Housing WA. ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Washington State OFFICE OF EQUITY

Washington For All

Megan Matthews, Director
Washington State Office of Equity

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2026

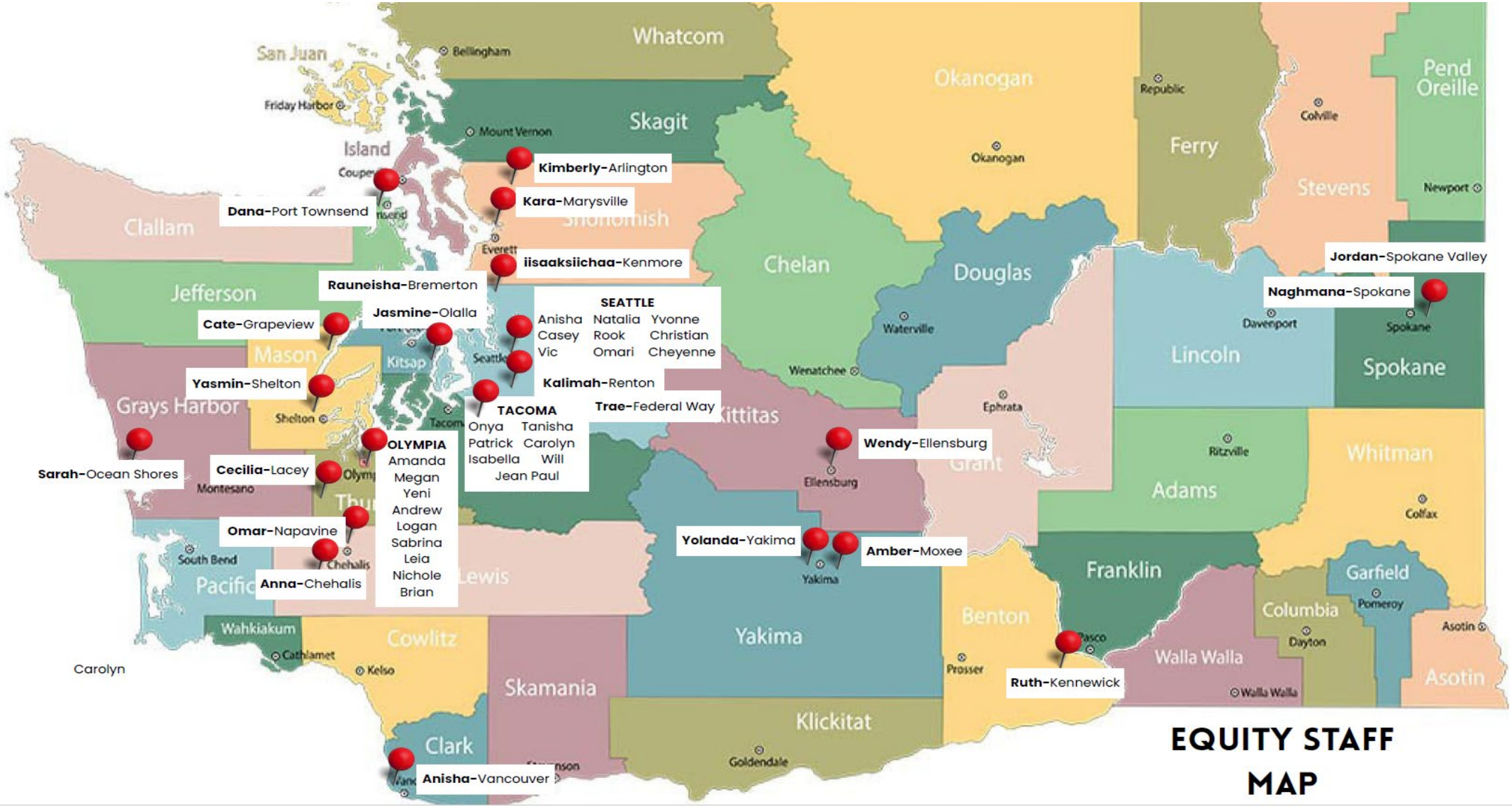
About Megan



Meet the Team



State Representation



Washington State Office of Equity

VISION: Everyone in Washington has full access to the opportunities, power, and resources they need to flourish and achieve their full potential.

MISSION: Facilitate policy and systems change to promote fair access to opportunities, power, and resources that reduce disparities and improve outcomes across the state.



Chapter 43.06D RCW

Office of Equity Timeline



2019: Task Force



2020: Legislation



2021: First Staff



2026: Maturing

Equity Today

Let’s Talk About It

How We Talk About Equity

Say what you mean and use everyday language

Example: The Office of Equity believes state government should serve everyone, not some, all.

Example: The Office of Equity helps change the way government operates so we meet the needs of everyone in Washington.

Practice Time

Take 5-10 minutes to think and jot down and practice how you can more plainly talk about your work.

Would Anyone Like to Share?

Learning Together

How We Do the Work

Move from talking about concepts to implementing the change.

What does it mean to change systems?

First things first: Can you describe your system?

Thoughts on the System at the State

- Roughly 75,000 state employees
- Focus on quick results and appearance of fairness
- Risk averse to legal challenge or negative publicity
- Siloed systems and decision-making
- Lots of turn over especially at decision-making levels
- Change takes a long time
- Mandates through the Governor, Legislature, and Judicial System

Practice Time

Take 15 minutes to think about and write how the system operates within your environment. Do you know?

Would Anyone Like to Share?

Learning Together

How Can You Nudge Your System?

There will never be enough of money or people

If you know how the system is structured, you can figure out how you can nudge it towards equity

Think bigger than training and strategic plans (though these may be part of the approach)

Don’t get distracted, keep focused on the system- if you’re not thinking at the systems level, no one is

Making Systems Change Real at the State



Establishing new mandates



Accountability through data



New systems through new models



Leading the change

Practice Time

Take 15 minutes to think about a way you can change one system in your sphere of control.

Would Anyone Like to Share?

Learning Together

Some Final Thoughts



This work is hard; it's full of conflict.

Nothing is given; you must be smart.

Develop allies & partners who can help you meet your goals.

Eat the elephant one bite at a time.

Focus on outcomes, not activities.

Take time for your mental and emotional well-being.

You are not alone; You got this!

Resources

Targeted Universalism

Targeted Universalism | Equity Learning Series – YouTube

Washington for All

Guidance to Agencies 2025 | Office of Equity (March 2025)

Federal Memo Guidance: Exec Summary (September 2025)

Federal Memo Guidance (September



OFFICE OF EQUITY

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