



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

NATHAN FLETCHER
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: March 15, 2022

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

DATA-DRIVEN APPROACHES TO PUBLIC SAFETY AND ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION: INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT'S PRELIMINARY REPORT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On October 19, 2021 (3), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed a series of actions aimed at permanently and safely reducing the jail population by creating alternatives to incarceration and community-based services and supports for individuals who do not pose a public safety threat. The Board actions directed development of comprehensive policy and service recommendations based on data, research, and stakeholder input. The direction came in the context of the COVID-19 public health emergency, during which policy changes enacted to keep jail populations low to protect public health and reduce infections resulted in significant reductions in the number of people booked into and held in local jails.

The Board directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to contract with an independent consultant to analyze specific data and the impact of pandemic-related policies on jail populations and public safety; solicit stakeholder input; review local community-based services supporting alternatives to incarceration and successful models from other jurisdictions; and develop short and long-term comprehensive recommendations for policies and services to support alternatives to detention in lieu of custody, along with fiscal analysis of costs and savings associated with the recommendations. Project goals include enhancing public safety through effective community-based services that address the root causes of arrest and crime, advancing equity, and reducing incarceration.

Following a competitive solicitation, the County contracted with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) as the project's independent consultant. SANDAG will present its analysis and recommendations in a series of reports to the Board on a previously directed schedule, including today's preliminary report. The Public Safety Group presented initial findings and recommendations developed through the working group and a community forum that were approved by the Board on February 8, 2022 (11). The CAO, through the Public Safety Group, will continue to convene a working group of public agency stakeholders to solicit and develop service

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recommendations to support alternatives to incarceration. The Public Safety Group plans to draw on SANDAG's research and planned stakeholder and community engagement as it develops CAO recommendations to be included in future scheduled Board returns. Future scheduled returns to the Board on Alternatives to Incarceration will include both SANDAG and CAO reports and recommendations.

Today's action is to accept SANDAG's Preliminary Report and receive a presentation on the report from SANDAG.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Accept the Preliminary Report provided by the San Diego Association of Governments on Data-Driven Approaches to Public Safety and Alternatives to Incarceration.
2. Receive a presentation from the San Diego Association of Governments.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Nationally, social determinants lead to disproportionate crime rates, arrest, and incarceration of people of color and those who are poor, mentally ill, struggling with addiction, disabled or homeless. The same is true in San Diego County, where people of color are disproportionately incarcerated, as are those with behavioral health conditions and those experiencing homelessness. According to local jail data, in 2021 black individuals composed 20 percent of the average daily jail population while census data indicates only 5 percent of San Diego County residents are black. Furthermore, the 2020 We All Count point in time survey estimated 25 percent of individuals in jail had been homeless at the time of arrest.

Today's action accepts SANDAG's Preliminary Report on a research and stakeholder engagement project to establish alternatives to incarceration through services that address social determinants associated with justice system involvement. The analysis and service proposals to be developed by SANDAG as part of the Alternatives to Incarceration project are expected to advance fairness and equity and create opportunities for better outcomes for underserved and diverse communities disproportionately impacted by the justice system by reducing justice involvement, incarceration, and recidivism. Service recommendations developed by SANDAG will include an analysis of their potential to achieve positive outcomes with attention to cultural responsiveness and accessibility among the County's diverse populations, especially those disproportionately impacted by justice involvement. Information on demographics and geographic area will be collected, reviewed, and reported as part of SANDAG's work to illuminate the impacts of COVID-19 related policies on subpopulations and continually inform the design, effectiveness, and equity of service proposals. Throughout this project, community stakeholders will be engaged in the review of data and outcome measures to provide diverse perspectives and inform ongoing implementation.

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FISCAL IMPACT

There is no current year fiscal impact associated with today's request. Staff will return to the Board for any related future recommendations with fiscal impacts.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

On October 19, 2021 (3), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to contract with an independent consultant to conduct data, research, and stakeholder-driven analysis and to develop comprehensive recommendations for policies and community-based services and supports that provide alternatives to incarceration, with the aim of protecting public safety, advancing equity, and reducing incarceration of people who do not pose a public safety threat. Following a competitive solicitation, the County contracted with the San Diego County Association of Governments (SANDAG) as the project's independent consultant. The previous Board direction set a schedule for the independent consultant's returns to the Board with a series of reports, findings, and recommendations. Today's action would accept SANDAG's Preliminary Report and receive its presentation.

SANDAG's contract with the County on the Alternatives to Incarceration project was executed in late January. The consultant's early focus has been on developing a research and data plan, establishing timelines, and finalizing a stakeholder engagement plan with the creation of a public Advisory Group to meaningfully involve stakeholders from the earliest stages the project.

