City of Chicago RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN
Chicago Animal Care & Control (CACC)

Under the City of Chicago's Municipal Code (Ch. 2-4-100), all City of Chicago departments must create and maintain Racial Equity Action Plans (REAPs) "to articulate and guide strategy aimed at advancing equity and making it a permanent pillar in all departmental workstreams." Progress on all REAPs are accounted for annually as a part of the City of Chicago's budget process. This document outlines the components of the REAP and ensures that all strategies are aligned to Chicago's citywide vision: *All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025)*

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THE CITY OF CHICAGO'S DEFINITION OF EQUITY

Equity is both an outcome and a process:

As an **outcome** equity results in fair and just access to opportunity and resources that provide everyone the ability to thrive. Acknowledging the present and historical inequality that persist in our society, equity is a future state we strive to create where identity and social status no longer predestine life outcomes.

As a **process**, equity requires a new way of doing business: one that
(1) Prioritizes access and opportunities for groups who have the greatest need.
(2) Methodically evaluates benefits and burdens produced by seemingly neutral systems and practices.
(3) Engages those most impacted by the problems we seek to address as experts in their own experiences, strategists in co-creating solutions, and evaluators of success.

Further, our focus is on evaluating our own strategies, interventions and resources in a way that prioritizes those who are most negatively impacted by current policies, procedures & practices.

Racial equity focuses on the social construction of race and how it has been used (historically and presently) to unjustly distribute opportunity and resources based on a person's skin color, heritage, ethnicity, and/or national origin. Advancing racial equity requires an analysis of systemic racism inclusive of the ways harm is created at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels. It also requires a commitment to dismantling systems that perpetuate racialized outcomes and rebuild systems that produce systemic inclusion.

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The coordination of the development and implementation of City of Chicago REAPs is led by the Office of Equity and Racial Justice. For more information about REAPs and/or the work of the office visit www.chicago.gov/equity.

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #1

The City of Chicago's Vision: All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025)

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Citywide Priority Area & Desired Result:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: All Chicagoans have a meaningful opportunity to influence City of Chicago programs, policies, and initiatives.

Indicators Examined:

Community Data

Business licenses issued by BACP (number of pet stores, animal hospitals, adoption centers)

Program/Department Data

311 calls broken down by typecode and community area; # of Commission Meetings, # of community outreach events, adoption & redemption participation

Community Feedback and Narratives

Chicago Animal Care & Control examined types of service requests through 311 over a period of two years. While looking at the highest number of calls coming from community areas, it was determined that Roseland and Austin were the largest sources of those calls. Within those two community areas, the majority of service requests were for injured, stray, and vicious animals. The Department began canvassing the neighborhood to understand their experience with animals. The residents of those neighborhoods generally want to know more about the Department and the services offered.

Define the Problem

The number of businesses and public spaces supportive of owning pets varies based on the neighborhood/community area an individual lives. Neighborhoods with more businesses generally have more animal-related businesses and services outside of what CACC offers. As a result, communities with the least amount of support from animal businesses frequently request assistance from CACC. By way of example, in 2021 and 2022, Austin, which has 1 animal-related business, submitted 3,166 service requests for various animal situations, which is more than Lakeview, which has 38 animal-related businesses and submitted 846 service requests for various animal situations. The Austin and Lakeview neighborhoods compare in population but have much different demographics.

Identify Root Causes to the Problem

After analyzing the information collected, it was evident that the two community areas CACC is focusing on showed a clear lack of offerings for pet supportive services as well nearly zero animal-related businesses and resources available to pet owners. Knowing there has been a historical disinvestment from public and private institutions in these areas, we see that "not all Chicagoans have equitable access to the City's dynamic economy. Systemic racism and racial segregation have led to stymied opportunities. There have been decades of disinvestment in neighborhoods where people of color live." (We Will Chicago Plan)

Define Your Department's Opportunity

CACC has an opportunity to proactively engage with the communities with the fewest amount of animal-related services/offerings to keep animals and families connected before a request for service or appointment to surrender.

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #1

Our department will advance the following strategies:

1. Department Strategy: Engage communities with the highest amount of services requests and animal intakes to understand what services are needed before this point

Measures of Impact: Reduction of animals impounded from targeted areas; Reduction of service requests from targeted areas; Increase in pet owners who have what they need to keep their pet

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
1.1 Gather information from communities most impacted by violations and in need of services from CACC	Create surveys to gather information on the needs of community. Attend community events and ward nights in target areas. Have staff attend higher trafficked areas, such as CTA platforms. Meet with veterinary hospitals located within the target area. Provide CACC data to the University of Wisconsin for direct outreach of those impacted by citations, those that have redeemed their animal from CACC, and those that have been to a low-cost clinic.	In process; Full Year 2023	
1.2 Analyze feedback and information collected	Continue to work with the University of Wisconsin to hear what feedback has been provided. Create a document of results. Look for trends between the survey results.	4th Q 2023, 1st Q 2024	
1.3 Determine what additional services CACC can provide or what improvements CACC can make to existing services	Based on the data collected, see what areas of animal ownership/care are struggling within those communities. Come up with a list of what CACC currently can offer and what is beyond the scope of services. Create a slideshow/presentation to report the collected data.	1st Q 2024	

Our department will advance the following strategies:

2. Department Strategy: Increase awareness of animal-related disparities across the City internally and externally and leverage partnerships to meet the needs of communities most impacted.

Measures of Impact: Reduction of animals impounded; Reduction of service requests; Increase in pet owners who have what they need to keep their pet; # of organizations providing services to communities with the fewest animal-related businesses; Animal diversions tracked and monitored

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
2.1 Develop trainings for staff to understand animal-related disparities and implement a more service based approach to address them	Staff involvement in keeping animals with those that care for them. Tracking diversion of animals from shelter intake. Analysis of field services by outside organizations. Training of current Animal Control best practices. Create a new position in field services to support a service-based approach.	In process - 1st Q 2024	
2.2 Engage national and local groups/ organizations to create a list of who can provide support/services for communities most impacted	Come up with a combined list of services currently offered. Identify and share in meetings with key organizational stakeholders to show what CACC has identified as needs within the community. Present slideshow/presentation from 1.3.	1st & 2nd Q 2024	
2.3 Promote/inform the public about affordable pet-related services they can access in their neighborhood	Publish information about services on the website and social media. Revise handouts to reflect offerings.	2nd Q 2024	

2.4 Engage and collaborate with city departments, CACC's Commission, and local organizations to find solutions to creating more pet-related businesses in neighborhoods with very few	Identify stakeholders and/or animal lovers within the community to act as a liaison with the department. Host virtual meetings for participation. Determine what barriers, if any, exist to starting new pet-related businesses and identify solutions to reduce them. Come up with a handout specifically targeting animal-related businesses.	Q1-Q4 2024	

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #1

Our department will advance the following strategies:

3. Department Strategy: Inform and provide education for the public at large and individuals who receive animal-related fines prior to punitive measures

Measures of Impact: # of citations issued, Ratings on experience surveys

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
3.1 Develop education and resources, offer trainings to the public	Build out a new support position who would be responsible for engagement education and training. Create a curriculum/course for humane education. Partner with and deliver training to CPS and communities most impacted by violations.	Q3 2024 - Q1 2025	
3.2 Create an experience survey to understand if the trainings and services offered were helpful	Create a short survey for individuals who participate in training. Assess feedback and implement changes necessary on a quarterly basis.	2025	

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Citywide Priority Area & Desired Result:

EDUCATION: All Chicagoans gain meaningful knowledge and skills to thrive.

Indicators Examined:

Community Data

Median Incomes, Cost of Pet Ownership

Program/Department Data

# of diversions, number of stray calls, animal related illnesses, bite reports, the need for pet vaccine and microchip clinics, requests for help via email or at intake, engagement through social media

Community Feedback and Narratives

Chicago Animal Care & Control examined types of service requests through 311 over a period of two years. While looking at the highest number of calls coming from community areas, it was determined that Roseland and Austin were the largest sources of those calls. The Department began canvassing the community to understand their experience with animals. Though the residents of those neighborhoods knew that the Department exists, many did not know the services offered through the Department and requested an additional focus on some of the areas of the issue (stray or loose animals, medical services).

Define the Problem

The number of businesses and public spaces supportive of owning pets varies based on the neighborhood/community area an individual lives. Neighborhoods with more businesses generally have more animal-related businesses and services outside of what CACC offers. As a result, communities with the least amount of support from animal businesses frequently request assistance from CACC. The high volume of service requests and calls indicates a need for more essential information and resources for communities with limited access. The absence of information, knowledge, and resources around how to care for your pet often results in pet owners relinquishing their animals to CACC's care because they believe that is their only option.

