
CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: **Office of Public Affairs**

Equity Lead(s): Katie Han, Jeremy Lasich & Atiqah Raja

Date: 11/22/2023

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Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2023 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#). Using that plan, fill in each goal below and describe: 1) what was done to make progress toward the goal, 2) with whom (partners), and 3) how work toward this goal was measured/evaluated and the results. If you have data for the performance measures in your CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan, report them. Add more goals as needed.

Goal 1: Improve customer service in an equitable and timely manner to all members of the public, Fairfax County employees, and elected officials.

Goal 1 Progress: Progress was made throughout the calendar year on improving customer service in an equitable manner. Data on the number of Limited English Proficiency individuals served was collected and will be used to assess language needs proactively.

- Over the phone translations – 771
- In-person Translations – 260

The Customer Service team is developing guidelines for equitable customer service that we plan to share with frontline staff. We plan to work collectively across departments and agencies to ensure there is diverse input. The first draft will be completed in Spring 2024.

Goal 2: Increase access to public records to all county residents.

Goal 2 Progress: FOIA requests increased 7% in the last year. Information on how to submit a FOIA request is available to anyone online, and the information can be translated into multiple languages using the county website's Translate tool. FOIA requests are also available in person using these forms and by calling the main county line. The FOIA forms themselves are available natively in several languages.

Goal 3: Provide education and resources to county website publishers that the Fairfax County website must be accessible to everyone and in compliance with the United States Access Board's 5087 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Goal 3 Progress: OPA continues to provide educational resources to meet the goal outlined, particularly through a refreshed Web Content Resource Center that features web accessibility information. In

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addition, OPA continued to coordinate several in-person training sessions (funded by DHR) in CY23 to train web content publishers and related staff on how to create web accessible content. While we are unable to measure specific metrics such as a decrease in the number of inaccessible documents on the county website, OPA and DIT are making progress to hopefully procure such a system that could aid in more reliable metrics.

Goal 4: Facilitate a comprehensive understanding among all county employees as to why and how equity is a foundational priority for Fairfax County.

Goal 4 Progress: We are reconfiguring our employee communications program and continue to look for opportunities to inform employees about the importance of One Fairfax. We will continue to pursue this goal in the next calendar year.

Goal 5: Develop policies and resources on language access and Title VI for use by county agencies.

Goal 5 Progress: The Language Access Program Director was hired in December of 2022. As part of developing a language access plan, a baseline survey was sent to departments and agencies about their language access services to learn about current practice and identify areas for improvement. The results of the survey indicated that only half of the agencies provided written translation services on a regular basis. These services were provided by vendors, bilingual employees or via Google translate. Only about 1/3 of the agencies felt the translation quality was satisfactory. In order to centralize the countywide translation need, a decision has been made to hire two full time translators (Spanish and Korean) embedded in OPA that could aid all agencies and departments. Ultimately, this will build quality translations over time with consistent terminologies. It will also allow for the development of more efficient processes with quicker turnaround time while providing effective timely emergency communication and saving costs without having to work with one of the translation vendors.

To create a successful centralized model, the language access team is working with DIT to implement a data tracking tool to accurately record and track the services.

A new language vendor, PGLS, has been acquired for agencies to have a third option for interpretation/translation services. They are a local vendor with competitive pricing compared to the two other language vendors. Onsite ASL services are also offered by PGLS.

To gain insight and determine the countywide need first, the work to update language access policy and other resources was not prioritized during CY 2023. This will be the focus for CY 2024 once all the OPA language access team members are hired. Language access is an ongoing commitment. OPA language access team will collaborate with other agencies to adapt strategies to meet evolving linguistic needs.

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Describe other equity-related work completed in CY 2023 (efforts that advance racial and social equity that your department was involved in within the department or countywide) not in the department's Equity Impact Plan.

- FOIA fee waivers were granted to members of the public with vulnerabilities and those representing those individuals (e.g., non-profit law firms).
- FOIA forms are available in multiple languages, but OPA has yet to receive a request in a language other than English.
- OPA has continued to play a significant role in the Inclusive Community Engagement Framework, most notably leading the efforts with Public Input, the new online platform for community engagement. Phase one of the pilot is complete, and now all departments who wish to be onboarded will be in CY24, in conjunction with engagement training offered by Neighborhood and Community Services.
- The decision behind hiring of two in-house translators will not only enable timely and efficient translation process, but it will also strengthen the existing Spanish social media content and create a first-time ever Korean social media outlet. This is a great outreach opportunity to foster a more inclusive environment to engage the community members who speak the two languages.
- The Language Access Program Director joined the Communications and Engagement Advisory team to identify countywide communication elements that should be brought into alignment with the Countywide Strategic Plan.