

## **Attachment: Description of FY 2024-25 STARS Awards**

### **PROGRAM PERFORMANCE**

#### **In-Home Supportive Services Program - County Health – Aging and Disability Services**

Description: Aging and Disability Services' (ADS) mission is to optimize the quality of life for older adults and people living with disabilities in San Mateo County. The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program offers a critical pillar that helps ADS reach this mission, providing a lifeline to nearly 9,000 older adults and people with disabilities. IHSS' objective is to promote independence, dignity and autonomy throughout the aging process with a compassionate, consumer-directed model empowering clients to select and direct their care from a caregiver of their choice. IHSS receives over 300 applications monthly. Each new referral is reviewed by a community worker or supervisor and those who meet minimum California Department of Social Services (CDSS) requirements are assessed by IHSS social workers. If eligible, a caregiver is identified to provide home-based care, which prevents premature transition into a facility and allows some of our most vulnerable clients to age in their homes. Performance and productivity standards for IHSS are determined and measured by CDSS and include federal guidelines for timely annual reassessments. Failure to meet the success rate negatively impacts funding for the program. Entering FY 2024-2025, IHSS faced ongoing challenges from high staff turnover and soaring demand with a sustained 16% increase in new applicants. IHSS began the year with a 21% overdue reassessment rate for higher need cases which are eligible for increased federal funding and a 30% overdue initial assessment rate. To address this, IHSS leadership analyzed staff input from the County-administered employee engagement survey to identify pain points, feedback and research recommendations.

Results: The IHSS team refined documentation standards by eliminating duplicate data entry across multiple systems and prioritizing work within CDSS's Case Management Information and Payrolling System. Quality assurance procedures were modernized through a new SharePoint system, replacing inefficient email exchanges of Word templates. Outdated CDSS reports were restructured into the ADS Power Apps database, allowing real-time compliance tracking at both program and individual levels. IHSS coordinated with other county programs to reduce redundancy and duplication of work. A pilot referral process that focused on IHSS education in collaboration with the Human Services Agency (HSA) reduced unnecessary back and forth between IHSS and HSA for 852 IHSS applicants. These efficiencies and refinements allowed IHSS staff to focus on completing reassessments and initial assessments. By July 2025, the team increased the success of both state mandate requirements such that 94% of the nearly 9,000 clients had received an annual reassessment on time and 85% of all initial applicants received their assessment within 90 days. As of September 2025, IHSS further improved the higher need cases receiving federal funding reassessment rate to 98%, making San Mateo County a leader in achieving these timely reassessment rates among Bay Area IHSS programs. The program has continued to demonstrate improvement in meeting metrics and projects a 100% success rate by December 2025.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

### **Elysian Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program – Human Services Agency (\$10,000)**

Description: Elysian STRTP, a program of Human Services Agency's Children & Family Services branch, is a trauma-informed, six-bed therapeutic residential program serving foster youth ages 12-17. The program treats youth who have experienced abuse and/or neglect that are exhibiting high need trauma-related behaviors and have mental health treatment needs that impact their social and educational functioning. Elysian supports youth in attending their school of origin, developing independent living and social skills, participating in healing, therapeutic interventions, connecting with their support/family systems, engaging in community and therapeutic activities (such as ceramics, dance, working out, music), using self-regulation skills, and meeting their expressed goals. The treatment focuses on developing the youth's natural resources in themselves, their family, school and community setting. Throughout the residential treatment process, importance is placed on meeting the needs of each youth's individual strengths and capacities. The primary goal is to assist youth by identifying their treatment needs, engaging them in services, and stepping them down to a lower level of care in their community within the shortest time frame possible.

Results: The customer service challenge that Elysian STRTP faced prior to FY 24-25 was mediocre satisfaction survey scores, with significant resident feedback from the teen residents asking for changes in the program rules and regulations. With a trauma informed lens and feedback from the teens, the program leadership reviewed all of the policies and procedures as well as the resident handbook, resulting in revisions to the program operating procedures and to handbook. Additionally, the Elysian team developed more ways for residents to give feedback on the program more often. The team started offering a satisfaction survey on a weekly basis during weekly community meetings to help the residents reflect both internally on the survey and externally with the staff on how they are feeling about the program, to share any suggestions, and to have options for providing program feedback. They can also use the QR code in their living spaces to generate any feedback, anonymous or otherwise, on the surveys. There are grievance forms available for them to complete at any time. The Elysian leadership team meets weekly to discuss the feedback and make changes accordingly either within the program or to the client's individual plan. The supervisors also meet with the residents in person to understand their strengths and needs, and plan together with the residents what would help them meet their goals and feel supported by the program. As a result of the updated policies, procedures and handbook, as well as increased opportunities to evaluate the program in a variety of ways, the program has seen an increase in overall satisfaction with the program. When FY 23-24 resident feedback survey was compared with the 24-25 survey, we saw an increase in overall satisfaction from an average of 2.9/5 stars to 4.2/5 in FY 24-25. The residents feel heard and can engage meaningfully and safely in their treatment while at the therapeutic program.

## GREEN/SUSTAINABILITY

### **Zero-Emission Fleet Transition Project – Department of Public Works (\$5,000)**

Description: To advance the County's fleet electrification goals, the Department of Public Works' Vehicle and Equipment Services (VES) partnered with the Sustainability Department to develop customized Fleet Electrification Transition Plans for 19 County departments. Recognizing the need for clear, data-driven guidance, VES analyzed fleet composition and usage data, evaluated charger deployment timelines, assessed available electric vehicle (EV) options, and compared lifecycle costs to internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles. Each departmental plan provides a practical roadmap identifying which vehicles to replace with EVs, the optimal replacement timeline, associated costs, and corresponding charging infrastructure needs.

These plans empower departments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve local air quality, lower fuel and maintenance costs, and plan strategically for future fleet investments. Through strong technical analysis, leadership, and cross-departmental collaboration, VES has established a Countywide framework that supports an informed, coordinated transition to zero-emission vehicles. This work keeps all departments on track to meet the County's 2035 fleet electrification target. Already, this initiative has produced measurable results. The County has secured multiple grants to support EV purchases and retire ICE vehicles from the shared motorpool. Over the next year, 22 new EVs will be deployed through these funding opportunities, representing a major step toward a cleaner and more sustainable fleet.

#### Results:

This project delivers significant environmental, fiscal, and organizational benefits. By identifying cost-effective pathways to replace ICE vehicles with EVs, it supports the County's climate goals while reducing fleet-related greenhouse gas emissions and improving local air quality. The analysis conducted through each departmental Fleet Electrification Transition Plan provides data that can be used to secure future grant funding, forecast capital and operating costs, and plan for efficient charging infrastructure deployment. These insights help departments make informed investment decisions and align fleet replacement planning with the County's 2035 electrification target. Benefits are measured through metrics such as the number of EVs added to the fleet, the percentage of electric miles driven, reductions in estimated emissions, and comparisons of operating and maintenance costs between EVs and internal combustion vehicles. These measurable outcomes demonstrate progress toward cleaner operations, long-term cost savings, and more strategic, data-driven fleet management.

## INCLUSION AND BELONGING

### **VRS HOME Program– VRS HOME Program – Human Services Agency (\$5,000)**

Description: For individuals experiencing homelessness or long-term unemployment, reentering the workforce can feel out of reach due to limited job history, trauma, or lack of formal training and support. The Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) Housing and Opportunities to Maximize Employment (HOME) program serves people experiencing homelessness and people who had been homeless and recently moved into housing through vocational counseling, assessment/training, supportive services, and job placement and coaching. The VRS HOME Program operates a food services training program component at the San Mateo County Navigation Center. The program provides up to six months of hands-on culinary training to prepare trainees to be job ready within a supportive, inclusive environment that fosters belonging, mentorship, and opportunity. Trainees gain practical skills, confidence, and teamwork while preparing meals for Navigation Center residents. The shared experience of preparing meals for fellow residents fosters dignity, self-worth, and reconnection to society, helping them restore their sense of purpose and contribution within the community.

#### Results:

Over the six-month training period, trainees can earn a California Food Handler's Certificate, develop confidence, and strengthen job-readiness skills. In FY 24-25, the VRS HOME program served 220 clients, completed 39 certifications including Forklift and California Food Handler, and supported 59 job placements with an average starting wage of \$22.21 per hour. Overall, 95% of individuals who completed an intake began paid training, and 93% of trainees who completed the program were determined "job ready." Among them, 54% secured community employment during the fiscal year. During FY 24-25, the VRS HOME Food Services Training Program served more than 98,000 meals to over 240 residents of the Navigation Center and fostered an inclusive kitchen environment that promotes belonging and pride.

Participants describe the program as life changing: "They're the ones that hold your hand and take it to the next step. By doing that, they allowed me to rejoin society. Without the VRS HOME program, I don't know where I'd be today," shared Sean, a VRS HOME trainee. Another participant, Shareese, said, "I had the freedom of expressing myself through food. I saw the kitchen, the nice big commercial kitchen and I thought I could really get creative if they let me. I like serving and seeing the smiles of the people that enjoy your food. It just brings me joy."