



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 17, 2023

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: KATE GARVEY, DIRECTOR, DCHS

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of the Transmittal of the Alexandria Fund for Human Services Reform Committee Recommendations.

ISSUE: Receipt of recommendations from the Alexandria Fund for Human Services (AFHS) Reform Committee.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- 1) Receive the recommendations from the AFHS Reform Committee; and
- 2) Request that the City Manager direct staff to implement the recommendations as accepted by City Council.

BACKGROUND: Earlier this year the City Manager informed City Council that the FY 2019 to FY 2021 AFHS grant cycle would be extended for an additional year as grantees and the community continued to encounter COVID-19 related challenges. These included reduced in-person client participation, the need for program shifts to virtual offerings, and staff and volunteer vacancies and exposure to the virus. It was felt that the extension would also increase the opportunity for stronger responses to the next request for grant applications as they would be able to articulate the current unmet human service needs more effectively in the city.

During the grant extension period the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) staff were charged to accomplish the following:

- Gain a greater understanding of the outstanding needs, gaps in services, and alternative resources available and the ongoing needs, gaps in services, and alternative resources available and ongoing challenges faced by the non-profit community to further stabilize the sector.
- Explore alternative approaches for the use of funds reflective of the new normal following COVID-19.
- Explore new priorities reflected in updated Strategic Plans and other shifts in Alexandria landscape.
- Outreach to all non-profit and partner organizations to communicate status and next steps.
- Review of all relevant data and Strategic and Master Plans to determine critical outcomes/ areas of impact.
- Convene stakeholders to explore greater innovation and leveraging potential for the Fund as well as priority uses of the fund.
- Review of funding areas and priorities to determine if the AFHS competitive process is the appropriate vehicle for funding these areas and the related fiscal impact.
- Ensure all non-profits are aware of other grant opportunities for which they may apply this year (this would be most important for those organizations that have not been receiving AFHS funding and would need to wait another year to apply).

In response to the charge to convene stakeholders, DCHS staff invited members of the City's human services related boards and commissions and other community stakeholders to join a committee that would assist staff with the development of reform recommendations for City Council approval. The members of the Reform Committee were:

- ACT for Alexandria - Ms. Heather Peeler, President, and Chief Executive Officer
- Alexandria Employment Commission - Ms. Susan Picerno
- Alexandria Housing Commission - Ms. Betsy Faga
- Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission - Ms. Jessica Cuddy
- Commission on Aging - Mr. Michael Schuster
- Commission for Women - Ms. Crystal Kramer
- Community Services Board - Ms. Michele Walz
- Economic Opportunities Commission - Ms. Aminata Ly and Ms. Jeneka Codgell
- Former Reform Committee - Mr. Joseph Valenti
- Human Rights Commission - Mr. Marc Bendick
- Partnership for Healthier Alexandria - Mr. Allen Lomax
- Social Services Advisory Board - Ms. Stephanie Kanwit
- City's Race and Social Equity Officer - Ms. Jacqueline Tucker
- Mr. Antonio Tamariz - Community Advocate, and past Economic Opportunities Commission Chair

DISCUSSION: The Committee focused on achieving the following objectives:

- Review funding areas and priorities to determine if the AFHS competitive process is the appropriate vehicle for funding these areas and the related fiscal impact.
- Review relevant data to determine critical outcomes/impact areas and structure for future grant cycles.
- Explore mechanisms that will allow collaboration among and between community-based organizations that provide services City residents.
- Develop a better understanding of racial and ethnic communities most impacted using prior AFHS data.
- Seek to explore ways to encourage innovation and racial equity focus.

To gain exposure and a greater understanding of critical information relevant to the AFHS areas of work, the Committee reviewed the following:

1. Mission, Vision, and Values Documents

- City of Alexandria
- Department of Community and Human Services

2. Strategic Plans

- Alexandria City Council 2022 Priorities
- Age Friendly Plan for A Livable Community Alexandria, Virginia
- Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) 2025
- Children and Youth Community Plan (CYCP) 2025

3. AFHS Grantee Information

- Outcome data for FY22
- Surveyed current AFHS grantees to receive feedback about current process

4. The City's Racial Equity Budget Tool

5. Information about Social Determinants of Health

6. Benchmarking of jurisdictions throughout Northern Virginia and the State using similar human services related funding mechanism

The attached PowerPoint presentation was shared during the Community Listening Session on December 15, 2022 (Attachment 1). The PowerPoint presentation includes additional materials used to inform the Committee's review process, as well as key background information regarding the AFHS. Staff also provided an overview and features of software platform that will enhance AFHS' future application submission, review and grantmaking processes.

The Committee deliberated over the course of five (5) in person sessions and received feedback on their draft recommendations during the Community Listening Session. The Committee's work resulted in the confirmation that awarding grants through a competitive process continues to be the most appropriate vehicle to help meet the City's increasing human services need. The specific recommendations for inclusion in the upcoming FY 2024 to FY 2027 AFHS grant cycle are attached (Attachment 2). DCHS staff worked closely with the Reform Committee throughout the review process and concurs with resulting guidance and recommendations.

The City Manager has requested that staff be prepared to incorporate all the City Council approved recommendations in the AFHS Request for Grant Proposal process for FY 2024 to FY 2027 grant cycle to commence July 1, 2023. To carry out an effective process for both applicants and grant reviewers, that the FY 2024 to FY 2027 AFHS Request for Proposals is planned to be released by late February to mid- March.

DCHS wishes to acknowledge the significant work of the AFHS Reform Committee Members. The time, care, and analysis invested by the members was significant and their commitment to this effort ensured a thorough and productive process.

FISCAL IMPACT: Awards for the FY 2024 to FY 2027 AFHS grant cycle, as in previous years, will be contingent on the amount appropriated to the Fund during the FY 2024 budget process.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: AFHS Community Listening Session PowerPoint Presentation

Attachment 2: AFHS Reform Committee Recommendations

STAFF:

Kendel Taylor, Interim Deputy City Manager

Federico Gutierrez, Deputy Director, DCHS