



Legislation Text

File #: 20-0677, **Version:** 4

Agenda Item Name:

Approval of the Request to Extend the Project Period for the Alachua County Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Grant Program

Presenter:

Court Services, Joe Lipsey

Description:

Review and approve the two-month extension period for the JMHCP Program to enable completion of the work plan, based on the action of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to extend the existing grant for this same period. The extension will authorize the continuation of the Program during this period to assure stability as a pending award decision is made by BJA on a subsequent grant application to extend the Program for 2020-2023.

Recommended Action:

Approve an extension of the current project period for the JMHCP Collaboration Grant Program from September 30, 2020 to November 30, 2020.

Prior Board Motions:

11/14/2017: Acceptance of FY 2017 Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Grant Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice/Bureau of Justice Assistance

5/22/2018: Approval of 1 FTE Program Manager

8/7/2018: Approval of Consultant Contract for Research via the County Manager

9/30/2018: Approval of 1st Amendment to Extend Research Contract Time Period via County Manager

5/8/2020: Approval of Submission of 2nd Grant Application to BJA Via the County Manager

Fiscal Consideration:

No budget adjustment needed. Existing budget will be moved into FY21 during the budget carry-forward process.

Background:

During the past three years, under the Department of Court Services, the County has been engaged in implementing its Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Grant Program (JMHCP). The activities

carried out have been leveraged by the County's successful FY2017 Category I Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Grant entitled "Collaborative County Approaches to Reducing the Prevalence of Individuals with Mental Disorder in Jail."

This grant application was awarded in 2017 for \$152,435 to support development of strategies to reduce the prevalence of the mentally ill in the Alachua County Jail. This grant concludes on September 30, 2020. The County provided matching funds in the amount of \$38,108 toward this project, which was used to support a portion of one staff salary and related benefits.

The JMHCP has been a broad and robust collaborative initiative which has yielded significant benefits, including results from a comprehensive process evaluation of system stakeholders on the existing system of services for those in the County Jail who are mentally ill. A comprehensive data collection and analysis measuring the actual number of those in the Jail who are mentally ill has provided specific numbers for the first time, based on formal research. Additionally, a strategic plan has been prepared and presented to the Alachua County Public Safety Coordinating Council (PSCC), calling for targeted, intensive efforts to enhance system coordination across the multiple stakeholder agencies comprising our criminal justice and behavioral health systems.

The Department of Court Services prepared a new application on behalf of the County to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) for its Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Grant Program (FY2020 Competitive Grant Solicitation No. BJA-2020-17114). As identified in the County's application, the total Project budget is \$1,135,144 (BJA funding of \$729,639). Key strategic partners identified in this initiative include the Gainesville Police Department/The City of Gainesville, Alachua County, and Meridian Behavioral Health Care. The application would support a three-year extension of the Alachua County JMHCP, implementing not only the aforementioned strategic plan but also leveraging the addition of a Co-Responder model for the City of Gainesville in concert with the Gainesville Police Department.

The County Manager approved the submission of the grant application to BJA on May 8, 2020, and the application was submitted to BJA on May 18th, 2020. At this time, the grant application is pending before BJA while its grant review process is underway. Court Services' previous submissions to BJA for funding have resulted in relatively quick determination. The current request is different. Due primarily to the impact of COVID-19, the Bureau is now not expected to make final decisions on our grant application and other such applications in the same Grant Category until September 30 at the earliest, possibly into October. Efforts to discern more conclusively a date for grant decisions by BJA have not resulted in any enlightenment.

Because of the lack of a timely determination of funding for the new grant application, the County faces difficulty in our efforts to continue to make significant impact through the JMHCP program, which is continuing apace during the last two months of the planned grant period. The activities include such priorities as organizing and staffing a new subcommittee of the PSCC, focused among other tasks, on advancing a Central Receiving Center for our community, and also expanding the use of Motivational Interviewing (MI). This is an evidence-based tool to help staff engage in qualitatively more effective client interactions within multiple Alachua County public and nonprofit agencies

concerned with law enforcement, criminal justice and behavioral health.

Because significant Federal funds remain available for the JMHCP program, the uncertainty regarding the timing of decision making by BJA, and a work program that remains valuable to the local criminal justice and behavioral health systems, on July 24, 2020 a request for an extension for an additional two month period (October 1 through November 30) was submitted to BJA by the Chair of the County's BoCC. This letter of request is pending before the BJA project officer assigned to this grant.

Careful review has been made of the existing Federal funds available in the JMHCP grant. The funds included for the final three months of the grant period (July 1-September 30) totaled approximately \$52,000 on June 30, including approximately \$41,000 in Federal funds. Remaining major expenditures include the program manager's salary and related benefits and the costs to complete scheduled training sessions for Motivational Interviewing for stakeholder agencies. Sufficient funds remain to be spent from Federal and County matching funds under this grant to take the JMHCP Program through November 30, 2020.

Following a positive grant decision made by BJA, it is likely that a period of several weeks will occur before a grant award letter is distributed to the County. It will then be necessary to review a grant award decision and prepare for BoCC approval to determine to formally accept. During this interim, the final work of the JMHCP Program under the first grant will be concluded, including such activities as final report preparation, conclusion of additional Motivational Interviewing for local criminal justice agencies and staff support for the Oversight Subcommittee of the PSCC created to advance the concept of a Central Receiving Center for our community. The recommended extension of the grant period provides the best opportunity for conclusion of efforts under the first grant application and JMHCP continuity during a bridge period while a Federal decision is determined and communicated to the County.