

SONOMA COUNTY



**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE
SAFETY NET DEPARTMENT
PROCUREMENT & GRANT PRACTICES
REVIEW**

Performed by

civicinitiatives

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Executive Summary

Sonoma County engaged Civic Initiatives, a public procurement consulting firm, to conduct a comprehensive review of procurement and grant practices across its seven Safety Net departments (Department of Health Services (DHS), Human Services Department (HSD), Probation, District Attorney, Community Development Commission, Child Support Services, and Public Defender) to gauge consistency and efficiency in the delivery of critical services. This review follows an overall procurement review conducted in 2023. The report examines the effectiveness of current County practices and offers recommendations aimed at enhancing service delivery and fostering stronger partnerships with Community-based Organizations (CBOs).

The findings of the review reveal that procurement and grant practices within Sonoma County are often seen as complex. CBOs report a lack of consistent practices across departments, and a lack of communication and collaboration with the County, which may inhibit the potential for strategic partnerships. The report also notes that the County's funding mechanisms do not adequately support the increasing costs associated with service delivery. Additionally, the absence of established grant practices, in particular for allocations of state or federal grant funding, has contributed to process delays overall.

The County, however, is making positive steps toward improving procurement processes and creating improved relationships with department teams and CBOs. Safety Net departments are actively working to centralize administrative functions, removing the burden from divisions and front-line staff. Additionally, Safety Net departments are seeking ways to improve the procurement and grant practices, focusing heavily on reducing the time to complete and execute contracts with suppliers and providers, and the time it takes to review and process invoices for payment.

Chief among the recommendations is establishing a centralized resource to begin to clearly delineate procurement from grant practices and to standardize grant processes across departments. Enhancing communication with CBOs is also identified as essential; the County could consider forming a CBO advisory council to foster open communication and collaboration. Furthermore, the development of comprehensive, Countywide procurement and grant policies, along with a clear grant management guide would create a foundation for standardized procedures and clarity of roles and responsibilities.

Additional recommendations involve increasing contract flexibility to include multi-year agreements and federally negotiated indirect rates, which would support financial stability for CBOs and enable better long-term planning. Finally, the report underscores the need for improved automation of procurement and grant practices.

Introduction

Background

Safety Net departments within the County are essential components of the local government, dedicated to providing critical services that support the well-being of the most vulnerable populations. These departments serve as a protective layer, ensuring that individuals and families in need have access to essential resources and services that promote stability, health, and self-sufficiency. It is estimated that close to twenty-five percent (25%) of County constituents seek services from one of the Safety Net departments today. To execute this mission, Safety Net departments must regularly procure goods and services from and/or provide grant funding opportunities to local service providers and community-based organizations (CBOs).

The County originally contracted with Civic Initiatives in March 2023 to perform a review of procurement practices overall at the County. Though this effort provided the County with a roadmap for transformation of the procurement function, it did not directly focus on the specific concerns faced by Safety Net departments and their service providers.

In July 2024, the County contracted with Civic Initiatives to perform a more focused review of the procurement practices of the County's Safety Net departments, including grant practices. The focus of the review was to determine what was working, what was not, where there were consistent practices and where the County Safety Net departments diverge in their approaches to both practice areas.

Methodology and Research Performed

Previous Report on County Procurement Practices

Civic Initiatives presented [recommendations](#) from the initial, enterprise-wide assessment of County procurement practices to the Board of Supervisors on October 17, 2023. Key recommendations included:

- Update County policies and procedures to align with future state vision
- Develop and Publish a Comprehensive Procurement Manual for the County
- Identify and document standardized BOS practices in a Desk Guide
- Define, document and implement a procurement training model
- Define, document and implement a procurement planning practice
- Develop, document, and implement a proactive stakeholder management program
- Implement improved strategic sourcing practices and processes
- Define, document, and implement a contract management and tracking practice for the County
- Define and implement a procurement automation solution that integrates with EFS

With implementation of these and other recommendations in the report, the County can vastly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their procurement processes.

Safety Net Review Project Methodology

Sonoma County engaged Civic Initiatives in July 2024 to review purchasing lifecycle and grant subaward processes among its Safety Net departments, to ensure consistency and to promote efficiency. The seven Safety Net departments for this project scope included the Department of Health Services (DHS), Human Services Department (HSD), Probation, District Attorney, Community Development Commission (CDC), Child Support Services, and Public Defender.

Civic Initiatives assessed key areas of the Safety Net departments' procurement and contracting operations to:

1. Identify ways to create consistent procurement and contracting processes across Safety Net departments; and
2. Identify process improvements that will create efficiencies for County staff and contractors/partners

In completing the focused review of the procurement and grant practices of the Safety Net departments, Civic Initiatives facilitated 29 in-person interviews with leadership, management and staff from each of the seven Safety Net departments. Additionally, 18 CBOs were interviewed to gain their point of view on procurement and grant practices at the County and to get their feedback on initial recommendations.

Once the discovery phase was completed, Civic Initiatives utilized its resource library of best practices and performed further research of peer practices to determine where gaps existed and to reinforce recommendations. This report provides the details of that review and the recommendations for improving and optimizing procurement and grant practices at the County.

Details of the discovery and research performed for the project are detailed in Appendix A.

Differentiating Procurements from Grants

Before getting into the details of the review, it is important to understand the differences between grants and procurements. Grants and procurements are both methods used by public entities to distribute resources and achieve public goals, but they serve different purposes and operate under different frameworks. The following provides an overview of the key differences between grants and procurements:

Procurements	Grants
Procurement is the process by which public entities acquire goods, services, or works from external suppliers. The primary objective of procurement is to fulfill specific operational needs of the public entity, such as purchasing equipment, contracting services, or constructing infrastructure.	Grants are financial contributions provided by public entities (like governments or agencies) to organizations, institutions, or individuals to support a public purpose or project. The primary objective of all grants is to promote or fund activities that align with public interests, such as research, community development, education, or public health.
In procurement, there is a direct exchange; the public entity pays the supplier, and in return, the supplier provides the specified goods, services, or works.	The grantee is not expected to provide goods or services directly to the grantor. Instead, the grantee uses the funds to achieve specific goals or outcomes defined in the grant agreement.
The public entity exerts more control over the procurement process and the delivery of goods or services. The contract specifies detailed requirements, deliverables, and timelines that the supplier must meet.	While the grantor may set certain conditions or objectives, the grantee generally has significant autonomy in how they use the funds to achieve the desired outcomes. The grantor does not typically control the day-to-day activities of the grantee.
Procurement focuses on both the inputs (what is being purchased) and the outputs (the goods or services delivered), with strict adherence to State, local and where applicable, Federal requirements and contract terms.	The focus is on achieving the broader outcomes or goals specified in the grant agreement, rather than on how the funds are specifically used on a granular level.
Procurement is governed by strict procurement laws, regulations, and policies designed to ensure fairness, transparency, competition, and value for money. Public procurements must follow defined processes such as competitive bidding, evaluation, and contract management.	Grants are typically governed by specific grant management regulations (e.g., 2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance, Grant-specific regulations, etc.), which may include requirements for eligibility, application, reporting, and auditing. These regulations are typically designed to ensure that grant funds are used for the intended public purpose.
The procurement process is generally less flexible, with a focus on ensuring that the public entity gets exactly what it paid for in terms of goods or services.	Grant agreements often allow for some flexibility in how funds are used, as long as the grantee adheres to the broader goals and reporting requirements.

Procurements	Grants
The relationship between the public entity and the supplier is governed by a formal contract, which specifies the goods, services, or works to be provided, the price, delivery schedules, and other terms and conditions.	The relationship between the grantor and grantee is governed by a grant agreement, which outlines the purpose of the grant, the amount of funding, the expected outcomes, and the reporting requirements. The agreement is typically not a contract for services but rather a financial contribution to support the grantee's activities.
Suppliers are required to deliver the goods or services as specified in the contract, and they must account for their performance and adherence to the contract terms. The public entity may also require detailed financial reporting, especially for cost-reimbursement contracts.	Grantees are usually required to report on how the funds were used and the outcomes achieved. The focus is on demonstrating that the grant objectives were met, rather than on detailed financial accountability.
Payment is made to the supplier upon delivery of goods or services or according to milestones defined in the contract. If the supplier fails to deliver as specified, the public entity may not pay, or may seek a refund or damages.	Grants are typically non-reimbursable, meaning that once the funds are disbursed and used according to the grant agreement, the grantee is not required to return them, even if the project does not fully achieve its intended outcomes.

Contracting with Suppliers and Grantees

Another key aspect in understanding the difference between procurements and grants is understanding the fundamental distinction between a procurement contract and a grant agreement. This distinction typically involves understanding who is receiving the benefit of the agreement:

- When the benefit of an agreement flows directly to the governmental agency, the agreement is generally a **procurement contract**. An example would be the purchase of computers for use by the government, or consulting services to assist the government in completing its core functions more efficiently.
- When the benefit of the agreement flows to a third party, such as the general public, or a specific part thereof, the agreement is usually a **grant agreement**. An example would be the provision of funds to a nonprofit entity to start a public campaign to encourage people over 45 to schedule proper cancer screening procedures.

The distinction is important, because there are a variety of terms that are better included in procurement contracts, while others are more appropriate in grant agreements. Also, different methods of sourcing should be applied, as the government has different priorities and risks in obtaining the services.

Often a Safety Net department's core mission is to provide services to specific populations, such as children, those with disabilities, or to assist with the treatment of people with certain conditions. When these relationships are established by agreement, it can be difficult to discern whether they should be established by contract or by grant agreement. (Sometimes, in fact, they may be established by either method.) The federal government provides a criteria in the Uniform Guidance, but this criteria can be confusing and difficult for the Safety Net department to employ. Following is a summary of typical distinctions, based on best practice and experience:

1. If the services are provided to third parties through the agreement and would otherwise be legally required to be done by the governmental agency, the agreement should probably be a procurement contract. For example, if the government agency is required by law to provide child welfare services to children in the child welfare system, the provision of those services provides a direct benefit to the government (since the children are wards) and would thus be a procurement contract.

2. If the services are provided to third parties and are not required legally and would not be done but for the agreement, it is likely that the agreement is a grant agreement. For example, if a government was providing child welfare services to children who were not wards, only seeking to ensure better health or outcomes for certain children, it's likely that agreement would be a grant agreement.
3. When determining procurement or financial assistance under a federal award, it is helpful to look at the purpose and objectives of the award. If the agreement is furthering that purpose directly, it is likely to be a grant agreement. If, instead, it is providing some kind of benefit that is ancillary to the purposes and objectives of the award, it is likely to be a procurement contract. For example, if the governmental entity has received a grant for improving cancer screening rates in the adult population over 45, an agreement that provides money to a nonprofit to start a social media campaign would be a grant agreement, as that agreement is directly furthering the objective of the campaign.
4. If the agreement furthers the purposes of the grant but the services in the agreement are provided in a market environment with many different purchasers, the agreement is more likely a procurement contract. For example, and to illustrate how tricky the distinction can be, imagine a slightly different scenario than the one described in #3 above: the government purchases social media advertising itself, urging individuals over 45 to seek cancer screening. While this directly furthers the grant objective, the purchase of the social media advertising is in a market with many buyers (those purchasing advertising) and in fact would be a procurement contract.

Another important distinction in Safety Net departments is the distinction between a subaward and direct financial assistance. Safety Net departments often administer direct assistance programs from the federal government, where money is provided directly to individuals who need it (for example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP). In that program, the other party is a beneficiary.

Those same agencies also provide funding to entities to service individuals under those programs or by employing the same funds. When that occurs, it is usually as a subaward (a type of grant agreement), as the funding is going to an outside entity to provide a benefit to other individuals or to the public at large. Direct grant agreements are not contractual, as they do not involve any benefit accruing back to the government whatsoever.

Current State

The following sections provide an overview of the current state of procurement and grant practices at the County and identifies ways to improve and optimize the current procurement and grant practices at the County.

Procurement Practices

Procurement Policies

California State Statutes, the County Code of Ordinances and Board Resolutions outline general procurement policies, but the County could benefit from a definitive set of policies that provide the necessary legal framework for the execution of procurements at the County. In response to recommendations from the prior review of procurement practices, the Purchasing Division of Public Infrastructure is working with Civic Initiatives to develop a revised policy framework for future implementation, while the Procurement department continues to refine its operational model.

The new policies have been drafted, and once they are approved and implemented, they should provide improved guidance for County departments, and will establish the foundation for the Purchasing Division to draft and publish an updated Procurement Manual with clear roles, responsibilities and processes for all departments to use in executing procurements at the County.

Procurement Processes

The decentralized nature of procurement at the County means that procurement processes are not standardized. A decentralized model can be helpful, given the different operational structures across departments. However, comprehensive, updated guidance, in the form of a Procurement Manual, can help staff and external stakeholders have a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities and expectations in the procurement lifecycle, and guidance on executing procurement processes. Development of a Procurement Manual would provide the following benefits to all County departments:

- Create a cohesive “how to” process document for the County
- Establish and enforce process that drives consistency, standardization, controls, and quality
- Improve clarity of roles and responsibilities within the County
- Ensure adherence to State, County, and Federal rules for all procurements
- Improve efficiency and effectiveness of staff resources and procurement execution
- Prepare the County for more efficient procurement automation efforts
- Provide the County an underpinning for Procurement Training

The County has prioritized the update of its current procurement guidance materials and plans to work on this project over the coming year.

Procurement Planning

The County has no identifiable procurement planning process that allows for resource planning and project staging. Many of the services provided by the Safety Net departments are needed year in and year out; however, most departments lack strategic contracts (Blanket Purchase Orders) to support these ongoing needs for services from year to year. This often leads to last minute requests for the purchase of goods and services, which require exception or exemption processes to be utilized to meet the needs and the missions of the departments. This is especially true for Safety Net departments, who often find themselves responding to the emergent needs of clients/constituents.

Also, with better planning, Safety Net departments could identify areas of similar or the same needs and use their combined volume to drive cost savings in the market and efficiency in the acquisition of needed goods and services.

With improved procurement planning, Safety Net departments will have improved insight into their procurement needs, can better identify and act upon strategic contracting opportunities to minimize emergent procurements, and can identify complex and/or high-risk projects resulting in more time to plan, and partner with the Purchasing Division and the CBO community as needed. Planning can also enable the Safety Net Departments to improve communication and transparency for upcoming procurement opportunities to the supplier/CBO community, in turn enabling them to better prepare as well. This type of planning enables Safety Net departments to be more proactive in its approach to procurement.

Procurement Training

A comprehensive procurement training program would improve efficiency, standardization, and consistency of quality for procurement activities for all departments, including Safety Net departments. Some County departments today may provide their own procurement training, but the vast majority of interviewees noted a lack of a standard, comprehensive procurement training program at the County and described training as on-the-job training at best. The Human Services Department has procurement training two (2) times a year for its staff to help them stay current on the process and requirements. However, this training is not based in a uniform curriculum and is not focused on the primary areas of importance for the department which should be focused on how to elicit and develop a strong scope or specifications. There is a need for the Purchasing Division to develop and deliver specialized, in-depth training on key procurement processes that are the responsibilities of the departments, as department stakeholders have described their past training as “high-level” and “lacking details of ‘how-to,’” including procurement system training.

Consistent with findings from the general procurement review last year, County department staff are typically not dedicated procurement professionals and may not have the knowledge to perform effective procurement planning processes (e.g., request for information or RFIs, market research, requirements elicitation, procurement and evaluation strategies, etc.).

Automating and Modernizing the Procurement Process

The County lacks a comprehensive automation solution to support procurement practices. There is some automation of the procurement process in the County, however the automation that does exist covers only limited steps of the procurement lifecycle, and what exists is seen by internal and external stakeholders as unintuitive and not user friendly. The difficulty in utilizing the current EFS system for procurement processes can lead to delays in processing of procurements in a timely manner internally. Externally, the supplier/CBO community must use the system to register, to see opportunities, and to submit bids and proposals in response to procurement opportunities. However, due to the complexity of the systems, some CBOs have chosen not to engage with the County.

The Human Services Department, in response to the receipt and assignment of ARPA funding to their department, acquired a procurement automation solution (Open Gov), but is currently only utilizing the system to facilitate the invoice receipt and review processes. Although its use is extremely limited today (one department and one specific process), this solution is a viable solution for the County to consider for broader automation of the County’s procurement processes.

The County would benefit from exploration of and eventual implementation of a comprehensive procurement automation solution. Such a solution would cover all aspects of the procurement lifecycle and would provide the County with a fully integrated solution to handle:

- Requisition Development & Workflow;
- Purchase Order Development & Workflow;
- Solicitation Development;
- Required Postings (Solicitation, Award, Exemptions, Exceptions, etc.);
- Vendor Registration and Notification;
- Vendor Submission of Responses;
- Contract Development and Execution;
- Contract Management; and,
- Contract Marketplace (online marketplace for use of relevant County Blanket Purchase Orders).

The County has some of this functionality today in its EFS solution, but as noted it is limited and not user friendly. The County could seek to improve and optimize the use of EFS to facilitate procurement automation, consider expanding the use of other available tools already in use at the County (e.g., OpenGov) or seek to acquire a new automation solution. For details of how the current Open Gov system might be able to be utilized to provide this functionality see Appendix F.

Contracting for Services

Safety Net Departments primarily contract with the CBO community, utilizing State, Local, Federal and grant funding, to provide Safety Net services in Sonoma County. However, today there is no differentiation in how the County approaches contracting with these entities. Grant agreements are distinctly different from procurement contracts and as such require a unique framework that address these differences.

The County should consider developing a differentiated approach to contracting with their CBO partners that takes into consideration the noted differences between procurements and grants outlined in this report and creates aligned and efficient processes.

Contract Management

County departments generally manage their own contracts, including the Safety Net departments. As a result, each department is left to establish their own policies, processes and procedures for contract management. For Safety Net departments, this also leads to unique processes for their supplier/CBO community. A supplier/CBO may need to learn unique and sometimes conflicting processes for each Safety Net department with which they hold contracts. For example, differences in invoice submission, processing and approval procedures can delay invoice processing and payment to a supplier/CBOs, which some CBOs substantiated in interviews.

Grants Practices

Grant Resources

The County has no central authority for grants, grant practices, and/or grant resources and in most cases, there is a lack of dedicated staff to guide and manage grant functions at Safety Net departments. Each Safety Net department establishes its own grant policies, processes, procedures and job aides. This leads to a lack of a standardized approach to grant practices that can cause process bottlenecks internally and leads to inconsistent interactions and delays with grantees externally. There is some coordination among Safety Net departments today, but it is limited and not focused on identifying organizational best practices that can be utilized by all Safety Net departments.

Grant Policies

The County has no organization-level policy today for grant practices and makes no differentiation between procurement and grant practices. In many cases, when executing grant processes, stakeholders default to procurement policy and guidance, which, while similar, are distinctly different and in most cases are not applicable to grant subawards.

Because no other defined practices exist, Safety Net departments look to the County Purchasing Division for support to utilize procurement processes for grant subawards. However, because this is not a procurement process the Purchasing Division often must redirect the department to the Safety Net departments' internal subject matter experts for guidance as Purchasing does not have the requisite knowledge or expertise to support grant subaward practices for the County. The granting of funds by an organization typically is less restrictive than standard procurement practices and provides more flexibility to the organization to develop process to compete for funding when it is a requirement of the grant.

The County and many Safety Net departments have established limited policies related to grant practices. These policies are primarily focused on review and compliance rather than on establishing a foundational framework for a Countywide program of grant subawards and management. For example, grant policies currently in place include a requirement for approval of grant funding by the Board of Supervisors prior to departmental acceptance of any grant funding, when depending on the funding, this could be accomplished through department head approval.

More specific grant policies exist but are developed and managed by each Safety Net department and are specific to each department. While funding requirements may differ, the County staff manage grants could benefit from countywide practice standardization.

Grant Processes and Procedures

Outside of those developed internally by Safety Net departments, there are currently no Countywide processes and procedures documented for grant management lifecycle practices (see Appendix B).

This creates varying grant practices among internal stakeholders when processing grant procurements, subawards and/or engaging with grantees. For example, the lack of clarity on specific grant processes often leads to inconsistent guidance and confusion when other departments are engaged downstream in the process (e.g., Purchasing, Finance, County Counsel, CAO, etc.). This also impacts suppliers and grantees, as many of those receiving funds from the County work with multiple departments and do not understand the lack of consistent processes from department to department.

Currently all formal procurements and the vast majority of grant subawards utilize the County procurement process for formal procurements (RFP process). The County is therefore not utilizing a best practice for grant subawards - Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) or Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) processes that are provided for in the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200) (see Appendix C for details). Some Safety Net departments are today utilizing the NOFO/NOFA approach (Community Development Commission) for grant subawards, but often are still required to do so utilizing procurement processes.

Additionally, by utilizing the standard procurement process for subawards, the County is requiring a more stringent and competitive process than is typically required by the Uniform Guidance. This results in potential impacts, such as:

1. Requiring Safety Net Departments to be overly prescriptive in their scope of work, instead of being able to approach the community with a broader statement of objectives/outcomes. This in turn also leaves little to no room for CBOs to provide innovative solutions in response to funding opportunities at the County.
2. Creating a competitive environment among potential applicants instead of fostering partnership and collaboration to address County health and human services issues.
3. Requiring County employees to follow the Sonoma County procurement process compliance requirements, which also drives longer timelines to execute subawards.
4. Limits the ability of the County to engage CBOs in a collaborative manner.

By establishing clear and differentiated processes and procedures for the execution of grant subawards, the County will address these specific impacts and many of the other issues related to grant practices raised in this review. Critical in this will be determining clear roles and responsibilities in the grant subaward processes and procedures and removing the County Purchasing Division from the process altogether.

Grant Monitoring and Communications Practices

Based on discovery interviews performed during this review, grant monitoring and communication are a primary focus of most Safety Net department staff involved in grant practices. However, during interviews it was noted that there are often limited communications with grantees once grant funds are subawarded. While some Safety Net departments were lauded by CBOs for their consistent engagement of grantees, many departments were noted to have a lack of good monitoring and communications with grantees following award of grant funding. Interviewees often attributed this to high employee turnover and a general lack of staff resources at the County Safety Net departments.

CBO Insights

The following are five key themes that CBO representatives identified as opportunities for improving their interactions with the County:

1. **Challenges in Contracting and Payments:** Many CBOs reported that the County's procurement and contracting processes are complex and inefficient, often leading to delays in payments and contract execution. Organizations expressed frustration over lengthy waits for contract approval and reimbursement, which impacts their ability to maintain services. Some organizations have provided services without contracts or payments for months into the fiscal year.
2. **Need for Improved Collaboration, Communication and Engagement:** CBOs emphasized the importance of consistent, two-way communication with the County. CBOs noted that County

engagement today can feel very one-directional, and they advocate for a more collaborative approach that could include:

- Developing processes for two-way communications between the County and the CBO community that enables strategic conversations about mutually defined concerns, enabling both to work together toward development of community goals, objectives, strategies and policy recommendations.

