

DC Office of Planning Racial Equity Action Plan

2024 - 2026



Photo credit: Carlos Vilas Delgado



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A Letter from OP's Director



Dear Washingtonians:

The DC Office of Planning (OP) is tasked with planning for the long-term growth of the District of Columbia, to help ensure it reflects our values of an inclusive and vibrant city.

In doing this work, OP acknowledges that planning, preservation, and urban design have been a part of systems that, through racially discriminatory and exclusionary policies, have harmed Black residents, other people of color, and their communities. For this reason, the 2021 Comprehensive Plan, the District's long-term vision for growth and development, centers equity and racial justice as a major theme.

The legacy and impacts of racial discrimination are deeply rooted and will take many years to dismantle. OP is committed to doing our part to realize a District where all people can thrive. We are advancing racial equity through transparent processes, centering community voices in planning, maximizing accessibility of our services and programs, and holding ourselves accountable for the impact of our work.

This Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) highlights OP's racial equity initiatives and outlines actions that OP will take over the next three years to advance racial equity in our work. OP's REAP is supported by Mayor Bowser's Office of Racial Equity and is aligned with the [Districtwide Racial Equity Action Plan](#). OP's REAP was informed with input from over 100 community stakeholders. This plan will guide OP's work from 2024 to 2026 and will be refined periodically to reflect progress and feedback. We look forward to your continued engagement in OP's racial equity work.

Sincerely,

Anita Cozart
Director

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND



In February 2023, OP held a Racial Equity Open House at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library to gather feedback on the OP REAP.

Mayor Bowser established the [Office of Racial Equity \(ORE\)](#) in 2021 to develop an infrastructure to ensure policy decisions and District programs are evaluated through a racial equity lens and to collaborate with District agencies, residents, and external stakeholders to make meaningful progress toward a more racially equitable city.

A racial equity action plan expresses an agency's commitment to achieving racial equity in DC. Having a clear, centralized plan can help agencies to prioritize attention and resources to build the infrastructure of a new status quo – one in which everyone can thrive and race no longer predicts one's outcomes.

Like racial equity itself, a racial equity action plan is both a process and an outcome. As an outcome, a racial equity plan is the agency's roadmap and detailed itinerary for change. As a process, drafting a racial equity plan builds staff awareness of the agency's vision for change and capacity to implement that change. A successful process also includes monitoring of and accountability for the plan and communication with internal and external stakeholders on its progress.

OP's Racial Equity Action Plan (OP REAP) includes information on the agency's existing racial equity initiatives and sets action steps for the next three years to further embed racial equity in OP's work. The OP REAP will be updated periodically and reported on annually to reflect the agency's progress and establish a feedback loop as we work with community stakeholders on implementation.

Districtwide, agency-level racial equity plans work in harmony by adapting and embedding the District's shared vision of racial equity through agency operations in measurable ways to create a whole-of-government response. In February 2024, ORE released the District's first [Racial Equity Action Plan](#). ORE supported and advised OP throughout the process of developing an agency-specific racial equity action plan.

