



**COOK COUNTY**  

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**GOVERNMENT**

**2025 DRAFT**  
**Environmental Justice Policy**  
**For Public Review and Feedback**

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Offices Under the President

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### I. Executive Summary

#### A. Purpose

Cook County, through its Offices Under the President (OUP), is committed to advancing environmental justice (EJ) in all its programs and activities. The purpose of this policy is to redress historical injustices and promote environmental equity throughout Cook County by establishing an EJ framework to inform OUP decision-making and centering those most impacted by environmental injustices.

The EJ framework that follows is a comprehensive approach to program and policy design and decision-making that will allow for the inclusion of the greatest number of environmental justice considerations in the earliest stages of the decision-making cycle, upfront, as decisions are being made. This framework is designed to foster environmental justice through strategies that address, mitigate and amend past injustices while enabling proactive, community-led solutions for the future.<sup>1</sup> It will ensure environmental equity in the administration of OUP programs and establishes a clear set of visions and priorities to promote environmental justice throughout Cook County. It sets a standard for accountability through intentional community engagement, reporting and commitment of OUP staff across departments.

OUP will assess data gathered over the next two to three years using this framework to further develop a robust set of policies and procedures through which OUP will be held accountable to our communities.

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<sup>1</sup> San Francisco Environmental Justice Framework, last accessed December 2024: [https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/Environmental\\_Justice\\_Framework.html](https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/Environmental_Justice_Framework.html)

The EJ policy furthers the goals and vision established in the OUP Racial Equity Policy, Equity Fund Task Force Recommendations<sup>2</sup> and the Policy Roadmap.<sup>3</sup>

This policy is intended to be a living document maintained by the Department of Environment and Sustainability (DES) that will be accessed regularly and reviewed annually in the second quarter of each fiscal year and refined as needed.

### B. Background

Low-income communities of color have historically borne the brunt of disproportionate environmental harms and lived in the areas with the greatest pollution, noise and traffic burden. These environmental injustices have a direct correlation to these communities being redlined or excluded through racially restricted covenants,<sup>4</sup> having lower property values, having fewer connections to decision-makers and not having a seat at decision-making tables. This has produced disparate environmental health, public health and socioeconomic outcomes for generations.

Chicago is considered the birthplace of the environmental justice movement. Hazel M. Johnson, a Chicago resident who founded the People for a Community Recovery (PCR) in 1979 and fought environmental injustices in her community in Altgeld Gardens, is widely recognized as the mother of the environmental justice movement. After her husband died from cancer, Hazel started to wonder why so many people were dying of cancer as well as being impacted by asthma and other health problems. She learned that her community was surrounded by landfills, an incinerator, underground storage tanks, factories, scrap yards, etc. leading her to coin the term “toxic donut” to refer to her community. PCR was founded to focus on reducing and eliminating environmental hazards in her community. One of PCR's first wins was getting water and sewer lines installed for a community next to Altgeld Gardens that had been drinking from well water that was contaminated with pollutants.

Another pivotal moment in the national environmental justice movement is often traced back to Warren County, North Carolina where in 1982, a hazardous waste landfill was sited in a poor, rural and predominantly Black community. There were large and lengthy protests with arrests and legal challenges. However, the residents lost their fight and toxic waste was put in the landfill. This community advocacy created an additional place to fight for justice, building on the Civil Rights Movement.

Chicago and Cook County suburbs (such as Cicero in the western suburbs) have a long history of EJ organizing by Black, Latino/a/e, Asian American and Native communities, including the Southeast Environmental Task Force, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, Blacks in Green and many more. Many communities and organizations have been working to combat environmental racism in public practices across generations.

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<sup>2</sup>Cook County Racial Equity, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/racial-equity>

<sup>3</sup>Cook County Policy Roadmap, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/policy-roadmap>

<sup>4</sup>Racial Restriction and Housing Discrimination in the Chicagoland Area, Digital Chicago Lake Forest College, last accessed December 2024: [https://digitalchicagohistory.org/exhibits/show/restricted-chicago/restrictive\\_covenants](https://digitalchicagohistory.org/exhibits/show/restricted-chicago/restrictive_covenants)

Due to government's historical role in creating the conditions of environmental injustices, OUP now works toward rectifying past environmental injustices and works with communities to create solutions for the future. A beginning step for OUP is to establish an environmental justice policy.

