



RACIAL EQUITY



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.

Commented [SC1]: This language was added to address concerns of some electeds about why we are not also focusing on other dimensions of identity (i.e. disability, gender, etc.) There is confusion between structural oppression and identity.

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:

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?

In 2025, DHHS completed its 3rd year of providing a comprehensive day-long orientation for all DHHS employees and expanded our New Employee Orientation by offering Essential Skills Trainings. These live-hour-long sessions are offered throughout the year to employees and at no cost to Community Providers. Covering topics like Keeping Yourself Safe, Social Determinants of Health, Trauma-Informed Care and Suicide Awareness, and Providing Services with Dignity and Respect, these trainings provide new and current employees opportunities to grow in their roles.

In alignment with the DHHS Strategic Plan WTD provided internship and trainee opportunities to ensure that DHHS continues to develop a talent pipeline for our future leaders. This is offered through our Professional Training Program. The Professional Training Program provided internships and practicums to 18 unique students across DHHS in 2025.

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 Workforce Training and Development (WTD) team within DHHS offers several in-depth programming opportunities to support professional development and advancement. Activities that support this include our Change Champions, Elevate for Impact, and one-on-one coaching opportunities. The 2025 Change Champion cohort graduated 15 individuals who championed projects across DHHS in alignment with our strategic plan. Elevate for Impact and our individual coaching programs provided 25 individuals coaching to further their growth as professionals in health and human services.

In addition to these programs, WTD rolls out semi-annual mandatory trainings to staff as well as offering optional instructor led trainings and continuing education credits. The team assists our six service areas in building job aids, tip sheets, and other skills-based trainings as well ongoing professional development opportunities. This comprehensive portfolio of trainings allowed our nearly 1000 employees to complete 20,524 learning engagements in 2025. These engagements included new employee orientation, essential skills trainings, monthly Seminar Series and Tuesday Talks, Safety Trainings, supervisor training special topics, and other service area specific trainings as requested.

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?

DHHS gathered input from managers on priorities and new initiatives for the 2027 budget. Leadership opted not to survey frontline staff this year. With much of the 2027 budget conversation centered on reductions, we wanted to protect the collaborative relationships between service areas rather than risk staff feeling as though they were being asked to weigh in against one another's programs. For budget years 2025 and prior, frontline survey feedback was used to help prioritize initiatives and supplemental requests submitted to the County Executive's Office. DHHS intends to reinstate the survey for the 2028 budget cycle.

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

Yes, 51% of DHHS contracted vendors are BIPOC-led organizations as of 2025. However, the number of certified WBE and MBE

providers in the DHHS network is less than 51% because many providers are non-profit or choose to forgo DBE certification, as they do not see it as beneficial to their enterprise. While the MBE and DBE designations are valuable, they do not always apply to the nonprofits we contract with. DHHS continues to identify ways to simplify the contracting process, diversify RFP panels, and create new funding opportunities that are accessible to smaller organizations, which often have a greater proportion of BIPOC leadership

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 Commission on Aging, the Aging and Disability Resource Center Governing Board, the Mental Health Board, the Mental Health Task Force, and other entities provide input to inform decisions on funding changes. As part of the Area Agency on Aging Area Plan, DHHS distributed thousands of paper surveys to various locations around the county to solicit input from seniors. We also heavily promoted our online survey to our aging network partners, including the Commission on Aging and its standing committees, ADRC Governing Board, subsidized housing sites, contracted vendors, and many more stakeholders. All data has helped inform budget decisions and how we prioritize and allocate resources over the next three years. Additionally, the Commission on Aging held three public (virtual) input sessions as part of the Area Plan process, providing us with further input.

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.

Service Data was used to help determine impact of service/programs recommended for elimination in the 2027 budget. For example, after review of the OPD Wil-o-Way service partnership with Easter Seals, it was determined that the Wil-o-Way facilities could be used more effectively for youth disability programming by allowing the vendor to lease and use the space directly rather than the previous subcontracting approach the placed Milwaukee County as an intermediary.

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

DHHS collects demographic data on participants and staff when available and appropriate.

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 2027 budget includes continued collaboration between Housing and BHS staff through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding, continuation of CART team with MCSO, and continued implementation of No Wrong Door through shared use of Impact Connect platform for closed loop referrals across DHHS service areas. These initiatives are aimed at achieving equity through supporting root causes of health issues that may result in negative outcomes and/or criminal justice involvement.

