



# 2021 Racial Equity Report

City of Milwaukee Office of Equity and Inclusion

## Introduction

2021 marked the Office of Equity and Inclusion's first year of operation. As a new office, our focus has been to develop resources to normalize racial equity in city government and create a framework to institutionalize the city's racial equity work. As we build this foundation and structure, we recognize that departments throughout city government have and continue to implement programs and initiatives to advance racial equity. While we do not attempt to summarize those efforts here, they are vital as we move forward as a city. This report highlights OEI's citywide racial equity work over the past year in the following areas:

## Capacity & Coordination

Building internal capacity and coordination to advance racial

equity

### **Policies & Practices**

Addressing policies and practices that may contribute to racial disparities and inequities

### **Racial Equity Framework**

Using a shared racial equity framework, tools, and analysis for decision making

### **Community Partnerships**

Strengthening relationships with community and stakeholders

## **I. Capacity & Coordination**

### **Racial equity training for city employees**

Ensuring that city leaders and staff have a shared understanding of key racial equity concepts, terms, and history is a necessary first step in advancing racial equity in city government. In 2021, 126 city employees and elected officials participated in a 14-hour, four-session racial equity leadership training through YWCA Southeastern Wisconsin. The training, based on YWCA's Unlearning Racism series, is designed to:

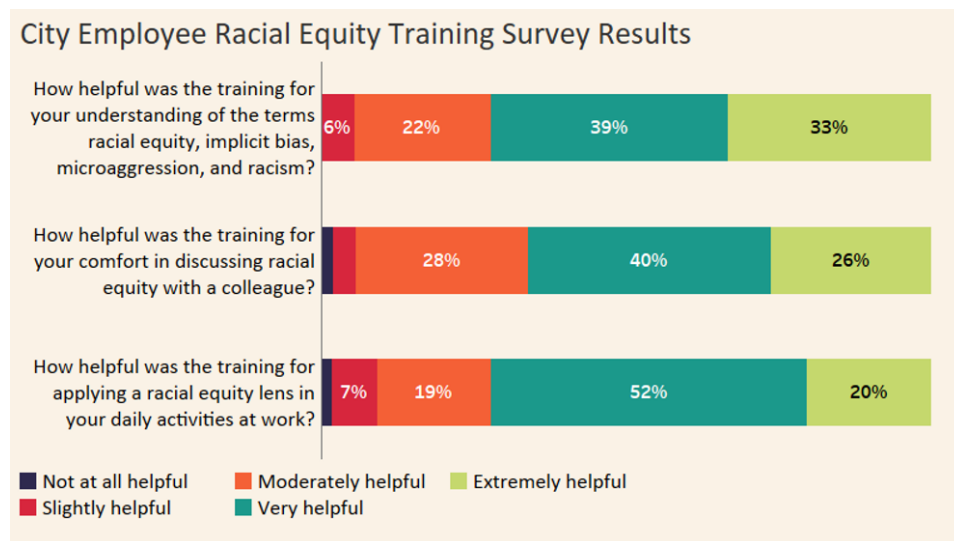


- Increase participant's understanding of the history and impact of racism on our city to better understand and address racial equity.
- Find common language and resources essential to building collaborative actions toward using a

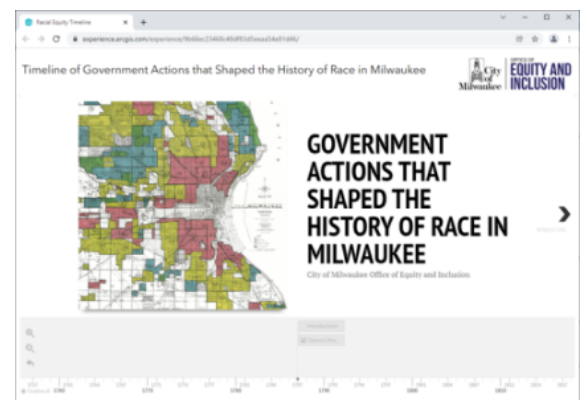
racial equity framework in all aspects of city work.

- Support leadership to build capacity to analyze their work and department plans, service delivery, policies and practices with a racial equity lens.

Many participants noted that one of the most valuable aspects of the training was the opportunity to discuss their own experiences and issues related to racial equity with other city employees. In addition, a majority of individuals who participated in the training and completed a post-training survey indicated that the training was helpful for their understanding of racial equity terms, their comfort in discussing racial equity with a colleague, and applying a racial equity lens in their daily work.



**Racial Equity Timeline:** Because history plays a vital role in our shared understanding of racial equity, OEI created an [interactive timeline](#) that focuses on explicit race-specific government actions at the federal, state, and local levels that have impacted the City of Milwaukee over the last 200 years. The timeline is designed to acknowledge and highlight the role of government in creating and maintaining racial inequities in



OEI Interactive Racial Equity Timeline

Milwaukee and it has been incorporated into the YWCA training materials for city employees.

## Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI) Leadership Team

The city's REI Leadership Team provides a space and a structure for planning and coordinating racial equity work across city government. The team is made up of two representatives (with at least one manager-level position) from each city department. Since forming in December 2020, the team has met monthly to share department initiatives and citywide updates.

At a department level, REI Leadership Team members regularly report out on racial equity efforts and activities that may be of interest to the broader group. For example, DCD Planning staff held a lunch and learn to share their experiences using a racial equity tool to reduce barriers to participation in DCD's neighborhood planning process. The presentation and discussion allowed other city departments to hear a first-hand account of how to apply a racial equity tool to a department process.



At a city level, REI Leadership Team members play a key role in implementing racial equity initiatives across city government. As OEI began a citywide racial equity assessment and planning process, the REI Leadership Team was involved in reviewing and refining an assessment form for departments to use to assess the current status of their racial equity work. Moving forward, the REI Leadership Team will continue to play a role in the city's racial equity assessment and planning process.

