

April 14, 2023

To: City of Berkeley, CA
Budget and Finance Policy Committee
From: Judy Weber
Principal, VIVA Consulting
RE: VIVA's Scope of Work and Recommendations
Housing and Community Services Staffing Study

I regret that I am unavailable to attend your committee meeting's discussion of the Housing and Community Services (HCS) Staffing Study. I have a prior professional engagement at this same time.

It was my pleasure to work with the Housing, and Community Services Division leadership and staff to conduct this staffing study. Together, we reviewed the scope of the division's work, growth trends in existing programs, and new and emerging policies and programs in order to make staffing and organizational recommendations. The recommendations presented in the report reflect best practices in the housing field, as well as staff's understanding and knowledge of HCS' workload and City priorities.

VIVA strongly supports the recommendations in the final report.

Below is a summary outline of our process working together. Please reference the final report for the recommendations.

A. VIVA's Scope of Work

The City of Berkeley engaged VIVA Consulting, LLC (VIVA) in January 2022 to evaluate and make recommendations on the staffing pattern and structure of its Division of Housing and Community Services (HCS) in the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services. VIVA's work began in mid-April 2022 and concluded in November 2022 and is detailed in HCS' April 2023 Staffing Study.

The questions guiding the study were:

- How well is HSC meeting the high priority objectives of the City in terms of its housing and homelessness programs? What impact does HSC's current staffing have on the City's successes and challenges in this regard?
- How well is HSC meeting its regulatory oversight/compliance of the programs it administers with its current staffing? Where are there gaps?
- What is the optimal balance between "generalist" and "specialist" roles as the programs and their regulatory requirements continue to grow and evolve?
- What can we learn from a survey of staffing models of peer municipalities with similar program and fund administration?
- What is the optimal number of positions and structure for HSC over the next few years?

The following process/steps were followed to develop and refine the assessment and inform the report:

1. Document review

VIVA reviewed HCS documents that were relevant to this engagement including the HCS Manager’s April 8, 2022 detailed, 13-page overview of HCS’ mission, scope of work, recent impacts on workload and unit staffing overviews. Supporting documentation to the Manager’s memo was provided in the following areas:

- HCS structure and overview including organizational chart evolution over 6 years
- HCS budget and finance including revenue sources/ contracts and their growth over time
- Staffing classifications
- Working job descriptions
- Work plans and trends

2. Guidance from the HCS Organizational Planning Committee

HCS appointed an Organizational Planning Committee (“the Committee”) of its Manager and unit leaders to guide the planning of the study. The Committee affirmed the process design and timeline for the study. It then discussed and approved questions to be used in an online HCS staff survey and subsequent one-on-one video interviews with senior HHCS and HCS staff as well as other City and external stakeholders.

3. HCS staff survey

VIVA administered the online HCS staff survey in May 2022. The survey enjoyed a 91% participation rate. VIVA summarized and reviewed the findings with the Committee and subsequently the staff.

4. Interviews with key staff

VIVA conducted 13 video interviews with three staff from the HHCS Office of the Director, six HCS senior staff, the City Attorney, two staff from the City Manager’s office and one external stakeholder familiar with HCS’ staffing practices. These interviews took place in June 2022 and VIVA summarized and reviewed the findings with the Committee.

5. Peer interviews

VIVA conducted 45- to 60-minute interviews during June, July and August 2022 with peer departments in seven peer municipalities¹ identified and approved by the Committee. The questions asked were also reviewed and approved by the Committee. A report on the peer interviews was shared with the committee as well.

6. Interim summary and update with HCS working group planning sessions

¹ Alameda County, Hayward, Irvine, Oakland, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Cruz,

VIVA prepared and presented to the Committee an interim PowerPoint report dated June 30, 2022 that was subsequently updated with working group assignments July 26, 2022. This report summarized the steps and findings to date related to the document review, the staff survey, the interviews with key staff, the interviews with peer departments in peer municipalities. The report also identified the topics the Committee had identified for discussion over the course of four planning sessions. In August, September and October 2022 to inform an updated organizational staffing design for HCS.

7. Planning sessions with HCS staff

VIVA facilitated and the HCS leadership team attended all HCS organizational planning sessions that took place in August, September and October 2022. Other HCS staff were invited, but not required, to attend any of the sessions. HCS staff were particularly encouraged to attend the first and last sessions. The first session would focus on setting goals/workload expectations for the next few years informed by the findings summarized in the interim report and the last session would review the final organizational design option that evolved from the planning sessions.

8. Draft and final report

Following the planning sessions, VIVA and HCS began drafting the report in November 2022, and finalized the report in April 2023.

B. VIVA' Recommendation

VIVA strongly supports the recommendations in the final report.