

EQUITY

The County Board adopted an **Equity Resolution** on Sept. 21, 2019. In that resolution, the Board provided direction for Arlington County Government and the community to help advance equity. The Board defines equity as all populations having access to community conditions and opportunities needed to reach their full potential and to experience optimal well-being. These populations include persons of color, women, the poor, immigrants, refugees, non-heteronormative individuals, and those who are differently abled. It also includes individuals from areas predictive of adverse life outcomes.

The County's vision statement focuses on being a diverse and inclusive community, and by many measures Arlington is considered successful. However, this overall success masks disparities which, if left unexplored, can lead to unintentionally harmful public policy. Significant investments in a community where disparities are ignored can cement inequity and exacerbate wealth and income inequality. Arlington County Government is working to identify actions and policies to implement the County's vision in an equitable way.

The Arlington County Board's Equity resolution calls on us to consider four important questions when making key decisions that impact our residents and other important stakeholders:

- (1) **Who benefits?**
- (2) **Who is burdened?**
- (3) **Who is missing?**
- (4) **How do we know?**

What We Are Doing

While addressing race and race-related disparities is not new for Arlington County, we are pursuing new means to advance our collective efforts. We are using new tools and creative approaches make it easier for residents with diverse experiences, cultural backgrounds, race, income, and housing types to engage with their government and help craft policies, programs, and projects. Examples include:

- **Racial Equity Training:** The proposed budget includes \$100,000 to expand and supplement training begun in FY 2020 for all levels of employees in County government. This training may include a second cohort of County employees participating in the Washington Council of Government's (COG) racial equity program sponsored by the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE). We will work towards making this type of training regular and continual for leaders and staff throughout the organization.

- **Housing Arlington:** This umbrella program takes a proactive, expanded approach to reach an equitable, stable, and adaptive community. New and ongoing efforts will reach beyond traditional policies and programs to generate holistic housing solutions.
- **Digital Equity:** Ten percent of Arlington households do not have access to a home internet connection. The Digital Equity initiative continues to build connectivity and access internet with a device to advance education, access health services, apply for jobs, and more.
- **Destination 2027:** This initiative focuses on disparities in health and a plan to achieve health equity by 2027. Health equity exists when everyone has access to the conditions they need for optimal health and well-being.
- **Small, Women, and Minority owned Businesses (SWaM):** The County Manager’s budget proposal increases outreach to SWaM businesses to raise awareness of opportunities to bid on County solicitations and do business with Arlington County. This also includes expanding training, language translation, and outreach to strengthen successful business practices.

There has been a commitment across the County throughout all departments to take the first steps towards addressing racial equity. This year, racial equity was a consideration in the development of the operating budget, and it will be so in the upcoming CIP process. There is a concerted effort across the organization to normalize conversation about race and equity—establishing a common language as well as direct and intentional dialogue. The first cohort that has been through the COG racial equity program sponsored by GARE will continue to report back on their efforts and training and will be developing a racial equity tool kit. The County’s commitment to racial equity is not an “initiative” or something to do but a value we intend all employees to uphold as a part of our culture and how we approach our work.