

City of Chicago RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN

Department of Administrative Hearings (DOAH)

Under the City of Chicago's Municipal Code (Ch. 2-4-100), all City of Chicago departments must create and maintain Racial Equity Action Plans (REAPs) "to articulate and guide strategy aimed at advancing equity and making it a permanent pillar in all departmental workstreams."

Progress on all REAPs are accounted for annually as a part of the City of Chicago's budget process. This document outlines the components of the REAP and ensures that all strategies are aligned to Chicago's citywide vision: ***All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025)***

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THE CITY OF CHICAGO'S DEFINITION OF EQUITY

Equity is 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.
- (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.

Further, our focus is on evaluating our own strategies, interventions and resources in a way that prioritizes those who are most negatively impacted by current policies, procedures & practices.


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.🔗

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The coordination of the development and implementation of City of Chicago REAPs is led by the Office of Equity and Racial Justice. For more information about REAPs and/or the work of the office visit www.chicago.gov/equity.



RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #1

The City of Chicago's Vision: All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025) 

Citywide Priority Area & Desired Result:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: All Chicagoans have a meaningful opportunity to influence City of Chicago programs, policies, and initiatives.

Indicators Examined:

Community Data:

Chicago Demographics

Program/Department Data:

Number of complaint forms received and number of complaints with contact information provided for DOAH to respond.

Community Feedback and Narratives

DOAH seeks to gather community feedback and narratives to obtain insight from the community through the new Respondent Experience Survey cards.

Define the Problem

Early in the creation of DOAH, Language Line translation services and the Coordinated Advice & Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS) were initiated by DOAH's senior management. The goal is now to seek input from Respondents regarding their usage of these two services. These services help support and assist respondents in navigating the Administrative Hearing proceedings at DOAH. That said, there is a lack of feedback from respondents on 1) how they may be struggling in their hearing proceedings, such as whether they have difficulty in navigating and understanding the process of the proceeding; 2) what additional services may better assist and help them to understand the proceedings at DOAH; and 3) what may already be in place that is helpful to the respondents in the hearing process and that should be expanded upon. Respondents previously could also engage with DOAH through a complaint box, but it was underutilized, respondents were reluctant to include their contact, and the questions did not identify the areas of concern stated in 1), 2), and 3) above. |

Identify Root Causes to the Problem

There was limited advertising and visibility on how to engage with and provide feedback to DOAH due to the time constraints of Court appearances. Completion of the complaints was based on the respondents' initiative to notice the availability of the forms where there was limited signage, to ask for the forms from DOAH staff at the Central Hearing Facility or at the satellite sites, and to then complete the forms and return the forms to the complaint box. There may have also been some hesitation to ask about the complaint box in a location where the incident arose. The complaint form is also on DOAH's website, but it is difficult to navigate and locate said form. These factors made it challenging for respondents to provide feedback and led to underutilization of the complaint form.

Define Your Department's Opportunity

Department of Administrative Hearings' opportunity for community engagement is to develop a process to gather feedback and insight from respondents while remaining non-biased. DOAH is a Courthouse that can indirectly engage respondents for feedback through a Respondent Experience Survey card. The purpose of this Respondent Experience Survey card is to bring to DOAH's attention any possible obstacles, struggles, or helpful resources the respondents encountered in the hearing process. This will allow respondents to influence whether the City continues with, enhances, or expands upon certain programs such as language line translation services and CARPLS. This will also allow DOAH to understand if anything needs to change in order to improve respondents' understanding of the Administrative Hearings process.

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #1

Our department will advance the following strategies:

1. Department Strategy: Assess respondents' experience with the Department of Administrative Hearings to strengthen ways for them to indirectly engage with DOAH.