In recent years, the Cook County COVID-19 Response Plan,<sup>5</sup> the Cook County Equity Fund Taskforce<sup>6</sup> and the Cook County Board, by Resolution 23-1092 in Support of Environmental Justice,<sup>7</sup> have called for the development of a Cook County environmental justice policy. To that end, OUP established an internal EJ policy working group, received community input through an EJ survey, held focus group sessions and conducted stakeholder interviews. Recognizing that community members must be centered in the development of this policy, OUP established an Environmental Justice Community Advisory Committee (EJ CAC) to co-develop the EJ policy with OUP staff. The EJ CAC is currently comprised of the following individuals: Delia Barajas (Voces Fieles Comunitarias Contra la Opresión), Oliver Ciciora (Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation), Aliaa Eldabli (Radiant Vessels Community Services), Jerri Garl (Environmental Justice Evanston), Jersey-Shabazz Hosier (Access Living), Fredia Lindsey (resident of Robbins), Theresa Reyes McNamara (Southwest Environmental Alliance), Daisy Rosa (resident of Rolling Meadows), Gina Roxas (Trickster Cultural Center), Myrna Salgado (Chicago Environmental Justice Network), Apostle Carl White, Jr. (Southland Ministerial Health Network), Angela Xu (resident of Chicago) and Michelle Yates (South Suburbs for Greenspace).

## II. Guiding Principles

- Jemez Principles for Environmental Justice:<sup>8</sup> These are 17 principles created by delegates of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 that were integral to defining the EJ movement. Topics include ethical uses of land for a sustainable planet, public policy free from discrimination and bias, protection from nuclear testing and hazardous waste disposal, the right to self-determination (the ability individuals have to make choices on actions that will impact them) and participatory government and decision-making, indigenous rights and treaties, the destructive nature of corporations, social and environmental education, sustainable consumption, cleaning up and rebuilding areas in balance with nature and more.
- OUP plays a vital role in improving the environment and quality of life for all residents of Cook County. OUP's role in repairing past environmental injustices includes proactively supporting and investing in environmental justice communities.
- Environmental justice raises awareness of the relationship between the environment and systemic racism and practices of environmental racism.
- Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by cumulative impacts of environmental injustices that have produced racially disparate public health, environmental health and socioeconomic outcomes for generations.

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<sup>5</sup>Cook County COVID Response Plan, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/cook-county-covid-19-response-plan>

<sup>6</sup>Cook County Equity Fund, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/racial-equity>

<sup>7</sup>Full text of resolutions can be found here: <https://cook-county.legistar.com/Legislation.aspx>

<sup>8</sup>Jemez Principles, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.pdf>

- Environmental justice emphasizes community partnership, empowerment and participation by those most impacted by disparate environmental conditions to result in outcomes that rectify past harms.
- Environmental justice education is important and necessary. Lack of education can lead to less community engagement, since residents might not know the extent of the environmental injustice they face.

### III. Definitions

Environmental justice: The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, class, color, gender, ability and national origin, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of laws, regulations, policies and programs that support quality of life in the places where they live, work, play, worship and learn. This includes equal access to environmental benefits and protections, such as access to clean water, access to healthy food, access to public transportation, access to health resources, access to parks and green spaces for recreation and peaceful enjoyment of natural areas, neighborhood safety, air quality, climate resilience, etc.

Fair treatment: The concept that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies.<sup>9</sup>

Environmental Racism: Environmental racism refers to any policy, practice or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups or communities based on race or color. It also includes exclusionary and restrictive practices that limit participation by people of color in decision-making boards, commissions and regulatory bodies.<sup>10</sup>

Meaningful involvement: Ensuring that the people impacted by decisions are at the table and that community concerns are considered, responded to and incorporated where possible in the decision-making process by intentionally seeking out and facilitating the involvement of those potentially affected. Ensuring that these voices are not just heard before decisions are made but are also active participants in the planning and development throughout the process.

Offices Under the President (OUP):<sup>11</sup> Comprises the six bureaus and 30 departments that serve the residents of Cook County.

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<sup>9</sup> Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/about-mpca/environmental-justice>

<sup>10</sup> Bullard, R. (1993). The threat of environmental racism. *Natural Resources & Environment* 7(3). 23-26, 55-56.

