February 20, 2025

Subject: Racial Equity Commission Data Committee July 17, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Reporting Period: July 2024-February 2025
Prepared By: Joyce Chiao, Consultant, Abundance
Reviewed By: Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Recommended Action

Approval of the July 17, 2024 Racial Equity Commission Data Committee Meeting Minutes.

Racial Equity Commission Data Committee July 17, 2024 - Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item #1: Welcome

A. CALL TO ORDER: Per the bylaws of the Racial Equity Commission, Commissioner Traco Matthews called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM.

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

C. REVIEW OF THE AGENDA

E. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM: Quorum Met; 3/3 Committee Members Present

Commissioners Present:

1. Commissioner Traco Matthews
2. Commissioner Manuel Pastor
3. Commissioner Yolanda Richardson

F. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Public Comment

No public comment on this agenda item.

Agenda Item #2: Public Comment on matters not on the agenda

No public comment on this agenda item.

Agenda Item #3: ACTION: Selection of Committee Lead and Committee Overview

Commissioner Traco Matthews, Acting Committee Lead

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Motion to appoint Commissioner Pastor as Committee Lead

Motioned by Commissioner Matthews and seconded by Commissioner Richardson.

R|E|C *Racial Equity Commission*

Motion passes (2-0-1*). *Marks abstention or absence from vote.

*Commissioner Pastor abstained.

Agenda Item #4: 15 Minute Recess

Commissioner Manuel Pastor, Committee Lead

Lead Pastor called for a recess at 9:25 AM.

Lead Pastor called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM.

Agenda Item #3: ACTION: Selection of Committee Lead and Committee Overview

Returned to agenda item #3, as it was not completed before the recess.

Commissioner Manuel Pastor, Committee Lead

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Commissioner Discussion

Matthews: No comments. Invited Commissioner Pastor to offer thoughts and insights.

Pastor: Expressed satisfaction with bylaws.

Public Comment

No public comment on this agenda item.

Agenda Item #5: DISCUSSION: Data Considerations and Opportunities – Panel and Committee Discussion

Commissioner Manual Pastor, Committee Lead

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Dr. John Dobard, Vice President, Policy and Programs, Catalyst California

Jason Lally, Chief Data Officer, Office of Data and Innovation

Edward-Michael Muña, Project Manager, USC Equity Research Institute

Dr. Ninez A. Ponce, Director, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research

Panel Discussion

Estes: What are the common mishaps that you see in how we use data that reinforce or produce racial inequity?

Muña: First, data disaggregation. Taking large, distinct communities and treating them as one large entity flattens their experiences. Deprives them of the opportunity to be seen. Leads to miscalculations about experiences of the community. Deprives communities of vital resources and services. Data disaggregation supports better service delivery and community empowerment by being part of the conversation. Second, data erasure. Hard-to-count or

smaller populations do not see themselves or their issues represented in the data. Also leads to exclusion of vital resources. Capturing data of communities that are often invisibilized is very important. Third, access. Many folks do not have access to data that reflects the conditions of their community. For example, health assessment, measuring environmental impacts, survey data about population growth. Community access to data reporting on their conditions empowers them to advocate for better conditions and the communities that surround them.

Lally: Thinking of data as facts is a mishap. We interpret data. There are biases in data. Ways in which data is collected may not reflect the community. Data analysts and professionals must remember that data is not always fact. We use data to inform us, to understand, but there may be gaps. Quantitative analysis is one aspect. Qualitative methods provide a fuller picture. Need to be mindful of what is in the data, how we are collecting it, and how we reflect that back to communities. Not only transparency, but also being mindful of how we talk about that. Proud that our department focuses on human-centered design and meeting people where they are. Making sure that we are talking about our services that are at a level that folks can understand. Does not require technical background or particular knowledge about policy or legal. In sum, two things – 1) understanding that the data we collect is not perfect, and we have to continually improve that, 2) communicating findings or information to communities in a way that is accessible and understandable.

Ponce: In other words, is our data trustworthy? One of the biggest mishaps is suppression of invisible communities. Four points – first, Office of Management and Budget revised standards, Statistical Policy Directive 15 (SPD 15). More granularity in data boxes to check. Even previous SPD 15 had non-compliance across CA agencies. Non-compliance could be due to lack of understanding or behavioral change. Had granularity in race data from the AHEAD act awhile back. No appropriations. Even if the law requires collection of more granular data, it will not happen without an implementation plan or resources. Data ecosystem is collection, classification, reporting, and dissemination. First is understanding what the standards are. Second, disclosure risk and statistical reliability leads to lumping groups. Constructs may be informed by other sources, such as geography and political. Must think about community-informed ways of classification. Third, data on smaller racialized groups cannot be accessed through public use files. The data lifecycle of collection, classification, calculation, and then what is available – what is reported. FOIL takes time. Insights are late because there are time, money, transaction costs. Differential pricing and access for smaller populations. Fourth, how we classify denominators in the state is dictated by Department of Finance. Smaller groups can be diminished in size based on classification schemes.

