

M I L W A U K E E C O U N T Y



RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL



INCORPORATED
1835

2026 BUDGET CYCLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview	3
Milwaukee County Strategic Focus Area	4
Instructions	5
Racial Equity Budget Tool Questions.....	6
Strategic Focus Area 1: Create Intentional Inclusion	6
Strategic Focus Area 2: Bridge the Gap	6
Strategic Focus Area 3: Invest in Equity	7

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Glossary	8
Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions	9
Appendix C: Resources By Strategic Focus Area.....	14
Appendix D: Public Participation Model	15

By achieving racial equity, Milwaukee is the healthiest county in Wisconsin.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY VISION STATEMENT

Overview

Racism has been and is a public health crisis in Milwaukee County. According to the County Health Rankings, Milwaukee County is, and has consistently been, one of the lowest-ranked counties for health in Wisconsin and, according to Federal Reserve Economic Data, Milwaukee County is one of our nation's most racially segregated areas.

According to 2019 statistics, a white person lives, on average, nearly 14 years longer than a black person and the infant mortality rate is nearly three (3) times higher for black infants compared to white infants. Race is a social construction with no biologic basis, yet racism may produce an assigned societal value based on the way a person looks that has resulted in race being a consistent predictor of a person's quality and length of life.

The Racial Equity Budget Tool (REBT) is a structured racial equity lens for departments to use to critically assess the impacts of budget decisions on communities of color. The tool is structured around Milwaukee County's strategic focus areas to help departments and decision makers better understand the pain points and opportunities to advancing the County's vision.

Milwaukee County's Racial Equity Budget Tool (REBT) is designed to:

Make intentional connections between the strategic plan and the budget.

Use racial equity as the key guiding principle for important decisions regarding investments or disinvestments.

Initiate conversations on topics related to the three-year strategic objectives among department leaders and employees.

Provide baseline data on departmental efforts to inform enterprise-wide decisions.

Milwaukee County Strategic Focus Areas

In 2019, Milwaukee County launched its first strategic plan in 20 years. This plan explicitly recognizes that racism is a public health crisis and leads with the vision that: **By achieving racial equity, Milwaukee is the healthiest county in Wisconsin.**

As part of the strategic plan, Milwaukee County leaders have committed to use a racial equity budget tool to ensure resource allocations advance the strategic focus areas and vision. The questions in this budget tool were guided by the strategic plan and were informed by best practices from other jurisdictions and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).

1. Create Intentional Inclusion

- Reflect the full diversity of Milwaukee County at every level of County government.
- Create and nurture an inclusive culture across the Milwaukee County government.
- Increase the number of Milwaukee County contracts awarded to minority- and women-owned business.

2. Bridge the Gap

- Determine what, where, and how we deliver services based on the resolution of health disparities.
- Break down silos across Milwaukee County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered.
- Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions.

3. Invest in Equity

- Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities.
- Enhance Milwaukee County’s fiscal health and sustainability.
- Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

Instructions

1. Submit only one REBT per department.

The REBT should reflect an analysis of the suite of budget decisions per department. Within answers to each question, **details may be provided at the division level**, as determined appropriate. Decision points should be analyzed as part of the comprehensive effort that your department is undertaking in addressing racial equity in programs, plans, policies, and power structures. Since departments are often tasked with cutting their budgets to reflect a reduction from their previous fiscal year's budget, a REBT should also include an analysis of how proposed reductions may or may not burden Black and Brown individuals and communities.

2. Keep the focus on the analysis of departments' improvements, reductions, and overall budget.

The REBT will focus on a racial equity analysis of decisions for new policies, programs, and plans under consideration, and the department's ongoing commitment to racial equity.

3. Use demographic data to help your department determine benefits and burdens of new decisions and overall budget.

State and federally collected demographic data resources are provided in [Appendix C](#). Departments are encouraged to

use any data they collect on their service users throughout the completion of the REBT. Data from other relevant and credible sources a department may have is also acceptable.

4. REBT technical assistance information and opportunities.

If you have questions related to the 2025 REBT, please attend one of the Strategy, Budget and Performance Open Office hours and bring the questions. All persons who may be expected to assist the department director in completing the REBT will be encouraged to participate.

- If you understand the question, but have difficulty determining how to answer a question, please contact your Budget Analyst for assistance.
- The Office of Equity should only be contacted on questions related to the racial equity components (glossary, concepts, etc..) that are unclear and cannot be addressed by your Budget Analyst. Send correspondence via email to equityoffice@milwaukeecountywi.gov.



