CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Department of Information Technology (DIT)

Equity Lead(s): Michelle Breckenridge and Brian Heffern

Date: November 30, 2023

EQUITY IMPACT PLAN REPORT

Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2023 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics (fairfaxcounty.gov)](fairfaxcounty.gov). *Using that plan, fill in each goal below and describe: 1) what was done to make progress toward the goal, 2) with whom (partners), and 3) how work toward this goal was measured/evaluated and the results. If you have data for the performance measures in your CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan, report them. Add more goals as needed.*

Goal 1: Maximize Broadband/Wi-Fi availability for underserved communities (i.e., Black and Hispanic Communities).

Goal 1 Progress: A significant amount of high-level work on the Broadband/Wi-Fi Access topic has taken place in 2023. On October 3, 2023, at the Board's Information Technology Committee meeting a detailed Digital Access Update was provided. Members of DIT's Equity Partners group provided logistical support in advance of the Board IT Committee presentation. The presentation is available here:

[Modern Digital Creative Agency Presentation (fairfaxcounty.gov)](fairfaxcounty.gov)

In addition, DIT staff, including members of DIT's Equity Partners Team, worked through the procurement process with the Department of Procurement and Material Management, and the Office of the County Attorney to secure contractual support that will result in the development of a wide-ranging *Broadband and Digital Equity Plan* for Fairfax County. The contractor is working closely with Fairfax County leadership and staff to ensure the plan reflects the unique needs of Fairfax County and will offer actionable steps. The final report is anticipated to include a strategic framework, identify needs and gaps, interact with existing federal/state/local efforts, and conclude with a high-level plan to close the digital divide. This work is beginning in late 2023 and will continue in 2024 with a report to the Board of Supervisors in mid-2024.

Starting in fall 2023, DIT's Geographic Information Services (GIS) team worked with the Department of Cable and Consumer Services, and the contractor to support the county's BEAD (Broadband Equity Access and Deployment) Program challenge and development of the Digital Equity Action plan noted above. GIS obtained and analyzed FCC broadband data and compared it to county data, including the vulnerability index. Interactive visualization tools were developed for these datasets. These tools and the results of the analysis were presented to the Digital Equity Coordination Team in early 2024.

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Goal 2: Promote IT careers for high school students from historically marginalized or underrepresented racial or ethnic groups.

Goal 2 Progress: This was a primary area of focus for the DIT Equity Partners Team in 2023. After successful implementation of an internship program in 2022, which included both college age and high school age individuals, DIT looked to build off lessons learned and significantly improve the experience in 2023. The objective was to target some of the available internship opportunities to high school students who may otherwise not have the access or opportunity for an internship of this nature. This was achieved through enhanced applicant outreach, utilizing resources from county programs such as Opportunity Neighborhoods, and/or tying it to established county summer youth employment programs.

To this end, the DIT Equity Partners Team worked to develop a flyer that could be shared both electronically and in hard-copy form to promote the internship opportunity. It is copied below:

Fairfax County Dept. Information Technology (DIT)
Equity Impact High School Internship Program

About

The Fairfax County Department of Information Technology (DIT) is seeking passionate minds willing to expand their knowledge in the Information Technology world. As part of DIT's 2023 Equity Impact Plan, DIT will offer paid summer internships in 2023. DIT's Equity Impact Internship Program is an immersive program, designed to introduce candidates to local government Information Technology (IT) and Computer Science career paths.

Fairfax County embraces its diverse population and recognizes it as a tremendous asset but also knows that racial and social inequities still exist. In furtherance of the Fairfax County One Fairfax Policy, the goal of this program is to provide opportunities for students who have had lower representation in IT careers due to institutional and structural barriers.

Students will work with IT professionals on projects where they will gain hands-on experience and learn about careers in Information Technology. This program will provide students the opportunity to build valuable relationships with mentors and establish a network of professionals to assist in academic and career planning for opportunities in the workforce. The internship program will take place the summer of 2023 with up to 900 total hours available to each student intern.

Work Location

Fairfax County Government Center 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035. Please note that there are multiple Fairfax Connector Bus Routes that directly serve the Government Center. Free student bus passes are available.

Required Qualifications

- Must be at least 16 years of age and available to work at least 280 hours.
- Must have a desire to learn more about IT.
- Must have effective communication and collaboration skills.
- Must be a student from an underrepresented group – i.e., those who have had lower representation in IT careers due to institutional and structural barriers.