Dobard: One other mishap – racial equities are presented, and then we do not name the root causes of those inequities or name the systems accountable for producing them. Inequities are the results of the ways that we organize ourselves socially, economically, politically. We do ourselves and impacted communities a disservice when we do not attach those numbers to what is producing those numbers. Important to be attentive to what is producing them and talking about both as we present them.

Estes: Can you talk more about the importance of addressing undercounting of communities such as the newcomer or those of the African diaspora and the impact of being undercounted?

Dobard: The Census plays a critical role in whether communities thrive or struggle. Census data is used to distribute political power and federal funds. Regarding political power, Census data is used to reapportion or reassign seats in the House of Representatives. Also used to redraw boundaries of political districts. Regarding federal funding, Census data is used to allocate trillions of dollars to states through grants and different programs. Inaccurate counts risk the prevalence of community voice and access to needed federal resources. Risk being put into political districts where they cannot elect a candidate of choice. State of California would not receive its needed federal resources. Those communities are the ones who would not have access to what California receives. Census Bureau has a recurring problem of undercounting communities, especially those impacted by racial inequities. State of California is showing what solutions look like. State has been conducting its own Census campaign to complement Census Bureau. Involves government, nonprofit, and business entities identifying hard-to-count communities. Organizing trusted messengers to encourage those communities to self-respond to the Census questionnaire. Public investment effort of $187M for 2020 effort. Implications of undercount are real, risks are high, and communities most burdened by racial inequity are the ones who will struggle the most if we do not get it right.

Estes: How has the visualization of data through the National Equity Atlas increase accessibility to data and served as a tool for local communities interested in advancing equity? What are some key strategies to ensure accessibility to data for communities?

Muña: Want to talk about narrative and framing before talking about data visualization. Data has biases built in. Data is sensitive to the community it is coming from. Political conditions impact how data might be interpreted, used, collected. Atlas provides root cause, top findings for quick real-time interpretation, and real-time solutions for how a community member might organize or advocate. Tool provides deep data disaggregation across ancestry, economic status, poverty, gender to look at an issue from different angles. All-in-one tool to download and present at city council meetings. Includes accurate citations. Supports data capacity of community-based partners. Multiple languages. Making it easy to use. With data interpretation, no matter how easy we make it, community still needs data capacity. Need multi-year investments in creating community-based mapping capacity to participate in redistricting conversations, create alternative maps, track populations. Build up community capacity.

Estes: Can you tell us why it is important to disaggregate data?

Ponce: Cannot just summarize experiences in an aggregated category. Hides specific issues impacting different communities, such as the astronomically high rates of COVID deaths impacting Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders during the pandemic. Resources do not go to the populations who need it. Equity dollars do not go to communities. Exposes the truth of identities that are hidden in these aggregated categories. Makes invisible communities visible. If there is no data, there is no problem. If there is no problem, there is no policy solution. Needs of marginalized populations, particularly smaller populations, go unaddressed.

Lally: Opportunity at the State is more guidance around how to balance considerations between privacy and disaggregation. California Health and Human Services agency has done good work around providing guidance to its departments. As Chief Data Officer for City of San

Francisco, used that guidance to publish data at neighborhood level. Defined a lower level of geography in San Francisco to show where people were affected by COVID. Published at lower levels of granularity by looking at the guidance and looking across the published data sets at the time and assessing whether someone could re-identify in different ways. Complex but possible. Way forward is to provide practical guidance to people doing this work.

Dobard: Disaggregating makes communities visible. Also need to be attentive to data categories that do not reflect social reality. Need to break down data sets in ways that get to nuance, as in the Middle Eastern North African (MENA) or Southwest Asian North African (SWANA). Needed better categories that reflect social reality to understand what is going on.

Muña: Categories and identities are located in time. They shift over time. Need strong, expansive community engagement and outreach efforts. Community-based organizations sometimes do not realize their population is changing until they need to provide specific language or services. Data lags. Sometimes, it is not reflective. Also reflective of the community engagement process that predisposed it.

Ponce: Disaggregating or updating categorizations can be costly, impact existing data fields, deviate from given categorizations, such as those from the Department of Health Research. However, can also save cost by being more efficient with targeted resources. Disaggregation is a form of data quality, assuming high fidelity. Disclosure is also important, especially as you disaggregate. Need guidelines on intermediate categories that are community informed and differential access to ensure access for smaller groups.

Estes: Can you share an overview of your work at the Office of Data and Innovation and how you are navigating considerations around race and ethnicity? Have you identified any best practices in data collection and analysis? What could be the role of the Commission in supporting the Office of Data and Innovation?

