

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: <b>Create Intentional Inclusion</b> .....	6
Strategic Focus Area 2: <b>Bridge the Gap</b> .....	6
Strategic Focus Area 3: <b>Invest in Equity</b> .....	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](mailto:equityoffice@milwaukeecountywi.gov).



## RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL

Date Submitted:

Department: Milwaukee County Zoo

*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?

The Zoo continues to focus on recruiting more diverse staff and providing more inclusive opportunities. For the 2024-2025 school year, three divisions partnered with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) and Cristo Rey Jesuit High School on a grant-funded internship program. Zoo staff continues to work with community partners to provide opportunities for job training that strive to create interest in Zoo-related jobs and careers.

Since 2021, the Animal Management and Health Division has been partnering with the Vincent High School Agriculture Program to provide students the unique opportunity for a paid summer internship. The number of interns continues to expand each year, providing a diverse group of students with exposure to zoo careers. In the summer of 2025, we are hosting four interns. Since the program's inception, we've had three interns return for consecutive summers.

The Zoological Society of Milwaukee's (ZSM) Education Department is developing new ways to recruit summer educators, including advertising in diverse schools. In addition, the ZSM Animal Ambassador Program teaches children about animals and develops an understanding of careers available in environmental fields. The program encourages minority and low-income youth to become interested in the sciences both as an academic and career choice. In 2024, 2,675 students attended an education program across 23 metro Milwaukee schools.

To assist with career/job training for young people with disabilities, the Zoo partners with Project SEARCH. This program helps students gain job experience and prepares them for the competitive workforce by immersing them in different kinds of jobs throughout the Zoo.

Emphasis is placed on the recruitment, retention, and development of staff and volunteers representing diverse perspectives. We ensure that the hiring process is conducted fairly through the use of a diverse interview panel and interview guides that enable scoring of each question, on each candidate, by the interview panel members, providing a quantitative result that ensures objective hiring decisions. To retain employees, Zoo Leaders continue to be flexible and accommodate employees' schedules and transportation challenges.

The Zoo's Community Engagement Coordinator is an active participant in events such as the Annual Fatherhood Summit, Milwaukee County Youth Commission, and "Powwow, Honoring the Heartbeat – Mental Health & Wellness at Potawatomi, supporting NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)", which have been incredible events to attract a diverse and inclusive workforce to our department.

Most recently, the Zoo and Zoological Society of Milwaukee partnered on a joint venture to build a relationship with the Forest County Potawatomi Tribal Nation.

Staff are supported and encouraged to participate in County-wide and community events, including Vision Week, Into the Streets, Pride parade, Juneteenth Day booths and parade, and Sherman Park Harvest Fest.

Zoo employees are invited to participate in the county-wide Network Resource Groups (NRGs) to promote an inclusive environment for all employees through education, networking, and workplace collaboration.

The Zoo's coalition-wide DEAI committee was formalized in 2024, with monthly meetings taking place. The DEAI committee guides the DEAI efforts of MCZ, ZSM, and SSA, ensuring alignment with the stated objectives of Milwaukee County, the AZA Accreditation Standards, and the shared objectives of ZSM, MCZ, and SSA. The DEAI Committee serves as an advisory body to the Executive Teams, working to integrate DEAI into all aspects of our work. Thanks to the efforts of this group, in the fall of 2024, we added diversity celebratory months which may include a guest speaker or

workshop, a featured food item and recognition slides on our main lobby digital displays, in addition to all staff emails and “Zoo Buzz” postings.

Paid staff and volunteers are provided opportunities to engage in DEAI-focused content either through facilitated conversations and/or training facilitated by internal or external providers. Some of our monthly offerings that started in the fall of 2024 include Communicating Across Generations with Dan Terrio, Accessibility and Inclusion Training with Dawn Koceja, Direct Positive Film and Workshop highlighting women leaders, Things Your History Teacher Didn't Teach You: Blacks in History with Derek Mosley and The ABC's of LGBTQ+ with Dan Terrio.

In the fall of 2024, the Committee implemented and administered a DEAI staff survey and shared the results of the survey with staff in early 2025. As a result of the survey, DEAI suggestion boxes were added around the Zoo grounds along with an electronic method of collecting anonymous DEAI suggestions from staff.

With the help of the Zoological Society of Milwaukee and the DEAI Committee, we've been able to expand the reach of community members served by our Access MKE Zoo program.

The Zoo's 2025 budget included \$64,221 to convert the unpaid Animal Care Internships to paid positions to align with other AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums, which have converted these opportunities to paid positions to remove this barrier to entry into the field. By converting Animal Care Internships to paid opportunities, the Zoo will better support those looking to enter the Animal Care field and build on our paid Agricultural Internship program for high-school students at the Harold S Vincent School of Agricultural Science (Milwaukee Public Schools). Together, these opportunities better support a pipeline of candidates from diverse backgrounds, while reflecting the County's values of Inclusion, Influence, and Integrity. The 2026 Budget continues the funding for the internship program.

The 2026 Budget includes \$58,208 to create 2,940 hours to expand the Seasonal Zookeeper position. The increase in hours helps support workforce development by establishing a clear “career ladder” from internship to full-time employment. Qualified interns will gain access to seasonal roles with expanded responsibilities, providing valuable hands-on experience and strengthening the pipeline of future full-time Zookeeper candidates.

Public transportation continues to be a substantial barrier to recruiting young people. Bus rides to the Zoo can take 1 to 1.5 hours, often requiring staff to transfer buses up to three times, as there is no direct route from many parts of the City of Milwaukee. The MCTS trip planning app and website are included in our employee orientation.

## **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?**

Staff are encouraged to take full advantage of the many learning resources available through the robust Dayforce learning and development module. For those interested in external training opportunities, participation is welcome with their leader's approval.

In addition, all employees are encouraged to pursue professional development through training and participation in industry organizations such as the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, American Association of Zookeepers, Visitor Studies Association, International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, Wisconsin Park & Recreation Annual Conference, the Governor's Conference on Tourism, etc.

The Animal Division follows an annual proposal process in which staff submit their requests for professional development opportunities. These proposals are reviewed collectively by the Animal Division Management Team, with decisions based on how well each request aligns with Zoo priorities and enhances team capabilities. One of the key evaluation criteria is whether an applicant has received prior funding or LAP (Leave with Approval for Professional Development) time, giving preference to those who have not previously received support.

Within the Facilities Division, both full-time and seasonal employees are offered opportunities to grow from basic responsibilities to more advanced tasks. This progression is carefully planned, with training tailored to the individual's skill level. As employees develop, calculated risks are taken to help them gain the confidence and experience necessary to succeed in their roles.

The Zoo also offers free monthly lunchtime lectures open to all staff and volunteers. These sessions allow staff to showcase their Zoo-funded professional development projects, provide valuable opportunities for continued education and

are designed to promote empathy for wildlife, covering a wide variety of relevant and engaging topics.

**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?**

Zoo-wide meetings are held bi-monthly and provide Zoo, ZSM, and SSA staff with budget information, divisional updates, and an opportunity to ask questions and share ideas. All Zoo staff are encouraged to submit budget ideas and/or cost savings measures to their direct manager's division head. In addition, the Administration and Finance and Operations Divisions regularly discuss and seek input on the budget at weekly Senior Staff meetings, Quarterly Supervisor meetings, and during one-on-one weekly meetings.

The Marketing and Communications Division staff meet on a weekly and monthly basis to discuss budgets, corresponding implications, and adjusting expenditures. The Division meets regularly with the Administration/Finance Division to evaluate revenue-generating programs.

Animal Division staff are passionately motivated to increase the Zoo's support of Wildlife Conservation. Team members brainstorm ways to increase these amounts via conservation fundraisers, to which the Zoo may provide matching funds donations.

In partnership with ZSM, the Zoo recently completed a strategic and master plan, which began in the fall of 2022. Input was collected via online questionnaires, focus groups, and in-person. All Zoo and ZSM staff had the opportunity to participate in the process via All-Staff meetings. Additionally, a group of frontline participants was chosen to participate more fully, as well as to communicate with their peers to solicit ideas and feedback and bring them into the planning process.

We also have "Zoo Buzz", a Teams site where staff can use the "Post New Ideas" channel to post new ideas for the Zoo.

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

Yes, the Zoo tracks contracts with minority and women-owned businesses. In 2025, the Zoo aims to award 65% of time-and-material contracts to Targeted Business Enterprises (TBE). In 2024, 64% of such contracts were awarded to TBEs, reflecting strong progress toward that goal. For 2026, the Zoo's goal will align with Milwaukee County's Targeted Business Enterprise benchmark of 22%.

