Human Services Program Process Improvement Project
Staff Report – May 2018

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Human Services Program Process Improvement Project, including background, evaluation process undertaken, key findings, and recommendations for implementation, as identified by the Human Services Advisory Board and Housing and Community staff.

History of the Human Services Program

- In 1981 the Council established the Human Services Program to enter into performance agreements with agencies that provide services that address the community's human service needs.
- The Town's Human Services funding process is coordinated with the Town of Carrboro and Orange County. The three governments use the same application and have synchronized their submission deadlines. Each elected board makes funding decisions independently.
- The Human Services Advisory Board reviews applications and makes recommendations to the Town Council annually for funding.
- The charge of the Advisory Board is to: assess human service needs of Chapel Hill residents, identify service gaps and ways to fill them, and advise the Town Council on funding needs at the beginning of the budget cycle.

Background on Process Improvement Project

- The Town Council requested a refined and streamlined funding process for the Human Services Program in the fall of 2017. Council received an informational update on the Project in December of 2017.
- The Council expressed interest in making sure programs funded are more results oriented.
- The Human Services Program currently funds multiple agencies to work on a broad range of issues. There may be opportunities to deepen the impact by redesigning the program to focus on specific outcomes and results on specific community issues.

Evaluation Process and Methodology

The Human Services Process Improvement Sub-Committee, comprised of staff and Human Services Advisory Board members, evaluated the Human Services Program, using a design thinking approach. The intended outcome of the process is to establish:

- ✓ A results-driven funding process that achieves the goals of the Town and is responsive to the community's greatest needs;
- ✓ Clearly defined funding priority areas, goals, and outcome measures that are shared regularly with the Council and the community; and
- ✓ A streamlined funding process that does not unduly burden nonprofit agencies, the Human Services Advisory Board or staff and maintains the collaborative, cross-jurisdictional spirit of the current process

The Sub-Committee used the following methodology to evaluate the program:

✓ Reviewed 2020 Comprehensive Plan and Council goals to identify synergies for potential priority areas.
✓ Reviewed U.S. Census and other data sources to inform priority areas for funding. See the Human Services Needs Presentation attached.
✓ Researched national best practices from other communities with similar funding programs.
✓ Involved the full Human Services Advisory Board in vetting the Human Services Results Framework
✓ Conducted focus groups with Human Service Agency partners to review Results Framework and provide input on performance indicators

Key Findings

1. **While many philanthropic institutions, local governments, and other funders have identified priority areas, very few have implemented a holistic results oriented framework to prioritize funding and monitor outcomes.** Staff reviewed ~30 major funders and found, that with the exception of international development organizations and a handful of other agencies, prioritization of funding tends to stop at the goal level and does not include a connection to holistic monitoring and reporting on results.
2. **A Results Framework is a broadly used tool in the field of international development and public health.** A Results Framework is a planning and management tool that provides the basis for monitoring and evaluation of progress towards achievement of specific measurable results.
3. **Health, education, and livelihood securities rose to the top as key community needs to be addressed.** See the Community Needs Assessment Overview and Focus Group Summary attached for additional details.
4. **Housing continues to be broadly identified as a key community need**, particularly low-income residents who reported encountering significant challenges finding affordable housing. While outside of the purview of this funding source, given the pervasiveness of the comments related to housing shared during our focus groups and review of data, it merited highlighting as a key finding.
5. **As the Human Services Program is currently structured, the Town's ability to deeply respond to the community's greatest needs is limited.** In FY18, the requests for funding exceeded the Human Services Program Budget by 56%, and for FY 19 by 84%. Further, in FY18 only 17% (8 agencies) of agencies received the full amount of their funding request, and 42% of total funding awards were for $5,000 or less, an amount insufficient to fully fund most programs or services or achieve a deep community impact.
6. **Agencies, Human Services Advisory Board Members, and Town staff dedicate an extraordinary amount of time to the current Human Services Process.** Human Services Advisory Board Members reported spending an average of 65 hours on the review process, including review of 50+ funding applications, six agency hearings, and board deliberations. This amounts to a combined 390 hours of volunteer time dedicated to the funding process (excluding regular board meetings when other business is conducted). Agencies reported spending on average 37 hours in completing the application, participating in the hearing, and preparing required reports. However, the range of the amount of time agencies spend on the Town's human services process varies widely, from a reported 20-60 hours total, per funding cycle.

