



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Human Services Department

Subject: United Way 211 Housing and Homeless Services Support
Contract Amendment

Meeting Date: March 25, 2025

Formal Title: Approve amendment to agreement with United Way of Santa Cruz County, increasing the total agreement cost by \$50,000, for a new total amount of \$220,000, for dedicated housing and homeless referral connection support, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

Approve the first amendment to agreement (Contract No. 25W4270) with United Way Santa Cruz from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, increasing the total agreement cost by \$50,000, for a new total amount of \$220,000, to provide dedicated resource and service referral support to people experiencing or are at imminent risk of becoming homeless and connect them with available shelter, affordable housing information and Coordinated Entry Connection Services, and authorize the Director of Human Services to execute the amendment.

Executive Summary

The Human Services Department (HSD) is requesting that the Board approve an amendment to agreement 25W4270 with United Way Santa Cruz County for homeless and housing referral and resource connection support via the 211 system. This amendment will result in increased capacity for United Way to perform the 211 services outlined in the attached Scope of Services by adding an additional staff member. The amendment also further revises the Scope of Services to include clearer guidelines related to follow-up call timing and record-keeping.

Discussion

211 Santa Cruz serves as United Way's 24 hour a day, seven day a week, free and confidential phone line and website, offering a multilingual information and referral service for Santa Cruz County. Additionally, 211 systems including 211 Santa Cruz play a pivotal role in minimizing the duplication of efforts related to information and referral services offered by both government and nonprofit organizations, as well as divert non-emergency calls away from 911 call centers, particularly during times of disasters. In 2022, 211 Santa Cruz handled more than 4,300 calls from individuals seeking resource information, with over 50% of those calls focused on housing assistance.

In April 2023, the Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership (H4HP) launched a redesigned Coordinated Entry System, shaped by the recommendations of the Housing for Healthy Santa Cruz Framework, prompting changes to streamline access to housing assistance and services with the goal of improving housing outcomes. In May 2024, HSD contracted with United Way for 211 services specific to offering dedicated resource and referral connection assistance to those experiencing homelessness or are at imminent risk of becoming homeless, expanding Coordinated Entry connection points to include virtual and phone-based access. When HSD initially executed this contract with United Way, their responsibilities increased from not only accepting calls and disseminating information, to receiving and processing Connection Service Request

Forms; completing follow-up calls for those requesting housing resources through the regional call center; and developing and maintaining lists and charts for affordable housing, sober living environments, and interim shelter. Additionally, United Way took on increased maintenance of public communications and resource information related to housing and homelessness on the 211 website.

Over the past 10 months, the services implemented with this agreement have enhanced service efficiency by channeling all individuals seeking housing assistance through 211. Originally, slated to serve 1200 callers over the course of the Fiscal Year 2024-25 contract, 211 Santa Cruz easily accomplished and surpassed that goal by December 2024. There is a need for additional support for 211 to continue to meet the existing increased call volume for the remainder of the existing contract term, and continue to achieve the additional duties described above.

HSD requests approval of an amendment of \$50,000 to agreement 25W4270 for a new total contract amount of \$220,000. The increased funding for this agreement will be used to hire an additional staff member that will bolster United Way's ability to keep up with the existing volume of calls and complete the ongoing follow up duties outlined in the existing contract Scope of Services. Additionally, the amendment proposes minimal changes to the existing Scope of Services that further identify and clarify guidelines related to follow up timelines and associated record keeping. Together, these changes will result in more effective and robust service and support by 211 Santa Cruz County for those in our community who are either experiencing, or at risk of becoming, homeless.

Financial Impact

Approval of the additional \$50,000 will not require a new General Fund contribution. The amendment is funded through United States Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD") Coordinated Entry grants.

Contract No. 25W4270 United Way 211, Amendment One

- 391200-62381-WHCE-WH001

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Comprehensive Health & Safety, Attainable Housing

Submitted By:

Randy Morris, Director of Human Services

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.