


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 4, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF GRANT AWARD FROM THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT FOR TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) RECIPIENTS

ISSUE: City Council consideration of a grant award in the amount of \$125,000 from the Virginia Department of Social Services for the employment advancement for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the grant award in the amount of \$125,000 to provide intensive employment services for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients with special difficulties finding and maintaining employment; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all documents as may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Virginia Department of Social Services issued a policy expansion, effective December 2004, for the TANF program. This policy now requires that all VIEW (Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare) participants must be offered screening for learning disabilities, mental health disabilities, and substance abuse. If the screening indicates a potential impairment, the VIEW participant must be offered the opportunity for a full assessment and evaluation. The VIEW program has the responsibility for providing appropriate accommodations to ensure that clients with disabilities receive full access to VIEW programs and services.

In FY 2004, 30 percent of the TANF recipients referred to Alexandria's VIEW (Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare) program lacked a diploma or GED. Many failed to achieve academic success because of undiagnosed learning disabilities. Additionally, 14 percent of the VIEW caseload have felony convictions; half of those also have less than a 12th grade education. Substance abuse is also a major factor for those with criminal backgrounds. The employment success of our TANF recipients who are less-educated, have learning disabilities, or are ex-

offenders is threatened by the lack of credentials, few workplace skills, and in some cases, felony convictions.

DISCUSSION: The Department of Human Services Employment Advancement Project will enable the VIEW program to comply with the expanded TANF policy on the provision of screening and assessment services for those clients with learning disabilities, mental health disabilities, and substance abuse. The grant will also help the VIEW program provide services and accommodations for other clients who have special difficulties in finding and maintaining employment: persons who lack a high school diploma or GED and persons with criminal records. Funding from the grant will defray temporary staff costs and provide psychological evaluations, situational assessments, and skills training for project participants.

The proposed Department of Human Services Employment Advancement grant will allow **JobLink** to assist clients with academic attainment as well as an understanding of workplace skills and behaviors. **JobLink** will incorporate GED preparation into the curriculum of its intensive job readiness program. This same curriculum also benefits ex-offenders because it addresses job application and interview techniques that can minimize prior convictions and workplace behaviors, such as dealing with co-workers and supervisors, following instructions, and handling stress.

Additionally, the Department of Human Services Employment Advancement Project will assist clients by enlisting the services of organizations that work with persons with learning disabilities such as the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, SOC Enterprise community rehabilitation program, and ICON community service program. These organizations provide intensive academic and vocational testing, situational assessments at work sites, and job coaching to ensure the best employment match and job retention.

The proposed grant runs through May 31, 2006, with the potential for a one-year extension.

FISCAL IMPACT: \$125,000 will be received from the Virginia Department of Social Services. Although there is no requirement for the City to provide a cash match or an in-kind match for these funds, the City is responsible for the normal administrative costs associated with this grant. These costs include financial and reporting oversight provided by the Department of Human Services, as well as by the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department. There are no monies available in the City budget to continue these activities once the grant funds are expended.

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Director, Department of Human Services

Dennis McKinney, Division Director, **JobLink**

Eula Parsons Roberts, *Alexandria Works!* Director, **JobLink**

Bruce Johnson, Director, Management and Budget