

# Whatcom County Racial Equity Commission

Whatcom County Council  
Committee of the Whole  
July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022

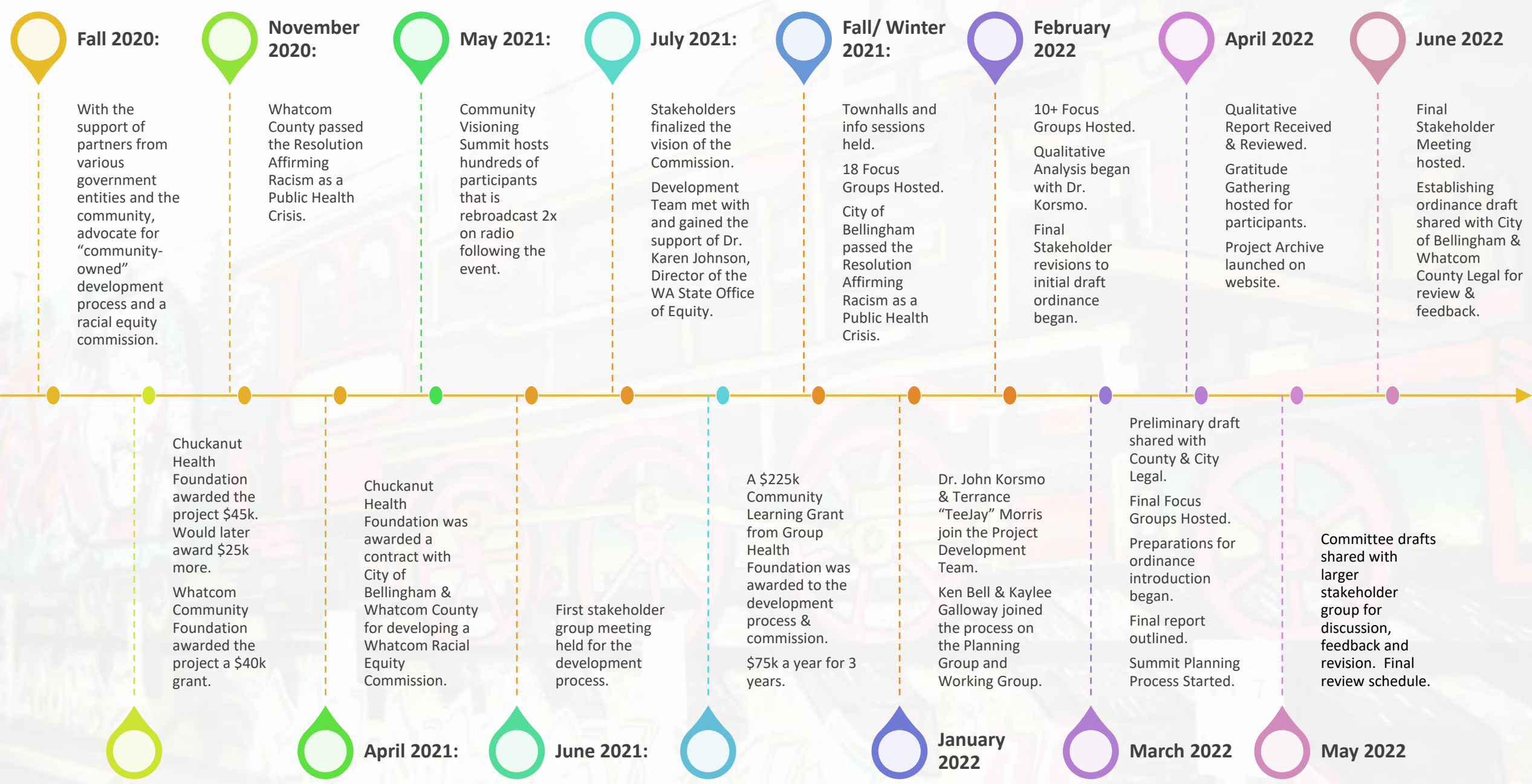
# Overview of Day

- ▶ Process Update
- ▶ Scope of the Commission
- ▶ Membership Composition
- ▶ Appointment Process
- ▶ Next Steps





# Process Update



**Fall 2020:**

With the support of partners from various government entities and the community, advocate for “community-owned” development process and a racial equity commission.

**November 2020:**

Whatcom County passed the Resolution Affirming Racism as a Public Health Crisis.

**May 2021:**

Community Visioning Summit hosts hundreds of participants that is rebroadcast 2x on radio following the event.

**July 2021:**

Stakeholders finalized the vision of the Commission.  
Development Team met with and gained the support of Dr. Karen Johnson, Director of the WA State Office of Equity.

**Fall/ Winter 2021:**

Townhalls and info sessions held.  
18 Focus Groups Hosted.  
City of Bellingham passed the Resolution Affirming Racism as a Public Health Crisis.

