RACIAL EQUITY ANALYSIS

In November 2020, the Board of Supervisors approved the use of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Analysis toolkit for significant board items, which provided the questions listed here for your exploration. To eliminate racial inequities in our communities, the County of Sonoma continues to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions and in the development of our policies, programs, and budgets.

Board Item Date	8/12/2025
Board Item Name	District Formation Funding Update
Department/Agency	CAO
Person(s) Completing Analysis (Lead)	Yoan Vivas

1. **Overview: Describe your program or policy and the desired results and outcomes.**
   a. What is the program, policy, or plan?
   b. What are the desired results (in the **community**) and outcomes (within your own **organization**)?
   c. What does this proposal have an ability to impact?

☒Children and youth
☒ Community engagement
☐ Contracting equity
☐ Criminal justice
☒ Economic development
☒ Education
☒ Environment
☐ Food access and affordability
☒ Government practices
☐ Other _____
☐ Health
☐ Housing
☐ Human services
☐ Jobs
☒ Parks and recreation
☐ Planning / development
☐ Transportation
☒ Utilities
☐ Workforce equity

a) Proposal: The County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors accepts an update on Fiscal Year 2024-2025 District Formation Fund activities. The County's Community Investment Fund Program Policy includes a funding allocation of $175,000 each year from Transient Occupancy Tax to support District Formation activities. This policy recognizes that rural areas of Sonoma County are experiencing an increased need for municipal services. District Formation funds may be used for professional services to establish Special Districts.
b) The intended result of District Formation Funded projects is to support unincorporated communities in exploring options to provide self-generated funding to address municipal challenges.

2. **Data: What's the data? What does the data tell us? What is the "Why"?**

a. Will the proposal have impacts in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)? What are the racial demographics of those living in the area?

b. What does population level data, including quantitative and qualitative data, tell you about existing racial inequities? What does it tell you about root causes or factors influencing racial inequities?

c. What performance level data do you have available for your proposal? This should include data associated with existing programs or policies.

d. Are there data gaps? What additional data would be helpful in analyzing the proposal? If so, how can you obtain better data?

a) This Board item is an update on activities funded through prior Board action. Each Supervisorial District received an allocation of $152,500 in District Formation Funding to spend on projects in unincorporated areas. The selection of specific geographic areas and District Formation projects within each District are up to the discretion of the Supervisor.

According to the "Housing Needs Data Report: Unincorporated Sonoma" report prepared by ABAG/MTC Staff and Baird + Driskell Community Planning on 4/2/21 for the 2023-2031 Housing Element, the population of Unincorporated Sonoma County in 2020 was estimated to be 138,523. This population makes up 28.1% of Sonoma County's overall population. According to this same report, the race/ethnicity demographics of Unincorporated Sonoma County's population in 2020 was 71.7% White, 0.7% African American, 2.2% Asian, and 20.9% Latinx. By comparison, according to the 2020 Census, the race/ethnicity demographics of all of Sonoma County's population in 2020 was 58.5% White, 1.5% African American, 4.5% Asian, 28.9% Latinx, 1.6% Native American/Other, and 5% multiracial.

The racial demographics vary between the five Supervisorial Districts, as well as within geographic areas of each District. The demographics of these areas can be looked up using the Sonoma County's 2021 Redistricting online mapping tool.

No new policy is being proposed in this Board item, and no specific funding recommendations are included. Therefore, this proposal/Board item will not have a specific impact on geographic areas. However, an analysis of prior District Formation Fund spending and project selection could be done to understand the impact of past funding. Geographic data could also be considered for future District Formation Funding recommendations.

b) With a population of 489,000, Sonoma County is 58% White, 29% Latino, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% Black. Analysis from the 2021 update of the Portrait of Sonoma reveals that the County's overall Human Development Index (HDI) score, comprised of health, education and earnings measures, is 6.19 out of a maximum total score of 10.00. The HDI score for the four largest racial/ethnic groups are as follows: White 6.74, Latino 4.93, Asian 6.86, and Black 3.99. Multiple factors, including access/affordability of housing, immigration status, racial discrimination, employment

stability and wages, language barriers, access to health care, and access to education, can be attributed to the differences in these scores. Additionally, the County has experienced and continues to be impacted by multiple, devastating disasters, including the 2017 firestorm, Kincade, Walbridge and Glass fires, the 2019 flood, and the Covid pandemic.

According to the Department of Health's website, residents of rural and geographically remote unincorporated areas of the County may experience social isolation and significant barriers in accessing basic services and supports such as transportation, health care, nutritious food and opportunities to socialize.

There are many root causes to investigate as to racial inequities in Sonoma County, including unincorporated areas. Some potential root causes may relate to the following categories:

- Access to housing: affected by a history of systematic removal, discrimination, and exclusion, which removed non-white individuals and communities from owning and/or renting property, or confined their ownership to only certain areas of the County.
    - Affordability: exacerbated by widespread inequality in wages by race/ethnicity
        - Non-white residents of Sonoma County on average have lower median earnings (as described in the 2021 Portrait of Sonoma), less savings, and ultimately, less money available to purchase property.
    - Ownership vs. rental opportunities
    - Access to loans & access to intergenerational wealth
- Access to government services
    - Access to transportation
        - The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has funded community-based transportation plans for the following communities in Sonoma County, which identify transportation gaps and barriers and strategies to improve mobility options for historically underserved communities:
            - Healdsburg (plan includes a small unincorporated area within it's geographic scope)
            - Lower Russian River (unincorporated area)
            - Santa Rosa – Roseland
            - The Springs (Central Sonoma Valley – unincorporated area)
    - Language access
        - On 5/15/24, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved the County's Language Access Policy and Implementation Plan. The Board item's racial equity analysis referenced the following link between language access and race in Sonoma County:

- While there are non-English speaking White residents, demographic data for the county show that the majority of residents who do not speak English are Spanish speaking or speak Asian or Pacific Islander languages. Those residents tend to identify racially as communities of color being Latinx/Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islanders and experience disproportional marginalization. Improving language access to county services for the 11.8% of residents who are linguistically diverse and do not speak English well can improve the outcomes of residents who are largely immigrants and from communities of color.

c) District Formation Funding, the County does not currently track performance level data on District Formation Funded program (funded by the Community Investment Fund policy).

d) The County does not currently collect and analyze the racial demographic data related to projects funded with District Formation funding. Doing so could result in an increased understand of which racial demographics were most impacted by recent District Formation funding decisions.

If the Board wanted to prioritize spending District Formation Funds on geographic areas that have higher levels of racial diversity, staff could include racial demographic data and policy recommendations to inform decisions on how and where to allocate future District Formation Funds.

In addition to racial diversity, other criteria/data that could be considered for future District Formation Fund could include Human Development Index (HDI) scores (available in the Portrait of Sonoma) and/or disadvantaged unincorporated communities' data from the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). LAFCO currently identifies "disadvantaged unincorporated communities" in Sonoma County as communities that have an annual median household income that is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median household. The currently listed disadvantaged unincorporated communities in Sonoma County are: Boyes Hot Springs, Cazadero, Glen Ellen, Guerneville, Monte Rio, Temelec and Valley Ford. LAFCO is currently working on developing a policy related to the data used to identify DUC areas.

3. Community Engagement: How have communities been engaged?

a. What does the community need to know about this item?

b. Who are the most affected community members who are involved with or have lived experience related to this proposal? How have you involved these community members in the development of this proposal?

c. What has your engagement process told you about the burdens or benefits for different groups? (concerns, facts, potential impacts)

d. What has your engagement process told you about the factors that produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this item?

e. What are ways to minimize any negative impacts (harm to communities of color, increased racial disparities, etc.) that may result? What opportunities exist for increasing racial equity?

A) The community should know that this Board item is an annual update on the District Formation Fund (DFF), which allocates funding to each Supervisorial District to support projects in unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. These funds help communities explore ways to improve local services through the potential formation of special districts.

While no new policy decisions are being made in this update, the item provides transparency on how funds have been used and highlights ongoing efforts to improve government services in underserved areas.

B) The District Formation Fund projects, which are funded by the County's Community Investment Fund Program Policy, may be used for any district formation activities in unincorporated areas of the County. The community members residing within these communities and receiving services from current and potential Districts are the most affected by this policy.

District Formation Fund projects and communities are currently selected by each Supervisor who determines the level of involvement from community members. Below is a brief summary of community engagement conducted as part of recent District Formation Fund activities:

1) Sonoma Valley Shared Services project: Between 2021 and 2024, District 1 staff have conducted a series of conversations with government partners (City of Sonoma, LAFCO), advisory groups (Sonoma Valley Community Advisory Commission and Springs Municipal Advisory Council), community partners (Catalyst Fund, La Luz, Food for All), and community members (9/28/23 listening session). District 1 and the City of Sonoma are exploring a partnership for a potential community assessment to further understand the needs of the community and identify potential options to improve government services in Sonoma Valley.
2) Alexander Valley Water District: Between 2022 and 2024, District 4 staff worked with Russian River Property Owners Association to develop a proposal to form an Alexander Valley Water District. Key stakeholders that have been involved and/or consulted include agricultural water uses within Alexander Valley, City of Cloverdale, City of Healdsburg, California American Water Company, mutual and private water companies serving residential and commercial uses, Sonoma Water, Lytton Rancheria, Dry Creek Rancheria, State Water Resources Control Board and Department of Fish and Wildlife, and conservation organizations working in Alexander Valley.
3) Lower Russian River Governance Study: Between 2023 and 2024, District 5 worked with a consulting firm to prepare a report on options to improve government services in the Lower Russian River region. Through public workshops, stakeholder meetings, and online tools, the community was asked to identify unmet needs, gaps in existing services, and desires for potential new services. In addition to the community workshops that were conducted in English with a simultaneous translation into Spanish, a Spanish-only focus group meeting was conducted on November 4, 2023.

In addition to the community engagement conducted through the District Formation Funded projects, the Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee also hosted an all- Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) listening session on August 16, 2023, with representatives from all five Supervisorial Districts. The primary objective was to hear directly from the community representatives about the top needs for government services in their communities.

C) The burdens and benefits of District Formation activities vary depending on the region and depending on the groups. Below is a summary of some of the key issues that were identified through some of the previously mentioned engagement processes:
    1) Sonoma Valley Shared Services project: participants in the 5/8/23 focus group and 9/28/23 listening session identified the following potential challenges in accessing government services in the valley. The potential community assessment could be used to understand the specific burdens and benefits for the different demographic groups living in Sonoma Valley.
        a. Transportation access
        b. Traffic/pedestrian/bike safety
        c. Access to mental health resources
        d. Broadband access
        e. Parks & Recreation access
        f. Childcare access
        g. Access to County services in general (need for navigation support to know what services are available and how to access them)
        h. Services unavailable to undocumented community members
    2) Lower Russian River Governance Study: The Lower Russian River Governance Study report outlines the findings of barriers and community concerns for accessing government services in this region. These findings are not disaggregated to indicate how burdens may be increased based on race or other demographics. However, District staff did conduct a Spanish-language Community Charla on 3/30/24 to hear specific concerns from the region's Spanish speaking community. Specific topics noted during this meeting include:
        a. Access to medical services (particularly urgent care and dental care)
        b. Housing access and affordability concerns
        c. Broadband access
        d. Transportation access
        e. Childcare access
        f. Language access in schools and more broadly
        g. Emergency response
D) More data on District Formation Funded projects is needed to determine factors that produce or perpetuate racial inequity.

4. Analysis and Strategies: What are your strategies for advancing racial equity?

a. Given what you have learned from research and stakeholder involvement, how will your recommended actions increase or decrease racial equity? Who would benefit from or be burdened by your item?

b. What are potential unintended consequences? What are the ways in which your proposal could be modified to enhance positive impacts or reduce negative impacts?

c. Are there complementary strategies that you can implement? What are ways in which existing partnerships could be strengthened to maximize impact in the community? How will you partner with stakeholders for long-term positive change?

d. Are the impacts aligned with your community outcomes defined in Step #1? If not, what will you change in order to create alignment?

A) This Board item does not have a specific proposal for any policy changes. More data on District Formation Funded projects is needed to determine whether past funding has increased or decreased racial equity.
B) Without specific racial equity criteria included in the selection of District Formation Funded projects, there may be unintended consequences on the communities funded and the communities not funded. For the communities within the geographic scope of District Formation funded projects, the creation of new Districts may increase the financial burden associated with housing costs. To reduce the negative impacts, the analysis in considering any new districts could include racial equity data and robust community engagement.
C) The County could continue to engage Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs) when making decisions about District Formation project funding. MACs are established in the County's unincorporated areas to serve as a mechanism to increase communication between the County and residents on local government decisions affecting their community. Additionally, the County's Unincorporated Governance Ad Hoc committee, established in 2023 is exploring governance solutions for unincorporated areas of Sonoma County, which could result in longer-term positive changes.
D) It is too soon to know the full impacts of the District Formation Funded activities. It is anticipated that these activities will result in impacts that are aligned with the community outcomes defined above.

5. Implementation: What is your plan for implementation?

Describe your plan for implementation:			
N/A – This Board item is an update on already funded activities with no new proposed policy to implement.			
Is this implementation plan:	**Yes**	**No**	**I'm Not Sure**
Realistic?	☐	☐	☒
Adequately funded?	☐	☐	☒
Adequately resourced with personnel?	☐	☐	☒
Adequately resources with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement?	☐	☐	☒
Adequately resourced to ensure on-going data collection, public reporting, and community engagement?	☐	☐	☒
If the answer to any of these questions is no or unsure, what resources or actions are needed? N/A – no proposed policy change			

6. **Accountability and Communication: How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?**
   a. How will impacts be documented and evaluated? Are you achieving the anticipated outcomes? Are you having impact in the community?
   b. What are your messages and communication strategies that will help advance racial equity?
   c. How will you continue to partner and deepen relationships with communities to make sure your work to advance racial equity is working and sustainable for the long-haul?

a) The current practice is for staff to present an annual update to the Board of Supervisors, which documents District Formation Fund activities. Additional data could be collected to document impact.
b) Strategies vary depending on the project.
c) There may be opportunities for increased partnership with Municipal Advisory Councils to help guide the selection of future District Formation Fund projects with the goal of advancing racial equity.