



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Legislation Text

File #: 21-546, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

From: District Attorney

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

Authorization for the District Attorney to Execute any and all Documents Necessary to Accept, Administer, Modify, Amend and Reapply for Funding Made Available by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services through the Victim Witness Assistance Program, Allocation of 2.0 Full-Time Equivalent Victim Witness Program Specialist Positions and Deallocation of .5 Permanent Part-Time Equivalent Victim Witness Program Specialist Position (4/5 Vote Required)

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Ratify the District Attorney's execution and submission of any and all documents necessary to accept, administer, which includes any amendments and extensions, there of, modify and reapply for funding made available by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services through the Victim Witness Assistance Program for the second through fourth quarters of the fiscal year 2019-2020 and the first quarter of fiscal 2020-2021 (requires 4/5 vote);
2. Authorize the District Attorney to execute any and all documents necessary to accept, administer, which includes any amendments and extensions, there of, modify and reapply for funding made available by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services through the Victim Witness Assistance Program for the remainder of fiscal year 2020-2021 and the first quarter of fiscal year 2021-2022 (requires 4/5 vote);
3. Allocate 2.0 full-time equivalent Victim Witness Program Specialist positions (class 0689, salary range 352) in budget unit 208 effective immediately (requires 4/5 vote); and
4. Deallocate the 0.5 permanent PTE Victim Witness Program Specialist position (class 0689, salary range 352) in budget unit 208 effective immediately (requires 4/5 vote).

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

State of California Office of Emergency Services, Victim Witness Assistance Office and the Victims of Crime Act, District Attorney - Victim Witness Program (1100-208)

DISCUSSION:

In August 2019, the District Attorney's office submitted an application for annual funding made available by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) through the Victim Witness Assistance Program for fiscal year 2019-2020. The funding is available through the Victim

Witness Assistance Office (VWAO) and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which are a combination of state and federal funds that are managed and disbursed annually to eligible counties by Cal OES. The annual application was approved for funding in the amount of \$32,787 in VWAO state funding and \$378,119 in VOCA federal funding. The total grant award in the amount of \$410,906 was approved during the fiscal year 2019-2020 budget process.

In July 2020, the Office of the District Attorney of the County of Humboldt submitted an application for annual funding made available by Cal OES through the Victim Witness Assistance Program for fiscal year 2020-21. The annual application was approved for funding in the amount of \$31,549 in VWAO state funding and \$377,768 in VOCA federal funding. The total grant award in the amount of \$409,317 was approved during the fiscal year 2020-2021 budget process.

Funding received from Cal OES through the Victim Witness Assistance Program has allowed the District Attorney's Office to provide increased direct services to victims and witnesses. Services provided include, without limitation, crisis intervention, emergency assistance, resource and referral assistance, direct counseling/therapy, victim of crime claim assistance, property return, orientation to the criminal justice system, court escort, presentations and training for criminal justice agencies, public presentations and publicity, case status/case disposition, notification of family/friends, employer notification/intervention and restitution. All of these services are mandated by California Penal Code Sections 13835.4 through 13835.5. Other direct services provided that are not mandated include, without limitation, temporary restraining order assistance, providing crime prevention information, witness notification and funeral/burial arrangements.

Due to the additional impact of COVID-19 in release of local jail and prison inmates and mandated services of victim and witness notification the Victim Witness Assistance Program has identified a need for additional Victim Witness Program Specialists in order to: continue providing community-appropriate levels of direct client services mandated by the California Penal Code; and provide increased Victim Witness services in restitution and crime application completion and submission to the California Victim Compensation Board. The allocation of 2.0 full-time equivalent Victim Witness Program Specialist positions will allow for the deallocation of the current .5 permanent part-time equivalent Victim Witness Program Specialist position.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the Board authorize the District Attorney to execute any and all documents necessary to accept, administer, which includes any amendments and extensions, there of, modify and reapply for grant funding made available by Cal OES through the Victim Witness Assistance Program for the second through the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2019-2020, fiscal year 2020-2021 and the first quarter of fiscal year 2021-2022. Staff also recommends that the Board allocate 2.0 full-time equivalent Victim Witness Program Specialist positions in order to allow for the continued provision of direct client services mandated by the California Penal Code. The delay in bringing this item to the Board was due to temporary changes in departmental operations caused by restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the fact the Victim Witness Office changed locations twice in the past year.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Approval of the grant award for fiscal year 2019-2020 will allow the County of Humboldt to be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$410,906 for services performed in accordance with the scope of work described in the grant application for the period of Oct. 1, 2019 through Sept. 30, 2020. This funding supplied salary and benefits totaling \$231,157 along with operating expenses of \$93,049. There was a cash match obligation totaling \$14,508 that was met in allowable indirect costs necessary to the operation of the organization and the performance of the grant project. The program reverted \$86,700 allocated for salaries and benefits for a Victim Witness Program Specialist. Due to the multiple office moves, office space limitations related to COVID-19 and longer recruitment process, the District Attorney's Office was unable to successfully to fill the vacancy.

In deallocating the .50 Permanent Part-Time Equivalent Victim Witness Program Specialist Position there is an estimated cost savings of \$61,988 in salary and benefits. By allocating 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) Victim Witness Program Specialist positions with the anticipated filament of the positions in pay period 2101013 the cost for fiscal year 2020-21 would be estimated at \$10,756 in salary and benefits for the 2.0 FTE positions. There is sufficient funding in budget unit 1100-208 Victim Witness to fund the requested positions in fiscal year 2020-21.

Approval of the grant award for fiscal year 2020-2021 will allow the County of Humboldt to be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$409,317 for services performed in accordance with the scope of work described in the grant application for the period of Oct. 1, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

The recommended actions support the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Framework by seeking outside funding sources to benefit Humboldt County needs, providing community-appropriate levels of service and investing in county employees.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board may choose not to approve the grant award. However, this alternative is not recommended as it would cause a loss of anticipated revenue for the County of Humboldt. Furthermore, it would leave the community, as well as the region, without the funding to support the provision of local services to victims and witnesses of crime Humboldt County.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Grant Award Letter and application for fiscal year 2019-2020
2. Grant Award Letter and application fiscal year 2020-2021

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: C-18
Meeting of: May 14, 2019
File No.: 19-710