



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Justice Project Planning Team

RE: Justice Project Implementation Plan - Discussion of potential next steps

DATE: January 17, 2023

At the February 7th Council meeting, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee will present the Justice Project Needs Assessment Report, including a list of recommendations for our community's public health, safety, and justice facility needs. On February 21st, a resolution accepting the Justice Project Needs Assessment will be on the Council agenda for consideration. The Justice Project Planning Team would like feedback from Council on the proposed next steps after the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) completes the Justice Project Needs Assessment report.

Justice Project Needs Assessment

For your information, the Justice Project Needs Assessment has the following elements:

- **Establishes a vision, values and goals** for the criminal legal system in Whatcom County,
- **Examines data** related incarceration rates, demographics, incarceration prevention and reduction efforts, and health and welfare needs,
- **Identifies gaps** in the current community response both inside and outside of the jail,
- **Considers what it would take to fill those gaps** in order to improve health and public safety, and
- **Makes recommendations** to address the community's public safety concerns.

Recommendations in the Needs Assessment focus on three interrelated elements of public health, safety, and justice:

- **Systems Goals**, include shifts in practices, policies, and funding that facilitate efficient functioning of the criminal legal system,
- **Services Goals**, which are the types of supports that need to be in place to prevent and reduce people's involvement with the criminal legal system, and
- **Facilities Goals**, which include a jail and a variety of residential and non-residential facilities and settings for legal and healthcare treatment services.

The priority needs and recommendations offered by the SAC to the Whatcom County Council are recognized as critical and time sensitive. The Needs Assessment acknowledges that the Whatcom County Council and Executive will consider recommendations in the SAC's Needs Assessment, consult with experts in service design and delivery and facility planning, consider financing mechanisms, and identify next steps for implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To move the recommendations of the Needs Assessment forward, within a timeline to consider a ballot measure for the 2023 general election, it is proposed that the County Executive Office, with support from the Justice Project Planning Team, develop an implementation plan for the Justice Project Needs Assessment recommendations that includes the following:

- Potential facilities concepts and planning level costs,
- Proposed services and systems efforts and their costs,
- Identification of County Departments, Community Leaders and Organizations to lead implementation of recommendations, and
- A funding approach.

There will be four (4) workshops with county staff and key stakeholders to identify implementation details for Justice Project Needs Assessment recommendations:

- Systems Workshop,
- Services Workshop,
- Facilities Workshop, and
- Funding Workshop.

Several groups will review and provide feedback on the draft implementation plan, including:

- County Council (March, April, and May updates),
- Law and Justice Council (Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force),
- Focus Groups for underrepresented audiences (tribal members, Latinx, people with lived experience in the criminal legal system), and
- General public at a town hall listening session event (April, 2023 TBD).

Consultant services will be funded through the New Health, Safety & Justice Facility fund and may include meeting facilitation, project feasibility services, cost estimating, presentations, and reporting.

We realize that the County Council has not yet considered the Needs Assessment. In hopes of keeping the project moving forward, the Planning Team wants to get feedback from the County Council on the proposed next steps for the implementation plan. The Planning Team is asking Council to confirm that these are the right elements to include in the implementation plan and that the process is the right path forward.