

# Alexandria Commission for Women Retreat 2025

## FY25 Wrap Up + FY26 Strategic Planning

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 2025

PRESENT: Lexi White; Yvette Jiang; Eva Bastianon; Kafi Joseph;  
Maxanne “Maxie” Witkin; Jennifer Beatty; Rev. Dr. Shelley Brown; Hope  
Nelson; Allison Heiser; Nichelle Johnson Billups; Dr. Elisabeth “PJ” Palmer  
Johnson; Krystle Bransky, and Debra Evans

# FY25 Wrap Up + FY26 Strategic Planning

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## 1. Welcome Lunch, Ice Breaker, and Reflections on FY25

### FY25 Highlights

1. Commission Volunteering – **6 votes** (*Rank 1*)
  2. 50th Anniversary Celebration (Sept 24) – **5 votes** (*Rank 2*)
  3. City Group Presentations – **5 votes** (*Rank 3*)
  4. Holiday Volunteering – 4 votes
  5. ALX Pride – 3 votes
  6. City Recognition of Women's History Month (Mar 25) – 2 votes
  7. Mental Health in ALX Panel – 1 vote
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## 2. Discovery Guide Share-Out by Subcommittee + Next Steps

### Overview

The group reviewed updates to the 2018 Status of Women report across five pillars:

- Economic Security
- Education & Barriers to Opportunity
- Healthcare
- Women in Leadership

- Safety

Focus areas included:

- Addressing data gaps and limitations.
  - Using both retrospective (2018–present) and forward-looking perspectives.
  - Comparing results against city, state, national, and DMV/regional benchmarks.
  - Identifying future inflection points that could impact women in Alexandria.
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## **Key Themes & Discussion Points**

### **Data Gaps & Comparisons**

- Many indicators lack updated, direct matches to 2018 data.
  - Interest in benchmarking against state, national, and regional data.
  - Adjust for population differences when comparing jurisdictions.
  - Add vignettes or callouts for qualitative context (e.g., private school impact, community programs).
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### **Economic Security**

- Women's labor force participation in Alexandria is higher than national averages.
- Strongest participation rates among Black and Latina women.
- Women's unemployment (~4.3%) is comparable to men's.
- Anticipated negative impacts from Medicaid/tax credit reductions and policy shifts.
- Recommendation: Include a forward-looking section proposing proactive economic protections.

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## Education & Barriers to Opportunity

- Female high school graduation rate rose from 82% (2015) to 91.5% (2024), still slightly below the state average.
- Dropout rate has decreased but remains above the Virginia average.
- Post-secondary enrollment for female ACPS graduates is ~72% (matches state).
- Limited gender-specific data for technical/career pathways.
- STEM participation gaps persist.
- Key barriers: language access, high ELL program usage (~45% of ACPS students), internet access disparities.

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## Healthcare

- Health insurance coverage improved after Medicaid expansion; future coverage is uncertain.
- Breast cancer mortality declining overall; racial disparities persist.
- Girls' mental health shows slight improvement in suicide planning rates, but numbers remain high.
- Teen pregnancy rate has risen — now highest in the region.
- Additional issues: maternal/infant mortality, obesity, opioid use.
- Cultural, religious, and policy factors (e.g., Dobbs decision) influence reproductive health access.

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## Women in Leadership

- Representation on City Council, School Board, and boards/commissions is largely unchanged since 2018.

- Pay equity gaps remain: Black women earn ~76¢, Latinas ~80¢ per dollar compared to white men.
  - Underrepresentation in fire and police departments.
  - Alexandria leads the nation in women-owned businesses (27%).
  - Suggested metrics: recruitment, retention, entrepreneurship, civic engagement.
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## Safety

- Limited local data on sexual/domestic violence; state sources available.
  - Potential mismatches between hotline/service usage and police reports.
  - Stress in America survey identifies top stressors: money, family responsibilities, relationships, job stability, personal safety, discrimination.
  - Recommendations:
    - Expand prevention and healthy relationships education.
    - Launch campaigns on sexual assault and trafficking awareness.
    - Address rise in non-consensual sexual contact among ACPS girls (~15%).
    - Tackle both sex and labor trafficking.
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## Detailed Points of Discussion

- **Forward-Looking Planning:** Include a forecast section anticipating impacts of policy changes.
- **Intersectionality:** Address disparities across race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status in all pillars.
- **Program Callouts:** Highlight local programs (e.g., Computer Core, ACAP health clinic, entrepreneurship support).

