

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 26, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Subject: Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors 2021 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

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This informational report provides a report on how the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors set and achieved its 2021 goals.

**POLICY**

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	<a href="#">Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity &amp; Health</a>
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**BACKGROUND**

[File 22-104](#) amends Chapter 108 to require that “annually, by April 30 of each year or sooner, each Milwaukee County department leader and/or their designee(s) shall provide a written and oral report outlining their year-end results to a Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors committee. The reports shall, at a minimum:

- (a) Indicate the year-end goals the department set in the prior year
- (b) Share the rationale and relevance of the department’s performance metrics (i.e. explaining why they are “SMART” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, and extending) and how they align to the county’s racial equity strategy, if applicable)
- (c) Report the department’s year-end results relating to the goals it had set, and
- (d) Provide a thorough analysis clearly articulating why goals were significantly exceeded, met, or not met.
- (e) Explain the department’s progress in creating a departmental-level strategic plan that aligns to the countywide strategic plan and provide an update about future plans to revise and enhance the departmental-level plan in the year ahead.”

## **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County’s fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

Alignment to the above strategic objectives is articulated in response to the questions below.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Board of Supervisors is an 18-member body elected by the residents of Milwaukee County. Milwaukee County’s 19 municipalities are unique in many ways, resulting in a diverse legislative body (1A). Individuals elected to serve on the County Board bring their own lived experiences to apply a racial equity lens as policy determinations are made (2C). Supervisors serve on nine standing committees, to which appointments are intentionally made to bring diverse voices to the table. Although Supervisors represent their individual districts, we come together as a Board to move Milwaukee County forward in pursuit of our shared vision and mission.

## **BODY**

1. What were the top 3 goals of your department/office 2021? Please explain why they are “SMARTIE” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable) and how they align to the county’s racial equity strategy.

- Goal 1: **Increase accessibility to the legislative process through enhanced technology-focused solutions.**

In advancement of our goals to apply a racial equity lens to all decisions (2C) and dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities (3C), the County Board focused throughout 2021 on ensuring that all residents could access the legislative process. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the County Board quickly pivoted to a virtual meeting structure in alignment with the Governor’s and County Executive’s public health emergencies. This change was made permanent via codification in [Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances Chapter 1.01\(d\)](#) (MCGO).

If only in-person opportunities (e.g. town halls, public hearings, and committee meetings) are offered, residents may be unable to participate if they are unable to get off work, have transportation barriers, or face other obstacles that prevent

full engagement. To measure this goal, we can compare the number of virtual and e-comments received at committee meetings to in-person meetings from year-to-year. Through highlighting these [comment methods](#) to our constituencies, and in collaboration with the Office of the County Clerk, we believe this goal is achievable and realistic.

- To what extent was this goal accomplished in 2021?

Throughout 2021, the County Board developed a hybrid meeting structure, culminating in the first hybrid meeting of the ARPA Taskforce in 2021. With news that Milwaukee County would receive millions in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, the County Board ensured we were a critical partner in the expenditure of those funds through the creation of the ARPA Task Force. The ARPA Task Force provides a vehicle for the voice of the public, our strategic partners, and community groups to be heard and has been nationally recognized as a model for deliberative and strategic allocation of federal funding throughout Wisconsin. The historic nature of this funding meant it was crucial to hear from a diverse constituency to gather public input on fund expenditures. Our hybrid meeting structure enhanced the e-comment and virtual comment tools we implemented in 2020. In 2022, we deployed the first hybrid County Board meeting.

For the first time, the County Board held its 2021 Annual Public Hearing in a hybrid format. Members of the public were able to submit comments virtually or appear in-person at the Courthouse (3B).

These hybrid models are key to engaging the public and meeting residents where they're at. We know that making it to the Courthouse for a public meeting is not always easy. With multiple access points into the legislative process, residents across the County can be heard. We will continue to deploy the hybrid meeting model in the 2022-2024 term with this goal in mind.

We also launched Sendgrid in 2021, which provides district offices with the ability to send out electronic newsletters in a more robust fashion. Not only does this help us reach more constituents to engage them with the legislative process but serves as an accessibility tool for those with different abilities (3C).

