

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATION FOR DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS GRANT FUNDS TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BEST PRACTICE STRATEGIES OF ALEXANDRIA YOUTH MENTOR PROGRAMS

ISSUE: Consideration of application for Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs FY 2011 Grant funds to evaluate the effectiveness of best practice strategies of Alexandria Youth Mentor Programs. The application is due March 8, 2011.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the submission of a grant application to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) by the Alexandria Court Services Unit.

DISCUSSION: In past years staff received feedback that there was a need for an expanded focus on mentoring opportunities, especially for children within the City. In 2006, while there were multiple, well-intended programs operating in the City, there was a shortage of model mentoring programs. Many programs were not structured well or using best practices as recommended by the National and Virginia Mentoring Partnerships.

In 2006, the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership (AMP) was established bringing together both City public and private non-profit mentoring programs. At that time, AMP was staffed City's Gang Prevention Coordinator, Mike Mackey. The purpose of AMP was to bring information to the mentoring programs on best practices as recommended by the National Mentoring Partnership. Alexandria programs offering mentoring services were pooled together, best practices trainings were utilized and uniform recruitment efforts were established. More mentors were recruited and matched with youth but AMP efforts were not enough to meet the growing need for youth mentors in the City. Last year, recognizing the importance of youth mentoring as a strong component in the development of youth in the City, City Council adopted youth mentoring as part of Goal 4 and Goal 6 of the City's Strategic Plan.

The Alexandria Mentoring Partnership effort continued to grow without the benefit of dedicated staffing. In 2009, the Court Service Unit contracted for a full-time Alexandria Mentoring Partnership Coordinator with the use of federal stimulus funding. In 2009, the City received \$250,000 in federal grant funding for gang prevention through the efforts of Congressman Jim Moran and the AMP Coordinator continued to be funded through those funds.

The grant funding has allowed the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership Coordinator to conduct continuous recruitment events and provide regular training for mentoring staff and mentors. AMP is active in social media and in faith-based congregations, businesses and federal and local agencies. The AMP Coordinator has developed research material on how to establish and maintain evidence-based mentoring programs. The Alexandria Mentoring Partnership's awareness of, and compliance with, best practice standards established by experts in the industry is now institutionalized among the youth mentoring programs in the City. Each mentoring program in the AMP has been evaluated against best practice standards and has implemented recommended changes where necessary. The AMP programs are now the essential referral source for the Alexandria City Public Schools and since the program began, over 300 new mentors have been recruited and matched with youth.

The FY 2011 grant program seeks to enhance what is understood about mentoring as a prevention strategy for youth who are at risk of involvement or already in the juvenile justice system. While mentoring appears to be a promising intervention for youth, more evaluation work is needed to further highlight the components of a mentoring program that are most effective and to identify the components of mentoring programs that help to reduce juvenile delinquency. The research will address the design and delivery of mentoring programs and encourage a more effective utilization of resources. It is also expected to enhance the implementation of evidence-based best practices for juvenile mentoring. It is anticipated that the research will be published nationally.

Since the foundation of the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership has already been established and has grown to 10 mentoring programs, the City is in a good position to evaluate the effectiveness of the overall initiative to see if the City's youth are in fact, reaping the benefits of this initiative. It is anticipated that the current OJJDP earmark grant funds which fund the AMP Coordinator will terminate on June 2011. The new mentoring grant would continue the AMP Coordinator position as the program evaluator and establish a partnership with a local university to conduct the evaluation research. It is also anticipated that this grant would be used establish a new mentoring program for court-involved youth who are returning to the community after incarceration as part of the Governor's re-entry initiative and this mentoring program would be evaluated as well.

FISCAL IMPACT: The grant award is \$200,000 to \$500,000 for a 12 to 24 month evaluation period. The Court Service Unit will apply for \$300,000. There is no City match required. Any positions created to implement the grant will be contracted and would terminate at the end of the grant.

STAFF:

Lillian Brooks, Director of Court Services

Mike Mackey, Gang Prevention/Intervention Coordinator

Loralei Coyle, Alexandria Mentoring Partnership Coordinator

Kendel Taylor, Assistant Director, OMB