

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CALENDAR YEAR 2025 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

Leadership Sponsor: Jeremy Lasich

Equity Lead(s): Jeremy Lasich – Deputy Director
Katie Han – Language Access Program Director

Departmental Equity Guiding Statement: The Office of Public Affairs is committed to ensuring 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 Communication, 4.) Language Access, and 5.) Internal (Employee) Communications.

Context: The primary challenge we encounter revolves around effectively communicating with all segments of population throughout all facets of our work, especially those who lack adequate technological 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.

That is also true for internal communications, where information is primarily disseminated through FairfaxNet or sent via email, which is consistently accessible to all field employees. In addition, our customer service team interacts with the public in a variety of ways every day, ranging from answering 703-FAIRFAX in multiple languages to helping residents face-to-face at the Information Desk. Every visitor or caller can bring their own unique challenges depending on the language they speak or the problem they are trying to solve.

Our Freedom of Information Act team has also seen an increase over the past few years in the volume and complexity of FOIA requests submitted to the county, both online and in person or over the phone.

To address these challenges, it is important to have communication strategies that span the spectrum of high-tech to no-tech, ensuring inclusiveness 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 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 standards, including Section 508 standards, is essential to guarantee access for people with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Justice issued a new federal rule in April 2024 that will require all local government websites to be fully compliant for people with disabilities by April 2026. The county's Digital Equity Action Plan calls for more attention on the readability of fairfaxcounty.gov content, while One Fairfax calls for equity to be considered in various digital ways. To address the DOJ mandate, OPA will be dedicating more time and resources in 2025 and beyond to ensure that the county is compliant with federal law and to ensure that all residents, regardless of disability, are able to access the resources they need online.

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.

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 continue to partner with all county agencies on developing language access plans and support with implementation. Over the past five 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.

OPA also serves on the Countywide Digital Equity Coordination Team of county agencies working to collectively address the digital divide in Fairfax County by ensuring all Fairfax County residents have access to affordable and reliable high speed (broadband) internet services, devices, software, training, and tools. The DEC works to:

- Establish connections with and coordinate efforts of existing digital services.
- Leverage best practices and identify gaps to enhance existing digital services.
- Provide cross-department collaboration and support to operationalize the Digital Equity Action Plan.
- Create engagement opportunities to inform, connect and educate internal/external stakeholders and the community.

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DEPARTMENT GOALS

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

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus:

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)

Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

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 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.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/Supports	Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures
1a. Develop guidelines for providing equitable customer service and distribute them to customer service staff.	Members of the public, customer service staff, OPA, and County language vendor	Staff time to create the customer service guidelines. Financial support for translating the customer service guidelines. AGCCP for best practices and collaboration.	Customer Service Team	Current ~ June 2025	Number and percent of agencies using the guidelines
1b. Continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with Fairfax County Contact Center staff and supervisors to share strategies and identify accessibility needs.	Customer Service Team, Office of Public Affairs, all Fairfax County public service employees and their supervisors	Staff time, Microsoft Teams	Customer Service Team	Current ~ December 2025	Number of partnerships Number of team meetings

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<p>1c. Identify and respond to requests for assistive devices to ensure equitable access to services for individuals with disabilities.</p>	<p>Customer Service Team, members of the public, Fairfax Area Disability Services Board.</p>	<p>Language Access team, staff time for research and purchasing, financial support, FMD (possibly), using Microsoft Teams to conduct stakeholder meetings</p>	<p>Customer Service Team</p>	<p>Current ~ December 2025</p>	<p>Number of assistive devices purchased Total number of assistive device requests</p>
<p>1d. Training for customer service staff on equity in addition to the training offered by the county.</p>	<p>Customer Service Team, members of the public.</p>	<p>Internal and external trainings vendors, financial support, OD&T</p>	<p>Customer Service Team</p>	<p>December 31, 2025</p>	<p>Number of training hours Number and percent of staff who participate in training</p>

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Goal 2: Establish a human centered, highly responsive approach to data access across government by leveraging the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to prioritize transparency, streamlined processes, user-friendly digital platforms, and equitable accessibility, empowering residents to efficiently engage with and utilize government data while fostering trust, digital literacy, and informed civic participation.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus:

15. Digital access and literacy to all residents.

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

Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

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

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

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/Supports	Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures
2a. Assess FOIA process and underlying administrative tools supporting high volume agencies and standardize across agencies to enhance predictability in the FOIA process and access to readily available information to citizens.	Countywide	Time/Staff	OPA-FOIA, IT	1/2025-12/2025	Annual FOIA report, monthly FOIA reports internal to OPA FOIA
2b. Enhance FOIA training throughout the county to include a component on data accessibility and equity in addition to creating an on demand FOIA training for ease of accessibility to the County workforce.	Countywide	Time/Staff	OPA-FOIA, IT	1/2025-12/2025	Data accessibility and equity included in the training Training reports and surveys

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Goal 3: Direct and advocate for accessible digital content in the lead up to new federal and state requirements that go into effect in CY26. Accessible digital content is essential not only because it will soon be the law, but because it's a way to serve all residents with disabilities and differing needs

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus:

15. Digital access and literacy to 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); Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability (ESRFV)

Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

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

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.

