

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: December 30, 2021

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

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update on the Racial Equity and Contracting Workgroup

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

The Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is providing an informational update on the progress of the Racial Equity and Contracting Workgroup.

POLICY

Wisconsin State Statutes:	
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 108
Specific Adopted Budget:	
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

BACKGROUND

On April 17, 2020, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors adopted File No. 20-173 which created Chapter 108, "Achieving Racial Equity and Health," of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances. DHHS is in alignment with this ordinance as DHHS leadership continues to focus on social determinants of health as well as racial and health equity through the work it does internally with its operations and externally, with its participants, contracted provider organizations, system, and community partners. Racial Equity and Contracting is one area identified by DHHS leadership in which there is an opportunity to address structural barriers and advance equitable policy and practice. The primary goal is to assess DHHS's contract procurement strategy and develop additional tactics to address structural barriers to expand the provider network and ensure that its diversity is representative of those served in DHHS.

In early fall of 2020, DHHS convened a short-cycle six-meeting session, Racial Equity in Contracting Workgroup to assess our institutional practices through a racial equity lens. It is our goal to develop DHHS's capacity to improve its work with providers and institutional partners to ensure a consistent process that addresses their needs.

Kairo Communications was hired to perform an external evaluation of the DHHS contracting process, our provider network, demographics, assess institutional readiness, and an environmental scan of services. The evaluation was to culminate in the creation of an implementation plan. The process included 37 key stakeholder interviews, a complete review of relevant contracting documents and policies, data, and literature review. The report entitled “Creating the Catalyst for Transformational Change”, was completed in May 2021 and released in June of 2021. The recommendations and findings were presented in two virtual community forums and before both the County Board of Supervisors and Mental Health Board.

Steps Towards Implementation and Alignment to County’s Strategic Plan:

The Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is in the process of reviewing recommendations, and an implementation plan as recommended in the report. Based upon the review of department contracts from 2010 to 2019, DHHS is exceeding County goals in both construction/capital projects and in non-capital operating contracts (20% African American Led/Owned, 13% Latinx Led/Owned, 33% BIPOC providers). Currently, we are in the implementation phase of some of the recommendations made within the report that would have a budgetary, resource, capacity and staffing impact; however, following is a list of measures we have implemented that support contracting equity for BIPOC, led and owned businesses.

Immediate steps implemented since the release of the document:

- We have taken immediate steps to increase outreach, access, enhance clarity, and eliminate redundant and burdensome requirements.
- DHHS has also increased the weight assigned to minority-owned and minority-led organizations in the RFP proposal scoring process. (weight of Cultural Diversity & Cultural Competence from 9% to 20%; separate criteria & score each separately)
- Increased outreach by expanding the media outlets used to advertise the RFP including expanding the use of community-based newspapers and the use of social media.
- Increased technical support by both increasing the number of public informational sessions and the time for accepting questions.
- Increased access by lengthening and simplifying the period to submit proposals and reduced by approximately 50% the number of documents that must be submitted with proposals.

All of the preceding measure will help to ensure that BIPOC, women-owned and smaller black-owned or black-led organizations are able to submit more responsive and competitive proposals under the RFP process.

We have partnered with the Office on Equity and Inclusion and the County's Equitable Contracting Workgroup to coordinate and advance our efforts to support equity-based contracting practices and play a larger part in advancing health and racial equity across all domains within Milwaukee County.

The DHHS Future State & Alignment to County Strategic Plan - Long term Goals:

Each of the four goals listed in the document highlights an area of opportunity and growth for the department. They include:

Goal 1. Infuse a norm of racial equity into all aspects of DHHS

Currently, this requires a review of implications for racial equity throughout the current process to integrate Children's and Adult services in DHHS. Workplace culture is another key area that plays a significant role in the department's priorities and outcomes. Efforts to address pay equity for Human Service Workers are an example of this, but recruitment and retention of staff of color is a broader goal. Additionally, a commitment to place based strategies to meet the needs of specific communities is vital for DHHS to move the needle on equity and outcomes for social determinants of health.

Goal 2. Manage a high functioning, equitable contracting system

Contract Administration began meeting weekly to address many of the concerns listed in the report, including a review of the current structure of the Division. Greater alignment of these efforts is needed with DHHS Fiscal Administration and outcome goals determined by DHHS's Enterprise Quality functions to address the needs of our providers. Technical assistance and capacity building efforts require funding and dedicated staff and is currently being considered for 2023.

Goal 3. Maintain racial equity in community engagement and outreach

DHHS has increased our outreach efforts in this area with our role in the Community Resilience Initiative for COVID 19 response. This work is continuing in partnership with the Office of Equity and Inclusion and with new partnerships with the Public Welfare Foundation and Milwaukee Turners for a participatory budgeting project in early 2022. We are exploring alternative application processes apart from the traditional RFP application, particularly with community advisory boards.

Goal 4. Collaborate with communities in partnerships to address social determinants of health

DHHS's role as a convener of collaborative partners is a key strategy called out in the department's Future State Strategic Plan. There is a need to formalize the connection between Quality Assurance, RFP opportunities, and our evaluation of social determinants of health. This is an area of growth to develop this capacity across divisions and in partnership with academic

institutions and intergovernmental partners.

Next Steps:

- Determine Department KPI's and Metrics for Racial Equity and Contracting
- Quarterly report of progress and activities of Action/Implementation Team

Related File No's:	20-173, 21-588
Associated File No's (Including Transfer Packets):	
Previous Action Date(s):	4/17/2020

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

While efforts to address structural barriers and advance equitable policy and practice in DHHS contracting addresses many, if not all, of the county's strategic objectives, the ones most relevant include the following:

- Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

FISCAL EFFECT

This report is informational and has no fiscal impact.

TERMS

Not applicable.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director
David Muhammad, Deputy Director, DHHS
Dennis Buesing, Contract Administrator, DHHS

PREPARED BY:

David Muhammad, Deputy Director, Department of Health and Human Services

APPROVED BY:

Shakita LaGrant-McClain

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director

ATTACHMENTS:

None

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Sup. Felesia Martin, 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
Pam Matthews, Fiscal & Management Analyst, DAS
Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Research & Policy Analyst, Comptroller's Office