



# State of Wisconsin State Council on Affirmative Action Report

Calendar Year 2024

*Summary and highlights of the Council's activities during 2024,  
including the annual diversity awards.*

## Division of Personnel Management

Contact:

Department of Administration,  
Division of Personnel Management  
101 East Wilson Street, 4th Floor  
PO Box 7855  
Madison, WI 53707-7855

Website: <http://dpm.wi.gov>

Email: [DOADPM@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DOADPM@wisconsin.gov)



STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

Tony Evers, Governor  
Kathy Blumenfeld, Secretary  
Jen Flögel, Division Administrator

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April 2025

The Honorable Tony Evers  
Governor, State of Wisconsin

Chief Clerk Lindsay Hale  
Wisconsin State Senate

Chief Clerk Edward Blazel  
Wisconsin State Assembly

Dear Governor Evers, Chief Clerk Hale, and Chief Clerk Blazel:

On behalf of the Division of Personnel Management (DPM), I am pleased to present the January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024, annual report for the State Council on Affirmative Action (SCAA), as directed by s. 15.107(3) Wis. Stats. and s. 230.46 Wis. Stats.

This year's report summarizes SCAA's activities and highlights the annual diversity awards, which recognize exemplary individuals, programs, and initiatives.

The Council's mission is to foster measurable progress towards an equitable, inclusive and diverse workforce in state government. Its efforts complement the mission of DPM and the Bureau of Equity and Inclusion (BEI) to promote innovative, diverse, and inclusive equal employment opportunities along with strategic human resources leadership and direction.

I look forward to a productive relationship with the SCAA as we continue to serve the residents of our great State. Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jen Flögel".

Jen Flögel  
DPM Administrator

## Message from SCAA Chair Angela Nash

April 2025

The Honorable Tony Evers  
Governor, State of Wisconsin

Chief Clerk Linsay Hale Wisconsin  
State Senate

Chief Clerk Edward Blazel  
Wisconsin State Assembly

Dear Governor Evers, Chief Clerk Hale, and Chief Clerk Blazel:

It is my honor to present the 2024 Annual Report on behalf of the State Council on Affirmative Action. This report highlights the strides we have made in fostering equity and inclusion within the state workforce. As Chair, I am proud of the Council's dedication to advancing our mission of ensuring an equitable and inclusive workplace for all employees.

This year, the Council achieved several significant milestones. We established three standing committees to sharpen our focus and deepen our impact:

1. **Workforce Equity and Inclusion:** This committee is dedicated to assisting state agencies in the implementation of agency equity and inclusion action plans.
2. **Council Function and Governance:** This group ensures that council governance and function are compliant, efficient, transparent, and aligned with our mission.
3. **Communications and Outreach:** This committee enhances our engagement with stakeholders and amplifies the Council's initiatives and achievements.

Additionally, we had the privilege of hosting the annual Diversity Awards Ceremony. This inspiring event provided an opportunity to celebrate individuals and organizations that exemplify excellence in applying principles of equity and inclusion. Through their leadership and innovation, they remind us of the transformative power of diversity in the workplace.

As we reflect on this year's accomplishments, we remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing affirmative action principles and creating a workplace that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. We look forward to building on this momentum in the coming year, continuing to collaborate with our partners and stakeholders to achieve our shared vision. Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication to these essential efforts.

Sincerely,



Angela Nash, Chair  
State Council on Affirmative Action

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## State Council on Affirmative Action (SCAA) Mission

The State Council on Affirmative Action was created by Chapter 196, Laws of 1977, s. 230.46, Wis. Stats., and describes the duties of the Council as follows:

*"The Council on Affirmative Action shall serve in a direct advisory capacity to the Administrator and, as part of that relationship, shall evaluate the progress of affirmative action programs throughout the civil service system, seek compliance with state and federal regulations, and recommend improvements in the State's affirmative action efforts as an employer. In carrying out its responsibilities, the Council may recommend legislation, consult with agency personnel and other interested persons, conduct hearings, and take other appropriate action to promote affirmative action. The Council shall report at least once per year to the governor and the legislature."*

The Council's overall purpose is to recommend strategic initiatives and foster measurable progress toward an equitable, inclusive, and diverse workforce in state government.