ESRFV 2. Foster a county workforce culture that emphasizes a person-centered, integrated and comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of residents facing vulnerability.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/Supports	Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures
3a. Rollout Siteimprove Web Tool to County Web Publishers to improve access to content that is accessible, especially people with varying disabilities.	Web Publishers and Their Supervisors	Siteimprove Maintenance Tool	OPA	CY2025	% of department websites that score at least a 75 on Siteimprove's accessibility scale (note: departments do not need to reach a score of 91 until April 2026, so staff will still be working toward the ultimate goal during CY25)
3b. Educate Web Publishers About Web Accessibility, Including Department of Justice Mandate	Web Publishers	Variety of training options, some free, some that need resources	OPA	CY2025	Number and percent of web publishers who have taken training to fulfill new DOJ mandate

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3c. Educate Content Contributors About How to Create Accessible Content	Content Contributors (variety of staff who create and think about website content)	Variety of training options, some free, some that need resources	OPA	CY2025	Number and percent of content contributors trained
3d. Educate County Social Media Publishers About Accessible Content	Social Media Publishers	Variety of training options, some free, some that need resources	OPA	CY2025	Number and percent of social media publishers trained

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Goal 4: Continue developing countywide strategies and resources to bridge the communication gap between Limited English Proficient community members and county employees, fostering meaningful and effective engagement.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus:

17. Policies that prohibit all forms of discrimination under Federal and State law in county and schools 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)

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

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/Supports	Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures
4a. Require customer facing departments and agencies to complete the language access plan template and regularly monitor their progress.	County agencies and departments	OPA, County staff	Language Access Team, Language Access Liaison, Agency Directors	2025	Number of interpretation, translation and % of bilingual interactions
4b. Develop and provide periodic employee training in language access policies, Title VI compliance and cultural sensitivity.	County Staff, SMT	County Staff Employee U	Language Access Team, OD&T	Current ~ 2025	Number of employees trained
4c. Recruit two hourly Spanish interpreters to support last-minute interpretation needs for BOS meetings, webinars and other outreach or community engagement events.	County Staff and LEP Spanish residents	County staff	OPA, Language Access Team, DMB & HR	By January 2026	Number of interpretations provided
4d. Publish <i>NotiCentro</i> (Spanish Newsletter) monthly for residents	OPA, All county content creators	NewsCenter platform	Language Access Team, OPA Digital Team, DIT	2025	Number of email subscribers

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Goal 5: Facilitate a comprehensive understanding among 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

Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

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	Timeline	Performance Measures
5a. Feature regular examples of successful equity-focused programs in county communications to contextualize policy impacts.	County Staff Residents	NewsCenter, FairfaxNet, NewsLink Executive Communications	OPA Internal Communications	Through 2025	Communications highlighting or emphasizing equity goals
5b. Develop and share messages about the significance of racial and social equity to County government employees and for the public.	County Staff, Residents	NewsCenter, FairfaxNet	OPA Internal/External Communications Teams	Through 2025	Number of communications highlighting One Fairfax goals

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COUNTYWIDE GOALS

Goal 1: Ensure that digital equity principles are incorporated while making county information available

Key Equity Driver(s): Equitable Community Development

Countywide Initiative: Digital Equity Action Plan

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

Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

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

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.

ESRFV 2. Foster a county workforce culture that emphasizes a person-centered, integrated and comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of residents facing vulnerability.

Department Actions	Stakeholders	Timeline	Performance Measures
1a. Educate Staff About Readability and Plain Language	Web Publishers, Content Contributors and Social Media Publishers	CY2025	Track the number of staff who have taken training.
1b. Encourage Use of County AI Tools to Address Readability	Web Publishers, Content Contributors and Social Media Publishers	CY2025	By December 2025, measure progress on how content readability scores have improved compared to January 2025; all residents will be better off with more readable content, especially people at different literacy levels or different language backgrounds.
Further enhance multicultural digital communications by improving digital emergency information assets, messaging, and processes in select languages.		CY25	

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Goal 2: Increasing County residents' knowledge of digital equity resources, programs, and initiatives

Key Equity Driver(s): Equitable Community Development

Countywide Initiative: Digital Equity Action Plan

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

Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

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

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.

ESRFV 2. Foster a county workforce culture that emphasizes a person-centered, integrated and comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of residents facing vulnerability.

Department Actions	Stakeholders	Timeline	Performance Measures
2a. Integrate digital equity links into the navigation and other prominent locations of the entire county website.	Residents	CY25	Addition of equity links when the navigation is updated.
2b. Maintain Fairfax County digital equity website by updating the public-facing site to centralize digital equity resources	Residents	CY25	Update site at least three times in CY25 to ensure content is accurate.
2c. Encourage County departments to utilize the Engage Fairfax platform when gathering community feedback	County Departments	CY25	Percent change in number of departments using platform in December 2025 vs. January 2025.

Department Director's Signature: _____

