



Arapahoe County

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Board Summary Report

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Agenda Date: 6/17/2025

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Michelle Halstead, Director, Commissioners' Office

Prepared By:

Daniela Villarreal, Management Analyst II, Commissioners' Office

Presenter: Daniela Villarreal, Management Analyst II, Commissioners' Office; Michelle Halstead, Director, Commissioners' Office; Kathy Smith, Director, Community Resources

Subject:

11:15 AM *Aid to Agencies Program Review

Purpose and Request:

The purpose of this study session is to provide an overview of the Aid to Agencies program, propose programmatic improvements, and seek direction from the Board of County Commissioners.

Background and Discussion:

Established in 2008, the Aid to Agencies program was developed by the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners to provide financial support to nonprofit organizations addressing critical service gaps throughout the County. Funded by general fund dollars, the program has awarded over \$27 million to 51 unique organizations since its inception.

The Aid to Agencies program has evolved over time, most recently operating with a \$2,079,500 program budget through a two-tiered funding approach:

1. Safety Net Funding: A designated funding pool of \$1,550,063 for core service providers that does not require an application process.
2. Competitive Grants: A competitive process for non-profit organizations totaling \$528,897, based on prioritized funding categories, with grant awards capped at \$100,000.

In 2024, the County's budget constraints led to a temporary pause of the competitive grant program and a significant reduction in safety net funding. With the passage of ballot measure 1A, the County reinstated 100% of allocated safety net funding and seized the opportunity to reimagine the future of the Aid to Agencies program for the 2026 budget year.

Data-Informed Analysis/Identified Community Needs

The County's strategic plan - *Arapahoe Forward* - identifies the need for alignment of resources to programmatic outcomes, leveraging data and community input to inform decision-making. Subject matter experts from the county's Community Resources, Human Services, and the Commissioner's Office departments reviewed existing data and public engagement provided during the 2024 Community Health Assessment, 2023 Community Needs Assessment, 2024 American Rescue Plan Act Annual Report, 2025 Point in Time data, 2019 Arapahoe County Housing Needs Assessment, and annual reports from current funding recipients of Aid to Agencies programs to propose a new framework for Board consideration.

The proposed Aid to Agencies framework reflects a more strategic, equitable, and data-informed approach to funding community nonprofits that deliver exceptional results for our residents. The framework seeks to build upon the program's legacy by deploying County resources more strategically and equitably. By aligning funding decisions with community needs and data-driven insights, the County aims to ensure meaningful mobility outcomes for residents while maximizing the impact of available funding.

Proposed Framework

A central component of the proposed changes includes the consolidation of the previous nine funding categories into four priority areas, each aligned with the County's Strategic Plan and informed by current data. Funding would be allocated based on these prioritized categories:

- Housing and Homeless Services
- Food Assistance
- Mental and Behavioral Health/Substance Use
- Transportation

To further advance equity and impact, the framework introduces targeted service populations including individuals with a disability(s), older adults, youth, minorities, and justice-involved. These are vulnerable groups identified through County-level data as having the greatest need. Organizations serving these populations will receive additional points during the application review process to ensure funding is directed where it can be most effective.

A key revision to the framework also involves a more deliberate definition and application of Safety Net

Organizations. The proposed definition characterizes safety net organizations as nonprofit entities that:

- Sole provider of essential service
- Do not duplicate County programs
- High-need and high-impact
- Must demonstrate service uniqueness and demand

Based on this definition, two organizations would currently qualify:

- Three Birds Alliance (formerly Gateway Domestic Violence Services)
- Aurora Mental Health Center - Detox Services

These organizations would receive a combined \$580,000 in base funding, with the option to submit a modified application to reassess service needs and potentially request additional support.

Beyond safety net funding, the revised model establishes funding allocations by category, leveraging the existing Aid to Agencies budget as a baseline. The framework also proposes two options for distributing financial resources:

- Option A - Equal Distribution: Each of the four funding categories would receive 25% of the remaining available budget after safety net allocations.
- Option B - Data-Informed Distribution: After safety net allocations, funding percentages for each category would be based on historical data from the most recent full Aid to Agencies grant cycle and ARPA investments.

Staff is recommending Option B, which allows for strategic investments in areas that have demonstrated measurable community impact, aligning resources with known priorities and successful outcomes. Applications would be scored within each category based on established criteria, that elevates applications that demonstrate the highest community impact and alignment with targeted populations.

These recommendations are based on the current Aid to Agencies program budget of \$2,079,500. Staff also is seeking direction whether to submit budget packages in the amounts of \$500,000 to \$1 million for increased program funding for consideration in the 2026 budget process. Additional financial resources would support expanded services in high-need areas and reflect the growing demand from prior application cycles.

The revised framework will have minimal impact on the 2026 grant cycle timeline. Staff propose maintaining a schedule consistent with prior years:

- July/August: Announce Aid to Agencies process and conduct workshops

- August - October 3: Application period
- October: Committee reviews
- November 18: Study Session to present award recommendations
- November/December: Award notifications
- January: Contracting and invoice processing

Staff believes this proposed framework positions the County to make more strategic investments in areas of greatest community need, ensuring the Aid to Agencies program remains responsive, effective, and equitable into the future.

Staff respectfully requests Board feedback and direction on the proposed framework, funding models, and budget submittal considerations to proceed with implementation for the upcoming grant cycle.

Fiscal Impact: The baseline Aid to Agencies budget, pending adoption of the 2026 budget, is \$2,079,500. Staff is seeking direction on whether the Board would like to see additional budget packages to increase program funding and associated impacts.

Alternatives: The Board may choose to approve all, some, or none of the proposed changes.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- ☒ Be fiscally sustainable
- ☒ Provide essential and mandated service
- ☒ Be community focused

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the proposed framework for redesigning the Aid to Agencies program, which represents a thoughtful reimagining of a longstanding County program, balancing continuity with innovation. By using a data-driven approach, aligning with strategic priorities, and centering equity, the revised model seeks to maximize the County's return on investment while delivering targeted, impactful services to Arapahoe County residents.

Concurrence: Human Services Department, Community Resources Department, Commissioners' Office, and Public Health Department.