



City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Human Services Department

Catherine L. Lester, Acting Director

Date: March 16, 2015

To: Honorable Sally Clark, City Council

From: Catherine Lester, Acting Director

Subject: City Council Confirmation Process and Questions

I am excited about Mayor's Murray's nomination of me to serve as the Director for the City of Seattle's Human Services Department. I am equally excited to continue to work with you and your colleagues on the City Council.

Attached are my responses to the questions shared from City Council regarding my nomination. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions. I look forward to the chance to further discuss my responses with you and members of the Housing Affordability, Human Services and Economic Resiliency committee on March 19th, 2015.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Question #1: What are your major goals for the HSD over the next three years? What do you see as the primary challenges facing the HSD over the next three years?

The Human Services Department is a significant investor of the human services safety net in our region. In addition to its role as an investor, the Department plays an important as a convener and thought partner on how to best address complex human services issues.

As Director, there are five goals that I am committed to working on during the next three years. Below I provide detail on each of these goals, and why I believe they are critical to address the challenges that will face HSD over the next three years.

The first is achieving a **results culture**. The Human Services Department is poised to be a premier leader in its work to make a measureable impact with how it invests in our community. The focus on outcomes and results is critical for two reasons. One is the shrinkage in public funds at the federal, state and local levels of government. Increasingly, the new normal requires public agencies to do more with less. The second reason is the ever-increasing racial and other disparities that exist, particularly with marginalized and underserved communities. During a point in time when more and more people are living at or below poverty, and the intersection between poverty and race is becoming starker, public agencies have a responsibility to ensure that investments have real and meaningful impact.

There are numerous challenges to shifting an organization like the Human Services Department to one that is highly aligned with a culture of results. One challenge is the capacity required both within the Department and in the provider network that makes this type of culture shift both possible and successful. A very explicit example of capacity is the ability to collect, analyze and use data to inform decisions about investments and operations.

The second goal is to ensure that the Department demonstrates **strong public stewardship**. With an annual budget in 2014 of \$128 million, it is imperative that the Department has good business operations that support a strong stewardship of the resources that are entrusted by the public. Historically, the Department has been challenged with several audit findings that have highlighted risk and liability to its role as a public steward. The challenge of increased audit risk and liability compromises the Department's credibility in the community and with external funders.

The third goal is to **create a positive employee experience** for my colleagues within the Department. Recently, an employee survey was administered to gauge from staff about the things that are working with within the Department, as well as area needing improvement. As Director, I am committed to improving the organization's communication, looking at ways to better invest in the professional growth and development of our staff, and cultivating a culture based on transparency and one which expresses appreciation for the staff. Although there are many competing and complex factors contributing to an employee's work experience, there are also a number of actions that I as the Director can and should take to strengthen and improve this

experience. I believe that the challenge is less about what and how to improve the employee experience, and more about how to authentically engage staff in helping to share in creating the solutions that will make a real difference.

Being **innovative in human services** is the fourth goal that I plan to work on. One area of innovation is to effectively frame a regional human services agenda, including the role that the city can play within that agenda. Increasingly, Seattle is assuming the role of a regional human service provider. However, the challenge of complex role and authority, shared financial commitments, and negotiated collaboration are the regional policy considerations that will be key to the goal of innovation.

And lastly, I want to ensure that the Department is **prepared for the future**. The current reality is one in which the landscape can change quickly. Preparing for the future requires an ability to anticipate what is on the horizon and discern whether the organization is equipped to meet those challenges. One of the primary challenges I believe ahead for the Human Services Department is the need for an intentional strategy to support our provider network through both capacity building support and technical assistance. In my conversations with provider agencies, I am consistently confronted by the reality that providers are struggling to have the capacity they need to effectively serve vulnerable people, including the capability to track and use data, have strong fiscal operations, and equip practitioners with current skills and competencies for working with clients that present with very complex and chronic needs.

Question #2: What is your general philosophy for how to most effectively work with a City Council? How will you be responsive to Council requests, in particular regarding priorities that differ with those of the Executive branch?

The general philosophy that guides me in my professional career is based in the value of collaborative relationships. I believe that relationships are fostered through regular face-to-face interaction and by joining with one another in work that is both mutually satisfying and challenging.

During my tenure with the City of Seattle, I have appreciated the opportunity to interact with members of City Council in a variety of ways. As Director, my commitment is to continue to partner with the Council, making a priority to regularly engage with Councilmembers during individual briefings and/or meetings, providing regularly written updates, and partnering on special projects and committees such as the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and Committee to End Homelessness. I am committed to being flexible and accessible to members of City Council, and will be available by phone and impromptu requests to meet or talk.

I believe that close coordination and alignment with the Mayor's Office is equally important to a positive and effective relationship between a Department Director and City Council. This is particularly critical in circumstances when there may be a differing policy position or priorities between the executive and legislative branches of city government. An example is the closure of the West Seattle encampment (formerly known as

Nickelsville), and the role that the Department played in managing the service planning for the closure under the McGinn administration. During the period, I was serving as the Department's Interim Director.

The decision to close the West Seattle encampment was one that had differing perspectives between the executive and legislative branches of city government. A further complexity was the strong opinion of federal partners which significant influence on the city's federal allocation for homeless services. In this example, it was important to me to ensure that the Department's role was very clear, and within this established role, to work closely with both the Mayor's Office and the City Council on the details of the transition. As Director, I will work closely with both the executive and legislative branches of government, being available and accessible to providing information, advice and following up on responding to critical issues.

Question #3: How will you ensure that Council members and Legislative staff receive timely information needed from your department for Council to make sound policy and budgetary decisions?

I recognize the importance of timely information, especially in a political environment such as city government. As the Director, I will ensure that members of the City Council and legislative staff receive timely information through regular face-to-face meetings, monthly department reports, and monthly briefings to the Housing Affordability, Human Services and Economic Resilience committee. I will also ensure that there are clearly identified points of contact within the Department to ensure that internally, I am triaging issues and questions and providing follow up to members of Council and their staff. Furthermore, I will be available and accessible to members of City Council by telephone, as well as impromptu meetings or requests for information.

In addition to the venues noted above, special projects, initiatives and committees are another opportunity to interface with City Councilmembers and their staff. There are numerous examples of such projects, initiatives and committees, each of which offer the opportunity to share information and clarify issues so that the Council can make sound decisions. Three examples are the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, the Committee to End Homelessness, and the Financial Empowerment Center initiative. There is also an important role that the Department can and should play in partnering with service providers and advocates in order to inform City Council, as well as the Mayor's Office, about policy and budgetary decisions.

Question #4: How will you work with other Departments to achieve the goals of the City? How about outside stakeholders?

The Human Services Department works on a number of issues that cross and connect with other departments in city government. Some examples include providing utility support and assistance, expanding opportunities for youth employment, addressing homelessness, ending gender-base violence, and making sure seniors can remain independent and in their own homes. These partnerships occur in the form of Interdepartmental

Teams (IDTs), ad hoc work groups, standing committees, joint staff meetings, and spontaneous problem solving sessions.

As Director, my approach to working with other Departments will be similar to how I described my approach to working with City Council; investing in my relationships with colleagues across the city, and leveraging these relationships to advance our shared goals. One of the most successful examples of an inter-departmental partnership has been the work between HSD and the Office of Economic Development (OED) to launch Career Bridge, a service to address employment barriers for men of color facing significant barriers. The partnership between HSD and OED has resulted in an investment to a community-based organization to serve men with prior criminal justice involvement by helping them prepare for and obtain employment, as well as the other supports so critical to success (i.e. education and training, housing, behavioral health supports, etc.).

The Department's work with Career Bridge has also required extensive partnership with community and other stakeholders. I have been involved in this partnership work through small and large group meetings and other convenings, one-on-one connections, and being present at events to support the work that partners are doing without a specific agenda from the city. Each opportunity to connect is an opportunity to strengthen how the city work with its partners, and invest time to explore ways that the citywide goals can be used to support both community and other more formal stakeholder partners.

A second example of inter-departmental work is the Department's leadership with the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) initiative, as well as the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. Both MDT and LEAD are strategies designed to coordinate efforts across departments, as well as between the city and other stakeholders, to address street disorder and other issues in the downtown core. As Director, my priority is to ensure that the Department is well coordinated with other city departments such as the Seattle Police Department, City Attorney's Office, Parks Department, and Seattle Municipal Courts. Both MDT and LEAD have intersecting and complex goals to triage street disorder, divert individuals from deep system involvement, and connect individuals to services. These goals require strong working relationships within the region include King County, United Way of King County, the State, philanthropy, and a broad network of social service providers.

Question #5: What is your organizational management approach? How will you review internal operations at HSD to determine if they warrant improvement? What is your leadership approach?

