



# OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



## ANNUAL REPORT FY22 – 23



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## Introduction

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Dear County Executive Elrich and Council President Glass,

I proudly present the 2022-2023 annual report for the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. In our third full year as a department, we continue to fulfill our charge to embed racial equity and social justice into county decision-making. Departments continue to grow in their understanding, execution, and implementation of racial equity in budget development. To improve our processes, refine our tools and training, and gauge the impact of our work, we engaged stakeholders in a series of conversations and surveys that led to refined processes and expanded offerings.

Our training department continues its work by adding additional training, including “Inclusive Language,” “Healing Circles,” and “Advancing Racial Equity the Role of Government” as self-guided training. The expanded offerings will give county employees more opportunities to complete the mandatory training requirement and expand their knowledge base. Our Racial Equity Leads and CORE Teams remain the engines of department-led work, often identifying policies and processes that need the attention of department leadership to create more equitable outcomes.

Our growing policy team continues to diligently examine capital, operating, and supplemental budget decisions for racial equity impacts. To refine our capital and operating budgets, our team worked with department stakeholders to re-design our capital and operating budget tools. This process helped ensure the clarity of the tool and ease of navigation for users. In the report, you will find a detailed description of our Racial Equity Impact Assessments re-vamp process and its findings.

Our office completed an update of the Racial Equity baseline study conducted by the Office of Legislative Oversight in 2017. Departments have used the baseline study to determine which racial equity gaps will be targeted during program development or budget allocation. The updated baseline study can be found here ([insert hyperlink](#)). Lastly, with help from the Office of Human Resources, ORESJ developed racial equity competencies that will be used in the performance management and evaluation process for the first time. I am excited and energized by everything our team has accomplished this year. I look forward to continuing to grow our team, expand our offerings, and refine our tools to create a meaningful impact for Montgomery County Government.



## Table of Contents

Meet our RESJ STAFF .....	4
TRAINING.....	6
ACCOMPLISHMENTS.....	6
Self-guided training: .....	6
Inclusive Language 101:.....	6
Lunch & Learn: .....	7
Racial Healing Circles:.....	7
GENERAL EMPLOYEE TRAINING.....	7
Advancing Racial Equity – The Role of Government ( <b>MANDATORY</b> ):.....	7
Groundwater Approach: A Practical Understanding of Structural Racism ( <b>MANDATORY</b> ): .....	8
SUMMARY OF TRAINING .....	8
Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) .....	9
FY23 POLICY ANALYSIS.....	10
IMPACT RACIAL EQUITY ASSESSMENTS (REIAs).....	10
Operating Budget .....	11
Capital Budget .....	12
Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).....	12
COVID-19 .....	12
Evaluating REIA Processes and Outcomes .....	13
Budget Equity Tools.....	13
FY24 Operating Budget.....	14
FY 24 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) .....	14
Policy Team Portfolios.....	14
Organizing for Racial Equity —Partnerships and Field Visits .....	16

## Meet our RESJ STAFF

### Tiffany Ward, Director and Chief Equity Officer

Tiffany Ward is the Chief Equity Officer (CEO) in Montgomery County, MD. As the CEO, she is charged with training county staff on the core tenets of racial equity and examining county policies and practices for their short and long-term effects on racial disparities. Tiffany has dedicated her 20-plus-year career to creating a fairer and more equitable world for people of color. During her 15-year career in local government, she has focused on education, health and human services, and housing policy. She spent the early years of her career working with youth-serving organizations to bring resources and opportunities to young people who were capable and talented but who lacked the financial resources needed to create good lives for themselves. Before her career in local government, she worked in the labor movement on voting rights issues, including felon re-enfranchisement and voter protection campaigns. Throughout her life, the values of justice, fairness, and community building have guided her. Tiffany is a graduate of Tufts University.

### Sarah Alvarez, Program Manager, Policy Analyst

Sarah Alvarez is a Program Manager of Policy Analysis in the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. In this role, Sarah works with ORESJ and county leaders to develop and assess departmental policies, procedures, and practices with a racial equity lens. Before joining the County, Sarah was a Senior Program Associate at the Aspen Institute, working for six years at the intersection of racial equity and economic opportunity. She is a skilled researcher, analyst, and facilitator with experience developing and managing applied research projects and facilitating peer-learning experiences focused on advancing equitable outcomes for workers, job seekers, and entrepreneurs facing structural barriers to opportunity. Sarah holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs from the University of Mary Washington. Outside of work, Sarah teaches Zumba and is developing a regular yoga practice—helping to balance her love of baking and baked goods!

### Rhiannon Reeves, Program Manager, Policy Analyst

Rhiannon Reeves supports the Montgomery County Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice as a Program Manager for Policy Analysis. In her role, she works to advance Montgomery County's policy of reducing and eliminating racial disparities and inequities by working with ORESJ staff and departmental leaders to develop and assess policies, procedures, and practices through racial equity. Before joining ORESJ, Rhiannon served as a Program Manager for the New Jersey Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, a Policy Analyst at the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), a Research Assistant at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); and Membership Program Assistant and Membership and Advocacy Coordinator at Sister Song. As a result of these previously held positions, Rhiannon is equipped to advance equitable outcomes through public policy—particularly for those facing the most significant systemic barriers to success. Rhiannon is a graduate of Georgia State University (B.A. in African American Studies with a minor in Sociology) and the Columbia University School of Social Work (MSSW with a policy concentration and children and families focus). Outside work, she enjoys cooking comforting meals for her family and taking long scenic walks.

### [Linda Price, Program Manager, Policy Analyst](#)

Linda Price contributes to the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice as a Program Manager and Policy Analyst. She brings over 17 years of experience in city and county government, specializing in budget, legislative, and policy analysis. Linda received a bachelor's degree in organizational communications and a master's degree in management with a focus on the Public Sector. Her commitment to advancing racial equity and social justice continues as she develops and implements evidence-based policies and programs to address disparities within communities of color. Linda excels in team building and resource management, creating inclusive work environments, and driving positive change. Outside of her professional pursuits, she enjoys spending quality time with family and friends and has a deep appreciation for live music, whether attending concerts or enjoying performances online.

### [Jeanette Rojas, Program Manager Training](#)

Jeanette Rojas is a Program Manager for Training in the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. Jeanette has over 20 years of experience in education program management and social justice advocacy that began in her role as one of the founders of the first Latina Sorority at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). After receiving her bachelor's degree in psychology from UMCP, she worked in advocacy organizations such as the National Council of La Raza (now known as Unidos Us) as a senior resource development specialist, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute as a programs manager, and the Parent Institute for Quality Education as the director. After receiving her master's degree in education and human development from George Washington University, she became passionate about working with first-generation college graduates at Montgomery College. While at Montgomery College, she created the Social Justice Inclusive Leadership Institute (SJILI), which helped students understand the foundations of social justice work while also receiving a stipend and a micro-credential. Working in education and advocacy has helped her understand the importance of racial equity and inclusion in educational institutions and all facets of the community. During her free time, she enjoys biking, meditating, and spending time with her family.

### [Andrea Gardner, Administrative Specialist/Human Resources Liaison](#)

Andrea Gardner is the Administrative Specialist and HR Liaison for the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. With over 20 years of extensive administrative experience, much of which she acquired while in the private sector and support of the County departments and agencies (supporting DTS (now TEBS), DOCR, DGS, CEX, and ORESJ) within Montgomery County government. She is a seasoned administrative professional who helps Director Tiffany Ward in expert coordination and planning across the office's portfolio of projects, in addition to her work as a Human Resources Liaison. Her passion for her work and her dedication to service are integral to maintaining the office's operational effectiveness. Andrea enjoys singing, being a grandmother to her now three-year-old granddaughter, vacationing by the water, and tending to her many plants and orchids.

# TRAINING

## Overview

Training continues to evolve in the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. We are always looking for ways to help Montgomery County Government employees learn more about how to view programming, policy, day-to-day work, and their community through a racial equity and social justice lens. We strive to provide tools for our county employees as they serve one of the most diverse Counties in the country. Our training has clear learning objectives, activities that engage our audience, and calls for action to help staff continue the work in their prospective departments.

86 MCG Employees have attended Inclusive Language 101, which has been presented twice this year (February and May).

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Self-guided training:

ORESJ has worked diligently to provide self-guided training to MCG staff who cannot attend during regular-work hours. Self-guided training provides flexibility that accommodates all work schedules and allows people to work through it one section at a time. Ultimately, all training will be available as self-guided modules.

