

DEPARTMENT OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING STRATEGIC PLAN JULY 2017



INTRODUCTION

The Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) is the institutional centerpiece of California’s broad anti-discrimination and hate violence policy. Born out of a decades-long struggle to prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, and business establishments, the DFEH has been at the forefront of protecting civil rights in California since its inception. Today, the Department of Fair Employment and Housing is the largest state civil rights agency in the country with 220 full-time permanent staff operating out of five offices throughout California. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations (businesses) and from hate violence and human trafficking. To accomplish this mission, the Department receives, investigates, conciliates, mediates, and prosecutes complaints of alleged violations of the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA), Unruh Civil Rights Act, Disabled Persons Act, Ralph Civil Rights Act, the California Trafficking Victims Protection Act, and other laws. The DFEH receives approximately 23,000 complaints annually from members of the public who allege that they have been the victim of discrimination or hate violence.

In addition to investigating, prosecuting and mediating complaints, the DFEH engages in public outreach and provides training and technical assistance to employers, business establishments, and housing providers regarding their responsibilities under the law. The employment anti-discrimination provisions of the FEHA apply to public and private employers, labor organizations and employment agencies. “Housing providers” include public and private owners, real estate agents and brokers, banks, mortgage companies, and financial institutions.

The Department also partners with law schools and universities in California to provide students hands-on experience in investigating, mediating and prosecuting FEHA cases. Since 2013, the Department has housed the Fair Employment and Housing Council (FEH Council), a body that issues regulations to ensure that the FEHA is interpreted and implemented in a way that is fair and that protects the public to the full extent of the law.

This Strategic Plan was initially published in September 2016 and updated in July 2017. It sets forth the goals and strategies that will guide the Department in working toward its vision over a period of three to five years. It was developed with input from DFEH staff throughout our five offices and from FEH Council members using an online tool that provided them with the opportunity to anonymously submit and comment on ideas important to them. This input was used by the DFEH Executive Team to develop a draft plan that was then shared with staff and the public for further review and comment. The result is this final Strategic Plan, which was updated in July 2017 as part of our annual process

to revisit the goals and strategies in the Plan to ensure their continued relevance and to determine the specific actions we plan to undertake in the coming fiscal year in support of the goals and strategies in Strategic Plan. The actions we plan to undertake in the 2017-18 Fiscal Year are included in our 2017-18 Action Plan, which is posted on our website alongside this Strategic Plan.

OUR VISION: A CALIFORNIA FREE OF DISCRIMINATION

The charge that was given to the Department when it was established in statute is a lofty one: “to eliminate discrimination in California.” It is this lofty ideal that inspires and permeates everything we do. At its core, this means that we work both to prevent discrimination from occurring and remedy it when it does occur. As an organization, we foster respect for the diversity of our staff and the public we serve. Because discrimination can cross every economic, social, cultural and geographic barrier, it also means developing a scope to our efforts that serves the diverse needs of the public, businesses, housing providers and other governmental entities across the State.

Our efforts to prevent discrimination have multiple components. Our vision encompasses providing education and assistance to the businesses, housing providers, and governmental entities operating in California so that they understand their responsibilities and have templates and tools to support them in meeting legal obligations. To target differing needs, we must also work with these entities and their representatives to provide them with education and assistance that will be most helpful to them.

It is also critical that members of the public understand their rights and know where to turn when they experience discrimination or hate violence. Given the diversity of the State, this will require that we expand our suite of education and outreach materials and efforts to meet a broader array of needs and to reach more audiences, especially in those areas where we have found a lack of knowledge and with populations who are most vulnerable.

When we receive an allegation of discrimination, it is critical that our processes and systems are easy to understand and navigate and that we are timely, accurate and thorough in addressing the complaint. This will mean evaluating and making changes to our processes and systems with input from our various stakeholders, to make them as user-friendly as possible and to ensure that they do a good job of supporting the work that we do. To eliminate and remedy discrimination, there must be vigorous investigation and zealous legal advocacy on behalf of the public interest. No matter how contentious a dispute is, the hallmark of the DFEH’s approach is respect for the involved parties, with the ultimate goal of improving business practices and spreading awareness to prevent future violations of the law.

In all of our efforts, we recognize the need to be collaborative and strategic in order to be as effective as possible within resource constraints. This means integrating our programs across all parts of our organization. Given the array of organizations that share aspects of our mission and goals, an important part of our vision is to build upon and expand partnerships with business and professional organizations, community groups, and governmental entities at the federal, state, and local levels. Being strategic will require that we work with our partners and analyze information to identify those areas where our efforts will have the greatest impact.

Being efficient and effective also requires that we evaluate our internal operations and look for every opportunity to improve them. From our policies and procedures to our IT systems; from our forms and templates to our emergency plans, our vision is to employ best practices throughout our

organization and to put measures in place to assess how well we are doing at meeting performance targets in all parts of the Department.

Of course, the quality of everything we do as an organization—the investigations we do, the cases we file in court, the mediations we conduct, the outreach we perform, and all of our other functions—are dependent on the people who work here. Not only do they need the right training, tools and resources to do their jobs well, but an environment that gives all employees the opportunity to reach their full potential. Thus, an important part of our vision encompasses creating that kind of environment for the people who work at DFEH—people who are dedicating their lives to eliminating discrimination in California.

OUR VALUES

Our values shape us as an organization. We look to these values to drive our decisions and actions every day and to define how we behave toward each other and the people we serve. Because our values are so integral to who we want to be as an organization, everyone at DFEH had opportunities to help define and select them. Our values are:

ACCOUNTABILITY

Individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations, other government entities and California taxpayers count on us to do our work accurately, thoroughly and timely. We hold ourselves responsible for meeting these expectations every day.

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE

We are entrusted with enforcing the laws that oppose discrimination and hate violence in California. We honor that trust and are committed to advancing the public interest and ensuring a just outcome for all parties in every case we handle.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

We recognize that everyone with whom we interact is a person worthy of our compassion and respect. We are professional, responsive, and inclusive in our dealings with external and internal customers.

EXCELLENCE

We have the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives and in the life of our state. Our impact depends on our wise use of resources, ensuring our workforce has adequate training, and continually evaluating our processes to ensure the highest level of excellence in everything we do.

FAIRNESS

We recognize the importance of being fair and objective in our investigations, mediations, and prosecutions, and in all of our interactions with the public and with each other. We provide everyone with equal access and opportunities.

INTEGRITY

We honor ourselves, each other and the public we serve when we are honest with our words and ethical in our actions. We strive for transparency in everything we do.

TEAMWORK

We bring together our diverse experiences, knowledge and skills to better serve the public and to make the DFEH the best it can be. We help each other and work together to advance our goals and improve outcomes across the entire organization

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

GOAL 1:

INCREASE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

STRATEGY #1:

IMPROVE THE RESOURCES WE MAKE AVAILABLE AND ADDRESS SPECIFIC IDENTIFIED AREAS OF NEED

STRATEGY #2:

IMPROVE OUTREACH TO PEOPLE WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

STRATEGY #3:

IMPROVE OUTREACH TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

STRATEGY #4:

AIM FOR THE GREATEST IMPACT FOR EVERY DOLLAR WE SPEND

GOAL 2:

PREVENT AND COMBAT DISCRIMINATION AND HATE VIOLENCE THROUGH PROACTIVE AND STRATEGIC EFFORTS

STRATEGY #1:

INTEGRATE A SOPHISTICATED UNDERSTANDING OF DISCRIMINATION INTO OUR WORK AND PURSUE CASES AND STRATEGIES THAT WILL HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT

STRATEGY #2:

HELP TO FOSTER BEST PRACTICES WITHIN CALIFORNIA STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

STRATEGY #3:

MODEL THE WAY FOR BEST PRACTICES IN CIVIL RIGHTS

GOAL 3:

PROVIDE EXCELLENT SERVICE TO THE INDIVIDUALS AND ENTITIES WHO INTERACT WITH US

STRATEGY #1:

ENSURE OUR SERVICES ARE USER-FRIENDLY, ACCESSIBLE AND CONSISTENT ACROSS ALL PLATFORMS

STRATEGY #2:

DECREASE COMPLEXITY AND IMPROVE TIMELINESS OF SERVICES BY STREAMLINING PROCESSES

STRATEGY #3:

IMPROVE THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

STRATEGY #4:

IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO SERVE PEOPLE WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

GOAL 4:

ENSURE THAT OUR INTERNAL PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY MEET OUR BUSINESS NEEDS

STRATEGY #1:

IMPROVE HOW WE GATHER AND MANAGE INFORMATION

STRATEGY #2:

ENSURE THAT ALL OF OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE UP-TO-DATE AND THAT WE KNOW WHERE TO FIND THEM AND HOW TO USE THEM

STRATEGY #3:

DEVELOP STANDARDS AND TOOLS FOR MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

STRATEGY #4:

CONTINUALLY EVALUATE AND IMPROVE OUR INTERNAL PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

GOAL 5:

GIVE OUR EMPLOYEES THE INFORMATION, TOOLS AND SUPPORT THEY NEED TO THRIVE

STRATEGY # 1:

IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS, PROVIDE ACTIONABLE FEEDBACK AND RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE

STRATEGY #2:

PROVIDE EVERYONE WITH THE TRAINING THEY NEED TO BE EFFECTIVE IN THEIR JOBS

STRATEGY #3:

IMPROVE INFORMATION, TOOLS AND RESOURCES PROVIDED TO STAFF

STRATEGY #4:

PROVIDE STAFF WITH MORE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES