

Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force

Meeting Minutes for 08/18/2022 9:00 AM- 12:00

Virtual Meeting

[TVW recording](#)

Minutes (for review and confirmation at next meeting, November 17, 2022)

I. Attendance

Voting Members

- Rep. Michelle Caldier, (R) Washington State House of Representatives
- Colleen Thompson for Kelly Cooper, Department of Health
- Sen. Perry Dozier, (R) Washington State Senate
- Sen. Manka Dhingra, (D) Washington State Senate
- Rep. Carolyn Eslick, (R) Washington State House of Representatives
- Veronica Gallardo, Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction
- Sen. Chris Gildon, (R) Washington State Senate
- Rep. Mia Gregerson, (D) Washington State House of Representatives (Legislative Co-Chair)
- Diane Klontz, Department of Commerce (Co-Chair Advisory)
- Jennie Fitzpatrick for Mark Kucza, Department of Corrections
- Jilma Meneses, Department of Social and Health Services (Executive Co-Chair)
- Sen. Joe Nguyen, Washington State Senate (D) Washington State Senate
- Rep. Strom Peterson, (D) Washington State House of Representatives
- Tim Probst, Employment Security Department (Co-Chair Advisory)
- Nicole Rose, Department of Children Youth and Families
- Carli Schniffner, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Quorum? Yes No

Non-Voting Members

- Mystique Hurtado, Governor's Office Indian Affairs
- Anna Minor, Office of Financial Management
- Nam Nguyen, Asian Pacific Islander Commission
- Ed Prince, Commission on African American Affairs
- Maria Siguenza, Commission on Hispanic Affairs
- Tony Bowie, Economic Security Administration Secretary
- Manny Santiago, Washington State LGBTQ Commission (pending confirmation)
- Megan Matthews for Dr. Karen Johnson, Washington State Office of Equity (pending confirmation)

Staff

- Amber Leaders, Office of the Governor
- Babs Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services
- Charice Pidcock, Department of Social and Health Services

II. House Keeping – Facilitator, Charice Pidcock (DSHS)

- Meeting is recorded and available via TVW.
- **Accessibility:** Captions are enabled.
- **Rules of Engagement Review:** Agreement on how we conduct ourselves in this meeting.

- **Housekeeping:**
 - LEWPRO members are designated “panelists” and will have the ability to participate. You can raise your hand to speak, ask questions or to vote.
 - All other “attendees” have been muted and chat function is turned off.
 - Can request to participate in public comment periods by raising their hand.
 - If you have questions during the meeting, the Q&A function is the best place to put those.

III. **Welcome and Introductions** – Task Force Co-chairs: Rep. Mia Gregerson & DSHS Sec. Meneses

- Rep. Gregerson: Welcome Charice to the team as facilitator for this meeting. Also welcoming new task force member – Senator Joe Nguyen – 34th District. Members introduce themselves via chat function (see attendance above).
- Sec. Meneses: Welcome to all the task force members, members of the public, Amber Leaders joining us from the Governor’s Office and Megan Edwards from the Office of Equity (on behalf of Dr. Johnson), also welcome to Charice as our designated facilitator.
- Rep. Gregerson led agenda review. No concerns, additions or changes from the group.
- Review and approval of [May 19, 2022 meeting minutes](#) – Motion to approve by Rep. Gregerson. Minutes were approved.

IV. **Public Comment Period #1**

- No comments

V. **Review Five-Year Plan Implementation Tracking tool** – Babs Roberts & Charice Pidcock (DSHS)

- Babs Roberts led review of the [implementation tracking tool](#) for the [Five-Year Plan to Reduce Intergenerational Poverty](#).
- Draft tool that aims to capture the progress related to the Five-Year Plan and help guide which areas may need more focus. Soliciting feedback from the group to refine and otherwise improve the draft tool’s usefulness.
- The document captures some of the work that has been done, or is in progress, across state agencies, the legislature, communities, etc. to advance the strategies and recommendations of the plan. Babs highlighted some of the recent accomplishments related to the plan that are captured in the tool.
- There is likely more progress that needs to be documented in the tool. The intent is to get this to a shared space so updates don’t have to come through one person. We will continue to work towards an ideal info-sharing process between now and the next meeting.
- Charice led a feedback activity on the tool: “I like, I wish, I wonder”
 - Feedback provided by Task Force members through this activity documented on [slide 13](#).