OP's Racial Equity Narrative

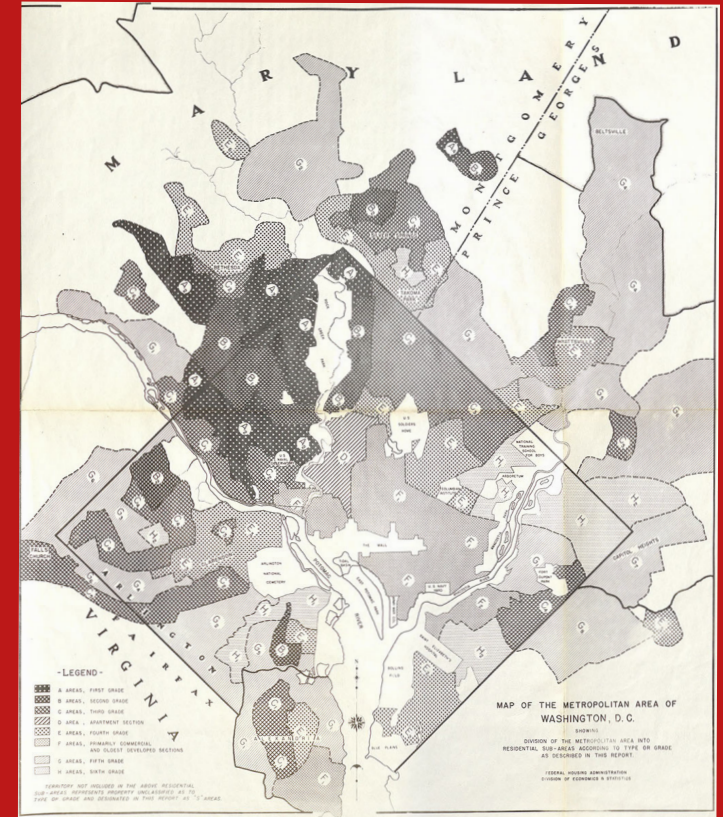
The Office of Planning (OP) is tasked with planning for the long-term growth of the District of Columbia, to help ensure it reflects our values of an inclusive and vibrant city. In carrying out our work we use the following guiding narrative concerning racial equity:

“The District of Columbia Office of Planning acknowledges that urban planning has been part of systems that, through racially discriminatory and exclusionary policies, have harmed Black residents, other people of color, and their communities.

Recognizing the continuing effects of this legacy, OP is working to achieve racial equity, which we define as when race no longer drives disparities or life outcomes for District residents, and when everyone has equitable access to opportunities and what they need to thrive, inclusive of all identities and no matter where they live.

OP is committed to applying a racial equity lens both in our internal operations and external work and to confronting and rejecting structural racism where it exists. We commit to advancing racial equity through transparent processes, centering community voices in planning, maximizing accessibility of our services and programs, and holding ourselves accountable for the impact of our work.

We will name and address inequities when we encounter them. We will build a planning practice centered on racial equity for land use; design and preservation; and the built environment. We will continue to advance racial equity to increase affordable housing, inclusive economic opportunities, and healthy neighborhoods where all residents can access what they need to achieve equitable outcomes.”



A 1937 Federal Housing Administration Residential Sub-Areas map graded sections of DC and its suburbs using race as a criterion. [This is just one example of racially discriminatory and exclusionary policies.](#)

The Comprehensive Plan

OP is the steward of the [Comprehensive Plan \(Comp Plan\)](#), a high-level guiding document that sets a positive, long-term vision for the District through the lens of physical growth and change. The Comp Plan is updated every five to ten years and sets policy priorities for all District agencies regarding land use, housing, infrastructure, capital investments, and public services. An update to the Comp Plan took effect in August 2021, enabling the District to better meet challenges and harness opportunities in critical areas, including housing, economic recovery, resilience, and racial equity.

The 2021 Comp Plan established several racial equity lenses for implementation to direct District agencies in developing processes and tools tailored to various programs, activities, and decisions, that center and account for the needs of residents of color. A racial equity lens is a set of questions that help identify and reduce barriers to equitable outcomes. The Comp Plan states that racial equity lenses should:

- Identify and consider past and current systemic racial inequities
- Identify who benefits or is burdened from a decision
- Disaggregate data by race and analyze data considering different impacts and outcomes by race
- Evaluate program, activity, or decisions to identify measures, such as policies, plans, or requirements, that reduce systemic racial inequities, eliminate race as a predictor of results, and promote equitable development outcomes (Comp Plan, 2501.4)

OP has been collaborating with interagency partners to define, apply, and refine the lenses established in the 2021 Comp Plan since its enactment. This includes work on tools that advance racial equity in land use, zoning, urban design, and preservation.

Racial Equity in the Comp Plan

The 2021 Comprehensive Plan sets forth a vision for...

