

May 22, 2025

Subject: Racial Equity Commission May 22, 2025, Community Engagement Committee Meeting Minutes

Prepared By: Toya Davis, Operations Manager, Racial Equity Commission

Reviewed By: Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Recommended Action

Approval of the May 22, 2025, Racial Equity Commission Community Engagement Committee Meeting Minutes.

Racial Equity Commission May 22, 2025 - Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item #1: Welcome

A. CALL TO ORDER: Committee Lead Salas called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM.

B. REVIEW OF THE AGENDA

C. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM: Quorum Met; 4/4 Commissioners Present

Commissioners Present:

1. Commissioner Angelica Salas, Committee Lead
2. Commissioner Candis Bowles
3. Commissioner Virginia Hedrick
4. Commissioner Traco Matthews

D. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Public Comment

No public comment.

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

Elena Santa Maria, Next Gen California/California Racial Equity Coalition.

Agenda Item #3: ACTION: Approval of December 19, 2024, Meeting Minutes

No public comment.

Motion to approve the minutes by Commissioner Hedrick and seconded by Commissioner Bowles.

Motion passes (4-0-0*). *Marks abstention or absence from vote.

Agenda Item #4: Community Engagement Plan Update and Overview of the Community Engagement Toolkit

Jourdan Ringgold, Senior Program Analyst, Racial Equity Commission

Dylyn Turner Kenner, Senior Program Analyst, Racial Equity Commission

Ringgold: Shared an update on the Community Engagement Plan. Expressed key themes shared by residents at community engagement events including racial disparities involving issues of affordable housing access, lack of career readiness and civic education, decrease in job opportunities and further distrust. Desire for more political and civic engagement and recognition/visibility of areas that are less represented or visible.

In response, Commission staff noted that they are developing the community engagement strategy (Framework), established a contract with Global Urban Strategies (California-based consulting firm) through 2027 to support the Commission's community engagement work, which will include an outreach strategy for the Framework and refining the Community Engagement Toolkit.

Turner Kenner: Presented the Community Engagement Brief developed by Vital Research, LLC and the Spectrum of Community Engagement informed the Community Engagement Toolkit. Shared the goals:

- Center equity in engagement (language access, attendance support, etc.)
- Increase meeting access (ADA compliance for meeting locations, hybrid meeting option)
- Honor unique identities and lived experiences
- Listen to community needs, answer questions, and receive feedback to inform the Framework

The Commission staff will return to locations visited by the Commission to share updates about the Framework and maintain community connections, take lessons learned from Meet-n-Greets and Listening Sessions to inform the Framework, summarize Community Meet-n-Greets and Listening Sessions in write-ups, and launch a Community Engagement Survey.

Example of graphic notes taken at community events was shared with the Commissioners and the public.

Committee Discussion

- There was no feedback from the Commissioners on proposed Community Engagement Plan.

Public Comment

Elena Santamaria provided public comment.

Agenda Item #5: Racial Equity Commission Summer Roadshow Overview

Jourdan Ringgold, Senior Program Analyst, Racial Equity Commission

Ringgold: Provide an overview of the Summer Roadshow and its purpose. Dates and event locations are subject to change. The purpose is to return to communities to report back how their shared wisdom and experiences have been reflected in the Framework. Interactive process will allow community to provide feedback to the Commission; and to provide Commissioners and Staff the chance to collaborate with community to explore how the Framework can be improved.

Ringgold: Outcomes of Summer Roadshow are to return to at least 60% of communities visited from January 2024 – June 2025, share draft content of the Framework and engage in interactive/collaborative discussions with community to solicit feedback.