68 MCG Employees have attended and completed our self-guided training that was launched in July 2023

- ORESJ self-guided modules on history, biases, inclusive language, and more!
- Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government self-guided modules *on the Government Alliance on Race and Equity website*

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*I just took the six-section course and found it to be very informative, educational, full of good information, and the system had plenty of opportunities to grow and challenge ourselves. I applaud your efforts thus far and look forward to supporting this work in any way possible. Montgomery County is lucky to have you; this is essential work. “Eric Rasch, Operations Manager – Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza.*

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## Inclusive Language 101:

A two-hour training that focuses on how language can bring people together and have meaningful conversations with one another by helping to create a safe space.

### Lunch & Learn:

A one-hour program during lunch that delves into topics related to racial equity and social justice. Our lunch and learns are intended to gather the MCG community for informal learning opportunities where employees or outside speakers share their personal stories or expertise on a pertinent racial equity or social justice topic.

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*'Enjoyed the casual and comfortable lunch and learn format. Love the open and honest dialogue - a great way to learn!'* Heather Black, Manager, Timekeeping and Payroll

*'Thank you, everyone, for creating this valuable space. You and our conversation were highlights of my time in the County, and I am grateful to have such inspirational colleagues.'*  
Nidhi Singh Rathore, Civic Design Lead

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### **Past Lunch & Learns:**

- June 7, 2023 - AAPI-Celebrating the New Generation of Leaders
- March 29, 2023 – Mental Health is Social Justice/Racial Equity
- December 7, 2022 – International Human Rights & MCG
- October 12, 2022 – Latinos and Race

### Racial Healing Circles:

An hour-and-a-half journey of healing through storytelling, intention, and mindful listening.

- ORESJ completed five healing circles with various departments.

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*'Creating a space to share our personal stories is powerful. Day-to-day interactions with coworkers often don't lead to these kinds of conversations. It helped break down walls and develop more comfort with one another.'* Janmarie Pena, Performance Management and Data Analyst I

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## **GENERAL EMPLOYEE TRAINING**

### Advancing Racial Equity – The Role of Government

#### **(MANDATORY):**

A four-hour introductory training on how we can begin to understand racial inequity in government and Montgomery County through biases, systemic racism, psychology, and history.



1,025 MCG  
Employees  
attended  
Advancing Racial  
Equity: The Role of  
Government

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*'It didn't feel like a lesson, but instead a good conversation. I learned so much, and I am glad I did. I grew up in a bubble in a poor neighborhood on welfare, so to be honest, I felt ignorant of all racial issues. I now feel more informed and confident talking to my son.'* Anne Hawley,  
*Permitting Services Specialist*

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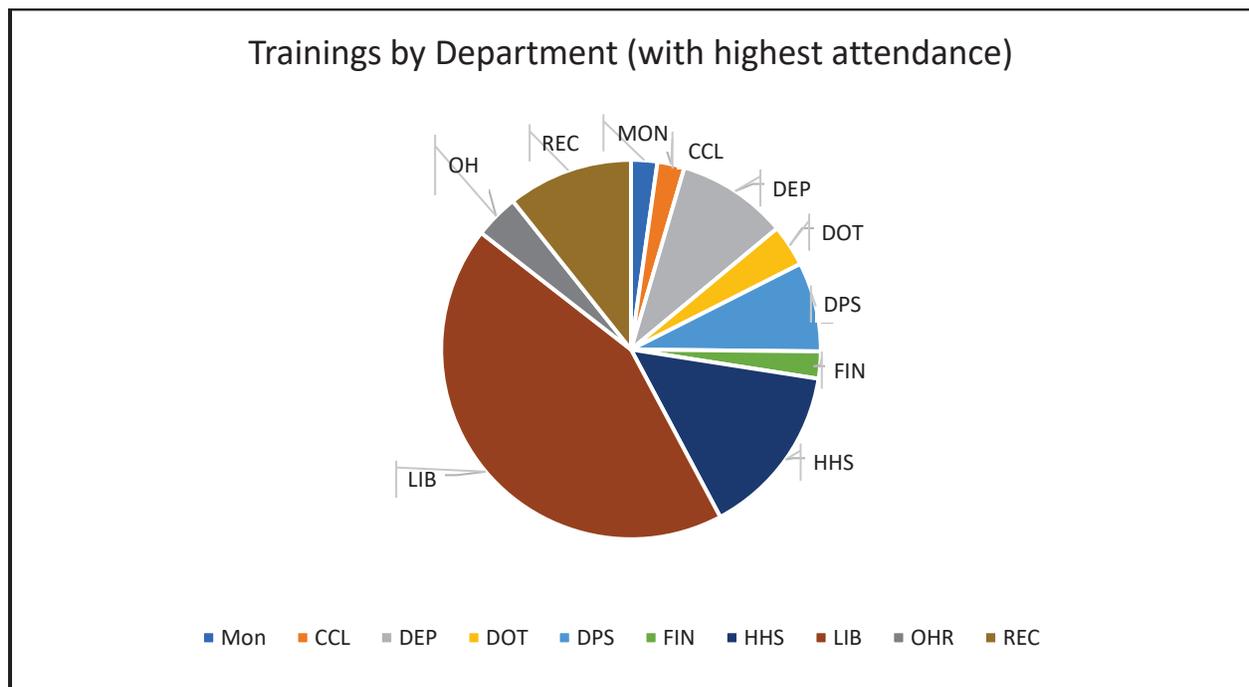
**Groundwater Approach: A Practical Understanding of Structural Racism (MANDATORY):**

