



# Racial Equity & Social Justice

One aspect of advancing this work involves analyzing resource allocations that form the structures—programs, policies, practices, and procedures—that can either worsen or improve racially disparate outcomes across the County. Our goal is to identify these disparities, reduce them, and ultimately create structures that eliminate their existence and prevent disparities from emerging in the future.

To this end, and in accordance with Bill 27-19, Administration - Human Rights - Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice - Racial Equity and Social Justice Committee Established, the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) developed a Budget Equity Tool to support departments and decision makers in applying a racial equity lens to the development of the County Executive's FY25 Recommended Operating Budget. This tool, related trainings, and reports, have helped to assess the strength of the County's commitment to and implementation of its guiding racial equity framework, adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), to normalize, organize, and operationalize for racial equity and social justice. This framework guides jurisdictions across the country in navigating the changes required to advance racial equity and social justice.



ORESJ highlighted—with its structured analysis—areas of strength and opportunity related to how the FY25 recommended operating budget enables the County's commitment to advancing racial equity and social justice. FY25 resources continue to help the County build its racial equity and social justice infrastructure, with departments across the County targeting resources towards:

- **Allocating or supporting the use of staff time for capacity building activities**
- **Allocating resources for relevant professional development, such as participation in GARE Conferences and trainings**
- **Designating staff resources to organize and lead the department's commitment to advancing racial equity and social justice**
- **Identifying areas of strength and opportunity in recruiting retaining and advance of a diverse and representative workforce**
- **Using or creating department-specific racial equity tools or maps**

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These targeted investments mean that while the County continues to carry out its core business it will strengthen staff knowledge and capacity to apply a racial equity lens to program design, collecting and analyzing data, utilizing best practices and research, and involving the community in program development. With this growing capacity, County Government will also be able to reflect on areas of opportunity, where changes to policy or process can help remove barriers, enable greater transparency and accountability, and drive more equitable outcomes for communities most burdened by structural racism and other inequities.

While many programs in the County help to fill gaps created by structural inequities, a few programs stand out for taking concrete steps to reduce the following racial disparities and gaps:

- **Department of Environmental Protection - Energy, Climate, and Compliance** - Gaps in access to the resources necessary to shape climate resilience and adaptability within communities that are most vulnerable (BIPOC, Low-income, disabled, and elderly residents) to climate hazards and related health and economic costs.
- **Department of Environmental Protection - Conservation Corps** - Racial disparities in rates of unemployment; gaps in access to education and skill-building opportunities for green jobs; disproportionate juvenile intake among Black and Latino youth.
- **Department of Health and Human Services - Aging and Disability** - Racial disparities and inequities in health outcomes due to systemic housing inequities and related economic insecurity (historical and current discrimination in employment, housing, and financial systems), specifically amongst older Black women.
- **Department of Housing and Community Affairs - Housing Code Enforcement** - Gaps in housing-related health hazards, energy burdens, and associated costs; disproportionate rates of rental housing cost burden among households identified as Black, Latino, and Other.
- **Department of Recreation Community & Neighborhood Centers** - Racial disparities and inequities in health and criminal justice system outcomes while also increasing a sense of connectedness, particularly amongst low-income BIPOC children, youth, and older adults
- **Technology and Business Enterprise Solutions - Office of Broadband Programs and Infrastructure Modernization** - Racial disparities in rates of unemployment; racial disparities in High School graduation rates college degree attainment; racial disparities in percent of population without or only a High School Degree or GED; racial disparities in certain disease mortality rates; racial disparities in internet access
- **Montgomery County Police Department - Police Cadet Program Expansion** - Racial disparities in recruitment and retention, with the potential to contribute to strategies aimed at reducing disproportionate rates of arrest among Black and Latino residents.

Overall, this budget provides resources for the County to expand its emerging commitment to and implementation of the RESJ Act. It supports County Government in building the skills and competencies necessary to identify and address racial and ethnic disparities across issue areas, at the same time providing resources for programs that help to fill gaps created by structural inequities.

**FY25 Approved** Budget includes:

Departments and Non-Departmental Accounts (NDAs) **not reviewed by ORESJ, but have the potential to advance racial equity and social justice:**

#### Office of Grants Management

- Funding to provide training for County employees on grant writing to allow for a stronger integration of racial equity and social justice into all aspects of the County grant management practices.

#### Office of Food System Resilience

- In FY23, established the Office of Food System Resilience to coordinate food resilience efforts with community

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partners, government agencies, and regional partners to develop and implement interagency budgetary, regulatory, and operational strategies to build a more equitable, efficient, resilient, and sustainable food system in Montgomery County.

- Provide million in funding to support the Food Staples Program

### Department of Health and Human Services

- Include \$3.0 million for Service Consolidation Hubs throughout the County to meet the needs of the community.
- Funding to continue services that was previously funded by a grant to provide psychiatric services in shelters
- Include \$2.5 million in funding to address overflow sheltering in hotels
- Allocate funding for the recruitment and retention of bilingual staff to support the Linkages to Learning clients
- Funding to support the Summer SNAP Food Program in alleviating food hunger
- Funding for the dental program to meet the increased demand
- Subsidize funding for dedicated nurses for new community schools
- Continue housing-related emergency services that was previously funded by eRAP (Federal Emergency Assistance Rental Program)

### Department of Housing and Community Affairs

- Continue to leverage Federal grants including the Community Development Block Grant, the HOME Investment Partnership Grant, and the Emergency Solutions Grant to provide affordable housing, housing rehabilitation, commercial revitalization, focused neighborhood assistance, public services, and prevent homelessness.
- Provide \$56 million for the Montgomery Housing Initiative fund to continue various programs and projects dedicated to creating and preserving affordable housing and related services.
- Fund the new Rent Stabilization Program that establishes maximum allowable rent increases to stabilize rents in the County.
- Continue to actively underwrite affordable housing loans to preserve and produce affordable housing. Three developments for multi-family projects have already been identified for potential funding in FY25. These developments would preserve or produce a total of 655 units, including 357 affordable units.

### Transit Services (Department of Transportation)

- Provide financial support of the Great Seneca Transit Network.

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