



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COUNTY EXECUTIVE

File #: 24-499

Board Meeting Date: 6/25/2024

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Michael P. Callagy, County Executive
Iliana Rodriguez, Assistant County Executive

Subject: Contracts with Focus Strategies to Conduct Evaluations of Homeless Shelter Operations and Diversion and Coordinated Entry System Services

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution authorizing the County Executive, or designee(s), to execute:

- A) An agreement with Focus Strategies for evaluation of the County's homeless shelter operations for a total amount not to exceed \$200,000 for a term of August 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025; and
- B) An agreement with Focus Strategies for evaluation of the County's Diversion and Coordinated Entry System for a total amount not to exceed \$200,000 for a term of January 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.

BACKGROUND:

The County's Diversion and Coordinated Entry System (CES) is a process that standardizes the way individuals and families at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness are assessed for and referred to the housing and services that they need for housing stability. To serve this population, the County contracts with homeless shelters operated by Samaritan House (Pacific Shelter, El Camino House, and Safe Harbor Shelter), WeHope (WeHope Shelter and Coast House (after June 30, 2024)), StarVista (Daybreak Shelter), LifeMoves (Navigation Center, Coast House (before July 1, 2024)), and Family Shelters (Haven Family House, Family Crossroads, Redwood Family House, and First Step for Families).

DISCUSSION:

The County has an interest in ensuring that its programs to serve the public are effective and efficient. Conducting evaluations provides actionable information on the efficacy of County programs, increases transparency and accountability, and helps leaders make evidence-based decisions. Evaluations can be critical to understanding the populations served by the County's programs and

how to improve services. This is especially important for programs that address homelessness.

Toward this end, in December 2023, staff conducted a competitive procurement to identify and select a qualified contractor to assist with the evaluation of contracts funded by the County's Measure K sales tax. Focus Strategies was the only respondent to submit a proposal, which was limited to evaluating programs within the category of housing and homelessness (their area of expertise). Focus Strategies provides objective assessment of efforts to address homelessness and provides data to inform solutions. The County Executive's Office has determined that Focus Strategies has the expertise to review and evaluate the County's Diversion and Coordinated Entry System (CES) and the operations of the County's contracted homeless shelters. A copy of the RFP matrix is submitted with this Board memorandum.

As of March 26, 2024, the County separately contracted with Focus Strategies to review and evaluate the Homeless Prevention and Emergency Financial Assistance (EFA) Program, which is administered by the County's Human Services Agency (HSA) through an agreement with Samaritan House. The County also entered into a contract with Focus Strategies in August 2023, to review and evaluate government programs on an as-needed basis.

To secure additional evaluation services, staff recommends entering into two new agreements with Focus Strategies. Under one agreement, Focus Strategies will evaluate the County's contracted homeless shelter operations. Focus Strategies will research, review, and analyze data relating to these operations and provide findings and recommendations to improve efficacy and outcomes for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In addition, under another agreement, Focus Strategies will evaluate the effectiveness of the County's Diversion and CES services as key elements of the homeless crisis response system. The Contractor's services will include quantitative analyses, qualitative analysis, review of best practices/literature review, and recommendations for improvement.

The proposed agreement for evaluation of the County's homeless shelter operations will have a term from August 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025. The proposed agreement for evaluation of the County's diversion and CES services will have a term from January 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Each of the two proposed agreements is subject to a maximum fiscal obligation of \$200,000 for a total of \$400,000.

The County Attorney has reviewed and approved the proposed agreements and resolution as to form.

EQUITY IMPACT

Individuals and families facing homelessness often represent our most vulnerable and marginalized residents, and many suffer the daily trauma of not knowing whether they will be able to sleep in a safe environment or obtain regular meals. Moreover, these individuals and families are highly vulnerable to violence, victimization, and adverse health outcomes, and a disproportionate number have experienced past forms of trauma such as child abuse and domestic violence. The County's homeless crisis response system (which includes CES and homeless shelters) assists these individuals and families in need, and evaluations will help ensure that the County is providing services in an equitable and effective manner.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The proposed agreements with Focus Strategies each have a maximum fiscal obligation of \$200,000 for a total aggregate fiscal commitment of \$400,000. This amount will be paid for using Measure K Reserves and is included in the FY 2023-24 Non-Departmental Services Adopted Budget.