Citizen Oversight Board

Strategic Plan

2023-2024

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## Overview: Strategic Plan 2023-2024

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  • Increase monitor and staff salaries, staffing, and bandwidth for effective oversight  
  • Make board membership more accessible to community members  
  • Amend board bylaws  
  • Clarify roles and standardize training for board members | • Request salary study for monitor position  
  • Write performance plan for monitor position  
  • Assist Monitor in setting strategic direction of OIM  
  • Develop board member role description, interest packet, onboarding checklist, orientation, ongoing training, offboarding, and exit interview  
  • Amend board bylaws  
  • Shorten nominating process for board members | Salary studies  
  Vacancy rates |
| Sustained Stakeholder Support: Community Outreach and Involvement | • Engage and catalyze community to raise visibility of Citizen Oversight Board and Office of the Independent Monitor, prioritizing strong, open relationships and working together to reform the oversight system  
  • Publish more resources for the public  
  • Prepare for new mayor and council members in 2023 | • Prepare community engagement plan with calendar of events  
  • Participate in community-hosted events  
  • Publish and update web page with history of the Citizen Oversight Board and Office of the Independent Monitor  
  • Educate political candidates about roles of Citizen Oversight Board and Office of the Independent Monitor | Participation at events  
  Public awareness |
| Unfettered Access to Records and Facilities; Public Reporting and Transparency | • Issue more data analysis, reports, and recommendations than in previous years  
  • Develop an approach to enable the OIM to drop-in on public safety departments  
  • Increase independence and transparency of use of force review boards at DPD  
  • Enhance transparency of process governing misconduct and policy complaints  
  • Enhance oversight and transparency of Denver Health’s performance in providing medical care to incarcerated persons | • Pursue outstanding data requests to agencies  
  • Develop strategy, templates, and checklists for reports and public statements  
  • Develop research priorities and partnerships  
  • Develop research strategy for drop-ins, use of force review, and misconduct and policy complaints  
  • Monitor implementation of public portal for IAPro database  
  • Analyze Denver Health contract with DSD  
  • Data requests and CORA requests | Reporting  
  Implementation |
Background

Introduction

In 2022, the board engaged a consultant to facilitate a strategic planning process. During three sessions beginning in August 2022, the board reflected on its role and accomplishments, chose priorities for decision making, and detailed goals, objectives, and activities to complete through 2024.

Board Mission

The Citizen Oversight Board (COB) was created in 2004 and consists of nine community members who are broadly tasked with assessing the effectiveness of the Denver Department of Public Safety’s hiring, training, and disciplinary processes and making recommendations as appropriate. Specifically, the duties and authorities of the COB are established in Section 12.1.1(B) of the City and County of Denver Charter, as follows:

There is hereby created the citizen oversight board, the size, qualifications, composition and appointment of which shall be as provided by ordinance. The functions of the board shall be to:

i. Assess the effectiveness of the monitor's office;
ii. Make policy-level recommendations regarding discipline, use of force, and other policies; rules; hiring; training; community relations; and the complaint process;
iii. Address any other issues of concern to the community, members of the board, the monitor, the manager of safety, the chief of police, the sheriff, or the fire chief;
iv. Make recommendations as to specific cases as may be prescribed in ordinance;
v. Exercise such other powers and duties as may be provided by ordinance; and
vi. In addition to executing the powers and duties assigned to the citizen oversight board, the citizen oversight board shall appoint, by and with the consent of city council, the monitor or any appointee who will serve as monitor in the interim. The monitor shall serve at the pleasure of the citizen oversight board.
Board Members

Three board positions were vacant during the strategic planning process. Ana Thallas joined the board at the end of November 2022 and David Martinez joined the Board in January 2023.

**Julia Richman, Chair**, currently serves as the Deputy Executive Director of the Governor’s Office of Information Technology (OIT), overseeing a broad scope of agency operations and key strategic initiatives. She joined OIT as the Chief Strategy Officer in 2020. Previously, Julia was the Chief Innovation and Technology Officer for the City of Boulder and a Senior Manager with Deloitte Consulting. Richman was born and raised in Colorado’s metro area. She is a Colorado Governor's Fellow, and a graduate of Leadership Denver. She also sits on the boards for the Colfax Marathon and Colorado Smart Cities Alliance. She received her MPP from the University of Chicago and AB from Dartmouth College.

**Nicholas Webber, Vice Chair**, is a supervising attorney at the Denver Trial Office of the Colorado State Public Defender, where he has worked since 2014. As a Deputy Public Defender, Nicholas works to protect the constitutional rights, liberties and dignity of indigent people accused of committing crimes. Nicholas has worked on all types of cases in his tenure at the public defender’s office, from misdemeanor traffic offenses to homicides and violent crimes. Nicholas is a Denver native, but left Colorado to obtain his bachelor’s degree from Boston University. After college, he worked with low-income families at a Jesuit school in Ecuador before earning his law degree from Santa Clara University. Prior to becoming a public defender, Nicholas worked at the Watsonville Law Center Legal Aid Clinic in California, as an Equal Justice Works Fellow advocating for migrant worker rights. He also interned with the Santa Cruz California Public Defender’s Office and served as a board member for the Pajaro Valley Women’s Shelter.

**Karen Collier** retired from public service in 2009, having worked in the Denver District Court as a court stenographer for 30 years. Since then, she has worked as an Alpine Ski Instructor in Winter Park and Granby, instructing differently-abled and abled-bodied youth and adults in Alpine skiing and as a tennis instructor with Denver Citywide Sports. Karen is committed to social justice work in Colorado, having worked with the Chinook Fund, Out4Life Colorado, delivering HIV prevention services to the African-American communities in the Denver Metro area, The Center, volunteering with Rainbow Alley; its LGBTQ youth outreach program, and One Colorado as a co-chair for the People of Color Caucus. In addition to the appointment to the Citizen Oversight Board, she sits on the Board of The Center for Trauma and Resilience and is a co-chair of Park Hill Congregational UCC's partnership with the Women's Homelessness Initiative; a program of the Capitol Hill United Ministries, providing daily shelter to women who are homeless in Colorado.
Terrance D. Carroll was the 54th Speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives. He is the only African-American to have served as Speaker of the Colorado House. Terrance served in the legislature from 2003 until being term-limited 2011. Terrance has been listed by 5280 Magazine as one of the "50 Most Influential People in Denver." Terrance's entry noted his reputation as a skillful dealmaker, stating that he is a "critical and respected negotiator."

Currently, Terrance is a Senior Fellow with Unite America. He also serves as a reserve police officer with Colorado’s statewide shared law enforcement reserve. Terrance is a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, the University of Denver’s Sturm College of Law, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Iliff School of Theology in Denver.

Larry Martinez is a proud native Coloradan, raised in the inner city of Denver. He has been an active community member all his life. As a youth Larry performed anti-drug theater with the West Side Drug-Free Youth Team and worked with several community groups on cultural awareness and professional development. Larry has worked with Denver Inner City Parish (a secular human services organization, known as DICP) for 20 years. During that time, he directed youth out-of-school time programs, food pantries, senior-citizens’ programs, community dinners, gift distributions, and sober living facilities. Larry is currently Executive Director of Denver Inner City Parish and a former director of DICP at College View, a Denver Parks and Rec center operated by DICP for 9 years. Larry also serves on the board of NEWSED CDC. He is married and a proud father of four wonderful children.

Stefan Stein is the Chief Executive Officer of Sherman & Howard, Denver’s oldest law firm. He represents clients in complex litigation, internal investigations, and government investigations and enforcement matters. Stefan previously served as Deputy General Counsel and Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer of Qwest Communications where he led a global ethics and compliance program for over 30,000 employees. He also served as a federal prosecutor in Los Angeles for seven years where he was the Deputy Chief of the Public Corruption & Government Fraud unit. Stefan has been actively involved in community service. In addition to serving on the Citizen Oversight Board, Stefan is a board member of the Colorado Nonprofit Development Center which is a fiscal sponsor for over 60 charitable organizations in Colorado. Stefan was previously a Board member and Chair of the Governance Committee of the Jewish Community Center of Denver. He was also a longtime Board member as well as the Interim CEO and Board Chair of Urban Peak, a nonprofit organization that provides a convergence of services to homeless youth and youth at risk of becoming homeless. Stefan holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Stanford University and a law degree from the University of Michigan.
Ana Thallas is a Colorado native and mother of three beautiful children (one deceased). Ana started her career as a Certified Optician then moved into optometry and ophthalmology practice management. Combining her expertise as an optician with her sales acumen, she managed a multi-state territory for one of the three largest luxury conglomerates in the world. During the pandemic of 2020 Ana and her team were unexpectedly laid off. One month later, on June 10, 2020, her oldest daughter, Isabella, was murdered in Denver’s Ballpark neighborhood. Devastated, Ana devoted herself to finding and creating resources that would support her healing and support others through similar loss. Among the sources of healing, a beautiful mural of Isabella was created in the heart of Denver at a “no name” pocket park. Ana collaborated with Denver City Council and Denver Parks and Recreation to restore the park and dedicate it as Bella Joy Gardens. Bella Joy Gardens has become a space of healing for many. As another avenue of healing, she successfully lobbied the Colorado General Assembly to pass the Isabella Joy Thallas Act (Senate Bill 21-078), which was signed into law in April 2021. Ana is publishing her writings detailing her journey through the devastation of the tragic loss of a child. Her hope is that it will encourage others who have also experienced unexpected loss.

David Martinez is the legislative aide for State Representative Javier Mabrey, and works at the Colorado State Public Defender's office as a discovery clerk. He is interested in fighting alongside the most vulnerable folks in their battle for justice. He attended Colorado State University where he majored in Political Science and became a first-generation college graduate. He is a proud Chicano who grew up in the Westside of Denver and is currently a resident of the Westwood neighborhood! David is eager to better understand social institutions that have been huge perpetrators in the societal ills that plague our communities. He has come to understand that the best way to tackle our catastrophes is through mobilized and organized efforts. La unión hace la fuerza. David was previously the community organizer for the Latino Action Council. He helped organize and facilitate the first Colorado Latino Political forum for U.S Congressional District 8. He also worked with the UCLA Latino Public Policy Institute to create a Latino lens for Proposition FF (Healthy School Meals For All).

Staff

Daniel Van Schooten joined the Board as its administrator in September 2021. In that capacity, he broadly supports the Board as it interfaces with the city and community. He manages administration, logistics, and finances on the Board’s behalf, as well as coordinating the training and onboarding of new members. Previously, he worked for the Project On Government Oversight, a nonpartisan, nonprofit federal government watchdog group. His responsibilities there included investigating whistleblower claims of systemic problems within the federal government and coordinating the organization’s oversight training program for congressional staff. He holds Bachelor’s degrees in Economics and International Relations from Wheaton College.
Values

While developing this strategic plan, the board prioritized these values:

- Accountability
- Community
- Service
- Compassion
- Diversity
- Freedom
- Legacy
- Making a difference
- Perseverance
- Seeking and sharing information with the community
- Trust
- Vision

The Denver Citizen Oversight Board also endorses and embraces the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement’s Thirteen Principles for Effective Oversight.1

Strategic Plan Detail

Goal 1: Adequate Funding and Operational Resources

1A) Hire and supervise new monitor
Timeframe: Q4 2022 for hiring; Q1 2023 for performance plan
Lead: Julia Richman and Screening Committee
Support: All COB members
Activities:
  ● Interviews
  ● Public meetings with community organizations
  ● Write performance plan for monitor position based on hiring rubric for board review and adoption
  ● Assist Monitor in setting strategic direction of OIM

1B) Increase monitor and OIM staff salaries and OIM staffing for more effective oversight
Timeframe: Q2 2024
Lead: Julia Richman
Support: n/a
Activities:
  ● Ensure the Monitor’s salary is and remains competitive
  ● Ensure salaries of OIM staff are and remain competitive
  ● Increase OIM staff size and bandwidth for additional work

1C) Make Board membership more accessible to community members
Timeframe: Q1 2023
Lead: Julia Richman
Support: n/a
Activities:
  ● Shorten nominating process for board members
  ● Change ordinance and remove nominating committee
  ● Increase stipends for Board members
  ● Promote Board membership during regular meetings
  ● Consider changing meeting cadence/location etc. to better meet residents where they are
1D) Amend board bylaws
Timeframe: Q2 2023
Lead: Stefan Stein
Support: Daniel Van Schooten
Activities:
- Make bylaws consistent with charter/ordinance changes
- Meet with new City Attorney’s Office contact for review
- Determine acceptable threshold for absences
- Define excused vs. unexcused absences or remove terms
- Address “may” and “shall”
- Discuss draft and adopt new bylaws

1E) Clarify roles and standardize training for board members
Timeframe: Q2 2023
Lead: Karen Collier and Nicholas Webber
Support: Daniel Van Schooten
Activities:
- Execute changes from amended bylaws
- Review role description to clarify expectations
- Evaluate travel expenses/reimbursement vs. advance process
- Update board member interest packet
- Write onboarding checklist
- Plan orientation and ongoing training
- Develop offboarding checklist and exit interview process

Citizen Oversight Board Meeting on January 6, 2023
Goal 2: Sustained Stakeholder Support: Community Outreach and Involvement

2A) Engage and catalyze community to raise visibility of Citizen Oversight Board and Office of the Independent Monitor, prioritizing strong, open relationships and working together to reform the oversight system

