



RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL

2027 BUDGET CYCLE



INFORMATIONAL
RECORD

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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 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.

Racism (not race) is a leading indicator of health because it structures access to opportunity like housing, education, employment, food, safety, and care. When access to opportunity is structured unequally, health outcomes follow that pattern. Other forms of oppression (i.e., ableism, sexism, etc.) operate through similar pathways, and when they intersect with racism, the impact on health compounds.

When we examine and correct the structural barriers created by racism, such as inequitable housing policy, underinvestment in neighborhoods, food apartheid, or unequal access to capital, we are also strengthening the infrastructure that also affects women, people with disabilities, older adults, Veterans, immigrants, and others who face systemic barriers in Milwaukee County.

The Racial Equity Budget Tool (REBT) enables departments to critically assess the impacts of budget decisions. The tool is structured around Milwaukee County's strategic focus areas to help departments and decision makers be better stewards of public resources.

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 2027 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:

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 Board of Supervisors, Org. 1000, is the legislative branch of Milwaukee County with 18 elected officials representing our diverse communities. The Board elects from the body a chairperson who by ordinance is the department head. The Board Chairwoman, Supervisor Marcelia Nicholson-Bovell, leads the department and is responsible for the direction of 4 full-time employees (FTEs) and the Team support from part-time positions.

Supervisors do not receive County benefits like health care, so many also are employed outside of the Courthouse. Operations are supported day-to-day by the efforts of the Board receptionist, legislative interns, Constituent Services Specialist, Deputy Chief of Staff, and Chief of Staff, as well as the legislative liaison for the Board in the Office of Government Affairs. The Team staff support is especially critical to Board operations as the state restructured the elected position of Milwaukee County Supervisor.

Each Supervisory district encompasses more than 50,000 County residents. To support a workforce that reflects the communities Milwaukee County serves, the Chair, as department leader, may engage Supervisors to share



Board position announcements across their broad community networks, expanding outreach to prospective applicants with varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. With a lens on equity, minimum requirements for educational attainment and driver's license are evaluated in JEQ development.

To expand pathways into local public service, the Board partners with district offices, community organizations, and County departments to promote participation in the Milwaukee County Youth Commission and support internship opportunities for former Youth Commissioners. By connecting interns with projects, legislative activities, and community events that reflect the County's vision, these opportunities elevate youth voices in current policy discussions while developing the next generation of civic and community leaders.

In 2021, the Board Chairwoman championed the first paid internship program in the legislative branch. This transformative change expanded access to legislative public service for students who otherwise would not have been able to pursue an unpaid position, shattering the cycle of privilege. The Board's paid internship program also strengthens recruitment and retention by creating a pathway from student employment to public service careers. Through meaningful legislative experience, interns build the knowledge, skills, and relationships to transition effectively into full-time roles.

The 2026 Budget Cycle

As elected officials, Supervisors are entrusted to provide vision and leadership for Milwaukee County on behalf of their constituents. This means Supervisors are responsible for making difficult decisions that impact local communities. The guiding principles empower the Supervisor to lead with thoughtful intention.

Intentional leadership means having a clear vision, an openness to growth and learning, and the ability to take decisive action to move goals forward. Supervisors may use this questionnaire and the lines below to reflect on how their leadership supports the Board's most critical responsibility of passing the County Budget.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Does my proposal align with the County's vision to become the healthiest in the State?

How does my initiative benefit the County, and does it align with the overall strategic plan of the County?

What steps are needed to plan requests in advance of the amendment deadlines?

Am I available to present my proposal at the Finance Committee?

Will twelve of my colleagues support my amendment?

Have I engaged with the County Executive to support my proposal?

If my proposal is district-specific, how do I engage Supervisors who represent different communities?

Is this budget amendment fiscally feasible, and does it consider the budget gap?

Where is the money for my amendment coming from?

Does the proposal need a one-time funds, or does it need to be funded every year moving forward?

