



BALTIMORE CITY EQUITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Fiscal Years 2021-2024



OFFICE OF
**EQUITY AND
CIVIL RIGHTS**

oecr.baltimorecity.gov

**EQUITY
DIVISION**
of Baltimore City

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MESSAGE FROM MAYOR BRANDON SCOTT

Fellow Baltimoreans,

When I took office, I made a promise that equity would be the guiding principle of my administration. We're counteracting decades of intentional disinvestment in our communities with intentional investment to benefit residents in every single neighborhood of our city. Today we are proud to release the **PROGRESS 2024 Baltimore City Equity Assessment Report**, which outlines the progress we have made together and the work that remains ahead.

Under our Equity Assessment Law and the leadership of our Office of Equity and Civil Rights, Baltimore continues to set national standards for how cities understand fairness and inclusion into the framework of government. From expanding access to housing and broadband internet to creating new pathways for youth and small businesses, our work is grounded in a simple but powerful belief: that when no one is left out or left behind, our entire city thrives.

The data and stories in this report reflect not only measurable progress, but also a growing culture of accountability, collaboration, and shared purpose across every city agency. One example is the Digital Equity Fund launched in April 2023 to support neighborhood-led digital inclusion plans in areas that have long faced systemic disinvestment. In its first round, the Fund distributed nearly \$1 million in grants to 100 newly formed organizations working to close the digital divide. A second round of \$1.8 million expanded support for digital literacy skills training and access for residents with limited connectivity—focusing on our elderly, people with disabilities, and immigrant communities.

I want to thank the Office of Equity and Civil Rights led by Chief Equity Officer and Director Amber Greene, other agency leaders, and community partners for their dedication to making Baltimore a city where equity is not an aspiration but an expectation. Together we are proving that government can be a force for fairness and opportunity.

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor, City of Baltimore



WELCOME FROM CHIEF EQUITY OFFICER AND DIRECTOR AMBER GREENE

In Baltimore City, equity remains a guiding principle. Together, we work day in and day out to ensure Baltimore is accessible, fair, and just for everyone that visits our city or calls it home.

But that doesn't make this work easy.

Despite our progress, inequalities and systemic barriers are still felt and present in our city's DNA, which means this work cannot stop here, each of us will need to do our part to make sure equity doesn't become an afterthought.

When it feels that the work of equity continues to get drowned out by more headlines, or disregarded by leaders, or even pushed to the backburner, I point you to the work presented in this report as a source of hope.

We are doing the work of protecting people, advancing equity, and building Baltimore's future.

Our agencies are implementing transformative equitable solutions to complex challenges that often span multiple agencies.

As you read along the Office of Equity and Civil Rights' *Franklin Avenue* Baltimore City Equity Assessment Report, I bring hope that you will find inspiration and motivation for new ways to implement equity into your agency work, collaborations, and community to ensure everyone and services are comfortable, supported, and successful in our city.

I am proud to share the progress of equity within our agencies, and I invite you to read on.

In partnership,

Amber Greene
Baltimore City's Chief Equity Officer
Director, Office of Equity and Civil Rights



BACKGROUND

Baltimore City's approach to equity reached a watershed moment with the passage of the Equity Assessment Ordinance and the establishment of the Equity Division within the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) to support its implementation.

Prior to the legislation, equity was a concept often invoked in the community context, in policy discussions, and in discourse on Baltimore's history, but the city had no formal policy clarifying its approach to equity.

The Equity Assessment Program creates a clear formal policy framework to guide agencies in their pursuit of equity work. Before this framework is the acknowledgment of systemic barriers, with deep historical roots that produce disparities in access and outcomes. Baltimore City recognizes that government plays a role in either perpetuating or alleviating these disparities. Ensuring equity is a core responsibility and priority of Baltimore City government requires careful attention to the ways that government policies, decisions, and operations affect a diverse and multifaceted public.

The legislation provided for an initial baseline year, focusing on building capacity, testing, and analysis of current agency operations and policies. The FY2021-FY2022 period represented the transition and setting up of agency activities into formal implementation of the program.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant early challenge, diverting agency attention from planned activities to requiring the application of equity principles in an unprecedented, emergency environment.

With the closing of the FY2021-FY2022 period, agencies enter a review of the Equity Assessment Program, having navigated COVID-19 and its subsequent recovery. This period has been one of tremendous activity as city agencies continue to implement the program, and this report will summarize agency progress as reported to the Office of Equity and Civil Rights.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE EQUITY ASSESSMENT ORDINANCE

The Equity Assessment Ordinance is found in [SustainableCityCode, Article 4, Subtitle III: Equity Assessment Program](#). The Equity Division of the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) provides support to city agencies in the discharge of mandates under the program, including by providing guidance, education, and technical assistance to support agencies work.

The main components of the program for city agencies include:

- 1. **Equity Coordinators** - Each city agency must designate an Equity Coordinator responsible for overseeing and implementing the agency's equity initiatives. These coordinators serve as the main points of contact for equity-related matters within their respective agencies.
- 2. **Equity Assessments** - Agencies conduct assessments of their existing and proposed policies and practices and develop and implement plans based on those assessments.
- 3. **Annual Reporting** - Agencies report annually to the Equity Division on their progress.

The Equity Assessment Program also requires an [equity assessment](#) of each proposed capital budget for the city, which is currently being developed. Copies of the full text of the legislation can be found on the OECR Equity Division website at: <https://oecr.sustainablecity.gov/equity-assessment>.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology for reporting on equity activities has varied over FRODO's history as agencies responded to GEDD's 19 and revised up implementation of the program. Most year, the Equity Division collected information from all agencies using a variety of means:

These assessments include both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gathering detailed information describe status of equity work within each agency. Areas of particular interest include equity policies and principles, training and professional development, workforce composition, and structural support.

In FRODO's and FRODO, a three-part assessment was conducted focusing on equity coordinators or agency equity assessment, and an end-of-cycle report on equity progress and outlining future actions.

In FRODO, a detailed end-of-cycle assessment was conducted gathering quantitative and qualitative data on the status of agency progress under the program.

In FRODO, agencies were asked to report continuously on their progress under the program, as well as goals for coming years. Topics of particular interest included strengthening equity coordinators, developing agency equity principles, implementing training and professional development, as well as an assessment of any barriers to achieving equity goals.

KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the degree of access individuals have related to public spaces, goods and services, programs, facilities, and more. Accessibility emphasizes creating and maintaining environments that enable all individuals to fully participate in and benefit from them, regardless of their personal characteristics.

Equity vs. Equality

Equity refers to the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all individuals while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have historically led to unequal outcomes. It focuses on recognizing that different people have different needs and providing the necessary resources and support to ensure everyone can reach their full potential.

Equality is defined as the state of being equal. In practice, it involves equal treatment, access, and opportunity for all individuals meaning everyone is given the same resources and opportunities. It assumes that all individuals will benefit equally from the same support and that they all have similar starting points. Distinguishing between equity and equality is crucial for understanding why inequality and inequity persist.

Diversity

Diversity refers to the presence of differences in characteristics within a group setting. Some characteristics include (and are not limited to) race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, religion, thinking, and communication styles.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of creating environments where any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued. It goes beyond merely acknowledging diversity to actively including and empowering all individuals ensuring that everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources and can fully participate in all aspects of work or an organization.

Systemic Barriers

Systemic barriers are policies, practices, or procedures that result in some individuals or groups being treated unfairly or unequally. These barriers are embedded within the established and ingrained institutions, systems, or structures of society and they disproportionately affect people based on characteristics that they hold in common that race, gender, ability, etc. Systemic barriers can be explicit (e.g. discriminatory laws) or implicit (e.g. cultural norms, unconscious bias).

FY 2021 - FY 2024

HIGHLIGHTS



A review of the data collected over the FY2021-FY2024 period reveals that the Equity Assessment Program is driving significant action across Baltimore City government agencies.

Equity work is never complete, but Baltimore City agencies are building critical institutional capacity and putting equity principles at the center of agency decision-making.

Each agency conducts equity work from a unique standpoint and takes an approach that makes sense for their own context. However, a few key themes have emerged that drive the discussion of agency progress during the FY2021-FY2024 period:

1. **Equity coordinators** are central to agency equity work, and each agency makes the role of the equity coordinator work for their context. This includes determining how to provide visibility into the role of the equity coordinator for agency staff, and how the role interacts with agency leadership and decision-making processes.
2. **Training and professional development** is essential to advancing agency equity work, and it is an ongoing need. Training is one of the important ways that agencies advance equity work, by building capacity to apply equity principles on a day-to-day basis.
3. Equity work requires continuous effort. This means **continued monitoring and review** of processes and data and embracing review of decision-making processes.
4. **Equity assessments** are a tool that provides valuable insights into existing disparities and areas needing improvement. Agencies that effectively utilized these insights were well-positioned to develop targeted strategies and measure their progress.
5. It takes an **integrating accountability** into decision-making is essential to equity work. Agencies reported that the greatest they are responding to the real needs and concerns of Baltimore's residents.
6. It is essential to maintain meaningful **community equity work requires partnerships**. Many agencies explored creative partnerships to advance equity, both within city government via interagency partnerships, and with external partners.

Overall, the FY2021-FY2024 period has been one of significant strides, representing the broad commitment of Baltimore City government agencies to visibility, actions, and community empowerment, as well as the parameters of anti-discrimination laws. The following section will also dive into some of the key highlights agencies have reported during the period that illustrate the ways that equity is being operationalized in Baltimore City.



EQUITY IN ACTION: FY2021-FY2024

Violence Reduction

Perhaps no issue in Baltimore City has garnered as much attention or the value of equity during the reporting period as Baltimore's reducing and preventing violence to protect and empower its citizens' coalition, which has focused on evidence-based, trauma-informed methods, harm reduction, and community engagement, led by the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) in collaboration with multiple city agencies, strategies such as the [Group Violence Reduction Strategy](#), [Community Violence Intervention \(CVI\)](#), and the [B-I-E \(Baltimore\) Program](#) have shown tremendous results. [Read more on page 44.](#)

Digital Equity

At City Hall in the reporting period has been closing the digital divide. Leading Baltimore City Information & Technology (BCIT) and particularly its Office of Broadband and Digital Equity (OBD) a wide range of initiatives has been rolled out including providing affordable broadband access to broadband, access to free or discounted internet-enabled devices, and establishing the city's free public Wi-Fi network. [Read more on page 45.](#)

Housing & Equitable Development

Baltimore City agencies, especially the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) are deploying a wide array of strategies to tackle the multifaceted housing crisis and disparate development patterns in Baltimore. First, Baltimore is focused on affordable housing production. In FY2021, DHCD's [Greening Up](#) program eased the city's [interim housing ordinance](#) to better support the production of affordable housing, resulting in legislation signing Mayor Scott in January 2022. In FY2022, DHCD and the Mayor's Office of Housing Services (MOHS) managed a cross-sector stakeholder collaboration as part of the [Homes America Initiative](#), exceeding annual goals by housing 1,641 households formerly experiencing homelessness while producing 4,588 units of new affordable housing. The city is also launching innovative financing via the [Community Benefits Tax Increment Financing \(CIBTIF\)](#) support the [Parker American Urban \(PAU\) Transformation Plan](#), which will transform a 100-acre site into a mixed-income community including 650 replacement affordable housing units and an additional 1,000 affordable units. Finally, the [Baltimore Baltimore](#) initiative is testing the vacancy crisis with a collaborative effort unique in its scale, bringing stakeholders from across the city together at old homes over 150 years. [Read more on page 46.](#)

Guaranteed Income Pilot Program

The Mayor's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is leading the development and implementation of Baltimore's [Guaranteed Income Pilot](#) under the name [Deliveries: Young Families Income Pilot](#) to increase economic security among low-income residents. Under the program, 500 young parents receive savings. 10-12 are provided with an unconditional cash payment of \$1,000 per month over 12 months. OCFS reports that over 1,000 applications were received.