## Executive Summary

The 2024 State Council on Affirmative Action (SCAA) report highlights significant achievements in fostering equity, inclusion, and diversity within Wisconsin's workforce. The council met four times over the course of the year with multiple subcommittee sessions throughout the year that aided in advancing the 2024 goals of the committee. Key accomplishments of 2024 included the following:

- 1) Updating the SCAA Bylaws and conducting a thorough review of the SCAA roles and responsibilities.
- 2) Assessing DPM published reports for relevance and practical application in agency human resources (HR) decision making.
- 3) Development of a process map for agencies to solicit council engagement on affirmative action matters.

Additionally, the 25th Annual Diversity Awards celebrated exceptional contributions, including both individual and agency awards for leaders advancing diversity and equity in the state workforce. Looking forward, SCAA has outlined goals for 2025, including further refining and implementing the SCAA Communication Plan to support both state and community organizations in equity and inclusion efforts, continuing review of DPM workforce reports to facilitate recommendations on relevance and practical application in agency HR decision making to leadership, and working with DPM Leadership to fill SCAA membership vacancies. This report reflects the council's ongoing dedication to building a more inclusive and representative state government workforce.

## SCAA Membership

*“There is created in the division of personnel management in the department of administration a council on affirmative action consisting of 15 members appointed for 3-year terms. A majority of members shall be public members, and a majority of members shall be minority persons, women, or persons with disabilities, appointed with consideration to the appropriate representation of each group. The president of the senate, the speaker of the assembly, the minority leader of the senate, and the minority leader of the assembly each shall appoint one member, and the remaining members shall be appointed by the governor.” s. 15.107(3) Wis. Stats.*

### **Members of the State Council on Affirmative Action from January 1, 2024– December 31, 2024:**

**Angela Nash – Chair**

Equity, Inclusion, & Wellness Program Director  
State of WI Department of Justice

**Fabiola Hamdan**

Immigration Affairs Supervisor  
Dane County Department of Human Services

**Ankita Bharadwaj – Secretary**

Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)  
Employee Retention Specialist  
UW-Madison

**Christopher Kilgour**

Outreach Manager  
Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, UW-  
Madison and Founder/Director, Color in the  
Outdoors

**Adin Palau – Member-At-Large**

Diversity Outreach and Engagement Specialist  
State of WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and  
Consumer Protection

**Shakita LaGrant-McClain**

Executive Director  
Milwaukee County Department of Health & Human  
Services

**Yee Leng Xiong – Member-At-Large**

Executive Director  
Hmong American Center, Inc

**Dominic Ledesma, PhD**

Assistant Vice Provost for Culture, Climate and Engagement  
Division of Information Technology UW Madison

**Carlene Bechen**

Volunteer Progressive Community Organizer  
Oregon Area Progressives

**DeVon Wilson**

Associate Dean for Diversity Equity, & Inclusion College  
of Letters and Science, UW-Madison

**Alenka Dries**

Employment Relations Specialist  
State of WI Department of Administration

**BEI Staff Liaison’s**

Members of the Bureau of Equity and Inclusion (BEI) who provide support and staff services to SCAA

**Paege Heckel**

Human Resources Program Officer  
of WI Department of Administration

**Briann Padrutt**

Executive Equity and Inclusion Specialist State  
State of WI Department of Administration

## SCAA Activity Highlights

### Council Meeting – January 10, 2024

The Council was welcomed by SCAA Chair, Angela Nash. DPM Administrator Jen Fogel provided DPM updates, including introduction of the tHRive project, which aims to improve HR service consistency, sustainable technology use, and equity. The project was in the early stages with workstream leaders identifying key voices for participation. DPM also noted the successful approval of all 2024-2026 Equity and Inclusion Plans and highlighted the value of SCAA's advisory role, particularly in enhancing job posting clarity, supporting diverse recruitment, and improving data collection on hiring equity. BEI Director Laurice Lincoln shared the completion of workforce analyses for state agencies per Executive Order 59, a broadened approach beyond recruitment to include retention and development, creating measurable impacts on equity efforts. BEI also reported on the Student Diversity Internship Program (SWSDIP), which received a notable increase in applications from diverse backgrounds and rural areas, as well as veterans and students with disabilities. The council discussed potential support for SWSDIP outreach and other monitoring improvements to maintain plan fidelity and measure impact. SCAA members reflected on strategic priorities for 2024 and considered restructuring standing committees or adding subcommittees to better address DPM and BEI goals. Discussions included exploring more flexible meeting schedules and committee structures to support progress, ensuring statutory compliance, and enhancing impact in areas like diversity hiring practices and program evaluation. The meeting concluded with a motion to refine committee goals and frequency based on council members' skills and priorities.