Measures of Impact: number of responses to Respondent Experience Survey cards; increase in experience ratings; new changes informed by survey data

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|--|--|----------|--------|
| <p>1.1 Develop a survey card to replace the complaint card currently in use</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a survey card to understand what areas respondents have difficulty with in the hearing process or what areas the courthouse should expand upon that successfully assisted respondents in navigating the hearing process. 2. Replace complaint cards with Respondent Experience Survey cards. 3. Increase areas where physical survey cards are available by distributing physical copies of surveys to all three hearing locations, Central Hearing Facility (CHF), Pulaski (4445 N Pulaski Rd), and 95th and Jeffery (2006 E. 95th) sites. 4. Have the cards placed in easily accessible areas at the CHF and the satellite Courthouses. 5. Work with the Department of Assets Information and Services (AIS) to create visuals and display information on monitors regarding the availability of Respondent Experience Survey cards. 6. Collaborate with the IT department to feature the Respondent Experience Survey card on DOAH's website so that it's real-time submittable online. 7. CHF manager will train staff on new changes and purpose of the survey cards. | 2023 | |
| <p>1.2 Review respondent survey cards to identify areas to improve equitable access to and navigation of DOAH's administrative hearing proceedings</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partner with the information desk team and AIS/IT to collect digital and physical copies of the Respondent Experience Survey cards. 2. Identify racial equity team comprising of staff from all four divisions of DOAH. 3. The racial equity team will be charged with analyzing the data obtained from responses from the Respondent Experience Survey cards 4. DOAH's racial equity team will share data and/or major theme responses with DOAH's four Division heads. | 2024 | |

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| 1.3 Address various challenges and concerns raised in survey cards | 1. Implement changes identified in the survey cards and modify where possible, based on the concerns raised. 2. Share findings with the Director of DOAH | 2024 | |
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RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #1

Our department will advance the following strategies:

2. Department Strategy: Increase information-sharing of CARPLs and Language Line translation services

Measures of Impact: review various programs and handouts available on debt relief, and reports from CARPLS

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|---|---|----------|--------|
| 2.1 Share information regarding the Department of Finance's (DOF) fine and fees debt relief program with respondents | 1. Explore the possibility of providing public service announcements on monitors regarding the different programs in several languages 2. Provide hard copies and handouts from DOF in various languages | 2023 | |
| 2.2 Provide information about the availability of legal assistance from CARPLS | 1. Signage about CARPLS 2. Onsite CARPLS office at DOAH- coordinate with CARPLS 3. Hardcopy fliers about CARPLS and services it provides in various languages most commonly used by City of Chicago residents. 4. Monitors with public service announcements on CARPLS | 2024 | |
| 2.3 Increase areas/ platforms where there is information on Language Line translation services | 1. Handouts in various languages on availability of Language Line 2. Monitors with public service announcements on Language Line in most commonly used languages for City of Chicago residents. | 2024 | |

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #1

Our department will advance the following strategies:

3. Department Strategy: Revamp the DOAH's website so that citizens can easily find information on CARPLS and Language Line.

Measures of Impact: current website and whether easy to locate information on the hearing processes, survey card, CARPLS, and/or Language line

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|--|---|----------|--------|
| 3.1 Update information on the Administrative Hearings process on DOAH's website | 1. Review current information available on website 2. Explain the Court proceedings in layman's terms | 2023 | |
| 3.2 Make the website more easily navigable for the public | 1. Assign AIS or IT person at DOAH to update website 2. Review current location of information on CARPLS and Language Line and how to make this information more visible and easily navigable | 2023 | |
| 3.3 Update and reassess links on website for Language Line and CARPLS | 1. Review current links on website for CARPLS and Language Line 2. Eliminate useless, outdated, or nonhelpful links on information regarding these two programs 3. Add link for real-time submission of Respondent Experience Survey cards 4. Relocate the links to more noticeable/visible locations on website | 2023 | |

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #2

The City of Chicago's Vision: All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025)☒



Citywide Priority Area & Desired Result:

WORKFORCE: The City of Chicago's workforce reflects the demographics of the City, and all employees are connected to training and advancement opportunities.

Community Data

City workforce demographics and DOAH's workforce demographics

Program/Department Data

2023 Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) survey responses

Community Feedback and Narratives

DOAH is in the process of reviewing feedback from current ALJs.


Define the Problem

DOAH has a diverse ALJ roster. However, that roster needs to be more consistent with the growing number of Asian and Latinx communities of Chicago. It is also important for the ALJ roster to be reflective of the various demographics of Chicago so that the people who come into the Courthouse observe that the diverse demographics of Chicago are represented on the DOAH bench.

Identify Root Causes to the Problem

Prior to participating in this cohort, there was insufficient advertising of the ALJ position. It was mostly referrals by past and current ALJs. Although the minimum year requirement is three years of legal experience, because it is an independent contractor position, most attorneys interested in the position are either retired or have active outside practices. That said, there may be an insufficient number of Asian and Latinx attorneys available to fill the position because the younger attorneys are seeking full-time positions with benefits. Also, Covid resulted in many senior ALJs not returning to the Courthouse. Many of those senior ALJs elected to remain active on DOAH's roster until such time as they feel comfortable returning to in-person hearings.

Define Your Department's Opportunity

DOAH's opportunity is to become more actively engaged with community-based law organizations, law schools, law firms, and other legal organizations to develop an even more diverse roster of ALJs that reflect the rich diversity of Chicago. 



RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #2

Our department will advance the following strategies:

1. Department Strategy: Strengthen engagement around recruitment with law associations, legal colleges/universities, and other community-based law organizations to build relationships necessary for workforce development.

Measures of Impact: current demographics of ALJs; demographics of ALJs post new recruiting efforts; number of new partnerships with schools, associations, firms and communities

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|--|---|-------------|--------|
| <p>1.1 Attend more Bar Association Events for recruitment of minority ALJs that reflect the demographics of the City of Chicago.</p> | <p>1. Join the email list for various Bar Associations, including Latinx or Asian organizations, to become aware of events. 2. Call and notify the various Bar Associations that we are interested in attending their meetings to inform their members about the available ALJ positions. 3. Distribute newly created notice of ALJ opportunity flier to the Bar Association members.</p> | <p>2023</p> | |
| <p>1.2 Attend more job resource fairs</p> | <p>1. Research dates of upcoming job fairs within the Latinx and Asian communities to make them aware of the available ALJ positions within DOAH. 2. Handout ALJ opportunity fliers at the job fairs.</p> | <p>2023</p> | |
| <p>1.3 Outreach to Aldermanic offices</p> | <p>1. Reach out to Alderman offices inquiring about any associations of Latinx and Asian communities within their Ward. 2. Email the Latinx and Asian community associations identified by the Aldermanic offices about ALJ opportunities at DOAH. 3. Hold informational sessions at these community association meetings.</p> | <p>2024</p> | |
| <p>1.4 Identify law firms in Latinx and Asian communities of Chicago in which we are trying to recruit</p> | <p>1. Canvas Latinx and Asian communities. 2. Provide Latinx and Asian law firms with information about ALJ opportunities.</p> | <p>2024</p> | |

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

Our department will advance the following strategies:

Measures of Impact: retention before and after relationships created as a result of the ALJ survey; and workforce diversity after relationships solidified

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|--|--|----------|--------|
| 2.1 Maintain relationships | 1. Continue meeting with various legal organizations and physically go to the law firms identified in the Latinx and Asian communities. 2. Do quarterly check-ins with the various organizations we meet with to increase diversity of the workforce. | 2024 | |
| 2.2 Continue checking in with ALJs | 1. Distributed ALJ survey to newly appointed ALJs annually. 2. Modify ALJ survey based where necessary and based on prior survey answers | 2024 | |
| 2.3 Update list of firms and organizations to have a relationship with in recruiting. | 1. Review various programs in Chicago Bar Association newsletters or other organizations newsletters that may create opportunity for ALJ recruitment | 2024 | |

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #2


Our department will advance the following strategies:

3. Department Strategy: Engage current ALJs to gather information to advance the Workforce priority.

Measures of Impact: Current and future responses to ALJ survey created by DOAH and Department of Human Resources

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|---|--|----------|--------|
| 3.1 Create a survey for current ALJs | 1. Coordinated with the Department of Human Resources to develop survey for current ALJs on DOAH's roster. 2. Created survey questions based on diversity goals. 3. Sent survey through survey monkey to ALJs. 4. Analyze data from the survey completed by ALJs. | 2023 | |
| 3.2 Create a focus group of the ALJs | 1. Analyze data from the survey completed by ALJs. 2. Identify which ALJs who completed the survey are interested in participating in a focus group. 3. Hold quarterly meetings with ALJ focus groups. | 2024 | |
| 3.3 Identify areas of focus | 1. Identify from surveys and focus groups meetings methods and areas in which to increase diversity and retention | 2024 | |

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

The City of Chicago's Vision: All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025) 



Citywide Priority Area & Desired Result:

ARTS & CULTURE: All Chicagoans celebrate, connect with, and contribute to the City's creative and cultural ecosystem

Indicators Examined:

Community Data

Chicago Demographics

Program/Department Data

The Department of Administrative Hearings can examine the various cultures that come to its facilities and who may also fill out the experience survey cards to determine which art communities to reach out to and display at the hearing facilities.gs.