Water Affordability

As Baltimore modernizes its water system and aging infrastructure, water affordability has become an issue for many families. In response, the [WaterAid](#) program was developed through collaboration between the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Baltimore City Community Action Partnership (BCCAP) housed in the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). WaterAid increases equitable access to water assistance, offering bill discounts of 10%, 20%, or 30% respectively for households below 100%, 100% or 120% of the federal poverty guideline. In 2023, OCFS also made available \$1.67 million in funding from [Maryland's Water Assistance Relief](#) programs to provide additional assistance to homeowners with water bills due during the COVID-19 pandemic. OCFS launched the [Frontloading Payment Plan](#) program in 2023 offering flexible, interest-free payment plans.

Equitable Access to Recreation

Baltimore City Recreation and Parks made great strides to close gaps in access to recreation throughout the city through two key initiatives, the [Run Relief](#) and a partnership with [Baltimore 20 in 5 Initiative to End Playground Inequity](#). The first initiative is a \$1.5 million commitment to revitalize city recreation spaces with initiatives including new facilities. [Baltimore brings a special focus on state, utilizing Baltimore's \[PlaySpace Equity Acceleration Initiative \\(PSEI\\)\]\(#\), which maps and rectifies city playgrounds based on equity considerations and their "need for repair," allowing for investment in the prioritized "need most" category 20.](#)

Food Security and Healthy Food Access

One of the central challenges for Baltimore City is healthy food access, and urban agriculture is a key component of closing equity gaps, with many opportunities for promotion. During the reporting period, the Department of Planning supported the FarmBaltimore in developing 50% of the land being farm land for the [Local Community Urban Farmer Training Academy](#) in Farming, Replant, Park, along with a \$ million in grant funds to train the next generation of farmers, including those from underserved communities. This grant funding was part of a total of **\$40 million alternative food security and resiliency** during the COVID-19 emergency across an array of programs including produce box distribution and initiatives increasing equitable access to healthy food options. As a result, the Baltimore City Health Department was able to provide **skilled meal** meals per month, **1,400 grocery boxes** per month, and food delivery services for seniors and homebound populations. Additionally, the Department of Planning's Food Policy and Planning Division partnered with 700 community organizations to distribute over 1.7 million boxes of food.

Equity in Capital Investment

Each year as required by the Equity Assessment Program, the Department of Planning (DOP) prepares a [GIS Distribution Analysis](#) tracking the distribution of capital spending by geography for projects with location data. This analysis builds off the Baltimore Capital Projects Equity Analysis Report released in 2018 with each subsequent annual analysis being an update to the 2018 report. For the FY2021-FY2023 period, the annual update demonstrates that lower income areas (the half of geographies considered areas [LHA]) where market investment income is higher the citywide market receive more investment as a proportion higher income areas, though this does not always hold when comparing the data at the quartile level. The annual update reports for FY2021-FY2023 can be found on the [GIS and Equity page of DOP's website](#).

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA)

One of the most important efforts taken on by city governments across the nation during the COVID-19 pandemic was the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, signed into law by President Biden. The Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs (MORP) utilized the **Equity Assessment Program** to build equity principles into the application process. Equity principles were applied to every phase of the process, from application preparation to program design refinement, application review, funding allocations, and monitoring.

- **Equity Assessment:** Organizations were required to complete equity assessments as part of their application.
- **Technical Assistance:** MORP provided technical assistance to applicants, particularly small nonprofits, through a team of consultants who offer feedback, answer questions, and provide resources.
- **Program Design:** MORP used demographic data to analyze program benefits, including underserved communities, racial/ethnic populations, or neighborhoods. Using this data, MORP selected applicants who serve the most vulnerable populations.

As a result of this equity focus, MORP was able to report the following outcomes:

- 80% of ARPA funds (\$193.3 million) were committed to housing services for underserved/poorer families, affordable housing creation, and supportive behavioral interventions.
- 8% of ARPA funds (\$51.4 million) were invested in workforce training and youth development. MORP reports that the unemployment rate in CDC's top five city averages by 6.8%, highlighting the need for equity to remain a focus of workforce efforts.
- 10% of ARPA funds (\$122.4 million) were allocated to city infrastructure projects, including broadband and digital equity initiatives in neighborhoods, primarily in areas with low digital inclusion, rural towns, and low-income groups.
- Capital investments were made in 10 neighborhoods, most of which are in CDC's, covering housing, public spaces, violence prevention, and infrastructure improvements.



\$193.3m

Invested in
HOUSING



\$51.4m

Invested
**WORKFORCE
& YOUTH**
Development



\$122.4m

Invested
INFRASTRUCTURE



39

Neighborhood Hubs
Created or Revived

INTEGRATING EQUITY AS A CORE FUNCTION

Over the FY2021–FY2023 performance agencies have taken on basic implementation tasks under the program, including appointing an Equity Coordinator and formulating their role, making a written commitment to equity principles and values, and using an equity lens in agency deliberations. These efforts drive to build the structure within the agency to ensure that equity is a core agency function driving decision-making on a daily basis.

Defining the Role of the Equity Coordinator

The establishment of Equity Coordinators is one of the main goals of the Equity Assessment Program, but agencies have shown creativity and ownership in defining the position. Many of the agencies have gone beyond creating the Equity Coordinator role and have built that position into the agency structure in ways that support more transformational equity work.

