



City of Olympia Boards and Commissions Committee Application

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Friday, December 13th at 5:00 PM PST

Advisory committees are a structured way for individual community members to share their opinions and perspectives, study issues, and develop recommendations in a focused small group. Their primary purpose is to provide judicious advice, from a community member's perspective, to the Olympia City Council.

Committee activities may include study of critical issues, hearing public testimony, independent research, and reviewing staff reports and recommendations - all of which is intended so that the committee is prepared to discuss, formulate, and forward well-developed, thoughtful recommendations to the City Council in a timely manner.

The City of Olympia values participation from all perspectives and life experiences and looks for equity and inclusion in advisory board appointments.

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

The Olympia City Council's Community Livability and Public Safety Committee recommends appointments to the full Council. Recommendations are made following review of applications and interviews of qualified candidates.

All of this careful consideration takes time, please be aware that you will not be notified until February of 2025 of any next steps in the process.

The City of Olympia is committed to the non-discriminatory treatment of all persons in employment and the delivery of services and resources. Questions? Contact Dawn Carvalho, Executive Services Assistant, 360.753.8065, dcarvalh@ci.olympia.wa.us

If you saved or submitted an application and did not receive a confirmation, please check your spam folder. When filed with the City, your application and attachment documents are public records and may be subject to public release.

Name	Caesar Plasencia
Email	[REDACTED]
Primary Phone Number	[REDACTED]
Address	[REDACTED]

Some appointments require that applicants reside within Olympia city limits. Even though your mailing address may be Olympia, you may reside in the County or another jurisdiction. Are you a resident of the City of Olympia?

No

Select your residential area (Olympia residency is not required; however, it is a primary consideration.)

Other

If you choose other please write in your area:

Rochester is a census designated area. It is where I live.

Which Boards and Commissions would you like to apply for?

Social Justice and Equity Commission

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



Plasencia^J C - Resume Octpdf

Briefly describe why you wish to serve on this/these Advisory Committee(s).

I wish to serve on the Social Equity Advisory Board to actively contribute to building a more inclusive and equitable community. Through my studies in public administration, I have developed a strong understanding of policy's role in addressing social inequities and bridging gaps in access, representation, and opportunity. My work with veterans and commitment to community service have given me firsthand insight into the challenges that underserved populations face and the importance of equitable policies in addressing them.

While I'm early in my career, I am eager to apply what I've learned and gain hands-on experience in promoting meaningful change. I believe my perspective, grounded in public service values and informed by recent academic study, would allow me to support initiatives that reflect and serve the diverse needs of our community.

Describe your experience, qualifications, and/or skills which would benefit the advisory committee(s) you are applying to.

I bring a unique combination of skills, experiences, and insights that I believe would benefit the Social Equity Advisory Board. With a Master's in Public Administration, my education has equipped me with a solid foundation in policy analysis, community engagement, and the mechanics of local government—key areas for promoting effective equity initiatives.

My ten years working with veterans gave me extensive experience in direct service and advocacy, where I observed and addressed the complex needs of underserved populations. This work fostered my skills in empathetic communication, problem-solving, and navigating bureaucratic systems to help individuals access the resources they deserve. Additionally, my time in the Marines strengthened my commitment to service and resilience, qualities that drive me to seek impactful, equitable solutions.

Though I am still early in my career, I am eager to contribute to the board with fresh ideas and a strong

dedication to learning. I am confident that my background in public service, combined with a strong interest in developing meaningful social equity policies, would enable me to support the board's efforts effectively.

Share the ways you've been involved or have volunteered in the community.

My community involvement has largely centered on supporting veterans and underserved groups, driven by a commitment to empathetic service and making a difference locally. For over ten years, I worked closely with veterans, helping them navigate challenges in accessing resources and adapting to civilian life. This experience not only allowed me to advocate for a population with unique needs but also instilled in me a deep understanding of the barriers many face in securing equitable treatment and opportunities.

Additionally, my time in the Marines serving in diplomatic security roles fostered a sense of civic responsibility that I've carried forward into my career. I have continued to support community causes that promote inclusion and access, aligning with my current work in local government and public administration. Each experience has strengthened my dedication to service and reinforced my desire to contribute to equitable policies that empower all community members.

