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Equity Fund Progress Report Cook County



Toni Preckwinkle
Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County Board President

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Introduction

Greetings,

On behalf of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Offices Under the President, I am pleased to share the second annual Equity Fund Progress Report, showcasing the significant work being done to implement 25 systems-level recommendations and related equity initiatives we committed to in our inaugural [Equity Fund Report](#) released in April 2022.

The bold and transformative systems-level changes that we are working to implement over time speaks to the Equity Fund Advisory Taskforce's vision to create safe, healthy and thriving communities in Cook County by reimagining and transforming systems around justice, public safety, health, housing, economic opportunity, community development and social services to benefit Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities, and proactively investing resources in solutions and supports to achieve equitable outcomes.

In addition to the significant planning and implementation work being undertaken by our department leads, the Equity Fund Advisory Taskforce has met quarterly throughout the year and continues to play an integral role in four key priority areas that align with the Taskforce's vision and the broader work of the County:

- Provide ongoing support and advisement on the implementation of the Equity Fund recommendations.
- Assist with the development of inclusive language and how to effectively integrate it into the County's policies, practices, and communication.
- Provide input on a framework or approach to developing equity indicators/metrics that demonstrate impact.
- Provide insight on the criteria by which to evaluate future investments from the Equity Fund in alignment with the County's guiding principles and related work.

We've had many successes this year which would not be possible without the hard work of our department leads and the input from the Taskforce including:

- Drafting an Inclusive Language Guide that will complement the County's Language Access Policy once approved in FY24.
- Launching the first Equitable Community Engagement Pilot in alignment with Equity Fund recommendation 6.2 Community Engagement Pathways. In addition to the allocation of funds to help strengthen the County's engagement of residents, we also drafted the first Community Compensation Policy that will be piloted by departments across Offices Under the President in FY24.
- Releasing the first Equity Fund Video at the second annual Equity Fund Hearing in September 2023.

Introduction

The 2023 Equity Fund Progress Report that follows includes the implementation work plans for each of the recommendations along with highlighted accomplishments and a status on the progress advanced to date. In addition, this progress report provides a high-level accounting of funds invested to date and related expenditures.

In December, the Cook County Board of Commissioners approved the second installment spending plan, bringing investment totals to \$130 million (which includes a \$10 million transfer of previously allocated funds for the Justice Advisory Council).

We hope this level of transparency provides members of the public with a snapshot of how this longer-term work evolves over time as we address the structural barriers that prevent the meaningful advancement of equity across Cook County.

Thank you to the departments under the Offices Under the President, the Equity Fund Advisory Taskforce and the diverse array of partners both internal and external who continue to work to put our recommendations into action, and build a better, stronger Cook County for all.

Sincerely,



Lanetta Haynes Turner
Chief of Staff

Equity Fund Recommendation Updates



For an understanding of the progress made across each of the departments key activities, the following guide is included:

Green - On track - substantial progress advanced

Yellow - On track - meaningful progress advanced

Red - Delayed - implementation delayed or halted



HEALTHY

COMMUNITIES



1.1

Adopt a Health Equity in All Policies (HEiAP) approach in policymaking to ensure Cook County government factors health considerations into its implementation of policies and programs and identifies gaps to improve health outcomes for all residents and communities.

Lead Department

Cook County Department of Public Health

Objectives

- Develop a Health Equity in All Policies (HEiAP) framework and pilot that includes health and equity criteria to inform policy and fiscal decision-making where applicable.
- Develop guides and tools to support Cook County agencies in developing a HEiAP approach.

Why It Matters

Health Equity in All Policies (HEiAP) is a collaborative approach that weaves health equity into government decision-making including its policies, processes, programs and services, to ensure that government resources are invested in ways that advance health and health equity. At its core, HEiAP is a way to address the social determinants of health that are the key drivers of health outcomes and health inequities. Implementation of a HEiAP initiative often benefits from tools and assessments, such as Health Impact Reviews, which are designed to analyze new legislation to identify the health impacts of a policy, to ensure that there's intentionality in how decisions are made. Integrating health equity tools such as the Health Impact Reviews into Cook County government's decision-making will help address the many interrelated factors that advance equity and improve health for Cook County residents and communities.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Convened with 15 organizations, including Cook County agencies, public health thought partners and power-building organizations to discuss opportunities for Health Equity in All Policies.
- Identified the following tools to develop in the next year: A toolbox for using health data to prioritize government investments, a map of municipal policies and plans and a pilot of the Health Impact review process.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, CCDPH adjusted the timelines of several of its key activities due to the key lead needing to support other strategic initiatives for the health department, including serving for five months in an interim role. CCDPH will be conducting interviews in December to fill the vacancy which will provide additional staffing to support implementation. In FY2024, CCDPH will focus on two major efforts 1) identifying and developing a comprehensive strategy for a HEiAP approach across Cook County departments within Offices Under the President; and 2) developing three HEiAP tools as mentioned above: a health data toolbox, a pilot of health impact reviews, and a municipal plans and policies map.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
<p>Conduct an assessment on existing priorities, needs and opportunities to inform a HEiAP approach with Cook County and other partner agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 5-6 stakeholder interviews to identify interest in and alignment with HEiAP. • Identify short-term goals and process for working with partner agencies. • Leverage community input to help inform the work. • Develop key performance indicators to demonstrate impact. 	1st Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
<p>Develop and implement an initial health equity assessment for Cook County policies and programs.</p>	2nd Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)

1.2

Create a behavioral health authority to coordinate a comprehensive, accessible and culturally responsive continuum of behavioral health services for Cook County, including preventative services, recognizing the intersections between health, housing and justice involvement.

Lead Department

Cook County Health

Objectives

- Establish a Behavioral Health Authority to work with stakeholders across the county to evaluate the current behavioral health care environment, identify capacity needs and resolve gaps in care.
- Build a robust, countywide behavioral health safety net by connecting external community programs and direct care providers.
- Partner with health stakeholders to develop the pipeline for future behavioral health practitioners in impacted BIPOC communities.
- Leverage the countywide Community Information Exchange system (once developed) to holistically address social drivers of health outcomes, deliver whole person support and better inform and drive more equitable allocation of resources to residents across Cook County.

Why It Matters

The expansion of behavioral health services is critically needed in Cook County as evidenced by limited access, long wait times, over-reliance on emergency room care and an increase in opioid-related deaths. These challenges continue to disproportionately impact under-resourced communities. Per the October 2023 Illinois Department of Public Health Statewide Semi-Annual Overdose Report, opioid overdose deaths of non-Hispanic, Black individuals aged 45-54 and 65+ are 4.1 and 6.2 times higher respectively, than for non-Hispanic White individuals of the same age. The Behavioral Health Authority seeks to close access gaps by addressing barriers to accessing services.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments:

- Hired and onboarded key leadership roles including the Chief Behavioral Health Officer, Senior Behavioral Health Officer, Executive Director of Behavioral Health Care Re-Design, and Executive Director of the Impact Fund and Community Services.
- Finalized plans for a Crisis Triage and Stabilization Center at Provident Hospital.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, CCH experienced several delays in hiring key personnel which impacted the timeline of program implementation. Notwithstanding those adjustments, CCH has been able to put key foundational components in place that will help further its implementation activities in FY24. As their work continues, the Office of Behavioral Health will focus on hiring key positions, opening its Crisis Triage and Stabilization Center at Provident and launching a mobile harm reduction unit to serve the west and south sides of Chicago.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Implementation of mobile harm reduction unit.	1st Quarter FY24	On Track
Conduct CCH service inventory to develop sustainability plan.	1st Quarter FY24	On Track
Host a behavioral health summit of 500-700 stakeholders.	1st Quarter FY24	On Track
Complete construction and open CTSC.	2nd Quarter FY24	On Track
Hire and onboard key personnel for the Office of Behavioral Health.	3rd Quarter FY22	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop key performance indicators for each of the four strategic areas; clinical services, justice involved, community and innovation.	2nd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Award the annual behavioral health impact fund grants to support community partners contributing to the behavioral health landscape of Cook County.	3rd Quarter FY24	On Track
Complete construction and open new outpatient behavioral health location.	3rd Quarter FY24	On Track
Award impact fund grants to community organizations.	3rd Quarter FY24	On Track
Finalize Community Needs Assessment.	4th Quarter FY24	On Track
Complete Workforce Assessment with CCDPH.	4th Quarter FY24	On Track
Finalize CCH sustainability plan.	4th Quarter FY24	On Track

1.3

Develop a countywide Community Information Exchange (CIE) System to holistically address social drivers of health outcomes, deliver whole person care and better inform and drive more equitable allocation of resources to residents across Cook County.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development

Objectives

- Engage public- and private-sector health and human services stakeholders, including people with lived experience, to develop a shared vision for a CIE.
- Develop the legal, data sharing, technological and governance frameworks necessary to implement the CIE.
- Implement and evaluate a CIE pilot around a specific use case, such as homelessness.
- Move from the pilot phase into continued operations by expanding the CIE to additional use cases and partner agencies.
- Develop and implement a long-term sustainability plan.

Why It Matters

Individuals and families seeking health and social services in Cook County must navigate a disconnected array of systems to access what they need. Most existing health and social service systems cannot easily exchange information due to client and patient records being siloed. As described in a 2021 [The Atlantic](#) article, “The Time Tax,” Americans spend enormous amounts of time navigating systems to access housing, manage health care and find services and resources they need. The article finds that “the time tax is worse for individuals who are struggling than for the rich; larger for Black families than for white families; harder on the sick than on the healthy.” The CIE is designed specifically to lessen the burden of seeking services. Through a shared client record, partner health and social service agencies can quickly connect individuals and families with the services they want to access and help them understand what other resources may be available. Once a client consents to the collection and sharing of their information, they do not need to provide that same information again, reducing the “Time Tax” and the trauma associated with repeatedly retelling their stories. Best practices in CIE development call for centering community and participant voices in the design, data use, and development of their local CIEs, and this project will build on these best practices in community- and people-centered design.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Collaborated with the Chicago Department of Public Health to engage the Illinois Public Health Institute to work with health and social service providers in developing a region-wide framework around an initial homelessness use case.
- Hired and onboarded a Project Director to oversee the Community Information Exchange, among other programs.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

At the time of the release of the Equity Fund’s first progress report in December 2022, the implementation plan for the CIE had not yet been developed. In FY23, the Bureau of Economic Development spent a significant amount of time on the planning and design of the CIE and has been able to align its implementation with the recent launch of the first 211 partnership with United Way, City of Chicago and numerous stakeholders. In 2024, IPHI will convene public and private stakeholders to create a shared vision for the CIE. Health, homeless prevention and other social service providers from across Cook County will develop the legal, data sharing, technological and governance frameworks necessary to pilot a CIE centered on a homeless use case.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Identify a subrecipient to lead CIE stakeholder engagement and planning process.	N/A	Completed
Conduct a 12- to 18-month CIE implementation planning process to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">develop a legal and governance framework, including legal and data sharing agreements;convene a pilot planning work group to develop an initial CIE use case workflow and plan for pilot implementation;develop a technology and data strategy;identify a technology platform; anddevelop a funding model and strategy for financial sustainability.	N/A	4th Quarter FY24
Pilot the CIE using the initial use case and conduct an evaluation of the pilot.	N/A	4th Quarter FY25
On-going Implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand the CIE to additional use cases and agency partners.Implement the sustainability plan, including securing ongoing funding.	N/A	4th Quarter FY27



VITAL

COMMUNITIES



2.1

Support collaborative efforts to reform Cook County’s property assessment and taxation system to promote equity and fairness and reduce the racial wealth gap.

Lead Department

Office of the President

Objectives

- Establish an internal Property Tax working group that will create recommendations to ensure the property assessment and tax system produces fair, equitable, consistent, and accurate results in a timely and efficient manner.
- Establish research projects with academic and industry leaders in the field of property tax to assess current states of systems, benchmark programs and practices to like-jurisdictions, and provide recommendations based on the findings.
- Implement key policy and legislative changes in partnership with the County’s separately elected property tax offices.

Why It Matters

Numerous studies have demonstrated inequities in property tax assessments and appeals that unfairly shift the tax burden to lower-income communities, most of which are BIPOC communities. Creating a more fair and equitable property tax system that reverses the property tax burden will allow homeowners in low-income communities to build equity in their homes. Additionally, by reforming incentives, exemptions, and other countywide property tax programs, the County can determine how to best halt the disinvestment in communities and address the disparity of tax rates and other consequences of past regressive policies. More efficiently and strategically using tax incentives will create new development opportunities and expand the tax base, lowering individual tax burdens and creating a more stable revenue base to better fund education and other essential services.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Released “[Introduction to Reform](#),” an overview of the Property Tax Reform Group, its progress, founding, and mission.
- Completed a research project with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Government Finance Research Center focused on the effects of homestead exemptions on Cook County.
- Hired and onboarded a Property Tax Policy Analyst.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Office of the President adjusted the timelines of several of its key activities but made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. During the year, the Civic Consulting Alliance (CCA) provided pro-bono consulting services to build internal processes and systems for the Property Tax reform group to identify and prioritize topics of research and provided a road map to move research into policy change. In addition, CCA led the “Integrated Customer Service” workstream project and provided 30 recommendations to the working group. In FY24, the President’s Office will work with the property tax stakeholders to review proposed recommendations and continue its evaluation work with external partners.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Finalize Intergovernmental Agreement for research assistance.	4th Quarter FY22	Completed
Draft and approve a Statement of Work for operational and valuation research.	4th Quarter FY22	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop project plan with key performance indicators that demonstrate impact.	1st Quarter FY23	Completed
Release the Operation and Valuation RFQ to the public per procurement guidelines.	1st Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Hire and onboard key personnel to support the Director in research and project management tasks.	1st Quarter FY23	Completed
Review and draft recommendations with the Property Tax working group.	2nd Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Evaluate the submissions for the Operational and Valuation RFP and finalize contract award.	3rd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Establish stakeholder feedback loop to inform current state of system and potential reforms.	3rd Quarter FY23	Ongoing

2.2

Increase Cook County's capacity to enforce Cook County's fair housing laws to reduce unlawful housing discrimination and affirmatively further fair housing.

Lead Department

Department of Human Rights and Ethics

Objectives

- Develop an enhanced strategic plan that strengthens the enforcement of fair housing laws and reduces unlawful housing discrimination through training, outreach, and compliance.
- Explore mechanisms that work to encourage, incentivize, and monitor municipalities' adoption of fair housing laws across Cook County.
- Revise Cook County Commission on Human Rights (Commission) procedural rules to make the process more streamlined and efficient for residents who have experienced discrimination.

Why It Matters

Increased housing access is correlated with reduced recidivism, increased economic stability, and improved access to employment and education. Enforcement of Cook County's housing protections, particularly the Just Housing Amendment and source of income protections, is critical to ensuring housing access for Cook County's diverse residents, especially those who are more vulnerable (e.g., individuals with justice involvement, individuals with disabilities, individuals who use Housing Choice Vouchers or alternative sources of income). Cook County residents need access to housing free of discrimination and harassment and the continued implementation of this recommendation will work to achieve the longer-term goal of removing barriers to obtaining housing.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Created and filled a new Policy Analyst position within the Department of Human Rights & Ethics to manage special projects and work with internal and external County stakeholders.
- Received a National Associations of Counties (NACO) Achievement Award for the [Just Housing Amendment Outreach Program](#).

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Department of Ethics adjusted the timelines of several of its key activities but made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. As they work to onboard key investigative and outreach staff, they will have the necessary capacity to develop their more enhanced plans to strengthen fair housing laws. In FY24, they will also focus on increasing and diversifying their outreach strategies, with primary foci of Just Housing Amendment, source of income, and housing protections.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Hire and onboard key personnel.	1st Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Develop enhanced enforcement plans to strengthen fair housing laws.	2nd Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop key performance indicators that more accurately track impacts of fair housing laws and enforcement in Cook County.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Coordinate with the Department of Planning and Development and the Housing Authority of Cook County on the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Plan and related initiatives to ensure coordinated impact.	2nd Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop plan for outreach and training regarding the JHA and Source of Income Protections.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Revise the Commission’s procedural rules to streamline the complaint process.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed

2.3

Build a more resilient housing and shelter system to provide dignified and reliable support to people experiencing homelessness in suburban Cook County, with the goal of achieving functional zero homelessness.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development - Department of Planning and Development

Objectives

- Expand access to crisis shelters that includes co-located support services.
- Create a Landlord Incentive and Mitigation Fund to encourage landlords to rent to residents who may have a previous eviction on their record.
- Increase investments in transitional and permanent supportive housing units in partnership with the State of Illinois and other partners.
- Advocate for increased Emergency & Transitional Housing (ETH) program funding for ongoing operations of shelter and crisis housing at the state level.

Why It Matters

Cook County is committed to ending homelessness and addressing the significant racial disparities in the County's unhoused population to create a community where everyone has a safe and stable home. The critical need for housing is evidenced by the results from the [2023 Point-in-Time Count](#), which show that 1056+ people experienced homelessness in Suburban Cook County, with approximately 984 in shelters and 72 unsheltered, an increase from the 2022 count. As part of its response, the County continued working with a range of stakeholders to utilize funding to build a better shelter system complemented by increased housing. Thus, developing a continuum of supportive housing in the most impacted communities, and prioritizing those most impacted by structural inequity.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Sought and received approval by the Cook County Board of Commissioners to provide partners with funding to acquire two hotels, Margarita Inn and Write Inn, that will function as permanent shelter sites as well as approved funding for the historic renovation of Evanston YMCA, sustaining 155 units of transitional housing.
- Collaborated with community partners and the Alliance to End Homelessness to successfully advocate for a significant increase in the State's funding to address homelessness, yielding an increased State line-item allocation over \$56 million to support Shelter operations, ensuring the economic feasibility of fixed site shelters.

Implementation Status:

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, due to the complexities of the acquisition process and the challenges experienced in identifying fixed assets that will not substantially impact the tax base of the respective municipality, the Bureau of Economic Development adjusted the timelines for several of its key activities. Given the impact of the recent (2022) triennial assessment, reduced collection rates and increased levies, municipal impact on a potential acquisition that may reduce the tax footprint have dire consequences. In FY24, the Bureau will further explore sites and opportunities that increase value, either imputed or socially, while creating new opportunities for fixed site shelter in the South Suburbs.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Develop a project plan that outlines the pipeline of projects, integrated timeline of the funding sources available and potential uses and constraints.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Assess opportunities to reduce constraints on using federal and state resources for homelessness to support reentry housing.	3rd Quarter FY23	Completed
Develop key performance indicators that demonstrate impact.	3rd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Continue supporting hotel-based sheltering and other emergency shelter options as a stopgap while new shelter options and permanent supportive housing is developed.	4th Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Establish a Landlord Incentive & Mitigation fund.	4th Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)

2.4

Increase Cook County resources to create new units of affordable housing across Cook County to promote housing stability and affordability.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development - Department of Planning and Development

Objectives

- Create new units of affordable housing using a racial equity lens in planning and decision-making to ensure housing is closest to transportation, job opportunities and critical services.
- Continue funding temporary and supportive housing and rental/eviction assistance as a stopgap to ensure stability of housing pending the development of affordable units.
- Develop a Housing Trust Fund Action Plan to drive housing development in impacted communities in partnership with the Housing Authority of Cook County.
- Establish an ad-hoc Affordable Housing Taskforce to set common goals to stabilize the marketplace, better assist homebuyers and target housing investments in impacted communities.
- Homeownership will facilitate the creation of generational wealth for residents of Cook County.

Why It Matters

Stabilized housing, either in the form of homeownership or affordable rental, remains a key contributor to family wealth creation and healthy family development. This recommendation is aimed at creating tools to support development, buying and rental opportunities matched to household incomes and offsetting the vagaries of the market, whether developmentally or financially (i.e., fluctuations in interest rates, inflationary pressures) to maintain opportunities to move along the continuum of stability from affordable rental to sustainable homeownership.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Construction of the Broadview permanent supportive housing site made significant progress and is at 50% completion.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, due to higher interest rates, the Bureau of Economic Development made modifications to its models to better accommodate recipients of affordable housing services. In FY24, the Bureau will explore new models to mitigate those challenges and will advance new mortgage products to help recipients in acquiring homes in suburban Cook County.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Draft the Regional Fair Housing Plan, which will provide residents with better access and options for where they live.	1st Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Establish an ad-hoc working group with separately elected property tax offices to better leverage and coordinate county resources in the development and preservation of affordable housing.	2nd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop a feasibility plan for a homebuyer interest buydown program.	3rd Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop an outreach and communications plan to increase municipal partnerships on affordable housing in impacted communities.	4th Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Develop a Housing Trust Fund Action Plan with the Housing Authority of Cook County.	4th Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)

2.5

Provide direct financial assistance to residents to sustain and preserve homeownership, to address the racial wealth gap and prevent continued displacement.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development – Department of Planning and Development

Objectives

- Develop a Mortgage Assistance program to provide funding for deferred maintenance grants, mortgage and property tax assistance, and home modifications for people with disabilities to help low- and moderate-income residents stay in their homes and build long-term home equity.
- Increase access to, and coordination of, existing household assistance programs to holistically address the needs of homeowners including water affordability, home retrofitting programs and energy efficiency programs.
- Reform the Cook County property assessment and taxation system to reduce the disproportionately high tax burden that prevents BIPOC residents from having the financial means to make improvements to their home and build home equity.

Why It Matters

Increased homeownership tools and program implementation will facilitate additional stable housing options and opportunities to grow generational wealth for residents of Cook County. As the pandemic came to an end, many suburban municipalities resumed the practice of shutting off water due to a resident's non-payment of water bills. In addition, the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), which was a new federal COVID response program that provided water utility bill assistance, came to an end earlier this year. Together, these two developments put thousands of suburban Cook County residents at risk of losing water access in their homes. The Cook County Water Affordability Program will provide relief to suburban Cook County residents with water debt while creating long-term solutions for water affordability in the region. The Cook County Water Affordability Program will provide immediate relief to suburban Cook County residents with water debt while creating long-term solutions for water affordability in the region.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Finalized the selection of the RFQs for the landbank/BED modular home project.
- Received Cook County Board of Commissioners authorization to enter into an agreement with Elevate Energy to begin implementation of the Water Affordability Program.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Bureau of Economic Development adjusted the timelines of several of its key activities and rescoped its program due to the changing real estate market and higher interest rates. In addition, the initiation of their Water Affordability Program was delayed by several months due to a robust discussion at the Cook County Board of Commissioners level regarding the parameters of the program. In FY24, the Bureau will focus their work on the design and implementation of the modular home project. In addition, its approved administrator, Elevate, will partner with CEDA to re-establish water utility bill payment assistance to help struggling income-eligible households in suburban Cook County. Elevate will also initiate an assessment phase for several potential additional components of the Water Affordability Program, such as a leak repair assistance program.

In addition, in FY24, the Bureau will continue work begun in 2023 to explore new models to mitigate those challenges and will advance new mortgage products to help recipients in acquiring homes in suburban Cook County.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Develop Mortgage Assistance Program in alignment with IHDA's program and resources.	2nd Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop additional key performance indicators that demonstrate impact.	2nd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Inventory home retrofit programs and identify major gaps and opportunities for County intervention.	4th Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Identify potential legislative solutions, mandates, and partners currently in support of limiting utility shutoffs.	1st Quarter FY24	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Identify potential cross-program connections to holistically address homeowner needs in relation to utility shutoffs.	1st Quarter FY24	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)

2.6

Continue championing government's role in launching programs and policies that support residents' economic security and increase economic mobility.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development

Objectives

- Design and implement the Promise Guaranteed Income Pilot that will provide 3,250 households with the financial resources to improve their economic mobility.
- Explore the development of an emergency relief fund to provide direct, flexible financial assistance to residents at their time of need.
- Partner with workforce providers on how they can better leverage Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) barrier reduction funds to support jobseekers in maintaining employment.

Why It Matters

Following the success of the Cook County COVID-19 Recovery Resident Cash Assistance program, the County launched the Cook County Promise Guaranteed Income Pilot. Direct cash payments like those provided by the Promise Pilot improve recipients' ability to weather an emergency, be stably employed, invest in educational resources for their children and access needed healthcare. This in turn positively impacts their mental and physical health, as well as improves financial stability and economic mobility. Cook County is proud to be investing in its residents in a way that trusts that they know best how to meet their own needs.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Participants in the Promise Pilot received their first year of monthly \$500 payments totaling \$6,000.
- Optional financial counseling for Promise Pilot participants was rolled out in March 2023.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

After its successful launch of the Promise Pilot in FY22, the Bureau of Economic Development continued its implementation of the pilot, focusing on initiating optional financial counseling for participants in FY23. To help increase participant uptake, the Bureau has increased marketing efforts and is conducting additional information sessions about this component of the program. In FY24, the focus of the Bureau will be the completion of the second year of the pilot and planning for the off-boarding of participants. In addition, the Bureau will also consider the parameters for maintaining a guaranteed income program in the long term and will work to develop a financial education series for the public with its partner Working Credit.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
<p>Begin implementing the Promise Guaranteed Income Pilot including the initiation of financial counseling for participants.</p>	<p>1st Quarter FY23</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Conduct a feasibility study for the creation of an emergency relief fund that provides flexible, real-time support to residents in need.</p>	<p>4th Quarter FY23</p>	<p>3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)</p>
<p>Conduct a comprehensive evaluation (quantitative and qualitative) to assess the impacts of the Promise Pilot on the local economy and the participants financial stability, economic mobility, physical and mental health.</p>	<p>4th Quarter FY25</p>	<p>4th Quarter FY26 (Adjusted)</p>

2.7

Align Cook County's workforce investments intentionally and strategically to support high quality jobs that promote residents' economic mobility and equity.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development

Objectives

- Enforce Cook County's Minimum Wage and Living Wage provisions and support sectors that pay living wages, provide good benefits, create potential for career pathways and reduce precarious work environments.
- Develop internal policies and procurement practices to ensure that vendors that work with Cook County are held to high standards for public accountability and promote equitable employment outcomes.
- Define and publicly report equity goals for workforce investments and connect those goals to support high growth sectors.

Why It Matters

Advancing Workforce Equity in Chicago: A Blueprint for Action, produced by the National Equity Atlas, found that white workers with only a high school diploma earn on average the same wages as Black workers with an associate's degree, and that eliminating racial inequities in income could boost the Chicagoland economy by \$136 billion a year. To achieve the goal of creating economic security and promoting economic mobility in the long term, Cook County will continue its work to ensure that its workforce investments provide high quality jobs for Cook County residents.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Committed to joining The Century Foundation's and Urban Manufacturing Alliance's Industry & Inclusion Coalition, a first-of-its-kind national initiative aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion in manufacturing.
- Awarded a Good Jobs Challenge grant to engage employers with training programs that provide skills and competencies needed for employment as well as prepare the workforce for career mobility and positive employment outcomes.
- Partnered with the City of Chicago to onboard a new CEO at the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, which is the federally designated workforce entity for the City of Chicago and Suburban Cook County

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Bureau of Economic Development adjusted timelines for several of its key activities but made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. The Bureau focused its effort on partnering with the City of Chicago to support the onboarding of the new CEO of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership as part of the County’s broader partnership commitment. In FY24, the Bureau plans to work with The Partnership to develop a shared definition of a “good job” and discuss how to apply it across sectors and programs. In addition, as a participant in the federally funded Good Jobs Challenge program, the Bureau is working with employers to develop training plans that strengthen the skills of their workforce and provide resources to assist businesses in exploring equity issues within their operations.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Hire and onboard key personnel to support and coordinate workforce development programs and investments.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Develop key performance indicators that demonstrate impact.	2nd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Define and publicly report equity goals for workforce investments.	2nd Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Participate in the RFA Good Jobs and Equity Project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Good Jobs & Equity definition process. • Create a plan to apply that definition (and enforce County minimum wage requirements) to the County’s and Partnership’s sector-based and workforce development work. • Scope a process to apply the good jobs definition as well as related equity goals for tax incentives, County procurement practices, and W/MBE certifications. 	1st Quarter FY24	1st Quarter FY25 (Adjusted)

2.8

Develop the small business and entrepreneurship ecosystem, especially for Black and Latine residents, to reduce the racial wealth gap.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development

Objectives

- Continue supporting the recovery of women- and minority-owned small businesses from the pandemic through the small business grant and business advising programs.
- Develop an entrepreneurship program for Black and Latine residents in alignment with the County's Small Business Source Program.
- Pursue Inclusive Procurement strategies that increase purchasing from minority-owned businesses and help locally owned businesses in target groups attain W/MBE certification and participate in County procurement.

Why It Matters

In Cook County, small businesses are critical drivers of the region's economic development, fostering employment, community and individual wealth, and innovation. At the community level, small businesses serve as a critical means to build community wealth, with an estimated 68% of revenue generated by local businesses staying within the community through employment of community residents. Small business families have an estimated median net worth five times higher than that of families with a head of household working for other employers.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Served 8,309 businesses via business advising and events through the Cook County Small Business Source, with approximately 83% of the businesses owned by people of color, 61% owned by women, and 95% having less than 10 employees.
- Launched the \$40 million Source Grant program and received 16,700 applications from small businesses. The grants will be awarded in 2024.

