Attachment B: Human Services Funding Process Framework

Background & Board Direction

The Human Services Funding Process evolved through a series of strategic decisions and guidance set by the Board of Supervisors implemented in FYs 25 and 26. These changes were intended to allocate new funding towards programs that will most likely drive outcomes and impacts of the Board's FY 24 –28 Strategic Plan Objective 1.2: Enhance and develop human services initiatives to assist community in accessing existing resources.

At the June 21, 2023, Board of Supervisors meeting, staff presented an initial Albemarle County Human Services Needs Assessment and discussed opportunities to address the identified needs through an expanded agency funding process. This initial assessment presented data and contextual information from the areas of homelessness, housing, criminal justice, food insecurity, behavioral health and financial need. Emerging needs in the areas of family homelessness, adolescent mental health, community safety, and navigation for seniors were identified based on data and analysis of current community capacity and context. On July 19, 2023, the Board approved an updated framework for funding recommendations where:

- Funding is first prioritized for programs that most directly align with the four emerging needs areas identified in the Albemarle County Human Services Needs Assessment (family homelessness, adolescent mental health, community safety, and navigation for seniors). This potentially higher level of funding is intended to include performance agreements or contracts, that could be renewed for additional years based on measured impact, for activities specifically intended to address the concerns or gaps in service for these four areas.
- Additionally, staff would no longer consider the "50% of the funding request" historical precedent when making funding recommendations for new programs; new programs would be considered for full funding of their request, in the context of the total budget recommendation.
- Funding for existing agencies and programs that do not as closely align with the four emerging needs areas would receive funding recommendations based on their program ratings.

After the first year of implementation of this process in the FY 25 budget process, on July 17, 2024, the Board of Supervisors updated this framework. These changes to the County funding process better reflect best practices and the County's human services needs. Changes implemented in FY 26 included:

- Changing the name to 'Albemarle County Human Services Funding Process'.
- Improving descriptions on the County website.
- Reviewing which agencies are included in the contractual obligations pool, and,
- Applying a prioritization rubric to the recommendations process based on whether the agency contributes to a basic needs safety net or serves a vulnerable population. In the FY 26 budget, these tiers were:
    - Tier 1 - Direct service and impact on basic needs and vulnerable populations
    - Tier 2 - Important and critical services
    - Tier 3 - Positive impact and protective community factors
    - Tier 4 - Preventative Community Programs
- Applicants were asked to submit an abbreviated application reporting on significant changes in programming, progress, number of county community members served in the current year and anticipated in the funding year.

Review Process

Applications are reviewed by volunteer citizens and County staff members whose charge is to review funding requests from community non-profit agencies using a team approach to reach consensus on rating each program. Team members reviewed and rated applications individually and collectively. The work of the teams was facilitated and supported by a temporary County staff member as well as other County staff as needed and designated by the Department of Finance and Budget. Funding recommendations are not made by the review teams, whose role is to review and rate the applications. Recommendations for funding amounts are formulated by County staff and are based upon program rating and Human Services Needs Assessment prioritization. Recommendations for funding amounts continue to be made in the context of the overall County budget development process, and while taking this process's inputs into account and subject to the availability of funds.