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MENTAL HEALTH & RECOVERY SERVICES

Orange County Innovation Community Program Planning Proposal

Primary Need

The community program planning process is a required element of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), intended to meaningfully involve the community in identifying mental health needs and priorities, program planning, implementation, etc. (Welfare and Institutions Code, [WIC] § 5848[a]). Orange County’s MHSA Office invests a great deal of time and effort in the community program planning process, both for its MHSA Plans and Innovation (INN) projects. The input from the community is vital to effective planning and program development that reflects the voice and needs of Orange County’s diverse communities. Over the years, the MHSA Office has strived to continuously improve on its process for more robust community planning, but additional efforts are needed to reach the broader community and gather meaningful input, particularly for INN projects.

Under the Act, counties may use up to 5% of their MHSA funds toward community planning (WIC § 5892[c]), and the development of an INN proposal requires dedicated staff time and ongoing engagement meetings with the community. Based on lessons learned from Orange County’s local vetting and community planning for INN projects, the concept development, research activities, community engagement and proposal development can take up to nine months or longer before it is ready for MHSOAC review and approval. With limited staffing resources, the County can only pursue one or two potential ideas at a time. As such, if community feedback results in a decision to stop pursuing a potential idea, INN Staff must restart the process of identifying and pursuing a new INN idea. Thus, the INN planning process is much more labor-intensive than other components of MHSA. The impact of limited staffing and potential for lost time, paired with the need to plan for new and/or carry over INN funds, increases the risk of reverting these funds back to the State.

On average, Orange County receives \$8M in INN funds annually. However, based on current revenue projections, Orange County anticipates an increase to \$11M annually, which will result in an estimated \$81M in new and carryover funds through Fiscal Year (FY) 2027-28. Current expenditures (including provisional approval of the Psychiatric Advance Directives INN project) are an estimated \$7.3M, leaving \$73.7M in available INN funding through FY 2027-28. Without the ability to utilize INN dollars toward staff time and resources needed to develop new proposals, Orange County will revert these dollars. Having funds dedicated to INN community planning can ensure that the community can meaningfully support the MHSA Office in developing ideas and projects which can be transformational to the mental health and recovery system. It will also demonstrate Orange County’s commitment to engage its stakeholders in the development and implementation of INN projects.

INN Community Program Planning Proposal

This proposal seeks approval to utilize INN funds toward community planning and related activities for new and/or ongoing INN Plans over the next five years. INN community planning and related activities will include, but not be limited to:

- INN Staff time, such as researching concepts, developing materials, coordinating and/or facilitating meetings, drafting proposals, etc.
- Translation and interpretation services to support Orange County's diverse community. Orange County's threshold languages currently include Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese. Materials will also be translated in Khmer and Tagalog to support these sub-threshold communities that are highly active and engaged in community planning meetings.
- Consultants/Subject Matter Experts to support and/or facilitate meetings. These may include individuals with expertise in a specific field, consultants with lived experience (i.e., Peers, family members) or individuals from diverse groups (e.g., Veterans and/or military-connected families, LGBTQ, older adults, deaf and hard of hearing, young adults/transitional age youth, etc.). This effort will also support more culturally responsive INN projects by engaging Orange County's diverse communities and incorporating varying cultural views and perspectives into proposals.
- Marketing strategies and materials to reach the broader community (i.e., flyers/announcements, online surveys, etc.).
- Program supplies (i.e., Stipends for consumers and family members; transportation costs for consumers and family members to attend in-person meetings, as appropriate; presentation/discussion materials; printing costs, etc.).

Pending approval, Orange County will be able to utilize INN funding to meaningfully engage stakeholders in proposal development and ongoing feedback throughout the duration of approved projects. INN staff will provide ongoing reports to local stakeholders and the MHSOAC about its community planning efforts, which will include the type of engagement meetings held, target populations reached, number of community members who participated in the planning process, projects that were supported through these efforts and number of proposals submitted to the MHSOAC and Commissioners for approval.

Budget

Through the MHSOAC delegated authority process, Orange County is requesting approval and authorization to use \$950,000 of INN funds to support community planning activities over the next five years. This budget will primarily support community planning and related activities for new and/or existing INN projects, as noted above.

This proposal will utilize and encumber funds from FY 2019-20 and future years, as well as any unspent funds from previously approved INN projects. If this request is approved, Orange County will include this proposal in its FY 2022-23 MHSOAC Annual Plan Update, which will be finalized by the Orange County Board of Supervisors in late June.