Human Services Results Framework
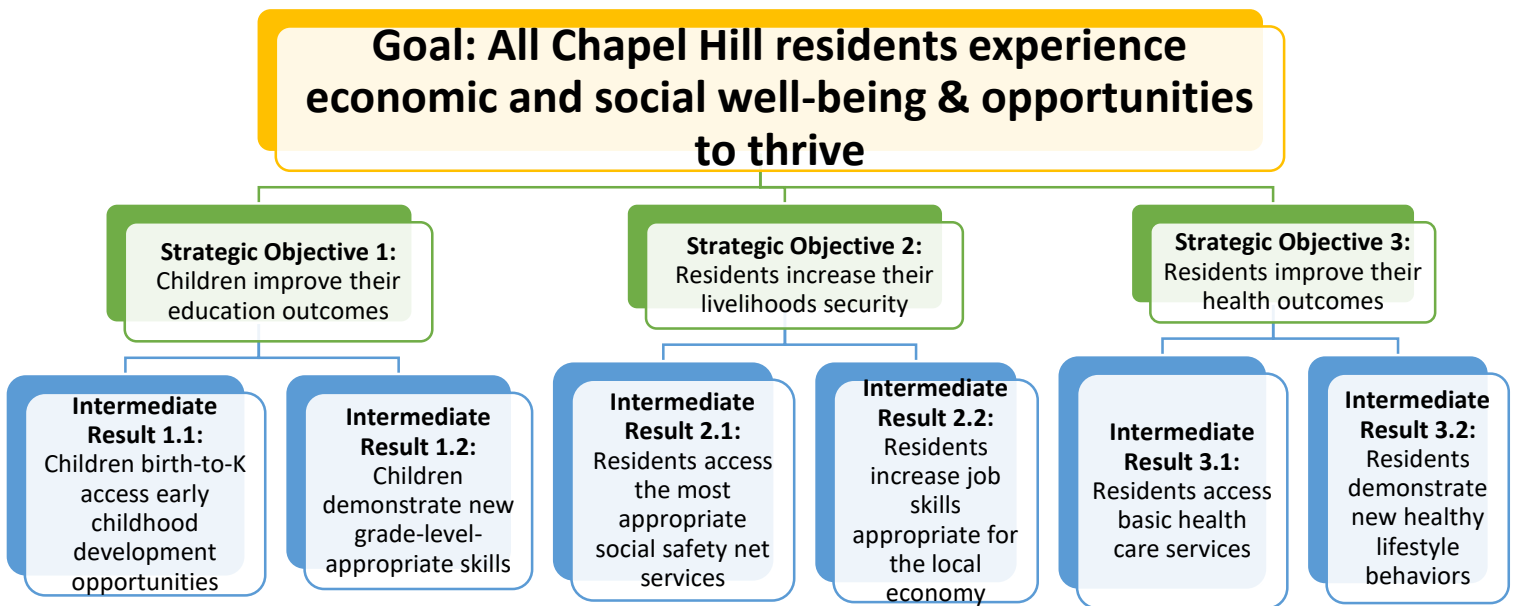
Based on the data collection and evaluation process undertaken by the staff and Human Services Advisory Board over the last several months, the Human Services Advisory Board and staff recommend implementation of the following Results Framework. For additional information about the Results Framework, see the attachment.

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Benefits of Using a Results Framework

- Greater impact: Town resources will be focused on human services needs identified as Town priorities in the Results Framework, and we will have the capacity to measure the impact and return on the Town's investment in the Human Services Program.
- Greater accountability: The Town can be more accountable to taxpayers by showing the overall impact of its Human Services program through both data and story-telling.
- Greater learning: The Town will be able to evaluate the overall program and make adjustments that improve relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. The results framework will also allow the Town to better assess what approaches or interventions contribute most effectively to achieving specific human services objectives.

Human Services Program Results Framework

Goal: All Chapel Hill residents experience economic and social well-being & opportunities to thrive

Strategic Objective 1: Children improve their education outcomes

Strategic Objective 2: Residents increase their livelihoods security

Strategic Objective 3: Residents improve their health outcomes

Intermediate Result 1.1: Children birth-to-K access early childhood development opportunities

Intermediate Result 1.2: Children demonstrate new grade-level-appropriate skills

Intermediate Result 2.1: Residents access the most appropriate social safety net services

Intermediate Result 2.2: Residents increase job skills appropriate for the local economy

Intermediate Result 3.1: Residents access basic health care services

Intermediate Result 3.2: Residents demonstrate new healthy lifestyle behaviors

Recommendations

Based on the rigorous research, stakeholder engagement, the Human Services Advisory Board and staff recommend the following process improvements to be implemented for the next Human Services Program funding cycle for Fiscal Year 19-20:

1. Adopt the Results Framework to further focus the funding priorities and emphasis on measurable and specific results (see framework overview above, and detailed information attached).
   - To maximize the value of the results framework and support the roll-out process, staff propose the following next steps:
     - Continue to strengthen primary and secondary data collection, which supports needs assessments and impact measurement
     - Undertake a gap analysis to ensure best use of resources and lower the risk of under/over-serving a particular group
     - Conduct information sessions with agencies to orient them to the new results framework
     - Provide learning opportunities for agencies on project design and MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning)

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- Incorporate cross-cutting Intermediate Results (IRs) into the Results Framework in subsequent years, with the aim of: agencies sharing learning on effective programming approaches, agencies are accountable to the people they serve, and residents experience greater social cohesion through programs and projects funded through the Human Services Program.

2. Implement the following process changes to streamline the application process to reduce the time and administrative burden on agencies, advisory board members, and staff:
   - Revise the funding application to align with the proposed Results Framework and reduce the overall number of questions to include only those that are essential to inform decision making.
   - Move to a paperless, online application process. This would save agency and Town printing resources, as well as align further with the Town's environmental stewardship goals.
   - For funding requests below $5,000, use an abbreviated application and expedited review process without an agency hearing. This would reduce the burden on agencies, who to this point even for small grants are put through a very rigorous and time intensive funding process.
   - Pilot a "High Impact Award" Grant, to provide up to 3 larger grants in the range of $30-50,000 to focus on particularly promising and innovative projects/programs that align with the new Results Framework.
   - Coordinate with Orange County and the Town of Carrboro to consider opportunities for implement across all jurisdictions

3. Evaluate the revised process after the first year of implementation, surveying agencies and HSAB, and making adjustments as needed.

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