## II. Policies & Practices

### Racial equity assessment and planning process

In order to implement a plan to advance racial equity in city government, it is important to assess the culture, structure, and practices within city departments and across the organization as a whole. To do this, OEI has developed a racial equity assessment and planning process that started in 2021 and will continue into 2022. The process is consistent with Common Council File 201192, which directs OEI to cooperate with the City Clerk Inspector General in conducting a racial equity audit of all city departments. A summary of the process is shown below.



Racial Equity Assessment and Planning Process

**Racial equity assessment:** In December 2021 each city department was asked to complete a racial equity assessment. The assessment is a series of questions designed to assist department staff in assessing racial equity within their department. It was developed using examples from other cities, organizations, and resources from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) with input from the city's REI Leadership Team. It includes six areas of focus: (1) commitment, (2) leadership and management, (3) workforce, (4) budgeting and contracting, (5) community access, involvement and partnership, and (6) data and evaluation. The assessments will be used to provide a foundation for departments to develop racial equity action plans.

**Racial equity employee survey:** To assess the knowledge, skills, and experiences of city employees related to race and equity, OEI is partnering with Marquette University's Center for Urban Research, Teaching & Outreach (CURTO) to administer a racial equity employee survey. The survey was developed by GARE and has been implemented by local governments throughout the country. CURTO will administer the survey, collect the responses, and provide OEI with a summary report in spring 2022.

## **Disparity Study**

The city has engaged Griffin & Strong, P.C to conduct a disparity study to determine whether there is a disparity between the percentage of minority and women owned firms that are available to provide goods and services to the city and the city's utilization of those firms. The study began in January 2021 and is anticipated to conclude in the summer of 2022. Griffin & Strong will prepare a final report of its research findings and recommendations to the City of Milwaukee regarding the inclusion of minority and women-owned firms in its procurement process.

## **III. Racial Equity Framework**

### **Racial equity tools**

Racial equity tools are a recognized best practice for operationalizing racial equity in local government. A racial equity tool is a set of questions that incorporates racial equity into the decision-making process. The tool is both a process and a product and the earlier it is used, the more valuable it is. By using racial equity tools throughout city government, we can help to ensure that racial equity is consistently integrated into decision-making processes.

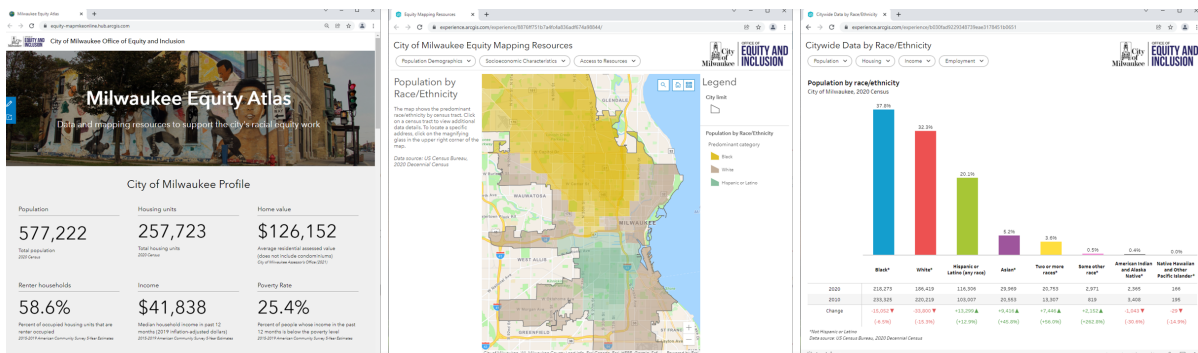
OEI's first experience implementing a citywide racial equity tool occurred when the federal government allocated \$394 million to the City of Milwaukee through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). In the spring of 2021 OEI developed a set of questions for city departments to use in developing and submitting ARPA funding requests. The questions covered four key areas: (1) setting equitable outcomes, (2) analyzing data, (3) advancing opportunity or minimizing harm, and (4) evaluation, communication and accountability.

### Data-driven approach

Data plays a central role in OEI's racial equity work, from understanding current conditions and existing inequities to measuring outcomes and evaluating progress. In 2021 OEI developed a collection of data and mapping resources to support the city's racial equity work. A selection of those resources is highlighted below.

**City Employee Workforce Dashboard:** The dashboard presents data on City of Milwaukee employees by race/ethnicity, gender, generation, job category, and department.

**Milwaukee Equity Atlas:** The Milwaukee Equity Atlas provides a central location to house the city's racial equity data and mapping resources. The site includes commonly referenced data on population, housing, income, and employment by race/ethnicity as well as maps on population demographics, socioeconomic characteristics, and access to resources.



Examples of OEI Data and Mapping Resources

## IV. Community Partnerships

### Community engagement

Community engagement is an important part of building racial equity into the decision-making process. OEI has recently started to identify opportunities to establish shared language and foundations around community engagement across city government. In late 2020, the City of Milwaukee applied for and was accepted into the National League of Cities - Cities of Opportunity Action Cohort, a year-long program for municipal leaders to advance equity through comprehensive policy and systems change. The Milwaukee team included city staff in DOA, OEI, DCD, MHD and community partners from United Way of Greater Milwaukee, Take Root Milwaukee, and Legal Action of Wisconsin, with participation from former Mayor Tom Barrett.

As a part of the Cities of Opportunity cohort, the city has worked towards building foundations of authentic community engagement in city government with the support of a technical assistance grant from the National League of Cities and consultants from Consilience Group, LLC. This work has continued into 2022.