Draft programming of the Road Show was shared: Refreshments and networking, welcome, overview of the Commission Charge, Key Themes from Across California, Where We Are New (Framework), Interactive Feedback Activity, and Closing/Next steps. Timeline of the roadshows was shared:

- First Week in July- Digital Kick-off of Roadshows
- July 14-16- Bakersfield and Fresno
- July 28 - August 1- Riverside and Imperial Valley
- August 4- August 8 – Antelope Valley and Los Angeles
- August 18 – August 20 – Yuba City, Sacramento, and Oakland
- Last week in August – Roadshow Closeout (digital)

Committee Discussion

Hedrick: Will there be public questions/prompts shared with community in advance of these meetings? How will the Framework be presented to Community? Will this be done in advance so Community can be prepared to ask questions and Commission Staff can be prepared for elements that community members are bringing forth that are relevant to the geographic regions? Can comments be submitted in advance?

Estes: Racial Equity Commission Staff are building strategies with Global Urban Strategies on the best way to go bac to Community to share what has been developed thus far. Had not thought of the specific questions to go to each community with as each community may have different questions. Going back to these communities is an effort to demonstrate progress, demonstrate that their concerns were heard, and demonstrate that we are trying to maintain conversation. Working with an application development team to gather information through a public comment process virtually, that can be downloaded reviewed, add comments or submit a form that allows comments to be added. Close to finalizing that development.

Hedrick: How do we reach Communities that are not geographic in nature, i.e. American Indian Alaskan Natives, those not centered in Urban counties but centered in a specific region? Also considering large faith-based communities that have a network throughout the state? Will we have targeted community outreach that is not geographic in nature?

Estes: Working with Global Urban Strategies on how we are reaching communities that are not geographic. Had a conversation with the Episcopal Church and their diocese about working on Racial Equity and Justice and creating space to have a conversation should they desire. A lot of people want to have conversations with the Racial Equity Commission, and this is about building relationships and extended the invitation for them to join us in sharing their experiences and stories with us.

Hedrick: Geographic reach-East of the Sierras has a large geographic gap between the Central Valley and Owens Valley, acknowledged this is a hard region to reach geographically, but what are the Commissions efforts as it relates to reaching this overlooked region in California.

Estes: In researching regions that can host us. Question for the committee is do you want to plan a community engagement event there knowing we are on a short timeline to produce this Framework? If any of the Commission members have community connections that they want to share, we can take that into consideration, but we do not have any within our immediate networks. If there are any, we would be happy to get that information. We tried to do some work in Placer County but there was some hesitation due to the political climate. We have tried, but if there are any thoughts or reflections, we would be happy to consider them.

Bowles: Can we have Listening Sessions with organizations that work in those communities? That is not as direct with engaging with people directly, but it is because they benefit from the work they are doing and their presence there and requires rapport building? Can they share with us in a virtual session?

Estes: Absolutely, that is part of the building the virtual Road Show option, but we can consider something specific for East of the Sierras.

Salas: For the summer, to the Commissioners, identify gathering moments: activities, conferences, that are happening in the identifying regions that Commissioner Hedrick has identified. We can be present, describe what we are doing, inviting participation and provide information so we can support our contractor/consultant as in these gatherings may have multiple representatives from different regions. Solicit that support from the rest of the Commissioners as well as Staff to know as leaders are gathering across the State. This is an additional way that we can engage.

Estes: Acknowledge that the Framework is not a “one and done” document, rather advancing racial equity in the State of California is a journey. While we have gone to several locations, and will continue to go to other locations throughout the years, there are plenty of opportunities to engage. Part of the reason why the Commission moved forward with the community engagement plan that does reach out to communities that Commissioner Hedrick shared as well as building in a contractor helped figure that out but hesitated on building out digital engagement because not everyone is digitally connected. Working with Global Urban Strategies on understanding what the network is and how do we connect with some of those spaces that don’t always rely on digital engagement.

Hedrick: Talking about Racial Equity when there are Executive Orders specifically about Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI), there is a lot of tension rising in the country and in California, how are we working to address that gap and do we have any guidance from the Governor in this current climate?

Estes: Guidance received is the work continues. Advised to be data drive, use plan and simple language. As we building out the framework, keeping that front and center. Ensuring that we are communicating with Communities in plain and simple language and what do we hope to achieve with the Framework.

