Review of the
Consolidated Community Funding Pool

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Steering Committee Report

July 22, 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

T he Community Funding Pool was established by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 1997 as a competitive grant process to fund human services offered through nonprofits. In FY2000, the Community Funding Pool process was combined with the Consolidated Plan process which included several federal funding programs, most notably, the Community Development Block Grant, to create the Consolidated Community Funding Pool (CCFP). Since its inception, the CCFP has adhered to the following Guiding Principles that have ensured the initiative's success as an investor and catalyst for strengthening the human services network of programs available for Fairfax County residents:

- Stable and Continuing Funding Support
- Effective and Efficient Program Management
- Community Involvement in all Aspects of the CCFP Process
- Funding Allocation Based on Community Needs
- Encourage Partnership, Cooperation, and Collaboration in Service Delivery
- Fair and Equitable Application Procedures
- Effective Program Monitoring and Evaluation

From the beginning, the CCFP was designed to fund programs that meet identified community needs, not individual organizations. This approach was to ensure these resources were directed towards solutions to the complex and changing needs of our diverse community, no matter who was delivering the service.

Since FY 1998, the CCFP has awarded more than $154 million (excluding current cycle) to 930 programs. Of those funded over the past three cycles, an average of 41% of the organizations receiving funds were small and 15% were new. Programs funded tend to address two to all four regions of the county.   More than 40% of the programs are region specific. Over the past three cycles nonprofits have leveraged cash resources of more than $176 million.

In April 2012, the Board of Supervisors approved FY 2013-2014 Budget Guidance confirming the Consolidated Community Funding Pool has been an effective and innovative method of funding a variety of human service needs for almost 15 years. Staff was directed to work with the Consolidated Community Funding Advisory Committee (CCFAC) and representatives from the nonprofit community and other stakeholder groups to review the current CCFP process and make recommendations to ensure that the county, through the CCFP, continues to leverage community resources for maximum impact on communities and those individuals and families most at risk. Any recommended changes were to be presented to the Board prior to the start of the FY 2017-2018 funding cycle.

The Consolidated Community Funding Pool Review Process was divided into two phases: 1) Information gathering from the Board of Supervisors and community input sessions; and, 2) convening a Steering Committee to analyze the information gleaned and make recommendations to the Board.

The Steering Committee, representing a range of perspectives and experiences, conducted a comprehensive review of the current CCFP framework, practices and procedures and identified a number of recommendations and strategic actions in the categories of Priority Setting and Needs Assessment, Financial Stewardship and Accountability, the Application Process, and Evaluation. The Steering Committee believes the adoption of these recommendations will ensure the continued integrity of the CCFP as an important tool in the county's human services delivery system and will address many of the questions and comments offered during the 2012 community input sessions.

Further, the Steering Committee validated what the Board of Supervisors itself documented in its legislative agenda for the 2014 session of the Virginia General Assembly and its guidance to the County Executive, that Fairfax County is facing huge challenges in the ability of its human services delivery system to meet the increasing and complex needs of its residents. Rising caseloads, changing demographic trends, cuts in federal and state funds and loss of local foundation revenue, such as the shutting down of the Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae foundations, mean that Fairfax County and its partners are facing increasingly difficult choices in determining what human services and affordable housing needs they "must" address and how best to do so.

OVERVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The following list of recommendations and strategic actions were deemed critical to the CCFP's ability to achieve maximum impact on human services outcomes. Adopting these recommendations will address key issues raised by the Board of Supervisors and community members during the 2012 input sessions, while affirming the overall principles and design of the CCFP as an important tool for making investments in nonprofit organizations to address needs of county residents. An in-depth discussion of these recommendations begins on page 6.

- RECOMMENDATION 1: Support strategic, effective and innovative human services programs that address community-identified priorities and needs.

  Strategic Actions

  - Strengthen community input in the process of identifying continuing needs, gaps in service and emerging trends and issues that may not be met by government programs alone.

  - Establish a process to include more input from human services agency directors and boards, authorities, and commissions to develop CCFP priorities reflective of community-defined need but aligned with, or understood in the context of, other human services priorities.

  - Increase the use of community needs assessments, demographic data, and service demand trends in the prioritization process.

- RECOMMENDATION 2: Establish financial stewardship and accountability and promote partnerships to leverage CCFP investments for the maximum benefit for participants.

  Strategic Actions

  - Ensure that the CCFP is allocating resources to programs based on past performance, and where there is program duplication, ensure that overlap and fragmentation are minimized.

  - Describe the expected results for each funded service and establish realistic leverage targets.

  - Provide incentives, technical assistance, information, and other forms of support to facilitate formal partnerships and collaboration.

⊞ RECOMMENDATION 3: Improve the CCFP application process, including timing, cycle time, and paperwork.

Strategic Actions

- Revise the RFP to minimize submission requirements for all applicants.

- Develop a streamlined application process for projects with funding amounts below a certain dollar threshold.

⊞ RECOMMENDATION 4: Improve the community's capacity to evaluate the successes of the CCFP and its constituent programs.

Strategic Actions

- Evaluate county-funded human services programs to identify the most successful approaches and the lessons learned in applying these approaches.

- Invest in what works and use evaluation data to position programs to meet established objectives and outcomes.

- Identify common outcomes and data sets among related CCFP programs, permitting aggregation of data and more rigorous evaluation.

- Improve understanding of the RFP outcome section requirements by clarifying instructions and providing training and technical assistance.

Other Issues for Consideration

The Steering Committee affirms that the CCFP continues to be an important mechanism for engaging nonprofits and the broader community in meeting the growing human services needs of Fairfax County residents, but emphasizes that the proposed changes to the framework, practices, and procedures of the CCFP described above will have limited impact on addressing other perceived issues or challenges that face the system as a whole.

The Steering Committee's review process raised a number of themes and factors that exceeded the scope of the Steering Committee's charge but that the Steering Committee believes must be addressed in order to ensure the ongoing stability of the CCFP as an important tool in Fairfax County's broader human services strategy. Those issues are described briefly below and discussed in more detail in the section on "Other Issues for Consideration" on page 22 of this report.

■ ISSUE 1: Ensuring ongoing support for programs identified as essential or critical

- The elimination or reduction of certain services would place severe stress on program recipients and agencies, nonprofits, and other providers that may be called upon to fill the gaps in service.

- The Steering Committee supports the view that certain core human services should be removed from the uncertainty of funding pool competition.

■ ISSUE 2: Responding to emerging trends and encouraging innovation

- There is no specific emphasis in the current RFP to solicit or encourage new approaches to service delivery efficiency and effectiveness.

- Incubation should be explored as a way to test new ways of delivering and sustaining programs/services.

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

I n April 2012, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved FY 2013-2014 Budget Guidance confirming that the Consolidated Community Funding Pool (CCFP) has been an effective and innovative method of funding a variety of human service needs for almost 15 years. The Board directed staff to work with the Consolidated Community Funding Advisory Committee (CCFAC), representatives of the nonprofit community, and other community stakeholders to ensure the county continues to leverage community resources for maximum impact on communities and those individuals and families most at risk.

This work was divided into two phases: 1) information gathering from the Board of Supervisors and community input sessions; and, 2) convening a Steering Committee to analyze the information and make recommendations to the Board.

Phase I – Information Gathering

In Phase I, county staff met individually with members of the Board of Supervisors to discuss their vision of the current and future state of the CCFP and to gather their expectations for the review process and results. Work was completed in December 2012.

Because community input is vital to the sustained relevance of the CCFP, the second part of the information-gathering phase was comprised of the annual CCFAC public needs hearing and four facilitated community forums across the human services regions. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss community perceptions of the CCFP and to offer ideas for process improvements. The meetings were conducted between November 26 and December 12, 2012.

The public hearing and community meetings were well attended by a diverse group of community representatives. In all, there were 161 attendees including representatives from funded and non-funded nonprofit organizations, human services advocates, residents, CCFAC members, and county staff.

Participants were asked to discuss the following questions:

- What is your understanding of the purpose and process of the funding pool?
- What are the areas of the CCFP process that you think are working?
- What are the areas of the CCFP process that can be improved?
- What do you think is the most effective way to distribute funds to nonprofit agencies in the future to address community needs?

Participant comments were recorded, collected, and reviewed by staff to glean information and ideas that might be valuable to the review process. Although not every comment could be neatly

categorized, the majority of participant comments lent themselves to grouping into one of four topic areas:

- Needs, priorities, categories, outcomes
- Perceived role of BOS, CCFAC, and county staff
- Encouraging nonprofit collaboration
- The CCFP application process

The ideas, information, and themes that emerged from the five meetings were consistent. While participants expressed their appreciation for this county resource, there was some concern about whether the current funding pool framework is flexible enough to address changes in community needs. Participants also expressed the idea that collaboration is beneficial and should be encouraged, and there was a call for streamlining the application process to help nonprofits balance competing demands. The feedback also indicated that the roles of the BOS, CCFAC, and county staff were unclear as to how they interact with various stakeholders in an apolitical process.

(Please see Appendix C: CCFP Public Hearing and Community Input Sessions for a discussion of the issues identified during the community input sessions.)

Phase II – Analysis and Recommendations

The second phase of the CCFP review involved setting up a Steering Committee to evaluate and synthesize the information received through the community input efforts and to develop recommendations to improve the CCFP process. While all Steering Committee members brought a broad human services perspective to the table, members were selected for their range of knowledge, experience, and expertise. Members represented nonprofit organizations, county agencies, and the community at large. (A complete list of committee members and county support staff is at the front of this report.)

Work teams made up of Steering Committee members were assigned to conduct further research and complete specific tasks to support analysis and recommendations outside of the Steering Committee meetings. Key individuals with specific knowledge or expertise were invited to attend meetings to provide input into the process including former Board of Supervisors Chairman Katherine Hanley and Cathy Muse, Director of the Department of Purchasing and Supply Management.

The Steering Committee used the following steps to complete the review process:

1. Reviewed the issues identified during the community input phase

2. Examined each issue and separated the *perceived* issues from those that describe a *realistic* picture of the current CCFP operating environment

3. Prioritized the realistic issues most relevant to the project's purpose of ensuring that the CCFP supports strategic outcomes and that community resources are used to maximum advantage

4. Described the selected issues as they currently affect the funding pool and subsequently impact the families and communities served, then explored how making modifications to the current practices would improve the process, services, and ultimately outcomes for service recipients

5. Established primary objectives for the CCFP that better support the direction of the entire human services system

6. Developed solutions, attempted to measure their anticipated impact, and linked these solutions to the primary objectives

7. Drafted preliminary recommendations, identified from the objectives, and supporting strategic actions

8. Cross-walked related recommendations and strategic actions to each other to better understand the impact of each proposed recommendation

9. Prioritized recommendations and strategic actions based on rationality and feasibility

The Steering Committee met from January through August 2013, and a first draft of the final recommendations was reviewed in December 2013. Due to the timing of the current CCFP cycle, for Fiscal Years 2015-2016, it was decided that this report should be delayed until after the CCFP process was completed. The new CCFP contracts were awarded as of July 1, 2014.

DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Priority Setting and Needs Assessment

Recommendation 1: Support strategic, effective, and innovative human services programs that address community-identified priorities and needs.

Overview

Currently, CCFP funding priorities are established by the CCFAC based on community input, including a formal public hearing. However, over the last several cycles the hearing has not been well attended and typically there has not been another opportunity for the larger community to be involved. CCFP policies require that community members, including recipients of services, be involved in the setting of priorities and that community participation be broad-based and inclusive. The Steering Committee has affirmed that the CCFP should be driven by the county's vision for human services delivery and community priorities and needs, both countywide and local.

Priority Setting

Given the current economic climate and changes in the county's ability to respond to the increasingly complex human services needs of all of its community members, it is important that the CCFAC take steps to encourage community involvement in priority setting to identify gaps in need and emerging trends. A return to more input from the community would help the CCFAC develop funding priorities that truly address the current and emerging needs of our community and could result in more tightly focused priorities. The expanded use of communication and social media technology could enhance these efforts.

Fairfax County collects and analyzes a significant amount of data from human services programs and contracts each year, including needs assessments, demographic data, and trends in service utilization and demand. While this information certainly includes and reflects "community" input, there is no formal mechanism for assessing it in the context of setting CCFP priorities. The priority setting process would be further strengthened and guided by more in-depth association with human services agency directors and boards, authorities, and commissions.