1. **Equity Coordinator as a leadership role.** The Department of Public Works includes its Equity Coordinator as part of the Executive Leadership Team, ensuring all decisions are subject to alignment with the department's equity commitments.
2. **Expanding the Equity Coordinator's focus to include agency equity goals.** The Baltimore City Health Department established the role of Health Equity Director, reflecting the department's focus on broadly reducing health disparities throughout Baltimore City.

Formulating a Written Commitment to Equity

An important step to integrating equity into the way each agency does business is to formally adopt a clear set of principles and values to guide. This process allows agency leadership and staff to describe what equity requires of that agency, writing it as policies and transparent statements that serve as reference points. Many agencies took this step during the FY2021-FY2022 time period.

1. **Adopting an equity statement.** The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) adopted an equity statement in FY2021, acknowledging Baltimore's history that prohibits inequity practices, and identifying principles that commit the agency to following them via equitable community development.
2. **Developing equity blueprint.** Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) used separate statements of principles and goals/quality (BORG) throughout County Equity applications. This blueprint was launched in FY2021 and came from all of the departments' [website](#).
3. **Equity statement as tool for stakeholder and community engagement.** The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) developed an Equity Policy and sought buy-in from stakeholders in the community. This process was completed in FY2021, and the policy supported various internal and external initiatives, including implementing various initiatives and the Health Project (30% of officers will be women by 2025).

Equity Committees

Similarly, agencies have found that in addition to designating an Equity Coordinator for the agency, formal and/or ad hoc committees of agency staff and leadership can help drive strategic implementation and better success.

1. **Strengthening Agency Commitments.** The Department of Public Works launched across office focused including its equity work, the Office of Equity and Environmental Justice.
2. **Empowering communities.** The Baltimore City Health Department reported using various functional Health Equity Committees to address health equity, analyze power dynamics, and create strategies with evaluation using a health equity lens.
3. **Committee leadership & accountability.** The Baltimore City Law Department developed an internal Equity Task Force responsible for developing an operational equity policy that affirms the culture and humanity of all people that encounter the Law Department, including employees.

BUILDING AGENCY CAPACITY

Agencies have found that identifying training needs and making resources available to address critical components of equity work.

A Focus on Training

An agency's commitment to equity requires building staff capacity. Frequent and adequate training and professional development allows staff to see equity as a core part of their role and responsibilities. By empowering staff in this way, agencies ensure that equity always finds its way into decisions and being made.

1. **Ensuring training is comprehensive.** The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) implemented comprehensive professional learning programs within the Social Equity Institute (SEI) Strategic Coherence. Coherence was identified as a critical transitional program to support staff understanding and application of social equity principles.
2. **As required, ongoing commitment to training.** The Office of Performance & Innovation (OPI) launched the In-County Equity Educational Initiative, including a train-the-trainer program providing an opportunity to have dialogue among OPI staff and featured opportunities for staff to learn from other agencies or community organizations who apply equity principles. The initiative also included the Equity in OPI Work program, which is a platform for staff to raise and discuss how OPI is putting equity principles into practice.
3. **Universal training for agency staff.** Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) trained all officers on conducting social assessment, workplace violence, implicit bias, and microaggressions. BCFD sees this training as part of their effort to create a safe and equitable workplace.

EXAMPLES

INTEGRATING EQUITY

Agencies that have aligned various aspects of requests with city missions like the Parking Authority, Baltimore City (PAMA) the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and the Baltimore City Health Department include social training an implicit bias as part of their broader equity programs. The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement promotes and supports the Department of Implicit Bias Training to support equitable being practices.

Utilizing Interspersed or External Training Programs

External training programs allow agencies to work with partners to provide fresh perspectives and expert information on equity issues impacting agencies. Many agencies sought to bolster their training offerings by working closely with partners to find better connections to Baltimore City and the broader equity field.

- **Engaging experts to provide training.** In FY2020, the Baltimore City Health System & Health Services (BCHS) completed equity training for senior leaders, ensuring their leadership is well versed. They also completed training with managers to extend this knowledge and foster an inclusive environment at all levels of the organization.
- **Interspersed partnerships to expand training.** The Baltimore City Law Department established a program called the Day of Equity in FY2020. Through a partnership with the Baltimore City Office of LGBTQ Affairs and the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Inclusion, they held an event called *Walking the Talk*.
- **Equity webinars as an all-staff event.** The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) hosted an all-staff training as part of their commemoration of Black History Month featuring Dr. Lawrence Brown, after discussing topics like disparities in Baltimore and the DHCD's role in community restoration. This training aimed to deepen staff's understanding of the historical context of inequities and their impact on current public health challenges.
- **Partnering with external experts to formulate policy.** In FY2020, Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) worked with the [Black Brain Trust](#) to conduct data and identify gaps, especially concerning improving services to business owners, including but not limited to Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color. This led BDC to develop initiatives to better support diverse and multi-faceted businesses throughout the city.

2020 October 2020

The Baltimore Convention Center is making strides to become more inclusive with decisions that impact the agency overall. When possible, the center is looking away from traditional, more expensive, rather than inclusive, all-in-one, training models. Instead, they are getting employees to share their feedback directly through their seat of choice.

COVID-19 SPOTLIGHT

LANGUAGE ACCESS

Baltimore is a diverse city with a growing population of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) residents. As COVID-19 created opportunities for language access, the City was right for a major, citywide push to enhance language access, much of which was led by the Mayor's Office of Immigration Services (MOIS).

In FY2020, MOIS provided technical assistance to agencies working with immigrant communities to ensure that language, immigration status, and access-to-technology did not pose barriers to receiving services. This was especially important as COVID-19 health and economic resources were deployed throughout the city. MOIS reported working with multiple agencies to ensure that the following programs and resources were inclusive of immigrants: mobile testing, contact tracing, isolation support, food distribution, business grants, election protection, energy assistance, and water assistance.

MOIS staff also evaluated their materials and worked with a professional translation company to produce translated materials. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, MOIS provided language access trainings to 167 city front-line customer service employees bringing the total number of trained employees to 874. In addition, MOIS has provided over 100 translations of vital documents.

Language access is especially important for agencies that have a high volume of contact with city residents, including Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) and the Parking Authority of Baltimore City.



397

Frontline Employees
Trained in Language Access



300

Vital Documents
Translated

FAIR & INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

People are the most important resource to an agency and equity work in Baltimore City could not happen without the right people. Diversity, staffing is an area where equity must be put into practice internally as agencies improve their performance by embracing all forms of diversity in recruitment and hiring, fostering inclusive environments that retain qualified talented staff and empowering staff to perform at their best, while ensuring that they follow anti-discrimination laws.

Equity in Recruitment Practices

An equitable workforce composition begins with recruitment and with reevaluating about how to ensure all communities are invited to apply for city positions and receive a fair shot at employment. Agencies need to work to improve recruitment practices to ensure qualified applicants awareness of opportunities in city government.

1. **Equitable recruitment outreach.** The Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) reports making efforts to reach some underrepresented populations for job postings and other services, including outreach to immigrants and the LGBTQ+ community.
2. **Reevaluating recruitment committees.** The Baltimore City Law Department implemented a new salary structure addressing historical inequities and created an Internal Recruitment Committee, forming an equitable recruitment outreach as well as compensation.

Equity in Recruitment Outreach

The Department of Legislative Reference has diversified recruitment and added best practices to the agency, which will contribute to achieving its goals.

Removing Barriers to Equitable Hiring

Equity requires going beyond equal opportunity for employment and asking whether the way in which hiring is conducted might put any groups at an unnecessary disadvantage. Agencies report challenging assumptions about hiring criteria to make sure the focus remains on hiring effective, talented, and qualified workers without an undue effort to avoid talent without delivering any tangible benefits. Agencies do this while also ensuring that the hiring processes are compliant with anti-bias ordinance laws.

1. **Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD)** adopted its recruitment strategies to expand its applicant pool on the basis of work from its Equity Committee, which includes representatives of various affinity groups. This included developing a training and mentoring program for disadvantaged applicants that is a portion of the hiring process, which was published in the recruitment materials and posted a disproportionate rate for women. As a result of this effort, a higher percentage of qualified women passed the BCFD and entered the academy.
2. **The Department of Human Resources** is adopting a new policy regarding non-members within the agency. It includes direct and interactive practices that minimize implicit bias in designing interviews, conducting interview panels, conducting interviews, and the final selection process. The policy requires that the Equity Office review interview questions and questions, interview panels, and the selection outcomes. The policy will also require that the agency's HR/OE office review and review of the interview scoring material to ensure non-discriminatory practices are in place.

Pay Equity

Pay equity is one place where agencies challenge themselves to make the equity walk, as traditional and accepted practices may unintentionally reproduce inequitable patterns of salary distribution. Many agencies report analyzing salary data and looking for any patterns that suggest additional efforts should be made to ensure pay equity including the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), Baltimore City Law Department, Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW), Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED), BaltimoreCity Recreation and Parks (BCRP), and many more.

Economic Opportunity

Beyond the workplace, city government agencies are able to advance economic opportunity in many ways through their work. In this way, agencies not only strive for fair and inclusive workplaces in city government, but also influence the broader city economy.

1. **Contractor Sourcing.** In FY2021, the Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW) launched the [Contractor Sourcing Initiative](#) to open up contracting opportunities the fairer way: making more opportunities available to small businesses.
2. **Workforce Development and Apprenticeships.** Job training creates the pathway to opportunity for many residents, and some city agencies have embraced training programs that connect residents with city jobs. One example is [BWR's trainee program](#), which provides young adults with training, mentorship, and education to create a pipeline to careers in water and wastewater. Initiating paid summer employment via the [BWR](#) trainees. The success of the BWR program was instrumental in the launch of Baltimore's Infrastructure Academy in 2021. Additionally, in FY2022, the Baltimore City Fire Department (BCF) finalized a partnership with the Maryland Apprenticeship Training and Employment Agency (MATAG) through a funding grant. [See our page here.](#)
3. **Supporting Businesses.** Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) has made significant progress in strategic initiatives aimed at promoting equity. They developed a strategy to support BPOC-owned businesses in key industry sectors, including technology, creative industries, industrial manufacturing, and hospitality/entertainment. Additionally, BDC used the [Black Start](#) fund as an equity initiative, demonstrating their commitment to creating opportunities and supportive business environments. In 2021, of 143 businesses awarded by BDC, 87% were BPOC-owned.

2023 BPOC Program and Goals

When businesses were disrupted by the collapse of the Bay Bridge, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development launched the [Part Business, Wage Stability Program](#), which provided a total of \$1,000,000 in wage stabilization, helping businesses to retain employees during the post closure.

Partnering/Inclusion and Belonging

A truly diverse and inclusive workplace does not happen by accident. It must be thoughtfully created. Agencies report taking proactive steps to ensure that all employees feel valued and that the workplace is a place where they fully belong.

1. **Holidays and cultural observances.** In January 2023, The Department of Public Works (DPW) Office of Equity & Inclusion created a new implemented and executed a virtual platform and program to highlight significant holidays and celebrations that commemorate and acknowledge the accomplishments and contributions of all who make up the DPW workforce and the communities it serves. Each month provided opportunities to promote programs or cultural activities, milestones, showcasing DPW employees and guests across City government, business, educational and community organizations.
2. **Establishing affinity groups.** The Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) created a chapter of Women in Fire (WIFire) that meets monthly within the City to discuss concerns related to the department and to women in BCFD. As a result of their work, BCFD is reviewing fire stations to improve physical conditions, making the stations more accommodating for women. Among the renovations are separate bathrooms and showers as well as partitions in sleeping areas. WIFire has also worked with BCFD uniform vendor on providing form-fitting gear and uniforms that are a better fit and fit for the women of the department, which supports their safety. Members of WIFire have been attending the Fire Chief to represent BCFD at various national conferences in the Americas.