## 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)?**

Culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) strategies are interwoven into every evaluation project done at the MCZ/ZSM and our evaluators are expected to stay current on best practices within their field. The staff responsible for evaluation in both organizations have the professional qualifications and professional development/continuing education training opportunities needed for these approaches. Both are supported to participate in several professional organizations that set industry standards for CRE (e.g., Association of Midwest Museums, AZA's SSRE SAG; Visitor Studies Association; OF/BY/FOR/ALL toolkit for respectful audience surveys); CITI Human Subjects Training.

Zoo visitors and groups that participate in programs are the main groups evaluated. For example, we conduct an annual exit survey of a minimum of 300 Zoo visitors to get feedback about their Zoo experience. This survey contains both rating questions and open-ended opportunities for survey-takers to make suggestions on how the Zoo can improve. Demographic data is collected so that the data can be compared by subsample (e.g., Milwaukee County vs. non-County zip codes, race, age). It also helps us understand our audience, who we might be missing, and informs our engagement strategies. We also continually evaluate our animal experience programming (Wild Connections) and special events, guest experience for our group sales clients, and new/current exhibits and interpretation to assess the efficacy of exhibit objectives, engagement, and space use.

The Zoo and ZSM also work together to evaluate conservation program engagement. For example, a survey helped us understand participation in the No Mow May campaign, any barriers experienced, and where we have growth

opportunities based on feedback. The survey was promoted on the local news and social media, distributed via our Empathy Program Action Committee (EPAC) partners, and sent to member distribution lists.

Zip code data from online ticket sales, members, and school groups is also assessed throughout the year to help us understand who is using our services and who may need further assistance or engagement.

The effectiveness and impact of ZSM's grant-funded education programming are continually evaluated and reported to stakeholders (e.g., Kohl's Wild Theater, Animal Ambassador, etc.). ZSM's "Partner Engagement Plan of Work" (PEPOW) works with partners to co-design programs. The partners include the Indian Community School, Milwaukee Public Schools, and La Causa Charter School in 2025 and 2026. PEPOW's goal is to develop a more culturally responsive curriculum and foster partnerships that make our programming more accessible to community partners. In addition, we have been asked by Milwaukee Public Schools to develop an Animal Empathy Kit to use across the district, and are working on a Dia de Los Muertos event with La Causa and a Native Language Day event with Indian Community School.

The internal evaluators for both the Zoo and the ZSM, and the Community Engagement Coordinator, in conjunction with the DEAI Committee, ensure that evaluation and research align with the organization's diversity program. In the future, the goal is to incorporate co-designed program evaluations with new partners where appropriate.

**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.)**

**a. Please provide specific examples of data and how that influenced decision making.**

**b. Are there gaps in the data that need to be addressed to better understand disparities in equity?**

Data used from Zoo research on under-served zip codes and populations has been and will continue to be used to determine advertising and promotional strategies and budgeting in Marketing & Communications. For example, exit survey data showed that visits from the Latino community were lagging. In 2023, Marketing and Communications set aside funds specifically to promote the Zoo to the Latino community. Furthermore, the summer exit survey data showed a higher percentage of Latino first-time visitors, which was likely tied to these changes in advertising strategy.

The MCZ and ZSM have partnered with Canopy Strategic Partners in 2022 on an integrated strategic and business planning effort. During one of the business plan workshops in 2023, Canopy shared an analysis of the difference between the composition of Zoo visitors' household income versus the makeup of the market region at large. Visitor demographics were gathered via mobile device data and compared with Census information from the surrounding area (a 90-minute drivetime radius). This analysis showed that Zoo visitation overrepresents lower-earning households by a significant margin: about 34% of market residents earn less than \$50,000 per year, while 41% of Zoo visitors are represented in this income bracket. In April of 2022, the Zoo implemented Flex Pricing, allowing guests the opportunity to visit the Zoo on a day that best accommodates both their budget and schedule. When developing the pricing model, concentrated efforts are made to be accessible to all income levels.

The Zoological Society of Milwaukee provides grant-funded educational programs to students, particularly in under-served areas, including MPS Nature Play, Kohl's Wild Theater, Animal Ambassador Programs, and Animal Connections Continuum.

The Marketing Strategy for 2025 prioritizes advancing DEAI initiatives by fostering a more inclusive community through strategically marketing to a broader and more diverse audience. It aims to target 20% of impressions toward diverse and underrepresented audiences and direct 15% of impressions to new audiences to boost attendance and revenues. These goals continue for 2026. The Zoo is also expanding outreach to actively engage with surrounding communities, including Native American, Hmong, and Hispanic/Latine communities.

**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?**

The Marketing and Communications Division continually works with marketing and communications staff from other County departments. We share information and participate in joint purchases, such as a county-wide video monitoring service and we share the Everbridge emergency communication system with OEM. Zoo's social media supports efforts to share information on its sites, supporting equity and health programs.

Unclaimed lost and found items are donated to the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services' Community Days.

The Zoo partnered with the Parks Department to lease golf carts, which allowed for greater purchasing power to negotiate the best price.

For the County's 2025 "Take a Child To Work Day", the Zoo donated a piece of equipment, a vehicle and a staff person to provide a learning opportunity.

The Zoo partners with OEM for on-site paramedic medical services for Zoo guests, First Aid/CPR/AED training for Zoo first responders and MCSO for Deputy Sheriff services and Active Shooter training as needed.

**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?**

While the Zoo and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) already offer programs aimed at engaging communities of color and underrepresented populations, such as Free Days and the Animal Ambassador Education Program, we recognize that more can be done. Together, we are committed to strengthening our focus on racial equity by developing a more comprehensive initiative that expands access to Zoo and Society programs.

Access MKE Zoo is designed to provide "360 degrees of access," ensuring that everyone, regardless of financial circumstances, can participate in our offerings. We are currently exploring business models and funding strategies to support this vision, including the development of a more robust financial aid program managed by ZSM. Potential uses of funding include purchasing Zoo memberships, covering the cost of classes, or providing access to specially priced, after-hours events. It could also help cover general admission.

To make this vision a reality, we are actively seeking sponsors to underwrite program and admission costs. This could involve creating a general fund to support a wide range of offerings or backing specific events, such as covering the cost of free tickets for the popular Wild Lights event in December.

Additionally, we are exploring the feasibility of offering reduced-rate memberships and admissions to individuals who participate in public assistance programs such as SNAP or WIC. While these initiatives will require time and thoughtful planning, each is under serious consideration as we work toward a more inclusive and equitable future.

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

A strategic pricing strategy known as Flex Pricing was implemented in April of 2022 to enhance affordability and accessibility. While keeping admission fees low for school groups may impact revenue, the flexible pricing structure is designed to account for and help offset this effect. So far, Flex Pricing has had a positive impact on overall revenues and has expanded opportunities for visitation among low to middle-income households.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Flex Pricing strategy will continue to emphasize the benefits of purchasing tickets online, where guests can access greater savings compared to buying admission at the gate.

In 2024, the Zoo hosted 123 accessibility days and 33 accessibility programs, collectively reaching 17% of Zoo visitors. These efforts provided an estimated community value of \$1,680,094.

As mentioned above, the Zoo is collaborating with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) to further develop Access MKE Zoo. Together, the Zoo and ZSM offer several programs aimed at reaching communities of color and underrepresented populations, including Free Days and the Animal Ambassador Education Program. We are actively exploring ways to deepen our commitment to racial equity through the creation of a more comprehensive access initiative that ensures all individuals can participate in the full range of Zoo and ZSM programs.

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

The Zoo is mindful of the potential demographic impacts of admission fees. While entrance fees help support operating expenses, the Zoo recognizes that cost can be a barrier for some communities. To mitigate this, the Zoo implements a dynamic pricing strategy (Flex Pricing) that allows guests to choose dates that align with their budget. Additionally, the Zoo offers more than 33 accessibility programs, including free and discounted days, many of which are designed to serve low-income individuals, families, seniors, and other underserved groups. These initiatives help ensure that no particular demographic is disproportionately impacted by admission costs and support equitable access for all visitors.

 [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?**

Additional Zoo Worker funds would help in the recruitment and retention of seasonal staff. This aligns with the objectives in the County's strategic plan in the following ways:

1A: Reflect the full diversity of Milwaukee County at every level of county government: Providing equitable and competitive compensation helps eliminate barriers to employment and supports a more inclusive recruitment strategy.

2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity: Offering a higher wage expands opportunities for those who may rely on their income to support themselves or family members. Many seasonal employees are entering the workforce for the first time, and competitive pay can foster longer-term interest in zoo-related careers.

2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions: Raising wages helps dismantle structural pay inequities and expands access to seasonal employment for underrepresented communities.

3A: Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities: Reducing staff turnover and workplace strain through better compensation supports employee well-being and more stable operations.

3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability: Investing in competitive wages reduces the cost of turnover, minimizes disruption, and improves service quality, thereby strengthening the Zoo's revenue-generating capacity.

3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities: Addressing compensation disparities removes a key barrier to employment, helping residents envision a future with the Zoo and within County government.

The total fiscal impact of this request, which covers wages and associated Social Security is \$105,853. The net impact on the operating budget (fund 10001) totals \$73,495, and the train trust fund labor allocation increases by \$32,358.

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

To improve accessibility to the Zoo for guests with disabilities, a Universal Changing Station was installed in 2023. In future capital building improvements, the Zoo will look to add more family restrooms and adult changing areas.

The Zoo has three Mamava nursing stations on Zoo grounds, which are private spaces available for guests and staff for nursing and pumping.

For the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the Zoo maintains the Sensory Inclusive Location status from KultureCity by having over 50% of staff, including our revenue partners and volunteers, take the annual refresher training on how to assist our guests with sensory needs. The Zoo also has a Social Story posted on our website and on the KultureCity app, which assists guests in knowing what to expect on their visit.

The Zoo provides free admission to approved special needs organizations on an annual basis for their clients and chaperones. For 2024, 2,598 clients and chaperones attended the Zoo for free, valued at \$40,896.

The Zoo continues to make directional maps available in multiple languages, including Spanish, Hmong, and German. The Zoo's website is ADA-accessible. Wayfinding signs/maps on Zoo grounds have a Spanish language component. In 2024, Group Sales brochures were also translated into Spanish and two of our rides, Skyglide and Carousel, added instructions in Spanish.

The Zoo's annual exit survey continues to be translated into Spanish, allowing more guests to provide feedback on their experience.

The Zoological Society of Milwaukee offered a Zoo class taught in Spanish.

With the success of the Zoo's first-ever Celebrate Diversity event in 2022, the Zoo continues to host the event annually. 2024 activities included a community tree, animal artifacts from around the world, and we doubled underrepresented owners/vendors in the sustainability market.

Marketing strategies continue to shift to a broader and more diverse audience to help foster a more inclusive community. Additional Spanish marketing campaigns were added, including interviews on Telemundo.

The ZSM Creative team continues testing an interpretive graphic design font that can be translated by guests using smartphones and Google Translate. This could expand access to Zoo interpretive graphic information to nearly 100 languages.

On Zoo grounds, wheelchairs and electric scooters are available for rental by guests. The Zoo's attractions have varying levels of ADA accessibility, including access to the Carousel and Zoo Expeditions for wheelchair users. In late 2024, our mobility booth was moved to the front of the zoo entrance, allowing easier accessibility to our guests after they have parked. Coming soon is an ADA accessible train car.



## 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](mailto: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

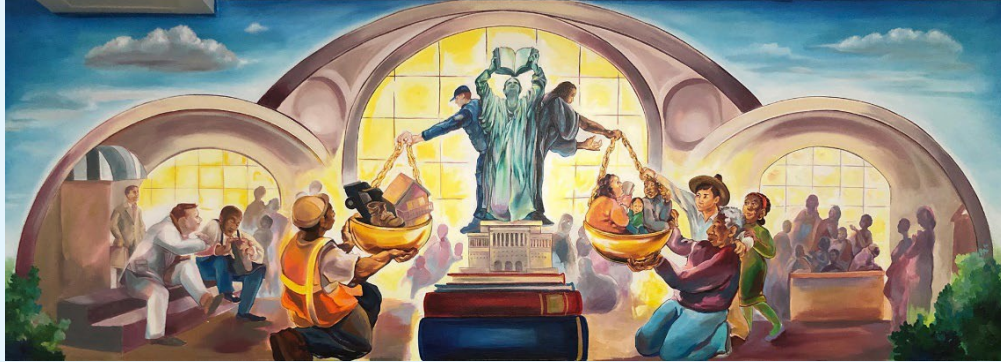
# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MODEL



	<b>INFORM</b> 	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b> 	<b>EMPOWER/LEAD</b> 
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.

© IAP2 International Federation 2018. All rights reserved. 20181112\_v1

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](https://county.milwaukee.gov/vision)