- **Strategic Action:** Strengthen community input in the process of identifying continuing needs, gaps in service, and emerging trends and issues that may not be met by government programs alone.

  - Expand the use of communication technology and social media tools, such as distance learning modules, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to facilitate these efforts.

  - Restore resources for CCFP support. In the early days of the CCFP, the CCFAC engaged in numerous efforts, with support from staff, to solicit community input,

including sponsoring a series of forums in different regions of the county, administering questionnaires, and hosting small regional focus groups.

- **Strategic Action:** Establish a process to include more input from human services agency directors and boards, authorities, and commissions to develop CCFP priorities reflective of community-defined need but aligned with, or understood in the context of other human services priorities.

  o Fairfax County agencies, boards, authorities and commissions have assumed an important role in capturing and analyzing data on growing community needs and emerging trends that is an important resource for informing the development of CCFP priorities. With this information, the county and its citizens will better understand how CCFP priorities align with county-defined priorities or address other community-identified needs.

- **Strategic Action:** Increase the use of community needs assessments, demographic data, and service demand trends in cooperation with other community partners.

  o For example, Fairfax County Public Schools, Inova Health System (which is now required to prepare needs assessments for each hospital as part of the Affordable Care Act), local foundations (Northern Virginia Community Foundation, Northern Virginia Health Foundation, etc.).

Financial Stewardship and Accountability

Recommendation 2: Establish financial stewardship and accountability and promote partnerships to leverage CCFP investments for the maximum benefit of participants.

Overview

The Financial Stewardship and Accountability recommendation addresses two major issues to establish a culture that accounts for the real costs of services and optimizes business practices for the maximum benefit to service recipients. First, there is a need to ensure that the CCFP is allocating resources to programs based on past performance, and where there is program duplication, to ensure that overlap and fragmentation are minimized. Second, in an effort to leverage CCFP resources, efforts by nonprofits to collaborate and form public-private partnerships to stretch limited resources by expanding the use of outside or non-CCFP funds should be encouraged. Defining leverage principles that demonstrate financial and social return on investment, and establishing leverage targets for programs will contribute to this goal.

The county should define the financial and social return on investment expected from each funded service based on established programmatic and operational goals. It is anticipated that the financial return on investment would be modeled in the context of similar investments in non-CCFP funded functions. Social return on investment (SROI) measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organizations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental, and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them, enabling a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated.

In service areas or regions where there are a number of providers offering similar services or outcomes, the CCFP should require proposals to demonstrate some awareness of that environment. Such program proposals should either offer a collaborative approach or demonstrate why their program is unique or contributes to the goal while not duplicating other programs. Effective service delivery is also dependent upon organizations being able to provide the services they promise. CCFP funds should be allocated to those nonprofits that demonstrate they are well positioned to be successful through the term of the contract.

- **Strategic Action**: Ensure that the CCFP is allocating resources to programs based on past performance, and where there is program duplication, ensure that overlap and fragmentation are minimized.

- **Strategic Action:** Describe the expected results for each funded service and establish realistic leverage targets.

    - Explore the concept of financial and social return on investment based on established program goals and in the context of similar investments in non-CCFP funded functions and make clear what is expected from each funded service.

- Provide training and guidance to nonprofits in the use of results-based accountability, measuring return on investment, or other frameworks used to measure quality, impact or leverage.

- Balance the leverage and financial expectations for CCFP investments against the realities of the current challenging funding environment for county agencies and nonprofit programs struggling to keep up with growing and complex needs and trends in human services.

- **Strategic Action:** Provide incentives, technical assistance, information, and other forms of support to facilitate formal partnership and collaboration.

CCFP Application Process

Recommendation 3: Improve the CCFP application process, including timing, cycle time, and paperwork.

Overview

The application process was the issue that generated the most discussion in the community input sessions. There were positive comments, such as the process has measurable outcomes, is service-oriented, and is open to all legitimate nonprofit organizations. The current two-year cycle that replaced the original one-year cycle was a universally agreed-upon improvement.

However, the process was also called bureaucratic, cumbersome, and requiring a great deal of reporting and regulation. Although mindful that the county must operate under public procurement guidelines, the Steering Committee sought to be receptive to these criticisms. As a result, some of the proposed changes may require guidance from DPSM to confirm whether it is possible to make the recommended adjustments.

In order to utilize the resources dedicated to the CCFP more efficiently and effectively, the committee recognizes the need to re-evaluate many of the current administrative procedures in order to streamline the application process. The application process recommendation puts forth recommendations in the following areas: paperwork reduction by removing extraneous information and data requirements, and providing a less stringent application process for all projects.

Timing of the Application

Traditionally, the CCFP application has been released to the public around the first week in October and remains open for sixty days, placing the proposal due date in the first week of December. This timing affects many basic needs providers negatively since it coincides with the busy holiday services and fundraising season and can be a burden for smaller nonprofits. The timing of the application is necessary, however, because it concludes with the Board of Supervisors approving funding recommendations in conjunction with the County fiscal year budget approval in April.

While the Steering Committee discussed the possibility of establishing an application submission due date that is well prior to the Thanksgiving holiday, it concluded that any movement in the timeline could have an unintended negative impact on applicants. Ultimately, it was determined that there is no optimal time of year for the application process that would also work with the county's requirements.

Cycle Time

Adjusting the funding cycle was another idea that was explored as a way to increase flexibility in the CCFP process. Currently, applicants do not receive notification on whether their project will be awarded funding until the week of the county budget approval in late April. This allows only two months for those defunded to prepare for operations in the new fiscal year. Allowing award

information to be revealed as early as possible would enable nonprofits to better plan and make informed decisions concerning the future of their projects.

Also related to cycle time, the Steering Committee explored the feasibility of increasing the number of years that a program is approved for funding, specifically for programs that have proven their value, to three, four, or even five years. However, this option was deemed less than optimal due to the additional administrative challenges in implementation and sustainability.

Paperwork

CCFP requirements call for completing a uniform application, no matter the dollar amount being requested, and submitting three hard copies plus two CDs of the complete proposal, including required forms and attachments for each proposed program. Emailed proposals are not accepted. For awarded projects, electronic progress reports are required to be submitted and include data elements such as the race, ethnicity, income level, and household size of the beneficiaries of the program – data elements that are a requirement of the federal funding sources in the CCFP. Some applicants find these data collection elements intrusive for their clients and feel the submission requirements are excessive and a burden for the nonprofits, especially smaller nonprofits who do not have the full-time staff to devote to this task.

The Steering Committee suggests that applications requesting funding amounts below a certain dollar threshold should require less information to be submitted than those for larger amounts. Application and data reporting requirements should be reduced to the minimum needed by proposal reviewers, county staff, and program regulations. For example, the IRS permits organizations with budgets below $300,000 to submit a review of financial statements rather than a formal audit. The Steering Committee supports an adjustment of CCFP requirements accordingly.

Finally, support for collaborative efforts should begin with the application process. Revisions to the RFP could include a form to indicate which funds are requested for which activities, and which are to be used jointly with another organization. The second organization would not need to submit a companion RFP. Instead, the leadership would submit a statement indicating that everything in the primary organization's RFP is accurate with regard to the proposed collaboration efforts. For additional information on collaborative efforts

- **Strategic Action:** Revise the RFP to minimize submission requirements for all applicants.

  - Reduce paperwork by removing requirements to submit data that is not needed.

  - Explore the idea of "pre-qualifying" applicants for the CCFP, allowing documents which the county already has to be accepted for the CCFP submission.

  - Establish process to allow for joint submissions for collaborative efforts.

- **Strategic Action:** Develop a streamlined application process for projects with funding amounts below a certain dollar threshold.

    - o Applicants with budgets less than $300,000 should be allowed to submit a review of financial statements rather than a formal audit.

    - o Projects requesting less than $50,000 should be eligible to submit streamlined "Approach" and "Outcome" sections.

Evaluation

Recommendation 4: Improve the county's capacity to evaluate the successes of the CCFP and its constituent programs.

Overview

The Evaluation recommendation puts forth recommendations in two main areas: more comprehensive evaluation of program outcomes and increased technical support to nonprofit data collection.

The Steering Committee recognizes that both human and financial resources are heavily constrained by the current fiscal climate. Little additional accountability from the CCFP is possible without more resources to support it. Such investments could result in better outcomes by encouraging the examination and distribution of lessons learned and best practices.

A major hindrance to the county's ability to evaluate programs is the lack of clear and consistent methods for collecting and utilizing information. The lack of an aggregated data collection process has been a detriment to providing a clear evaluation of the CCFP as a funding mechanism, as well as individual program outcomes.

Accountability

The County must improve its ability to assess program outcomes within the funding pool and its awarded programs. The community input process revealed a concern that successful past performance is not part of how proposals are evaluated, but that currently funded programs and organizations are more likely to receive future funding. An analysis done by staff demonstrated that this is not entirely unfounded: sixty-one percent of the 2013 CCFP award recipient programs have received funding for more than five cycles (since FY 2005) and twenty-eight percent have received funding continuously since 1999 (See Appendix F).

Currently, the penalties for failure to meet contracted outcomes in the absence of severe extenuating circumstances are virtually nonexistent. Noncompliance mostly results in sharing that information with the SAC in their consideration for the next two-year cycle; even then, it is but one factor under consideration. While defunding is an extreme measure, there must be intermediate steps as a consequence of failing to meet program outcomes. We recommend further work to determine which remedies are possible legally and within county procurement regulations.

- **Strategic Action:** Invest in what works and use evaluation data to position programs to meet established objectives and outcome

    - To increase understanding of evaluation and outcome requirements, the County should reinstate the training and technical assistance that was lost as a result of budget cuts. Training about program outcomes and evaluation, data collection, logic models, and other evaluation-related topics could result in better programs and better program performance.

- **Strategic Action:** Improve understanding of the RFP outcome section requirements by clarifying instructions and providing training and technical assistance.

Maximizing CCFP Outcome Data

Fairfax County collects an abundance of outcome data from CCFP programs each year, yet no overall evaluation of the CCFP occurs. While variation among organizations' capacity makes standardized requirements difficult, the County would benefit by identifying a common set of outcomes and data sets among all CCFP programs. Some outcomes would be in common with all programs, while others may address like programs (e.g., gang-prevention, workforce development, emergency assistance). This would permit the aggregation of data and foster more rigorous evaluation, while the objectives and data sets would capture all necessary information to satisfy the need for public accountability and reporting requirements of other funders (e.g., HUD). Any such revision of required data should be developed with the full participation of the nonprofits to assure that it is feasible with minimal additional resources. The county should also make data collection resources (e.g., software, funds for data systems) available to nonprofits so that they need not divert services money to that purpose.

While the current structure relies heavily on quantitative data to describe service and program success, qualitative data has been underutilized as a source of useful information. A template for drafting success stories that incorporates qualitative analysis to illustrate the successes of CCFP funded programs would help tell the "story behind the numbers."

- **Strategic Action:** Identify common outcomes and data sets among related CCFP programs, permitting aggregation of data and more rigorous evaluation.

  - Providing training and technical assistance to nonprofits, in advance of each funding cycle, to brief applicants on the outcomes and data collection that will be expected to be captured and how that information is accessed by nonprofits for use in developing CCFP and other proposals to deliver quality human services in Fairfax County.

Promote success and share best practice

By evaluating its human services programs, the county can identify the most successful approaches and lessons learned in applying those approaches. In addition, county staff should regularly search the literature for best practices and benchmark information on human services delivery in other communities similar to Fairfax County. This information should be provided to the nonprofit community continuously as it becomes available.

The county should also conduct CCFP process evaluations (which document program implementation and the resulting relationships between strategies and outcomes) and outcomes evaluations (which would determine if a program has met its goals). These evaluations should include qualitative data in addition to the WebR-reported quantitative data. The lessons learned should be shared with program managers, policymakers, and potential applicants.

- **Strategic Action:** Evaluate county-funded human services programs to identify the most successful approaches and the lessons learned in applying these approaches.

    - o Inform CCFP recipients and representatives of other county human services agencies, boards, authorities, and commissions to share information and consider its application in defining future CCFP or human services priorities and in strengthening the practice of providers in Fairfax County.

OTHER ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The Steering Committee affirms that the CCFP continues to be an important mechanism for engaging nonprofits and the broader community in meeting the growing human services needs of Fairfax County residents, but emphasizes the proposed changes to the framework, practices, and procedures of the CCFP described above will have limited impact on addressing some of the program's perceived issues or the challenges that face the system as a whole.

There was significant discussion during the committee's review about the overall challenges for Fairfax County in the ability of its human services delivery system to meet the increasing and complex needs of its residents. Some of these issues were documented by Board of Supervisors in its legislative agenda for the 2014 session of the Virginia General Assembly and in guidance to the County Executive in developing recommendations for the FY2015 budget. Rising caseloads, changing demographic trends, cuts in federal and state funds and loss of local foundation revenue, such as the shutting down of the Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae foundations, mean that Fairfax County, its nonprofit and community providers are facing increasingly difficult choices in determining what core human service and housing needs it "must" address and whether it will accept the fact of lines and waiting lists or the fact that some needs will not be met.

The Steering Committee's review process raised a number of themes and factors that exceeded the scope of the Steering Committee's charge but that the Steering Committee believes must be addressed in order to ensure the ongoing stability of the CCFP as an important tool in Fairfax County's broader human services strategy. To effectively address the issues outlined below, the Steering Committee recognizes the need to engage other stakeholders including the Board of Supervisors, Human Services Leadership, technical experts, and nonprofit service providers in devising recommendations, policies, and practices. While the Steering Committee did not make formal recommendations to resolve these additional issues identified in every case, the group thoroughly discussed each issue, the evidence, and pervasiveness of each issue, the impact of each issue, and widely held assumptions and influencing factors. Below, the Steering Committee presents brief descriptions of each issue and suggestions for follow up action. To successfully implement the program recommendations and strategic actions outlined above, it is recommended that these issues be considered in the very near term so that implications for changes in the CCFP may be incorporated prior to the next funding cycle.

⊞ ISSUE 1: Ensuring ongoing support for programs identified as essential or critical

During the community input sessions held in 2012, the topic of critical services being funded through the CCFP was raised repeatedly. The discussion specifically addressed those programs termed "critical" or "essential" that would cause great difficulty in the community if they were defunded.

Although the scope of the term "critical services" is subjective, there was broad agreement among the Steering Committee that the elimination or reduction of certain services would place severe stress on program recipients and the county agencies, nonprofits and other providers that may be called upon to fill the gaps in service. In the current system, these programs must compete for resources in the funding pool's two-year cycle. Additionally, it was suggested that the county may be using the CCFP to secure resources for programs it is obligated to provide by code, statute, law, or policy, and again, these services are placed at risk for defunding every two years. Defunding these programs, which frequently serve the most vulnerable members of the community, could severely hamper the system's capacity to address identified community needs. To avoid such a scenario, the Steering Committee supports the view that certain core human services that address critical needs should be removed from the uncertainty of funding pool competition.

The process of determining what services would be identified as critical or essential should include the examination of service gaps, the identification of underserved populations and, variations in need by region. The process should also include the review of available data and information, and the evaluation of the alignment between CCFP priorities and Human Services result areas/investments to ensure the allocation of these resources as a part of a broader continuum of investments from other human services programs, non-CCFP contracts, and community-sponsored supports. The Steering Committee stresses, that the process of determining essential or critical services should remain inclusive of community stakeholders to retain the intent of the Pool as a mechanism for responding to community identified priorities. Further, funding decisions should be framed as choosing among organizations competing to offer programs that meet identified critical needs or provide essential services, ensuring the service will be available, regardless of who the provider is. The focus should be on essential or critical services, not ensuring the ongoing viability of organizations.

⊞ ISSUE 2: Responding to emerging trends and encouraging innovation

Since its inception, the CCFP has supported programs that have been effective in meeting identified priority needs in the community. While progressive practices can be found in current CCFP programs, there is no <u>specific </u>emphasis in the current RFP to solicit or encourage new approaches to service delivery efficiency and effectiveness. These concepts or approaches might address emerging trends within the identified priorities, or new approaches to service delivery; for example: the creative uses of technology in service delivery, the use of predictive analytics or the development of integrated, holistic service delivery models.

One method discussed by the Steering Committee to encourage innovation was the incubation model, which tests new ways of delivering and sustaining programs and services. Incubation could include not only financial support but also technical assistance, use of space, and other provisions to encourage the public/private delivery of services.

The Steering Committee believes the incubation concept is worth exploring and may afford an opportunity to bring together stakeholders, traditional and nontraditional, to look at issues in a new way. The committee also recognizes that this approach may require early investment of resources to encourage later leverage and program sustainability.

Summary

The Steering Committee, representing a range of experiences and perspectives related to the Consolidated Community Funding Pool, feels that the recommendations and strategic actions outlined in this report, if implemented, will improve and strengthen the CCFP and seeks the Board of Supervisors endorsement. The members of the Steering Committee wish to express their appreciation for participating in the review process for this very important human services program. We recognize that an implementation plan will be needed and stand ready to assist in helping the county to make this plan a reality.

Appendix A

A Brief History of the Consolidated Community Funding Pool Process

The Community Funding Pool was established by the Board of Supervisors in 1997 as a means of streamlining the funding process for nonprofit organizations. Community Services Block Grant dollars and General Fund dollars were combined at that time. In FY 2000, nonprofit funding from the Community Development Block Grant was merged into the pool, resulting in the Consolidated Community Funding Pool.

Funding is available from a combination of local, state, and federal sources: Fairfax County general funds, federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and federal and state Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds.

The original guiding principles, which are still in effect in 2014, are:

Stable and Continuing Funding Support - Fairfax County should commit to an adequate, sustainable, and continuing level of funding support in order to provide a degree of stability for planning and staffing by community-based organizations and to ensure that needed services are provided.

Effective and Efficient Program Management - Fairfax County should ensure that community-based agencies receiving funding support are capable of managing their programs efficiently, effectively, and responsibly.

Community Involvement in all Aspects of the CCFP Process - Fairfax County should ensure that people (residents),especially recipients of services, are involved at all levels of the funding process – planning, setting priorities, making recommendations for funding, and monitoring and evaluation.

Funding Allocation Based on Community Needs - Fairfax County should ensure that the funding is driven by the County's vision for human services delivery and community needs both Countywide and local.

Encourage Partnership, Cooperation, and Collaboration in Service Delivery - Fairfax County should require that agencies cooperate in delivering services to the community in order to improve the breadth of services available, to bridge gaps, to better meet the needs of clients, and to use resources more effectively.

Fair and Equitable Application Procedures - Fairfax County should ensure that the procedures used by the County in administering the funding support program are objective, fair, and equitable, with equal opportunity to all to participate and offer services.

Effective Program Monitoring and Evaluation - Fairfax County should require that community-based agencies be held accountable for using grant funds in accordance with the purposes of the grant and for achieving intended outcomes.

Consolidated Community Funding Advisory Committee

The Consolidated Community Funding Advisory Committee (CCFAC) members are appointed by the County Executive. The CCFAC is comprised of representatives from Fairfax County Human Services Boards and Commissions and community members representing specific community sectors. Their responsibilities include:

> ➢ Setting policy regarding the funding process
> ➢ Seeking public input on community needs
> ➢ Establishing funding priorities
> ➢ Establishing the evaluation criteria
> ➢ Managing the Consolidated Plan process for HUD
> ➢ Advocating on behalf of the nonprofits and reporting to the Board of Supervisors

Request for Proposal Process

Following Board approval of the funding priorities, the CCFAC directs staff to prepare the RFP application booklet and resource manual which are distributed to nonprofit organizations. The RFP is published in October with proposals due in December. A pre-proposal conference is held in October or early November so that potential applicants can ask questions of County staff and get clarification on the application and process. At this conference, the application is reviewed, forms explained, and questions answered. All nonprofit organizations are welcome to attend and submit an application.

FY 2015-2016 Priorities

In this cycle, the fund explicitly recognizes the value of programs serving neighborhoods (geographically defined) and communities (shared interests – not bound to one location), as well as those for individuals and families. The CCFP will focus on measurable outcomes for individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities, rather than on types of services or particular populations of clients. These outcomes should be long lasting and measurable to advance the human services goal asserted by the Board of Supervisors in the County's 2012 Comprehensive Plan. Proposed projects may address one or two priority areas.

> ➢ Prevention – Families and individuals get help to remain independent and have the tools and resources to prevent future or ongoing dependence
> ➢ Crisis Intervention – Individuals, families or communities in crisis get help to overcome short-term problems and quickly move back to independence, if appropriate
> ➢ Self-Sufficiency – Families, individuals, neighborhoods and communities get comprehensive services addressing many facets and needs so that they can attain self-sufficiency over a period of three months to three years
> ➢ Long-Term Supportive Services – People, neighborhoods and communities that have continuing and long-term needs achieve or maintain healthy, safe, and independent lives to the maximum extent possible

Proposal Selection

Proposals are evaluated and scored by the Selection Advisory Committee (SAC), a group of Fairfax County community members with Human Services experience who are selected by the County Executive for this important work. SAC award recommendations are forwarded to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for final award approval. Funding requests are analyzed and voted upon by the whole committee while keeping in mind that not all proposals can be funded. Proposals are ranked in order by priority area then the final list of recommended programs and funding levels is presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Applicants are notified of their award in April following approval by the Board of Supervisors. Approved projects are awarded funds through a contractual agreement with the county and are subject to negotiations on final terms and conditions. The two-year funding cycle begins on July 1 and ends two years later on June 30.

After Contracts Are Awarded

County staff supports the selected programs throughout the two-year funding cycle in a variety of ways. Staff monitors programs to ensure that they are successful and meet the terms and conditions of the proposal and the contract. This is accomplished through site visits and evaluation of the reports submitted to the county and the funding source. Staff also monitors the organization's infrastructure, staffing, compliance with by-laws, and financial documentation. Technical assistance is provided to funding awardees through training, small-group workshops on selected topics, and on a one-to-one basis, as needed. This technical support is provided to all nonprofits that request support, not just those who received CCFP funding, so that the level of commitment among County organizations remains strong.

CCFP Web Address: **www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ccfp**

Appendix B

CCFP Public Hearing and Community Input Sessions
November – December 2012

In response to a Board of Supervisors directive, County staff, in concert with the Consolidated Community Funding Advisory Committee (CCFAC), is in the process of reviewing the framework, practices, and procedures of the Consolidated Community Funding Pool (CCFP) to ensure the program supports strategic human services outcomes and uses community resources for maximum impact on at-risk individuals, families, and communities. As part of this effort, the county hosted a public hearing and community meetings in each of the four human services regions.

The public hearing and community meetings were well attended by a diverse group of community representatives. In all, there were 161 attendees and of those, 80 were from various nonprofits, 49 were county staff (includes facilitators and note-takers), 13 CCFAC members (10 at the public hearing and three at the community meetings), and eight participants from other organizations.

Participants were asked to discuss their ideas and responses to the following questions:

➢ What is your understanding of the purpose and process of the funding pool?
➢ What are the areas of the CCFP process that you think are working?
➢ What are the areas of the CCFP process that can be improved?
➢ What do you think is the most effective way to distribute funds to nonprofit agencies in the future to address community needs?

Participant comments were recorded and collected to glean information and ideas that might be valuable to the review process. Although not every comment could be neatly categorized, the majority of participant comments lent themselves to being grouped into four themes, with the differences between small and large NPOs emerging as a significant subset of the process theme. The themes are:

➢ Needs, priorities, categories, outcomes
➢ Perceived role of BOS, CCFAC, and County Staff
➢ Collaboration between the county and NPOs and among nonprofit organizations
➢ Effect of the process on nonprofit organizations, especially small versus large NPOs

Needs, Priorities, Categories, and Outcomes

Most participants had a clear understanding of the purpose of the funding pool, describing it as county money used to fund programs to support local human services needs within a framework of priorities identified by the community. There was the realization that government cannot meet all of the needs of its residents and the funding pool is a fair way to partner with the nonprofit community to get closer to fulfilling unmet needs. One participant opined that there are many county contracts, but only the funding pool is truly community-driven. There was discussion around whether the county's priorities are a true representation of current needs and whether

the CCFP process is flexible enough to meet changing needs. Most participants thought all the CCFP money was county money, while a few knew that the pool is supplemented by federal and state Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. There was also a view that the funding pool supports organizations that provide unique or specialized programs, or those that provide support to underserved populations, with a focus on poverty. Community-based priorities were characterized as the "most important issues to citizens," identified by the "voicing of needs" by residents, and were developed "based on what's learned from the community."

