

**Mission** To lead coordinated communications, customer service, language access and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests from a countywide perspective that connects County residents with information about their government's services, operations, and policies. To increase public awareness of hazards and to communicate appropriate actions to take before, during and after emergencies. To ensure clear, transparent, and timely communications to and from employees to maintain an informed and motivated workforce.

**Connection  
to the  
Countywide  
Strategic Plan**

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted the first-ever Countywide Strategic Plan on October 5, 2021. The Countywide Strategic Plan serves as a road map to help guide future work, focusing on the 10 Community Outcome Areas that represent the issues of greatest importance to the community, and uses the County's One Fairfax equity policy to invest in people and places that have limited access to opportunity. On February 18, 2025, the third Annual Report on the work of the strategic plan was released to the public. The report contains point-in-time progress highlights for each of the community outcome areas, plus a number of additional initiatives to embed the elements of the plan within department-level work. The report also includes a Year Three Implementation Model, including five data dashboards and data stories that are being replicated across all of the outcome areas, which will engage hundreds of County subject-matter experts to identify and champion the specific strategies that will move forward to implementation under the direction of the County Executive's Steering Committee. For more information on the Countywide Strategic Plan, please visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan). The Office of Public Affairs primarily supports the following Community Outcome Area:



Community Outcome Area	Vision Statement
Effective and Efficient Government	All people trust that their government responsibly manages resources, is responsive to their needs, provides exceptional services and equitably represents them.

**Focus** The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) is the central communications office for the County and provides essential information to the public, elected and appointed officials, County employees, and the media concerning County programs and services. The Director serves as the County media spokesperson, and as a liaison with the County Executive and the Board of Supervisors. OPA also manages countywide editorial planning, social media, website content, emergency communications, compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA), language access, and customer service.

OPA coordinates a comprehensive, centralized public affairs program for the County and also provides communications consulting to other agencies. Employee internal communications, countywide web content management, social media, customer service and emergency communications are part of the agency's critical functions.

OPA focuses on three main areas of communication: external, employee and emergency. This structure facilitates the best use of OPA staffing to address the following strategic issues: enhancing access to information both internally and externally; improving crisis and emergency communications; publishing content through numerous tools and engaging the public; providing information proactively to the media; and supporting agencies that do not have their own public information staff, as well as coordinating with those agencies that do have embedded communications staff. Strategies to address these critical issues include increasing collaboration with agencies, enhancing information on the County's intranet and internet websites, and continuing to explore tools for reaching diverse audiences.

OPA remains proactive in anticipating the needs of the public and media by providing timely information. In addition to managing the content on the County's website at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov), OPA oversees the use of several social media sites, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, and Nextdoor, allowing direct communication with the public. The reach through these tools has grown exponentially over the past few years and enables the amplification of a common message through multiple channels.

OPA is also responsible for coordinating countywide compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, promoting the County's commitment to transparency, improving the efficiency of the VFOIA response process, monitoring requests, and enhancing accountability. Strategies to address these goals include ensuring agency compliance with a countywide FOIA policy, VFOIA, and other state and federal records laws; providing quarterly training on these laws and policies to County employees; ensuring open and collaborative communication with designated agency points of contact; and administering a centralized system to track all FOIA requests.

Finally, OPA oversees the County's language access program to ensure that equitable considerations are given when developing policies, practices, and budget decisions. The program addresses language barriers residents face by providing equal access to County services, programs, benefits, and information to all residents, regardless of their English language proficiency. It also promotes cultural competency, enhances the efficiency of the County's translation process, and strengthens partnerships to meet the needs of the County's multilingual and cultural communities.

### External Communications

OPA provides leadership and counsel in communicating with many external audiences about important issues, deadlines, and events. This includes serving County residents, the business community, nonprofits, faith communities, media, and many other key groups by sharing relevant, timely and actionable information through [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov) and the County app; various social media platforms; the Public Input inclusive community engagement platform; email newsletters; media relations; podcasts, internet radio, and SoundCloud; and printed materials.

Key External Communications services and highlights include:

- **NewsCenter** ([www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news)), the County's central focal point for publishing news articles, has been recognized with several awards, including a Governor's Technology Award and a National Association of Counties Achievement Award. Over 2,000 articles are posted to the County's NewsWire each year.
- **Daily and weekly emails** reach more than 15,000 subscribers, up from 9,000 at the beginning of FY 2024. The number of daily news subscribers increased by 42 percent, while the Weekender newsletter highlighting County events increased by 112 percent.