<sup>11</sup> Cook County Offices Under the President, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/agency/bureaus-of-fices-under-president>

#### IV. Initial Action Steps and Timeframe <sup>12</sup>

To implement the EJ policy, the County will prioritize the following initial action steps:

- A. Continue to convene the internal EJ working group
- B. Build OUP staffing dedicated to environmental justice, providing capacity and training for current staff
- C. Establish a long-term EJ working group with external partners
- D. Perform an assessment of OUP programs and policies and provide recommendations
- E. Develop public reporting and engagement processes and timeline
- F. Identify a mapping tool and define EJ communities in Cook County

##### **A. Continue to convene internal EJ working group:**

Initially convened in November 2021 and meeting periodically since then, this internal working group will continue to meet and strategize ways to implement improvements to County policies and programs to operationalize environmental justice. This is an inter-department working group led by DES and consisting of members from the Office of the President (OOP), Bureau of Administration (BOA), Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security (EMRS), Bureau of Economic Development (BED), Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Building and Zoning (DBZ), Department of Transportation and Highways (DoTH), Justice Advisory Council (JAC), Bureau of Technology (BOT), Department of Public Health (CCDPH), Human Rights and Ethics (DHRE) and others as deemed necessary. The internal working group membership will be reviewed annually in alignment with this policy review to ensure that participants are still appropriate.

**Timeframe:** Already established, will meet quarterly at minimum and more frequently as needed.

##### **B. Build OUP staffing dedicated to environmental justice, providing capacity and training for current staff:**

Because this policy will reach across OUP and require the involvement and cooperation of many bureaus, departments and services, it is essential that the necessary resources are provided to ensure its success. Currently, environmental justice work is being done by various employees in addition to their responsibilities. DES intends to expand its environmental justice training and staffing to implement this policy, supporting agencies in the assessments of programs and policies, managing the internal and external working groups, engaging with community members, performing analyses and acting as a resource for communities and residents. Cook County will build upon best practices established by partner agencies and environmental justice guidance such as the U.S. Environmental Justice Science, Data and Research Plan.<sup>13</sup>

**Timeframe:** Two full-time, dedicated EJ staff are included in the approved 2025 budget.<sup>14</sup> DES intends to hire in 2025.

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<sup>12</sup> The timeframe will be based on Cook County's fiscal year, which runs December 1 through November 30. Q1 is December-February, Q2 is March-May, Q3 is June-August, and Q4 is September-November.

<sup>13</sup> Environmental Justice Science, Data, and Research Plan, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NSTC-EJ-Research-Plan-July-2024.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Cook County 2025 budget, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/Budget>

**C. Establish a long-term EJ working group with external partners:**

To ensure that community members have a voice and ensure accountability, OUP will establish a long-term working group which will also include of at least eight but not more than 15 impacted community members and organizations throughout the County. This builds off the establishment of the EJ CAC which was created for the specific purpose of co-developing a County EJ policy. The internal EJ working group will develop an open application and selection process to establish this group in 2025. The group will meet every other month during its first year and periodically during its second year. There may be stipends for participating in this group and collaborating with the County in the implementation of the EJ policy. OUP will assess the need to continue the working group with external partners on a yearly basis beginning after the initial two-year time frame.

**Timeframe:** Establish in 2025 and continue for two years. In the first year, the group will define participation expectations, governance structure and public reporting mechanisms and establish long-term EJ working group structure for future years.

**D. Develop public reporting and engagement processes and timeline:**

Accountability is key to ensuring that progress is made in the implementation of the County’s environmental justice framework. DES, together with the EJ working group, will develop public quarterly progress reports on the work that is being done, using simple, clear and accessible language. A clear point of contact will be established for environmental justice input and concerns. This policy is a living document and will be reviewed annually in the second quarter of each fiscal year to see what adjustments and updates need to be made, in with the external working group and involving input from the public. If substantial updates or operational changes are required, OUP will seek to provide those updates publicly by the end of the fourth quarter in the same year. The timeline for reporting and updates may be adjusted based on input from the EJ working group.

**Timeframe:** The first quarterly report will be released in 2025 and will continue from there. A complete public reporting and engagement process and timeline will be released in 2026.

**E. Perform a thorough assessment of OUP programs and policies and provide recommendations:**

DES EJ staff will review current programs and policies throughout OUP to identify actions within the scope of each department’s authority to promote environmental justice and repair past injustices. Staff will look at what gaps exist, what has worked in the past, evaluate previous harms (even if unintended), determine which may result in disparate outcomes for disadvantaged residents and identify where improvements are needed. These assessments will review impact across the County and specifically in the soon-to-be designated environmental justice communities<sup>15</sup>. Additionally, they will be used to develop recommendations that may reduce harm and/or improve environmental, social and health outcomes and will be reported out publicly.

**Timeframe:** The recommendations from the assessment will be completed in 2026 and reported publicly, based on guidelines developed by the EJ working group.

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<sup>15</sup> To be defined as part of action step F.



### **F. Identify a mapping tool and define EJ communities in Cook County:**

An environmental justice mapping tool will help focus engagement efforts and recommendations developed through this process to the communities that have been most impacted by environmental injustices. OUP has not yet determined if a new map will be created or if an existing map or tool, such as the Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CJEST),<sup>16</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Environmental Justice Index,<sup>17</sup> IL Environmental Protection Agency's EJ Start,<sup>18</sup> etc., will be used. First, OUP will determine what data is available, which data will be utilized and if the tool reflects cumulative burden (how multiple indicators compound to exacerbate negative impacts). For a new mapping tool, potential data points could include quantitative and qualitative data related to air quality, public health, location of existing industrial facilities, quality of life factors, socioeconomics, flooding, tree canopy data, high noise levels, heavy traffic (especially truck routes and train depots), etc. This process will include collaborating with other local jurisdictions and incorporating a public input component. OUP will work to ensure that the tool is clear for everyday residents. The mapping tool will lead to the development of a shared definition and understanding of "environmental justice communities" in Cook County.

**Timeframe:** By end of 2026, there will be an official definition and map of environmental justice communities within Cook County.

### **V. Primary Focus Areas for this Framework**

Below is a list of primary focus areas where OUP will begin implementing this framework. Each includes immediate steps and future considerations to help guide this work. For each focus area, OUP will determine what it is already doing in this space, what past programs, policies or practices may have resulted in harm to communities, what role OUP could be playing and what more can be done by OUP. It is important to note that some of these steps and considerations will require OUP to focus internally on policies and practices within its control and some will require OUP to focus externally on how to engage with residents and local governments, etc. The focus areas are not comprehensive; the policy and framework will be updated annually as described in this policy. The full assessment with recommendations<sup>19</sup> will give OUP a more complete view of potential actions.

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<sup>16</sup> CEQ Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, last accessed December 2024: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#8/0/0>

<sup>17</sup> CDC Environmental Justice Index, last accessed December 2024: <https://atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/eji/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> IL EPA EJ Start, last accessed December 2024: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/aa364c77db684dfa92a-fa5094b69f6ff>

<sup>19</sup> Assessment identified in IV.E. of this policy.



<b>Air Pollution</b>	
<b>Immediate Steps</b>	<b>Future Considerations</b>
<p>1. Evaluate what air pollution data is currently being collected OUP and other relevant agencies.</p> <p>2. Improve communication to public about air monitoring program<sup>20</sup> and Clean Energy Plan<sup>21</sup>. Clearly present types of data, how it is being collected and frequency of data collection on OUP website.</p> <p>3. Ensure Spanish translation at a minimum for all data pages.</p>	<p>1. How can OUP incorporate community-led data collection/monitoring throughout the suburbs and collaborate with City of Chicago on their community air monitoring network?</p> <p>2. How can OUP support electrification efforts for residents and municipalities, especially suburbs across the County?</p> <p>3. What additional OUP-led air monitoring and accountability practices may be incorporated to inform and reduce environmental and public health harms?</p>

<sup>20</sup> Cook County Air Monitoring, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/content/air-quality-monitoring>

<sup>21</sup> Cook County Clean Energy Plan, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/clean-energy-plan>

<sup>22</sup> LeadCare Cook County, last accessed December 2024: <https://leadcareillinois.org/cookcounty/>

<b>Water: Access to Clean Drinking Water, Infrastructure and Flooding</b>	
<b>Immediate Steps</b>	<b>Future Considerations</b>
<p>1. Access to Clean Water: Identify OUP-related programs and services available to residents and municipalities (including LeadCare Cook County<sup>22</sup> and other lead line replacement programs).</p> <p>2. Access to Clean Water: Clearly present programs and eligibility in multiple forms of media, such as video, on OUP or program websites. Include specific resources for residents (renters and owners), businesses, municipalities and nonprofit organizations.</p> <p>3. Access to Clean Water: Ensure Spanish translation at a minimum for all program guides.</p> <p>4. Water Infrastructure: Report out on what OUP is currently doing to address infrastructure issues, including stormwater management efforts with DoTH, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) and related projects in Build Up Cook.<sup>23</sup></p> <p>5. Water Infrastructure/Flooding: Listen to residents regarding their biggest water infrastructure issues, respond to concerns in a timely manner and connect them to immediate and long-term resources as appropriate.</p> <p>6. Flooding: Compile and provide public resources that currently exist to help residents, businesses and municipalities before disasters occur (flooding, water scarcity, drinking water contamination) in addition to resources for recovery after such events.</p>	<p>1. How can OUP departments collaborate to ensure clean, affordable water access across the County?</p> <p>2. Can OUP programs support public health initiatives to provide resident-facing programming and support?</p> <p>3. Explore educational opportunities regarding preventative measures for flooding and response measures for residents.</p> <p>4. Continue to pursue funding for infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>6. Clearly define what services related to water infrastructure, green stormwater infrastructure and flooding support OUP can provide and how to access these services.</p>

<sup>22</sup> LeadCare Cook County, last accessed December 2024: <https://leadcareillinois.org/cookcounty/>

<sup>23</sup> Cook County Build Up Cook, last accessed December 2024: <https://arpa.cookcountyil.gov/build-up-cook>

Climate Resiliency	
Immediate Steps	Future Considerations
<p>1. Create an inventory of all Climate Resiliency programming and initiatives across OUP including Climate Resiliency Planning for Communities.<sup>24</sup></p> <p>2. Develop an internal working group from representatives of DES, EMRS, DoTH, BAM, BED to create a climate resiliency plan with timelines of project completion and intentional community engagement.</p> <p>3. Develop standard messaging for residents about climate resiliency projects, disaster preparation and adaptation efforts.</p> <p>4. Identify best method to push out messaging to community members on a consistent basis. This may include social media, radio announcements, text messaging, community networking with community organizations or places of worship, etc.</p> <p>5. Compile and provide public resources that currently exist to help residents, businesses and municipalities before disasters occur (extreme temperature events, increased storms) in addition to resources for recovery after such events.</p>	<p>1. How can the OUP prioritize resiliency measures in projects it funds?</p> <p>2. Continue to pursue funding opportunities to support resiliency efforts. This may include programs such as supporting resilience hubs, improving or maintaining green spaces, expanding access to health care, providing opportunities to participate in energy efficiency or renewable energy upgrades, etc.</p> <p>3. How does a County Climate Resiliency plan work with and integrate the County’s Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan?<sup>25</sup></p>

<sup>24</sup> Cook County Climate Resiliency Planning for Communities, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/climateresiliency>

<sup>25</sup> Cook County’s Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyemergencymanagement.org/reducing-risk-response/hazard-mitigation-plan-updates>

Access to Healthy Food	
Immediate Steps	Future Considerations
<p>1. Continue to advance implementation of Cook County Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) across County’s procuring departments (Cook County Health, Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and Cook County Sheriff’s Office) and other County anchor institutions such as higher education institutions and healthcare systems to serve/sell local, healthy, sustainable food that aligns with GFPP values.</p> <p>2. Continue to increase investments in local food producers and businesses, including MBEs/WBEs and other small businesses, that align with GFPP values (local, healthy, sustainable, fair and humane) to provide local, healthy and culturally responsive fresh foods to food insecure communities.</p> <p>3. Assess impact/progress of County Ordinance 22-5345 (passed in Nov 2022) to create a Class 7d property tax incentive to spur and support the establishment or expansion of grocery stores in food deserts.</p> <p>4. Support implementation and expansion of Food is Medicine<sup>33</sup> programs across suburban Cook County.</p> <p>5. Support promotion and use of Metro Chicago 211<sup>34</sup> to connect suburban Cook residents to resources including community food access sites.</p> <p>6. Continue OUP’s gap analysis of urban agriculture within Cook County.</p>	<p>1. Support expansion of participation in federal nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, WIC) and other food security programs like Food is Medicine programming and medically-tailored meals. Leverage the CMS 1115 waiver which states can use to deliver and pay for health care services in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).</p> <p>2. Identify and advance policy solutions to gaps/barriers identified through OUP’s gap analysis of urban agriculture that improve access to community farms, healthy and culturally important foods.</p> <p>3. Support increases in funding levels/ reimbursement for school meal programs (National School Lunch Program, Breakfast After the Bell<sup>30</sup> and Healthy School Meals for All<sup>31</sup>) and federal nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, WIC).<sup>32</sup></p>