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The Department of General Services was able to collect pertinent data from the equity work employees survey conducted during FY 22 which will be the foundation of a gap analysis and the development of a gap recommendations for future fiscal years.

EQUITABLE PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING

The **Equity Assessment Program** provides agencies with a policy framework for implementing equity, but the real work happens where the rubber meets the road. Agencies are using the program to advance strategies and improvements to processes that seek to remove systemic barriers and foster more equitable outcomes.

harnessing Equity Assessment Data for Decision-making

Some agencies are using equity assessments or assessments to continually monitor data relevant to equity work. This work is central to the spirit and goals of the **Equity Assessment Program**, and agencies report using equity assessment data in ways related to their mission.

1. **Developing datasets that drive change.** The Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BMDOT) partnered with Baltimore’s Metropolitan Council to develop critical equity score methodology, which was utilized in the [2022 Baltimore City Transit Development Plan](#). This analysis informed recommendations of Mayor Anthony Williams including the launch of the new **Share City Circulator** (Share Bikes serving **Share** bike guidance). BMDOT is continuing this work with a second phase of the Transit Equity Score Study beginning in FY2023.
2. **Shareless Vehicle Program Equity Score.** Another way BMDOT uses data to increase transportation access is in establishing equity scores to prioritize the deployment of resources. A good example is the shareless vehicle program, where renters are required to place shareless vehicles in equity areas that might not otherwise receive them.
3. **Healthy Food Priority Areas.** Healthy food access is a complex challenge involving the efforts of many agencies. Central to organizing these varied efforts is data mapping of Healthy Food Priority Areas, which are active maps with wide range of resources, initiatives, and interventions, from incentivizing and attracting new grocery stores, to supporting urban farms, gardens, and markets.



BEE BEPPEP

**Equitable Access to
Parking Authority of
Baltimore City (PAAC)**

Bees as insects are always busy and worker for the Parking Authority of Baltimore City (PAAC). In addition to using bees as logo, equity access to ensure 80% of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations are installed in neighborhoods with low vehicle access (LVA), equity access efforts to transferring various accessibility, universal website features and customer service options to pay for transit parking, and ensuring parking spaces and lots meet all accessibility requirements. In addition, in PAAC's the Parking Authority, all relevant resources of relevant parking spaces for residents with mobility-limiting disabilities.

Using Strategic Planning to Implement Equity

While the goal is for equity to be integrated in day-to-day operations and decision-making, many needs require a special, coordinated, and regular focus. Agencies report undertaking major new initiatives in response to particularly identifiable problems or to stay ahead of emerging issues. In many cases a formal strategy is necessary where one agency cannot address a gap alone, requiring a strategic framework that brings in partners and resources from places both within city government and outside.

- 1. **Building Housing through Baltimore Baltimore.** As part of the city's agreement to equitable neighborhood development agreements like the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) prioritizes access and equity in targeting a wide array of community development initiatives and efforts. Many of these efforts are impacted by one major problem: Baltimore's large number of vacant homes. In 2020, Baltimore Baltimore, a joint development partnership between the City, private equity partner the Greater Baltimore Community (GBC) Community Center (BCC) and the State of Maryland was announced to provide a combined, 15-year, \$1 billion investment to directly address the full scale of the vacancy issues through public and private funds, as well as new innovative [non-conforming affordable housing/rev. instrument/housing/IRI](#). The strategy calls for a minimum of 11,000 units of affordable properties for development and as many as 20,000. DHCD is now publishing the City's first ever Comprehensive Housing Plan process which will provide additional guidelines and direction to Baltimore/Baltimore and the DHCD's broader equitable development and affordable housing initiatives.

- 1.1.1. Live Baltimore's focus on diverse communities in FY2022** Live Baltimore initiated equity as a primary focus of their FY2022 (fiscal) strategic plan. They conducted a series of focus groups to understand the preferences of Black, working consumers in the Baltimore and DC metro regions. As Baltimore was the birthplace of discriminatory redlining in homebuying and lending, Live Baltimore continues to work to attract individuals historically excluded from homebuying opportunities and ensure that their programs are inclusive and supportive of diverse communities.



In FY2022, OIT and the Baltimore Digital Equity Team released Baltimore City's first ever [Digital Inclusion Strategy](#), a five-year plan aimed at improving access to technology, training, economic opportunity, workforce development, and helping residents move from OIT's work to the next step by joining the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, which ranked Baltimore City as one of the nation's "Most Ready Digital Inclusion Territories." Some early wins from this strategy:

- 1. Expanded OIT's Wi-Fi Coverage to low-income households and added 50,000+ points.
- 1. Reached the \$1.5 million grant milestone from networks to better connect, provide digital skills training and devices to other white and underserved low-income households.
- 1. Launched Baltimore City's new Wi-Fi network (replacing all of the former city centers, four public centers, and expansion public Wi-Fi sites in the following six weeks).
- 1. Launched the Digital Equity Fund focused on the creation of community-led digital inclusion programs to increase local awareness to a million+ jobs.
- 1. Launched the Home Connect campaign with funding support from The Broad Foundation, which aims to connect low-income households with discounts on internet and digital services. The campaign was the first in the Baltimore City householders' efforts for a 50% adoption rate compared to the national rate of 30%.

EQUITY IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Communication between the community and government is essential to inform agencies of the impact of their policies and procedures. Doing community engagement itself must be done with an equity lens, to ensure that agencies are getting the information and perspectives they need.

Utilizing Input from Advisory Bodies

When engaging the community, agencies report partnering with committees of residents and stakeholders that they already exist to provide feedback with a critical perspective.