List your educational and/or professional background and area of study.

I am currently completing my Master's in Public Administration at the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University, focusing on local government. My educational path includes a dual degree in political science and psychology from Saint Martin's University, complemented by an Associate of Arts from South Puget Sound Community College. This academic foundation has given me insights into both governmental operations and human behavior, essential for understanding and addressing community needs.

Professionally, I bring over ten years of experience working directly with veterans, helping them navigate resources and advocating for their unique needs. Additionally, my five years in the Marines, where I served in diplomatic security, have instilled a strong sense of resilience, leadership, and public service. This combination of education and experience equips me with a balanced perspective and a commitment to advancing impactful, equity-centered initiatives within public administration.

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

Twelve hours a month. Three hours a week. More if needed, but only if I am available.

Question Applies to the Social Justice and Equity Commission: What is your understanding of, or experience in, issues related to social justice, human rights, racial and/or other forms of discrimination?

My mentor once explained that equity is about intentional unequal treatment for the sake of fairness. While equality suggests treating everyone the same, it often overlooks individual differences. Equity, by contrast, focuses on distributing goods and services based on specific individual or community needs.

For instance, if two children require support, the resources allocated to each may differ. One child may need more food due to their size to avoid malnutrition, while the other might thrive on three balanced meals daily. Proper allocation, therefore, might be adjusted to ensure each child receives what they truly need to succeed.

This principle of equity extends beyond the individual and ripples through entire communities. For example, children who lack proper nutrition may struggle in school, act out, or face increased risks, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantages. Under-resourced communities encounter these challenges more frequently than their affluent neighbors, and their children are often more vulnerable to compounding barriers like educational inequities and social stigmatization.

Consider this concept within the workforce: imagine a parent from an underserved community who hesitates to apply for a job, fearing their skills are inadequate. If municipal roles prioritized training and support for new hires rather than expecting them to perform perfectly from day one, cities might see improved job retention and higher application rates. Equity-focused hiring practices that recognize the

diversity of applicants' backgrounds can transform workforce dynamics, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their community.

Question Applies to the Social Justice and Equity Commission: What lived experiences or skill sets would you bring to the Commission?

I bring a blend of lived experiences and skill sets rooted in my time working with veterans, serving in the Marines, and pursuing public administration. For over a decade, I worked closely with veterans and their families, many from underserved backgrounds, helping them navigate access to healthcare, housing, and employment resources. This role deepened my understanding of the systemic barriers faced by marginalized groups and highlighted the importance of equitable policies that address unique needs.

In addition, my role in Medicaid oversight—focused on identifying and mitigating fraud, waste, and abuse—reinforced my dedication to ensuring that public resources reach those most in need. This work taught me to analyze complex systems and identify inefficiencies that can disproportionately impact vulnerable communities. It strengthened my commitment to fair and effective resource distribution, especially in programs critical to low-income individuals.

My experience in the Marines instilled resilience, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to service, all of which shape my approach to community work. Now, as I complete my Master's in Public Administration, I am building the tools to analyze policies critically, advocate for systemic improvements, and navigate the nuances of local government.

These experiences collectively provide me with a strong foundation in advocacy, deep empathy for underserved communities, and a commitment to developing policies that foster equity and inclusion. I am eager to bring this perspective to the Commission to support impactful, community-centered initiatives.

Question Applies to the Social Justice and Equity Commission: 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?

Working with veterans, you encounter a wide range of beliefs, viewpoints, and biases. However, the goal isn't to judge or challenge their perspectives; it's to assist them in navigating their needs. One example that stands out is from my time working as a liaison between the federal government and the State VA in the Federal building in downtown Seattle. A veteran came into my office, frustrated and using offensive language, referring to a colleague by saying, "that colored girl wouldn't answer any of my questions."

Before he could continue, I interrupted and said, "We don't use that language here. Her name is Sarah, and she's very good at her job. I won't be able to help you if this continues." It took a moment, but he realized I was serious and adjusted his tone. I answered his questions, and he remained cordial for the rest of our conversation. Later, I checked in on Sarah, who told me that the same individual had come by to apologize for his behavior.

