

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

February 14, 2022

TO: SBCCOG Steering Committee

FROM: Jacki Bacharach, SBCCOG Executive Director
Ronson Chu, SBCCOG Senior Project Manager for Homeless Services

SUBJECT: FY 22-23 Innovation Funds – Client Aid 2.0 Pilot Implementation

Adherence to Strategic Plan

Goal A: Environment, Transportation and Economic Development. Facilitate, implement and/or educate members and others about environmental, transportation and economic development programs that benefit the South Bay.

BACKGROUND

Homeless Client Aid 2.0 pilot builds upon Client Aid 1.0 pilot from the previous Innovation Fund. Client Aid 2.0 is governed by the Los Angeles County/South Bay Cities Council of Government SOW (See attached relevant Client Aid 2.0 section of the SOW.)

Innovation Fund 1.0 allowed cities and provider agencies (ie. PATH, St Margaret’s Center, and Harbor Interfaith) to provide temporary motel stays and rental subsidies to help reduce the number of individuals experiencing homelessness. The cities and provider agencies would front the money for the expenses and seek reimbursement from SBCCOG. The SBCCOG would then seek reimbursement from the County before issuing a check.

A few issues arose in Innovation Fund 1.0. One, only two cities have signed up to administer client aid, so use by cities was limited. There is a great deal of logistical set up for cities to have funds available for client aid purposes. Second, provider agencies do not necessarily have discretionary funds available to front the costs of client aid, further limiting its use. Several outreach workers reported they utilized their own personal credit cards and sought reimbursement later. Third, the reimbursement process can be cumbersome and slow. The SBCCOG currently requires an invoice from the requester, and then the SBCCOG must bill the County. County response times can vary. Lastly, the provider agencies would like to have the funds available for more use cases such as ID/rental application fees, transportation to appointments/interviews, and prepaid phone among others.

In summary, feedback on barriers to delivering services from Client Aid 1.0 pilot include:

- 1) Desire to accommodate more cases
- 2) Quicker/easier access to funds
- 3) Invoicing/reimbursement process is cumbersome

Examples of use cases include:

- a) Case manager taking client to DMV and needs money for ID or car registration so that client can gain employment as a valet driver
- b) Case manager finding a suitable apartment for client and needs money for security deposit
- c) Client has a promising job interview the next day; Case manager would like to put client in a motel so that the client can shower, sleep and prepare for the interview
- d) Client has car towed, endangering client's job security. Case manager needs to pay for impound fees and proof of temporary insurance

CLIENT AID 2.0

Based on the above feedback from cities and provider agencies, SBCCOG has redesigned client aid to address the 3 issues mentioned above - the desire to accommodate more use cases, quicker access to the funds, and a more streamlined reimbursement process.

To address the issue of providing additional use cases, SBCCOG has added the following eligible use cases:

- One night motel stay prior to a court date, job interview, housing appointment, or other event that would help cure the homeless situation (approx. \$100/night)
- 1-5 day motel stay due to an immediate acute health, safety, weather related problem, or an after hours/weekend request prior to social worker engagement (approx. \$100/night)
- Rental/Utility Deposits
- Moving Assistance
- Transportation to appointments or interviews that would progress their re-housing efforts
- Minor job-related medical expenses: glasses, hearing aid, etc.
- Auto tow/boot/temp insurance to sustain job or safe parking
- Application Fees/DMV Fees/Document Assistance
- Prepaid phone

Regarding the issue of quicker access to funds and a streamlined reimbursement process, the SBCCOG has coordinated with the County to provide seed money for the program. The SBCCOG has received \$45,000 of seed money for client aid expenses for January 2022- June 2023. This seed money eliminates the need to seek reimbursement from the County.

Furthermore, as an additional modality to provide quicker access to the funds, SBCCOG is proposing the issuance of \$500 debit cards to the 3 main provider agencies in the South. Debit cards can be used by homeless outreach staff in the South Bay, but will not be given directly to the homeless client. Cities and provider agencies can also submit a request for a check from the SBCCOG for expenses above \$500 but not to exceed \$5000 and in instances when the debit card is not accepted. Finally, to streamline access to these funds, the SBCCOG has created a Google Form that will serve 4 purposes - provide: program guidelines, application questions, check

request, and performance tracking. Please see attached Google Form . More details about the proposed process and procedures for Client Aid 2.0 is below.

PROPOSED PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

As an amendment to the SBCCOG current Financial Policies and Procedures, SBCCOG will set up a separate debit account to administer Client Aid 2.0 to allow for SBCCOG to access and distribute funds directly to the case managers. As noted above, the Los Angeles County has already seeded \$45,000 in SBCCOG’s general account. Once the funds are transferred to this new debit account, the SBCCOG Accountant, will create a separate ledger in the accounting system to track transactions and report to the Steering Committee monthly. The SBCCOG Executive Director or their designee will have signature authority for this account.