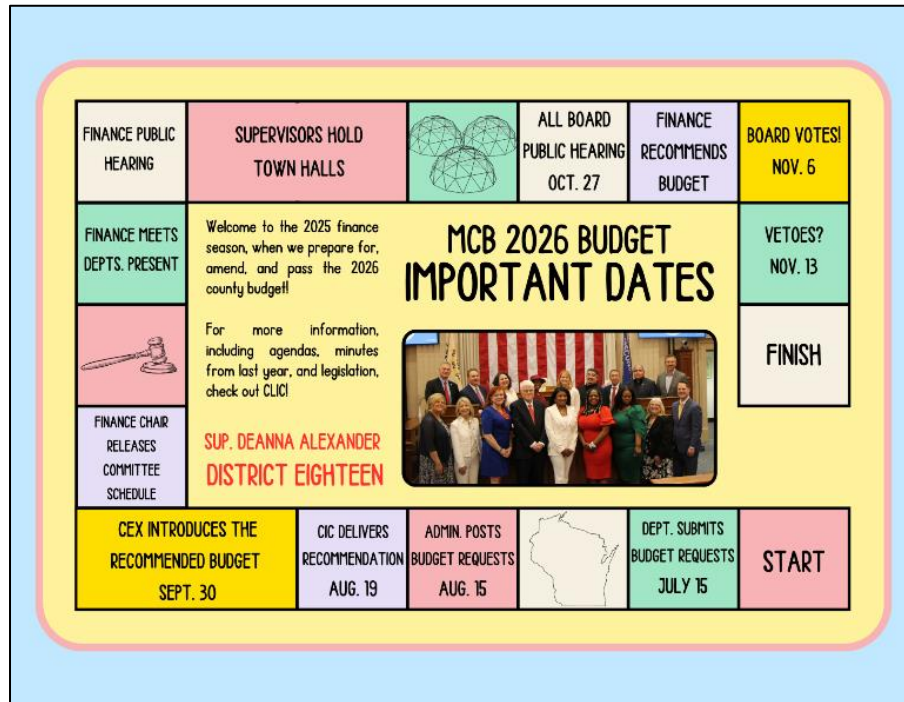
Am I engaging in a way that is respectful, courteous, and upholds the integrity of the legislative branch?

The department develops supportive resources, career pathways, and opportunities for training and advancement to promote professional development and successful succession planning. During term transitions, the Team coordinates cross-departmentally to implement an onboarding process under the Board's adopted policy, initiated by the Chairwoman, that supports elected officials in partnership with the Office of Strategy, Budget, and Performance. Board staff are provided tools and resources to lead and take ownership of their work while building the knowledge and experience for continued growth within the County. Board leadership also creates opportunities for staff to connect with other departments and partner organizations to better understand the impact of County services and the work supported through the legislative process. These team-building and professional development efforts strengthen staff investment in the Board's mission while supporting a workplace culture where employees can grow their skills and pursue future opportunities, including pathways from entry-level positions into full-time public service roles. Attracting, developing, and retaining talent through these efforts requires dedicated staff time and intentional investment in workforce development.

The costs associated with these initiatives are primarily reflected through existing personnel resources, staff time dedicated to recruitment, mentorship, onboarding, professional development, internship supervision, and community engagement activities.

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

The Board's approach to workforce development includes hiring employees who bring the skills, judgment, and experience to support the legislative branch while providing opportunities for continued growth and advancement. The Board's staff Team are supported in further developing their skills, expanding their responsibilities, and preparing for future leadership roles as part of intentional succession planning. Professional development opportunities are available at all levels, with employees identified for programs such as the Leadership Engagement Program (LED) and Manager Development Program offered by the Milwaukee County Office of Human Resources to strengthen leadership capacity and prepare employees for continued growth.



We invest in the continued development of elected officials and staff with coordinated trainings and professional learning opportunities. The Chairwoman, with support from the Board staff Team, launched a series of trainings, beyond those at onboarding, with County partners, including the Office of Corporation Counsel on public meetings and records and the Wisconsin Counties Association on roles and responsibilities. Board leadership also makes intentional space for staff to build professional networks within and outside of the Courthouse, strengthening collaboration and knowledge across the public service community.

Each traditionally scheduled academic semester, one to two interns join the County Board on a part-time basis, gaining meaningful, hands-on experience in local government while supporting the daily operations of the office. The internship program is designed to provide a clear pathway to full-time employment by developing the professional skills, institutional knowledge, and public service experience needed to succeed in a permanent role. Interns work collaboratively with County Board staff and elected officials, contributing to constituent services, legislative initiatives, and representative responsibilities while receiving mentorship and guidance from an experienced Team. This supportive environment allows interns to make meaningful contributions to the work of elected officials while building the confidence, knowledge, and professional competencies necessary to achieve their long-term career goals in public service.

3. Our employees can be a great resource for innovation and knowing what is working well and what needs work. Have you engaged a diverse group of frontline employees to inform decisions about your proposed budget changes? If yes, how was input solicited, who was involved, and what were the results?

As elected officials, each Supervisor approaches the budget individually and through the lens of how to best represent the specific needs and perspectives of their constituents. Budget resources created by Board leadership and the County staff Team support elected officials with this approach. Supervisors also are encouraged to join the County Board Staff Open Houses held regularly where all staff Team members are available to answer questions and support district offices.

Org. 1000 engages in developing fiscal priorities, amendments, and communications as part of the budget adoption process. Throughout this process, the Board Chairwoman leads by setting the guiding principles of preparation, collaboration, decorum, sustainability, and racial equity with Supervisors and the staff Team to Center our County vision when considering budgetary items.

On a departmental level, the Chairwoman welcomes ideas and suggestions from Board staff and creates opportunities for ongoing leadership engagement. Through regular meetings, the Board Staff Team collaborates on legislative operations and projects, with all bringing forward ideas, sharing expertise, and taking ownership of work that supports the legislative branch.

The Legislative Services Director in the Clerk's office and Chief of Staff held monthly formal meetings, and these interactions between partner teams bridge communication gaps and encourage effective cooperation and collaboration in the interest of the County residents we all serve.

The Chairwoman of the County Board prioritizes transparency for the Board's Requested Budget for Org. 1000 by establishing a public review process for the department's financial information. Prepared by the Office of the Comptroller, informational reports are formally referred to the Finance Committee and considered during a public meeting, providing Supervisors with direct access to the fiscal details of the Board's request months before the Recommended Budget is introduced. This process reflects the value of transparency in the legislative branch and allows the elected body, employees, and the community to better understand how resources support the Board's legislative responsibilities as a governing body.



2026 County Board Staff Open House

Get your questions answered by County Board Staff!

County Board Staff will be in **Room 201B** on:

Wednesday, July 22
12:00-1:30 p.m.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY 50/50



Monica Evans
Receptionist

Welcomes visitors and refers to the Board and provides constituent referrals to district offices and other government offices



Kelly Babilitch
Board Chief of Staff

Designated by the Chairperson to support daily operations of department and focus on Board engagement internally with the Team and externally with the community



Aline Morales
Deputy Chief of Staff



Blanca Martinez
Constituent Services Specialist

CSSs support all 18 district offices by coordinating our legislative intern program, Board Day presentations, front desk coverage, and processing purchases



Jackie Moreno
Constituent Services Specialist



Matylda Burke
Board Intern

Supports District offices and staff with various policy and administrative projects



Kaliop Morgan
Board Intern

COUNTY CLASSROOM ADVENTURES: EXPLORING THE BUDGET PROCESS!



"Every July, Milwaukee County Board members meet to discuss the County's budget. They even vote on the County's Budget!"



"On August 15, we get to meet with our County Board members to discuss the County's Budget!"



"What happens next, Chairman?"



"Then, the County Board meets to discuss the County's Budget. They even vote on the County's Budget!"



"On October 15, we get to meet with our County Board members to discuss the County's Budget!"



"We also hold a Public Hearing—because your voice, and your family's, belong in the County's Budget! Be sure to put that on your calendar!"



Board Meeting
Nov. 8

"We have elected our representatives for the County Board. They will be working with us to make decisions for the County's Budget!"



"On November 15, the County Board meets to discuss the County's Budget. They even vote on the County's Budget!"



"Budget meeting with your representatives! They will be working with us to make decisions for the County's Budget!"



Milwaukee County

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

While the Board does not enter into service or professional contracts through the Org. 1000 budget, the legislative body fulfills its policy and oversight responsibilities by reviewing and acting on County contracts that fall within its jurisdiction through the Committee on Finance, consistent with state law.

All action items that appear before the County Board require a fiscal note to be attached, including whether an item was reviewed by the Office of Economic Inclusion. With these legislative processes and oversight tools, the County Board can monitor adherence to our ordinances and adopted policies for contracts.

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)?

The legislative branch serves as a policy-making body that provides referrals to direct services and holds primary responsibility for adopting Milwaukee County's annual budget, which funds those services. To support resident involvement in the budget process, the Board hosts an annual public hearing and district town halls where community members can share priorities, concerns, and perspectives. Throughout the year, Supervisors maintain engagement across the County so fiscal decisions are informed by the diverse values and shared priorities of the communities they represent.

In recent years, the Board has implemented rule changes to expand access to public testimony through remote and hybrid participation options. These include eComments and virtual attendance options for committee meetings and the Board's annual public hearing on the budget, reducing barriers for residents who may not be able to attend in person at the Courthouse and creating additional opportunities to participate in the legislative process.

To deepen engagement with younger residents, the County revitalized its Youth Commission, creating a platform for youth voices in local governance. Youth Commissioners have participated in the budget process by voicing their perspectives during the Board's annual public hearing, contributing to discussions that shape Milwaukee County's priorities.

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?

The Board Chairwoman also creates and refers reference (REF) files to support ongoing review of County operations and administrative reporting. These files provide a public framework for information to be presented by subject matter experts, enabling Committee Chairs and Supervisors to examine data, ask questions, and consider how information informs policy decisions and oversight responsibilities.

Data and administrative expertise are important components of the legislative process, and representative decision-making requires elected officials to apply their independent judgment, informed by the perspectives, priorities, and experiences of the communities they represent. Committee Chairs may request additional departmental reports and work with the Legislative Services Division in the Clerk's Office to obtain information needed to support legislative deliberation and oversight

The Board recognizes that opportunities remain to strengthen the information available for legislative decision-making. As part of their oversight role, Supervisors continue to ask questions, request additional information, and identify gaps in available data that may improve understanding of disparities and support more informed policy decisions.

Milwaukee County Committee Chair Designees Responsibilities

NEW

A Renewal of the Committee Chair Responsibilities Resource with a Refreshed Look

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Office of Corporation Counsel is the County Attorney for Guidance on Compliance with Open Meetings Laws DECIDE on items and order of committee agendas

DECIDE on items and order of committee agendas – Respond timely with decisions to the County Clerk's Legislative Services Division (LSD) after receipt of Matters Available for Scheduling (MAFS) and consultation with subject matter experts and partners like Research or County departments. Consult with OCC for guidance on properly noticing items for, and process for going into, closed session.

KEEP Meeting Open to Public – Contact the Sheriff's Office if a meeting will run past 5 p.m., so MCSO can plan to keep the door to the Courthouse open so committee proceedings are accessible to the public during the meeting.

POST agendas – Give OK to the Committee coordinators with sufficient time for LSD to post your committee agenda at least 24 hours before the start of the committee to meet State requirements for public notice.

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

LSD and Research Department at the Table in Meeting to Support Members and Public Process

SUPPORT committee members – Lead the committee and uplift with members our guiding principles of racial equity, preparation, collaboration, sustainability, and decorum.

RUN efficient meetings – Plan to appropriately move through agenda items. Decide how to order agenda items when you receive MAFS about one week before the meeting. Consider how best to receive public testimonies, and, if you decide to use time limits, be prepared to apply with consistency for fairness. Consider order, being mindful a quorum is needed for an action item to advance with recommendation to the County Board.

ATTEND meetings in-person – Arrive at the Courthouse on time for the start of a scheduled hybrid meeting. If you decide to hold a virtual meeting because of an emergency, coordinate directly with OCC and Clerk's Office for open meeting compliance and proper notice.

NOTIFY members when absent – Contact your Vice Chair and Committee Coordinator before the start of the committee to let the Vice Chair know you are unable to attend the scheduled meeting and that they may run the meeting in this exceptional circumstance.

CONTACT the Sheriff's Office – Ask the Office of the Sheriff for deputy support if you believe there is a security risk or County staff have expressed concerns for their safety.

LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

Checks and Balances in County government

ASK for reports when needed – informational reports may be requested from departments over which your committee has jurisdiction.

COORDINATE with county departments and affiliates – about the REF files referred to your committee and seek collaborative agreements for expectations about reporting cadences and timelines for submissions of written reports.

REVIEW and act on LSD notes – LSD adds details to legislative files, and committee chairs or departments may review these notes and take corrective action or amend, if needed.

DO the heavy lifting – Supervisors "do the heavy lifting" of reviewing, discussing, and ultimately making recommendations to the full Board on legislative items in committee where public testimonies are received.

7a. How does your budget reflect efforts to work across departments to break down silos to maximize access to and quality of services offered?

A resolution authored by Chairwoman Nicholson-Bovell and adopted by the Board set the County's vision that, by achieving racial equity, Milwaukee is the healthiest county in Wisconsin. The Board reinforces this vision in their processes and structures.

To achieve that vision, the Board a) created a separate Committee on Audit to enhance legislative oversight of administrative operations with a focus on equity; b) reimagined and expanded the scope of the Health Committee with a focus on equity and inclusion of strategic planning; c) expanded the membership of the Committee on Parks and Culture to bring more voices across the County to the table for recommendations on our green spaces; and d) further opened up meetings of the standing committees, including the Board's annual public hearing on the County budget, to receive virtual testimonies from the public through eComments and Teams.

These structural changes within the body reflect the Board's commitment to breaking down silos within the County and to bringing government closer to the people Supervisors are elected to represent.

b. How does this help us achieve the vision of achieving equity and health?

The Board also continues to expand opportunities for meaningful public participation through initiatives such as the "For the People" Room, hybrid public meetings, and enhanced access to legislative information. These

efforts reduce barriers to civic engagement, strengthen trust in County government, and meet residents where they are. This means that all, notably those from historically underrepresented communities, have greater opportunities to inform decisions in their neighborhoods.

The Board's committee structure now includes the separate Committee on Audit and expanded Committee on Health Equity, Human Needs, and Strategic Planning and Committee on Parks and Culture. These committees provide dedicated forums for reviewing departmental performance, monitoring strategic goals, and promoting accountability across County government. These collaborative structures break down organizational silos and encourage coordinated approaches to improving health, equity, and public service delivery.

The Board's emphasis on collaboration, legislative oversight, and inclusive public engagement advances Milwaukee County's vision of achieving racial equity and becoming the healthiest county in Wisconsin. By fostering collaboration across the County, strengthening legislative oversight of administrative operations, and incorporating racial equity into policy and budget decision-making, these Board structures and processes mean that County resources are allocated in ways that are transparent, equity-driven, and responsive to community needs.

8. **What are the expected benefits and potential unintended consequences to disadvantaged communities of your proposed budget changes?**
- a. **What analysis did you do to determine the expected benefits and potential unintended consequences?**

Expenditures within the department are uniquely capped by state statutes. These limitations have compounding effect on capacity to represent residents, deliver constituent services, grow community presence, and advance collaborative policies. If potentially negative racial-equity implications exist within the Org. 1000 budget, they exist not in the decisions we have made, but in the decisions, we are unable to make.