**February 2022**

10+ Focus Groups Hosted.  
Qualitative Analysis began with Dr. Korsmo.  
Final Stakeholder revisions to initial draft ordinance began.

**April 2022**

Qualitative Report Received & Reviewed.  
Gratitude Gathering hosted for participants.  
Project Archive launched on website.

**June 2022**

Final Stakeholder Meeting hosted.  
Establishing ordinance draft shared with City of Bellingham & Whatcom County Legal for review & feedback.

Chuckanut Health Foundation awarded the project \$45k. Would later award \$25k more.  
Whatcom Community Foundation awarded the project a \$40k grant.

Chuckanut Health Foundation was awarded a contract with City of Bellingham & Whatcom County for developing a Whatcom Racial Equity Commission.

First stakeholder group meeting held for the development process.

A \$225k Community Learning Grant from Group Health Foundation was awarded to the development process & commission.  
\$75k a year for 3 years.

Dr. John Korsmo & Terrance “TeeJay” Morris join the Project Development Team.  
Ken Bell & Kaylee Galloway joined the process on the Planning Group and Working Group.

Preliminary draft shared with County & City Legal.  
Final Focus Groups Hosted.  
Preparations for ordinance introduction began.  
Final report outlined.  
Summit Planning Process Started.

Committee drafts shared with larger stakeholder group for discussion, feedback and revision. Final review schedule.

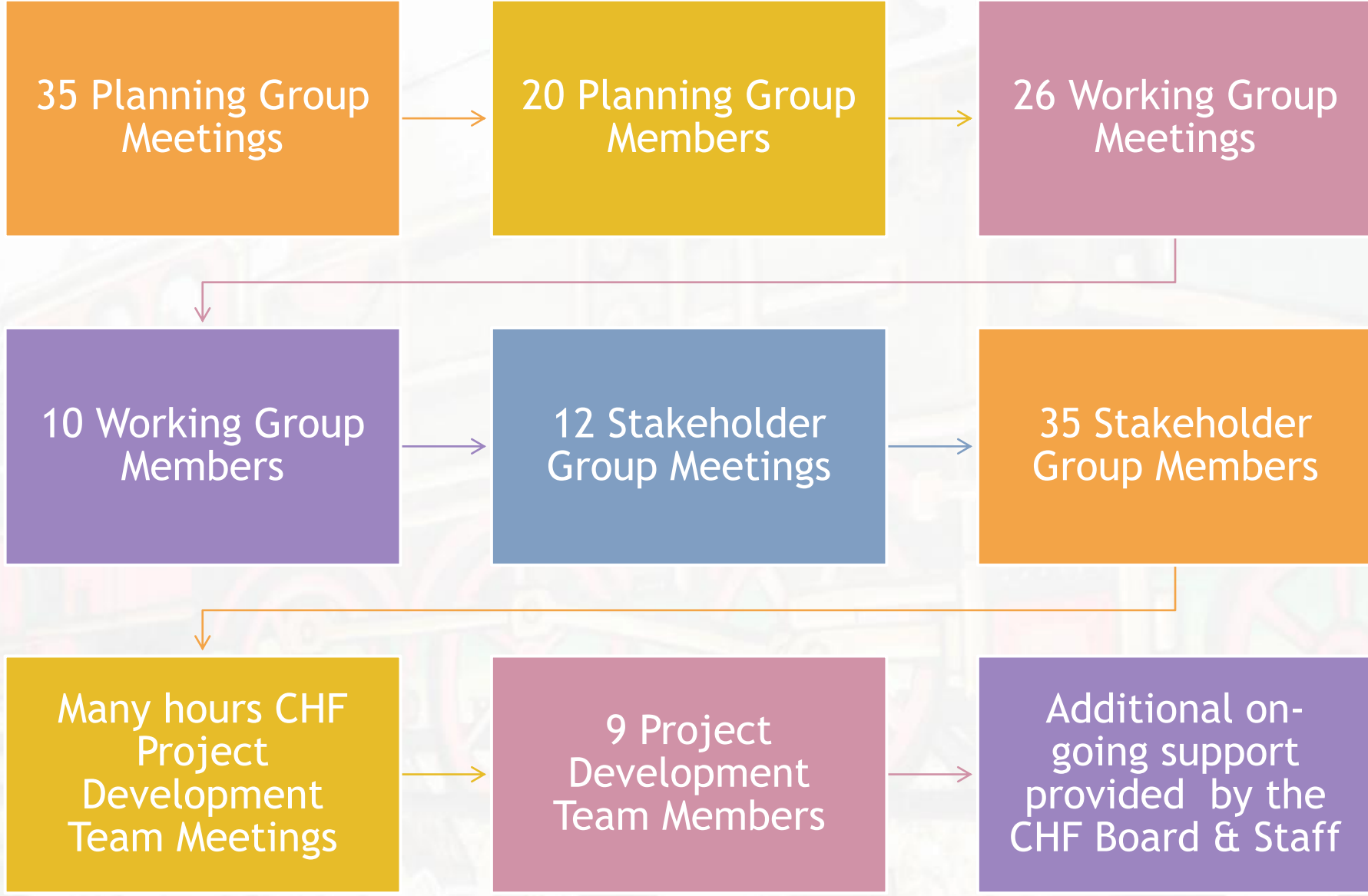
**April 2021:**

**June 2021:**

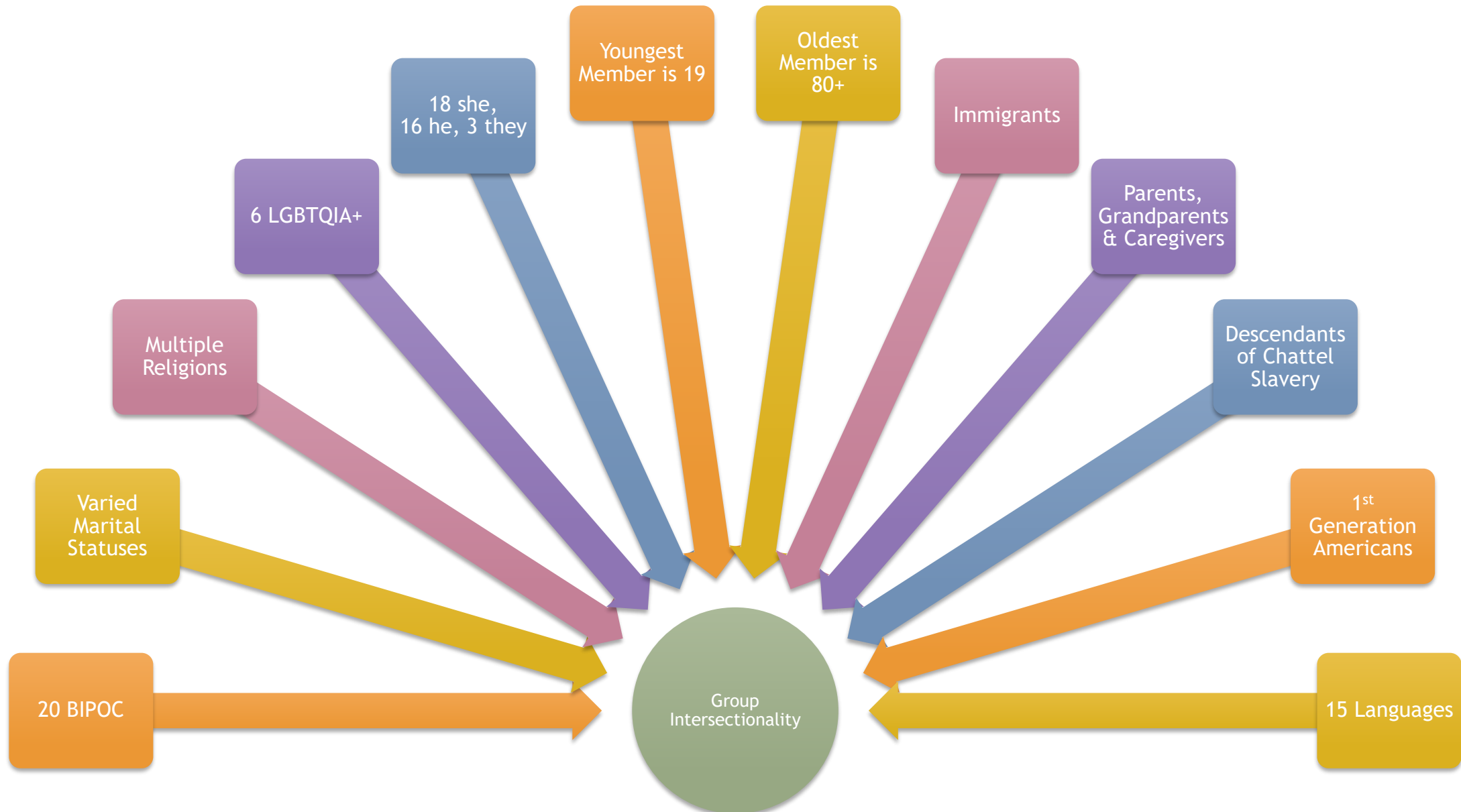
**January 2022**

**March 2022**

**May 2022**



24 Months. 100+Hours of Meetings. 72 Individuals.



# Focus Group Process

6 Months

7 Facilitators

31 Sessions

60+ Hours  
Community  
Conversations

Over 100  
Participants

Roughly 1000  
Pages of Raw  
Data

200+ Hours of  
Analysis

112 Pages of  
Data

First Output:  
9 Themes

# 31 Sessions. Over 100 Participants.

- ▶ Asian & Pacific Islander Community Members
- ▶ Arts and Culture Sector
- ▶ Black & African American Community Members
- ▶ Elders in Whatcom County
- ▶ Those with Carceral System Experience
- ▶ Fishing & Farm Workers
- ▶ Higher Education Students
- ▶ Indigenous Community Members
- ▶ Law Enforcement
- ▶ Lynden Community
- ▶ LGBTQIA+ Community
- ▶ Latiné/Latinx Community
- ▶ BIPOC Mental Healthcare Workers
- ▶ Mail List Opt-in Group 1
- ▶ Mail List Opt-in Group 2
- ▶ Mail List Opt-in Group 3
- ▶ Nooksack, Everson & Sumas Community
- ▶ Nooksack Tribe
- ▶ Nooksack Valley Faith Leaders
- ▶ Parents of BIPOC Youth
- ▶ Whatcom County Public Defenders
- ▶ Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office
- ▶ Whatcom County Public Workers & Union Members
- ▶ BIPOC School Employees
- ▶ Elders in the Sikh Community
- ▶ Young Adults in the Sikh Community
- ▶ Social Justice Activists & Organizers
- ▶ Students from the Fishing and Farm Working Community
- ▶ Sumas Community
- ▶ Whatcom County Superintendents
- ▶ Whatcom Young Professionals





# Reflection from Focus Groups

# Focus Group: Questions

- ▶ What does belonging look like in Whatcom County?
- ▶ Can cultural awareness solve for structural violence and/or racism?
- ▶ Can you discuss the impact and cost that environmental quality has on your day-to-day life?
- ▶ What can our local government do to collaborate with BIPOC communities to better represent people of color?
- ▶ How just and fair do you feel our current local legal system is for the BIPOC community and why?
- ▶ How would you describe your relationship with local law enforcement and any personal interactions you have had with them?