...an equitable District:

“Equity exists where all people share equal rights, access, choice, opportunities, and outcomes, regardless of characteristics such as race, class, or gender. Equity is achieved by targeted actions and investments to meet residents where they are, to create equitable opportunities.” (Comp Plan, 213.6)

...Racial Equity:

“As an outcome, the District achieves racial equity when race no longer determines one’s socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live or their socioeconomic status; and when racial divides no longer exist between people of color and their white counterparts.” (Comp Plan, 213.9)

Advancing Racial Equity in Land Use and Zoning

Zoning

OP analyzes all development proposals before the Zoning Commission to ensure alignment with the Comp Plan and consistency with the intent of the District's zoning regulations. Since the 2021 Comp Plan was adopted, OP's reports to the Zoning Commission have included an analysis of the Comp Plan through a racial equity lens, and include data that is disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

Land Use Planning and Urban Design

OP develops land use and urban design plans for areas that require more focused direction than is included in the 2021 Comp Plan. The Comp Plan established area-specific goals for dedicated affordable housing, a first step in addressing centuries of residential segregation in the District and unlocking opportunities for residents of all races and ethnicities to live in high-opportunity neighborhoods.

OP's land use and urban design plans center racial equity by:

- Identifying any history of discriminatory land use and development practices.
- Disaggregating demographic and engagement data by race, ethnicity, gender, and other socio-economic factors, where possible.
- Acknowledging and listening to diverse voices from neighborhoods and seeking to expand opportunities for participation.
- Advancing land use and zoning changes that increase production of market rate and affordable housing.



A Continuing Conversations on Housing event in September 2019 where OP, DHCD, and DMPED collected public input on the District's housing goals.



In February 2020, a Continuing Conversations on Housing event included the UnDesign the Redline interactive exhibit, which connects the historically intentional and systematic racial housing segregation to political and social issues of today.

Advancing Racial Equity through Cultural Preservation

Cultural displacement occurs when residents lose a sense of belonging or shared identity in their neighborhood due to neighborhood growth or change. OP's work on historic preservation and commemoration helps to ensure that residents continue to see themselves reflected in their communities.

OP houses the Historic Preservation Office. The District's [2025 Historic Preservation Plan](#) is centered around "Celebrating Our Diversity." The plan outlines major preservation initiatives, serves as a guide for the Historic Preservation Office and the Historic Preservation Review Board, and is a tool for everyone in the District of Columbia who engages with the District's historic environment.

As part of plan implementation, OP is continuing to expand thematic studies of communities that have historically been underrepresented by historic preservation. For example, in February 2024 OP released [the Black History Trail Map](#), which includes 300 sites associated with history and culture in the District of Columbia. OP has released similar context studies on LGBTQ historic resources and women's suffrage, and is working on context studies related to the history of the District's Chinese and Korean and Latino communities.

OP also recognizes the role that commemorative works play in reminding us of our shared past and values, creating a sense of community pride, and reminding us of significant people and events that have shaped the world we live in. While DC is often thought of as a city of monuments, very few commemorative works in DC honor the lived experiences and contributions of Black Washingtonians and people of color. OP's Commemorative Works Technical Assistance Program provides grants and design assistance to community organizations to plan for new commemorative works in the District's neighborhoods that recognize Black Washingtonians and people of color.



Black Lives Matter Plaza is one of 300 sites on the Black History Trail Map. (Photo credit: Carlos Vilas Delgado).



The Women's Suffrage Context Study explains how women and local women's organizations played a large role in the DC suffrage and home rule movements. (The League of Women Voters, at the April 12, 1970, march for DC suffrage (Photo credit: DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post).

Developing OP's Racial Equity Action Plan

OP staff developed this Racial Equity Action Plan in coordination with ORE in their inaugural pilot cohort of 12 District agencies. As part of the cohort, OP staff conducted a racial equity assessment in 2022 to assess internal decision-making processes, human resources practices, community and interagency relationships, and staff well-being.

OP held 3 engagement events to share the agency's draft REAP with community stakeholders, including an Open House and focus groups. OP used input from engagement events and the analysis from the internal assessment to develop the REAP.

Summary of Feedback

Over 120 participants engaged in OP's Racial Equity Open House and Focus Groups. Engagement focused on gathering feedback on the REAP's goals and strategies, as well as considerations for implementation.

The following themes emerged as key takeaways from engagement:

- Clarity & understanding of racial equity
- Meaningful community engagement
- Staff training & education
- Transparency
- Historic context & data analysis
- Partnerships with other agencies, businesses, and organizations
- Careers & internships
- Youth engagement & representation



The OP Racial Equity Open House (February 2023).



