



## *Community Services Department*

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**TO:** Human Relations Commission

**FROM:** Minka van der Zwaag  
Manager, Office of Human Services  
Community Services Department

**DATE:** November 6, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP)  
2020 Human Services Needs Assessment & Draft FY2022-23  
Priority of Needs  
**Agenda Item # 3**

### **Executive Summary:**

This report transmits to the Human Relations Commission (HRC) the results of a recent Human Services Needs Assessment, updated demographic information and a draft Priority of Needs for Fiscal Years 2022 – 2023 for the Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP).

### **Action at this meeting:**

Based upon a review of the survey and demographic information, the HRC will be asked to provide a recommendation as to the HSRAP Priority of Needs for FY2022-23.

### **Background:**

A Request for Proposal (RFP) or application for HSRAP funding occurs every two years. The next RFP will be issued in November 2020, with proposals due in January 2021. Funding for this cycle is from July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023. Included in the RFP is a listing of the Priority of Needs, or allowable funding categories, for the current cycle. As part of the process of updating the Priority of Needs, an assessment of the human service needs in the community is conducted. This has included a large-scale review (2012), a supplemental needs assessment (2014), which consisted of interviews with staff of each of the HSRAP grantees, and

since then a biennial needs assessment which included a survey and demographic information.

You will find the following information included with this staff report:

- 2020 Human Services Needs Assessment Survey Results - (Attachment A – sample survey and results). This survey was sent out approximately 40 recipients including current HSRAP grantees, Avenidas, Palo Alto Community Child Care and Project Sentinel/Palo Alto Mediation Program, all who have service contracts with the City, in addition to other human service agencies serving Palo Alto residents. 27 responses were received.
- Demographic Information – (Attachment B)
- Priority of Needs FY 22-23 – draft (Attachment C)

This staff report is not intended to be a thorough analysis of the 2020 Human Services Needs Assessment but includes questions and staff observations to assist the HRC in making a recommendation in regards the FY2022-23 Priority of Needs.

### **Discussion:**

HSRAP has historically had a wide scope of allowable funding categories and some agencies have been receiving funding for numerous years. Research from the wide scale 2012 Human Services Needs Assessment indicated that, viewed broadly, the list of needs changes little over time as seen through the eyes of support providers and recipients of assistance. However, during recent years, the following gaps in funding areas have been identified and added based on HRC/Staff analysis of current community human service needs: tutoring, youth wellbeing, and elder abuse. In addition, in the last HSRAP cycle, it was more clearly articulated that LGBTQ + needs were inclusive of gender identity and expression.

The survey results received reflect only a snapshot of the needs, gaps, barriers and trends in Palo Alto from the service lens of the 27 human service agency representatives who completed the survey and that is reflected in the diversity of responses received. It should be noted that some agencies forwarded the survey to more than one representative in their organization, often to amplify the needs of a different client base.

Commissioners are encouraged to review the survey results and demographic information provided and consider the following questions:

- What are gateway needs (i.e. If these needs are met, a person is more successful in addressing their other service needs?)
- What is the extent to which problems are interconnected, e.g., homelessness and mental health or hunger and economic dependency?

- Are there service needs not included in the current Priority of Needs and can HSRAP play a role?

Staff cautions the HRC during its review of the survey results not to assume that if a service ranked low or did not appear as a need that the service is not needed. It could indicate that current service levels provided are adequate, but if financial assistance was removed or a current human services agency was no longer able to provide that service, that the need may increase again.

Staff also acknowledges that this survey serves mainly as a “window” into the needs, gaps, barriers and trends identified by the survey respondents. Staff will be checking to see if internal funding is available to complete an in-depth Human Services Needs Assessment for the next HSRAP cycle.

The demographic information provided includes several multi-year graphs and an update for 2019/2020, depending on the data sources available.

As stated previously in this report, the HRC is being asked to provide a recommendation as to the HSRAP Priority of Needs for FY2022-23 based upon a review of the survey and demographic information.

The impact of COVID 19 (COVID) on the human services community and our residents is beyond the capacity of what HSRAP can address. Staff asks that the HRC’s discussion center on evaluating the information provided within the lens of making a recommendation on the FY22-23 HSRAP priority of needs. A further discussion of the 2020 Needs Assessment/Demographics in relation to the impact of COVID and any other suggested responses or actions can be agendaized and discussed at a future HRC meeting.

In reviewing the results, the area cost of living, especially the need for affordable housing continues to be the top issue affecting clients of local human services agencies. This is an enormous problem which is beyond the capacity of HSRAP to address. While questions one through six are identical to those asked since 2016, comparison of answers or analysis of trends is challenging as most current survey responses were influenced by the impact of COVID on both the human services providers and their clients.

As indicated in the survey comments, human services providers have worked diligently to adapt their services to address the needs of their clients despite all the COVID related challenges. Services were moved to a virtual format whenever possible, with hurdles related to technology and HIPAA compliance to overcome. Adaptions were made to those in-person services still permitted to follow county/state health department directives and new programs and services were initiated to meet client needs. Calls were and are being made to clients regularly to

see how they are doing, and food, medicine, and other needed supplies are being delivered to a client's front door by many providers.

The loss of program and fundraising revenue is hitting organizations hard, while expenses for most are increasing. The unknown length of the COVID pandemic is also making it challenging to plan and budget for the future.

While the move to virtual services has been a lifeline for most agencies and allowed them to serve their clients in new and different ways as well as reach new clients, many reported that the issue of access to adequate technology/knowledge of use has been a big stumbling block in serving many clients. This lack of full digital inclusion spans multiple demographics and while evident before COVID, has been exacerbated during the pandemic. Agencies have also reported greater requests by clients to meet basic needs (food, rental assistance, medicine) as well as the myriad of mental health challenges brought on the extended need to shelter in place such as isolation, loneliness, fear, etc.

**Draft Priority of Need (Fiscal Years 2022-23):**

Upon review of the 2020 Human Services Needs Assessment and the demographic information provided, staff believes that most of the needs identified fall within the current Priority of Needs. The one area of need that came up often in the needs assessment results was that of digital inclusion and the HRC may wish to consider discussing this need.