



Legislation Text

File #: 22-340, **Version:** 2

Request to Accept the Police and Mental Health Collaborations for Diversion Programs Grant

PURPOSE: The purpose of this agenda item is request that the Town Council accept the Police and Mental Health Collaborations for Diversion Programs Grant to provide a social worker in the Carrboro Police Department.

DEPARTMENT: Police Department

CONTACT INFORMATION: Chief Chris Atack, 919-918-7407

COUNCIL DIRECTION:

Race/Equity Climate Comprehensive Plan Other

The Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department submitted this grant to funds efforts to divert those community members facing mental health and/or substance use disorder issues from the criminal justice system and connect them with support services. Demographics and income levels of individuals facing mental health and substance use issues tend to be disparate from the demographics and income levels of the greater community. Please see attached Racial Equity pocket questions for additional information.

INFORMATION: The Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department applied for a N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) grant in the Summer of 2022 to provide funds for a mental health diversion social worker position in each Orange County law enforcement agency. This position would work to divert people experiencing mental health or substance use issues from the criminal justice system and towards supportive care. The grant was awarded to the County in the Fall of 2022. The Carrboro Police Department wrote a letter of support for the grant and is slated to receive funding for a social worker position along with the other law enforcement agencies in the county - Chapel Hill Police Department, Hillsborough Police Department, and the Orange County Sheriff's Office - all of which have accepted, or are expected to accept, the grant.

In 2022, the Carrboro Police Department responded to over 200 calls for individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. It is expected that these numbers will increase over time as individuals in mental health crisis and substance use rates increased for years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and have continued that trend. Embedding social workers within law enforcement agencies has become a national model designed to assist in diverting people from the criminal justice system and connecting vulnerable populations to support services. This grant enhances the Carrboro Police Department's ability beyond the current Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), de-escalation, and other mental health training for officers and would give the department capacity and resources to directly connect individuals in crisis to supportive care and avoid potential criminal justice involvement.

The Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department will receive a total of \$1,193,750 for a period starting from February 2023 through September 30, 2025. The Town of Carrboro's total portion is \$152,518 to

cover salary, benefits, equipment, and supplies for a social worker for two years. The funding source for this program is through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding via the Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG). The Town will enter into a subcontract with the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department. The grant does not require the Town to commit to funding this position at the end of the grant term.

Separate from this grant, ARPA funds have been allocated for a mental health position within the police department. Initial data collection from the first few months from this grant will determine if this requested ARPA-funded position is needed to support or expand this diversion effort. Considerations will include - case load, potential expanded social worker hours, and on-call and emergency call back options.

The Community Safety Task Force will receive an update on the grant at the March 6, 2023 meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: Grant acceptance will have staff and fiscal impact commensurate with hiring and supervising an employee and providing a vehicle for transportation needs. No other significant costs are anticipated.

RECOMMENDATION: The Town Manager recommends that the Town Council adopt the Project Ordinance to accept the grant.