One of two focus groups held on the OP REAP (February 2023).

OP Racial Equity Action Plan

2024 – 2026

In alignment with the District's Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP), the Office of Planning's REAP is built on and guided by four major goals:

- 1. OP staff understand and are committed to achieving racial equity.**
- 2. OP is committed to eliminating racial and ethnic inequities.**
- 3. OP is committed to meaningfully engaging community in agency decision-making processes and strengthening community partnerships.**
- 4. OP is an equitable employer and engages in racially equitable hiring, promotion, and retention practices.**

ORE standardized the language in these four goals for consistent application across all District agencies. Each agency develops indicators, ideas for action and performance measures that are relevant to their work, as detailed in the chart on the following pages.

This REAP is a three-year plan that will be evaluated and reported on annually. OP invites residents and stakeholders to continue to remain engaged in the implementation process by emailing OP at planning@dc.gov; calling OP at 202-442-7600 or by visiting the OP's website: planning.dc.gov.

The charts on the following pages include a "point of accountability." This refers to the staff who are responsible for initiating the ideas for action, coordinating with OP staff, and tracking progress on the related performance measures. The point of accountability as noted in the chart below include OP's:

- Deputy Directors
- Associate Directors
- Food Policy Director
- Front Office
 - Communications Team
 - Finance & Procurement Team
 - Human Resources Team
 - Operations Team
- Racial Equity Advisory Group (a cross-division working group)

Goal 1. OP staff understand and are committed to achieving racial equity.

Goal 1.1 - Provide staff with the training, resources, and guidance required to understand the importance of racial equity and how to apply racial equity lenses to their work.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Points of Accountability
<p>OP staff are trained to apply a racial equity lens to their work on a day-to-day basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect staff to racial equity training opportunities to reach proficiency on racial equity practices (2024-2026) • Conduct annual racial equity competency survey to evaluate impact of training (2024-2026) • Review best practices and develop a session to practice and learn to apply selected racial equity tools (2024) • Compile internal central resource library of racial equity training and reference materials (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of staff who have received training annually. • % of staff who complete racial equity competency survey. 	<p>Human Resources Team and Racial Equity Advisory Group</p>

Goal 1.2 - Ensure staff can communicate about racial equity both internally and externally.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Points of Accountability
<p>OP staff develop a shared language to communicate about racial equity in OP's work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop narratives to describe how OP is approaching and advancing racial equity across the agency's various disciplines (2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of teams at OP with racial equity narratives. 	<p>Communications Team and Racial Equity Advisory Group</p>
<p>OP staff learn to normalize conversations about race and ethnicity internally among staff and externally with stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create spaces and opportunities for staff to share lived experiences with one another (2024-2026) • Develop a conversation series for staff to have continued dialogue and build the communication skills necessary to call out racial disparities and harms and their impact (2024-2026) • Develop an inclusive language resource booklet and workshop for staff (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of staff who engage in events focused on racial equity. 	<p>Communications Team and Racial Equity Advisory Group</p>

Goal 1.2 (cont.) - Ensure staff can communicate about racial equity both internally and externally.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Points of Accountability
<p>OP staff engage in dialogue about the role of planning in shaping the built environment and racial equity outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively identify opportunities to host or participate in engagement events (2024-2026) Produce materials to inform the public about OP's work in shaping the built environment and racial equity outcomes (2024-2026) Explore the development of educational opportunities to share information about the purpose of planning and how to become involved (2024-2026) Create a historical timeline of how planning has contributed to and detracted from racial equity in DC as a training resource (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of staff who understand DC's development history. # of neighborhood events OP participates in by location of event. # of partnerships with schools and organizations to teach youth and young adults about planning. # of ANC or civic association listening and engagement sessions held. # of educational materials and programs developed to share information about planning. 	<p>Communications Team and Racial Equity Advisory Group</p>

Goal 1.3 - Embed a racial equity lens into the agency's policies, procedures, and practices.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Points of Accountability
<p>OP staff utilizes racial equity tools to assist with the identification, development, and establishment of budgets, policies, and strategic initiatives (includes Racial Equity Budget Tool, Racial Equity Impact Assessment, and Internal agency coaching/training).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track key performance indicators tied to strategic initiatives focused on racial equity (2024-2026) Develop grant agreements that include deliverable that support racial equity efforts (2024-2026) Develop internal agency policies that apply a racial equity lens (2024-2026) Develop and assess internal practices that advance racial equity priorities (2024-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of agency key performance indicators tied to a racial equity focused strategic initiative. # of grants issued by OP that embed a racial equity component. # of internal practices that apply and advance racial equity. 	<p>Front Office</p>

Goal 2: OP is committed to eliminating racial and ethnic inequities.

Goal 2.1 - Create and enhance racial equity analysis tools to apply to OP's work.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Points of Accountability
<p>OP's teams each apply a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA), root cause analysis, or other racial equity tool to inform the execution of their projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with ORE and agency partners, review best practices, and gather feedback from community stakeholders (2024-2026) • Apply racial equity tools to specific projects, activities, and processes (2024-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of OP plans, programs, and initiatives that incorporates one or more of the following: a racial equity tool, consultation with ORE, review promising practices, and community feedback. 	<p>Associate Directors and Food Policy Director</p>

Goal 2.2 - Develop an approach to embedding racial equity in the District's Comprehensive Plan Rewrite.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Point of Accountability
<p>OP has defined an approach for how to embed racial equity in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan rewrite.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposal outlining the process for the 2025 Comp Plan rewrite, include how racial equity will be embedded in the public engagement process and plan content (2024) • Develop Racial Equity framework to apply to 2025 Comp Plan rewrite process and policies (2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of 2025 Comprehensive Plan process proposal to Council. • Creation of Comp Plan racial equity framework. 	<p>Associate Director for Citywide Planning</p>

Goal 3: OP is committed to meaningfully involving the community in government decision-making processes and to strengthening community partnerships.

Goal 3.1: Enhance OP’s community engagement practices by centering racial equity and cultural and linguistic competency to ensure the agency’s planning efforts are accessible to a broad range of participants and are reaching impacted communities.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Point of Accountability
OP staff understand meaningful community engagement and are equipped to apply a racial equity lens to engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate agency wide workshop on ORE Meaningful Community Engagement guide (2024) • Complete inventory of community interactions by OP division (2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of OP staff that receive training on community engagement with a focus on racial equity. 	Racial Equity Advisory Group
Identify and utilize innovative tools and methods to support community engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify innovative and accessible community engagement tools and methods. This can include reviewing practices utilized across District agencies, in peer cities, and gathering feedback from community stakeholders (2025) • Research strategies to incorporate trauma-informed engagement in OP’s planning processes (2025) • Develop community engagement plan template rooted in the concepts and practices of meaningful community engagement. The template should include strategic asset and stakeholder mapping, assist with identifying approaches and methods targeted to specific community identified, and scoping for evaluation of tools and methods (2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of external-facing projects using OP’s community engagement plan template. • # of community members and groups engaged throughout each planning process by method. • Demographic makeup of community members engaged (e.g. race, ethnicity, age, gender, ability, etc.) • Future performance measures to be identified through activities described in this action. • Track outreach by OP division and location in the District. 	Racial Equity Advisory Group
Identify ways to promote and facilitate community involvement in implementation of planning efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess opportunities for community stakeholder involvement in co-creation and implementation of place-based planning efforts (2024-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of recommendations in place-based planning efforts with a community group designated as an implementor. • # of recommendations in a place-based planning effort assigned to community groups that are completed within the time horizon of the plan. 	Racial Equity Advisory Group

