



Office of Community Involvement



Non-Departmental CBAC

TO: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners (6) pages

FROM: Non-Departmental Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC)

DATE: April 22, 2023

SUBJECT: Non-D Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - Report overview and highlights

Our role as a Committee is to review Non-Departmental program offers and provide input to influence budgetary decisions according to the diverse perspectives and needs of communities within Multnomah County. We envision a County that is accountable, collaborates with other jurisdictions, protects our environment, provides for the safety and health of the public, and advances equity – especially for Black, Indigenous and other communities of color, as we know these communities are disproportionately impacted by County budget decisions.

At least in recent years, our Committee has focused on out-of-target program offers. We chose to continue that approach this year, as we understand that out-of-target offers are the most likely to need community advocacy to be incorporated into the final budget. We considered all 11 out-of-target offers for FY24.

We also reviewed each offer with these priorities in mind:

- Advance equity by centering race, ability, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and other historically marginalized identities
- Decrease the number of houseless community members and address the housing crisis
- Strengthen and promote emergency preparedness
- Improve access to behavioral health services (mental health, addiction, rehabilitation services)
- Mitigate impacts of climate change by reducing emissions and strengthening resilience to extreme climate events

PROCESS - To better educate ourselves to weigh in on budget offers, the Non-Departmental CBAC has meetings scheduled throughout the year. To prepare for the FY24 budget cycle, we

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met nine times. In our meetings, we heard presentations from the Chair, Commissioners, and Non-D offices as detailed below:

- 9/12 – Jenny M. Madkour, County Attorney
- 10/3 – Deborah Kafoury, County Chair (former); Lori Stegmann, County Commissioner (District 4)
- 11/7 – *committee work session to plan future presentation requests, no presentations*
- 12/5 – John Wasiutynski, Director of the Office of Sustainability; Julie Sullivan-Springhetti, Director of the Office of Communications
- 1/9 – Joy Fowler, Office of Diversity and Equity; Jennifer McGuirk, County Auditor
- 2/6 – Sharon Meiran, County Commissioner (District 1); JR Lilly, Director of the Office of Community Involvement
- 3/6 – Jessica Vega Pederson, County Chair
- 4/3 – *committee work session to discussion priority budget offers, no presentations*
- 4/17 – *committee work session to finalize this report, no presentations*

EMERGING ISSUES & CHANGES - There are a number of out-of-target offers relying on existing and dedicated funding streams this year, such that our Committee’s budget advocacy for them doesn’t feel very relevant (e.g., ARP funds that are winding down this FY being used to support continued emergency management services tied to COVID-19). We found that we were mostly prioritizing between offers that aim to improve the functioning and accessibility of County government in general and a few offers that more directly aim to help the County provide core services and advance policy goals.

BUDGET FEEDBACK - Since we restricted our review to out-of-target program offers, we do not have much feedback on the County budget overall. Perhaps for the FY25 budget cycle our Committee will feel better able to engage in broader budget review, considering in-target offers and the overall mix of budget priorities across County departments and offices as well.

That said, our Committee’s vision and priorities (included in the Executive Summary above) should serve as an overall statement on our desires for County budget priorities.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN (ARP) RAMP DOWN - One challenge we had this year is determining how or if we should assess out-of-target program offers where all of the FY24 funding would come from remaining ARP funds. It would have been helpful to us to better understand much earlier in the process how CBACs could effectively weigh in on the use of remaining ARP funds. For example, what can change about out-of-target program offers relying on ARP funds – the level of ARP funding we apply? Is ARP funding one lump sum the County can divide up however it sees fit, or are there funding categories or directives that have to be followed, e.g., a certain amount can go towards warehousing, a certain amount towards supplies, etc.?

Members: Reginal Cole, Tracey Lam, Xavier Tissier, Dustin Kight, Raphaela Haessler, Z Sloane
Staff: JR Lilly

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Again, because we didn't realize how many of the out-of-target program offers we'd review this year would be tied to ARP until just a few weeks back, we decided to prioritize other offers, assuming the ARP-funded offers are more likely to get funded simply because a funding source (that needs to wind down) already exists for them. But in future years where we have significant state, federal, or other temporary/non-General Fund funding sources to consider, better education for the Committee on how to approach these offers would be very helpful to us.

PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS - Using our vision and priorities and assuming ARP-funded out-of-target program offers would not benefit as much from our budget advocacy, the Committee chose to prioritize the following offers:

1. #10009C Transforming Justice Implementation \$250,000

Supporting a high level of community safety is one of the Committee's priorities for the County. This program offer was one of the few we reviewed that directly addresses community safety. It's also the continuation of work that has already begun, and it's important to us that County efforts and investments be given a chance to succeed, so endorse this offer receiving its full FY24 funding request.

