

Office of Public Affairs CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan



Leadership Sponsor: Jeremy Lasich

Equity Lead(s): Jeremy Lasich & Atiqa Raja

Departmental Equity Guiding Statement: The Office of Public Affairs is committed to communicating with residents and employees in a fair and equitable manner regardless of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status, or other characteristics in five key areas:

1.) Customer Service, 2.) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 3.) External Communications, 4.) Internal (Employees) Communications, and 5.) Language Access.

Context: The biggest issue we face is communicating with all segments of the population throughout all areas of our work. This includes those who are underserved by technological access. The majority of our external communications efforts are focused online, primarily using NewsCenter, the county's website and social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Nextdoor. However, there is a portion of the population who do not have access to these channels and therefore, do not see our messages. In addition, many people who do have the technological capabilities do not follow county government messages on social media or visit the county's website and news platforms.

This is also true for internal communications since most information is posted on FairfaxNet or sent via email, which not all field employees have access to on a regular basis.

It is important to have communication strategies that vary from high-technology to no-technology to reach all of the 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 also take the lead in working with other county agencies to make sure their programs and services are promoted in an equitable fashion as well. It is essential to comply with the county's accessibility standard section 508 standards, ensuring access for people with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities.

As the County's central communications office, the Office of Public Affairs distributes messages every day in various methods. We have learned that our reach was limited to only those who follow us on our various online accounts. Therefore, our shift to implement new methods of disseminating information through networks connected to the community has helped us expand our reach and the impact of County programs.

By working with community leaders, ethnic media, county communicators, and outreach professionals, access to information is increased. As the central communication office, we are committed to continuing to lead and advise our internal and external partners to implement communication that is not one size fits all, but rather responds to the needs of communities.

The Office of Public Affairs will continue to be a resource for other communicators to ensure that the message reaches various populations and that the information is shared in the channels used by community members in a simple way, so that it is easy to understand or translate.

In 2023, OPA's new Language Access Services Director will begin work on countywide policies and procedures that will help improve communications with all segments of the population, including those who speak other languages.

Long-term Outcome(s):

- Cultural and Recreational Opportunities
- Economic Opportunity
- Efficient and Effective Government
- Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability
- Environment
- Health
- Housing and Neighborhood Livability
- Lifelong Education and Learning
- Mobility and Transportation
- Safety and Security

System-Level Infrastructure: OPA will be working with the Department of Information Technology (DIT) for Fairfax Website support. The FOIA team will be working with countywide FOIA teams for input on different FOIA related forms & engagement with the public. The Language Access Services Director will partner with all county agencies on developing language access plans. For the last three years, OPA has been co-leading with NCS & One Fairfax in supporting "Engage Fairfax County," the county's Inclusive Community Engagement Framework. OPA has drafted several key documents, including the framework and the community engagement spectrum, which synthesizes the work of a multiagency steering committee. OPA's current work is focused on Public Input, a new countywide engagement platform. OPA is onboarding more than 50 staff from eight departments, with another wave on onboarding and training planned for later this year. As the work progresses, OPA will work with other agencies as needed.

(DEPARTMENT NAME) CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

Goals	One Fairfax Area of Focus	Actions	Stakeholders	Timeline	Resources and Supports	Responsible Parties	Performance Measures
1. Improve customer service in an equitable and timely manner to all members of the public, Fairfax County employees, and elected officials.	15, 17, 18 (digital, non-digital access)	1a. Publicize the assistance that 703Fairfax staff can provide to individuals with limited English proficiency	County Language Vendor, Department of Information Technology, members, OPA, and members of the public.	Current - 2023	OPA, 703Fairfax Customer Service Team, Department of Information Technology, SurveyMonkey, survey material for outreach events, Public Information Officer's survey data, Conference rooms, Census, Microsoft Teams	703Fairfax Customer Service Team	1a. Number of over-the-phone translations Number of in-person translations Number of documents translated into languages other than English Number of social media engagements Number of materials handed out and number of locations
		1b. Create guidelines for equitable customer service and provide to customer service staff.	Members of the public, customer service staff, OPA, County Language Vendor.	Current - 06/2023	Staff time to create the customer service guidelines. Financial support for translating the customer service guidelines	Customer Service Team	1b. Number of guidelines distributed Post the guidelines on FairfaxNet to make it available to all agencies and track engagement
		1c. Build, strengthen, and maintain partnerships with Fairfax County	703Fairfax Customer Service Team, Office of Public Affairs, Public	Present and ongoing	Staff time, Microsoft Teams, contact center	703Fairfax Customer Service Team	1c. Number of partnerships Number of Team Meetings
		1d. Design and translate into Braille a directory including the most requested Fairfax					1d. Design and translate into Braille a directory including the most requested Fairfax

