



Utah Division of
Multicultural Affairs

**Utah Multicultural Commission
Meeting Minutes**

January 13, 2026 | 1–2:30 p.m.

INDUSTRY SLC | Google Meet

Approved

Members: Emmie Gardner, Meredith Lam, Rhiana Medina, Shawn Newell, Kevin Nguyen, Rich Nye, Nune Phillips (designee for Tracy Gruber), Trhas Tafere

Absent: Luna Banuri, Jefferson Moss, Tom Ross

Guests: Maegan Castleton, Jenny Hor, Dustin Khong, Igor Limansky, Kat Potter, Cassandra Wambach

Welcome –Shawn Newell, MCC Co-Chair

Shawn Newell welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes – Commission Vote

MOTION: Kevin Nguyen moved to approve the meeting minutes from November 18, 2025. Rhiana Medina seconded the motion. The motion passed on a 7-0-4 vote.

Yeas – 7

Emmie Gardner
Rhiana Medina
Shawn Newell
Kevin Nguyen
Rich Nye
Nune Phillips
Trhas Tafere

Nays – 0

Absent – 4

Luna Banuri
Meredith Lam
Jefferson Moss
Tom Ross

Commissioner Vacancy – Commission Discussion

The commission will interview candidates for the open seat in early February. Commissioners were encouraged to invite community members to apply, especially individuals who are well connected to the community and are not currently represented on the board.

Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs Updates – Igor Limansky

The division had 187 candidates apply for the deputy director position. The deputy director will oversee the logistics for the Multicultural Commission and the Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Commission. The hiring process includes a blind screening of resumes followed by three rounds of interviews. Igor Limansky invited commission members to participate in the final interview round, which requires candidates to prepare a presentation.

The commission has not adopted bylaws to establish standards and procedures governing internal operations. The drafted bylaws are undergoing legal review by the Attorney General’s Office and require review and approval by the

commission at a future meeting. The division is also updating an agreement form listing commissioner expectations, which includes a 75 percent attendance rate at meetings to ensure active participation.

In reviewing the analytics for the commission newsletters, each newsletter was issued to 56 recipients with 36 people opening the emails. The newsletters had an open rate of 64 percent but much lower click rates. The analytics do not track how the newsletters were shared or in what manner. The commission will want to determine how the newsletters can engage a larger audience to justify the work required to develop them.

Gov. Spencer Cox hosted the Literacy and Reading Symposium to address early literacy levels. Through the Acadience platform, data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and English proficiency show how various student populations are not reading at grade-level. Students with limited English proficiency undergo the English Language Development assessments. Assessments phase students out of the program once they show proficiency in speaking English and writing at grade level. Gov. Cox's administration is working with Sen. Ann Millner to sponsor legislation that would invest in early literacy intervention strategies for students and families. The commission discussed potential collaborations with the Promise Partnership Council that can be leveraged to support multilingual learners.

Kat Potter serves as a liaison between the Utah Department of Cultural and Community Engagement (CCE) and the Utah State Legislature. CCE can educate the public on the department's efforts and its divisions but cannot take a formal position on any legislation unless the item is in the governor's budget request. Legislation focused on literacy will be closely followed as these bills will affect various divisions within the department. CCE is seeking a one-time funding request to support the Volunteer for Good program overseen by UServeUtah. The department does not have an external bill tracker but encourages the public to search for trackers administered by community partners.

211 Presentation – Cassandra Wambach, 211 Utah

211 is a hub that connects people to basic needs resources in their local area. Throughout the state, different systems provide 211 resources. United Way of Salt Lake oversees services in northern Utah and United Way of Central and Southern Utah provides services in southern Utah. Community members can reach 211 service navigators by dialing or texting the number, calling an 888 number, sending a chat or email, connecting on social media, or visiting an office.

211 manages a database of over 3,000 organizations that provide various services. The database is updated once a year and up to four times a year for providers to whom 211 refers more often. Support is offered in over 200 languages. Providers interested in being part of the database need to submit an online application.

Service navigators ask questions beyond the scope of the client's initial call to ensure eligibility for services before referring them to resources and to provide other support services, if needed. They ask clients 11 universal questions to determine eligibility. If a client consents, 211 creates an account with their information, which service navigators can easily reference in the future if the client calls again. 211 also offers clients warm transfers to other service providers and follows up with any client who consents to this. The most common referral categories are housing, transportation, food and meal assistance, utility assistance and healthcare.

The 211 team also participates in outreach events and digital materials can be found on their website.

April Retreat Dates – Commission Discussion

The commission chose to host a retreat on April 9. The March 10 meeting will include a legislative recap and solidify the direction of the commission's work, especially in addressing literacy rates. The April retreat will dive deeper into developing plans around the chosen initiative.

Other Business & Open Comment – Commission Discussion

- Maegan Castleton is leaving her employment with the Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs for a new opportunity.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services awarded the Utah Department of Health and Human Services a cooperative agreement for the Rural Health Transformation Program.

Adjourn

MOTION: Emmie Gardner moved to adjourn the meeting. Kevin Nguyen seconded the motion.

Action Items

- Invite community members to [apply for the vacant seat](#) on the commission – **Commissioners**
- Notify Igor Limansky of interest in participating in the final interview round for the deputy director position – **Commissioners**
- Invite Promise Partnership to present their initiatives for multilingual learners – **Igor Limansky**
- Send calendar invitations for the March 10 meeting and April 9 retreat – **Jenny Hor**

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2026, from 1–2:30 p.m.