

MEETING MINUTES  
EQUITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 28, 2026  
TEAMS Meeting

**Members Present:**

Andrea Northwood  
Gina Strobush  
Justine Taylor  
Cortney Mihulka  
Dawn LaFond  
Jamie Peterson-Johnson  
Jennifer VanHaaften  
Kelly Harrison  
Kris Ward  
Kristy Hartke  
Leslie Busby-Amegashie

**Optional Attendees Present:**

Jeni Ginter Light  
Scott Sussman

**Members Not Present:**

Chris Leslie  
Danielle Wheeloack  
Amy Formella  
Jennifer Fahey

Total members: 15

Total voting subcommittee members: 9 (Chair and Co-Chair not included as voting members)

Quorum for subcommittee (one-third of total voting membership; Chair is not considered a voting member): 6

**1. Welcome and Call to Order**

- The meeting of the Equity & Inclusion Advisory Committee was called to order by Dawn LaFond at 2:01pm.

## **2. Roll Call and Engagement Activity**

- Roll call and engagement activity was completed by Kristy Hartke and a quorum was present.
- Engagement activity's question was, "Would you rather"

## **3. Certification of Notice of Meeting**

- Certified by Dawn LaFond that agenda posted at WAMS, DPM HR Site and WDVA internet site.

## **4. Adoption of Minutes from February 24, 2026**

- MOTION: The February 24, 2026 meeting minutes were circulated via email – no edits requested. Motion to approve by Leslie Busby-Amegashie; second by Jamie Peterson-Johnson. Minutes are hereby approved and will be posted to WAMS, DPM HR Site and the WDVA internet site.

## **5. Subcommittee Reports**

- Recruitment - Andrea reported:
  - DVA voices initiative we are hoping to progress, no new individuals nominated or willing to participate. Thoughts that we will have a higher interest level of volunteers after the first set of videos/testimonials are shared. Comms added some new individuals and will help focus on this effort.
  - Ceremony at Central Cemetery for Battlefield Cross. ACTION: Dawn to add to 5/4/26 Noteworthy news: Ceremony at Central for Battlefield Cross Unveiling on 05.13.2026 and reaching out to state of Wisconsin, VFW and American Legion posts to give them an opportunity attend and show support, but honoring specific ones. Military Honors Program attending, too, with mock program and Comms team capture in pictures as well as video, along with testimonials from local organizations
    - Staff can attend with approval from their supervisors May 13 at 1pm at CWVMC.
- Retention - Jennifer reported:
  - Reviewed the NEO documents - this will be one of the new goals along with supervisor training

- Noteworthy News – After several iterations, the secretary has approved and hoping to get out today.
- Stay survey sent out 4/20/26 and is due 5/8/26. Please take survey and reminder others to complete.
- Culture - Jamie
  - Continue to work on screen savers
  - Met most of the goals and waiting for the next run to rev up again
- Partners in Giving
  - Working on announcement to send to all WDVA staff, once approved by deputy will send out - ADS has the email and still in draft form
  - Hiccup with the change jars and we will not be placing at Union Grove. There is discussion on how to get the homes more involved and information will be shared at a later date.
  - Continue meeting every three weeks
  - Ongoing updates to the master donation list

## 6. Old Business

- Current members term ending
  - Kristy Hartke
  - Dawn LaFond – renewing
  - Andrew Martin
  - Andrea Northwood
  - Danielle Wheelock
  - Kelly Harrison – not renewing
- 2027-2029 E&I Plan Updates
  - Next Monday, 5/4/26 – going to committee to finalize, due to BEI on 5/14/26 where there will be a follow-up meeting with BEI on 5/21/26
  - Jeni will give data presentation to senior leadership & will run through with the team on 5/4/26 and believes that the need has been met.
    - Agencies demographic is diverse so don't think we are driving up under utilized pathways as much as we are increasing opportunities
    - Jeni will assist with other metrics along with summary statements.
  - Veteran status is self-identified and STAR information is confidential. If measuring utilization of veteran hires, then these are in the demographic areas that Jeni provides. Perhaps ask if they want to be recognized or on a list.
  - W2 goal: Eligibility versus enrollment - enrollment is the new measure
  - No requirement that governing body make a motion to approve the plan
    - Recruitment - approved the goals and finalized language throughout with final that all is good

- Retention - approved with goals and finalized before handing to Scott
  - Culture - approved and updated to Scott as finalized
  - Any substantive changes will be shared after the 5/4/26 and/or the 5/8/26 and will update as necessary.
- March Madness
  - This year we had 13 people play for the men's and a handful for the women's brackets.
  - The crown and tiara were passed down to the winners, and they will hold onto it until the 2027 challenge.
  - Participation is low
    - Next year will discuss if want to continue. UG and King may do their own.

## 7. New Business

- Jeni Ginter-Lyght: Resources EAP had a meeting of all EAP coordinators (Jeni is for Region 4) and rolled out a new service through "VA" and called "SAFE - Suicide Prevention and Prevention Environment" and they are encouraging agencies to think about hosting for employee based. Indicate that if you were to give training to employee and if it were to prevent suicide in veteran population.
  - Here is additional information about the submission of projects and/or employees for a number of BEI awards. All due in September. I encourage EIAC members to brainstorm submissions and we could suggest those to the SO. The 27th State Council on Affirmative Action Impact Awards Program is now accepting nominations through September 11, 2026. This program celebrates our state's ongoing commitment to recognizing state employees whose contributions have improved the quality of state programs and services, and expanded opportunities for all Wisconsin citizens. We encourage you to review your programs and employees for possible nominations in this year's award categories. Now is the time to submit your nominations.
  - Award Categories
    - Influence Award: This award recognizes state agencies, UW campuses, and Wisconsin Technical Colleges that have delivered innovative and inclusive solutions. These organizations ensure prompt and effective services for all Wisconsinites and foster an inclusive workforce that understands the impact of decisions and meets the needs of the state's people.

- Ann Lydecker Educational Award: Named in honor of the late University of Wisconsin–River Falls Chancellor Ann Lydecker, this award acknowledges exceptional efforts to recruit and retain an innovative, experienced, and skilled faculty workforce. It also recognizes environments where students thrive, as evidenced by data demonstrating improved educational outcomes.
- Outstanding Leadership Award: This award honors individuals who exemplify leadership by inspiring a shared vision, valuing inclusion, fostering a climate of trust, and promoting self-determination and wellness. Award recipients have built and sustained inclusive, mindful, and positive work environments that create access and opportunity for all employees.
- Lifetime of Service Award: This award is given to employees with more than 15 years of civil service. It recognizes individuals who have demonstrated consistent leadership and an enduring commitment to fairness, justice, access, opportunity, and healthy work environments throughout their careers. Recipients have made purposeful efforts to recruit, retain, and promote the public service workforce over the course of their professional lives.
  - Submission Guidelines and Timeline
    - Nominations for all four categories are open until September 11, 2026. For detailed descriptions of the State Council on Affirmative Action Impact Awards, visit: Division of Personnel Management Diversity Award from the State Council on Affirmative Action (Selected individuals, agencies, colleges, and universities will be notified about their award status no later than September 28, 2026. The awards ceremony will take place on Friday, October 23, 2026, in the Assembly Chambers at the Wisconsin State Capitol.
    - For more information regarding the State Council on Affirmative Action Impact Awards program, please contact Briann Padrutt by email: [briann.padrutt@wisconsin.gov](mailto:briann.padrutt@wisconsin.gov)
- Jeni: BEI forwarded email about diversity awards, which are due in September, which is another resource that she will provide, like lifetime service award outstanding leadership award, influence award

## **8. Future Agenda Items**

- None

## **9. Public Comment**

- None

## **10. Adjournment**

- MOTION: Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by Jamie Peterson-Johnson; second by Gina Strobush and carried on a vote to adjourn the meeting. Meeting was adjourned at 2:56pm.

Kristy Hartke, OPA