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# EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

## CALENDAR YEAR 2024

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Office of Public Affairs (OPA)

Equity Lead(s): Katie Han & Jeremy Lasich

Date: November 26, 2024

### EQUITY IMPACT PLAN REPORT

#### DEPARTMENTAL GOALS

*Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2024 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/equity-impact-plans). Add each departmental 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 listed in your CY 2024 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:

In calendar year 2024 (CY24), OPA acquired two wheelchairs for public use. By providing these wheelchairs, the information desk ensures that individuals with mobility impairments can access the same services as those without disabilities. Since their purchase, the wheelchairs have been borrowed 27 times.

OPA continues to offer information in multiple languages to improve the overall customer experience. During CY24, the information desk assisted 1,410 Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals, a 98% increase compared to CY23.

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

Goal 2 Progress:

In CY24, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) team in OPA increased FOIA training throughout the County. From May through December 2024, the FOIA team provided 11 FOIA trainings with a total attendance of 340 employees and advised agencies on over 990 FOIA requests. We partner with agency FOIA points of contact and the Office of the County Attorney to identify areas to improve access to information while protecting vulnerable populations' data as allowed by law for customized trainings. This provides employees with an opportunity to connect with the FOIA Office and to better understand the county's centralized and standardized processes, which reduce inequalities caused by inconsistent practices across agencies. This ensures all requesters receive

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fair and equitable treatment. Finally, OPA continues to partner with other county agencies to promote and encourage participation in public meetings, including virtually if possible to ensure that everyone has equal access to provide feedback on critical issues. This is most noticeable during the budget public hearings for the Board of Supervisors where many residents provide virtual testimony by recording videos from home before they are played during board meetings.

**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.

Goal 3 Progress:

OPA and HR offered four classes in CY24, and the Digital Accessibility Policy Team (includes OPA, DIT, OHREP and the OCA) held its first meeting in November.

Note: There are some goal items from CY24 on hold for CY25 due to a larger effort at fulfilling a new federal mandate that all local government digital content must be compliant for accessibility. The U.S. Department of Justice issued this new rule in April 2024, and it takes effect in April 2026. These items on hold and much more will be addressed in CY25 and CY26 equity impact plans.

**Goal 4:** Further enhance multicultural digital communications.

Goal 4 Progress:

The OPA Digital Team and Language Access Team partnered on several initiatives in CY24, including planning for a countywide Spanish newsletter to launch in CY25; beginning Korean social media accounts; and jointly managing the county's Spanish Facebook page. OPA continues to recognize, acknowledge and share multicultural information, such as Immigrant Heritage Month, Juneteenth and more.

**Goal 5:** Develop policies and resources for language access.

Goal 5 Progress:

The language access policy has been updated to reflect the needs of our community. The team has worked with DIT to develop a translation request portal Language Access Request System (LARS) so that agencies and departments have user friendly portal to submit their requests. Since January 2024, the in-house translation team has completed 556 translation requests, which includes 380 Spanish and 176 Korean requests. This centralized process provided a free, faster turnaround translation with consistent translated terminologies. In March 2024, OPA launched Fairfax County's first Korean social media platforms on Facebook and Instagram. This initiative marks a

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significant step towards inclusivity and fostering community engagement. Each post aligns and indicates one of the 10 Community Outcome Areas from the Countywide Strategic Plan. The countywide training on language access is being developed to be rolled out in CY2025.

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

Goal 6 Progress:

The Office of Public Affairs continues to use our daily county employee email to promote equity-focused initiatives, such as the first annual equity conference. Additionally, we provide support by taking photos, offering event coverage, and collaborating regularly with One Fairfax to align efforts and advance equity goals.

The Office of Public Affairs enhances residents' understanding of equity by disseminating information through the county's news platform, highlighting initiatives and stories that reflect our commitment to the One Fairfax policy.

### COUNTYWIDE GOALS

*Report progress on Countywide goals related to the Regional Fair Housing Plan, if relevant to your department. As above, copy in each Countywide goal from your CY 2024 Equity Impact Plan, and describe progress made in CY 2024. If none, write "Not applicable."*

Not applicable.

### OTHER EQUITY-RELATED WORK

*Was other equity-related work completed in addition to the goals above? If so, please describe.*

The Language Access Program Director presented at the LEADing Equity Conference on June 2024 and at the Virginia Fire Equity & Diversity Conference on October 2024.

The Language Access Program Specialist provided interpretation services at the Harmony Place Mobile Home Park and at the outreach event at Fairmont Gardens Apartments.