DFSS’s Commitment to Outcomes
Updated: January 2022

1. Department Overview
2. Commitment to Outcomes
3. Operationalizing Equity
OUR MISSION

Working with community partners, we connect Chicago residents and families to resources that **build** stability, **support** their well-being, and **empower** them to thrive.

OUR PRIORITIES

**Deliver** and support high quality, innovative, and comprehensive services that empower clients to thrive.

**Collaborate** with community partners, sister agencies, and public officials on programs and policies that improve Chicagoans’ lives and advance systemic change.

**Inform** the public of resources available to them through DFSS and its community partners.

**Steward** DFSS’ resources responsibly and effectively.
DFSS is one of the largest social service funders in Chicago

- Stewards a $790 million budget ($404M annual budget + $386M in CARES, ARP, and Bond investments)
- Provides funding to 350 community-based organizations (delegate agencies); issues over 1,600 contracts (grants); and invests $346 million into Chicago communities each year
- Provides direct services through six Community Service Centers and six Regional Senior Centers (individuals are assessed and receive in-person assistance by DFSS staff)
### 1. Department Overview // Program Divisions

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<td>▪ Community-based early learning sites</td>
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<td><strong>How</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Community-based early learning sites</td>
<td>▪ Legal advocates</td>
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<th>Senior Services</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Case management</td>
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<td>▪ Job preparation, training &amp; placement</td>
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<td>▪ Referrals to services</td>
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<td>▪ Public benefits assessment</td>
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<td>▪ Prevention &amp; intervention</td>
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<td><strong>How</strong></td>
<td><strong>How</strong></td>
<td><strong>How</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Community Service Centers with DFSS staffing</td>
<td>▪ Senior Centers staffed by DFSS employees</td>
<td>▪ Job training providers</td>
<td>▪ One Summer Chicago</td>
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<td>▪ Service provider partners</td>
<td>▪ Service providers</td>
<td>▪ Community Re-Entry Support Centers</td>
<td>▪ Afterschool programs</td>
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*selection of programs, not an exhaustive list*
2. Commitment to Outcomes // Overview

At its heart, DFSS’s Commitment to Outcomes is about better results for vulnerable Chicagoans.

Through a Commitment to Outcomes, it is anticipated that DFSS will be able to:

- Clearly describe, measure, and report on the outcomes it wants to achieve
- Use these outcomes to drive decisions around programming, funding, and collaborations
- Adopt effective internal practices to coordinate across program areas and with grantees
The Commitment to Outcomes is built upon a Strategic Framework, with process improvements scaffolded over time.

**Phase 1 // Strategic Framework:**
Setting and operationalizing department priorities, outcome goals, and metrics, and aligning with decision-making procedures.

**Phase 2 // Strategic Contracting:**
Engaging grantees to integrate outcome goals and metrics into results-driven requests for proposals and contracts.

**Phase 3 // Performance Improvement:**
Implementing a performance improvement system to prioritize and execute efforts and improve results.

**Phase 4 // System Coordination (in development):**
Improving service matching and referral and linking data to improve client experience and outcomes.
2. Commitment to Outcomes // Overview

The Commitment to Outcomes is driven by guiding questions, new processes and tools, and improved data capacity and use.

**Phase 1: Strategic Framework**
- What are the high-level changes that you want to occur in the lives of people served by the program?
- What data do we have – or need – to understand program performance?

**Phase 2: Strategic Contracting**
- How do the program model and services need to change? Why?
- Who is the target population for this program (beyond basic eligibility)?
- Are we funding services equitably?
- What levers do we have to improve performance? What key activities drive the model?
- Who are we serving?
- Are we delivering services equitably?

**Phase 3: Performance Improvement**
- Example Guiding Questions
  - What are the high-level changes that you want to occur in the lives of people served by the program?
  - What data do we have – or need – to understand program performance?

