

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A
COMMUNITY-BASED AGENCY FUNDING SUPPORT POLICY**

*Report to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
July 29, 1996*

Community-Based Agency Funding Policy Committee

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Acknowledgment

The Funding Policy Committee gratefully acknowledges the staff assistance of Margo Kiely, Director of the Office of Systems Management for Human Services; Caroline Valentine, Office of the Deputy County Executive for Human Services; Brenda Gardiner; Office of Administration for Human Services; Sarah Shangraw, Office of Systems Management for Human Services; and Trudy Brisendine, Department of Family Services. The Committee also wishes to thank David Miller and Cecelia Curtis, both of the Office of Administration for Human Services, for their research assistance; and Judy Greene and Natalie Thomas for their clerical assistance. Finally, the Committee wishes to thank Carol Frecker, Department of Family Services, and the Facilitation Team members for facilitating the Community Worksho

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A Report to the Board of Supervisors, Fairfax County

SECTION I INTRODUCTION

As a result of the FY 1997 budget deliberations, the County Executive recommended changing the manner in which the County provides funds to community based and contributory agencies. The FY 1997 Adopted Budget later approved by the Board of Supervisors called for the creation of a competitive grant process for funding human services offered through community-based agencies. This decision signaled a change in the traditional relationship between the County and its partners in the human services community, and offered an opportunity to collaborate on new ways of working together.

During the FY 1997 budget review, the Board asked the Human Services Council to consider how the new competitive grant process would work. In response to this request, the Council prepared a preliminary report suggesting a general framework for the funding policy and its implementation. In addition, the Council proposed that an interim committee of community leaders be established to develop recommendations to the Board for a funding policy. Further, the Council recommended that this citizen committee use an open process, involving and seeking input from all interested stakeholders. The Board accepted these recommendations, resulting in the establishment of the Community-Based Agency Funding Policy Committee (FPC). The names of the FPC members are listed inside the cover of this report.

The FPC was charged to develop and recommend to the Board of Supervisors a comprehensive policy for providing competitive grant funding support to community-based agencies that provide human services to Fairfax County citizens. Specifically, the FPC was charged to:

- X Identify goals and policies for the competitive grants funding approach, including the relationship of the community agency funding pool with other public and private competitive grant funding sources for human services;
- X Establish specific guidelines and timelines for the County in implementing the funding policy, including coordination with other public/private funding sources;
- X Specify the needed citizen involvement in the policy implementation phase; and
- X Ensure that the competitive grants process is based on objective needs assessments, with provisions for ensuring accountability, monitoring performance and evaluating outcomes.

The Board also stipulated that the new funding policy is to be operational starting July 1, 1997; therefore, the policy and guidelines need to be developed and approved early in the FY 1997 transition year. In addition, the committee was told that the recommendations should take into consideration how other human services grant programs in the County operate. Finally, the committee's recommendations could include suggestions about how the various grant processes

might be coordinated, including the possible consolidation of pool funds and processes at a future date.

SECTION 2 COMMITTEE PROCESS

The Funding Policy Committee's initial work was to gather and review relevant information on similar funding policies. County staff assisted the committee in reviewing current literature and contacting 16 state and local jurisdictions across the country to learn about their grant funding experience for community-based agencies. The committee met with County and private agencies that have grant experience and compiled written materials from groups that were unable to meet with the FPC. The committee also held discussions with County agencies that are emphasizing collaborative work in connection with their programs. Finally, the Committee reviewed the Board of Supervisors' goals for human services and the goals of redesign as they relate to community agency funding. (The next section presents a brief summary of the research highlights. More detailed results of the research are included in Attachment 1, Detailed Summary of Research)

Based on the results of the research and discussions with community representatives, the Committee developed several components of a draft proposed funding policy. These components included a statement of goals for the funding program, and seven proposed policy areas to govern the administration of the funding program. For each policy area, the Committee drafted a brief policy statement and identified multiple issues for discussion and consideration.

On July 15, 1996, the Committee held a community planning workshop to obtain ideas, feedback, and recommendations from stakeholders in the funding process. More than 100 workshop participants divided into small, facilitated groups to discuss and make recommendations on each of the seven policy areas, and were encouraged to suggest additional questions, issues, or additional policy areas. The highlights of the workshop are presented in Section 4 of this report. (See Attachment 2 for the complete record of the workshop discussions. See Attachment 3 for a list of participating agencies and groups.)

The committee used the information gained from the workshop to finalize the goals, policy statements and objectives found in Section 5 of this report. The committee's draft report was presented to the Human Services Council for review and comment on July 22, 1996. Many of the Council's suggestions were incorporated into this final report for presentation to the Board of Supervisors.

SECTION 3 RESEARCH SUMMARY

The committee gathered and reviewed information on funding goals and policies from a wide variety of sources. The committee reviewed:

- < the Board of Supervisors= adopted goal for human services;
- < the goals of Human Services redesign as it relates to community agency funding;
- < HSC recommendations on redesign that relate to community agency funding;
- < the principal article on community agency funding by Sue Parrott, titled AAllocating Resources for Human Services;≡
- < the results of over one dozen telephone interviews that staff conducted with leaders of other jurisdictions about their funding policies;
- < the results of meetings with several county and private sector grant managers to learn of their policies and procedures related to funding; and
- < other examples of partnerships and networking experience in the human services community.

Committee members were greatly aided by an article entitled AAllocating Resources for Human Services≡ (Sue Parrott, Management Information Service Report #25, June 1993). The article outlines a general framework for developing a funding policy for community agencies that deliver human services. The article addresses specific issues such as principles, guidelines for funding, priorities, implementation, and monitoring and performance measurement.

Grant Experiences of Other Jurisdictions

The committee gained valuable information from interviews conducted with leaders from more than one dozen jurisdictions across the country about their funding policy. The interviews covered the goals of each jurisdiction=s funding policy; the size and source of the funding; the roles of staff and citizen committees in the funding process; criteria for funding allocation decisions; monitoring and evaluation requirements; and perceived strengths, weaknesses, and Alessons learned.≡ Highlights from the interviews are summarized below.

- X The most common process used to make funding allocation decisions in local government funding projects involve citizen committees (with staff support) evaluating proposals and making funding recommendations to an elected body, and staff conducting ongoing contract monitoring.

Other variations include:

- Ongoing contract monitoring contracted out to a private firm.
- City staff make all funding allocation decisions and conduct monitoring, with no

- *formal* citizen input into allocation decisions.
 - Another city department (e.g., Housing, OMB) administers the RFP/contracting process, with human service staff and/or citizen input.
 - The entire process is contracted out to an outside agency (e.g., United Way) that may convene citizen committees.
- X All jurisdictions use citizen committees to obtain input as to which Human Services programs should be provided in the community and what priority should be placed on program areas. In Richmond and San Antonio, citizens participate in setting priorities through neighborhood or regional councils.
- X In all but 2 jurisdictions (San Antonio and Cincinnati), citizens committees participate in funding allocation decisions, generally reviewing proposals and making budget recommendations to the elected officials. (In San Antonio and Cincinnati, staff make all recommendations. In Alexandria, citizen committees do participate in selected special funds, but not in General Fund decisions.) In Roanoke and Savannah, citizen committees have final approval on allocation decisions.
- X Many locations encourage collaboration among agencies but had difficulty defining it in the RFP or measuring it. Scottsdale has developed the following definition of collaboration.
- ACollaboration is defined as:*
- *Communities, agencies, or local organizations joining together, through written agreements, to provide services, based on common goals and shared funding.*
 - *Instead of focusing on individual agendas, collaborative partnerships establish the kinds of common goals that address problems that lie beyond any single agency or organization=s purview, but which concern them all.*
 - *Partners agree to pool resources, jointly plan, implement and evaluate new services and procedures, and delegate individual responsibility for the outcomes of their joint efforts.@*
- X APolitics≅ and conflict-of-interest on funding allocation committees was a recurring theme. Several jurisdictions recommended addressing the issue up-front in policy statements to avoid problems later in the process. One jurisdiction required Council members to recuse themselves from any funding discussions about affiliated CBOs. This policy has had mixed results. Another jurisdiction has faced legal challenges.
- X Difficulty in establishing and monitoring performance-based outcome measures was also a recurring theme. Almost every jurisdiction reported struggling with how to develop

- meaningful outcome measures (beyond workload indicators).
- X Jurisdictions included a wide range of paperwork requirements. San Antonio and Savannah seemed to have the most ≡burdensome≡ requirement; others required less complicated monitoring reports and extensive applications. Several jurisdictions recommended keeping the application process as simple as possible to encourage small providers to apply. One jurisdiction that has formal audit procedures waives this requirement for contracts under \$5,000. One jurisdiction requires CBOs to be in existence for at least 2 years to be eligible to bid.

 - X 2 of the 12 jurisdictions interviewed have some form of combined process for CDBG public service funds and other human services funding. As needed, the Committee can provide information from eight additional jurisdictions that use a combined process for these funds.

