



## RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL

Date Submitted: 8/12/20

Department: Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

*Please note: each response field below has a 2,500 character limit.*

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE CATEGORY 1: DIVERSE & INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

#### **What activities are you doing to attract and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce in your department? What are the associated costs of these activities?**

The Milwaukee County Board is a diverse body with 18 Supervisors elected from across the County with each district comprising about 53,000 residents. The Board has been the starting point for many in their public service careers within County government. A shining example of this public service trajectory, the current County Executive served as a Legislative Assistant on the Board. Other former Board staff also now work in leadership positions within other County offices and serve within other governments. To build a diverse workforce, the Chair, as departmental leader, engages Supervisors and staff with an ask that they circulate posts for job announcements for Board positions to their wide networks with intentionality towards diversity. This recruitment step is taken to expand beyond the base level of support provided by Human Resources that posts announcements to limited sites. Minimum requirements for educational attainment and drivers' license are evaluated in JEQ development.

To retain a diverse workforce, the department has initiated weekly staff meetings with district offices. While Supervisors independently manage their offices, these departmental coordinated meetings with district offices build community within the diverse body. The meetings have proven to be a good place for information sharing and to increase engagement between district office staff. These efforts to attract and retain diverse talent and build an inclusive workforce require additional staff time within the department without a financial cost for the activities.

#### **How do you use professional development and advancement opportunities to advance equity in your department's workforce? What resources are used to support these opportunities for professional development and advancement?**

The Board Chair has made it a priority to find means to provide advancement and equity opportunities amongst the department's workforce. By designing professional development opportunities and goal setting for staff via virtual trainings, we seek to expand understanding of County function, improve skill sets, and cultivate a work environment that encourages its staff to explore avenues not immediately within their core position function.

The department has increased utilization of existing technology to create new searchable resources (internal and constituent based) for district offices to share knowledge equally and allow all to build skill sets on County processes and operations.

Currently, the unique restrictions on our budget do not allow additional resources to expand these opportunities. The statutory cap that uniquely applies to the Board's budget limits opportunities to create a career ladder within the department and reduces abilities for professional development. Using current staff, time and technology has been our vehicle; however, limited capacity does not allow this model to sustain these efforts.

Despite budget restrictions and inability to hire more staff, we have sought opportunities to advance equity by exploring a partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Department of Africology to place interns within our Department. Given this collaboration would be a new partnership within the university, we hope to attract other departments in the future.

The Board's internship program recruits from multiple post-secondary institutions and has provided learning opportunities for students who attend MATC, UW-Milwaukee, Marquette, UW-Madison, UW-Parkside, Carthage College, and Alverno College, among others. We coordinate with these institutions and their own resources, such as the Kleczka program, to select participants who bring different backgrounds into the County. Participants in the internship program have been hired to the Board to support departmental and district operations, creating a pipeline from internship to employment.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE CATEGORY 2: PEOPLE-FOCUSED DESIGN

**How and when have service users, particularly users of color, and other key stakeholders been engaged to inform decisions about your requested budget (Who was involved, what was the forum, what were the results)?**

The Board Chair is responsible for leading the planning for the Board's public hearing on the annual budget. We have been focused on determining a model that will allow for diverse public participation, while taking into consideration the current global pandemic and need to protect public health. We are looking at leading multiple virtual forums centered around the budget, while seeking to implement a hybrid version of our annual hearing. We hope to work with community centered County partners for venue, technology, and staff support with these hearings.

In addition to virtual forums and our annual hearing, we are looking at other methods of receiving public input (i.e. surveys, social media polls, email forms, e-comments, district newsletters). In the past, the Milwaukee County Board has used the annual hearing, district town halls, community task forces, and "Chats with the Chair" events in locations throughout the county to hear from constituents of color and key stakeholders on what matters most to them. These public inputs then help fuel district office decisions during committee and Board meetings.

**What are the multi-lingual needs of your department's service users? How do you use your budget to meet these language needs?**

Each district office serves a large, diverse community comprised of people from all walks of life. Therefore, district offices—as well as the front office— can and often do encounter constituents whom require assistance in another language. When our office operated in person prior to the pandemic, these encounters were handled more with visual communication.

With cooperation from the Office of the County Clerk, the Board has engaged sign language interpreter services at our public hearing on the annual budget. Similarly, translation services have been engaged to meet the linguistic needs of residents. Budget posters written in Spanish have also been used in the past to help inform a wider group of residents in the community.

Moving forward, as we continue to work remotely, we hope to continue using these tools when possible and are looking to create a virtual front desk that mirrors the program utilized by the Register of Deeds office. We will also explore hiring individuals with diverse linguistic backgrounds and provide major departmental updates in multiple languages (via social media, newsletters, etc.).

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE CATEGORY 3: EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

**Our employees can be a great resource for innovation and knowing what is working well and what needs work. Have you engaged a diverse group of frontline employees to inform decisions about your proposed budget changes? If yes, how was input solicited, who was involved, and what were the results?**

A Supervisor can approach the budget individually and through the lens of how to best represent the specific needs of their constituents. This approach can be done through collaborative budget documents and surveys. District and departmental staff are engaged in the development of fiscal priorities, amendments, and communications as part of the budget adoption process.

On a broader departmental budget scope, the Chairwoman welcomes ideas and suggestions from staff within the department. One avenue for leadership engagement is participation in the weekly staff meetings.

**Describe ways in which racial and economic data was used to prioritize resource distribution. (Data can include sources found in the resources section of this tool, department collected data, or any other relevant data from other sources.)**

As we approach the recommended budget, we will look to using quantitative and qualitative data made available across departments and within community organizations to help guide our budget decisions and resources. By creating the Audit committee, the Board Chair sought to provide a mechanism to receive audit reports and requested communications to help inform how we approach our upcoming budget through a racial equity lens. In doing so, our department has requested and received a report from the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, Milwaukee County Courts, Milwaukee County Transportation System, and other scheduled audits that outlines each respective department's practices towards achieving racial equity and provides more transparency to all Milwaukee County residents through a public forum.

**What are the positive or negative racial equity implications of your proposed budget changes? For reference departments may refer to the "Form 1 – Major Changes" tab of your Supplemental Forms 2021 spreadsheet. Any change with identified impacts should be described.**

Unfortunately, the potentially negative racial equity implications of our proposed budget exists not in the decisions we have made, but in the decisions we are unable to make. Unlike other County departments, the Board is uniquely subject to a State imposed expenditure cap of no more than 0.4 percent of the total tax levy. With no new positions, no salary increases, and no additional resources to support day to day operations, we are still starting out \$14,000 behind. This means a reduction in staff capacity to support operational needs, a reduction in constituent services for our most vulnerable residents, a shortage in resources for community engagement and constituent contact, and higher staff turnover with few advancement opportunities for hardworking staff members.



**What are the expected benefits and potential unintended consequences to disadvantaged communities of your proposed budget changes?**

**a. What analysis did you do to determine the expected benefits and potential unintended consequences?**

With moving toward a virtual environment, we are learning that we can reach more of our residents within disadvantaged communities. Prior to the pandemic, the County Board focused on in person, and morning only meetings to allow for public testimony. Through this we have noticed that for in-person opportunities (e.g. town halls, public hearings, and committee meetings) our disadvantaged residents are often times unable to join due to being unable to get off work, having unreliable transportation, or a variety of other barriers including physical ability, that prevent full engagement. Since teleworking and providing communities with a digital platform to engage (e.g. e-comments system for committee meetings, virtual forums, meetings and signings) we are seeing that more individuals can participate and feel connected to our legislative process.

The department is covering the personnel costs of providing this year's COLA (cost-of-living-adjustment) to employees and the automatic salary increases for supervisors effective with the 2020-2022 term. The approximate \$14,000 reduction in operations costs reflected in the requested budget correspond to these personnel adjustments. The July 15 submission of the department budget request is the first step in the 2021 budget process. The Board Chair continues to conduct discussions with partners about capacity for County services, including constituent communications/casework and public consideration of legislation. Alternate options are being evaluated.

**b. What will your department do to mitigate unintended consequences resulting from your proposed budget changes?**

The Board Chair manages the department with an eye to the values adopted in the County's racial equity ordinance:

- Respect: We work with and for others;
- Integrity: We do the right thing; and
- Excellence: We never stop improving.

Keeping these values in mind, the position of Board Chair also offers an opportunity to collaborate with Supervisors to determine if there is potential to reach an accord among district offices about what activities can be tracked together to rectify unintended consequences. A recent example of this strategy would be the Fair Deal town hall series, which allowed district residents throughout the County to provide their input on balancing the budget and possible options and alternatives. In conjunction with these town halls, a county web page was also created to aid in mapping out all of the information. As we move forward as a body, the Board Chair is committed to driving a strategic direction to impact culture, drive decision making, and align goals as a Board to achieve a shared vision of making Milwaukee County the healthiest county in the state of Wisconsin. Additionally, we can better align our values as a County by collaborating with and across departments and supporting County wide initiatives to achieve racial equity. An immediate action to ensure this is done will be to reinstate a Racial Ambassador for our department.