**Tools, Processes & Data**
- Outcome dashboards
- Decision-making filters for funding opportunities and reductions
- Operational database improvements
- RFP planning: program analysis, best practice research, workshopping
- Applicant and evaluator surveys; service provider and stakeholder interviews and focus groups
- Active Contract Management (ACM)
- Performance Improvement Initiative prioritization and tracking tool
- Logic models and process mapping
- Data linkages

Timeline:
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022
The foundation of the Strategic Framework is understanding the difference between outputs and outcomes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Output Metrics (Lead Indicators)</th>
<th>Outcome Metrics</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
| • Early warning signs indicating if a program is on track to achieve its ultimate results  
• Measure quantity and efficiency | • Can be early proxy measure for results  
• Often faster to observe or easier to measure than results  
• Sometimes necessary to make sure data available for other metrics |
| **Weaknesses**                   | **Examples**    |
| • Alone, rarely offer insight into efficacy/opportunities for improvement  
• May be misleading because never perfectly predict results | • Proportion of people who graduate job training  
• Percentage of client data entered into a system  
• Time from child referral to when services begin |
|                                 | • Wages 1 year after training completion  
• Recidivism post release from prison  
• Child removals after stabilization services |

• Ultimate results a program aims to achieve (for clients)  
• Measure impact and quality  
• Explicitly linked to the purpose of the program  
• Can capture whether program has lasting impact  
• Often time delayed  
• May require matching data to other systems
2. Commitment to Outcomes // Phase 1: Developing a Strategic Framework

Refreshed DFSS’s overall mission and priorities with stakeholder input

Set division-level outcome goals in line with DFSS priorities

Started to “live into” framework internally

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Goal #1a: Reduce by 5% the number of homeless households identified in the Continuum of Care One List

Actual = 10% decrease (YTD)

- # homeslesss households (YTD)
- # others
- # sheltered
- # unsheltered

- # total homeless households (YTD)

9,435

1. Measuring, reporting on, and refreshing priorities and goals
2. Making decisions
3. Driving collaboration
DFSS’s work is largely delivered by grantees – to achieve results, priorities and goals must be integrated into results-driven requests for proposals (RFPs) and contracts.
2. Commitment to Outcomes // Phase 2: Strategic Contracting

**Overview**

**Strategic Planning for RFP Success**
- Defining division needs, target population, what success looks like for each contract. Readying the delegate agency community for new outcomes expectations.

**Results-Driven Contracting (Writing an Effective RFP)**
- Developing results-focused RFPs that solicit innovative, evidence-based solutions. Using contracts to orient delegate agencies towards clear outcome metrics.

**Applicant Engagement & Support / Evaluation Prep**
- Conducting outreach to potential applicants, providing training, and preparing for evaluation and awards.

**Strategic Planning and Research** includes:
- **Set goals** and identify what needs to change
- **Understand potential solutions** to address goals and needs
- **Involve the delegate community** and other stakeholders

**Objectives**

- Results-driven RFPs and contracts should be **crafted, not drafted**, to:
  - Advance strategic priorities
  - Encourage innovation
  - Prepare for collaborating with delegate agencies to improve performance

- Increase pool of potential applicants and ensure that agencies are well-informed and prepared to complete the application process.

- Secure appropriate and sufficient evaluators and provide training to effectively score proposals.

**Tools**

- ✓ Guiding questions for strategic planning
- ✓ Information-gathering toolbox
- ✓ Assumption-Buster Workshop
- ✓ Program checklist
- ✓ Guiding questions for results-driven contracting
- ✓ RFP template (narrative)
- ✓ Evaluation template (application questions/scoring guidance)
- ✓ Email template
- ✓ Webinar template

**Trainings for key staff and leadership team**

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The RFP development process was revamped to allow for strategic planning and results-driven contracting.
2. Commitment to Outcomes // Phase 2: Strategic Contracting

**Refreshed RFP**
Focus on shared outcome goals rather than activities

**Updated selection criteria**
To reflect our focus on results and best practices

1. Strength of proposed program
2. Performance management and outcomes
3. Organizational capacity
4. Reasonable costs, budget justification, and leverage of funds

**Revised application questions** to help DFSS make more informed decisions

**Example questions**

- “What are the challenges and critical needs facing your intended client population?”
- “Describe the evidence base and/or best practices that support the proposed program.”
- “Please tell us about a time your agency made a programmatic or organizational change based on data collected.”

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**Framework for improvement**
- Outcome goals
- Program information
- Reasonable costs, budget justification, and leverage of funds
- Performance management and outcomes
- Organizational capacity
Strengthen links in our process to help prioritize, resource, and drive action and improvement

2. Commitment to Outcomes // Phase 3: Performance Improvement

- What initiatives and programs are priorities?
- For example: Is performance lacking? Are there gaps in service delivery?

- What is the problem we’re trying to address?
- In what different ways could we address this problem?

- Have results improved?
- If not, what do we believe needs to happen in order to improve results?

- What needs to be accomplished in order to achieve results?
- How will we measure and track whether results are achieved?

- What initiatives and programs are priorities?
- For example: Is performance lacking? Are there gaps in service delivery?
2. Commitment to Outcomes // Phase 3: Performance Improvement

Selecting potential improvement strategies to match the need

- Identify Priorities
- Choose an Improvement Strategy
- Improve Results
- Resource and Execute

Example Improvement Strategies:
- Target population analysis
- Best practices research
- Results-driven RFPs
- Active contract management
- Systems re-engineering
- Other strategies

Selecting potential improvement strategies to match the need
2. Commitment to Outcomes // Phase 3: Performance Improvement

**Active Contract Management**

- Regularly and proactively collaborating with delegate agencies to improve outcomes
- Using real-time data to understand current performance, monitor progress, and quickly identify trends and troubleshoot problems
- Identifying opportunities to improve service delivery systems and share best practices across delegate agencies
- Improving regular communication through “feedback loops” about performance between DFSS and delegate agencies

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<th>Data</th>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Identify key dashboard metrics and in-depth analysis opportunities to effectively monitor progress toward outcomes</td>
<td>Uncover patterns in the data that reveal what is and is not working. Ask operationally-oriented questions to keep learning what’s driving those patterns</td>
<td>Connect insights to concrete action steps and follow-up mechanisms to remediate problems and scale effective practices</td>
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3. Operationalizing Equity // Overview

The City of Chicago defines equity as both an outcome and a process.

As an outcome equity results in fair and just access to opportunity and resources that provide everyone the ability to thrive. Acknowledging the present and historical inequality that persist in our society, equity is a future state we strive to create where identity and social status no longer predestine life outcomes.

As a process, equity requires a new way of doing business: one that (1) prioritizes access and opportunities for groups who have the greatest need; (2) methodically evaluates benefits and burdens produced by seemingly neutral systems and practices; and (3) engages those most impacted by the problems we seek to address as experts in their own experiences, strategists in co-creating solutions, and evaluators of success.

Racial equity focuses on the social construction of race and how it has been used (historically and presently) to unjustly distribute opportunity and resources based on a person’s skin color, heritage, ethnicity, and/or national origin. Advancing racial equity requires an analysis of systemic racism inclusive of the ways harm is created at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels. It also requires a commitment to dismantling systems that perpetuate racialized outcomes and rebuild systems that produce systemic inclusion.
DFSS is currently focused on three primary opportunities for integrating equity goals into the RFP process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools to shape development of program model and service delivery</th>
<th>New application questions to assess agency’s service approach</th>
<th>Surveys to learn about applicant’s experience responding to RFPs</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Equity Toolkit</strong>&lt;br&gt;An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity</td>
<td><strong>Example questions</strong>&lt;br&gt;How does your agency reflect and engage the diverse people and experiences of the communities it serves (e.g., board, leadership)?&lt;br&gt;“Please describe how client feedback and/or input is incorporated into your service delivery.”&lt;br&gt;What organizational competencies, capabilities and/or infrastructure has your agency developed to serve your intended target population?</td>
<td>1. Agency size, previous City funding, and staff capacity&lt;br&gt;2. Opportunity to provide creative solutions&lt;br&gt;3. Quality of application resources and supports&lt;br&gt;4. “Usability” of application system</td>
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DFSS applied Active Contract Management techniques to drive equity goals for the Rental Assistance Program

1. Use live program data to identify gaps and monitor progress

2. Develop and test strategies to improve equity goal

Increase application share by:
Better engaging the target population +
Simplifying the application process

- Interview on-the-ground stakeholders
- Deploy new, targeted outreach strategies
- Develop accessible instructions in multiple languages
- Clearly communicate program rules