Lally: Thinking through standards implementation. Provide guidance to meet people where they are. Office develops standards, including Plain Language Standard. Trained hundreds of staff. Vision is a modern, effective California government that provides exceptional services to all Californians. Center humans before technical design and solutions. Currently tailoring SPD 15 to California needs and populations. Goal is to create something interoperable with federal standards but meets Californian needs. Office is doing additional research to test things like the impact of data ordering and cognitive load on response rates. In implementation, answer questions around how this guidance corresponds to federal guidance, how to update systems. Continuously improve process through communities of practice and engagement with those responsible for implementation to inform better guidance. California Department of Aging data dashboard is a good example of intersectional data. Aggregate these best practices so that others can benefit from doing this work. Will be beginning community engagement around the draft. Drawing upon Commission network of trusted messengers. Needing help to reach the folks who need to be reached. Will be ongoing.

Estes: What top two considerations the Commission should have in developing the framework as it relates to data practices that advances racial equity?

Muña: First, need for standardized universal data collection around race. Confusion about what is mandated. Second, capacity-building and engagement. Often working with small, evolving populations with limited capacity. Need to be partnering with them to collect data. Build their capacity. Barriers to entry need to be as low as possible. Many organizations do not have capacity to apply for, staff, and adhere to reporting requirements of government grants.

Lally: First, lots to learn at the intersection of community engagement and data collection. What can help communities do this work? Second, what might continuous improvement look like in practice in community? Think through operationalization.

Ponce: One, money. Equity dollars incentivize agencies to be compliant to and implement standards. Need to have mechanism of accountability or incentives. Monetary or penalties. Second, measure not only race but also racism.

Dobard: One, disaggregation. Framework must uplift best practices to ensure that populations are not made invisible. Two, be attentive to root causes and the systems that are accountable to producing racial inequities. Tell those stories to the different audiences that the framework is trying to reach.

Commission Discussion

Pastor: Thanked the panelists. Regarding process outcomes, what is the level of participation for communities capacity-building and collecting their own data? How does the Commission measure the process and engagement? Regarding policy outcomes, what happens at a policy level to move population outcomes? What are the impacts? Thinking about population, process, and policy outcomes. Geographic variation did not come up. What do we need to do to make the State think this is easy rather than one more obstacle? How do we bring those on board who already feel over-worked and that the data is not easily accessible?

Matthews: Expressed gratitude to panelists. Underscored the necessity of funding. Highlighted the differential pricing or investment needed for smaller ethnic groups. Applied concept to geography and rural communities throughout the state. Where do you think this Commission or the State should help guide in this regard? To be effective with implementing a new framework, grow investment with community-based organizations.

Richardson: For Jason Lally, what is your timeline for standards implementation? For Dr. Ponce, do you have any best practices for how we can involve the community in this process?

Lally: Regarding timeline, standards release is the end of this calendar year. Federal standard has already come out and applies to federal agencies. Federal standards will roll down. Planning alignment of implementation that will differ by department, depending on their federal compliance needs. Focus on moving standards forwards without creating misalignment to federal standards. Still working out more specific implementation timelines and expectations. On making the work easy for others, do the hard work on the ground work – needs finding, root cause analysis – to make it look easy. Provide practical guidance. Release information along with programmatic support, such as training. Also produce toolkits and house guidance in The Innovation Hub. Building out Data Community Practice. Create structures to guide people through the process.

Pastor: Discussing, confronting, and addressing structural racism is the hard work. Keep the accessing of data collection and visualization easy.

Ponce: Put the resources towards the communities that need it most. Criteria accounts for groups that are often isolated to minimize coverage bias in surveys. Also consider population size to achieve probability sample. Decisions on imputing data cannot be based on whether it performs well on average. Look for the communities where it performs the worst, and determine whether it is performing well. On community-informed data, convene community-based organizations, experts, academics, funders, frontline folks, delivery system folks to inform survey content. Ask communities what they want in their dashboards to get more resources for their communities. Then, build the communities, show the dashboards in Town Halls, and conduct trainings.

Dobard: Affirmed Dr. Pastor's point about geographic variability. Be attentive to how we are disaggregating by geography. Includes not just talking about the Inland Empire but also Riverside County, San Bernardino County.

Muña: Agencies should start from a place of inclusion first and then must justify why they cannot include people. Cannot make this decision unilaterally. Must work in partnership or consultation with third parties so that accountability is built into the system.

Maldonado: Acknowledged the under-collection of data on Indigenous Californians.

Public Comment

Wendy Hetherington of Riverside County Department of Public Health.

Agenda Item #6: DISCUSSION: Next Steps for Staff Action

Commissioner Manuel Pastor, Committee Lead

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Commissioner Discussion

Pastor: Suggested more thinking by staff on the concept of population, process, and policy in data to drive equity outcomes.

Matthews: Affirmed the three categories put forth by Commissioner Pastor. Policies are an articulated statement of values. Reiterated the importance of including policy values component of data work and not just looking at numbers.

Richardson: Acknowledged and affirmed the population, process, and policy concept.

Estes: Acknowledged the process, policy/values, and population outcomes framing. Noted that staff will further explore this framing, in conjunction with consultants, Framework Development Committee, and the other Commission committees.

Agenda Item #7: Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:12 AM.