Implementation Status On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Bureau of Economic Development made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. In FY24, the Small Business Source/BSO Network will focus on enhancing the advising experience for small businesses and increasing the capacity of the BSO Network to ensure broad geographic and demographic coverage. The Bureau of Economic Development, having completed its assessment of the capital landscape, will focus on incentivizing financial institutions to offer new products to support supplier businesses, increase the capacity of local community development financial institutions to provide loans to small businesses, and build the pipeline of Black, Latine and Women owned firms.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Launch and actively monitor the Small Business Grant Program.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Conduct an Access to Capital study to better understand the barriers small businesses face in accessing capital and opportunities to generate additional financial resources.	3rd Quarter FY23	Completed
Based on the Access to capital study, utilize County funds to serve as seed funding to incentivize financial institutions and partners to offer supplier financing products to increase access to flexible capital that better meets the needs of smaller/MWBE suppliers.	N/A	4th Quarter FY24
Continue working with and engaging the Small Business Advisory Council.	3rd Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Develop responsive services and resources to support entrepreneurship.	3rd Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Develop Inclusive Procurement strategies to increase and strengthen the pipeline of M/WBE in the County's procurement process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactivate the internal Inclusive Procurement working group. • Complete an assessment of County expenditures* with M/WBE businesses and identify opportunities to expand set of M/WBE contractors and suppliers. • Re-align County policies to increase the pipeline of minority-owned businesses and help them access procurement opportunities from the County, other local governments, and County partners. 	4th Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY25 (Adjusted)

2.9

Pursue place-based investment through a community-centered approach to support a deeper and more sustainable commitment to implement locally desired community and economic development.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development

Objectives

- Establish a community-driven, place-based investment program in five (5) suburban communities utilizing the County's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) and other data to inform geographic locations.
- Partner with identified communities to leverage and coordinate existing and new County resources that can help implement local priorities as determined by the community.

Why It Matters

In partnership with United Way of Metro Chicago, the County aims to enhance how the public sector builds up local communities by learning from and investing in United Way's place-based Neighborhood Network Initiative. Local stakeholders identify community priorities and create a resident-driven neighborhood strategy. County resources are then leveraged to help implement those strategies. By working alongside community leaders, residents, businesses, and other internal and external partners, the County can respond to community priorities, foster more equitable investments and improve quality of life.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Launched four Transforming Places networks, each of which established a steering committee, conducted a community needs assessment, and began identifying priority action items for community improvement. The identified communities where work will be leveraged include Blue Island/Robbins, Harvey, Chicago Heights/Ford Heights, Park Forest/Richton Park, and a fifth community in west suburban Cook.
- Hired and onboarded a full-time program manager to support Transforming Places and facilitate coordination with other county initiatives and resources.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Bureau of Economic Development has adjusted the timelines of several of its key activities due in part to the longer than anticipated time it requires to synthesize metrics, reporting standards, and KPI's in alignment with each network's action plan. Those action plans will be finalized in early 2024 and resulting program metrics will be finalized in coordination with United Way and their evaluation partner. The external evaluator is expected to come onboard at the same time. In 2024, the Bureau will focus on launching the fifth network in west suburban Cook, and identifying county resources that align with each network's action plan.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
<p>Select and recruit three communities for new Neighborhood Networks for cohort 2 of the initiative.</p>	<p>4th Quarter FY22</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Launch two cohorts with 1-3-year programming including coalition building, creating workplans and capacity building and implementation.</p>	<p>1st Quarter FY23</p>	<p>1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)</p>
<p>Develop key performance indicators in partnership with local community partners and United Way based on the needs of the community.</p>	<p>4th Quarter FY23</p>	<p>2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)</p>
<p>Develop program infrastructure including the hiring and onboarding of personnel, retaining external evaluator, developing systems for internal County coordination, and determining the approach for allocating program implementation funds.</p>	<p>4th Quarter FY23</p>	<p>2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)</p>

2.10

Develop innovative programs to assist communities and residents that have been hard-hit by predatory lending.

Lead Department

Office of the President

Implementation Status

Delayed - implementation delayed or halted.

Implementation Summary

This recommendation has not been advanced as the Office of the President continues to explore its role in the predatory lending industry and whether there are meaningful ways it can work with the State of Illinois and City of Chicago to advance effective strategies that will yield long term impact. While there are no new objectives or key activities at this time, the Office of the President will continue its legislative advocacy for predatory lending reform, working closely with the Woodstock Institute, a member of the Equity Fund Taskforce and other legislative partners.

2.11

Strengthen and enforce Cook County's worker protection laws to ensure all workers receive fair compensation and protection from violations.

Lead Department

Cook County Department of Public Health

Objectives

- Increase outreach and education to ensure workers and employers are aware of worker protection laws and enforcements in partnership with the Department of Human Rights and Ethics.
- Establish a worker safety committee pilot to support workers in high violation workplaces.
- Establish a process to acquire and share violation data to increase visibility and guide strategic enforcement plans.

Why It Matters

Precarious employment contributes to adverse health outcomes and has been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic in which certain workers were forced to work in unsafe conditions. Increases in disparities in employment, health, and precarious working conditions and decreases in high-quality, full-time employment with adequate wages and benefits persist even as the prevalence of COVID-19 has decreased. To ensure that responses to future health-related crises are effective in addressing the health and safety needs of workplaces in general, education and outreach in the most vulnerable communities will mitigate disproportionate negative impacts experienced within those communities. The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), in collaboration with Raise the Floor and several worker centers, will continue to implement the Worker Protection Program (part of the larger Suburban Cook County Healthy Work Initiative) to equip workplaces and workers with information, resources and support, and strengthen policies and systems to minimize the spread of diseases like COVID-19, promote workplace health and safety, build economic security and mitigate social and health inequities among workers.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Launched the Healthy Work Partnership with Raise the Floor Alliance, ARISE Chicago, Chicago Jobs with Justice, Chicago Workers Collaborative, Warehouse Workers for Justice, and the UIC School of Public Health to support region-wide communication and collaboration.
- Continued to support the implementation of the Community Action for Worker Safety Program, which engaged 9,541 workers and families of workers through community canvassing, door knocking campaigns, and one-on-one meetings to promote workplace health and safety.
- Aided the launch of Illinois Council for Occupational Safety and Health (I-COSH). I-COSH is made up of labor and worker-centric safety organizations, including academic institutions, occupational health specialists, government representatives, and others, and is focused on collective action to address health and safety concerns.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, while there were no substantive changes to its implementation plan, the Cook County Department of Public Health experienced setbacks with the University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health conducting an environmental scan in which findings will be used to develop a shared strategy agenda and planning for the Healthy Work Learning Collaborative. As a result of the delay in their agreement being executed, the scan will be completed in FY24. In addition, CCDPH and worker-centered partners will continue its work to bring together the Healthy Work Partnership and implement the Suburban Cook County Worker Protection Program, as well as support the establishment of I-COSH and local worker health and safety committees and organizing around worker issues and policy strategies. Additionally, CCDPH and the Healthy Work Partnership will plan and execute an inaugural Healthy Work Convening to bring together leadership in building an economic culture that prioritizes and values worker rights, health and safety, showcases accomplishments and learnings related to the SCC Healthy Work Initiative, and provides space to foster dialogue around “decent work” and opportunities for strategic alignment across the region. This inaugural convening will engage entities at the forefront of health, labor and organizing in the region.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Re-launch the Suburban Cook County Healthy Work Partnership.	1st Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Complete an environmental scan to inform strategy agenda and program redesign.	3rd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop legislative agenda to holistically support workers.	4th Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Establish methods to acquire and share violation data for strategic enforcement purposes; draft relevant inter-agency agreements as needed.	4th Quarter FY23	3rd quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Establish an inter-agency hub for collaboration on enforcement to maximize impact.	4th Quarter FY23	2nd quarter FY24 (Adjusted)



SAFE AND THRIVING

COMMUNITIES



3.1

Improve interagency data-sharing and public access to deidentified and disaggregated criminal legal system data to increase transparency and usefulness, with specific attention on data that identifies racial and ethnic disparities and operational challenges that contribute to barriers and collateral consequences for those impacted by the criminal legal system.

Lead Department

Justice Advisory Council

Objectives

- Coordinate existing research bodies working with the County to advance data-driven, community-informed decision-making.
- Develop a comprehensive public-facing data dashboard that includes key ARPA outputs and desired equity outcomes across the criminal legal system.

Why It Matters

Data transparency is imperative to gain and foster community and stakeholder trust. Communities most impacted by community violence and contact with the criminal legal system need more direct, frequent access to accurate and up-to-date information on government policy and practices, specifically in areas concerning community safety and public health. System improvement can be driven by impacted residents working closer with government agencies on a shared narrative crafted out of common performance metrics. Potential blanket solutions can be tailored more locally based on opportunities found through grappling with the data in partnership with impacted communities. This process will allow agencies to match resources more effectively with needs validated by diverse community voices.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Worked with collaborating stakeholders on building the data infrastructure for the implementation of the Pretrial Fairness Act (PFA).
- Updated and implemented the second iteration of the Community Violence Intervention Street Outreach metrics to advance more robust evaluation on impact through the Violence Prevention Intergovernmental partnership with the State of Illinois and City of Chicago.
- Wrote the final Capstone application to the MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge to convene a multidisciplinary body of community and system representatives to do a structured analysis of racial disparity in the County's criminal legal system.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, due to the delayed implementation of the passage of the Pretrial Fairness Act (PFA) and uncertainty in how the implementation of the PFA would affect underlying data agreements and coordination, the Justice Advisory Council has adjusted the timelines of several of its key activities including pausing the development of its equity metrics. Coordination of data consolidation and analysis with Loyola University Chicago continues with partners at the Office of the Chief Judge and State’s Attorney Office. In addition, the JAC has continued its work through the Intergovernmental Partnership on Violence Prevention (IGP) with the revision of the metrics instrument for street outreach, collaboration with Centers for Neighborhood Engaged Research and Science (CORNERS) at Northwestern University, our research partner, on the impact evaluation, and the analysis of the funding landscape of violence prevention for sustainability purposes and equity in grantmaking.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Conduct a landscape analysis of current data collection and public data reporting and identify gaps and opportunities for increased data-collection, data sharing and public-facing transparency.	4th Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Co-design key performance indicators with practitioners and the existing Community Engagement Committee through the Justice Advisory Council.	4th Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop a long-term data plan that identifies large-scale data needs, processes, and resources to ensure sustainability in the dissemination and maintenance of data.	4th Quarter FY24	On Track

3.2

Develop a comprehensive and coordinated countywide re-entry plan that works to support residents returning to their communities from detention, jail, and prison by removing structural barriers to housing, economic security, and opportunity, including the negative impacts of criminal and juvenile records.

