



BET FY2023 Theme Analysis

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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Introduction

To gain a holistic assessment of the Budget Equity Tool (BET) responses for FY2023, the responses were submitted to a quantitative analysis. The aim of this analysis was to identify themes and common strategies, resources, or limitations referenced in the responses to the BET questions. As this was the inaugural year of the tool, we asked detailed questions that asked departments to consider several different ways they could or might embed equity into their operations based on their FY2023 budget requests. We received robust answers which formed a baseline to understand equity throughout Metro.

We then performed a thematic analysis of the BET responses. After reviewing the data multiple times, we generated a list of codes to label interesting aspects of the BET responses. We then organized these codes into different themes. Themes were identified for five different frameworks: equity, workforce, language accessibility, data, and outreach. Themes were further categorized as either an inequity, a limitation, or a strength/solution. Inequities refer to barriers that deny residents a full opportunity to participate in aspects of Metro's economic, social, and civic life. Limitations are those that Metro departments have encountered in both external and internal facing equity initiatives. Strengths and/or solutions are existing or planned programs and policies to promote equity both internally and externally.

For each theme, solutions/strengths consistently outnumbered and exhibited greater variation than the limitations. Departments were more open to share their efforts to embed equity in their work, but many were hesitant to go into detail about these limitations and their impacts. While limitations varied across frameworks, two limitations did transcend each framework: lack of funding and the rising cost of living for Metro employees and residents. Similarly, departments cited a lack of funds or resources (both external and internal expenditures) as limiting their ability to combat inequities in the city.

Below is list of themes for each of the frameworks with a short definition of that theme and additional observations of that theme. Themes are listed in descending frequency.

Workforce

We asked departments how they play to advance equity within their department. We also asked what resources they relied on to recruit, retain, and promote a diverse workforce.

Inequities

Increased demand on staff Some departments noted that an increase demand on staff and the pressures this has placed on these employees.

COVID Departments noted the negative impact had on maintaining the workforce. Many positions were not able to perform their duties through remote work which often put extra stress on employees. Departments also noted that private industry, in addition to higher wages, could now offer remote work options for employees which makes it harder to retain and recruit employees.

Cost of living The rising cost of living in Metro, in particular the lack of affordable housing, was mentioned as inequity experienced by many Metro employees.

Lack of car access A few departments noted that many Metro employees do not have access to a private vehicle or rely on public transportation to get to work.

Limitations

Competitive job market Many departments noted the competitive job market, particularly the ability of the other sectors to offer higher salaries and remote work opportunities, as a limitation in recruitment and retaining a diverse workforce. One department specifically cited the impact of COVID on being able to compete for quality job candidates.

Limited funding Departments stated that budget or contractual limitations, lack of funding for additional staffing or competitive salaries, and the general lower salaries for Metro employees limited their ability to retain staff members while Nashville's needs continue to grow.

Small department Several departments described themselves as a small department (15 employees or less). However, most of these departments described themselves as diverse.

Little room for promotion Departments stated that the department structure or organization allowed limited room for promotion of employees. Smaller departments noted this as a limitation.

Metro salary structure/pay plan Some departments stated that the Metro pay structure limits opportunities for promotion or salary increases and subsequently negatively impacts the retention of employees.

High stress job A few departments noted that the nature of the work they performed imposed enormous stress on employees who may also be facing other stresses outside of work.

Non-diverse hiring pool A small number of departments noted that the new candidate pool did not include diverse candidates. One speculated that those candidates with the necessary skills were able to secure higher paying jobs elsewhere mirroring larger trends within that profession.

No time to train employees One department stated they would be able to recruit more diverse candidates if they could provide on the job training but lacked the capacity to do so.

Strengths/Solutions

Diverse workforce Departments overwhelmingly stated the importance of having a workforce that reflected Metro's diversity. Departments either point to the present diversity of their staff or their efforts to recruit and promote diverse candidates. Targeted recruitment and concerted efforts to promote diversity helped achieve these goals. Smaller sized departments did express some difficulty having opportunities to promote staff of color but were able to achieve notable diversity among the staff.

Staff reviews for disparities Departments stated that they performed staff reviews for disparities including gaps in pay. Metro Human Resources and Human Relations were also noted as partners in ensuring workforce diversity.

Metro partners Several departments worked with other Metro departments to recruit more diverse candidates. Primarily, this duty fell to Metro Human Resources. The ODEI was mentioned as a future partner in these efforts as well.

Community partners Many departments worked with community and professional organizations to recruit new employees. These efforts include participation in community events and job fairs as well as working with minority professional organizations and local Chambers of Commerce. Many departments worked with Central HR to connect with community partners.

Workforce needs to reflect community Many departments stated as a value that their workforce needed to reflect the diversity of Davidson County.

Workforce development Departments had policies or programs in place that would aid employees in their professional development through investments in education or training and increase employee retainment. A few departments requested funds for FY2023 to provide employment training or professional development.

Competitive salaries Departments believed they would be able to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce if they could offer salaries comparable to other industries. A small number believed that they currently offered competitive compensation rates (these departments are led by elected officials).

Pipeline programs Some departments have developed or would like to create programs to target, recruit, and support underrepresented employees. These programs often offer workforce experience or apprenticeship opportunities. Most pipeline programs focus on recruitment of students from universities/colleges.

HBCUs Metro departments actively recruit new hires from local and regional HCBUs. Departments targeted these educational institutions more than any other.

Targeted recruitment Departments targeted specific groups or communities for recruitment. This includes recruitment for candidates with specific language skills, targeting specific income areas or reaching out to certain professional organizations.

Job postings on external platforms In addition to governmentjobs.com, departments post job announcements on external platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Handshake, and other social media platforms.

Local colleges and trade schools Departments target local 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities and trade schools to recruit new employees.

Additional staff Departments believed that or made requests for additional staff to promote more equitable work environments and access to services.

Non-traditional recruitment and hiring A few departments stated that they diverged from traditional Metro practices for recruitment and hiring. This includes non-traditional job postings, minimizing certain requirements for positions, allowing for on the job training to make up for skills deficits, or using paper applications along with online applications.

Employee feedback Departments relied on feedback from personnel including employee surveys to improve the workplace environment and employment well-being.

High schools Departments suggested that recruitment efforts may require partnerships with local high schools.

Minimizing requirements Departments stated that they reevaluated minimum requirements for certain positions in terms of required licenses, related work experience, or other requirements that might create barriers for job candidates.

Work from home Few departments were able to implement remote work policies for their employees. However, others cited work from home as something that they made them a competitive employer and thus made it harder to recruit employees.

Diverse hiring panels One strategy, although not common, utilized diverse hiring panels to guard against bias for candidates of specific backgrounds.

Staff networks One department relied on current staff networks to recruit new employees.

Paid internships A few departments noted the importance of paid internships in recruiting underrepresented groups.

Outreach

We asked departments how they would measure outreach to underserved communities and how they plan to engage with historically and recently neglected communities. Similarly, we asked departments how outreach would play a role in ensuring accountability and making department services more accessible to Metro residents.

Inequities

Disadvantaged communities Departments discussed their efforts to reach neglected or disadvantaged communities through outreach and community events.

Expense of parking The price of parking in the downtown area where several Metro departments are located was noted as a barrier for residents to access service or participate in Metro meetings.

Digital divide Lack of internet access, access to a computer or smart phone, and digital literacy gap create barriers for residents to access services.

Nashville's growth Departments stated the need to increase outreach efforts to meet the needs of Nashville's growing population.

Lack of vehicle access Departments cited the need to increase accessibility to department services for residents who might lack ready access to transportation create barriers for some residents to access information or services.

Limitations

COVID impacts COVID (and the need for social distancing) prevented some departments from performing community outreach but many departments are looking to return to pre-COVID levels.

Need to raise awareness of services Departments stated the need to raise awareness of the department's roles and responsibilities as well as what they can offer residents, particularly through community events.

Lack of funds Departments noted they lacked funds or sufficient funds to conduct community outreach at the necessary level.

Strengths/Solutions

Community events Community events were the most frequent mentioned way that departments conducted outreach. The events help to promote the department and create awareness of their services, community engagement and events, public meetings, etc. These community events were also a way for the public to provide feedback to departments or educate the public about county rules and regulations.

Staff designated for outreach Several departments have staff members or divisions whose responsibilities include or center on community engagement. This includes public information coordinators, community liaisons, community outreach teams, and press secretaries.

Targeted outreach Several departments noted that when they often target which communities they focus on for outreach. This includes outreach to programs who might specifically qualify for and benefit from specific programs or efforts to reach underserved communities.

Department website Many departments viewed departmental websites as a form of outreach. Websites are a way to make department information, reports, forms, services, or resources more accessible to the public, especially for residents who may lack private vehicle access, cannot take time off during office hours to access services, or cannot incur the cost of parking downtown.

Community partners A few departments referenced community partnerships as a way to facilitate outreach.

Outreach through advertising A few departments utilized advertisements through radio, printed notices and more to reach constituents.

Metro partners A few departments worked together to do outreach through community events.

Video streaming Video streams (both synchronous and asynchronous) through the MNN Cable, Nashville.gov, or the Metro YouTube channel help make the council meetings more accessible to the public. Here departments touted their role in facilitating video streaming rather than using it.

Transparency Departments named transparency to the public as an important department value. Public dashboards or online published materials were one method departments used to accomplish this.

Student/youth programs Some departments performed outreach to K-12 educational institutions or student/youth community groups.

Public reports Public reports, in paper form, on department websites, or in department newsletters were mentioned as a form of outreach.

Mobile services and locations Some departments are investing in mobile teams or services so that residents do not have to come to the downtown area to access department services. Departments are also looking to conduct outreach through both in-person and virtual means.

Social media Departments capitalize on social media to conduct community outreach.

Public dashboards Though not a common strategy, some departments believed public dashboards showcasing department performance could be a form of outreach.

Public information requests Departments have specific staff responsible for fielding public information requests.

Webex WebEx is a video conferencing application. ITS noted their role in facilitating the use of WebEx services for both virtual meetings and events and public participation in these events through that platform.

Newsletters Newsletters were mentioned as a form of public outreach but were not common.

Web based services E-services through department websites were cited by departments as a way for residents to avoid hardships that requiring people to come in person might result in.

Kiosk based services Certain departments are coordinated efforts to offer kiosk based services to residents around Metro to increase access to services.

Language Accessibility

We asked departments what steps to reduce the impact of barriers for limited English proficiency speakers and remain compliant with ADA legislation, and if they had adequate funding and resources for interpretation and translation services. Generally, we asked departments how they made departmental information more accessible to the public.

Inequities

Needs of Spanish speaking population Departments specifically cited the need to accommodate residents whose primary language is Spanish. This particular need has shaped other department policies such as the push to recruit bilingual staff who can speak Spanish or efforts to translate documents into Spanish. Other languages such as Arabic, Somali, and Kurdish were of interest but not at the frequency of Spanish.

Increase of LEP speakers seeking services As Nashville continues to grow, the impact of language barriers to Metro services is also increasing, and more departments are encountering individuals who experience language accessibility issues.

Limitations

Lack of funds or resources Departments reported no funds for translation of documents or specifically designated funds for translators or interpreters within the department. In some cases, departments underscored the need for funds for a dedicated language line for their department. Departments felt they could better meet the need of LEP speakers if resources/staff were directly located within their department.

Documents are not translated Department documents are currently only available in English. Departments primarily cited a lack of funds or bilingual staff as the root cause for this limitation.

Lack of plan for interpretation or translation Departments stated that they recognized the need for a plan to address language accessibility for residents to fully participate in civic life. Although a limitation, many departments did cite this as an opportunity to work with others in Metro to combat language barriers.

Lack of bilingual staff Many departments saw bilingual staff as the main strength in promoting language accessibility by acting as interpreters or translators but note the difficulty in hiring people with desired language skills.

Inadequacies within Metro There was one instance of a department specifically naming inadequacies with Metro's approach to language accessibility as a limitation in promoting language access.

Unsure of present needs One department stated that it was difficult to identify the resources (costs and equipment) required to ensure language accessibility.

Strengths/Solutions

Reliance on bilingual staff Many departments saw bilingual staff as the main strength in promoting language accessibility by acting as interpreters or translators. A few budget investment requests for the year specifically asked for funds to hire bilingual staff. Spanish speaking staff were the most mentioned (or sought after). Other bilingual staff were fluent in Arabic or Kurdish. A few departments noted that their bilingual staff received additional compensation for their work as translators or interpreters.

Translators or interpreters Departments utilized translators or interpreters to bridge gaps in services for residents with limited English proficiency or hearing impaired community members. Some of these services were in house or departments utilized Metro resources.

Materials translated into multiple languages Department materials such as forms, applications, informational documents, or notifications are available in multiple languages either in paper form, electronic form, or online.

Language line Departments referenced their use of the language line or submitted a request for a language line as a way to increase language accessibility.

Metro resources Departments utilized resources or services from other departments to meet translation or interpretation needs. These departments include Human Relations, ITS, or State Trial Courts that can facilitate language accessibility.

Language Access Plan A Language Access Plan is a document that spells out how to provide services to individuals who are non-English speaking or have limited English proficiency, and the deaf or hard of hearing.

Department information translated online Departments stated that departmental information is or can be translated online including departmental websites, social media posts, and posted documents. In some cases, Google translate or Nashville.gov was cited as a way for LEP residents to access departmental information.

ADA compliance ADA stands for the Americans with Disabilities Acts . Internal HR often arrange translation or interpreter services for individuals who needs fall under this legislation. In terms of language accessibility, ADA compliance refers to services to accommodations provided to members who are hearing or visually impaired.

External partners Departments received external funds for translation or interpretation services or work any community group or organization outside of Metro to promote language accessibility.

Google translate Google translated is utilized by some departments to translate public information on the department's website.

Department resources Departments had existing resources, funds, or personnel for translation or interpretation needs.

Additional funds Departments identified the need for and made specific requests in this year's budget for bilingual staff, interpreters, or the translation of documents.

Role is to provide language services Part of that department's responsibility was to provide translation/interpretation services to other departments or assist other departments with developing a language access plan.

Census data Departments utilized the most recent census data to anticipate language needs for Metro residents.

Translation software While no department currently utilizes translation software, one department is exploring the potential use of this resource.

Inequities in Nashville

We asked departments several questions about how their department meets the needs of historically and recently neglected communities within Metro and what programs and policies in place did they have to meet them.

Inequities

Disadvantaged or underserved communities These terms refer to communities that historically and presently experience disparities or inequities.

Language accessibility Language accessibility ensures accommodations people of all ages and abilities including limited English speakers, and the needs of the visually impaired and hearing impaired community.

Economic inequities Economic inequities can refer to income disparities, differences in access to capital, and lacking the ability to take time off work and subsequent loss of wages. Many departments primarily worked with individuals from low-income communities. Others had programs in place specifically to assist those individuals.

Racial inequities Racial inequities refers to structural, institutional, or individual bias that advantage or disadvantage people of color. Departments noted specific programs or policies they have enacted to combat racial inequities within Nashville.

Digital divide The digital divide refers to those that lack regular access to the internet, computers, smart phones, or tablets and who may lack specific digital skills. This is an inequity experienced by residents trying to access Metro services or apply for Metro jobs.

Lack of vehicle access Residents lack access to a private vehicle or reliable transportation.

Affordable housing Lack of stable and affordable housing was something many departments noted was an issue for Metro residents and employees.

Educational attainment Educational attainment refers to the education and skills necessary for the current job market. Several departments had programs to assist Nashville residents in acquiring the educational attainment necessary to participate in the local job market.

Cost of living Departments cited the increasingly high cost of living in Metro.

Limitations

Equal service Many departments emphasized treating departments equally rather than equitably without recognizing the structural inequities that prevent residents from having complete access to department services. They emphasized treating all residents the same regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic background.

Lack of resources Many departments referenced a lack of resources to adequately address inequities. While this did not sway departments from their efforts, they were adamant that they could do more with more.

COVID Some departments noted the negative impact COVID had on many residents trying to access Metro resources. The pandemic often compounded the impact of existing inequities. The courts and justice system in particular mentioned COVID. However, it was somewhat surprising that more departments did not mention COVID's impact.

Budget limitations Similar to lack of resources, a small number of departments specifically referenced budget limitations that hampered their ability to address inequity.

Lack of control Lack of control was a common sentiment expressed by departments. This lack of control referred to their inability to control which communities they serve.

Strength/Solutions

DEI related programs or policies DEI related programs, policies, or practices that address inequities within Metro. This was by far the most mentioned theme in this analysis. These initiatives ranged from small scale efforts to large scale cross-department ones. Often these programs are targeted to reach a specific segment of the local population. The majority of these programs were outward facing but there were initiatives that focused on Metro employees.

Designated staff Many departments mentioned specific staff members or divisions who led program and policy initiatives to combat different inequities. Many of these staff members were part of the FY2023 budget requests.

Requested funds Departments requested additional funds or budget modifications to address inequities. This includes money for additional staff, new equipment or tools, training, or fundings/additional funding for equity based programs. Additional staff was by far the most common use of these funds.

DEI training Several departments mentioned training as a means to foster an inclusive work environment and improve service delivery to residents.

Fee programs Many departments had programs/policies in place to reduce or cancel departmental fees. The justice system in particular saw this method as a way to address the financial hardships populations from already disadvantaged backgrounds might experience.

Mission drive For some departments, their mission and role within Metro is to address the needs of disadvantaged and underserved community members. Other departments centered equity as a key value in executing their duties.

Decentralized services Many departments recognized that offering satellite service locations around the county or eliminating the need to come in person to a department would increase access to department services.

Outreach Outreach or raising awareness of department programs was one method for addressing different inequities with Metro.

Procurement Work with the BAO or Office of Procurement is one way that departments could dismantle inequities in Metro by working with MBE, WBE, etc. vendors.

Data Drive Approaches

We asked departments to detail the role (if any) that data collection and analysis played in driving department policy, programs, and initiatives. We also asked departments to consider how data collection could be used to assess departmental service delivery.

Inequities

There were no clear inequities identified in the BET responses that would prohibit the collection or analysis of data in program/policy development, execution, or evaluation.

Limitations

No established data policies These departments did not have a process for regular collection and use of demographic data or needed help in that area.

Disaggregated data not used Departments may use collect and use data but do not utilize demographic or disaggregated data.

Resource limitations Departments cited that they lacked staff (whose sole role would be to handle data) or funds, equipment, or software to

Strengths/Solutions

Demographic data Departments utilize or plan to use demographic data, disaggregated data, or specific demographic indicators to identify disparities including: age, race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, income, education, and employment. This data is used to evaluate workforce diversity and departmental performance. This data is typically drawn from the census bureau.

Equity based assessment Departments use data to identify the impact of policies and programs on equity with Metro i.e., how are specific communities affected by existing policies or practices.

Data drive programs and policies Data steers department services and decision making including determining how resources and staff are allocated.

Surveys Departments use a variety of surveys to evaluate departmental policies and programs including customer, paper, online, and stakeholder surveys. Surveys were a common method to collect data and assess policies/programs.

Regular data collection and assessment Departments report regular data collection and data-based assessment and helps craft departmental policies. Demographic data often forms the basis of assessment.

Designated staff The department has either designated staff or divisions to lead data collection and analysis.

Census data Departments utilize data from the US Census Bureau, specifically the American Community Survey, to understand how different communities experience departmental services. Large utility-based departments (MWS, Planning, WeGO etc.) rely on this form of data.

External partners Departments work with external partners such as consultants or application developers for data or data analysis.

Data analytic tools Departments named specific data analytic tools that support data analysis such as Tableau, ArcGIS, SAS, or open-source codes. In a few instances, these data tools were tailored for a specific industry.

Specific indicators to measure performance Departments have specific indicators or metrics to measure the performance of certain programs such as number of attendees at community engagement events, number of events hosted, or demand for services.

Transparency Departments establish transparency through regular reports or public displays of departmental data. This information is available and does not necessitate a public information request.

Data from Metro partners Departments work with Metro partners to for data collection and analysis. For JS, departments such as CJP are directly responsible for providing other JIS departments this service.

Assessment of budget modification Departments use data or data analysis to track the performance of specific budget modifications. For many departments, this referred to the budget investment requests for FY2023.

Locational data Departments use location based data such as zip codes, geographic or neighborhood designations, or council district to frame their data analysis.

Performance metrics These departments frames their use of data for internal assessment in terms of performance metrics ala those reported to the Office of Performance Management in the Mayor's Office.

Role is data driven These departments view their role or mission to collect and analyze data and provide that information to other Metro departments. For the Metro's justice system, these roles are occupied by Criminal Justice Planning and Justice Integration Services. Metro's Human Relations Commission also views this work as an essential element of their role within Metro.

Longitudinal data Departments collect data over an extended period of time and use that data to track trends and changes over time that could influence department policy.

Qualitative data Departments collect and utilize qualitative data as well as quantitative data. Most departments did not mention qualitative data as something they relied on to guide department programs or policies.

Self-assessment Departments detailed the role that data would or could play in internal assessments of programs or policy efficacy.