2. #10017C WESP Planning and Engagement

\$240,000

The County requires a diverse, effective, and engaged staff to meet its obligations to the community and achieve its policy goals. As such, the Committee sees great value in continuing to integrate the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) throughout County offices and functions. The County will only ever be able to achieve as much as the strength of its staff allows, and we see improvements in equitable treatment among County staff as key to the County's success.

3. #10010B OCI - Policy & Training Coordinator \$120,000

As the Committee's vision statement opens with, "We envision a County that is accountable," we see great value in strengthening the Office of Community Involvement's work to engage community members in the County's work, from policymaking to program development and implementation. Better supporting the involvement of community members in County endeavors will only serve to increase the willingness of community members to engage, strengthening ties between the people and their government.

Since the Committee only reviewed 11 program offers this year, we wanted to provide some feedback on the eight offers not included in our priorities for funding above:

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- **#10000B Deputy Chief of Staff - \$240,000**
 - *Given the significant services and additional budget the County now manages, we agree that another senior staff person who can help the Chair conduct County business and move priorities initiatives forward is a worthwhile investment. We recommend that the Office of Equity and Inclusion to be centrally involved in the recruitment and hiring for this position, and for the Deputy to help ensure the full implementation of the WESP.*
- **#10005B Ombudsperson - Charter Review - \$257,800**
 - *We weren't sure if this program offer benefits from budget advocacy since the position is voter-mandated. That said, we generally support the creation of this position, and hope the funding request is adequate to recruit and retain a talented ombudsperson in the role.*
- **#10007B Public Records Software - \$200,000**
 - *We found this program offer confusing. It reads as though a primary goal for FY24 is choosing the software, but also reads as though FY24 is about implementing a software that's already been chosen. We also didn't understand why the same budget request was being made this year as last year. While we generally like the idea of implementing software that will make processing public records requests easier and more accessible to the public, we couldn't prioritize it given our confusion over what this offer does and doesn't cover.*
- **#10040B Resolution & Development Coordinator Pilot - \$196,400**
 - *We chose to prioritize what seems like a related offer, WESP Planning and Engagement, because it aims to support more equitable and inclusive workplace environments across the County, which if achieved should cut down on the number of situations that would be relevant for this position to work on. We were also confused about the length of this pilot and what would come of it after the initial trial and assessment period is over.*
- **#10093A ARP Emergency Management Logistics & Warehouse - \$888,842**
 - *We had two questions about this and other Emergency Management ARP-funded program offers – to what extent are these services exclusively about COVID-19 outbreak prevention and readiness (i.e., some of the program offer language reads as though these services also provide for extreme weather readiness for homeless community members), and to what extent we even have a role in weighing in on these offers, given the lack of General Fund dollars requested. Because it seems like General Fund requests are more likely to be debated than ARP-funded requests, we chose not to consider these for prioritization.*
- **#10093B ARP Emergency Management Logistics & Vehicles - \$772,000**
 - *No other comments or questions.*
- **#10093C ARP Emergency Management Community Personal Protective... - \$100,000**
 - *No other comments or questions.*

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- #10094 ARP Office of Sustainability Food Access Focus - \$400,000
 - *The Committee debated prioritizing this offer, but chose not to, mainly because of the ARP funding attached to it (i.e., it doesn't appear to need General Fund budget advocacy). We did, however, have questions about whether the County continues to assess its investment in developing the MudBone Grown-leased farm after the County's direct funding (or at least its management of ARP funds earmarked for it) ends. We're curious about this because it seems like the County's goal of increasing the number of Black farmers using the site from three to four is small, and it appears that the County will need most if not all of FY24 to even complete infrastructure work that would make more farmers using the site viable. While the Committee thinks the overall intention of the program and the way it connects to other needs and services (e.g., providing CSA prescriptions so people get access to healthy, culturally appropriate food) are great, we want to make sure the County is doing what needs to be done to create an operation that can continue to grow, providing even more opportunities for Black farmers and benefiting local communities through healthy food access as well.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – Recognition of committee members, staff, and any others who may have played a role in developing and delivering your recommendations.

The Committee would like to thank the many Commissioners and County leaders who met with us over the past 8 months. We would also like to give thanks to Dani Bernstein, former Director of the Office of Community Involvement, for kicking us off this year and onboarding new Committee members; Anna Allen, former interim Director of the Office of Community Involvement, for staffing us while the County worked to hire a permanent Director; and JR Lilly, the current Director of the Office of Community Involvement, for helping facilitate Committee members' input for this year's report. We'd also like to recognize outgoing Committee members Raphaela Haessler and Xavier Tissier, who are completing their sixth and final years as Non-D CBAC members. Their knowledge of past budget cycles and willingness to educate new committee members was incredibly valuable to our work. We wish them all the best!