The management and leadership approach that I have adopted in my career is one of shared or collaborative leadership. I enjoy and thrive in strong team environments, and enjoy the synergy of team problem solving. I also believe that clarity on the boundaries of role and authority is a key contributing factor to an environment where shared or collaborative leadership can exist.

As Director I plan to use a dual Deputy Director structure, one to lead services and strategy and a second to lead administrative operations. This structure is intended to ensure that there is adequate support and direction throughout the Department, and to clearly distinguish role and authority within the organization. I will work closely with the two Deputy Directors to ensure smooth internal operations. One of my top priorities as Director is to implement a data dashboard that will track both service and operational performance metrics. I plan to use this dashboard for review of internal operations and to determine where improvements are needed. The service metrics will be generated from the full implementation of the Outcomes Framework, while the operational metrics will include internal business functions such as human resources, information technology, contracts and fiscal management.

Additionally, I plan to work closely with the Labor Management Committee (LMC) and other staff workgroups so that I can understand the critical issues impacting the Department's operations, as well as ideas for how to strengthen our work and make improvements. Two other examples of recent staff workgroups are an ad hoc team convened to conduct a set of analysis related to Race and Social Justice, and a standing affinity group convened to work through issues in the Department's contracting and monitoring practice. Both of these workgroups have created space for staff from across the department to work together to share information and expertise, and problem solve.

And lastly, a series of recent listening visits with staff confirmed the importance and value of small group gatherings. Although the Department holds regular all staff meeting throughout the year, the smaller gatherings seem to be more meaningful for staff by affording them the opportunity to connect with the Director and each other to share experiences, raise issues, and offer ideas. As Director, I am interested and committed to continuing these small group gatherings on a monthly basis at each work site within the Seattle Municipal Tower, the South King County office, and the Central Building.

Question #6: Give an example of your strategic planning abilities and describe an experience using strategic planning.

Strategic planning is a skill that I have used often in my role as Deputy and Interim Director of HSD, as well as in other leadership roles in my career. One such example is my work leading the development of the Department's Outcomes Framework. For the purposes of this response, I will share an example from my prior work experience with the Department of Social Services in Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC) to highlight my strategic planning abilities.

I joined Mecklenburg County's Department of Social Services at a time when the national child welfare system was experiencing tremendous change and transformation, much of which was inspired by the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The ASFA legislation recognized the historical negative impact of child welfare and child protective services on children and their families, and proposed a set of practice and policy changes intended to improve the safety, permanency and well-being goals for children at risk of abuse and neglect.

My role was to design and implement the system improvement required to be responsive to the ASFA legislation. I led a departmental strategic planning process within our child welfare division to look at the policy, practice and resources implications for responding to ASFA. The strategic planning process involved reviewing relevant quantitative and qualitative data, convening internal and external stakeholders, identifying goals and objectives as well as related milestones, identifying resource needs and constraints, and creating an implementation framework. There are two significant outcomes to this strategic planning process which remain in effect within the organization today.

The first was the reconfiguration of staff to geographic distributes across the county. These district teams also represented a blending of staff by functions, thus eliminating the functional silos that staff had historically worked in. The alignment of a blended team of staff assigned to a specific geographic district meant that staff could more easily coordinate their work with families, and could more readily partner with the stakeholders and resources unique to that geographic area.

The second was the creation of a team of facilitators tasked with convening family-centered meetings at the point in which an out-of-home placement decision was being considered for a child involved with the child welfare system. Data has shown that out-of-home placements were an important juncture for long-term outcomes for vulnerable children. Therefore, a commitment to ensuring that any decision to place a child out of their home, to move a child from one placement to another, or the decision to reunify a child back with the birth family, should be made with great coordinated.

Question #7: What experience do you have balancing budget priorities in an environment where budget reductions are necessary?

During my tenure as Director for the Cuyahoga Tapestry System of Care (CTSOC) in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland, Ohio), I was charged with achieving contract efficiencies while mending relationships with the provider network. CTSOC was the county's approach to ensuring that the needs of children and youth with severe and persistent mental health issues were met. The focus was on meeting the needs of these young people involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This charge was given to me during a time of significant change and transition, including the conclusion of a federal corruption investigation and a multi-million deficit in the county's budget.

My approach to this charge to achieve contract efficiencies was work closely with my team and our county's budget office in exploring all of the possibilities for a strategy for reducing contracts. This exploration involved our review of the goals and objectives for the services we needed to deliver, the available of resources, the reality of current budgetary pressures and constraints, and the community landscape.

The strategy involved consolidation of contracts by 50%, which net a cost savings of approximately \$150K. This strategy also involved shifting to contracts with lead agencies that had strong adequate infrastructure who were able to enter into sub-contract arrangements with smaller organizations that had more specialized, and in many cases, more culturally competent services.

After the design of the contract consolidation strategy, I spent time engaging with our provider network to share the intention of the consolidation plan, talk through implications and impacts, and hear their feedback. These meetings with the provider network helped to inform how we implemented the strategy through a competitive procurement process that informed decisions for a set of multi-year contracts for clinical and family wrap around services.

My experience in Ohio has informed my approach to balancing budget priorities in environments where reductions are often required. First, the importance of working with internal stakeholders to identify priorities, and understand available resources as well as fiscal pressures is an important step. The relationship between those colleagues with expertise in program design and those experienced with budget management is important. Second, taking the time to meet with impacted stakeholders, like service providers, helps to refine the strategy and promotes transparency. I recognize that it is not always possible to include every voice in a planning process; however, I believe that to the extent to which stakeholders can be engaged, a better outcome is more likely.

Question #8: City of Seattle is currently implementing the Race and Social Justice Initiative to address racial and social inequities. In your position, how will you support and implement the Race and Social Justice Initiative? Can you provide some specific examples?

The City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) is particularly important for the Department, both because of the origins of RSJI emerging from HSD and the current relevancy of RSJI to the scope of work that HSD is charged with stewarding.

One of the most powerful opportunities for HSD to align with RSJI is through the Outcomes Framework, the strategy for results-based accountability that focuses using the Department's resources to making investments that will reduce racial disparities. In my role as the Department's Director, I will work closely to shepherd our efforts to both scale and sustain this framework so that we are assured that the \$99 million that are invested in our community area having a measureable impact towards reducing racial and other disparities.

Following the grand jury decision in Ferguson, MO, Interim Director John Okamoto charged the Department with conducting a RSJI analysis focused on four areas: Human Resource policies and practices; the implementation of our Outcomes Framework; our outreach and engagement practices; and the way in which the Department works with providers around capacity building and technical support. My commitment as Director is to support the implementation of the recommendations that have been made as a result of the

analysis in these four areas. Many of the recommendations align with the five goals that I have outlined as my priorities for the next three years. Furthermore, these recommendations reflect staff's efforts to take stock of our current environment within the Department and identify opportunities to improve our work both within the organization and in the community.

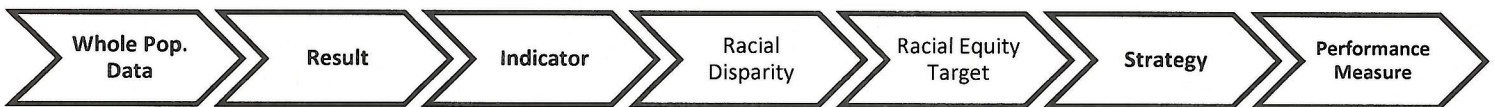
I also want to acknowledge the importance of staff development and training to support their capacity for anti-racism and culturally competent practice. HSD has a very active and robust Change Team. However, there is always an opportunity to expand the work of RSJI to every member of the HSD team. It is for this reason that additional staff development and training is a critical factor to supporting the success of RSJI within the Department.

Question #9: What specific and measurable outcomes should the HSD look to when measuring success?

The Human Services Department has been focused on shifting to a results culture through the development, refinement and implementation of its Outcomes Framework. The objective of the Framework is to provide a policy frame for how the Department defines results for its investments, aligns resources to those results, and then monitors progress to ensure a return on investment. The Framework is grounded in data, both at the whole population level and at the program level. In essence, the Outcomes Framework is a results-base accountability strategy that focuses on making a measurable impact to reduce racial disparities.

The Department's work is achieved through three service divisions. Attached is a summary of the three service divisions, along with the aspirational goals for each division, the results reflecting the aspiration goal, and the population-level indicators that demonstrate achievement of the result.

Using a theory of change, the Department has begun to use data to inform the design of our investment strategies with a focus on reducing racial and other disparities. The theory of change methodology shows the logical link between the desired results, population level indicators, racial disparities and equity targets, strategies for achieving the desired results, and performance measures. Below is a visual depiction of the theory of change.



The strategy is technically what the Department is purchasing from a provider or other vendor through a contract; an example might be case management services for youth that are homeless. The performance measure is what will be counted to gage performance of the contract and includes quality measure (how much do we do?), quality measures (how we did we do it?), and impact measures (is anyone better off?).

