

WORK SESSION AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

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SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION

Human Services Priorities Platform Update.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to explain the aims and process of the Human Services Priorities Platform project and seek Council feedback. The Social Sustainability Department's current approach to supporting human services is widespread and in need of a refresh. This project is being designed to efficiently retool how the department addresses ongoing and emerging human service issues affecting low-income and vulnerable residents.

GENERAL DIRECTION SOUGHT AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. Do Councilmembers support staff's proposed approach to developing the Human Services Priorities Platform?

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Human service needs in the Fort Collins community are complex and interconnected. Examples of human service issues include childcare access and affordability; nutritious food programs for children and seniors; housing counseling/rent assistance; services for disabled residents, at-risk youth, persons experiencing homelessness, and sexual abuse/domestic violence victims; mental/behavioral health services; and services for those striving to achieve self-sufficiency.

The Social Sustainability Department (SSD) presently addresses these issues with a broad approach that is aligned with the department's Strategic Plan (summary attached). The SSD Strategic Plan was released in 2016 and is used to inform eligibility for funding programs and to guide where staff time and other resources are delegated. However, attempting to support as many organizations and causes as possible dilutes the potential impact of addressing systemic and sustainable solutions for the community's human service needs. To ensure that City resources are efficiently directed to the community's most pressing human service priorities, staff is proposing the development of a *Human Services Priorities Platform* for use in competitive funding programs and to influence staff work plan activities.

The Human Services Priorities Platform will be an adaptable, role-clarifying blueprint for how SSD delivers resources, programming and partnership toward human services in the community moving forward. The Platform concept will profile the human service issues of greatest significance to the City and will form the

basis for future work. The key priorities identified will inform staff activities and grant-making for the next five years, beginning in Fiscal Year 2025. Staff intends for the Platform to be updated on a 5-year cycle and to align with adopted City policies and priorities as expressed in the City Strategic Plan, Housing Strategic Plan, City Plan, and other relevant documents.

The project work plan is currently designed in four stages:

Stage I – Collect Voices, Insights and Trends

The project will include analysis of existing data sets, reports and plans that are recent, relevant and local. Recognizing that many nonprofit partners express frustration of being over-asked for input from the City and other institutions, this project will utilize current materials to inform its data trends and topics. Examples include the Fort Collins Resilient Recovery Plan, Social Sustainability Gaps Analysis, Larimer County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), Health District Community Survey, demographic forecasts and others.

Understanding the local funding landscape is a key activity of this stage and will include an examination of leading human service funders and the focus areas they support. Similarly, a multi-year trend analysis of the City's Human Services Program grant funding will help to demonstrate how City-administered funds have historically been awarded towards various causes.

Further public engagement may be warranted to solicit necessary input or to verify trends. This may take the form of focus groups and interviews with service providers, and surveying residents representing identities and interests that are currently underrepresented.

Meetings with relevant City Boards and Commissions will further enrich and add to the public engagement in this stage. Internal City departments that interact with high risk and vulnerable populations will also be consulted.

Local data collected by SSD already demonstrates greater proportional representation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and other historically excluded residents receiving support from human service providers. This is further confirmed within multiple measurements in the Fort Collins Equity Indicators Report. A priority of the Human Services Priorities Platform will be to preserve the values of the City's Strategic Objective related to diversity, equity and inclusion (Neighborhood Livability and Social Health - NLSH 1.4) in each stage of the Platform's development and implementation.

Stage II – Priority Shift and Draft Platform

After the Stage I information has been assembled, a team of City staff will evaluate where emerging and ongoing human service trends are clearly indicated, and how those issues align to current human service priorities and funding interests in the community. A draft detailing how SSD may shift its prioritization of human service concerns will then be prepared. This will include a demonstration of the potential impacts of implementing these shifts, such as: deeper funding, strengthened partnerships and possible trade-offs.

It will be important to return to the various community partners and request their review and feedback on the proposed human service shifts. A public review process will be conducted and modeled after U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements, which the SSD staff are well familiarized with. Necessary revisions and considerations will then be adopted into a final Human Services Priorities Platform document.

Stage III – Endorsement

The *Human Services & Housing Funding (HSHF) Board* is the Council-appointed body responsible for advising the Social Sustainability Department's initiatives surrounding human services, poverty, affordable housing, and related human-centered interests. The HSHF Board also reviews and creates

recommendations for a variety of funding requests from community programs related to these issues, and therefore will have their work significantly influenced by the Human Services Priorities Platform. The HSHF Board will be consulted throughout Stage I and Stage II of the Platform project, and their endorsement of the final deliverable will be solicited to provide validation and credibility.

Stage IV – Implementation

Effective implementation and communication of the Human Services Priorities Platform will conclude this project. The primary deliverable will be a simple, print-ready document illustrating the principal human service interests of SSD and our role as a partner, funder and convener. Collateral materials and a web landing page will be created to share further details as necessary.

Human service organizations and other community groups will be invited to in-person and online orientation sessions, in addition to receiving general messaging sent via email. The HSHF Board will also receive further orientation on how they may apply the Human Services Priorities Platform to their work.

To ensure the Platform remains relevant and responsive, community conditions will be scanned annually to identify any systemic changes that may necessitate updates outside the typical 5-year review process.

Timeline

Q1-Q2 2024: Stage I – Collect Voices, Insights and Trends

Q2 2024: Stage II – Priority Shift and Draft Platform

Q3 2024: Stage III – Endorsement

Q4 2024: Stage IV – Implementation

NEXT STEPS

Council will receive update memos as significant milestones are achieved throughout the development of the Human Services Priorities Platform.

Retooled human service priorities will be integrated into the annual Competitive Funding Process beginning in 2025, as well as relevant SSD Budget Offers.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Social Sustainability Human Services Priorities and Concentrations
2. Presentation