



Community Services Department

TO: Human Relations Commission

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Community Services Department

DATE: October 13, 2022

SUBJECT: Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP)
2022 Human Services Needs Assessment & Draft FY2024-25
Priority of Needs
Agenda Item # 5

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 2024 – 2025 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 FY2024-25.

Background:

A Request for Proposal (RFP) or application for HSRAP funding occurs every two years. The next RFP will be issued in late fall/early winter, with proposals due in January 2023. Funding for this cycle is from July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025. 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:

- [2022 Human Services Needs Assessment Survey Results - \(Attachment B\)](#)
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), as well as other human service agencies serving Palo Alto residents. 17 responses were received.
- [Demographic Information – \(Attachment C\)](#)
- [Draft Priority of Needs FY 24-25 – \(Attachment D\)](#)

This staff report is not intended to be a thorough analysis of the 2022 Human Services Needs Assessment but includes some highlights of survey results as well as questions and staff observations to assist the HRC in making a recommendation in regards the FY2024-25 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: LGBTQIA+ needs more defined to be inclusive of gender identity and expression, and during the last HSRAP cycle, online-digital inclusion was added as this cyber divide was most acutely felt during the COVID pandemic when so many services transferred online.

The survey results received reflect only a snapshot of the needs, gaps, barriers and trends in Palo Alto from the service lens of the 17 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 may have 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.

The demographic information provided includes several multi-year graphs and an update for 2021/2022, 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 FY2024-25 based upon a review of the survey and demographic information.

Staff asks that the HRC’s discussion center on evaluating the information provided within the lens of making a recommendation on the HSRAP priority of needs.

In reviewing the results of the top 5 human services needs that the clients of agencies serving Palo Altans face, affordable housing, affordable medical/dental care, and disability services tied for the highest spot followed by a tie with behavioral health services and emergency financial assistance for basic needs. This is a slight change from the 2020 needs assessment when the top five responses were housing, case management, emergency financial assistance, mental health and disability services. Housing has topped the list for years, but the mix of rest of the top 5 is subject to who responds to the survey as it is not always the same mix of agencies from cycle to cycle.

The Needs Assessment survey of 2020 (right in the midst of the COVID) asked several questions about the effects of the pandemic on service providers and their clients. In this cycle, we asked a couple questions to ascertain COVID’s continuing local effect on the clients that our human services agencies serve and on the agencies themselves and the highlights below indicate that COVID is still affecting our providers and their clients as follows:

- Mental health challenges facing adults and youth
- Continued reluctance among vulnerable populations to return to in person services
- Lingering financial struggles for both clients and the agencies that serve them
- The rise in the cost of living (especially for housing) vs. income for clients
- The ever-increasing cost of providing services for providers

- The many challenges that agencies face in finding and retaining staff

Draft Priority of Need (Fiscal Years 2024-25):

Upon review of the 2022 Human Services Needs Assessment and the demographic information provided, staff believes that most of the needs identified fall within the current Priority of Needs.