

## FY24 Operating Budget Equity Tool Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is a racial equity lens and how do I use it?

- First, make existing policies, practices, and procedures involved with project (service/program) development explicit. This will allow you to make the decision-making process and information used visible.
- Once these details are visible, applying a racial equity lens is more effective. The racial equity lens can then illuminate inequities in access, opportunity, and outcomes. The racial equity lens gives you information about how racial disparities and inequities in the County were considered, how impacted communities were engaged, and whether the project has the potential to respond to an identified community need or racial disparity or inequity.
- With the information from the racial equity lens, you can then target resources, engage with community members, and explore different best practices for addressing racial disparities and inequities.
- Remember the result of the racial equity lens is ADDITIONAL information. It does not necessarily dictate the action you should take or the solution. It raises awareness about racial disparities or inequities in a particular issue area, the historical context and current policies and practices driving those inequities, and where/how resources should be targeted.

### 2. How should a department use the BET to develop its budget?

- The tool not only provides decision-makers with information on how budget decisions may advance racial equity and social justice in the county, but it's also intended to guide budget development. In this sense, the process of using the tool is equally as valuable as the information it yields<sup>1</sup>. **Think of the Tool as a guide as much as a report.**

### 3. I don't think a racial equity lens was used in the development of this project (program/service). Therefore, it may not be in alignment with the County's current policy of reducing and eliminating racial disparities and inequities. What do I do?

- First, pause and think about why a racial equity lens wasn't used? If the reason is that the project was developed prior to the passage of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act of 2019, please indicate that (and the year the project was originally designed/approved). Then, explain in detail what factors were considered in the development of the project. For example, what was the methodology or approach used for determining the location or design specifications? What prioritization/eligibility factors were considered? Did you engage community members or outside stakeholders in the development of this project? Please tell us about any missing data or existing policies/practices that may have limited your ability to consider racial equity and social justice in program design.

### 4. I'm the department budget manager or analyst; I'm not familiar with the BET tool. What should I do?

- First, read the BET Guidance Manual. It provides instructions on how to answer each question along with data sources and sample response. Then, consult your Racial Equity

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<sup>1</sup> City of Portland Budget Equity Assessment Tool. <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/707806>

CORE Team Lead. Together, you should familiarize yourself with the racialized history of your department's service area.

- Utilize the GARE member portal to learn about similar work happening in other jurisdictions.
- Identify who the primary beneficiaries of your services are, whether/to what extent these beneficiaries experience racial disparities and inequities in the County, and how the proposed project will address the disparities and inequities affecting beneficiaries.
- Refer to the ORESJ [Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statements](#) page which provides analysis and context on various topics regarding racial disparities and inequities in the County and the kinds of programs, practices, or activities that respond to and/or shift structures creating these inequities.

#### **5. What data should I use and how should I use it?**

- The use of data in a racial equity analysis is a growing field of practice. The Guidance Manual offers several resources to help you understand overarching principles and methods for identifying, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to advance racial equity. Here we've outlined a few top tips:
  - i. Be clear about the outcome/goal/purpose of the project (program/service/initiative).
  - ii. Define the issue area. What issue area/policy/sector/field do these goals and outcomes relate to? Think about the historical context of your department's area of work/field at the national and/or local level, as applicable.
    1. Redlining, urban renewal, racial residential segregation
    2. Environmental racism
    3. Exclusion from, and predatory practices, in the financial sector
    4. Intervening public systems such as child welfare and the carceral system
    5. Opportunity and achievement gaps in both education and employment
    6. Disparities in health outcomes and access to healthcare
  - iii. Look for data at the County (regional, state, or national level) that tells you about access or outcomes in this issue area. Are there racial disparities or inequities present in the issue area? This helps ground the past to the present trends we see and alerts you to any areas of inequity that can be influenced by your project.
  - iv. Use the Montgomery County Racial Equity Profile as a starting point when identifying racial disparities and inequities.

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/OLO2019-7-6\\_20\\_19.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/OLO2019-7-6_20_19.pdf)

#### **6. How was the OBET developed?**

- The OBET, like racial equity tools more generally, are used across jurisdictions to operationalize racial equity in local government. The use of racial equity tools is common across jurisdictions implementing GARE's Normalizing, Organizing, and Operationalizing for Racial Equity Framework. Each jurisdiction's tools reflect their unique policy requirements and organizational structure. The Montgomery County OBET was designed based on research of other jurisdictions' tools and experiences applying a

racial equity lens to budget decisions. It involved review of tools from San Antonio, Texas; Washington, DC; and Alexandria, VA, as well as other jurisdictions (included in the works cited section). The tool reflects the County's current experience using a racial equity and social justice lens, including with the CIP BET<sup>2</sup>. It is expected that future iterations of the tool may change to reflect additional experience.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ORE/Resources/Files/FY24CIPBETTool.pdf>