

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS CY 2024 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN



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Departmental Equity Guiding Statement: The Office of Public Affairs is committed to ensure fair and equitable communication with residents and employees, regardless of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status, or other characteristics. The commitment is upheld across five key areas: 1.) Customer Service, 2.) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 3.) External Communications, 4.) Language Access, and 5.) Internal (Employees) Communications

Context: The primary challenge we encounter revolves around effectively communicating with all segments of the population throughout all facets of our work, especially those who lack adequate technology access. The majority of our external communications efforts are concentrated online, using platforms like NewsCenter, the county’s website and social media channels, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Nextdoor, and X. Unfortunately, there is a portion of the population who lacks access to these channels, leading to a gap in message visibility. Moreover, even among those with technological capabilities, some do not engage with county government messages on social media or visit the county’s website and news platforms.

This is also true for internal communications, where information is primarily disseminated through FairfaxNet or sent via email, which isn’t consistently accessible to all field employees.

To address this, it is important to have communication strategies that span the spectrum of high-tech to no-tech, ensuring inclusivity across the entire community. Many government services (such as paying taxes) affect all county residents regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, etc. Our biggest challenge is making sure everyone sees those key messages. As the countywide communications office, we must take the lead in collaborating with other county agencies to ensure their programs and services are promoted in an equitable fashion. Compliance with the county’s accessibility standard, including Section 508 standards, is essential to guarantee access for people with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities.

As the County’s central communications office, the Office of Public Affairs distributes daily messages through various methods. Recognizing the limitations of relying solely on online followers, we have transitioned to implementing new methods that leverage community-connected networks, expanding our outreach and enhancing the impact of County programs.

Collaborating with community leaders, ethnic media, county communicators, and outreach professionals has proven instrumental in increasing information accessibility. Our

commitment is to guide internal and external partners in developing communication that is tailored to the diverse needs of communities, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

The Office of Public Affairs will continue to be a resource for other communicators, ensuring that the message reaches diverse populations through channels easily understood or translatable by community members. In 2024, OPA's recently formed Language Access Program Team will concentrate on implementing countywide policies and procedures aimed at improving communication across diverse segments of the population, particularly those who speak languages other than English.

System-Level Infrastructure: OPA collaborates with the Department of Information Technology (DIT) to provide support for the County's website. The FOIA team works with agency FOIA points of contact for input on various FOIA-related forms and to enhance public interaction. The Language Access Team will partner with all county agencies on developing language access plans.

Over the past four years, OPA has been co-leading with NCS and One Fairfax "Engage Fairfax County," the county's Inclusive Community Engagement Framework. During this period, OPA has drafted several pivotal documents, including the framework and the community engagement spectrum, consolidating the efforts of a multiagency steering committee.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CALENDAR YEAR 2024 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

DEPARTMENT GOALS

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

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus:

15. Digital access and literacy for all residents.

17. Policies that prohibit all forms of discrimination under Federal and State law in county and school system activities, and ensure that all practices provide fair treatment for all employees, contractors, clients, community partners, residents, and other sectors who interact with Fairfax County including higher education, business, nonprofit, faith, philanthropy, and civic.

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Efficient and Effective Government (EEG)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy EEG 1 – Implement a human-centered, highly responsive design approach across county and school programs and services to improve the customer experience.

EEG 3 – Enhance communication and outreach to the community by using all available communication methods and tailoring messaging to individual needs.

EEG 11 – Expand the employee learning opportunities to increase staff competencies and experience in the areas of leadership, equity, cultural proficiency, use of technology and innovation to meet the needs of a changing environment.

EEG Metric: % of residents who rate the overall quality and accessibility of Fairfax County government services excellent or good. (Action 1a – survey)

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
<p>1a. Create guidelines for equitable customer service and provide to customer service staff.</p>	<p>Members of the public, customer service staff, OPA, County Language Vendor.</p>	<p>Staff time to create the customer service guidelines. Financial support for translating the customer service guidelines, AGCCP for best practices and collaboration</p>	<p>Customer Service Team - OPA</p>	<p>Current – Spring/Summer 2024</p>	<p>Number of Agencies provided the guidelines</p> <p>Survey the same agencies in December to find out how many are actively using the guidelines</p>
<p>1b. Continue to build, strengthen, and maintain partnerships with Fairfax County contact center employees and supervisors.</p>	<p>Customer Service Team, Office of Public Affairs, Public Information Officers,</p>	<p>Staff time, Microsoft Teams, contact center</p>	<p>Customer Service Team - OPA</p>	<p>Current – December 2024</p>	<p>Number of partnerships</p>

	all Fairfax County public service employees and supervisors.				Number of team meetings
1c. Enhance customer access to the Customer Service Center to better serve the public.	Customer service team, members of the public, Fairfax Area Disability Services Board, Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs.	Language Access Team, Staff time to research best practices and assistive technology. Financial support for the purchase of assistive technology, FMD, Use of Microsoft Teams to conduct meetings with stakeholders.	Customer Service Team - OPA	Current – December 2024	Number of assistive devices purchased Total number of assistive device requests
1d. Training for customer service staff in diversity, equity and inclusion in addition to the training offered by the county.	Customer Service Team, members of the public.	Internal and external training vendors, Financial support, OD&T	Customer Service Team - OPA	December 31, 2024	Number of people trained % of staff in customer service positions trained Number of training hours

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

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus: 15: Digital access and literacy for all residents

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Efficient Effective Government (EEG)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy EEG 2. Implement a comprehensive approach to consistently solicit customer feedback on their service experience and share results regarding the quality of the county’s programs and services.

EEG 3. Enhance communication and outreach to the community by using all available communication methods and tailoring messaging to individual needs.

EEG 7. Review and improve the structure, operations and impact of county boards, authorities and commissions to better reflect current needs and demographics of the community.

EEG 10. Enhance countywide succession planning and ensure continuity of operations by focusing on key positions and critical functions where effective knowledge transfer and smooth workforce transitions are required.

EEG 21. Strengthen the use of data-informed decision making through regular data collection, evaluation and distribution.

EEG Metric: % of transactions that meet a specified service or performance standard. % of residents who rate Fairfax County Government as trustworthy. % of residents who feel they have authentic opportunities to participate in Fairfax County Government decision-making.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
<p>2a. Continue to promptly provide public records to all county residents in compliance with FOIA laws.</p>	<p>County staff</p> <p>County residents and media</p>	<p>OPA FOIA Team</p> <p>DIT FOIA tracking application team</p> <p>OPA web team</p> <p>Countywide FOIA Tracking application</p>	<p>OPA FOIA Team</p> <p>Agency FOIA compliance coordinators</p>	<p>Current - 2024</p>	<p>Percentage of FOIA requests responded to by required FOIA deadlines.</p> <p>Hours spent to provide FOIA training to internal staff and members of the public.</p> <p>Number of individuals training on FOIA laws.</p>
<p>2b. Continue to provide FOIA request forms in multiple languages.</p>	<p>County staff</p> <p>County residents and media</p>	<p>OPA FOIA Team</p> <p>OPA Language Access team</p> <p>Staff training on language interpretation and translation</p>	<p>OPA FOIA Team</p> <p>Agency FOIA compliance coordinators</p> <p>Agency staff with language proficiencies</p>	<p>Current - 2024</p>	<p>Volume of FOIA requests received and responded to in a language other than English in compliance with the required FOIA deadlines.</p>

		availability and process.			
2c. Continue to seek input from internal stakeholders on how to better engage with all members of the community on the FOIA response process.	County staff	OPA-led FOIA training for county staff	OPA FOIA Team	Current - 2024	Number of countywide FOIA team meetings
		Countywide FOIA team meetings	Agency FOIA compliance coordinators		Number of new or enhanced policies to support more efficient effective processing of FOIA requests.
2d. Continue to provide opportunities for increased participation in public meetings – including those who have disabilities.	County staff	OPA FOIA Team	OPA FOIA team	Current - 2024	Volume of participants in public meetings.
	Members of the public with disabilities	Health and human services board, authorities and commissions staff support	DMB Clerk's Office		Accessibility to participate in public meetings and availability of accommodations to support members of the public with disabilities.
	Board, Authorities and Commissions		BAC staff support		
		DMB data analytics team			
		DIT public meetings calendar webpage staff			

Goal 3: Educate staff about the accessibility and readability of digital information so that people with disabilities and residents with baseline literacy levels can have more equitable access to county content.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus:

15. Digital access and literacy for all residents.

17. Policies that prohibit all forms of discrimination under Federal and State law in county and school system activities, and ensure that all practices provide fair treatment for all employees, contractors, clients, community partners, residents, and other sectors who interact with Fairfax County including higher education, business, nonprofit, faith, philanthropy, and civic.

Other: Inclusive Community Engagement

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Efficient and Effective Government (EEG); Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability (ESRFV)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy EEG 1: Implement a human-centered, highly responsive design approach across county and school programs and services to improve the customer experience.

EEG 3: Enhance communication and outreach to the community by using all available communication methods and tailoring messaging to individual needs.

EEG 4: Improve public participation and engagement opportunities to ensure all facets of the community are represented and have the physical, technological, and language access necessary to engage and participate in community discussions and decisions.