Community Feedback and Narratives

We will gather community feedback by reaching out to various art communities in the City of Chicago to identify which art to display and where and how to display it at the three hearing sites.

Define the Problem

Despite the variety of art in Chicago, access to the arts and culture is unevenly accessible to the communities throughout the City of Chicago.

Identify Root Causes to the Problem

Poverty and lack of transportation hinder people from having access to the arts and culture of the City. Nearly 80% of Chicagoans believe arts and culture improve neighborhood vitality, yet, only half of the residents believe the arts and culture are available where they live. (Data from a recent survey from Chicago Community Trust). DOAH could help expand the accessibility of arts and culture opportunities in support of community health and wellbeing.

Define Your Department's Opportunity

Make the Department of Administrative Hearings more welcoming for the different people coming into the hearing facilities by having Art on display representing the various communities of the City of Chicago. At the same time, we will grow public awareness and appreciation for the City's rich diversity through the arts.

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

Our department will advance the following strategies:

1. Department Strategy: Student Art Contest

Measures of Impact: review statistical data on accessibility to art and how the communities can benefit from it at DOAH hearing sites.

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|---|--|-------------|--------|
| <p>1.1 Create contest for student art to display at three hearing locations</p> | <p>1. Develop parameters of contest. Determine whether this should be a yearly contest.</p> | <p>2023</p> | |
| <p>1.2 Contact Chicago Schools</p> | <p>1. Reach out to CPS and Parochial schools in Chicago for art teachers' contact information. 2. Coordinate with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) regarding contest rules. 3. Identify which grades can participate in the contest, High School, Middle School, and/or Grammar School.</p> | <p>2024</p> | |
| <p>1.3 Awarding Top Art Student</p> | <p>1. Hold a ceremony with an award for the top student in each grade that was identified to participate in the contest. 2. Display of art at DOAH's three hearing site locations as award.</p> | <p>2024</p> | |

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

Our department will advance the following strategies:

2. Department Strategy: Engage with Department of Cultural Affairs on what art should be displayed.

Measures of Impact: Art and Culture impact on the community as they come in before and after display.

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|---|---|----------|--------|
| 2.1 Identify communities from which to display art at DOAH | 1. Discuss with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) which communities most under-represented in the arts. 2. Reach out to different art communities within Chicago for art to display from the ones identified by DCASE. | 2023 | |
| 2.2 Selection of the Art to display | 1. Coordinate with DCASE in selecting art that is warm and welcoming. 2. Also, find art that is reflective of the various demographics of Chicagoans. | 2024 | |
| 2.3 Inventory arts organizations and artists | 1. Create a list of artists and organizations that reflect the various diverse Communities of Chicago. 2. Update each year the various artists and organizations from which to display art. | 2024 | |

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

Our department will advance the following strategies:

3. Department Strategy: Cultural days at 400 W Superior.

Measures of Impact: Experiences of respondents before and after cultural nights implemented.

| Actions | Implementation Plan | Timeline | Status |
|---|--|------------------|--------|
| 3.1 Display of various cultures | 1. Select from which cultures to display art. Select day to have cultural days at Central Hearing Facility. Have light refreshments available for respondents to encourage them to take in the art before their hearing. | 2. 3. 2024 | |
| 3.2 To seek feedback on art exhibits | 1. Train customer service information desk to inquire of respondents' opinions on the art displayed. | 2024 | |
| 3.3 Respond to feedback | 1. Decide on which artists and art organizations to maintain relationships with after the first year of implementation. 2. Analyze whether the program is working or not and resulting in a more welcoming environment. | 2025 | |