

## Why We Did This Audit

The County Board expressed concerns regarding what community outreach and surveys are being released by departments and the type of surveys that are being conducted. These concerns led to the adoption of a County Board resolution which requested an audit of how Milwaukee County has engaged public or employee opinions of service delivery and efforts. Questions regarding if these efforts were producing statistically valid results and whether the results are representative of people of color, people with disabilities, people with language or technical barriers and people that have been marginalized were raised.

## What We Recommend

Should policymakers desire a county-wide survey be conducted a vendor would likely be required to support the project. We found a wide range of cost estimates depending on how a survey is conducted with many considerations to ensure a survey is representative of the County's community.

ASD made 3 recommendations that, if implemented, will address the issues raised in the audit.

- *The Office of Equity lead efforts to develop a guide for departments to use when conducting surveys and gathering data. This guide should be completed and distributed to departments within a year.*
- *The Office of Equity should lead efforts to encourage departments, via both its guide to surveys and when providing assistance to departments to include demographics of respondents and the methods used in conducting the survey including but not limited to: type of sample selection if applicable, conducted in-house or via contract, and cost of contract when results of a survey are reported to the public or the County Board.*
- *The Office of Equity lead efforts to develop a guide to maximize the results of community engagements that departments are participating in and provide the guide to departments within one year.*



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## Surveys: Milwaukee County Departments Collect Information Primarily from Program Users but Guidance should be Provided to Improve Data Collection Methods.

### BACKGROUND

With as diverse a community as Milwaukee County and with as wide a variety of services provided by the County to those residents, soliciting and hearing from all sectors of the County is a difficult task.

### OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Our overall objective was to determine whether Milwaukee County departments conduct scientific surveys and received responses representative of the County's community.

### WHAT WE FOUND

We contacted select County departments and found they conducted over 160 surveys in recent years. Most were customer participation surveys. The table below shows the number of surveys by department.

Summary of Surveys Conducted by Select Departments		
Department	Number of Surveys	Date Range
Airport	32	2015-2022
DHHS including Aging & BHD	46	2015-2022
Human Resources	3	2016-2020
Office of Equity	1	2020
Parks	26	2016-2022
Strategy, Budget and Performance	5	2018-2021, 2023
Sheriff	6	2015-2021
Zoo	42	2015-2022
<b>Total (estimated)</b>	<b>161</b>	

- The County does not currently have guidelines or standards for departments to use to guide their survey development, deployment and analysis.
- Some but not all of the County's surveys included demographic data.
- In addition to the surveys conducted by County departments, we found that most departments also participated in community engagement activities.
- We reviewed a select number of these surveys to answer the questions below. Many of the surveys were conducted in-house by existing staff and none were conducted following all common protocols for scientific surveys but some did incorporate items such as sampling of users and oversampling of underrepresented populations.

Review Questions for each County Survey
Was it a customer satisfaction based survey?
Was it conducted using scientific methods such as sampling?
Were other methods employed beyond a survey?
Were actions taken to increase the participation of historically underrepresented groups?
Was demographic data included?
Was the survey conducted by an outside vendor?

- Major issues for scientific surveys include: random sampling is required, underrepresented groups are less likely to respond to surveys so often weighing of results is required to ensure survey is representative, wording of questions can impact the results.
- Over sampling and community outreach is often required to get representative results.
- There are multiple factors to consider when deciding to conduct a county-wide encompassing survey. We reviewed two cities, Charlotte and Philadelphia, and their use of city wide surveys to identify costs, strengths, challenges and lessons learned by those entities in conducting their comprehensive resident input surveys. Our analysis of the Cities' work showed that in addition to employing methods to ensure a representative survey, additional community based work with a variety of partners produces the most comprehensive results.

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