Lead Department

Justice Advisory Council

Objectives

- Develop a returning residents unit to leverage and coordinate existing resources across County criminal justice stakeholder offices and networks to expand housing options, access to healthcare, and public benefits for returning residents.
- Launch a rental assistance program for returning residents that includes wraparound services in partnership with the Housing Authority of Cook County.
- Expand the No Place to Stay (NPTS) housing program for pre-trial defendants ordered to electronic monitoring but who lack a community residence.
- Develop a state and local continuum of coordinated re-entry services in partnership with the State of Illinois and City of Chicago.

Why It Matters

Building up a community-based and community-led system of support for the returning resident population remains an area of paramount importance for the County. People who have experienced periods of incarceration have experienced traumatic disruptions in their lives as a direct consequence of their incarceration. Such experiences also impact the lives of families and communities who regularly or disproportionately endure the loss of loved ones and caregivers to the carceral system. Attending to the well-being and recovery of individuals coming home after incarceration and supporting their success not only promotes community safety, but also fosters healing from past mistakes for which the criminal legal system has already held returning residents to account.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Implemented the pilot phase of the rental assistance program (RECONNECT), which resulted in four returning residents securing leases in their names.
- Worked with and funded the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership's A Road Home Program to assist with continuing the flagship reentry program.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Justice Advisory Council made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. However, due to the significant volume of referrals received during the initial launch of its pilot phase of the rental assistance program (RECONNECT), they have paused programming to ensure they are able to provide suitable services for program participants who were currently in the pipeline to search and obtain leases for housing. During the pause, the JAC has been able to fine-tune their policies and procedures and finalize the lottery process for the program with the assistance of research partners from the University of Chicago.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Launch a Returning Resident Rental Assistance Program that includes wraparound supports.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Develop a comprehensive set of key performance indicators that demonstrate impact.	3rd Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24
Formalize agreements with state and local correctional facilities and re-entry providers.	4th Quarter FY24	On Track
Design and activate the Returning Resident portal on the Cook County website.	4th Quarter FY24	On Track
Draft and implement a collaborative budgeting framework to support better coordination of re-entry resources across County criminal justice stakeholder offices to maximize impact of investments.	1st Quarter FY25	On Track

3.3

Support community-informed alternatives to policing in suburban Cook County to minimize harmful interactions between police and residents, especially Black residents, and promote community safety.

Lead Department

Justice Advisory Council

Objectives

- Advance the recommendations of the Alternatives Health Intervention Response Taskforce (ALT-HIR) Report focused on appropriate non-law enforcement responses to residents experiencing behavioral/mental health crises.
- Build a comprehensive understanding of policing practices in suburban Cook County, informed by law enforcement and community through listening sessions, interviews and existing data.
- Support the emerging work to develop a 211 infrastructure to ensure policing bodies and providers have non-emergency access to social services.
- Invest in alternatives to 911 responses for behavioral health crises by working with communities to identify the needs and priorities that best serve them in emergency situations.

Why It Matters

Many of our communities in Cook County have been subjected to long histories of disinvestment, persistent inequity, and limited resources, resulting in numerous barriers to critical services. This is especially true of physical and mental health services. As a result, individuals in mental or behavioral health crisis often have no alternative to calling 911. With over 100 different policing agencies in suburban Cook County, both residents' reasons for calling 911 and the responses they are met with can vary widely. But, often, Cook County residents in mental and behavioral health crisis are receiving a response from law enforcement officers in their most vulnerable moment, rather than a response from trained behavioral health specialists. Law enforcement responses to mental and behavioral health crises exacerbate the harms and disparities we see in our criminal legal system. Mental and behavioral health crises may result in illegal activity which police responses are designed to prioritize. Data has also shown persons with behavioral illnesses are more likely to experience excessive force that results in injury or death during police interaction. Additionally, there has been no evidence to suggest that co-responder models—where law enforcement responds to mental and behavioral health crisis alongside a behavioral health professional—results in any reductions in arrest. Investing in true alternatives to law enforcement response for mental and behavioral health crises can ensure Cook County works more effectively to address root causes of crime and violence, reduce reliance on law enforcement and the criminal legal system, and minimize the chances of violent or deadly encounters with police countywide.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Convened leadership of the Justice Advisory Council, Cook County Health, and Cook County Department of Public Health to begin more strategically aligning shared work and priorities, including violence prevention and alternatives to police response.

Implementation Status: On track - meaningful progress advanced

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the alternatives to police response work faced significant challenges and setbacks. In the 2023 budget, the Sheriff’s Office was granted clinical staff to pursue alternatives to law enforcement strategies in the 911 call center. During the debate and passage of the FY 2023 budget, commitments were made to finding alternative funding sources and alternatives to Sheriff’s Office employees for providing mental and behavioral health services in Cook County. Unfortunately, the fiscal year 2024 budget reflects an increase in these services provided by a law enforcement agency. In FY24, the JAC will be working diligently to ensure these values and commitments to alternative health interventions are reflected in Cook County’s policies, budget, and community investments. This work will include the development of key performance indicators that speak to the intersectional and cross-agency collaborations necessary for this work to be successful. They will also work to revise their implementation plan to center true alternatives to law enforcement response in their key activities and de-prioritize court and law-enforcement centered activities.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Develop a community engagement process—including conducting listening sessions—to define public safety needs of residents and inform non-policing solutions.	3rd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Conduct focus groups/interviews with law enforcement stakeholders across high contact municipalities to better understand their resources and interactions with suburban residents. Resources shall include their awareness of community-based crisis services, mental and behavioral health care resources.	3rd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Inventory and map crisis care continuum resources in suburban Cook and how crisis responses compare to practices in Chicago.	3rd Quarter FY24	1st Quarter FY25 (Adjusted)
Coordinate and drive progress on ALT-HIR Task Force Report Recommendations.	4th Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop key performance indicators.	4th Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY25 (Adjusted)
Develop strategic work plans for dedicated investments related to suburban alternatives to police response.	4th Quarter FY24	1st Quarter FY25 (Adjusted)

4.1

Increase access to and availability and affordability of public transportation to connect communities and ensure transit equity.

Lead Department

Department of Transportation and Highways (DOTH)

Objectives

- Expand direct investments in public transportation and continue the commitment to the Fair Transit model to increase transit affordability and enhance service.
- Partner with the transit agencies to implement key projects that improve transportation options for transit-reliant communities, including better bus service, improved stations, and safer routes to access transit.
- Champion policies, such as revising the required farebox recovery ratio or encouraging employer support for transit, that would place the transit system on firmer financial footing.
- Partner with the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and transit service boards to help implement full fare integration to allow for discounted transfers between services offered by different agencies, which would create a more affordable and convenient transit system.
- Adopt and publish equity metrics in County-funded transportation projects and factor equity into Cook County appointments to transit service boards.

Why It Matters

A reliable, high-frequency public transit system can connect people to education, jobs, and other opportunities without requiring the expense of a personal car. Keeping transit affordable while improving service is critical to transportation equity. For example, a study in the CMAP Plan of Action for Regional Transit shows that households making less than \$15,000 per year use transit almost three times more than the average household. Despite this, much of the transit system faces major financial pressure due to loss of ridership during the COVID pandemic, threatening the ability to provide robust service with affordable fares. The County will fund projects or initiatives that improve transit service for highly vulnerable communities while participating in longer term efforts with the state and other partners to adequately fund the transit system and ensure a broad structure that meets regional needs.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- The Fair Transit South Cook program provided a third, and final, year of funding to reduce fares on the Metra Electric and Rock Island lines. The annual report continued to show higher ridership recovery on these lines relative to the rest of the system, with program benefits going to lower-income communities along the line.
- The Invest in Cook program provided new funding in 2023 to the Chicago Transit Authority to advance its Better Streets for Buses program and to Pace to advance its Pace Pulse program, both of which will make buses faster and more reliable.

Implementation Status: On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Department of Transportation made no substantive changes to their implementation plan. Over the last few months of FY23, the Department continued its planning for the transition of its Fair Transit to an income-based reduced fare program, with a launch anticipated in February 2024. In addition, they also completed a draft fare integration report, incorporating input from all service boards. This report will be released in 2024, with the goal of at least one implementation project emerging from the study. Development of the report was decelerated to allow for the CMAP Plan of Action for Regional Transit to be completed.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Prepare feasibility study and implementation action plan for fare integration in conjunction with RTA and service boards.	1st Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Complete the <u>Cook County Transit Plan</u> , which will identify improved transportation options for transit reliant communities to guide county investment.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Formalize policy recommendations on transit-supportive economic development incentives as part of DOTH's transit plan.	2nd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Formalize a transparent process for increasing the diversity of transit board appointees for Cook County Board President.	3rd Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Work with University of Illinois/Center for Neighborhood Technology to develop equity measures for Invest in Cook and broader DOTH programs.	3rd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Prepare assessment of transit access for County assets.	4th Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Participate in the RTA Strategic Plan process and assist CMAP in developing its required transit overview report to the Illinois General Assembly.	1st Quarter FY24	Completed

4.2

Increase digital connectivity and access to broadband infrastructure and digital devices for residents, particularly in communities of color.

