



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director

MEMORANDUM

April 13, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

cc: Gabe Albornoz, President
County Council

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation #22-79
Bridge Funding for the Food Security Task Force.

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #22-79 Bridge Funding for the Food Security Task Force is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County, as it will enable the distribution of food using an approach that responds to the structural inequities influencing racial disparities in food insecurity in Montgomery County. It's important to note that this supplemental funding will not address the underlying structures creating food insecurity in Montgomery County, however it will provide resources to people most impacted by the dual stressors of the Covid-19 recovery and inflation, which could prevent disparities from growing.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #22-79 is to provide funding to sustain County emergency food procurement operations through June 30, 2022. Emergency food procurement remains necessary as a spike in Covid-19 cases related to the Omicron variant and inflation have led to unprecedented demand for food in the County. As with the pandemic, the effects of inflation¹ have disproportionately impacted

¹ A Business Insider Article describes: "Households without college graduates, African American, Hispanic and Latino communities, and those not living in cities have been spending more of their post-tax income on goods and services". Jason Lalljee. Insider. "People of color and rural households are getting hit the hardest by the hot inflation of 2021". November

communities of color and low-income people. The bridge funding under this Supplemental Appropriation provides resources to local food access providers to procure and distribute food; this is building on and evolving from work begun under *A Food Secure Montgomery County, 5-year Strategic Plan*². In July 2021, ORESJ conducted a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) of a Bridge Funding Proposal for the Food Security Taskforce (TFSTF). In that assessment, we drew upon the Taskforce's 5-year strategic plan to gain an understanding of the depth and scale of the food insecurity crisis in Montgomery County. That REIA documented that even prior to the pandemic, the communities most at risk of experiencing food insecurity were those with incomes below the County's self-sufficiency standard and the following populations:

- residents lacking access to personal vehicles and adequate transit options; eligible but not enrolled in benefits programs; working multiple jobs and/or experiencing homelessness;
- children in school, on weekends, and/or in single parent households;
- seniors aging in place and/or with medical dietary restrictions;
- foreign born residents with limited English proficiency in mixed immigration status;
- families with lack of knowledge of or access to culturally appropriate services; and
- people with disabilities with limited mobility and/or waiting for case management.

The REIA also documented the many structural inequities that create racial disparities in who experiences hunger. At the time of its analysis, ORESJ found that there was insufficient information available to demonstrate the extent to which those facing the greatest risk for food insecurity received targeted food assistance. There was an additional round of bridge funding in November 2021, using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars. ORESJ maintained its earlier finding, adding emerging racial equity practices for use of ARPA dollars.

This assessment will therefore focus on the extent to which food assistance under this supplemental appropriation is targeted and whether inequities in access to food assistance have been considered and addressed in the proposal. Since November 2021, ORESJ has learned about some of the tools TFSTF and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) use to support Service Consolidation Hubs (Hubs) in identifying and meeting food assistance needs. For example, one of the tools is a map showing the concentration of residents by census tract:

- percent of households participating in the Montgomery County Public Schools Free and Reduced Priced Meals Program;
- racial and ethnic demographics;

24, 2021. Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/inflation-hurts-black-latino-hispanic-people-of-color-rural-households-2021-11>

² A Food Secure Montgomery: What we know now and what we can do. A 5-Year Strategic Plan. February 2017. Available at: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/Resources/Files/pdf/MoCo_Food-Security-Plan_2017.pdf

- poverty rates;
- the Centers for Disease Control Social Vulnerability Index;
- percent of households with no access to a vehicle;
- homelessness prevention index;
- language spoken at home; and
- Covid-19 case rates.

Looking at these variables and their distribution across the County provides useful information about where demand might be highest, and what the nature of that demand might look like. For example, will service likely involve residents whose language spoken at home is something other than English? ORESJ also learned about TFSTF and HHS' data monitoring efforts, and challenges in collecting and disaggregating data from across a disbursed network of community-based organizations and non-profits. A lack of disaggregated data can prevent even more specific targeting that could help planners and food access providers understand in a more granular way clients' specific experience. Researchers, analysts, and advocates across sectors increasingly recognize the ways disaggregated data can shape more effective policy and practice³ as well as the practical challenges and opportunities for accessing and analyzing data with this level of granularity⁴.

III. **DATA ANALYSIS:** Despite a lack of disaggregated data in current reporting, there is evidence that inequities impacting access to food are considered in the Hub model. For example, the Hubs offer a range of food access options that help to overcome structural barriers like inflexible work schedules (disproportionately impacting workers in non-management, business, science, and arts occupations; in Montgomery County these workers are more likely to be people of color⁵), lack of access to a private vehicle⁶ or reliable public transportation, and lack of affordable accessible childcare options. The Hubs offer drive in, walk-in and by appointment, home delivery options, and take steps to make available culturally appropriate food. ORESJ cannot verify that all local food access providers are aware of and responding to the structural inequities previously mentioned or that clients are satisfied with the range of available culturally appropriate food—additional research and community engagement beyond the scope of this REIA would be required to better assess these points. However, given the volume of food and funding provided through the Hubs,

³ Victor Rubin. Danielle Ngo. Ángel Ross. Dalila Butler. Nisha Balamam. Policy Link. Counting a Diverse Nation: Disaggregating Data on Race and Ethnicity to Advance a Culture of Health. 2018. Available at https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/Counting_a_Diverse_Nation_08_15_18.pdf

⁴ Steven Brown. Alena Stern. Rebecca Bullied, Justyce Watson. Urban Institute. "Considering Ethic and Empathy in Imputing Race and Ethnicity to Expand the Available of Disaggregated Data". August 27, 2021. Available at: <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/considering-ethics-and-empathy-imputing-race-and-ethnicity-expand-availability-disaggregated-data>

⁵ See data analysis section

⁶ See data analysis section

it's possible that its practices could positively influence the practices of local food access providers who aren't affiliated with the Hubs.

Occupations by Race and Ethnicity, Montgomery County, MD, 2017

Occupation Categories	Asian	Black	Latino	Other	White
Management, business, science, and arts	62.0%	45.4%	24.9%	13.9%	63.9%
Service	13.6%	19.7%	31.3%	39.2%	10.6%
Sales and office	16.4%	23.2%	16.1%	13.5%	17.1%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	1.7%	3.5%	20.9%	28.5%	5.1%
Production, transportation, and material moving	6.3%	8.2%	6.7%	4.8%	3.4%

Source: Table 7. Montgomery County, Maryland Office of Legislative Oversight Montgomery County Racial Equity Profile. Available here:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/RevisedOLO2019-7.pdf>

No Vehicle by Race and Ethnicity, Montgomery County, MD, 2017

Racial/Ethnic Group	% Who do not have a car
Asian	6.0%
Black	12.8%
Latino	4.1%
Other	6.4%
White	5.5%

Source: "No Vehicle". Montgomery County, Maryland Office of Legislative Oversight Montgomery County Racial Equity Profile. Available here:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2019%20Reports/RevisedOLO2019-7.pdf>

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive