



Racial Equity Initiatives Update

July 1, 2025

Agenda



- Background
- Language Access Plan
- Racial Equity Assessment
- Key Village Progress
- Racial Equity Policy Audit
- Reparations/Reparative Justice
- Human Rights/Community Relations
- Next Steps

Background



In 2024, the Board adopted a series of goals related to Racial Equity including the following key priorities:

- Priority 1: Ensure equitable access to government contracts and services
- Priority 2: Assess and address historical lack of equity
- Priority 3: Support integration and diverse community entry points
- Priority 4: Enhance cultural competency

Background



Priority 1: Ensure equitable access to government services and contracts

- ✓ Create a formal **language access** policy and programming for the Village
- ✓ Complete **Racial Equity Assessment** and implement a Racial Equity Action Strategic Plan
- ✓ **Audit policies** and procedures from a racial equity lens regarding ADA and aging in community accessibility

Language Access Plan



On October 22, 2024, the Village Board approved a Language Access Plan (LAP) designed to ensure individuals with limited English proficiency can have meaningful access to Village Services.

In accordance with the Village's purchasing policy, staff have selected a vendor, inLingo, to provide translation of vital documents and contracted interpretation services. The DEI team will begin training this summer and ensure staff proficiency with inLingo by Q3.

Other next steps include rolling out the VOP in-house interpretation program and partnering with Communications to select a provider for Board meeting interpretation and translation services by Q4 of 2025

Racial Equity Assessment



In February 2023, the Village conducted an RFP for a Comprehensive Racial Equity Community Needs Assessment intended to “understand the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges to racial equity for the community.” Embedded in the RFP were six deliverables including (1) Racial Equity needs Assessment/Study, (2) raw data, (3) Racial Equity Assessment Report, (4) Oak Park Community Advancing Racial equity and Social Justice (OP CARES) Roadmap, and (5) Community Education and Engagement Plan.

On May 8, 2023, the Village Board approved a Professional Services Agreement with the University of Illinois Chicago, via their Greater Cities Institute (GCI), to do the assessment. GCI conducted internal and external research from May 9, 2023 through January 31, 2024, and this research serves as the basis for their findings.

As noted in the report, there were significant research limitations. One of the most impactful was the emergency disaster proclamation approved by the Board on November 2, 2023. Staff capacity to support the project was disrupted, leading to delays in bringing the project to completion and a reduction in intended deliverables.

Lead Investigator on the project, Dr. Kathleen Yang-Clayton will now present a summary of the findings from the 2023 project.

Key Village Progress



Acknowledging Harms

- ✓ Public discussion of findings of the community-led Oak Park Reparations Task Force
- ✓ Board interest in formal apology
- ✓ Investment in Percy L. Julian streetscape
- ✓ Return of Dinner & Dialogue programming via the Community Relations Commission's 2025 work plan

Still to do:

- Formal Apology
- Publicly discuss Reparative Justice opportunities
- Consider amenities to increase inclusion of historically marginalized residents

Data Collection

- ✓ Implementation of Envisio to track data associated with Board Goals and programs
- ✓ Open Data and Transparency Portal in development
- ✓ Updates to CAD/RMS and other internal Village systems

Still to do:

- Public Racial Equity Dashboard

Key Village Progress



Internal/External Communications

- ✓ Adopted a language access plan, identified a partner, in the process of implementing the pilot program
- ✓ Conducting a racial equity policy audit to review existing policies & protocols
- ✓ Implemented Employee Service Plans, enhanced training opportunities for supervisory and frontline staff – both in-person & virtually via Village LMS, and invested in employee special events and wellness activities
- ✓ Updated Non-Union Pay Plan to review and make market-based and internal equity adjustments to compensation
- ✓ Rolled out new website and developing strategic communication plan
- ✓ Key staff participating in International Association for Public Participation training and certification
- ✓ Increasing Civic Engagement via VCO programming & forthcoming Government 101 Program
- ✓ Community Relations Commission modernization and alignment

Still to do:

- Cross-Departmental Racial Equity Working Groups to engage a diverse group of employees in actively advancing equity work
- Revamp organizational and departmental employee onboarding experience

Collaboration & Knowledge Sharing

- ✓ Local Government 2025 collaboration to stand up for Oak Park's ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusivity
- ✓ Local government and partner collaboration to receive Certified Welcoming Designation for immigrant inclusion
- ✓ Collaborative work with Departments and community stakeholders to integrate equity into key Village strategic plans including: Sustainability, Housing, Vision Zero, Urban Forestry, Economic Vitality
- ✓ Tri-agency collaboration around school safety

Still to do:

- Bring back regular meetings between Oak Park Government Equity teams and leaders, including non-profit partners