EEG 6: Expand capacity to meaningfully engage the community in places that are accessible and in ways that consider needs, traditions, and values of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural groups.

EEG 11: Expand employee learning opportunities to increase staff competencies and experience in the areas of leadership, equity, cultural proficiency, use of technology and innovation to meet the needs of a changing environment.

EEG 20: Create "communities of practice" around areas of functional expertise (such as human resources, financial management, data analytics or performance measurement) to foster innovation, increase collaboration and share best practices across the county workforce.

EEG 23: Provide greater access to information, engage with our community in an inclusive way and receive wide and diversified community input regarding spending priorities.

ESRFV 1: Develop targeted marketing and outreach strategies, in coordination with community-based partners, to proactively engage residents facing vulnerability.

ESRFV 13: Evaluate existing service in comparison to industry best practices to ensure the most effective, people-centered approaches are utilized to meet the needs of residents facing vulnerability.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
<p>3a. Provide classroom training to website publishers on how to create accessible documents, especially PDFs.</p>	<p>County vendor OfficePro, Department of Human Resources, Department of Information Technology</p>	<p>Funding for classes from DHR</p>	<p>OPA Digital Team to coordinate DHR to continue funding</p>	<p>4x/year in 2024 plus any additional training departments elect to fund</p>	<p>Number of staff trained</p>

<p>3b. Update general "Why Digital Accessibility Matters" training on EmployeeU for all county content creators; require social media publishers take the course.</p>	<p>All county content creators such as website publishers, social media publishers, information officers and communications specialists</p>	<p>Updated training document</p>	<p>OPA Digital Team</p>	<p>By June 30, 2024</p>	<p>Number of staff trained via EmployeeU course</p>
<p>3c. Create photo ALT text style guide for county content creators to showcase how to properly write alternative, descriptive text (ALT text helps people with disabilities and differing needs access digital content such as photos and graphics).</p>	<p>All county content creators such as website publishers, social media publishers, information officers and communications specialists</p>	<p>Create training/resource document, drawing from research and best practices</p>	<p>OPA Digital Team</p>	<p>By Oct. 1, 2024</p>	<p>Number of county tweets in a select period of time that include ALT text</p> <p>Point-in-time assessment on county tweets in April 2023 showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total tweets: 1,306 • Tweets with alt text: 156 • Percentage of tweets with alt text: 11.94%
<p>3d. Convene Digital Content Accessibility Community of Practice to provide leadership and coordination.</p>	<p>Office of Public Affairs, Department of Information Technology, Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs, Department of Family Services, Office of County Attorney, Legislative Affairs, Department of Human Resources</p>	<p>Monitor federal and state legislation, as well as updated worldwide standards</p>	<p>OPA Digital Team</p>	<p>By Dec. 1, 2024</p>	<p>Creation of the Community of Practice</p> <p>Number of meetings held</p> <p>Number of participants</p>

<p>3e. Introduce “Plain Language” writing concepts to all county content creators, to improve meeting community literacy levels, language translations and Generative AI interactions such as chatbots.</p>	<p>All county content creators such as website publishers, social media publishers, information officers, outreach professionals, language translation staff and communications specialists</p>	<p>Federal government’s PlainLanguage.gov and other resources</p>	<p>OPA Digital Team</p>	<p>By Nov. 1, 2024</p>	<p>Number of staff trained via EmployeeU course(s)</p>
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Goal 4: Further enhance multicultural digital communications.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus: 15. Digital access and literacy for all residents.

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Efficient and Effective Government (EEG), Cultural and Recreational Opportunities (CRO), Safety and Security (SS)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy CRO 9: Provide comprehensive, up-to-date, accessible information to the public about local artists, creative cultural industries, places of cultural and natural heritage, events and spaces and facilities.

EEG 3: Enhance communication and outreach to the community by using all available communication methods and tailoring messaging to individual needs.

EEG 4: Improve public participation and engagement opportunities to ensure all facets of the community are represented and have the physical, technological, and language access necessary to engage and participate in community discussions and decisions.

EEG 6: Expand capacity to meaningfully engage the community in places that are accessible and in ways that consider needs, traditions, and values of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural groups.

EEG 11: Expand employee learning opportunities to increase staff competencies and experience in the areas of leadership, equity, cultural proficiency, use of technology and innovation to meet the needs of a changing environment.

EEG 13: Implement a workplace culture change effort to actively promote equity and inclusion, collaboration, excellence, innovation, customer service, transparency, accountability and trustworthiness.

SS 9: Strengthen individual, family, employee, school and community capability to facilitate effective emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery.