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

These efforts target root causes of inequity in our community. Aligning Housing and BHS staff around TANF-funded supports helps address housing instability before it becomes a health or safety crisis. The CART partnership with MCSO ensures mental health crises get a clinical response instead of a purely law enforcement interaction. No Wrong Door focus on shared technology cuts down on residents needing to navigate multiple disconnected intake processes and needing to tell their stories multiple times.

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?

DHHS gathers demographic data across all levels of care and uses that information to guide decision-making. Public feedback (either written or verbal) is also collected throughout the year. This input helps identify potential gaps in services and can serve as catalyst for funding decisions and/or state advocacy priorities. Direct consequences of reduced funding assumptions in the 2027 budget include reduction to Substance Use Disorder system of care capacity resulting in longer waitlists and shorter treatment authorizations. Anticipated reductions in Senior Nutrition funding may also reduce capacity for home delivered meals and may necessitate further consolidation of congregate meal sites. In Youth Mental Health, the elimination of \$250,000 in reserve-funded services without direct Medicaid billing—including literacy support, female-specific programming, and parenting skills—will reduce the range of services available to a population that may not have comparable options elsewhere. In Community Access to Recovery Services, delaying tax levy funding until after a client's enrollment period will increase the time between initial enrollment and service start for some consumers, a change that may disproportionately affect clients with fewer resources to bridge that gap.

The department is also monitoring risk tied to \$504,744 in assumed state revenue under Wis. Stat. § 301.373 for female juvenile

placements; if a formal reimbursement agreement is not reached with the state, additional program reductions affecting youth justice services may be required.

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

The requested budget recommends reducing the Credible Messengers program funding by \$0.5 million to meet tax levy reduction targets. Children Youth and Family Services is working closely with Behavioral Health Services to provide credible messenger services through the Comprehensive Community Services (Medicaid) benefit when clinically appropriate. CARS consumers who previously relied on SAM funds for housing-related assistance will be referred to the 1915(i) Housing Support Services program through the Milwaukee County Housing Division to help ensure continuity of housing support despite the funding shift.

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

The 2027 budget does not propose any changes to user fees.

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?

DHHS Agency 800 is submitting 2027 supplemental requests to restore CYFS program reductions made to meet tax levy targets and older adult service reductions made due to anticipated lower Older American Act funding levels. BHS is not submitting supplemental requests; the budget funds Oxford House and BHS' share of Impact Connect through reserve funds in lieu of a supplemental request.

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?

DHHS leverages both in-house and contracted providers to meet the department's multi-lingual service needs. The department employs 13 bilingual FTEs who deliver direct services to our customers. Medicaid now funds interpretive services for eligible Medicaid programs. The 2027 budget continues to support these services, aiming to make behavioral health services as accessible as possible. DHHS maintains partnerships with organizations like 16th Street Clinic and United Community Center, which possess the language and cultural competencies suitable for many of our consumers. Additionally, DHHS continues to look for ways to expand geographic reach to provide services closer to where consumers live.



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.*

APPENDIX B

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](#)

APPENDIX D

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.

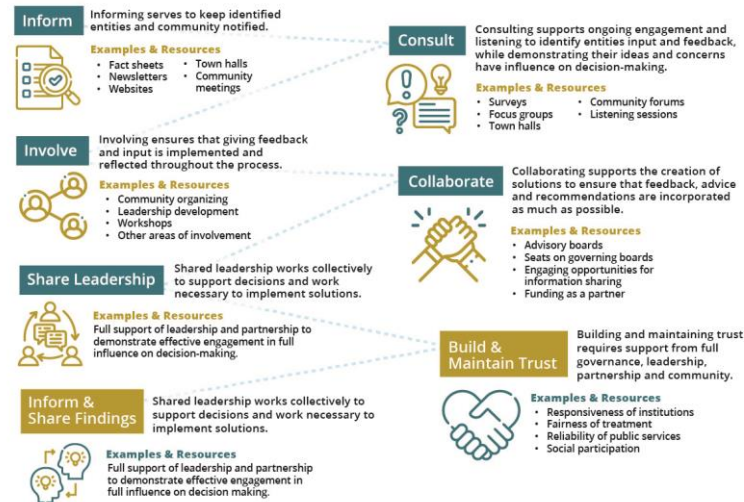
Summary of the Community Engagement Frameworks

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.



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
HEALTH & RACIAL EQUITY

ONE COUNTY ONE VISION

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

County.milwaukee.gov/vision

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