Lead Department

Office of the President

Objectives

- Adopt a regional approach to increase digital access and partner with high vulnerability municipalities to better understand residents' needs and municipal infrastructure.
- Develop a regional Digital Equity Action Plan that centers impacted communities and advances four priority areas: digital infrastructure, digital proficiency, digital accessibility and digital security and safety. Support the continued expansion of broadband in impacted households and provide financial assistance for internet service and digital devices in partnership with the Housing Authority of Cook County and other stakeholders.
- Continue the internal facilitation of Council of Digital Equity (CODE) and leverage their input to help achieve the County's digital equity goals.

Why It Matters

To create a more equitable and prosperous Cook County, we must focus on digital equity. Digital equity refers to ensuring that all individuals have equal access to technology, such as computers, the internet, and digital services, regardless of their socioeconomic status, geographic location, or other factors. Digital equity is crucial to reducing disparities and promoting equal opportunities in today's technology-driven society. The inaugural Digital Equity Action Plan provides the framework to advance digital equity goals by focusing on four cornerstones: Accessibility, Confidence, Safety, and Infrastructure. When all Cook County residents have access to the technology and knowledge they need to access employment, education, health and essential services, digital equity will be achieved.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Released the [Digital Equity Action Plan](#) and [Digital Equity Map](#) in October 2023.

Implementation Status

On track – meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the President’s Office made no substantive changes to the implementation of its recommendation. Starting in Mid-April 2023, Cook County convened a representative Guiding Team, a subcommittee of CODE, to advise on the community engagement strategy, engage various constituencies and host a series of in-depth, highly personalized community conversations throughout Cook County. The Guiding Team members facilitated Community Conversations sessions in English and Spanish to allow participants to explore digital equity in their own words and from their perspective, using the lenses of Barriers, Solutions, and Vision to guide the discussion. To supplement this engagement, Cook County and its partners also employed a 30 to 35-question survey, in both online and paper formats, available in English and Spanish. The 3,179 completed surveys from Suburban Cook County residents provided a wealth of information about digital inequity in the community. The Digital Equity Action Plan serves as a framework to advance digital equity in Cook County and the Office of the President will work to create an implementation work plan that identifies specific activities, budget needs, timelines, and metrics in 2024.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Draft a 60-day action plan to identify people and processes needed to advance digital equity activities.	3rd Quarter FY22	Completed
Conduct an assessment and inventory of digital equity champions, stakeholders, and activities through a digital equity survey and regional focus groups.	1st Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Draft key performance indicators that demonstrate impact in the four identified focus areas: Digital Infrastructure, Digital Proficiency, Digital Accessibility and Digital Security and Safety.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Release an RFP to procure external consultant to support the drafting of a regional digital action plan.	3rd Quarter FY23	Completed
Publish the County’s first regional Digital Equity Action Plan .	4th Quarter FY23	Completed
Develop and implement workplans for the Digital Equity Action Plan.	N/A	4th Quarter FY24



SUSTAINABLE

COMMUNITIES



5.1

Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure to address decades of disinvestment in Black and Latine communities.

Lead Department

Department of Environment and Sustainability

Objectives

- Evaluate flood risk with other government partners in coordination with the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan to inform future investments.
- Provide technical assistance to impacted communities to strengthen climate resiliency through planning and project implementation, with a focus on green infrastructure, tree planting, and job training opportunities.
- Create Resilience Hubs, which will embed climate resilient infrastructure into community focal points so impacted communities are better prepared for disasters.
- Secure federal funding and bolster departmental capacity to support ongoing climate resiliency planning, green infrastructure, stormwater management, job creation, and hazard preparation beyond ARPA.

Why It Matters

Climate resilient infrastructure will support residents by reducing negative impacts from flooding and high-heat events and bolster these communities in the face of future climate-related natural disasters. By focusing on areas of disinvestment and centering the needs of residents, the County intends to ensure that they are not left behind in the coming years, but rather stand at the forefront of preparation. Benefits of investing in climate resiliency include improved public health, reduction in property loss/damage, ability to rebound after major hazard or disaster events, improved local knowledge and capacity, and building opportunities for local green jobs.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Selected the Villages of Bellwood, Franklin Park, Justice, Lynnwood, and the City of Markham to participate in the Climate Resiliency Planning for Communities Program.
- Rain Ready initiative provided \$247,000 in gap funding toward green infrastructure elements as part of the Winchester Avenue Roadway Reconstruction Project in Calumet Park. The roadway reopened to the public in November 2023 upon completion of this project.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Department of Environment and Sustainability made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. In FY24, the Department will continue its climate resiliency planning across five communities, with the goal to create community-specific climate resiliency plans for each. Additional planning and coordination will occur for the department’s Rain Ready Implementation, Resilience Hubs, and Hazard Mitigation Planning.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Conduct outreach to begin the process of establishing three resilience hubs in the south suburbs.	1st Quarter FY23	Completed
Conduct outreach to community-based organizations for input on Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.	1st Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Release application for Climate Resiliency Planning and identify communities for participation.	1st Quarter FY23	Completed
Initiate engagement and project prioritization with Rain Ready communities.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Initiate Rain Ready installation and project implementation in communities.	3rd Quarter FY23	Completed
Draft update to Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.	1st Quarter FY24	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Initiate green infrastructure planning and technical assistance with municipalities and connect regional efforts with ARPA projects.	4th Quarter FY24	On-Track

5.2

Establish a Cook County Environmental Justice Policy to incorporate environmental and equity impacts in policy and program decision-making.

Lead Department

Department of Environment and Sustainability

Objectives

- Draft and codify an Environmental Justice Policy for Offices Under the President.
- Develop a comprehensive Environmental Justice screening tool that will help identify impacted areas for planning and future investments in alignment with equity related initiatives, including the Health Equity in All Policies (HEiAP).
- Work with partners including the City of Chicago, Chicago Environmental Justice Network, and other stakeholders to ensure coordination and alignment of efforts as well as geographic inclusion.
- Develop a legislative agenda for Cook County to address environmental justice concerns and minimize added burden to impacted communities.

Why It Matters

An Environmental Justice Policy, once adopted by the County, can help inform and guide programmatic and policy decision-making across Offices Under the President. Codifying this work will positively impact residents and communities by reducing or eliminating inequities in environmental problems and health outcomes. It will also provide communities more control over decisions that directly impact their health, livelihood, and economic development. In addition, adoption of these tools and guidelines will allow the County to better qualify for and respond to federal funding opportunities as applicable to Justice40 initiatives, a White House effort that directs 40% of Federal environmental investments into disadvantaged communities overburdened with pollution.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Provided research support and input on the County's first Community Compensation Policy

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Department of Environment and Sustainability made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. The Department did however adjust several of its timelines related to key implementation activities, including revising its community outreach and engagement process which was initially planned to be done in partnership with the City of Chicago. In FY24, the Department will be creating a community advisory committee to help co-develop an Environmental Justice Policy, in addition to other opportunities for engagement and feedback on the topic of Environmental Justice, including a Focus Group and general presentations. An Environmental Justice Policy for the County will be created by the end of 2024.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Develop an engagement plan for community and stakeholder input, with an intentional focus on impacted residents.	1st Quarter FY23	Completed
Conduct community outreach in coordination with the City of Chicago for input on the creation of an Environmental Justice Policy and Environmental Justice screening tool.	2nd Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Engage community review and feedback on the tool and policy.	2nd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop first draft of the Environmental Justice Policy.	3rd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop key performance metrics to demonstrate impact.	3rd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Finalize the Environmental Justice Screening Tool.	4th Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Finalize and implement the Environmental Justice Policy.	2nd Quarter FY24	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)

5.3

Support actions that improve both public health and environmental health for the overall well-being of residents, particularly in Black, Latine, and low-income communities.

Lead Department

Department of Environment and Sustainability

Objectives

- Partner with municipal water utilities to oversee and manage lead service line replacement across Cook County, starting with a pilot phase focused on high-risk home and facility-based childcare facilities.
- Align the Health Equity in All Policies (HEiAP) and the implementation of the Environmental Justice Policy to ensure an equity lens is utilized in the planning and programming of future investments in impacted communities.
- Acquire land to preserve more natural areas and restore existing preserves to high levels of ecological health in partnership with the Forest Preserves of Cook County.
- Implement the Businesses Reducing Impact on the Environment (BRITE) program to support business investments that reduce pollution and improve air quality.
- Revitalize disinvested communities by facilitating the assessment and cleanup of contaminated and abandoned properties.

Why It Matters

Environmental and public health are inextricably linked. The County's investments in both areas will help to address the generations of disinvestment, racist and inequitable policies and practices which have resulted in BIPOC communities experiencing higher rates of asthma, heart disease, flooding, and lack of access to natural areas. Black Americans are 75% more likely than White Americans to live in communities negatively impacted by industry emissions. Non-Hispanic Black Americans are 40% more likely to have asthma than non-Hispanic White Americans. By reducing toxins and improving indoor air quality in residences, removing lead pipes that may contaminate drinking water, minimizing pollution from surrounding businesses, converting brownfields into usable space, and enhancing the forest preserves, Cook County residents will have access to safe water to drink, clean air to breathe, and overall improved quality of life.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- The BRITE (Business Reducing Impact on the Environment) program, Cook County's pollution prevention program team conducted 20 business environmental assessments in 2023, with 17 of these businesses being in municipalities with Social Vulnerability Index scores of 0.6 or greater.
- Successfully launched the Lead Care program in five pilot communities. To date, 65 daycares have enrolled across all five communities, and 13 lead service lines have been replaced. Lead Care Cook County was expanded countywide in October 2023.