The jurisdictions consistently reported that establishing a process of this type was a challenging yet worthwhile effort. In addition, the jurisdictions emphasized that the processes they had established evolved over time in response to the changing needs of the community. Those interviewed gave encouragement to other jurisdictions interested in developing community funding processes, and indicated that the work in their respective communities had strengthened their service delivery systems.

Grant Experiences of County and Private Groups

Two Fairfax County government competitive funding processes, offered through the Community Development and Services Block Grants activities, were reviewed. Administered by County agencies, these two block grants fund discretionary grants for community-based organizations. In addition, the committee researched the Fairfax-Falls Church United Way discretionary grant program. Each of these competitive processes use the same application process for all applicants and use community planning and/or needs assessment data to determine the worthiness of proposals. Awards are renewed on an annual basis, with the Community Services Block Grant funds being eligible for multi-year funding based on successful progress of programs and continued demonstration of need for up to a three year period.

Other grant making opportunities were researched through foundation and corporate giving programs. Specific application processes, and guidelines were shared, either verbally or in writing. Each grant making process identified was unique in application, priority setting and in selection processes. Some organizations identified training and grant making guidelines that had been developed through their association.

Partnership and Networking Experiences

Additional research and interviews were conducted regarding various partnership and networking initiatives occurring in the community. Examples of such partnerships included the recent Continuum of Care planning meetings related to Housing and Urban Development requirements for Consolidated Planning; grant writing initiatives related to discretionary ANotice of Funding Availability opportunities for Housing and Homeless services; partnership efforts supporting services to the homeless; and efforts under the Human Services Redesign.

While they represent a variety of service areas and techniques, these programs have the following common goals:

- X The use of a multi-disciplinary, broad-based approach to meeting client needs and solving problems;
- X The use of partnership and collaboration to meet community needs;
- X A focus on prevention; and
- X The efficient use of public funds.

Various participants involved in these efforts articulated that successful partnerships require:

- X a commitment to a common purpose;
- X a recognition that strength in partnerships develops when organizations and individuals share skills and expertise with one another;
- X honest communication among participants and open participation as keys to successful endeavors; and
- X a recognition that collaboration builds over time and can be achieved only with ongoing effort.

SECTION 4 HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

On July 15, 1996, the Committee held a community planning workshop to obtain ideas, feedback, and recommendations from stakeholders in the funding process. More than 100 workshop participants divided into small, facilitated groups to discuss and make recommendations on each of the seven policy areas, and were encouraged to suggest additional questions, issues, or additional policy areas. The exhibits below present the highlights of the workshop discussions of each of the seven proposed policy areas. Attachment 2 contains a complete record of the workshop discussions.

Policy I. Stable and continuing funding support

- One year of funding is too short for some programs. Multiple-year funding would improve planning, leveraging of funds, and staff retention.
- Agencies with multiple funding sources should be required to identify their current or pending funding sources. Applicant agencies should have to specify a plan to develop other funding sources.
- Many think that grants should be for direct services only, but infrastructure costs (rent, heat) support direct services.
- "Mini-grants" might allow new agencies to demonstrate their ability, or jumpstart a program to support emerging needs.
- The County should support specific programs, not whole agencies.

Policy II. Effective and efficient program management

- The funding program should give priority to non-profits (501(c)(3) or equivalent).
- All agencies should be audited.
- Past performance/service quality is a very important selection criterion.
- The County should provide technical assistance to help agencies be good stewards, through evaluation, good measurement tools and communication.

Policy III. Citizen involvement at all levels

- Citizens (including consumers) should play a role in entire process, with a diverse representation of neighborhoods, ethnic groups, youth, etc.
- The needs of grassroots participants, e.g., scheduling and time commitment required for meetings, help with the jargon and bureaucracy, etc., should be considered.
- The Human Services Council should not be the only decision making body.
- Existing community groups should be tapped where possible -- community includes businesses, faith community, educators, non-profits, etc.
- Policy, monitoring and evaluation should not be done by the same group.

Policy IV. Funding is the plan based on community needs

- The needs (broadly defined) should be identified, with the required data/trends/demographic studies, grant process should not be complicated by the needs of smaller populations. The County should not have efforts to complicate the needs of smaller, specialized agencies from being involved.
- The funding should be controlled by the County in its role as the funder and the identification of needs should be a joint effort between the County and the community. The County should provide a list of ongoing service organizations in the community (hospitals, police, fire, etc.) and should be a part of the process of identifying needs and should be a part of the process of identifying needs.

Policy VI. Fair and equitable application procedures

- Grantor should provide clarification of grant goals, objectives, criteria, and target populations. Grantor needs to take more responsibility to be honest about goals, up front.
- Applications and reporting requirements should be simple, standardized, and clear from the beginning of the process.
- The County should consider performance-based awards, and allow for negotiation and modification in funding.
- The County should provide technical assistance or funding for a grant writer for agencies.
- Providing a continuum of care requires a blend of services and providers - must make sure that this process does not rupture the continuum by introducing incentives or disincentives for providing a wide range of services.

Policy VII. Effective program monitoring and evaluation

- Evaluators need to have direct contact with the people running the programs; and involved citizens must be knowledgeable of a program in order to evaluate it.
- Goals, objectives and performance measures must be well defined and agreed upon.
- Evaluation must be done consistently across the board; provide samples of how to develop good goals and objectives.
- An annual summary of positive highlights, such as the United Way State of Community Report would assure public that goals are being met.
- Look at how the County is currently evaluating programs: What is already working?
- Utilize site visits.
- Have County assistance available during the contract, if needed.

SECTION 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A COMMUNITY-BASED AGENCY FUNDING SUPPORT POLICY

In 1988, the Board of Supervisors adopted the following goal for Fairfax County Human Services:

Each individual should have the opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency and function to the limit of his or her ability, particularly in providing family stability through economic security. @

The Committee recognized that the goals and policies of the community-based agency funding support program must be consistent with this overarching goal for Human Services. The recommended goals for the funding policy seek to ensure that services are integrated and linked to the overall goal for Human Services and the Human Services Strategic Plan. The Committee recommends that the Human Services Goal and Strategic Planning process should be revisited by the County as a whole, through a regional stakeholder process. Outcomes of programs and services should be directly related to the vision, and successful efforts should drive funding allocations and resources. Emerging needs in the community are to be identified through communication with citizen groups and individuals.

PROPOSED PROGRAM GOALS AND POLICIES

One of the explicit goals of the human services redesign, as articulated in the April 19, 1993 plan, was to expand the capacity of the human services community to serve citizens. Rather than continue in the traditional role of government as the primary service provider, the new Human Services delivery system would expand its resource development role to foster an environment that expands the community's capacity. These community human service resources will be strengthened through:

- X redefining the County human service resource development role into that of a catalyst, facilitator, and partner with the community;
- X expanding County-private sector partnerships;
- X encouraging more aggressive County outreach to attract, advise, support, and retain private sector resources based in the community; and
- X continue to seek new and innovative ideas to expand the community role and involvement in human service delivery.

In addition, the April 19, 1993 Redesign document lists six goals for the redesigned human services system. One of these is for the system to be community-based and geographically located. This goal means that the system will provide services to clients within their own communities and involve the community in partnership. Community based organizations will be

A...involved in the design, development, and delivery ...≡ of services in their communities. The goal of having a Aright-sized≡ system includes provision for A...competition in service delivery through partnerships with the private and non-profit sectors.≡

In May 1993, the Human Services Council reviewed the plan of the County Executive for redesign of the human service delivery system and recommended that the proposed human service delivery system be adopted. Part of the HSC recommendation related to public/private partnerships and the importance of increased collaboration. In their recommendations, the HSC indicated that non profit agencies and vendors are a tremendous resource in Fairfax County. The redesign plan to expand county/private sector partnerships and to broaden community capacity to serve citizens were cited as important objectives of redesign. Further the Council stated that the effectiveness of the new system will depend heavily on enhanced collaborative relationships with other public and private human service groups.

The following proposed goals and policies for the funding support program reflect the importance the County places on community-based agencies as a critical component of the human services delivery system. In addition, they reflect the County=s commitment to developing partnerships with community-based agencies to provide essential services to citizens, in a manner that ensures accountability and maximizes scarce resources. Finally, they recognize the need for the funding support program requirements to be clear, consistent, and equitable. The Committee recognizes that the recommended funding support program will inevitably impose new requirements on County staff as well as community-based agencies, and that both groups will have to work creatively to meet these requirements with existing resources. However, the Committee strongly believes that the benefits of the new process will outweigh the costs.

Proposed Funding Support Program Goals

- # **Provide support for services that are an integral part of the County=s vision and strategic plan for human services.**
- # **Serve as a catalyst to community-based agencies, both large and small, to provide services and leverage resources.**
- # **Strengthen the capacity to provide human services to individuals and families in need through the effective and efficient use of resources.**
- # **Help build public/private partnerships, and improve coordination and collaboration, especially within the emerging five human service regions of the County.**

Proposed Funding Support Policies

This section presents the seven funding support policies recommended by the Committee. Each policy is followed by several objectives which clarify the intent and scope of the policy. A brief discussion is provided for each policy to summarize the main points of the community input and the Committee's deliberations.

Policy I. 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.

Objectives

- X The process should allow for multi-year awards as appropriate, to ensure stability in services provided and staffing.
- X A mechanism to support a mini-grant process should be established to address emerging needs.
- X Leveraging of multiple community resources (e.g., funds, volunteers, in-kind contributions) should be encouraged.
- X As part of the application process, agencies applying for funds should identify other funding sources for which they have applied or which they may expect to receive, including County funds or in-kind support, regional and other outside resources.
- X Funding should be available to support all legitimate costs related to program services.
- X The priority for use of County funds should be on the support of services. Appropriate overhead and indirect costs should be proportional to services being considered for funding.

Discussion

The Funding Policy Committee (FPC) heard from several sources that one-year funding limits the ability of community-based organizations to obtain other community supports. Multi-year awards allow for fundraising development and an opportunity to commit outside community resources in support of the program. Allowances for addressing emerging needs should be considered. Several jurisdictions reported the use of a mini-grant/contract process that would

allow for new services and for short-term start-up and emergency services to be funded. The FPC believes that a portion of total funds should be available on annual basis for competitive allocation, to address these situations.

There was discussion among FPC members and the community regarding the importance of understanding an organization's full funding capacity. As service providers apply for funds, it is important to identify all funding support available to the applicant. Full disclosure of this information allows for funding awards to be made in confidence that there are no other sources also contributing funding for the same effort, and duplicating the intent of the award. The sharing of costs among multiple funders is appropriate, however, and should be encouraged to leverage any and all available community resources in support of the proposal under consideration.

Applicant agencies should be required to provide a plan which identifies other funding sources or opportunities, and describes how other resources will be developed to lessen dependence on County funds over time. Leveraging other resources, such as volunteers, other grants and fundraising opportunities, allows the community funds to be available to benefit more community organizations.

There is some sentiment that all services should not be in the competitive process. Some services lend themselves to a sole source status due to the unique nature of services provided. The committee recommends a review of such types of programs for funding outside this competitive process. In addition, there may be opportunities to add funds from other sources for services currently underfunded in the system.

Further, the FPC discussed the importance of flexibility in the types of activities funded -- such as provision of funds to support administrative expenses, rent or other indirect expenses. Some organizations may require these items be funded in order to have a viable project; others may have alternative funding sources available in support of these items. The FPC concurs that a variety of fiscal conditions exists among potential applicants of funds, and that those costs that are reasonable and related directly to the provision of services for the project(s) proposed for consideration should be considered in the allocation process. Given the limited amount of funding, however, the emphasis of the funding process should be on the direct provision of services to benefit the community.

Finally, the competitive process should be broad-based in scope to encourage a competitive and more effective service network. The FPC considered whether the competitive process should be County-wide or regionally based. The impact to organizations may vary, depending upon the size and service focus of the organization. To determine the appropriateness of either choice, the implementation committee should consider establishing criteria to balance county-wide needs versus specific population or neighborhood need.

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

Objectives

- X At this time, funding support should be restricted to non-profit agencies.
- X An audit should be required of all agencies receiving funds and should reflect appropriate and responsible use of all funds available to the agency or group to assure their viability as an organization.
- X Past performance should be a consideration in awarding of funds, with protections in place so as not to penalize new organizations starting new programs.
- X Funded agencies should meet Americans with Disabilities Act, Fair Labor Standards Act and non-discrimination requirements.
- X Performance measures should be developed to provide information on successful programs, and to assist agencies in evaluating their progress towards management goals.

Discussion

Several factors influenced the FPC's consideration of opening the application process to for-profit agencies. With one exception, all of the jurisdictions contacted during the research process limit their funding pool only to non-profit agencies. In addition, the County's current policy is to fund only non-profits with the resources placed in this competitive process. Finally, the County recognizes and supports the unique ability of non-profit agencies to leverage community resources, volunteers, and in-kind support. In light of these factors, it is the Committee membership's belief that at this time, funds should be restricted to non-profits. The Committee recommends, however, that this narrow eligibility should be reviewed over time to explore the possibility of allowing other qualified organizations to compete for these resources, particularly if additional funding becomes available.

The cost of audits should be an allowable expense as a proportionate share of funds requested. However, audits should only be one of several criteria considered in evaluating the programmatic health and responsible administration of any organization. Audits should not be an administrative burden and consideration should be given to the unique status of small organizations. Funding assistance in underwriting these requirements should be available as needed. Emphasis should be placed on successful service delivery and appropriate administration

of resources.

Selection processes should be fair and equitable, and new organizations should not be penalized for lack of experience. Criteria should be established to assure appropriate use of funds, and special provisions need to be made for organizations with limited track records. The role of the County is to help funded agencies be good stewards of public funds. Performance measures and outcomes are a valuable, ongoing way for agencies to assess their own progress towards managing effective service delivery. These measures must be program specific.

The goal of this allocation process should be to promote high standards of service delivery, and to provide training to potential recipients to ensure efficient and responsible service delivery. Through a partnership endeavor, it is possible to continue to focus on the delivery of appropriate services to meet needs.

Policy III. Fairfax County should ensure that citizens, especially recipients of services, are involved at all levels of the funding process--planning, setting priorities, making recommendations for funding, and monitoring/evaluation.

Objectives

- X Citizen involvement should be a part of every phase of the funding process, including planning, priority setting, project selection and monitoring/evaluation.
- X The County should develop procedures to ensure that broad and diverse regional grassroots citizen participation, including recipients of services, will be a part of the decision-making process for planning and prioritization efforts as well as participation in monitoring and evaluation efforts.
- X Training and staff support should be provided for citizens participating in the process to enhance their effectiveness in the process.
- X Organizations receiving funding should seek feedback from recipients and the community regarding their performance.

Discussion

Many organizations that will receive funding have policy or administrative Boards overseeing their organization. As such, citizens will be involved in the direct oversight of funding once it is awarded to an organization. Additional citizen client feedback is needed to provide information about progress of services, and organizations should be encouraged to develop a plan to address communication and implementation strategies. The proposed regional stakeholders councils, as they are developed, can be involved in establishing funding priorities in the future.

Citizen participation should be open, fair, flexible, effective, and free of conflict of interest concerns. Communications need to be broad-based -- meetings should be held throughout the county, notices should be widely distributed, and many outreach strategies should be employed to ensure that those benefitting from the services offered have an opportunity to provide input. Participants need training opportunities to allow for a broad and representative process that reflects the diversity of participating citizens. Both the funded organizations and the County have a shared responsibility to ensure broad community participation in all aspects of the funding process and program administration. As available resources continue to be stretched, agencies will have to use creative outreach and education strategies, such as combined outreach efforts for several programs or agencies. Community meetings and gatherings, as well as community bulletins or newsletters, are available resources that should be used regularly. Automated

technology should also be considered and developed. The goal of these communications should be to enhance citizen involvement and to provide opportunities for networking and collaboration among service providers.

To maximize the diversity of community participation and to promote objectivity throughout all phases of the process, membership on committees involved in the overall funding allocation process needs to be coordinated. In particular, the FPC members received feedback that while the Human Services Council and the Boards, Authorities and Commissions have a role in supporting the implementation of this new process, these groups are not the only voices to be heard in determining priorities or the direction of the funding program.

While there is general consensus regarding the importance of citizen involvement in all aspects of the funding process, some concern has been expressed regarding the citizen role in the monitoring of the funding program and specific oversight regarding activities funded. The FPC recognizes that the administrative responsibility for monitoring programs rests with the County, in partnership with funded agencies, but wants to encourage citizen involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process. Citizens, particularly those receiving services, need to be heard in order to be assured that services are meeting their needs.

Policy IV. Fairfax County should ensure that the funding support program is driven by the County's vision for human services delivery and community needs-based priorities, both county wide and local.

Objectives

- X Several needs assessment sources should be developed and used to aid in the development of the priorities for the funding pool. Objective studies and data gathering are needed to capture the needs of specific target groups to assess the broad and specific concerns for a wide range of populations.
- X Funding criteria should be guided by these needs-based priorities.
- X Priority should be given to programs which seek to prevent the need for more costly and intensive interventions in the future.
- X A balance should be maintained between funding services that are broad-based in scope, as well as those unique to specialized needs.
- X Gaps in services should be identified and prioritized, in order to address the changes in services, expansion of services, or provision of new services.

Discussion

The funding support program must be guided by the goals and vision for Human Services and by the needs of the community. The Human Services goal and vision statements need to be reviewed and updated, so that they can be translated into clear guiding principles for program planning. The County has several tools for assessing community needs, but should continue to develop additional tools to ensure that all voices are represented. While the Needs Assessment is a valuable tool to gain a broad overview of needs, specific groups need to be targeted to supplement the overall community-wide needs assessment. Some additional resources that can be used to identify and prioritize human service needs include: the school system; public safety; hospitals in the community; the faith community; the United Way; and other community organizations. These organizations are a critical component of the regional stakeholders process, and are valuable sources of information on community needs and resources.

Priorities and criteria for funding support should be based on the needs of the community, as discussed above. Other prioritization frameworks, such as the Community Conditions identified by the Human Services Council, should also be examined as a guide to prioritization of the funding.

Due to limited resources, it will be important to prioritize funding those services which have the most potential to impact citizens' lives, especially those which seek to prevent additional needs in the future. The Committee places a high priority on prevention services as an effective use of community funding.

The Committee recognizes the importance of maintaining a balance between services that address broad-based needs (such as prevention, self-sufficiency or family stability) and services that address more specialized needs (such as specific skills or disabilities). Services to meet the full spectrum of needs should be supported by the funding program, and an effort should be made to identify gaps in services. Too much emphasis on any one priority area, including emerging needs, risks disrupting the continuum of services provided.

Policy V. Fairfax County should require that agencies cooperate in delivering services to the community in order to improve the breadth of services available, to bridge service gaps, to better meet the needs of clients, and to use resources more effectively.

Objectives

- X The County should facilitate cooperation by providing agencies with information and opportunities for networking, such as information on service gaps, forums to meet and learn about other service delivery agencies, and examples of successful coordination and collaboration.
- X Collaboration is one tool to minimize duplication of services. Where the appearance of duplication exists, the County should facilitate a discussion between community agencies to identify potential opportunities for collaboration.
- X Applicants should be required to demonstrate how they employ (or propose to employ) appropriate cooperative and collaborative approaches in delivering services.

Discussion

Cooperation includes informal strategies (such as networking and service coordination for shared clients) as well as collaborative strategies (such as partnership agreements and service contracts). The Committee wishes to promote collaboration as a strategy to ensure that the full array of needed services are delivered to clients; however, the Committee feels that a strict requirement for collaboration in the funding process is not appropriate at this time. There was some concern that a *requirement* for collaboration would be too prescriptive, especially in the first year of the process, and would dictate methods for service delivery that may not be driven by client needs or outcomes.

Cooperation to coordinate existing services is a broader concept that can serve as a reasonable starting point. The committee heard that community-based agencies currently use a wide variety of cooperative efforts, and that nearly all agencies cooperate in some form when it is in the clients= interest to do so. In its research, the Committee found that collaboration is a priority in many jurisdictions; however, those jurisdictions that impose a formal requirement for collaboration did so several years into the process. To promote the Committee=s hope that collaboration will become the norm, the County should encourage and facilitate cooperation by providing information and opportunities. Over time, successful cooperative approaches that stress communication and problem-solving can evolve into collaborative partnerships with accountability for shared efforts.

Collaboration and partnerships are useful tools for achieving efficiencies and minimizing unnecessary duplication. The committee heard that while collaboration can be a source of administrative cost savings, it does not in itself promise dramatic efficiencies. Where there is the appearance of duplication of services, however, collaboration should be explored as a potential way to ensure the efficient use of community funds.

Collaboration can also be a tool to ensure that the full breadth of needed services is available to clients across the continuum of care. While providers should explore opportunities for collaboration during the funding process, the Committee recognizes that the need exists for small, unique services targeted to specific populations. In facilitating but not requiring collaboration among similar organizations, the policy recognizes that formal collaboration may not be appropriate for some small agencies with services and outreach targeted to specific neighborhoods and communities.

Policy VI. 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.

Objectives

- X The application process should be as simple as possible.
- X Technical assistance and individual assistance should be available based on the needs of the groups applying for funding, including assistance from non-County sources.
- X Specific application criteria should be clear, understandable and consistent for all applicants. Goals and objectives should be identified as part of the solicitation process. The needs-based funding priorities and criteria should be clearly defined.
- X The process should be responsive to changing needs and circumstances and allow for changes in procedures when necessary.
- X Procedures should be developed for disclosure of affiliation or potential conflict-of-interest for all persons associated with the funding process.

Discussion

The transition to a competitive process for funding community-based agencies represents a significant change. Workshop participants expressed great concern that the application process could become so cumbersome that precious resources would be diverted to application efforts instead of service provision. Procedures and paperwork requirements should be as simple and efficient as possible in order to reduce the administrative burdens on CBOs and County staff and to target resources to direct service delivery.

To the extent possible, the County should provide support to community agencies as needed to assist them in performing to their best potential, both in the application process prior to award as well as following the award. Assistance to help organizations prepare performance standards and monitoring plans should be provided to agencies that are awarded funds.

Needs-based funding priorities as well as standards for program goals and objectives need to be defined clearly in the solicitation process and applied consistently to all applications. Reporting should be based on agreed-upon outcomes, based upon the unique services being funded. The process should be standardized as much as possible, yet allow grantees to be able to measure success using the most appropriate measures.

The funding policy for community-based agencies presents a challenge in that the need for stakeholder involvement must be balanced with the integrity and objectivity of the funding process. The committee recommends that the County Executive review the application of the County's conflict-of-interest policy to the funding of community-based organizations. In any event, all persons associated with the awarding of funds through this new process should be required to disclose any agency affiliations or potential conflicts of interest.

Policy VII. 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.

Objectives

- X As part of the application process, applicants should be required to develop evaluation plans that define appropriate strategies to determine whether expected outcomes are being met. Evaluation should be ongoing and should focus on whether the planned services are meeting expectations.
- X Performance outcomes and objectives should be measurable, reasonable, accurate and not burdensome to service providers.
- X Outcome measures and data collection should be relevant and realistic in relation to the scope of the funding available and the persons being served.
- X The County should develop consistent and simplified reporting processes and requirements.
- X Ongoing technical assistance and consultation should be provided to develop a strong performance review effort.

Discussion

The use of outcome measures and evaluation efforts is an ongoing learning process for human services providers. Opportunities to provide continuing education to CBO and County staff on the development of performance measures, monitoring and evaluation processes should be sought. Data collection requirements should be consistent with and relevant to the nature of the service. Monitoring and evaluation efforts need to include a variety of strategies to ensure that program monitors are familiar with the program, such as site visits and ongoing communication with service providers.

Given the fiscal limitations, a variety of evaluation strategies will need to be employed, including self-assessments, feedback from citizens involved with the program, and other outside resources as available. Evaluation needs to be viewed as a shared responsibility. The application process should identify options for using automation and management information systems to enhance evaluation efforts.

Citizens and clients are integral to the monitoring and evaluation process at varying stages

in the process; forums and opportunities for their input will be critical in ensuring that service delivery is appropriate to meet the needs of the community. Citizen involvement in measuring success of programs can take many forms, such as client satisfaction surveys and citizen advisory councils.

Further, if conditions in the community change, there must be allowances for programs to redefine or refine program goals, objectives and direction. Responsiveness to the needs of the community can best be achieved with accurate information about the true impact a program has on the lives of people being served.

There is concern among community-based organizations that requirements placed on recipients of these funds also be expected of County provided services. Equitable application of standards and performance standards are necessary for the entire human services system and should be a goal of all providers.

Recommendations for an Implementation Strategy

The Funding Policy Committee considers it critical that a different committee work under the direction of the Board of Supervisors on implementing the above policy recommendations. To facilitate the work of this group, the committee recommends the following next steps for implementing the funding policy.

- X The Deputy County Executive for Human Services should be tasked with establishing a workgroup of County staff to define the steps necessary to ensure implementation by July 1, 1997, which could include:
 - Determining the operating guidelines and providing support for the selection committee;
 - Resolving legal and procurement questions regarding the award process, and developing the technical solicitation.

- X An ad hoc Citizen=s Review Committee should be established to work with County staff to assist in the first-year implementation of the process and to ensure appropriate citizen involvement in the process. The CRC role should be to:
 - Recommend the implementation process for the first year;
 - Recommend the first year priorities for funding, through various strategies to obtain input from a broad representation of the community, including existing human services boards, authorities, and commissions; recipients of services and community agencies;
 - Sponsor public forum(s) to obtain input on program priorities; and
 - Recommend a permanent implementation process for future years.

- X There should be a request to the Board of Supervisors to charge the Deputy County Executive for Human Services and the County Executive to report to the BOS by August 5, 1996 on the proposed implementation steps for the above recommendations.

Proposed Timeline

The FPC has discussed the sequence of events needed to administer the funding support program. The Committee suggests the following activities for the first year of implementation:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
Identify priorities for subsequent year	September
Identify anticipated funds for program	October
Solicitation request released (75 days to respond)	Early December
County budget plan released	January
Proposals due	Mid February
Selection committee review (30 days to complete)	Mid March
Selection decisions announced	Mid April
Board adopts budget	April
Award letters sent	Early May
Program year starts	July 1
Monitoring and Evaluation	July 1