

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 27, 2023
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
From: George Christenson, Milwaukee County Clerk
Subject: County Clerk's Office/Election Commission's 2022 Annual Report
File Type: Informational Report

This informational report provides a report on how the County Clerk's Office/Election Commission set and achieved its 2022 goals.

POLICY

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

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health
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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.

BODY

1. What were the top 3 goals of your department/office in 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.
 - Goal 1: By November 8, 2022 increase voter participation and electorate awareness throughout Milwaukee County.

The goal is achievable since, with greater access to information, all eligible voters should be able to cast their votes on Election Day if they wish to do so. Empowering Milwaukee County residents - especially those most vulnerable – through unencumbered access to the ballot is an important mission that leads to a more just and equitable society. Voting is a solemn right guaranteed by our Constitution and it must never become a privilege that some who are otherwise eligible to vote cannot attain.

- Goal 2: By the end of 2022, increase staff diversity to include employees that can provide the highest quality of customer service to the growing Latinx population in Milwaukee County.

The latest United States Decennial Census indicates a growing Latino population in Milwaukee County. To ensure that all Latino customers feel welcome and receive top-level customer service in the County Clerk’s Office, we decided to continue our 2021 pledge in 2022 to increase the number of Spanish-speaking staff persons assisting customers in our front office and over the phone. We achieved the goal of having two out of four of our front office staff persons be able to speak and read Spanish in 2021. In 2022 we aimed to increase that number to three out of four.

- Goal 3: By the end of 2022, the Milwaukee County Clerk's Office will implement a public-facing appointment solution to ensure equitable access to the services it provides and help Milwaukee County residents, and members of the general public, better plan their visit to the Clerk's Office.

This goal is achievable and realistic, with the assistance from the Milwaukee County's Information Management Services Division (IMSD), combined with the ability to utilize existing appointment software solution already employed by Milwaukee County.

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

a. Goal 1:

As a result of the Milwaukee County Board Resolution 22-887 adopted in July 2022 and subsequently signed by the County Executive Crowley, a provision of \$50,000 was allocated to the Milwaukee County Election Commission (MCEC) "to educate residents on the voting process, supplement voter registration, and empower citizens to vote." With that provision, MCEC successfully implemented voter education and outreach opportunities leading up to the 2022 General Election. The campaign funding allowed for purchase of advertising space, including billboards, bus shelters, and advertising space on the buses themselves. The locations and bus routes were strategically chosen to include areas of lower voter turnout in traditionally disenfranchised communities. In addition to the 2022 Voter Education and Outreach Campaign, the Clerk's Office congruently utilized marketing software (GovDelivery) and social media to provided vote-eligible residents with updates on important election-related information. The messages were timely and coincided with key election-related deadlines, such as voter registration, in-person absentee voting, as well as Election Day timelines.

In April of 2022 voter turnout in Milwaukee County was 29.04% and in November of 2022 it was 68.80%. While there is no doubt that the nature of these two elections resulted in a higher turnout, it is also safe to assume that the efforts of the County Clerk's Office contributed to that increase.

b. Goal 2:

This goal was successfully achieved in 2022. Currently, three out of four staff persons processing Marriage Licenses, Passports, DNR and Transit sales read, comprehend, and speak fluent Spanish. This is very important as it allows bi-lingual customers and those who only speak Spanish to feel more welcome in our office and receive the best customer service possible. Achieving this goal has additional benefits as the Clerk's Office is often the first point of contact for the general public in need of County services. Whether over the phone or in person, Spanish speaking members of the public who engage with our

staff feel more comfortable speaking Spanish, regardless whether they are in need of services provided specifically by the County Clerk's Office.

c. Goal 3:

This goal was successfully achieved as the Milwaukee County Clerk's Office, with the help of IMSD, implemented the online appointment software. Milwaukee County residents are able to schedule an appointment for services via the County Clerk's website, and thus ensure that they will be helped at the exact time when they arrive at the Clerk's Office. This is a more equitable way to provide services as it eliminates the circumstance where, during a busy time of day, a customer that is under a time constraint (because of work obligations, for example) is delayed in being served due to others who happen to arrive before them. Appointments also allow the customer to better plan their visit to the County Clerk's Office.

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

One of the principal factors that enabled progress toward achieving these goals was the dedicated staff in County Clerk's Office, who were willing to go above and beyond to achieve them. With respect to elections, additional help came from the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors in form of funding for the Voter Education and Outreach campaign. With respect to diverse staffing, the vacancy in the front office enabled us to hire an additional Spanish-speaking person.

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

With respect to Goal 1, funding was a hindrance. With greater funding, the Clerk's Office would have been able to conduct a more robust voter education and outreach campaign. With respect to Goal 2, the limited means of recruiting Spanish-speaking candidates utilized by Milwaukee County was a hindrance. The County needs to re-evaluate and find creative ways to improve recruitment of BIPOC and Latinx candidates. There were no hinderances with respect to Goal 3 and its accomplishment is a fine example of how innovation can be achieved utilizing existing capacity and talent within the organization.

5. Aside from financial resources, what help does your department/office need in identifying and achieving your strategic goals?

The Clerk's Office welcomes future consultations with any and all divisions of the County's Administration to outline additional goals for 2023, including the Milwaukee County Office of Equity as well as the Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance

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

Our strategic plan is a work in progress, but we plan to work with the Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance to help us with our strategic planning efforts.

FISCAL EFFECT

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

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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PREPARED BY:

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APPROVED BY:

George L. Christenson, Milwaukee County Clerk

ATTACHMENTS:

The Milwaukee County Clerk's Office Voter Education and Outreach Report for 2022

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk