



RACIAL EQUITY



REPRODUCED
10/2020

BUDGET TOOL

2027 BUDGET CYCLE

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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.



RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL

Date Submitted: 06/26/26

Department: Department of Human Resources

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 Department of Human Resources (DHR) remains deeply committed to building a diverse and inclusive workforce for Milwaukee County. That commitment holds true for DHR as well. As of June 6, 2025, over 58% of DHR's workforce identifies as non-white, reflecting the success of our ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Key to this progress has been the work of our Talent Acquisition (TA) team. Through close collaboration with hiring managers, TA has implemented intentional strategies to attract and retain diverse talent. One notable initiative is the continued "Changemaker" campaign, designed to broaden our appeal to prospective candidates and elevate our employer brand.

To address staffing challenges and boost our competitiveness, we've adopted a more proactive recruitment strategy. This includes expanding our outreach through marketing, social media, and advertising, and adding a second Diversity Recruiter in 2023. These steps have enabled us to better target hard-to-fill positions and have significantly increased the diversity of our applicant pool. This has not only had a positive impact on DHR, but it has also had a positive impact on Milwaukee County as a whole.

Our community engagement has also been a critical part of this success. In 2024 alone, DHR participated in 109 community events, hosting recruitment booths and hiring events that allowed for direct engagement with job seekers. DHR is on track to surpass community engagement participation numbers in 2025. These efforts have contributed to a nearly **68% increase in diverse hires** in 2025 year-to-date, compared to previous years. Additionally, we've seen a **64% increase in diverse applicants** in the same time frame, positive trends that are continuing into 2026. We've also launched a Hiring Manager Toolkit, offering best practices and resources to support inclusive hiring. This toolkit equips our leadership with the tools they need to make fair and equitable hiring decisions.

DHR's work has not gone unnoticed. We were honored to be named **2023 UMOS Corporate Sponsor of the Year** and were recognized by the **Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce** and **Wisconsin Chinese Chamber of Commerce** for our community partnerships and contributions. While we've made meaningful progress, continued support is needed. We've invested in sponsoring events and initiatives across communities of color, the LGBTQ+ community, and other underrepresented groups. However, to sustain and expand these efforts, we must incorporate formal, department-specific DEI plans across Milwaukee County. Additional funding would enable us to provide targeted support, tools, and enterprise-wide resources to further advance representation, inclusion, and retention across all departments.

In summary, DHR's comprehensive approach, from strategic hiring campaigns to community outreach and internal support resources, has been pivotal in advancing our DEI goals. We are proud of the impact so far and are committed to sustaining this momentum.

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 Department of Human Resources (DHR) continues to use an "internal only" postings period for all new and

promotional roles within DHR to ensure mobility opportunities are first shared internally with current DHR employees. DHR offers a variety of professional development training and programs employees can participate in to promote equity and advancement within Milwaukee County. DHR encourages professional development/advancement discussions with leadership so they can help identify opportunities, within DHR and/or across Milwaukee County. DHR leadership continues to support internal movement within Milwaukee County as we understand that our greatest asset are the employees. For enterprise-wide programs, the Organizational Learning & Culture (OLC) team offers Leadership Excellence (LEX) and the Management Development Program (MDP) to prepare aspiring leaders for promotional opportunities within Milwaukee County. These programs are offered to both DHR employees and all employees.

The total for both LEX (2015-2020, 2024) and MDP (2015-2025) programs:

Total # = 715

Males = 308 (43.07%)

Females = 407 (56.92%)

White = 454 (63.49%)

Non-white = 261 (36.50%)

DHR will continue to offer programs and training opportunities such as the MDP, LEX, Milwaukee Club meetings, and the DEI Book Club. The OLC team will maintain all current DEI-related instructor-led and eLearning sessions and will also seek opportunities to expand the catalog in this area. The Job Shadowing and Mentorship Program (JSMP) will expand throughout 2026 after all pilot phases, starting first in DHR. By the end of 2026, OLC will complete an audit and update of all existing OLC owned eLearning content to ensure alignment with basic accessibility standards and the use of inclusive language. All of this work is aligned with promoting equity within the DHR workforce and the greater workforce of Milwaukee County.

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?

