

Dane County Board of Supervisors Innovation Interns Fall 2016

Concept:

Using LTE funds, engage 2 interns to each work 100 hours researching a specific topic. Tasks to include best practice research, interviews with key stakeholders and local experts, and development of a white paper. A template of the final white paper will be provided and will guide the project. Interns will work 10 hours a week and meet at least every two weeks with the Chief of Staff and a County Board member designated to help oversee the work. In addition to the white paper, the intern will make a presentation to the Executive Committee in early December.

Cost: The County pays LTE interns \$15 per hour. A 100-hour internship, with Social Security, would be \$1,615. At this rate, the Board Office could afford 2 interns this fall. The total cost would be \$3,230.

Benefits:

- 1) Expand the Board Office's capacity to complete policy and practice research on issues of interest to the Board.
- 2) Strengthen ties with the UW, Madison College, and Edgewood College as partners in policy development, and possibly future funding.
- 3) Provide experience to students, possibly opening doors to future County employment. The internship may add to the diversity of the Board Office staff initially and may improve the diversity of the County's workforce over time.

Future Planning: The idea would be to have this initiative occur each fall, dependent on the LTE budget expenditure by mid-year.

Ideas for topics:

Inclusive Engagement: Dane County embraces transparency and welcomes the public's voice. However, providing the opportunity for all stakeholders to engage in government processes has been challenging. Recognizing that there are racial and social justice implications to public engagement, the objective of this research is to identify innovative best practices in community engagement, interview both local community advocates and academics versed in current research, and develop recommendations for specific county initiatives.

Examples of specific needs for inclusive engagement practices:

- 1) How can Dane County best engage the general public and the neighborhood regarding redevelopment of the Alliant Energy Center?
- 2) How can the County Board provide meaningful input from diverse communities on the annual departmental budget requests and on the proposed budget?

- 3) What are the elements of public engagement for the purchase of affordable housing units?

Financing Strategies: In 2003, the County established a committee both to identify approaches to control costs and to explore alternative and stable sources of revenue in order to maintain the County's commitment to control taxes and offer high quality services. In the more than a dozen years since the report was issued, the county financial environment has changed. There are state imposed limits on the property tax levy and, subsequent to the recession of 2008, a focus on maintaining a strong general fund balance. While the 2003 study recommends fee increases as a revenue source, new public sector financing approaches are emerging, including, but not limited to, Pay for Success.

Pay for Success financing represents an innovation in the social services sector. Programs are financed by bringing together governments, private investors, and service providers. In a Pay for Success arrangement, investors provide the necessary capital that service providers need to launch new programs. Governments pay back these investments only if specific, measurable outcomes are achieved.

The objective of this project is to identify innovations in public financing for operating and capital expenditures. The research would include an analysis of various approaches, verification regarding whether county government in Wisconsin has the authority to implement an approach, and the challenges and opportunities of financing methods. In addition to a literature search, the research would include interviews of key county staff, national content-area experts, and local academics. The white paper would include recommendations and approaches to address potential barriers to implementation.

Rural Elderly Issues and Solutions: Dane County has a strong history of supporting the needs of the elderly. The Area Agency on Aging of Dane County serves individuals who are age 60 and over and/or their family members by providing information and assistance in accessing services that will help older adults stay in their own homes and communities. The amount of assistance that is provided is dependent upon the needs of the older adult. These services can be short-term (such as getting signed up for a prescription drug program) or long-term (such as someone who is frail or who has a chronic health condition receiving ongoing monitoring and support from a case manager) and anywhere in between. Examples of community-based services include: congregate and home delivered meals, caregiver support, case management, and help with benefits questions. Many of these services are provided on a donation basis and are delivered at the local level.

The Baby Boom population is aging and will put an increased demand on services in the coming decades. The elderly living in rural areas of the county face a number of challenges, including social isolation and a lack of access to groceries, health care, and supported housing options.

The objective of this analysis is to:

- 1) Update the demographic information regarding rural seniors and make projections.

- 2) Identify specific issues facing the rural elderly and current county programs to address them.
- 3) Conduct a literature search regarding best practices to address unmet needs, including costs and other barriers to implementation.
- 4) Interview county officials, stakeholders, and academic professionals to identify innovative approaches.
- 5) Make recommendations.