



Alexandria Fund for Human Services Independent Evaluation : Community Engagement Sessions
August 6, 2025, 10:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. & August 7, 2025, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.



Agenda

About AFHS & Independent Evaluation

- Background
- Process
- Post-Evaluation Steps

Operationalizing Recommendations

- Staff Review
- Stakeholder Feedback and Funding Options
- Next Steps

Q & A

AFHS Background

- This umbrella fund was formerly established in 2014, but City Council appropriated funds has facilitated nonprofit grant making since 1992.
- AFHS allows for the expansion of the City's human service delivery system through a competitive grant-making process.
- Funds non-profit partners in the community providing vital programs and services to residents that support the mission and vision of DCHS and aligns with City Council endorsed human service-related strategic plans.
- Services are provided across all ages and human service conditions.
- The \$1.9m annual FY 24-26 appropriation supports 48-programs.
- In FY24 more than 30,000 individuals were supported by AFHS funded programs.
- City Council requested an independent evaluation of the Fund with recommendations for the FY 27-29 grant cycle and services of independent evaluator community procured.

Independent Evaluation Process: As directed by City Council



Assess the City's Current Grantmaking Practice and Other Best/Promising Practices with assistance from an external entity.



Define and identify essential services being provided and funded through the AFHS and provide recommendations on the funding source and structure of those services.



Development of an evaluation process that serves to measure the impact of the fund.



Method to ensure that AFHS funds are awarded to service providers that adhere to best practices and effective approaches that will yield the desired impact across designated priority populations as identified by existing data.



Engagement of nonprofit partners in the process to seek to understand the capacity required to deliver services with the intended results. To ensure the impact in a cohesive and responsive manner that will meet the essential services to create changes in our communities.

Post-Evaluation Steps

During the June 10th, 2025, City Council Legislative session, DCHS staff presented the AFHS report and recommendations issued by the independent evaluator Community Science (CS).



During the June 14th Public Hearing, DCHS was directed to work with community partners to develop an operational framework for implementation of the FY 27-29 AFHS grant cycle.

Framework to be presented to Council in September 2025.

The approved operational framework will be reflected in the FY 27-29 Request for Grant Proposal (RFGP) and grant making process.

Council Direction:



Collaborate with stakeholders and bring forth a framework for implementing the recommendations.



Consider multiple funding avenues that best meet the community's needs by examining the framework of both large-scale funding grants and smaller grants designed to assist community-based organizations via mini or incubator grants.

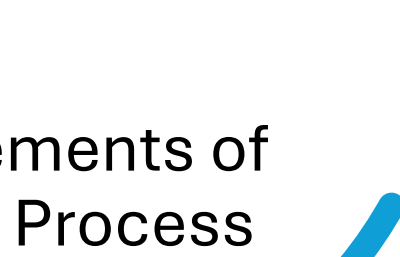


Preview elements of year-end report that highlights the impact of the AFHS investments.

A large orange circle on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

Independent Evaluation Recommendations

The evaluation yielded four broad recommendations with embedded sub-recommendations.

- **Recommendation 1:** Adopt the proposed Essential Human Services (EHS) definition.
 - **Recommendation 2:** Restructure the AFHS for greater impact.
 - **Recommendation 3:** Explore the feasibility of increasing the total amount of the AFHS funding to meet demand.
 - **Recommendation 4:** Address elements of the Grant Application and Review Process
- 
- Four blue curved lines of varying lengths and orientations, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.



Overview of Key Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Adopt the following definition of Essential Human Services (EHS).

Essential Human Services (EHS) are those that meet the fundamental needs necessary for survival, stability, and well-being. Rather than a dichotomous classification of essential or not, services exist on a spectrum. At the most basic level, they ensure **survival** by addressing the immediate bare needs of food, water, shelter, and safety. The next level supports continued survival or **stability** by preventing harm, promoting health, and enabling economic and social participation. At the highest level, they foster mobility, resilience, and community engagement — collectively known as **thriving**. Rather than a fixed set of services, EHS depend on contextual factors such as geography, culture, and societal conditions.

