


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 16, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 55 : ESTABLISHMENT OF METRICS AND REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR THE ALEXANDRIA FUND FOR HUMAN SERVICES

This is in response to Mayor Euille and Councilman Krupicka's request for information on what the City is doing to help establish clear metrics and reporting procedures to govern the three Alexandria Fund for Human Services grant programs (the Community Partnership Fund, the Youth Fund and the Children's Fund). This question was in response to the Youth Policy Commission's long standing interest in developing better metrics to measure whether programs receiving funds meet the expected/desired impacts.

In July 2005, the administration of the Community Partnership Fund was transferred from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to the Department of Human Services (DHS). As part of that transition, the Department conducted a review of the current grant processes and procedures, and established the Alexandria Fund for Human Services (AFHS) as the umbrella fund that coordinates grants and special initiatives for the Community Partnership Fund, the Youth Fund and the Children's Fund. The Department examined "lessons learned" from all three funds and proven practices from state and federal grant programs.

As you are aware the City has initiated a Managing for Results Initiative, a results-focused, management system. Consistent with this approach, DHS has been working with grant recipients to establish better performance goals, performance targets and outcomes. OMB and DHS collaborated with the Alexandria Community Trust to provide training for nonprofit organizations in program evaluation through the Alexandria Nonprofit Excellence Forum.

Specifically, staff worked with the consultant team retained by the City to implement its MFRI to develop a workshop for nonprofit agencies to enhance participant knowledge of developing and measuring short, immediate and long-term program outcomes. The workshop, entitled *Outputs and Outcomes: Effectively Measuring Your Impact*, was specifically offered to FY 2007 AFHS grant recipients. The workshop was followed up with a hands-on outcome workshop, where participants were able to work with the consultant in developing outcomes for their individual programs.

Additionally, DHS staff worked with the consultant to develop outcome requirements for the FY 2008 and 2009 grant applications, and to modify and standardize the outcome reporting requirements. Over time, the new reporting format, which will be instituted this fiscal year, will enhance program reporting and evaluation. It will also allow the City to better report outcome data to the community.

Recognizing the need for continued improvement in program evaluation, the City is committed to providing additional evaluation training to grant recipients to improve program outcomes and articulating those outcomes to the community. The next phase of this effort will also be to provide training to staff and citizen members of the Early Childhood Commission, Youth Policy Commission and the Community Partnership Review Panel on program monitoring and evaluation, most directly in the area of conducting program audits and site visits.

The collective effect of all of these initiatives will allow us to better examine the impact of the grants, identify any existing service gaps, and determine priorities for all three grants. The budget document for FY 2009 will reflect available performance indicators available for the three funds. Those and other indicators will be used by the DHS and the various panels evaluating the future grant applications.

Some of the other key changes to date to the three grant programs are:

- Marketed the grants to the Alexandria community by developing a name, the Alexandria Fund for Human Services, as the overarching identification for the human service grants.
- Changed the grant application processes of all three grants, including examining the criteria, guidelines, and application procedures.
- Changed the application deadlines for applying for funding, which began with FY 2007 requests for grant proposals. The dates were changed to begin on the first weekday closest to the first of the month. The Community Partnership Fund is March 1; the Youth Fund, April 1 (for FY 2008 grant applications, the date was April 2, 2007 as April 1 was on a Sunday), and Children's Fund, May 1. Grants deadlines were intentionally staggered as not to over burden applicants, who would potentially be eligible for all three grants.
- Adopted a quantified rating system, with specific categories and assigned points, for the review of applications for all three grants.
- Coordinated and changed the announcement date of all three grant opportunities to early January.
- Changed the fiscal years for the Youth Fund and the Community Partnership to coincide with the City's fiscal year.

Staff will monitor these changes and evaluate their effectiveness. In addition, as the City's overall Managing for Results Initiative is developed, staff will incorporate performance measures and reporting mechanisms to institute continuous improvement for the Alexandria Fund for Human Services and all grant recipients.

