



**LGBTQ QUALITY OF LIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATION 20190423-1**

Date: April 23, 2019

Subject: Budget Recommendation

**Recommendation**

The LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission adopts the attached recommended items for the City Manager's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

**Description of Recommendation to Council**

See Attached

**Rationale:**

See Attached

**Vote**

The commission adopted the recommendation 12-0

Attest: Neal Falgoust, Staff Liaison



## **BUDGET RECOMMENDATION – PRIORITY 1**

### *Increasing Mental Health Resources for LGBTQIA+ Population*

**Describe the issue facing your community or stakeholder group. In your role as Commissioner, what have you heard from your community about the issue?**

In a variety of listening sessions and other discussions hosted by the LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission as early as January 2018 and continuing through this budget cycle, community members have noted consistently that the City of Austin invests \$0 in LGBTQIA+ focused mental health services.

**What does the data tell us about the issue? Is there data on who is most impacted by the issue?**

In 2015, the Austin/Travis County Community Advancement Network reported that 19% of Travis County adults (over 165,00 people) reported poor mental health (five or more days of the last 30 with depression, stress anxiety or other issues).

The Community Health Improvement Plan recognizes the lack of mental health providers and resources in the community and has identified mental health as a key priority for Travis County. This Plan recognizes the need for providers who make patients from marginalized communities, including the LGBTQIA+ community, feel safe.

The average cost of a single psychotherapy session in Austin ranges from \$90-\$150 per session.

A local LGBTQIA+ affirming counseling organization in Austin currently has a waitlist of almost 100 people due to the demand for these services. A local LGBTQIA+ youth organization serving ages 12-23 and another organization serving the transgender and gender non-conforming community each have a 30-person waiting list.

According to polling conducted by Gallup Williams Institute, the greater Austin area has the third largest LGBTQIA+ population per capita in the USA.

QWELL Community Foundation's recent "LGBTQ+ Wellbeing Survey of Greater Austin," conducted in collaboration with Dr. Phillip Schnarrs, Associate Professor of Community-Based Participatory Research at Dell Medical School, collected data on more than 2,200 local adult LGBTQIA+ respondents.

Of the 2,200+ respondents, 400 were ages 18-25. In the preliminary findings, nearly a third of these respondents felt anxious every day during the past week, and just under half reported feeling depressed the majority of the days of the week. 26% of the respondents reported experiencing suicidal thoughts in the week preceding the survey.



Suicide is the second most common cause of death among 18 – 25-year-olds in the United States and research has consistently shown higher rates of suicidal ideation, self-harm, and suicide attempts among LGBTQIA+ youth compared to non-LGBTQIA+ peers.

The LGBTQIA+ community's risk of suicide is 6-8x the general population, with transgender people, LGBTQIA+ seniors, and people of color at the highest risk.

QWELL's survey also found that only 17% of Austin respondents feel like valued members of the community. Studies show that lack of community connections is a direct cause of depression and other mental health issues.

**What is your recommendation for addressing this issue? Recommendations should focus on increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and equity.**

City Council to fund, at \$100,000 annually, to support the stability and growth of organizations and businesses with:

- existing services that provide LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health counseling in Austin;
- programs to increase the number of LGBTQIA+ competent mental health care providers in Austin; and
- projects that would expand access to LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health therapy.

**Strategic Outcome Area:**

Health and Environment

**Within the HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT outcome, which indicator does your recommendation address?**

Accessibility to quality health care services (physical and mental)



## **BUDGET RECOMMENDATION – PRIORITY 2**

### *Mental Health Response Team*

**Describe the issue facing your community or stakeholder group. In your role as Commissioner, what have you heard from your community about the issue?**

The LGBTQ Quality of Life Commissions held a Budget Forum on March 6th, 2019 to hear feedback from the community on budget recommendations to the City, and they resoundingly expressed their concern for budgeted monies for mental health resources in the LGBTQIA+ community. The community felt that skillfully trained responders and resources should work in coordination with law enforcement agencies and should replace a “police first” response to mental health emergencies. The community expressed that these commitments are needed to reduce the use of force incidents in our community and improve the fair administration of justice. We were informed of a successful pilot in Dallas that pairs counselors with officers and addresses 911 call centers ability to manage responses to mental health emergencies.

As a Commission, we know from our work with various stakeholders that many in our community experience barriers to mental health resources and that training in regards to police interaction with the LGBTQIA+ community are inadequate. APD crisis intervention training meets state requirements, but not all of the best practice elements are included in their certified training. These disparities intersect with mental health issues and create in our community particularly, an exasperated and increased danger.

Moreover, the community and various stakeholders have repeatedly demanded actions to address the use of force cases that have ended tragically. Some of the highest profile cases over the past two decades include Sophia King (2002), David Joseph (2016) and Morgan Rankings (2017). We have heard a call for the expansion of the definition of public safety, and thereby its prioritized funding.

**What does the data tell us about the issue? Is there data on who is most impacted by the issue?**

According to a CBS article posted in September of 2018, City auditors say since 2008, the Austin Police Department has seen a 95 percent increase in mental health calls.

APD crisis intervention training meets state requirements, but not all of the best practice elements are included in their certified training. APD does not always dispatch certified officers to lead the response to mental health-related calls, and those officers are not always available when needed. In addition, officers may not have all relevant mental-health information when responding to these calls for service. Currently, APD does not track and review crisis intervention incidents to improve outcomes and statistics on mental-health related calls are challenging to track.



QWELL Community Foundation's recent "LGBTQ+ Wellbeing Survey of Greater Austin," conducted in collaboration with Dr. Phillip Schnarrs, Associate Professor of Community-Based Participatory Research at Dell Medical School, collected data on more than 400 SGM-TY (18 – 25-year-olds) who indicated, on average, that their mental health was not good  $x = 16.27$  ( $SD = 10.25$ ) days during the past month. Further, nearly a third (32.7%) felt anxious every day during the past week, and just under half (48.7%) reported feeling depressed the majority of the days of the week. 26% of the more than 2,200 local adult LGBTQIA+ respondents reported experiencing suicidal thoughts in the week preceding the survey. Suicide is the second most common cause of death among 18 – 25-year-olds in the United States and research has consistently shown higher rates of suicidal ideation, self-harm, and suicide attempts among sexual and gender minority youth compared to heterosexual peers. The LGBTQIA+ community's risk of suicide is 6-8x the general population, with transgender people, LGBTQIA+ elders, and people of color are at the highest risk.

**What is your recommendation for addressing this issue? Recommendations should focus on increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and equity.**

The LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission recommends that budget funds be allocated for 2020 in the following ways: In a commitment to expanding the definition of public safety to include but not remain limited to the adequate deployment of mental health responders and those trained to handle mental health emergencies to improve crisis response and reduce the use of force. Specifically, we ask for the reduction of the use of force synergistically and strategically by increasing advanced training for certification as mental health officers in APD, mandatory officer training on serving the LGBTQIA+ community, collaboration with expert mental health community providers and related current city service providers. We further request funds be allocated to adequately collect and report found data around such efforts to address reducing the use of force and building community trust around issues of safety.

The Commission would advise Council to research and implement a mental health response team modeled after the one in Dallas, collaborating with local LGBTQIA+ community stakeholders. The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI), Dallas FireRescue Department (DFR), Dallas Police Department (DPD), and Parkland Health & Hospital System announced the launch of the Rapid Integrated Group Healthcare Team (RIGHT Care) pilot program, which will provide a comprehensive emergency response to calls involving mental health emergencies. The first-of-its-kind program in Texas it is an innovative partnership involving specially-trained and equipped paramedics, police officers, and mental health professionals who will respond as a single coordinated team to safely and effectively manage patients experiencing mental health emergencies.

#### **Strategic Outcome Area**

Safety



**Within the SAFETY outcome, which indicator does your recommendation address?**

Timeliness and quality of emergency response



## **BUDGET RECOMMENDATION – PRIORITY 3**

### *Creating LGBTQIA+ Health Equity*

**Describe the issue facing your community or stakeholder group. In your role as Commissioner, what have you heard from your community about the issue?**

In a variety of listening sessions and other discussions hosted by the LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission as early as January 2018 and continuing through this budget cycle, community members have noted consistently that there is no dedicated position within Austin Public Health's Health Equity Unit to specifically address growing health disparities and inequities within Austin's LGBTQIA+ population.

**What does the data tell us about the issue? Is there data on who is most impacted by the issue?**

According to polling conducted by Gallup Williams Institute, the greater Austin area has the third largest LGBTQIA+ population per capita in the USA.

According to the Healthy People 2020 initiative, LGBTQ health requires specific attention from health care and public health professionals to address a number of disparities, including:

- LGBTQ youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide;
- LGBTQ youth are more likely to be homeless;
- Lesbians are less likely to get preventive services for cancer;
- Gay men are at higher risk of HIV and other STDs, especially among communities of color;
- Lesbians and bisexual females are more likely to be overweight or obese;
- Transgender individuals have a high prevalence of HIV/STDs, victimization, mental health issues, and suicide and are less likely to have health insurance;
- Aging LGBTQ individuals face additional barriers to health because of isolation and a lack of social services and culturally competent providers; and
- LGBTQ populations have the highest rates of tobacco, alcohol and other drug use.

On May 7, 2015, Austin City Council passed Resolution 20150507-027 focusing on health and economic equity, and APH was assigned the lead role related to the first part of the resolution focusing on health equity. As a part of this process, APH convened a primary stakeholder group, and through this group, a comprehensive report was developed that specifically referenced recommendations to address ongoing intersectional issues of health disparities between QTPOC communities Austin. The report recommended a variety of short-term goals to address health disparities affecting communities of color in Austin, including LGBTQIA+ health. The report addressed concerns that LGBTQIA+ health equity is increasingly an intersectional issue within communities of color who are likely to struggle with comorbidities, including but not limited to HIV/AIDS and chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease



and diabetes. Additionally, according to this report, QTPOC experience a lack of access that is compounded by multiple forms of discrimination and therefore experience additional barriers in access, quality, and relevance of care.

**What is your recommendation for addressing this issue? Recommendations should focus on increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and equity.**

City Council to fund an additional Program Coordinator position within the Health Equity Unit at Austin Public Health to address previously outlined health inequities and disparities within Austin's LGBTQIA+ population.

**Strategic Outcome Area**

Health and Environment

**Within the HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT outcome, which indicator does your recommendation address?**

Accessibility to quality health care services (physical and mental)





## **BUDGET RECOMMENDATION – PRIORITY 4**

### *QTPOC Art Funding*

**Describe the issue facing your community or stakeholder group. In your role as Commissioner, what have you heard from your community about the issue?**

Queer/Trans People of Color who live in Austin face compounded challenges because of their intersectional identities of race, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. Often, QTPOC Austin residents must create their own systems of support and celebration and often they experience a lack of artistic visibility due to the historical landscape of the city.

**What does the data tell us about the issue? Is there data on who is most impacted by the issue?**

The Gallup/Williams Institute estimates the Greater Austin LGBTQIA+ population to be at 5.3%, slightly more than half are QTPOC. The LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission held an open community forum at City Hall, and several community members were concerned with the lack of artistic visibility and minimum access to cultural funding for Queer/Trans People of Color.

**What is your recommendation for addressing this issue? Recommendations should focus on increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and equity.**

The City of Austin should act to ensure the visibility of QTPOC artists and their work, and they should act to ensure education and preservation of QTPOC's historical contributions and significance to Austin and the nation. The LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission recommends City Council to: fund, at 25,000, a coalition of art organizations that work specifically with QTPOC to assist the City of Austin in exploring LGBTQIA+ People of Color identities through art and culture as well as engage with the community in a meaningful way through historical disparity and education. Fund the grant through the Equity office through their mini-grant program to minimize overhead and application process.

**Strategic Outcome Area**

**Culture and Lifelong Learning**



**Within the CULTURE & LIFELONG LEARNING outcome, which indicator does your recommendation address?**

- Quality of cultural venues, events, programs, and resources
- Vibrancy of creative industry
- Appreciation, respect, and welcoming of all people and cultures
- Honoring and preservation of historic and ethnic heritage
- Quality of lifelong learning opportunities



## **BUDGET RECOMMENDATION – PRIORITY 5**

### *Celebrating Austin's Black LGBTQIA+ Community*

**Describe the issue facing your community or stakeholder group. In your role as Commissioner, what have you heard from your community about the issue?**

Queer/Trans People of Color who live in Austin face compounded challenges because of their intersectional identities of race, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. Often, QTPOC Austin residents must create their own systems of support and celebration because they can not trust historical discriminatory systems to provide the support and celebration they deserve. Austin does have a thriving QTPOC art community that includes artists, leaders, and luminaries creating work in written, visual, performing arts, wellness, and healing, despite barriers.

**What does the data tell us about the issue? Is there data on who is most impacted by the issue?**

The Gallup/Williams Institute estimates the Greater Austin LGBTQIA+ population to be at 5.3%, slightly more than half are QTPOC including an 8.1% Black population. The Black population is the only ethnic group in Austin that is shrinking. Last year, the Equity and Intersectionality working group held a public community forum, and most LGBTQIA African Americans felt that the City of Austin lacked cultural visibility for them and the community. A group of local Black LGBTQIA+ residents are organizing to bring *The Tenth*, the magazine of Black queer culture, to our city in the Fiscal Year 2019-20 to create a special issue celebrating Austin's Black LGBTQIA+ artists, activists, leaders, and luminaries before a local and national audience to increase visibility and community.

**What is your recommendation for addressing this issue? Recommendations should focus on increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and equity.**

The City of Austin should take action to celebrate Austin's QTPOC community locally and nationally as part of the City's ongoing efforts to market Austin as a premier and inclusive business and leisure destination. The LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission recommends City Council direct VISIT AUSTIN to allocate funds to underwrite the production and free distribution of a special Austin issue of *THE TENTH*, the national magazine for Black and QTPOC culture, as a promotional piece about QTPOC life and cultural opportunities in Austin, and distribute the magazine for free to any QTPOC who requests a copy. This will allow stories and images of Austin's QTPOC culture to reach a broader national audience, encouraging them to visit our city for vacations or for community events like Austin Black Pride.



**Strategic Outcome Area**

**Culture and Lifelong Learning**

**Within the CULTURE & LIFELONG LEARNING outcome, which indicator does your recommendation address?**

- Quality of cultural venues, events, programs, and resources
- Vibrancy of creative industry
- Appreciation, respect, and welcoming of all people and cultures
- Honoring and preservation of historic and ethnic heritage
- Quality of lifelong learning opportunities