



ACCESS, COMMUNITY & ENGAGEMENT QUADRENNIAL REVIEW 2022-2025









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QUADRENNIAL REVIEW

Since 2021, the Office of Equity & Inclusion (OEI) worked to create equitable workspaces by producing programming and initiatives to include

- Three equity, inclusion, & belonging surveys
- More than 20 agency wide workshops
- Three seasons of podcast/audio learning content winning a Silver 2024 Anthem Award
- More than 26 DEI observance events
- Three speed mentorship programs
- Ten Sexual Harassment Prevention Trainings

Since 2021, the Equal Employment Opportunities Office worked to ensure that all employees and job applicants were treated fairly and equitably as it

- Conducted more than 800 intakes for investigation
- Processed 9,116 reasonable accommodations
- Conducted trainings with other numerous city agencies, which were attended by more than 50,000 city employees
- Participated in 16 DEI observance events

Since 2021, the Employee Programs Office worked to enhance staff well-being and work experience as they

- Supported more than 30 agency heritage events
- Promoted more than 50 Blood Drive events
- Hosted three Employee Excellence Programs, which honored more than 700 staff
- Hosted two Annual Employee Resource Group Expos, which connected more than 250 staff to resources
- Workwell Health and Wellness Activities

The following are office highlights from 2022-2024, showcasing the impactful programming hosted or supported throughout the years.

2022

AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE-BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENT

In February 2022, the DSS-HRA-DHS African American Heritage Committee with support from Employee Programs, hosted their annual Black History Month event. The theme this year was “Black Health and Wellness,” and “A Musical Journey of the African American Experience. The keynote address was given by Dr. Olusimbo Ige, Assistant Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Health Equity Capacity Building at New York’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

5-DAY EQUITY & INCLUSION CHALLENGE FOR AAPI HERITAGE MONTH

In May 2022, OEI issued a 5-day equity and inclusion challenge in honor of AAPI Heritage month. The challenge was to spend a few minutes each day learning and getting a better understanding of the equity issues that individuals in the AAPI community face daily.

DA CELEBRATION PANEL

In July 2022, OEI in the collaboration with the Office of Disability hosted a virtual event in recognition of the 32nd anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). The event included a screening of Signing Black in America and a guest speaker from the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities.

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLKIT RELEASE

In July 2022, OEI issued a racial equity toolkit. The toolkit was created to increase shared understanding of racial equity and inclusion. It is important to clearly define the terms we use in conversations. It is also important to be aware of how and why dimensions become racist and ways we can create change.

JUNE-SAFE SPACES

OEI hosted this session highlighting interactive practices to understand the LGBTQ+ community and how employees can be more welcoming in the workplace.

Participants completed the following learning objectives: How to increase cultural competency around working with LGBTQ+ colleagues and how to become more aware to issues that people in the LGBTQ+ community face. In addition, participants learned how to increase awareness about communicating with colleagues and clients about SOGIE to create a more inclusive space.

DSS VETERANS DAY EVENT

In November 2022, OEI with support from Employee Programs, hosted a Veterans Day celebration and resource fair in honor of staff members who identify as veterans, current U.S. service members, military family members, and to further celebrate Veterans Month. Featured guest speakers for the event included NYC Department of Veterans Services Commissioner James Hendon, U.S. Coast Guard NY Sector Commander Capt. Zeita Merchant, Model and U.S. Air Force veteran Cyrene Renee, and Boxer and U.S. Army veteran Boyd Melson. The event was followed by a resource fair featuring representatives from NYC Department of Veterans Services, Manhattan VA Campus, VA Manhattan Regional Office, and The Staten Island Vet Center.

2023

TONE POLICING AND CODE-SWITCHING

On January 24, 2023, OEI hosted a Tone Policing and Code-Switching virtual fireside chat and panel discussion under “Navigating through Toxic Environments.” The OEI team presented, followed by a fireside chat on tone-policing featuring Karen St. Hilaire, DSS Chief of Staff & Kimi Kang, CEO of Alchemist Beauty. The program ended with a panel discussion on code-switching featuring Mark Neal, DSS Chief People Officer, and Brent Whitfield, DSS Director of LGBTQI Affairs, and Won Palisol, adjunct professor at Columbia University. More than 150 employees attended the online event.

WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

On March 6, 2023, OEI with support from Employee Programs, hosted The NYC DSS-HRA-DHS Women’s History Month Celebration under the theme “Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Story.” The event started with a presentation by ACE on women in city government. Guest speakers included Claire Graves, Executive Director of the Webby Media Group, Mayte Carvalho, author of “Persuasion: Practical Guide,” and Emelyn Stuart, owner of Stuart Cinema & Cafe. OEI hosted a panel discussion that featured Cindy Hsu, CBS anchor and reporter, and Dr. Alicia Williams, Vice President, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Saks. The event concluded with several poem readings by DSS HRA DHS staff. An agency Women’s History Month Celebration poetry book was published later that month. More than 125 employees attended the event.

67TH UNITED NATIONS CSW “HOLY PROSTITUTION” FILM SCREENING & PANEL

On March 10, 2023, members of the OEI team attended the 67th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) event titled “Holy Prostitution.” The event featured a documentary that addressed the discrimination and oppression of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Following the film, Her Royal Majesty Queen Angelique Monet of Eti-Oni provided key remarks and hosted the panel discussion. Toward the end of the program, OEI gave a short presentation on its work to foster gender equity for employees.

NYC DSS HRA DHS EXCELLENCE STAFF AWARDS

On May 5, 2023, Employee Programs hosted the Excellence Staff Awards. The event began with remarks by Commissioner Park and included a breakfast. Awards were presented to winners in the following categories: The Lifetime Achievement Award, The Eagle Award, The Cross Collaboration Award, The Helping Hands Award, and The Staff Champion Award.

CARIBBEAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

On June 30, 2023, the DSS-HRA-DHS Caribbean American Heritage Committee, in collaboration with Employee Programs, hosted the Caribbean American Heritage Month Celebration. The event featured a keynote address from Dr. Ken Irish-Bramble and Trevor Fraser. Singing and dance performances were given by Alejandra “Mama Caribbean” George and Winston Hoppie. More than 140 employees attended the event.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SPEED MENTORSHIP PROGRAM (MANAGERS)

From July 24 to August 2, 2023, OEI hosted the first-ever Inclusive Leadership Development Speed Mentorship Program for managers (M1-M2). Day 1 started with a mentoring kick-off session, followed by a career development and DEI workshop. On Day 2, participants attended several group mentoring sessions. On Day 3, participants were involved in one-on-one mentorship sessions with the commissioner and program chiefs. On Day 4, OEI hosted a mentorship networking event, with opening remarks from Commissioner Molly Park and participants receiving certificates for completing the program.

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MARSHALL PLAN FOR MOMS TASK FORCE

In February, members of OEI participated in a Marshall Plan for Moms Task Force meeting with the Commission on Gender Equity. Created by Local Law 99 of 2022, The Marshall Plan for Moms Task Force brings together a minimum of 17 leaders from City agencies and offices, advocates, and experienced community members to support New York City’s working parents and caregivers. The Task Force will conduct research culminating in a report and recommendations on policies and issues.

HOURLY OF POWER LEARNING SERIES

In April, OEI and City of New York Law Department Diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity Office hosted a 5-day Diversity Week “Hour of Power” Lunch and Learn Workshop series for New York Law Department staff. Presentations included Dimensions of Racism, Applying a Gender Lens, Social Emotional Learning, Inclusive Environment Systems, and Psychological Safety. More than 200 participants attended the weeklong event.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY/IMPOSTER SYNDROME WORKSHOP

In May, OEI hosted a virtual workshop on Psychological Safety and Imposter Syndrome. The workshop provided insight into psychological safety is and its importance within the workplace. The team also discussed how imposter syndrome can lead to increased risks of depression, anxiety, and burnout. The team shared resources with attendees at the end of the online event. More than 100 people attended the online event.

UNEQUAL GROUND WORKSHOP AND REPORT RELEASE

In July, The Office of Equity & Inclusion attended a Women Creating Change workshop. The workshop's theme was "Unequal Ground – Advancing Economic and Civic Equity in New York's Workforce" and a report economic barriers report was shared. In collaboration with The New School Center for New York City Affairs, the report highlighted the structural barriers contributing to ongoing gender pay disparities across the city. The event featured several speakers including, Carmen De La Rosa, a New York City Council Member, Senator Jessica Ramos, Chair of the Committee on Labor, New York State Senate, Dr. Michelle Holder, Associate Professor of Economics at John Jay College, and Jeanna M. Victor, Executive Director, NYC Equal Employment Practices Commission.

DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE WORKPLACE LIAISON BREAKFAST

In October, members of OEI attended a Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Workplace Liaison Breakfast, hosted by the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. During the event, Elizabeth Saylor, Citywide Director of the Employment Law Unit at the Legal Aid Society, led a presentation on Executive Order 85 related laws and resources. Participants were given the opportunity to engage in an overview of how to help implement NYC DV/GBV workplace policies.

CULTURALLY COMPETENCY TRAINING

In December, OEI created an eLearning training, "Become a Culturally Competent Leader," which is available via the Absorb platform. This training equips managers with the necessary skills and knowledge to lead in diverse and inclusive workplaces. The training provides valuable insights into cultural competency, effective communication across cultures, and best practices for fostering inclusive environments. To date, more than 60% of the agency's managerial workforce have completed the online course.

After several years of hosting events, amassing feedback from Equity & Belonging Surveys, engaging staff throughout the agency and meeting with senior leaders from different program areas, OEI, EEO, and Employee Programs reevaluated it's programming and report mechanisms.

Based upon feedback and recommendations from executive leadership, the Office of Equity & Inclusion (OEI), Equal Employment Opportunities Office, and Employee Programs Office, determined that a transition to a consolidated department will establish the necessary infrastructure to ensure both internal and external stakeholders continue to have a voice in work environments and meet the future needs of the agency.

ESTABLISHMENT OF ACE

As of July 1, 2025, the Office of Equity & Inclusion (OEI) and Equal Employment Opportunities Office (EEO) were combined into the Office of Access, Community and Engagement (ACE). Departments within The Office of Access, Community and Engagement (ACE) include:

EMPLOYEE PROGRAMS

Lead by Director Tracy Mack, provides oversight and guidance to the agency's Employee Resource and Heritage groups, as well as plans and coordinates agency events and initiatives such as:

- Blood Drives
- Excellence Program
- Commissioner Assignments
- ERG/Heritage Events
- Special Meetings and Retreats
- Trainings
- Lunch & Learns
- Toy Drives

CHANGE INITIATIVES & COMPLIANCE

Lead by Director Shaquiea Sykes, this department creates, implements, and monitors mandatory training programs aimed at raising awareness about sexual harassment prevention, as well as equity and inclusion. The department focuses on preventing discrimination through educational outreach and technical assistance. In addition, this area compiles reports to ensure compliance with all relevant local laws and executive orders. Mandated diversity, inclusion, and EEO trainings include trainings required by local laws, mayoral executive orders, or City policy, such as, but not limited to, Everybody Matters: EEO and Diversity & Inclusion Training for NYC Employees required through Local Law 121 (2021) and The Power of Inclusion in compliance with Mayoral Executive Order 16 (2016).

ENGAGEMENT & ACCESS

Lead by Director Gregory Williams, this department is dedicated to the creation of agency work environments that are free from unlawful discrimination, ensure all staff have a fair opportunity to participate and thrive in their workspaces, increase work productivity, promote agency succession planning goals, and collaborate with agency partners to foster inclusive spaces. In addition, the department works to implement trainings and compile reports to maintain compliance with New York City Local Law 45 & New York City Executive Order 85.

EEO COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS DEPARTMENT

Led by Director Dennis Whinfield, this department facilitates the reporting, investigation and resolution of complaints related to discrimination and harassment based on protected categories by conducting thorough investigations, interviewing witnesses, gathering evidence, and making informed decisions regarding the validity of the claims.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS DEPARTMENT

Led by Director Monique Quinones-Jackson, this department receives and reviews reasonable accommodation requests from employees, interns, temps, and applicants, with disabilities, religious needs, status as a victim of domestic violence, sex offenses, stalking and for pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition including lactation needs by gathering necessary documentation, and verifying if the individual qualifies for a reasonable accommodation under ADA guidelines and applicable policies.

OVERALL GOAL

The goal of The Office of Access, Community & Engagement is to develop a workforce that values cultural competence and intersectionality while ensuring adherence to City policies and procedures related to equal opportunity and non-discrimination, as well as relevant federal and state statutes and regulations. We achieve this by:

- Establishing an infrastructure that allows staff at all levels to participate in shaping workplace systems, including career development, training, and policies.
- Fostering collaboration, coordination, and prioritization of engagement efforts across the entire agency.
- Design, manage, and implement engagement strategies aimed at promoting racial and economic justice, both internally and externally.
- Review and process reasonable accommodation requests from employees, interns, temps, and applicants, gathering necessary documentation, and verifying if the individual qualifies for a reasonable accommodation under ADA guidelines and applicable policies.
- Conducting ongoing compliance reviews and compile the appropriate necessary reports.
- Facilitate the reporting, investigation and resolution of complaints related to discrimination and harassment based on protected categories by conducting thorough investigations, gathering evidence, and making informed decisions regarding the validity of the claims.
- Offer workshops to educate staff and community members about equity, social justice issues, and the barriers faced by marginalized groups.
- Developing programs that uphold or honor and integrate the cultural backgrounds of the communities we serve, ensuring that our services are relevant and appropriate.



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2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

Over the course of 2025, The Office of Access, Community & Engagement hosted several workshops and trainings, supported agency ERGs and heritage groups, and collaborated with several city agencies on producing inclusive programming,

MLK JR DAY CELEBRATION

In January, the Engagement and Access Department and Change Initiatives and Compliance Department hosted a virtual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. program celebrating the life and societal contributions made by the civil rights leader. The online event featured a presentation and keynote addresses presented by Barry Wittenstein, Author, "A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation, Doreen Rappaport, Author, "Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," Michael Ward, Actor, "For the Love of Mahalia" (musical), and Lisa Crayton, Author, "Only Light Can Do That: 60 Days of MLK – Devotions for Kids." More than 60 people attended the virtual event.

INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE LEGAL TEAMS: STRATEGIES FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUITY IN OUR PRACTICE WORKSHOP

The Office of Access, Community & Engagement and New York City Law Department hosted a "Diverse Legal Teams: Strategies for Diversity and Equity in our Practice" course for 55 general counsels from several NYC agencies. The course taught participants how to examine strategies and policies that help promote and support diversity and the elimination of bias in the workforce. The course also included examples of how general counsels could encourage new perspectives, promote equity, and better work products. The course finished with a final discussion on agency policies and strategies to further diversity, equity and inclusion goals in line with the New York City Charter, Chapter 78 on Equity. Participants earned 2 CCU credits in Diversity, Inclusion and Elimination of Bias. More than 100 people attended the event.

THE GRIEA PROJECT WORKSHOP PART 5

The Engagement and Access Department and Change Initiatives and Compliance Department hosted a virtual The GRIEA Project workshop on The Empowered Workplace: Strategies for Building Inclusive Teams. The workshop covered what are inclusive pathways within the workplace, how to further develop inclusive pathways and sustainable levels of communication, trust, and inclusiveness (CTI), and best practices on fostering productivity for workers.

The workshop ended with a discussion on best practices to establish tools for worksites to promote talent development and workplace innovation. More than 40 people attended the virtual event.

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP EXPO

In February, the Employee Programs Department hosted an Employee Resource Group (ERG) Expo. The expo included various presentations from several ERGs to include, DSS Wellness, Latino Heritage Committee, Rainbow Committee, Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Committee, Diversity Book Club, Toastmasters, Parenting & Caregiving (P.A.C.E) and the Caribbean Heritage Committee. The event promoted the agency's commitment to celebrating the diversity of its workforce and created a space where employees from different backgrounds could connect. More than 120 people attended the event.

AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE-BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

The DSS-HRA-DHS African American Heritage Committee with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted their annual Black History Month celebration under the theme "Hidden Figures, African Americans and Labor." The event featured several musical performances and a keynote address by Erica Ford, Author, "The Peace Doctor's Playbook: 365 Days to A Stronger, More Powerful You." More than 250 attended the event.

THE GRIEA PROJECT WORKSHOP PART 6

The Engagement and Access Department and Change Initiatives and Compliance Department hosted a virtual The GRIEA Project workshop on Mastering Mindfulness and Enhancing Team Perspectives. The workshop covered what mindfulness is and how it impacts the workplace. The team talked about common biases, schemas, and behaviors. The workshop continued with discussions on understanding people's different perspectives and the social cognitive learning theory. Lastly, participants learned about trait perspectives and how to practice non-judgmental observation in the workplace. More than 50 people attended the virtual event.

INAUGURAL INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

In March, the Engagement and Access Department and Employee Programs Department hosted an International Women's Day Celebration that focused on the theme "Accelerate Action" and featured guest speakers who included Tara Orr, CEO of Femme X Boxing, Shelley Wade, a Radio/Podcast Host with 94.7 FM The Block, Doreen Rappaport, Author, "Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The event also featured a EO85 training session by the NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. More than 140 people attended the event.

