

Attachment B – Agency Budget Review Team Process

BACKGROUND

The Agency Budget Review Team (ABRT) consists of volunteer citizens and County staff members whose charge is to review funding requests from community non-profit agencies using a team approach to reach consensus on rating each program. Funding recommendations are not made by the ABRT, whose role is to review and rate the applications. Recommendations for funding amounts are made in the context of the overall County budget development process, while taking ABRT inputs into account and subject to the availability of funds.

At the June 21, 2023 Board meeting, staff presented an initial Albemarle County Human Services Needs Assessment and discussed opportunities to address the identified needs through an expanded ABRT process. This initial human services needs assessment presented data and contextual information from the areas of homelessness, housing, criminal justice, food insecurity, behavioral health and financial need. Emerging needs in the areas of family homelessness, adolescent mental health, community safety, and navigation for seniors were identified based on data and analysis of current community capacity and context. Staff recommended a long-term funding component be added to the annual ABRT process that would provide performance agreements or contracts for activities specifically intended to address the concerns or gaps in service for these four areas.

It is common for there to be annual modifications to this process that are more procedural, such as improving technical assistance to applicants. This item is before the Board because it contemplates a recommended change for the Board's feedback to update how funding recommendations are prioritized in the annual budget process.

DISCUSSION

In the two most recent budgets, FY 23 and FY 24, funding has been allocated to ABRT agencies in most situations as follows:

1. First, providing funding for existing agencies based on their program ratings, such as an incremental increase for agencies rated "exemplary," level funding for agencies rated "solid," and decreases and/or contingencies with conditions agencies must meet for those rated "fair" or below.
2. Funding new programs that received an "exemplary" rating and showed direct alignment with County Human Service goals at 50% of their funding request.

For FY 25, staff recommends revising this so that:

1. Funding is first prioritized for programs that most directly align with the four emerging needs areas identified in the Albemarle County Human Services Needs Assessment (family homelessness, adolescent mental health, community safety, and navigation for seniors). This potentially higher level of funding is intended to include performance agreements or contracts, that could be renewed for additional years based on measured impact, for activities specifically intended to address the concerns or gaps in service for these four areas.

- a. Additionally, staff would no longer consider the “50% of the funding request” historical precedent when making funding recommendations for new programs, new programs would be considered for full funding of their request, in the context of the total budget recommendation.
2. Funding for existing agencies and programs that do not as closely align with the four emerging needs areas would receiving funding recommendations based on their program ratings.

The intent of this change is allocating new funding towards programs that will most likely drive outcomes and impacts of the Board’s FY 24 –28 Strategic Plan Objective 1.2: *Enhance and develop human services initiatives to assist community in accessing existing resources.*

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Board approve the updated Agency Budget Review Team (ABRT) Process framework to guide FY 25 funding recommendations or provide feedback on how to best prioritize funding in this area.