- **Empowering community voices.** The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) established the Public Safety Advisory Commission (PSAC) made up of a diverse group of city residents from each police district, neighborhood as well as various local agencies, police officers, and government officials. The commission is focused on building trust and improving public safety interventions with marginalized communities.
- **Aligning with community priorities.** The Mayor's Office of Children and Family Services (MOCFS) aligned its initiatives with the Baltimore Children's Cabinet priorities, addressing systemic issues like poverty and racism through targeted programs. MOCFS administers the Head Start program, which is a priority program through increased funding that addresses issues up to 2025. The MOCFS from 2019 to 2023, MOCFS also reflects these priorities through its support of the [Mayor's Baltimore Youth Engagement Strategy](#) which was launched in 2023.

Building Community Capacity

For community values to be truly heard, care must be taken to empower residents and community-based organizations by providing opportunities for education, development, and leadership. Agencies' efforts should include regular community input and fostering real community capacity as part of their engagement efforts.

- 1. **Building advocacy capacity** In FY 2020, the Baltimore City Department of Planning expanded its **Planning Advocacy** program to serve youth and emerging developers and to engage residents in real-world civic engagement to better serve and understand the community's needs. This includes national workshops and quarterly open-air meetings.
- 2. **Empowering community values to shape policy** Family League of Baltimore (Family League) worked with Morgan State University to develop a **Community Health Needs Assessment**, which found clear patterns of racial inequity that align with Baltimore City's history of urbanization through redlining. This data allowed Family League to prioritize targeted investments to underserved communities in the emergency context of the pandemic in developing the recommendations, which in priority was given to input from the community which was solicited extensively in the report. Examples of impact include the funding of new evidence-based programs, the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters Program (HIPHY) and Healthy Families America (HFA) home visiting, which helps to meet a wide range of household needs to improve early childhood development outcomes.

ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY

The Environmental Control Board was able to hire two staff to assist with day-to-day operations, increase ECRB's outreach activities in order to provide support to neighborhoods, and launch additional funding for community-based health projects.

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE EQUITY

Agencies find that successful equity work requires partnership, and many agencies have pursued local and impactful partnerships with external stakeholders to accomplish a variety of goals.

- 21. Data partnerships.** *Philadelphia City Department of Social Services* partnered with the *Arnold B. Casey Foundation's* *MDI Model Data Center* to access data on how child welfare services impact equity within communities. The data provide a wide range of information on child well-being, including economic well-being, education, health, family, and community factors.

Some of the most critical partnerships are those between city agencies or between different levels of government. Agencies report that working across governmental silos can yield benefits that advance the success of each partner agency in achieving its own mission.

- 22. Intergovernmental coordination.** *The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE)* collaborated with *the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC)* to help organize meetings and coordinating a joint meeting plan to improve critical justice coordination across local, state, federal, and judiciary branch partners.

COVID-19 SPOTLIGHT PARTNERSHIPS

Baltimore City Recreation and Parks created **Student Learning Centers** during the pandemic, responding to the urgent need for safe learning environments and technology access. This allowed Baltimore City Parks school students to access safe learning environments as well as work with resources like Florida's structured learning environment. The Student Learning Centers provided more than 1,000 students important access to virtual learning lessons via 15 locations in schools and recreation centers, displaying the resilience of Baltimore during the COVID-19 emergency.

The Mayor's Office of Children and Family Services (MOCFS) coordinated and led the city's **COVID-19 Emergency Food Strategy**, a commitment by the city to make sure no resident in Baltimore City went hungry during the pandemic. In its first year (March 2020-March 2021), the emergency effort distributed over 800 million effort dollars, 1.2 agencies, 150 partners, 800 distribution sites and delivered 8.7 million meals, 120,000 food boxes, and 11,000 prepaid cards for household goods to youth and families.

Additionally, the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOSH) and Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) with support from other agencies, executed goals throughout the city's participation in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Homelessness Initiative, an effort to coordinate efforts to address the homelessness crisis. In 2020, Baltimore City housed 1,400 households and created 1,000 units of affordable housing, exceeding its goals for the year. To guide the work, Mayor West convened the city's Housing Committee on Homelessness and Housing, including homeless services and housing providers, philanthropy, city departments, people with lived experience of homelessness, as well as representatives from health, behavioral health, education, and public safety.



1000+

MEALS
DISTRIBUTED

COVID-19
Emergency
Food Strategy

COVID-19 Emergency
Food Strategy



8.7m

MEALS
SERVED

COVID-19
Emergency
Food Strategy

COVID-19 Emergency
Food Strategy
(1000-200 x 500)



730k

FOOD BOXES
SERVED

COVID-19
Emergency
Food Strategy



1443

HOUSING UNITS
PROVIDED

COVID-19
Emergency
Food Strategy

COVID-19 Emergency
Food Strategy
(1000-200 x 500)



2500

HOUSING UNITS
PROVIDED

COVID-19
Emergency
Food Strategy

COVID-19 Emergency
Food Strategy
(1000-200 x 500)

The Power of Partnership: The Singapore Collaboration

In 2004, Mayor Scott launched the Singapore Collaboration as a response to concerns for the safety of workers and conditions arising from overseas work, recognizing that to address expatriating requires addressing the root causes and systems that give rise to the need to expatriate. The issue is recognized to be a complex and persistent one, reflecting both perspectives of race and class, requiring an approach based in equity considerations. The Collaboration is an unprecedented partnership between public, private, community, and government to develop a cohesive public, private, and community-based response to expatriating. Implementation of the Singapore Working Action Plan began in January 16, 2006. Results in 2006 included:

1. 750 young people served through interventions to opportunity including 60 city-sponsored job placements, rising to 84 in April 2007.
2. In 2006, support for the National Police Department (NPD) of criminal activity related to expatriating dropped 87% year-over-year, and again by 67% in 2006.

AGENCY
SPOTLIGHT



The following section looks at how city agencies' to show a more comprehensive view about how the **Equity Assessment Program** drove change over the four-year **FRD's PRD's** period: the **Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP)** and the **Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement (MONSE)**. This helps us demonstrate how a sustained commitment to the program allows agencies to gain experience and take actions that lay groundwork for continuous improvement and expansion.