Through experiences like this, I've learned the importance of setting respectful boundaries while still fulfilling my role. Even when others' beliefs and rhetoric oppose my own, I remind myself that my job is to ensure they can meet their basic needs. At the end of the day, differences only go so far before we all need a helping hand.

Question Applies to the Social Justice and Equity Commission: 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.

In a perfect Olympia, every community member would have access to affordable housing; the food bank would no longer be a necessity; and children would receive adequate nutrition not just during the school week but on weekends as well. Kids could play freely without fear of unnecessary police intervention, and women could walk safely at night, free from the threat of assault. Employers would value people for their potential to learn and grow, mental health support would be accessible for all, and Olympia would offer robust, compassionate support for those experiencing homelessness.

But we know this ideal doesn't reflect our current reality. In fact, the coming years will be challenging, and achieving these goals may be harder than ever. Reaching this vision will require dedication, patience, and a willingness to confront and unlearn personal biases, fostering a community where everyone feels secure and valued. Together, we can work toward an Olympia that rises through adversity and brings us closer to a truly just and equitable future.

If you are not appointed to a Board or Commission at this time:

Do you wish to be considered for appointment to another Board or Commission?

No

Do you wish to be considered for future appointment to your preferred Board or Commission?

Yes

Thank you for your interest in serving on a City of Olympia Advisory Committee!

Please hit the "submit" button below when you have completed your application .

Caesar J. Plasencia

My purpose is to leverage expertise in public administration to drive inclusive community development, advance social justice, and foster equitable, empathetic leadership within local government.

Goal: A role within city council focused on social justice and equity, creating opportunities in local government for qualified individuals hesitant to pursue municipal roles.

Education

Master of Public Administration, Local Government Specialization, Mark O. Hatfield School of Government, Portland State University, Portland, OR

- *Degree expected Fall 2024*

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Psychology, Saint Martin's University, Lacey, WA

- May 2010

Associate of Arts, South Puget Sound Community College, Tumwater, WA

- December 2007

Professional History

Oregon Health Authority – Program Integrity Audit Unit, Salem, OR Nov '19 - Present
Administrative Assistant 2

- Provide support for OHA's Program Integrity Audit Unit and Investigations Unit on Medicaid fraud, waste, and abuse
- Distributed Letters of Intent for the Oregon Health Authorities Behavioral Health Resource Network management project

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Seattle, WA Feb '13 - Apr '19
Claims Quality Assurance Specialist

- Liaison between the Federal and State Veterans Administration
- Oversaw performance-based contracts with veteran service organizations and affiliates
- Lead trainer for the State of Washington on VA compensation, VA benefits, and pension

- Monitored and reported revenue generated through VA claims for Washington State, which exceeded \$250 million annually

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Olympia, WA Aug '10 - Feb '13
Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Coordinator

- Per US Dept of LaborVets provided employment services for homeless veterans in five counties around the Puget Sound area
- Networked with government agencies, nonprofits, and small businesses to enhance awareness and services for homeless veterans
- Experienced working with clients who have experienced war trauma, substance abuse and who have been homeless for extended periods

The United States Marine Corps

Aug 2000 – Aug 2005

Extracurricular Activities

Thurston County Veterans Advisory Board

July '24 - Present

Volunteer time and services (Not a current member)

Marion County WIC Enrollment

Jun '19 - Aug '19

Volunteer

King County Library System

Sep '18 - Feb '19

ESL Facilitator

Saint Martin's University

Jan '10 - May '10

Volunteer

Honors and Awards

Washington Dept. of Veterans Affairs Certificate of Achievement	May 2011
Abraham Lincoln Pillar of Excellence Award – Agency Award	May 2014
Class speaker for Wounded Warrior Advocacy Training Program	Aug 2014
Washington Dept. of Veterans Affairs Certificate of Achievement	Aug 2015
Washington Dept. of Veterans Affairs Certificate of Appreciation	May 2016
Washington Dept. of Veterans Affairs Distinguished Service Award	Jun 2016
Washington Dept. of Veterans Affairs Certificate of Appreciation	May 2017

Skills

Counseling, community engagement, veteran support and advocacy, security and safety management, strong leadership and team collaboration, exceptional communication and writing abilities, deep empathy and service-oriented, problem solving, and excellent soft skills.