Budget Equity 101

The Budget Equity Tool

Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion FY2023

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Introduction to Budget Equity Tool

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County 's **Budget Equity Tool** (BET) is a way to integrate equity into departmental policies, practices, and program developments and their corresponding budget needs. This tool can help departments develop targeted and data-driven strategies and practices that can promote racial and economic equity and improve service performance for every Nashvillian. The tool is designed to determine whether budget allocations advance equitable outcomes for residents and Metro employees, measure the impact of budget decisions in terms of burdens or benefits for specific communities, and overall improve performance and service delivery for each department.

Equity is a key guiding principle for this year's overall budgeting process. Equity within government refers to fair practices and policies that ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities while acknowledging and addressing past and present structural inequalities. Equity and **equality** are distinct. Equality means treating everyone as if their experiences are the same. Equity acknowledges and addresses past and present structural inequities that advantage some over others. Nashville is a uniquely diverse city. To feel the positive impact of this diversity, the City must continuously reassess and adjust its equity and inclusion efforts.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion supports the budge equity through development of the tool, training and technical assistance for its completion, reviewal each departments completed BET, and subsequent feedback. The BET is the first step in integrating equity in the budget decision making process and one of many ways departments can work with the Office of DEI.

The BET is a set of three strategies and corresponding questions that will guide departments to identify and articulate its equity priorities and how to implement them. Each department will submit their complete responses to each question to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through the online submission platform. The BET asks each department to analyze budget decisions and identify what comprehensive ways departments can prioritize equity.

Budget Equity Tool Strategies

Strategy One	Strategy Two	Strategy Three
Adopt an Equity Lens	Be Data-driven	Promote Assessment and Accountability

Budget Equity Strategies

1. Adopt an Equity Lens

This first strategy evaluates if budget decisions and modification anticipate any potential burdens or benefits to historically underserved communities. These communities include populations who share a particular characteristic and geographic communities who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in any part our city's economic, social, and civic life. Applying an equity lens to the budget process requires departments to evaluate how specific groups benefit or face burdens based on budget modifications. These changes can affect both the residents who utilize a department's services, the contractors or outside stakeholders departments might work with, or staff within a department. The questions for this strategy will facilitate how to internalize an equity lens into the budget process and department operations.

2. Be Data-driven

When applied through an equity lens, being data-driven specifically refers to using population-level data and demographic and economic indicators to understand how budget decisions impact different parts of the city. Each department will identify the necessary data and plan to collect to support your department's equity goals. Disaggregated data (data that looks at separate population groups) and spatial data are the most powerful utilities in understanding which neighborhoods, geographic areas, populations, or employees are most impacted by the budget. The questions here will help departments ensure high-quality and equitable services for all residents.

3. Promote Assessment and Accountability

The final strategy requires departments to develop a way to evaluate if equity goals are met or progressing is being made. An attainable equity plan will build off the other two strategies and provide a framework for accurate and manageable assessment. Each department needs to set concrete milestones and measure progress on department equity goals. The budget is an opportunity to state the department's values and priorities. Proper assessment and subsequent accountability will help departments adhere to these values and realize departmental priorities.

Instructions

1. **Complete one Budget Equity Tool and limit responses to the space provided.**

    Each department will submit one tool. If a department has multiple divisions, consolidate the responses in one submission. A complete tool will address all aspects of the questions, utilizing the examples within the questions to guide the responses. Each tool must be submitted to the Budget Equity Tool submission portal. JIS users should submit the tool by email to Andrea Blackman and copy Sneh Patel and Michelle Boudreaux. The deadline for submission is February 11, 2022.

2. **Contact the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for any questions related to the BET.**

    Departments need to reach out to the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion if they have any questions about the BET. We will be reviewing each tool and making recommendations on adjustments or resubmissions that are necessary. Each department will also need to submit an articulation of how each budget investment furthers equity. Our office is available to assist each department with this portion of the budget process as well.

3. **Utilize internal and external data sources to collect population-level data.**

    Department-specific and disaggregated can guide each department in determining the impact of proposed policies, plans, and budgetary decisions. Below are a list of internal and external data sources.

Nashville sources:	**External sources:**
Nashville Open Data Portal	American Community Survey
NashvilleMaps	US Census Bureau Data Equity Tools
Office of Performance Management	National Equity Atlas
Davidson County Demographic Atlas	Racial Equity GIS Hub
DEI Office Equity Dashboards	Statistical Atlas

Strategy One: Adopt an Equity Lens

1. In what targeted ways will your department use the budgeting process to advance equity? (This can include adjustments in staffing, providing diversity, equity, and inclusion training opportunities for staff, or a commitment to delivering programs, services, research or other actions with a focus on reducing disparities experience in your department and the services provided) to the public.

The Community Oversight Board (COB) serves diverse communities and explicitly takes an equity approach in our work. The FY23 budget from the COB includes requests for several new positions that will enhance our services and build the department's ability to serve residents. In 2021, 48% of complainants were Black or African American, 30% were White, 11% were Asian, and 11% were two or more races. These demographics reflect the fact that people of color are more likely to have police contact. Improving the COB's investigative services will assist with providing equitable services. Additionally, the COB issues policy reports aiming to make the police department and criminal justice system more equitable and transparent to the community. Our budget request aims to build the COB's capacity, improve transparency to the community, and enhance internal management procedures.

