

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: January 17, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and NorthPoint Health & Wellness Conference Center (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Philip Gaye-Bai, Manuel Zuniga, Liz Banini, Nelly Torori, Josefina Geronimo, Alex Abraha, Lolita Davis-Carter, Kimetha Johnson, Paul Slack, Joanna Rosa, Craté Darden, Makram El-Amin, Farhia Said, Nina Vongpheth, Muriel Gubasta, Tonia Lofton, Chris Renville, Jessi Evjen, Bonni Abdurahman, Chris Green
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Cate Dymit, Laura Villarreal, Steven Wilson, Dr. Karen McKinney, Nikki Farago, De Anna Conover, Kelly Barnebey, Hli Vang, Jose Arrieta_
- **Public Attendees:**

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
1:05	Introductions and Welcome
1:20	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:25	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:35	DHS Legislative Update and Discussion
1:50	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup Administrative Updates
2:20	Break
2:30	Discussion on Learning and Development Survey Results
2:50	Discussion on CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions. He also invited council members to participate in the Tribal-State Relations Training (TSRT), a 2-day immersive in-person training about American Indian tribal governments, histories, cultures, and traditions.

Here are the upcoming sessions. Please email Community Relations if you would like to be added to the registration list.

- February 26-27, 2025, Prairie's Edge Casino Resort in Granite Falls, MN
 - Hosted by the Upper Sioux Community
- March 26-27, 2025, Fortune Bay Resort Casino in Tower, MN
 - Hosted by the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa

Decisions Made

Review and approve December minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and December minutes: Kimetha Johnson
- Second: Philip Gaye-Bai
- The motion passed

Discuss scheduling of January 23rd CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet:

- A vote was taken to postpone the event to a later date.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the January observances on the agenda: National Slavery & Human Trafficking Prevention Month, Tamil Heritage Month, [National Day of Racial Healing](#), and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- Manuel Zuniga shared the [One Dream, One Minnesota Career Fair](#) takes place Saturday, January 18 from 10am-2pm at the MN National Guard Armory in St. Paul.
- Dr. Karen McKinney mentioned the State of Minnesota's slate of events to honor Martin Luther King Jr. [2025 MLK Jr. Celebration of Events / Office of Equity, Opportunity, and Accessibility — State of Minnesota](#). This includes the January 19th [Connections for Hope](#) across the state.
- Nina Vongpheth shared Hennepin County has events planned for the National Day of Racial Healing. More details will be shared in post-meeting email update.
- Hli Vang invited everyone to join an African American Child Well-being (DCYF) Learning Session with DHS on Wednesday, February 12. Please bookmark this link for upcoming opportunities by the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion: [Inclusion and Engagement Events / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#).

- Nelly Torori mentioned the Minnesota Department of Health Black Youth Mental Health event on Thursday, February 6, 2025 from 12:30-4:30 pm. [Register here.](#)
- Kimetha Johnson invited everyone to the Residents of Color Collective's (ROCC) ice fishing event on Sunday, January 26 from 1:00-2:00pm at Thompson County Park.
- Lolita Davis Carter shared about an event on Saturday, February 22 regarding BLM Reformation Commission and CMAH.
- Tonia Lofton gave a shoutout to the AACP Minneapolis Chapter and Child Protection Committee and to the MNCTWA to which she is a Community Trainer training Ramsey and Hennepin County staff on the African American Family Preservation and CWD Act, which started rolling out on January 1, 2025.
- Makram El-Amin shared opportunity from FAM Organization – see flyer.

DHS Legislative Update and Discussion

Kristy Graume, Director of Legislative Relations, updated the CECLC on the Governor's budget release from Thursday, January 16.

[Governor Walz Proposes Curbing State Spending to Balance Budget](#)

In addition, DHS's change pages are now posted on MMB's website. [MN Management and Budget website.](#)

The budget forecast reflects \$600M for the first biennium, then a \$5B deficit in the second biennium. There is more of an emphasis on program preservation than on investments. DHS will advocate to protect programming and funding, and to prevent reductions or minimize impact where reductions could occur.

The CECLC's legislative proposals are not included in this budget. However, here are highlights related to the council's priorities: funding for HIV grants for service provision; transitioning to direct payments to Tribal nations for adult mental health initiatives and traditional healing; a onetime investment in audio only telehealth; and SEIU wage increases and \$30M in onetime stipends for hiring and retention.

The budget proposes reductions in disability services, primarily in waiver services. There are also changes regarding program integrity to ensure DHS has appropriate resources to prevent and effectively respond to fraud cases. On the Senate side, both parties are concerned about funding reductions for disability, behavioral health, and services for older adults. There are no impacts to Elderly Waiver in this budget.

There will be robust conversation at the Legislature around funding, and DHS will continue its work to advocate for minimal impacts.

Council members are encouraged to join Legislative and Policy Workgroup meetings to discuss these topics and elevate their concerns.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

The workgroup has been preparing for next week's CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet and considered the possibility of postponement due to the current climate at the Legislature. After brief discussion, a vote was taken, and the council decided to postpone the Meet & Greet for a later date.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup continues its work with Ebenezer Community Church. The topics raised included increasing mental health crisis and resource needs; health literacy needs; and supports for faith leaders and small community-based organizations.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

At its last meeting, the workgroup met with Gaosheng Thao and looked at recruitment data and trends around hiring practices. She also shared DHS's hiring guidebook with the group.

Administrative Update

Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago recognized the council's emotions around Commissioner Harpstead's announcement of her [resignation](#). Her last day will be Monday, February 3. DHS leadership is working with the Governor's office on transition planning and timeline. The CECLC will be kept up to date.

Nikki opened the floor for everyone to share comments and questions.

Discussion on Learning and Development Survey Results

In December, Community Relations sought input to identify training and development opportunities for the council to invest in 2025. There were eighteen responses to their survey, which were shared in today's meeting.

Here are the top five:

1. Action-oriented Facilitation Process Training
2. CECLC Community Leg Advocacy Training
3. Change Management Practices
4. CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat
5. Art of Hosting: Facilitation Methods

Council members were invited to give input. For next steps, Community Relations will work with DHS staff to identify the types of training that would best suit the council and begin planning for these activities. One or more trainings may require a contract process.

Discussion on CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat

DHS Community Relations and CECLC leadership will begin discussion on planning. More information to come.

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: February 21, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of MN (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Philip Gaye-Bai, Manuel Zuniga, Liz Banini, Nelly Torori, Josefina Geronimo, Alex Abraha, Lolita Davis-Carter, Kimetha Johnson, Paul Slack, Craté Darden, Tonia Lofton, Chris Renville, Angela Fields, Micaela Schuneman, Makram El-Amin, Nina Vongpheth
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Cate Dymit, Steven Wilson, Dr. Karen McKinney, Nikki Farago, Elyse Bailey, Hli Vang, Kelly Barnebey, Stacy Wells, Micah Tran, Gaosheng Thao, De Anna Conover
- **Public Attendees:** Angela Reed, Beth Chaplin, Nathan Charles, Dr. Tolulope Ola, Dr. Richard Oni

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
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1:50	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup Administrative Updates
2:30	Break
2:40	Discussion on funding concerns for Meals on Wheels Program with Makram El-Amin
3:00	CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat Subcommittee Announcement
3:10	Revisit CECLC Learning & Development Opportunities
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Shawn plans to visit co-chair Chris Green in hopes of holding a future council meeting outside the metro, closer to where Chris lives.

Decisions Made

Review and approve January minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and January minutes: Paul Slack
- Second: Micaela Schuneman
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the February observances on the agenda: Black History Month, Heart Health Month, and National Cancer Prevention Month. He gave a shoutout to DHS for a recent event sponsored by its Men of African Heritage and Black Women Employee Resource Groups.
- Manuel Zuniga will send information regarding input on child protection, child welfare, and foster care to Community Relations to be included in the post-meeting email update.
- Hli Vang shared the Olmstead Implementation office is hiring consultants with lived experience. Please share with your respective networks. Also, the DHS Office of Equity & Inclusion (OEI) has upcoming training sessions. Please check its [calendar](#) and feel free to register. Hli acknowledged Dr. Karen McKinney's contribution and service to DHS and the CECLC. She will be retiring from DHS after serving as chief equity officer for the past five years. Her last day will be Friday, February 28. With that, Shawn Sorrell presented Dr. McKinney with a certificate of appreciation to which she expressed deep gratitude and reflected on her time with the council. Among her many accomplishments as chief equity officer, she stood up the Strategic Antiracism Team (StART) at DHS, established OEI, initiated an agencywide learning and development plan grounded in equity and antiracism, and oversaw a systematic effort to assess the agency's interpersonal cultural development.
- Angele Reed announced legislation that is currently being heard by the State Senate's Judiciary and Public Safety Committees under [Senate File 1416](#). This bill would establish a new right for residential tenants in Minnesota to house a youth aged 25 years or younger for up to 60 days without facing eviction or retaliation from their landlord.

