



RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL

Date Submitted: 7/24/20

Department: 450 - District Attorney

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?

Our managers interview and extend offers to interested and qualified job candidates. This selection process has resulted in a diverse workforce. As of the last Equal Employment Opportunity submitted to the federal government in November 2018, 41.25% of the DA county work force was non-white. At 29.38%, African-Americans made up the largest non-white racial group. This favorably compares with a US census estimate for Milwaukee County's population as 64.2% White and 27.2% African-American.

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?

With about 160 FTE county employees and 9 officials/administrators (as defined by the EEO), advancement opportunities within the District Attorney's Office are limited. That said, 33% of this class of employees is non-white. We are always mindful of considerations of diversity when promoting our staff.

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)?

As the District Attorney's Office for Milwaukee County, our service users are comprised of victims, witnesses and criminal defendants in criminal cases. Our Director of Victim Witness Services, and her supervisors, regularly engage with victims and witnesses and they form a "hands-on" understanding of victim and witness needs. As they relate to the criminal justice system, these needs are often basic, including such things as decent witness waiting areas, nourishment, transportation and sometimes relocation needs. Virtually none of these basic items are funded with tax levy dollars through our budget. Rather, we apply for grants to cover these types of expenses and, if awarded, we administer such grant funds for the benefit of the victims and witnesses.

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

We serve a multi-lingual victim and witness base. We have one bi-lingual Victim Witness position authorized in our budget for a Spanish speaker, but we give preference to multi-lingual job applicants who can assist in the office's translation needs. We have a small sum allocated in our budget for Language Line which offers telephone-based translation services through a contract with Milwaukee County.

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?

Our Financial Manager, Anna Thomas, who was first hire in 2019, engaged in substantial outreach with supervisors, encouraging them to submit to her the needs of our employees. In many instances in 2019, Ms. Thomas engaged with all levels of employees concerning their needs, taking such needs into account - within the limits imposed by a shrinking budget - while assembling the budget. Candidly, in 2020, these types of efforts did not take place in as much as the attention of the office has been directed to the pandemic.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE CATEGORY 4: IMPROVED PERFORMANCE & EQUITABLE PRACTICE

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 the District Attorney's Office for Milwaukee County, we are reactive, so to speak, and not proactive as it relates to the people we serve. We overwhelmingly serve underprivileged people of color in Milwaukee County who are victims and witnesses to crime. For example, measured as a function of the defendant's zip code, the top ten 2019 zip codes for all victims served, white and non-white, were: 53204; 53208; 53209; 53210; 53212; 53215; 53216; 53218; 53223 and 53225. For that same group in those ten zip codes, 76.1% were non-white and 23.9% were white. This compares with an overall percentage of 65.1% for non-white victims in all incidents in all zip codes and 34.9% for white victims. Resource distribution in our office is more likely to be based upon trends in crime rather than racial or economic data. Viewed as a whole, however, those benefiting from the resources administered by the office are far more likely than not to be economically disadvantaged persons of color.

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.

1. Marsy's Law changes. In April 2020, as a result of a ballot referendum, Marsy's law was enacted as a modification to the Wisconsin Constitution. This constitutional law greatly increases the responsibilities of the District Attorney's Office to victims of crime, adding new requirements such as those requiring victim interaction even before charges are filed and requiring notice of all hearings, regardless of type. Consequently, we foresee an additional three new Victim Witness positions and one Secretarial Assistant position will be needed to address these new demands. We view this change as neutral from the impact of racial equity in as much as we hope to simply keep pace with the demands placed upon us by this new constitutional requirement.
2. Loss of anticipated victim witness funding related to the VOCA grant. As a result of unanticipated funding under the Victims Of Crime Act grant. our 2021 budget is substantially higher as compared to our 2020 adopted budget. Not having received certain funding we had good reason to believe would be awarded, the end result was that Milwaukee County was required to shoulder a higher percentage of the compensation package for Victim Witness Advocates employed by Milwaukee County. If Milwaukee County were to ignore the constitutional mandate of Marsy's Law and not fund these Victim Witness Advocates at the higher percentage, it would have an adverse racial and economic impact in that services to our poor and underprivileged victim and witness base would certainly suffer.
3. Loss of Victim Witness Reimbursement under ch. 950. By statute, the State is authorized to subsidize up to 90% of certain victim witness expenses, mostly the compensation packages for Victim Witness Advocates (not funded by VOCA) and victim support staff. Recently, funding has been at the level of about 47%+. This dropped dramatically in 2020 to 42.5% Once again, if Milwaukee County chose not to fund this loss of revenue, there would be a serious racial equity impact for the same reasons as stated in relation to the VOCA grant.
4. Loss of Funding for Child Support Investigations. The Child Support Office ended funding for two Investigators and a prosecutor position. Funds were administered by that office under the IV-D program of the Federal Social Security Act. Again, because of the demographics of the victims we serve in this office, underprivileged persons of color will be most directly and adversely affected.

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 respect to all major proposed budget changes, we strive to maintain the level of service required by the Wisconsin Constitution. Any change in funding in these areas, however, will result in reduced quality of service and this reduced quality of service will disproportionately affect the poor and persons of color in Milwaukee County.

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

We presently have no plan if we are not provided with sufficient funds to meet our statutory and constitutional mandates. We trust that this will not happen.