Matthews: Going back to Commissioner Hedrick's first question, about having questions that everyone can be thinking about and reacting to: important for the Commission to acknowledge in this political environment probably most communities are thinking about things they may lose. It may be a worthwhile question to have something prepared of the nature: "What is it you hope to keep? What do you want us to keep and prioritize?" May be a good icebreaker for every community that gives people an opportunity for people to share their fears and concerns, but home in on what is most important to them. Every community is going to have different priorities in their communities, almost every community will want to speak to that.

Estes: There is nuance with sending staff out to collect this information versus Commissioners who are appointed to a public advisory body. That means something when coming from Commissioners versus coming from staff. We have to be mindful of this given our roles in state government.

Matthews: If I am hearing correctly, {Commissioners} can ask that question more feasibly than Staff, with the intent of most listening sessions to have Commissioners there?

Estes: The intent is to have Commissioners there. It is important to have the Cin having that type of dialogue, to have the Commissioners there.

Matthews: I am thinking about all of the CBOs in my reach, and all of the Faith-based organizations and churches within my reach, and if I was to show up to a listening session and not say anything about what is happening, people would say I was "tone deaf" or he is inauthentic. What is the right approach? It is fair to acknowledge what is happening, ask how communities are doing? Everyone has their own concerns. Where do you want to see us commit energy? It is important that someone is asking that question wherever we go.

Salas: Acknowledge the reality of where and how we are doing this work. Community engagement needs to continue- we are California, move forward and continue to be committed to this work even in the new political context as we enter different community spaces. To reiterate what Dr. Estes stated, as Commissioners, we need to guide staff and consultants with this information.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda Item #6: 15-Minute Recess

Committee Lead Salas called a recess at 3:40 PM.

Committee Lead Salas called the meeting to order at 3:55 PM.

Agenda Item #7: WORKSHOP: “Prioritizing Engagement Strategies” – Committee Discussion

Joyce Chaio,

Workshop and Committee Discussion

Chaio: Reviewed the Asset Analysis Highlights > Community Engagement Best Practices- goal is to identify 3-5 core community engagement strategies to include in the Framework due in December 2025. There is flexibility in this process. Discussion will be on Community Engagement Best Practices strategies.

Questions Commissioners asked for in prior conversations- graphics included question: In which of the following ways...is your organization involved in community engagement? Of the State agencies and departments who responded, these were the results:

Inform-83% Consult- 75% . Involve- 67% , Collaborate- 65% , Defer to- 21%

How does your organization distribute information intended for the public, for example, how to engage with the agency or information about a newly available opportunity or resource?

Our organizations website- 92% , Public meetings- 75%, Through trusted messengers- 56%, Community Meetings- 54%, Board meetings- 50%, Another way- 44%, Town Halls- 37%

Discussion results- Community Engagement includes tribal engagement was overwhelming the top priority with votes for this item exceeding that of the second highest-voted item by nearly double. Three out of four Community Engagement Committee Members emphasized Community engagement needs dedicated resources- add to the budget line items, under-supported regions and being accessible in language, simplicity and invitation.

Discussion methodologies and tools included what is actionable (can it be implemented), urgent (what needs to happen now) and structural (does it foster a sustainable internal shift toward equity?)

Community Engagement Best Practices from March 2025 included: 1. Institutionalize a state approach to community engagement (e.g., Community Engagement Toolkit). 2. Meet community where they are: collaborate with trusted partners, engage community-based organizations, use accessible language, be responsive to different cultures, engage community outside of normal business hours. 3. Address barriers to participation- explore ways to provide childcare, food, etc.

Do these engagement recommendations address community engagement?

Salas: For #1, Institutionalize (add) **and resource** a State approach to community engagement; if resources are not available, the strategies won't happen.

Bowles: All three strategies are useful, but there seems to be a lack of connection between community engagement and “what are we engaging for”. If we are getting feedback but is not connected to impact, or systems change, or outcomes, then what is the point of the feedback? Need to find a way to connect the way the community engagement gets operationalized or turned-into the change the community engagement was for, then there is no accountability. In the asset analysis, there are sections that have the impact those agencies saw once they engaged. Important not to disconnect these strategies from the responsibilities they have to result in something meaningful.