Four of the eleven positions build on the COB's capacity to conduct fair, timely, and traumainformed investigations into police misconduct. This includes two investigators, one social worker, and one legal assistant. Two additional investigators will be requested in FY24. These roles will directly improve services that are disproportionately requested by people of color and lower-income individuals who have the highest risk of police contact.

Two positions are focused on transparency to the community. A public information coordinator will improve communication to community members. A professional specialist focused on license plate reader audits and body-worn camera audits will help inform the community of any concerns related to these technologies.

Three of the positions are to improve internal management of departmental functions. A special assistant to the director will play a key role in supervising research and auditing staff. An administrative services manager will supervise the community liaison, public information coordinator, administrative assistant, and social worker. An executive assistant will assist the executive director in managing schedules and documents so that the department can be more efficient. These additional roles will ensure that staff can focus on oversight responsibilities rather than other administrative functions that are currently distributed across the department.

Together, these positions will build the services that the COB provides to the community and allow the COB to meet the growing demands of the community.

Strategy One: Adopt an Equity Lens

2. What persistent gaps or limitations in your overall budget could inhibit your department's ability to advance racial and economic equity? (This can include funding limitations outside the department's control, time constraints, or recognition that current funding is not adequate to address the extent and impact of racial and economic disparities.)

One limitation is that the staffing budget has not been adjusted in the first three years of the COB's work and as the demand for services have increased, the timeliness of investigative findings has been a challenge to maintain. From FY20 to FY22, MNPD's budget grew nearly 12% while the COB's budget grew under 2%. As a result, individuals who are seeking misconduct investigations do not receive timely closure related to their traumatic experience with the police department. It also results in police officers having to wait for outcomes of investigations against them. The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement recommends that oversight budgets are indexed to the police budget and that the oversight budget should be at least 1% of the police budget.

The demographics of individuals making complaints of police misconduct reflect the disproportionate impact of policing on communities of color, in particular on Black or African American communities. Having too few investigators means that the COB is not able to provide timely services, as we would like to do.

Strategy One: Adopt an Equity Lens

3. Describe what strategies your Department recommends to reduce the impact of barriers to or changes in services for low-income and communities of color. (This can include a reduction in funds for services, lack of service accessibility for those with limited/no internet access, vehicle access, or limited English speaking-ability).

The COB aims to reduce barriers to accessing our services as much as possible. We aim to have at least one new investigator be bilingual (English-Spanish) so that we can better serve Spanish-speaking communities. We are also evaluating whether our office space is in an accessible location to community members and whether being in the same building as the District Attorney could make our office less accessible.

An administrative services manager overseeing the community liaison and public information coordinator will develop a strategic outreach plan that will prioritize reaching low-income and communities of color.

Strategy Two: Be Data-Driven

4. What are specific programs, policies, practices, and structures within your overall budget and improvement requests that can address historical and recent instances of racial and economic inequity? (Please include the data sources and indicators for the wellbeing of the community, such as gauging quality of life, sustainability, performance, or healthiness, that you referenced to identify these racial and/ or economic inequities.)

There are at least three areas in the COB's budget request that will address historic and recent instances of racial and economic inequality. First, the addition of a social worker will build the COB's ability to conduct needs assessments and connect complainants to services that will assist with resource needs. Research shows that police contact is disproportionately experienced by people of color, individuals with mental health concerns, substance use disorders, unstable housing or financial situations, and those living in economically distressed areas. If more vulnerable people are having contact with police, the risk of police misconduct is also greater. Several recent studies by Florida State University sociologists (McFarland et. al 2018) and a Vanderbilt doctoral dissertation (Vielehr 2019) found that in a 2011-2014 survey of Black residents in Nashville, those who report being unfairly treated by police also have shorter telomeres (a biomarker of aging and chronic health risk) and more depressive symptoms than those without unfair police treatment. The researchers argue that the stress of unfair police conduct has long-lasting physiological and psychological impact. The COB's social worker will aim to connect individuals to resources that will intervene early so that police misconduct will not undermine wellbeing.

The second area that will address inequality is improving the timeliness of police misconduct investigations by adding two investigators and a legal assistant. Complainants who come to the COB often have had an encounter with a police officer--a Metro Government official--who has violated their trust in government. Conducting timely and fair investigations is a step toward rebuilding their trust with the city. In 2021, the investigations closed by the COB were open for an average of 485 days. While there were a number of reasons for investigative delays, a primary goal of the budget request is to improve services for residents and complete investigations within 60 days.

The final area that the COB budget request addresses is trust and accountability through the addition of a professional specialist who will focus audits of body worn cameras and license plater readers. According to the 2021 Vanderbilt Nashville poll, 79% of Whites, 81% of Hispanics, and 63% of Blacks approved of MNPD. The increased mistrust of the police department among Black residents is rooted in historical and recent inequality. Gideon's Army's Driving While Black report showed that MNPD was disproportionately stopping and searching Black drivers and, according to the Policing Project, that disproportionate impact had no effect on serious crimes. The COB aims to ensure that police department technology programs that the city invested in have appropriate oversight and audits. The budget request for the professional specialist will allow the COB to actively oversee body worn cameras and license plate readers, identify areas of improvement, and communicate to the community about the efficacy of those programs.

Strategy Two: Be Data-Driven

5. Describe ways that your department used or will use racial and economic data to prioritize and develop criteria for resource distribution. What additional demographic data will your department collect, track, and analyze to assess equity impacts in the community moving forward and for future budget decisions?

Currently, the COB collects race, ethnicity, gender, and address data on all complainants. We have had discussions about whether and how to collect socioeconomic status (SES) data from complainants without the questions potentially making the individual feel stigmatized. The addition of a social worker who would complete more thorough needs and resource assessments of an individuals' circumstances could provide an avenue for SES data collection. An additional consideration is balancing thorough data collection with the fact that all data becomes an identifiable public record.

Our current data allows the COB to publish a monthly statistical report that reports on complainant demographics.

Strategy Two: Be Data-Driven

6. How will your department use targeted data to help inform recruitment, retention, and promotion efforts for staff of color, including executive, supervisory, and entry-level staff and part-time and field staff?

Metro Human Relations Commission's most recent Inclucivics report listed the COB as the most racially diverse department in the Metropolitan Government. In the December 2020 report, 80% of the COB staff were people of color. Recruiting and retaining a diverse staff is a priority for the COB because it is essential for building trust with the residents the COB serves. There is room for improvement in the COB's hiring. For instance, only one person in the office speaks Spanish and there are currently no Spanishspeaking investigators. Recruiting a Spanish-speaking investigator would enable the COB to better serve residents with limited English proficiency who are Spanish-speaking.

Strategy Three: Promote Assessment and Accountability

7. How will your proposed budget enhance your department's ability to engage with and include historically and recently neglected communities? How will that engagement be assessed and who will be a part of this self-assessment process? (This engagement can include improving leadership opportunities in government and community organizations, targeting community meetings, attracting diverse stakeholders, and increasing community outreach efforts.)

In addition to the additional investigative resources, the COB's proposed budget includes a public information coordinator to supplement our community liaison. In the three years since the COB was established, it has become clear that there are two distinct roles needed for community engagement: one to focus on outreach to community groups and presentations to the community and another that is focused on public information through social and traditional media. Each has a unique skill set necessary to be successful and together they will be able to provide additional transparency to the community and neglected communities. The two roles would be supervised by an administrative services manager who would ensure that appropriate data is tracked and that underrepresented communities are prioritized for community engagement.

Currently, the COB tracks two performance metrics for community outreach: number of events and total residents reached. The COB is in the process of hiring a community liaison and the budget request includes a public information coordinator and administrative services manager. These three roles will develop additional metrics in their outreach and engagement strategy to measure outreach equity.

Strategy Three: Promote Assessment and Accountability

8. How will your department allocate funding to ensure public documents, policies, meetings, etc. are readily accessible to the public, including the translation of documents to Spanish, ASL, and other languages. Does your department have funding or resources for interpretation services in all relevant places and programs (such as service desks, service phone lines, public meetings, job postings, etc.)?

Language access is a deficit for the COB that needs to be improved. The previous community liaison had started the process to have outreach materials translated but she resigned before any documents were translated. The COB had identified a portion of the outreach and education budget to use for translation services but there is no funding specifically reserved for translation.

The COB has also been evaluating whether there is complaint software that could improve language access for filing a complaint. Investigators use a language hot line to have conversations with nonEnglish-speaking complainants and at least one of the requested investigator positions will be bilingual.

Language access is an area where the COB would like to offer better resources to the community. Assistance would be welcomed for strategies and funding to improve language access.

Strategy Three: Promote Assessment and Accountability

9. How will the department ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate the equity impact of budget modifications? How will the department measure outreach to underserved communities?

Currently, the COB reports seven key performance indicators to the Mayor's office: three related to investigations, two on community engagement, and two on non-complaint calls from the community. For community engagement, MNCO tracks the number of community engagement events and the number of residents reached through community engagement. Additional metrics can be added to outreach tracking to ensure that we are measuring where outreach takes place and whether the group is affiliated with undeserved communities.

MNCO issues a monthly statistical report that shows the zip code of complainants and the complainant demographics. This information is helpful for understanding the areas impacted and served by the COB.

Next Steps

Start conversations about equity within your department and the execution of its mission.

Revisit the budget equity tool to gauge progress being made.

Continuously be on the look-out for ways to integrate equity practices into your department.

Utilize the DEI office to assist your department in achieving its equity goals.

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The office of DEI is here to answer any additional questions about the Budget Equity Tool or general questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion. There is also a training video and further information on the tool available on the Office of Management and Budget's SharePoint as well as the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's website.

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