It came out that there is some collaboration, perhaps unrecognized, between the nonprofit community and the county in identifying needs in particular communities. For example, NPOs interact with immigrant populations to identify needs, while the Health Department reaches out to those who are homeless. Several participants also held up the CCFP grants program as an example of successful collaboration between government and the community.

Some participants commented that they think the CCFP categories and priorities are too broad. For example, the terms "self-sufficiency" and "crisis" were offered as concepts that are soft and not specific enough to be applied meaningfully to different types of programs. Some priorities, too, are seen by some as soft and lacking specificity – prevention and basic needs were specifically mentioned in this context. It was further noted that the levels of need in the four regions of the county are so different that one definition of a particular term may not be adequate to encompass the need for services that exists throughout. Likewise, while most participants acknowledged that tracking outcome measures is a legitimate requirement of the funding pool process to ensure an acceptable "standard of care," some thought that the outcome measures were not realistic or too general.

Several participants suggested that emerging needs should be added as a category and wondered whether there was flexibility in the program to accommodate this category and its associated programs. Other comments indicate that participants are concerned whether the funding pool is nimble enough to be responsive to the needs of the community based on population changes (demographics), trends (poverty, joblessness), and the need for supportive programs (training, fiscal literacy) that will allow service recipients to successfully incorporate the services they access into their lives.

Two participants suggested the need for a countywide needs assessment to get a current view of community needs in order to develop an up-to-date set of priorities.

Perceived Role of the BOS, CCFAC, and County Staff

As the roles of various county bodies in the CCFP process were explored, it became clear that some participants did not have a firm grasp as to which entity does what. It was suggested that the CCFP should receive more publicity and that the CCFAC should do more outreach to the nonprofit sector to remedy this inconsistency. Those who were knowledgeable about the funding pool were well aware that the CCFP process is removed from politics, and there were many comments about the fair and apolitical nature of the process. BOS oversight of the funding pool was characterized as its conduit to the community. While the BOS has the final approval of county priorities and the programs that receive CCFP grants, it was recognized that there is technical input from county staff and many were complimentary about staff and contract management support.

There was considerable confusion about the role of the CCFAC and the Selection Advisory Committee (SAC). Participants were unsure how members are selected and trained and what

factors are taken into consideration in their decision-making. Some participants did not know of the existence of the SAC, and one participant opined that the SAC was not knowledgeable about the nonprofit community. Based on this comment, it was suggested that NPO representatives have non-voting technical advisory membership status on the SAC.

Encouraging Nonprofit Collaboration

Collaboration was a frequent theme, often in the sense of NPOs banding together to tackle the CCFP application process together. Collaboration would allow for the leveraging of resources by smaller organizations, as well as removing or reducing the impact of barriers, such as the cost of the required audit. There was also the thought that organizations with similar programs could work together to build one strong program and be more likely to get funding. Some participants know that the county encourages nonprofits to collaborate whenever possible and suggested that incentives or bonus points be given in the application process to those who collaborate. There was even a suggestion that the funding pool process should be less competitive and more collaborative and that NPOs should be encouraged to share information and be more cooperative.

Conversely, there were those who stressed the competitive nature of the process and wondered how collaboration could be accomplished in such an environment. Still others said that an emphasis on collaboration was detrimental to unique or innovative programs or those on the leading edge of serving emerging needs populations.

The CCFP Application Process

The single topic that generated the most commentary, much of it negative, was the application process. Many comments centered around three main points:

- One-size-fits-all application is too complex, requires too much data (much of which is deemed intrusive and irrelevant), and fails to fully capture the differences between programs
- Requirement of a formal audit is excessive, especially for small nonprofits
- Timing of the application around the holidays, the busiest time of year for nonprofits, pulls resources away from programs at a critical time

There were positive comments, such as consensus among participants that the funding pool process has measurable outcomes, is service-oriented, and is open to all legitimate nonprofit organizations. Knowing there is a process, what must be done to participate, networking and sharing best practices with other organizations, and learning from one another – characterized as "community building" by one participant – is seen as a strength of the program.

The current two-year cycle that replaced the original one year cycle is a universally agreed-upon improvement. Technical support provided by county staff was lauded by many as a valuable benefit, especially contracts and grant writing support. Some participants are able to use the funding pool process for their own purposes beyond funding programs, such as using it as a screening tool for finding other contracts with the county.

However, the CCFP process was also called "bureaucratic and repetitive," "cumbersome," "arduous," and requiring a great deal of reporting and regulation. There was concern that successful past performance is not part of the evaluation going forward, but that currently funded programs and organizations were more likely to receive future funding. There was concern that there is not enough communication about the funding pool, leading to

misunderstandings about which organizations are eligible, how to apply, and other basic information. One participant even said that the process has been hidden from the nonprofit community.

There were suggestions to improve the process, including: publish the RFP earlier in the year, streamline the application (rewrite or eliminate confusing questions) and make it available online, extend the funding cycle to three years, and accept short, narrative program descriptions in place of forms. Other suggestions included a required pre-proposal conference, meetings with individual applicants, and allowing a short form for previously funded programs. There were also several requests for technical assistance in the form of proposal writing workshops.

The aftermath of the process also drew comments. Some participants were unaware that they could call county staff to be given insight as to why their application was denied. Others suggested that a formal a Q&A opportunity be built in to the CCFP process to accommodate this need. More importantly to NPOs, several participants pointed out that the short, two-month time period between the denial of funding in the new cycle and the end of funding from the previous cycle leaves organizations scrambling to find funds to continue important programs. Some programs, and even organizations, are heavily dependent on CCFP funding and program denial can be catastrophic.

While there are many barriers to success in applying to the funding pool, there is a perception that organizations that are familiar with the grants process, especially those who have previously received CCFP funding, have an advantage over new applicants. There were questions about how new organizations and programs are cycled into the process if the current crop of programs is routinely given funding in its entirety.

Aside from the frequent suggestion of allocating more money to the funding pool, there were several ideas for increasing the effectiveness of getting money to the nonprofit community, starting with the previously mentioned need for simplifying the process, with more focus and better communication around priorities, deadlines, and the process in general. Other suggestions included:

- Consider new groups on a preliminary one-year cycle
- Organizations with separate county contracts should not be eligible for CCFP money
- Long-term, successful programs should have a simplified application process
- Increase "match" requirements for NPOs who get ongoing funding
- Contract extensions for successful programs
- Renewals versus submitting a new application every funding cycle
- Programs requesting more than $100,000 should go through contract procurement; $99,000 or less should receive a funding pool grant

There was discussion surrounding those programs considered essential that would cause great difficulty in the community if they were defunded. These are large, long-term programs that take a significant share of CCFP funds, leaving less money to be divided among other programs. It was suggested that the funding pool should be a point of entry for funding, rather than a long-term funding solution, and that critical services should be moved to the regular budget.

Effect of CCFP on Nonprofit Organizations; Small versus Large NPOs

There was a range of views on the effect of the funding pool on nonprofits, from acting as an incubator or providing seed money for new or small nonprofits, to providing the financial latitude to allow more established organizations to expand programs and services. While some organizations receive funding from sources other than the funding pool, many depend heavily on CCFP grants. Therefore, if funding is denied, the impact on the organization is considerable if not profound. Representatives of organizations with a significant volunteer base felt they made better use of funding pool dollars and gave the county a better return on its money.

A related theme that surfaced throughout the information gathering process was that while the CCFP welcomes small nonprofits to vie for funds, to do so is to put small nonprofits in the position of overcoming many disadvantages in competing against large nonprofits. It was acknowledged by many that small NPOs and large NPOs are very different entities and nowhere is this more evident than in coping with the complexities of the CCFP process. There was even the comment that the CCFP process benefits larger nonprofits that have development departments and do not have to sacrifice time from programming. Small organizations cannot afford the services of a professional grant writer, which they feel automatically handicaps their applications. The requirement for a formal audit is expensive for all, but is especially prohibitive for small nonprofits. Finally, as mentioned above, the timing of the application at the busiest period of the year creates staff shortages at a critical time. Because most small organizations do not have full time paid staff, or even a full complement of volunteers, to cover multiple functions, the application process is unreasonably burdensome.

One suggestion to balance the disparity between large and small NPOs was that a formal incubator program be developed within the funding pool framework to nurture small or new nonprofits. Another was to earmark a certain percentage of funds to go to small or new NPOs or those developing unique programs. Finally, it was suggested that small and large NPOs be funded through separate pools of money entirely.

In summary, the ideas, information, and themes that emerged from the five meetings were consistent. Participants expressed their appreciation for the existence of a county resource that funds nonprofit programs to benefit the community, and acknowledged that overall the program works well. There were no serious expressions of hostility toward the program, and the only request for significant change revolved around simplifying the application process.

Appendix C

Consolidated Community Funding Pool Review Project

Presentation to Board of Supervisors
Human Services Committee
January 22, 2013

Presentation Agenda

- CCFP Review Project Update
  - Purpose
  - Objectives
  - Phases
- Identified Community Input and Board Themes
- Further Discussion
- Next Steps Toward Recommendation
  - Process
  - Deliverables

Project Purpose

To review the current CCFP funding framework, practices and procedures to ensure they support strategic human services outcomes and that community resources are leveraged for the maximum collective impact on those most at risk.

Project Scope of Work

1. Engage community and gather feedback on current process, community needs, and funding priorities
2. Identify funding pool strengths and challenges
3. Review and assess CCFP purpose, policies and procedures
   - Explore potential changes in the application requirements
   - Explore procedural changes to the application review process
4. Validate current funding policies or propose new funding policies that support project purpose
5. Recommend implementation strategy

Project Phases

Community Input (November 2012)

- Public Needs Hearing on Consolidated One-Year Action Plan
- Regional community input sessions
- Individual sessions with Board of Supervisors
- Online survey

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Project Phases

Steering Committee (January 2013)

- Analyze information from community input
- Conduct further research
- Make project recommendations

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Identified Themes - Community

Purpose, Priorities, and Outcomes

Concern that CCFP may not be flexible enough to meet changing and emerging needs of community

- Filling "community driven" gaps vs. addressing system-wide priorities
- "Critical" services at risk of not being funded (funding programs vs. organizations)
- Innovation vs. sustainability and small or new vs. big, established
- Broad priorities vs. specific targeted needs
- Lack of standardized outcome measures

Identified Themes - Community

Process

Fair and apolitical but:

- Application more complex than other funding processes
- Formal audit requirement is expensive and burdensome for smaller organizations
- Overwhelming for small nonprofits (suggested "incubator" model or tiered process)
- Cycle time impacts application process as well as program implementation and sustainability

Identified Themes – Community

Communication and Capacity Building

Engaging public and private stakeholders to increase service system impact

- Communication with staff and other providers throughout the process
- Better information sharing and data collection to support service delivery and funding decisions
- Nonprofit collaboration rewarded with incentives

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Identified Themes – Board of Supervisors

Purpose, Priorities, and Outcomes

- Clarify CCFP's purpose and criteria
- Better use of data to identify community needs
- Community leveraging emphasis within application review criteria
- County/Human Services System priorities alignment
- Number of nonprofits leads to duplication
- Encourage provider collaboration
- Stronger, more consistent outcomes
- Challenge of "critical" services in the pool

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Identified Themes – Board of Supervisors

Process

Administrative supports to ease the process

- Cycle time
- Automatic renewals
- Extended contracts

Next Steps

Steering Committee will:

1. Analyze the funding pool's framework and process to ensure viability in the future human services environment

2. Propose updated CCFP Goals, Policies and Guidelines based on the current human services environment:

   - Clarify purpose of funding pool and describe best model for disbursing funds to community-based providers in current system
   - Align funding priorities with human services system priorities
   - Provide guidance for new application requirements and procedural changes to the application review process

Staff will present any recommended changes to the Board by late Spring.

Stay Informed Throughout the Process

Go to the CCFP Redesign webpage:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ccfp/ccfp_redesign.htm

- OR -

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