

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: August 16, 2024

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: A report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), providing an update on a MacArthur Foundation grant award for the development of reentry housing

File Type: Informational Report

BACKGROUND

Milwaukee County has a long-standing partnership with the MacArthur foundation through its participation in the Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC).

Over the last decade, Milwaukee has redesigned its system, integrating risk and needs assessments by implementing universal screening for individuals booked into the jail. This practice provides risk information to be used when making pretrial release decisions and has guided the development of evidence-based strategies for pretrial supervision and early intervention programs, including diversions and deferred prosecutions.

In 2008, the Milwaukee Community Justice Council (CJC) launched reforms to reexamine use of the local jail. To expand these initial efforts, Milwaukee requested the support of MacArthur Foundation through its SJC initiative.

The SJC has evolved over five phases:

- **Phase I (2015):** engaged jurisdictions across the country to participate in the planning and development of site-specific strategies.
- **Phase II (2016 - 2018):** provided funding and technical assistance to implement strategies that were identified during Phase I.
- **Phase III (2019-2020):** continued support for our work, including four new or modified strategies and added investments in community engagement.
- **Sustainability Phase IV (2021-2022):** deepened our focus on racial equity and long-term sustainability.
- **Capstone Phase V (2023-2025):** infuses final funding to promote sustainability

and uphold community engagement, racial equity, and data efforts.

In 2024, Milwaukee County was invited to apply to the MacArthur Foundation through their grant application process for housing capital dollars for reentry housing. This competitive application round entitled Just Home was the first direct investment into housing as a part of the SJC. Milwaukee County was one of just six communities across the country to be awarded funds through this application process.

The Just Home Project builds on the foundation of multiple local efforts to address criminal justice challenges in Milwaukee County. This presents an opportunity to converge complementary efforts and strengthen partnerships to address a critical gap: housing for system-impacted individuals, in particular persons with mental health needs.

To identify the specific target population, the county will assemble a comprehensive steering committee composed of housing, health, criminal justice, and community stakeholders, including persons with lived experience. Once convened, the lead agency will guide the steering committee through the process of outlining and gathering key metrics to determine the target population. Partners will also collectively review similar housing projects and learn from the experiences of peer jurisdictions. The steering committee will then partner with existing collaboratives to share target population data, research target population needs and local housing gaps, and set out approaches that respond to identified needs. Through this process, the steering committee will propose data-informed, community-driven housing solutions in a Housing Investment Action Plan (HIAP).

By participating in the Just Home Project, Milwaukee County aims to replicate its success in reducing homelessness. Partners aspire to be a model for breaking the cycle of incarceration and housing instability, creating a community where stable housing becomes a catalyst for positive change and improved quality of life. Stakeholders envision a coordinated effort that gets it right the first time. Partners will strive for a community in which:

- Efficient, warm connections enable people to access the resources they need to be healthy, safe, and prosperous on their own terms.
- Systems prevent unnecessary, wasteful, disproportionate, and harmful contacts, so people can remain in the community and stay connected to pro-social supports.
- Ample affordable housing is accessible and attainable for all, including system-impacted persons.
- Silos are reduced, eliminating systemic gaps with detrimental consequences for the most vulnerable in our community.
- Success will be measured through clear and quantifiable indicators, including:
 - Stable Housing: Gauging the increase in stable housing for the target population.
 - Service Connection: Tracking successful, efficient linkages to agencies and support services.

- Health Outcomes: Measuring improvements in self-reported participant health outcomes.
- Equity: Ensuring the project leads to demonstrable reductions in systemic disparities
- Recidivism: Monitoring reduced criminal legal system contact after participation
- Engagement: Assessing project efficacy in strengthening relationships and engaging project partners, especially people with lived experience
- Sustainability: Capturing progress towards building infrastructure with long-term viability
- Community Impact: Evaluating the overall impact on community wellbeing, including decreased violence in identified areas.

Just Home is broken down into two phases of the grant focusing on planning and implementation. The planning phase of grant begins in fall of 2024 and will last for a period of nine months with a separate implementation phase that will be conducted post planning period for an additional 18 months. Housing Services received a total of \$375,000 in grant funding for these periods and there is no Milwaukee County match for these funds.

Funds will be used to hire a Project Manager for the grant who will be responsible for grant reporting and community engagement strategies. The focus of the planning period will be to engage various community stakeholders to discuss potential housing reentry housing models that focus on a reduction in the jail population per the goals of the Just Home initiative. One of the focuses of this outreach is to engage individuals who are formerly justice involved to ensure all voices are heard in determining what models can be successful.

The budget includes \$40,000 for the CJC which will be a partner in the community engagement efforts for the Just Home Project. The budget also includes \$25,000 to ensure that individuals with lived experience can be paid and reimbursed for their participation in the planning process. Finally, the planning budget includes \$10,000 for general administration of the grant for Milwaukee County Housing Services staff. Housing Services is also proposing a total of \$40,000 for evaluation services for the Project. This partner will be identified in the last quarter of 2024. MCHS will be charging the Project a total of \$31,684 for Housing Services staff to administer the grant during the planning and implementation periods. Activities will include project reporting, fiscal support, and general administration of the grant.

Once the planning phase of the grant is complete, Housing Services will be eligible for up to \$5 million in housing capital through the Just Home grant to produce new affordable and emergency housing options for the reentry population. These funds would be available to Milwaukee County as a Program Related Investment (PRI) Loan. The PRI loan terms would be a one percent interest loan with a ten-year term. Once the planning period is complete and loan funds become available, Housing Services would identify the

appropriate housing model and seek County Board approval for the future use of the PRI loan. Past uses of PRI loans for this purpose have been gap financing for new construction projects as well as the production of new emergency housing units.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This action item aligns with strategic plan objective 3A (Invest “upstream to address root causes of health disparities”) and objective 3C (Dismantle Barriers to diverse and inclusive communities). This project presents an opportunity to further advance the county’s strategic plan by addressing a critical gap: housing for system-impacted individuals, in particular persons with mental health needs.

FISCAL EFFECT

This item is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

James Mathy, Housing Administrator

PREPARED BY:

James Mathy, Housing Administrator, Department of Health and Human Services

APPROVED BY:

Shakita LaGrant-McClain

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director

ATTACHMENTS:

None

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Sup. Shawn Rolland, Chair, Health Equity, Human Needs, and Strategic Planning Committee
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive’s Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller’s Office