MILWAUKEE COUNTY

RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL

Date Submitted:

Department: MPAC

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

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?

MPAC has been committed to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI) for over 20 years. In 2020, we deepened that commitment by creating a measurable REDI Action Plan that includes specific goals to attract and retain a modernized workforce. A key goal is to increase the representation of people of color in management roles to 40% by 2028. Currently, 20% of MPAC's total staff and 12% of management staff identify as people of color.

To support this goal, MPAC has invested in targeted strategies as part of a comprehensive, multi-year strategy to build and sustain a diverse, inclusive workplace:

- Since 2020, MPAC has invested annually in training for all regular full-time and part-time employees and Board members, covering topics like unconscious bias and navigating the current EDI climate. Leadership and Board members also participated in the Intercultural Development Inventory assessment, which assesses mindset/skillset towards cultural differences and commonality. Led by the CEO and the Senior Director of Human Resources, a plan for ongoing education ensures this work continues annually. Costs range from \$2,000 to \$5,000 per training session and assessments.
- We've broadened our hiring networks to include groups such as the Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee, Greater Milwaukee Urban League, Women of Color in the Arts, and the LGBT, Veterans, and Hmong Chambers. These connections help us reach a broader pool of candidates that better reflect our community. Annual costs are covered by existing staff time.
- MPAC evaluates vendors and service providers for inclusive employment practices and alignment with our REDI goals. Costs are built into MPAC's vendor review process.
- In 2023, we launched a new internship program, partnering with UW–Milwaukee to reach student organizations that support underrepresented students. Students from Milwaukee High School of the Arts participated in our School to Work event in May. Alongside masterclasses teaching onstage skills, MPAC is adding sessions for students exploring offstage careers. Staff from Production, Engineering, HR, Finance, Marketing, Development, and Programming met with rotating groups of 20 students to discuss career paths and answer questions. Each group also toured the venue with our Sr. House Manager, an MPS graduate who began her career as an MPAC intern. This format lets students explore multiple career paths and engage in extensive Q&A. Annual costs are covered by existing staff time.

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?

MPAC integrates professional development and advancement opportunities into our REDI strategy by offering team members ongoing access to EDI and accessibility education. Throughout the year, team members participate in sessions hosted by our industry trade organizations such as The Broadway League, Association of Performing Arts Professionals, the Performing Arts Center Consortium, and other professional associations. We have also found great engagement among our team by bringing in local experts to facilitate unconscious bias conversations. Most recently, Dan Terrio, Milwaukee County Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, spoke with all of our staff.

Beyond formal training, MPAC uses its programming as a tool for professional and cultural development. Through our free employee ticket program, our team members are exposed to a diverse array of cultural arts experiences, further extending their EDI education and building cultural competency. This is aligned with our goal of booking artists who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of Milwaukee County. To that end, our annual goal is to ensure a minimum of 30% of the artists we contract/book are artists of color. We exceeded this goal with over 45% artists of color booked in our 24/25 season and have over 40% artists of color booked for our 25/26 season.

MPAC also supports advancement by identifying and nominating team members and the organization for local and national awards to reflect the positive work our team is doing to advance racial equity, diversity, and inclusion through the performing arts. For example, the MPAC Board of Directors was recognized as a finalist for the 2022 NACD DE&I national awards program. Additionally, MPAC was thrilled that our Director of Community Partnerships, Anthony Smith, received the inaugural Milwaukee County Champion Health Equity Standard Bearer Award in 2024. This award program shines a light on those leading the way to health and racial equity, serving as role models of how to reduce disparities in quality, access, and outcomes to make Milwaukee County the healthiest county in Wisconsin. Smith was also named a BizTimes Notable BIPOC Executive in 2025. These recognitions help amplify career growth and professional visibility.

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?

A cross-section of the entire MPAC team (representing various departments, ages, skill sets, experience and ethnicities) is involved in ongoing strategic planning and development of annual tactics, including budgetary needs. On an annual basis leadership establishes a few key priorities for the year, that will help progress our strategic pillars. Those priorities are used to guide departmental planning sessions and individual goal setting with all full-time employees. Departmental and individual goals are rolled into an annual plan that is supported by leadership across the organization to ensure necessary cross-functional collaboration and resource availability.

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

MPAC tracks contracts with minority, women, and veteran-owned vendors and has taken steps to increase spending with these vendors by setting specific operational goals. For example, we set a target to spend at least 10% of the annual marketing budget with diverse-owned businesses. The last fiscal year 6.5% of total eligible spend was with minority and woman owned vendors and an additional 7% was with veteran owned vendors.