Chaio: Are we checking the box or driving toward something?

Estes: Staff are looking at these strategies with the benefit of looking at the other committees, i.e. data as well as budget and equity committee. Community Engagement has a connectivity to accountability on the data side. The opportunity for the toolkit is to map out how community engagement can include understanding and sharing impact. There is intersection between these recommendations throughout the Framework.

Bowles: Important to be intentional about the intersection around Community Engagement. It is important to not just use the language of “Community Engagement”, but talk about it as it pertains to those interconnected pieces.

Estes: Doing so in plain and simple language because Community can be misconstrued in many ways.

Matthews: Engage Tribal stakeholders from around the state, but this is broader. What are we doing about other special populations that are being served by the State or specific entities? I.e. language access, we do not have this type of engagement as some populations are specific to geographic locations. Explicitly include Communities in specific geographic areas. Number two has “be responsive to other cultures”, but it should be specifically spelled out that you have to talk to cultures that you are serving. This will also help address serving people with disabilities. Add specifics behind “who” will be engaged and “how” will they be engaged.

Salas: High response around Community Engagement because of the Executive Order. In certain instances, there has to be an Executive Directive or regulations in order to do the work or else it won't be prioritized. Suggested adding 4. Regulations and Executive Orders, which have greater prioritization of Community Engagement.

Estes: Engagement around special populations is not just for community engagement, but it is a broader need for Framework. Clarity on intersectionality. Staff has spoken to advocates from the aging community, variety of abilities and disability community and the development disability community. There is a need to be perspective within this framework. This Framework has to meet the needs of over 200 departments and agencies, boards and commissions, that all

do different work. This could be an opportunity to recommend a directive, but we would need to know who that directive would come from and how it would be done. Data aggregation would need to be done based on several different statuses. The Commission has to provide guidance in a Framework, the Commission is able to put forth a recommendation around a directive.

Matthews: Confirmed he understood.

Chaio: Tools that drive accountability for pushing institutions to be engaged, what that looks like and what tools will be pushed forward. Will add a “dotted box” around #4 to include that in the recommendations.

Do the (four) recommended areas seem actionable, urgent and structural?

Estes: Confirming including three to five recommendations to be included in the Framework, but still looking to add to that list in the future. More actions may be feasible in a year or two based on the current political climate.

Matthews: Believes the items are actionable at different levels based on the current political climate. All are urgent to the people, communities, and Commissioners. On the structural side, providing guidance on how the “how to change the system?” and if the system is changed, it needs to be systemic change.

Salas: #2 Change the “header” to “Know the Infrastructure that exists within community” to understand what already exists, the needs and the highpoint of engagement, This should be instructive- individuals will seek out to understand so they do not “recreate the wheel”. The other recommendations should include the need to be “continual” or “ongoing”.

Estes: Staff is trying to model these in community engagement, and these are good elements for the toolkit, being prescriptive, knowing what assets exist within communities. REC Staff utilizes these tools. How do you get other agencies to build these into their toolbox?

Chaio: In summary, 1. Institutionalize and resource a state approach to community engagement- funding and research are critical for sustaining community engagement; 2. Accountability with tools and possible recommendations for a directive; 3. Refinement of language-switching from “meet community where they are” to “know the infrastructure that exists- balance precision and plain language; 4. Capture the purpose of community engagement- to drive that systems change, or else it is not effective/exists in silos.

Next steps is for Staff to build this structure in June.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda Item #8: Next Steps for Staff Action

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Identifying basic questions in advance for Communities in relation to the Road Shows. Researching and leveraging Commissioners networks with communities East of the Sierras- not only geographical gaps, but other special populations, for example tribal nations. Increasing the spread of our engagement and as a way of continued engagement. More details were considered such as being prescriptive and directive as it pertains to drafting the Framework and ensuring elevation of intersectionality and connecting that with community engagement, outcomes and impact.

Committee Discussion

No Committee Discussion.

Agenda Item #9: Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:36 PM.