As the informational report from the Office of the Comptroller on the County Board's 2026 Requested Budget summarized in File 25-503, *"with very little left to cut in future years, meeting statutory tax levy caps over the next decade could decimate the County Board's ability to function as an operating department if any major countywide property tax levy reductions occur."*

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

Together the Board can better align our values as a County by collaborating with and across departments and supporting Countywide initiatives to achieve racial equity. The Chairwoman is committed to driving a strategic direction, in partnership within the department and across the County, to impact culture, drive decision making, and align goals as a Board to achieve a shared vision of making our community the healthiest in the state of Wisconsin.

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

N/A



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**WELCOME
STOP IN**

This space is
"For the People"

Connect with your
County Officials

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



**BIENVENIDO
PÁSELE**

Este espacio es
"Para el pueblo"

Conéctese con
sus funcionarios
del condado

NUESTRA VISIÓN
Al lograr la equidad racial,
Milwaukee es **el condado**
más saludable de Wisconsin.

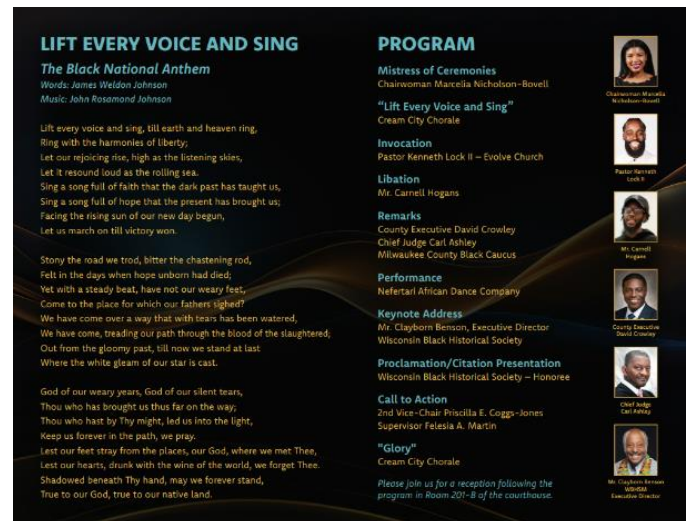
STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 3: INVEST IN EQUITY

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?

Centralized resources that all departments can take advantage of are critical to role in the future success of the legislative branch of the County. Should the County make centralized funds available to address racial inequity, these resources could further advance technological resources at the Board to expand community engagement and participation in line with the 'no-wrong door' approach.

Unlike other County departments, the Board is subject to a state-imposed expenditure cap of no more than 0.4 percent of the total tax levy. Programs have been implemented at the County that the Board uniquely cannot access, like DOSAA (funds for salary increases to address equity and employee retention issues.)

If awarded additional equity-focused funding, our department would prioritize Strategic Focus Area 3: *Invest in Equity*, with a specific focus on enhancing community outreach and participation among historically underserved populations. The proposed project, titled the Community Engagement and Access Fund, would support and expand culturally significant, equity-centered events that bring County government into community spaces where residents already gather and feel seen. Building on successful collaborations such as the County's cross-departmental recognition of the 100th anniversary of Black History Month, which brought together Board leadership, the Milwaukee County Black Caucus, the Milwaukee County Judiciary, and the County Executive's Office, the Board would continue investing in partnerships that expand access, representation, and civic engagement. Events such as [Juneteenth](#), the [Pride](#) Parade, local district activities, along with the continued development of the Public Access Room (For the People Room), present opportunities to increase access to County services, elected officials, and civic engagement.



The funding would be used to strengthen accessibility through translation and interpretation services, multilingual outreach, transportation assistance, ADA accommodations.

In addition, the Public Access Room would be enhanced with staffing and technology support to function year-round as a hub for digital navigation and civic access. Additional funding, which would cover event support, outreach infrastructure, language access services, and part-time staffing to further connect with the residents we serve. The intended outcome is to increase civic participation among marginalized communities, improve service access for residents with language and physical access needs, and build sustained trust between County government and the communities we serve.

10. What is your department doing to dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities, including meeting multilingual needs, accessibility barriers, food apartheid, financial empowerment or other factors that impact the stability and wellbeing of people in Milwaukee County?

Multilingual connections occur between staff and constituents through public correspondence, constituent services, and community outreach. This engagement is strengthened through intentional recruitment and the Board's commitment to creating an accessible and inclusive legislative branch.

To address multilingual needs, the Board has developed and reimaged key public-facing documents with Spanish translation so documents are accessible to Spanish-speaking residents. At the pen of Supervisor Gómez-Tom, the Board adopted 2023 legislation equipping County departments with resources and training to provide public information, forms, websites, and other communications in Spanish and Hmong. The Board further advanced this initiative through a 2024 budget amendment committing \$100,000 to implement the policy. Legislative meetings are also livestreamed through the County Legislative Information Center (CLIC) with closed captioning in English and Spanish. Public-facing legislative calendars provide meeting information, participation details, and QR codes linking residents directly to committee materials online.

