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Audit Services Update: Office of Equity & Human Rights has made progress on ensuring Americans with Disabilities Act compliance

News Article



This is a one-year follow-up to our 2021 report that called attention to compliance risks related to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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Our 2021 report, [City does not ensure Americans with Disabilities Act compliance](#), called attention to compliance risks related to the Americans with Disabilities Act that were outside the scope of our [2021 emergency preparedness audit](#). In the report, we called for the Office of Equity & Human Rights to work with City Council to develop a plan to ensure compliance with the Act and allocate resources to ensure the plan is implemented.

Since we issued our report, the Office of Equity secured funding from Council to hire a self-evaluation consultant and an investigator, worked with Portland's public information resource to create a central point of contact for requests and complaints under the Act, expanded training opportunities for City staff, and issued a report on a recent survey of people with disabilities.

Recommendation in process

We recommended that the Office of Equity & Human Rights work with City Council to develop a plan to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and allocate resources to ensure the plan is implemented.

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When we released our report, the City did not have a strategy for achieving citywide compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Over the past year, the Office of Equity & Human Rights worked with City Council to fund a consultant to lead a citywide self-evaluation. The self-evaluation will identify the steps the City should take to meet the Act's requirements. The Office of Equity expects the consultant to begin work in early 2023.

The Office of Equity worked with [PDX 311](#), the City's public information resource, to create a central point of contact for [accommodation requests](#) and [discrimination complaints](#). Community members can use PDX311 to request an accommodation for any City program or to report discrimination on the grounds of disability arising from City services or activities. Requests and complaints can be submitted by email, phone, or in person - and in multiple languages. A manager in the Office of Equity receives copies of all submissions and is available to consult with bureaus on their resolution. The Office of Equity plans to ask Council to require City bureaus to route all requests and complaints through PDX 311 to help track data, and intends to report to Council at least annually on areas in need of improvement.

To grow Americans with Disabilities Act expertise across the City, the Office of Equity plans to hire a new investigator who will train bureau staff to investigate alleged violations of the Act. The Office of Equity also developed and offered additional trainings, and is creating a digital access policy to guide City staff in the development of electronic-based information that is accessible to all users. In addition, almost 500 Portlanders with disabilities participated in a [Disability Equity and Engagement Survey](#) about their experiences, needs, and perspectives. The Office of Equity released a report on the survey in 2023. The report offers data that bureaus can use when making decisions on programs, plans, and services.

Continued efforts in this area will help ensure that all City programs and services are accessible to Portlanders with disabilities.

Visit our original 2021 audit report and recommendations

Visit our online dashboard to track the status of recommendations from other reports