

**2023 BUDGET
COUNCIL BUDGET DELIBERATIONS
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Provide your 2023 strategic goals; how are they different from 2022? In what way, if at all, are your strategic changes demonstrated in your budget request?

The mission of the Snohomish County Human Services Department remains to help all persons meet their basic needs and develop their potential by providing timely, effective human services and building community.

Our 2023 strategic goals that align with this mission are outlined below.

Ensure every Snohomish County community member has a place to call home. While this has been a longstanding goal, it continues to be impacted by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing loss of low-rent housing. We have utilized hotel/motel vouchers to address this issue in the short term and have collaborated with cities, law enforcement, the Office of Recovery and Resiliency (ORR), and Facilities and Fleet to create longer-term solutions. We have continued to collaborate with the City of Everett on their pallet shelter pilot program as well. We are also continuing our work with the Department of Emergency Management, the Snohomish Health District, the network of cold weather shelter providers, and other partner agencies to create a year-round network for disaster sheltering as needed due to weather events.

Ensure every Snohomish County community member has access to critical behavioral health services. This, too, has been a longstanding goal but it has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Our 2023 budget includes additional funding to address pandemic-related behavioral health needs in conjunction with ORR. In 2021, we worked with a host of partners to establish two 16-bed treatment facilities in repurposed space in the Denney Juvenile Justice Center and have been continuing our work with State and local elected officials to create another evaluation and treatment facility in repurposed space in the City of Lynnwood Jail. We are also working on expanding our community outreach efforts utilizing Designated Crisis Responders and the Snohomish County Outreach Team.

Ensure every Snohomish County community member in need of long-term services and supports has access to high quality services that support their optimal self-determination. This has been a longstanding strategic goal as well. We have utilized surge funding to increase access to home delivered meals as well as congregate meals delivered using pandemic-specific protocols. We have increased discharge planning services to support individuals returning to their own homes with the supports needed to maintain independence. This work will be continuing in 2023.

Ensure every Snohomish County family with children has access to the developmental and intergenerational services needed to ensure the healthy development of all family members. This longstanding strategic goal has also been profoundly impacted by the pandemic since in person services to families had to transition to remote delivery and is now in the process of transitioning back to in-person and hybrid service delivery models. Children in early learning programs frequently lack access to

the Internet, an essential condition for remote learning. Despite the numerous challenges and concerns about children returning to classrooms, we're seeing high participation rates in learning activities and parents have remained engaged in continuing to enhance their skills as children's first teachers. We are working with ORR and the Opportunity Council to increase the resiliency of the child care/early learning industry as a whole given its key role in family and economic recovery and are continuing to develop and strengthen the focus on youth of all ages.

Ensure we are equitably reaching vulnerable populations with services designed to meet their needs in a strengths-based, trauma-informed, and individuals/household-centered fashion. We have also expanded and enhanced services to all populations furthest from opportunity with a focus on ensuring the services provided centered the unique needs of each individual or household served and that the services build on the strengths of each individual or household. Many of the individuals and households we serve have experienced significant trauma in their lives, trauma which impacts the effectiveness of the services being offered. Human Services is continuing to implement a department-wide effort to enhance the knowledge and tools used by each department staff member to ensure we operate in a trauma-informed manner at the individual client, community, and departmental levels. This is being coupled with peer-led activities to increase staff resiliency and race equity awareness.

Ensure all services are delivered in a compliant fashion while optimizing efficiency, excellence, and equity. The entire Human Services team utilizes the continuous improvement tools and learnings to advance the Executive's aim of reducing waste and optimizing efficiency so we can provide excellent customer service to Snohomish County community members. We are also utilizing the knowledge and awareness gained regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion through the efforts of the Executive Office of Social Justice and the tools being implemented by Central Human Resources as well. We are using the knowledge gained to enhance our support of the network of service providers with which we work while ensuring compliance with federal and state funder requirements to meet the human services needs of all Snohomish County communities to the benefit of us all.