 PRESENTATIONS BY SUPERVISOR SUBMISSION FORM	
FILL OUT AND SUBMIT A COMPLETE AND ACCURATE FORM TO THE OFFICE OF THE BOARD CHAIR AT countyboardstaff@milwaukeecountywi.gov	
With the Board's adoption of policy in File No. 24-486, regularly scheduled meetings begin at 12:00 p.m. and are generally planned to conclude by the end of business (5 p.m.). The following guidance outlines how citations are scheduled within that structure. Citations not associated with an Organization of a Program Presentation will be scheduled under the 12th Order of Business. When three or more citations relate to a Board-adopted County observance, they will be grouped under the 2nd Order of Business. District offices may consult with the County Clerk, as parliamentarian, regarding procedures for requesting that an item be taken out of order on the Board floor. To uphold the standards of the Board and ensure the intent of the recognition is met, both the honoree and the district Supervisor must be present in person on the day of the meeting for any presentation. This reflects the expectation that individuals being recognized are welcomed and acknowledged by the sponsoring office in a formal setting.	
DISTRICT OFFICE COMPLETING FORM: _____	DATE: _____
NUMBER OF CITATIONS: _____	
By submitting this form, I agree with the following:	
☐ DUE DATE: District office presentations are scheduled in advance of every Board meeting to support proper preparation. For CITATION PRESENTATIONS , please submit one week before Board Day. If the due date is missed, the citation will be presented at the next Board meeting. For an ORGANIZED PROGRAM , please submit three weeks before Board meeting. Finalized details must be completed and submitted to the Office of the Board Chair by the Monday prior to a Thursday Board Day. A Run of Show is required. If a district office includes additional materials, such as a graphic program or table tents, those items must also be submitted at that time.	
☐ ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION: For completeness, any prior or related legislation should be cited. Include File No. and a brief description of the legislation, including recognition recipients if applicable.	
☐ EQUITY: District office enters how the citation or organized program presentation aligns to the County's strategic plan and may use examples from departmental reports as model.	
☐ PAST PRESENTATIONS: Enter dates of Program or Citation presentations given by this district office within the past 12 months in a Board meeting.	
☐ TYPE OF RECOGNITION: District office enters the name of the person or organization	
☐ ESTIMATED LENGTH OF PRESENTATION: The preference of the body is a maximum of 25-30 minutes total for all presentations at the start of the meeting based on district survey results. If a separate presentation has been previously approved for another district office and you select to present on another topic, please contact the hosting district office to coordinate.	
☐ HOST/ MEETING SUPPORT: The district office is responsible for setting up and cleaning up of any decorations, refreshments, or other hospitality items provided by the end of the day. This may also include coordination with other offices, removal of all leftover food, serving items, and other materials ensuring shared spaces remain clean and healthy. Note: Any additional coffee or refreshments beyond the arranged one regular coffee tote must be coordinated by the requested district office. The Comptroller's Office has provided Meal Reimbursement in Milwaukee County guidance.	
This box is to be completed by the Office of the Board Chair and returned to the submitting district office and the Legislative Services Division for confirmation. Please plan ahead to allow time for review as incomplete forms will be returned.	
COUNTY BOARD MEETING DATE RECOGNITION SCHEDULED: _____	
COORDINATE AVAILABLE PRESENTATION TIME WITH SUPERVISOR (\$): _____	
If applicable, contact the District Office that is coordinating the monthly presentation on timing and logistics.	

The Board has also advanced legislation to address food apartheid and improve equitable access to healthy food. Led by [legislation authored by Chairwoman Nicholson-Bovell](#), the Board adopted pioneering legislation declaring food apartheid a public health emergency, recognizing the deliberate, racialized systems of disinvestment and market practices that restrict access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant food in communities of color. Building on this work, the Board adopted additional [legislation](#) establishing [a joint City-County Food Access Taskforce](#) to strengthen long-term food access solutions, promote food justice, and support community-led, locally owned grocery stores in underserved neighborhoods.

New Legislation

Resolution 25-704: Emergency Food Assistance Funding

Author: Chairwoman Nicholson, with co-sponsorships by Supervisors Johnson, Jr., Taylor (S), Rolland, Martinez, Bielinski, Martin, Gómez-Tom, Cogges, Jones, Shea, Eckblad, Vincent, and O'Connor.

The Purpose: To provide \$150,000 in emergency supplemental food assistance for Milwaukee County residents affected by SNAP (FoodShare) reductions during this State of Emergency.

Why It Matters: Over 234,000 Milwaukee County residents rely on FoodShare benefits, including families, seniors, and children. The federal funding reductions leave them at risk of going hungry.

Thank you to the many Supervisors, residents, and community partners for the overwhelming support of this emergency funding, meant to bridge the gap through the holidays for families hit hardest.

In America's Dairyland, a place known for its rich agricultural history and for feeding the nation, we should never have to debate whether our own neighbors can eat.

Here in Milwaukee County, we saw entire neighborhoods stepping in while the inaction of those in power in D.C. is jeopardizing food security across our nation.

Our people don't wait – we work. We had the choice to follow their lead, and we took it. What we need is a chicken in every pot, not a game of political chicken.

New Legislation

Resolution 25-705: Declaring Food Apartheid a Public Health Emergency

Author: Chairwoman Nicholson, co-sponsored by Supervisors O'Connor, Johnson, Jr., Bielinski, Taylor (S), Martin, Gómez-Tom, Capriolo, Shea, Vincent, Martinez, Cogges-Jones, Rolland, and Eckblad.

The Purpose: To declare food apartheid the racialized systemic lack of access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food, as a public health emergency in Milwaukee County.

Why It Matters: Food apartheid stems from systemic disinvestment, not a lack of resources. Neighborhoods like Metcalfe Park, where 40% live in poverty and 1 in 4 don't own a car, face daily barriers to accessing healthy food. Grocery store closures worsen health disparities tied to race, income, and geography.

The residents and advocates of Metcalfe Park Community Bridges, led by Melody McCurtis, are the driving force behind this resolution. We are declaring food apartheid a public health emergency in Milwaukee County.

Food apartheid isn't about scarcity, it's about systems of disinvestment. It's about neighborhoods that have been denied access to fresh, healthy food. By passing this resolution, we are saying that this hunger is not accidental. This harm is not invisible. And this change will not wait.

Just like we believed when we were the first in the Nation to declare racism a health crisis, Milwaukee County can't fix what it won't face – we're choosing to face it.

By passing this resolution, we become one of the first counties in the nation to declare food apartheid a public health emergency – and we do so for the thousands of households counting on us to act now.

New Legislation

Resolution 26-453: City-County Joint Taskforce to Address the Food Access Crisis

Author: Chairwoman Nicholson-Bovell, co-sponsored by Supervisors Roundtree, Jr., Martin, Gómez-Tom, O'Connor, Rolland, Wasserman, Vincent, Johnson Jr., Shea, Eckblad, and Capriolo.

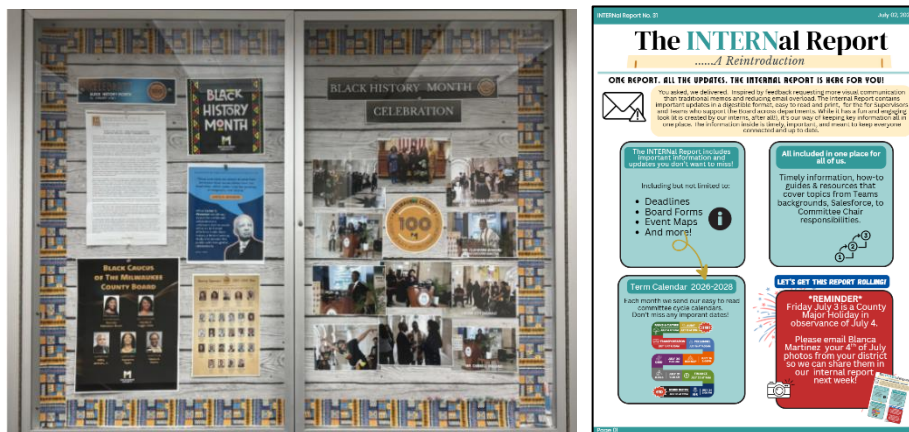
The Purpose: Establish a Milwaukee City-County Joint Taskforce to develop coordinated solutions that expand access to affordable, nutritious food in underserved communities.

Why It Matters: Too many Milwaukee County residents live in neighborhoods without reliable access to healthy food. This taskforce brings together government, community leaders, and local experts to confront food apartheid and build long-term, community-driven solutions.




Internally, the Board promotes equity through transparent communication and information-sharing among Supervisors and staff. The INTERNAL Report, a collaborative staff-led publication, provides legislative updates, operational resources, Board forms, event information, and staff recognitions in a format that is more visual and accessible than traditional emails. The Board also maintains a rotating bulletin board highlighting cultural monthly observances, County initiatives, and equity-focused programming that fosters awareness, engagement, and inclusion.

Collectively, these efforts demonstrate the Board's commitment to Strategic Focus Area 3: Invest in Equity by improving language access, expanding public participation, increasing transparency, and creating more equitable opportunities for residents to engage with Milwaukee County government.





Appendices

Appendix A:
Glossary

Appendix B:
Frequently Asked Questions

Appendix C:
Resources by Strategic Focus Area

Appendix D:
Community Engagement Frameworks

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.

Historically marginalized 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.

Food Apartheid: Inequity in the food system on the basis of race, class, and geography that are the result of discriminatory planning and policy decisions.

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.

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?

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?

The REBT will focus on an equity analysis of decisions for 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.

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.

APPENDIX B

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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.

15) 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 Performance, Strategy and Budget and the County Board.

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**

- [Community Engagement Toolkit](#)

Additional County Resources

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

Disparities in Food Access

- [Food Apartheid](#)
- [Food Access](#)

Community Engagement Frameworks & Guidance

Community Engagement connection to the REBT Tool and Budget Alignment

These frameworks help guide users of the REBT tool to think critically about how budget decisions align with the strategic plan and advance racial equity. By applying the continuum, staff can assess whether their fiscal choices reflect appropriate levels of community involvement, ensure that decisions are informed by community priorities, and understand the equity impacts of how resources are allocated. This supports intentional, equity-centered budgeting rooted in community voice and shared responsibility.

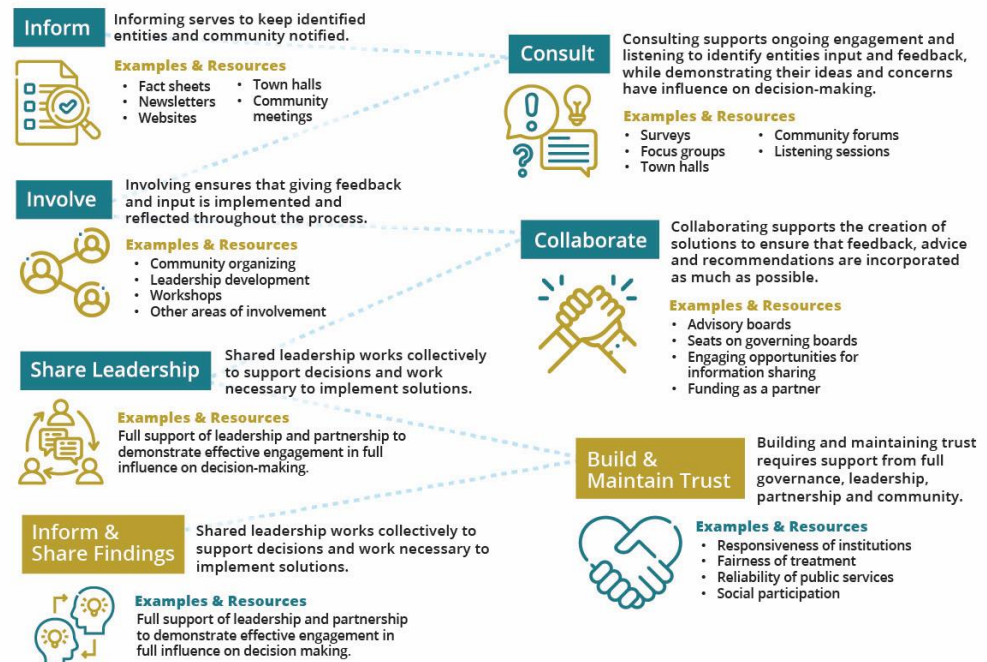
Summary of the Community Engagement Frameworks

The Community Engagement Continuum & Breaking Down the Path outlines five levels of engagement—Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Share Leadership. supported by practices that build trust and ensure findings are shared transparently. At the early stages, engagement focuses on providing information and gathering feedback through tools like fact sheets, surveys, and town halls. As engagement deepens, community members help shape decisions, co-create solutions, and participate in shared leadership structures such as advisory boards or governing bodies. Across all stages, trust-building, transparency, responsiveness, and partnership are essential for meaningful and equitable involvement.

Community Engagement Continuum

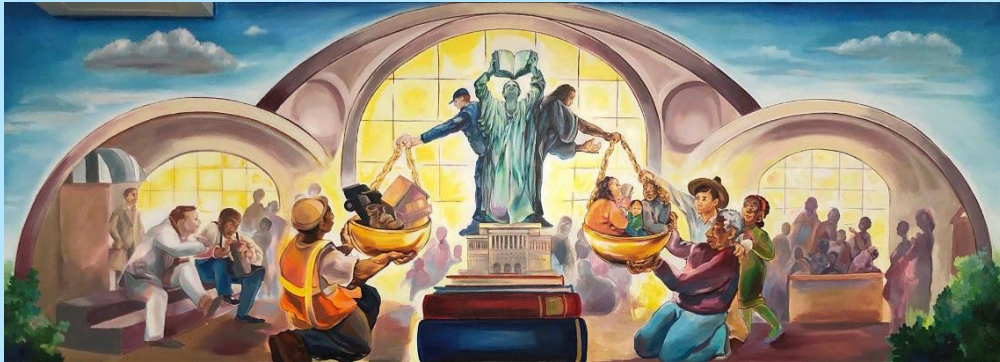


Breaking Down the Path



For future assistance, please access OOE's Technical Assistance program by sending us an email at OOEAssist@milwaukeecountywi.gov For direct self-serving tools around our Community Engagement efforts, please visit the [Office of Equity Community Engagement web page](#)

ON THE COVER



“ WELCOME TO THE PEOPLE’S HOUSE ”

Artist: Tia Richardson

Commissioned in 2020. Used with permission of the artist.



ONE COUNTY ONE VISION

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

County.milwaukee.gov/vision

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