SS 11: Enhance continuity of operations planning and training to ensure capability and continuity of essential government services in the event of an emergency

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
<p>4a. Launch more language-specific official social media channels and other platforms for residents.</p>	<p>Office of Public Affairs, all county content creators</p>	<p>Social media platforms</p>	<p>OPA Digital Team and OPA Language Access Team</p>	<p>July-December, 2024</p>	<p>Number of new social media followers Percent engagement rate of new channels</p>
<p>4b. Improve digital emergency information assets, messaging and processes in select languages.</p>	<p>Office of Public Affairs, Department of Emergency Management and Security, Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, Department</p>	<p>Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Support Function 15, Joint Information Center Plan, Alert and Warning Annex</p>	<p>OPA Language Access Team & OPA Digital Team?</p>	<p>Phased approach over several years</p>	<p>Number of emergency messages provided in languages other than English</p>

of Family Services,
Fairfax County Public
Schools

4c. Regularly recognize and celebrate significant cultural holidays on county communication channels to showcase diversity and inclusiveness.

Office of Public Affairs

Social media
platforms, email
newsletters

OPA Digital Team
and OPA Language
Access Team

January-
December
2024

Number of cultural
holiday posts

Number of residents
who engage with
cultural holiday social
media posts

4d. Translate core NewsCenter articles into Spanish and share in new monthly Spanish email newsletter for residents.

Office of Public Affairs,
all county content
creators

Translation services,
NewsCenter
platform,
GovDelivery email
system

OPA Digital Team,
OPA Editorial Team
and OPA Language
Access Team

July-
December
2024

Number of NewsCenter
articles translated

Number of email
subscribers

Goal 5: Develop policies and resources on language access.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus:

- 1. Community and economic development policies and programs that promote wealth creation and ensure fair access for all people.
- 10. A health and human services system where opportunities exist for all individuals and families to be safe, be healthy and realize their potential through the provision of accessible, high quality, affordable and culturally appropriate services.
- 17. Policies that prohibit all forms of discrimination under Federal and State law in county and school system activities, and ensure that all practices provide fair treatment for all employees, contractors, clients, community partners, residents, and other sectors who interact with Fairfax County including higher education, business, nonprofit, faith, philanthropy, and civic.

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Effective and Efficient Government (EEG)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

- Strategy EEG 3. Enhance communication and outreach to the community by using all available communication methods and tailoring messaging to individual needs.
- EEG 4. Improve public participation and engagement opportunities to ensure all facets of the community are represented and have the physical, technological, and language access necessary to engage and participate in community discussions and decisions.
- EEG 6. Expand capacity to meaningfully engage the community in places that are accessible and in ways that consider needs, traditions, and values of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural groups.

EEG Metric: % of registered voters in Fairfax County who voted in the most recent local election
 % of residents who rate the overall quality and accessibility of Fairfax County Government services as excellent or good

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
<p>5a. To update a plan that is consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for Fairfax County to adhere to when providing services to, or interacting with, individuals who speak language other than English.</p>	County Staff & BOS	One Fairfax, Fairfax County Language Access Liaisons and County Executive Office	OPA Language Access Team	Current ~ 2024	Update and publish Language Access policy to reflect the needs of our community
<p>5b. Update the Language Access site in SharePoint and the Toolkit. This includes establishing guidelines for County agencies to access OPA’s in-house translation services.</p>	County Staff	County Staff	OPA Language Access Team, Language Access Liaisons	Current ~ Dec 2024	Number of translation requests in Language Access Recording System (LARS) Guidelines completed
<p>5c. Develop periodic employee training on language access policies, Title VI compliance, and cultural sensitivity.</p>	County Staff and SMT	County Staff and SMT	One Fairfax, OD&T, Employee U, countywide Language Access Liaisons	Current ~ 2025	Number of trainings offered Number of employees trained

Goal 6: Facilitate a comprehensive understanding among all county employees and residents highlighting examples of equity considerations in county programs, processes, and decisions.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus: 18. Other

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Effective and Efficient Government (EEG)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric:

Strategy EEG11. Expand employee learning opportunities to increase staff competencies and experience in the areas of leadership, equity, cultural proficiency, use of technology and innovation to meet the needs of a changing environment.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
6a. Feature regular examples of “success” in action with regard to department and countywide goals to contextualize policy and illustrate paths to successful implementation.	County Staff	FairfaxNet, executive communications.	OPA/Internal Communications Team	Through 2024	Number of communications highlighting One Fairfax goals.
6b. Develop and share messages about the significance of racial and social equity to County government employees and for the public.	County Staff FFX County Public	FairfaxNet, NewsLink	OPA/Interal Communications Team OPA/External Communications Team	Through 2024	Number of communications highlighting One Fairfax goals.

Director’s Signature: 