Examples of this can be found in Orange, Napa and Alameda County, where the Counties have established standing groups with CBOs to help define and implement community goals, objectives and strategies and to support outreach to the broader community. (see Appendix D for an overview of the Be Well OC model)

- Engaging CBOs of all sizes from a broad range of service to ensure all voices are heard.
 - Utilizing CBOs to engage the broader community through their networks of volunteers and clients.
 - Fostering increased collaboration among CBOs to increase communication and understanding of the services they offer.
3. **Inconsistent Processes:** Different County departments have varying procedures, which can be confusing and burdensome for CBOs. CBOs noted that the level of turnover and current vacancy rates at both the leadership and staff levels have led to a lack of internal champions to drive improvements and improve interactions, further exacerbating the situation.
 4. **Suggestions for Process Improvements:** CBOs proposed several recommendations, including streamlined contracting processes, increased flexibility in contract terms, and establishment of a dedicated County liaison for CBOs. They also called for a more collaborative approach in developing solutions and policies to address shared challenges, such as data sharing and coordinated care.
 5. **Funding and Resource Allocation Concerns:** Many CBOs raised concerns about funding stability. They noted reimbursement rates are often too low to cover the actual costs of services provided, and with added County requirements for services or reporting each year, the funding they are getting is not able to meet service needs in the community. Most contracts have no structure in place to allow for cost-of-living adjustments from year to year, so funding often doesn't change, even though costs to provide services continue to increase. Adding to this issue are County requirements, such as the Living Wage Ordinance, which present additional administrative work and may require CBOs to do more with the same level of funding. Lastly, CBOs noted that the indirect cost rates at the County are challenging and do not align to federally negotiated indirect cost rates. This leads to inequities among CBOs and often limits the CBOs ability to hire and retain key staff (e.g., leadership, bilingual staff, etc.) necessary to provide the required level of service to the community.

As such, organizations advocated for the adoption of federally negotiated indirect rates to better reflect the true cost of service delivery. They also suggested regular evaluations to ensure the best alignment of resources.

Leading Practices

Through research and engagements with past clients, the following have been identified as the leading practices for ensuring efficient, effective and compliant procurement and grant practices.

- A Grant Management Center of Excellence provides the County with an office focused on supporting the organization in the management, use, and impact of grants by establishing standards for the management of grants. Through the office the County can establish policies and procedures and provide guidance and support to departments throughout the grant lifecycle.

Grant Management Center of Excellence



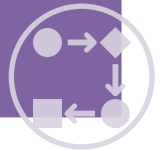
- Clear policies drive standard practices and establish a structured framework that guides decision-making, behavior, and actions regarding procurement activities. Policies provide the foundation for the establishment of processes and procedures that ensure the County meets all expectations for public procurement and grants. Policies also create a clear distinction between procurement and grant practices.

Clear Policies



- Clear documentation or a manual of the "how to" that details roles, responsibilities and expectations ensures all stakeholders involved in the process understand how to execute the process effectively, efficiently and in compliance with relevant policy.

Clear Processes and Procedures



- A well-structured Procurement and Subaward plan is essential for ensuring that grant funding is utilized to acquire needed goods and services in a timely manner. The plan should include all procurements and subaward opportunities, total value of each, special funding requirements or deadlines, intended dates of acquisition, and other relevant information to help plan timelines and resources.

Annual Procurement & Subaward Plan



- Training ensures that all stakeholders involved in the process have the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to complete the process effectively and efficiently. It also supports documented guidance making certain stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities and how to remain compliant with federal, state, and local regulations, as well as grant-specific guidelines. Training is critical to avoid penalties, disallowances, and potential loss of funding.

Roles-Based Training



- Ongoing management, monitoring and evaluation help ensure that procurements and grant-funded projects are on track to meet their goals and that any issues are addressed promptly. Transparent communication and timely reporting are critical for maintaining good relationships with contractors and grantors and ensuring that all stakeholders are informed and engaged. Effective financial management is crucial for maximizing the impact of grant funds and timely invoicing, review and payment/reimbursement while ensuring accountability and compliance.

Strong Contract Management/Grant Monitoring Practices



- Automating the procurement process is critical to improve overall efficiency and effectiveness of the process, while also automating compliance with federal, state and local regulations, as well as grant-specific guidelines. Through automation the County can improve timelines for execution of procurement while also improving transparency, supplier management, and costs for goods and services. With automation the County will be better positioned to efficiently subaward grant funds, track and monitor grantees, and meet reporting requirements of grantors.

Automate the Process



Recommended Actions

This list of recommended actions is primarily focused on grant related items as the bulk of recommendations related to improving and optimizing procurement practices at the County were identified in the broader procurement assessment deliverables (see Appendix E for details).

R1: Establish a Centralized Resource for Grant Management

Civic Initiatives recommends that the County establish a centralized resource for grants, which would provide organizational leadership and oversight over grant policy, evaluation, and training.

In our research, numerous public entities, including Alameda County, Monterey County, and San Diego County have established similar offices. Each of these offices is located in the County Administrator's Office or a similar office, but where the office is located within the County's organization is not as important as the establishment of the office and the execution of the roles and responsibilities of the office. These include at minimum:

1. Coordinate across the County on grant management activities
2. Develop and manage the County's grant policies
3. Develop and manage the County's uniform guidance on grant management lifecycle processes
4. Develop and manage County job aides related to grant management lifecycle practices (e.g., tools, templates, checklists, forms, etc.)
5. Support departments to track and monitor high-risk and high-profile grants at the County
6. Support reporting to the Board of Supervisors, grantors and other relevant entities
7. Develop and deliver training to County staff on grant policies, processes, procedures and systems
8. Provide subject matter expertise to departments for grants (e.g., fiscal, legal, program, etc.)

The grant staff in the County Administrator's Office Strategic Initiatives division is currently focused on Climate funding priorities, but over time CAO staff may be able to provide some or all of the above-listed support. The CAO is a good starting point for a centralized grant resource.

R2: Develop Grant Policies

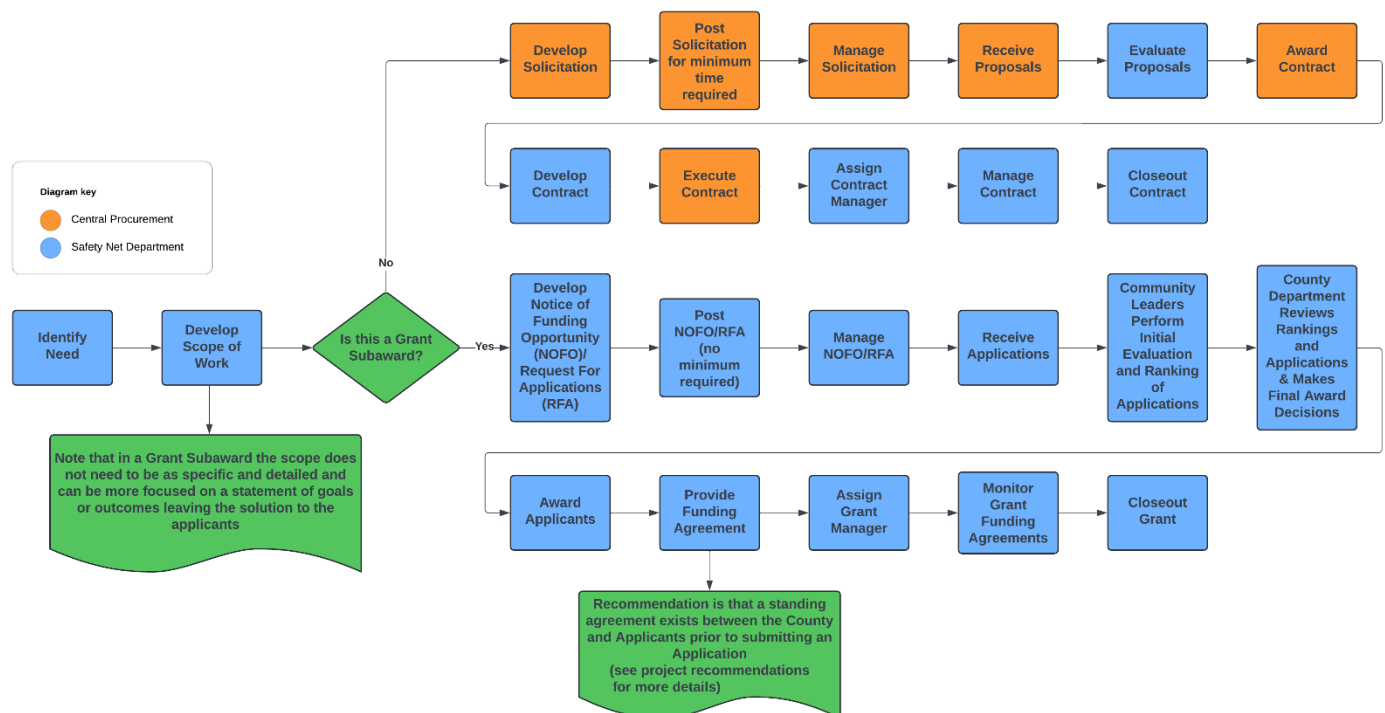
It is recommended that the centralized grant function, once established, facilitate the establishment of a policy group composed of departments that typically receive or manage grant funds at the County to work toward the development of a set of grant policies for the County.

