

AAQoL Budget Recommendation #1 – Mental Health Education, Outreach, and Service Provision

Recommendation Description

This recommendation would create a mental health outreach, education, and service campaign targeted to the Asian Pacific Islander (API) community in the City of Austin. The campaign would focus on (1) reducing the stigma of mental health issues within the API community, (2) identifying mental health issues, (3) collecting data about mental health issues within the API community and the need for mental health services, and (4) connecting people to mental health support systems.

This budget recommendation seeks to expand the capacity of existing Austin Public Health (APH) outreach/education contracts to target the API community. APH staff has indicated that a mental health outreach and education campaign could be accomplished within existing funds.

This budget recommendation also seeks to expand the capacity of existing APH contracts to provide services such as direct mental health services to the API community and telehealth services in Asian languages. The AAQoL Advisory Commission is requesting \$200,000 to fund the increased capacity.

City Department

Austin Public Health (APH)

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

High levels of mental distress and serious mental illness is prevalent in Austin's API community. However, API persons experiencing these conditions are less likely to seek treatment due to social stigma, lack of awareness, and language barriers.

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

Data from the City's Asian American Quality of Life Initiative (Quantitative Study) showed higher levels of mental distress and serious mental illness across all of Austin's largest Asian American ethnic groups when compared to the general U.S. population. In addition, these groups also exhibited low utilization levels of psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals (counselors, marriage therapists, social workers).

Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities

Strategic Outcome 1: Health & Environment

- Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental

AAQoL Budget Recommendation #2 – Transportation to City Events Pilot

Recommendation Description

This recommendation would create a pilot program to provide transportation of socially-isolated residents to Asian American Resource Center (AARC) events as well as other city events. The pilot program would pick up individuals and groups from areas of the city with high concentrations of Asian Americans. The pilot would utilize existing City resources, where feasible. The pilot program would provide transportation to up to 10 AARC/City events in FY 2020 that are open to the public and would also test pick up alternative pick-up/drop-off locations consisting of homes and apartment complexes in different parts of the city.

The proposed pilot seeks to expand the capacity of transportation services to the AARC, which is currently only provided through the Senior Meals Program. It is intended that three to four of the pilot program events be Senior Meals Program events so that AARC can test different pick-up/drop-off sites to reach people that don't normally participate in the program and to gather data to improve service delivery. The pilot will also include at least one cross-cultural event with PARD's Senior Transportation Program.

The pilot would use the current AARC 11-passenger van as well as PARD Transportation vehicles, which are available for use on evenings and weekends. For events that take place during the week, rentals vehicles are available from the Facilities Department at a cost of ~\$51/day. Because PARD Transportation staff and the AARC driver are at capacity, the pilot would need temporary drivers at a cost of ~\$15/hour. AARC staff have stated that they can handle the coordination effort for events at the AARC. These tasks including advertising that transportation services are available, intake of requests, scheduling drivers, and data gathering. PARD Transportation has been asked to coordinate two to three city events held at other locations.

Discussions with PARD Transportation and AARC staff indicated that a pilot program of 10 events could be accomplished at a cost of ~\$3,500. The cost includes the temporary drivers, fuel, Facilities Department vehicle rentals, and a minimal amount of maintenance.

City Department

PARD/AARC

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 AAQoL Advisory Commission has received numerous comments from our two budget community engagement events regarding the difficulty of getting to and from AARC/City events from certain parts of town. Attending cultural events helps reduce the feeling of social isolation, especially with seniors.

Additionally, information gathered from our Quality of Life studies and community engagement events have shown that health and economic development are priorities for our community. Providing

transportation to City events, such as health and job fairs, would help address these high-priority, community-identified issues.

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

Although our community has indicated the need for transportation to events, there is currently no data on the level of need and where those needs are concentrated. Creating a transportation pilot program targeting seniors and others in areas of the City with high concentrations of Asian Americans would provide data on community needs, interest, and locations required to provide justification for a future, permanent transportation program. AARC staff has also indicated that data is also needed regarding transportation for the Senior Meals program.

Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities

Strategic Outcome 1: Mobility

- Accessibility to and equity of multi-modal transportation choices

Strategic Outcome 2: Culture & Lifelong Learning

- Vibrancy and sustainability of creative industry ecosystem

AAQoL Budget Recommendation #3 - Install room divider for AARC Ballroom

Recommendation Description

This recommendation would fund the installation of a room divider for the Asian American Resource Center (AARC) Ballroom based on the original Phase 1 Master Plan to accommodate increased demand for mid-sized meeting space.

The divider would provide more flexibility in meeting the needs of the community. It would provide different space options for different activities. Additional staff was hired in 2019, including a full-time permanent Marketing Rep, putting AARC in a better position to identify new groups and offer more options for event collaboration and other programs.

The cost to purchase and install the divider is estimated to be \$200,000.

City Department

Austin Parks & Recreation Department (PARC)

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

There is a high demand for meeting and activity spaces at the Asian American Resource Center (AARC). The facility currently has a small conference room and small classrooms, as well as a large ballroom.

Although there is a Master Plan process underway to expand the Center, it will not be implemented for five to 15 years. In order to accommodate more programs, the proposed solution is to use one-time funding to install a divider in the ballroom to increase the availability of medium-sized meeting/program space. A divider that also preserves the ability to use the entire ballroom is ideal.

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

We know from 2017 data that there continues to be a high demand for additional programming at AARC but extending the hours of operation is no longer feasible. In 2017, AARC was able to use one-time funding to extend operating hours to accommodate more programs. As a result, the number of programs and participants increased. In 2018, there was a significant drop in revenue from programs and participants.

Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities

Strategic Outcome 1: CULTURE & LIFELONG LEARNING

- Quality of cultural venues, events, programs, and resources
- Quality of lifelong learning opportunities

Strategic Outcome 2: GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS FOR ALL

- Condition of City facilities and technology
- Public Engagement and Participation
- Equity of City Programs and Resource Allocation

Strategic Outcome 3: HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

- Accessibility to quality health care services
- Accessibility to quality parks, trails, and recreational opportunities

AAQoL Budget Recommendation #4 - Create an Immigrant Affairs Office with at least one full-time staff person

Recommendation Description

We recommend that the City of Austin create an Immigrant Affairs office with at least one full-time staff member. This office would act as a central location for information about city services and programs that are available to immigrants. It would also be tasked with outreach to the various immigrant communities to build trust and collect feedback about the City and how its programs and departments are serving the immigrant community. This effort would increase efficiency by creating a “one stop shop” for community members and for departments that have questions/concerns about how their services and programs are being accessed by immigrants in Austin and help avoid any duplication of services. It also would make City services and programs more effective by ensuring that immigrant

community members are aware of those services and programs and create a direct line for feedback regarding their experiences with said services. The office would increase equity by ensuring that the voice of a vulnerable population is elevated, and it would also bring the City of Austin to parity with the other Texas major cities, which are already serving their immigrant communities through an established Immigrant Affairs office.

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

We have heard from the community, including in our community budget forums, that immigrant and refugee communities are underrepresented in policy and budget discussions. Additionally, immigrant service providers at the budget forums described having no knowledge of the various City services, grants, and programs available to the immigrant community in Austin. The decentralized nature of these programs within the City government is creating a barrier to access for immigrant community members.

We need an office with a city staff person who can identify how the immigrant communities are affected by city policies, how well they are served by city services, and gaps in service. We also need a person who can direct outreach efforts to the immigrant communities. A person in such a position can provide some oversight of city services and outreach to immigrants, help ensure there isn't duplication, and coordinate the currently disjointed effort to reach immigrants. A dedicated staff person can also ensure that as federal and state immigration policies change, such as the upcoming change on public charge rules and the implementation of SB4, City departments are aware and can tailor their policies accordingly.

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

There are over 70 languages spoken in Austin. The City has identified 7 priority languages. Immigrants account for approximately 19% of the city's population.

In 2018, the City Council directed the City Manager to review Immigrant Affairs Offices in other cities in Texas and determine how the City of Austin can most effectively do the same.

Alignment with Council Priorities

Strategic Outcome 1: Government that Works for All

- Condition of City Facilities and Technology
- Satisfaction with City Services
- Public Engagement and Participation
- Equity of City Programs and Resource Allocation

Strategic Outcome 2: Safety

- Fair Administration of Justice

Strategic Outcome 3: Health

- Accessibility to quality health care services
- Accessibility to quality parks, trails, and rec opportunities
- Food security and nutrition

Strategic Outcome 4: Culture and Lifelong Learning

- Quality of cultural venues, events, programs, and resources
- Appreciation, respect and welcoming of all people and cultures
- Honoring and preservation of historical and ethnic heritage

Strategic Outcome 5: Mobility

- Accessibility to transportation choices

Strategic Outcome 6: Economic Opportunity & Affordability

- Housing availability and affordability
- Ability to improve your home

AAQoL Budget Recommendation #5 – Budget Object Codes for Translation and Interpretation Services for All City Departments

Recommendation Description

The AAQoL Advisory Commission recommends that all City Departments budget a certain amount in the new Translation and Interpretation object codes that would force Departments to make an assessment of their need for translation and interpretation services. That assessment will be evaluated as those object codes are used to record expenses during the year, improving accuracy in future years. If no budget is included in these object codes, Department staff may be unaware that they exist and tracking of those expenses would be compromised.

In recent years, the City has focused on increased awareness of the importance of language access to meet community needs. The Language Access Coordinator was created. The City website is language accessible. Vendors have been identified to translate documents and the City is working on identifying certified language interpreters for Department use. There are new budget codes for Translation and Interpretation services. The recommendation is for Departments to use these new codes to plan for translation and interpretation services.

This recommendation can be accomplished within existing funds.

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

Providing funding and support for language access is one of the 14 recommendations from the AAQoL Initiative (study) Executive Summary. These same feelings were communicated to our commission during our community engagement events.

Providing translation and interpretation services is necessary for individuals who speak English “less than very well” to access city services and participate in city engagement activities. Providing language access will help to increase their trust in government as well as help the city build meaningful relationships with all members of the community.

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

There are over 70 languages spoken in Austin. The City has identified 7 priority languages. Immigrants account for approximately 19% of the city’s population. According to the 2017 Travis County American Community Survey (ACS), 36% of the Hispanic population and 36% of the Asian population speak English “less than very well”.

The City Equity Office developed an Equity Assessment Tool that has been piloted in a few Departments. This tool can provide more specific data that can be measured over time.

City Department

Multiple

Alignment with Council Priorities

Strategic Outcome 1: SAFETY

- Fair administration of justice
- Timeliness and quality of Emergency Response
- Public compliance with laws and regulations

Strategic Outcome 2: GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS FOR ALL

- Satisfaction with City Services
- Public Engagement and Participation
- Equity of City Programs and Resource Allocation

Strategic Outcome 3: MOBILITY

- Accessibility to transportation choices

Strategic Outcome 4: HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

- Accessibility to quality health care services
- Accessibility to quality parks, trails, and rec opportunities

- Climate change and community resilience