

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 19, 2024

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

From: Sumaiyah Clark, Executive Director; Chief Equity Officer

Subject: Office of Equity 2023 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

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This informational report provides a report on how the Office of Equity set and achieved its 2023 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 goals is articulated in response to the questions below.

## **BODY**

1. What were the top 3 goals of your department/office 2022? 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.
  - a. *Goal 1: Provide advice, guidance, support, and technical assistance to County leaders and departments on matters related to racial equity.*  
 OOE was tasked within County government to assist with the development and institutionalization of racial equity tools to collaborate with departments to assess and transform policies, procedures, practices, and power structures to help the County become a place where all citizens are healthy, welcomed, and thriving. This goal aligns to all the County’s strategic objectives, as racial equity expertise is a critical component of advancing the strategic plan.
  - b. *Goal 2: Provide training to normalize, organize, and operationalize racial equity practice at all employee levels.*  
 OOE was tasked to lead the normalization of conversation about race and racism at all levels of County government, including building the capacity of Racial Equity Ambassadors to help facilitate institutional change as prescribed by a model from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). This goal aligns to all the County’s strategic objectives, objective 2C in particular, as building capacity of County leaders and employees to apply a racial equity lens is a critical component of advancing the strategic plan.
  - c. *Goal 3: Serve as a conduit between African American residents and County government to address public policy concerns and devise strategies to meet the unique needs of African American communities.*  
 File No. 15-636 directed the Office on African American Affairs to serve as a liaison between African American communities and County government entities and to advise the County Executive, Board of Supervisors, County departments, and the generable public on the views and needs of African American residents

This goal speaks to advancing all the County's strategic objectives, as the African American community is more burdened by health disparities than any other community.

2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2022? Please explain.

- a. Goal 1: OOE continued to serve as a resource for County leaders and departments in evaluating the impact of program, budget and policy decisions that affect adversely impacted residents. OOE began planning the development of several resources and tools which are accessible to a variety of stakeholders.
- b. Goal 2: OOE partnered with Human Resources (HR) to establish a shared approach to advancing the normalization of equity. For example, the Racial Equity Ambassador program sunsetted, while the Diversity Council was planned and established by Human Resources. This was significant because it allowed Milwaukee County to invest more widely in organizational infrastructure that facilitates equity across the enterprise. It also helped to address inequitable or disparate impacts on employees and stakeholders who reflect particular social statuses, including ethnicity, class/income, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and age, among others, in addition to race.
- c. Goal 3: OOE transitioned from the Office on African American Affairs to the Office of Equity. OOE has made intentional strides to assure its commitment to the African American community. The new office maintained relationships with African American community partners and residents to center their voices. Additionally, it expanded focus to include other diverse populations.

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

The Office of Equity understands research on social determinants of health factors, which have significant influence on outcomes that contribute to the quality of life of Milwaukee County residents. OOE has also maintained relationships with cross-sector stakeholders who have goals which align with Milwaukee County's mission and vision.

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

There were several staff vacancies in 2022 and 2023 which hindered progress. Once staff were hired, OOE was able to make significant progress towards achieving the outlined goals.

5. What is the status of your Department/Office in developing its strategic plan? If complete, please upload your plan with this report.

The Milwaukee County Office of Equity (OOE) has a draft strategic plan that is being finalized. The purpose of the strategic plan is to provide a structured roadmap for the department's future direction, outlining goals, objectives, and initiatives to be undertaken through 2027. It is a guiding framework to align resources, prioritize actions, and navigate challenges, ensuring cohesive and intentional progress toward long-term success and sustainability in advancing the County vision.

6. If not addressed in #5, what are your Department/Office goals for 2024?

Goal 1: Integrate best practice frameworks that address racism and promote equity across Milwaukee County

- During 2024, one of the frameworks that is scheduled to be launched by OOE is the Community Engagement Continuum.
  - This continuum is connected to Milwaukee's County's ability to gain insight into the needs and priorities of community members. Community engagement directly involves building relationships with the community (stakeholders) – people or groups who share things in common like where they live, a shared identity, or shared interests.
  - The Community Engagement continuum matters because it illustrates how to ensure that those most impacted by government decision making have a say in the development and implementation of strategies, resources, and other needed entities. It serves as a guide for leaders and groups to engage in process of building effective community engagement and effective responses from needed stakeholders that will achieve better results to help Milwaukee County be the healthiest county in Wisconsin.

Goal 2: Implement strategies for internal and external accountability to increase civic trust

- During 2024, one project that OOE will continue to lead which promotes accountability is the Equity Assessment Project.
  - In July of 2021, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a resolution directing an analysis of "the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances and internal documents including Administrative Manual of Operating Procedures, guidelines, trainings, and plans used for hiring, salaries and wages, employee retention, provision of Milwaukee County services, and other relevant materials to identify language that is racist or supports systemic and institutional racism (herein referred to as "policies") and directing that DAS, in consultation with the Office of Corporation Counsel, Office on African American Affairs (now Office of Equity), and any other relevant County departments, to provide to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors recommended changes to those laws and policies for approval" (Item 21-551).
  - While the Board resolution exclusively focuses on institutional racism, it was determined that it would be beneficial to review the policies in item 21-551 to identify and address other forms of institutional oppression, discrimination, exclusion, or any other inequitable or disparate impact on particular social statuses, including ethnicity, class/income, gender identity, sexual orientation,

- ability, and age, among others.
- Implementing strategies for accountability is crucial to foster civic trust by promoting transparency, responsible governance, and credibility. Accountability ensures institutions are held responsible for their actions and prevents corruption and abuses of power. Prioritizing internal and organizational accountability is foundational to equity and ensuring OOE and County outcomes can be achieved.

Goal 3: Increase community leaders in decision-making processes in Milwaukee County to grow resident-based power.

- During 2024, OOE will launch a series of self-service tools and capacity-building resources that are readily accessible to community leaders, system partners and other stakeholders.
  - OOE's strategy is a multifaceted, systems-based approach that identifies the current state of how power is distributed across Milwaukee County while increasing cross- sector collaboration to create conditions that allow residents who have been historically underrecognized to grow community power. We believe empowering resident-based leaders while working toward positive economic impact of all residents will accelerate community involvement in both decision making in Milwaukee County and civic life, as defined by Healthy People 2030 (US Dept. of Health and Human Services- Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion).

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

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

### **PREPARED BY:**

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### **APPROVED BY:**

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