Additionally, MPAC recently re-launched our Restaurant Partner Program in the 2022/23 season, which includes partnerships with local restaurants, many of which are owned by people of color. These restaurants are promoted to patrons as pre and post-dining options, helping us further invest in Milwaukee's diverse business community.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 2: BRIDGE THE GAP

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)?

In 2018, MPAC partnered with P3 Development Group to develop a diversity and inclusion strategy to support our vision to be the region's world-class gathering place for all. P3 conducted in-depth stakeholder engagement, including over 100 "man-on-the street" interviews across 30+ Milwaukee neighborhoods and structured interviews with diverse community leaders. Insights from this process informed a community-driven diversity and engagement strategy.

In 2020, we strengthened our commitment by forming a board/staff task force to advance racial equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI) within MPAC and our industry. We re-engaged P3 to update findings and guide strategic planning for our REDI Action Plan, focused on representation, inclusion, and financial investment. Now in year five of the plan, we've achieved the following:

- ~Over 40% of MPAC Presents artists are artists of color
- ~Board and leadership staff completed the Intercultural Development Inventory assessment
- ~Leadership participated in anti-bias education

- ~Commissioned new works by artists of color
- ~Dedicated a minimum of 10% of our advertising budget to reach diverse audiences
- ~Formed a Cultural Ambassador partnership with Green Bay Packers star Donald Driver

In 23-24 we engaged Athena Communications to guide the next phase, including a culturally focused audience development strategy. Tactics included hiring community influencers, participating in community events, and hosting public Cultural Community Conversations in collaboration with Radio Milwaukee/HYFIN, Latino Arts, and the Kellogg PEAK Initiative. These tactics were refined and expanded for our 24/25 season.

In May 2024, our Board REDI Committee hosted a strategic focus group led by artist and cultural strategist Marc Bamuthi Joseph. The session reaffirmed the arts' role in shaping cultural narratives and framed our REDI work as essential to economic growth and accountability. One outcome was a new local artist engagement strategy, including 15+ community conversations aimed at informing inclusive programming and success metrics. We also introduced the concept for DanceMKE, a competitive showcase celebrating dancers and choreographers of color, with a fundraising and implementation strategy underway for a 2026 launch.

For the second year, MPAC is hosting Summer of Soul with Culture x Design. This free series transforms our grounds with rotating artisans, community vendors, and food trucks, offering a rich cultural experience for all.

6. Describe ways in which demographic and economic data were 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.)

- Please provide specific examples of data and how that influenced decision making.**
- Are there gaps in the data that need to be addressed to better understand disparities in equity?**

MPAC's REDI Action Plan centers on representation, inclusion, and investment, with metrics that guide resource distribution. To support these goals, MPAC uses demographic and economic data, including U.S. Census data for Milwaukee County and the City, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) research, and internal audience demographics, to inform programming, engagement strategies, and investments. Examples of data-driven resource distribution include:

~Milwaukee census data led MPAC to set a goal that 30% of MPAC Presents annual programming feature artists of color to better reflect the community. We exceeded this, with over 50% artists of color in our 24/25 season and over 40% booked in our 25/26 season.

~We launched the Culture Collective, designed to elevate artists of color across disciplines. The 24/25 season included 10 performances from artists of color, drawing nearly 12,000 attendees—a 30% increase from its first year. This program continues to grow in popularity and will expand in the 25/26 season.

~NEA data on disparities in arts education informed MPAC's education programs. Student Matinees, Artist Residencies, and Family Nights serve over 12,000 youth and their families annually, providing meaningful access to the arts. Family Nights invites families in neighborhoods of need to attend live theater, fostering connection and cultivating future artists and audiences. In 2024, MPAC launched Broadway Bridges Milwaukee with The Broadway League, one of just 24 venues nationally selected. Students from 3 MPS schools, along with rotating partners, participate in 5-6 sessions per season led by Broadway artists and attend shows, culminating in a gala performance with a Broadway star. A similar program focused on jazz and dance launches in 25/26.

~Local population data also shapes MPAC's community programs. Our annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and César Chávez Celebrations engage local students. In 2025, we'll debut a new Native Cultural Celebration co-created with Wisconsin's 11 Tribes and present the first large-scale theatrical production by Hmong artists in Wisconsin, featuring over 50 performers alongside Maa Vue, an acclaimed singer-songwriter and Thai refugee.

