



Racial Equity & Social Justice

Montgomery County government, with the establishment of the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice, is committed to reducing and eliminating racial disparities and inequities in the County.

One aspect of advancing this work involves analyzing resource allocations that form the structures-programs, policies, practices, and procedures-that can either worsen or improve racially disparate outcomes across the County. Our goal is to identify these disparities, reduce them, and ultimately create structures that eliminate their existence and prevent disparities from emerging in the future.

To this end, and in accordance with Bill 44-20, Racial Equity and Social Justice - Impact Statements - Advisory Committee Amendments, the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice developed a Budget Equity Tool to support departments and decision makers in applying a racial equity lens to the development of the County Executive's FY23 Recommended Operating Budget. This tool and process has supported the County's implementation of its guiding racial equity framework, adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), to normalize, organize, and operationalize for racial equity and social justice. This framework guides jurisdictions across the country in navigating the changes required to advance racial equity and social justice.



Building from this framework, the FY23 Recommended Operating Budget enables the County to continue developing its racial equity and social justice infrastructure, while fostering meaningful community partnerships, and piloting initiatives that address the symptoms and structures of inequality.

First, this budget reflects a greater awareness among departments about the human and other resources necessary to learn new skills and competencies for identifying and addressing barriers to racial equity and social justice in all aspects of the County's work. Departments specifically pointed to the leadership and reach of CORE teams-a structure used to normalize conversations about race and racism-in expanding staff knowledge and capacity to identify and discuss racial disparities and make necessary systems-level changes. These normalizing efforts help to equip decision makers with new perspectives and a deepened appreciation for the role of government in addressing long-standing racial and ethnic disparities in the County.

Second, this budget enables the County to continue partnerships with long-standing community groups who provide

essential services in response to the impacts of racial and ethnic disparities. Over time, the County will look for ways in its policies and processes to amplify voices of community members most excluded and impacted by structural inequities, enabling the government and community to cocreate solutions together.

Lastly, to operationalize racial equity, this budget provides resources to help mitigate against the harms of structural racism and initiates efforts to address racial disparities head on. The FY23 recommended budget was heavily impacted by the County's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of this budget focuses on shoring up departments, programs, and services serving communities most impacted by the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. In Montgomery County, like much of the country, communities of color—due to long-standing inequities in education, employment, housing, and healthcare—are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. While some of these programs and services don't eliminate racial disparities, they do prevent them from widening, enabling a more equitable pandemic recovery for all county residents.

FY23 Recommended Budget includes:

Departments and Non-Departmental Accounts (NDAs)

Cable Communications Television

- Deploy 40,000 free computers to low-income residents and seek grant funding to expand additional digital equity programs including assistance to low-income residents to enroll in home broadband subsidy programs and expand Senior Planet Montgomery to affordable housing developments.
- Leverage FY22 Community Communications Survey findings to strategically deploy County Cable Montgomery (CCM) resources. The goal is to provide communications over preferred communications platforms, in formats and languages that enable the County to reach more residents with information, especially those communities that are not currently engaging with the County.
- Add funds to support Montgomery County Media (MCM) operations, which provides media training for residents and operates the public television channels and website; programming is focused on communities of color. MCM operates a separate facility in a Housing Opportunities Commission affordable housing development in Silver Spring that provides media training for African American and Latino youth.
- Provide technical support to enable elected officials and departments to host hybrid in-person and remote community meetings to increase participation by new immigrants, low-income residents, and communities of color.
- Create a Connect Montgomery Alliance (CMA) Coordinator position to coordinate programming designed to serve low-income families, specific racial and ethnic communities (including African American and Latino households), and coordinate promotion of support service programs across the County, municipalities, and two educational agencies.

Community Grants

- Funding in the amount of \$70,000 for grants to provide non-profit technical assistance and management support.
- Funding in the amount of \$750,000 to provide grants for non-profit partners who serve underserved communities, children, youth, and families.

Community Engagement Cluster

- Establish an Office of Food System Resilience to coordinate food resilience efforts with community partners, government agencies, and regional partners.
- Funds are added to support the farm to food bank program, the Montgomery County Food Council, market money grants that allow farmers markets to match Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funding for individuals, and community gardening and local resilience grants.