Identify Root Causes to the Problem

After analyzing the information collected, it was evident that the two community areas CACC is focusing on showed a clear lack of offerings for pet supportive services as well nearly zero animal-related businesses and resources available to pet owners. Due to a lack of access to pet supportive

services, animal caretakers in the community are left without access to the needs of the animals and without knowledge and services from local businesses. Additionally, pet ownership does come at a cost. In 2021 the annual cost of owning a dog was $1,391, and $1,149 for a cat per the ASPCA. Data shows that the current median incomes in Austin and Roseland are between $31,000 and $37,000, with 31% and 37%, respectively, earning less than $25,000 annually. Due to low income and lack of access to care, it is clear that the cost of pet ownership becomes a barrier for families to retain their pets.

Define Your Department's Opportunity

While there is no direct correlation between a persons income level and the love and care they will provide for their pet, CACC is committed to sharing knowledge and support to assist pet owners in their communities. CACC has an opportunity to proactively provide information and training to communities with the fewest amount of animal related services/offerings to keep animals and families connected before a request for service or appointment to surrender.

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #2

Our department will advance the following strategies:

1. Department Strategy: Develop a framework to advertise information in the community to foster best practices in responsible animal husbandry - e.g: adequate nutrition, supplies, basic training, enrichment, medical needs

Measures of Impact: # of priority communities reached, # of needs that can be reached

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
1.1 Look at responses received from community engagement by community area	From the data collected, determine what type of services, offerings, and support the community is requesting. Breakdown needs by community area. Prioritize which are most feasible/accessible.	4th Q 2023 - 1st Q 2024	
1.2 Determine what resources CACC can offer and what other resources are needed	Identify each community needs based on the feedback and service request data. Pinpoint how resources are going to be managed, given, and budgeted. Seek partnerships with organizations that can fill the resource gaps.	1st & 2nd Q 2024	
1.3 Create content to share out to the public	Develop ideas to generate knowledge sharing within the community. Discuss options with stakeholders and/or animal lovers within the community. Create handouts, e-learnings, short videos, in-person training, and staff guides. Find locations to host and provide access to our information. Determine the best way of getting information out digitally. Come up with a schedule of how often training will be.	2nd Q - 4th Q 2024	

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #2

Our department will advance the following strategies:

2. Department Strategy: Share programming with community members and other key stakeholders

Measures of Impact: Attendance to trainings, # of people reached on social media and website, # of priority communities reached, amount of support/diversion tracked

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
2.1 Internal Training	Discuss and open up conversations with staff about the disparities that exist in the city. Build internal infrastructure, including utilizing a new support position that would oversee staff in ways of engagement, education, and training. Ongoing staff training, including meetings, one on one role-playing, scenario-based simulations, and handouts.	2nd Q 2024 - 2025	
2.2 Determine best way to disseminate content to target audience	Identify locations within priority communities where information can be accessible to community members. Reach out to other City Departments/sister agencies, Aldermanic Offices, partners, and various community organizations to spread the information. Pull in "the people on the ground" in the communities to assist.	4th Q 2024	
2.3 Launch the programming in priority communities	Re-engage with members of the community. Disemminate the programming to partners who agreed to share and among those in the community.	2025	

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #2

Our department will advance the following strategies:

3. Department Strategy: Assess if resources are meeting the needs of community

Measures of Impact: Use requests for service and intake data to determine success, amount of support/diversions given and offered

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
3.1 Compare macro-level department data from post and pre-program sharing	Compare requests for service and intake data to determine if numbers are going down (i.e., fewer calls for injured animals, fewer animals coming in from those priority communities, etc)	3rd Q 2025	
3.2 Evaluate data metrics for priority communities that received resources	Use intake data and service request data to determine if animals coming in had access and utilized the resources that were offered. (i.e., if microchips were offered in the priority area, does CACC see more animals coming in microchipped from that area). Analyze diversion/support statistics.	3rd Q 2025	
3.3 Follow up with surveys/feedback	Ask the community and stakeholders if they are noticing an improvement in issues related to pet ownership. Create a survey asking for feedback. Fine-tune and adjust as needed.	4th Q 2025 - 2026	

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

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Citywide Priority Area & Desired Result:

PUBLIC SAFETY: All Chicagoans are safe across the city and have trusting relationships with law enforcement and first responders.

Indicators Examined:

Community Data

Community trust

Program/Department Data

Fine & fees associated with citations, # of citations, zip codes citations are issued

Community Feedback and Narratives

The Department began canvassing the priority communities to understand their experience with Animal Control (See Priority #1). The feedback received showed that many members of the public were unclear of the functions of the Department, that there is a need for support on animal related issues, and communities wanted the Department to be more engaging. One community member stated it simply: "Show up. Speak up. Talk to us."