Our 2023 budget request reflects these ongoing strategic goals with a focus on moving from response to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic including the positions needed to ensure we make optimal use of ARPA Tranche 1 carry over and Tranche 2 funds consistent with the findings of ORR from their facilitated recovery discussions with community partners and mayors and their recovery roadshows.

NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LANDSCAPE

- 1. What federal, state, local issues are facing your work? What risks or opportunities does that create for you in 2023 and beyond? What is your plan to leverage the opportunity or mitigate the risk? What support do you need?***

Human Services is funded almost exclusively by grants and local resources dependent on the generation of taxes and fees. Given the current economic conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are continuing to see a surge in short-term funding coupled with a long-term trend in year-over-year resource reductions as needs in the community continue to grow. The short-term surge funding, however, is far more restrictive than was the initial funding provided in 2021, resulting in extensive retooling by County staff and our community partners to ensure compliance with the legislation. In some instances, these compliance requirements are extremely onerous, impacting the amount we must

spend to administer the programs and forcing us to take down and retool the service delivery “production lines” on a regular basis.

Some of the growth in need relates specifically to having to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic but some relates to the continued fraying of our human services ecosystem which did not begin with the pandemic but is being exacerbated by it. At the federal level, at the time of this writing, both Houses of Congress have passed a Continuing Resolution which the President is expected to sign to keep the Federal government operational through December 16, 2022. Should operations be disrupted at the federal level, there would be a significant ripple effect which would result in state and county staff and our partners having to do a tremendous amount of technical work to keep resources flowing and services operating. At times, services are disrupted under such circumstances despite our best state and local efforts.

Legislation that has been proposed to mitigate the long-term disinvestment trend on human services investments has not passed and it is unclear at the time of this writing whether such legislation will be introduced and passed and, if so, in what form. At the state level, there has been an increase in investment in human services but it is unclear what level of investment will be sustained, for how long, and with what parameters.

There are a number of existing mandates that are already underfunded, a situation that may be exacerbated by current and future budget decisions although thus far, we have been seeing a recognition of this fact, and attempts to address it, at the state level.

The ability of the Human Services Department to advance our work in the behavioral health and housing arenas will be substantially advanced by Council’s passage of the 1/10 of 1% sales tax authorized under HB 1590. We anticipate providing Council with a revised proposed business plan for the best and highest use of this resource beginning in 2023.

2. *What, if any, new mandates do you have impacting your work? Are they funded or unfunded? What is the plan for accomplishing the work?*

There have been no major changes in the mandates impacting the work of the Human Services Department other than those noted above. We plan to continue utilizing our existing structure and staffing to accomplish the work. The major challenge we currently face is the challenge recruiting employees for key positions, consistent with national trends. We continue to collaborate closely with the Executive Office and Central Human Resources to address this challenge as discussed further below.

PROGRAMS

1. *List programs, projects, and services within your department funded through federal COVID/ARPA funds. What, if any, of those programs are you recommending for ongoing funding and what is the source of the ongoing funding?*

ORR will be providing a presentation on the proposed use of ARPA funds for all departments.

2. *What new programs are you launching for 2023? What need or efficiency is the new program addressing? How is that program funded for sustainability? What metrics are in place to determine effectiveness?*

Currently, other than the ARPA/SLFRF funds that will be presented by ORR, the primary new programming is in the area of Housing and Community Services COVID-19 surge funding for new services such as emergency rental assistance plus existing services with some changes in emphasis and/or eligibility requirements. These funds will be utilized to continue surge activities on the heels of the Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars that expired on December 31, 2021. At this point, programs have not been reduced or eliminated but, as noted above, this is a distinct possibility as budgets are developed at the federal and state levels although we do not anticipate a funding cliff for major service categories until 2024. As noted above, some key areas in which potential future shortages may occur are resources for sheltering individuals experiencing homelessness; affordable housing; community development; food for seniors and other vulnerable populations, particularly those residing in some communities; paratransit; emergency services; early learning including remote learning; services for children and youth with developmental disabilities; child care; behavioral health evaluation and treatment beds and services; and veterans services. We anticipate being able to continue providing some operating funds to community partners who extend and enhance the most critical services available to community members. We also anticipate that we will be able to continue making significant advances toward meeting service needs in the affordable housing and behavioral health arenas as a result of Council's passage of the 1/10 of 1% sales tax allowed by HB 1590. For our grant funded programs, the metrics of effectiveness are determined by our funders. The proposed metrics for the new 1/10 of 1% sales tax program will be included in the final draft HB 1590 business plan currently under development.

