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# CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

## ANNUAL REPORT

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC)

Equity Lead(s): Kate Daley

Date: 12/05/2023

### EQUITY IMPACT PLAN REPORT

*Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2023 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#). Using that plan, fill in each 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 in your CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan, report them. Add more goals as needed.*

**Goal 1:** Increase and promote language access to OEEC resources

Goal 1 Progress: The OEEC is overseeing implementation of two community-facing climate plans, the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), which addresses the cause of climate change, and Resilient Fairfax, which addresses the effects of climate change. To increase engagement with community members on climate action and to ensure residents have access to the information and resources needed to adapt to our changing climate, the OEEC established a goal in 2023 to increase and promote language access to OEEC resources, which were almost exclusively in English.

In its 2023 Equity Impact Plan, the OEEC discussed plans to form an internal team to identify language access needs and required resources for community-facing materials. This year, the office formalized the creation of an internal outreach team to discuss and plan outreach and engagement opportunities and resources needed to advance the office's mission. Led by the OEEC's Public Information Officer and Outreach Specialist, this team has identified a list of priority resources to be translated, with a focus on educational and outreach materials on ways residents can take climate action. The group also identified the languages on which to focus its translation efforts: Spanish, Arabic, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. These choices were informed by the top languages spoken by Fairfax County Public Schools students at home, and in consultation with Fairfax County's Language Access Coordinator in the Office of Public Affairs.

As part of these efforts, the OEEC identified 15 priority resources, including infographics, fact sheets and handouts, to be translated into Spanish, Arabic, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. The OEEC sought quotes and has been working with the county's pre-approved vendors to translate materials. Translations have been completed for 10 resources (or 67% of the priority list) and are substantially underway for the remaining five (33%), with an expected completion date by the end of the calendar year. The completed

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translated resources may be found on a [“Resources for Residents”](#) page on the OEEC website and are used at OEEC outreach and engagement events, including community tabling events. The OEEC is unable to collect granular enough data to determine which translated materials are being downloaded; however, between mid-September (when the resident resource page was created) and early December, the “Resources for Residents” page has been viewed 140 times, with 225 total downloads of the infographics, fact sheets and handouts.

The OEEC will continue Identifying, evaluating, and addressing language access needs as additional community-facing climate action resources are developed and disseminated.

### **Goal 2:** Develop and leverage partnerships to expand community engagement opportunities

Goal 2 Progress: The OEEC was formed in July 2019, and much of its work in its first few years was devoted to the development of climate action plans, including the Operational Energy Strategy, finalized in July 2021; CECAP, finalized in September 2021; and Resilient Fairfax, finalized in November 2022. With the completion of these three plans, the office’s work in 2023 has been focused on consolidating implementation efforts to address cross-cutting and complementary goals and strategies included in these plans and to maximize coordination with other county agencies. This year, and in direct support of Goal 2 from its 2023 Equity Impact Plan, the OEEC established a Climate Interagency Team to coordinate on several initiatives, including community engagement. The Interagency Team, which consists of over 150 staff from over 25 agencies, is organized into six working groups, including a “Community Aid, Education, Engagement and Incentives” group (otherwise known as Group 3). In addition to an “All Hands” Interagency Team meeting in March 2023, Group 3 met in May and November of this year and will continue to meet regularly in 2024.

The group allows county agencies to coordinate outreach and engagement opportunities. It also helps agencies identify and address gaps in community aid and services and develop resources to ensure those that need resources are aware of the programs available to them. For instance, Group 3 has identified gaps in extreme heat services, and as a result, the county will develop resources in 2024 on heat-related guidance for outdoor workers and outdoor sports, and guidance for heat-resilient design such as cool roofs and cool pavements.

In pursuit of the OEEC’s own community engagement goals, Group 3 has allowed the OEEC to collaborate with agencies with which it did not frequently interact prior to group formation, including several health and human service agencies. Many of these agencies have established connections with communities that the OEEC has struggled to reach, including vulnerable residents who may most benefit from climate resilience and mitigation services and resources. Partnerships established through this group ensures that the OEEC is better positioned to leverage connections and opportunities to increase its reach in the community and can benefit from lessons learned from agencies with long-standing community programs.

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### **Goal 3:** Integrate equity considerations into FEEE

Goal 3 Progress: Fairfax Employees for Environmental Excellence (FEEE) is an employee engagement group overseen by the OEEC and established to foster a culture of sustainability in the workplace. Historically, the group has largely included members from environmental service organizations, with low participation from other county agencies. One of the OEEC's goals in 2023 was to identify and implement new promotion opportunities for FEEE to increase and diversify its membership. This year, the office utilized NewsLink, interagency partnerships and other resources to promote the group and its engagement efforts. As a result, FEEE membership has nearly doubled in 2023, with approximately 40 new members representing 21 county agencies and departments. Of these new participants, FEEE has representation from several health and human service agencies (e.g., DFS, NCS, FCHD and HCD) as well as other agencies (e.g., DTA, DHR, DIT and DCC), which have not been active in FEEE. The OEEC is continuing to explore promotion opportunities, such as through the development of materials for new employee orientation, to continue to increase its reach in the workforce.

The OEEC also continues to explore the development of educational and engagement opportunities for FEEE that focus on the intersection of equity and sustainability.

*Describe other equity-related work completed in CY 2023 (efforts that advance racial and social equity that your department was involved in within the department or countywide) not in the department's Equity Impact Plan.*

- The OEEC continued to lead Fairfax County's evaluation of a Green Bank or similar clearinghouse for energy efficiency and clean energy projects. This initiative is intended to offer technical guidance and information on available incentives for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and electrification technologies for residents and businesses. This initiative will advance the One Fairfax Policy by making a focused effort to improve access to energy efficiency and clean energy among members of the community who often encounter barriers to realize these opportunities.
- The OEEC launched the Charge Up Fairfax pilot program in March 2023, which helps community associations, like homeowner associations and condominium associations, access electric vehicle charging for residents and their guests. Support is offered through technical assistance and financial incentives; grants are made on a reimbursement basis to communities that install electric vehicle charging equipment. The program provides added incentives for associations located in a designated equity area, as identified by county and/or federal mapping tools. Five communities were accepted into the pilot program in spring 2023; five additional communities were accepted in December 2023. Of these, four communities are located in designated equity areas and are eligible for added incentives.

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- In October 2023, the OEEC, in partnership with the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD), expanded and re-launched the Energy Conservation Assistance Program, a cost-share program that provides technical and financial assistance to property owners implementing energy efficiency updates, installing energy solutions, or enhancing the resilience of structures and property to withstand the impacts of climate change. Qualifying organizations include common-interest communities, places of worship, and nonprofit or community or charitable organizations. As part of the re-launch, the county increased overall reimbursement levels for eligible projects and created added incentives for organizations located in designated equity areas, as identified by county and/or federal mapping tools. Several places of worship, including three in highly vulnerable areas of the county, have already reached out with interest in the program. The OEEC will track and report on participation in this program going forward.
- The OEEC also works with places of worship through its Climate Champions Pilot Program, launched in January 2023. The premise of the Climate Champions initiative is to accelerate climate action in the community and broaden the impact of invested resources. As part of the pilot, the OEEC partners with the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS) to identify stakeholder needs, increase education and awareness about climate action initiatives, and support FACS' Solar Sanctuary program, a program that has been awarded federal funding to help faith communities, primarily in rural and low-income communities, become places of refuge during power outages.
- This spring, the OEEC developed and sought federal funding for a proposal for a Resilience Hub Pilot Program to be implemented in facilities serving climate- and socioeconomically vulnerable county residents. Resilience hubs are community-serving facilities that distribute and centralize information and resources, connect residents to county assistance, support residents' resilience to climate events, and build community capacity and connection. They are typically located in existing facilities that are trusted by community members, and on a day-to-day basis, function as a space for community gathering or events, location for trainings, and as a centralized place for community members to seek resources. As part of the pilot, the OEEC proposed upgrades to the facilities that would be participating in the program, to enhance their physical resilience to climatic effects and to ensure continuity of service during climate hazards. The proposal also included building staff capacity to ensure effective operations and using hubs to connect the surrounding community to public services, trainings, and programs, such as financial assistance for air conditioning and critical needs, public health trainings, emergency preparedness trainings, and flood risk reduction. Although funding was not awarded, the OEEC continues to seek other opportunities to advance this work. It has identified and is prioritizing a list of potential resilience hubs based on criteria, such as areas with high heat, flood, and socioeconomic vulnerability. The list is being developed in coordination with county agencies and faith communities through FACS.