- OPA continues its **social media** publishing role leading daily information dissemination on multiple County platforms that reach the community. OPA also leads the entire County social media program, including oversight, approving new accounts, analyzing metrics from all County accounts, setting standards, and working in partnership with more than 80 social media publishers across the County. In FY 2024, over 36,000 posts were published across the County's social media accounts.
- OPA supports the **County website** ([www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov)) in many ways, including managing key pages, setting content policy, tracking metrics, providing accessibility support, conducting usability testing, consulting with agencies, and working with the Department of Information Technology to plan the site's next phases and features. In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a "final rule" detailing how local governments must comply with new guidance so content is accessible to individuals with disabilities. OPA is leading County efforts to meet this rule by April 2026; this work is also aligned with the County's Digital Equity Action Plan.
- OPA has taken on a leadership role for **Inclusive Community Engagement** in partnership with One Fairfax and the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services. This work has led to process improvements, standards, coordination and ensuring a more equitable way for the County to engage the community. OPA oversees the County's online public engagement platform, Public Input. In FY 2024, County departments using Public Input published 93 projects that yielded more than 125,000 responses.
- OPA's **digital team** develops policies and governance for the website, social media, and related digital tools; provides strategic and tactical counsel; trains digital publishers; maintains a suite of metrics; and enhances capabilities during emergencies and public health crises.

### Customer Service

OPA's customer service team serves County residents, often as their first point of contact, through the 703-FAIRFAX (324-7329) telephone line and voice mailbox, the 703-FAIRFAX and Public Affairs email inboxes, and the Customer Service Center located in the Government Center building. The customer service team often serves as a bridge, linking residents to the appropriate agency to assist them with their needs, and connecting them with the services and programs they need. Despite a 2 percent decrease in FY 2024, 703-FAIRFAX received more than 35,000 phone calls, with the number of callers using the Spanish language prompt nearly doubling. Additionally, an 18 percent increase in in-person engagement (nearly 12,000 information desk walk-ups) suggests a growing preference for face-to-face interactions among residents.

The customer service team also maintains a list of over 2,400 Community and Homeowners Associations that County agencies rely on to communicate with residents; publishes and supports maintenance of the Public Meetings Calendar that helps inform residents about important discussions and decisions that may impact their lives; maintains a Customer Relationship Management database that houses contact information for County agencies, as well as other state and local agencies, enabling the team to efficiently connect the public to agencies and services; and maintains an equipment loan program to provide essential items to County agencies for events such as groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

### **Employee Communications**

OPA serves as the central hub for countywide internal communications, addressing the diverse needs of individual agencies and employees. Through strategic consultation and executive communications management, OPA ensures employees remain informed and engaged. OPA collaborates with internal partners such as the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Information Technology, the Facilities Management Department and others to deliver essential information about programs, services and benefits.

OPA manages the County's intranet, FairfaxNet, which averages nearly 13,000 unique visits monthly and serves as a primary resource for employee information. The daily newsletter, NewsLink, reaches over 12,000 employees each workday, while a countywide calendar provides easy access to key dates and online events.

### **Emergency Communications**

As required by the Fairfax County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), OPA coordinates and disseminates all emergency information related to major incidents affecting more than two County agencies. During activations of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), OPA staff are key players in the incident command organizational structure, serving as the EOC Command and General Staff Public Information Officer (PIO), while the Director of OPA serves on the Senior Policy Group of key County leadership. Additional OPA staff serve in the Joint Information Center (JIC) as assistant PIOs, creating and disseminating all emergency-related content during an EOC activation. OPA opens the County's JIC, which serves as the central clearinghouse for emergency information, whenever the EOC is activated above a monitoring level.

The increased use of communication tools and the changing way residents receive information means that OPA must continue to recognize and adapt to effectively distribute emergency news and information to various audiences and stakeholders. As such, OPA uses multiple communication tools and channels. These include the emergency information blog ([www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog)); County website; County and agency Facebook and X accounts; YouTube; Instagram; Nextdoor; Flickr; SoundCloud; emails, text and pager messages from Fairfax Alerts and the Employee Alert Network (EAN); online Fairfax County Government Radio ([www.fairfaxcounty.gov/radio](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/radio)); numerous podcasts; the emergency information hotline and internal hotline numbers for County employees; video (online and on Channel 16); media interviews; and the County mobile app. Each post to the blog is automatically shared via email with over 7,800 subscribers.

### **Virginia Freedom of Information Act**

OPA provides the public and media access to Fairfax County information and public records through the countywide FOIA program. The countywide FOIA Officer serves as Fairfax County's main point of contact for FOIA requests, coordinates the County's compliance with VFOIA, and provides strategy and direction to agencies on how to efficiently respond to the growing volume and complexity of FOIA requests.