### Council Meeting – April 17, 2024

The Council heard from Jen Fogel, DPM Administrator, regarding DPM updates; highlighting the Project tHRive initiative updates, including the goal of seeking broad employee feedback, and a new advisory council being established to deepen engagement with agency leaders. Jen Fogel discussed the results from the recent HR customer service satisfaction survey that were shared with the governor and legislature. BEI Director Laurice Lincoln provided updates, noting that the 2023 SCAA report was published, and monitoring efforts for agency equity and inclusion plans were underway to improve equity outcomes. New criteria were being considered to strengthen monitoring across areas like recruitment, workplace culture, and data collection. BEI also shared that the Student Diversity Internship Program (SWSDIP) saw 1,216 applicants, with strong representation from diverse groups, rural areas, and out-of-state students. The council discussed ways to retain these interns in Wisconsin's workforce. Other updates included expanding mediation training and beginning preparations for the Diversity Awards. The council's 2024 goals were set, with standing committees established in three focus areas: Workforce Equity and Inclusion (led by Angela Nash), Communications and Outreach (led by Laurice Lincoln), and Council Function and Governance (led by Paige Heckel). Each committee will focus on specific initiatives, such as enhancing the utility of workforce reports for decision-making, developing engagement processes for equity and inclusion matters, and revising council bylaws to align with legal and mission-driven requirements.

### Council Meeting – July 17, 2024

The SCAA members heard updates from BEI Director Laurice Lincoln on the State of Wisconsin Student Diversity Internship Program (SWISDIP), where a record 1,216 applicants participated, and 131 women, 74 racial or ethnic minorities, 4 veterans, and 25 individuals with disabilities were hired. Interns participated in trainings on state government operations and Imposter Syndrome, as well as a Capitol tour. BEI shared its ongoing review of equity and inclusion monitoring tools and processes and announced upcoming site visits for state agencies to ensure effective equity and inclusion plan implementation. Standing committees shared progress updates. The Communications and Outreach Subcommittee outlined a plan to engage agencies in SCAA meetings to present their equity and inclusion progress and foster feedback, while also engaging community groups semi-annually. The Workforce Equity and Inclusion Committee examined state workforce reports, aiming to improve readability and data utility for equity and inclusion professionals. The Governance Committee completed bylaw updates, clarifying council member roles and meeting requirements. The Council approved the new Communication Plan, with plans to revisit it annually. Members also discussed the potential for full-time state hires from SWISDIP interns, diversity award nominations, and planning for the Diversity Awards in December. The meeting concluded with plans for committee reports and a governance review at the next meeting.

### Council Meeting – October 16, 2024

SCAA members heard from DPM Administrator Jen Flogel whose report included initiatives like the 2024 DPM Conference, a new employee recognition program, and gathering workforce compensation insights for the 2025-2027 plan. The tHRive project was highlighted for improving HR service consistency, with an interactive directory and collaboration with the Department of Administration Division of Enterprise Technology (DET) to address tech challenges. BEI Director Laurice Lincoln discussed supporting equity and inclusion professionals across agencies with resources like cultural assessments, mediation, and the Employee Assistance Program. The Council approved the Diversity Awards theme, “The Year of the Worker: Moving Forward Together!” and received updates on award nominations and planned keynote speakers. Subcommittees presented recommendations, including report improvements for HR decision-making and the updated bylaws were approved by the Council. The meeting concluded with updates on preparing for the annual report and confirming the next meeting in January 2025.

## SCAA Subcommittee Highlights

### Communications and Outreach Subcommittee

The role of the Communications and Outreach Subcommittee is to develop communication channels with state agencies and public organizations and to provide multi-directional communication channels to facilitate information flow related to principles of equity and inclusion and their practical application.

**2024 SCAA Goal Focused on by Subcommittee:** Develop a process map for agencies to solicit council engagement on affirmative action matters.