Racial Equity Policy Audit

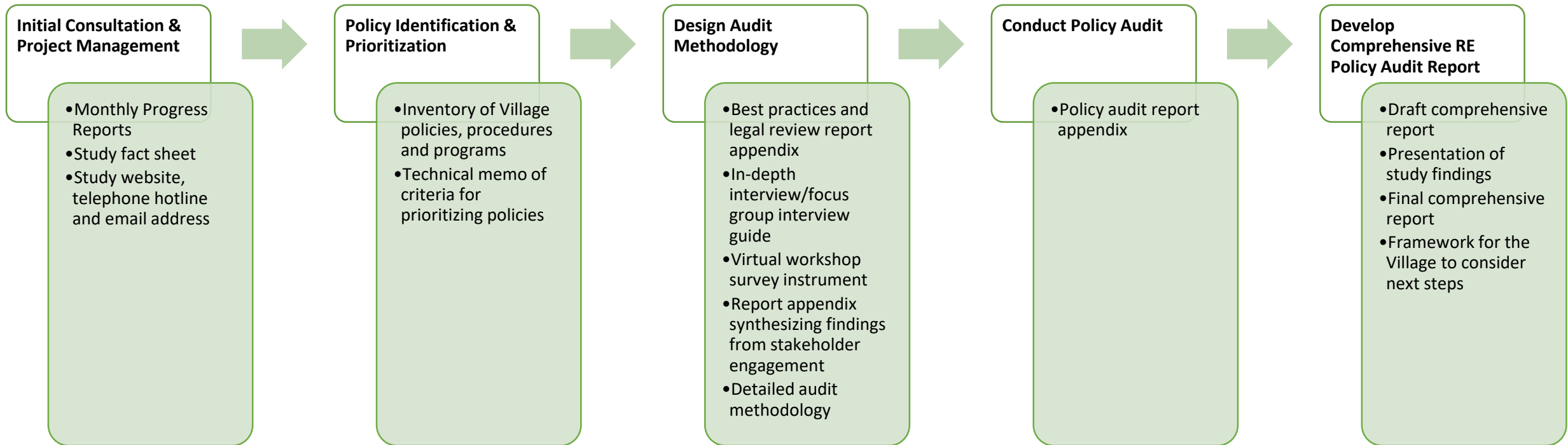


On January 27, 2025, the Village issued an RFP for a Comprehensive Racial Equity Policy Audit. The RFP review committee selected a vendor, Keen Independent Research, and, pending Board feedback, the project will begin this summer.

The policy audit will be conducted with a racial equity lens and include ADA and aging accessibility needs along with other intersectional considerations.

Key policies for review include personnel policies, housing and zoning policies, public safety and policing policies, procurement policies, engagement and communication policies, and other community services and public health policies.

Racial Equity Policy Audit



Racial Equity Policy Audit



This project is estimated to take approximately 6 months.

Following the policy audit, and in consideration of the racial equity needs assessment, staff will bring recommendations for a **Racial Equity Action Strategic Plan** to the Board of Trustees for review.

Background



Priority 2: Assess and Address Historical Lack of Equity

- ✓ Finalize reparations research and evaluation, conduct community educational sessions and provide recommendations for next steps including potential advocacy efforts at the federal and state level
- ✓ Evaluate Village historic commitment to protecting human rights (i.e. current Human Rights Ordinance, associated policies and practices and associated Community Relations division programming)

Reparations/Reparative Justice



The Community-led Oak Park Reparations Task Force last presented to the Board of Trustees on July 16, 2024. At that time, staff committed to continued research into reparations eligibility and identifying next steps.

To date, staff's analysis is that Oak Park does not meet the strict scrutiny standard that would serve as the basis for a municipal reparations program. The Village issued an RFP in January 31, 2025 for additional historical research to identify any other documents or materials that might meet the strict scrutiny standard. The Village received no responses.

While the Village may not meet the standard for a traditional reparations program, that does not mean that the Village cannot acknowledge harm and offer reparative justice-based programs in line with Oak Park's vision for racial equity. Staff hope to begin facilitating community engagement and education sessions in Fall of 2025.

Human Rights/Community Relations



Staff continue to evaluate the Village's Human Rights Ordinance (HRO) to ensure the community's progressive commitment to human rights and dignity are protected. Tonight, the Board will review proposed amendments to the HRO regarding protecting gender affirming care.

Staff have also worked to update the Community Relations Commission (CRC) enabling language and created a clear pathway for the CRC to participate in the Human Rights Ordinance administration via monitoring HRO violations. Staff continue to evaluate baseline services offered by Community Relations division.

Next Steps



Board feedback, particularly regarding the Racial Equity Policy Audit

New Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer, **Kellye Keyes**.



Questions