

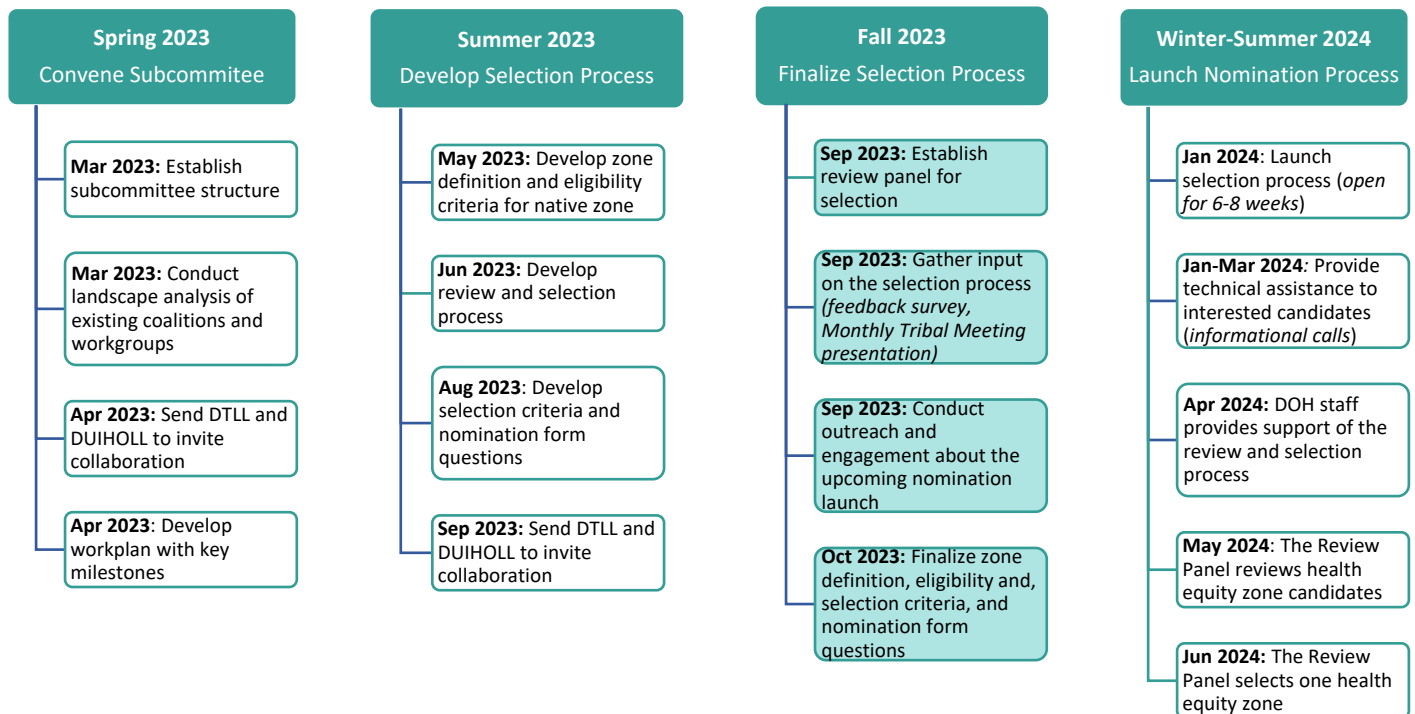
What is the Health Equity Zones Initiative?

[The Health Equity Zones \(HEZ\) Initiative](#) is a community-driven effort supported by the Department of Health, created from the understanding that people who are most impacted by health inequities are closest to the solutions that will improve their health. A health equity zone is a geographic area where people who live and work there can collaborate to improve the health of their community. The HEZ Community Advisory Council created designations for each of the three zones dedicated to rural, urban, and Native communities.

During the pilot of the HEZ Initiative, the Department committed to investing in three geographic communities across the state that are most impacted by health inequities. Each health equity zone will receive core infrastructure funding of \$200,000 per year for two years to support the zone communities in identifying health priorities and developing strategies that meet the unique needs of their community. The Department will support the zones in identifying funding that aligns with their health priorities to support strategy implementation.

Zone for Native Communities Update

Tribal community representatives on the Community Advisory Council are developing the selection process for the zone dedicated to a Native community. To develop the selection process, the tribal community representatives are seeking collaboration from tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations. At the request of the tribal community representatives, HEZ staff conducted a landscape analysis of existing coalitions and workgroups focused on Native health, which was completed in March. Over the last three months, the tribal community representatives have developed drafts of the zone definition, eligibility criteria, selection criteria, and nomination form questions. The nomination process is anticipated to launch in January 2024.



Rural and Urban Zones Next Steps

[The nomination process](#) to identify rural and urban zones launched on March 13, 2023. The HEZ Community Advisory Council (CAC) reviewed and scored nominations for the urban and rural health equity zones from May to June 2023. The CAC met in-person in June 2023 to select the initial urban and rural health equity zones, which are in Burien-SeaTac-Tukwila and Whatcom County, respectively.

In the post-selection of the urban and rural health equity zones by the Community Advisory Council, each zone will convene Community Collectives to identify health priorities and develop strategies that address the unique needs of their community. The Community Collectives are anticipated to convene in Winter 2024. In the Whatcom County Rural Communities Zone outreach work will include outreach to the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Indian Tribe to invite tribal community members to participate in the community guided work of that zone. Participation in the Whatcom County Rural Communities Zone does not preclude the Nooksack Indian Tribe or the Lummi Nation from applying for the Zone for Native Communities.

If you would like to learn more about the HEZ Initiative and/or participate in the developing the selection process for the zone dedicated to a Native community, please contact HealthEquityZones@doh.wa.gov or visit the [HEZ Initiative WA Portal page](#).