

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the City Administrator



**Performance Oversight Hearing on the
Office of the City Administrator**

Testimony of:
Kevin Donahue
City Administrator

Before the

Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
The Honorable Anita Bonds, Chairperson

February 7, 2024
2:00 PM

Good afternoon, Chairperson Bonds, and members and staff of the Committee on Executive Administration and Labor. I am Kevin Donahue and I have the honor of serving as the City Administrator. I am here today to discuss the performance of the Office of the City Administrator during Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024. I am joined by Jenny Reed, the Director of the Office of Budget and Performance Management, and Dr. Amber Hewitt, the District's Chief Equity Officer.

Functions of the Office of the City Administrator

The Office of the City Administrator serves as the central hub of District Government operations. We prepare and manage the District's budget, which means we monitor agency budgets throughout the year, try to predict costs the District will see in the coming years, secure funds from the federal government, and evaluate whether programs are effectively using budgeted funds. We work closely with agencies to set operational goals and implement the legislative actions and policy decisions of Mayor Bowser and the Council. My office is also the hub of coordination for several critical priorities, including creating a more racially equitable city and preventing gun violence.

Coordinating the District's Evolution to a Post-Pandemic Posture

The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency declared by the Federal government expired last May. In many ways, the District Government had already reached a "new normal" in our operations and we were preparing for the next phase. The Internal Services team has been leading the ongoing evolution of our post-pandemic posture and will continue to do so as we move into its final phase.

Last month, we announced District Government workers would be in the office an additional day per week beginning in March and 50% of office-based staff will be in-person each workday. This will enhance our engagement with the community, foster a more collaborative work environment, and support the local economy. And as Mayor Bowser has repeatedly said, we need the White House to take more decisive action so that most of the Federal government workforce is in the office most of the time.

In terms of COVID-related federal assistance, we continue to seek and close out the reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for pandemic-related expenses and we are proud that, on a per capita basis, the District is at the forefront of receiving federal recovery funding.

Budget, Performance Management, The Lab @ DC, and the Innovation Team

The Office of Budget and Performance Management, led by Jenny Reed, leverages data, innovation, and strategic planning to guide the District's investments. OBPM formulates the budget and tracks agency performance through regular performance cluster meetings where each agency's key performance indicators and strategic initiatives are reviewed and discussed.

The Budget Team has maximized the use of federal funds to meet District needs, and we are on track to fully expend all ARPA funds by their deadline. We are roughly at the 75% mark for the eligible use of these funds, and in following the plans laid out in the FY23 and FY23 budgets. We have until the end of this year to obligate all the ARPA funds. Our goal is to not have a single unspent dollar that would be at risk of being clawed back by changes to federal legislation.

The Performance Team and The Lab @ DC continue to use the Launch, Evaluation, and Monitoring (LEM) Hub to track the effectiveness of the District's use of the ARPA funds, with program design support, technical assistance, impact evaluations and other research studies, ongoing reporting, and data analysis. Data for each ARPA-funded project is posted on our [website, oca.dc.gov](https://oca.dc.gov).

I want to highlight one specific project from last year. Partnering with the DC Housing Authority and the Department of Human Services, The Lab engaged residents, case managers, and agency staff in improving the resident experience with housing vouchers and, last Thursday, released a new, entirely redesigned paper application. The new voucher application includes nearly 40% fewer required pages to complete and requires a typical reading level of grade 4, instead of the previous grade 8.

In 2021, the District was awarded a grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies to create a digital Innovation Team, which we refer to as the i-team, and focuses on digital transformation and innovation to deliver better results for our residents. Over the past year, the i-team worked with agencies to assess our recruitment and hiring processes. The i-team worked with the Department of Employment Services and the Department of Human Resources to launch the HBCU Public Service Program, a groundbreaking apprenticeship program with Howard University and the University of the District of Columbia that will place 25 graduating college seniors in a year-long apprenticeship program within District Government agencies and DC Water.

OBPM also continues to coordinate with the Mayor’s Build Back Better Infrastructure Task Force to identify the most transformational, equitable and sustainable projects to build with the once-in-a-generation funding provided through President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. We provide a comprehensive overview of the competitive grants applied for and successfully obtained by the District, along with details on funded projects, online at infrastructure.dc.gov.

Office of Gun Violence Prevention

In January 2022, Mayor Bowser created the Office of Gun Violence Prevention as a permanent office within OCA, to provide a whole-of-government approach to addressing gun violence using public health tools.

Linda Harllee Harper, the District’s first Director of Gun Violence Prevention, helped develop policy and strategic initiatives to drive down gun violence. Her tragic death last year deprived her family of a beloved mother, our team of a beacon of moral clarity, and our city of a ferocious defender of those that our society is too quick to disregard or toss aside. As we look forward, we honor her memory by doing the work.

In carrying on Linda’s legacy, the OGVP team has continued to do the work of providing grant funding to our residents and community-based organizations to help them break the cycles of violence and address the needs they see in their communities. OGVP provides the grants, follow-up support, and educational resources for grant recipients that show the determination and management to expand and improve the impact of their programs. In FY23 and so far in FY24, OGVP issued 145 grants totaling about \$1.1 million to 99 organizations operating in the city.

Office of Racial Equity

Dr. Amber Hewitt serves as the District’s first Chief Equity Officer leading the Office of Racial Equity (ORE). ORE’s mission is to ensure policy decisions and programs are evaluated through a racial equity lens. Dr. Hewitt and her team’s accomplishments include:

- Releasing the District’s first Racial Equity Action Plan, which was published last week after a comprehensive process of seeking input from residents and stakeholders, and developing a racial equity dashboard to track indicator benchmarks and progress;

- Supporting the first two Racial Equity Pilot Cohorts, a partnership with 22 District agencies to test racial equity tools, complete departmental assessments, and develop agency-specific racial equity action plans;
- Leading the Interagency Committee on Racial Equity to advise on the development and implementation of racial equity plans, tools, and resources;
- Finalizing a guidebook to provide agencies with the proper resources to think critically about when and how they collect, use, and share race and ethnicity information; and
- Expanding the racial equity training program, with 780 District Government managers trained.

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead, the Bowser Administration remains focused on continuing the shift to a post-pandemic stance and addressing District residents’ priorities. We will continue to:

- Construct the upcoming FY25 Budget in an increasingly tight financial environment.
- Coordinate key aspects of the District’s post-pandemic recovery to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and District employees and maximize the use and impact of federal relief funds.
- Develop plans and strategies for the “future of government” by strategically analyzing the District Government’s workforce, facilities, contracting, and technology and identify changes needed to meet the forthcoming transformation.
- Expand gun violence prevention coordination and activities, which include using the OGVP dashboard to share data and information with residents and stakeholders.
- Make data-driven assessments of the performance and impact of our federal COVID-19 recovery investments as funds expire at the end of this year. The lessons we learned and analytical infrastructure we created will propel us forward as we design, launch, and evaluate the initiatives that will lead DC’s comeback.

Thank you for the opportunity to share highlights of my team’s work. I am prepared to take your questions.