Despite these efforts, data gaps remain. More detailed information, especially around disability, language access, and LGBTQ+ identities, is needed to better understand and address disparities. MPAC is exploring tools and partnerships to improve data collection in these areas.

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

MPAC is proud to partner with the Milwaukee County Office of Equity on key community-facing programs such as the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. And César Chávez Celebrations. In May 2024, this collaboration expanded to include The HOOPS Project, a powerful stage play exploring identity and belonging through the stories of over 100 individuals from Milwaukee, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles who have deep connections to hoop earrings, documenting and archiving the voices of Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian, and other individuals

of the global majority. The program included a staged reading, post-show Q&A and discussion, and engagement with local ERGs and BRGs, demonstrating a cross-functional approach involving artistic programming, community engagement, and EDI goals.

In 2025, we'll debut a new Native Cultural Celebration co-created with Wisconsin's 11 Tribes and present the first large-scale theatrical production by Hmong artists in Wisconsin, featuring over 50 performers alongside Maa Vue, an acclaimed singer-songwriter and Thai refugee.

Additionally, MPAC's organization-wide Strategic Plan includes six pillars: Arts Participation, Guest Experience, Employee Experience, Capability & Asset Development, Financial Sustainability, and Racial Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (REDI). Each pillar includes measurable success indicators that drive budgeting decisions and departmental collaboration. By aligning all departments under a shared road map, we ensure that resources are allocated with equity in mind and that each department contributes to building a more inclusive and connected Milwaukee through the performing arts. This integrated cross-functional approach breaks down silos and helps advance both equity and community well-being by centering diverse voices, building access, and using the arts as a tool for shared cultural connection.

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?

MPAC is shifting to a more sustainable business model aimed at long-term financial sustainability and expanded community impact. Proposed budget changes include increased investment in fundraising infrastructure, expanded free and low-cost community programming, and a more integrated customer relationship management system to improve ticketing and fundraising operations.

The expected benefits to disadvantaged communities include increased access to free and low-cost programs like Rainbow Summer, Family Nights, the Culture Collective, and our new Native Cultural Celebration. These programs highlight artists of color and are intentionally designed to serve diverse audiences. Additionally, we have increased investment in our education programs, including our Student Matinee Series and Artist Residencies, which annually serve over 12,000 youth and their families, many from Title I schools. The budget also supports MPAC REDI's goals by investing in artists of color, inclusive community programming, and engagement efforts that reflect Milwaukee's demographics.

To analyze the impact of these changes, MPAC utilized census and audience demographic data, National Endowment for the Arts research, and stakeholder feedback, including from our Board REDI Committee. This combined analysis helped identify several potential unintended consequences, including the risk that a focus on increasing contributed revenue could unintentionally deprioritize lower-income audiences, that planned parking structure redevelopment may create short-term access barriers, and that team members and community partners may face increased pressure to deliver more with fewer resources if growth projections are not met.

In response, MPAC remains committed to keeping key community programs free or low-cost, maintaining diverse artist representation through Rainbow Summer and the Culture Collective, and expanding access initiatives such as transportation support for student groups and bringing artists to schools to provide masterclasses and workshops. By aligning budget decisions with demographic data and community input, MPAC aims to grow responsibly while ensuring equity and inclusion remain at the forefront of our mission.

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

To mitigate unintended consequences from our proposed budget changes, MPAC is taking several proactive steps. We are actively seeking support from local, state, regional, and national funders who support our work in promoting racial equity, diversity and inclusion. As part of securing significant additional funding from regional and national sources, we are maintaining and expanding free and low-cost programs such as Rainbow Summer, Family Nights, and our Student Matinee Series to ensure access remains equitable. To address potential access barriers related to a planned parking structure redevelopment, we are exploring partnerships for alternative transportation and parking options. We are also closely monitoring team member and partner capacity and plan to pace program expansion to align with resources, helping to prevent burnout. Ongoing community feedback, staff input, and Board and Committee oversight will continue to inform decisions to ensure our growth remains inclusive, balanced, and mission-driven.

c. What are the demographic impacts of any fines and fees accessed by your department? Are there disproportionate impacts on any particular groups?

MPAC does not assess fines or penalties, but we do charge for ticketed performances. Standard ticketing fees can present financial barriers for low-income individuals and communities. To address this, in 2024 we introduced sliding-scale ticket fees for MPAC Presents

performances, helping to keep ticket costs more accessible and reduce the burden of fees on lower-priced tickets. For select youth and community programs, ticket fees are waived entirely.

To mitigate disproportionate impact, MPAC offers a variety of free and low-cost programs that are accessible to a wide range of audiences. Rainbow Summer, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration, the César Chávez Celebration, and our new Native Cultural Celebration are all free programming opportunities for our community. Through initiatives like Family Nights and targeted Culture Collective partnerships, we collaborate with community groups to provide complimentary access to performances.

We also subsidize our Student Matinee Series through contributed revenue and dedicated funding, allowing us to offer significantly reduced pricing for Title I schools to ensure equitable access. We are working to strengthen our understanding of audiences accessing these opportunities through improved demographic tracking that will allow us to better assess whether particular groups are underrepresented due to financial barriers.

 [GO TO QUESTIONS \(REBT FORM\)](#)

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 3: INVEST IN EQUITY

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

MPAC is committed to fostering equity through inclusive programming, artist support, and expanded educational access. With additional funding, MPAC would expand its capacity to deliver more equity-centered programming that uplifts underrepresented voices and fosters inclusive access to the arts. This investment directly supports MPAC's mission to engage diverse communities through education, performance, and artist development.

- **Expanding Capacity in Programming and Education:** Additional staffing in the Programming and Education department would allow for shared responsibilities and deeper focus on equity-centered initiatives. This would enable the department to scale successful programs like our Student Matinee Series and youth masterclasses and develop new programs that engage underrepresented communities. These initiatives connect youth with national and international artists, sparking creativity and providing meaningful exposure to the arts.
- **Investing in Local Artists:** Strengthening the Programming and Education team's capacity would enable MPAC to better identify, commission, and support local artists, particularly those from historically marginalized backgrounds. Specifically, MPAC will need funding to support the establishment and growth of programs like DanceMKE, which exemplifies MPAC's commitment to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI). This initiative supports choreographers and dancers of color in Milwaukee through financial awards, studio access, and performance opportunities. Additional funding would allow MPAC to establish this program, increase artist stipends, and expand its reach to more participants and audiences.

Together, these investments would significantly enhance MPAC's ability to deliver on its equity goals while enriching the cultural landscape of Milwaukee County.

Budget needs would be approximately \$170,000. This total includes:

- ~Compensation for additional Programming & Education staff: \$100,000
- ~Launch of DanceMKE: \$40,000
- ~Expansion of Student Matinee and Workshop offerings: \$20,000
- ~REDI continuing education and training: \$10,000

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

MPAC is actively working to dismantle barriers to inclusion by offering bilingual assistance, enhancing accessibility services, and fostering a more diverse and welcoming environment. Several guest-facing team members, including Front of House staff and Box Office personnel, are fluent in Spanish, allowing us to provide bilingual support as needed.

In 2024 we hired a new Volunteer Services Manager to refresh our Volunteer Program with an emphasis on diversity and belonging. Our volunteer base has grown from 7% to 11% people of color, a 31% increase, better reflecting our community and contributing to a more inclusive guest experience. In FY 2025 our volunteer base grew greatly, by almost 30% while still maintaining about 11% people of color.

Our Broadway Series offers sign language-interpreted Saturday matinees, and we make alternative arrangements upon request and depending on availability of interpreters. We also offer assisted listening devices, audio description services, and braille and large-print programs.

MPAC recently launched two major accessibility initiatives. With training led by national expert Dr. Joel Snyder, we created a volunteer-led audio description program, which will be added to our programming next season. We also introduced sensory-friendly Student Matinee performances in both the 23/24 and 24/25 seasons, offering a welcoming experience for individuals with autism or sensory processing needs.

In 24/25, we launched Broadway touch tours, led by technical crew who share sets, props, costumes, and more, allowing blind and low vision participants to engage with the items through tactile exploration. Combined with audio description, this provides a more inclusive theater experience.

We also purchased a fully accessible lectern with built-in audio-visual capabilities, dual LED monitors, and electric remote height adjustment to provide an accessible experience for presenters of varying physical abilities.

Facility improvements further support our commitment to accessibility. In 2020, we renovated our outdoor grounds to create an ADA-friendly park-like setting. Since then, we've expanded outdoor programming, including the return of Rainbow Summer in 2023 and Summer of Soul, a biweekly free music series in partnership with Culture x Design.

Looking ahead, MPAC plans to raise private funds for additional accessibility renovations. Proposed projects include a sensory-friendly room near Uihlein Hall and entrance/lobby upgrades to Todd Wehr Theater. We are consulting with national accessibility experts to ensure these upgrades serve our guests effectively.



Appendices

Appendix A:
Glossary

Appendix B:
Frequently Asked Questions

Appendix C:

Resources by Strategic Focus Area

Appendix D: Public Participation Model

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

Communities of color: In the context of the Milwaukee County Racial Equity Budget Tool, the term communities of color is interchangeable with Black and Brown communities and inclusive of all non-white populations of color.

Disadvantaged communities: A collective term for referencing communities that have historically experienced inequities where they learn, live, and work that were/are not optimal due to disenfranchisement, disinvestment, marginalization, racism, and other systems of oppression.

Diversity: Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender — the groups that most often come to mind when the term “diversity” is used — but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

Diverse group: As it relates to question 5, an intentional effort to include individuals from different racial, ethnic, gender, and social backgrounds proportionate to the diversity of the department.

Economic data: Numerical data collected based on service delivery criteria determined by departments.

Equity: The just, fair, and impartial treatment, acceptance, or behavior of people without favoritism or discrimination. Equity means righting wrongs, doing what’s right, and giving people what they need to thrive, which is different from equality, which means everyone gets the same thing regardless of circumstance or need.

Frontline employees: A grouping of Milwaukee County employees that serves as the initial point of contact for service users or a range of employees from all levels of the workforce with emphasis on the inclusion of direct service rendering staff.

Inclusion: Assurance that the culture, values, and opinions of individuals and groups are represented in the decision-making processes.

Inclusive workforce: A workplace environment that recognizes the contributions of all employees, while valuing their social status, race, gender, or other demographic classifications.

Key stakeholders: Both internal and external individuals, agencies, or organizations who participate in the planning, development, implementation and decision-making process of an activity, process, or service delivery. (AMOP: Key stakeholders are service users, the workforce, partners, governing boards, donors, suppliers, taxpayers, regulatory bodies, policy makers, funders, and local and professional communities.)

Multilingual needs: The ability of Milwaukee County departments to address linguistic needs for all service users through staffing, documentation, and other communication platforms.

Professional advancement: Opportunities for staff to build their capacity and ascend or pursue lateral movement to further advance their career trajectory.

Racial data: Demographic data collected by Milwaukee County departments that identifies the race/ethnicity of service recipients.

Racial equity: The just and fair inclusion of all people in society, regardless of their race/ethnicity, with unfettered ability to participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Racial equity is achieved when race no longer determines one’s health and socioeconomic outcomes and when everyone has what they need to thrive and decide what’s best for themselves, their families, and their communities, no matter where they live.

Service user: Current or potential user of Milwaukee County services.

Unintended consequences: Outcomes of a purposeful action that are not intended or foreseen.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PURPOSE

1) What is the purpose of using this tool?

The Racial Equity Budget Tool (REBT) has many intended purposes:

- It is about making an intentional connection between the strategic plan and our budget. We cannot sufficiently change our institution if we do not think critically about how and what we are spending money on.
- Whether we are making investments or disinvestments, we must do so with racial equity as the key guiding principle to those important decisions.
- It is meant to spur conversation on topics related to the strategic focus areas among department leaders and employees so we are all challenging ourselves to think critically about our efforts to advance the vision.
- This tool is an opportunity to baseline departmental efforts to make informed enterprise-wide decisions.

These are only some of the many answers to why we are using a tool to assess budget decisions.

2) What other jurisdictions have used a racial equity budget tool? Where did the budget tool questions come from?

Milwaukee County's REBT builds on the success of other jurisdictions in implementing a budget tool. Jurisdictions Milwaukee County looked to for guidance include the City of Seattle, the City of Portland (Ore.), King County (Wash.), and the City of San Antonio. Resources from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) were also used. The questions are largely framed around Milwaukee County's strategic plan.

3) How does this tool work when departments must make budget cuts year over year? What is the point of doing this when departments don't have a lot of latitude about what disinvestments to make?

Milwaukee County's structural deficit and budget challenges are no secret. However, Milwaukee County still has an annual budget of over \$1 billion. Whether the County is

making disinvestments or investments, those decisions must be made with racial equity at the forefront of decision-makers' minds. Departments should think critically about their current assumptions and spending versus shifting investments to address root-causes of inequities.

COMPLETING THE TOOL

4) Are there right answers to the questions?

Responses to this tool will inform our future action to see where Milwaukee County can improve on the path to health and racial equity. There are no right answers to the questions, and each department is starting in a different place, serves different people with different needs, and faces a different set of barriers and opportunities. While there are no right answers, the information provided in the tool will be used for decision making throughout the budget process and will be available to the public. Therefore, answers should be robust, defensible, and easy to understand. Your department's answer may look very different than another department's answer and that is okay as long as the answers address the question.

5) What if there are inequities to other groups other than racial groups? Should we be talking about those inequities in our analysis?

Yes! Milwaukee County is race forward, but not race exclusive. If there are other inequities identified in your analysis, please include them.

6) Does every department complete one tool, or is it one tool for each division?

Please submit one tool per department. Responses can be broken down at the division level within your department's tool, as appropriate. All questions should be completed.

7) Who is responsible for filling out the budget tool?

The department head is ultimately responsible for the content in the REBT. It is up to department leadership to determine who in their department is most appropriate to be involved in completing questions in the tool, which will differ from department to department. Likely people to include are department leaders, fiscal staff, and administrative staff.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

8) Is this tool supposed to imply that we should be taking actions on each of these items? Are the questions meant to be directives to departments?

The REBT will focus on an equity analysis of decisions for

A budget is a reflection of priorities. Ultimately, Milwaukee County's budget should reflect our values and advance our vision and strategic plan. However, we acknowledge our organization is on a journey to continuously improve our efforts toward health and racial equity. The REBT is meant to spur conversations among department leaders and staff about what they are and are not able to do in a given budget year to advance the vision. To that end, the tool is not an absolute directive to departments. We fully expect that some departments' answers to some of the questions will be that they are not doing anything this year with an explanation about why that is the case. Looking ahead to future years, departments will be expected to show how their budgets help Milwaukee County make progress toward its vision.

9) How do I use this when my work is statutorily required?

What services Milwaukee County provides is often statutorily required. However, how we do our work usually is not a directive. This tool is meant to challenge us all to think about how to do the enormous part of our work that is within our discretion and control.

10) Is there a standard approach all departments are expected to take to answer the questions?

No. Answer the questions based on the approach your department currently takes on these items.

11) What type of analysis is expected for each of the questions?

It depends on what your department is currently doing in each area. Please use the diverse expertise and experiences of staff in your department to determine the most appropriate way for your department to answer the questions.

12) What part of the budget is this tool being applied to?

new policies, programs, and plans under consideration, and the department's ongoing commitment to equity. Your department is asked to identify what considerations are considered in the overall budget to maximize equitable outcomes.

Performance, Strategy and Budget and the County Board.

USING THE DATA

13) Who will receive the data departments provide in the REBT? Who will be expected to answer questions about the information provided?

Responses to the REBT will be publicly available and will be presented to the County Board. If any decision-makers (e.g., County Executive, County Board Supervisors, department directors) have questions about the information provided in the REBT, the department should be prepared to answer them. We are all partners in Milwaukee County's strategic planning effort to achieve racial equity, and the budget tool is in-part meant to inform and focus conversations around strategic priorities, understanding that not all questions have known answers or solutions.

14) What if someone questions the analysis, conclusions, or recommendations made in the budget tool?

Like all research and analysis, there will be questions and critiques and we should embrace these important conversations. The work presented in the budget tool should be defensible, but most of these questions do not have a clear right or wrong answer. If someone finds something wrong in the analysis, then we need to fix it. However, if it is a question about the interpretation and meaning of the analysis, then we can make space for different perspectives to find the best path forward with the information we have available.

14) Will the budget tool submissions be scored?

No, the REBT submissions will not be scored. However, they will be made available to the public and reviewed by the County Executive's office, the Office of Equity, the Office of

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(CONTINUED)

LOGISTICS

16) When will the budget tool be due?

The REBT is due on July 15 — the same due date as the requested budget.

17) Where do I go if I have questions?

If you understand the question, but have difficulty determining how to answer a question, please first try to problem solve within your department by looping in additional experts (e.g., people leaders, frontline staff, etc.).

If you need assistance understanding what the question is asking, contact your Budget Analyst for assistance.

The Office of Equity should only be contacted on questions related to racial equity components (glossary, concepts, etc.) that are unclear and cannot be addressed by your budget analyst. Send correspondence via email to equityoffice@milwaukeecountywi.gov.

APPENDIX C

RESOURCES BY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 1: Create Intentional Inclusion

- [2020 Milwaukee County Workforce Audit](#)

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 2: Bridge the Gap

- [American Community Survey](#) (from US Census Bureau – descriptions below from US Census Bureau)
 - [Data Profiles](#) have the most frequently requested social, economic, housing, and demographic data. Each of these four subject areas is a separate data profile. The data profiles summarize the data for a single geographic area, both numbers and percent, to cover the most basic data on all topics. (Can compare state/County/Municipal data. With some effort, can get zip code level data.)
 - [Narrative Profiles](#) are short, analytic reports derived from the ACS 5-year estimates. Each Narrative Profile covers 15 different topic areas and provides text and bar charts to display highlights of selected social, economic, housing, and demographic estimates for a selected geographic area. (Easy to get zip code level data)
- [Personal Income Data](#) (Bureau of Economic Analysis) Per Capita Personal Income by State/County, 2016 – 2018 for the entire nation.
- Per Capita Income by County
- [Public School Enrollment](#) (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)
- [Private School Enrollment](#) (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)
- [State of Wisconsin WBE/MBE/DVE](#) This provides a list of all Woman/Minority/Disabled Vets Business Enterprise information. You can search by business name, by product/service, and by location.
- [Milwaukee County Diversity and Compliance Website \(B2GNow\)](#) Links to certified lists for the State of Wisconsin ACDBE/DBE/SBE Directory and the Milwaukee County approved DBE/SBE vendors (training available on using system).

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 3: Invest in Equity

- [Public Participation Model](#)




Additional County Resources

- [Strategic Plan \(Objectives\)](#)
- [Health and Equity Framework](#)

APPENDIX D

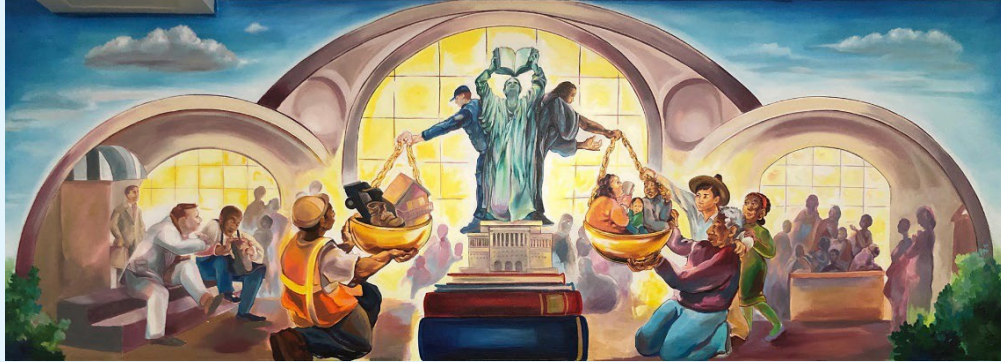
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MODEL



	INFORM 	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE 	EMPOWER/LEAD 
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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ON THE COVER



“WELCOME TO THE PEOPLE’S HOUSE”

Artist: Tia Richardson

Commissioned in 2020. Used with permission of the artist.



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
HEALTH &
RACIAL EQUITY

**ONE COUNTY
ONE VISION**

By achieving racial equity, Milwaukee
is the **healthiest county in Wisconsin.**

County.milwaukee.gov/vision

MPAC continues to be a vital cultural driver for Milwaukee, enriching the city's cultural landscape with diverse and high-quality performing arts. Our programming attracts nearly 300,000 visitors annually from across Wisconsin and Northern Illinois, fostering a vibrant cultural scene that benefits the entire region. In the 2022/23 season alone, over half of our ticket buyers traveled from outside Milwaukee County to experience live performances in downtown Milwaukee. This influx of visitors supports local businesses and generates additional sales tax revenue, reinforcing MPAC's role as an economic catalyst. By hosting a variety of cultural and artistic events, MPAC helps bridge cultural divides, promote social cohesion, and celebrate the diverse heritage of Milwaukee's communities, making the city more attractive to residents and businesses, and fostering a sense of pride and unity.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are fundamental to building a just and vibrant society, and MPAC's Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) efforts are integral to supporting Milwaukee County's goals. MPAC's commitment to REDI ensures that its programming, leadership, and community engagement reflect the rich diversity of Milwaukee. By creating opportunities for artists of color, investing in community programs that engage underrepresented groups, and fostering an inclusive environment, MPAC enhances its relevance and impact. Aligning with the county's strategic focus on DEI, MPAC drives social progress, ensuring all community members feel valued and included, thus strengthening its position as a leader in promoting social equity through the transformative power of the arts.