

To: Community Engagement Committee
Cc: Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director, Racial Equity Commission
Re: Proposed Community Engagement Plan – December 19, 2024

Background

To date, the California Racial Equity Commission (Commission) and staff have hosted or participated in events for a variety of communities and sectors including but not limited to San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, Delano, Lamont, Oakland, Martinez, Sacramento, Indian Wells, Monterey, Bakersfield, El Centro, Fresno, and Yuba City. Through a series of conference panels, webinars, and other presentation opportunities, information about the Commission has been shared via regional, state, and national networks including but not limited to the Workforce, Child Welfare, Area Regional Centers (Individuals living with Special Abilities), Planners, Philanthropy, United Way Network, Behavioral Health Centers, and Academia.



Figure 1 Community Meet-n-Greet in Lamont, CA (2024)

Committee members received a brief outlining proposed best practices and recommendations for developing and implementing a community engagement plan at the September 17, 2024 Committee Meeting. The [brief was developed by Vital Research, \(LLC\)](#) in partnership with Commission staff. Committee members also received a “Community Engagement Brief” and “Community Engagement Plan” from the California Racial Equity Coalition (formerly known as the SB 17 Coalition).

Commission staff reviewed all documents and conducted additional research to develop the following Community Engagement Plan to implement with the purpose of engaging community to inform the development of the Racial Equity Framework. In the development of the plan, particular detail was paid to staff capacity, financial constraints, and feasibility for ensuring meaningful and intentional engagement.

Proposed Community Engagement Plan

Community Engagement Purpose

The purpose of the Community Engagement Plan is to guide the Commission and staff in its outreach efforts to ensure communities throughout California have an opportunity to learn about the efforts of the Commission and position those communities to inform the development of the Racial Equity Framework. The Commission is committed to building relationships with community that build trust, support civic engagement, and provide an ongoing connection to the work of the Commission. The plan may evolve and shift upon the development of the framework to further the model on how to authentically and intentionally engage community.

Spectrum of Community Engagement

The Commission will apply the Spectrum of Community Engagement framework to inform its efforts (Fig 2.). The Commission recognizes that the charge and scope of the Commission does not include Level 5 or “Defer to” and thus would not be applied in our efforts. The Community Engagement Plan centers the need to develop ongoing and recurring touch points with community and trusted organizations to build trust, communication and collaboration.



Figure 2 Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership

Community Engagement Strategy

***Phase I - Community Meet-n-Greets, Listening Sessions, Public Meetings
 (Inform, Consult, Involve)
 ONGOING***

Community Meet-n-Greets

The Commission will continue to host Community Meet-n-Greets, Listening Sessions, and Public Meetings throughout California. The Community Meet-n-Greets will be curated in partnership with local community organizations that directly engage residents. To identify community partners in the regions we travel to, we will work with the Administration’s External Affairs Office, Commissioners, and the Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications. We will identify any language and accessibility needs to ensure that residents are able to attend and participate. Commission staff will work with the local community organization to determine the best outreach strategy for Commission-related events. Community Meet-n-Greets will take place

in the late afternoon and early evenings and will last no longer than two (2) hours. The Commission is currently exploring how partner organizations may be funded to ensure residents in attendance have access to stipends, childcare, refreshments, and other supports to ensure equitable participation in Commission events and activities.

The Meet-n-Greet program will continue to be developed in partnership with local community organizations. When available, no more than two (2) Commissioners will attend each event and Commissioners in attendance will be invited to provide brief reflections while Commission staff will provide an overview of the Commission’s charge. The Meet-n-Greet will also feature local community program(s) with an equity focus and small and large group interactive discussions. Through the discussion, the Commission will learn more about the experiences of community including assets, challenges, and opportunities. We will have a detailed notetaker available to help capture the conversation. This visual translation of the event will allow participants to immediately see how their voices and experiences are captured. Experiences and wisdom shared by community will be noted in a summary report to be shared with the Commission and public. Commission staff will work diligently to reflect on the experiences of community to inform the development of the framework. Specifically, staff will explore and provide guidance on strategies that support agencies, departments, boards, and commissions with strengthening their respective engagement strategies to ensure their programs and initiatives are adequately informed by and developed in collaboration with community. Commission staff will work with subject matter experts and the Commissioners to make sure the wisdom and experiences of community inform strategies and opportunities to advance racial equity.

To date, our Community Meet-n-Greets have been well attended, with 75-100 attendees per Meet-n-Greet. We cultivate a participatory culture and engage with cultural humility. We have allowed ourselves flexibility in “reading the room” and “understanding the pulse” of what communities are experiencing and pivot the program and activities accordingly. For example, at a listening session this fall, the community wanted to speak about its challenges rather than its assets. We



Figure 3 Community Meet-n-Greet in Riverside, CA (2024)

We followed the cues of the community members in attendance and created space for what they wanted to talk about. While imperfect, the Commission and its staff have learned a lot to ensure events are inclusive and accessible. We self-evaluate our efforts internally and in partnership with community so that lessons learned can be applied in future programming.

Listening Sessions

We are currently exploring the use of Listening Sessions in partnership with other state or local government advisory bodies or councils who also engage diverse populations throughout California and have a similar interest and charge. These Listening Sessions will be similarly developed and implemented like the Community Meet-n-Greets. On October 22, 2024, the Commission partnered with the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA) to host a Listening Session in Yuba City centering the Sikh Community. The Commission is in the process of planning another listening session in partnership with CAPIAA and the Commission on the State of Hate in Fresno on December 4, 2024.

Public Meetings



Figure 4 Commissioner Maldonado and Residents during a Community Meet-n-Greet in Los Angeles (2024)

The Commission and its staff are committed to traveling to diverse communities and regions throughout the state. To date, staff have engaged in events, meetings and activities including San Bernardino, [Riverside](#), Los Angeles, Delano, [Lamont](#), [Oakland](#), Martinez, Sacramento, Indian Wells, Monterey, Bakersfield, El Centro, Fresno, and Yuba City. We are planning to travel to Imperial County, Monterey/Salinas, Klamath/Weed, and Sacramento for our full Commission meetings in 2025. When feasible, we will look to leverage the in-person locations for our virtual Commission meetings to host further Community Meet-n-Greets with additional communities throughout the

state, including but not limited to the Central Coast, East of the Sierras, San Diego region, and other regions.

All public meetings that are subject to the Bagley-Keene Act will be publicly posted no less than 10 days in advance of the meeting on our website and through public notice in our newsletter. Meetings subject to the Bagley-Keene Act will be livestreamed through Zoom and YouTube, and recordings will be available on YouTube and on our Commission Website. As noted previously, language access services will be offered for in-person and virtual participants as requested or as identified by local community partners.

Digital Engagement Strategy

To ensure our engagement is representative of the diversity within California, the Commission aims to hear from more community members beyond in-person events. The Commission staff will work with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) External Affairs & Communications team to develop a communications plan to support outreach on social media

and through existing networks in each community the Commission visits. The communications plan will include a digital strategy that centers its outreach on the diverse audiences in California by leveraging new social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat which were previously not used by LCI. Expanding the platforms through which we conduct outreach allows us to meet people with digital access where they are at. In addition, the Commission will explore initial steps for developing surveys that will be distributed in-person at various Meet-n-Greets, Listening Sessions, and across social media platforms, to help develop best practices around engagement. To ensure the accessibility of engagement (in-person and online), the Commission will explore community compensation strategies for surveys and other outreach methods. The Commission will also explore finding a consultant/contractor to support with community engagement strategies as needed. To maintain that the Commission's engagement practices are accessible to communities on the other side of the digital divide, it will work in partnership with local community organizations to identify and utilize culturally appropriate forms of communication. This includes, but is not limited to, radio, television, newspaper, and SMS communications, etc.

***Phase II – Community Roadshow with Framework
(Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate)
Summer 2025***

Upon the development of an outline for the Racial Equity Framework, the Commission and staff will leverage planning and outreach strategies outlined in ***Phase I*** and return to communities to report back how their shared wisdom and experiences have been reflected in the framework. The Roadshow will allow community to participate in reflecting to the Commission if their perspectives were adequately captured. This may come in the form of publicly noticed in-person and virtual workshops or conversations with communities. As an interactive process, the Roadshow will provide the chance for Commissioners and staff to collaborate with community to explore together how the framework could be improved.