Department of Health and Human Services

- Expand funding for the Asian American Health Initiative, Latino Health Initiative, African American Health Programs

- Enhance funding to expand Health and Psychiatric Services to accommodate an increase in year-round clients at home shelters
- In addition to the investments made in the Montgomery Housing Initiative Fund, these resources will provide an additional \$2 million for Rapid Rehousing (General Fund)
- In addition to the investments made in the Montgomery Housing Initiative Fund, these resources will provide an additional \$3 million for Rental Assistance (General Fund)
- Fund the Bienvenidos Initiative, focused on expanding the County's capacity to address the unique needs of unaccompanied migrant children and asylum-seeking families including school-based health services, family reunification, Street Outreach Network supports, and youth leadership development. Related legal and representation services are funded in the Community Engagement Cluster.
- Increase mental health services for Montgomery County Public Schools at ten priority high schools without High School Wellness Centers and expand mental health services at six high schools with existing High School Wellness Centers to address growing demand
- Provide funding to continue the East County Opportunity Zone program
- Support food security through a \$4 million allocation for the direct purchase of food for distribution
- Add a Tuberculosis nurse to address health disparities and better serve the growing County immigrant population. Thirty percent of tuberculosis cases Statewide are in Montgomery County.

Department of Housing and Community Affairs

- Continue to leverage Federal grants including the Community Development Block Grant, the HOME Investment Partnership Grant, and the Emergency Solutions Grant to provide affordable housing, housing rehabilitation, commercial revitalization, focused neighborhood assistance, public services, and prevent homelessness.
- Allocate \$2 million in additional resources dedicated to the Rental Assistance Program to continue protecting lower-income residents from rent increases by working with nonprofits to identify and preserve at-risk naturally-occurring affordable housing and actively engaging purchasers with rental agreements to preserve affordable rents.
- Allocate \$3 million in additional resources dedicated to the Rental Assistance Program
- Continue to actively underwrite affordable housing loans to preserve and produce affordable housing. Five developments, including one senior and four family projects, have already been identified for potential funding in FY23. These developments would preserve or produce a total of 815 units, including 317 affordable units.

Office of Agriculture

- The Montgomery County Farm to Food Bank program - a partnership between the Montgomery County Food Security Task Force, the Department of Health and Human Services, Manna Food Center, the Montgomery County Food Council, the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture, and the Greater Washington Community Foundation - has collectively invested and committed over \$630,000 in local farms to support a sustained and resilient local food supply and provide more nutritious and culturally diverse produce to residents who experience hunger. Since July 2020, over 112,235 pounds of fresh, locally produced food has been purchased or donated to over 30 food assistance providers, creating over 90,000 meals for the Montgomery County community.

Office of Consumer Protection

- The Office expanded its language access program, establishing an in-house roster of volunteers that speak five different languages to assist residents and merchants with limited English proficiency.

Office of Grants Management

- Funding to create this Office to develop and oversee a grant funding mechanism for County departments to use for implementing programs and initiatives. This Office will develop, manage, advertise, and apply a racial equity lens into

the application and awarding processes for grant programs offered by the County.

Office of Human Rights

- Increase support for the Partnership Fund to provide partial compensation for property damage to victims of racial, ethnic, religion, sexual orientation, and disability-based hate/violence. The Partnership Fund aims to demonstrate community support for the victims and ease the financial consequences of such violence.

Office of the County Executive

- Add funding to address disparities in the black business community and to provide increased training and resources through grants to the Black Chamber of Commerce and to the Black Business Council. This support will facilitate increased outreach and engagement between the County and the business community; allow the development of a Small Business Lending Program; and provide funding for technical assistance, training, capacity building, and resources to businesses throughout the County. These funds will also support the growth of a database and information sharing initiative for the County's Minority, Female, and Disabled-owned Businesses Program.
- Add a Climate Funding and Performance Specialist position to seek out grant opportunities that can support the Climate Action Plan's racial equity and social justice actions, such as the Community Justice Academy.

Office of Public Information

- Funding provided to expand Spanish language communications outreach via Radio America, communicating directly with this specific segment of the County's Latino population.

Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

- Add funding for consulting services to assist with community engagement and planning for the Montgomery County Lynching Memorial Project.
- Provide funding for increased staffing to support the mission of the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice.

Parking Districts (Department of Transportation)

- Explore opportunities to install solar photovoltaic systems on garage rooftops within the PLDs (parking lot districts) that can provide discounted electricity to lower and moderate income (LMI) communities in the County as well as County-owned facilities.

Urban Districts

- Standup a fee reduction program to expand access to community spaces in the Wheaton Urban District.

WorkSource Montgomery Inc. (Non-Departmental Account)

- Funding for employment and training services for immigrants.

Overall, this budget provides resources for the County to deepen its efforts to normalize, organize, and operationalize for racial equity and social justice. It supports the County government in building the skills and competencies necessary to identify and address racial and ethnic disparities across issue areas, at the same time providing resources for engaging community partners and piloting innovative strategies for shrinking disparities and improving the well-being of all Montgomery County residents.