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) is committed to gathering the voice of all DHR employees. DHR understands capturing the voice of employees not only helps identify opportunities for innovation and process improvement but also helps foster an environment and culture of inclusion. DHR is committed to creating spaces for employees to provide feedback in a safe space knowing their feedback is important and valued. A variety of DHR employees, at all levels, have been engaged through the use of surveys, including the all-employee engagement survey and through multiple DHR specific surveys. Employees are allowed to confidentially provide feedback in work related to DHR's strategic plans and provide input on how their roles and work will support the greater work of the department. DHR leaders hold frequent meetings with team members providing a forum for employees to share their thoughts and inputs on departmental initiatives and goals. Additionally, DHR engages members of our DEI Council and Network Resource Groups to survey needs in the workforce, and where budget dollars would be best placed to foster an engaged and inclusive workforce. As we continue to advance our strategic plan and its impact to our department budget, we will continue to engage DHR employees.

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

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) has limited external vendor contracts. The external contracts we do have, provide services to the entire workforce, i.e., medical services, benefits administration, background screens, etc. Those contracts are usually managed by larger organizations with the subject matter expertise to service an organization of our size. If DHR needs to look at external contracts, DHR will do our due diligence to partner with Minority/Women-Owned business when opportunities arise. DHR is committed to ensuring equitable representation when contracting for services remains one of our highest priorities.

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)?

DHR has a Director of Organizational Learning and Culture, HR Business Partners, HR Recruitment Analysts, an Employee Engagement Program Manager, a Workforce Data Analyst and a Culture & Inclusion Program Manager who regularly interact with employees across Milwaukee County. DHR's budget continues to consider the networking and interactions these groups have had with employees to ensure a high level of service delivery to clients, irrespective of our

budget restrictions.

Although our funding for DEI-related work did not continue, we still engaged the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Council and the Network Resource Groups (NRG's) on areas of focus for promoting outreach and participation efforts. DHR asked these groups "if additional funding is granted, what should be the priority?" Members shared strong interest in attending professional development conferences and trainings, participating in networking events and partnering with local non-profits through service initiatives. These activities not only support employee growth but also deepen engagement and contribute to retention across the workforce. DHR has also collaborated with the DEI Council and NRG's to identify broader strategic focus areas from outreach and inclusion. Ongoing fiscal support for these groups are a part of DHR's budget requests and will continue to be requested every year. These fiscal resources will help strengthen stakeholder engagement among Milwaukee County's diverse workforce, while fostering an inclusive and authentic workplace culture rooted in equity and belonging. In 2025, DHR launched the Milwaukee County Culture Statement, a guiding framework that outlines the values and qualities essential for building and sustaining an employee-centered workplace culture. This Culture Statement will serve as a cornerstone for future workforce initiatives, helping ensure that all employees feel supported, valued, and empowered.

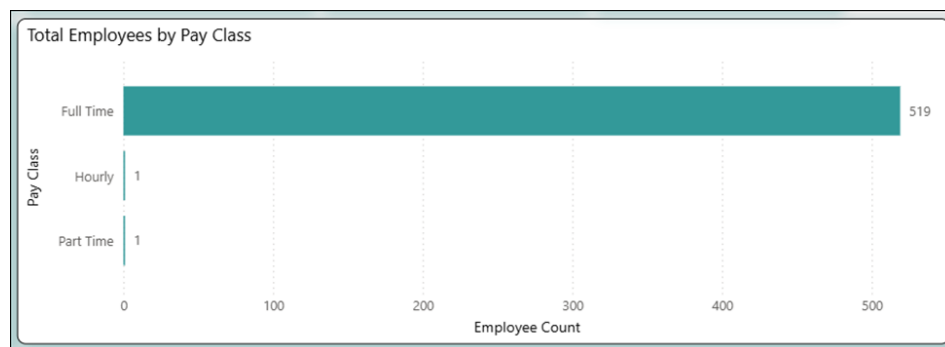
6. Describe ways in which demographic and economic data were used to prioritize resource distribution. (Data can include sources found in the resources section of this tool, department collected data, or any other relevant data from other sources.)

In 2025, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) continues to collaborate with other county departments to ensure system configurations are in place to collect workforce data that is accurate, consistent, inclusive and representative - enabling equity-focused insights and informed decision-making. DHR leadership and key individual contributors are actively a part of Milwaukee County's Data Governance Program which will help shape data policies, uphold compliance, and drive equity-focused insights.

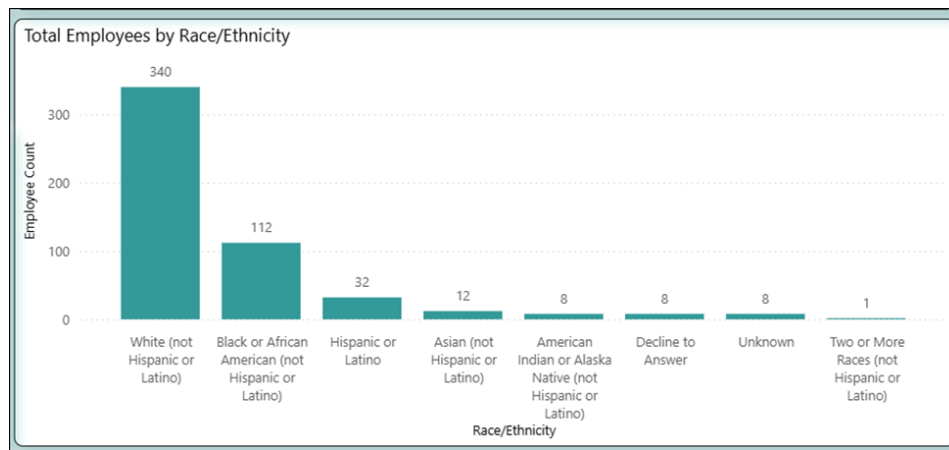
As part of the county's Strategic Plan, "Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government", DHR, along with other county leadership, now have the capability to break down and segment the county's workforce by People Managers and non-managerial employees, allowing for deeper analysis of representation, equity, and inclusion across all groups and roles.

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

The graphs below illustrate how data is used to influence decision making. The first chart indicates the number of people managers at Milwaukee County. As mentioned above, having this information is a critical first step in being able to advance the county's strategic goal of reflecting diversity at every level of county government.



This chart further segments people managers by race and ethnicity. While the county's overall employee demographics may align with the county's overall resident demographics, other employee segments, like people managers, may not. Having the ability to review segmented employee data assists in ensuring the diversity of people managers and other employee segments.



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

Although DHR and county leadership have the capability to break down and segment our workforce by people managers and non-people manager employees, there is still one missing layer of our workforce that we currently have no visibility or true insight on. In order to ensure that, our workforce “Reflects the full diversity of the County at every level of County government”, it would be beneficial to further segment the people manager group into the management categories of elected officials, cabinet (executive leadership, senior management, middle management and first-line manager.) Having the ability to further segment people managers into these categories would allow full visibility to the people manager segment and improve the county’s ability to evaluate the County’s workforce at every level.

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?

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) partners with and across all Milwaukee County Departments and Divisions to break down silos and to serve the needs of the County and its employees. For example, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Director, Culture & Inclusion Program Manager and Employee Engagement Program Manager are tasked with working with employees from across the County, and at all levels, to support and improve the County’s culture of inclusion and to improve employee engagement. It is also noteworthy to mention DHR’s oversight of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council and Network Resources Groups that continue to support the inclusion of over 400 Milwaukee County employees representing all Milwaukee County departments, including Milwaukee County Transit.

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

The concerted efforts of these roles and their individual and collective work continue to create a sense of community and inclusion for Milwaukee County employees through learning, volunteerism, and public engagement, while also addressing the needs, concerns, and opportunities of employees. By serving in this capacity, we can continue to break down silos and create equitable opportunities for employees, which leads to the vision of Milwaukee County becoming reality.

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?

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) worked hard to ensure we met our levy target. Unfortunately, given some restraints to our budget, DHR is still in need of additional resources to advance racial equity and diversity and inclusion efforts. DHR has been able to build upon and deliver racial equity related training to the internal workforce. Although these trainings have been well received, we will be able to maintain status quo offerings. We also anticipate delays in creating, customizing and offering new trainings. Since we still do not have dedicated funding for the DEI related work that supports the workforce, a potential unintended consequence will be our inability to provide additional capacity building and support, especially as it relates to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council and Network Resources Groups. Unfortunately, capacity building and support were not considered as a part of what we could do with our proposed budget. One of the greatest expenses to any organization is filling vacant positions. By investing in employee engagement and retention programs, we retain top talent while reducing the financial burden on taxpayers. We are extremely thankful for the funding we received in 2024 for these groups; however, additional funding is needed to allocate resources to those groups for internal and external workforce inclusion planning, development and expansion.

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

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) does have a plan, as a result of our proposed budget, to mitigate unintended consequences. DHR will continue to utilize our current intact team as we are committed to helping Milwaukee County implement programs and services aimed at building better a diverse and inclusive workforce.

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

This is not applicable to the Department of Human Resources.

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 efforts are critical to the County's ability to achieve its vision and to have a workforce that reflects the community it serves at all levels, and to foster a culture of inclusion in all operations. If provided additional funding, the Department of Human Resources still has similar request as in past years. If allocated, DHR would implement the following to better support the ENTIRE organization:

- Provide CONTINUING, YEARLY resources to support and grow the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Council and Network Resource Groups (NRGs) (The Brave, Mosaic, Prism, Enabled, Arise, and Pulse). DHR remains committed to helping Milwaukee County become the healthiest county in Wisconsin by achieving racial equity. To provide proper support for this work, there must be an ongoing commitment to support the work we are asking of our workforce. DHR wants to strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion efforts with the establishment of the Network Resource Groups (NRGs), led by Milwaukee County employees. These resource groups represent the diversity of County employees and create a space where employees feel a sense of belonging and can contribute to creating an equitable and inclusive work environment for all employees. The focus of 2027 will be to increase participation, offering trainings, education, seminars, summits, volunteer and network opportunities, etc., for the "workforce ambassadors, however, we need funding to make the greatest impact. We know that when we invest in employees, we see a return on investment through more connected employees, a greater retention rate, and productivity and output increases. (\$7K)
- Professional Development Bootcamp Speaker Honorariums. Milwaukee County remains committed to building a workforce that is skilled, empowered, and equipped to advance our mission of becoming the healthiest county in Wisconsin through racial equity. To continue this work effectively, we must invest in the professional growth of our employees and ensure they have access to high-quality learning experiences that strengthen their ability to lead, serve, and contribute meaningfully to an equitable workplace. (\$2K)
- Add 1.0 FTE position of Director of Employee Experience (PG 32E; same as Diversity Equity & Inclusion Director [1141]). Ties to Strategic Plan 1A, 1B & 3A. To support County-wide retention efforts. Concentrated retention efforts focused on creating career ladders and lattices (career paths) across the County and implementation of Talent Management processes including high potential talent identification and succession planning for all County departments. (Used Salary from Form 320.) (\$140,628) If this position is not created, DHR is requesting the Employee Engagement Coordinator is reclassified to this position. (\$13,217 additional)
- Add 1.0 FTE position of Performance Management Coordinator (PG 30M; same as Data Analytics Coordinator [1144]). Ties to Strategic Plan 1A, 1B & 3A. This position will support the development and implementation of strategies and tactics to create and reinforce a performance driven culture, optimize employee performance, and foster employee growth, while aligning individual goals with Milwaukee County's strategic priorities. Includes the day-to-day support of managing probationary, annual and other performance reviews. (Used Salary from Form 320.) (\$103,133)
- Money for Compensation Salary Data (1148). This request aligns with Milwaukee County's goals 1A (Reflecting the full diversity of the County at every level of County government) & 1B (Create and nurture an inclusive culture across the County Government). Without a fair equitable pay structure, Milwaukee County will have challenges recruiting and retaining talent. Milwaukee County will need a compensation philosophy that encompasses a regular market review of County positions. The Total Rewards division will need funding to purchase this salary data. (\$50K)
- Funding for employee engagement activities and employee recognition program as a result of our biennial all employee engagement survey, which will roll out in 2026. (\$10K)
- Provide ongoing additional funding to Talent Acquisition to better market and advertise jobs with the County. DHR needs an increased budget to better attract candidates. (\$50k)
- Resources to continue to improve Milwaukee County's workforce racial equity and diversity & inclusion training,

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?

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) uses several approaches to dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities including recognizing and celebrating the diversity of Milwaukee County:

- The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs within DHR use CountyConnect, and other employee communication methods, to promote and celebrate Black History Month, Pride Month, AAPI Month, among many others.
- We have integrated a restorative practices approach into our DEI work, creating space for employees to openly address concerns, build mutual understanding, and foster stronger, more inclusive workplace relationships. When we create this culture with our employees, it carries into the communities we serve.
- In addition, DHR played a significant role in the Vision Week engagement activities and programs. We have added programming regarding restorative practices, engaging groups that may have resistance or hesitation regarding DEI.
- In 2025, DHR proudly hosted the "Redefining Equity Summit," a transformative gathering focused on advancing restorative practices in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The Summit brought together employees, community leaders, and DEI practitioners to explore new approaches to healing, belonging, and equity across Milwaukee County.
- In 2026, DHR sponsored 'Into the Streets', a weeklong program which encouraged employees and teams to take up to four (4) hours paid to volunteer for a Milwaukee County non-profit. Non-profit organizations in our community are fostering equity in many ways and often fill an area of need that County programs and services cannot provide. This effort encouraged employees to take the vision of Milwaukee County into the communities we serve. This second-year effort logged over 200 volunteer hours and donated over 20,000 food and hygiene items to Vivent Health.
- DHR is once again participating in the MMAC's Region of Choice and serving as the DEI Summit Presenting Sponsor, building a bridge to the business community and helping to create diverse and inclusive communities. In addition, our DEI Director is serving as the chair of the Region of Choice task force, ensuring Milwaukee County has a crucial seat at the table regarding the recruitment and retention of diverse communities.
- DHR will continue to build upon these successes in the upcoming years.

