



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

January 19, 2024

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

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

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #24-23
Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service FY24 Cadet Training Program
Personnel Costs (\$616,400)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that *Supplemental Appropriation #24-23 FY24 Cadet Training Program Personnel Costs* has the potential to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County as it provides resources for students to participate in the FY24 Cadet Training Program--potentially improving the diversity of recruit classes and retained officers. The extent to which resources target the recruitment of students from black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), or low-income communities, as well as the diversity of recruit classes and retained officers, should be measured and highlighted to ensure the program is meeting its intended goal.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of SA #24-23 is to provide additional funding for Montgomery County Fire Rescue Services (MCFRS) Cadet Training Program expenses through the end of the 2023-2024 school year. The MCFRS Cadet Training Program is a vocational education program that provides juniors and seniors from all County high school clusters with formal training to prepare them to enter the fire and emergency medical services career fields. Students complete coursework related to fire and rescue and emergency medical services at the Public Safety Training Academy. The requested funds are intended to cover the fire training component of the program, which is labor-intensive, has a low student-to-instructor ratio, and requires costly protective gear. MCPS has signed a memorandum of understanding with MCFRS to fund 50 percent of the program's original scope and is anticipated to fund 50 percent of the cost increase.

III. **ANALYSIS:** The Fire Cadet training program benefits students exploring a career in public safety but also has the potential to benefit MCFRS by creating a pipeline for recruitment directly into the workforce. As a result, the Cadet Training program could cultivate a more diversified pool of qualified MCFRS recruits if the diversity of program participants reflects the diversity of the school system. The following table provides demographic data for the MCPS student population, of which students of color comprise the majority.

MCPS Student Demographics

	Student race and ethnicity
14.1%	Asian
21.9%	Black or African American
≤ 5.0%	American Indian or Alaskan Native
33.4%	Hispanic/Latino
≤ 5.0%	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
25.3%	White
5.0%	Two or more races

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools. Our Schools at a Glance. October 2023.
<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/district/about/ataglance20231106.pdf>

In 2022, the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) completed an equity assessment of MCFRS. The report, *Building Organizational Capacity for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Fire and Rescue Service*, provides recommendations on the infrastructure required to apply an equity lens to decision-making, the training necessary to change institutional culture related to DEI, and the community engagement needed to inform MCFRS’s vision of equity and related goals.¹ The NAPA report underscored the need for MCFRS to reflect the diversity of the communities it serves and prioritize equity and inclusion, stating, “a diverse, equitable, and inclusive fire and rescue service strengthens community ties. When the rescuers reflect the community and are culturally competent in its needs, the partnerships between fire and rescue services and the community improve even more.”

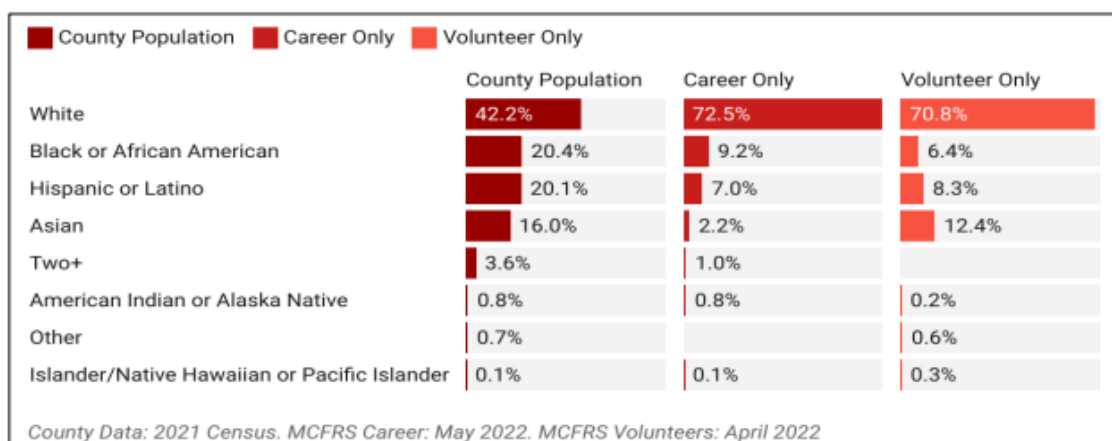
The NAPA equity assessment identified the following benefits that the fire service would yield by focusing on DEI:

- The ability to better achieve mission/service delivery;
- Improved partnership with the community;
- Greater recruitment and retention; and
- overall increase in employee engagement and experience.

¹ National Academy of Public Administration for the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service. September 2022. *Building Organizational Capacity for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Fire and Rescue Service*. Available at: <https://napawash.org/academy-studies/mcfrs-comprehensive-equity-assessment>.

The MCFRS Cadet Training Program could support these goals. Tracking towards the MCFRS workforce and incoming recruit class demographic data would help monitor progress toward these goals. The NAPA report provided the following demographic data for MCFRS personnel, which shows that less than a quarter of the Department's workforce identified as BIPOC in 2022. Additionally, the report found that less than 10% of MCFRS personnel are female. NAPA recommended that MCFRS work regularly with the Office of Human Resources to produce periodic reports on all aspects of the employee lifecycle.²

Figure 19. Race and Ethnicity (2020) - Montgomery County vs MCFRS workforce



Source: National Academy of Public Administration

Finally, details are unclear regarding the Cadet Training program's implementation and its impact on the overall diversity of incoming MCFRS recruit classes. In the 2024/2025 cadet class, 56.4% of the students are non-white, and 46% are female. However, it's unclear whether the recruiting class and retained officers will reflect those demographics. More information about the program's outreach strategies and efforts to understand and address potential barriers to program participation and recruit conversion for BIPOC or low-income students would help to clarify how effectively this program could support MCFRS' diversity goals as well as enable career and economic opportunities for all interested MCPS students. The FY24 Operating Budget for the Department funded a dedicated FTE for DEI functions, which will hopefully bolster the department's efforts to maintain the Cadet Training Program and diversify the MCFRS workforce.

cc: Gary Cooper, Acting Chief, Fire and Rescue Services
 Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

² IBID.