



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Edward D. Reiskin
City Administrator

FROM: Sara Bedford
Director, Human Services
Department

SUBJECT: Informational Report on Downtown
Streets Team and Soldiers Against
Violence Everywhere

DATE: September 27, 2021

City Administrator Approval 

Date: Oct 14, 2021

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report On Two Homeless Workforce Programs Downtown Streets Team And Soldiers Against Violence Everywhere.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Soldiers Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) and Downtown Streets Team (DST) are two workforce training programs intended to provide homeless City of Oakland residents with employment and training opportunities while simultaneously cleaning the streets of Oakland. SAVE focuses on blight abatement in West and Downtown Oakland combined with classroom instruction. DST manages a two-tiered program which includes blight abatement in 4 locations across the City and the Streets Team Enterprises program, which places participants in 3 months of paid on-the-job training. Both programs were funded directly by the City Council. SAVE and DST have had challenges executing the components of their agreements leading to the extension of their contract terms. Some complications arose with the pandemic while others are due to organizational changes and challenges.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Soldiers Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE)

In 2019, City Council recommended SAVE as a homeless provider to lead a workforce development program for unhoused residents of the City of Oakland. On August 1, 2019 City Council adopted Resolution No. 87834 C.M.S., authorizing the City Administrator to enter into grant agreements with various organizations and nonprofits. The resolution included an

allocation to SAVE for fiscal year 2019 – 2020. Due to organizational changes within SAVE, the grant was unable to be executed. A new Executive Director (ED) was hired to lead SAVE in spring 2020 and City Council adopted Resolution No. 88333 C.M.S, amending Resolution No. 87834 C.M.S., to extend the timeframe of the grant with SAVE through June 30, 2021. As a small organization with a new executive director, SAVE again had challenges with the contracting process causing a delay in the final execution of the agreement. As a result, the grant agreement with SAVE was not executed until December 2020 and the program began serving clients in March 2021. Further organizational complications led to the program being paused at the end of April 2021 to allow time to address challenges with the program structure. On July 14, 2021 City Council adopted Resolution No. 88739 C.M.S. extending the contract term through June 30, 2022.

Downtown Streets Team (DST)

In 2018 City Council recommended DST as a homeless provider for the City of Oakland. On October 2, 2018, City Council adopted Resolution No. 87361 C.M.S., authorizing the City Administrator to enter into a grant agreement with DST for a pilot workforce development program. From January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019, DST successfully implemented this pilot program. On May 12, 2020, City Council adopted Resolution No. 88109 C.M.S., awarding a second grant to DST to provide a workforce development and employment training program for the unsheltered in FY 2020-2021.

Through the City's Request for Qualifications for homeless providers, DST was awarded additional funds specifically to support the Tier 2 paid career training elements that led to placements in various agencies, including one providing homeless services. This element of the program responded to Council concerns voiced about DST that they did not have living wage options for clients, only stipend participation. In addition, creating an employment pipeline of individuals with lived experience of homelessness in the homeless services workforce will contribute to more effective and equitable programming.

DST's grant was executed in September 2020 and the organization began setting-up the program in October 2020. By January 1, 2021 DST had hired all staff, established three blight abatement cleaning sites, and began to establish the Streets Team Enterprises program component. Due to the program getting a late start, DST was unable to execute a full 12 months of programming by the grant end date. Therefore, City Council adopted Resolution No. 88740 C.M.S., authorizing the extension of agreement with DST through June 30, 2022.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

SAVE

In Fiscal Year 2020/21 SAVE again had challenges executing their original contract. The program only had a single staff person, the Executive Director, and when the director was not available it caused delays in receiving and finalizing contract documents. SAVE began program administration March of 2021. SAVE was responsible for outreach and recruitment subcontracting the management of the work crews on blight abatement and workforce

development to another agency, Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS). Due to concerns with the collaboration, BOSS withdrew from the collaboration in April 2021 and work was paused at the end of April to allow for restructuring of the program design and execution. Human Services Department (HSD) discussed a plan of action with SAVE and they were encouraged to apply to HSD's Capacity Building Program to gain support with organizational needs. The program was expected to resume in July 2021.

SAVE's Executive Director was accepted to and joined the Capacity Building Program in May 2021. After the extension of their agreement was granted by the City Council, SAVE continued to have internal organizational challenges completing the FY 2021/22 contracting process. City staff sent the organization a final warning letter in mid-August setting a clear and urgent timeline to respond to requests for documents. A follow up meeting was held between City staff and the agency's Board of Directors several days later. At that meeting, the Board informed the City they had separated from their Executive Director and the Board would take over the program's management and complete the contracting obligations.

The contract is currently routing through city departments for execution. Once the grant is executed, the program is expected to resume in October 2021 for 6-months through March 2022. As the program has not yet resumed there is limited data to present between March and April 2021 when the program was run in conjunction with BOSS.