DHS Legislative Update and Discussion

In the House of Representatives, the GOP has a slim majority until the March special election. Committee chairs lead the agendas and choose which bills to move forward. In the Senate, the DFL has maintained the majority. The Governor's budget was released, and hearings are underway. The budget proposes reductions in disability services, primarily in waiver services.

DHS budget fact sheets: <https://mn.gov/dhs/media/fact-sheets/2025-session-fact-sheets.jsp>.

Included this year:

- Human Services budget aims to stop fraud, strengthen program integrity, and reduce spending growth
- Protecting public dollars in human services programs
- Strengthening oversight of autism programs
- Improving support and program integrity for substance use disorder treatment programs
- Reducing growth to preserve access to disability services
- Continuing access to care via audio-only telehealth services
- Continuing oversight, capturing prescription drug savings

It was asked what measures DHS already has in place to prevent and mitigate fraud. Elyse Bailey, DHS Budget Director, replied DHS has an existing robust structure in place. One business area is responsible for provider vetting and enrollment. Another business area is the [Office of Inspector General \(OIG\)](#) which provides accountability and comprehensive oversight of services and funds. In addition, DHS partners with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) which investigates criminal aspects of fraud cases. DHS seeks to increase its number of investigators on staff and their capacity.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

Shawn Sorrell mentioned [House File 10](#) which does not allow state funding to anyone who does not have legal status and makes them ineligible for MinnesotaCare and the North Star Promise scholarship program. HF10 has been met with a lot of opposition and may not gain any traction in the Senate. Council members are encouraged to contact their representatives if they are concerned about HF10.

The workgroup has a legislative subcommittee for those who are interested in championing the council's legislative priorities, including strengthening their advocacy skills and partnering with appropriate DHS staff. The workgroup now convenes on the first Thursday of each month at 12:00-1:00 pm.

The CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet has been rescheduled to Wednesday, April 16 from 12:30-4:30 pm. A subcommittee has reconvened to resume planning. Community Relations will send information and a link to RSVP.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup continues its work with Ebenezer Community Church. There are other external groups that are interested in participating, and the workgroup is deciding how to proceed.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup remains focused on DHS equity and inclusion policies and hiring practices. At its last meeting, it discussed challenges that arise in hiring and retention.

Administrative Update

Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago shared [Shireen Gandhi](#) has been appointed Temporary Commissioner and provided some of Shireen's background. She is unable to join today's meeting but plans to attend in the near future.

Discussion on Funding Concerns for Meals on Wheels Program with Makram El-Amin

Makram El-Amin sits on the board of Metro Meals on Wheels. He brought forward a proposed policy change that could negatively impact metro Meals on Wheels recipients.

What's Changing?

Under Title III Admin & Financial, Section 9, AAA Grants and Contracts with Service Providers, Policy 5, the MN Board on Aging proposes to prohibit the current contracting relationship between Metro Meals on Wheels and its member organizations. Instead, if eligible, each provider must contract directly with an Area Agency on Aging.

Effective Date

This change would go into effect on October 1, 2025.

Impact on Service Delivery and Vulnerable Seniors

- Subcontractor Disruption
 - Affected Programs: 19 programs across 4 counties (All of Anoka, Hennepin, and Ramsey counties, plus the Burnsville area in Dakota).
 - Current Reach: In 2024, these programs collectively served 222,745 meals to 1,750 seniors.
- Vulnerable Senior Demographics
 - Economic Vulnerability
 - 1,335 seniors (90% of income reporters) live below 200% of the poverty level.
 - 610 seniors (41% of income reporters) live below 100% of the poverty level.
 - Social Isolation
 - 66% of the seniors served live alone.
 - Age Profile
 - Average age is 75; with 364 seniors over 80 and 156 seniors over 90.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Considerations

- Culturally Specific Services
Metro Meals on Wheels has expanded services geographically and culturally through subcontracting, offering menus that include:
 - Halal options.
 - Hmong, Latino-inspired, East African, and soul food choices.
- BIPOC Provider Involvement
 - Al Maa 'uun: Primarily African American/Black clientele.
 - SEWA: Primarily Asian (South Asian) clientele.
 - Community Emergency Services: 37% African American/Black clientele.
 - Other programs serve less than 10% BIPOC.
- Efficiency and Federal Funding
 - Subcontracting Benefits:
 - 93% of grant dollars go directly to meal providers.
 - Centralized functions (monitoring, compliance, data collection, accounting, and grant management) allow providers to focus on serving seniors.
 - Risk of Service Gaps:
 - Without this structure, many small, local providers may be unable to manage complex administrative tasks, risking withdrawal from the program and leaving high-need communities underserved.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The proposed policy change directly contradicts CECLC's priorities by undermining:

- Equitable investments in marginalized communities,
- Intentional racial equity advancement, and
- Support for community partners' equity initiatives.

Changing the current contracting model will disrupt a proven system that reaches vulnerable seniors with culturally tailored meals and critical support. This is not merely an administrative shift – it is a matter of diversity, equity, and inclusion that will disproportionately harm seniors who are already at high risk. Makram asked the council to consider advocating against this change to protect seniors and uphold our commitment to equity and community support.

The council discussed leveraging DHS's relationship with the MN Board on Aging to present a case. For next steps, DHS Community Relations will identify staff who can lead an initial conversation and advocate the council's concerns. It is unlikely the Board has done an equity analysis, as it is not required to use DHS's Equity Analysis Toolkit. As a partner with DHS, however, it was proposed to have the Board pause on executing its policy change until an equity analysis can be conducted.

CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat Subcommittee Announcement

An email will be sent to the CECLC following today's meeting regarding a subcommittee to plan the Strategic Planning Retreat. Timeline will be a consideration, given reappointments that occur in autumn 2025.

Revisit CECLC Learning & Development Opportunities

Craté Darden emphasized the Office of Employee Culture is available to provide learning and development opportunities to the council. There will likely be further discussion about this at the retreat.

Meeting adjourned at 3:53 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: March 21, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and NorthPoint Conference Center (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Manuel Zuniga, Liz Banini, Micaela Schuneman, Nelly Torori, Josefina Geronimo, Alex Abraha, Lolita Davis-Carter, Victor Obisakin, Tonia Lofton, Makram El-Amin, Joanna Rosa, Nina Vongpheth
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Cate Dymit, Lola Muhammad, Keziah Mbogo, Steven Wilson, Nikki Farago, Temporary Commissioner Shireen Gandhi, Elyse Bailey, Kristy Graume, Hli Vang, Kelly Barnebey, Gaosheng Thao, Leigh Grauman, Micah Tran, Jung Jens Vang, Clark Frederickson, Deqa Said, Reena Shetty
- **Public Attendees:** Jewelly Lee, Angela Reed; Maangaar Voices-Najma Siyad, Anisa Hagi Mohamed and Amina Adan; African Immigrant and Refugee Suicide Prevention-Dr. Ola Tolulope Monisola, Dr. Oni, Henry Momanyi, Idman Abdullahi

Agenda

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- 1:35 Workgroup Updates & Priorities
- Legislative Workgroup
 - Topics & Issues Workgroup
 - Equitable Outcomes Workgroup
- Administrative Updates
- 2:00 Follow-up Discussion on Meals on Wheels Program Changes
- 2:20 DHS Legislative Update and Discussion
- 2:30 Break
- 2:40 Update on CECLC Retreat Planning
- 4:00 Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Chris Green called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Shawn Sorrell reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register or be added to a waitlist.

Upcoming trainings:

- April 23-24, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - **Registration is full. There is a waitlist.**
- May 14-15, 2025, Black Bear Casino in Carlton, MN
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - **Registration is full. There is a waitlist.**
- June 24-25, 2025, Grand Casino Mille Lacs in Onamia, MN
 - Hosted by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 - Registration is open.

Shawn invited anyone new to the council to introduce themselves. He welcomed DHS Temporary Commissioner Shireen Gandhi who provided her background and remarks on DHS's continued commitment to the CECLC's priorities and the agency strategic plan.

Decisions Made

Review and approve February minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and February minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Manuel Zuniga
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the March observances on the agenda: Women's History Month, National Social Work Month, Problem Gambling Awareness Month, Irish American Heritage Month, Ramadan, and Lent.
- Manuel Zuniga shared his article "[Act to celebrate #AANHPI Heritage Month after the US Federal government's elimination of 33 years of bipartisan celebration and recognition.](#)"
- Hli Vang gave a shoutout to Gaosheng Thao and her team for arranging for DHS to be a sponsor at the Hmong National Development Conference (HNDC), [We Rise United](#). That conference takes place on April

16-19 (during the April CECLC meeting) at the Hilton Minneapolis. She invited anyone to attend and to share with their respective networks.

- Leigh Grauman shared the DHS Medicaid Equity Forums will take place on April 21, 23, and 25. Same content for each. She invited everyone to join and to share with their respective networks. This year's focus and theme is Medicaid Matters to talk about the importance of Medicaid in light of potentially significant cuts. Registration details coming soon.
 - **Twin Cities Metro: Monday, April 21 from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm**
*Allina Health Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan Community and Education Center
2800 10th Avenue South, Minneapolis, 55407*
 - **Moorhead, Minnesota: Wednesday, April 23 from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm**
*Moorhead Area Event Center
1080 28th Avenue South, Moorhead, 56560*
 - **Virtual forum: Friday, April 25 from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm**

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

Planning is still underway for the CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet. Senator John Hoffman has offered his team for assistance and hosting needs. Community Relations is working with his team to secure a date and location in the Senate (likely in late April or early May); to identify key legislators to invite; and to craft invitations to send legislators and their staff.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

Community partners who have been working with this workgroup had the opportunity to introduce themselves to the council.

- Council member Farhia Said invited Maangaar Voices
 - From Maangaar Voices: Najma Siyad, Anisa Hagi Mohamed, and Amina Adan.
 - Maangaar is the Somali word for autism, and Maangaar Voices was founded by a group of dedicated parents of children with special needs, many of whom are on the autism spectrum. Its goal is to unite and support one another in navigating the complex challenges of services, schools, therapies, and support systems for their children.
- African Immigrant and Refugee Suicide Prevention – Dr. Ola and Dr. Oni
- Media Engagement Project Opportunity – Joanna Woolman, Mitchell Hamline, Executive Director at Institute to Transform Child Protection

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup remains focused on DHS equity and inclusion policies and hiring practices.

Administrative Update

Helen Ghebre recognized Cate Dymit's service to DHS and to the council, and wished her a warm sendoff. Her last day at DHS is Friday, March 21. Cate expressed deep gratitude to be part of this work and for the relationships fostered. She thanked Helen Ghebre for her leadership and mentorship. Council members and other staff joined in celebrating Cate's tremendous contribution.

Follow-up Discussion on Meals on Wheels Program Changes

Chris Green introduced Reena Shetty, Executive Director for Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) and DHS Aging and Adult Services Director, who joined today's meeting in response to the February agenda item about proposed policy changes to Meals on Wheels. Reena provided an overview on the funding changes including background, current context, and potential opportunities to engage with the full council.

Makram El-Amin asked how the MBA has ensured the proposed policy changes are culturally responsive to the clients served. Is there other funding available at the state level outside of Title III funding? Reena answered the Older Americans Act has stringent guidelines and performance measures around targeted populations. The thresholds are set in the RFP. There is \$21M in contracted funding. The current emphasis on addressing fraud, waste, and abuse plays a part in the proposed changes.

Shawn Sorrell asked about MBA's equity analysis – what will it do with the results? Reena answered the DEIA Committee of the MBA oversees that work. When that conversation occurs, if it is on an agenda, is there space for public comment? Yes, at the end of each full board meeting. Reena can provide a link to MBA's equity analysis and the next full board meeting on Friday, April 18 (if the full review is completed by then).

DHS Legislative Update and Discussion

DHS Legislative Director Kristy Graume provided a legislative update. A GOP senator has stepped down which caused a shift in balance until the Governor calls a special election. The House is now rebalanced to an even split of 67-67. Committees have changed to a co-chairing model, alternating the gavel on different days. Friday, April 4 will be first policy deadline when all the bills must get through committees. This time of year, committee chairs are working closely with fiscal analysts to put together budget positions. Because those bills are so big and complex, they work expeditiously. On the Behavioral Health side, there is significant focus on mental health and substance use disorder bills being heard. It is to be determined what will be in the final bill. All DHS policy bills have been introduced. Feel free to reach out if there are questions.

DHS Budget Director Elyse Bailey added the Governor released his revised budget for the next biennium. The revised budget includes just under \$250 million in additional ongoing reductions in FY 28-29, paired with small, primarily one-time investments in critical work, including funding to respond to Avian Influenza and law enforcement training. The budget will limit year-over-year growth rates in Medicaid waivers without limiting eligibility for services, saving the state more than \$1.3 billion.

DHS budget fact sheets: <https://mn.gov/dhs/media/fact-sheets/2025-session-fact-sheets.jsp>.

Update on CECLC Retreat Planning

Retreat planning is still underway, and a date will be confirmed soon. There was discussion about late September or early October; possible locations; and an agenda for 1.5 days.

Meeting adjourned at 3:34 PM

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- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Steven Wilson, Kelly Barnebey, Clark Frederickson, Angie DeLille
- **Public Attendees:** Kelsey Delisle

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2:35	CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat Subcommittee Announcement
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Shawn Sorrell reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

These upcoming trainings have gone to waitlist. The remaining 2025 sessions will be posted soon.

- May 14-15, 2025, Black Bear Casino in Carlton, MN (**waitlist**)
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- June 24-25, 2025, Grand Casino Mille Lacs in Onamia, MN (**waitlist**)
 - Hosted by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Decisions Made

Review and approve March minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and March minutes:
- Second: Victor Obisakin
- The motion passed

Review and approve dates of 2025 Strategic Planning Retreat:

- Motion to approve September 12-13 to hold the retreat: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Joanna Rosa
- The motion passed.

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the April observances on the agenda: Autism Awareness Month, National Counseling Awareness Month, Celebrate Diversity Month, Testicular Cancer Awareness Month, and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. On April 17-18, [Restoration for All, Inc.](#) held an event in Inver Grove Heights to provide early childhood literacy and other early childhood support reaching various milestones via a program titled: [Follow Along](#). There are two upcoming events for our Spanish-speaking communities on Saturday, April 26 and Sunday, May 4. More details in the post-meeting email update.
- Clark Fredrickson shared two upcoming learning sessions at DHS:
 - In recognition of Autism Acceptance Month, the Office for Equity and Inclusion (OEI) will host a learning session with Nathaniel Dempsey on Tuesday, April 22 from 1:00-3:00 pm. Dempsey's

presentation “Autism and Neurodivergence: What Next?” explores the transition from awareness to acceptance, tolerance to belonging, and accommodation to systems change for people with autism, ADHD, and other learning differences.

- The Asian Heritage Employee Resource Group (AHERG) is hosting a virtual Karen and Karenni learning session with The Urban Village from 1:00-2:00 pm on Thursday, April 24.
- Check out the [Inclusion and Engagement events calendar](#) to view details and add to your own calendar.
- Manuel Zuniga mentioned May is AANHPI Heritage Month which is no longer federally recognized. He shared his article [“Act to celebrate #AANHPI Heritage Month after the US Federal government’s elimination of 33 years of bipartisan celebration and recognition.”](#)
- Joanna Rosa shared upcoming trainings and events by the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee (MIRAC): [MIRAC - Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee](#).
- Micaela Schuneman shared [Latino Day at the Capitol](#) on Thursday, April 24 from 2:00-4:00 pm.
- Lolita Davis Carter shared an upcoming event titled A Discussion About Black Family Mental Health in Minneapolis on Saturday, April 19 from 10:00 am-1:30 pm. Details, including the link to register, will be in the post-meeting email update.

DHS Legislative Update and Discussion

Due to the Easter/Passover legislative break, DHS legislative staff are not in attendance but will provide a written update following this meeting.

DHS budget fact sheets: <https://mn.gov/dhs/media/fact-sheets/2025-session-fact-sheets.jsp>.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

The workgroup welcomed Angela Fields as new co-lead. In March, it participated in advocacy training with the Legislative and Policy Analyst in the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion to form a subgroup to cross-reference current bills with CECLC legislative priorities. That subgroup is setting up a workflow or framework to be used for future legislative sessions.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup is focusing on outreach to Greater Minnesota and on collaborating with partners in immigrant and diaspora communities.

Manuel Zuniga would like to invite Abdi Mohamed from Office of New Americans to present to the council at a future meeting. Here is more information about that Office: <https://mn.gov/deed/about/what-guides-us/equity/ira/>.

Chris Green presented an event from stakeholders in NWMN, which involves offering a community meal and a meet and greet on June 5th. CECLC members are invited to attend.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

Using its charter, the workgroup is drafting a standard process to review agency programs, which it will share with the CECLC once finalized. DHS Equity Directors will attend the next workgroup meeting to discuss equity analysis.

Administrative Update

Helen Ghebre provided follow-up on Reena Shetty's presentation on Metro Meals on Wheels Senior Nutrition Program in last month's meeting. Equity analysis on the proposed policies is being pushed to the June DEIA Committee meeting. The delay is caused by changes at the federal level that impact the technical assistance received from regional administrators. Leonard Geshick, the Indian Elders Coordinator and DEIA Committee staff lead, will provide the June meeting details as the date approaches.

Once the revised policies are posted, Reena will have Leonard send them to Community Relations to share with the CECLC.

CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat Subcommittee Announcement

Helen Ghebre presented several venue options in Cass Lake, Carlton, Morton, and Mahanomen. The council asked Community Relations to add other venues to the list for consideration and to prepare a grid or 1-pager comparing the venue amenities, total cost, distance, etc.