- **Goal 2: Provide professional development and advancement opportunities to staff to encourage retention and improved public service.**

Staff positions have been realigned to create ladders for advancement within the department (3C). We implemented this realignment with the assistance of each staff member to learn about their individual professional interests and strengths (1B). A tremendous effort has been made to try and build a staffing model that creates greater capacity within the confines of an extremely limited budget that uniquely limits the ability of this department to expand opportunities. Staff members have been given the opportunity to create more agency within their

position by creating workflows that outline their centralized roles.

Another part of this goal was to realign the intern program to encourage applicants of diverse backgrounds to apply and expand their professional development in ways that are not commonplace for a governmental department (1A, 1B, 3A, 3C). The proposal to pay student interns supports the County's mission of achieving equity, as unpaid internships create a system that advantages individuals of higher socioeconomic status because they may have access to outside financial support. Student interns provide essential support to Milwaukee County Supervisors, and it's important to recognize their contributions by paying them a fair wage. Any student who wants the training and education that comes with an internship at the Board of Supervisors deserves the opportunity to benefit from the experience of working in local government, not just those who can afford to take on an unpaid position. As we seek to diversify our staff, we bring equity and inclusion to the forefront.

Several current staff members have started with the Board as Interns or Legislative Assistants and advanced to leadership roles or positions with progressive responsibilities. These advancements demonstrate that our goal is realistic and achievable. We can measure this goal with paid internships by both examining the diversity of backgrounds we see in the hiring pools now, compared to when the positions were unpaid and by number of applications received overall.

- To what extent was this goal accomplished in 2021?

In 2021, the County Board unanimously adopted [File No. 21-748](#) to create two, paid hourly intern positions. To build a diverse workforce, the Chair, as departmental leader, engages Supervisors and staff to circulate posts for job announcements for Board positions to their wide networks with intentionality towards diversity. This recruitment step is taken to expand beyond the base level of support provided by Human Resources that posts announcements to limited sites. Minimum requirements for educational attainment and drivers' license are evaluated in JEQ development.

The County Board now offers bilingual (English and Spanish) constituent services as a result of staff capabilities. All district offices have access to these services, which include written and oral communication abilities. Systems are in place to manage and direct the work flows of incoming requests to ensure that all bilingual constituent needs are addressed in a timely and efficient manner.

Routine meetings are scheduled for engagement, peer-to-peer support, and professional development with training opportunities. Weekly connects with district staff are led by the Lead LA. To boost morale, monthly all-staff gatherings and outings to places like our South Shore Terrace and the Zoo are coordinated through the Chairwoman's Office.

Additionally, new resources and tools to support district engagement were newly

launched. Some examples are: Sendgrid for electronic newsletters; LA permissions to update district webpages; and tailored workflow guidance in recognition that every Supervisor has their own style and preferences. These tools and resources support our staff and empower their work flows to improve public service.

- Goal 3: **Create avenues for legislative oversight in the pursuit of the County's mission to achieve racial equity by becoming the healthiest county in the State of Wisconsin.**

One responsibility of the County Board is to provide legislative oversight of Milwaukee County services and functions (2B, 2C). This critical function ensures that Milwaukee County is responsive to its constituents, and we are making progress towards our mission. Multiple avenues exist to accomplish this including cyclic committee hearings and the annual budget process. Because this work is so important and necessary, it was our goal, in 2021, to develop more practices and procedures for carrying out legislative oversight.

- To what extent was this goal achieved in 2021?

The Board created a separate [Committee on Audit](#) to enhance legislative oversight of administrative operations in a forum with greater transparency. The Board also created a reimagined and expanded [Committee on Health Equity, Human Needs and Strategic Planning](#) (2A). [MCGO 1.11\(c\)\(4\)3](#) includes the addition of strategic planning within this legislative committee, which means current policy, budget and operational decisions of all county departments can be heard in a single space versus a siloed approach (2B). To track progress on achieving our mission and fulfilling our strategic plan, departmental leaders are to report on their goals, and the status of those goals, to the County Board each year ([MCGO 108.04\(1\)\(a\)](#)). Responses to these reports are sent to the Committee on Health Equity, Human Needs and Strategic Planning for review to facilitate the breaking down of previously existing silos (2B).

