



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of the Submission of a Grant Application for Expansion of the Alexandria Treatment Court ("ATC").

ISSUE: Consideration of the submission of a grant application for expansion of the Alexandria Treatment Court ("ATC").

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Ratify a grant application, to the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the amount of \$499,112 for the funds to expand the ATC; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The ATC launched a pilot program in the fall of 2019 aimed at diverting from conviction and incarceration, adults charged with felony offenses connected to substance use disorder. The ATC targets a "high-risk/high need" population, meaning individuals who have sufficient severity of substance use disorder that, without substantial treatment intervention, they are at high risk of criminal reoffending. Because the ATC does not have a dedicated source of funding, participating agencies agreed that ATC would accept no more than 5 to 10 participants during the pilot program, to ensure that individuals could be adequately served within existing agency budgets. If this grant is ratified, it would enable the ATC to triple its capacity, improve access to under-served populations, and improve the services that are offered to better comport with national best-practices.

DISCUSSION: The grant seeks \$499,112 over a 36-month period, to be used in conjunction with repurposed and existing Department of Community and Human Services ("DCHS") grant funds in the amount of \$60,000 to accomplish the following spending objectives:

- Hiring an additional DCHS therapist that would work exclusively with ATC participants.
- Hiring a professional and independent ATC coordinator (this task is presently filled by a prosecutor, Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney David Lord).
- Dedicating additional directed funds towards improving drug testing in the program.
- Setting aside dedicated funds as required by the grant for the ATC treatment team to receive ongoing training in best-practices in this field.

These spending objectives will:

1. Enable the ATC to triple capacity: Currently the ATC can serve no more than 10 participants within existing agency budgets. By hiring an additional DCHS therapist and a coordinator, the program would be able to accept up to 30 participants at any point in time. The therapist and coordinator are needed to enhance capacity because the therapist provides direct and substantial (time-consuming) treatment services to participants and a professional and independent coordinator is needed for the program to grow into its full capacity. In the pilot program we have been relying on a prosecutor to attempt to fill dual functions in the program, which is not ideal and which would not work well if the program was significantly larger as the prosecutor cannot focus solely on this function.
2. Enable the ATC to better serve disadvantaged communities: The ATC aims to hire a bilingual therapist, so that the ATC can better serve the Spanish-speaking population in our community.
3. Improve testing capacity: Drug testing is absolutely critical to a drug court's success. Currently, our testing capacity is deficient in many ways when compared with national best practices. The ATC is not incapable of providing frequent, observed, random, and comprehensive tests with quick results as is suggested by those standards. The grant would dedicate funding to allow it to improve on this area.
4. Enhanced accountability, monitoring and evaluation: The hiring of an independent and professional ATC coordinator will enhance the program's ability to provide more meaningful reporting and statistics and to seek ways to provide long-term financial and programmatic sustainability.

The grant filing deadline has already occurred so the grant application has been filed, but remains subject to City Council ratification. If the Council does not approve the grant application, the City will decline any award offered.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no financial impact in terms of an allocation from the City's general funds. The match component of the grant is fulfilled through the existing use of agency resources on the program. The grant does seek to leverage \$60,000 in repurposed DCHS grants, which have been approved through that agency and the grant providers.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Alexandria Treatment Court Grant Application Program Abstract

Attachment 2: Alexandria Treatment Court Grant Program Narrative

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager

David Lord, Senior Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney