



Thursday, January 13, 2022

City of Olympia Social Justice and Equity Commission Application

Advisory committees are a structured way for community members to share their opinions and points of view, study issues, and develop recommendations in a focused small group to the Olympia City Council.

Commissioners will be tasked with aligning the Commission work plan to elevate the voices, perspectives, and needs of marginalized community members; mediation and investigation of discrimination and harassment complaints; studying issues; hearing public testimony; independent research; and reviewing staff reports and recommendations. The Commission will also prepare, discuss, put together and forward well-developed recommendations to the City Council.

Appointment to the Commission requires living or working within Olympia City limits.

The City of Olympia values participation from all perspectives and life experiences and looks for equity and inclusion in advisory commission appointments. The Olympia City Council's General Government Committee recommends appointments to the full Council. Recommendations are made following review of applications and interviews of qualified candidates.

To reduce barriers to community member participation the City offers stipends of \$25 per meeting attended to advisory commission members. Members who certify as low income are eligible to receive stipends of \$50 per meeting attended. Advisory commission members may waive the stipend upon request.

The City of Olympia is committed to the non-discriminatory treatment of all persons in employment and the delivery of services and resources. The City can provide reasonable accommodation for anyone who needs it to participate fully in the commission.

For questions, please contact Susan Grisham, Assistant to the City Manager, 360.753.8244, sgrisham@ci.olympia.wa.us

Name

Omar Santana-Gomez

Appointment to the Commission requires living or working within Olympia City limits. Do you:

Live in Olympia

Work in Olympia

Email Address

[Redacted]

Home Address

[Redacted]

Work Address

[Redacted]

Select the neighborhood where you live or work (whichever is applicable):

Other

If you choose other please write in the neighborhood here:

City limits, apartment complex near mall



View a larger, zoomable map here:

https://www.olympiawa.gov/community/neighborhood_associations/index.php

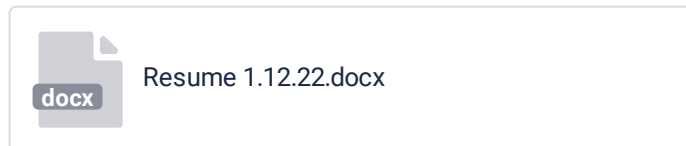
Primary Phone Number



Interests & Experiences

Please keep answers concise and informative. You are introducing yourself to the Olympia City Council and sharing with them why you are interested in being considered for appointment. You may attach a resume.

Attach a Resume



Why are you interested in serving on the Social Justice and Equity Commission?

I am interested in serving on the Social Justice and Equity Commission because the purpose of the Commission not only aligns with the current work I do for the WA DOH it also aligns with me on a personal level. The work to eliminate racism not only in Olympia but throughout Washington is the job of everyone. We all have a part to play, whether it is actively calling out systems of oppression and working to tear them down or benefitting from these systems and enabling them to persist. While it is difficult to work within these systems that were created by people that did not have my interests in mind it is a necessity to break them down. I work everyday in an attempt to dismantle systems of oppression while at the same time surrounded by people who reinforce them. It is exhausting, but necessary. I do this work hopelessly optimistic that things will continue to get better.

What is your understanding of, or experience in, issues related to social justice, human rights, racial and/or other forms of discrimination?

My current work is dealing with systems change within the healthcare system. The systems around us are inherently racist, sexist, homophobic. They were built by and for largely by white cis men so within that framework it is hard for diversity, equity, and inclusion to exist. I see social justice and the ongoing fight for human rights as the tool to combat the oppression that is deeply engrained in our society. Before the joining the Department of Health I was within the Washington State LGBTQ Commission as a project manager. Our focus was on bettering the lives of LGBTQ Washingtonians. My work included advocating for or against legislation, working to build connections between state entities and outside community organization and letting LGBTQ members of our communities know what their rights are. An important aspect of doing this work is knowing that we all hold multiple identities that in turn guide us through society. Some identities come with privilege while others can work against us. Understanding the intersectionality of our identities is important because we need to be able to understand when we need to take up space and when we need to back up and elevate voices that are not being heard.

What lived experiences or skill sets would you bring to the Commission?

As a queer person of color I feel I bring a lived experience that can offer a different lens to the work the Commission will be doing. While I understand we have procedures and bureaucracy to follow I try and push as much as I can get away with for innovative and creative solutions to problems. I have a history of work that has touched on a array of different communities and organizations. I have worked as an advocate for survivors of domestic violence, for the State as an advocate for LGBTQ Washingtonians, and currently to better healthcare access to historically underserved communities. With the experience and leadership experience I bring I also love working collaboratively in a team and am always up for learning.

Describe a time when you experienced a personal bias and how you worked through that bias; or describe a time when you worked with someone with different viewpoints than yours and how you worked through those differences?