DHR continues to use a variety of communication methods to connect to our diverse workforce. The OLC team continues to publish training materials and videos with closed caption and vocal narration to support written scripts to accommodate persons with disabilities. Retirement Plan Services continues to customize their communication styles, whether it being vocal speed, clarity, and inflection, or breaking things down easier to assist members who are older, which is a great in creating inclusion for our senior citizen population. Some DHR staff members are bilingual and assist as needed, most providing support for applicants applying for positions within Milwaukee County.



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.

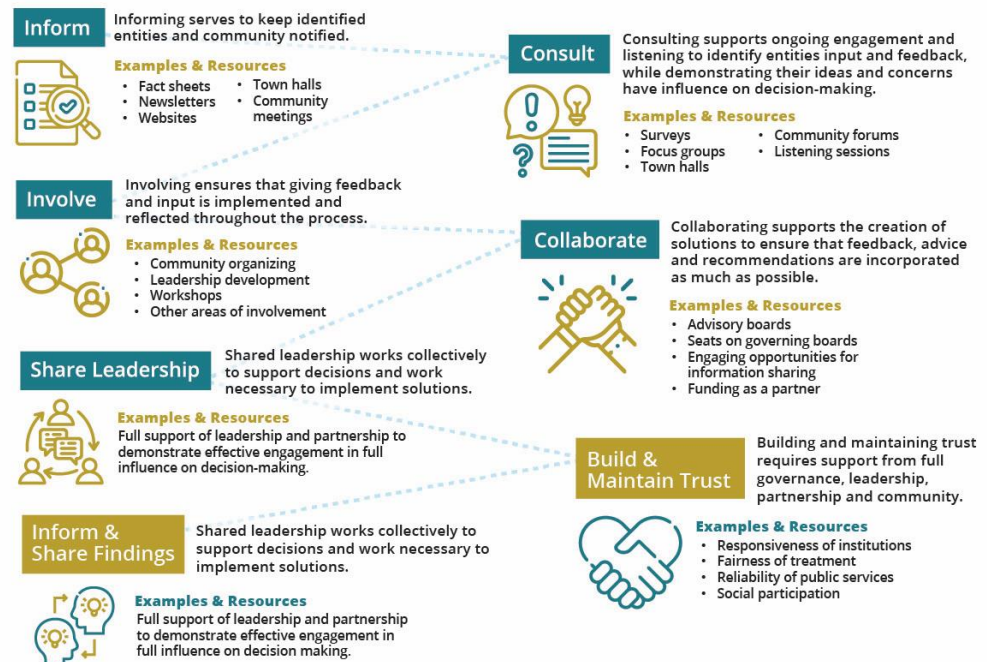
Summary of the Community Engagement Frameworks

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

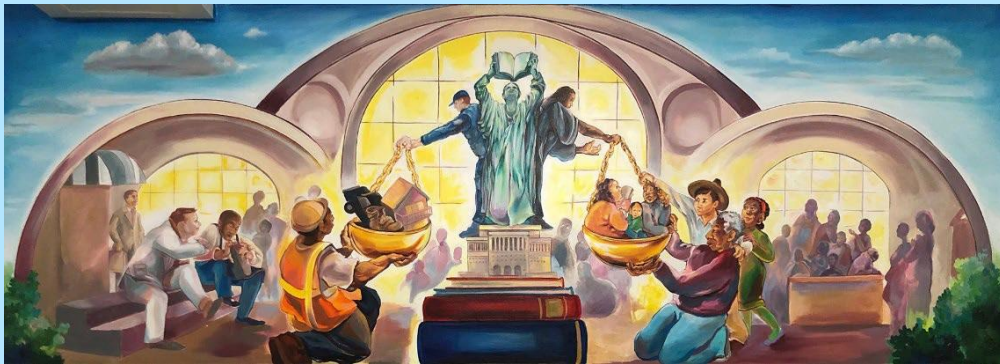


Breaking Down the Path



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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