The goals of the countywide FOIA program are to 1) coordinate compliance with VFOIA; 2) promote the County's commitment to transparency; 3) improve the efficiency of the FOIA response process; and 4) enhance monitoring and accountability of FOIA requests. In order to achieve these goals, OPA conducts compliance training; works with County agencies to improve the FOIA response process; administers the countywide FOIA tracking application and generates annual reports; and provides subject matter expertise to County agencies, Boards, Authorities, and Commissions; and Board of Supervisors' offices. In FY 2024, OPA offered 10 FOIA trainings to staff and managed 856 of the 16,835 total FOIA requests received by the County. Additional performance metrics and data are published annually in the FOIA Annual Report, which is available on the OPA website.

### **Language Access Program**

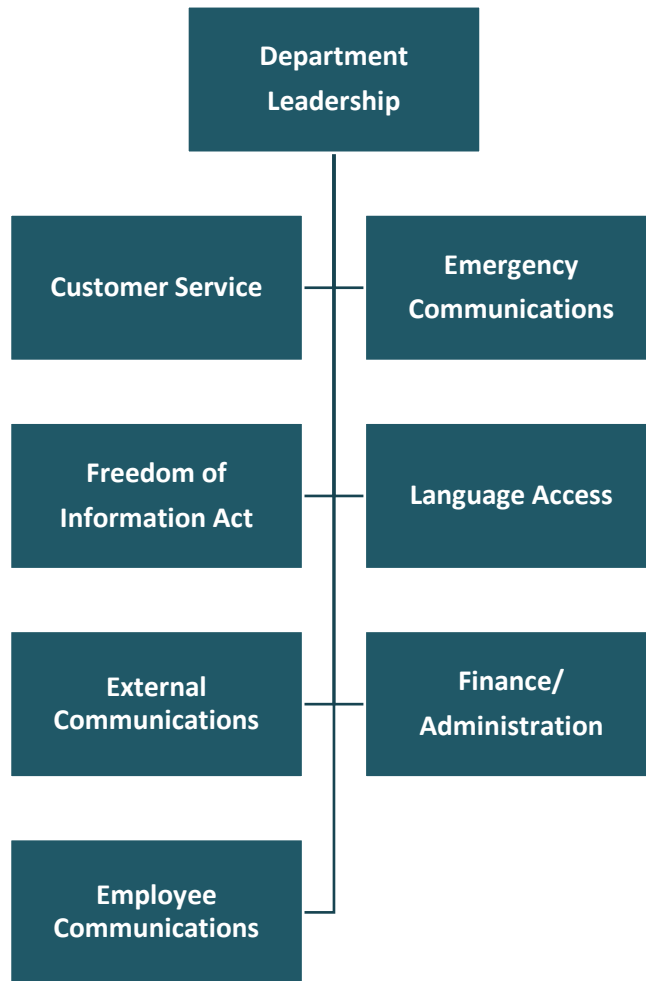
The County's Language Access Program (LAP) helps to ensure the equitable distribution of communication of benefits, services, and resources to all County residents, regardless of their English proficiency. It also aims to serve the 31 percent of County residents with limited English proficiency (LEP) who identify themselves as speaking English "less than very well."

LAP is centered around the four goals of 1) addressing language barriers residents face by providing equal access to County services, programs, benefits and information to all residents, regardless of their English language proficiency; 2) promoting cultural competency; 3) enhancing the efficiency of the County's translation process; and 4) strengthening partnerships to meet the needs of the County's multilingual and cultural communities. These goals are supported by oral interpretation, written translation, and other resources. OPA's Language Access Program team includes two in-house Spanish and Korean translators who can provide translation services to County agencies, thus reducing the dependence on outside vendors.

LAP staff offer interpretation and translation qualification assessments to identify bilingual employees capable of providing services and reviewing vendor-translated documents. LAP offers employee trainings on the importance of providing language access services; policies and procedures related to providing language access services; effectively and respectfully communicating and interacting with LEP individuals; procedures to request and work with an interpreter; using the language access database to record and capture data; and using plain language when writing any content.

OPA has hosted Spanish-language Facebook and X pages since 2020. Additionally, an emphasis on in-language media has led to regular coverage of County news and services by Spanish-language networks such as Univision, Telemundo, and other media outlets. The County's first Korean language Instagram and Facebook accounts were launched in March 2024, given that the Koreans make up the second largest population of foreign-born residents in Fairfax County. These services strengthen the County's connection with Spanish- and Korean-speaking communities, ensuring the dissemination of vital news and information about the County. They also serve as platforms for residents to explore programs and services offered by the County.

## Organizational Chart



## Budget and Staff Resources

Category	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Adopted	FY 2025 Revised	FY 2026 Advertised	FY 2026 Adopted
<b>FUNDING</b>					
<b>Expenditures:</b>					
Personnel Services	\$2,172,527	\$2,933,363	\$2,771,363	\$2,693,482	\$2,693,482
Operating Expenses	325,152	254,169	422,038	355,361	355,361
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$2,497,679</b>	<b>\$3,187,532</b>	<b>\$3,193,401</b>	<b>\$3,048,843</b>	<b>\$3,048,843</b>
Less:					
Recovered Costs	\$0	(\$239,882)	(\$239,882)	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$2,497,679</b>	<b>\$2,947,650</b>	<b>\$2,953,519</b>	<b>\$3,048,843</b>	<b>\$3,048,843</b>
<b>AUTHORIZED POSITIONS/FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)</b>					
Regular	26 / 26	25 / 25	25 / 25	24 / 24	24 / 24



## FY 2026 Funding Adjustments

*The following funding adjustments from the FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan are necessary to support the FY 2026 program. Included are all adjustments recommended by the County Executive that were approved by the Board of Supervisors, as well as any additional Board of Supervisors' actions, as approved in the adoption of the Budget on May 13, 2025.*

### **Employee Compensation** **\$103,759**

An increase of \$103,759 in Personnel Services includes \$54,845 for a 2.00 percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all employees and \$44,692 for performance-based and longevity increases for non-uniformed merit employees, both effective the first full pay period in July 2025. The remaining increase of \$4,222 is included for employee pay increases for specific job classes identified in the County's benchmark class survey of comparator jurisdictions.

### **Web Content Accessibility** **\$162,000**

An increase of \$162,000 in Operating Expenses is included to support a web content platform to enhance the County's compliance with a federal rule issued by the U.S. Department of Justice in April 2024. This rule mandates that all local government websites achieve full accessibility for individuals with disabilities by April 2026. The platform will enhance content accessibility and readability, while also enhancing access for individuals with disabilities, low digital literacy, and limited English proficiency.

### **Reductions** **(\$164,566)**

A decrease of \$164,566 and 1/1.0 FTE position reflects reductions utilized to balance the FY 2026 budget. The following table provides details on the specific reductions:

Title	Impact	Positions	FTE	Reduction
Eliminate Communications Specialist IV Position	This reduction eliminates a vacant Communications Specialist IV position responsible for senior level communications strategies, message development, and crisis communications. The workload will be absorbed among the remaining staff; therefore, it is not expected to have any adverse impact on agency operations.	1	1.0	\$113,758
Reduce Non-Merit Personnel Budget	This reduction aligns the non-merit personnel budget to actual experience and is achievable now that the Office of Public Affairs has merit positions providing Spanish and Korean translation services for County agencies. However, if there is a significant increase in translation requests, especially for non-Spanish/Korean languages, agencies may need to absorb these expenses.	0	0.0	\$40,000
Reduce Operating Budget due to Continued Cost Savings	This reduction realizes operating savings agencywide by aligning funding with actual expenditures as well as implementing targeted service adjustments such as limiting cell phone usage to critical staff and discontinuing hard copy newspaper subscriptions.	0	0.0	\$10,808

## Changes to FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2025 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2024 Carryover Review, FY 2025 Third Quarter Review, and all other approved changes through April 30, 2025.

### Carryover Adjustments

**\$5,869**

As part of the FY 2024 Carryover Review, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of \$5,869 in encumbered carryover in Operating Expenses.

## Position Detail

The FY 2026 Adopted Budget Plan includes the following positions:

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS – 24 Positions			
1	Director	5	Management Analysts II
1	Deputy Director	3	Information Officers III
1	Management Analyst IV	3	Information Officers II
1	FOIA Officer	2	Information Officers I
2	Information Officers IV	1	Administrative Assistant V
1	Public Safety Information Officer IV	2	Administrative Assistants IV
0	Communications Specialists IV [-1]	1	Administrative Assistant III
Denotes Abolished Position(s) due to Budget Reductions			
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## Performance Measurement Results by Community Outcome Area

### Effective and Efficient Government

The County's main Facebook account serves as a key performance indicator to monitor the increasing use of this predominant social media tool by both the public and the media seeking important information about Fairfax County. However, challenges arise due to ongoing changes in Facebook's algorithm and content delivery to users' news feeds, impacting the growth of organic reach year over year. To address this, OPA plans to invest more in paid social media to complement organic reach and ensure wider dissemination of critical information.

Despite the challenges, Facebook remains a critical platform for the County's 20+ accounts to share information. OPA will continue publishing content on the main account and three other Facebook pages it manages (Disabilities, Environment, and Spanish language), while maintaining oversight of all accounts.

Community Outcome Area	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Estimate
Effective and Efficient Government						
Effective Technology and Quality Facilities						
Percent change in Facebook reach (main account)	25.7%	30.5%	6.7%	(14.1%)	1.7%	0.0%

A complete list of performance measures can be viewed at  
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/fy-2026-adopted-performance-measures-pm>