



MONTGOMERY COUNTY

OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY
& SOCIAL JUSTICE

2020 - 2021 Annual Report



Montgomery County, Maryland
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

2020 - 2021
Annual Report



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*Mission of the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice
is to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities in
Montgomery County.*





OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

Dear County Executive Elrich and Council President Hucker,

I am excited to present to you the 2020-2021 Annual Report for the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORES.J). In my inaugural report, I shared with staff across the county our efforts to normalize conversations about racial equity throughout government and our continued efforts to educate residents and constituents on the tenets of racial equity. We also worked to create racial equity tools and processes that would help us make more equitable decisions during a pandemic that further exposed the racial disparities in health, wealth and housing in our county. I introduced you to the framework that we would use to help close the racial disparities in Montgomery County. We continue to use the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) framework to normalize, organize and operationalize the tenets of racial equity as we build the foundation of our department and the capacity of county employees. I am happy to report that we have made significant progress this year. Essential to our progress is the addition of three staff members. We brought on a Training Manager, Policy Analyst and Administrative Aide with a range of expertise and experience. This team has trained employees, created budget equity tools and supported our Racial Equity and Social Justice committee and much more.

Currently, our training program is providing trainings to all county employees including department appointed racial equity leads and department directors. These trainings are key to building the knowledge and skills necessary to insert racial equity analysis into everyday decision making. We also want these trainings to foster curiosity, further analysis of current and future decisions, so that racial equity is embedded throughout government. The training of racial equity leads, and department directors is especially important, as everyone in the County has a role to play in advancing racial equity and social justice.

This past year provided us great opportunities to operationalize racial equity, in March of 2021 our office began producing Racial Equity Impact Assessments for executive supplemental appropriation requests. Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIA) have enabled us to work with departments to look critically at the implications of their budget decisions. We were also able to drive home the importance of disaggregating data and the need to engage communities of color as key to eliminating racial disparities in Montgomery County. Our operationalizing efforts continued with the newest iteration of a Budget Equity Tool that is being used in the Capital Improvement and Operating Budget processes.

While the details of our efforts over the past year will be presented in the body of this report, it is important to remember our county's ultimate goal is to put the lives and life outcomes of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) at the front of our minds when making decisions. The tools, trainings and guidance of this department are just some of the ways that we can arrive at that ultimate goal. We will continue to assess and improve our methods as we keep that goal in mind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tiffany Ward".

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

Meet Our Staff



TIFFANY WARD

Director and Chief Equity Officer

Tiffany Ward is currently the Chief Equity Officer in Montgomery County, MD. As the Chief Equity Officer, 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 been her guide. Tiffany is a graduate of Tufts University.



SARAH ALVAREZ

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. Prior to 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!



ANDREA GARDNER

Administrative Specialist

Andrea Gardner is the Administrative Specialist for the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. She has extensive experience in Montgomery County Government, having provided support to DTS (now TEBS), DOCR, DGS, CEX and now ORESJ. Andrea is a seasoned administrative professional and provides expert coordination and planning across the Office's portfolio of projects, in addition to supporting Director Tiffany Ward. Her dedication to service is integral to maintaining the Office's operational effectiveness. In her free time, Andrea enjoys singing and being a grandmother to her

fifteen-month-old granddaughter, vacationing by the water, and tending to her many orchids.



GIMARI JONES

Training and Development Manager

Gimari Jones is a Program Manager within the ORESJ and her focus is on Training and Development. She is new to the County, having started in December. However, Gimari brings years of experience in equity through her time leading efforts that center and support the rights of English-learner and immigrant students and communities in Washington, DC schools and through providing anti-racist focused professional development and coaching to high school staff – including MCPS

and other districts across the country through her time at Equal Opportunity Schools. In her spare time, Gimari loves vintage and thrift shopping and has a budding love for plants as a newly minted 'plant and garden mom'. But what she finds most important is spending time with her two children and partner.



Training

Accomplishments

Senior Management Training, CORE Presentations to Department and Established Racial Equity Lead

Overview

In December 2020, the ORESJ hired a training program manager to help guide, develop, and implement trainings across the County. Since then, the office has implemented racial equity focused trainings for groups of staff. The training series, called Racial Equity Learning Labs, aims to increase the County's Workforce's foundational knowledge of varying types of racism, deepen discussions on dismantling race inequities, and will eventually build capacity in using racial equity tools that are essential to advancing race equity across all department's policies, programs, and practices - creating a fair and just Montgomery County Government. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all trainings have been delivered virtually via ZOOM.

Normalizing for Racial Equity: Trainings in Action

What does it mean to normalize Racial Equity with Trainings and why is it important?

Equity Lead Trainings

Department Equity Leads

Staff selected to lead their department's Core Teams - were trained first. Equity Leads participate in cycles of learning focused on (a) developing shared knowledge of foundational race-equity concepts and an understanding of the history of racism and (b) building capacity to lead Equity Core Teams through race equity discussions and activities to assess and develop policies, practices, and processes through a race-equity lens. Equity Leads have also participated in 1:1 coaching sessions with our office, to receive guidance on launching their Core Teams and navigating organizational barriers to change. These trainings and coaching sessions are ongoing as new co-leads are on-boarded, and as departments launch Core Teams. About 35 Equity Leads have participated in trainings throughout this year and have **Equity Lead Trainings** have included:

- Racial Equity Institute training (2-day workshop) – Fall 2020 and ongoing;
- Study Circles Facilitator's training with MCPS (Fall/Winter 2020);
- Practice Sessions (Winter/Spring 2021);
- GARE Conference (3-days – Spring 2021); and
- Bi-monthly cohort meetings.

Director Trainings

In an effort to bring department directors together to learn, engage with one another, and connect on progress towards moving race equity forward as equity minded leaders of their respective departments, directors were invited to participate in the two-day Racial Equity Institute workshop and follow-up debrief sessions facilitated by Leadership Montgomery. Directors were given options to attend one of two scheduled workshops and debrief sessions with colleagues, which took place in May, June, and through early July. Between both workshops, 24 leaders were in attendance.

General Staff Trainings

In an effort to continue to normalize conversations on race across the County, this year the department successfully launched Racial Equity Learning Labs for Staff – a training series for all staff who seek to learn, engage, and deepen their understanding of systemic racism – historically and currently. The series kicked off with two available sessions this year ‘Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government, which launched in May, and The Groundwater Approach: Building a Practical Understanding of Structural Racism, which launched in August. The ‘Advancing Racial Equity’ workshop is a 4-hour training facilitated by ORESJ staff, repeated monthly, while the ‘Groundwater’ training course is a 3-hour session taught by facilitators from the Racial Equity Institute (REI), with a total of 5 repeated sessions available. Below are descriptions and summaries of participation for each training thus far.

Summary of Trainings

Training Title	Description	Schedule Dates	Number of Staff Participation as of 9/30/2021	Number of Staff Participation at the End of Calendar Year 2021
Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government	In this engaging workshop, participants examine the system of racism and the role government has historically played in creating and upholding racial inequities.	5/25 6/30 7/28 8/25 9/29 10/27 12/1	250	350
The Groundwater Approach: Building a Practical Understanding of Structural Racism	Racial Equity Institute organizers use stories and data to present a perspective that racism is fundamentally structural in nature. By examining characteristics of modern-day racial inequity, the presentation introduces participants to an analysis that most find immediately helpful and relevant.	8/24 9/15 10/7 10/20 11/5	150	405
Racial Equity Institute Phase I Workshop	Racial Equity Institute organizers use stories and data to present a perspective that racism is fundamentally structural in nature.	5/19 5/20 6/24 6/25	30	30

Staff Trained (as of 9/30)

24 Directors

35 Equity Leads

450 General/All Staff

Looking Ahead

Currently, the department offers Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government monthly and will continue to do so through the end of the calendar year. However, with course participation limited to 50 people per session, and with its high demand, there are oftentimes waitlists. To build capacity and to provide more available sessions we will soon deploy a 'train the trainer program' - where interested staff would be trained as co-facilitators of the course and will deliver the training with a training partner. This program will kick-off with a series of coaching sessions through our office for eligible and interested staff throughout October. In January 2022, we will move from offering Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government one time per month to offering 2-3 sessions monthly. This will increase the average number of staff being trained each month to at least 150 people or more. We are thrilled to share that at the moment there are 24 staff who expressed interest in participating as trainers.

Additional Training Offerings

In the coming year the office plans to explore alternate delivery models within our learning and development continuum, such as self-paced learning modules that increases shared language around key equity concepts. The office also plans to expand the Racial Equity Learning Labs (RELL) series by offering staff trainings that have been identified as necessary to promote and encourage culture shifts towards equity. Training topics will include:

- White dominant culture norms and their effect on inclusiveness (culture and climate);
- Understanding and engaging communities most effected by racism (community engagement); and Identifying interpersonal barriers to moving beyond racism (implicit bias; microaggressions).
- It is essential that the community guides and informs our community engagement work. Therefore, we have identified MORE - Montgomery County Racial Equity Network - as a community partner to co-plan, co-develop, and potentially facilitate community engagement sessions/initiatives and resources our office rolls out.

CORE Teams

Organizing for Racial Equity Core Teams

This year, the ORESJ worked with Equity Leads to launch Racial Equity Core Teams for their respective departments. Racial Equity Core Teams are leadership teams, including both formal and informal leaders, who will be responsible for analyzing and assessing departmental policies, procedures, and practices through a racial equity lens. They are instrumental in developing their department's racial equity action plans. To kick-start and facilitate organizing each department's team, the ORESJ attended department staff meetings to provide an overview of Core Teams and to recruit members. Recruitment meetings took place throughout late winter and spring and resulted in 171 staff across 19 departments signing up to join their Core Team.

Although staff interest in joining Core Teams seemed positive, Equity Leads still experienced difficulties pulling teams together. In order to assist leads in identifying barriers to launching teams, the office developed an analysis tool called the SWOB (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and barriers) tool. The tool aided leads through the process of identifying department nuances to launching the work, such as culture roadblocks, level of leadership support needed or lack thereof, commitment barriers for staff, opportunities they could leverage, and other observations. The ORESJ hosted working sessions for Equity Leads to work together unpacking policies, practices, and attitudes that might be hindering progress. From there, Equity Leads developed actions to mitigate any barriers that were discovered through this unpacking/analysis process. After troubleshooting identified issues, working through various roadblocks, and participation in coaching/check-in meetings with our team, leads across seven departments successfully launched Core Team activities over 12 weeks. At the start of our work, only one department, the Department of Environmental Protection, had a Core Team. Other departments who launched Core Teams this year include:

- Alcohol and Beverages Services
- Office of Agriculture
- Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
- Animal Services
- Public Libraries
- Recreation
- Office of Management and Budget.

Departments that have successfully launched Core Teams this year will be the first round of departments to begin the seeding process for developing RESJ action plans. We have invited Equity Leads to participate in a 10-month learning cohort with our office and GARE, which will include participation as a team in a training series to build capacity in areas essential to developing plans. Areas of focus will include:

- Gaining better understanding of institutional / structural racism through root cause analysis;
- Development of skills to analyze policies and practices from a racial equity perspective;
- Increasing understanding of organizational change theory;
- Applying a racial equity lens with a results-based framework to transform organizational culture and actions to deliver racially equitable results;
- Exploring measures and goals that delve deeper to reveal disparities and track progress towards racial equity; and
- Deepen understanding of issues and practices related to inclusive engagement and public participation in government.

Racial Equity Policy Analysis

Overview

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice, in accordance with Bill #44-20, began reviewing supplemental/special appropriation requests with a racial equity lens in March 2021. 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 that are likely to produce disparate or disproportionate racialized outcomes. The product of each review is a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) sent to the County Council for consideration. REIAs are used across in several jurisdictions to evaluate the current or predicted impact of policies, programs, and budget decisions on racial disparities¹. They are similar to how environmental impact statements or health impact assessments are used in their respective fields to provide decision makers with a uniform structure for looking critically at data in light of current and historical conditions and desired goals. REIAs enable decision makers to mitigate against harmful unintended consequences and get ahead of what Terry Keleher of Race Forward calls “rapidly replicating racism”². In addition to producing insights about anticipated racial equity impacts, REIAs also encourage the adoption of an analytical process that proactively includes community engagement and input from communities impacted by racial disparities. A national best practice³, testing assumptions and validating quantitative analysis with the qualitative data and input from affected communities generates more comprehensive, nuanced, and actionable findings. As a product and process, REIAs promote transparency, accountability, and the use of a racial equity lens before decisions are made—all practices that support the County’s effort to advance racial equity and social justice.

Accomplishments

To date, ORESJ has produced 20 REIAs from seven requesting departments. In its analysis of supplemental appropriations, ORESJ looks carefully at the text of the supplemental appropriation, responses departments provide in a racial equity impact statement tool⁴, and any information about the data or approaches the department used to inform its proposal. ORESJ then conducts research and analysis using the following questions as a starting point:

- What historical or current racial inequities influence and/or are influenced by the problem the proposal seeks to solve?
- What data or evidence is used to justify or support the proposal?
- How does the proposal respond to the racial inequities related to the particular proposal? (e.g., strategies for authentically engaging affected community members, disaggregating data to identify impacted populations, eliminating barriers to access, addressing root causes with systems-level or structural changes)

Spotlight: 2021 Pandemic Recovery

In 2021, 12 of the 20 REIAs that ORESJ completed related to the County’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including use of federal and state funding to reach and support communities most affected by the pandemic’s negative health and economic impacts. In the County, as in other parts of the Country, communities of color, particularly Black and Latinx residents, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The reason for this disproportionality is complex but is closely linked to racial inequities in healthcare quality and access, insurance coverage, housing, and overrepresentation in occupations and industries most vulnerable to job losses and Covid-19 exposure. Many of the supplemental appropriations related to the pandemic recovery respond to these racial inequities by developing frameworks and tools that center racial equity and by providing targeted services and resources to impacted communities. For example, ORESJ found Departments use of the Montgomery County Framework for Equitable Access to Covid-19 Vaccination and the Department of Health and Human Services Covid-19 Preventing Homelessness Index valuable demonstrations of how a supplemental/special appropriation incorporated a racial equity lens into planning, implementation, and monitoring processes.

In assessing supplemental appropriations related to the pandemic, ORESJ also drew on a growing body of research from national organizations and evidence from other jurisdictions focused on centering racial equity in pandemic recovery efforts. Organizations like Policy Link, Urban Institute, Keiser Family Foundation, and the Center for Law and Social Policy have produced valuable research and analysis on a range of health, housing, small business, and employment inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. Jurisdictions like the City of San Antonio and the Port of Seattle have produced Covid-19 frameworks and tools to support agencies in deploying response and recovery resources in ways that advance racial equity. Common principles include:

- centering communities and residents most impacted;
- recognizing past harms;
- utilizing culturally and linguistically competent community engagement strategies;
- developing strong reciprocal relationships with trusted community partners; and
- considering immediate relief as well as long-term systems building.

Insights from other jurisdictions as well national research supported ORESJ in assessing potential racial equity impacts of proposed supplemental and special appropriations. As the pandemic recovery continues, departments and the County can continue to learn from and adapt policies and practices that center racial equity and social justice at every stage of a program and at all levels of department operations.

In The Future

ORESJ looks forward to departments continued development and use of racial equity principles and frameworks to guide the planning, implementation, and monitoring of their work, particularly in the development of supplemental and special appropriations requests. Areas where departments can strengthen their supplemental and special appropriation requests include:

Collection and/or use of disaggregated population-level or community indicator data to identify which communities are most impacted. Avoid using broad terms to describe affected communities or areas — where possible, be specific by identifying zip codes or census tracts that are affected.

Articulating historical or current inequities related to the issue and explaining the role County, state, or national policies or practices have played in creating or exaggerating those inequities.

Develop strategies and practices that strengthen community engagement and enable authentic inclusion of impacted residents.

Consider how the appropriation can address short-term needs while also laying the foundation for structural changes that advance racial equity and social justice, including: how and with whom proposals are developed; how access is expanded or appropriately targeted; how data is collected and disaggregated; how outcomes are determined and measured, and how community feedback is sought and included in decision making.

¹ OLO Report 2018-8. https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2018%20Reports/OLOReport2018_8.pdf

² Quote referenced in OLO Report 2018-8. https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2018%20Reports/OLOReport2018_8.pdf

³ <https://www.aecf.org/blog/step-by-step-guide-on-using-equity-principles-in-social-science-research>

⁴ Racial equity impact statement Tool questions: Who is benefiting? Explain and provide backups to support your answer.; Who is burdened? Explain and provide backups to support your answer.; Does the initiative/program receiving the supplemental appropriation reduce racial inequities in the County? If yes, please tell us how.; Are there any potential disproportionate effects on communities of color or low-income?

