



**Anne Arundel County**  
**Office of Equity & Human Rights**

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2024 - 2026:**  
**THE EQUITY**  
**BLUEPRINT**

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# Introduction

The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion was originally formed in 2021. On July 1, 2023, the office relaunched under a new name, the Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR), with the same mission - to uphold anti-discrimination laws and advance equity in Anne Arundel County.

OEHR's work is supported by [Executive Order 50](#), which was issued by County Executive Steuart Pittman in September 2021, as a commitment to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion as guiding principles and core values for every County workplace, program, activity, contract, and decision. Through this directive, the OEHR is tasked with applying an equity lens to address the legacy of policy inequities and ensure that discrimination of any kind is not supported or promoted as a consequence of governmental policies and initiatives.

This strategic plan is a critical part of our collective vision to make Anne Arundel County "The Best Place - For All." OEHR will continue to meet data-driven goals, implement action-oriented objectives, and yield impactful outcomes in alignment with the office's mission, vision, and core values. This plan will be managed, implemented, and assessed by OEHR staff with coordinated support from the workforce and community; it will serve as a roadmap for the office's ongoing work.

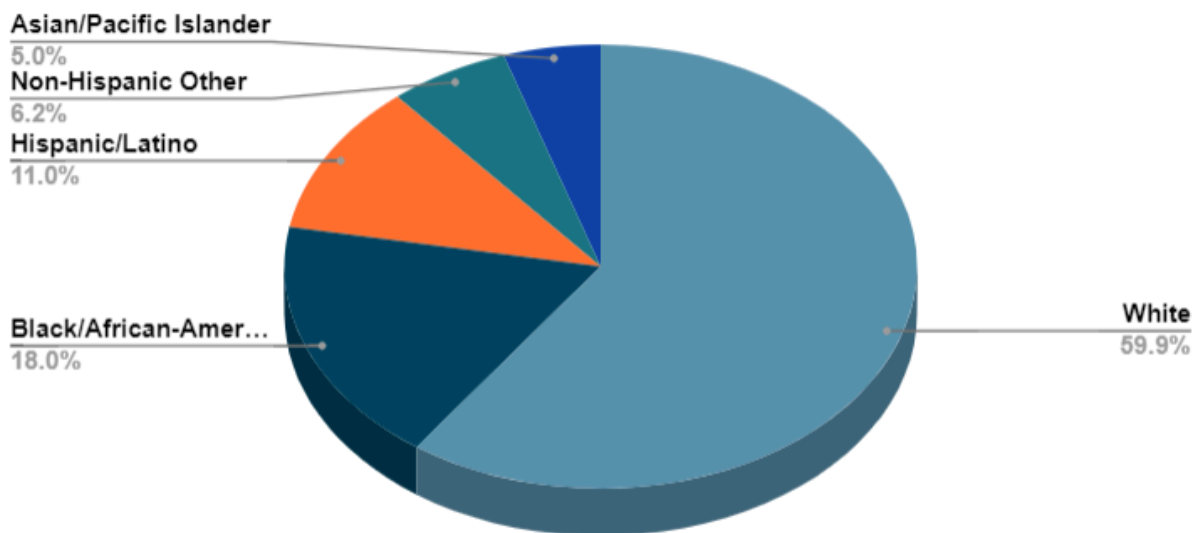


# About Anne Arundel County

With a total population of approximately 603,565 people, Anne Arundel County is the fourth largest jurisdiction in Maryland, with the third largest economy in the state. Low unemployment, high household incomes, and a strong housing market are highlights in the community's diverse and thriving economy.<sup>1</sup> As of June 2023, the County's 1.8% unemployment rate<sup>2</sup> remains lower than the national and state averages at 3.6% and 1.9%, respectively<sup>3</sup>. The median annual household income is about \$121,806 with approximately 72% of community members being homeowners.

Despite these positive indicators, demographics are strongly correlated with the way that community members experience the County. The County's racial/ethnic demographic composition as of 2024 can be seen in the chart below. There are documented disparities in income, rates of homeownership, health outcomes, academic success, and other key determinants of health and well-being.

## Racial/Ethnic Demographic Composition



The Spring 2024 Community Attitudes Survey administered by Anne Arundel Community College reflects current community perceptions. Black/African-American, transgender, and gender non-conforming community members are perceived to experience the highest levels of discrimination (approximately 25%) in the County.<sup>4</sup> Based on the County's total population, this means about 151,900 of our community members are negatively affected by discrimination based on race and gender identity. Unfortunately, this experience transcends racial and gender lines as people who have been involved with the justice system, Hispanic people, and people with physical or mental disabilities also scored high on the scale of perceived discrimination in the County.