		contact center employees and supervisors.	Information Officers, all Fairfax County public service employees and supervisors.				County information and contact information
		1d. Improve customer service interactions with people with disabilities.	703Fairfax customer service team, members of the public, Fairfax Area Disability Services Board, Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs	12/2023	Staff time to research best practices and assistive technology. Financial support for the purchase of assistive technology. The use of Microsoft Teams to conduct meetings with stakeholders.	703Fairfax Customer Service Team	Number of materials distributed Number of assistive devices purchased
2. Increase access to public records to all county residents.		2a. Continue to provide the FOIA request forms in multiple languages as the need arise/requested.	Fairfax County Agencies (CW FOIA Teams)	Current - 2023	OPA FOIA Team DIT - update OPA webpage	OPA FOIA Team	Number of FOIA request forms submitted in languages other than English Number of meetings among FOIA staff at county agencies on ways to improve residents' access to public records, and implementation of new and improved ways to connect with all residents.
		2b. Seek input from countywide FOIA teams on ideas of how to better engage with the community when submitting a FOIA request.	Fairfax County Agencies (countywide FOIA Teams)	Current - 2023	OPA FOIA Team County Wide FOIA Teams	OPA FOIA Team, County wide FOIA Teams	
3. Provide education and resources to county website publishers that	15,17	3a. Provide classroom training to website publishers on how to create accessible	County vendor OfficePro, Department of Human Resources,	Current - 2023	Classrooms, staff time, training materials	Digital Team	Percentage of websites that are 508-compliant Percentage of staff trained

the Fairfax County website must be accessible to everyone and in compliance with the United States Access Board's 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

documents, especially PDFs.	Department of Information Technology				
3b. Provide general "Why Digital Accessibility Matters" training available online to all county employees and provide consultation to county staff on digital accessibility.	County vendor OfficePro, Department of Human Resources, Department of Information Technology	Current - 2023	Staff time, Employee U, training materials	Digital Team	
3c. Conduct ongoing audits of LinkCheck compliance reports, which identifies accessibility issues and broken links on the county's website.	Department of Information Technology	Current - 2023	Staff time, LinkCheck application	Digital Team	
3d. Manage blog on FairfaxNet, which provides digital communications resources and guidance for county employees.	Department of Information Technology	Current - 2023	Staff time, FairfaxNet	Digital Team	
3e. Develop and maintain a quarterly metrics report that will analyze public website data and highlight significant stats and trends.	Department of Information Technology	Current - 2023	Staff time, FairfaxNet, PowerPoint	Digital Team	
3f. Integrate accessibility best					

		practices, such as ALT tags, into the social media publisher training curriculum.					
4. Facilitate a comprehensive understanding among all county employees as to why and how equity is a foundational priority for Fairfax County.	17,18	4a. Provide regular information and updates on the work of One Fairfax, to highlight the county's equity priorities and their importance.	County Staff	Current – 2023	One Fairfax Staff, Team Fairfax Insider, NewsLink, Executive Messaging	OPA Internal Communications Team	Employee communications exploring equity, including examples of success. Biannual executive communications emphasizing the importance of a foundation of equity and inclusion in all county efforts.
		4b. 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	Current – 2023	One Fairfax Staff, Team Fairfax Insider, NewsLink, Executive Messaging	OPA Internal Communications Team	
5. Develop policies and resources on language access and Title VI for use by county agencies	All	5a. To establish a mandate that is consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for Fairfax County to follow when providing services to, or interacting with, individuals who are limited English proficient.	County Staff & BOS	Current – 2023	One Fairfax, Fairfax County Language Access Coordinators and the County Executive's office	OPA Language Access Strategy Manager	Update and publish a new Language Access Policy to reflect the needs of our community.
		5b. Develop a plan to inform county agencies and community partners about the policy.	Internal and external partners.	Current – 2023	One Fairfax Staff, Team Fairfax Insider, NewsLink, Executive Messaging,	OPA Language Access Strategy Manager, OPA Internal Communications Team,	Develop an outreach and communication plan to disseminate the updated policy internally and externally.

				Traditional and non-traditional media.	Countywide Language Access Coordinators	
	5c. Develop a toolkit for Language Access Coordinators to help coordinate at the agency level.	County Staff	Current - 2023	Language Access Coordinators	OPA Language Access Strategy Manager, OPA Internal Communications Team	Create a Language Access Plan template, Procedures for Accessing Document Translation and Interpretation Services
	5d. Establish guidelines for county agencies to develop language access plans based on their operational needs that will be updated annually.	County staff & SMT	Current - 2023	One Fairfax & SMT	OPA Language Access Strategy Manager, Countywide Language Access Coordinators	Agency level language access plans.
	5e. Develop periodic training for Fairfax County on the county's language access policies, Title VI compliance, and cultural sensitivity.	County staff and SMT	Current - 2023	One Fairfax, OD&T, Employee U, countywide Language Access Coordinators	OPA Language Access Strategy Manager, Countywide Language Access Coordinators	On-demand training.

Director's Signature: *Ally M. Grottel* 2/2/23