Timeframe: Q1 2023 for schedule; Q3 2023 plan finished and approved

Lead: Larry Martinez
Support: Julia Richman and Daniel Van Schooten

Activities:

- Set goals
- Highlight roles and process
- Flow charts: When issues are brought to the board, what happens?
- Prepare community engagement plan
- Create calendar of community events for the year and decide which to attend
- Add community events to board meeting agendas

Citizen Oversight Board members Stefan Stein and Karen Collier, and Administrator Daniel Van Schooten at Servicios de la Raza’s annual cookout in September 2022.
2B) Publish more resources for the public

Timeframe: Continuous maintenance
Lead: Daniel Van Schooten
Support: n/a
Activities:
- Regularly update and maintain list of available resources
- Create new resources as appropriate

2C) Prepare for new mayor and council members in 2023

Timeframe: Q1 through Q3 2023
Lead: Julia Richman
Support: Terrance Carroll and Daniel Van Schooten
Activities:
- Build packet of messaging and talking points
- Meet with candidates, as appropriate

Goal 3: Unfettered Access to Records and Facilities; Public Reporting and Transparency

3A) Issue more data analysis, reports, and recommendations

Timeframe: Q1 2023 through Q4 2024
Lead: Nicholas Webber and Daniel Van Schooten
Support: Julia Richman
Activities:
- Develop strategy and templates for reports and public statements (Q1 2023)
- Pursue outstanding data requests to agencies (Q1 2023)
- Collaborate with OIM on opportunities to bring more information to the public
- Develop list of research priorities (Q4 2024)
  - Compile examples of potential projects/needs
  - List potential partners (colleges, institutes, etc.)
3B) Develop an approach to enable the OIM to drop-in on public safety departments

Timeframe: Q4 2023
Lead: Nicholas Webber
Support: Larry Martinez
Activities:
- Research other agencies’ practices for drop-ins
- Prepare plan
- Publish recommendations
- Begin drop-ins

3C) Increase independence and transparency of Use of Force Review Board at the Denver Police Department

Timeframe: Q4 2023
Lead: Daniel Van Schooten
Support: Julia Richman and Nicholas Webber
Activities:
- Research other agencies’ practices for use of force review
- Confer with Office of the Independent Monitor staff on proposed changes
- Evaluate possibilities for new membership including Office of the Independent Monitor staff, residents, community representatives
- Publish recommendations

3D) Enhance transparency of process governing misconduct and policy complaints

Timeframe: Q1 2023 through Q3 2024
Lead: Daniel Van Schooten
Support: All board members
Activities:
- Review previous recommendations
- Research other agencies’ practices for addressing misconduct and policy complaints
- Confer with Office of the Independent Monitor staff on proposed changes
- Consider process improvement for discipline meetings and all steps of process
- Monitor implementation of public portal for IAPro database
- Make recommendations in each annual report
- Public awareness campaign
3E) Enhance oversight and transparency of Denver Health’s performance in providing medical care to incarcerated persons

Timeframe: Q1 2023 through Q4 2024
Lead: Julia Richman
Support: Daniel Van Schooten
Activities:
- Analyze Denver Health contract with Denver Sheriff Department
- Build relationships with Denver Health staff
- Attend City Council discussions and meet with Council staff regarding Denver Health’s performance
- Publish recommendations
- Data requests and CORA requests
- Publish recommendations

Reporting on the Strategic Plan

At the Board meeting on the first Friday of each month, the lead for each objective will report:
1. Progress the lead/support made since last month’s update
2. The one or two most important things the lead/support team can do in the next month that will have the biggest impact on completing this item

In its annual reports for 2023 and 2024, the Citizen Oversight Board will detail its progress on the goals and objectives in this strategic plan.
Contact Information

Members of the public are always welcome to join the Board’s twice-monthly meetings or provide their thoughts to the Board through one of the options below.

The Board’s 2022 meeting schedule is available on our website, as are copies of recent reports, meeting minutes, and meeting recordings. Older records are available upon request.

The board regularly shares updates via the following channels:

- Website: www.denvergov.org/COB
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/DenverCOB/
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/denver_cob
- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@Denver_COB
- Email List: https://eepurl.com/dnUb9D

You can contact the board in any of the following ways:

- Social media (listed above)
- Email: COB@DenverGov.org
- Voicemail: (720) 913-3150
- Mailing Address:
  Citizen Oversight Board
  Denver Post Building
  101 W. Colfax Ave., Suite 100
  Denver, CO 80202