The Preliminary Report outlines SANDAG's approach to research and data, including a community service review, and community engagement to deliver the analysis and comprehensive recommendations sought by the Board.

Key elements of SANDAG's Preliminary Report:

Community Engagement Plan

Alternatives to Incarceration Advisory Group

The Advisory Group is expected to meet monthly in public meetings for one year through the end of SANDAG's scheduled services. The group will be composed of a minimum of ten community members who represent diverse perspectives and experiences, including community-based organizations, criminal justice reform advocates, re-entry and recidivism experts, and those with lived experience and family members who have knowledge of and direct experience with

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addiction, mental health issues, homelessness, and the justice system. The Advisory Group will be provided with regular updates on the research process and asked to provide input on the research as it evolves, as well as recommendations for the data and information collected.

SANDAG is currently reviewing applications for the Advisory Group and finalizing its membership. The contractor accepted applications on its website and encouraged interested community members to apply through County and SANDAG stakeholder email lists and social media. The application period was scheduled to close March 15.

Website, social media, and mailing lists

SANDAG has created a page on its website at: <https://www.sandag.org/index.asp?classid=14&subclassid=17&projectid=629&fuseaction=projects.detail>. Individuals interested in the project will find research updates on the page and will be invited to provide comments and suggestions there. Interested individuals can also sign up on the web page to receive project updates and information about community forums by email.

SANDAG will provide regular updates regarding the project on a variety of social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Stakeholder Survey

Public safety partners and community stakeholders will have the opportunity to complete a survey sent via an email distribution list, available on the SANDAG website, and advertised on social media. Potential questions would pertain to the effect that detention has on an individual and those he/she/they are connected to, how different policy changes have affected those in the community, and which policies result in both the short- and long-term good for individuals and communities. The survey will be translated into Spanish and other languages upon request.

Community forums

Six community forums will be held virtually around the County. These forums will be another opportunity for the community to share their thoughts regarding the research to date, as well as policies and programs regionally.

Research Goals and Approach

SANDAG's project is organized around four major research goals and research questions based on the Board's direction. The SANDAG plan details specific County agency and external data sources it will use in its analysis, and its specific research methodology.

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These research goals are:

1. Produce a data driven analysis on how the use of jails changed from pre-COVID-19 versus during COVID-19 with a focus on identifying policy interventions that would cost effectively, safely, and permanently reduce the San Diego jail populations.
2. Identify the primary policy drivers of reduced incarceration rates during COVID-19, conduct a population sub-analysis by demographics and geography for the population affected by these policy changes, analyze public safety outcomes associated with these short-term changes in incarceration policy, and recommend policy changes to safely and permanently reduce jail populations and better protect public safety with alternatives to incarceration.
3. Develop a set of comprehensive service recommendations for short- and long-term actions and investments to expand access to alternatives to incarceration for justice involved individuals who do not pose a public safety threat.
4. Analyze the costs, savings, and long-term fiscal impacts to Public Safety Group departments, the Health and Human Services Agency, and other aspects of County operations by shifting the County approach to public safety to prioritize “safety through services” and evidence-based alternatives to incarceration.

Project Timeline

SANDAG’s Preliminary Report includes a timeline outlining monthly milestones. Convening an Advisory Group and confirming the validity of key data sources that will be relied upon are important early steps. Jail population and other public safety data analysis will be completed by Spring; service and fiscal analysis take greater focus by May; and stakeholder and community engagement and feedback are integrated throughout the timeline.

SANDAG is scheduled to present its analysis and recommendations in a series of reports to Board on May 24, 2022; October 25, 2022, and January 31, 2023. The Chief Administrative Officer, through the Public Safety Group, will return on these same dates with project updates and any recommendations developed through a stakeholder working group and with the benefit of SANDAG’s Advisory Group, community outreach, data analysis, service options research, fiscal analysis, and recommendations. On February 8, 2022 (11), the Board authorized the CAO to enhance the capability of sobering services in the Central region to serve higher acuity clients and provide successful care transition, with funding referred to the Fiscal Years 2022-24 CAO Recommended Operational Plan. Future CAO reports will include updates on the implementation of these services and additional recommendations.

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LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the Equity and Justice Strategic Initiatives of the County of San Diego's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, by providing access to health services to support reducing disparities in the justice system and to safely support alternatives to incarceration.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment A: Data-Driven Approach to Protecting Public Safety, Improving and Expanding Rehabilitative Treatment and Services, and Advancing Equity Through Alternatives to Incarceration, Preliminary Report, SANDAG