Implementation Status

On track - substantial progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Department of Environment and Sustainability made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. In FY24, the department will continue its implementation of a suite of programs and strategies to improve the environmental health of Cook County residents through its Healthy Homes initiative, which will be launched in early 2024, its BRITE initiative and its continuation to obligate \$6+ million amongst those businesses and additional businesses that will be assessed in 2024.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Initiate the acquisition of land which will improve access to green space for residents.	4th Quarter FY22	Completed
Finalize contracts for consultants to support climate resiliency and the BRITE Program assessment.	1st Quarter FY23	Completed
Hire and onboard key personnel in the Cook County Department of Public Health to serve as point person for the Healthy Homes program.	1st Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Launch the Lead Service Line Replacement Pilot Project.	1st Quarter FY23	Completed
Initiate riparian restoration work to reduce flooding in surrounding areas and improve overall ecological health.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Begin Healthy Homes evaluations, remediation, and upgrades.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Initiate hydrologic assessments in targeted areas.	4th Quarter FY23	Completed



OPEN

COMMUNITIES



6.1

Develop a comprehensive equity-centered grantmaking strategy to promote equitable access to resources and increase capacity to deliver services in partnership with smaller, grassroots, emerging, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color-led organizations anchored in marginalized communities.

Lead Department

Office of the President

Objectives

- Increase transparency about grant opportunities, reporting requirements and expectations for public funding.
- Develop and implement uniform and equitable grant-making practices across Offices under the President that reduces barriers and increases accessibility of public funding to community-based organizations.
- Establish a continuum of capacity building and technical assistance resources to ensure organizations have sufficient capacity to apply for, receive, and manage public funds and compete for other funding opportunities.
- Pursue coordination and alignment opportunities across planning tables focused on increasing capacity building for organizations, including through the Intergovernmental Partnership on Violence Prevention (IGP).
- Improve service delivery and impact of the County's investments long term.

Why It Matters

Cook County relies on strong partnerships with community-based organizations and non-profits to deliver a broad and diverse array of programs and services to residents, businesses, and municipalities across Cook County. These organizations are often most proximate to, and, anchored in the impacted communities that they work with and/or serve, demonstrated in part by their organizational mission, community impact and active and engaged service delivery to those residents/clients who live within those impacted communities. The urgency for Cook County government to increase the readiness and capacity of these organizations through more equitable, coordinated and community-focused investments has never been more amplified than it was during the COVID-pandemic. Organizations of all types, irrespective of their operating budgets, faced significant challenges not only with the loss of revenue and/or public funding support, but also with having to be flexible and adaptable in the ever-evolving landscape and recovery after COVID. Particularly, in those communities most impacted by COVID-19 and the lack of consistent and holistic investments, many of those same organizations had far less access to financial resources compared to their peer organizations. They also lacked the human capital infrastructure and supports needed to increase service delivery despite serving as trusted and credible sources within their communities. As shared by the experiences and feedback received from many of these organizations, additional challenges and barriers were encountered as they pivoted to

respond to much of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded grants released by the County and other partners. From encountering delayed payments to feeling overwhelmed by the new and ever-changing compliance and risk protocols, there is a critical need for more structural support to ensure these organizations can apply for, comply with and/or maintain public funding. Organizations that are strong and healthy are better able to accomplish their missions, which in turn provides better service delivery to clients and the communities from where they live.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Successfully released the first-ever Cook County Capacity Building Starting Block Grant, an enterprise-wide effort across Offices under the President to provide capacity building funding for community-based organizations across sectors. The first round of awards will be presented for approval by the Board of Commissioners in December 2023.
- Worked with Chief Procurement Office and departments to launch the first-ever “Pathways to Cook County Expo” that expands the annual “Vendor Fairs” that historically attracted for-profit vendors to learn of opportunities to do business with Cook County. This refreshed format included record numbers of non-profit vendors and members of the public to consider what grant opportunities are available in Cook County as well as what other public services and functions support residents directly at the County-level of government.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

At the time of the release of the Equity Fund’s first progress report in December 2022, the Implementation plan for this recommendation had not yet been developed. In FY23, the President’s Office formed an internal working group including the Justice Advisory Council and other departments across its offices, to develop an implementation plan to advance more equitable grant practices and supports for community-based organizations applying for funding from Cook County. With an intentional focus on coordinating planning tables, the President’s Office also continued its work through the Intergovernmental Partnership (IGP) to build out a robust capacity building infrastructure for community-based organizations operating in the violence prevention sector. In FY24, the President’s Office will work with the Justice Advisory Council to administer the newly developed Capacity Building Start Block Grant and will continue facilitating its internal working group to develop and implement equitable grant making practices and the continuum of capacity building and technical assistance resources to community-based organizations.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Establish an internal working group to develop implementation workplan to advance more equitable grant-making practices across departments	N/A	Ongoing
Administer an internal survey to gather information related to the current state of the County's grant making policies and practices across its bureaus and departments	N/A	Completed
Expand existing Vendor Fair to be more inclusive of community-based organizations and nonprofits working across sector to support service delivery to residents	N/A	Completed
Develop and launch the Capacity Building Grant Program that provides capacity building funding for cross sector community-based organizations who work within disinvested communities to increase their organizational health and capacity	N/A	Completed
Draft and implement a uniform set of equitable grant making strategies and practices that support the administration of public funding for community-based organizations	N/A	4th Quarter FY24
Develop a continuum of capacity and readiness services and programs for organizations at all stages of their interest/engagement with Cook County <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Draft RFQ for capacity building/technical assistance experts to support grant funded organizations. o Develop suite of readiness curriculum, programs and opportunities for organizations interested in applying for public funding. o Design and launch a public-facing resource library for community-based organizations to access free curated trainings, programs, and opportunities. 	N/A	1st Quarter FY25

6.2

Establish flexible, accessible, and empowering pathways for residents of historically disinvested or marginalized communities to meaningfully participate in developing and implementing County policies and programs.

Lead Departments

Justice Advisory Council (JAC) and Office of the President

Objectives

- Develop and formalize a community-centered participatory engagement process for Offices Under the President (OUP) that includes best practices on engagement of residents and other community stakeholders.
- Develop a community engagement compensation policy to be adopted and implemented across OUP.
- Formalize the JAC Community Engagement Calendar that includes the “Action Summit” and Community Dialogues model as developed under the MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge.
- Facilitate community partnership workshops where community residents and community-based service providers meet regularly to discuss Cook County policy and practice matters.

Why It Matters

Those who experience the most pressing challenges in our communities, including the disproportionate impact of crime and violence, are too often the furthest from the resources and influence to improve conditions. Cook County can better include representation of these experiences in our policymaking by ensuring people closest to the problems are also closest to designing the solutions. This will require a deliberate commitment by the County to engage residents to share their experiences and participate in crafting policy and practice at a systemic level. Engaged residents will personally benefit from the empowerment that comes from being valued for their wisdom, not only through compensation for providing subject matter expertise relevant to a given policy matter, but also through the fulfillment of advocating on behalf of similarly situated peoples while holding government accountable for the consequences of its actions. This type of formalized, community-centered participatory process builds trust between the County and our residents and creates a level of meaningful civic engagement that will have long-lasting impacts.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- The Cook County Racial Equity Cohort Fellowship received recognition from the National Association of Counties (NaCo) for an innovative practice in community engagement.
- Worked with Offices Under the President to draft the County’s first Community Compensation Policy designed to engage residents most directly impacted by a given policy or practice advanced by County government, and ensure their experience is recognized and duly compensated in parity with other professional services ordinarily procured for the county through contract.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Justice Advisory Council made no substantive changes to its implementation plan, but several timing adjustments were made to key activities as the scale of the work in this policy area gains clarity. In FY24, the Justice Advisory Council will focus on the development and implementation of a countywide, holistic approach to community engagement for Offices Under the President. Critical to this effort is regular collaboration and communication across relevant agencies engaged in various community engagement efforts that are currently siloed from each other and show up in the same communities but in disconnected ways. The critical goal would be that a resident would experience “no wrong door” to access Cook County government and voice their needs, concerns, and inform the direction of the county executive administration.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Analyze current state of community engagement across OUP to better understand existing practices and gaps.	3rd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop a plan for OUP to leverage existing community spaces and trusted community-based organizations when seeking community input.	3rd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Develop key performance indicators to demonstrate impact.	4th Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Continue to participate in the MacArthur Foundation Equity Cohort to identify strategies that address racial inequities in the criminal legal system.	1st Quarter FY24	On Track
Draft and implement a community compensation policy using Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) best practices.	4th Quarter FY24	On Track
Pilot new engagement models to increase community involvement and participation in county decision-making.	4th Quarter FY24	On Track

6.3

Implement countywide best practices to measure the impact of policies and programs on immigrant and refugee communities to ensure Cook County's work to reduce racial and ethnic inequities is inclusive and actively works to protect immigrants and refugees.

Lead Department

Department of Human Rights and Ethics

Objectives

- Create internal guidelines for collecting data and information that effectively measure impact on immigrant and refugee communities in partnership with the Office of the President.
- Conduct an Equity Landscape Review across OUP, particularly public-facing services, and programs, to identify and eliminate gaps in services and barriers that impede Cook County immigrants and refugees from fully accessing or using services.
- Develop a public-facing report to provide the status of equitable access and recommendations for enhanced accessibility.

Why It Matters

Cook County has been a sanctuary county for immigrants and refugees for almost two centuries. In recent years, Cook County has pursued new policies, like the [Policy for Responding to ICE Detainers](#) in 2011, to provide support and expand services to immigrants and refugees. As more than 25,000 migrants have arrived in Chicago and Cook County since August 2022, this recommendation is as relevant as ever as the city, county and state address this humanitarian crisis. Using a human rights-centered approach, the Equity Landscape Review Report revealed several strategic opportunities to further expand access to our current services, which will be collaboratively pursued in 2024.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Completed the Equity Landscape Review Report, the culmination of outreach to numerous County-based immigrant and refugee-serving organizations, interviews with individuals about their lived experience, and a survey of bureau chiefs, department heads, and language access liaisons within the Offices Under the President.