<sup>26</sup> Good Food Purchasing Program through Cook County Department of Public Health, last accessed December 2024: <https://cookcounty-publichealth.org/chronic-diseases/good-food-purchasing-initiative/>

<sup>27</sup> State Waivers List for Medicaid, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/index.html>

<sup>28</sup> Full text of ordinances can be accessed here: [https://library.municode.com/il/cook\\_county/ordinances/code\\_of\\_ordinances?no-deld=1206348](https://library.municode.com/il/cook_county/ordinances/code_of_ordinances?no-deld=1206348)

<sup>29</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, National School Lunch Program, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp>

<sup>30</sup> Rise and Shine, Breakfast After the Bell, last accessed December 2024: <https://riseandshineillinois.org/breakfast-after-the-bell/>

<sup>31</sup> Food Research and Action Center, Healthy School Meals for All, last accessed December 2024: <https://frac.org/healthy-school-meals-for-all>

<sup>32</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, federal nutrition assistance programs, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/programs>

<sup>33</sup> Cook County Health Foundation, Food is Medicine, last accessed December 2024: <https://cchealthfoundation.org/food-is-medicine/>

<sup>34</sup> Metro Chicago 211, last accessed December 2024: <https://211metrochicago.org/>

<b>Community Engagement</b>	
<b>Immediate Steps</b>	<b>Future Considerations</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate OUP's current language access policy,<sup>35</sup> using resources such as Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Language Access Plan.<sup>36</sup></li> <li>2. Review and map out OUP public-facing programs to understand how information currently gets to County residents.</li> <li>3. Review how OUP currently seeks input on projects, programs and policies from community members. Cook County resident engagement will be informed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IL EPA) EJ enforcement strategies.<sup>37</sup></li> <li>4. Review how youth are currently being engaged for input on OUP programs and policies.</li> <li>5. Incorporate accessibility features such as image descriptions when making reports and social media posts.</li> <li>6. Clearly identify OUP jurisdiction for practices and programs that impact environmental justice concerns such as zoning, road maintenance, transit updates, etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an engagement process/policy for OUP that incorporates receiving and responding to public input.</li> <li>2. How can OUP create educational resources that are appropriate for multiple audiences and do not all require internet access?</li> <li>3. Collaborate with Cook County digital equity<sup>38</sup> work.</li> <li>4. How can community members have increased input on OUP program and policy development?</li> <li>5. Establish norms and internal processes that encourage youth participation and compensation for residents and community organizations.</li> </ol>

<sup>35</sup> Cook County Language Access Policy, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/sites/g/files/ywwepo161/files/service/cook-county-offices-under-president-language-access-policy-may-2021-vf.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Illinois EPA Language Access Plan, last accessed December 2024: <https://epa.illinois.gov/about-us/accessibility/language-access.html>

<sup>37</sup> Environmental Justice Enforcement Strategy, IL EPA, last accessed December 2024: <https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/environmental-justice/ej-enforcement-strategy.html>

<sup>38</sup> Cook County Digital Equity, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/digital-equity>

Transit/Transportation	
Immediate Steps	Future Considerations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement the recommendations in the 2023 Cook County Bike Plan<sup>39</sup> and Cook County Transit Plan.<sup>40</sup></li> <li>2. Continue to invest in the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program<sup>42</sup> (a public-private partnership that works to improve the way passengers and goods move over rail) to minimize air emissions from idling trains.</li> <li>3. Review composition of project advisory committees and outreach strategies to maximize participation and represent community diversity.</li> <li>4. Participate fully in current legislative effort to adequately fund, improve access to and expand the regional transit system.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use Connecting Cook County Long-Range Transportation Plan<sup>41</sup> update scheduled for 2026 to help identify additional specific action steps for EJ policy.</li> <li>2. Study and implement truck routes to minimize EJ impacts related to noise and air pollution from goods movement.</li> <li>3. Work with local and state transportation agencies to identify high-pollution areas and reduce negative health impacts.</li> </ol>

<sup>39</sup> Cook County Bike Plan, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/bikeplan>