Essential Human Services Spectrum

```
graph LR; S[Survival] --- M1(( )); M1 --- M2(( )); M2 --- ST[Stability] --- M3(( )); M3 --- T[Thriving];
```

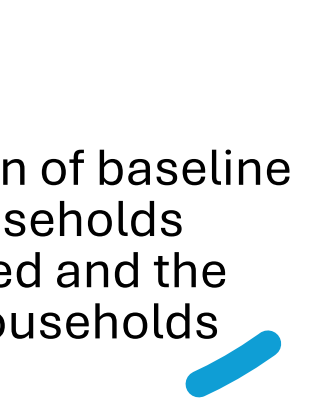
Survival- addressing the immediate basic needs of food, water, shelter, and safety. most basic level continued survival by preventing harm, promoting health, and enabling economic and social participation.

Stability - Continued survival by preventing harm, promoting health, and enabling economic and social participation.

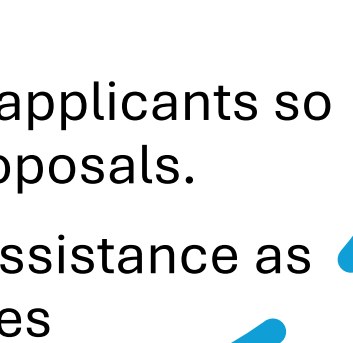
Thriving-Services that foster mobility, resilience, and community engagement.

Rather than a fixed set of services, EHS depend on contextual factors such as geography, culture, and societal conditions.

Process, Outcomes, and Data Related Recommendations

- Establish a competitive grant making process that focuses primarily on **stabilizing** and **thriving** community well-being.
 - Employ data-driven metrics to ensure that the most vulnerable populations have the support they need (via funded programs/services) to mitigate crises and that the City of Alexandria fosters the conditions that allow populations to move away from surviving and toward thriving
 - Expected outcomes focused on the following priorities:
 - Basic Needs Fulfillment
 - Vulnerability and Equity
 - Health and Safety
 - Economic Stability and Support
 - Social Functioning and Cohesion
 - Require all grantees to commit to the collection of baseline data to include: the number of individuals/households served, zip codes, race/ethnicity of those served and the primary language used by those individuals/households supported.
- 

Grants Process Related Actions Recommendations

- Request data-driven grant proposals that prioritize impact.
 - Maintain the three-year grant period FY 2027-2029.
 - Publish a clear evaluation rubric aligned with funding priorities.
 - Allow 6-8 weeks between the release of the notice and deadline for submission date.
 - Allow 4-6 weeks between the announcement of grant awards disbursement.
 - Establish weekly “office hours” during the grant application timeframe for general questions and answers (not in the recommendations).
 - Continue to offer detailed debriefs to all applicants so that organizations can improve future proposals.
 - Continue to offer post-award technical assistance as needed to support the success of grantees
- 



**Key Polling
Items**



Stakeholder Polling Items

Options were developed using the following sources of information:

- Recommendations outlined in the report.
- The funding request amount for the FY24-26 AFHS funding cycle.
- Funding allocation and process in neighboring jurisdictions.
- Guidance from City Council.

Stakeholder Polling Items

Directions for Completing Polling Questions

- Following the review and content of the slides we will be launching polling questions based on the information presented.
- Some slides may contain multiple polling questions, please make sure to complete all questions.
- After you complete the poll, please submit your answers.
- Questions?

Stakeholder Polling

Prioritize applications proposing a service provision that is not duplicative of other services offered in the community and validating formal partnerships amongst community partners to build a strong safety net.

Composition of Community Advisory Group (CAG) that will in coordination with designated DCHS Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) provide input on funding decisions.

Mechanism for investing in **capacity building to support smaller nonprofits** in navigating grant process.

Stakeholder Polling

Three funding options for the FY 27-29 grant cycle.

Make fewer and larger grants to maximize impact.

Cap the number of grants and funding allocation.

Employ **direct contracts for persistent conditions related to survival, not otherwise available in the community** and where a disruption in funding would create instability for critical services providers and their beneficiaries.

Stakeholder Polling

Increase the City of Alexandria's AFHS budget allocation to ensure that funding keeps pace with rising service demands and inflation.

Introduce a **Cost-of-living adjustment** for multi-year grants to ensure service continuity.

Stakeholder Polling

Mini-grants modest awards designed to help organizations fund smaller projects or initiatives. Applicants for mini-grants will benefit from a streamlined application and reporting process.

Incubator grants funding for organizations to support the early development and planning phases of a project. These grants are intended to help shape initial concepts, establish a foundation for future efforts, and prepare for full-scale implementation or additional funding.

Abbreviated application and reporting processes for programs applying for and awarded a mini or incubator grants.

Funding Model Options

AFHS Funding Option 1

- Employ the AFHS competitive grant process primarily for **stabilization** and **thriving** services.
- Fund 38 programs capped at 75K, 50K, 10K.
- Consistent with Council guidance, award 13 mini-grants or incubator grants of up to \$10,000 each to organizations aiming to fund smaller-scale programs.
- This option would allow \$491,430 for procurement of survival services.

AFHS FY 2027-2029 Funding Grants Awards and Procurement Process = \$1,996,430

Grants: competitive grant process primarily for stabilization and thriving services.

| Total # of Grants 38 | Award Amount |
|---|---------------------|
| 5 (1/Grant Priority) | \$75,000 |
| 20 Grants | \$50,000 |
| 13 Mini-grants/Incubator grants | \$10,000 |
| Procurement Process: To address immediate survival needs food, shelter and security. | |
| | Total Amount |
| Award Total | \$491,430 |

AFHS Funding Option 2

- Employ the AFHS competitive grant process primarily for **stabilization** and **thriving** services.
- Fund 29 programs capped at 75K, 50K, 10K.
- Award fewer grants at higher amounts for more impact.
- This option would allow \$496,430 for procurement of survival services.

| AFHS FY 2027-2029 Funding \$1,996,430 Grants and Procurement | |
|---|--------------|
| Grants: Programs for stabilization and thriving services. | |
| Total # of Grants 29 | Award Amount |
| 10 | \$75,000 |
| 14 | \$50,000 |
| 5 | \$10,000 |
| Procurement Process: Address immediate survival needs food, shelter and security. | |
| | Total Amount |
| Award Total | \$496,430 |

AFHS Funding Option 3

- Employ the AFHS competitive grant process primarily for **stabilization** and **thriving** services.
- Use a portion of the funding for procuring survival program.
- Use a portion to fund 13 mini/incubator grants capped at 10K.

| AFHS FY 2027-2029 Funding \$1,505,000 Grants | |
|--|--------------|
| Award Amount | Total Amount |
| No funding caps | \$1,375,000 |
| 13 Mini/Incubator Grants (capped at 10K) | \$130,000 |
| | \$1,505,000 |
| Procurement of Survival Services | \$491,430 |
| Total | \$1,996,430 |

AFHS Funding Options

| Funding Option 1 | |
|--|--------------|
| Total # of Grants 38 | Award Amount |
| 5 (1/Grant Priority) | \$75,000 |
| 20 Grants | \$50,000 |
| 13 Mini-grants/Incubator grants | \$10,000 |
| Procurement Process: To address immediate survival needs food, shelter and security. | |
| | Total Amount |
| Award Total | \$491,430 |

| Funding Option 2 | |
|--|--------------|
| Award Amount | Total Amount |
| No funding caps | \$1,375,000 |
| 13 Mini/Incubator Grants (capped at 10K) | \$130,000 |
| | \$1,505,000 |
| Procurement of Survival Services | \$491,430 |
| Total | \$1,996,430 |

AFHS Funding Options

| Funding Option 3 | |
|--|--------------------|
| Award Amount | Total Amount |
| No funding caps | \$1,375,000 |
| 13 Mini/Incubator Grants (capped at 10K) | \$130,000 |
| | \$1,505,000 |
| Procurement of Survival Services | \$491,430 |
| Total | \$1,996,430 |



Funding Options

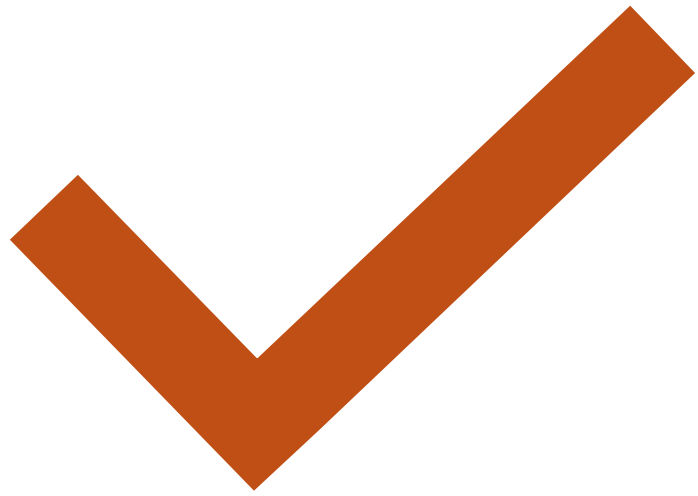
Of the four AFHS funding options presented, which option do you prefer?

- Funding Option 1
- Funding Option 2
- Funding Option 3

Recommended FY 27-29 Grant Priority Areas

Five Grant Priorities Areas: Primarily for Stabilizing and Thriving Services.

| AFHS Grant Priorities | Stabilizing Expected Outcomes | Thriving Expected Outcomes |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Basic Needs Fulfillment | Provides consistent access to basic needs with some security (e.g., subsidized housing, food assistance programs, primary healthcare). | Promotes long-term individual or family well-being and self-sufficiency beyond immediate needs (e.g., home ownership programs, nutrition education, preventive healthcare). |
| 2. Vulnerability and Equity | Addresses disparities by providing ongoing support that reduces vulnerability (e.g., disability assistance, affordable legal aid, access to early childhood education). | Promotes systemic change and structural equity, ensuring all communities have opportunities for prosperity (e.g., policy reforms, universal basic income, equitable healthcare access). |
| 3. Health and Safety | Strengthens protective factors to prevent crises and improve resilience (e.g., community health clinics, mental health support programs). | Builds sustainable, health-promoting systems that enhance long-term public well-being (e.g., universal healthcare, public health education, built environments supporting health and safety). |
| 4. Economic Stability and Support | Enhances financial security and mobility through structured programs (e.g., job training, income-based housing, affordable childcare). | Promotes long-term economic independence and prosperity (e.g., small business grants, wealth-building initiatives, economic policy reforms). |
| 5. Social Functioning and Cohesion | Encourages inclusive participation and community support (e.g., social services, community engagement programs). | Builds long-term social resilience, belonging, and civic engagement (e.g., leadership development, cultural programming, initiatives promoting collective well-being). |



What Remains Unchanged for FY 27-29 Grant Cycle

Applicant Eligibility



Organizations positioned in the community to offer services that are sound in practice and services are delivered to respond to emerging and critical human service challenges.



Organizations may be based either in the City of Alexandria or in other jurisdictions, but funding made available through this grant opportunity can only be used to provide services to Alexandria residents.



Organizations, public or private with an IRS nonprofit determination.



Confirmation of organization eligibility by completing the pre-application screening in the grant portal.



Approval of the organization's governing body (Board of Directors) to an applicant.

Focus Populations

- Children and youth (including ages 0-5)
- Individuals with low incomes and low wealth
- Individuals with dental, physical health, mental health, and vision care needs
- Individuals facing crises
- Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Older Adults
- Historically marginalized communities:

Includes, but is not limited to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant populations (including those who lack documentation or families with mixed status), justice involved individuals, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities across the lifespan to include support for care givers, Individuals with Limited English proficiency, Unhoused /Housing Insecure /Housing Cost Burdened.

Next Steps



Finalize the funding framework aligned with the recommendations outlined in the independent review informed by stakeholder feedback and City Council guidance.



Present to Council an operational framework for the AFHS 27-29 grant process in September 2025 . If accepted the issuance of the funding availability and RFGP will follow.



Issue of funding availability in October 2025.



Release of the RFGP in November 2025.



Questions & Comments

Please send additional questions or comments to the AFHS dedicated email by August 20, 2025:

DCHSAlexFund@alexandriava.gov

