



# COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION  
DRIVE, ROOM 102A  
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 2/6/2024

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Human Services

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Katie Greaves 565-8501, Chris Sorg 565-5535

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisorial District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

California Outcomes and Accountability Review System Improvement Plan for Sonoma County CalWORKS Program

**Recommended Action:**

Approve the California Outcomes and Accountability Review System Improvement Plan of the Sonoma County CalWORKs program and authorize the Chair to sign the System Improvement Plan.

**Executive Summary:**

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) is a local, data-driven program management framework that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by sharing best practices and analyzing participant outcomes. Cal-OAR consists of three core components: performance indicators, a county CalWORKs self-assessment, and a CalWORKs System Improvement Plan. The Cal-OAR continuous quality improvement process, which includes the self-assessment and plan, will take place over five-year cycles. The county plan is required to be completed every five years, approved in public session by the Board of Supervisors, and submitted to the California Department of Social Services by February 28, 2024.

The Cal-OAR process was authorized by SB 89 in 2017 with delays authorized by AB 79 in 2020. This is the first Cal-OAR cycle which began July 1, 2021.

**Discussion:**

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program provides services, resources and opportunities to families living in poverty to achieve economic and social mobility. The staples of the CalWORKs program are monthly cash aid, employment services, social work case management, child care, housing assistance and other wraparound supportive services. In Sonoma County, the CalWORKs program is known as SonomaWORKS.

The CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) is a mandatory continuous quality improvement framework to adapt county CalWORKs program design, service delivery models, and activity structure towards the best participant outcomes possible, all with an equity focus and lens. Cal-OAR emphasizes collaboration and partnership among program participants, county and state staff and program partners. Cal-OAR is comprised of a County Self-Assessment (CSA) and a County System Improvement Plan (SIP).

SonomaWORKS took a collaborative approach in developing the CSA. Focus groups and one-on-one interviews were held in English and Spanish to capture observations and experiences of 71 program participants and staff. This allowed SonomaWORKS to discern where programs and services are working well and where there is room for improvement. SonomaWORKS also learned from other Bay Area counties through the formalized peer review process.

All of the data collected through the CSA process were used to select strategic priorities and action steps for the SIP. The development of the SIP was guided by our Cal-OAR Stakeholder Engagement Steering Committee. We held three in-person focus groups of 54 program participants - one in Spanish and two in English. We also conducted 19 one-on-one telephone interviews with current and former program participants. The questions and protocol for the focus groups and one-on-one interviews were approved by the steering committee and were consistent across participants. Participants were compensated for their time.

The development of the SIP was also informed by input from the Employment & Training Racial Equity Community Group to ensure an antiracist approach to selection of SIP strategies and alignment with racial equity goals. The Racial Equity Community Group will continue to be involved in the implementation of the SIP throughout the SIP lifespan to ensure ongoing adherence to the use of a racial equity lens.

Our Cal-OAR CSA and SIP steering committees selected First Activity Attendance Rate and Ongoing Engagement Rate as the two areas of improvement for the 2023 SIP. The two measures were selected because locally they are lower than the state average. The First Activity Attendance Rate shows initial engagement and a general understanding of the program. The longer-term Engagement Rate shows the long-term prospect and traction of clients. The committees both concluded that these measures are foundational in order to build rapport and to provide wraparound supportive services to participant families as they navigate toward achieving their educational and employment goals.

SonomaWORKS aims to improve performance in First Activity Attendance Rate and Ongoing Engagement Rate by implementing the strategies below, all of which were identified by the steering committee in collaboration with the Racial Equity Community Group, based on input gathered from program participants.

1. Include client voice in the implementation of all SIP strategies throughout the SIP lifespan. Hold formal focus groups and key informant interviews annually as part of a continuous quality improvement process that is representative of the SonomaWORKS population.
2. Create new countable activity that focuses on life skills and relationship/community strengthening.
3. Streamline monthly required attendance forms to alleviate client and worker load.
4. Introduce change management principles to streamline operations, forms, and procedures.
5. Review disaggregated data and take appropriate actions to ensure similar performance measure outcomes are achieved for all populations.
6. Implement a redesigned Subsidized Employment Program.
7. Provide additional and regular staff training that includes trauma informed care, harm reduction, and self-care.
8. Increase workshop offerings including those requested by clients, provided through internal and partner collaboration.
9. Offer more options for client engagement which includes office, home, field and digital options (as

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requested through client voice).

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has reviewed and tentatively approved the Sonoma County SIP. Following approval of the SIP, HSD will focus on implementing the action steps in the county plan with annual progress reports to CDSS and adjustments to the County plan as needed and decided upon between HSD and CDSS. The next Cal-OAR cycle will begin in July 2026, with the next county plan due in 2028.

**Strategic Plan:**

N/A

**Racial Equity:**

**Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?**

No

**Prior Board Actions:**

None

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY23-24 Adopted</b>	<b>FY24-25 Projected</b>	<b>FY25-26 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this item.

<b>Staffing Impacts:</b>			
<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>

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**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

- 1 - Cal-OAR System Improvement Plan
- 2 - CDSS Phase One Trended Report for Sonoma County

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

SIP signature page