

Response to Questions on the FY 2014 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Gross

Question: Provide additional detail on the Human Services Council request for employment services funding that support the housing blueprint.

Response: The Human Services Council requested \$900,000 to fund employment services to support the targeted FY 2014 Housing Blueprint goals. Included in the Housing Blueprint is the THRIVE initiative. The goal of THRIVE is to ensure that individuals and families are provided not only affordable housing but are connected to services and supports offered by other County agencies or non-profit organizations that help them succeed and become self-sufficient. These programs are designed to help residents better manage their money; train for a new job; pursue college or other training; become a better parent; learn English etc.

As part of the THRIVE initiative, the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) has been designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a Moving to Work agency. The Moving to Work designation gives FCRHA the flexibility to try new and more efficient ways of delivering affordable housing and is intended to achieve three main goals:

- Reduce costs (for both program administrators and participants) and achieve greater use of federal funds;
- Give incentives to families with children where the head of household is working, is seeking work or is preparing for work by participating in job training, educational programs or programs that assist people to obtain employment and become economically self-sufficient; and
- Increase housing choices for low-income families.

In an effort to meet these goals, the Moving to Work designation also gives FCRHA the ability to combine federal Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher funds to better address the purposes of the housing programs while also meeting the needs of the community.

The funding requested by the Human Services Council is intended to supplement work being done as part of the THRIVE initiative and specifically targets the homeless population. Individuals who are homeless require different approaches and employment models compared to individuals in stable housing who are unemployed or underemployed. However, it has not been determined whether this funding can be applied to an existing employment and training program (modified to address the specific needs of homeless individuals) or whether a new program will need to be developed. The Housing Support Services Committee (comprised of County and non-profit services providers) will review all options and determine how best to utilize the funding. Additionally, it still needs to be decided which County agency will administer the program, as well as what, if any, additional staff resources will be needed.

Since the employment model has not yet been developed, an alternative to funding this request would be to use any remaining FY 2013 General Fund one-time balance from the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH). Any remaining balance from OPEH could be carried over to FY 2014 to pilot a program specifically targeting employment services for homeless individuals. This would be one-time funding; therefore, additional baseline funding will need to be identified in FY 2015 and beyond if the program was successful. Additionally, FY 2015 budget guidelines could include language directing staff to explore how current HUD funding could be effectively re-purposed to address the Moving to Work designation.