



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**DATE:** October 11, 2022

**17**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**RECEIVE THE INITIAL REPORT ON RAISING THE BAR FOR A MORE ACCESSIBLE SAN DIEGO COUNTY: IDENTIFYING ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO FURTHER SUPPORT FACILITY ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS, AND ACCESS TO SERVICES, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

### **OVERVIEW**

On January 25, 2022 (20), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to identify areas within County services, programs, and activities to increase communication for persons with disabilities, conduct community engagement with relevant stakeholders and community members, and to work with the County of San Diego's Committee for Persons with Disabilities to receive input on the CAO's identified areas and proposed recommendations for implementation.

In addition, the Board directed the CAO to provide an annual report to the Board that outlines any enhancements to accessibility provided under the various County departments during the year and return to the Board of Supervisors with recommendations.

Today's recommendations are to receive the CAO's report on the key areas of focus to increase communication regarding access for persons with disabilities, the findings from community engagement, and the Committee for Persons with Disabilities input on the CAO's identified areas of opportunity. The first annual report to the Board on accessibility related enhancements implemented by various County departments during Fiscal Year 2021-22 will be provided separately as a memo to the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

#### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

Receive the County of San Diego's (County) Chief Administrative Officer's Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings (Attachment A, on file with the Clerk of the Board).

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### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

According to the "2017 Demographic Profiles San Diego County" report about 9.8% or an estimated 312,565 persons with a disability live in the County of San Diego.<sup>1</sup> Conducting internal reviews along with engaging and seeking community input helps the County of San Diego in the identification of opportunities to increase communications regarding access and further enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Historically, the County has been responsive to the needs and requests of people with disabilities. Recognizing the need for more equitable management of resources, there is an opportunity for the County of San Diego to take a more proactive approach to accessibility awareness to anticipate and provide for the needs of people with disabilities above the legal requirements.

This review provides the necessary information to enable the County of San Diego to prioritize and make progress toward enhancing accessibility for people with disabilities beyond the requirements of state and federal laws. Furthermore, the annual report of accessibility-related enhancements implemented by County departments during the year provides the Board and the community with a better understanding of the services, programs, and activities offered by the County to persons with disabilities.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

This action is appropriate as it aligns with the County of San Diego Sustainability Goal #2 – provide a just and equitable access to County services, policy decision-making, and resource allocation in support of sustainable communities.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's action. There may be future fiscal impacts associated with implementing recommendations contained in the report. Any such recommendations would return to the Board for consideration and approval. Upon return by staff, funding for future costs will need to be identified by the department and will proceed once identified. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

### **ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

The Committee for Persons with Disabilities has received presentations of the findings from the community engagement sessions and the Accessibility Awareness Survey. No actions were taken; however, the Committee has requested more staff to support the efforts of the committee in promoting awareness of accessibility throughout the County of San Diego and the community.

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **County Accessibility Governance**

The County of San Diego has Board of Supervisor policies, Chief Administrative Officer Administrative policies, Management Group policies and Departmental policies that relate to compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and ensuring accessibility to services, programs, and activities for people with disabilities.

Details of the current governance structure are included in Attachment A – Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

### **Board of Supervisors Action**

On January 25, 2022 (20), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer to take several actions.

County Staff convened a cross-functional Accessibility Awareness Working Group to define, develop, and conduct virtual community engagement sessions and an Accessibility Awareness survey. Staff established an Accessibility Awareness webpage on SanDiegoCounty.gov to provide dial-in instructions for the Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement sessions and the link for the Accessibility Awareness Survey.

### **Community Engagement Sessions**

The three virtual community engagement sessions conducted in May 2022 were publicized through emailed invitations to community-based organizations, CountyNewsCenter, media press releases and County of San Diego social media sites. The purpose of the community engagement sessions was to:

- Share resources for how people with disabilities may access County of San Diego services, programs, and activities.
- Receive suggestions from attendees about how to improve getting information to individuals about the County's services, programs and activities for people with disabilities, and
- Provide information on how the public could provide input via the Accessibility Awareness Survey.

Resources were scheduled to provide Spanish language interpretation, closed captioning, and American Sign Language interpreters for the community engagement sessions. Presenters from various departments provided overviews of some of the many accessibility accommodations in place at the County.

Lessons learned from conducting the virtual community engagement sessions will be shared with County of San Diego departments as part of a community engagement best practices toolkit.

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### **Accessibility Awareness Surveys**

The Office of Ethics and Compliance conducted the Accessibility Awareness Survey of San Diego County residents in June 2022 seeking input on how to increase communication and awareness about access and accessibility to County services, programs, and activities by persons with disabilities. The survey was promoted through public announcements and invitations to community-based organizations that work with people with disabilities. The survey was also promoted through the Accessibility Awareness webpage on SanDiegoCounty.gov which permitted limited English proficiency speakers to read the announcement in their preferred language.

The electronic survey was hosted for three weeks from June 3 through June 24, 2022 in threshold languages including English, Spanish, Chinese - Traditional, Arabic, Vietnamese and Filipino.

The Accessibility Awareness Survey consisted of single choice, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Detailed survey descriptions are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

### **Survey Response**

The goal was to receive at least 250 responses to the Accessibility Awareness Survey. There were 469 unique respondents that answered the survey.

The results reported in this board letter represents responses received from people with disabilities and caregivers of people with disabilities. Detailed survey results are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

### **Key Departments**

Departments that are most used by people with disabilities are recommended to work with the County of San Diego's Committee for Persons with Disabilities to receive input and seek recommendations for subject matter areas that are not already represented by another community advisory group, e.g., Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee. Detailed results are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

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### **Learning About County Services, Programs, and Activities**

The survey collected responses for how people with disabilities currently learn and how they prefer to learn about services, programs, and activities. These results support a recommendation for continued emphasis on making more information available and accessible online.

The percentages of respondents that preferred to learn from television and radio were 2x and 3x greater than the percentage that currently learns from television and radio, respectively. The results support a recommendation for seeking to make more information available through broadcast radio and television. Detailed results are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

### **Accessing County Services, Programs, and Activities**

The survey collected responses for how people with disabilities currently access and how they prefer to access services programs, and activities. The percentages of respondents that preferred to access using In-person Mobile Services, Kiosk, and Mobile App were 2.7x, 2.4x, and 1.9x greater than the percentage that currently accesses services, programs, and activities through those means, respectively. The results support continued emphasis on using technology to provide services where the audience is located and in need. Detailed results are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

### **Difficulty Finding Information**

The survey collected responses for the difficulties people with disabilities experience in finding information about services, programs, and activities. Of those that attempted to find information, the percentage that found it Difficult or Very difficult was 1.7x greater than the percentage that found it Easy or Very easy.

When asked what made it difficult, the most common responses reflected a lack of understanding of services, programs, and activities available and where to find resources. Additionally, navigation of the County website was cited as a difficulty. These results support locating information in a manner that is more customer-centric and intuitive for the audience, and promoting resources that can inform, educate, and advise. Detailed results are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

### **Requests for Accommodation**

The survey collected responses for the frequency that people with disabilities have requested accommodations to access services programs, and activities. These results reflect an opportunity for establishing resources to inform the public and train personnel about reasonable accommodations available for people with disabilities. Detailed results are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

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## **Boards, Commissions, and Committees Representation**

The Office of Ethics and Compliance presented to the Committee for Persons with Disabilities the results of the Accessibility Awareness Survey, conducted related to the January 25, 2022 (20) Board direction. The Committee expressed that the demographic survey conducted subject to the Board's direction on May 24, 2022 (10) for a baseline diversity and equity assessment of all boards, committees, and commissions (BCCs) did not include disability status.

It was agreed to conduct a supplemental disability status survey to assess the representation by people with disabilities on County of San Diego BCC's. As a result, a Board Memo was sent to the Board of Supervisors on August 23, 2022 that a return to the board would be delayed in order to include results from the supplemental Disability Status Survey. Results from 315 respondents (33% rate) were compared with the 2020 American Community Survey (5-year estimates 2016-2020). Overall, the percentage of BCC appointees that responded with any disability is 12% compared to 10% for the County population. Detailed results are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

## **Improvements**

The survey collected input from respondents for what they thought could be improved. Responses included providing more support for people with disabilities throughout the lifecycle of interaction with County services, programs and activities. Detailed responses are available in Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings.

## **Recommendations**

The feedback received from this community engagement is critical to determining recommendations for enhancements to improve awareness for people with disabilities to access County of San Diego services, programs, and activities. The results herein help us understand community insight to prioritize services, programs, and activities that people with disabilities might most rely upon in order to make the most immediate positive impact on accessibility. This initial data obtained can serve as a launchpad for more targeted community engagement to include future focus groups, listening sessions, customer satisfaction surveys, etc.

Below are recommendations as a result of community engagement and input from various stakeholders:

- Evaluate current staffing model for accessibility support
  - Countywide ADA Title II Coordinator
  - Departmental ADA Title II Coordinators
  - County Liaison for Committee for Persons with Disabilities
  - Administrative Support for Committee for Persons with Disabilities

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- Include considerations for participants with disabilities in community engagement best practice recommendations
- Departments review internal policies and procedures to enhance accessibility awareness for services, programs, and activities for people with disabilities
- Provide training for interacting with clients and customers with disabilities
- Promote and publicize the Committee for Persons with Disabilities internally and to the community
- Log and report on accessibility enhancements

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed actions support the Equity, Justice, and Community initiatives in the County of San Diego's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, as well as the County's Live Well San Diego vision by identifying potential opportunities for further accessibility improvements beyond the County's current compliance with State and federal law.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Attachment A - Report of Accessibility Awareness Community Engagement Findings