VI. **Update: Poverty Reduction Sub-Cabinet & Universal Basic Income Study** – Dr. Lori Pfingst (DSHS)

- Poverty Reduction Sub-Cabinet Update:
 - Lori noted that the involvement of the steering committee, made up of people with lived experience, has been key to the relevance and success of the poverty-reduction work thus far.
 - Review of the poverty reduction plan: 8 strategies and 60 recommendations that support the goal of a just and equitable future for all Washingtonians.
 - Economic success is just one aspect of upward mobility to reaching one’s full potential. We have to recognize that the definition of “prosperity” can vary across communities.

- Lots of momentum and gains based on the strategic plan so far, including the new Subcabinet on Intergenerational poverty. Continuing to develop strategic partnerships, including with community partners, to further this work.
- The Subcabinet has met a few times.
 - Goal is to accomplish the recommendations in the plan.
 - Agency members: DCYF, DSHS, ESD, Commerce, DOR. No one agency can be responsible for reducing poverty – it has to be a collective effort.
 - 2023 Subcabinet Priorities based on the Governor’s direction:
 - Make navigating health and human services easy by modernizing access to health and human service programs.
 - Increase food and housing stability for all Washingtonians.
 - Invest in the generational wealth and well-being of families with affordable housing and child care, and living wage jobs.
 - Strengthen communities’ ability to partner in solutions.
 - Next steps:
 - Agencies finalize budget and policy requests.
 - Subcabinet agencies work together in interagency teams to advance the “call to action” of the Subcabinet.
 - Subcabinet continues to develop as a Pro-Equity, Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team.
 - The subcabinet’s relationship to LEWPRO includes requesting input and support related to the work of the subcabinet.
 - Recognize the intersections of climate and environmental justice with economic justice and well-being. Have started exploring this issue, particularly some work within DOH and Commerce on this topic. There is more work to do to align the work around these issues.
 - 1.7 million people in Washington are experiencing poverty. As a measure of intergenerational poverty, we can look at how many adults on food assistance were on food assistance as children (46%). The number may be closer to 1.9 million based on how many Washingtonians receive public benefits from DSHS.
- Universal [Basic Income Study](#) Update:
 - There is national interest in UBI. Budget proviso (21-23) provided DSHS with funding to conduct a feasibility study for a Universal Basic Income pilot in Washington, which was completed in June. A diverse team worked on development of the study, including a steering committee of those who would benefit most from UBI. UBI has the potential to fill economic gaps and establish a stronger economic foundation.
 - Recommendations from the study:
 - Establish a public-private partnership – “The Evergreen Trust”
 - Allows Community Based Organizations, which are often more trusted than Government within communities that have been historically excluded, to play a critical role.
 - Provides the greatest flexibility for protecting existing benefits, which are meant to be supplanted by UBI, not replaced by it.

- 2-year pilot focused on two groups. Poverty group – income below 100% FPL versus a low-income group – income between 100-200% FPL. Each group would have a control group for evaluation purposes.
- Participants would receive a percentage of Fair Market Rent based on county of residence.
- Minimum amount of participants for an adequate sample size is 5,000. 10,000 participants would be ideal for more robust data analysis.
- FMR was chosen as the basis for three reasons:
 - Recognizes the impact of lack of affordable housing
 - Adjusts for cost of living in each county
 - Adjusts year-to-year based on market conditions and inflation
- Depending on the guaranteed income amount option, the low end of the range could be around \$600 and the upper end of the range could be \$2500.
- Study recommends a targeted approach to guaranteed income versus a universal approach. There are around 100 basic income pilots around the country, they all use a targeted approach. The recommended pilot would also: ensure low barrier income verification, collect baseline data, allow payment options for those who use banks and those who don't, provide benefits counseling, offer optional wraparound services, include program integrity measures, conduct an annual evaluation, etc.
- The recommended priority populations for enrollment in the pilot are those experiencing a destabilizing life condition or transition that requires economic stabilization.
- Pilot groups are evaluated annually on economic well-being, power and autonomy, and sense of belonging – factors that are critical to moving out of poverty.
- Pilot costs could range from \$65 million to \$244 million, depending on design. Potential for public and private funds to support the effort.
- Cost/benefit – hard to determine without the data, but expected outcomes would be increased economic stability and immediate gains in economic well-being, power and autonomy, and sense of belonging leading to intergenerational benefits. Anticipated intermediate outcomes include greater engagement in society, reduced risk of engagement with public systems, reduced homelessness. Expected long term outcomes include increased education, earnings, assets & wealth, and improved health.
- Administrative data shows that the need is significant. The incidence of destabilizing conditions within the target population is high.
- Next steps – socializing the study in many venues, many groups are interested, looking ahead to opportunities for the next legislative session and a larger public discussion on this topic.
- Questions/feedback:
 - Is there data on age-breakout of the 1 million in poverty? That data is available. Generally speaking, seniors are experiencing less poverty due to programs such as Social Security, but also carry a lot of debt (such as out-of-pocket medical costs, etc.). Children and young adults have the highest poverty rates.
 - How would the public/private partnership funding model work? The reason to design the pilot this way is that it provides the most flexibility for protecting existing benefits from being reduced by basic income (for example, recent federal clarification that categorically eligible households with public-private funded basic income can be excluded for SNAP food assistance). There is a comprehensive analysis within in the report on protecting benefits.

- *Does a 2-year pilot allow enough time to capture accurate data on outcomes? Many local pilots are one year and are able to capture immediate impacts. The intermediate impacts can be predicted based off of 2 year data. The longer-term impacts are more difficult to capture in a 2-year pilot.*
- *Would we be able to compare the incidence of destabilizing conditions (mental health, substance use disorder, etc.) to population over 200% FPL (non-poverty)? Will have to follow up to see if we can get this data comparison.*
- *Appreciation for the work that went into this study.*
- *Wrap-around services – once folks stabilize with the access to basic income and are ready to find a career pathway within the WorkSource system, ESD would be happy to engage and partner in providing wrap-around services to participants. Agreed, there should be ongoing conversation about this critical opportunity to build a bridge and supports towards employment and training.*

VII. Poverty Reduction Budget Proposals – Sec. Jilma Meneses (DSHS), Asst. Sec. Tony Bowie (DSHS-ESA)

- *High level poverty-reduction proposals from ESA for the upcoming session. Aim to advance the work of the Poverty Reduction Work Group and build upon the strategic plan by addressing gaps and cliffs in ESA’s scope. Even changes that may seem “small” (such as an additional \$100 – 200) from the outside can be very impactful to those who are experiencing poverty. Appreciate this opportunity for ongoing information sharing on these requests for the next Biennial budget.*
 - *Increase Asset Limits for Public Assistance (5.9M) – Current asset limits don’t support financial security. Important to increase the asset limit to allow for reasonable savings and reliable vehicle without being disqualified for assistance.*
 - *Cash Grant Alignment with the Need Standard and Inflation (48M) – The Need Standard is updated annually for inflation, but cash grants are not. This means as inflation and cost of living increases it is harder to get by with the same amount of assistance. This proposal is aiming to link the cash grants to percentage of the need standard, adjusted based on the Consumer Price Index.*
 - *Smoothing the Cliff Effect (21.7M) – Provides a period of earnings disregard to allow time to solidify economic footing when beginning new employment without losing cash assistance.*
 - *TANF Time Limits (27M) – During the pandemic, TANF time limit extensions have been made available to all households, this proposal would make this a permanent policy change. Reduces disparate impacts of time limit policy to families of color.*
 - *Removing the Interim Assistance Burden for Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) Program Recipients (39M) – Currently, ABD cash benefits received while pending SSI approval (interim assistance) must be repaid to the state. This proposal would eliminate the interim assistance repayment requirement, allowing those transitioning to SSI to keep these funds to help meet their basic needs.*
 - *Restoring Cash Assistance to Clients with an Incapacity (13.8M) – Provides a cash grant to those who are unable to work due to a physical or behavioral health condition expected to last at least 90 days (but does not meet the threshold for ABD assistance). Prior to 2011 this population was able to access cash assistance, this proposal would restore cash assistance for this population so they can meet basic needs while incapacitated.*

- *100% Pass Through of Child Support (8.7M) – Allows more support for TANF families by passing through all current child support without impacting the cash grant. Data suggests increased engagement from the non-custodial parent when all the support is going directly to the family.*
- *Increasing Access to AREN (3.7M) - Restore the maximum Additional Requirements Emergent Need (AREN) payment to \$1500 from the current \$750 to reflect increasing costs of living (housing, car repairs, etc.).*
- *Improving Program Access (12.8M) – Help clients stay connected with benefits by reducing administrative barriers, specifically ending the Mid-Certification review for TANF population and eliminating the interview requirement for ABD and HEN Referral eligibility reviews. This change will help reduce churn that occurs when a review is missed and an eligible family has to go through the application process again in order to regain their benefits.*
- *Expanding OAR (3.2M) – Expand Ongoing Additional Requirements to include the HEN Referral population, and include additional ongoing needs such as transportation, dentures, hearing aids, etc.*

VIII. Prioritize Strategies & Recommendations - Sec. Jilma Meneses, Babs Roberts (DSHS)

- *Reflecting on all the great poverty-reduction work and initiatives we've discussed today, we want to take time to think about how we should prioritize the strategies and recommendations for further action. We look to the Task Force members to participate in this process as leaders in advancing the five-year plan.*
 - *Exercise: creating a "decision matrix." The prioritization process may take some time over several meetings to complete as there are many important recommendations to be implemented. A decision matrix can help as a way to sort options to determine what may be the best option, or rank the options, based on specific criteria. Can use weighted criteria to help determine the importance. The decision matrix is just a prioritization tool, it does not dictate the decisions but helps guide the decision-making conversations.*
 - *First step to designing the decision matrix is to identify the criteria consider for each option. Community voice would be important to incorporate here. Potential criteria:*
 - *Moves a person/family out of poverty*
 - *Number of people served*
 - *Alleviates poverty*
 - *Ability to expand/replicate, scalability*
 - *Supported by data/research*
 - *Leverages or expands on existing services*
 - *Removes/dismantles institutional or other barriers*
 - *Reaches Unserved/Underserved populations (addressing inequities)*
 - *Difficulty to implement (political considerations, operational considerations, complexity)*
 - *Sustainability*
 - *Budget/Infrastructure*
 - *Significance/urgency of impact*
 - *Effect on private sector (housing, jobs, etc.)*
 - *Supports an inclusive economy*

- *Cost per person served*
- *Supports self-sufficiency*
- *Promotes equity*
- *Return on investment/long term impacts*
- *Immediate impact*
- *We could combine many of these criteria. More work to come on the decision matrix. Invite members of the Task Force are interested to assist in refining the tool, let Babs or Charice know. We will bring a refined draft back at the next meeting for further discussion.*

IX. Community/Stakeholder Legislative Strategies – Community Partners

- *Invitation for community partners to share strategies to advance poverty reduction work, initiatives in the works, etc.*
 - *Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children: Thrilled to see the recommendations of the plan, the basic income study, and decision packages from DSHS appear to be advancing the poverty-reduction initiatives. Many partners are also working on issues related to basic income, see a lot of alignment there and opportunity for future conversations. Hopeful that Washington can become a participant in basic income initiatives. Can see where the decision packages align with what we know, that experiencing poverty can intersect with other negative outcomes (child welfare, behavior health), so the more we can focus on these issues we can better support families. The Washington Anti-Poverty Advocates group is still weighing legislative priorities for upcoming session, but looking to the proposals of DSHS and the Task Force to help inform their agenda.*
 - *Lianna Kressin, Statewide Poverty Action Network: Appreciative of the proposals and work that has been highlighted today. Encouraged to see a lot of shared priorities and voices of those with lived experience at the center of this work. Looking forward to partnering in this work and advocating for these proposals to move forward in order to make an impact in reducing poverty.*
 - *Josephine Tamayo Murray, Communities of Concern Commission: Supportive of the tracking tool to capture our collective efforts and the subcabinet priorities. Would like to see more inclusion of the lessons learned from the pandemic, particularly around racial disparity. Black and Brown communities have not yet recovered to move forward from the pandemic. What lessons learned during the pandemic could be applied to the decision packages in the upcoming legislative session to promote racial equity?*

X. Public Comment Period #2

- *No additional comments*

XI. Good of the Order – Charice Pidcock (DSHS)

- *Next meeting date: November 17th from 9am to noon*

XII. Adjourn – Sec. Meneses (DSHS) & Rep. Gregerson

- *Thanks to the public and task force members for participation in this work. Appreciative of the commitment to poverty-reduction work.*
- *Thanks to Charice and staff for all the work that goes into these meetings.*