

MEMORANDUM

May 4, 2021

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Vivian Yao, Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: FY22 Operating Budget: Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) -
Expiration of Kresge Opportunity Ecosystems Grant

PURPOSE: Review and make recommendations on operating budget item

Those expected to attend this worksession:

- Raymond Crowel, Director, DHHS
- JoAnne Barnes, Chief, Children, Youth and Family Services, DHHS
- Jason Rundell, Budget Team Leader, DHHS
- Deborah Lambert, Office of Management and Budget

The Executive is recommending a reduction of \$750,000 to the Admin-Children, Youth & Families program in FY22 due to the expiration of the Kresge Opportunity Ecosystem grant. The funding has been used to support a two-generation approach to poverty alleviation in the Upcounty and East County regions. The effort has focused on systems-work to promote collaboration across public and private sectors, integrate service delivery, community engagement and economic development, and advance social and economic mobility for children, youth and families. This is the last year of the grant, which expires in March 2022.

Work Completed

Executive staff has provided the following highlights of work completed through the grant:

- Building community awareness through extensive community outreach and supplementary resources, resulting in increased referrals from partners and schools.
- Embedding a new phase system which tracks clients through their progression (measures plight of client at intake and how they grow as their case progresses; involves initial skills assessment and a self-sufficiency evaluation, which measures factors such as health needs

and literacy). On-going case management is then provided for at least one year to coordinate services and track progression for child and parent.

- Training Opportunity Coaches in 2Gen, community resources and motivational interviewing to support each client's goals.
- Providing funds to support client needs such as emergency financial assistance, childcare or educational enrollment.
- Improving Governance structure by adding more subject matter experts and senior managers. Both sites also expanded partner and community member participation within programmatic governing sub-committees.
- Standardizing goals across both Opportunity Ecosystem sites (challenge given individual measures are determined by funding). Several measures are being re-evaluated because of the pandemic, presenting new opportunities to harmonize across sites.
- Both sites working together on groups to support parents in Thriving Germantown and East County with activities for the entire family to adhere to post-pandemic guidelines. Surveys were distributed to both programs and feedback was used to develop series.
- Creation of parent and youth liaisons for East County committees to increase resident involvement. Each liaison serves as an expert in their community and works with engaging residents to participate in community meetings and events.
- Since March 2020 events have taken place virtually and community participation has lessened due to lack of internet access and limited space for virtual events. Regardless, activities conducted include: Family Scavenger Hunt, Paint Night, Remix Rage (anger/stress management), and Trivia Night.
- The Health and Wellness committee will be launching a program aimed at increasing access to seniors who are currently not connected with online programs and resources. In addition, committee members are creating an outreach strategy to increase awareness for COVID and post-pandemic relief efforts for East County residents.

The following tables report service numbers for East County and Germantown communities:

<i>East County Opportunity Zone</i>	<i>Thriving Germantown (Aug. 2020 report)</i>
251 households have received ongoing Care Coordinator ¹ or Opportunity Coach ² services (66 households in FY21).	75 individuals received case management services
350 (one-time) pandemic referrals – 467 individuals served, including food, rental, and utility assistance and child-care connection.	1,192 total encounters through April 2020
Race (self-report): 64% African American, 7% White, 4% Asian, 4% Multiple race, 1% Other Ethnicity (self-report): 73% Non-Hispanic, 26% Hispanic, 1% Other	Initiated 680 pathways in FY20. Of those, 89% or 608 were completed and 97% or 659 were closed with partial success

Addressing Barriers to Access

The Department reports that “the pandemic shifted the work of the governance committee toward pandemic relief efforts; however in the past year, the committee also focused on collaborating with other agencies and further within the department to improve customer experience; developing universal goals aimed at improving equity across county efforts; enhancing processes to gain feedback from customers; and narrowing the scope of current Opportunity Ecosystem measures and objectives.”

In addition, the Department described challenges that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic. Existing processes for service-delivery across the Opportunity Ecosystem could no longer support emergent needs and had to be rapidly revised and re-established. To adapt to the changing circumstances, staff had to implement new ways to continue providing services to current clients and support increased needs from the larger community. The shift to remote work disrupted home visits and walk-in services. The shift to electronic applications for social services programs increased the convenience for residents with internet access but prevented access to services for residents who lack internet access or computer literacy. Moreover, the disparate impact of COVID-19 on the Thriving Germantown and East County community caused a great apprehension and fear amongst residents. The Department anticipates this fear will continue as the pandemic persists, resulting in fewer in-person and walk-in appointments when offices reopen.

The Department highlighted the following strategies to address these obstacles:

- **Partnership with Consolidated Service HUBs:** The East County Coordination/ Opportunity Coach team partnered with the East County Hub at Kingdom Fellowship Church and Rainbow Community Center to serve as a referral site for residents to get connected with resources. Project staff participate in the food distribution events and connect with residents in need one-on-one. The UpCounty Consolidation at Blackrock

¹ Average of 3 referrals to additional eligible services per client by Care Coordinator

² Average of 4 referrals to additional eligible services per client by Opportunity Coaches

Hub required further calibration including rearranging food storage configurations for better efficiency and less damage, limiting volunteer access, offering resources in various languages, including foods that were culturally appropriate, and identifying partners in the business community to provide services such as transportation.

- **Setting Universal Equity Goals:** The Department is continuing its efforts to train staff in understanding and operationalizing Equity principles at work (Office of Community Affairs staff hosted brown bag lunch series conversations around Race at HHS buildings, and developed and piloted an Implicit Bias curriculum, which was made available to HHS staff). The governance committee began the task of re-examining theory of impact to identify root causes by analyzing current barriers and enablers. The process of identifying root causes requires on-going dialogue and is a continued focus for the governance committee.
- **Mapping Social Economic Mobility (SEM) resources:** The Opportunity Ecosystem grant provided a unique opportunity to identify programs that are shared across DHHS and community partners. With the support of the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and Jeannie Chaffin, LLC., the governance committee is leveraging this opportunity to create a map which will function as a visual aid to help guide future decision-making and project development. The map is expected to delineate customer journey, resources, and measure alignment across various 2Gen programs in Montgomery County. It will be used to help identify potential barriers to customer access and opportunities to improve service delivery and customer satisfaction by using a unified Theory of Impact, goals and measures for social and economic mobility and race equity.
- **Journey mapping:** To use customer experience to evaluate current programs, the governance committee is engaged in on-going customer mapping discussions. The current customer map links the Opportunity Ecosystem sites to other community-based programs such as TESS and Linkages to Learning. The Department plans to enhance the customer mapping chart, which will require additional intentional planning and design. The governance committee is currently creating a design team which will undertake this work in Quarter 4 through early next year.

Sustainability

The Department was given a no-cost extension of the Kresge grant to continue the work of the Opportunity Ecosystem until March 2022. CYF reports that it is working on strategies to sustain the work until the end of FY21, and the governance committee on sustaining resources that have been devoted to the ecosystem longer-term. The focus is to sustain the positive changes made in these two communities by sharing information across Germantown and East County networks. The governance committee, with the support of the partner networks, wants to ensure that our approach in these communities promotes racial and service equity and ways to continue networks between government, nonprofits, and families in the community; in order to improve access to services and improved outcomes that can last long term.

Council staff recommendation: Before recommending approval of the reduction, the Committee may want to hear more details from Executive staff about the plans for continuing staffing/functions of opportunity coaches and care coordinators, as well as governance and data infrastructure and client support resources for the balance of FY22, after the grant expires and beyond. In any case, the Committee may want to request a mid-year update on transition plans.