The County Board Chairwoman created 63 [reference files](#) to support analyses of administrative operations and service delivery with a racial equity lens (1C). These actions empower respective Committee Chairs to provide legislative oversight of matters within their jurisdiction. [Informational](#) reports from the Sheriff's Office, Department of Transportation, and Circuit Court were also created to review policies and practices to achieve racial equity.

To enhance the abilities of the Board to exercise our legislative oversight, the Chairwoman sought and received agreements from Committee Chairs who will fulfill this duty using available tools for matters within their jurisdiction. Committee Chairs are empowered to request departmental reports, utilize the above Reference files, and act on file notes from the Legislative Services Division (LSD) in the Clerk's Office.

The County Board does not award contracts of its own but provides legislative oversight of departmental contracts through the Committee on Finance. Through this process, we ensure that contracts are being fairly awarded to minority-owned and women-owned businesses (1C). All action items that appear before the County Board are required to have a Fiscal Note attached, which includes whether or not an item has been reviewed by our Community Business Development Partners ([MCGO 42.04](#)). Additionally, [File No. 22-12](#) requests regular informational reports related to participation and departmental waivers of Milwaukee County's Targeted Enterprise Program, and Federally-funded projects relative to Disadvantaged Business Enterprises and Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. Through these methods, the County Board monitors adherence to our own ordinances and adopted policies.

The successful passage of amendments to the 2021 and 2022 County Executive's Budgets demonstrates that elected officials can collaborate to achieve a shared vision. Disagreement on policy did not prevent collaboration on matters of shared value in the interests of those we represent.

At the beginning of 2022, the County Board also adopted [File No. 22-104](#), defining requirements for reporting of year-end departmental results and future goal-setting to see how we are making progress, as a County, towards achieving our strategic plan and fulfilling our adopted mission.

2. What factors *enabled* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

The County Board implemented several measures through the legislative process, many outlined above, to accomplish these goals. In addition, collaboration with our partners in County government, including the Legislative Services Division of the Office of the County Clerk, the Research Services Division of the Office of the Comptroller, and the Office of Corporation Counsel, help us carry out our daily work, which propels us closer to our goals (2B).

3. What factors *hindered* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

Unlike other County departments, the County Board is limited to a unique, State-imposed expenditure cap of 0.4 percent of the total tax levy. The provision of new funding for racial equity through centralized resources would be a step to ensuring that all departments, including the Board, can equally access these services to better represent our constituents and fairly treat our employees. There have been programs implemented that the Board uniquely cannot access such as DOSAA, which is used to award salary increases to address certain equity and employee retention issues.

The potentially negative racial equity implications of the Board's budget exist not in the decisions we have made, but in the decisions we are unable to make, which hinders our progress towards accomplishing our goals.

Centralized resources that all departments can take advantage of will play a critical role in the future success of the County Board. The constituents we serve and represent are our top priority. As such, increased resources for engagement tools and technology solutions that continue to allow broader outreach with more people is ideal. For example, there is an interest in exploring closed caption services for streaming Board and Committee meetings. As we've moved to support public input during virtual and hybrid environments, we've adapted a great deal but always are seeking ways to better serve our entire community. To support accomplishing these goals, the Board also would benefit greatly from having access to translation services, mental health training, and "no wrong door" training for staff who engage daily with constituent services and referrals.

4. What is the status of your department/office in developing its strategic plan?

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the County Board developed and implemented a strategic realignment based on the above goals. As we encounter new challenges, we evaluate how we can evolve our strategic plan to meet the needs of the public and the county. For example, we are undertaking a new [Capital Project](#) to enhance public health and safety in the County Board Room. These necessary upgrades aim to provide better access to the public for our legislative proceedings and meet the latest public health guidance. Additionally, the County Board will create avenues for more discussions around professional development and self-evaluation for staff so we can improve engagement and highlight staff strengths, which will better support District Offices and constituent services. The COVID-19 pandemic provided the opportunity to reevaluate how we approach constituent services when our physical office was closed to the public. We instituted a fully remote front desk model so residents would continue to receive constituent referrals to appropriate district offices and departments. The County Board is interested in implementing a front desk setup for offering constituent services in multiple languages similar to the model instituted by the Register of Deeds. Moving forward, we will evaluate our strategic plan to ensure that our decision making is done with a racial equity lens, in pursuit of our mission, and in the interest of those we serve.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

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**PREPARED BY:**

Milwaukee County Board Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson