



County of Santa Cruz

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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BOARD TO WEIGH COMMUNITY PROGRAMS STRATEGY

Over the years, the County of Santa Cruz has earmarked significant funding for safety net services to local residents through non-profit agencies that have a proven track record of innovation and strong community commitment.

However, there are currently no mechanisms in place to measure the collective impact of the County's investment. On August 16, the Board of Supervisors will consider a plan that renews the County's commitment to data-driven, community-based assistance by implementing a new system for funding local nonprofits tasked with delivering these critical services.

In order to maximize its investment in the community, the County is proposing to realign investments based on nine community strategic plans that have been validated by extensive data and stakeholder input. Starting in FY 2017-18, non-profit applicants will compete for three-year grants to provide evidenced-based approaches that align with these strategic plans to improve the lives of elderly residents and youth, expand health care access, reduce homelessness, increase substance use disorder and mental health treatment and more.

Should the plan be adopted, the County is committed to seeing our partners succeed in this new environment and applicants will be provided training and technical assistance to assure they can adequately compete for funding. The County will also receive an annual report card to the community and explore third-party program evaluations to assure taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely.

"Government and local non-profit service providers alike have the extremely important role of delivering evidence-based, cost-effective services to the most vulnerable people in our community," Santa Cruz County Human Services Director Cecilia Espinola said.



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“We are fortunate in this County to have a strong foundation of non-profits who work in partnership and are committed to maximizing limited funding and getting results for clients.”

The Board of Supervisors last year approved a plan to initiate the change. The County’s Human Services Department has since held numerous meetings both internally and with government and nonprofit funders, local nonprofit service providers, strategic plan representatives and major outside grant-making organizations.

Key elements of the new funding system include defining and monitoring results, using evidence and data to inform program and funding decisions, instituting a transparent, efficient and competitive grant application process.

“I am so proud of our Board of Supervisors for designing this new system for investing in our non-profit health and human services agencies,” said Mary Lou Goeke, executive director of the United Way of Santa Cruz County. “We have some of the best helping agencies in the country right here in Santa Cruz County. By thoughtfully aligning our investments in their services to our neediest residents we will help more people, more quickly, become financially independent and lead healthier, productive lives.

“Coordinating our investments in our youth will have payoffs for generations to come,” Goeke continued. “United Way of Santa Cruz County is grateful to partner with the County of Santa Cruz and other local funders to best serve the people of our county.”