

MEMORANDUM



To: The Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

Through: Robert S. LaSala, County Administrator

From: Gwendolyn Warren, Bureau Director, Health and Human Services 

Subject: Economic Impact of Poverty Report

Distr: Carl Harness, Assistant County Administrator
Maureen Freaney, Assistant County Administrator
Mark Woodard, Assistant County Administrator
Jim Bennett, County Attorney
John Woodruff, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Larry Arrington, Director, Planning Department
Tim Burns, Director, Justice and Consumer Services
Anthony Jones, Bureau Director, Community Development
Todd Myers, Director, Code Enforcement
Mike Meidel, Director, Economic Development
D. Gay Lancaster, Executive Director, Juvenile Welfare Board
Dr. Claude Dharamraj, Director, Pinellas County Health Department

Date: May 17, 2012

BACKGROUND

The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners has 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 the Health and Human Services, Justice and Consumer Services, Community Development, Code Enforcement, Economic Development and Planning departments through a series of workshops that provided an avenue for these departments to reassess their core services to ensure they align with the Board's Strategic Direction. In an effort to review and determine whether the core services provided by these departments align with current community needs, 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.

SUMMARY

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. 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.

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.

RECOMMENDATION

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. The strategic initiatives are vital strategies to bend the cost curve of expenditure for these at-risk neighborhoods. Implementation of these recommendations will increase self-sufficiency of individuals living in poverty, promote safe, clean neighborhoods and decrease the amount of resources needed to support these at-risk communities -- allowing funds to be allocated countywide and improving the quality of life of every resident in Pinellas County.