I will describe working with someone with different viewpoints. I feel that working for a state agency I work with a lot of people with different viewpoints than myself. Doing equity work at the state I have learned that while on paper we strive for DEI, we aim for having a diverse workforce; that isn't the case beyond written statements. We talk a big game but being surrounded by mainly white cis folks at work, I and even they will say how we lack diversity in our workforce. As the DEI head for my division I am running into plenty of people who have differing viewpoints. The way I am working through differences is meeting people where they are. One of the unfortunate side effects of privilege is being unaware of things that don't affect you. Patience and understanding of where someone is coming from is so important to working through differences. There does need to be a shared understanding of open mindedness so we can grow and learn from each other, if we can agree on that then there is hope for change. That is generally my approach.

Describe what a "just and equitable Olympia for all people" looks or feels like to you and how would you include all marginalized people into this vision.

When talking about change within a big system, such as Olympia as a whole it is important to not leave people out of the conversation. When we put on townhalls or create committees for example, it is easy to go to our usual connections and list serves to reach organizations that have the capacity to join in the work. We need to begin to break down these usual ways of doing things and actively include people from marginalized communities. One big piece that we are talking about in my current position is how to equitably include these communities in our work. The idea right now is making sure we are able to compensate or reimburse people for their time and energy. When we say we want to include marginalized communities we need to take into account that these communities will need additional resources to participate. Taking into account, not everyone works a 8-5 job, not everyone can take time off of work, taking into account childcare needs. This is to say that including these communities involves more effort than just inviting them. It is when we include these voices that have historically been left out of conversations that we can work towards an Olympia that is just and equitable for all people.

Appointment to the Commission will require your attendance at evening meetings, and other types of work (reading, meeting preparation etc.). How many hours per month are you willing to commit as a volunteer?

I could commit anywhere from 3-6 hours per Month. Depending on commitments for the position I could do more.

Thank you for your interest in serving on a the City of Olympia Social Justice and Equity Commission!

OMAR SANTANA



SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience as a project grant manager, able to manage concurrent projects independently.
- Experience Managing and Supervising personnel and overseeing project implementation and completion
- Highly organized and able to both work independently and in group settings successfully.
- Combined four years of experience providing services to Domestic Violence Survivors and their families. Comfortable with conflict and confrontation and able to diffuse situations diplomatically.
- Over five years of experience working with underserved populations, both in direct service advocacy and systems changes such as legislative work and agency rule making.
- Experience leading and implementing programs to educate groups about disparities in marginalized communities such as the LGBTQ and non-English speaking communities.
- Excel in developing strong connections and partnerships with a wide variety of organizations and agencies.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills developed through previous classes and trainings, native Spanish speaker.

EDUCATION

- Saint Martin's University, Lacey, WA Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology and Cultural Anthropology Graduated May 2015
- Centralia College, Centralia, WA Associates of Arts Degree Graduated June 2012

EXPERIENCE

October 2021 – Present: Equity and Social Justice Manager, Washington State Department of Health

- Program management
- Building and Delivering DEI related trainings agency wide
- Strategic planning around addressing root causes of systemic inequities and social determinants of health
- Assist in a wide variety of Division led projects to provide equity lens on the work already being done
- Working with Division, Agency, and HR leadership on best practices around hiring with DEI in mind
- Continually building relationships throughout the agency in an effort to collaborate on meaningful/sustainable DEI initiatives
- Data collection and review to guide DEI work

December 2019 – September 2021: Program Manager, LGBTQ Commission

- Maintaining commission social media presence
- Scheduling meetings with other state agency's or outside stake holders
- Manage and Coordinate Commission Interns
- Organizing commission meetings/town halls
- Subject matter expert to other state agencies in the area of LGBTQ issues.
- Conduct legislative research to advance laws to protect LGBTQ community
- Connect State agencies with trainings in the areas of LGBTQ competency
- Represent the Commission and Director at events and stakeholder meetings

May 2016 - February 2018: Domestic Violence Case and Resource Specialist

- Monitor compliance of respondents in domestic violence cases with court ordered treatment.
- Act as a liaison between parties and service providers, and other community providers in domestic violence cases.
- Conduct required orientation sessions with parties in cases involving children.
- Advise court officials and staff on domestic violence trainings and secure funding.
- Manages domestic violence grant funds in accordance with grant requirements.
- Attend regular meetings of community partners involved in domestic violence cases as a representative of the court.
- Maintains contact with national technical assistance providers to ensure best practices in the area of domestic violence.
- Manage multiple projects involving court policies, and community organizations

March 2015 - May 2016 Legal Advocacy Specialist, SafePlace

- Direct advocacy services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Train SafePlace personnel and volunteers on how to best provide legal advocacy
- Coordinate with Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services to organize attorney-client