

October 14, 2025

**Subject:** Racial Equity Commission September 17, 2025, Meeting Minutes  
**Prepared By:** Toya Davis, Operations Manager, Racial Equity Commission  
**Reviewed By:** Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

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## Recommended Action

Approval of the October 14, 2025, Racial Equity Commission Meeting Minutes.

## Racial Equity Commission October 2025 - Meeting Minutes

### ***Agenda Item #1: Welcome***

**A. CALL TO ORDER:** After a delayed start due to travel challenges from weather delays, Commissioner Matthews called the meeting to order at 10:35 AM. Shared a reminder that the Commission condemns acts of hate and discrimination. Commissioner Matthews shared the CA vs Hate resource line. Commissioner Matthews noted that several Commissioners will be arriving late due to travel and weather challenges.

### **B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND COMMUNITY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

### **C. REVIEW OF THE AGENDA**

Executive Director Dr. Larissa Estes, reviewed the agenda and requested to have Agenda Item #4, Director's Report moved after Agenda Item #2, Consent Agenda due to allow for Commissioners to arrive.

### **D. REMARKS FROM DISTINGUISHED GUESTS**

Isabelle Gatdula, District Representative to State Senator Angelique Ashby, 8<sup>th</sup> District, provided remarks. Commissioner and President Luke Wood, brought remarks welcoming the Commission to the campus of Sacramento State. Sacramento State serves 31,000 students, and within the past two years, Sac State has reached its highest graduation rate with the largest graduating class in the history of the university. Equity focused programs at Sac State include the Native American College, Black Honors College, Hispanic serving institution and Pacific Islander Institution as well as the only Black-American serving institution in the State.

Dr. Sam Aseffa, Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, Director thanked Dr. Estes for her leadership in this important and transformative work. He marked the importance of the milestone of the Framework completion. He specifically called out the transformative efforts to embed equity into the heart of our state government and the opportunity to give every Californian, no matter their background, a real chance to thrive. The Racial Equity Framework helps to build a more just, inclusive and compassionate California. This is turning the vision of a "California for All" into a lasting reality. Steadfast work in this work is needed now more than ever to protect hard work and progress in this space that confronts growing inequities that Californians face everyday. This ensures every community is seen and heard. Director Aseffa

indicated he has been engaged and he has seen the impact this work has on communities. Input from the 1,000s of voices that have been heard ensure inclusion. And focuses on what unites us versus what divides us.

We see the impact of climate change every day focused on the communities that you have worked with; this is not just a checklist, but a living tool that is calling for reflection, learning and sustained actions by state government. It centers community voices are vital, it builds trust and it holds offices accountable. It's final version will equip state agencies to move from statement to measurable action centering community voice, requiring transparency and With our partners at the California Strategic Growth Council, we will utilize the Framework to strengthen future and existing programs. This is what government looks like and this is an opportunity to treat equity as not just a side initiative but moving in the direction as an "Office of Equity". This should be embedded into every aspect of daily functions of State Government.

The Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation is honored to have been tasked with the charge of creating the Framework with special attention being given to the unique approach to community engagement and input. The work to go to communities with the highest need and improve trust in government, into communities with the highest need, expanding language access has been inspiring.

To the Commissioners, Staff, allies, partners and community members who supported this work, on behalf of the Governor and the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, "thank you" for this work. What began as an Executive Order, will be a durable roadmap for action. We are proud to walk with you as you turn this into a living document for our state agencies. Thank you for this important work.

**E. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM:** Quorum was met; 9/9 Commissioners Present.

**Commissioners Present:**

1. Commissioner Virginia Hedrick
2. Commissioner John Kim
3. Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado
4. Commissioner Traco Matthews
5. Commissioner Dr. Manuel Pastor
6. Commissioner Yolanda Richardson
7. Commissioner Anjelica Salas
8. Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood
9. Commissioner Simboa Wright

Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Salas and Commissioner Wright joined the meeting at 11: 12 a.m..

**F. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS**

**No Public Comments on Agenda Item #1*****Agenda Item #2: Consent Agenda***

**Action:** Motion to approve the September 17, 2025, Commission meeting minutes with one correction was made pg. 8, to Commissioner Maldonado's comments clarifying that he "is not a State Director", he was seeking clarity and wanted to add in "if I were a State Director...". Motion was made by Commissioner Richardson and seconded by Commissioner Pastor. Motion passed 6-0.

**No Public Comments on Agenda Item #2*****Agenda Item #4: Executive Directors Report***

Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission

Dr. Larissa Estes announced the transition of two Commissioners from the Commission Yolanda Bowles and Jolie Onodera, effective September 2025. The Governor's Office and the Senate Rules Committee have been made aware and are starting their processes to reappoint for those vacancies. The Commission can still function as long as there are six Commissioners.

Last year, the Commission received funds through the East Bay Foundation to ensure resources were available for travel and participation stipends. Those funds end November 2025. We are currently working with East Bay Foundation on how to best spend down those funds or to request a no-cost extension. No additional philanthropy funds have been received to support community engagement that we have been able to do so successfully. The Commission does have a dedicated special fund that has been set-up to receive grants, gifts and funding. As Executive Director, I continue to reach out and engage with philanthropy. I hope to have more details at our next meeting.

**Framework Discussion**

Dr. Estes reviewed the Commission Charge EO-N-16-2021. She also reviewed the Model for Transformation and the role of the Commission- specifically the Commission's activities in the Model for Transformation and more specifically, "Working Together to make a California for All a reality". She discussed finalizing the Framework as it is due to the Legislature and the Governor on December 12, 2025. The proposed Commission Strategy was reviewed which includes developing a community survey that would be launched in 2026. There would be an overview that is able to be shared with community via a brochure. The ownership of implementing the framework would be on the agencies as there is no body that would be monitoring progress. Continuing to have conversations about details of what an "Office of Racial Equity" could look like, drafting a memo - building that into the Staff's work next. The first annual report would be due by December 1, 2026.

In 2027, Implementation and Technical Assistance Committee would focus on what the implementation strategy would look like as well as a self-evaluation strategy tool. Annual Report would be due December 2027. On-going strategies and implementation and evaluation in 2028, with continuous evaluation through the sunset of the Commission in June 2030. The

ideas would be to use the Racial Equity Framework to advance racial equity, address structural racism, and shift power to communities beyond June 2030.

Commissioner Pastor expressed the importance and significance of the next steps.

Commissioner Richardson expressed the importance of building in time to hear back from community on the Framework on how the implementation process will work for the annual report.

Executive Director Estes shared the products need to be created in a way that community can resonate with i.e. a brochure, or an animated video.

Chair Matthews asked where the proposed locations in 2026.

Proposed meeting locations for 2026:

- Central Valley
- San Diego/San Bernadino-Commissioner Maldonado recommended San Diego to support ease of travel for Commissioners
- Central Coast (Santa Barbara, Ventura, San Luis Obispo)-Commissioner Pastor acknowledged the equity work happening in the Central Coast region.
- Sonoma

Proposed Meet-n-Greet locations for 2026

- East of the Sierra
- South Bay
- Shasta or Siskiyou County
- Bishop

Commissioner Pastor also indicated the need to host focus groups with local and state agencies to hear feedback on if the tool needs to be refined.

Executive Director Estes added information on Impact Indicators (identifying the Top 20) that can be managed across multiple departments.

Commissioner Salas likes the idea of the animated video and offers that would be a great resource to translate into multiple languages for accessibility, specifically, audio for indigenous populations.

Executive Director stated she wanted to connect with Commissioner Salas and Commissioner Maldonado as they are the Fundraising Committee to build a philanthropy strategy.

Commissioner Kim appreciated the timeline inclusion in the report as it helps to keep the Framework in context. Also appreciates the brief included in the report. Question about what to do in the first year in terms of managing “real time” requests?

Executive Director Estes indicated it is a challenge with only having four full-time staff, that is not an easy task with over 200 State agencies and that is not including local government agencies. The Implementation and Technical Assistance Committee in December and early 2026 can assist. The Framework gives validation to the work that is already being done and the ways

to build on what is already happening. There is a heavy lift in the first nine months of 2026, but we do not want to create a strategy without giving people an opportunity to sit with the tools already being offered on the Implementation and Technical Assistance Committee.

Commissioner Kim indicated the potential base should also include Legislators as they may want Technical Assistance on building legislation. What is the potential to build out staff?

Executive Director Estes shared the possibility of convening learning communities. She also shared there are State agencies that already have Equity Teams that can serve as internal Subject Matter Experts. Legislators in the Senate and Assembly also have Staff that are specific to equity work.

Commissioner Maldonado suggested having an “Open House” in 2026 (end of summer), where departments and agencies can be invited to come together to hear presentations and assign the specific committees. Perhaps use Commission meeting time to host an “Open House” in the summer.

Executive Director Estes indicated the need to understand the need of each department/agency first before understanding what committee may be able to assist. She also indicated the challenge with availability based on other obligations and understanding the limitations based on Staff. Ensuring a level of boundaries are still adhered to. Allows for more fluidity and less formality.

Commissioner Kim also indicated it would be great to have a “Train the Trainer” conversation and bring in-agency staff, legislative or equity partners and give them authority to support requests. Perhaps establish cohorts to expand and multiple capacity.

Executive Director Estes shared there may be challenges due to staffing size and/or through contracts or consulting. The budget is not increasing and there is a fund set-aside for philanthropy for implementation. There are opportunities to help with implementation with the specific funds set aside to do so. For future funders briefing, this information is helpful.

Commissioner Hedrick shared being stuck on translation of the Framework to community. What will this Framework mean to community and the communities we have visited and how it impacts those communities? She indicated she did not see the Framework addressing that issue. Not being able to translate the Framework for the communities we have visited specifically Kern County and the negative impacts on the justice system (foster care, law enforcement). Some challenges with not being able to implement suggestions from the Framework; also, pointing out what looks like a “disingenuous process” with community. Is there an opportunity to invite State Agencies who are willing participants in this process to do something in real time? Perhaps co-hosting with the Air Resources Board- partnering with them so community has something tangible. This is just a suggestion, but to host co-meetings with agencies.

Commissioner Matthews also offered that there were concerns in Salinas and other places, and concerns with local municipalities. He was not sure if communities will feel as though they have the power to hold local municipalities accountable with this Commission. He suggested a”

bridging of this gap". How do we help that local communities have the information to hold their local municipalities accountable by having local municipalities as the target audience.

Executive Director stated was a comment from Commissioner from the September meeting, "how do we get the information that we are learning from communities to the appropriate agencies and departments?" - which was a great flag to remind of the need to bring this information to agencies and communities to ensure agencies are engaged with communities-including local government. This is a conversation that can be discussed at the Implementation and Technical Assistance Committee.

Commissioner Kim asked if state agencies should be prioritized as the Framework is rolled out and building the base in the first year.

Executive Director Estes stated some state agencies have begun to attend meetings and engage with the Racial Equity Commission, such as CAL Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Motor Vehicles is currently attending this meeting.

Commissioner Salas indicated the audience may be the State departments, but the tools can be universal and used by community by making them adaptable. The tools can be taken back to community.

Commissioner Pastor was struck by accountability in the document. He shared that considering there are phases that should be considered.

Commissioner Kim "publishing the statewide index" was not included in the timeline. Is that going to be included?

Executive Director Estes pointed out there are strategies and tools included, but there is an opportunity to work with other agencies and departments further on the timeline due to staffing capacity.

### **Proposed Bylaws Changes**

Executive Director Estes mentioned the need to establish an Evaluation Committee as a standing committee. The Commission did receive a grant from Blue Shield of California Foundation, for \$200,000. Proposing to discuss this in December.

Any proposed changes to the bylaws should be shared with the Executive Director by November 14, 2025, for consideration and proposed language for consideration at the December 17, 2025, Commission meeting.

### **Public Comments**

#### **No Public Comments on Agenda Item #4**

Break for fifteen minutes.

The meeting was called back to order by Chair Matthews at 11:52 a.m.



***Agenda Item #3: Draft Framework – ACTION ITEM***

**Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director of California Racial Equity Commission and Joyce Chiao, Facilitator, Abundance**

Chair Matthews stated that at the Commission Meeting in September (2025) in Klamath, CA, the Commissioners decided to collectively conduct an additional round of revisions for presentation during the October meeting.

Executive Director Estes stated that immediately following the September meeting, the REC Staff feedback received from Commissioners along with several public comment letters from advocates, advocacy organizations, and two from State agencies/departments. This feedback was taken into consideration and embed it into the existing framework draft without changing the structure of the document while accounting for what the Commissioners and the public wanted to see added. The updated draft was then sent to the Legal department for review to make sure recommendations that were made were able to be acted upon according to the law.

She stated the revisions made as:

- Added specificity where feasible and in alignment with existing language.  
Reviewed public comment letters and added content as appropriate, as needed tools.

Additional steps before 12/1/25:

- Work with DGS framework into an ADA compliant document available online and hard copy before it goes to the Governor's Office and the Legislature.
- Work with LCI IT and Communications on how to make framework and toolbox interactive and accessible online

An example of what the initial design was shared that included images from the Commissioners being engaged with community during REC events.

Motion to approve the presented draft of the Racial Equity Commission Framework was made by Commissioner Dr. Wood and seconded by Commissioner Wright.

Chair Matthews noted that Commissioner was the only Commissioner present at this meeting who did not have an opportunity to participate in the discussion at the meeting in Klamath. He asked her to share her thoughts first.

Discussion followed the motion.

Commissioner Salas commended the Staff and community members who came to meetings and provided input including their lived experiences. She stated that there is mention of "historical wrongs" in the document, but there are "wrongs" that are happening even "as we sit here". This document has to serve a purpose in "real time"-it has to be a living document as many departments are being tested as to how they are going to respond in the moment. There

needs to be an urgency around implementation and in the timing of the tasks/work. The evaluation and readiness is happening in “real time” i.e. California State Department of Education has risen to an incredible challenge for our children and our parents at this time. Provide examples in the Framework. As we move forward with Community Engagement, explore different ways to have community members to trust government again. Possibly add this to the executive summary and/or introductory letter, but we do have to understand that great harm has happened. Great work has advanced in our state, municipalities and at our county levels, but there has been steps backward including local law enforcement and the trust for those departments. That spirit needs to be embedded in language.

Chair Matthews posed the question about the possibility of changes made to the Framework today, would necessitate the need to reconvene the Commission in a meeting on November 10, 2025?

Executive Director Estes responded to Commissioner Salas’ proposal of including information in an “Introductory Letter”, stating it would depend on who that letter comes from (can be discussed at a later date), stating the need to build trust with community again, acknowledge what is happening in the present. Also, each Commissioner is a leader in their own organizations and could choose to draft press releases associated with the release of the Framework. That gives each Commissioner the opportunity to uplift the Framework in their own language. There may be a different approach in how State government chooses to promote the Framework. That is an opportunity to emphasize the importance of building trust and addressing present harms.

Commissioner Kim noted that he agrees with Commissioner Salas’ comments in that if they look at the Framework 10 years from now, if there is no mention of the current harms, it may be seen as a blaring omission. This could be a motion to authorize the Staff to include current events in the executive summary. Concerns and potential edits that I raised on process or feedback in September were addressed, and this second version is worth it and a significant step forward. I want to thank Dr. Estes and her Staff on their work as it pertained to the impact on staff and the tight timeline. While this is not a finished product, but a key marker- the flagship document for this Commission. I am ready to move forward with this current version. The one point that I would like to make is to address the strategy of presenting a Memo on the “Office of Racial Equity” in 2026. We should consider adding that language into the Framework on page 42- Part One, Priority Four, in the section around strategies and page 70- Part Four- what's next for the Commission, add a sentence around the proposed design of the Office of Racial Equity.

Executive Director Estes stated the Commission does not have the authority to direct the establishment of an Office. The mention of the Office is important and the work that the Commission can contribute in providing recommendations on what it could look like, and

where it could sit is also important. It is the work outside of the Commission outside of the dais pushes the opportunity to better define the work.

Commissioner Kim clarified that he did not want to add to the Framework that the Commission is “authorize” because the Commission does not have that authority, but from the content of this meeting, to prepare a memo of the proposed design, that we intend to take that step in the Framework.

Commissioner Maldonado thanked Dr. Estes and the Staff on taking his suggestions regarding the layout of the Framework. He stated the Framework looks “fabulous” and reads coherently. He asked if the “Implementation Toolkit” could include a summary of the Framework? If was a State Director, he would like a summery that had key words tagged in the Implementation Kit.

Executive Director Estes stated in some elements of the Framework, there are instances that differentiate between the Department or Agency level to allow Directors to see themselves in the document.

Commissioner Pastor stated he appreciated the work that went into this version and the ability to track those changes. The Framework included other intersections with race in terms of class, geography, age, disability and the intersections with race as that is this Commissions charge. He further reiterated he was intrigued by Commissioners Salas’ remarks on where items could go if they are being lifted up and adding those items to the letter that goes with the Framework. Further agreeing with Commissioners points to the risks of regression.

Executive Director Estes asked Legal Council, Matt Reed, to ask about whether there is a need to vote on a letter (to be included in the Framework) that could possibly come from Chair Matthews that includes lifting-up key items around ongoing-community engagement and building that trust and what is happening in the present, and the key connector on what a role in what an Office of Racial Equity could explore.

Legal Counsel, Matt Reed stated he does not believe the Commission has to vote, as the Chair has a wide range of prerogative if is the desire of the Commission as a whole, to develop a transmittal letter and not to update the document. This can be informal or more formal in the formal- with would include specific direction of a vote if the Commissioners wanted to “word smith”. If the Chair is amenable to authoring the letter, as long as there is clarity as to how the letter is developed, who reviews it and who informs it. If the Chair is amenable to drafting the letter, they would be within their authority to do so.

Joyce Chiao, Facilitator, Abundance, shared four questions for the Commissioners:

#### **Commission Discussion and Review Questions**

1. Is this framework written for your key audience/user?

In June, the Commission approved the framework audience: *State government, inclusive of agencies, the legislature, and judicial, with support and technical assistance for other governmental entities.*

Commissioners agreed with this question. No concerns were voiced.

2. Based on the approved outline (June 2025) and discussion (September 2025), is there anything within the Commission's charge that was discussed but NOT included?

Executive Director Estes noted that Commissioner Kim noted the State Equity Index- not adding it to the Framework but considering where this would fit in the long-term strategy for implementation.

Commissioner Kim added the "Transmittal Letter" and the "Memo" would clarify and specify the key next steps. If the Chair could include that, it would be great.

Executive Director Estes further added that Commissioner Salas stated the leveraging a Transmittal Letter to go along with the Framework to lift-up the substance around building trust and addressing the current trauma and inequities that communities are experiencing.

Commissioner Salas added there is a section within the Framework that describes community engagement and recommendations around financial support for communities who participate. The need for investment in community engagement was well crafted. For future consideration, budgets are more restrictive with philanthropic dollars. Philanthropic dollars will never cover what government needs to do as philanthropic dollars are more restrictive. I support partnering, but it is the duty of the government to invest in the engagement of its people in a true multi-racial democracy. Continue to address that going forward.

Executive Director Estes stated the letter that could accompany the Framework could lift that up as philanthropy has to prioritize philanthropy. We want to make sure there is sustainability built into the efforts that State agencies want to see and want to do community engagement. There is also an opportunity to further consider what is allowable ensuring we are not being ultra-conservative with State dollars in supporting the communities that we serve.

Commissioner Salas really appreciated the trusted messenger examples including community based organizations. These are innovations, and as changes in administrations happen, we do not want these efforts to get lost in the way that things are supposed to move forward.

3. What topics could be considered 1) for the annual report or 2) as recommendations for future Commission consideration?

Commissioner Pastor wanted to have deeper dives on California immigrant communities. This is important to make clear the ties between racial equity and immigrant inclusion and possibly add this to the Transmittal Letter; a "Declaration of Interdependence"

Commissioner Hedrick stated “Possibility Lab” report where they did an environmental landscape of existing equity work among state government. She would like to see potentially in the annual report, or the Evaluation Committee, a cross-walk with the Framework to see if gaps were filled, if duplicative information where did the Framework strengthen the landscape? What gaps remain?

Executive Director Estes stated this is being considered in the scope of for the evaluation, keeping in mind what was learned in the asset analysis and how is that carried forwarded. The self-evaluation of agencies and departments and how do we evaluate the impact of the Framework?

4. Is there anything else that you want to share about the framework?

Joyce Ciao closed with the following points as it pertained to the Framework:

1. Framework is written to the key audience.
2. Transmittal Letter- including Commissioner Kim’s thoughts on the equity index, and exploring long-term strategy for implementation, includes important messaging and contextualization from the beginning about the role of government and past transgressions, incorporation a recognition of budgets and making sure governments remains committed to budgeting for community engagement without overreliance on philanthropy.
3. Continuing to explore deeper dives into California immigrant communities.

**Public Comment** Public Comment was made by

- Xi Zeung, Equity Specialist, California Department of Aging
- Elena Santamaria, NextGen CA and California Racial Equity Coalition
- Alejandra Ponce de Leon, Catalyst California
- Vince Leus, Prevention Institute, California Racial Equity Coalition

Commissioner Salas commended the California Racial Equity Coalition for all of their work that led for the Racial Equity Commission existing and being a consistent part of the meetings as they model participatory engagement from the community.

Chair Matthews echoed those sentiments. He also acknowledged he would be drafting a letter to accompany the Framework.

Voting results on approval of the draft Framework:

1. Commissioner Virginia Hedrick- aye
2. Commissioner John Kim - aye
3. Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado- aye
4. Commissioner Traco Matthews- aye
5. Commissioner Dr. Manuel Pastor- aye

6. Commissioner Yolanda Richardson- aye
7. Commissioner Anjelica Salas- aye
8. Commissioner Dr. Luke Wood - aye
9. Commissioner Simboa Wright- aye

Vote: 9-0

### ***Lunch Recess***

**Chair Matthews** called for a lunch recess at 12:52 PM to reconvene at 01:52 PM; the meeting was called back to order at 01:52 PM.

Chair Matthews reiterated language support for American Sign Language was offered in-person and on-line via the caption function.

### ***Agenda Item #5: Next Steps for Staff Action***

Executive Director Estes stated the following Staff Actions:

1. Staff will be moving forward with the formatting and design of the approved draft Framework in preparation for its delivery to the Assembly, Senate, and Governor's Office to be posted publicly no later than December 1, 2025.
2. Staff will support the Chair Matthews in drafting a Transmittal Letter and working to secure signatures the Commissioners in support of that letter and review it with Communications and External Affairs.
3. Staff will refine the evaluation scope of work to be inclusive of focus groups with agencies and departments as well as connecting it back to the asset analysis that was done in 2024.
4. Exploring the development of an Open House in 2026 welcoming State agencies and departments to be a part of the process and to engage with them to get a better sense of what their needs may be around implementation and technical assistance.
5. Staff will update the Funders Briefing document to make sure some of the recommendations that were lifted-up around community engagement, and ensuring we are requesting funding that supports increasing community awareness and accessibility of the Framework.
6. Staff will be working on planning the December 17, 2025, meeting in Sacramento, specifically around the Implementation and Technical Assistance Committee and the Community Engagement Committee.
7. Staff will accept any by-law changes through mid-November so if any changes are recommended at the December meeting can be considered.

Chair Matthews asked Executive Director Estes if the action items outlined seem feasible?

Executive Director stated the priority is the development of the Framework in ensuring it is ADA compliant and accessible on-line to ensure communities can access the work produced. There may be a delay on the exploration of an Open House.

***Agenda Item #6: Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda***

Commissioner Wright thanked Executive Director Larissa Estes and the Staff for all of their hard work and the Commission. California is setting the standard in equity. This is a proud moment to move forward to ensure all Californians have a voice.

Chair Matthews echoed the same sentiments. He asked that those who are present give Dr. Estes and the Staff a round of applause.

***Meeting Adjournment***

Meeting adjourned by common consent at 1:59 PM.