<sup>40</sup> Cook County Transit Plan, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/transitplan>

<sup>41</sup> Cook County Long-Range Transportation Plan, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/connecting-cook-county-long-range-transportation-plan>

<sup>42</sup> CREATE Program, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.createprogram.org/>

<b>Lack of Trees/Green Space</b>	
<b>Immediate Steps</b>	<b>Future Considerations</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch community tree planting program which prioritizes communities that need support in expanding their tree canopy.</li> <li>2. Report on efforts OUP has already taken in maintaining and increasing tree canopies both at County facilities and within municipalities.</li> <li>3. Engage residents, community organizations, municipal leaders and other stakeholders to best support high priority communities.</li> <li>4. Continue to engage municipalities through brownfield redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization programs<sup>43</sup> to explore opportunities for expanded green space.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to pursue funding opportunities to support tree preservation, tree planting and tree maintenance programs where appropriate.</li> <li>2. Better share overlap and opportunities in access to green space afforded through partnerships with Land Bank and Forest Preserves of Cook County.</li> </ol>

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<sup>43</sup> Cook County Brownfield programs, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/service/brownfield-redevelopment>



Economic Development/Jobs	
Immediate Steps	Future Considerations
<p>1. Catalog what is being done within OUP to support “green jobs”, with a particular focus on those being incentivized by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law<sup>44</sup> and Inflation Reduction Act<sup>45</sup> investments in clean energy solutions and infrastructure.</p> <p>2. Continue efforts in the Small Business Source,<sup>46</sup> Businesses Reducing Impact on the Environment (BRITE)<sup>47</sup> and Solar Collaborative to grow small businesses that address clean energy needs, pollution prevention and decarbonization, with a focus on business owners from historically excluded communities.</p> <p>3. Assess OUP ability to promote environmental justice goals in existing review processes as well as in grant programs.</p> <p>4. Identify sites at risk of large-scale industrial development in unincorporated Cook County and assess opportunities to improve EJ outcomes. Assess OUP role in facilitating or supporting large scale industrial development and identify opportunities to include requirements, limitations, etc. that would improve EJ outcomes.</p> <p>5. Engage in green building through architecture, engineering, construction, etc. to grow career opportunities that promote equity in the built environment.</p>	<p>1. Ensure engagement between BED and DES on green jobs initiatives and grants, existing or new applications, to improve alignment with EJ outcomes.</p> <p>2. Continue to actively pursue funding opportunities to implement workforce, small business and sector goals to expand OUP’s support of clean energy and create green jobs.</p> <p>3. Review County procurement policies to identify methods that can help create better opportunity for local firms to participate. Explore cooperative purchasing agreements for major goods that offset costs in low-income areas.</p> <p>4. Leverage opportunities in Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (2021 CEJA, P.A. 102-0662).<sup>48</sup></p>

<sup>44</sup> Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/build/guidebook/>

<sup>45</sup> Inflation Reduction Act, last accessed December 2024: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/inflation-reduction-act>

<sup>46</sup> Cook County Small Business Source, last accessed December 2024: <https://cookcountysmallbiz.org/>

<sup>47</sup> Cook County BRITE program, last accessed December 2024: <https://www.cookcountyil.gov/BRITE>

<sup>48</sup> IL CEJA full text available here: <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=102-0662>

## **VI. Responsibilities**

DES is responsible for implementing this framework, supported by OOP. As part of this implementation, DES is responsible for convening the EJ working group, supporting OUP departments and bureaus in performing the assessments of programs and policies and serving as lead for public reporting and accountability associated with this policy.

Departments listed in this policy will participate in the internal EJ working group. It is anticipated that many departments in OUP will actively participate in EJ policy implementation and assessment.

Department heads or designees are responsible for performing the assessment of department programs and policies as laid out in this policy, with support from DES EJ staff. Department heads or designees are also responsible for submitting assessment data to DES in a timely manner as directed by DES.

### **VI. Short-term Timeline**

The short-term timeline for implementing the County's EJ policy is:

- Begin the assessment of the department programs and policies - 2025
- Hire dedicated DES staff who specialize in EJ - 2025
- Identify methods for internal and external education and involvement in EJ policy implementation - 2025
- Establish working group with external partners - 2025
- Release first public quarterly report - 2025
- Release initial department program and policy assessment recommendation report - 2026