WOMEN WORKING IN CITY GOVERNMENT VIRTUAL EVENT

The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department hosted a Women Working in City Government virtual event under the theme “Moving Forward Together: Women Educating & Inspiring Generations.” The event featured a panel that was moderated by Danielle Barrett Assistant Commissioner & Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection. Panelists included Joslyn Carter, a DHS Administrator with the NYC Department of Homeless Services, Christina Curry Commissioner of the NYC Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, Anne del Castillo, a Senior Policy Advisor of Creative Sector Strategy with the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, and Mirta Radkov, an Assistant Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Revenue with the NYC Department of Social Services. More than 90 people attended the virtual event.

WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION 2025

The Engagement and Access Department and Employee Programs Department hosted a Women’s History Month Celebration that focused on the theme “Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations” The featured guest speakers for the event included Commissioner Sideya Sherman, NYC Chief Equity Officer/ Mayors Office of Equity & Racial Justice, Dr. Rita Kakati Shah, Author, *The Goddess of Go-Getting: Your Guide to Confidence, Leadership, and Workplace Success*, Ashley-Lauren Elrod, CEO, Visionary Women Productions, Lisa Crayton Contributing Author, *“Our Voices: Issues Facing Black Women in America,”* and Wasidah Francois, a Holistic Health & Wellness Specialist. The event also featured a NYC Her Future workshop, which was provided by the agency’s Executive Director Nathifa Forde. More than 140 people attended the event.



EEO OFFICE QUARTER DELIVERABLES

During the first quarter of 2025, the Equal Employment Opportunities Office worked processed 663 reasonable accommodation requests and the EEO Complaint Investigation Department conducted 72 intakes, completing 10 investigations.

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY MONTH

In April, the Engagement and Access Department with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted the agency's first ever "Celebrate Diversity Month Extravaganza," which featured guest speakers and workshops centered on boosting cultural awareness, creating spaces of inclusion, and fostering belonging where people feel valued. Guest speakers included Kenya Gipson, Director of Community & Culture with Hot 97, Tseyang Tenzin, a Senior Manager of Strategic and Community Projects with NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Christopher Williams, CEO of Heart, Body, & Soul, Boyd Melson, former Professional Boxer, and Wasidah Francois, a Holistic & Wellness Specialist / Sound Bath Practitioner. The event also included presentations by the Rainbow Committee, Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Committee and a Sound Bath session.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WORKSHOPS

The Engagement and Access Department hosted several "Engaging Communities" workshops throughout the city to cultivate inclusive climates and ensure employees feel they are being heard. The discussion topics for workshops included: The Behavior Ideation Model, Cultural Competency in the workplace, The pillars of Equity and how staff can foster inclusive work environments.

The following agency sites hosted the team ...

300 Skillman Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11211

175-10 88th Ave
Jamaica, NY 11421

215 Bay Street
Staten Island, NY 10301

EMPOWERING AUTISM AWARENESS IN DIVERSE POPULATIONS VIRTUAL EVENT

The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department hosted a virtual discussion about “Empowering Autism Awareness in Diverse Populations.” Panelists Heather Clarke, an Instructional Support Specialist at the NYU Nest Program; Molly Perez, Ed.M., Instructional Educational Specialist at Nest; and Nicole Russell, Founder of Autistic Adults NYC, participated in a discussion about the unique experiences of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), particularly within homeless populations. The discussion addressed various communication styles found in these groups and offered strategies for staff to improve communication with clients and one another when interacting with individuals who may have autism. It also explored how discrimination affects individuals with autism, particularly in relation to race and gender. The goal of this program was to enhance understanding and awareness of the intersectionality between autism, homelessness, race, and gender issues. A total of 70 attendees participated in the event.

EXCELLENCE AWARDS

In May, the Employee Programs Department hosted an Excellence Awards program featuring a presentation of awards to include the Eagle Awards, Cross-Collaboration Awards, Helping Hands Awards, Impact Awards and Lifetime Achievement Awards. The ceremony honored more than 125 employees who exemplified the Excellence values of Service, Respect, Transparency, and Accountability. More than 200 people attended the event.