SAVE board members and staff recently went through data entry training for use of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database. HMIS participation is a requirement for most homelessness funding. SAVE is dedicated to running a workforce training program and has confirmed they have a full cohort of homeless Oakland residents ready to resume work and training once their grant is executed.

HSD recognizes that challenges, such as those with SAVE, will arise as staff expand its portfolio of homeless providers to include small emerging organizations. This is why the capacity building program was created. HSD has encouraged SAVE board members to join the capacity building program separately from their former Executive Directors participation. HSD awaits to hear from SAVE Board members will engage in the capacity building program. SAVE has also been asked to provide a current training program description, outline and schedule which is yet to be received. The latter will be a requirement before the program re-starts.

DST

DST is funded to run a two-tiered workforce program. Tier-1 is the first step of the program where participants learn the basic responsibilities of employment and participate in blight clean-up. Currently, DST runs crews with homeless participants in four areas of the city: East Oakland, SVDP, Lake Merritt North and Lake Merritt South. Each site has assigned clean-up days with work taking place Monday – Friday. Two of the program sites were inactive in July and August due to low participation and a Covid exposure of participants working at the SVDP site. As of September, all sites are now active with full participation.

DST's Tier 2 program pairs participants, who either have shown success in the Tier 1 program or homeless residents who show readiness for steady employment, with a partner organization to engage in a 3-month on-the-job training program. With the launch of their 3rd cohort, all participants slots are filled, and all participants have been placed at their assigned training sites.

Although this is the 3rd cohort, the first two cohorts struggled with participant engagement and neither cohort made it to a scheduled completion date. DST has evaluated their lessons learned and incorporated relevant changes into this 3rd cohort around participant engagement. DST's current funding will sustain the program through March 2022.

PAST PERFORMANCE, EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The data available to date is unimpactful.

SAVE

March and April SAVE had a cohort of seven homeless residents participating in the program. All participants identified as African American with one identifying as female and the remaining identifying as male. In March 2021, all participants were enrolled in health insurance and increased their income through their participation in this program. SAVE has also reported all participants in April increased their income through this program.

DST

To date, DST has yet to meet their agreed upon outcome goals. In fiscal year 2020/21 DST served 52 homeless Oakland residents, two of which were assisted in moving indoors. DST has a goal of enrolling 80% of participants in mainstream benefits and 90% in health insurance. Their annual outcomes were 66% and 72% respectively. Their housing goal is to assist 50% of participants to move off of the street to indoor locations, their annual rate was 3% last fiscal year. DST is working on enhancing their ability to maintain program engagement.

Due to concerns about program performance for both of these agencies, HSD recently implemented a weekly update report from both DST and SAVE and is reviewing data weekly. Outcomes entered into HMIS will also be evaluated quarterly for both programs. HSD meets with DST monthly to discuss challenges and successes. HSD plans to begin meeting with SAVE regularly as they relaunch their program.

At this time staff does NOT recommend moving forward with an additional year of funding for either program in FY 2022-23 should funding be available. Staff will continue to evaluate both programs for the remainder of their contract terms.

Employment for Oaklanders who are unhoused continues to be a critical need and HSD, in collaboration with the City's EWD Workforce Division, are exploring models and funding opportunities to address the unique needs of this community. It should also be noted that in FY 2020-21 the Miller Community Cabin site became a site specifically focusing on homeless individuals who are "ready, willing and able to work" called Turning Point. Managed by ROOTS Community Health Center, the program makes use of the agency's social enterprise businesses to build work readiness skills, increase income, ultimately supporting permanent housing placements. In FY 2020-21 the 40% of program exits were to permanent housing, an increase of 10% above the previous year. Forty-Two percent (42%) of people who exited the program were employed, compared with 19% in FY 2019-20. Staff is exploring the possibility of transitioning a second cabin site into a workforce model.

In addition, the employment training program, through the Excess Litter Fee fund (ELF), is an example of a workforce program coming together with homeless services to provide opportunities for long-term stability. District Works collaborates with Roots Community Health Clinic-Miller Community Cabins and Deeply Rooted to run a litter abatement program with competitive pay of \$25 per hour. The ELF program provides an example of how programs providing a living wage help support ongoing participant engagement.

FISCAL IMPACT

This is an informational report and therefore has no fiscal impact.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

No outreach was deemed necessary for the proposed policy action beyond the standard City Council noticing procedures.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The Community Economic Development Committee Receive This Informational Report On Two Homeless Workforce Programs.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Lara Tannenbaum, Community Homelessness Services Manager at (510) 238-6187.

Respectfully submitted,



SARA BEDFORD
Director, Human Services Department

Reviewed by:
Lara Tannenbaum, Manager
Human Services Department

Prepared by:
C'Mone Falls, Program Planner
Community Homelessness Services Division

