



RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL

Date Submitted: 7/15/20

Department: Parks

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?

Parks introduced a workforce development program, "UpLift", specifically for communities of color, which was approved within the 2020 budget, but delayed because of COVID-19 impacts. The UpLift budget in 2020 was \$40k, and Parks is again seeking \$40k to support UpLift in 2021. Parks is exploring opportunities to potentially leverage those funds through partnership with MMSD.

Parks is working to expand recruitment approaches for all open positions in the department, working toward the long-term goal of growing a diverse workforce that represents our county's racial and demographic composition. Parks recognizes the fact that the racial composition of the department is currently predominantly white and understands the need to foster a diverse and culturally relevant workforce. There may be minimal costs (under \$5k) associated with expanding recruitment approaches including where job opportunities are posted. Related, Parks is also diversifying interview panels for open positions to ensure that people of color participate and are equitably represented.

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?

Parks has worked to reduce career advancement barriers by offering more on-the-job training and educational opportunities within hiring probationary periods, allowing front line staff to expand their education and job skills to qualify for management roles.

Professional development includes keeping racial equity trainings for staff going. In 2019, the county comprehensively and robustly introduced the racial equity conversation to all staff. In 2020, those comprehensive efforts were suspended with COVID-19. There is much work to do in advancing this conversation and keeping RE training moving forward. Parks has not identified funding in the 2021 budget for racial equity training and plans to use free platforms (like online implicit bias testing) to keep the conversation and growth moving.

Parks leadership encourages and models participation in professional organizations within and outside of the Parks and Recreation industry. Parks recognizes that, historically, the field of P&R has been comprised of predominantly white males and is committed to advancing diversity and inclusion within the profession. This often happens by participating in professional organizations outside of P&R, or via P&R organizations more global in nature. Parks & Recreation memberships are typically organization-based (under \$2k) with costs covered from Parks' training budget. Costs of participation in non-P&R organizations are often covered by the employee.

Access to professional business training (ex. Coach Tom) has been very helpful for leadership growth, particularly when specific challenges arise, and equity is a part of these conversations.



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)?

Admittedly, outreach and engagement have been challenged in general in 2020. At the onset of the year, Parks embarked on three continuous improvement projects with the Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget. Those three projects included overhauls of 1) Parks' fuel tracking, 2) Parks' project management process, and 3) Parks' outreach and engagement process. COVID response across the department and the county put these efforts on hold.

Parks is working to resume work to evolve our engagement processes in 2021, especially as we continue to navigate reduced social contact and an increased online presence. Parks needs to ensure that communities of color are at the table and participating in decision-making. The creation of the We Care Crew has given rise to increased collaboration with communities of color, with people of color as decision-makers at the table. Parks will continue to increase platforms for voices of color to be represented, while recognizing the work white people need to do to change their understanding and historic perception, to bring culture change in support of diversity and racial equity.

Additionally, Parks leadership has met with several County Supervisors, including the Chairwoman, over the course of the year to provide department status and budget updates. Leadership has also met with other key stakeholders, including the Milwaukee Parks Foundation, to provide budget updates and discuss the equity needs of the parks system. The Foundation Board holistically represents the diversity of the county and will be valuable partners in diversifying our audience and advancing racial equity. +

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

Various data sources show that English, Spanish, and Hmong are the top three most frequently spoken languages in the county. As a result, Parks attempts to incorporate all three where possible, but there are limitations (ex. website). During the COVID pandemic, Parks developed and posted trilingual safety signs on all "use at your own risk" amenity sites (ex. playgrounds, athletic courts, dog parks, etc.). This signage was funded through the Parks Marketing budget.

Additionally, Parks has bilingual English and Spanish speakers on its public services team available to support customers as they navigate the system. +

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?

In May, Parks leadership engaged managers in conversations around potential options to bring on seasonal support during the county-wide hiring freeze. Leadership held three meetings with all managers from each of Parks' three divisions to vote on the approach, and we were able to move ahead with one of their top 2 preferences. While this was related to the implementation of the 2020 budget, it was a valuable exercise, and one we will repeat in July.

Parks leadership was also planning to hold Lunch & Share sessions, open to all Parks full-time staff, to provide input on 2021 budget direction. Unfortunately, only one of session was held prior to the COVID lockdown, but this is a tool we would look to use again in the future – potentially online.

Parks has also maintained regular meetings with Parks' 11 Racial Equity Ambassadors and will continue these conversations with more focus in the second half of 2020 and into 2021.

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.)

In 2019 and 2020, Parks develop a Racial Equity Index as a factor using a racial equity lens to aid in prioritizing capital projects and resource distribution. The Index considers socio-economic and health factors beyond zip code to more accurately reflect need, particularly within our communities of color. It has been a valuable tool that was used to inform our 2021 budget and will continue evolving in the future. (Parks has infographic with more detail available.)

While Parks was unable to open deep-well pools in 2020, roughly half of our wading pools and splash pads were opened. Sites were chosen based on the equitable distribution of water resources across the county. A similar approach will be taken with both pools, splash pads, and wading pools again in 2021.

Once it became clear that the impacts of COVID-19 were hitting communities of color harder early in the pandemic, the We Care Crew was organized and mobilized as a partnership between government, law enforcement, and community organizations, and community members. The WCC was a grass roots response to the resourcing needs within our communities of color and while it does not have a budget per se, in 4 months the Crew has distributed upwards of \$40k in resources to the community, another \$5k in volunteer hours, and there is more to come.

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.

As mentioned earlier, Parks simultaneously holds the often-conflicting efforts of revenue generation and racial equity. These two efforts tend to clash, and the result is often a focus of energies on revenue generating services (ex. golf, beer gardens, marina) rather than services the community needs (ex. community centers, access to water resources, basic operations like mowing and trash collection). Parks recognizes that this model is not sustainable, nor equitable, and is working for longer-term solutions with racial equity and a focus on service needs at the core.

Various fee increases have the potential for negative racial equity implications as they may become a barrier for access to those amenities

The closure of wading pools and deep well pools has a negative racial equity implication by reducing access to water and heat relief across the county.



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?

Again, racial equity and revenue generation by nature clash, but Parks' budget structure, with a reliance on revenues and decreased reliance on tax levy, cast the structure in stone over a decade ago.

With all-time low staffing and service levels, a larger system footprint, and increased services, Parks is positioned to continue its focus on revenue generation, resulting in less capacity to support basic service needs.

The current funding model carries fundamental flaws and impedes long-term sustainability, not to mention the advancement of racial equity. Parks is evaluating options for long-term change, recognizing the system is broken.

We are constantly assessing the services we provide within the context of community need, this year within the context of the pandemics of COVID-19 and racism, and the demanded focus on revenue generation often compromises and challenges the delivery of the basic services that much of the community relies on.

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

This is a difficult question to answer because while a racial equity lens was utilized to build the 2021 budget – and is used with the department every day – the unintended consequences of the proposed budget are not yet known. However, this exercise helps open our eyes to be on the lookout for unintended consequences when they do arise, and be prepared to rectify them, with the advancement of racial equity at the forefront.