

CSP Redesign Process

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is the Department of Community Resources and Services (DCRS) re-examining its grantmaking at this time?

There are several reasons the County has chosen to take a step back and assess the Community Service Partnership (CSP) Program. There have been significant changes in Howard County since funding started in 1974: population growth, shifting demographics, evolving community needs, and an increase in the number of nonprofits. With respect to the changing needs, challenges, and opportunities facing Howard County, we need to consider how to have the greatest possible impact through this funding. Additionally, the County has heard the call from the community to explore opportunities for improvement of the CSP Program. This is our opportunity to take stock of the possibilities to address barriers to stability and find the strategies needed to make Howard County a place of broadly-shared prosperity and opportunity for all who live here.

What efforts will be made to minimize disruption for currently funded agencies during this planning period?

While the County remains committed to investing in the delivery of critical services through partnership with community-based nonprofits, the goal of the planning process is to enable DCRS to execute that mission with clear priorities, shared goals, and measurable impact. During this time, DCRS will suspend the regular Operating Grant application process and extend the opportunity for funding renewal to all FY20 Operating Grant recipients. DCRS will accept applications for FY21 One-Time Grant through an abridged application process.

DCRS recognizes that all Grantees are engaged in important, urgent work for Howard County's most vulnerable residents. We anticipate there will be questions as we move forward and will offer multiple opportunities for both current and prospective grantees to provide input into the redesign.

When will DCRS publicize the new strategic direction?

We expect to complete the redesign in the late spring and announce grant focus areas in June 2020.

Do you anticipate an increase or decrease in overall funding for the CSP Program?

Investing in the provision of critical services to vulnerable Howard County residents will continue to be a priority for the County. As in prior years, CSP funding is allocated annually through the County budgeting process.

Do you anticipate an increase or decrease in the number of organizations funded through the CSP Program?

The County is redesigning CSP to maximize the impact of its annual investment in human services and will consider the best ways to achieve that goal through the strategic planning process.

Will you continue to fund operating expenses?

DCRS is aware of the critical need among nonprofits for operating support. With best practices in mind, we will reflect on and review our operating grantmaking during the planning process.

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Will you solicit input from your grantees and other community groups and stakeholders during this planning process?

Yes. It's very important to the County that the voices of grantees and other community stakeholders be heard throughout the process. As our planning gets underway, we will inform the community of specific opportunities to provide input during the first few months of 2020.

What criteria will be used to determine grant funding after FY21?

Constructing grant criteria will be part of our redesign process.

What is the plan for grantees who may no longer be funded through CSP after the redesign is complete?

As part of the planning process, DCRS will evaluate this concern and determine what, if any, assistance can be provided to help transition agencies whose work no longer aligns with CSP. It is too early to determine what this may look like.

I have a question that isn't covered here. What should I do?

Please reach out to Megan Godfrey Jackson, CSP Manager, at mgodfrey@howardcountymd.gov.

Audience Question & Answer

from November 15 Grant Information Sessions

Will the community needs data be collected and shared early on?

We are currently in the process of curating and culling data from existing needs assessments to create a clearer overall picture of resources and gaps in human services throughout Howard County. The results of this assessment will be shared during our community conversations as part of the redesign.

Will the CSP be looking for nonprofits that have similar missions to merge?

It is not our role to ask nonprofits to merge; however, we do support efforts to reduce duplication of services and streamline efficiency of service delivery. As a funder, we strongly encourage collaborations that achieve the maximum impact for the least cost. There may be some soul searching for nonprofit leaders to determine if their organization needs to be a stand-alone nonprofit or a program that can fold into another nonprofit.

What is the timeline for the CSP community collaboration for the redesign process?

You will start seeing invitations to surveys and event flyers in early 2020.

Please keep in mind, if you attended today's meeting, we have your email from the registration process so we can keep you informed on events. If you know someone who couldn't attend and would like to stay informed, please connect us. The survey will be open ended, meaning you will be able to forward the link to your email lists. Everyone is welcome to complete the survey.

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Some people that we work with don't have access to the internet; how will we ensure that we capture their needs, too?

We will be conducting a survey and hosting focus groups. Encourage those without access to internet to attend the in-person focus groups or, if they choose, they are more than welcome to call if they need assistance filling out the survey.

Will the survey be available in other languages?

We hope to have materials available in a few key languages. We plan on having language translators at the focus groups, too. Please contact us if you need translation services so that we can make reasonable accommodations.

Will you be including non-government and regional partners in the redesign process?

Yes, we are planning to include United Way and other regional partners. If you have specific feedback on who you think needs to be part of the process, please email us. If you see gaps, we want to know. Hearing from diverse voices within our community is essential to designing a grant program that meets the needs of the community.

Have you thought to have one focus group per language group?

That is a great idea. We will consider that as we plan the focus groups.

Will we have access to the redesign process information?

We plan to be transparent through this process and keep you moving with us. We will be updating the CSP webpage to reflect current and new information – FAQs, PowerPoints, and handouts will all be there. We will also send updates to your emails that we collected when you registered for this session. We want everyone to have consistent information and equal access to that information. If you know someone who would like to receive information, please have them contact us so that we can add them to our list.

In the scan Due East is doing, can they include what is currently being funded by CSP and what outcomes are being tracked under those funds?

As part of the scan that Due East is producing, DCRS and Due East will review all recent grants and the outcomes being tracked.

In the grant redesign, are you thinking about priorities or the application process itself? What is the end goal?

We are thinking about all the above. We are looking to align with community outcomes based on data, survey feedback and focus groups to set clear goals and purposes for funding. We are also looking at the priorities that the County Executive has identified and how to better align our priorities to address basic human needs.

As for the application process, we want to refine it to minimize the burden on applicants and reviewers while ensuring due diligence of public dollars. We are looking into FluidReview to make sure the whole application process is easier. Since we are redesigning the grant process, that means FluidReview will

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have to be redesigned too or we may need different software. We know there is room for improvement. We will be sending out a survey about FluidReview for grantees to provide feedback.

The six priorities in the presentation were snippets, is there somewhere we can see them with more detail?

The six pillars you saw in the presentation are the County Executive's priorities. You can see the six pillars in greater detail on the [HoCoDash webpage](#). As for the CSP, there may be more specific priorities. At this point, we are completely open to the fact that there may be community priorities we are not yet aware of and hope to learn about through this process.

The HoCoDash webpage is very data driven. We are seeing some funders move away from Operating funding. I am worried that Operating funding may go away because it's not "sexy and data driven".

We understand the difference between business output and nonprofit output. Today, Operating grants aren't just for funding operations, but also for programs and other needs. However, a nonprofit that receives 80% of its operating budget from the County or any other single source is at higher risk in the event of an economic downturn or shift in funding priorities. We will need to look at HOW we are funding operations to ensure that we create a strong and self-sustaining nonprofit sector. We are not going into this redesign process with the idea of eliminating operating funding, but we do need to find a way to show that we are moving the needle on critical issues.

Can you provide clarity on what the CSP will consider a basic need so that nonprofits can determine if they will be eligible for funding?

Peoples' lives don't fall into a clean line of basic needs vs. non-essential needs. Basic needs vary from person to person. We will have to prioritize certain needs due to our limited resources, but our goal is to deliver something broad enough to encompass a diversity of missions and populations served. Keep in mind, these priorities may change year to year based on the evolving needs of our community.

Within certain areas of Howard County, what is considered a basic need may be different. As you go through the process, will there be a formal way to analyze nonprofits? Nonprofits are formed in different ways; some are very dependent while others are more self-sustaining.

We will be setting priorities but always through a lens of bolstering nonprofit self-sufficiency. We will be looking into the area of greatest need, but we need to tease out what that means for the redesign process. We understand that different communities look different and we want to come out of this process with common understanding and clear definitions. We don't want to be overly prescriptive in the redesign so that we can regularly evaluate the program to ensure we are keeping up with community trends and best practices while delivering a clear and consistent process.

Have you considered an awareness campaign about the redesign process?

Education about the community's unique needs and community conversations must be a part of this process. We need many different community voices to inform the redesign.

The more inclusive and clear we make this process, the easier it will be to tell Howard County's story. This will make it easier for your nonprofit to tell its story. In the end, it will be easier to leverage your dollars effectively and enhance the services you're providing without being duplicative.

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It is inspiring to hear the synergy between everything. Are you aspiring to be a national model and leader through this redesign process?

Our focus is to do right by Howard County. We are fortunate to be serving a community with engaged community leaders and robust resources. At the end of this redesign process, we hope the experience will serve our community and others.

In the long term, is there a way to keep track of things that may fall through the cracks, like a check-in and audit?

This is where data is so important – both quantitative and qualitative. It helps us to clearly see gaps and let us know if our strategies are working. No matter what service you provide, it all trickles down to how you are helping people to improve their lives. The delivery of human services is a business and we must be able to talk about our return on the investment of public dollars.

As for the focus groups, will these be substantial meetings? How are you planning to do them?

The focus groups will be community-based conversations to help shape the redesign process and ensure that the process is inclusive and representative of the community. At the same time, the focus groups will build connections and alignment between agencies.

I find this exciting. It seems like performance measures won't be due until later, is that to coordinate with the new analysis and design?

Historically, this is the same timeframe we request performance measure information from our grantees. We also need our grantees to finish their financials and this gives them a chance to assess their financials and make requests that match.

Since we are working on the redesign, we didn't want to change the current grant process midstream. Our plan is to ease into change deliberately and thoughtfully. We want to do data collection in a way that is consistent across the community. We're looking at the best ways we can bring some integrated performance measures to Howard County.

We are new to CSP, so we are out of the running for an Operating grant. Is that also true for the One-Time Grant?

It is hard to say without knowing more about your agency. Operating grants are only for currently funded grantees; however, if you meet the eligibility requirements for the One-Time grant, then you can apply.

As a new agency, how can we contribute to the redesign?

Please participate in the focus groups and complete the surveys we send out. We want both old and new agencies at the table. If you didn't register for this session, please give us your email so that we can make sure you receive future updates.

Will the data you collect be shared with other County agencies? Will it trickle up?

We will share the information that we collect, and it is part of the reason we want county agencies on our Design Team. We will be assessing common threads using existing studies as well, so we don't reinvent

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the wheel. This allows all of us to share data that you can then leverage and include in your future funding requests.

For FY22, will you have redefined the process, criteria, and new goals?

FY22 may be the launch into the new process or the beginning of phase one. There is a historical funding structure to consider. We are tenacious in pursuing change but plan to be thoughtful as we seek change. The last thing we want to do is destabilize the community and our partners.

The 2020 census is coming. Do you already have a plan to use the information collected from that?

DCRS is the lead agency for the census. We want to continue evaluating the process with the ability to react to the way our community continues to change. This will allow us to be nimble, needs-driven and relevant over time.

Will the Operating grant be open to new agencies in FY22?

We don't have any preconceived notions about operating grants or who might be eligible for them. We will have to go through this process before we have those answers.