

EQUITY

In September 2019, the County Board adopted an [Equity Resolution](#) that provided direction for Arlington County Government and the community to help advance equity. Since that time, a lot has changed in our community and country. The goals and expectations have become clearer. The need to advance the conversation, educate each other, and take actionable steps has accelerated.

Over the past year-and-a-half, the County has:

- **Hired a Chief Race and Equity Officer:** In July 2020, the County Manager appointed the first ever Chief Race and Equity Officer to lead the efforts to advance racial equity, diversity, and inclusion both internal and external to the organization. This senior-level position reports directly to the County Manager. The Manager has also proposed reallocating an existing position to support the work plan of the Chief Race and Equity Officer.
- **Established a Racial Equity Framework:** In fall 2020, a vision, mission, and goals were established in the Chief Race and Equity Officer's work plan, providing the framework for the County's Racial Equity Action Plan. This framework is posted on the [County's Equity Webpage](#).
- **Racial Equity Training:** Countywide racial equity training has continued to expand since the County Board adopted the Equity Resolution in September 2019. Even before then, departments had begun this important work, including participation in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's (COG) racial equity program sponsored by the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE). A cohort of 13 County and Arlington Public Schools employees joined colleagues from neighbor jurisdictions for this 10-month program. Senior County leadership also participated in training through GARE. Beginning in September 2020, a County staff "implementation cohort" participated in continued learning and technical assistance programs focusing on how to implement racial equity tools to advance racial equity.

In FY 2022, the County equity training will be a regular and continual part of learning and development for County leaders and staff.

- **Initiated Countywide Dialogues on Race and Equity (DRE):** Between October and December 2020, the County, in partnership with an organization called Challenging Racism, facilitated six virtual conversations among 150 community members on privilege, bias, and systemic racism; completed four trainings with 62 partners on how to have conversations with their networks; conducted an assessment where more than 2,800 residents answered questions about race and racism and provided feedback to the County Manager and Board; and developed a DRE Neighborhood Toolkit to help citizen groups and neighborhoods lead conversations on privilege, bias, systemic racism, and equity.

Other Ongoing Equity Work Includes:

- **Housing Arlington:** This umbrella program takes a proactive, expanded approach to reach an equitable, stable, and adaptive community. New and ongoing efforts will reach beyond traditional policies and programs to generate holistic housing solutions.
- **Digital Equity:** Ten percent of Arlington households do not have access to a home internet connection. The Digital Equity initiative continues to build connectivity and internet access to advance education, access to health services, job resources, and more.
- **Destination 2027:** This initiative focuses on disparities in health and a plan to achieve health equity by 2027. Health equity exists when everyone has access to the conditions they need for optimal health and well-being.
- **Small, Women, and Minority owned Businesses (SWaM):** The County continues to increase outreach to SWaM businesses to raise awareness about opportunities to bid on County solicitations and do business with Arlington County. The County will be exploring additional training for vendors on best practices for bid and proposal submissions.

What More Are We Doing

The County is using new tools and creative approaches to make it easier for residents from diverse experiences, cultural backgrounds, races, incomes, and housing types to engage with their government and help craft policies, programs, and projects. The FY 2022 Proposed Budget includes \$225,000 that will provide for a variety of continuing and new initiatives, including:

- **Regional Participation and GARE Membership:** We will continue our partnership through COG in advancing racial equity region-wide and our membership with GARE. These partnerships will provide access to training and technical assistance, resources, and information sharing across jurisdictions with application tailored to each participating locality.
- **Workforce Dialogues on Race and Equity:** While continuing to provide support and convene the DRE Partners within the community, the County is planning a series of facilitated dialogues for the workforce on race and equity. Conversations will be organization wide and facilitated by an outside consultant. These dialogues—similar to the community-wide dialogues—may also include an assessment component to gather baseline information on the County’s workforce views on advancing race and equity so we are able to tailor future actions and move the work forward. Meanwhile, every County department has begun targeted work with their employees to normalize conversations around race and equity.
- **Racial Equity Core Team:** The Racial Equity Core Team, which is an extension of the GARE Cohort, will continue to work with the Chief Race and Equity Officer to

develop the County's Racial Equity Action Plan. Based on the framework referenced above, the plan will focus on the following areas and provide guidance to departments and inform the community in implementing racial equity: 1) Communications, 2) Community Engagement, 3) Data and Metrics, 4) Education and Training, 5) Finance, Contracts and Procurement, and 6) Workforce.

- **Racial Equity Training:** The County will develop instructional materials to be used for all staff and adapted for the community to educate about race, equity, and racial equity. Training modules and instructional materials will be provided in a variety of media and formats to give accessibility to all staff and will be adapted for virtual, self-guided, and in-person delivery.
- **Racial Equity Dashboard:** The County will develop and maintain a demographic dashboard to present indicators and measures of success by race. The dashboard under development uses American Community Survey Data. This data will be available for use both internally and externally to inform decision-making and track the County's progress over time in closing the gaps on race-based disparities.
- **Racial History Timeline:** The County will develop a comprehensive timeline for all areas and lines of business for Arlington County. The timeline will cover the County's origins to present and will be both iterative and interactive. It will include information and facts about Arlington's history in the areas of land use, housing and zoning, parks, cultural resources, transportation, education, civics, politics, etc.

County departments have already implemented policies and procedures to address equity, such as eliminating fines in the Arlington Public Library. Other recommendations for FY 2022 that advance the County's overall equity work are an increase to the County's base pay/living wage from \$15 to \$17 per hour, an increase in the County employee benefit in the Live Where You Work Program with increased benefits to our lowest paid employees, and additional funds to support the Public Defender's Office, which helps the most vulnerable population in the courts system.

There is a commitment throughout all departments to taking steps towards addressing racial equity, using the lens of these questions: Who benefits? Who is burdened? Who is missing? How do we know? What did/do we do?

There is a concerted effort to normalize conversations about race and equity across the organization—establishing a common language as well as direct and intentional dialogue. The first cohort trained through the COG racial equity program sponsored by GARE will continue to report back on their efforts and training as the Racial Equity Core Team. The County's commitment to racial equity is intended for all employees, to be a part of the culture, and to impact how work is approached in Arlington County.