**2024 Accomplishments:** Developed the SCAA Communication Plan in accordance with Executive Order 59 to support communication channels between the SCAA and state agencies as well as community groups. The communication plan includes offering resources, assistance, and advice to both State Agencies and community groups, as well as ensuring dissemination of state employment opportunities. The subcommittee also worked to support the annual Diversity Awards ceremony by participating in the awards selection committee and the planning process.

**Lead:** Laurice Lincoln/Briann Padrutt **Members:** Carlene Bechen; Christopher Kilgour; Yee Leng Xiong

### Workforce Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee

The role of the Workforce Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee is to assist and advise state agencies in the implementation of agency equity and inclusion action plans as well as serve as a liaison and knowledgeable resource to advise state agencies in accordance with DPM/BEI's established goals for equity and inclusion plans.

**2024 SCAA Goal Focused on by Subcommittee:** Assess DPM published reports for relevance and practical application in agency HR decision making.

**2024 Accomplishments:** Participated in a thorough review of DPM published reports including the State of Wisconsin Hiring Reasons by State Agencies Report, W-2 Hiring Report and Underutilization Report. Review included assessment of the reports for relevance, usefulness of the content, and practical application of the information contained in the report for agency HR decision-making.

**Lead:** Angela Nash **Members:** Dominic Ledesma; Alenka Dries; Devon Wilson; and Ankita Bharadwaj

### Council Function and Governance Subcommittee

The role of the Council Function and Governance Subcommittee is to ensure council governance and function are compliant with legal requirements and effectively foster the council mission. Additionally, the subcommittee works to update, establish, and monitor council governance documents and protocols that fulfill statutory obligations and foster effective council operations.

**2024 SCAA Goal Focused on by Subcommittee:** Update the SCAA Bylaws and conduct a thorough review of the SCAA roles and responsibilities.

**2024 Accomplishments:** Updated council governance documents and protocols including the Bylaws, as well as the Executive Committee roles and duties documents.

**Lead:** Paeg Heckel **Members:** Shakita LaGrant; (Fabiola Hamdam); Adin Palau

## 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Diversity Awards Ceremony

In conjunction with the 41<sup>st</sup> Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award, the Council celebrated the 2024 Diversity Award winners on December 6, 2024, in the Assembly Chambers of the Wisconsin State Capitol. The winners were:

Trisha Kilpin received the Virginia Hart Award for their dedication to serving the people of Wisconsin and going above and beyond to help others.

The Department of Public Instruction received the 2024 Diversity Award for their 2024-2026 Equity and Inclusion Plan. The department is utilizing a comprehensive approach to expanding and fostering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives internally using the state framework of recruitment, retention, and organizational culture. This multi-level, comprehensive initiative proposes internal accountability, provides training and support to staff, and further develops avenues to recruit, retain, and promote a diverse workforce.

Gale Johnson, Department of Health Services, received the Outstanding Leadership Award. Gale Johnson's leadership as the inaugural Program Director for the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCED) and the Wisconsin Well Woman Program for the Department of Health Services has directly contributed to promoting increased services for some of Wisconsin's most vulnerable communities and has aided in accomplishing the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services health equity and diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

Gina Pruski, State Public Defender's Office, received the Lifetime of Service Award. Gina Pruski's 30+ year career at the State Public Defender's Office has been dedicated to championing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), initiatives in implementing training programs, promoting cultural competency, and being a leading contributor in the development of agency initiatives to foster an inclusive and healthy work environment. Gina's impressive work clearly demonstrates dedication to raising diversity's visibility in the workplace.

## SCAA 2025 Recommended Goals

Goal 1: Implement SCAA Communication plan by inviting agencies and community organizations to collaborate with the SCAA by offering resources, assistance, and advice to both state agencies and community groups, as well as ensuring dissemination of state employment opportunities during meetings.

Goal 2: Continue to assess DPM published reports for relevance and practical application in agency HR decision making and provide recommendations to leadership.

Goal 3: Work with leadership to fill SCAA membership vacancies.

## Staff Services for the SCAA

BEI provides staff services to the Council and can be reached at 101 East Wilson Street, 4th Floor, Madison, Wisconsin, 53707-7855. Inquiries regarding this report can be addressed to: [DOADPMBEI@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DOADPMBEI@wisconsin.gov)