- **Community Engagement:** Track participation in hearings, civic engagement, and advocacy.
  - **Report Structure Enhancements:**
    - Red/Yellow/Green (R/Y/G) status for past-to-present and present-to-goal progress.
    - Qualitative vignettes where quantitative data is limited.
    - Consistent benchmarking at city, state, and national levels.
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### **3. FY26 Key Goals & Activities – Subcommittee Goal Setting**

#### **FY26 Goals – Voting Results**

1. Continue volunteer opportunities – **10 votes**
  2. One event across all subcommittees – **7 votes**
  3. More community engagement – **6 votes**
    - Revisit 2018 Status of Women Report / complete scorecard update – **6 votes**
    - Strengthen connections with City Council & local organizations – **6 votes**
  4. Solidify gains / assess next steps in challenging environment – **3 votes**
  5. Identify youth member – **2 votes**
  6. Lead a project – **0 votes**
  7. Build inclusive partnerships for local voices – **0 votes**
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#### **Advocacy & City Council Relations**

**Mission:** Advocate for policies and budgetary solutions while engaging the community and raising awareness.

### **FY26 Goals & Activities**

- Attend stakeholder events, town halls, City Council meetings, and Budget & Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee sessions.
  - Collaborate with the Scorecard/Report team to develop a long-term advocacy platform.
  - Prepare state legislative priorities by October 5; review prior list and gather new ideas.
  - Partner with neighboring commissions and local boards for joint priorities.
  - **Key Issues:**
    - Extend unemployment benefits, focusing on women and women of color in leadership.
    - Support Human Rights Commission in developing sanctuary city policy protections.
  - **Signature Advocacy Event:** If timing aligns with Women's History Month, host a public launch with panel, report presentation, and moderated Q&A.
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## **Community Outreach**

**Purpose:** Strengthen partnerships and maintain consistent public engagement.

### **FY26 Goals & Activities**

- Identify and cultivate local partners (nonprofits, city departments, schools, medical providers).
- Maintain public presence at major events (Farmer's Markets, ALX Pride, Irish Parade).
- Distribute outreach materials (flyers, banners, brochures) and target key community networks.
- Coordinate with Events Committee to unify the public calendar and materials.

- Leverage existing city events for low-cost visibility.
  - Marketing & awareness through social media and possible local transit ads.
  - Event examples: Lighting of the Tree, Alexandria Council of Economic Development, report launch events.
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## **Events**

**Purpose:** Support subcommittees and manage public engagement logistics.

### **FY26 Goals & Activities**

- Maintain the Commission's social calendar or merge with Community Outreach for joint management.
  - Update public materials at least annually.
  - **Report Launch:**
    - Lead-Up Panel (May 26 target) with contributors.
    - Launch Event (post-May 26) as a town hall with Q&A.
  - Maintain ongoing public presence with monthly community representation.
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## **Membership & Volunteer (Subcommittee)**

**Purpose:** Build commissioner engagement and volunteer capacity.

### **FY26 Goals & Activities**

- **Foster Positive Member Experience:**
  - Structured onboarding (handbook, checklists, buddies).
  - Quarterly social gatherings for new/outgoing members.



- “Try on” initiatives to refine operations.
  - **Increase Volunteer Engagement:**
    - Recruitment for event-specific and ongoing roles.
    - Youth volunteer pipeline.
    - Maintain rosters for continuity.
  - **Recognition Goal:** Apply for “Commission of the Year,” highlighting the report launch.
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## 4. Creating Personal Commitments

- **LEXI:** Renew commitment as Chair; strengthen and “gel” the new committee structure; excited to build capacity.
- **YVETTE:** Commit as E-Board member and Membership & Volunteer Subcommittee member to onboard new commissioners.
- **ALLISON:** Reinforce commitment to community outreach; attend more city events; support increased volunteer engagement; value hearing diverse community perspectives.
- **EVA:** Being new, looks forward to building community relationships.
- **NICHELLE:** Excited for the community to learn about the Commission’s advocacy; grow community strength through Commission’s work.
- **KAFI:** Strengthen bonds within the group; increase engagement to amplify the Commission’s voice; work with Nichelle to complete and share the Status of Women Report.
- **PJ:** Increase outside volunteering; signed up for Aug. 23 at Pat Miller Square.
- **MAXIE:** Commitment to bring chocolate.
- **KRYSTAL:** Retreat clarified purpose; advocate externally; attend budget/finance meetings for funding; be more present in the community.

- **JENNIFER B.:** Work with Community Outreach to explore walking in the Scottish Parade.
  - **SHELLEY:** Re-energized by new members' ideas; commit to outreach and internal relationship building; attend social gatherings to strengthen collaboration.
  - **HOPE:** Listen, absorb, and serve through Community Outreach Subcommittee.
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## 5. Parking Lot, Actions, and Next Steps

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