**COVER SHEET**

Case Study Title

Healthy Communities

Case Study Category

Economic Vitality

Jurisdiction Name

Pinellas County, Florida

City/County Manager Name

Bob LaSala, County Administrator

Innovation Award Consideration

Yes

Rapid Fire Session Consideration

No

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**SYNOPSIS**

Intent of the project/program/service

Pinellas County Government strategically identified and aligned specific departments in order serve the most distressed communities within the County in a high-performance manner, directing resources in the most effective and efficient way. There is no single cause and no simple solution to the challenges facing distressed communities and individuals; furthermore, disadvantaged citizens are mired in “vicious feedback loops” that drive them into a quality of life below the standards of healthy vitality necessary to be productive and self-sufficient. Healthy Communities is a transformation from a government-centric to a community-centric model recognizing that while county government has an important role to play; it must play it within the context of a broader network of collaborative partners.

The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (Board) has recently developed a new strategic vision that aims to improve the quality of life for Pinellas County residents. The groundwork to address this vision was undertaken by county departments—Health and Human Services, Justice and Consumer Services, Community Development, Economic Development, Code Enforcement, and Planning—through a series of workshops to reassess their core services to ensure they align with the Board’s Strategic Direction. This workgroup took an economic approach to identify which constituents are the greatest users of county resources, recognizing limitations in available funds and the complexity of issues our communities face. **The economic approach entailed two phases: identifying specific zones within Pinellas County that have high concentrations of poverty and small return to our tax base and outlining specific suggestions on strategic initiatives that align with the Board’s Strategic Direction and will impact overall community outcomes without incurring in additional costs.**

The first phase focused on identifying the areas within our community that have high concentrations of poverty, their geographies, demographics, and economic impact on the County. This approach was taken because having specific clusters of poverty within Pinellas County is detrimental to the entire community, for poverty spreads and impacts everyone’s quality of life – including those not impoverished. Poverty also affects the economic prosperity of a community, since conditions associated with poverty can limit an individual’s ability to develop the skills, knowledge, and habits necessary to fully participate in the workforce. While there is no one cause for poverty, communities exhibiting high poverty rates also have disparities in social and environmental determinants that lead to poor outcomes. **After examining the entire County, five at-risk communities were identified to have 16% or more of their population living at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The low-income individuals residing within these zones account for approximately 45% of the County’s total low-income population**. Not only have these zones presented in poverty beyond the most recent economic downturn, but these areas are also showing signs of growth, exemplifying how concentration of poverty affects nearby communities.

Costs associated with individuals living in poverty are elevated due to an increased risk of adverse outcomes such as poor health, low productivity, and increased crime in unsafe neighborhoods which leads to lower graduation rates and a reduced participation in the labor market. **Our analysis of these communities indicates that these areas are responsible for up to 57% of all arrested adults and 59% of all arrested youths during fiscal year 2011, approximately $254.6 million annually in lost wages due to adults that dropped out of high school, 40% of all foreclosures in 2009, and a 16% unemployment rate in 2009.** Furthermore, housing available at affordable rates for the low-income population is clustered within or near the five at-risk communities, forcing individuals searching for affordable housing to reside in communities with limited access to food and health care, in addition to long commutes if they have a job that requires them to travel and they rely on public transportation. These individuals also have poorer health outcomes than the general population, with the total hospital costs of Medicaid beneficiaries and the uninsured exceeding $1.9 billion from October 2010 to September 2011. Even if only 25% of the utilization came from low-income individuals residing in these zones, that would still account for $120.5 million in emergency room cost and $359.4 million in inpatient costs attributed to Medicaid beneficiaries and the uninsured.

One conclusion to be drawn is that current efforts through departmental programs and services need to be re-tuned with greater efficiencies to not only maximize dollars and see a value-added return but to also realize improved quality of life for all Pinellas County residents. **While we understand that low-income individuals reside within all parts of Pinellas County, it is only in areas with high concentrations of poverty that one can see social patterns and costs associated with poverty.** These effects are amplified by raising children in poor environments, which contribute to poor development, increased illnesses, lower educational attainment, lack of recreational activities and role models, disengagement in the community, lower paying jobs, risk of homelessness, increased arrests and recidivism rates, and a lower lifetime monetary contribution to society.

The second part of our economic approach addresses the workgroup’s proposals to meet the Board’s strategic outcomes:

* increasing citizen satisfaction with the delivery of services
* delivering measureable savings and improved customer service from investments in technology
* utilizing a data driven approach to target opportunities for efficiencies
* achieving measureable per service/per unit cost savings
* achieving cost savings from collaborative workgroup for consolidation
* enhancing public safety and reducing victimization

**We believe that in order for the county to see a reduction in service costs associated with at-risk communities, departments must re-align their core services and work collectively rather than independently.** By doing so, Pinellas County will be able to increase its return on investment (in terms of a highly skilled workforce, greater number of high school graduates, decreased crime rates, and increased property values) improve community outcomes and overall quality of life – ultimately reducing the need for government support services in these neighborhoods and freeing up resources to be used countywide.

The strategic initiatives are vital strategies to bend the cost curve of expenditure for these at-risk neighborhoods. The initiatives focus on collaboration, co-location, investments in technology, data-driven decision making and preventive services – allowing families to have greater access to support services.

**A New Approach: Strategic Alignment across Agencies**

Our community is at a tipping point; by shifting the way services are currently delivered in Pinellas County, we would be able to achieve better outcomes without requesting additional dollars to do so. Our research on other communities in the United States indicates that success can be achieved through transparency, education, outcome measures and legislation. While this workgroup has provided the Board with specific interdepartmental strategic initiatives that will produce desired outcomes in a separate document, the following are the guiding principles behind these suggestions:

***Collaborating interdepartmentally and externally***

County departments and other local agencies currently invest their dollars on similar initiatives and populations. However, these services are not all connected, costing the county additional dollars while leaving gaps in the community. By collaborating on the same areas and developing services that complement each other, improved service quality can be achieved while reducing associated costs. Similarly, aligning strategies with other local community agencies will allow for improved access and streamlined service delivery without investing in additional dollars. By aligning the strategic initiatives of these agencies to focus on collaborating and co-locating services, we would be able to eliminate duplication and increase the quality of healthcare provided without increasing appropriated funds. Utilizing the same approach across all core areas the Board wishes to focus on, Pinellas County would be able to redistribute dollars within the community and improve service quality for all.

***Co-locating services***

As previously expressed by the Department of Health and Human Services, co-locating service agencies allows for families and other residents to have better access to available resources, while increasing overall service delivery in the community. This workgroup believes co-locating services is key to obtaining improved outcomes without incurring additional costs.

The first step in co-locating services is a “virtual co-location” through the implementation of improved technologies that share enrollment and client information. This will allow for multiple services to be accessible by residents within the first year of reorganizing agencies. The integration of these technologies has already begun through initiatives such as our One-E-App and Health and Human Services’ CHEDAS system. Improved technological capabilities will also allow for the multiple agencies to provide access to the entire family unit at one location and dealing with bill payments “behind the scenes”.

Following virtual co-location of services will be physically co-locating services through infrastructure that allows multiple agencies to be housed in the same location. Current and new facilities will be utilized to house multiple agency services, such as health and behavioral health care, workforce development, and other social services necessary to improve our client’s quality of life.

***Shifting focus to prevention***

Preventive services are cost-saving and have significant, long-lasting gains. For example, incarcerating children costs 20 times more than enrolling them in pre-school ($88,000 a year per incarcerated child versus $4,212 per child enrolled in a Pre-K program – Juvenile Welfare Board). Additionally, Trust for America’s Health reported that strategically investing only $10 a person in disease prevention could result in a return on investment for Florida of up to $6.20 for every dollar spent in health care costs. The strategic initiatives proposed by the Departments of Health & Human Services and Justice & Consumer Services shift system focus to preventive measures that improve quality of life and overall outcomes, with programs that integrate primary and behavioral health care, education, and jail and homelessness diversion. Some of these initiatives have already begun, as is the case with the improvements to the integrated health care delivery system spearheaded by Health and Human Services, the Health Department, and the Juvenile Welfare Board, which has over 25 community partners involved in delivering care to Pinellas County’s low-income population, as well as juvenile justice reforms to reduce detention use spearheaded by Justice and Consumer Services.

While the Board does not control all entities involved in providing services to the communities in need within Pinellas County, they do have the ability to establish policies and ordinances that assist their implementation. This, combined with the power to engage cities and other boards in discussions to align community efforts strategically, will ensure that Pinellas County becomes a healthier community for all its constituents – regardless of where they live.

Costs, if any

While grants and other resources will be pursued in order to further efforts, the alignment planning and efforts across departments and across systems allows for more effective approaches to addressing problems with little or no change to cost.

Savings, if any

Savings can be expected across systems through the coordinated approach. For example, addressing needs within the community and stabilizing individuals can greatly reduce recidivism and ongoing criminal justice costs.

Identify innovative characteristics and explain how they improved the organization

The collaboration of various departments has provided opportunity to enhance the services and leverage the amount of funding and services that can be provided. For example, Community Development provides the funding for bricks and mortar to meet the needs of the low income families and Health & Human Services providing the services that allow them to succeed.

Obstacles, if any

Continued obstacles are education and change. Changing the basic methods of doing business can create resistance. Status quo is often easier.

Outcomes – cost savings, for citizens, any performance measures information, etc.

* Reduced recidivism
* Reduced justice system involvement for various social concerns(mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other barriers)
* More efficient and effective justice system
* Stronger community connections
* Stronger families
* Access to health and social services

Applicable results and real world practicality

There is no single cause and no simple solution to the challenges facing distressed communities and individuals. Disadvantaged citizens are mired in “vicious feedback loops” that drive them into a quality of life below the standards of healthy vitality necessary to be productive and self-sufficient. Healthy Communities is a transformation from a government-centric to a community-centric model recognizing that while county government has an important role to play; it must play it within the context of a broader network of collaborative partners.

Pinellas County has done a significant amount of research on the economic impact of poverty within its region and how to tackle the problems facing at-risk areas by implementing a new, collaborative strategy to make these neighborhoods safer, healthier and stronger communities which, in effect, will reduce crime and avoid further erosion. In addition, the county has recently undertaken a series of planning discussions to define core strategic initiatives for cross-departmental and cross-agency collaboration. This project is geared towards a community-based approach to target disparities in at-risk communities suffering from significant poverty, insufficient transportation, poor access to healthcare and food stores, and significant blight and recidivism. These at-risk communities tend to be the most costly to government resources when not addressed effectively.

Persons living in poverty are more likely to suffer from poor health, affecting the overall quality of life and well-being in the community. Poorer health outcomes translate into dollars lost in a community because of loss in productivity, unemployment, and shorter life expectancy. Individuals with limited access to healthcare not only utilize the emergency room (ER) for primary care, but also have higher rates of chronic disease.

Was a private consultant used? If yes, describe involvement and identify

No, the work was done by County departments. Future consideration of a consultant to aid with certain processes as needed may be considered.

**PRESENTATION STYLE**

We envision using a visual to aid in the communication of statistics (graphs, pie charts, etc.) such as PowerPoint. There will also be some sort of group activity perhaps involving division of the room into sections that represent the different clientele served by Healthy Communities in a way that will show attendees that they are truly interconnected.