Implementation Status

On track - substantial progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, the Department of Human Rights and Ethics was able to make substantial progress on its implementation workplan. With the broad support of many individuals and community organizations, the key activities associated with the first phase of recommendation 6.3 were executed according to plan and on schedule. In FY24, the Department will work in collaboration with departments within Offices Under the President to develop recommendations and tools for expanding access in this area based on the findings from the Equity Landscape Review Report.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Create plan for developing and executing Equity Landscape Review across OUP.	2nd Quarter FY23	Completed
Develop the Landscape Review policy and processes, which will include an accessibility scan of current programs and services and further collaboration with community groups and OUP.	3rd Quarter FY23	Completed
Develop key performance indicators to demonstrate impact.	4th Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Finalize and deploy relevant surveys to community groups and OUP.	4th Quarter FY23	Completed
Draft and finalize Equity Landscape Review Report.	4th Quarter FY23	Completed
Support OUP departments in the development of Equity Landscape Review recommendations.	3rd Quarter FY24	Ongoing

Additional Complementary Recommendations

Cannabis Business Development Program

Establish a Cannabis Business Development Program to create a revolving fund to support grants cannabis-related businesses owned and operated by Social Equity Applicants who reside in Cook County, recognizing the link between the Equity Fund and cannabis tax revenue and the related history of incarceration and exclusion communities of color have faced.

Lead Department

Bureau of Economic Development

Objectives

- Engage cannabis subject matter experts to help develop the pilot program.
- Convene meetings with similarly situated government jurisdictions with similar cannabis small business grant programs to discuss best practices (i.e., programs in Oakland, CA., Sacramento, CA., Portland, OR.).
- Host town hall sessions with social equity applicants to garner feedback and ensure the finalized program addresses the specific needs of social equity applicants in Cook County.
- Engage the Cook County Cannabis Commission throughout the program planning and execution.
- Coordinate and collaborate with the State of Illinois and Cook County's 135 local municipalities relative to developments in government funding, programs, and legislative/policy changes.

Why It Matters

With the legalization of cannabis for adult use on January 1, 2020, in Illinois came the establishment of Social Equity Licenses to provide opportunities for persons and communities that have been historically impacted by arrests and imprisonment for cannabis offenses to participate in the legal cannabis industry. In recognition of this, as well as the inherent challenges in starting a business, Cook County committed resources to provide grants to Cook County-based Social Equity Licensees to cover expenses related to the start-up and/or operation of a cannabis business (craft grower, dispensary, infuser, or transporter).

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

In FY23, The Bureau of Economic Development adjusted the timelines for several key activities but made no substantive changes to its implementation plan. Adjustments to its timelines were due in part to the Bureau’s need to prioritize staffing resources for the planning and launch of more time-sensitive programs and initiatives funded through the American Rescue Plan Act. Over the course of the year, the Bureau established a working group in partnership with the Office of the President and other stakeholders, that has completed design of the program, with the intent of finalizing an agreement with a Grant Administrator and launching the program in FY24.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Develop the CBDP pilot with the Cook County Cannabis Commission, Bureau of Economic Development, and subject matter experts.	1st Quarter FY23	Completed
Present the finalized program details and application to Cook County Cannabis Commission and the Board of Commissioners.	2nd Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Begin advertising program and public outreach in preparation for the launch of the program.	3rd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Launch Cook County Cannabis Business Development Program.	3rd Quarter FY23	3rd Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)

Additional Complementary Recommendations

Cook County Land Bank Authority

Cook County Land Bank will continue working to increase naturally occurring affordable housing stock and economic opportunity in disinvested communities within Cook County.

Lead Department

Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA)

Objectives

- The CCLBA is looking to remove systematic barriers to homeownership in the most distressed communities of Cook County.

Why It Matters

The Cook County Land Bank initiatives will increase naturally occurring affordable housing stock, economic opportunity, and the removal of systemic barriers through efficient disposition of formerly vacant and abandoned property in areas of historic disinvestment. The Cook County Land Bank Authority works with homeowners and community developers to bring back vacant and abandoned properties to productive use. This targeted process increases the stock of naturally occurring affordable housing and assists in generating jobs and economic development with local developers and entrepreneurs. Ultimately, this work culminates in direct impact as they work to create homeownership opportunities while fostering generational wealth-building for distressed communities.

FY23 Highlighted Accomplishments

- Expanded the Homebuyer Direct Program by purchasing seven homes from Fannie Mae/ Freddie Mac /HUD with equity fund dollars, expending over \$1.2M to date.
- Created the Purchase Assistance Program and allocated \$960K with a total of approximately \$69K committed this year to provide purchase assistance to homebuyers for aged inventory properties and previous CCLBA developer-renovated homes.
- Discounted over 115 aged inventory properties in Englewood by 50% to increase sales. Of the 115 aged inventory properties, CCLBA now has approximately 15 sales closed and 15 pending sales in the pipeline.
- Procured the Chicago Rehabilitation Network Inc / The Center for Shared Homeownership to help with cooperative housing purchase assistance program consulting services to CCLBA relevant to the Reclaiming Vacant Land pilot program.

Implementation Status

On track - meaningful progress advanced.

Implementation Summary

While CCLBA continues its work to increase affordable housing stock across Cook County, it has identified several system level barriers to achieving the transformation that is necessary. Those barriers include a current real estate market with highly inflated property values that are exacerbating elements of gentrification within all Cook County communities, the inability to address the volume of the tax certificate crisis in Cook County, which is exacerbating the racial wealth gap by creating place-based disinvestment and threatening existing neighborhood residents' economic security and distressed neighborhoods and communities are inundated with vacant land parcels that bring down property values within that community. Moreover, the ability to redevelop these properties exceeds existing residents' ability to afford new construction, and consequentially the developers' desire to invest in that respective community. In FY24, CCLBA will continue to work around many of these system barriers as it implements its core housing programs.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE		
KEY ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	STATUS UPDATES
Develop a timeline for CCLBA to secure property, market, and sell to eligible homebuyers.	2nd Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Evaluate CCLBA's aged-inventory (i.e. - property acquired >2 Years) to determine the percentage of property classes are available and marketable for this program.	2nd Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY23 (Adjusted)
Acquire Properties from Fannie Mae/ Freddie/ HUD for Equity fund program.	2nd Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Determine criteria and parameters for homebuyers to be eligible for the Equity Fund subsidy.	2nd Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Finalize the selection process for eligible homebuyers for the developer and aged inventory purchase assistant program.	2nd Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY24 (Adjusted)
Publish, advertise, and market properties for homebuyers that are eligible given the parameters of the program.	2nd Quarter FY23	Ongoing
Complete the sale of properties to homebuyers eligible for the program.	4th Quarter FY23	Ongoing



Equity Fund Financial Reporting



FY23 Equity Fund Expenditure Report

1st Installment Spending Plan

The chart below indicates the breakdown of expenditures for the Equity Fund’s first installment spending plan of \$50M approved by the Cook County Board of Commissioners in May 2022. Expenditures through December 2023 came in lower than budgeted due to the significant amount of time allocated to the planning and design of programs and strategies underlying the Equity Fund recommendations and the time-sensitive requirement to expend American Rescue Plan Act federal relief funds first, given the expiration of those funds in 2026. Remaining funds will rollover into the next fiscal year and be made available for department leads to continue related implementation work.

Equity Fund Allocation - \$50M				
Recommendation	Lead Department	Allocation	FY23 EF Expenditures	Carryover*
Transforming Places (2.9)	BED	\$15 million	\$1.8 million	\$13.2 million
Equity in Grantmaking (6.1)	OOP	\$15 million	--	\$15 million
Community Information Exchange (1.3)	BED	\$10 million	--	\$10 million
Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA)	CCLBA	\$5 million	\$0.9 million	\$4.1 million
Cannabis Business Development Program (CBDP)	BED	\$2 million	--	\$2 million
Reserve		\$3 million	--	\$3 million

*Remaining funding will rollover into the next fiscal year



FY24 Equity Fund Expenditure Report

2nd Installment Spending Plan

The 2nd Installment Spending Plan of \$70M was approved by the Cook County Board of Commissioners at its December Board meeting. Expenditures in FY2024 (December 1, 2023–November 30, 2024) are expected to increase significantly as the evolution of the work continues.

As part of its commitment to identify long term sustainable funding, in its FY24 Budget, the County has designated the Illinois Casino Tax as a permanent revenue source for the Equity Fund and for those equity-related ARPA programs and services that will be operationalized by the County beyond 2026.

Equity Fund Allocation - \$70M				
Recommendation	Lead Department	FY23 Allocation	FY24 Allocation	Total Allocation
Transforming Places (2.9)	BED	\$15 million	\$0	\$15 million
Equity in Grantmaking (6.1)	OOP	\$15 million	\$0	\$15 million
Community Information Exchange (1.3)	BED	\$10 million	\$0	\$10 million
Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA)	CCLBA	\$5 million	\$2.5 million	\$7.5 million
Cannabis Business Development Program (CBDP)	BED	\$2 million	\$2 million	\$4 million
Health Equity in All Policies (1.1)	CCDPH	--	\$725,000	\$725,000
Property Tax Reform (2.1)	OOP	--	\$805,000	\$805,000
Access to Capital (2.8)	BED	--	\$1 million	\$1 million
Healthy Workers Initiative (2.11)	CCDPH	--	\$1 million	\$1 million
Transit Equity - Income Based Fare Pilot (4.1)	DOTH	--	\$7 million	\$7 million
Department of Environmental Sustainability - Various Programs (5.1, 5.2, 5.3)	DES	--	\$1,924,500	\$1,924,500
JAC Grants	JAC	--	\$35 million*	\$35 million
Equitably Community Outreach Pilot	OUP	--	\$591,500	\$591,500
Equity Fund Reserve				\$31.45 million

* Includes previously allocated funds made to the department and transferred to the Equity Fund Special Purpose Fund



Toni Preckwinkle
Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County Board President

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