

Draft Thoughts on Listening Sessions for the Governor's Council on Diversity & Inclusion / 2/20/2018

Executive Order 2017-09 states that in its first year, the Governor's Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion "shall host a series of community forums across the State to take public input and suggestions on issues within the Council's charge." Such forums have been described as "listening sessions."

In order to come to agreement on how to execute the above charge, the Council will likely want to consider the basic questions of why, what, who, where and when. In short, it will need to consider:

- Why are we hosting these sessions?
- What will the format of these sessions look like?
- Who are these sessions targeting?
- Where and when will these forums be held?

The below are some preliminary thoughts on how the Council might go about answering these questions. While the Council specifically asked for thoughts on the anticipated listening session at UNH on March 8th, the below may be useful to the Council as it begins to discuss a broader framework for these sessions over the coming year.

WHY? Why is the Council hosting these sessions and why should participants want to attend?

The Council needs to:

- Expose ourselves to stories, experiences, & multiple lenses.
- Identify opportunities to address systemic inequity in communities around the state
- Listen & bear witness
- Find a process that leads to key themes & recommendations that are achievable and impactful
- Achieve legitimacy & credibility
- Develop a foundation to build on
- Achieve new insights into unknown challenges & things going-on "underground"

Attendees should get:

- An idea of the scope of the Council & its the authority to act
- Coffee & Tea
- Clarity
- Hope
- A sense of care & investment conveyed by the Council
- Humility expressed by the Council
- Multiple avenues to give voice (i.e. written testimony, conversation opportunities, laptops setup, etc.)

What? --What process should the Council use to conduce listening sessions?

The listening sessions' framework needs to be structured to be inclusive and to maximize engagement of all participants, without creating insurmountable logistical burdens.

A general agenda for the listening sessions could include:

- A Statement of Welcome & Purpose from the Council
- Small group discussions with recorders & facilitators
- Opportunity for larger group testimony
- Closing

The framework described above could also include opportunities for real-time written, audio, and video participation, with minimal technological lift. (This might include computers in the back of the room.)

WHO? – Who are the listening sessions targeting? Generally & UNH specific

The Council will need to consider whom we are targeting when we invite folks to address issues related to diversity and inclusion. Such identities might include, but are not limited to:

<i>GENERAL SESSION TARGETS</i>	<i>UNH SPECIFIC</i>
LGBTQI communities members Immigrants Residents of Color Students Families Police Allies Faith Communities People w/ Disabilities Socio-Economically disadvantaged Mental and Behavioral Health Advocates	Durham Families Youth LGBTQ on the Seacoast Seacoast Residents Immigrants in the Seacoast (Indian, Indonesian, others) UNH Students UNH Faculty, Staff, administration

WHERE & WHEN? Potential State Areas & Local Partners for Listening Sessions

Listening Sessions need to be representative of communities statewide and they need to be accessible to as many NH communities as possible. It would be helpful to communities if the Council were able to announce the locations and dates/times for several of these listening sessions at once. This will give communities confidence that we are taking our statewide charge seriously.

Note: Local partners are not just physical hosts. The hope is that actively engaging local partners in designing and promoting listening sessions will help make the sessions more inclusive and productive. There was agreement that Community Colleges may be effective partners in multiple communities.

Suggestions for locations and some potential partners for future listening sessions include:

Early Sessions:

Manchester (YWCA, Police, Families in Transition, Granite State Organizing Project)
 Nashua (One Greater Nashua, Gate City Immigrants Initiative)
 Seacoast
 UNH – March 8th

Other Regional Sessions

Concord (NHTI, New American Africans)
 Lakes (Laconia)
 Monadnock
 Upper Valley
 North Country

Mt. Washington Valley

Other Education Institutions

Plymouth State
 Keene State
 SNHU
 Dartmouth