Goal 3.1 (cont.): Goal 3.1: Enhance OP’s community engagement practices by centering racial equity and cultural and linguistic humility to ensure the agency’s planning efforts are accessible to a broad range of participants and are reaching impacted communities.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Point of Accountability
<p>OP staff understand cultural and linguistic humility and apply it to OP’s work consistently and proactively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile consolidated guidance for OP staff on language access requirements for public facing documents and community events (2024) • Establish consistent criteria for when documents should be translated (2024) • Distribute information to staff on certification exams, incentives, and training opportunities on a regular basis (2024-2026) • Coordinate agency wide training on cultural and linguistic humility (2025) • Include methods to ensure cultural and linguistic humility in project community engagement plans (2025) • Assess how translation is incorporated into OP’s website & regular communication material (2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of OP staff that receive training on cultural and linguistic humility and Language Access. • # of staff who are currently bi- or multi-lingual that become certified. • % of external documents translated and engagement activities with interpretation services when identified as a need for the impacted community. • % of essential OP web pages translated into the District’s official languages. 	<p>Communications Team</p>

Goal 3.2: Build OP’s capacity to evaluate the success of its community engagement.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Point of Accountability
<p>Establish performance measures to evaluate success of community engagement practices and consistently apply evaluation methods across OP’s projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a scan of best practices to evaluate the success of community engagement and gather feedback from community stakeholders that have engaged with OP (2025) • Compile performance measures that can be utilized across various engagement approach and methods (2025-2026) • Collect and evaluate community engagement outcomes as recommended by performance measures (2025-2026) • Review results of evaluations on a regular basis to adjust engagement tools and methods, as needed (2025-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion and application of a consistent set of performance measures to evaluate OP’s community engagement activities. • # of external-facing plans, programs, and projects that have evaluated community engagement methods using performance measures. 	<p>Racial Equity Advisory Group</p>

Goal 4: OP is a racially equitable employer and engages in racially equitable hiring, promotion, and retention practices.

Goal 4.1: Increase the racial and ethnic diversity of OP staff so that the agency is representative of the District’s population and the communities that we serve.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Point of Accountability
<p>OP recruitment yields applicant pool that reflects racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the District.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect hiring managers and interviewers to unconscious bias awareness training to ensure fair and objective evaluation of candidates (2024) • Forge partnerships with diversity-focused organizations, universities, and community groups to tap into their networks and attract diverse candidates (2024-2026) • Post job ads on platforms and websites that specifically target diverse communities or professional networks (2024-2026) • Participate in career fairs, conferences, and events that are diversity-focused (2024-2026) • Support internship opportunities at OP that prioritize outreach to communities underrepresented in planning and related occupations (2025-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-Serving Institutions, job boards, and professional organizations in the region that post OP open positions. • % of managers and interviewers trained on unconscious bias and objective evaluation of candidates. • # of platforms and websites that OP posts positions on specifically target recruiting diverse applicants. • # of partnerships with diversity-focused organizations, universities, and community groups to tap into their networks and attract diverse candidates. • % of interview panels with questions focused on experience working in and with communities of color and/or professional experience applying racial equity tools. 	<p>Human Resources Team</p>
<p>OP staff of all races, ethnicities, and genders have equitable opportunity for advancement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track professional development opportunities, promotions, and leadership roles based on disaggregated staff demographics, as available (2024) • Update analysis annually (2024-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of staff providing information about their racial, ethnic, and gender identity. • Racial and ethnic diversity of staff across grade level. • Advancement by race, ethnicity, and gender. 	<p>Human Resources Team</p>

Goal 4.2: Foster an inclusive office culture where OP employees feel supported and valued.

Indicators	Ideas for Action & Timeline	Performance Measures	Point of Accountability
<p>OP staff of all races, ethnicities, and genders report that office culture is supportive and inclusive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate a survey and conduct an assessment to understand employee perception of office culture. Analyze results to determine whether perception varies by race, ethnicity, and/or gender (2024-2026) Conduct stay interviews and standardize exit interview process (2024-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of staff who complete the survey. % of staff who self-report feelings of inclusion. % of staff who self-report perceptions of agency commitment to an organizational culture of inclusion. % of staff who self-report incidents of bias or discrimination in the workplace. 	<p>Human Resources Team</p>
<p>OP staff have equitable opportunity for professional development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate availability of resources, trainings, and educational opportunities to OP Staff (2025-2026) Track availability of opportunities provided to OP staff and identify gaps (2025-2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of staff participating in skill-based training to improve job performance by race, ethnicity, and gender. % of staff participating in continuing education activities by race, ethnicity, and gender. 	<p>Human Resources Team</p>