The primary policy that needs to be established in the short term is one that clearly differentiates procurements from grants and allows departments managing grants more flexibility in how they subaward grant funds to community organizations. This is a critical first step because today, lacking this policy or guidance, departments are utilizing procurement processes to subaward grant funding, which limits flexibility needed in the processes, extends timelines unnecessarily and leads to reduced competition due to terms and conditions included in the procurement process that often are not required for grant subawards and resultant grant agreements. (see R6 for more details)

Key areas to consider when developing grant policies include, but are not limited to policies guiding:

- Establishment of the Grant Management Office and where it will be located organizationally
- Establishment of the Grant Review Board and the requirements for review and approval of grant application prior to submission
 - The Probation Department at the County utilizes a simplified version of a Grant Review Board in their processes today and could be used as a guide for how to build out a similar model for the County. (see Appendix G for example of the process)
- Delegation of authority for receipt of grant funding (who has authority to approve the receipt of grant funding at to what levels)
- Delegation of authority for grant sub awarding (who has the authority to approve the sub awarding of grant funds and to what levels)
- Establishment of a requirement that all grants have a defined grant manager that is distinct from the program manager, who is responsible for helping to manage the grant and associated subawards to ensure compliance with the grant requirements (similar to a contract manager for a contract).
- Budget management requirements
- Grant fund disbursement requirements (e.g., requirements for the sub awarding of grant funds)
- Grant expenditure requirements (e.g., signature authorities, limits, delegations, thresholds, etc.)
- Grant compliance requirements (e.g., monitoring, reporting, escalation, etc.)
- Available funding approaches for grants

The following graphic provides an overview of how the County should seek to differentiate the procurement process from the grant process.



R3: Develop a Grant Management Guide

It is recommended that the Grant Management Office, once established, facilitate the drafting and management of a Grant Management Guide providing uniform guidance to departments at the County on processes and procedures to follow in the varying phases of the grant management lifecycle. The guide should provide guidance on roles, responsibilities and expectations, and provide detailed “how to” steps necessary to complete each required process. The Guide should be sure to clearly delineate the differences in process between grant procurements and grant subawards and should incorporate Federal and State requirements, including those found in the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200).

Examples of key items to address in the guidance include, but are not limited to:

- Grant Review Board processes
- Grant receipt and acceptance processes
- Grant subaward processes (e.g., use of a Notice of Funding Opportunity/Availability (NOFO/A) or Request for Applications (RFA) process in lieu of the current RFP approach for subawards)
- How to create more open-ended outcome-based approaches
- Use of a regional review boards and/or advisory committees for initial grant applicant screening (Community Development Commission has a model for this)
- Clearly defined guidance on invoice processing and payment

R4: Improve Support for the Execution and Management of Grant Subawards

Once the County has established a clear delineation in the policies and processes for the execution of grant subawards from those of procurements, it will be necessary to consider who will support Safety Net departments in executing grant subaward processes - today this falls to the staff of the County Purchasing Division. It is recommended that the County establish a unit within the County Purchasing Division that is responsible for supporting Safety Net departments in the development, management, evaluation, award of funding and development of grant agreements for grant opportunities at the County. This group should function similar to the County Purchasing Office but should be solely focused on grant subaward opportunities, leaving the remaining staff at the County Purchasing Office to focus on procurements only. It is recommended to be housed within the County Purchasing Office due to the similarity of processes and systems necessary to execute the work, and to provide the ability for this new unit to provide subject matter expertise on grants to the procurement staff for procurements utilizing grant funding streams.

In addition, like the recommendation from the procurement assessment, it is recommended that the County provide for the ability of departments to have staff dedicated to the management of grants. Today many departments are relying on Program Managers to fulfill this function, but the role of a Program Manager and the skills required of them are vastly different than those expected of a true Grant Manager. Although they have differing roles, they work closely together to ensure that grant-funded projects within a program are managed effectively and that all grant requirements are met.

Program managers are focused on the overall management of multiple projects within a program, aligning them with strategic objectives, working with the internal and external stakeholders to ensure program success. They require skills in community development and leadership required to ensure the establishment of a coordinated, sustainable program of services to the community.

Grant managers focus specifically on the management and compliance of grants and grant-funded projects, handling the administrative, financial, and compliance aspects of grants. They work closely with finance teams, auditors, grantees and grantors to manage grant funds properly. They require skills in financial management and compliance expertise.

Each department should assess the size and scope of their grant portfolio and determine the appropriate level of Grant Managers needed to properly manage the grant portfolio.

R5: Develop a Grant Agreement Framework for Grant Subawards

The recommendation is to establish a framework for grant agreements that is distinctly different from what is currently used for grant agreements. This is supplemental to and does not replace contracts that should still be utilized for all procurements, including those utilizing grant funding streams. In developing the framework, we recommend:

- **Establishing one Master Engagement Agreement template.** The Engagement Agreement establishes a legal agreement between the entity and the County that stipulates minimum terms and conditions of receiving grant funding from the County. Ideally, these agreements would be executed by a County grant team responsible for helping departments with grant subawards and grant-related procurement. A more realistic approach would be to enable department heads to sign Engagement Agreements; Engagement Agreements can be considered a precursor for an entity to provide a response to a grant opportunity. These should be standing with each entity that may want to receive grant funding from the County and should have no specific termination or expiration date.

In the process of developing this template, it is recommended that County Counsel consider the risks associated with this type of agreement and limit unnecessary terms and conditions accordingly, to help remove barriers to engaging with the County that were identified by staff and community-based organizations in interviews (e.g., insurance requirements, living wage requirements, restrictive terms and conditions, etc.).

- **Establish one Funding Agreement template.** The Funding Agreement provides the subaward details, including the grant amount and any specific requirements above and beyond those already stipulated in the Engagement Agreement, that are a requirement of the granting of funds (e.g., performance requirements, reporting requirements, timelines, program requirements, etc.). A Funding Agreement would be provided to the entity for each unique stream of funding they are receiving from the County. This may mean that a single subaward for a funding opportunity is awarded through multiple Funding Agreements based on the grant subaward. Similar to the service agreement template provided by Purchasing, a Funding Agreement template would have areas that could be tailored to specific grant requirements.

It is also recommended that efforts be taken to meet with County Human Resources, impacted Bargaining Units and other relevant stakeholders to come to agreement on requirements for contracting for direct service provision at the County. Today there is a lengthy process for getting approval to go to market to procure needed services of Safety Net departments that drives delays and service gaps, and often leads to the need for stop-gap measures such as Sole Source or exigent procurements. The process is addressing the requirement that the County should not go out to contract for services that can be provided by staff of the County. The requirement does not consider the department requesting the need for procurement of services, and only considers that there may be someone on staff somewhere in the County providing that service as an employee of the County.

For example, the Human Services Department may require the services of a psychologist to provide services to a minor. The Department does not have any staff that can provide that service. but because the Department of Health Services, who still has direct service providers on staff at the County, may have

such a person on staff, the procurement is delayed because the County is required to address this with Human Resources and Bargaining Units to get approval prior to moving forward.