3. *If different than #2, what are your areas of significant investment? What are you not doing because of that investment?*

Does not apply.

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

1. *What is your department doing to streamline processes or delivery services in a new way? How do your budget allocation requests play into these innovations? Are there ways in which a different budget approach, e.g., several departments sharing a resource, could achieve the same or better results in a more cost-effective way?*

We are continuing participation in the telework pilot process. Employees have moved to their planned in-office or hybrid work schedules and we have implemented a number of sustainable efficiencies in the process. One example is that we have streamlined processes in our energy assistance programs with documents now being exchanged remotely in most instances, creating efficiencies for staff and customers. In some instances, our federal and state funders have had us return to more in-person services. In such instances, we are utilizing the efficiencies associated with the use of technology developed during the pandemic as part of the way we are conducting business to the benefit of County residents. We know that the expansion of broadband infrastructure is critical to this process and are working with our partners who currently have limited broadband capacity to support them in the delivery of services.

Both as a result of the pandemic and growing community need, the Human Services Department has had to lead with innovation and streamlined processes in the delivery of services to Snohomish County

community members in every aspect of our work. Frequently, we have had to do so in the absence of federal or state guidance and have had to adjust when that guidance was made available.

In terms of housing and community services, Snohomish County is a national leader and is one of a handful of Continuums of Care in the nation to be designated as a Unified Funding Agency for our innovations in addressing homelessness. This designation has allowed us to assume more local control of funding processes and service delivery while attracting more federal resources to our county.

While jurisdictions throughout the nation have struggled to make emergency rental assistance available to eligible households in need, Snohomish County has led the way in making resources available to families with the help of our traditional and non-traditional community partners and has been able to obtain reallocated resources as a result.

In the arena of early learning and developmental disabilities, we have been recognized as a leader in helping our educational partners achieve distinction as operating “high achiever” programs.

Washington State ranks #2 in the nation in the delivery of long-term services and supports and Snohomish County is recognized as a leader throughout the state.

In the arena of behavioral health, Snohomish County has built out a continuum of integrated law enforcement/human services programming that is without parallel in the nation and includes components such as the Carnegie Resource Center, the Diversion Center, Jail Transition Services, continuity of substance use disorder services for individuals upon release from the Jail, and collaborative street outreach.

As a department funded largely by grants from federal and state partners and highly dependent on processes they establish, our budget approach is greatly impacted by other entities. Within that context, the Department is always examining opportunities to collaborate with other departments and has done so extensively over the past two years, particularly with the Department of Emergency Management, Fleet and Facilities, Finance, Central Human Resources, and the Executive’s Office, including the Office of Recovery and Resiliency and the Office of Social Justice, in addition to the Snohomish Health District. Our study of best and most promising practices around the nation, and in some instance, the world, supports our pursuit of continuous improvement which, in turn, helps us achieve more and do a better job of meeting community member needs. This does not always translate into faster – our focus is on using data and metrics to determine if we are achieving the desired outcomes and continuously reengineering programming as indicated.

Much of the work we accomplish is through our partnership with community organizations. We work with those partners to build their capacity and strengthen the resiliency of our countywide human services network. It is through the use of these supportive processes that the Human Services team, in collaboration with our network of community partners, is able to optimize our ability to achieve our mission and strategic goals year after year.

