

## Department Strategic Framework

The Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) has worked with its partners and stakeholders to develop a Strategic Framework – an approach that will transition DFSS to a more outcome-oriented model that focuses on how many people leave better off after receiving DFSS’ services, versus how many people walk through the door. The Strategic Framework consists of a refreshed mission, priorities, and goals, along with a plan for how DFSS will measure, report on, and review them in the years to come; use them to make decisions; and drive greater collaboration within DFSS.

To facilitate this process, DFSS engaged the Civic Consulting Alliance, a local non-profit organization that provides pro bono consulting to help public officials solve the region's most pressing challenges.

### DFSS Refreshed 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.

### DFSS 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 Chicagoan’s 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

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Strategic Framework?

The Strategic Framework consists of a refreshed mission, with priorities and goals at the agency and division levels that define the primary areas of focus that help DFSS advance its mission. It also provides approaches for how DFSS will use its mission, priorities, and goals to:

- make decisions and drive greater collaboration within the department
- measure, report on, and refresh outcomes in the years to come

This is different than a Strategic Plan, which typically shares detailed strategies an organization will implement in the short-term (3-5 years). In contrast, the Strategic Framework lays the foundation for how DFSS will operate in the long-term and provides fundamental principles for guiding decision-making.

## Why is DFSS creating a Strategic Framework?

People generally come to DFSS when they are experiencing a difficult situation. The efforts of DFSS staff and its partners are critical, as they work to ensure that those who receive services leave stronger than when they arrived. The Strategic Framework will transition DFSS to an even more outcome-oriented model that focuses on *how many people leave better off* after receiving DFSS' services, versus *how many people walk through the door*.

Using data to guide decision-making and drive outcomes is a shift happening in human and social services nationally, and more and more funders are advocating for this approach. DFSS is at the forefront of this shift, building on best practices and lessons learned from around the country. With a widening gap between the amount of services needed and the funding available to support them, DFSS must prepare for a future where it achieves more with less. The Strategic Framework will enable DFSS to use its funds more effectively by better targeting which funding it pursues, programs it supports, and collaborations it takes on, while at the same time seeking to achieve the best outcomes for program participants.

## How was the Strategic Framework developed?

The Strategic Framework was developed through a comprehensive process that involved:

- In-depth interviews with DFSS staff and partner organizations
- Best practice research and interviews with human service agencies across the country
- Numerous workshops with DFSS senior staff and representatives from all divisions
- Workshops with a cross-section of DFSS' most important stakeholders, including delegate agencies, advisory councils, partner organizations, funders, union representation, the Mayor's Office, and the Office of Budget and Management

This process was facilitated by the [Civic Consulting Alliance](#), a local non-profit organization that provides pro bono consulting to help public officials solve the region's most pressing challenges.

The Strategic Framework is a work in progress. DFSS doesn't have all the answers yet, but has intentionally decided to be transparent and engage staff and stakeholders early on so that shaping it can be a community effort.

If you have further questions about this please email [dfss@cityofchicago.org](mailto:dfss@cityofchicago.org).



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