



Policy Memorandum

To: City of Milwaukee Common Council – Community and Economic Development Committee and Mr. Mario Higgins, Community Development Block Grants Director

From: Ritchie T. Martin, Jr., Milwaukee LGBT Community Center

Date: November 3, 2025

Subject: Gaps in the 2026 Proposed Funding Allocation Plan (FAP) and Policy Recommendations for Sustained, Equitable Funding

Executive Summary

Milwaukee's LGBTQ+ organizations provide essential citywide services, including mental health care, crisis response, youth programming, housing navigation, public safety, and cultural belonging. Yet, these lifelines remain underfunded, dependent on unstable, short-term grants that hinder sustainability.

A review of the City of Milwaukee's 2026 Proposed Funding Allocation Plan (FAP) reveals significant gaps in equity, stability, and inclusion, particularly for LGBTQ+ and intersectional communities. To ensure that Milwaukee's public investment reflects its values of dignity, safety, and equity, the City should establish a Milwaukee Equity Fund, a stable, multi-year mechanism pairing community leadership with fiscal accountability.

Findings: Key Gaps in the 2026 FAP

1. Absence of Dedicated LGBTQ+ Funding Stream

- The plan provides no direct funding allocation for LGBTQ+-specific organizations or youth services.
- Only the HOPWA program (\$1.4M) targets a portion of this community, limited to HIV/AIDS housing support.
- Services such as *Project Q* offered through the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center and other culturally competent youth programs currently lack formal city-backed stability.

2. Over-Reliance on City Departments

- Over \$7.4 million of CDBG allocations are directed to city departments, leaving less than \$5.6 million for community-based programming.

- This limits community control, innovation, and culturally responsive service delivery, particularly among organizations serving BIPOC and LGBTQ+ residents.

3. Reactive Rather Than Preventive Focus

- Funding emphasizes crisis response and code enforcement (e.g., shelters, lead abatement) with minimal support for prevention, early intervention, or mental health stabilization.
- The absence of investment in preventive models perpetuates higher downstream costs and systemic inequities.

4. Lack of Multi-Year Stability and Accountability

- The current annual grant cycle undermines long-term planning, staff retention, and data-driven evaluation.
- There is no community-led governance structure to oversee equity outcomes or performance metrics.

5. Insufficient Data Transparency

- The FAP includes no disaggregated demographic reporting by race, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- Without equity metrics, the City cannot evaluate whether resources are reaching its most vulnerable residents.

Policy Recommendations

1. Establish a Milwaukee LGBTQ Equity Fund

Create a multi-year, city-backed fund to provide stable, accountable support for LGBTQ+ community organizations delivering critical services in housing, health, youth leadership, and safety.

- **Purpose:** Move from survival-based funding to long-term sustainability.
- **Structure:** City-administered funds with community-led advisory board and annual public reporting.
- **Model:** Draws on municipal equity funding models in Seattle, Minneapolis, and Chicago.

2. Integrate Equity and Inclusion Metrics into FAP Reporting

- Require annual demographic outcome data disaggregated by race, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- Adopt an Equity Scorecard framework to evaluate how allocations address systemic disparities.

3. Expand Public Service Funding for Community-Based Organizations

- Increase the share of Public Service allocations directed to community-based, culturally competent nonprofits from 15% to at least 25%.
- Prioritize youth, mental health, and identity-affirming programs that prevent homelessness and violence.

4. Implement Multi-Year Grant Commitments

- Allow qualified community-based organizations to receive 3-year renewable awards contingent on performance and data reporting.
- Stabilize staffing and improve outcomes through predictable, long-term support.

5. Create a Community Equity Advisory Board

- Establish a co-governance model to oversee the Equity Fund and provide public accountability.
- Include representation from LGBTQ+, BIPOC, housing, health, and youth sectors.

Milwaukee's progress toward equity requires that its budget reflect its values. The 2026 FAP, while meeting federal requirements, does not yet meet the City's moral imperative for equitable, inclusive investment.

By establishing a Milwaukee Equity Fund, integrating data-driven equity metrics, and embedding multi-year stability for community partners, the City can transform reactive funding into proactive equity-based development, ensuring that all Milwaukee residents are not just visible, but valued.

Respectfully,

Ritchie T. Martin, Jr., Executive Director

Milwaukee LGBT Community Center

Email: Rmartin@mkelgbt.org | Phone: 262-744-8536