- ▶ **Have you tried to access a local service or program and had a negative experience because of your race?**
- ▶ How do you feel about you and your child's experience within your local school system?
- ▶ How would Whatcom county look or feel different if the WREC is successful?
- ▶ Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

# Voices from the Community

## From a Local High School Student

*“I get told about [my race] at school and stuff. I don't really care cuz it doesn't really hurt me. I don't really care about it. I only care if it's like towards my mom and stuff because they take care of me and stuff. I don't really mind it at school because I just hear it every day so I just don't really mind it.... [I hear] “oh, you're a (racial slur),” or whatever...and I just don't want to complain because I don't really care what they say.”*

## From a Mental Health Care Service Provider

*“I've definitely heard clients complain about being profiled in medical settings where they keep getting questions about their drug use when it's either not relevant at all, or it was a really long time ago. And it's made it so some of my clients actually didn't even want to be involved with me as a counselor because they just completely lost trust in the system and were really traumatized by the experience of trying to better their health.”*



# Commission Scope of Work

# CONTEXT: 3 Connections with the Commission

Community & Commission

Community & Local Government

Local Government & Commission

All of which lays a foundation for moving forward together as neighbors

# Commission Scope of Work

## Engage

- Engage with the community and be a conduit for the community to engage with local government

## Analyze

- Gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data

## Develop

- Develop and recommend plans to advance racial equity

## Recommend

- Recommend and advise on policies, revisions to existing policies, and programs to advance racial equity

## Educate

- Educate and/or provide resources for public education in order to advance racial equity'

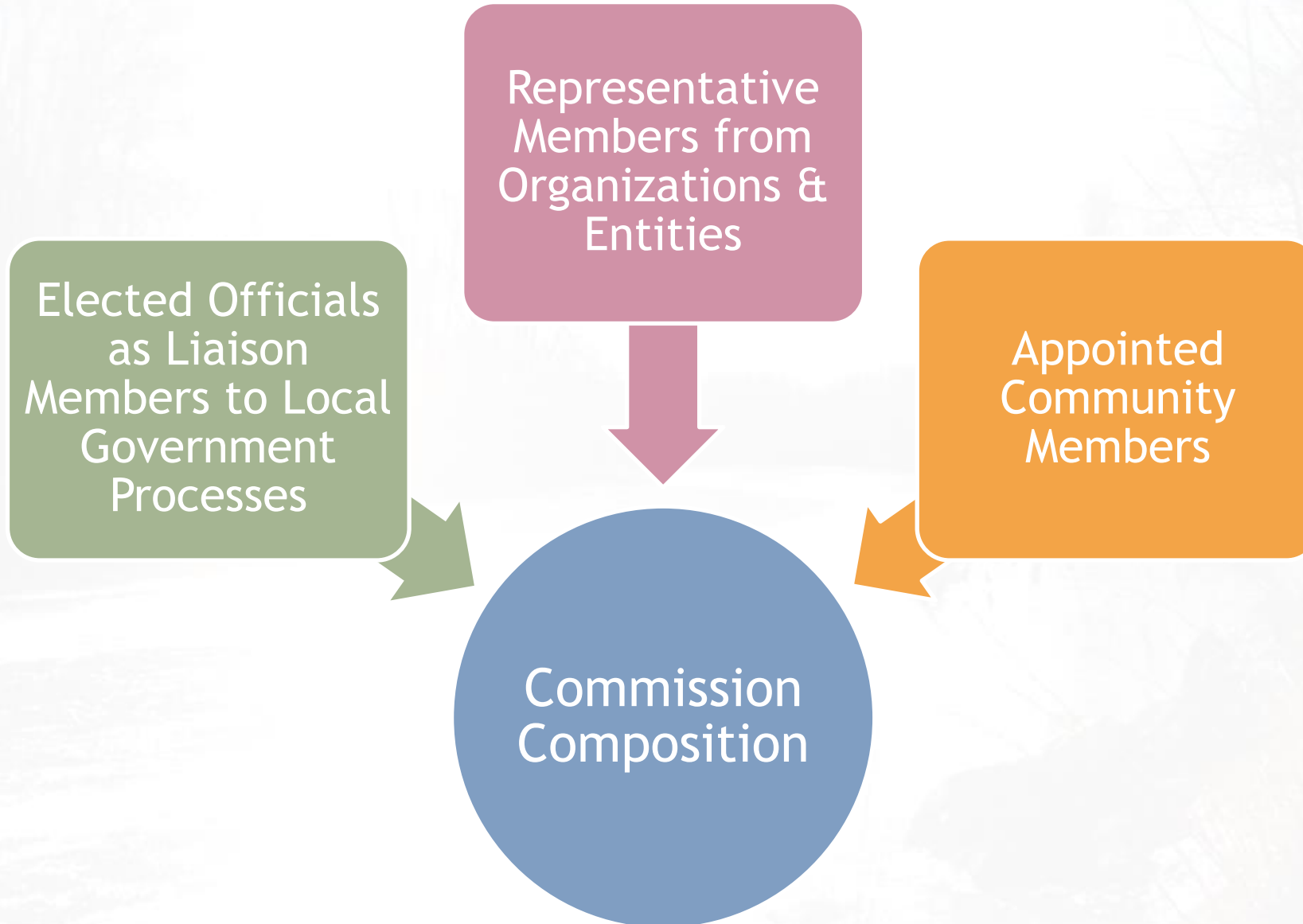
## Report

- Report on its progress to both the community and partners in government annually

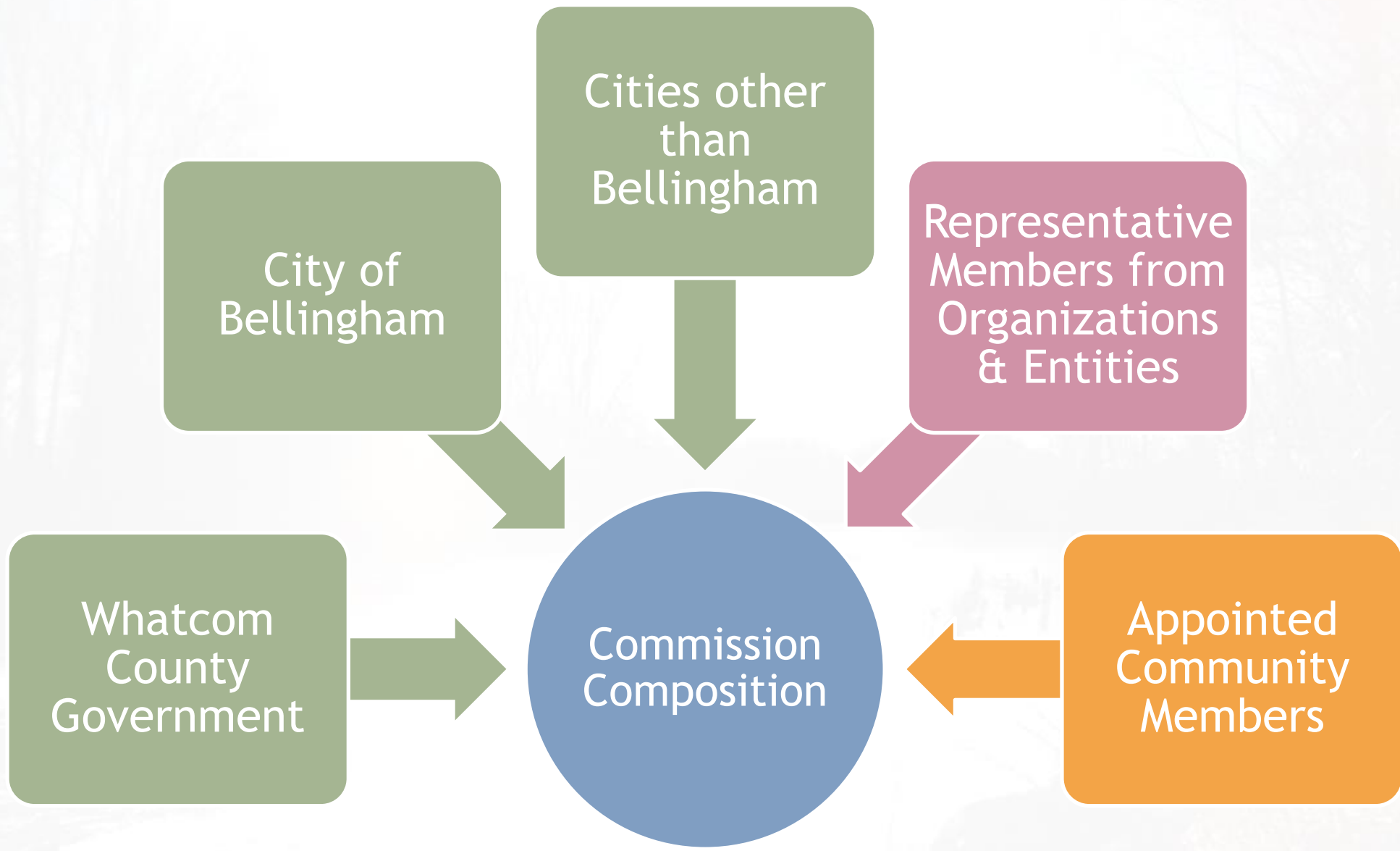


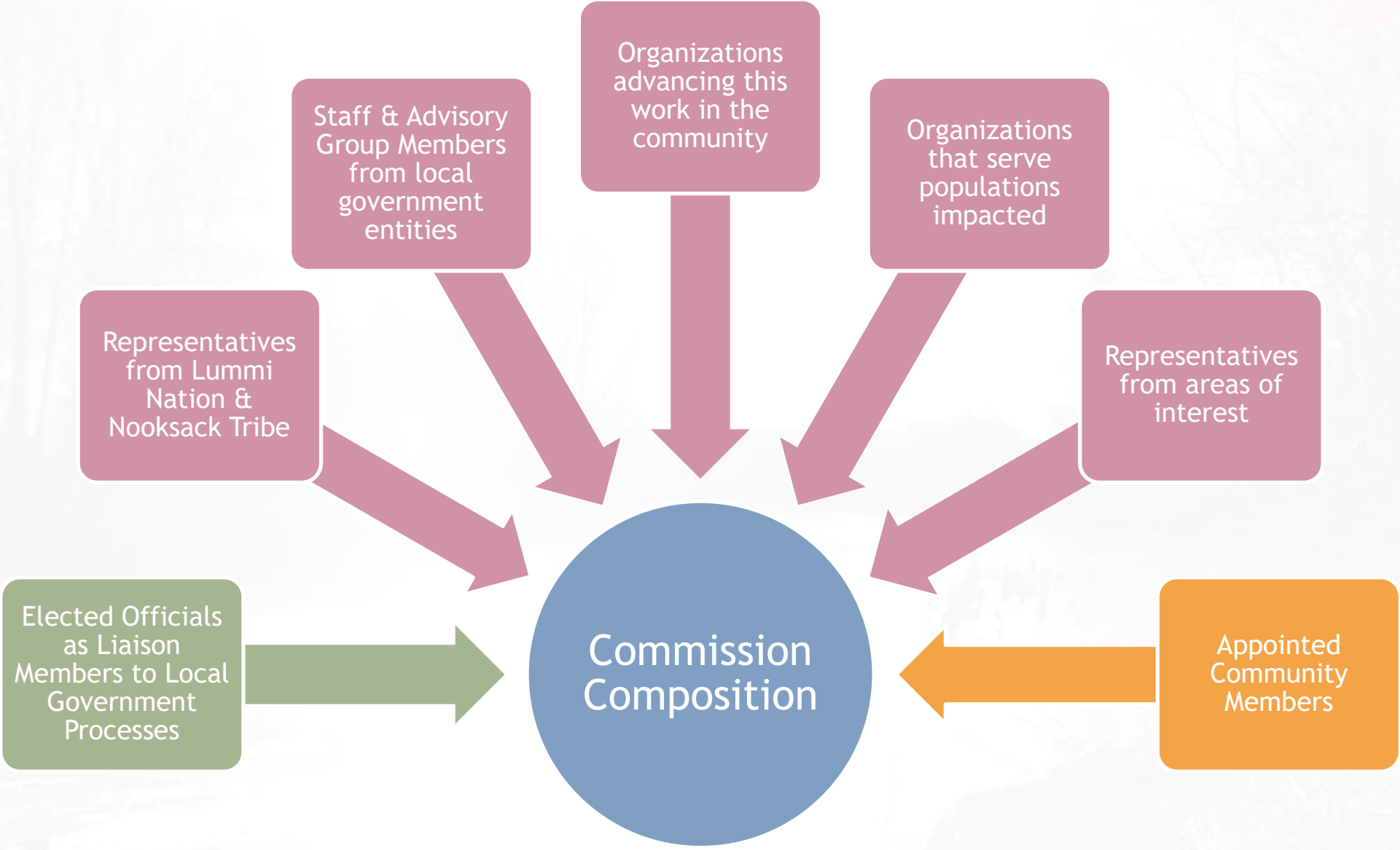
# Membership Composition

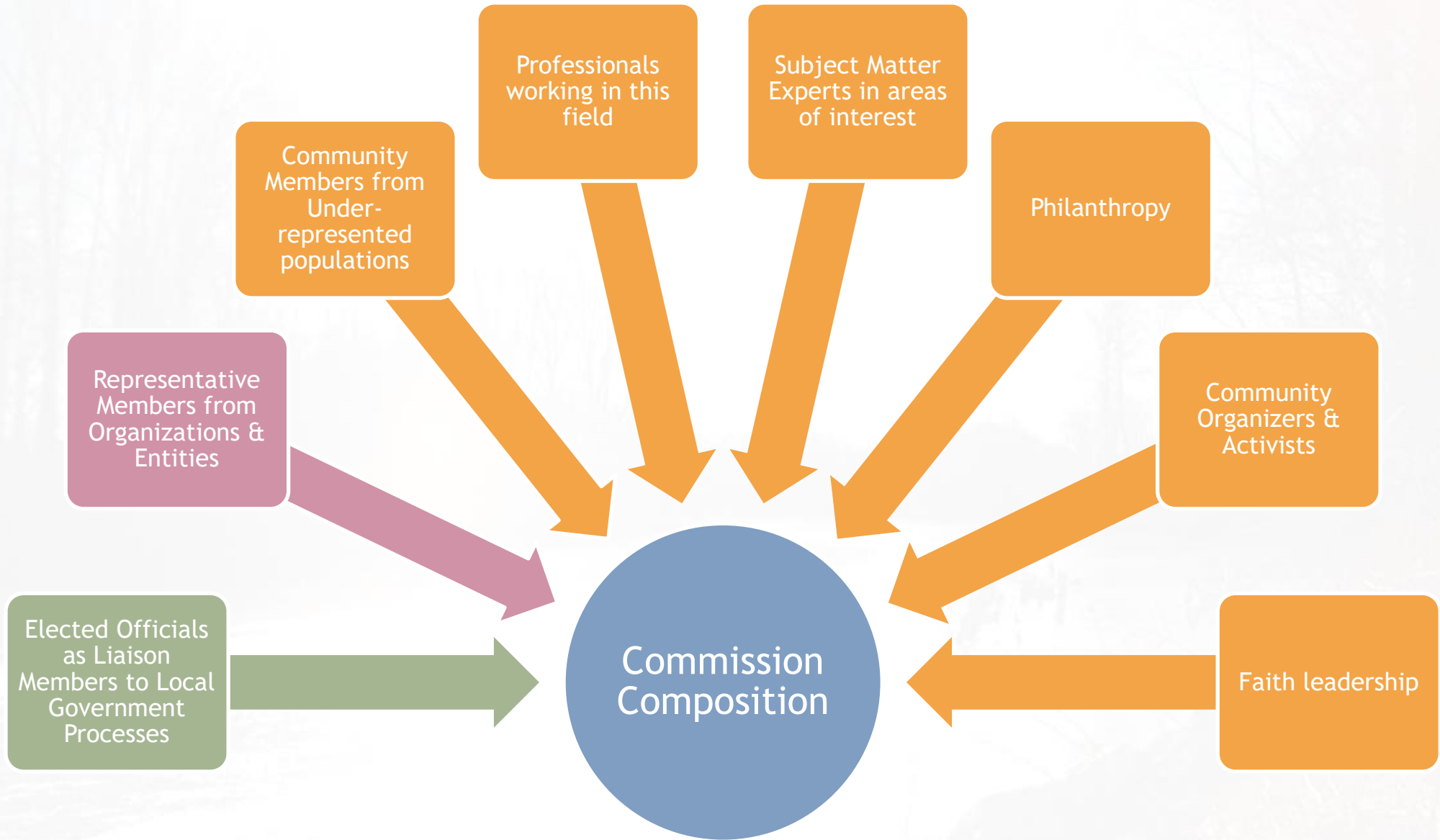
# Types of Membership Roles

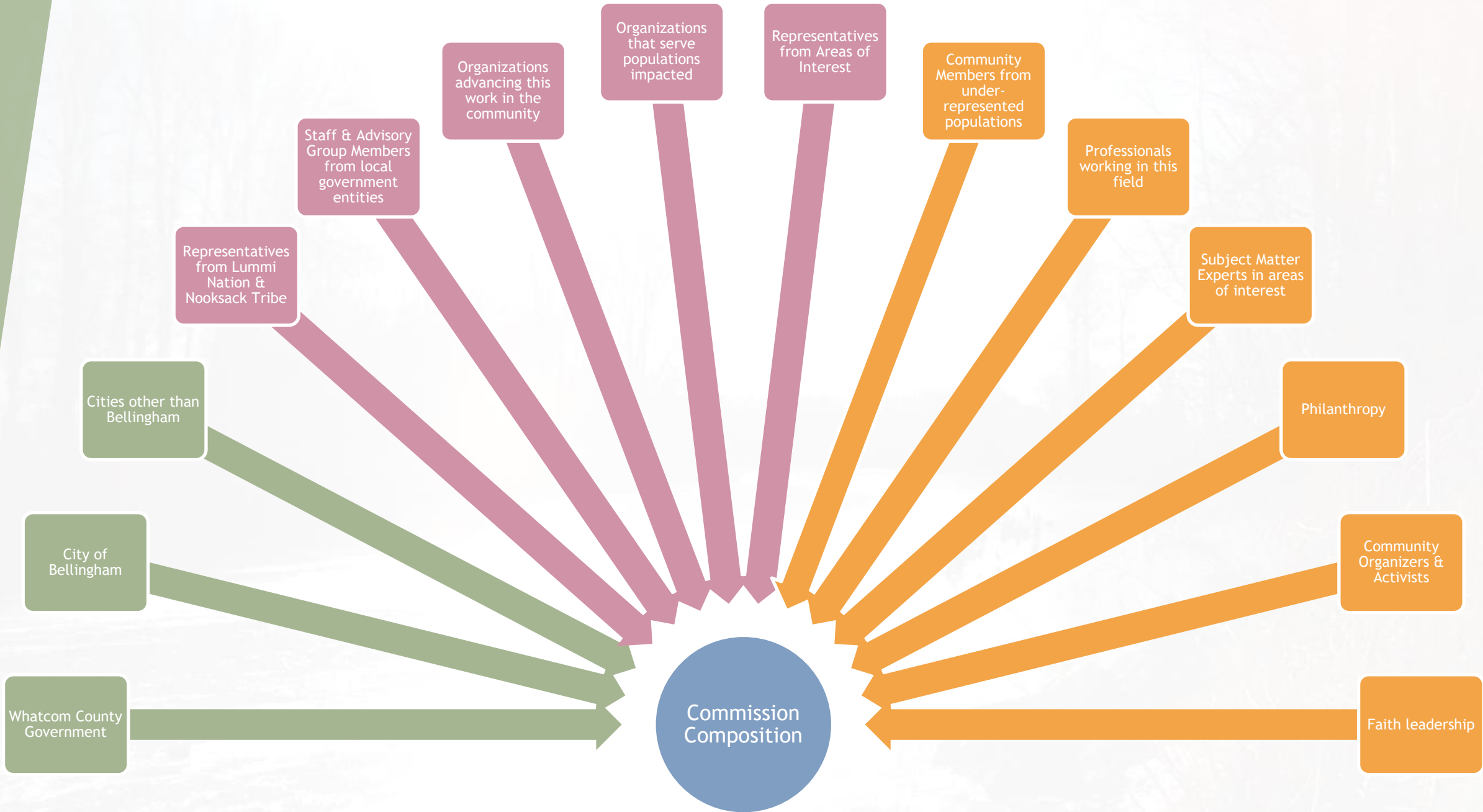














# Appointment Process

# 3 Tracks to Appointment

## Track 1: Liaison Members

Follows existing processes like Council Reorganization for appointment or by vote of the Small Cities Partnership

## Track 2: Representative Members

Will be selected from within entities & organizations

## Track 3: Appointed Community Members

Will follow an application & committee review process before recommendation by the Executive & Mayor of Bellingham to Councils for approval

# Appointed Community Members

Community members apply

Applications reviewed by an Appointment Committee

Committee gives written summary recommendations to County Executive & Mayor of Bellingham

Mayor & Executive review committee recommendations & bring applicants forward to Councils

Councils vote to appoint an applicant to the Commission



# Next Steps



# Legislative Sequence

(modeled on The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence)

## Revisions

- Gathering feedback & questions
- Revising recommendation drafts

## Ordinance

- Pending introduction to County Council in the Fall

## Interlocal Agreement

- City of Bellingham will vote to adopt through Interlocal
- Interlocal agreement prepared for both County Council & Bellingham City Council



YOU NEVER FAIL  
UNTIL YOU STOP TRYING

Thank you so much for your time.

For more information visit:  
[www.chuckanuthealthfoundation.org/](http://www.chuckanuthealthfoundation.org/)

Or send an email:  
[Shu@ChuckanutHealthFoundation.org](mailto:Shu@ChuckanutHealthFoundation.org)



## Questions

Do you have any questions about the presentation or the development process?

## Invitation

Before the next step of revisions, we would appreciate your feedback on things we should consider with stakeholders.