10TH ANNUAL HEALING THE HURT CONFERENCE

The Engagement and Access Department attended the 10th annual Healing the Hurt Conference, which hosted the event under the theme, Mind & Body in CommUNITY: Empowerment Through Culture, Connection, & Care. The conference offered interactive workshops and networking session opportunities to build connections. More than 170 people attended the event.

SPEED MENTORSHIP REUNION

The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department hosted an Inclusive Leadership Development Program Speed Mentorship reunion for program graduates. More than 60 program alumni engaged in additional career development workshops, one on one mentoring sessions, group mentoring sessions, and a networking event.

ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

The Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Committee with the support from the Employee Programs Department and The Engagement and Access Department hosted their annual AANHPI Heritage Celebration under the theme “A Legacy of Leadership and Resilience.”

The event featured a keynote address by NYC Taxi Limousine Commission Commissioner David Do and performances by Cebuanos Engaging in Building Unity (CEBU) Inc., The Chen Sisters Dance Troupe, The Central Asian Trio, The Vasudha Dance Academy, Mr. Zhisheng Zhang from the Chinese Music Ensemble of New York, a martial arts demonstration by the USA Shaolin Temple. The event ended with a panel discussion moderated by Rebecca Chew, an HRA Chief Program Officer, which included Joo Han, Deputy Director of the Asian American Federation and Felicia Singh, Director of Policy and Government Relations for the Coalition of Asian American Families and Children (CACF). More than 155 people attended the event.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP

The Engagement and Access Department hosted an “Engaging Communities” workshop at the 847 Barretto Ave Bronx, NY 10474 site to cultivate an inclusive work climate and educate staff on available ACE resources. The discussion topics for workshops included: The social behavior change process, and more than 55 staff members attended the event.

QUEENS PRIDE PARADE

In June, the Rainbow Committee with support from the Employee Programs Department coordinated staff participation in the Queens Pride Parade in Jackson Heights. More than 15 staff attended the parade.

ACTIVATE CONFERENCE 2025

The Engagement and Access Department attended the New York City Public Schools ACTIVATE Conference 2025, which was hosted by the Organizational Development, Talent and Culture Department. Pivotal topics included, creating more inclusive school environments, building community as leaders, unpacking ways to become better allies to historically marginalized groups, and fostering belonging through conflict. Educators and participants had the opportunity to earn CTLE credits by participating in sessions around practical strategies and evidence-based approaches to cultivating inclusive cultures.



JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

The DSS-HRA-DHS African American Heritage Committee with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted its annual Juneteenth Celebration under the theme “A Reckoning: Reclaiming the past, Remembering Black voices, and Reshaping the future.” The event featured a keynote address by Reverend Dr. Noel P. Simms, Pastor and CEO of Immersion Ministries, a musical performance by vocalist Lynette Rhettt and an exercise presentation by fitness coach Ashley Ntansha. During the event, Karen St. Hilaire, DSS Chief of Staff, received a Distinguished Service Award. More than 130 staff attended the event.

CARIBBEAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

The DSS-HRA-DHS the Caribbean American Heritage Committee with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted its annual Caribbean American Heritage Month Celebration under the theme “Celebrating Us.” The event featured a keynote address by Trevor Fraser, a teacher of Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication and Business Communication at Adelphi University, and musical performances by Kaisokah Moko Jumbies, a stilt dancing group, and the Haitian band Carimi. More than 160 people attended the event.

EEO OFFICE QUARTER DELIVERABLES

During the second quarter of 2025, the Equal Employment Opportunities Office processed 607 reasonable accommodation requests, and the Investigation Department conducted 42 intakes, completing 13 investigations. The Equal Employment Opportunities Office conducted 2 live sexual harassment prevention trainings during this quarter as well.

INAUGURAL ENGAGING COMMUNITIES EXPO

In July, The Engagement and Access Department with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted the agency’s first ever “Engaging Communities Expo,” which featured presentations by the Equal Employment Opportunity Office and The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department. Guest speakers for the event included, Angela Indardeo, a Positive Psychology

Coach & Resiliency Trainer, and Frances Green, a Community Outreach Specialist with National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City (NAMI-NYC). In addition, workshops were given by the New York City Commission on Gender Equity and the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence. More than 140 staff attended the event.

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY CELEBRATION (VIRTUAL)

In August, The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department hosted a virtual workshop on "Cultural Notions of Gender Roles and Their Impact on Women's Earnings and Employment Opportunities" in celebration of Women's Equality Day." This Fireside Chat featured participants Sabina Simmonds, Director of Administration (DSS), and Tanika Thomas, Training & Compliance Manager (DEP). The conversation centered on cultural perceptions of gender roles and caregiving, as well as their impact on women's earnings and job opportunities. The participants discussed the barriers women face in various communities, how traditional gender roles influence career choices, and explored potential strategies for creating equitable workplace environments. Attendees gained a deeper understanding of how intersectionality affects economic outcomes for women. At the end of the discussion, Adana Wright, Chief of Policy and Strategic Learning, provided additional resources on the topic. There were 61 attendees.

GENDER RESOURCE FAIR

The Engagement and Access Department and DSS Community Outreach Team participated in the first ever the New York City Commission on Gender Equity's Gender Resource Fair. The event featured the distribution of more than 600 sexual health products, 3,900 period products, and a free toy give away for kids. The team engaged more than 80 community members and more than 300 people attended the event.

EXCELLENCE PROGRAM AMBASSADOR KICK OFF

In September, the Employee Programs Department hosted an Excellence Program Ambassador Kick Off event to increase awareness of the agency's Excellence Program, promote the use of Excellence e-cards, and recruit new Excellence Program Ambassadors.

INAUGURAL ENGAGING COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE

The Engagement and Access Department with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted the inaugural Engaging Communities Conference to identify ways to cultivate inclusive work climates. The event featured guest speakers to include Betty Diaz, CEO of B25 Management, Shihadah Saleem, Director of Youth Programs & Pathways, NY Hall of Science, Zakia Dunson, Manager Student Support Advisor at SUNY Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Program, Deputy Commissioner Gili Hershkovich-Kim of Adult Protective Services (APS), and Deputy Commissioner Cassandra White of Street Homeless Solutions. More than 125 people attended the event.

2ND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

In October, The Engagement and Access Department with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted the agency's second International Men's Day Celebration under the theme "Supporting Men and Boys." The event featured several guest speakers to include NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, Barry Cooper, Founder of the BRO experience, and Skip Dillard, Program Manager for 94.7 FM The Block. A workshop was presented by the New York City Commission on Gender Equity on their services and how they assist in combatting gender inequality. More than 120 people attended the event.

LATINO HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

The DSS-HRA-DHS the Latino Heritage Committee with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted its annual Latino Heritage Month Celebration. The committee awarded scholastic scholarships to NYC based students and included musical performances. More than 160 people attended the event.

EEO OFFICE QUARTER DELIVERABLES

During the third quarter of 2025, the Equal Employment Opportunities Office processed 599 reasonable accommodation requests, and the Investigation Department conducted 108 intakes, completing 15 investigations. The Equal Employment Opportunities Office conducted 4 sexual harassment prevention trainings during this quarter.

3RD ANNUAL NATIONAL VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES CELEBRATION

In November, The Engagement and Access Department with support from the Employee Programs Department hosted the agency's Third Annual National Veterans and Military Families Celebration. The event included a Color Guard performance, a veteran education workshop, and several guest speakers. More than 100 people attended the event.



ONGOING ACE INITIATIVES

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLKIT

The toolkit was created to increase a shared understanding of racial equity and inclusion; to help us clearly define the terms we use in conversations. It is also important to be aware of how and why dimensions become racist and ways we can create change. The racial equity toolkit is a resource list and reference tool that provides research, definitions, ideas, and guidance for employees who want to increase their understanding of racial equity, systems, communities, and culture at a large.

GENDER EQUITY TOOLKIT

The Gender Equity Toolkit is designed to assist individuals in helping our agency reach its goal of creating gender-equitable workspaces throughout New York City. The toolkit is composed of four parts and includes gender equity strategies, application of a gender lens, utilization of a gender assessment scale, spotlighting the workforce pay gap, and adoptable practices that embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion for people of all ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, abilities, etc. Portions of the toolkit are in collaboration with the NYC Commission on Gender Equity.

BLOOD DRIVES

The Employee Programs Department coordinates agency Blood Drives every 56 days at specific locations within the five boroughs and monitors opportunities for staff to attend other Blood Drives near their work or home location. This initiative is an integral part of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services allowing staff to have the convenience of donating near their work or home. DSS has consistently been the largest donor pool behind the uniformed services.

#ENGAGINGTHURSDAY SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The Office of Access, Community and Engagement and Office of Communications Management (OCM) collaborate on producing an online campaign aimed at creating work environments where all employees feel accepted and protected. Every third Thursday of each month, the agency posts Inclusion & Belonging centric messages on all agency social media platforms to foster inclusion, combat marginalization, and inform staff of workplace best practices.

EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

The Employee Programs Department oversees this agency-wide program, which allows opportunities to honor staff and managers who exemplify the Excellence values of Service, Respect, Transparency, and Accountability. Through the coordination of “road shows” throughout different agency locations and promotion of E-Card usage, this program will help develop new opportunities to gather input from the internal stakeholders.

WORKPLACE INFLUENCER PROGRAM

The Engagement and Access Department recognizes the need to mobilize individuals who positively influence others within the workplace. A Workplace influencer is an individual within a program area who is dedicated to creating equitable workspaces and goes above and beyond in helping the agency achieve its inclusion and belonging goals. This program will assist in identifying ACE Award candidates and help increase ACE scorecard metrics for underperforming program areas.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WORKSHOPS

The Engagement and Access Department hosts “Engaging Communities” workshops to engage and capture feedback from agency staff members. The workshops provide insight into inclusion practices, strategies to strengthen workplace operability, strengthen leadership development, and provide information on city resources that can create equitable outcomes for staff and clients.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SPEED MENTORSHIP

The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department helps connect individuals to mentors who can provide different perspectives on success in the professional governmental arena. The four-day Inclusive Leadership Development Program Speed Mentorship program includes career development workshops, one on one mentoring sessions, group mentoring sessions, and multiple networking opportunities. Through knowledge sharing, networking, and interaction with senior leaders, mentees can build meaningful relationships to better meet agency succession planning needs.

NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

The Office of Access, Community and Engagement works with Communications, Finance, Legal Affairs, and Conflict of Interest representatives to offer information about access and compliance centric programming available to staff at every New Hire Orientation.

A LOOK AHEAD

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CELEBRATION

In January 2026, The Engagement and Access Department with support from the Employee Programs Department will host a virtual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration event. The event will focus on celebrating the accomplishments of MLK Jr and the impact of his work.

WINTER DIVERSITY BOOK CLUB

In February 2025, The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department with the McMILLAN Library/ Office of Research & Policy Innovation will do its second diversity book club launch. The purpose of the book club is to create community across agency program areas which will create a culture of comfort, teamwork and camaraderie. The book club will give employees the opportunity to step up and practice leadership roles such as leading a group discussion or presenting an overview of a chapter. This book club will help our agency become a learning organization in which people continuously grow and develop.

ERG RECRUITMENT EXPO

In February, the Employee Programs Department will host a Recruitment Expo that will feature representatives from all agency Heritage Committees and Employee Resource Groups to recruit new members and educate staff on each group's mission, expectations, and goals.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

In March 2026, The Engagement and Access Department with support from the Employee Programs Department will host the second annual International Women's Day Celebration that will focus on celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women.

BLACK WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SERIES

In March 2026, The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department will host its second annual Black Women in Leadership Series. The virtual event will provide key opportunities for participants to reinforce and amplify their ongoing commitment to women's equality.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION 2026

In March 2026, The Engagement and Access Department with support from the Employee Programs Department will host the third annual Women's History Month Celebration under the theme "Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future." The event will focus on celebrating the vital contributions of women and educating participants through the sharing of inspirational stories.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SPEED MENTORSHIP

In April 2026, The Change Initiatives and Compliance Department will host an Inclusive Leadership Development Program Speed Mentorship cohort for staff members. The four-day program will include DEI centric & career development workshops, one on one mentoring sessions, group mentoring sessions, and a networking event.

EXCELLENCE AWARDS

In May 2026, the Employee Programs Department will host an Excellence Awards program featuring a presentation of awards to include Lifetime Achievement Awards, Eagle Awards, Cross-Collaboration Awards, Helping Hands Awards, and an Impact Award.







CONTACT US

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The Office of Access, Community and Engagement team has laid a solid foundation for thousands of our employees including hosting workshops, support of our agency's DEI Council, support for more our 12 ERGs, and composition of racial and gender equity toolkits. In addition, Hundreds of new hires have attended our office presentations and know our agency's inclusion goals from day one. As the Office of Access, Community and Engagement stays committed to supporting the agency, it will continue to promote innovative practices, find ways to impact the agency in a positive manner, and seek to increase equitable outcomes throughout New York City. Our mission is our people.

