

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: May 15, 2025

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

From: Sumaiyah Clark, Executive Director; Chief Equity Officer

Subject: Report from the Director, Office of Equity, providing an informational report on the development of a Milwaukee County Economic Development Blueprint supported by the City Start Grant

File Type: Informational Report

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**BACKGROUND**

Milwaukee County Office of Equity (OOE) applied for and was one of six jurisdictions in the United States selected to receive a \$100,000 grant from the Cities for Financial Empowerment (CFE) Fund to participate in the national City Start initiative. The CFE Fund provides both funding and focused technical assistance to local government leaders and their teams to help them embed systemic financial empowerment programs and policies into services to improve individual and family financial stability. This is achieved by integrating financial empowerment strategies with local government's infrastructure.

OOE will use the City Start grant to hold a series of stakeholder conversations with community leaders to understand the historical and current story of wealth in Milwaukee County, including how the government has boosted wealth for some groups and blocked wealth for others; and engage with residents on financial empowerment issues and opportunities. We will also engage with community researchers to compile relevant data showing Milwaukee's current and historical wealth status and the impact of tailored policies and practices in achieving positive change in other communities. Finally, an internal working group of Milwaukee County leaders will coordinate the drafting of a wealth building blueprint. The goal of the grant is to produce and publicly release an innovative, actionable blueprint tailored to local needs that fosters financial stability across generations.

All costs associated with the initiative are 100- percent covered by the City Start grant.

OOE has submitted an appropriation transfer in the July cycle to recognize the additional expenditures and offsetting revenue.

**Initiative Detail**

The initiative will be completed over an 18-month period and include several phases:

- Phase 1: Setting up Stakeholder Engagement
- Phase 2: Understanding the Financial Empowerment & Racial Wealth Equity Landscape (One on One's, Roundtables & Data Gathering)
- Phase 3: Leveraging the Story of Wealth (Synthesizing information & deciding priorities)
- Phase 4: Developing the Blueprint
- Phase 5: Release & Integrate the Blueprint



By completing the phases of work to develop the blueprint, Milwaukee County has the unique opportunity to advance its efforts to improve economic wellbeing by linking existing community wealth building investments. In turn, resources will be maximized for greater reach and impact. A cross- departmental advisory council has been established that includes leaders from DHHS, SBP, DAS and the CRC. A host of community partners from higher education, business, advocacy, philanthropy and banking sectors are also participating in the initiative.

### **Next Steps**

Moving to the second phase of the initiative, information gathered from Community Roundtables held on June 10-12, will be paired with input gathered from additional roundtables yet to be scheduled, one on one interviews with other stakeholders and experts and various public data sets. Together, these insights will be analyzed by our internal working group and County leaders to determine the priority areas that the blueprint should focus on based on what is within Milwaukee County's capacity & jurisdiction. Upon release, OOE & the working group will work with County departments to integrate recommended strategies and policies and regularly monitor progress.

### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

This work aligns directly with goal 3C of Milwaukee County's strategic plan, "Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities" by promoting equitable policy and systems change to improve the quality of life for people who live across Milwaukee County. It is also designed to bolster collaboration opportunities between government, community residents and other critical partners. Furthermore, the blueprint supports the County Executive's policy agenda priorities of health, public safety and economic development.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

The report is informational only and has no tax levy impact.

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Sumaiyah Clark, OOE Executive Director  
Kenmikiiya Terry, OOE Director of Equity Strategy and Operations  
Rick Banks, OOE Senior Manager

**PREPARED BY:**

Rick Banks, Senior Program Manager

**APPROVED BY:**

Sumaiyah Clark, Executive Director; Chief Equity Officer

**ATTACHMENTS:**

None

cc: County Executive David Crowley  
Sup. Shawn Rolland, Chair Health Equity, Human Needs & Strategic Planning Committee  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk  
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller's Office