Iowa Office of Civil Rights

Iowa Office of Civil Rights Strategic Plan

2025 - 2027

Updated May 2025

IOWA | Iowa Office of Civil Rights

FROM THE DIRECTOR

I've had the honor of serving Iowans and leading the Iowa Office of Civil Rights for the last two years. The Office staff continues to meet the challenges and opportunities of the day, including: the realignment of state government, officially transferring duties from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission to the Iowa Office of Civil Rights, and identifying efficiencies to ensure Iowans receive thorough investigations, which includes a legal analysis of the filed complaint.

The strategic vision contained within this document represents aspirational goals and performance indicators that IOCR will strive to complete in the next two years. The IOCR team's dedication to fulfilling our mission is evident in the over 1,400 impartial civil rights investigations completed annually.

Using operational expertise, team member input, and applying our core values and focus, we were able to establish strategic initiatives, goals, and key performance indicators to ensure the IOCR continues to operate efficiently for many years to come.

As we embrace officially becoming the Iowa Office of Civil Rights and the opportunities for the future, I hope Iowans will notice a renewed dedication towards operational efficiencies and excellence in our legal analyses. I am excited for what we are able to achieve in these next two years.



Warm regards,

Kristen Stiffler
Director

IOCR OVERVIEW

The Iowa Legislature established the Iowa Civil Rights Commission on April 29, 1965 with the enactment of the Iowa Civil Rights Act. The Commission was established to investigate allegations of illegal discrimination and provide education and outreach regarding civil rights for Iowans. The Commission continued its mission until 2024 when the Iowa Legislature established the Iowa Office of Civil Rights (IOCR) to continue the mission established 60 years ago.

The Iowa Office of Civil Rights receives over 2,000 civil rights inquiries a year and investigates over 1,400 complaints. When the IOCR establishes probable cause that illegal discrimination has occurred, the IOCR enforces the Iowa Civil Rights Act through litigation in collaboration with the Attorney General's Office. The IOCR also provides education and outreach to Iowans throughout the state. In July 2023, the IOCR became an attached unit of the Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing (DIAL).

The IOCR contracts with the federal government through workshare agreements, which consists of about 50% of the Agency's total appropriation. General Funds provide the remaining 50% to fulfill the duties and responsibilities established in the Iowa Civil Rights Act. The IOCR's appropriation is just over $3 million to fund the Agency's 27 FTEs.

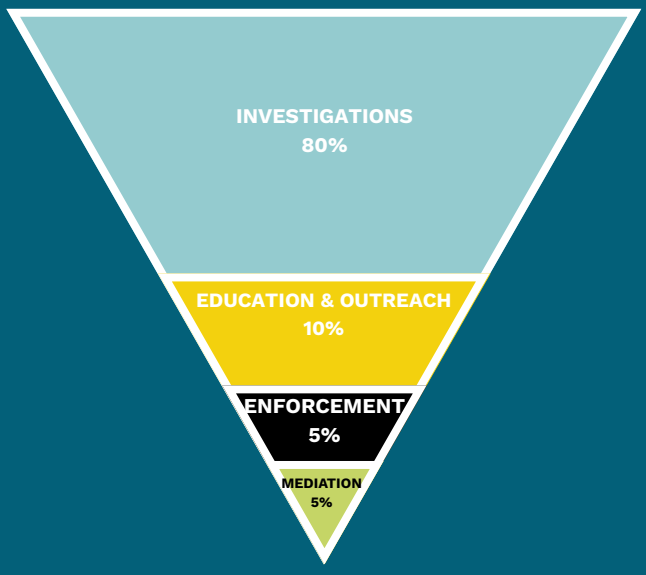
CORE FUNCTIONS

INVESTIGATE
Investigate complaints of alleged discrimination and provide a legal analysis of the findings of the investigation.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH
Provide education and outreach to the public and stakeholders about civil rights laws, rights, and responsibilities.

ENFORCE
Recommend legal outcomes based on investigations and enforce violations of illegal discrimination.

MEDIATE
Offer mediation services to parties open to alternative dispute resolution.



