

County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Executive

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Date: February 26, 2019

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive

From: Miriam Singer, CPPO, FCCN, Chief Procurement Officer DS
MS

Subject: Strengthening and Capacity Building for Community Based Organizations

On December 18, 2018, the Board of Supervisors approved a referral to Administration to report back to the Board regarding options for consideration relating to a proposed framework for how the County can assist in building capacity and sustainability of community-based organizations (CBOs) serving vulnerable communities (Item 94705). This report describes considerations for development of a framework that includes options for strengthening the capacity of CBOs currently providing services, and addresses CBOs that serve culturally and linguistically diverse and underrepresented communities.

Administration has met with county agency directors to identify effective initiatives currently underway to address this area of opportunity. They include initiatives by Behavioral Health to contract to provide technical assistance regarding quality improvement, behavioral health finance and strengthening network adequacy. In addition, the Social Services Agency (SSA) has instituted a program where county staff go onsite to CBOs to assess their technical assistance needs. This program has resulted in assisting funded CBOs with developing program outcome measures and standardizing contracting processes. Additionally, SSA staff conducts annual provider site visits, which include a review of client and administrative records that will identify opportunities for capacity building and further detail technical assistance needs. Administration is planning to review the results of these CBO contractor assessments/reviews and those of other departments, as well as information received from CBO advocacy agencies, to determine specific areas of needs for CBO capacity building. This will be an ongoing evaluation process to ensure that the County keeps abreast of the current and future needs and possible capacity-building opportunities for current and future CBO partners.

Models used by other jurisdictions and in a focused way, in our community, include establishing a cooperative of smaller, grass roots CBOs that share a common back-office administrative office to support non-direct service activities. Some governments also have assembled management watch teams to include budget, finance, and management analysts to assist service providers in unique, hard to replicate service areas with development to allow for their growth and improve upon their performance of administrative management duties. Yet another approach focuses on a resource office established via rotating assignment on County premises that stands ready to aid CBOs of any size and experience in navigating the County's diverse contracting processes.

In the Spring of this year, a quarterly internal meeting will be facilitated to share lessons learned

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that have proven effective in improving contracting practices with CBO service providers, as well as to tackle common challenges that arise and may benefit from implementing consistent solutions across departmental lines. In addition, quarterly meetings will be hosted to facilitate conversations between department heads responsible for direct services, including community health clinics, and community-based service providers and their associations with the intent of identifying practices that are working well and finding solutions to challenges. A unique focus of the technical assistance activities is to identify success factors in strengthening the infrastructure and capacity of smaller, grassroots, and “mom & pop” service providers serving underrepresented communities. Assessments will be developed to assist with their unique needs to effectively lead and manage organizations and to foster strategic and responsible growth. This approach is intended to improve outcomes for clients served and to promote opportunities for scalability to serve a larger number of clients in need of services consistent with culturally competent practices. This effort will also require initiation of a listening and learning process to identify unique methods to reach and support their sustainability and growth. A number of subjects may be discussed, and solutions explored will focus on building strength in talent management, development and succession planning, as well as administrative, fiscal, and program management skills essential to success in human services contracting. Developing and strengthening strategies that are unique to developing leadership in CBOs, including smaller organizations is also of critical importance.

The goals of the proposed framework are:

1. Enable CBOs that are currently and successfully contracting with the County with the tools and assistance needed to build on their organizational structure and improve their service delivery outcomes allowing for scalability to meet the demands of the community.
2. Provide administrative and organizational technical assistance to smaller, less structured organizations that have proven to be effective in serving unique populations but do not have all of the administrative resources required to seek and further develop administrative/management capacity contracting relationships with the County or other local government agencies.

A multi-pronged approach to address these goals will be led by my Office with support from the Office of Countywide Contracting Management (OCCM) and the Office of the County Counsel. I will also continue to engage with agency heads in the Behavioral Health Services, Social Services, Office of Support Housing, Probation, Re-Entry Services, and Public Health Departments, along with others as identified through the process.

The first step will be to explore what is working well and opportunities for improvement in contracting relationships with the CBO community through conversations with service providers and advocates. The following options, among others, will be considered:

1. Building internal teams comprised of County staff from the referenced departments that possess the administrative, financial, personnel, programmatic, and/or procurement expertise to develop assessments and/or create improvement plans based on the needs of current CBO service providers. This may involve developing capacity and resources within

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- each of these departments and having their expert staff be the advisors to CBO service providers to assist in responsible, strategic growth.
2. Engaging a technical assistance consultant(s) or establishing a technical assistance pool that has proven experience and expertise in the area of business assessments, technical assistance and CBO specific capacity building.
 3. Exploring opportunities to partner with a charitable foundation(s) to provide funding, assessment, and/or technical assistance to both emerging and established CBOs. This would include organizations with interests in sustaining services to a diverse array of underrepresented and/or underserved populations. This effort would include extensive market research to learn availability in the marketplace with proven experience in capacity building and a willingness to partner (and invest) with the County.

The proposed framework would also focus on capacity-building opportunities for smaller organizations that successfully serve underrepresented communities but do not have the administrative strength to expand their services. Administration is exploring ways to help partner smaller CBOs with larger, more established CBOs that can serve as the administrative agent and assist with functions such as applying for funding opportunities, complying with contractual requirements, budget development, and invoicing. These partnerships can lead to building the smaller organizations administrative capacity and sustainability.

Additionally, Administration will research CBO capacity-building models across the state, including the City/County of San Francisco and the County of Los Angeles to learn of other proven strategies. Staff will also continue conducting outreach efforts consistent with California law to expand competition in CBO contracting. Outreach events such as vendor and department specific networking meetings present additional opportunities for to obtain feedback that can inform future trainings and the framework for strengthening CBOs serving clients in our community.

Other areas of opportunity for CBO contracting assistance include establishing standardization and consistency in contracting requirements, such as audited financial statements, contracting methodologies, consistent documents and terms and conditions, indemnification provisions, communications approaches during procurement processes, compliance practices, and accountability reviews. OCCM is initiating specific consultation and activities with County agencies to establish consistency and ease of navigation through the County's wide array of contracting processes and practices.

Providing an open forum for communication with the CBO community by reinstating quarterly meetings to present the proposed initial framework, establish a space for ongoing conversations, sharing contracting updates or shared training needs, and learning about emerging community issues will go a long way in developing more collegial and effective partnerships. The quarterly CBO meetings will provide valuable input, serve as problem-solving fora, and secure feedback that will support continuous improvement and contribute in a positive manner the County's transformation initiative in its efforts to strengthen CBOs serving the vibrant, culturally rich and diverse Santa Clara County community.

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