

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 • 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 Mahnommen, 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