



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: County Executive Office

Subject: Health in All Policies and Community Indicators Report

Meeting Date: May 20, 2025

Formal Title: Consider report on proposed integration of a Health in All Policies (HiAP) framework with County strategic initiatives, including the Strategic Plan refresh and community indicators, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

1. Accept and file a report on the proposed integration of a Health in All Policies (HiAP) framework with County strategic initiatives, including the Strategic Plan refresh and community indicators;
2. Direct the County Executive Office to receive input on the proposed community indicators during the Strategic Plan refresh community engagement process and return on or before December 16, 2025, with any revisions to be included in the proposed 2026-2032 Strategic Plan; and
3. Direct the County Executive Office and Health Services Agency to return on or before December 16, 2025, with implementation options and resource needs to further integrate HiAP principles with County strategic initiatives.

Executive Summary

The Board requested that staff explore the integration of a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach as part of the Strategic Plan refresh. HiAP is a way to make sure that the County's decisions across different areas—like housing, transportation, and economic development—are connected and help support healthier lives for residents. This report explains where HiAP aligns with the County's current work, including the Strategic Plan refresh, Results Count, and LEAN process improvement, as well as where new resources might be required.

The report also provides an update on community indicators of well-being, a critical part of aligning systems to achieve better results for our most vulnerable residents.

Discussion

What is Health in All Policies

Health in All Policies (HiAP) is a collaborative approach to governance that seeks to improve health outcomes and reduce inequities by systematically considering health and equity in policy decisions across sectors. It encourages agencies to work together to address the social, economic, and environmental factors that influence health.

Equity and Accountability

At the heart of HiAP is a commitment to equity, community engagement, and shared accountability. This aligns with the County's approach during the creation of the County

Equity Statement, and with how we are planning to engage community for the Strategic Plan refresh.

Community engagement, collaboration, and aligned leadership are key to making HiAP work. This means working with people from different backgrounds, listening to their ideas, and being ready to adapt when things change. It also means making sure that the County's actions are guided by what the community needs and values. This approach helps keep everyone working toward the same goals.

Alignment with Current County Efforts

HiAP aligns with the County's strategic initiatives, particularly in fostering collaboration, adaptive leadership, and cross-sector partnerships. By integrating HiAP with frameworks like Results Count and LEAN, the County can enhance its capacity for data-driven decision-making, equity-centered practice, and community engagement.

- **Community Engagement:** HiAP emphasizes inclusive and intentional outreach, which aligns with the County's ongoing efforts to center community voice through Results Count and customer voice through LEAN. This means making sure those most affected by policies are heard and involved in decision-making.
- **Collaboration:** Aligning HiAP with existing cross-sector initiatives can strengthen coordination across departments. Results Count supports this by emphasizing the **Theory of Aligned Contributions**, where different leaders work together toward shared goals. LEAN enhances this by streamlining processes to make collaboration smoother.
- **Population Data (Results Count):** HiAP encourages using data to understand how different policies affect health, which is consistent with Results Count's focus on being **results-based and data-driven**. It means using data to set clear goals, measure progress, and adjust strategies based on what works.
- **Person/Role/System Framework:** Aligning individual leadership roles with community and organizational systems is a key part of HiAP. This connects to the Person/Role/System framework in Results Count, which helps leaders understand how their actions fit within a larger system and how they can drive positive change.

Opportunities with Health in All Policies (HiAP)

Exploring HiAP offers several opportunities for the County, especially by providing a clear and consistent policy framework that departments can use when bringing items to the Board. These opportunities include:

- **Policy Alignment:** HiAP would ensure that decisions made across County departments consistently consider health, equity, and sustainability impacts. This means that when departments bring items to the Board, they would be expected to show how their actions affect the well-being of residents, including who benefits and who may be impacted.
- **Accountability:** By applying a HiAP framework, the County could establish clear expectations for departments to explain how their decisions support community

health and equity goals. This could include requiring a brief analysis of health impacts in Board reports or using a standardized checklist for decision-making.

- **Informed Decision-Making:** HiAP encourages departments to use data to understand the impact of their actions. This aligns with existing County practices like Results Count, which emphasizes being data-driven. Departments could be asked to present data on expected outcomes and track the real-world impact of their actions over time.
- **Clearer Prioritization:** With HiAP, the County could create a standard set of priorities that align with its Strategic Plan. This would help ensure that the County is consistently focused on the health and well-being of all residents, even when making decisions in areas that may not traditionally be seen as “health” related.

By providing this structured but flexible approach, HiAP can help the County make better decisions that lead to better outcomes for residents.

Resources and Considerations

If the County chooses to explore HiAP, it must consider its current resources and commitment to the framework.

- **Staff Capacity:** The Health Services Agency (HSA) currently has limited capacity to lead or coordinate HiAP due to recent funding cuts and a focus on core public health responsibilities. Additional budget impacts from State and federal cuts may also hinder staff’s ability to integrate a new framework countywide. Any HiAP effort would need to account for this, potentially identifying a more focused group of departments or policy areas in which to apply HiAP.
- **Alignment in Decision-Making:** HiAP provides a framework for evaluating the health and equity impacts of policy decisions. For this approach to be effective, it is important that the framework is applied consistently and that the insights it generates are meaningfully considered in Board decision-making. Without consistent application, there is a risk that staff efforts to assess health impacts may feel disconnected from final decisions, which could reduce confidence in the process.
- **Effectiveness vs. Efficiency:** A HiAP approach prioritizes effectiveness by promoting collaboration across departments and engaging with community members to ensure that policies support health, equity, and well-being. While this approach can lead to better, more informed decisions, it may also slow down the process, as departments take time to coordinate, gather input, and assess impacts. The County would need to balance the value of inclusive, well-considered decisions with the need for timely action.

Local examples such as the City of Santa Cruz illustrate the scale and time commitment required to institutionalize HiAP. In talking with City staff, there has been overall resistance to the adoption of HiAP, as staff feel that it is another box to check, and not additive to their work. There is a reporting structure in place, as well as a City Council subcommittee that meets bimonthly to get updates. Staff training and incorporation of HiAP reporting into council agenda items has helped, and the uptake has been slow. This experience underscores the importance of identifying a HiAP implementation

model that fits the County’s culture, staff bandwidth, and organizational structure. Appendix A provides additional details on current efforts to build a community of practice.

Moving forward, the Board may wish to consider how HiAP could be piloted or phased into County operations, and what level of staffing, coordination, and technical assistance would be necessary to support that integration. Options include embedding HiAP in the Strategic Plan refresh, aligning it with existing Results Count cohorts, or identifying priority departments for early adoption.

Strategic Plan Refresh Integration

Developing the 2026–2032 Strategic Plan offers an opportunity for the County to strengthen its commitment to equity, results, and community-driven priorities. Building on the County’s Equity Statement, the refresh process will use tools aligned with Results Count, LEAN, and HiAP to ensure that community voice is at the center. This means intentionally engaging residents—especially those most affected by policy decisions—and aligning County actions across departments. Appendix A provides additional details on community engagement and alignment with HiAP.

With the new six-year County Strategic Plan, HiAP could help frame policy discussions by focusing on health and equity, making it clear how different factors like housing, transportation, and education impact well-being. Results Count could support accountability by measuring progress toward community-defined outcomes, while LEAN could ensure that County processes remain efficient and responsive. Together, these frameworks would provide a roadmap for making informed, transparent, and community-centered decisions.

Community Indicators of Well-Being

The following matrix outlines the **Standard Drivers of Health** and corresponding **Resilience Drivers** that will serve as key community indicators in the County's performance tracking framework. These proposed indicators are designed to track progress toward achieving long-term outcomes for community health and well-being, in line with the current County Strategic Plan. It is important to note that these indicators may be adjusted based on input from the community engagement process during the upcoming Strategic Plan refresh. This ensures that community needs and priorities remain at the center of the County’s work and that indicators evolve with community insights.

The proposed indicators align with the principles of Results Count and HiAP in terms of setting measurable outcomes that address both systemic drivers and actionable resilience measures. Specifically, they:

- **Results Count:** Focus on measurable population-level outcomes, encouraging transparency and alignment of efforts across departments.
- **HiAP:** Ensure that social determinants of health are considered in policy decisions across sectors, fostering a holistic approach to community well-being.

In response to Board feedback from February 11, 2025, the proposed indicators are also responsive to the Board’s desire to track resilience, including specific areas such

as mental health, safety, homelessness, transportation alternatives, and job quality. These indicators address gaps identified in previous planning processes, particularly around areas of community resilience, mental health, and economic security.

Focus Area	Standard Driver of Health	Resilience Driver	Disaggregation
Health	Access to Healthcare, Self-Reported Poor Mental Health	Timely Access to Care	Age, geography, race/ethnicity
Safety	Safety Rate	Successful Return to Community	Crime type, geography
Housing	Homeless Point in Time Count	Housing Units Built	Age, affordability, geography
Transportation	Pavement Condition Index	Transportation Alternatives	Road type, usage
Environment	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	EV Infrastructure	Source, region
Economy	200% Federal Poverty	Job Quality	Sector, race, education

The **Standard Drivers of Health** are population-level measures that capture broader systemic factors such as access to healthcare, housing availability, safety, environmental health, and economic stability. These are factors that are often influenced by decisions made outside the health sector, aligning with HiAP's focus on health as a product of intersectoral collaboration.

The **Resilience Drivers** reflect areas where the County has more direct influence and where improvements can be tracked through specific, actionable metrics. These resilience measures highlight the County's capacity to improve community outcomes and demonstrate progress toward long-term well-being, particularly in areas where the County has a more immediate ability to make a difference (e.g., through the provision of services, infrastructure investments, and economic opportunities).

The proposed indicators will be revised based on feedback received from the community engagement process during the Strategic Plan refresh, and the final indicators will be presented to the Board as part of the proposed 2026-2032 Strategic Plan. This will ensure they remain relevant, comprehensive, and aligned with the evolving priorities of residents and stakeholders. It will also provide the opportunity to adjust these metrics to reflect the community's definition of resilience and well-being, ensuring that the County's work continues to be guided by the people it serves.

This responsive and adaptive framework will allow the County to track resilience measures more effectively, ensuring that we are not only addressing long-term drivers of health but also strengthening our community's capacity to adapt and thrive in the face of emerging challenges.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The County of Santa Cruz has made steady progress in aligning its work around equity, results, and community engagement. With the Strategic Plan refresh underway, the County has an opportunity to build on this foundation by exploring how a HiAP approach could further strengthen these efforts.

This report has shown how HiAP can align with existing County practices like Results Count and LEAN, offering a structured way to ensure that decisions across departments consider health, equity, and sustainability. At the same time, it highlights that fully implementing HiAP would require careful planning, dedicated resources, and a clear understanding of how it fits with the County's existing work.

Moving forward, the Strategic Plan refresh will continue to prioritize community voice and accountability. In fall 2025, staff will lead a comprehensive community engagement process designed to hear directly from residents—especially those most affected by public policies. This process will help ensure that the proposed 2026-2032 Strategic Plan reflects the needs and priorities of the community.

As this work continues, staff will return to the Board by December 16, 2025, with updates, including:

- Options for how HiAP could be integrated with County decision-making;
- Resource needs for any new work that may be required; and
- Further recommendations to align HiAP with County strategic initiatives.

The County's commitment to health, equity, and results remains at the center of this work. Whether through HiAP or other frameworks, the goal is to ensure that County decisions lead to better outcomes for all residents.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact associated with this item. Funding for activities related to the Strategic Plan refresh are included in the County Executive Office's Fiscal Year 2025-26 Proposed Budget.

Strategic Initiatives

Equity Framework - Plans, Policies & Budgets, Communications & Education

Operational Plan - Operational Excellence

Climate Action - Government Operations

Submitted By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

ChatGPT 4o, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) large language model tool, significantly contributed to the development of this agenda item, including Staff Report, in compliance with the County of Santa Cruz AI Appropriate Use Policy.