

RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL
Date Submitted: July 15, 2022
Department: County Board of Supervisors

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 1: CREATE INTENTIONAL INCLUSION

1. 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 of Supervisors is the legislative branch of Milwaukee County comprised of 18 Supervisors elected from across the largest and most diverse County in Wisconsin. Each Supervisor district represents approximately 53,000 residents. To build a diverse workforce, the Chair, as departmental leader, may engage Supervisors and staff to circulate posts for job announcements for Board positions to their wide networks with an 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.

Also, in a direct effort to attract a diverse workforce, the Chairwoman championed the Board's first paid [internship](#) program. This policy change from an unpaid intern program to one where interns are paid fairly for their work is part of the department's strategic realignment and broadens employment accessibility. This realignment helps break a cycle where the privileged have greater opportunities than those without outside financial support.

The department has developed supportive resources, ladders for advancement, and trainings aimed at promoting professional development and success. With these tools, staff are empowered to lead and take ownership of their work. Chairwoman Nicholson also establishes regular staff outings to other county departments and partner organizations so staff may see the real-life impacts of County services and amenities, promoting greater investment and pride in our work as a governing body.

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.

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

Chairwoman Nicholson leads the Board's strategic realignment for the department with a focus on the County's vision of achieving racial equity. In doing so, staff positions have been realigned to create opportunities for professional development. Chairwoman Nicholson implements this realignment with the assistance of each staff member with solicitation of information about individual talents and strengths and to learn about interests. A tremendous effort has been made to try and build a staffing model that creates greater capacity within the Board and backup supports for district offices within the confines of an extremely limited budget.

Board staff at all levels regularly engage with professional development opportunities, either by receiving trainings or by developing resources for fellow staff members. Recently, Chairwoman Nicholson launched self-evaluations. These evaluations gave staff the opportunity for intentional self-reflection of their work and to celebrate their strengths while identifying opportunities for professional development. Board self-evaluations also created a space for personalized engagement with leadership where professional goals could be discussed.

3. 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?

As elected officials, each 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. Throughout this process, Chairwoman Nicholson sets the guiding principles of preparation, collaboration, decorum, sustainability and racial equity with Supervisors and staff to keep an eye toward our broader vision when considering budgetary items.

On a departmental level, the Chairwoman welcomes ideas and suggestions from staff. One avenue for leadership engagement is participation in the weekly core staff meetings, which offers opportunities for centralized departmental staff to provide input on Board operations and projects. Additionally, the Chairwoman created a space for Legislative Assistants (LAs) to engage in weekly meetings where staff can share ideas, experiences, and cultivate peer support systems. Staff have cultivated a support network among each other and various external departments since the inception of the weekly LA meetings, which aids in the successful servicing of constituents.

4. Are you tracking contracts with minority and women-owned business? If yes, please share percentages of each. If no, why not?

The County Board does not award contracts of its own but provides legislative oversight of departmental contracts through the Committee on Finance. Through the [reference](#) file process, the Board provides legislative oversight to determine whether contracts are being fairly awarded. All action items that appear before the County Board are required to have a Fiscal Note attached, which includes whether an item has been reviewed by the Office of Economic Inclusion. Through these methods, the County Board monitors adherence to our own ordinances and adopted policies.

5. How and when have service users, in diverse and inclusive communities, and other key stakeholders been engaged to inform decisions about changes in funding levels for services provided in your requested budget (who was involved, what was the forum, what were the results)?

The Board continues to focus on ensuring residents can access the legislative process with the understanding that public input fuels district office policy and fiscal decisions. Because citizen participation is critical, since the pandemic, our department has provided communities with multiple platforms to engage (e.g., e-comments system for committee meetings, virtual forums, etc.) with the

legislative process. These access points strengthen connections to local government. This year all Supervisors had the opportunity to participate in a hybrid meeting and hearing where the public could voice their opinions about the fiscal impacts of Act 12 to Milwaukee County from a place that was most convenient to them.

The legislative branch is a policy-making body that provides referrals to direct services. The Board also has a primary responsibility to adopt the County's annual budget that funds direct services. The annual hearing and district town halls are ways the Board historically has engaged with the public on the budget. As Supervisors engage with communities across the County on policy and fiscal issues, our policies and budget become a reflection of our shared values and priorities as a community.

We implemented e-comment and virtual comment tools in 2020 and first deployed a hybrid structure for Committees and Board meetings in 2022. The American Rescues Plan Act (ARPA) Task Force, an [initiative](#) launched by the Board with legislation authored by the Chairwoman, was the first to utilize this hybrid meeting structure. By convening in a hybrid structure, the Task Force is additionally able to provide a vehicle for the voice of the public, our strategic partners, and community groups, to be heard on how to allocate millions in federal dollars throughout Milwaukee County. The ARPA Task Force has been nationally recognized as a model for deliberative and strategic allocation of federal funding throughout Wisconsin.

6. 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.)

Chairwoman Nicholson continues to develop avenues to ask for information through the legislative process in a way that intentionally promotes oversight and advancement of the county vision to achieve racial equity. The County Board Chairwoman created 63 reference files to support the analyses of administrative operations and service delivery with a racial equity lens. These actions empower respective Committee Chairs to provide legislative oversight of matters within their jurisdiction.