Racial Equity and Social Justice Tools

Racial equity tools are analytical approaches or structured sets of questions and guidance that support users in applying a racial equity lens at various decision points. Using racial equity tools makes the process of advancing racial equity more concrete for decision makers.

In 2021, ORESJ developed, in collaboration with the Office of Management and Budget, a Budget Equity Tool for the Capital Improvement Program Process and the FY22 Operating Budget. ORESJ led the conceptual development of both tools based on research of tools and processes used in other jurisdictions as well as an appreciation for how department users may engage with the tool. ORESJ also consulted with the OLO (Office of Legislative Oversight) report on Racial Equity in Government Decision-making: Lessons from the Field⁵ and its analysis of principles and effective approaches for tool development as well as presentations from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity members. Key takeaways from our research include:

- Tool development takes time; it is collaborative, iterative, and should be focused on the end user—their existing capacities and resources—and the broader context of where a jurisdiction is on its racial equity and social justice journey;
- The racial equity principles and assumptions underlying the development of the tool as well as the narrative context are critical;
- Responses to questions in a racial equity tool are not the end point or solution; responses provide new insights and make “visible” aspects of a decision that are often “invisible”;
- There is no single way to assess responses provided in a tool as jurisdictions are currently and
- Iterating on a number of approaches based on capacity, effectiveness in achieving stated goals, and desire to build culture of learning

Budget Equity Tool

Based on our research, ORESJ produced a Budget Equity Tool designed to incorporate a racial equity and social justice lens into the Capital Improvement Program process. The CIP tool includes instructions, questions, a preliminary list of data sources for departments to consider, and a glossary of key terms. ORESJ conducted two trainings and a Q&A session about the tool, its goals, and recommendations for how departments can approach this work. In the Q&A session, ORESJ highlighted the importance of disaggregating data as a technique for identifying the unique experiences and circumstances affecting communities of color and low-income residents. ORESJ reached approximately 40 staff across trainings. At the time this report was produced, departments were in the midst of using the tool in the development of their CIP proposals. The FY23 Budget Equity Tool and Manual are currently under development and will be debuted at the launch of the operating budget process.

In The Future

In the future, ORESJ looks forward to deepening its expertise through continued research and policy analysis as well as by strengthening relationships with County stakeholders, community members, and national partners. With these assets and a commitment to learning, ORESJ will continue to provide expert leadership and support in the implementation of Bill #44-20 and in the development of a racial equity and social justice culture that enables long-term progress towards realizing the County’s vision for a just and equitable Montgomery County.

⁵ https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2018%20Reports/OLOREport2018_8.pdf

Community Outreach

Overview

The Office of Racial Equity has continued to normalize conversations on race and racial equity with Montgomery County constituents and residents. Below are some of the groups that have engaged with the department over the last year.

Events

- Speaking Engagement: The Rotary Club about Racial Equity
- Community Bridges “Racial Equity Town Hall”
- COG Racial Equity Work Group Meeting
- Racial Equity Presentation: Reimagining Public Safety Task Force
- Kensington Racial Justice Committee
- RACE Forward Virtual Conference
- The Black Community and the Covid-19 Vaccine
- Panelist, Policy Innovation Lab, Georgetown University
- Green Fest Panel Discussion on the intersection of Race and Environmental Justice
- Guest Lecture – University of Maryland School of Public Health
- DMV Implementation Cohort participation
- RESJ Update to MORE

Racial Equity and Social Justice Committee

This year ORESJ has continued to provide staff support to the Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee. The office organized recruitment efforts to expand the committee, which resulted in an increase in membership to 17 public and government members. Notable accomplishments of the committee include:

- A letter drafted and sent to Governor Hogan to encourage increased targeted vaccination efforts in BIPOC communities;
- A letter drafted and sent to the County Executive to ensure vaccination equity across the county, specifically in BIPOC communities; and
- An increased awareness of government functions and efforts across county department services through guest speakers at meetings.

Moving forward, the office will continue to support the committee through administrative functions for monthly meetings, planning and organizing the first annual retreat, and organizing any activities the committee decides to initiate in the coming year.

*"Not everything that is faced can be changed,
but nothing can be changed until it is faced."
- James Baldwin*



MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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& SOCIAL JUSTICE**

101 Monroe Street, 6th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/