***Phase III – Public Comment Period
(Involve, Consult)
Fall 2025***

The Commission staff is proposing a 30-day Comment Period for community residents, organizations, and others with a vested interest to review and provide holistic comments on a fully drafted Racial Equity Framework. As part of that Public Comment period, the Commission would establish an evaluation tool to better understand what worked in engagement efforts and opportunities for improvement. The evaluation tool would measure the Commission's transition from community engagement related to informing the development of the framework, to ongoing community engagement that highlights efforts to implement the framework, stories of impact, and continuing to learn about the evolving needs of community.

***Phase IV – Ongoing Community Engagement
(Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate)
January 2026 – June 2030***

Upon the Commission’s approval of the Racial Equity Framework, the Commission will continue to engage community on a quarterly basis. These engagements will help to ensure community is aware of the Framework and how it can be applied to advance racial equity and create opportunities for the Commission to continue learning from community. The final Framework will be shared with community, and it will emphasize how their wisdom and lived experiences were incorporated. The goal is to continue to help community identify and engage in public discourse on issues that are important to them. Upon the completion of the Framework, the Commission will establish an action plan to continue to build and sustain trust with key community organizations and residents throughout California. This action plan will integrate additional best practices, tools and methodologies for Community Engagement in alignment with the Framework. Ongoing feedback loops and evaluation opportunities will be integrated into this phase to allow for quality improvement on the Commission’s efforts to engage communities effectively and with intention.

This plan was developed to ensure flexibility necessary to meet challenges such as logistical obstacles, language barriers, accessibility needs, staff constraints, and budget challenges. The Commission is very aware of the evolving socio-cultural context surrounding efforts with communities and is committed to ensuring the existing work in communities continues. Implementing the Spectrum in alignment with the Community Engagement plan creates a natural connection point for community organizations to reach out for technical assistance and guidance for connecting with existing state government initiatives and programming to support needs at the local level. In addition, the Commission staff is exploring strategies to connect local community organizations to fiscal sponsorship opportunities to mitigate and reduce the barriers experienced by community residents as they seek to participate in this civic engagement opportunity with the Commission.

Measurable Goals and Outcomes

- Host at least four (4) Community Meet-n-Greets and/or Listening Sessions in calendar year 2025.
- Return to at least 60 percent of communities visited from January 2024-June 2025 to share back what the Commission has learned and how it has been integrated or considered in the development of the Racial Equity Framework.
- Identify and develop recommendations to the Commission, through Committee meetings and regular reports, to address barriers to community participation in Commission activities and events.
- Develop an evaluation tool to evaluate the Commission’s community engagement efforts and support continuous improvement.

- Develop and implement a Community Engagement action plan for the Commission in alignment with the Racial Equity Framework.
- Disseminate summaries from Community Meet-n-Greets and/or Listening Sessions through the Commission website and newsletter within 30 days of the event conclusion. Summaries shall detail the wisdom and experience of community, reach of the event, and partnership with local community organizations.
- Work with local community organizations to identify accessibility needs of community and inform the development of a community engagement strategy at least 30 days prior to each event or activity to ensure those needs for transportation, refreshments, childcare services, etc. are met.
- Assess and identify language translation services needed at least 21 days in advance of each Meet-n-Greet and/or Listening Session.
- Provide at least quarterly reports to the Community Engagement Committee on the progress of the above plan.

Next Steps

- Plan consideration and approval
 - Community Engagement Committee reviews and considers proposed plan at the December 19, 2024 Committee meeting.
 - Present proposed plan to full Commission for consideration at the December 19, 2024 Commission meeting.
 - The next scheduled opportunity for Committee consideration of a proposed plan would be May 2025 and Full Commission consideration would be June 2025. The Committee may request a virtual meeting be scheduled in January or February 2025 to consider the plan prior to the March 20, 2025 Commission meeting.
- Plan implementation
 - Commission staff execute plan January 2025 – December 2025, including providing updates at the May and September 2025 Committee meetings.
 - Commission staff will follow up with Committee to discuss iterations to the plan as the Commission moves into the Racial Equity Framework implementation and dissemination phase, and to ensure compliance with its statutory requirement for ongoing Community Engagement.
 - Commission staff will pursue additional fundraising and contracting opportunities to support additional Community Engagement activities.



Staff Recommendation to the Committee

Staff recommend the approval of the proposed plan with flexibility to allow for adjustments during the Commission outreach and engagement. Recommendations and specific direction from the Committee and/or full Commission on implementation, staff capacity, financial constraints, and feasibility will be integrated as appropriate.