- 2. What, if any, hiring challenges are you experiencing? How is that affecting your level of service or internal operations? How are you mitigating those operational challenges and/or what is your plan for recruitment?***

The Human Services Department is not immune from the hiring challenges facing all industries or the specific hiring challenges faced by other health and human services organizations throughout the nation. Direct services positions have been particularly impacted but we have been able to work collaboratively with Central Human Resources to streamline the processes for opening and closing positions and have redistributed work and enhanced staffing within our Administrative Services Division to improve recruitment and are seeing more applicants for positions as a result. We have been able to mitigate the impact of this challenge through the amazing work of a committed, dedicated, and highly experienced team of human services professionals working in direct service delivery, oversight of subcontractors, and administrative services. It has been and remains my distinct honor to work with this profoundly capable team who help ensure that we are able to address many of the needs of our county's most vulnerable residents year after year.

3. Please provide a list of all vacant position titles, position codes, date vacated, and date first posted.

This list is provided in a separate attachment.

4. What effect has the increase of inflation and/or supply chain issues had on your department? What, if any, services or projects have you had to adjust to accommodate for this?

As a department delivering human services, we have not been significantly impacted by inflation and/or supply chain issues other than through the challenges recruiting workers as identified above with one exception. Our capital projects are being impacted by these challenges and we are seeing delays and cost overruns for many, although not all, as a result. We are working closely with the entities facing these challenges to amend contracts as needed and are working with our state and local partners on resource allocation options to ensure all the capital projects we are helping fund are able to proceed to completion.

SUCCESES

1. Take this opportunity to share to significant success in your department over this past year. What made it a success?

It is a challenge to name just one success given that every division in the Human Services Department has been able to achieve so much for so many during one of the greatest human services crisis in a century. I will highlight one particular success, and that is the successful resettlement of hundreds of Afghan refugee families in one year. I personally began being engaged in refugee resettlement work in the summer of 1975 and have never seen a resettlement process that has been as effective as this most recent example. There were so many contributing factors.

First, was the leadership of Council, Executive Somers, and the entire Executive Office. The vision of the current Chief of Staff, Alessandra Durham, for creation of the Welcome Center was instrumental in our ability to provide a welcoming environment for these newcomers to our county. She also ensured we were in close communication with our Federal and State delegations at every step of the process so they could help address our resource and policy needs. Our Executive Director, Lacey Harper, also provided tremendous leadership and ensured we had a path forward and the means of addressing every barrier.

Secondly, this success was made possible by the skill and expertise in management of Federal and State funded programs of our Human Services team. We could not have effectively administered the funds available to us under circumstances that were, at times, challenging without them. It is the hallmark of true professionals that they are able to make the near impossible look easy and Nate Marti, Tyler Verda, Mike Liddicoat, Lori Corbray, and a host of other team members did just that.

So many community partners came together to make this effort a success. The Community Foundation of Snohomish County was there, as they always are, to mobilize resources for immediate needs. The City of Everett was incredibly responsive in making facilities available when requested by Volunteers of America Western Washington who then ran the facility with great efficiency and effectiveness. The commitment and expertise of the team members at Volunteers of America Western Washington and Refugee and Immigrant Services Northwest is, in my experience, without parallel. Their teams brought tremendous knowledge and compassion as well as resources to meet this challenge. They were at SeaTac Airport at 1:00 in the morning to meet incoming families and were available 24/7 to meet myriad needs. They also coordinated the work of many other health, human services, legal assistance, and faith community partners who brought committed volunteers to the Center week after week to meet new arrivals' needs. And, many, many landlords offered homes to the new arrivals at their request. The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office ran an incredibly successful and well-organized resource drive which met the need for everything from diapers to bicycles.

I apologize in advance for not being able to mention everyone who dedicated so much to this effort. This success was truly a community effort, one that was built on years of collaboration, respect, expertise, and trust among all involved and is a sterling example of what makes Snohomish County so special.