



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Ag Development & Resource Conservation**



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

860-713-2501
CTGrown.gov

**Connecticut Department of Agriculture Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group
Access to Education and Training**

Regular Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, August 11, 2021
2:30-4:00PM
Held Virtually via WebEx Platform

Members Present: Luis Vega, Lauren Little, Xochitl Ahtziri, Azeem Zakir Kareem, Tamika McPhail, Ana Legrand, James Dombroski, Héctor Gerardo, Erica Fearn, Kimberly Acosta
Members Absent: Robert Peck, Shuresh Ghimire
DoAg Staff: Cyrena Thibodeau, Alissa Dragan
Public Present: Ashley Stallworth

1. **Welcome & Call to Order-** Meeting was called to order by Cyrena Thibodeau at 2:40 PM. Cyrena explained that all Working Group meetings are public & discussed rules for recording, posting, etc.
2. **Group Introductions-** Meeting participants introduced themselves and their organization/affiliation.
3. **New Business**
 - a. **Community Agreements-** Cyrena discussed the community agreements and introduced the group to the Working Group Document and its components. There was a brief discussion about adding items to the Community Agreements if the workgroup wished to. It was noted that all workgroup members should be mindful of differences in personal upbringings and that we are all from different backgrounds with different life experiences. Workgroup members should come to the forum with love and love one another within the meeting space.
 - b. **Presentation and discussion with DoAG on existing programs and purpose/task of topic group-** Cyrena gave an overview of the CT Department of Agriculture and it's programs, Alissa spoke briefly about Aquaculture. The presentation serves as an introduction to the various components of Agriculture that the workgroup may wish to focus on. There was a brief discussion of including other organizations outside of the agency that might be resources as part of the focus.
 - c. **Future Meetings: dates, length, documents/organization-** The Working Group Document was gone over in more detail. There was a discussion about maintaining a Google Document for members to contribute, edit, and provide input on the workable recommendations.
Group discussed whether to continue using WebEx or a different meeting platform. Hector offered use of his Zoom account. The next meeting will not occur until after the next Main Working Group Meeting on 8/23/2021, it was decided to use a poll to pinpoint a date and time. The presentation, Working Group document, and recording of meeting will be available on the DoAG website.
The floor was opened to comments:
 - How can the workgroup members be assured that a two-way relationship is being built, rather than the Department extracting information from the community for it's own

use/purposes? The Agency has a strong desire to collaborate with a larger goal than just producing a report. Agency outcome goals include relationship building within the state's BIPOC community, farmers and their networks, sharing our resources, information, and support, and incorporating the BIPOC communities' concerns and ideas into policy.

- Concerns about accountability were raised and it was noted that there is no mechanism to hold the Agency accountable. The community cannot typically count on established institutions to make large changes. While there is a desire to make meaningful policy changes, it might be up to the group members to learn from the workgroups to use that knowledge and the organizational framework to make changes at the grassroots level.

4. **Public Comment-** No public comments

5. **Next Steps-** a poll will be created to set up the next meeting date, to be held after 8/23/21. Cyrena will share the Workgroup member contacts so everyone can connect as needed.

6. **Adjourn-** Meeting was adjourned at 4:10 PM by Cyrena Thibodeau

Respectfully submitted by Alissa Dragan, Environmental Analyst II, August 16, 2021