To further support legislative oversight, which includes resource allocations, the Chairwoman sought and received agreements from Committee Chairs who will fulfill this duty using available tools for matters within their jurisdiction. Committee Chairs are empowered to request departmental reports, utilize the above-mentioned Reference files, and act on file notes from the Legislative Services Division (LSD) in the Clerk's Office.

7. How does your budget reflect efforts to work across departments to break down silos to maximize access to and quality of services offered? How does this help us achieve the vision of achieving equity and health?

Achievement of equity is the vision for the County adopted by the Board with a [resolution](#) authored by the Chairwoman, and operational, policy, and fiscal decisions of the legislative body reflect this priority.

To achieve that vision, the Board [created](#) a separate Committee on Audit to enhance legislative oversight of administrative operations with a focus on equity.

The Board also [created](#) a reimagined and expanded Committee on Health Equity, Human Needs and Strategic Planning (HEHNSP). The Board's adoption of File [No. 22-104](#) requires end-of-year reporting of

by departments on results with future goal setting with the intention of seeing the County's progress to achieving our strategic plan and fulfilling our adopted vision. The expansion of the HEHNSP Committee to include equity and strategic planning allows for those plans--from all departments--to be reviewed and tracked within a single space, breaking down previously existing silos.

In 2023, the Board additionally adopted [legislation](#) authored by the Chairwoman that asks the Office of Sustainability and the Department of Administration to develop criteria to evaluate capital projects for their contribution to the County's adopted goal of carbon neutrality and alignment with the strategic plan outlined in the Climate Action 2050 report. This reporting mechanism will allow all departments to see the overall impact of new or updated infrastructure on the environment and consequently health of Milwaukee County.

8. 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?

Expenditures within the department are uniquely capped by state statutes. These expenditure limitations have a compounding effect on capacity to represent residents, deliver constituent services, grow community presence, and advance collaborative policies. The potentially negative racial equity implications of the Board's budget exist not in the decisions we have made, but in the decisions, we are unable to make.

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

The Chairwoman 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. Together the Board can better align our values as a County by collaborating with and across departments and supporting Countywide initiatives to achieve racial equity.

9. If your department were to receive some additional funding for addressing racial equity, what specific strategic plan priority would you address, what would be the project/activity and intended outcome, and how much would it cost?

The constituents we serve and represent are our top priority, and, as we have developed new ways to support public input and adapted a great deal, we always are looking for ways to better serve our entire community. To achieve this priority, the department would greatly benefit from having access to translation services, mental health training, and "no wrong door" training for staff who engage with constituent services and referrals daily.

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. There have been programs implemented that the Board uniquely cannot access such as DOSAA, which is used to award salary increases to address certain equity and employee retention issues. Centralized resources that all departments can take advantage of, will play a critical role in the future success of the County Board.

The provision of new funding for racial equity through centralized resources would be a step to ensuring that all departments, including the Board, can equally access these services to better represent our constituents and fairly treat our employees. As an example, increased resources for centralized engagement tools and technology solutions that allow broader outreach with more people would benefit all. To achieve this intent, the Board has [advocated](#) for technological solutions that promote equity and citizenry access to their county government.

10. What is your department doing to dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities, including meeting multilingual needs and other communication or accessibility barriers?

From a policy perspective, the Board advanced resolutions that work directly towards diminishing economic barriers within Milwaukee County, including [File No. 23-377](#) and [File No. 23-336](#) that respectively appropriated ARPA funds to purchase and forgive medical debt and allocated resources for the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) Faculty and Students Together Fund (FAST Fund) to mitigate student housing insecurity. These efforts positively impact Milwaukee County residents by relieving economic stressors and supporting academic prosperity in low-income families.

Additionally, from a policy perspective with engagement of our younger generation, the Board adopted [legislation](#) in June of 2022 to reestablish the Milwaukee County Commission on Youth. The Youth Commission has been sworn into office and meets regularly in the Board meeting spaces. So the Board can receive recommendations from the Youth Commission, the Chairwoman also created a [reference](#) file for the Intergovernmental Relations Committee.

To uplift the diverse communities of the County, the Board continues to utilize the “Presentations By Supervisors” section of their meetings to promote equity. With these presentations, the Chairwoman welcomes partnership with Supervisors who pull from their networks and amplify the achievements of members from the community. With intentionality for equity, the Board has conducted a wide variety of presentations. In 2023, these presentations included Black History Month, Women’s History, and Pride Month, bringing awareness to the excellence exemplified by Milwaukee County’s diverse community. Supervisors also participated in the countywide coordination for Juneteenth Day and Pride Month celebrations this year.

From an operations perspective, Supervisors [amended](#) the 2023 Budget to strengthen public access to County meetings and hearings by specifying that the digital transformation project be used to offer translation services, including multilingual captioning services and multilingual meeting notices and agendas. The Board received a status update on our initiated budget amendment in [File 23-435](#) that relays this program is expected to launch July 31, 2023.