REPORT'S OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY & ENGAGEMENT

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) is using an equity informed approach to violence reduction, focused on building community safety by identifying and mitigating the root causes of violence. The agency partners with residents, community-based organizations, institutions, businesses, and agencies to further this work. Over the **FRD's PRD's** period following the publication of the city's first **Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan (CVPP)**, MONSE increased and expanded all areas of initiatives serving key populations in Baltimore City including youth, returning citizens, and victims of violence.

Overall, this approach has been a success, best symbolized by the historic drop in homicides and nonfatal shootings during this period from 588 homicides and 728 nonfatal shootings in 2021 to 468 homicides and 484 nonfatal shootings in 2024. In the first half of 2025, Baltimore posted the lowest rate of homicides in 50 years.

In **FRD's** **MONSE** launched the **Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS)**, an evidence-based intervention that connects individuals at greatest risk of being the victim or perpetrator of violence with about, sustained access to a broad array of supports provided by a unified group of partners in different markets. An independent analysis by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania's Crime and Justice Policy Lab of the first 18 months of **GVRS** implementation found a 30% reduction in homicides and nonfatal shootings, as well as a 50% increase in job postings, with no corresponding increase in arrests or displacement of crime to other districts. As a result of the success of the initial **GVRS** rollout, the program expanded to new locations by Q4 2024, with a 5th district added in 2025, and is currently projected to be citywide.

In FY2016, MCHIE supported the reestablishing of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, launched the Violence Prevention Youth Intervention pilot in the Western District and established an Evidence-Based Services team. It also launched the first Behavioral Health Intervention Program, which applies (E-C) practices to street corners with the highest rates of violence identified by violent crime hotspots analysis. To date, MCHIE started nine new heat interventions, which alone without return to the E-C system.

In FY2016, MCHIE began to ramp up its Community Violence Intervention (CVI) ecosystem, complementing existing in-CPI by expanding similar approach to youth high risk individuals not currently receiving program services in the city of Chicago. MCHIE had launched 11 pilots to establish the ecosystem, including (E-C) practitioners, organizations like SafeStreets, Coordinated Neighborhood Stabilization Response (community outreach) crisis services, and youth-led teams. A MCHIE funded study by the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health found in 2016 that the SafeStreets program resulted in a 20% reduction in shootings.

In FY2016, MCHIE launched the **Behavior-Based Violence Intervention** pilot at four high schools (Wright-T有所, Career, Sigma Theta, and International Studies), adding another key player in the city's expanding violence intervention infrastructure.

MCHIE sees all its work as being in furtherance of equity in Baltimore City and also strives to uphold equity principles internally through fair hiring and compensation practices, diverse employee demographics and regular evaluation. Their work is guided by an explicit commitment to the principles of transparency, accountability, integrity and inclusiveness.

BALTIMORE CITY REC & PARKS

Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP) is the city's leading provider of affordable, year-round leisure and recreational activities for residents of all ages and abilities. Their focus on equity includes a broad set of internal policies and initiatives focused on building an equitable and inclusive workplace, as well as supporting equity in capital investment and meeting underserved populations, including communities of color and youth.

In its FY2021, BCRP developed an **Equity Assessment** called for in their **2020-2024** strategic plan, to identify service gaps and prioritization of projects based on equity considerations.

In FY2022, BCRP expanded their equity analysis of capital projects in part by partnering with **Kaiser's 90 in 9 Initiative to End Racialized Inequity**. This partnership provided access to Kaiser's **Program Equity Framework Index (PEI)**. This initiative aims to assess equitable access to quality play spaces, particularly in underserved areas, using PEI's benchmarks for maintenance.

BCRP significantly contributed to youth engagement by providing 200 members of new, free youth programming as all BCRP facilities across the city from a \$1 million investment from BCRP and a major philanthropist.

In its FY2022, BCRP began the **Re-Build** a broad scope of capital spending to close equity gaps in access to recreation. Backed by a funding commitment of \$120 million, including \$41 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, BCRP identified opportunities to build new facilities or upgrade existing ones, using both partnerships and the results of equity analysis. As of the end of 2022, 24 playgrounds, six facilities, and four parks were under renovation.

By FY2023, BCRP reported regularly assessing processes to make adjustments needed to promote equity. Data analysis continued to be critically important, allowing the agency to think critically about equitable distribution of funding, facilities, and resources. They continue to guide ARPA project selection with facility assessments and equity considerations to prioritize capital investments. They reported applying an equity lens to assess needs and opportunities for marginalized communities, citing community engagement, targeted programming, and equitable resource allocation as key strategies.

In FY 2024, NHTF reported broad progress under the **Equity Assessment Program**. Looking internally within the agency, equity strategies continue to be important to promote a culture of belonging within the agency. Initiatives being proactive and recruitment efforts are central to this goal, as is a continued focus on pay equity, including compensation audits, equitable job classification systems, and regular pay reviews. NHTF also provides generous support for new employees and works with the Department of Human Resources to track their progress and promote career professional development goals.



OFFICE OF EQUITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS

oecr.dallas.gov

EQUITY DIVISION

OF DALLAS COUNTY

ABOUT US

The Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) is a city agency devoted to attaining equity, upholding federal and local civil rights laws, local wage laws, ADA compliance and ensuring oversight of local enforcement. The Office of Equity and Civil Rights carries out activities to address inequity, inequality, and discrimination through the work of its divisions that support the work of several boards, commissions, and committees according to their respective enabling legislation, including the Community Relations Commission, the Equity Division, the Mayor's Commission on Disabilities, the Police Accountability Division, which includes the Administrative Charging Committee and the Police Accountability Board, the Veterans Commission, the Wage Commission, and the Women's Commission.

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