

Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE)

Executive Director's Report to the General Membership

Time Frame: November 8, 2024-February 20, 2025

Submitted by: Elizabeth Gordon, Executive Director

Executive Order 24-05: GCDE led the work on rewriting Executive Order (EO) 24-05. This Executive Order, "Improving Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities in State Government", focuses on making Washington state government an employer of choice for people with disabilities. This EO was written by, for, and with people with disabilities (both within and outside of state government), in partnership with other state agencies and state leaders. It was a long-time project that was finally signed in December of 2024, and implementation started in January 2025. A few highlights from that EO are:

- Requires all state employees to take training on accessibility, including making accessible documents
- Requires all leaders and supervisors to take training in reasonable accommodation
- Requires state agencies to evaluate their progress toward hiring people with disabilities, and set goals to ensure that they have full representation in all levels of the state agency

The Executive Order got the attention of the National Governor's Association (NGA), who interviewed GCDE, and plans to highlight the work nationally.

Digital Equity Forum (DEF): Washington State Office of Equity, and Washington State Broadband Office, convene the DEF to work on the state's goal "to provide all residents access to high-speed broadband". The larger group meets monthly, with subcommittee meetings at least monthly, or more often based on work. I co-chair the Broadband Accessibility and Services Subcommittee, whose primary goal is to identify gaps in the system, and make recommendations for solutions. The group will make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature in late-2025. Digital Equity and Access was identified by GCDE members as a key issue in the pandemic, and in the years following the pandemic, which is why we have a seat at this council. This group focuses on the statewide plan and recommends funding for services.

Office of Equity Commission meetings: Representatives from the various Commissions and Committees meet with the Office of Equity monthly in a roundtable discussion of the work happening at each agency, and to have collaborative working space. Agencies represented include Commission on African American Affairs, Department of Veteran's Affairs, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, Women's Commission, Commission of Hispanic Affairs, LGBTQ Commission, and Commission on Asian Pacific Affairs. GCDE also participates.

Developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) Equity, Access, and Inclusion for All: This was a series of meetings with federal agencies, AI leaders, and the disability community, hosted by a partnership among the United States Access Board, the American Association of People with Disabilities, and the Center for

Democracy and Technology. The purpose was to hear from the disability community on the impacts of AI, and how its use impacts people with disabilities, both positively and negatively. Here is a link to a preliminary report from those sessions: [U.S. Access Board Presents Preliminary Findings on Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) for Disability Community and AI Practitioners](#). There was further work scheduled for this group in early February, which was postponed indefinitely. Washington State has a task force working in this space, and Elizabeth will be exploring ways to ensure that we are considering the needs of people with disabilities (both within and outside of state government) as we develop policy on this emerging technology.

Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities: Elizabeth attended their quarterly meeting. Proposed legislation would give GCDE a seat on this council. GCDE members identified the need to have a voice to address disparities that people with disabilities encounter in the healthcare setting. This is an important way for GCDE to have a voice to talk about health equity from a disability perspective. Link to website: [Home | Health Equity](#).

Legislative Session: Session began January 2025. To date, GCDE has reviewed more than 350 pieces of legislation, and has a short list of 19 bills identified as priorities for this session. Budget work will be ramping up after February 21st. Session ends in late April. Please see the spreadsheet included in your materials for more information on GCDE's legislative priorities.

Reasonable Accommodation (RA) Roundtable: GCDE coordinates the RA Roundtables in partnership with the Office of Financial Management, and the Attorney General's Office. The next Reasonable Accommodation Roundtable is scheduled for March. The purpose is to share Reasonable Accommodation Best Practices with practitioners across state agencies.

Statewide Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Council: Elizabeth attends the council meetings to represent people with disabilities, and workers with disabilities employed by the state. The group meets monthly. For more information, visit the website: [OFM State HR DEI Council](#).

Other activities Elizabeth participated in during this time frame:

- Attended the Annual Interagency Forum on Accessibility. The event focused on efforts internal to the federal government to support workers with disabilities.
- Attended the Disability-Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) Collaborative. This group focuses on emergency planning, and is convened by Department of Health. This is the group that activates in times of emergency, such as during a wildfire event, to ensure that folks with disabilities affected by the event get the supports that they need.
- Washington DeafBlind Consortium: this group works to eliminate barriers to collaboration between entities that serve the DeafBlind community.
- Directors' meetings: Directors of Washington State Rehabilitation Council, Developmental Disabilities Council, Washington State Independent Living Council, Washington School to Work Coordination Board, and Arc of Washington meet monthly to support and learn about each other's work.

- Schedule A hiring: Partnership initiated by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) business services to identify ways to implement measures to streamline hiring of people with disabilities into state positions.
- Office cleaning: GCDE has an office, and several cubicles, at the Maple Park Building in Olympia. We have been asked to shrink our footprint there, since we have been on telework status for a couple of years. Staff has gathered at the office several times to get rid of old files, papers, brochures, books, unneeded supplies, etc. The goal is to finish this work by the end of this fiscal year. Unneeded items are sent to surplus to be repurposed or sold.
- Some national meetings have been cancelled that we typically attend such as the US Access Board, and National Disability Council meetings.