Iowa Office of Civil Rights

OUR MISSION

TO PROVIDE IMPARTIAL, EFFICIENT, AND FACT-DRIVEN INVESTIGATIVE ANALYSES OF DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS FILED IN IOWA AND PROMOTE CIVIL RIGHTS OUTREACH AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

OUR VISION

THE IOWA OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS SEEKS TO ELIMINATE ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION WITHIN THE STATE OF IOWA

CORE VALUES AND FOCUS

IMPARTIAL
WE WILL PROVIDE NEUTRAL, FACT-DRIVEN INVESTIGATIONS TO ENSURE IOWANS ARE TREATED JUSTLY UNDER THE LAW

EFFICIENT
WE WILL WORK TO ENSURE TAXPAYER DOLLARS ARE UTILIZED TO THEIR FULLEST EXTENT

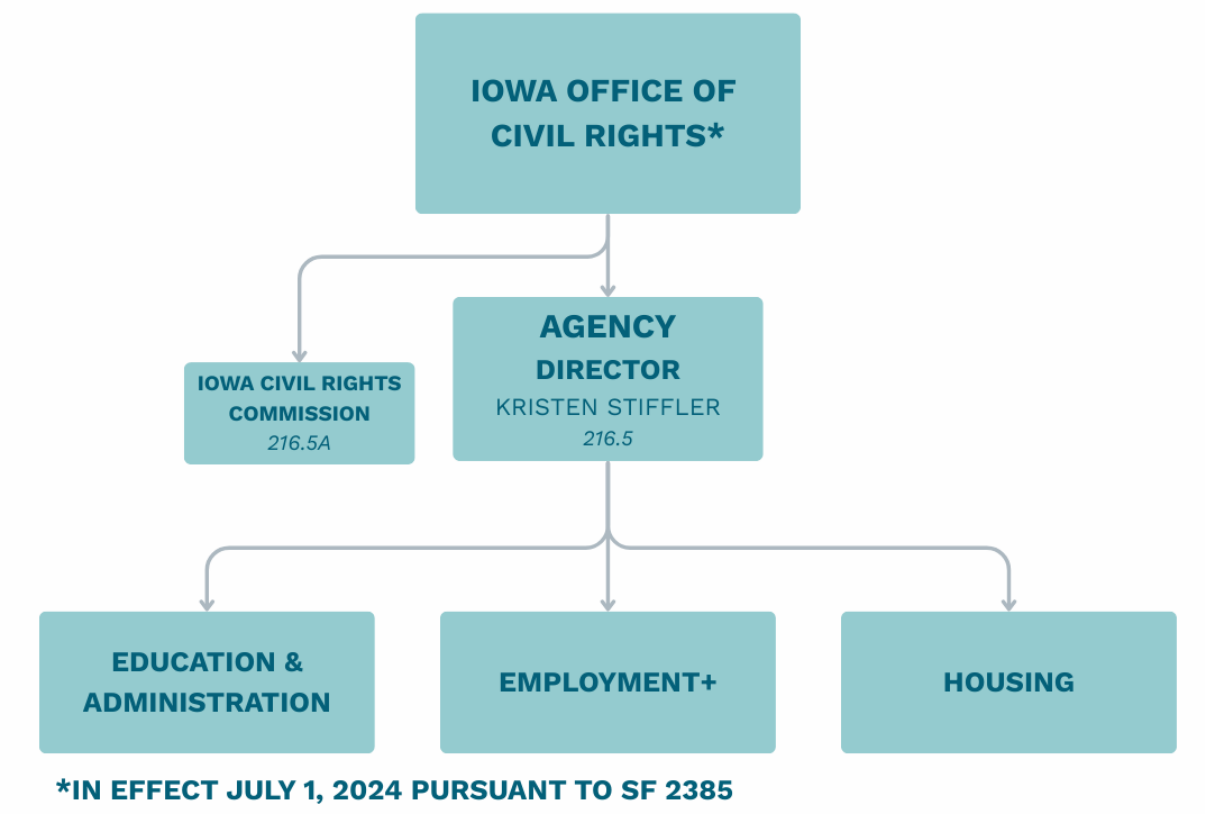
PURPOSEFUL WORK ETHIC
WE NURTURE A CULTURE OF OUTSTANDING WORK ETHIC, TEAMWORK, AND DILIGENCE

CUSTOMER SERVICE FOCUS
WE ARE COURTEOUS, RESPONSIVE, AND RESPECTFUL

TRUSTED RESOURCE
WE ARE A RELIABLE CIVIL RIGHTS RESOURCE FOR IOWANS

MISSION ORIENTED
WE WILL KEEP A CONSTANT FOCUS ON ENSURING JUST OUTCOMES FOR IOWANS

IOWA
Iowa Office of Civil Rights



AGENCY ASSESSMENT

The Iowa Office of Civil Rights completed an internal and external agency assessment, all of which impact the mission and vision of the agency. These factors were taken into consideration as goals and strategies were developed for the agency.

S Strengths	W Weaknesses	O Opportunities	T Threats
• Staff dedication **(I)** • Legal expertise of Iowa civil rights law **(I)** • Agency culture of quality investigations **(I)** • Viewed highly by federal partners **(E)**	• Small state agency with short statutory deadlines **(E)** • Occasional staffing instability **(I)** • Outdated case management system **(I)** • Data integrity **(I)** • Insufficient succession planning **(E)**	• Utilize process improvements to promote efficiencies **(I)** • Utilize state supportive services to illustrate organizational needs **(E)** • Leadership support for education and outreach **(I)**	• Federal & State Appropriation **(E)** • Changing Federal landscape **(E)** • Historically high turnover rates **(I)**

(I) – Internal Assessment (E) – External Assessment

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, GOALS, & KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

FY26 Enterprise Priority:
Government Efficiency

Strategic Initiative 1

ADVANCE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

GOAL: Identify and improve program efficiencies utilizing LEAN Six Sigma practices

KPI: Complete LEAN Six Sigma analysis of IOCR process to identify baseline metrics for Operational Plan FY27 **Timeline: Spring 2026**

KPI: Digitize internal case processing and case flow for investigations **Timeline: May 2025**

KPI: Implement new case management system to replace 20-year-old case management system **Timeline: July 2025**

KPI: Establish baseline metrics regarding case processing and closure times **Timeline: July 2026**

KPI: Assess data inputs and outputs to establish baseline metrics, ensure data integrity, and foster collaboration with policymakers **Timeline: Ongoing**

GOAL: Identify opportunities to ensure accessibility and readability of civil rights laws, rules, and processes

KPI: Review current rules and initiate rulemaking pursuant to Executive Order 10 **Timeline: December 2025**

KPI: Analyze and provide recommendations regarding the Iowa Civil Rights Act to ensure accessibility and readability **Timeline: December 2025**

KPI: Create digital toolbox for Iowans to navigate the civil rights complaint process **Timeline: December 2026**

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, GOALS, & KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

FY26 Enterprise Priority:
Government Efficiency

Strategic Initiative 2

ELEVATE ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

GOAL: Retain, recruit, and support agency staff

KPI: Complete analysis of organizational structure to ensure effective implementation of agency mission **Timeline: December 2025**

KPI: Create succession plans, update internal processes, and procedures **Timeline: March 2026**

KPI: Encourage cross training, collaboration, mentorships of staff through quality interactions **Timeline: Ongoing**

Strategic Initiative 3

INCREASE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

GOAL: Identify and improve discourse with diverse stakeholders surrounding civil rights topics

KPI: Establish baseline metrics for education and outreach and ensure expansion beyond Des Moines metro **Timeline: July 2026**

KPI: Identify opportunities for direct stakeholder engagement for director and leadership team regarding process improvements **Timeline: Spring 2026**

KPI: Create plan to promote the Iowa Civil Rights Act Compliance Initiative to educate small businesses **Timeline: Fall 2025**

KPI: Create a listserv to keep stakeholders updated on agency and commission activities **Timeline: Fall 2025**

KPI: Identify opportunities for Commissioners to engage in their communities and create baseline metrics **Timeline: Fall 2025**