

BUDGETING FOR EQUITY

In February 2020, the Indianapolis City-County Council unanimously adopted a Special Resolution directing City and County departments and other agencies to use all available tools to assist in the elimination of racial and social disparities in Indianapolis and to promote equity within the City-County workplace and in delivery of City-County services.

“Equality” is enshrined in our country’s founding documents as one of the highest ideals in American culture, but an individual’s race is nevertheless predictive of success on broad collection of indicators of well-being, including health, education, criminal justice involvement, physical environment, employment, and economic economy. The distinction between equality and equity is important to ensure public policy and resources are directed appropriately. Equity is not achieved by treating everyone equally; rather, eliminating racial and social disparities requires that policies are implemented and resources distributed in a way that justly addresses the underlying issues and needs of underserved and vulnerable populations among us.

In the coming year, the Indianapolis City-County Council will implement a process through which racial equity data is incorporated into budget planning for every city and county department. Ultimately, the Council expects the process to become a tool that creates:

- A critical thinking opportunity that helps analyze how are Departments are accounting for impacts on marginalized communities
- A means to help the City communicate how Departments are integrating equity into budgeting
- A structured way to apply equity to decision-making processes around resource allocation, and
- A formal approach to operationalizing equity within the City-County government’s existing processes.

The Council’s intent for 2020 budget hearings is to normalize the conversation around racial equity and allocation of resources, with the goal of learning what plans will be put in place to address existing disparities. Regardless of what current data might indicate, collecting it illuminates our common path forward.

To gather baseline information and lay the foundation for the work to come in the coming year(s), Department heads and other presenters will be asked to address the questions below in presentation of 2021 budget proposals to the Council. For each question/ group of questions, articulate the specific metrics you will use to measure progress. Alternatively, describe your plan to identify these metrics.

- 1) In what ways does your proposed 2021 budget advance racial equity, both in the community and within your own department?
- 2) In the context of your Department, how would you define “success” in advancing racial equity? What are the areas/programs where your Department has had some success or has significant potential to succeed in building racial equity? What are the areas/programs that present a challenge in terms of equity?
- 3) In the coming year, what disaggregated demographic data will your Department collect, track, and evaluate to assess equity impacts and inform your future budget decisions? Examples could include: licenses or permits issued/denied, professional development or advancement opportunities granted/denied, fine or fee enforcement/forgiveness, etc. (please contact the Office of Audit & Performance for assistance with this question).
The Council’s (forthcoming) “Equity Map” is another model.
- 4) What is the racial makeup of your Department’s staff? What is the racial make-up of your management team? What is the breakdown of compensation and level of authority by race, gender, and educational attainment?
- 5) Where and how do you plan to recruit diverse candidates for future vacancies? If applicable, how will these efforts differ from years past?
- 6) How does your current spending reflect efforts to address equity (procurement/contracting/etc.)? Have you engaged the Office of Minority & Women’s Business Development to establish and meet contracting goals? If so, do you regularly provide reports to OMWBD? If applicable, what steps will you take to build capacity of minority-owned firms to participate in procurement or contracting with your Department?
- 7) In the coming year, how will community members, including communities of color and low-income communities, be consulted to identify programming and/or service needs for your Department?