After discussion on timing of the retreat, a motion was made to hold the retreat on September 12-13. The motion passed unanimously.

Craté Darden also presented a draft agenda for discussion. The agenda will be finalized closer to the retreat.

Meeting adjourned at 3:08 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: May 16, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and NorthPoint Conference Center (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Manuel Zuniga, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Victor Obisakin, Craté Darden, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Nelly Torori, Rosa Tock, Farhia Said, Nina Vongpheth, Makram El-Amin, Tonia Lofton, Alex Abraha
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Steven Wilson, Keziah Mbogo, Kelly Barnebey, Angie DeLille, Micah Tran, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Nicole Juan, Sean McMoore, Rachele King, Marissa Hill-Dongre, Nate Carter
- **Public Attendees:** Janeth Nicandro, Laurissa

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
1:05	Introductions and Welcome
1:20	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:25	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:35	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup Administrative Updates
2:15	Legislative Updates
2:30	Break
2:45	Follow-up on CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat (Location)
3:10	Immigration Basics and Current Resettlement Landscape Presentation by DHS Resettlement Program Office
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Rosa Tock from the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs (MCLA) is retiring after 32 years of public service. Council members expressed gratitude for her service and participation in the CECLC. In addition, Shawn welcomed staff from the Department of Public Safety to today's meeting.

He reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

The remaining 2025 sessions have been posted.

- **July 23-24, 2025, Cedar Lakes Casino & Hotel in Cass Lake, MN**
 - Hosted by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
 - Registration opens on June 3, 2025
- **August 13-14, 2025, Giminjimendaamin Ezhichigeyang in Redby, MN**
 - Hosted by the Red Lake Nation
 - Registration opens on June 3, 2025
- **September 25-26, 2025, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, MN**
 - Hosted by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
 - Registration opens on June 3, 2025
- **October 22-23, 2025, Shooting Star Casino in Mahnomon, MN**
 - Hosted by White Earth Nation
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025
- **November 5-6, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN**
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025

Decisions Made

Review and approve April minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and April minutes: Manuel Zuniga
- Second: Shawn Sorrell
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the May observances on the agenda: Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Red Dress Day, African World Heritage Day, Mother's Day, Jewish American Heritage Month, and Mental Health Awareness Month.
- Manuel Zuniga is excited to celebrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month and in honor of that, both the Lowry Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis and the I-35W Saint Anthony Falls Bridge will be lit in the colors of the AANHPI Unity, Resilience, and Resistance Flag on the evening of May 21. This will be the first time in 33 years that AANHPI Heritage Month will not be recognized at the federal level. Also, May 14 is Hmong American Day, and May 10 is National AANHPI Mental Health Day.
- Keziah Mbogo shared a health and research fair that takes place Saturday, May 17 from 10am-3pm.
- Nina Vongpheth shared the City of Minneapolis and the State of Minnesota honor May as American Indian Month. There is typically a kickoff parade on May 1, but it was postponed due to recent violence in the community. It will now take place on Friday, May 30 instead. The Indian Health Board will have a groundbreaking for its new center, and there will be a celebration powwow. Look for details in the post-meeting email update.
- Rosa Tock thanked the CECLC for signing the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs (MCLA) Letter of Support to preserve the MinnesotaCare Expansion Program.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

At its last meeting, the workgroup debriefed and talked about next steps for legislative advocacy participation; reviewed its list of legislative champions; and determined best options for meeting in the future. Those interested in advocacy will identify their respective legislators and reach out to them.

The workgroup identified a need for clear legislative priorities. It wishes to understand the difference between policy and budget years, to discuss its timeline concerns, and find alternative ways to engage with local legislators when there are timeline constraints.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup remains focused on outreach to Greater Minnesota and on collaborating with partners in immigrant and diaspora communities. It will reevaluate if there are additional projects or topic areas to focus on.

More information about an upcoming community meet & greet session on Thursday, June 5 will be shared in the post-meeting email update.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup started to create a program review cycle which is the bulk of its current focus. It intends to bring the program review cycle to the full council for review and input, when ready.

DHS Equity Directors attended the meeting to discuss the equity analysis toolkit and how the workgroup can be supportive. Nelly Torori encouraged council members to attend workgroup meetings and lend their voice on these important topics.

Administrative Update

There were no updates.

DHS Legislative Update

Shawn Sorrell welcomed Nicole Juan, DHS Legislative Coordinator, who provided a legislative update.

Health & Human Services Budget Bill Advances

The Health and Human Services (HHS) omnibus bill has passed the Senate. The Human Services Policy Conference Committee has finalized its work and adopted a Conference Committee Report, which will now return to both the House and Senate floors for final approval.

Budget Negotiations Underway

On May 15, Governor Walz and legislative leaders reached an agreement on budget targets, setting the stage for final negotiations across all major finance bills. A brief special session is likely next week to finalize the state budget.

MinnesotaCare Update

As part of the negotiations, leaders agreed to roll back the expansion of MinnesotaCare coverage for undocumented adults. However, coverage will be preserved for undocumented children, maintaining access to essential health care services for the youngest Minnesotans.

It was asked how many undocumented residents will be impacted by that. Nicole said she would need to double check the data.

Follow-up on CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat (Location)

Prior to today's meeting, the council voted via email on potential venues for its retreat on September 12-13. Jackpot Junction Casino garnered the most votes. DHS staff and leadership, including the Office of Indian Policy, are invited to participate.

Immigration Basics and Current Resettlement Landscape Presentation by DHS Resettlement Program Office

Helen Ghebre introduced Rachele King, Director for the DHS Resettlement Program Office (RPO), who provided brief background on RPO and an overview of immigration and resettlement. Rachele's colleague Marissa Hill-

Dongre, Immigration Law Lead, presented on Immigration Hotel, a concept created by Professor Victor Wiebe. It graphically describes the current system of immigration laws and policies in the US.

RPO staff are available to provide this presentation to interested organizations. Several council members suggested that RPO gather input from immigrant communities and vet the content with those who have lived experience, then rework its presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 4:08 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: June 20, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of Minnesota (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Nelly Torori, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Abdi Al-Mumin, Victor Obisakin, Craté Darden, Tonia Lofton, Pachua Vang
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Steven Wilson, Hli Vang, Kelly Barnebey, Shavana Talbert, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, De Anna Conover, Nate Carter, Sophia Mai, Ahmed Mussa, Evelyn Witherspoon, Yasmin Yahye, Jewelly Lee, Abdullahi Soyan, Haile Tegegne, Lizzette Banini, Samia Abdulle
- **Public Attendees:** Janeth Nicandro

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
1:05	Introductions and Welcome
1:20	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:25	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:35	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup
	Administrative Updates
3:00	Legislative Updates
3:15	Break
3:30	Retreat Update
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions. Some time was held for council members and others to express reactions, sympathy, or condolences for the tragic events that occurred this past weekend.

Shawn reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

The remaining 2025 sessions have been posted.

- **July 23-24, 2025, Cedar Lakes Casino & Hotel in Cass Lake, MN**
 - Hosted by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- **August 13-14, 2025, Giminjimendaamin Ezhichigeyang in Redby, MN**
 - Hosted by the Red Lake Nation
- **September 25-26, 2025, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, MN**
 - Hosted by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- **October 22-23, 2025, Shooting Star Casino in Mahnomon, MN**
 - Hosted by White Earth Nation
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025
- **November 5-6, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN**
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025

Decisions Made

Review and approve May minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and May minutes: Paul Slack
- Second: Philip Gaye-Bai
- The motion passed

To postpone the Legislative Meet & Greet to 2026:

- Motion to approve postponement: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Philip Gaye-Bai
- The motion passed.

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the June observances on the agenda: Father’s Day, Pride Month, Refugee Awareness Month, World Refugee Awareness Day, and National Immigrant Heritage Month. He gave a shoutout to DHS Community Relations’ efforts to draft communication on behalf of the CECLC to express our support and condolences for the recent tragedies.
- Nate Carter shared the 17th Annual Community Empowerment Through Black Men Healing Conference taking place June 26th, 2025, 9 am – 4:30 pm and June 27th, 2025, 9 am – 12:30 pm <https://www.brothershealing.com/>
- Angela Fields feels buoyed that Community Health Workers (CHWs) are being integrated into various types of clinical research. She has been invited to be part of an advisory panel and gave an update on her work.
- Hli Vang indicated the [Hmong International Freedom Festival](#) takes place in St. Paul on June 28-29 and invited council members to review the Office of Equity & Inclusion’s (OEI) calendar of [Inclusion and Engagement Events](#).
- Janeth Nicandro shared the [Worthington International Festival](#) takes place on Thursday, July 10 from 5:00-9:00 pm, and in Rochester, the Rochester Police Department is hosting [Safe City Nights 2025](#) throughout June, July, and August.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

The workgroup received a robust update from the DHS Legislative team and worked with them to cross-reference current bills with CECLC priorities and explore opportunities for support and opposition. The workgroup plans to implement a communications cascade to the CECLC by next legislative session in order to receive regular, timely feedback. This work is currently on pause as the session has concluded.

Angela Fields is championing Community Health Worker (CHW) initiatives in the state. There is growing momentum in Minnesota to grow and strengthen that workforce.

Council members are encouraged to contact their lawmakers to advocate these legislative priorities:

- Promote equitable DHS investments in marginalized communities of color and Tribal Governments and people. (Ex. CEMIG, Opioid Epidemic Response Grant (OERAC), etc.)
- Housing and Homelessness
- Disability Waiver Services: Increasing access
- Elderly Waiver Services
- Community Health Workers Systems Navigation
- LGBTQIA+ Community Health Care Access

Work had been underway to reschedule the 2025 Legislative Meet & Greet that was postponed in spring. CECLC leadership and this workgroup coordinated logistics with Senator Hoffman and his staff. However, given the current circumstances, Shawn Sorrell requested to further postpone the event until next year. After brief discussion, a motion was made to postpone until next year. The motion passed unanimously.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

Council members are encouraged to let their respective networks know about this opportunity for the workgroup to partner on community engagement and outreach. There needs to be interest by council members to do intentional community engagement.

At the Crookston Community Listening Session, 20 people attended. The workgroup is still sifting through the information gathered and is weighing how DHS can best interact with that community. More to come. Paul Slack said listening sessions should be generated by council members and do not have to be frequent.

The co-chairs met with Rachele King in RPO to offer immediate feedback following last month's CECLC meeting. There is intention to give a letter of recommendations to RPO after the next workgroup meeting.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup shared its charter in today's meeting and brought its Program Review Cycle Flowchart for review and input. The workgroup aims to pilot some projects using this flowchart, offering a structured review of metrics.

Administrative Update

There were no updates.

Legislative Update

There were no updates.

Retreat Update

The retreat will be held on September 12-13 at Jackpot Junction Resort and Casino in Morton, MN. Council members are encouraged to attend and will be responsible for booking their own hotel rooms. Mileage, gas, meals, and lodging are reimbursable.

Community Relations is working to gather an estimate for funding approval and will provide more information at a later date. Contact them with any questions.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: July 18, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of Minnesota (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Victor Obisakin, Tonia Lofton, Lolita Davis Carter, Shannon Geschick
- **State Agency Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Steven Wilson, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Hli Vang, Kelly Barnebey, De Anna Conover, Sophia Mai, Yasmin Yahye, Jewelly Lee, Leigh Grauman, Tamir Elnabarawy, Kristy Graume, Micah Tran, Bahea Manasra, Gaosheng Thao, Julia Stumpf, Bilqis Amatus-Salaam, Sophia Mai. Haile Tegegne
- **Public Attendees:** Demarcus Ford, Foua-Choua Khang, Keemarr McKinney-Van Buren, Lisa Xiong, Farhiya Ali, Ahmed Mussa, Imaan Hassan

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
1:05	Introductions and Welcome
1:20	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:25	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:30	Federal Updates
1:50	DHS Legislative Update and Discussion
2:35	Break
2:45	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup
	Administrative Updates
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Chris Green called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Chris reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

The remaining 2025 sessions have been posted.

- **July 23-24, 2025, Cedar Lakes Casino & Hotel in Cass Lake, MN**
 - Hosted by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- **August 13-14, 2025, Giminjimendaamin Ezhichigeyang in Redby, MN**
 - Hosted by the Red Lake Nation
- **September 25-26, 2025, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, MN (*waitlist*)**
 - Hosted by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- **October 22-23, 2025, Shooting Star Casino in Mahnomon, MN**
 - Hosted by White Earth Nation
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025
- **November 5-6, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN**
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025

Decisions Made

Review and approve June minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and June minutes: Chris Green
- Second: Victor Obisakin
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Chris Green opened the floor for members to share.

- Gaosheng Thao invited council members to participate in DHS Equity Week, an annual conference presented by the Office for Equity and Inclusion (OEI). It will be held virtually on October 6–10. The conference is open to state employees across the enterprise and agency partners. This year’s theme, “Humanizing Human Services,” underscores the importance of empathy, curiosity, and co-creation in public service. Details will be shared in the post-meeting email update.
- A shoutout was given to Helen Ghebre for her 2025 Excellence in Cultural Advocacy & Community Engagement Award from the 11th African Mental Health Summit that took place on Friday, July 11.

- Philip Gaye-Bai invited everyone to [Liberian Independence Day](#) on July 25-27 in Brooklyn Center.
- Haile Tegegne shared the Ethiopian Community in Minnesota present a community event and concert on Saturday, July 26 from 12:00-7:30 pm in St. Paul. This event will include live music performances, community celebration, youth activities, and vendors. He also mentioned the Little Africa Festival and Parade on Sunday, August 3 from 12:00-9:00 pm in St. Paul. Details will be shared in the post-meeting email update.
- It was shared that [Sister Cities Day](#) will be on Sunday, July 20 from 1:00-5:00 pm at Nicollet Island Pavilion in Minneapolis. The event highlights all of Minneapolis' Sister Cities, with a special spotlight this year on the anniversaries of its sister city relationships with Ibaraki City, Japan (45 years), Eldoret, Kenya (25 years) and Uppsala, Sweden (25 years). Free and open to the public.

Federal Updates

Tamir Elnabarawy, Director of Federal Relations, provided a presentation on DHS's preliminary analysis of the reconciliation bill signed into law on July 4, 2025. The bill is a historic disinvestment in the Medicaid program and an initial estimate of \$1B reduction in federal funding per biennium.

The bill will prohibit funding for reproductive health and cap state directed payment (SPDs). It will limit retroactive coverage; limit eligibility for lawful immigrants; require states to conduct eligibility redeterminations for adult expansion group every six months rather than 12 (this does not apply to members of Tribes); and requires states to establish an 80 hour/month "community engagement requirements" for able-bodied adults between ages 19-64. The dates these provisions take effect will vary.

Tamir described DHS's outreach and engagement efforts around these provisions. DHS is also creating public-facing materials about the bill and its impacts.

DHS Legislative Update and Discussion

Kristy Graume, DHS Director of State Government Relations, provided a 2025 legislative session recap. Her slide deck will be shared with the CECLC following this meeting.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

Dr. Joanna Rosa gave a presentation on the Equitable Health Care Task Force recommendations and encouraged council members to review and provide comments via the link provided in the meeting. This information and her slide deck will be shared in the post-meeting email update. In addition, Julia Stumpf and Bilqis Amatus-Salaam from Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) were introduced and presented on the task force's background and purpose. It was established to ensure all persons in Minnesota can receive health care and coverage that is respectful and ensures optimal health outcomes.

Once comments are completed, the workgroup will compile them into a cohesive submission that CECLC members will vote on. If quorum is reached, the submission will be presented to MDH. Since the extended deadline is July 23, 2025, it is hoped that comments can be submitted by July 22, allowing members to vote and have the results sent out on July 23.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup will request Resettlement Program Office (RPO) presentation slides for review and further discussion. An RPO representative will participate in workgroup meetings including the Topics and Issues Workgroup.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup continues its plans to pilot the equity analysis process using existing DHS programs (e.g., GEARS program on home/community-based services and recruitment/retention efforts). It is exploring how to better equip community-serving individuals with Medicaid information.

Administrative Update

DHS is currently seeking 2025 applicants for membership to CECLC. The council is accepting applications for following positions:

- 1 Member representing Advocacy Group Representative
- 1 Member representing American Indian Community Representative
- 3 Members representing Community Member Representing Diverse Cultural and Ethnic Community
- 1 Member representing County Provider serving Large Cultural and Ethnic Communities
- 1 Member representing Culturally Specific Human Services Providers
- 1 Member representing Department of Human Services Employees
- 1 Member representing Faith-based/Spiritual Organization Representative
- 1 Member representing Human Services Program Participant Representing Communities of Color
- 1 Member representing Private Industry Representative
- 1 Member representing U of M Health Equity Research

To apply for council membership and assure consideration, interested applicants must complete an electronic application and supplemental questionnaire through the Minnesota Secretary of [State's Boards and Commissions website](#) by end of day August 6.

Retreat planning is underway. Community Relations will be sending RSVPs on Monday, July 21 to coordinate logistics with Jackpot Junction. A high-level agenda will be sent with the RSVP.

Meeting adjourned at 3:47 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: August 15, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of Minnesota (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Chris Green, Shawn Sorrell, Philip Gaye-Bai, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Victor Obisakin, Tonia Lofton, Lolita Davis Carter
- **State Agency Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Hli Vang, Yvette Kanzler, De Anna Conover, Sophia Mai, Yasmin Yahye, Jewelly Lee, Leigh Grauman, Kristy Graume, Micah Tran, Bahea Manasra, Julia Stumpf, Bilqis Amatus-Salaam, Haile Tegegne
- **Public Attendees:** Keemarr McKinney-Van Buren, Lisa Xiong, Farhiya Ali, Ahmed Mussa, Imaan Hassan

Agenda

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1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
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1:20	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:25	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:35	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup
2:05	Break
2:20	Workgroup Updates & Priorities (Continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Legislative Workgroup
3:20	CECLC Retreat – Hotel Reservations
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Chris Green called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Chris reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

The remaining 2025 sessions have been posted.

- **September 25-26, 2025, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, MN (*waitlist*)**
 - Hosted by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- **October 22-23, 2025, Shooting Star Casino in Mahnomon, MN**
 - Hosted by White Earth Nation
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025
- **November 5-6, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN**
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025

Decisions Made

Review and approve July minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and July minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Victor Obisakin
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Chris Green opened the floor for members to share.

- 8/21/25 – Youth Family Circle Event by Youth & Family Circle (Farhiya Ali)
- 8/21/25 – Hybrid Session – CECLC Collective Impact on a Culture of Service at DHS – 10:30 – 12:30
- 8/25 – 8/29 – CHW Awareness.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

Dr. Joanna Rosa gave a presentation on the Equitable Health Care Task Force recommendations and encouraged council members to review and provide comments via the link provided in the meeting. This information and her

slide deck will be shared in the post-meeting email update. In addition, Julia Stumpf and Bilqis Amatus-Salaam from Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) were introduced and presented on the task force's background and purpose. It was established to ensure all persons in Minnesota can receive health care and coverage that is respectful and ensures optimal health outcomes.

Once comments are completed, the workgroup will compile them into a cohesive submission that CECLC members will vote on. If quorum is reached, the submission will be presented to MDH. Since the extended deadline is July 23, 2025, it is hoped that comments can be submitted by July 22, allowing members to vote and have the results sent out on July 23. Response from MDH, now MDH is analyzing feedback and comments, hearing back from MDH and will bring back to the council

Community Health Workers for our state on a national setting, externally connecting with various partnership, We Choose Us, recruiting more for the up come legislative session. Met with Amy Klobuchar on Medicaid and that went well. Upcoming next week with Tina smith to bring our priorities to that space. [Communication toolkit / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#)

August 20 is the deadline for legislative proposals and are keeping an eye on that.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup will request Resettlement Program Office (RPO) presentation slides for review and further discussion. An RPO representative will participate in workgroup meetings including the Topics and Issues Workgroup. A document is available for the members to look at and provide recommendations. The document is the first draft of the memo that was shared with the members. The committee requested other examples on these types of recommendation for other local areas that have the same type of recommendation or resources.

Next steps to find other organization to add to recommendation letter. Identify some other organization doing similar work to provide resources to do the work. Request to have Helen's team to rework the recommendation to bring back to the group for discussion and vote at the next meeting

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup requested feedback on barriers of attendance or being a member of the group. Wondering if it was the date and time which is monthly on Tuesdays at 3 pm. Members can provide feedback by using a QR Code. The workgroup and member discussed the charter and the equity tool to assists to request an equity analysis.

Administrative Update

DHS is currently seeking nominations for 2 co-chairs for the Council. Helen explained the process to the committee.

- Nomination will open today and remain open until August 29
- Communication will go out today on the process
- Terms will be 1-year term for one co-chair and 2-year term for the other co-chair

Candidates will be asked to respond to a list of questions. Helen and team will start collecting that information and it will be brought to the September meeting. Candidates will be shared at the September meeting and voted on at the retreat in September. Once the vote has been finalized, a memo will go to the Commissioner for appointment and hopefully by the October meeting we will have new co-chairs.

Retreat is September 12-13. Folks can check in on Thursday evening. Please use the room block which is open until September 5th. Rates are \$114.73 for a Non-Smoking King room. All are welcome.

Meeting adjourned at 3:29 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: September 19, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of Minnesota (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Chris Green, Shawn Sorrell, Philip Gaye-Bai, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Victor Obisakin, Tonia Lofton, Lolita Davis Carter
- **State Agency Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Hli Vang, Yvette Kanzler, De Anna Conover, Sophia Mai, Yasmin Yahye, Jewelly Lee, Leigh Grauman, Kristy Graume, Micah Tran, Bahea Manasra, Julia Stumpf, Bilqis Amatus-Salaam, Haile Tegegne
- **Public Attendees:** Keemarr McKinney-Van Buren, Lisa Xiong, Farhiya Ali, Ahmed Mussa, Imaan Hassan

Agenda

- 12:00 Lunch & Community Networking / WebEx Opens**
- 1:00 Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement**
- 1:05 Introductions, Welcome & Check-in Activity [Breakout Sessions]**
 - Introduce new community members and guests
 - How have you lived one of the Guiding Principles this week?
 - What do you and your communities do to prepare for fall?
- 1:20 Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes**
- 1:25 Community Celebrations & Shout Outs**
- 1:35 Reflections on CECLC Retreat**
 - Member Experiences/Takeaways
- 2:05 Break**
- 2:20 Workgroup Updates & Priorities**
 - Equitable Outcomes Workgroup**
 - Present new day/time of meeting
 - Discuss possible current/ongoing programs
 - Topics and Issues Workgroup**
 - RPO Recommendation Memo Vote
 - Legislative Workgroup**
 - Legislative Summit
- 4:00 Adjourn Full Council Meeting**

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Shawn Sorrell reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

The remaining 2025 sessions have been posted.

- **September 25-26, 2025, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel in Prior Lake, MN (*waitlist*)**
 - Hosted by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- **October 22-23, 2025, Shooting Star Casino in Mahnomon, MN**
 - Hosted by White Earth Nation
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025
- **November 5-6, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN**
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025
- **January 28-29, 2026, Black Bear Casino Resort in Carlton, MN**
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration is open.

Decisions Made

Review and approve July minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and August minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Tonia Lofton
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Angela Fields introduced Dr. Ivan Woo and Rashad Ahmed. <https://mydiversioncenter.org/>
- Equity Week - https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/Equity-Week_2025_Interactive-Guide_tcm1053-706415.docx
- Inclusion – Engagement Weeks <https://mn.gov/dhs/inclusion-engagement-events/>
- Immigrants - <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/ncr/immigrants-refugees/meetings-events/welcoming-week/>
- Project Shine - <https://www.projectshineumn.com/>
- October 4, 2025 - Northpoint Health & Wellness Center to discuss bridging the gap uniting African Immigrants and African Americans in MN
- Program to increase cancer prevention capacity among East African CHWs
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bmlRHy-sVrbYUX0PTjkAo2hftj9zu2b/view?usp=sharing>
- One Woodbury Event – 9/27 – 11 – 2:30 – Ojibway Park

Reflections on CECLC Retreat

- Members share their experiences/takeaways.
 - Ability to come together
 - Opportunity to interact
 - Skills & diversity of the council members
 - More time for breakout sessions
 - Ability to network with other members
 - Ability to learn more of the history
 - Examine Change Management
 - Fabulous Tour
 - Our process & purpose of the Council and Committee
- One powerful takeaway from the CECLC retreat was the opportunity to deeply examine change management—not just as a technical process, but as a human-centered journey. I was reminded that regardless of our professional roles or titles, we are all fundamentally human. Building authentic relationships is not optional; it's essential. We must move beyond transactional interactions and intentionally cultivate connections that honor the lived experiences of individuals. This retreat reinforced that if we truly want to impact lives through our work—especially within government systems and their outputs—we must meet people where they are. That means listening, engaging, and valuing their humanity throughout the process. Change doesn't happen in isolation; it happens through relationships. And that's the work I'm committed to doing.
- Possibly present Pressing Issue Statements
- We do not fully understand the impact to Medicare/Medicaid accountability to include but not limited to: Federal Changes, Access, Equitable Outcomes, Eligibility, Disparities Reduction, Fraud.
- Budget cuts that will impact communities and program compliance.
- Educating our communities.
- Share the 3-page report from retreat from last year's executive summary

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

Working on rescheduling the subgroup; working on a bill tracker and the legislative summit. Oct 21 - 12 – 4 at North Point for the summit; DHS Legislative team, Kristy Graume, Elyse Bailey. Working with the workgroup and subgroup as to how this summit will go. Bill tracking items that align with the committee.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

- The workgroup presented the memo of recommendation to the committee.
- Motion to move forward: Shawn Sorrell; 2nd Joanna Rosa
- Discussion: Recommendations; Shawn read the memo to the committee.
- Motion passed to move forward with the letter. Letter will be sent

This workgroup meets the first Wednesday of the month from 12 - 1

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup did find a new date and time; First Monday of the month 12 – 1 beginning in October. Newer members if you want more information regarding this workgroup, please reach out. Requesting those that were at the retreat to provide information or ideas that may have come up at the retreat that pertain with this workgroup. Action items came out of the retreat, which will be discussed at the meeting in October

Administrative Update

Recent executive order directing agencies combating fraud. Helen will share that with the committee later today or Monday.

DHS is currently seeking nominations for 2 co-chairs for the Council. Please reach out to Helen if you have any question or nominations.

- Legislative Summit: October 21, 2025, 12pm – 4pm at NorthPoint
- Next CECLC Meeting on October 24th

Meeting adjourned at 2:52 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: October 24, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: Webex and International Institute of Minnesota (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Chris Green, Shawn Sorrell, Philip Gaye-Bai, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Joanna Rosa, Angela Fields, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Victor Obisakin, Tonia Lofton, Lolita Davis Carter
- **State Agency Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Hli Vang, Yvette Kanzler, De Anna Conover, Sophia Mai, Yasmin Yahye, Jewelly Lee, Leigh Grauman, Kristy Graume, Micah Tran, Bahea Manasra, Julia Stumpf, Bilqis Amatus-Salaam, Haile Tegegne, Angie DeLille, Temporary Commissioner Shireen Gandhi,
- **Public Attendees:** Keemarr McKinney-Van Buren, Lisa Xiong, Farhiya Ali, Ahmed Mussa, Imaan Hassan, Asma Abdille

Agenda

- 12:00 Lunch & Community Networking / Webex Opens
- 1:00 Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
- 1:05 DHS Commissioner Shireen Gandhi
- 1:30 Introductions, Welcome & Check-in Activity [Breakout Sessions]
 - Introduce new community members and guests
 - How have you lived one of the Guiding Principles this week?
- 1:45 Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
- 1:50 Community Celebrations & Shout Outs
- 2:00 Break
- 2:10 Workgroup Updates & Priorities
 - Equitable Outcomes Workgroup
 - HEARD Program
 - Topics and Issues Workgroup
 - New Administration Impact: CECLC Response
 - Legislative Workgroup
 - Legislative Summit Update
 - CHW Update
- 3:20 CECLC Workplan
- 4:00 Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Shawn Sorrell reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Tribal and Urban Indian Relations and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

The remaining 2025 sessions have been posted.

- **November 5-6, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN**
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration opens on September 3, 2025
- **January 28-29, 2026, Black Bear Casino Resort in Carlton, MN**
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration is open.

Temporary Commissioner Shireen Gandhi addressed the group:

- Thank you for your work
- Applauded the CECLC Legislative Summit
- Discussed the Fraud with HSSA & OIG Investigation
- Federal Grants
- Medicaid stops
- Housing benefits
- Federal shutdown
- Accountability of grantees & programs
- Executive Order 25-10 Empowering State Agencies to Continue Combatting Fraud: [EO 25-10 Combatting Fraud tcm1055-706055.pdf](#)

The following community attendees introduced themselves:

- Mia Thor, Chief Program Officer, Value Village, <https://arcsvaluevillage.org/>
- Asma Abdille, Assistant Director, Deaf Muslim Organization, <https://mndeafmuslims.org>

Decisions Made

Review and approve September minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and September minutes: Micaela Schuneman,
- Second: Joanna Rosa
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shout out regarding the Legislative summit, was very powerful and meaningful

- Shout out to Helen’s team and the Legislative team for sharing their information
- October 4, 2025 - Northpoint Health & Wellness Center to discuss bridging the gap uniting African Immigrants and African Americans in MN
- Program to increase cancer prevention capacity among East African CHWs
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bmlRHy-sVrbYUXOPTjkAo2hftj9zu2b/view?usp=sharing>

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

- Currently working finalized the legislative summit, last Wednesday at 2 pm
- Preparing documentation on some of the feedback and what is happening at the legislative level
- Requested feedback on the legislative summit
 - Members provide feedback of what they would like the workgroup to work on
- [Federal Medicaid changes / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#)

Topics and Issues Workgroup

- Requesting new people to co-chair this workgroup
- Look at the social and political environment on service
- Look at the cost
 - What is the impact?

This workgroup meets the first Wednesday of the month from 12 - 1

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup did find a new date and time; First Monday of the month 12 – 1. Introduction to a group we have been working with that will take our time to provide an update on a project.

HEARD Project Team will present for 15 minutes and open space for feedback for another 15 minutes. Team: Meaghan Hunt, Chue Zha Thao, Simran Chugani.

- Funded by Moving Home Minnesota
- Project began in 2019
- Wrapping up phase 2 currently
- Phase 3 approach
 - Community partnerships
 - State partnerships
 - Community Advisory Board (CAB)
 - Indigenous Evaluations Consultant
 - Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
- <https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/news-initiatives-reports-workgroups/long-term-services-and-supports/hcbs-racial-ethnic-disparities-evaluation/index.jsp>
- Developing two (2) dissemination products and information
- Discussion regarding Phase 2 findings
 - Reconnected with the phase 1 CAB

- Social media lead to fraudulent responses and passive recruitment
- Requested feedback regarding the presentation, recruitment and communities.

Administrative Update

DHS is currently seeking nominations for 2 co-chairs for the Council. Please reach out to Helen if you have any question or nominations.

- Next CECLC Meeting on October 24th

CECLC Workplan

- CECLC Executive Summary
- 30/60/90 Day Workplan
 - Discussed the division of tasks in the workplan to the current workgroups
 - Discussed collaboration between workgroups on the tasks when needed
 - Discussed next steps
- Vote on approval of workplan
 - Shawn Sorrell moved to approve the workplan
 - Paul Slack Seconded
 - Motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: November 21, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and NorthPoint Conference Center (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Philip Gaye-Bai, Josefina Geronimo, Micaela Schuneman, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Tonia Lofton, Wayne Somes, PaChua Vang, Nelly Torori, Craté Darden, Kimetha Johnson, Julie Churcher, Chris Guy, Kiora Matthews, Raphael Omoto, Angela Fields, Joanna Rosa
- **State Agency Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, De Anna Conover, Hli Vang, Kelly Barnebey, Sophia Mai, Steven Wilson, Yung Jens Vang, Leigh Grauman
- **Public Attendees:** JoDee Christianson, Abebe Dashew, Ahmed Mussa

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
1:05	Introductions and Welcome
1:20	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:25	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:45	Connection Building Activity
2:25	Break
2:30	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Legislative Workgroup
	Administrative Updates
4:00	Adjourn

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Shawn reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training (TSRT) opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Tribal and Urban Indian Relations and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

TSRT posted the following sessions:

- **January 28-29, 2026, Black Bear Casino Resort in Carlton, MN**
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration is open.
- **February 25-26, 2026, Grand Casino Hinckley in Hinckley, MN**
 - Hosted by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 - Registration opens on January 6, 2026
- **March 25-26, 2026, Treasure Island Resort & Casino in Welch, MN**
 - Hosted by the Prairie Island Indian Community
 - Registration opens on January 6, 2026

Decisions Made

Review and approve October minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and October minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Christopher Guy
- The motion passed

A motion was made to approve the recommendations as written for the HEARD Team Phase III project. The motion passed unanimously.

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Kimetha Johnson is excited to announce she moved her home based non-profit to an office location. She will send details about an open house in the coming weeks. In addition, the Residents of Color Collective (ROCC) is hosting a [Resource Fair](#) on Friday, December 12 from 5:00-7:30 PM.
- Hli Vang shared [MN Hmong New Year](#) will be held on November 30-December 1 at the St. Paul Rivercentre. Tickets are on sale now.
- Julie Churcher shared Simpson Housing is holding its annual [Homeless Memorial and March](#) on Thursday, December 18 from 4:45-8:00 PM at Plymouth Congressional Church in Minneapolis.

- Helen Ghebre mentioned the [2025 Fall Mental Wellness Conference](#) on Saturday, November 22 at Wilder. Registration required.
- There is [Dyani White Hawk: Love Language](#) at the Walker Art Center, which runs through February 15, 2026.
- There is a [Queering Indigeneity](#) exhibit at Minnesota Museum of American Art from September 18, 2025–August 16, 2026.
- Wayne Somes gave a shoutout to the Detroit Lakes Public Schools which had [record attendance at its powwow last week](#) to celebrate Native American Heritage Month.
- Shawn Sorrell is excited to announce the birth of his grandson.

Connection Building Activity

Craté Darden led the council through a connection building activity.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

The workgroup continues work on its legislative tracking worksheet and aims to build more structure around legislative updates to the CECLC when session begins.

The CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet has been confirmed for Thursday, April 9, 2026. More details to come.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The CECLC Desired Outcome 3 was assigned to this workgroup, which is:

DHS must expand targeted, linguistically appropriate, and culturally relevant community outreach and education efforts to improve program awareness, eligibility understanding, and responsiveness to policy changes

The workgroup has deliberated on how to proceed, and its goal is to organize one listening session per quarter. The Legislative Workgroup would like to work with them to make that happen.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The Equitable Outcomes Workgroup developed a feedback and recommendations memo for the HEARD Phase III project, which was sent in advance of today's meeting. A vote is required to move this forward.

Below is a high-level summary of the recommendations provided by the workgroup.

Highlights of Feedback and Recommendations

Our feedback focused on strengthening community engagement, local partnerships, and cultural accessibility in Phase III. We acknowledged the project's strong foundation in equity and responsiveness to community voice, while emphasizing the need to deepen local connection and shared accountability, particularly given the research vendor's out-of-state location.

Key Recommendations

- Strengthen and localize recruitment through trusted community messengers, cultural brokers, and Tribal partners to ensure authentic, diverse participation.
- Make materials culturally and linguistically accessible, using plain language, multiple languages (English, Somali, Spanish, Hmong, and Tribal languages), and visuals that reflect community identity.
- Deepen partnerships with community-based and Tribal organizations by engaging them as co-researchers and designating community liaisons for ongoing two-way communication and data sovereignty.
- Develop a Phase III Community Engagement Plan to outline lead partners, co-design timelines for materials and translations, and set evaluation checkpoints for continuous feedback.
- Ensure equitable compensation and flexible participation options to recognize lived experience and remove barriers to engagement.

Together, these recommendations aim to make Phase III more community-centered, transparent, and action-oriented, ensuring that findings reflect and benefit the diverse Minnesotans receiving Home and Community-Based Services.

A motion was made to approve the recommendations as written for the HEARD Team Phase III project. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Update

Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago gave an overview of DHS program integrity and pre-payment review.

- [Pre-payment review FAQ / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#)
 - The Minnesota Department of Human Services has created a frequently asked questions webpage about the new pre-payment review process that [Governor Walz announced on October 29, 2025](#).
 - The FAQ page is the best source of the most up-to-date answers to common questions about pre-payment review and will be updated on a weekly basis.
 - Questions can be submitted on the webpage, and DHS will post answers on the page as needed.

- [Program integrity / Program Integrity - Department of Human Services](#)
 - As a part of Governor Walz's recent Executive Order 25-10 to prevent fraud, waste and abuse in state programs, DHS has launched a new webpage that will serve as a central resource to keep the public informed of our progress. It includes:
 - Clear definitions for fraud, waste, and abuse.
 - A timeline of actions that have been taken.
 - Key decisions that support transparency, prevention, detection, and enforcement.
 - Information on preliminary investigations, cases opened, law enforcement referrals, administrative actions, and money identified for recovery.

DHS's goal is to safeguard the programs that serve Minnesota's most vulnerable communities. It encourages everyone to visit the webpage; there is a lot of information available. The public can also sign up there to receive email updates.

Helen Ghebre provided the following updates:

- As shared earlier, the CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet is scheduled for Thursday, April 9, 2026 at the State Capitol. More details to come.
- There is an opportunity to serve as council co-chair. Nominations will be open soon. There will be more information in the post-meeting email update. The current co-chairs are happy to field council members' questions about the role.

Meeting adjourned at 3:40 PM

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: December 19, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of MN (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Micaela Schuneman, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Wayne Somes, Chris Guy, Angela Fields, Joanna Rosa, Chris Renville, Richard Oni, Abdi Ali-Mumin, Sonia Reyes, Kiora Matthews
- **State Agency Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Sophia Mai, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Kelly Barnebey, Leigh Grauman, Micah Tran, Shelly Diaz, Nate Carter, Nicole Juan, Haile Tegegne, Crate Darden, Assistant Commissioner DeAnna Conover, Jewelly Lee, Steven Wilson
- **Public Attendees:** PaChua Vang

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
1:05	Introductions and Welcome
1:20	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:25	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:35	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup
2:35	Break
2:40	Workgroup Updates & Priorities (Continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup Administrative Updates
3:10	Vote to Recommend Co-chairs to the Commissioner for Appointment
4:00	Adjourn

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Chris Green reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training (TSRT) opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Tribal and Urban Indian Relations (TUIR) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

TSRT posted the following sessions:

- **January 28-29, 2026, Black Bear Casino Resort in Carlton, MN**
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration is open.
- **February 25-26, 2026, Grand Casino Hinckley in Hinckley, MN**
 - Hosted by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 - Registration opens on January 6, 2026
- **March 25-26, 2026, Treasure Island Resort & Casino in Welch, MN**
 - Hosted by the Prairie Island Indian Community
 - Registration opens on January 6, 2026

Decisions Made

Review and approve November minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and November minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Chris Guy
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Nicole Juan shared that In the Heart of the Beast's is hosting its annual [Winter Solstice celebration](#) at Powderhorn Park on Saturday, December 20 from 6:00-9:00 pm.
- Nate Carter invited everyone to attend a snow tubing event at Three Rivers Park from 1:00-6:00 PM on Saturday, December 20. On Tuesday, December 23 from 6:00-8:00 pm, 100 Black Men Twin Cities and Restoration Inc. are hosting a toy drive next to the Costco Business Center in North Minneapolis.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

The workgroup is partnering with the Topics and Issues Workgroup on the CECLC Desired Outcome 3, which is:

DHS must expand targeted, linguistically appropriate, and culturally relevant community outreach and education efforts to improve program awareness, eligibility understanding, and responsiveness to policy changes.

Both workgroups received feedback from DHS staff whether Outcome 3 could be simplified relative to its scope of practice. They are seeking DHS staff who can be resources and key parts of the discussion.

Dr. Joanna Rosa requested the CECLC formally advocate in support of MNsure Navigators at large and submit a letter of support to legislative bodies. She shared her memo with the council for consideration: *Support for MNsure Navigator Concerns and Recommendations to Strengthen Minnesota Health Care Program Enrollment*. The council would like to know the role CECLC would play once Legislative Session begins. No action was taken at today's meeting. Instead, the workgroup was asked to update the memo's language.

There was also a Community Health Workers (CHW) update. Workgroup members are finalizing legislative priorities for 2026 – so far what is standing out is bringing awareness and education; building partnerships; creating a communications infrastructure; implementing CHW-related legislation into the bill tracker; collaborating with CHW connectors at the national level; increasing statewide understanding of the CHW role; and expanded community engagement. The current actions are developing simplified education tools and talking points to share publicly and participating in civic engagement activities to strengthen CHW visibility and advocate for its work.

Nicole Juan, DHS Legislative Coordinator, provided legislative updates. The state budget forecast shows a structural deficit, i.e. revenue is less than spending. The next time there is a Budget year, the Legislature will have to contend with that. On a positive note from the budget forecast, this current biennium is not in the red.

The DHS Legislative team is preparing for session, which begins on February 17. It is a Policy year, but the Governor typically introduces a supplemental budget halfway through session. Special elections will be held on January 27.

[Budget and Economic Forecast / Minnesota Management and Budget \(MMB\)](#)

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup is seeking two co-leads. Paul Slack welcomed interested council members to contact him with questions.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

There was discussion around upcoming federal mandates for SNAP.

Alex Abraha shared the outcome of last month's vote on the recommendations memo for the HEARD Phase III project. In addition, the workgroup continues to plan its work for 2026 around the CECLC Desired Outcomes 1 and 2, which are:

Desired Outcome #1: The Department of Human Services (DHS) must establish an equitable accountability system that ensures eligibility, access, and consistent delivery of housing and healthcare services for all populations, particularly those experiencing disparities.

Desired Outcome #2: Increase equity analysis scans across DHS to ensure equitable funding distribution for marginalized communities, with a goal of improving equity-based funding allocation by 25% by 2026.

Administrative Update

Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago gave an update on DHS program integrity efforts. She offered the following information and indicated DHS leadership will provide ongoing updates to the council.

DHS Updates: Medicaid Communication [Toolkits / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#)

- These materials help to communicate clearly and accurately about the federal changes coming to Medicaid because of the bill signed into law by President Trump on July 4, 2025.
<https://mn.gov/dhs/federalchanges/tools-for-partners/>
- Helping Minnesotans get and keep their health care coverage takes us all working together and sharing consistent messages. Use these resources to communicate about Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare in your community.
<https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/toolkits/>
 - Some MinnesotaCare members pay a monthly bill, called a premium, for their insurance. The bill amount depends on your income, family size, and the number of family members enrolled in the program.
<https://mn.gov/dhs/minnesotacare/how-much-will-it-cost/>
- Spanish: <https://vimeo.com/1147486543?fl=ip&fe=ec>
- English: <https://vimeo.com/1147486007?fl=ip&fe=ec>
- Somali: <https://vimeo.com/1147484294?fl=ip&fe=ec>

To participate in monthly Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare roundtables, please sign up at this link:

https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNDHS/subscriber/new?topic_id=MNDHS_451

[Press Releases / Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan](#)

Vote to Recommend Co-chairs to the Commissioner for Appointment

The nominees for co-chair are Chris Guy, Alex Abraha, Angela Fields. They shared a brief background, their achievements, and their specific interest in being co-chair.

Each council member gave two names of nominees as their vote to DHS Community Relations for tallying. After a final count, Angela Fields and Alex Abraha were selected to be the new co-chairs. Congratulations! The next step is to advance these recommendations through the formal appointment process. Additional updates will be shared as that process continues.

Helen Ghebre offered words of encouragement and gratitude to the council as it looks ahead to 2026.

Meeting adjourned at 4:02 PM