The County's recently redesigned workforce dashboard provides insight into the demographics of our workforce, inclusive of leadership level and salary. While the County boasts strong numbers for women in leadership, there are opportunities to enhance recruitment efforts for several underrepresented demographic groups, and to explore wage gaps.

This context informs the Office of Equity and Human Rights' approach to closing gaps in service delivery and operations through policy, procedure, and programmatic development. Understanding the demographic landscape of the community will help OEHR enhance compliance with anti-discrimination laws and integrate equity to improve access for all members of the community.







# Mission

The Office of Equity and Human Rights provides leadership in the development of policies, programs, and procedures that: a) ensure compliance with anti-discrimination laws; and b) integrate equity, access, and inclusivity into County operations.

# Vision

Making Anne Arundel County the Best Place - For All.



# Core Values



## Respect

Due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, and traditions of others when engaging with the community and workforce.



## Responsiveness

The genuine effort to acknowledge and identify reasonable solutions to individual and community needs.



## Local Context

Honoring the inherent value in the history, backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and norms of Anne Arundel County community members and using this information to inform our approaches.



## Accountability

Assume personal and collective responsibility for data-driven goals, objectives, and outcomes for the office.



## Collaboration

Cultivating authentic engagement opportunities within the workforce and community to define, co-create, and implement solutions that address historical challenges.



## Sustainability

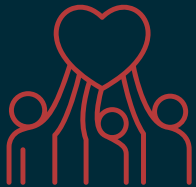
Build sound infrastructure and adopt cultural norms that will increase the longevity of our progress, create space for innovation, and meet the needs of the workforce and community.

# Pillars of Practice

The Office of Equity and Human Rights centers on the following six core functions:

## Accessible & Inclusive Legislation

Identifying gaps in existing laws, policies, and procedures to develop solutions based on the needs of the community.



## Community & Public Engagement

Offering collaborative, equitable, and accessible engagement opportunities to connect with community members who live, work, and conduct business in Anne Arundel County.

## Compliance, Enforcement, & Investigations

Monitoring and managing County anti-discrimination laws and policies to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal guidelines.

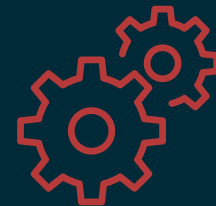


## Data Collection & Analysis

Collecting, disaggregating, and analyzing data that helps provide context for gaps in policies, programs, procedures, and service delivery.

## Internal & Administrative Affairs

Creating and maintaining the infrastructure to support the core functions of the Office of Equity and Human Rights.



## Training, Education, & Development

Developing, facilitating, and assessing educational opportunities throughout the workforce and community.



# Accomplishments

*This section highlights several significant accomplishments successfully achieved by the Office of Equity and Human Rights from 2021-2024.*

## Accessible & Inclusive Legislation

### Language Access Law

- » The law requires all County departments to provide persons with limited English proficiency with equal access to public services and public meetings.
- » OEHR established compliance procedures for departments, and provided technical assistance including annual orientation sessions for the 40+ language access liaisons, and webinars for 175+ staff members and county partners.

### Civil Rights Law

- » Among other things, the law extends the County's anti-discrimination protections to include private employment and public accommodations.

## Community & Public Engagement

### Shepherd-Byrd Grant

- » The County was awarded a four-year, 1.2 million dollar federal grant to address hate bias incidents and crimes. This will involve partnership with Anne Arundel County Police Department, law enforcement agencies throughout the County, and community partners.

### Strategic Partner Network

- » Developed a work group consisting of equity and EEO professionals in government/non-profit organizations around the County.

### Housing Resource Portal

- » Collaborated with Arundel Community Development Services to develop a one-stop online resource directory for housing related resources in Anne Arundel County.

### Engagement on several Boards, Commissions, and Work Groups

- » A list of OEHR's community partners can be found in Appendix 3.

## Compliance, Enforcement, & Investigations

### Investigations

- » Created a multidisciplinary case management team.
- » Investigated and resolved fair housing and employment discrimination complaints reported to OEHR.
- » Audited and documented non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and practices by department.
- » Implemented an online complaint and case management system for all discrimination complaints reported to OEHR.

### Testing

- » Partnered with Arundel Community Development Services and the Equal Rights Center to conduct 50 countywide fair housing tests.

## Data Collection & Analysis

### Countywide EDI Assessment

- » Administered an assessment to 29 departments and non-profit partners to determine the proficiency of leadership and staff with respect to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Assessment data was used to inform and prioritize office initiatives and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

### EEO Audit

- » Collected and reviewed countywide departmental procedures and policies regarding management of EEO complaints

## Training, Education, & Development

### Training and Programmatic Activities

- » Trained nearly 1,000 employees and non-profit collaborators on a range of topics including cultural competence, emotional intelligence, equal employment opportunity laws and best practices, the equity lens, and unconscious bias.
- » Delivered and supported educational programming for employees and residents for designated special emphasis observances, including book studies, expert interviews, archeological site visits, film screenings, and more.
- » Hosted “Social Justice Movie Night” featuring a topical film screening followed by an expert-led discussion.

# Goals





# Objectives

## Engage



- 1
  - Expand training opportunities to educate County employees, partners, and community members on the fundamental principles of equity and equal opportunity.
  - Synthesize resources documenting the history of Anne Arundel County as it relates to equity, equality, and human rights with a focus on highlighting events that positively or negatively impacted marginalized communities.
  - Collaboratively develop, facilitate, and support programs and resources that build awareness of equity and human rights related issues.



## Equip

- 2
  - Deliver high quality data, tools, resources, and frameworks to build capacity for departments to use in assessing and planning for equity.
  - Expand outreach and engagement efforts that leverage community knowledge, expertise, and experiences to solicit feedback, create learning opportunities, and develop tailored responses.
  - Codify procedures for managing internal and external complaints of discrimination.

# Operationalize







- Centralize resources that help departments enhance compliance.
- Centralize resources that help departments apply an equity lens to their respective work areas.
- Implement enforcement procedures for discrimination complaints involving public accommodations and external employers in accordance with the County's recently enacted Civil Rights Law.
- Continue supporting the County's new Procurement Access and Vendor Equity (PAVE) program to increase representation in contracting and enhance capacity-building for SMWBEs.



# Evaluate

- Gather and analyze multi-year, cross-sectional data by repeating surveys and assessments previously conducted throughout the tenure of the current administration.
- Maintain a trend analysis for discrimination complaints and identify supporting training needs.
- Maintain a County Equity Index as a tool to better understand where inequities exist across several indicators in Anne Arundel County.

# Connect with Us!

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Key Terms and Definitions

*The terms and definitions below, though not all encompassing, provide foundational information to effectively and accurately communicate about EEO, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. It is important to note that language constantly evolves based on emerging trends and culture.*

1. **Diversity** - The range of differences in people based on social identities including, but not limited to, race, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, age, ability status, religion, and socioeconomic status. (Variety)
2. **Equality** - Focuses on providing the same resources, access, and opportunities to all people, regardless of their individual or collective needs. This approach does not consider historical barriers that have limited access to resources and opportunity. (Sameness)
3. **Equity** - Focuses on applying targeted and tailored strategies to address the need specific to each community to achieve fair outcomes. This approach recognizes that people have different needs, challenges, and contexts, and therefore require different levels of support. (Fairness)
4. **Inclusion** - The behaviors and social norms that ensure all people feel welcome, respected, and supported to fully participate in an environment. (Representation)
5. **Marginalized Communities** - Groups of people who have historically or presently experienced social, political, and/or economic exclusion and/or discrimination based on their identities.

# Appendix 2

## Endnotes

1. Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation. (2024, August 8). Anne Arundel County Snapshot. County profile: For business: Anne Arundel County AAEDC. <https://www.aedc.org/business/county-profile/>
2. Maryland at a Glance. Maryland Unemployment Rates - by County. (2024, August 5). <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/economy/html/unemployrates.html>
3. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey . U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - Current Population Survey. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/>
4. Economy, Housing, and Crime are Top Issues for County Residents. (2024, April 24). Recent Presentations or Press Releases. Retrieved September 6, 2024, from <https://www2.aacc.edu/csli/AACC-Community-Survey-Spring-2024-Press-Release.pdf>.



# Appendix 3

## Board, Commission, and Work Group Partners

- Anne Arundel County ADA Committee
- Arundel Community Development Services
- Anne Arundel County Human Relations Commission
- Baltimore Metropolitan Council Regional Fair Housing Group
- Caucus of African American Leaders - Fire Department Task Force
- Crownsville Advisory Committee
- Joint Commission on the Opportunity Gap
- LGBTQ+ Coalition
- Maryland Association of Human Relations/Rights Agencies
- Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities
- Non-Profit Center Advisory Committee