An agreement could be developed among all impacted stakeholders, to limit the specific services that must be reviewed, allowing all other service categories to continue through the procurement process without need for further review.

R6: Utilize More Strategic Contracting Practices

It is recommended that the County utilize more strategic contracting approaches for their Safety Net department procurement needs. Some examples of items noted in interviews include:

- **Master Agreements:** Today Safety Net departments often contract for similar or the same goods and services under different procurements, contracts, pricing and terms. It is recommended that the County Purchasing Division partner with the Safety Net departments to identify opportunities where the departments can coordinate and collaborate on procurements that can be established as a Master Agreement and used by all departments (even non-Safety Net departments). For example, it appears the County could establish standing Master Qualified Vendor Lists for use by all Safety Net Departments in the delivery of common services.

This is especially helpful in addressing last-minute, emergency and/or exigent needs that often are needed by Safety Net departments. Use of Master Agreements also can provide some or all of the following benefits to the County and Safety Net departments:

1. **Streamlined Procurement Process** - the County only has to execute one procurement to get the benefit for all County departments.
2. **Reduced Administrative Burden** - Master Agreements simplify the procurement process by establishing pre-negotiated terms and conditions, which reduces the need to draft, review, and negotiate new contracts for each individual purchase of a good or service. Having Master Agreement in place, even if they are not utilized, can save time over the long run and greatly limit the need for procurement exceptions or exemptions.
3. **Cost savings** - Master agreements can often provide opportunity for volume discounts or preferential pricing due to the anticipated or committed volume of goods or services over the term of the agreement.
4. **Standardized Pricing and Terms** - Master agreements ensure that all transactions under the agreement follow the same pricing and terms and conditions, providing consistency and reducing the likelihood of errors or misunderstandings.
5. **Improved Vendor Relationships** - Master agreements foster long-term relationships with vendors, which can lead to better service levels, more reliable supply chains, and stronger partnerships.
6. **Improved Contract Management** - With a master agreement, all purchases can be managed centrally under a single contract framework, simplifying oversight and ensuring consistency across all related agreements.
7. **Enhanced Strategic Planning** - Master agreements allow organizations to plan strategically for the long term, knowing that key terms and relationships are locked in place, which provides stability and supports long-term objectives.

- **Open Enrollment Procurements:** Use of open enrollment procurement approaches to allow for service providers to submit qualifications to the County for review and inclusion on a standing master provider list. An open enrollment is an option for goods and services which are solicited via Request for Proposal or Request for Qualifications and are established as a Master Price Agreement. Open Enrollment allows for multiple bid openings or continuous bid openings that occur over a determined span of time. Open enrollment is helpful when you need the opportunity to bring on additional vendors during the term of the contract or would like a prequalified list of vendors from which to solicit quotes.
- **Utilize Multi-year Contracts/Agreements:** Instead of creating one- year contracts or agreements, it is recommended that the County, and especially Safety Net departments, utilize more multi-year agreements and that the requirements related to Board approval of those agreements be eliminated (except where dollar thresholds for Board review are exceeded). These contracts/agreements should have appropriate clauses (funding out clause, price escalation clause, etc.) that allow for flexibility over the term of the contract/agreement. Utilization of multi-year contracts/agreements decreases the amount of time needed to process a contract on an annual basis and provides mechanisms to limit gaps in service that occur today due to the time required to process new agreements each year.
- **Pre-Approved Single/Sole Source:** The County could consider the establishment of categories of goods and services that are pre-approved single/sole source procurements and define them in policy. Once established, processes would allow for procurement stakeholders to acquire these good and services without the need to submit and wait for approval of a Single/Sole Source Justification. The policy should be reviewed regularly and updated as required to add or remove additional pre-approved categories from the list.
- **Direct Service Exemptions:** In some public entities, direct service to constituents is exempted from competitive procurement requirements (unless required by the funder). The County could consider a similar exemption to allow the Safety Net departments more flexibility to address exigent service needs. Although the direct services are exempted, it does not mean that all service procurements should utilize the exemption and the exemption may be limited to exigent circumstances or certain dollar thresholds to provide controls to the process.

R7: Improve Lines of Communication with CBOs

To strengthen partnerships with CBOs and improve service delivery, it is essential to enhance and formalize lines of communication between the County and CBOs. Improved communication fosters transparency, trust, and collaboration, ensuring that CBOs are effectively supported and that their insights are utilized in County planning and decision-making. The County is making efforts in this direction with revisions to its Upstream Investment Platform. Some examples of ways the County could improve lines of communications include:

1. **Establish Regular Check-Ins and Feedback Loops:** Creating a routine schedule with the contracting department for check-ins, such as quarterly or monthly meetings, which allow for consistent dialogue and feedback. These sessions can be used to address ongoing concerns, share updates on County policies, and receive input on emerging community needs. They also provide a platform for CBOs to share successes, challenges, and best practices, promoting knowledge-sharing across organizations.
2. **Designate County Liaisons for CBO Coordination:** Assigning dedicated County staff as liaisons to coordinate with CBOs can streamline communication and ensure that CBOs have a direct point of

contact. This role could also involve supporting CBOs by providing guidance on navigating County processes for procurement, applying for grant funding and contract management, and providing timely responses to inquiries.

3. **Create a CBO Advisory Council:** Establishing an advisory council comprising representatives from key CBOs allows for structured, strategic input on County initiatives. This council could meet regularly to advise on program development, funding allocation, and other important matters, ensuring that CBOs have a voice in decisions that impact their work and the communities they serve. The Advisory Council could also be utilized for initial evaluation of applications/proposals for grant funding, providing the County with a prioritized list of recommended project funding. The County would need to take care to ensure that no conflicts of interest are introduced through this approach (e.g., an applying CBO could not be a member of the evaluation team).
4. **Facilitate Partnerships in CBO Community:** In a County that has over 3,000 registered not-for-profit organizations, identifying a way to provide an equitable, representative, yet consolidated voice to the various CBO service lines would help to improve communication with the County.
5. **Develop a Centralized Communication Platform:** Implementing a centralized platform, such as an online portal, can facilitate efficient information exchange. This platform could house key resources, such as contract templates, process guides, and updates on funding opportunities, while also enabling CBOs to submit questions, access support, and stay informed on County initiatives in real time.

Improving communication with CBOs is a vital step toward building more effective and sustainable partnerships.

Next Steps

To address the challenges identified in Sonoma County's procurement and grant practices and to enhance partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), in addition to implementing Wave 1 procurement projects outlined in the Transformation Roadmap, the County should focus on implementing a series of key actions to improve and optimize its grant practices. The establishment of a centralized Grant Management Office should be prioritized to provide consistent oversight, streamline processes, and support county departments in navigating the grant lifecycle. This office will play a critical role in creating standardized policies, managing grant procedures, and delivering training to ensure efficient and effective grant administration across departments.

Additionally, developing a clear set of countywide grant policies that differentiate between procurement and grants will provide much-needed clarity and flexibility for departments. These policies should promote the use of grant subawards over procurement contracts where applicable, simplifying the process and reducing barriers for CBOs. Accompanying this policy framework, a comprehensive Grant Management Guide should be created to serve as a reference for County staff, offering step-by-step guidance on grant procedures, including the distinction between procurement and grant processes.

The County should also improve communication channels with CBOs by establishing regular check-ins, appointing dedicated liaisons, and forming a CBO advisory council. These steps will ensure that CBOs are supported throughout the procurement and grant processes and that their insights are incorporated into County decision-making. Furthermore, automation of grant processes is essential to increase efficiency, reduce delays, and ensure compliance with federal and state regulations. This could involve assessing current technology and implementing systems to support the full grant management lifecycle.

Finally, as part of enhancing contracting practices, the County should explore multi-year contracts, develop a framework for strategic contracting, and consider utilizing master agreements. By following these next steps, Sonoma County can strengthen its partnerships with CBOs, streamline operations, and build a more resilient, effective safety net for the community.

Appendix A: Discovery Performed

Research Performed

Civic Initiatives reviewed numerous documents to gain an understanding of the current state of procurement and grant practices at the County. The following table outlines the documents reviewed by Civic Initiatives in the discovery phase of the Safety Net review.

Item Reviewed	Providing Department
Grants Management Policy and Procedures-Internal	District Attorney
Gift Card Policy -Internal	District Attorney
Form- Gift Card Purchase	District Attorney
Email (2-24-22) from Purchasing Agent Approving Tracfone Prepaid Phone Cards	District Attorney
Process Flow Chart - RFP/Q Decision Tree	Department of Health Services
Form - Competitive Procurement Pre- Approval - Internal*	Department of Health Services
Template - Vendor List for RFP/Q	Department of Health Services
Template - Budget Workbook for RFP/Q	Department of Health Services
Form - Internal request for Contract or RFP**	Department of Health Services
Template - RFP/Q Evaluation Criteria Scoring Weight List	Department of Health Services
Sample of Above Template	Department of Health Services
Template - Evaluation Workbook	Department of Health Services
Form - Evaluation Panel Information Overview - Document	Department of Health Services
Form - Evaluation Panel Information Overview - Presentations	Department of Health Services
Form - Agenda - RFP Vendor Interview/Presentation	Department of Health Services
Template- Award Letter - RFP/Q	Department of Health Services
Template - Non-Award Letter, Winner Unknown- RFP/Q	Department of Health Services
Template - Non-Award Letter, Winners Determined - RFP/Q	Department of Health Services
Process Flow Chart - Procurement Workflow - Approved to RFP/Q	Department of Health Services
Process Document - RFP Process Guide	Department of Health Services
Template - Attendance Sheet for Prebid/Proposal Meeting	Department of Health Services
Template- LICN Budget Form	Department of Health Services
Template - Outpatient Budget Workbook	Department of Health Services
Template - Proposal Cover Sheet	Department of Health Services

Item Reviewed	Providing Department
Template w/Instructions- Notice of Award	Department of Health Services
Template - RFP/Q Pre-Conference Slide Deck	Department of Health Services
Reference Document - Evaluation Team Leader Duties	Department of Health Services
Policy Document- HSD Professional Services Procurement	Department of Human Services
Technical Support Help for Zoom Set Up	Department of Human Services
Reference Table for Determination of Contracts and Procurements Process Requirements	Department of Human Services
Form- Determination of Type of Competitive Procurement	Department of Human Services
Template- Email Award Recommendation Notice - RFP	Department of Human Services
Process Document- Living Wage Information	Department of Human Services
Form - Notice of Intent to Submit Response	Department of Human Services
Process Document - Proposal Review Committee Instructions	Department of Human Services
Reference Table for Services- Federal vs. Sonoma County	Department of Human Services
Reference Document - HSD Procurement Training Slide Deck	Department of Human Services
Form - Upstream Investments Alignment	Department of Human Services
Form - Cover Sheet with Checklist - Proposal Response to SC HSD	Department of Human Services
Process Document - Software Purchases	Department of Human Services
Form - HSD Proposal Evaluation Workbook	Department of Human Services
Template - Email for Recruiting Community Evaluation Panel Members	Department of Human Services
Form- COI and Disclosure	Department of Human Services
Form- Budget Workbook for RFP	Department of Human Services
Template - HSD RFP Document	Department of Human Services
Form -Statement of Qualifications	Department of Human Services
Template - HSD RFQ Document	Department of Human Services
Reference Table - Procurement Timeline for Internal and External parties	Department of Human Services
Form - Responsive and Responsible Check	Department of Human Services
Template - Notice of Advertisement	Department of Human Services
Form - RFP Evaluation Workbook	Department of Human Services
Form - RFP/Q Process Checklist	Department of Human Services
Alameda FDO and SSA Case Study - Final	Department of Human Services
Articles from Press Democrat	County Administrator's Office

Item Reviewed	Providing Department
County Contracts Focus Group Report 2018	County Administrator's Office
Grand Jury Report - Often Reported, Never Repaired 2024	County Administrator's Office

Discovery Interviews

Civic Initiatives met with 29 internal County stakeholders to gather information on the current state of procurement and grant practices at the County and to gather their input on potential recommendations to improve and optimize those practices. The following table outlines the County stakeholders interviewed by Civic Initiatives in the discovery phase of the Safety Net review.

Interviewee	Department
Michelle Whitman, Executive Director	Community Development Commission (CDC)
Janeene de Martinez, Director	Child Support Services (CSS)
Carla Rodriguez, District Attorney	District Attorney
Tina Rivera, Director	Department of Health Services (DHS)
Angela Struckmann, Director	Human Services (HSD)
Tyrone Navarro, Fiscal & Admin Manager	Child Support Services (CSS)
Rhonda Coffman, Assistant Director	Community Development Commission (CDC)
Joan Croft, Dept Analyst	District Attorney
Shane Lewis, ASO II	District Attorney
Gina Michelson, Department Analyst	District Attorney
Renee Theilman, Department Analyst	District Attorney
Leah Benz, ASO II	Department of Health Services (DHS) – Behavioral Health
Adam Borovkoff, ASO II	Department of Health Services (DHS)
Wendy Sanders, Assistant Director	Department of Health Services (DHS) – Behavioral Health
Ruby Zhang, Department Analyst	Department of Health Services (DHS)
Regina De Melo, Program Development Manager	Human Services (HSD) – Child Welfare Services
Amanda Gayda, PPEA	Human Services (HSD)
Brenda Mechling, ASO Finance	Human Services (HSD)
Kellie Noe, Program Development Manager	Human Services (HSD)
Lynn Peralta, Assistant Director	Human Services (HSD)
Annie Silverman, PPEA	Human Services (HSD)
Cristin Tuidar, Program Dev Manager	Human Services (HSD)
Tony Walls, ASO	Human Services (HSD)
Natalie Brunamonte, ASD	Probation
Robert Halverson, Program Development Manager	Probation
Brad Hecht, ASO	Probation
Jeremy Scannell, ASO	Public Defender
Amanda Ruch, Assistant Auditor	Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector
Damian Gonshorowski, Audit Manager	Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector

Community Based Organization (CBO) Interviews

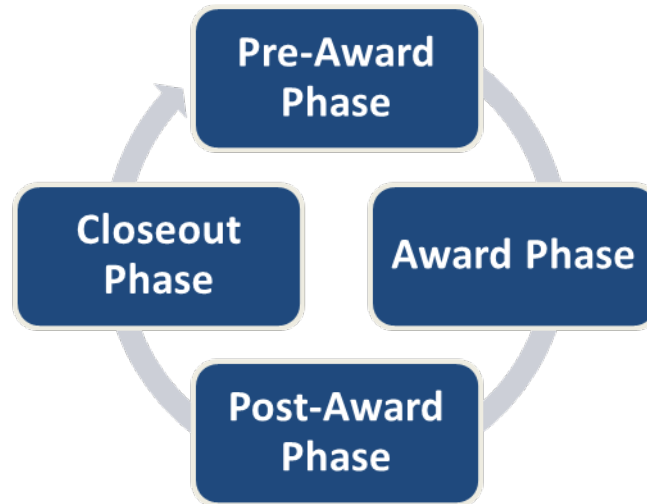
In addition to internal County stakeholders, Civic Initiatives met with CBO stakeholders to get their insights on current County procurement and grant practices and to receive their input on potential recommendations to improve and optimize those practices. The following table outlines the CBO stakeholders interviewed by Civic Initiatives in the discovery phase of the Safety Net review.

Interviewee	Department
Elece Hempel, Executive Director	Petaluma People Services Center
Melanie Dodson, Executive Director	4C's Sonoma County
Cynthia King, CEO	CAP Sonoma
Jennielynn Holmes, CEO	Catholic Charities
Maurice Lee, CEO	Center Point DAAC
Cathryn Couch, CEO, Founder	Ceres Community Project
Robin Bowen, Executive Director	Child Parent Institute (CPI)
Ronit Rubinoff, Executive Director	Legal Aid
Allison Goodwin, Interim President & CEO	Redwood Empire Food Bank
Alethea Larson, Executive Director	The Living Room
Susan Fette, CEO	TLC Child & Family Services
Christy Davila, Executive Director	West County Community Services
Mary Frances Walsh, Executive Director	Nami Sonoma County
Chris Kughn, CEO	Buckelew Programs
Tracey Feick, Director of Mission Services	Goodwill- Redwood Empire
Laura Crutsinger, CPO Ariana Ibarra, Regional Manager Sonoma County	Seneca Center
Amber Twitchell, Executive Director	On The Move Bay Area
Jade Weymouth, Executive Director	La Familia

Appendix B: Grant-Management Lifecycle

The grant management lifecycle consists of four key phases, each essential for the effective management of grants. These phases are designed to guide organizations through the entire process, from identifying funding opportunities to closing out the grant.

The following are the phases in the grant management lifecycle and the typical activities that occur during each phase.



1. Pre-Award Phase

- **Opportunity Identification:** Identify potential grant opportunities that align with the organization's strategic goals and objectives. This involves researching funding sources, understanding eligibility criteria, and assessing the feasibility of applying.
- **Proposal Development:** Develop a comprehensive grant proposal that includes a clear statement of need, project goals, objectives, methodology, budget, and evaluation plan. This phase also involves writing and compiling required documents, such as letters of support, and ensuring all submission guidelines are followed.
- **Internal Review and Approval:** Before submission, the proposal often undergoes an internal review process to ensure it meets organizational standards and aligns with strategic priorities. This may involve getting approval from leadership or relevant departments.
- **Submission:** Submit the completed grant application to the funding agency or organization, ensuring it meets all deadlines and requirements.

2. Award Phase

- **Award Notification:** If the proposal is successful, the organization receives an award notification from the funder. This phase involves reviewing the terms and conditions of the grant award, including the funding amount, reporting requirements, and any specific compliance obligations.
- **Negotiation and Acceptance:** The organization may need to negotiate certain aspects of the grant, such as budget allocations or timelines. Once negotiations are complete, the grant is formally accepted, and the organization signs the grant agreement.

3. Post-Award Phase

- **Project Implementation:** Begin implementing the grant-funded project or program according to the approved plan. This includes mobilizing resources, coordinating with partners, and carrying out project activities.
- **Budget Management:** Monitor and manage the grant budget to ensure funds are spent in accordance with the grant agreement. This includes tracking expenditures, adjusting as needed, and ensuring that spending aligns with the approved budget.
- **Compliance and Reporting:** Adhere to all compliance requirements outlined in the grant agreement. This includes submitting periodic financial and programmatic reports to the funder, documenting project progress, and demonstrating that funds are being used appropriately.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuously monitor and evaluate the project's progress toward achieving its goals and objectives. This may involve collecting data, assessing outcomes, and making necessary adjustments to improve project performance.

4. Closeout Phase

- **Final Reporting:** At the end of the grant period, submit final reports to the funder, including a comprehensive overview of project outcomes, financial statements, and any lessons learned. This report should demonstrate how the grant funds were used and the impact of the project.
- **Audit and Compliance Review:** Some grants require an audit or final compliance review to ensure that all terms and conditions were met. This phase may involve providing additional documentation or responding to audit findings.
- **Grant Closeout:** Complete all administrative tasks related to the grant, including finalizing financial reconciliations, releasing any remaining funds, and officially closing the project. This phase also involves archiving all grant documents for future reference or audits.
- **Lessons Learned:** Reflect on the successes and challenges encountered during the grant lifecycle. Document and share lessons learned with stakeholders and peers to improve future grant processes.

Appendix C: NOFO/NOFA Examples

The following are links to some federal examples and guidance that can be utilized by the County to develop more streamlined templates and implement the NOFO/NOFA process at the County.

Example	Links
2 CFR 200 - NOFO Guidance	https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-C/section-200.204
GFOA SMART Grants Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Example	https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-09/FY22%20SMART%20Grants%20NOFO_Final.pdf
SAMHSA FY 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Application Guide	https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/how-to-apply/nofo-application-guide
Grants.gov NOFO SAMPLE	https://www.grants.gov/grantsws/rest/opportunity/att/download/287592
HRSA Understanding the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Template	https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/grants/manage/understanding-nofo-requirements.pdf
FEMA FY 2024 NOFO Template	https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_ncp-fy24-nqwsqp-nofo.pdf
HUD NOFA Format Outline	https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/DOC_9959.doc

Appendix D: Be Well OC Model

The following provides an overview of the Be Well OC model that may be considered by the County as they seek to implement improved engagement activities. More details can be found at <https://bewelloc.org/>.

The Be Well OC model is a community-wide strategy to improve mental health care in Orange County, California. The model aims to create a more accessible and compassionate system of care by uniting organizations from the public, private, academic, and faith-based sectors. The model uses a best practices model called Collective Impact to: Reduce stigma, promote mental health, identify problems early, provide comprehensive treatment, and educate and prevent mental illness.

The Be Well OC model includes:

- **Mental health and wellness facility:** A state-of-the-art facility in Orange that provides mental health and substance use disorder services.
- **Mobile response program:** A program that operates in seven cities and on UCI's campus.
- **Crisis stabilization:** A program that offers medication monitoring, evaluation, and crisis stabilization.
- **Social rehabilitation model:** A flexible model that adapts to the needs of the client.
- **Residential programs:** Programs that include withdrawal management, substance use residential, crisis residential, and co-occurring disorders residential.

The Be Well OC model's goal is to start a movement to improve mental health services across the United States.

Appendix E: Procurement Transformation Roadmap

The following link provides access to the report provided to the Board of Supervisors on October 17, 2023.

<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12361581&GUID=07298A48-EA25-444D-8F91-5CC583A22131>

Appendix F: Open Gov Functionality

The following is a list of the functionality that Open Gov could provide the County to support procurement and grant management lifecycle processes:

1. Document Creation
 - Available templates for procurement solicitation documents.
 - Available templates for grant opportunity documents.
 - Customizable fields to meet specific project needs.
2. Response Management
 - Streamlined process for managing procurement bid and proposal submissions.
 - Streamlined process for managing grant application submissions.
 - Automated notifications for suppliers to know when opportunities are posted.
 - Automated notifications for respondents on key deadlines.
3. Supplier Registration
 - Self-service portal for supplier registration and updates.
 - Comprehensive supplier profiles for easy access to qualifications.
 - Ability to upload and store documents related to suppliers (e.g., living wage, W9, COI, etc.)
4. Evaluation Tools
 - Collaborative scoring and evaluation matrix for review teams.
 - Transparent scoring process with clear criteria.
5. Communication Management
 - Centralized messaging system for all communications related to an opportunity.
 - Q&A features to facilitate clear and timely information sharing.
6. Document Management
 - Secure storage and sharing of procurement and grant-related documents.
 - Version control to track changes and updates.
 - Enable cross-department collaboration and feedback when creating documents.
7. Compliance Tracking
 - Automated checks for compliance with procurement and grant regulations.
 - Documentation of compliance processes for audits.
8. Reporting and Analytics
 - Real-time dashboards for tracking progress of procurement and grant opportunities.
 - Detailed reports on participation and evaluation outcomes.

9. Workflow Automation

- Automate approval processes and notifications.
- Reduce manual tasks and improve efficiency.

10. Contract Management

- Centralize contract storage and tracking.
- Monitor compliance and renewal dates.

Appendix G: Probation Department Grant Proposal Development Process

The following document provided by the Sonoma County Probation Department details the process used by the department for determining whether to pursue a grant proposal.

Grant Proposal Development Process

Purpose of this document: To define roles and responsibilities in producing a grant proposal and outline the process for determining whether to pursue a proposal.