Preferred Qualifications

- Understanding of Microsoft product suite, PowerPoint, Word, Excel, Access, etc.
- Interest/experience in programming, coding, gaming, and/or troubleshooting computers or smartphones.

Internship Outcomes

- Students will gain hands-on experience in many different areas of IT, to add to your resume.
- Access to other student interns and IT professionals that will advise, motivate, and serve as a resource for you.

How to Apply

Students must complete the online application (go to https://bit.ly/DITequityinternship or scan the QR Code below) by 11:59 pm on **April 9, 2023**. Interviews will take place in April/May 2023. DIT's Equity Impact Internship program will begin in **June 2023**. If assistance is needed to complete the application, please contact DIT Internship Coordinator at DITIntern@fairfaxcounty.gov.

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The DIT Equity Partners Team then partnered with numerous County agencies, including the Department of Neighborhood Community Services, Fairfax County Public Library, and others to distribute throughout the county, targeting areas of the County and County programs where it would be more likely to reach the intended audience. This outreach resulted in over 40 applications, from which a series of interviews were conducted, five students were identified, and eventually three students were selected to participate in DIT's Summer Internship Program. The students were representative of diverse ethnic groups, cultures, and gender.

Once the internship program began, the DIT Equity Partners Team took the lead in developing many programs and opportunities for the interns to ensure their exposure to many facets of information technology as well as other critical topics such as the importance of considering equity in their roles. On their first day, the interns watched a 30-minute One Fairfax introductory video narrated by Chief Equity Officer, Karla Bruce. In addition, all high school interns attended an afternoon-long training that included a viewing and discussion on *Race the Power of an Illusion – The Difference Between Us.*

On the technical side, members of the DIT Equity Partners Team led numerous sessions and provided coordination and facilitation for several aspects of the summer internship program, such as:

- A meeting with the Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee, at which interns were able to ask their own questions of these business and industry leaders.
- Project Management Training
- Introduction to Information Security
- Introduction to Network Services

In addition, The GIS team created a report of the Vulnerability Index associated with county facilities (schools, community centers, libraries) and houses of worship, in support of DIT's Equity Impact High School Internship Program.

Goal 3: Provide equitable access to DIT certification, specialized training, degreed programs, and other county-sponsored continuous learning programs, to eliminate systemic racial and social bias in professional development opportunities.

Goal 3 Progress: In 2022, the DIT Equity Partners Team developed a document titled "Department of Information Technology Equity Partners Professional Development Opportunities Matrix." The matrix includes five sections of information with links and other supporting information. The five sections are:

- DIT Information and Resources
- Community Colleges and University Certificate and Degree Programs
- Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) Professional Development Opportunities
- DHR's Office of Development and Training (OD&T) Professional Development

- Other Professional Development Opportunities

In 2023, this document was updated with new information and development opportunities and continues to be widely disseminated throughout DIT. Changes are being highlighted in an all-staff meeting.

Goal 4: Identify key IT industry-related equity issues and results-based training for DIT staff.

Goal 4 Progress: The DIT Equity Partners Team will research and study racial and social equity issues in the technology sector, to understand and identify key topics for an IT-focused equity training program. While racial equity is not yet a significant part of the mainstream technology policy debate, DIT is centering it as a priority. By implementing required, technology and results-based training, DIT aims to establish not only a more equitable standard in technology governance, but also a more equitable economy in Fairfax County in which everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive. The equity training program in development explores how exclusion and racialization harms our society and economy, and how inclusion and equity bring cascading benefits for all. Some of the most prevalent opportunities to improve racial equity in the technology industry include:

- Democratic participation – inviting more diverse voices and perspectives, with various levels of authority to the decision-making table.
- Build on equitable opportunities for Black and Indigenous people of color, and other marginalized groups with talent and competitiveness within the technology labor market through hiring, promotion, and retention policies/practices that ensure access to high-quality jobs that provide family-sustaining wages and benefits, career advancement, and skill development pathways.
- Working within DIT business areas to identify and create avenues to increase equitable access to digital goods, data-driven services, and disrupt the dissemination of misinformation.
- Racial equity and Artificial Intelligence – Understanding and combating racial bias in the development and use of artificial intelligence.