A three-hour webinar that takes a deeper look at the systems that perpetuate racial inequity within our communities.

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*'It was great and very informative.'* David Delgado, IT Specialist

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## SUMMARY OF TRAINING

### Future Outlook

We are continuously monitoring the racial equity pulse of our County. As such, hate crimes are on the rise. Our work, including our training, is more important in the County and our communities. We are committed to creating classes and programs that guide staff to have a clearer understanding of systemic racism and action-based solutions. Ultimately, our vision of a more just Montgomery County starts with education and continues as a journey as we help employees take action on all they have learned.

Our new class, 'Understanding Structural Racism in Montgomery County, ' uncovers the history of structural racism in Montgomery County and our nation. It looks at the data of our County and how it has evolved. We will examine how we begin to change the narrative of how our society has viewed racial equity. We will also explore how we can lead from where we are in government.

## Core Teams and Racial Equity Leads

Our Core Teams continue to work diligently in their respective departments using the GARE national practice model of normalizing, organizing, and operationalizing racial equity. Currently, we have Equity Leads who are leading the way through scheduled gatherings with their Core Teams where race is explicitly identified as a focus of work in government. Our Core Teams have training on biases, inclusive language, book clubs, racial healing circles, and field trips to historical places in our County to help them journey toward racial equity and social justice. Our Leads are responsible for advancing equity in their departments and community. Some of these include:

- Office of Agriculture - Resource Guide for BIPOC Farmers
- Public Libraries – Diverse authors, no more late fees, multicultural events
- Department of Recreation – no more fees for recreation centers (if over 16)

Continuous professional development is vital to our Equity Leads' ability to facilitate complex discussions around race. Nine Equity Leads and three Core Team members were able to participate in Leadership Montgomery's REAL Inclusion Program. It is a cohort program that lasts about nine months. Systemic beliefs, policies, and practices that create racial inequities are examined within the context of organizational leadership.

## Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)

We continue to work collaboratively with the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) by using their Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government training and attending their events/activities. Our staff has access to their resources via their website, zoom meetings, and in-person training, such as their community engagement training offered in the spring.

We had five staff participate in the community engagement training offered by GARE. We met with other government workers from various jurisdictions in the Washington DC metropolitan area who spoke on best practices for getting the community to trust government initiatives. We created a plan to help involve our communities and disseminate information to pockets in neighborhoods that may not be aware of the county's resources.

# FY23 POLICY ANALYSIS

## Overview

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) supports the County in applying a racial equity lens to its policies, practices, and procedures to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities. Using a racial equity lens brings conscious attention to potential racial equity impacts of government decisions by providing insights into historical and current structural inequities likely to produce disparate or disproportionate racialized outcomes. Often, we describe using a racial equity lens as the “how?” of intentionally doing two things. First, it centers on the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents and other groups facing systemic oppression in policy and decision-making spaces, and second, it brings the history of structural racism and its cumulative impacts into the present. ORESJ uses a racial equity lens to analyze Supplemental and Special Appropriations through Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs) and the study of Capital and Operating Budgets. ORESJ uses REIAs and Budget Equity Tools (BETs) to conduct these analyses. The following sections describe ORESJ’s work developing and using these tools while supporting County departments and agencies in using a racial equity lens to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities.

### ORESJ in the Field Sharing Best Practices

In FY23, ORESJ policy analysts were invited to present their work centering on racial equity in policy analysis and program development. Tiffany Ward and Sarah Alvarez were joined by Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) colleague Janmarie Pena – via a webinar presentation – hosted by Prosperity Now, which focused on leveraging racial equity impact assessments as a tool for change.

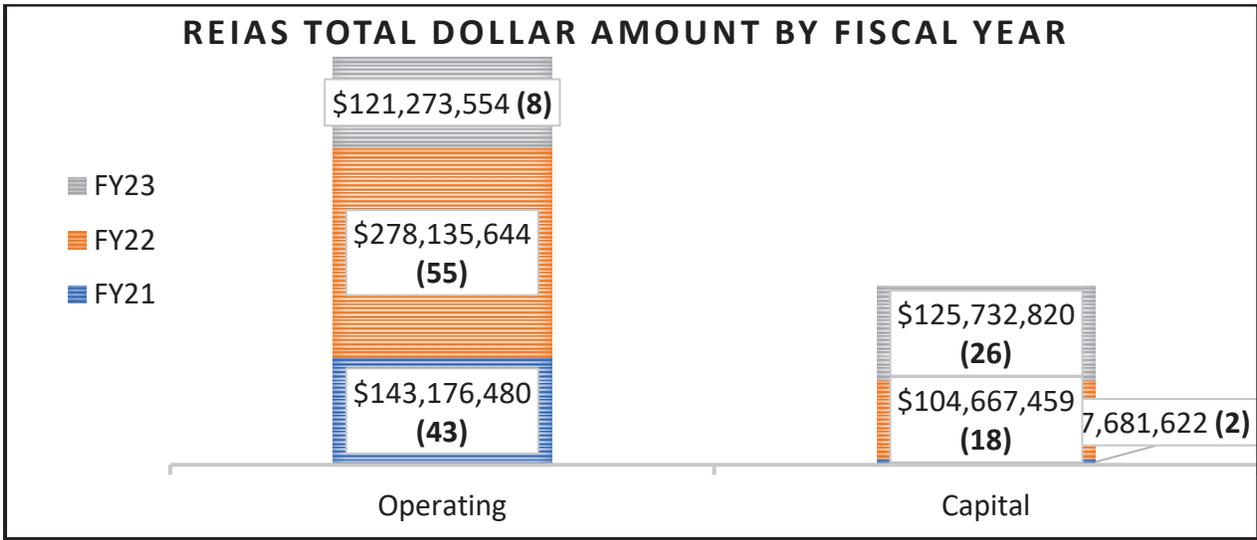
Rhiannon Reeves shared her expertise on the intersection of mental health, racial equity, and social justice for an ongoing MCG lunch and learn series led by ORESJ.

## IMPACT RACIAL EQUITY ASSESSMENTS (REIAs)

### REIA Analytics

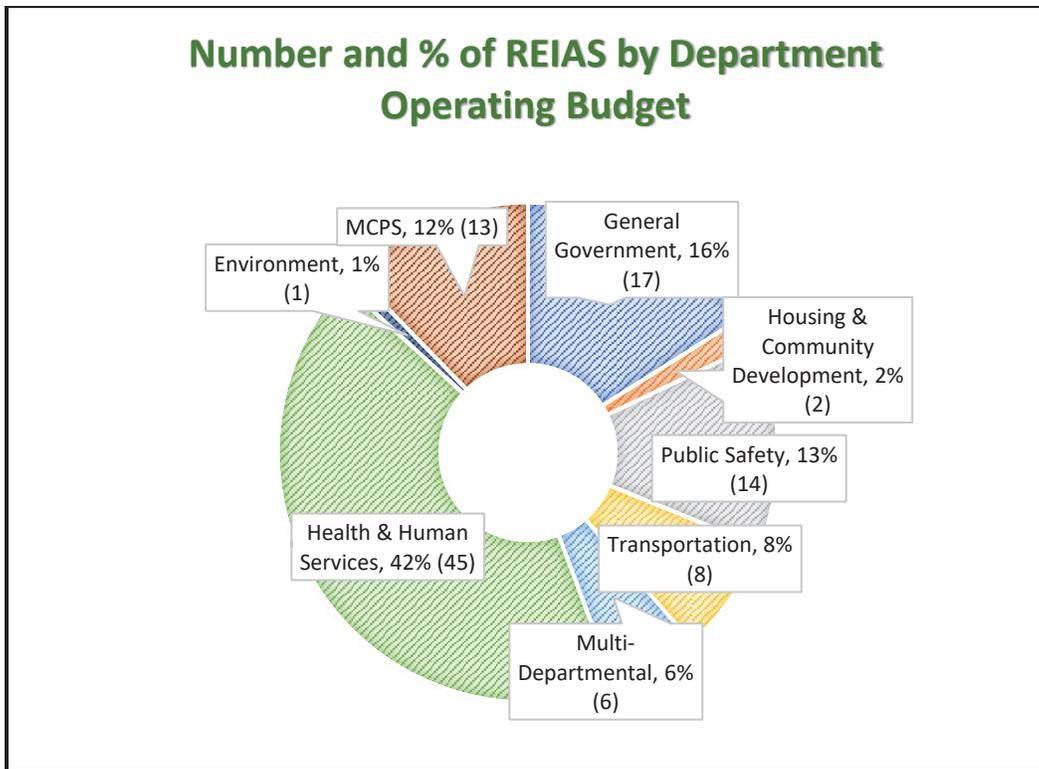
The ORESJ Policy Team recently compiled analytical data on completed Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs) following the passage of [Bill 44-20](#), which requires a racial equity and social justice assessment for all budgets and supplemental appropriations. This data will help Montgomery County gain valuable insights into the impact and outcomes of these REIAs and the ongoing journey goals toward meeting the County’s reduction and eliminating racial disparities and inequities.

The following table illustrates the dollar amount and number of supplemental appropriations completed between FY21 and FY23 for the operating and capital budgets.



## Operating Budget

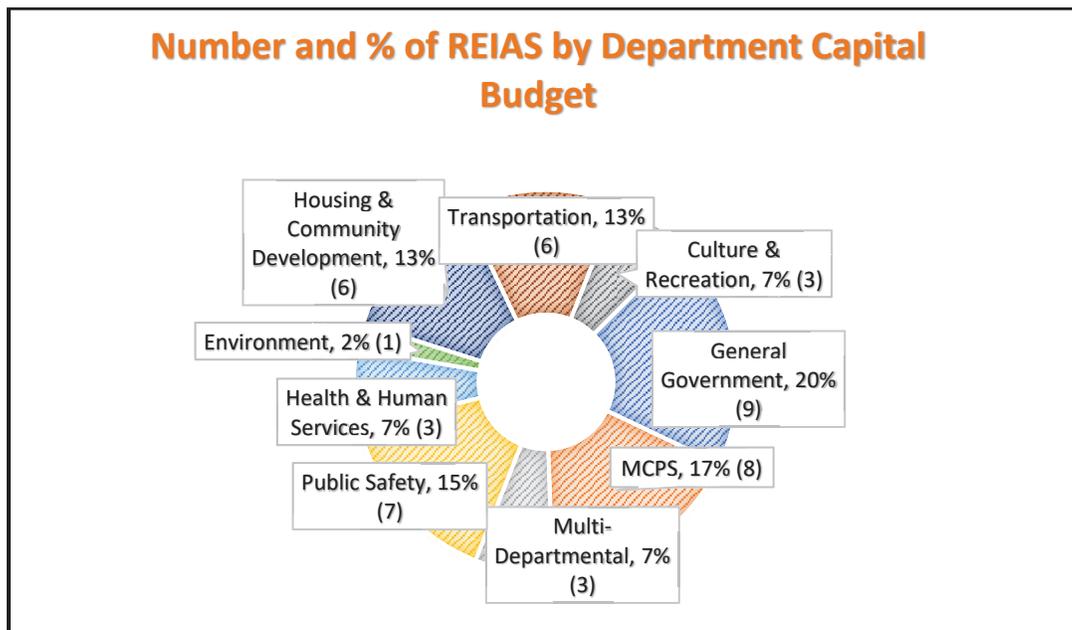
Between FY21 and FY23, the ORESJ completed 106 REIAs from 17 departments. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) leads with 45 REIAs, representing 42% of operating budget supplementals. General Government and Public Safety focused departments had 17 and 14 REIAs, respectively, making up 16% and 13% of the total supplemental appropriations reviewed. The makeup of REIAs by department category is shown in the below chart.



Notably, 52% of the REIAs were deemed "likely to advance" racial equity and social justice, while 27% were classified as "inconclusive." Only 11% were considered "unlikely to advance," with the remaining 10% showing "potential to advance."

## Capital Budget

ORESJ completed 46 REIAs between FY21 and FY23 for capital projects. General Government projects lead with 9 REIAs, making up 20% of the total supplemental appropriations assessed. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) projects had 8 REIAs, making up 17% of the assessments, while 7 Public Safety projects were reviewed, making up 15% of the total. The makeup of REIAs by project category is shown in the below chart.



Findings for capital project REIAs were categorized as 31% "unlikely to advance," 26% as "likely to advance," 26% as "inconclusive," and 17% showing "potential to advance" racial and social justice.

## Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

Numerous REIAs have been conducted for MCPS, including 15 assessments for operating budgets totaling \$49 million and 9 REIAs for capital budgets nearing \$76 million. MCPS has demonstrated a higher likelihood of advancing racial equity and social justice within its operating budget (67%) compared to its capital budget (50%), with the latter showing a 50% likelihood of advancing and 50% being unlikely to advance.

## COVID-19

In response to the public health emergency brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, 39 REIAs were conducted for COVID-19-related supplemental appropriations, surpassing \$350 million of appropriations reviewed. A significant 72% of these assessments took place in FY22.

Understandably, HHS was the primary beneficiary of COVID-related funding, receiving nearly \$250 million in supplemental funding. Findings for COVID-19-related REIAs showed that 74% of additional funding was “likely to advance” racial equity and social justice. Other assessments were categorized as 13% “unlikely to advance,” 10% “inconclusive,” and 3% having “potential to advance” racial equity and social justice.

## Evaluating REIA Processes and Outcomes

This summer, the ORESJ Policy team initiated a project involving the REIAs completed for supplemental and special appropriations. The project aims to improve the process of producing REIAs and provide an opportunity for more meaningful utilization of the completed assessments. Some critical tasks begun, completed, or planned include:

- Map the current REIA process from start to finish with all participants.
- Meet with various users to understand the current process and utilization of REIAs, including Councilmembers and Council Staff, Legislative Branch Offices, Chief Administrative Officers, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Montgomery County Government departments, and the Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee (RESJAC).
- Refine REIA tools, such as the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) template and produce guides to solicit better information from departments.
- Prepare analytics of all completed REIAs to identify trends in findings, funding recipients, and the impact of COVID-19 on supplemental funding.

Upon project completion, ORESJ will have standardized findings language, a revamped REIA template, a redesigned REIA website, and other practical outcomes. Furthermore, we are exploring potential changes to focus our review on specific categories or types of supplemental requests. We hope these changes will make for more valuable and impactful REIAs.

## Budget Equity Tools

Budget Equity Tools (BET) is both a product and a process that makes applying a racial equity lens concrete by providing a structured approach for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting data about historical and current racial disparities and inequities in the County. With this information, departments can adjust their planning, design, or evaluation of their budgets – to lead to outcomes that more closely align with the County’s goals – while also supporting decision-makers in assessing budgets based on their ability to advance priority initiatives such as racial equity and social justice.

ORESJ is grateful for feedback from BET users in the following departments:

- ❖ Department of Transportation
- ❖ Department of Environmental Protection
- ❖ Department of Recreation

ORESJ strongly believes in continual learning and growth while seeking to foster an organizational culture that recognizes that change takes time and commitment. Based on this belief, each fiscal year, ORESJ assesses the quality of BET responses, collects feedback from BET users in surveys and focus groups, and revisits updated iterations of similar tools in other jurisdictions. This assessment allows

ORESJ to identify racial equity knowledge and capacity gaps, as well as parts of the tool and budget development process that can be strengthened. Over time, ORESJ's growth mindset and assessments have steadily improved BET response quality and an updated version of both. Operating and Capital Budget Equity Tools each year since FY21.

## **FY24 Operating Budget**

ORESJ developed an FY24 Operating Budget Equity Tool ([OBET](#)), [scoring rubric](#), and [guidance manual](#) (along with hosting a training) to assist departments in applying a racial equity lens to budget development at departmental and program levels. Departments were required to answer department-level and program-level questions regarding a proposed program enhancement, new program, or program reduction.

For department-level questions, respondents were prompted to utilize the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#) Normalize, Organize, Operationalize framework—indicating which activities their department's proposed budgets enable them to undertake as they relate to supporting their commitments to advancing racial equity and social justice. For program-level questions, respondents were provided with a list of questions corresponding with whether they were proposing a new or enhanced program or a program reduction.

ORESJ received submissions from a total of 38 departments and 38 programs. Utilizing a clearly defined rubric, ORESJ provided a numerical score along with a narrative justification that included a combination of recommendations, reference information, and/or examples of where responses could have been strengthened or areas within the reaction that exemplified a commitment to advancing RESJ. This analysis was submitted through BASIS and transmitted to Department Directors, the County Executive, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Department-level scores and analysis were also transmitted to County Council members, analysts, and staffers.

## **FY 24 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)**

In FY24, ORESJ developed a ([CIP Budget Equity Tool CBET](#) and [Operating Budget Equity Tool \(OBET\)](#)), rubric, [training](#), and [guidance manual](#) to support project managers and decision-makers in applying a racial equity lens to the Biennial Capital Improvements Program (CIP). In addition, ORESJ conducted technical assistance with six department users to help them identify data sources and think about their project in the context of racial disparities and inequities in the County. ORESJ analyzed CBET responses for 54 projects, categorizing them based on the strength of their alignment with the County's RESJ Act. ORESJ transmitted its analysis—ratings and justification—to OMB, the County Executive, and other relevant decision-makers via memo with project ratings, an explanation of overarching patterns, and recommended next steps.

## **Policy Team Portfolios**

To assist departments in realizing their commitment to reducing and eliminating racial disparities and other inequities for community members of Montgomery County, ORESJ Policy Analysts have been assigned the below departments to be their policy point of contact, providing them with targeted support including, but not limited to include the following items.

- Using a racial equity lens in resource decisions via our budget equity tools,
- Sharing best practices from current research and data related to the intersection of racial equity and the department's issue areas,
- Sharing insights from sister departments in neighboring jurisdictions, and
- Connecting departments to networks of racial equity experts in their specific issue area(s).

<b>Sarah</b>	<b>Rhiannon</b>	<b>Linda</b>	<b>Tiffany</b>
Office of Food Security Resources (OFSR)	Dept. of Health and Human Services (DHHS)	Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF)	Office of Human Resources (OHR)
Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA)	Alcohol and Beverage Services (ABS)	Dept. of Finance (FIN)	Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
Dept. of Transportation (DOT)	Office of Grants Management (OGM)	Dept. of General Services (DGS)	County Executive Office (CEX)
Office of Agriculture (OAG)	Department of Recreation (REC)	Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD)	Office of the County Attorney (OCA)
Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS)	Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEHMS)	Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)	County Council (CC)
Office of Procurement (PRO)	Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL)	Office of Community Partnerships (OCP)	Board of Elections (BOE)
Dept. Permitting Services (DEP)	Office Human Rights (OHR)	Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR)	Public Information Office (PIO)
Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (FRS)	Animal Services and Adoption Center (ASAC)		

## Organizing for Racial Equity — Partnerships and Field Visits

To gain a deeper understanding of our department partners and their work, ORESJ participated in two site visits in FY23. In March, ORESJ team members Jeanette Rojas and Sarah Alvarez attended a day-long tour to learn about the complex system of



In May, ORESJ team members Jeanette Rojas, Linda Price, Rhiannon Reeves, and Sarah Alvarez attended a day-long tour of the Montgomery County Agriculture Reserve and the farms contributing to the Montgomery County food ecosystem. Co-sponsored by the Office of Agriculture and the Montgomery County Food Council, this tour helped ORESJ gain a more robust



understanding of the County's rich agricultural assets and the challenges to expanding equitable land access and producing more table food within the local food system.

ORESJ looks forward to hitting the road in FY25 to learn more about the County and opportunities to strengthen racial equity and social justice across issue

areas. If you are interested in hosting our team at a department event or site, please get in touch with Andrea Gardner at [Andrea.Gardner@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Andrea.Gardner@montgomerycountymd.gov).



services, equipment, and personnel that make up Montgomery County Fire and Rescue (MCFRS). They visited the Public Safety Communications Center and Public Safety Training Academy and joined a ride-along to gain firsthand experience regarding how officers work within the community.