As Director, my commitment is to scale and sustain the Department's shift to a result culture. Building on the lessons learned over the last several years, the next step is to codify the priority outcomes and indicators, as well as the process the department's uses to create investment strategies that align its resources to these measurable outcomes and indicators.

Question #10: What is your vision for HSD's role in reducing homelessness in Seattle and the region?

Someone once shared with me that *homelessness is a reflection of a breakdown in community*. This reflection resonates with me, and informs my thinking and vision for the role that the Department must play to reduce homelessness.

I also believe that the Department has an important role to play as a convener of partners and as a participant at other convenings, to help inform service design, policy decisions, and allocation choices that address the issue of homelessness. So many of the factors contributing to homelessness involve systems of which the city has no direct authority. Examples of these systems include healthcare, corrections, foster care, mental health and chemically dependency. My vision for HSD is to lead and team with partners in this region on opportunities for transformation within the system that contribute to homelessness.

One example of how this is in action today is the leadership that HSD is doing in supporting of eliminating homelessness for youth and young adults in our community. Although our investments directly supporting youth and young adult homelessness is only 3% of the Department's entire budget, our role in as a system champion and thought partner has been critical in highlighting the systemic issues of disproportionality. In this system champion and thought partner role, HSD has been the convener and also the participant to examine the issues and impact of disproportionality for youth of color and queer youth who find themselves homeless. This role is one which will inform our future investments, beginning in 2016, but is also important in elevating this challenge to those systems that more directly contribute to this issue in being responsible for making the changes required to have an impact in reducing this disparity.

A second critical role for the Department in reducing homelessness is that of advocate. For decades, an incremental reduction in federal funding has slowly eroded the safety net in communities across the country. This erosion has impacted many of the major public systems that contribute to homelessness like child welfare, general welfare, mental health, and corrections. As Director, I will provide leadership in framing the issues and challenges experienced on the local level to shape an advocacy agenda directed to our State and Federal partners.

And finally, there is a clear role for the Department to play as a major investor in the local service continuum. The Seattle Human Services Department plays a significant role in the region in addressing homelessness as evident by the nearly \$40.4 million invested across 183 contracts and 60 agencies in 2014. These investments

funded services to assist single adults, youth and young adults, families, survivors of gender-based violence, older adults, and veterans. These investments include prevention, intervention and permanent housing services. And yet despite this significant investment, the homelessness issue is growing and becoming more complicated.

The role of investor requires the Department to clearly define the desired results, including measures of success and performance; align our resources towards those results; and monitor our investments to see whether or not progress has been made and learn from our efforts. As Director, my commitment is to ensure that the Department's investments are designed and procured with the goal of making a measurable impact and reducing disparities as described in the Outcomes Framework. I will also work closely with regional partners to ensure alignment on funding priorities, performance expectations, and monitoring practices.

ATTACHMENT:

HSD Outcomes Framework – Outcomes & Indicators Slides



Youth & Family Empowerment Division

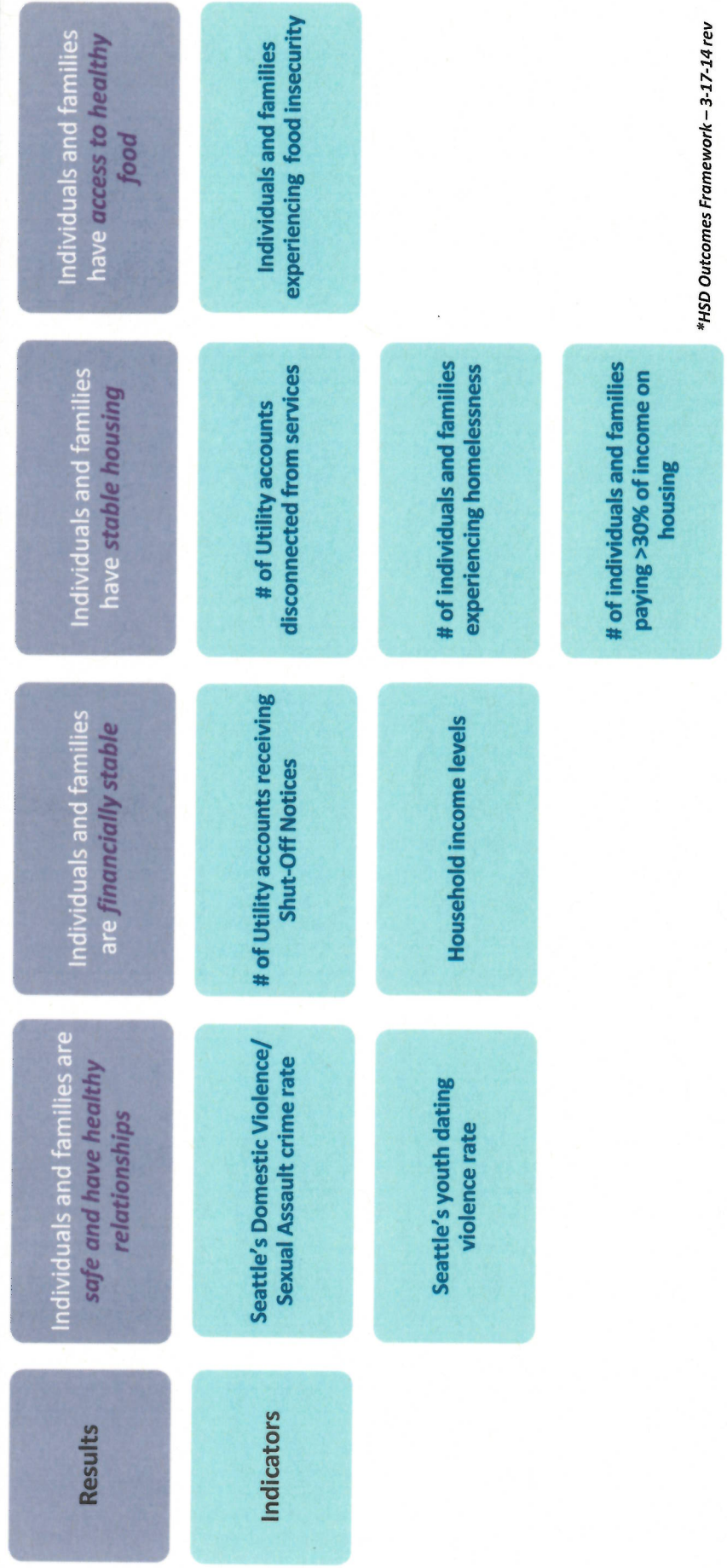
Community Value: Children & youth are prepared for school and life
Target Population: Children and youth in Seattle between 0-25 years

Results	Children and youth <i>achieve academic success</i>	Children and youth are <i>healthy</i> (physical, social, emotional)	Youth effectively <i>transition to adulthood</i>	Families are <i>strong, healthy and stable</i>
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of preschool children ready for kindergarten % of middle school youth who are not truant % of youth with on time high school graduation % of high school grads enrolled in college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of youth and young adults reporting fair or poor health % of children or youth w/emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions % of youth and young adults using alcohol and other drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of youth with on time high school graduation % of youth and young adults engaged/connected to school and/or their community % of youth and young adults not employed or in school % of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of children, youth and adults who are obese % of families paying more than 30% of income on housing % of families with children living in poverty



Community Support & Assistance Division

Community Value: Our community is safe, stable, and self-reliant
 Target Population: All Seattle residents



*HSD Outcomes Framework – 3-17-14 rev



Aging & Disability Services Division

Community Value: Our community promotes healthy aging and lifestyle
Target Population: Older adults in Seattle/King County and adults living with a disability

Results	Vulnerable adults have <i>affordable, quality healthcare</i>	Vulnerable adults achieve <i>basic needs</i>	Vulnerable adults <i>improve or maintain their health</i> (physical, social, emotional)	Vulnerable adults <i>remain independent</i> (home & community)
Indicators	Rates of unnecessary re-hospitalizations	Rate of vulnerable adults needing daily assistance with self-care	Rates of fall-related hospital admissions	% of Medicaid Long Term Care recipients who receive institutional care vs. home-/community-based services
	Rates of hospitalization for Ambulatory Care Sensitive Conditions	% of adults in affordable housing	% of adults reporting participation in healthy activities	% of unpaid caregivers who intend to place their loved one in a nursing facility
	Rates of preventable chronic disease	Unemployment rate for older adults	Rates of preventable chronic diseases	Rates of fall-related hospital admissions
	Mortality rates	Rate of food insecurity among older adults	Mortality rates and life expectancy	% of older adults reporting satisfaction with access to mass/special needs transit
	Rates of satisfaction with healthcare	% of older adults living below 200% of federal poverty level	Self-reported health status	