Define the Problem

Chicago residents still see Animal Control Officers as the 'dog police, dog catcher, dog pound', with the purpose of capturing animals and seeking out violations of animal related laws. Unfortunately, much of the language used in the Municipal Code the department follows is based upon enforcement and punitive based approaches, suggesting the departments only option is to seek out violations of the law. CACC wants to break that stigma and be known as a resource for helping Chicago residents with the animals they care for.

Identify Root Causes to the Problem

After looking deeper into the role of Animal Control in Chicago, the department refers to its governing chapter of the Municipal Code, section 7-12. The language used within the code further verifies that the purpose of the department is to act as an enforcement agency. Looking all the way back into the mid 1800's, "dog catchers" were charged with the duty of picking up and killing stray dogs to address public health and safety concerns,

such as rabies. Additionally, dog catchers would patrol the streets looking for unlicensed dogs to collect fees from their owners for the return of their beloved companions. These practices caused fear and disdain for those working in the role for years to come.

Define Your Department's Opportunity

CACC hopes to build community trust to not necessarily be seen as law/code enforcement and instead as service providers. CACC has an opportunity to shift the paradigm by embracing a more restorative-based approach versus a punishment-based one. By changing departmental policies and procedures related to enforcement of the Municipal Code (Section 7-12) for a first-time offense, the department's staff can instead offer education and resources prior to punitive measures (i.e., not issuing a citation for a violation of the Municipal Code). CACC will provide staff with training on these new or revised policies and procedures.

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

Our department will advance the following strategies:

1. Department Strategy: Change language in the Municipal Code (Section 7-12) to ensure department policies are more conducive to a support-based approach and education rather than enforcement for first time offenses.

Measures of Impact: Municipal code adopts language that is supportive rather than punitive

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
1.1 Review existing municipal code (7-12)	Look at language of each ordinance. Based on feedback from community engagement, determine what needs clarification or revision to align. Create draft of proprosed changes. Prioritize which codes to propose changes on.	3rd Q 2023 - 1st Q 2024	
1.2 Look into various avenues to propose ordinance changes	Determine who we would need to engage. Decide which method is most feasible and realistic between various avenues of the proposal (i.e., budget management, submit introduction memos, and/or work with alderperson or mayor).	3rd Q 2023 - 1st Q 2024	
1.3 Make recommendations for change and assess how to move forward based on outcome	Propose ordinance amendments via route options from 1.2.	3rd Q 2023 - 4th Q 2024	

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

Our department will advance the following strategies:

2. Department Strategy: Review, consolidate, and update department Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) so that internal procedures guide department staff, resulting in a positive, supportive climate.

Measures of Impact: # of policies produced/updated, # of citations issued

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
2.1 Review existing language, policies, procedures, SOPs	See what feedback from Priority #1 provided as it relates to enforcement and the public image of the Department. Generate ideas on how to improve policies (for example: build in a tiered process for handling enforcement, based on level of severity). Determine what SOPs can be consolidated.	4th Q 2023 & 1st Q 2024	
2.2 Incorporate in ideas from community and through exploring current best practices	Look at how other animal controls work within the community. Determine partners and other stakeholders to assist in the process of updating, and defining. Ask community how they want us to engage with them. Ensure practices are equitable.	1st Q & 2nd Q 2024	
2.3 Develop or update policies and practices which the department wants to adopt	Create and/or update SOPs/policies/procedures keeping in mind and including all information from Priority #1 and Priority #2 and those most negatively impacted	2nd Q - 4th Q 2024	

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN: Priority #3

Our department will advance the following strategies:

3. Department Strategy: Socialize policies and procedures among staff to build and improve relationships within community

Measures of Impact: Community feedback through 311 Citizen Comments, emails, social media

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
3.1 Build an infrastructure to share updates to department policies and procedures with staff	Engage staff in the process. Determine various ways updates can be shared with staff (i.e., all staff meetings, emails, and training created). Continue education or refresher training annually.	1st Q & 2nd Q 2024	
3.2 Training staff on procedures, policies	Provide staff with the tools and knowledge from Priority #2 and Priority #3 to know the options to offer support over jumping to punitive measures. Encourage and reward positive interactions and feedback. Build into the onboarding of new staff.	2nd Q 2024 - 2025	
3.3 Collect data to capture information from the front desk and field to understand if departmental changes have positively impacted the community	Develop annual report that shows impact of community including key statistics (field, shelter, support), training updates, policy updates	4th Q 2025 - 2026	