Goal 5: Continue the process of introducing and embedding the One Fairfax Policy in the Department of Information Technology and work to normalize conversations about race.

Goal 5 Progress: In the summer of 2023, the DIT Equity Partners Team updated the existing online document that includes DIT's Equity Guiding Statement, outreach activities and staff commitments to promoting equity and demonstrating DIT as a diverse organization. At the same time, a slightly amended version of that document was developed for distribution to DIT's summer interns. Other 2023 successes include facilitating and providing logistical support to six county equity ambassador-led trainings and continuing to discuss equity-related topics at DIT All Hands Meetings.

To foster greater awareness and engagement around diversity and equity within DIT, the DIT Equity Partners Team launched a "Did You Know?" campaign at the end of this year. The campaign is designed

to share interesting and thought-provoking facts and insights related to diversity and equity to the entire department, creating a space for engagement and dialogue. The campaign kicked off with a presentation at DIT's November All Hands Meeting. The content covered various topics, from historical figures in the fight for equity, to lesser-known facts about cultural diversity. The goal was not only to share information but also to spark curiosity and initiate conversations among DIT employees. As we move forward into CY2024, the DIT Equity Partners Team plans to keep the campaign going as it was evident from the kickoff, that it's a wonderful tool to promote ongoing education and dialogue about diversity and equity within DIT.

In addition, the DIT Equity Partners Team experienced growth this year, both in terms of its members and influence. The expansion of the team reflects a growing commitment from individuals within DIT to engage in equity-related initiatives. The increased diversity on the Team is representative in the variety of DIT business units, ethnicity, age, gender, as well as length of service in DIT and the county. It has enriched the team's perspectives and strengthened our ability to address our equity impact.

Goal 6: Apply an equity lens throughout the purchasing and contractual review processes when purchasing IT applications, hardware, software, and services.

Goal 6 Progress:

In 2023, DIT met with our partners in the Department of Procurement and Material Management (DPMM) and has developed the following three-step action plan going forward. First, we want to 'strategize for equity' in DIT's request for bid (selection) process. While we cannot make selections based on Small, Women-owned, and Minority-owned (SWAM) business status in the state of Virginia, we can incorporate verbiage, for example in the General Purpose statement, to embed DIT's commitment to equity in our procurement process.

Secondly, DIT can utilize the renewal contract process to negotiate terms (not unlike the Federal Government does), to secure agreement from the vendor(s) selected to ensure that 30 percent of the subcontractors they use will be SWAM. We can also secure their agreement to participate in the County's Supply Chain Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative, which is part of DPMM's equity program.

Finally, we can incorporate a practice that ensures the equitable delivery of DIT services and a routine review of those services to consider who the goods/services support and who could be harmed by and/or who isn't benefitting from these goods/services.

Of note, DIT is currently in the process of reviewing its Staff Augmentation contract, which includes about 30 different vendors that provide the county with IT consulting services and are working to incorporate the plan discussed above in that renewal.

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Describe other equity-related work completed in CY 2023 (efforts that advance racial and social equity that your department was involved in within the department or countywide) not in the department's Equity Impact Plan.

In 2023, DIT's Geographic Information System (GIS) team facilitated several equity-related projects in support of Fairfax County agencies. They:

- Mapped SNAP recipients for the Department of Family Services, provided a density analysis summarized by Supervisor District. Totals were further normalized by the total number of households in each district. (Completed 1/12/2023)
- Worked with Neighborhood and Community Services to assess the availability of childcare resources countywide, providing yearly analyses to identify areas where child care supply is low. These results are found in the Early Childhood Supply and Access Gaps application. (Completed 6/7/2023)
- Created a series of maps for the Department of Family Services visualizing clients of 6 employment service programs. These maps were used to guide discussions between the DFS Director Michael Becketts and Supervisor Lusk. (Completed 9/5/2023)
- Mapped properties that are part of the Project-Based Vouchers program for the Department of Housing and Community Development, creating a dashboard that includes information on which properties are designated for multi-family, seniors and individuals with disabilities. (Completed 1/26/2024)
- Mapping participants in the Home Repair for the Elderly Program for the Department of Housing and Community Development. This program assists low-and moderate-income homeowners who are older adults and/or who are living with disabilities with minor home repair to help them remain in their homes. The Power BI dashboard built by GIS includes the ability to filter the data by sex and race. (In progress)