As stated in the Google Form, in order to qualify for Client Aid 2.0, cities and provider agencies must first exhaust all other available options, including but not limited to accessing: internal city/agency resources, LAHSA Problem Solving, Safe Parking, Rapid Rehousing, Shallow Subsidies, Prevention Services, Interim Shelters, Medi-Cal/CalAIM, other State/Local resources. Additionally, Client Aid 2.0 recipients must already be in the Los Angeles County Coordinated Entry System (“CES”). SBCCOG staff can verify this by accessing the Los Angeles County Homeless Management Information System (“HMIS”).

There will be 2 ways for cities and partner agencies to access these funds: 1) via prepaid debit cards and 2) via a check request. SBCCOG will distribute \$500 debit cards to the 3 main provider agencies in the South Bay - PATH, St Margaret’s Center, and Harbor Interfaith. SBCCOG will require the partner agencies receiving the debit cards to sign an agreement letter and set up a debit card check out process (Please see below for the partner agency Agreement Letter and the Debit Card Check Out Form). In both the debit card and check writing methods, the partner will need to first fill out the Google Form and obtain an email approval from either the SBCCOG Senior Project Manager or Senior Analyst for Homeless Services. Once approval is obtained, the debit card can then be used, or the SBCCOG will issue a check. Below is more detail about each of the two modalities:

- 1) Debit Cards: SBCCOG will initially request five \$500 prepaid debit cards from the bank. Three of the debit cards will go to the following lead agencies in the South Bay: PATH, St Margaret’s Center, and Harbor Interfaith Services. There will be one point person identified to the SBCCOG at each agency responsible for the \$500 debit card. The SBCCOG Senior Project Manager and the Senior Analyst will hold the other 2 debit cards. Upon Google Form approval, city and partner agency staff can sign out the debit cards and must sign them back in once they are finished with the transaction. Please see attached Debit Card Check Out Form. The \$500 prepaid cards can be cancelled if they are lost or stolen.

Partner Staff will be responsible for obtaining a W9 and receipts from the vendor, and forwarding them to SBCCOG. The SBCCOG Accountant will enter the vendors and the transactions into the accounting system. Once a debit card is fully used, the SBCCOG

Senior Project Manager may request a replacement card upon approval of the Executive Director or Designee. The Accountant will then request the card from the Bank.

Checks and Balances: There will be 4 checkpoints in this process: 1) As part of the Google Form process, the SBCCOG Senior Project Manager and the Senior Analyst will validate the end recipient of the debit card purchase. This review can be done by simply checking the HMIS system for the Client ID and corresponding client aid case note. HMIS has its own homeless verification process for any participant in CES. 2) The Senior Project Manager and the Senior Analyst will maintain a Client Aid 2.0 tracking sheet that will essentially be the Google Form spreadsheet output. Once a month, the SBCCOG Executive Director will review the tracking sheet to ensure that the program is conforming to the guidelines. 3) The tracking spreadsheet will be included in the monthly Steering Committee agenda for review (confidentiality of the end recipient will be respected). And 4) Per the Los Angeles County contract with SBCCOG, the county will audit the program as they deem necessary.

2) Checks: For use cases when debit cards are not accepted or for expenses greater than \$500, the SBCCOG will issue a check from the debit account. Checks will not exceed \$5,000 and require authorization from the Executive Director. Upon approval of the Google Form, the SBCCOG Senior Project Manager of Homeless Services will seek email approval to cut a check from the Executive Director. Upon email approval, the Accountant will issue the check, signed by the SBCCOG Executive Director or their designee and delivered to the partner staff. Partner staff will be responsible for HMIS entry, obtaining the W9, and receipts.

Checks and Balances: The check writing process will have 6 checkpoints; 1) The SBCCOG Senior Project Manager or the Senior Analyst will validate the client in the HMIS system. 2) The SBCCOG Executive Director or Designee will approve the aid. 3) The Accountant will be the 3rd approver at issuance of the check. 4) The SBCCOG Executive Director or Designee will check the tracking spreadsheet monthly. 5) The tracking spreadsheet will be included in the monthly Steering Committee agenda packet for review. And 6) Los Angeles County has authority to audit the program as they see fit.

This process has been reviewed by the SBCCOG Treasurer, Joseph Lillio, and he felt it had sufficient checks and balances and was an expeditious way to accommodate clients.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board approve the following actions by SBCCOG staff to:

- 1) Open new Client Aid debit account using the \$45,000 LA County seed money
- 2) Dispense the money per the steps outlined in the above memo
- 3) Amend the Financial Procedures and Policies to allow for:
 - a) Distribute Client Aid funds under \$500 utilizing debit cards
 - b) Distribute Client Aid funds under \$5,000 through checks signed by the Executive Director or Designee from a separate account dedicated for this purpose.

Attachment 1: Client Aid Section of the Los Angeles County SOW with SBCCOG:

Task 4: Client Aid (Priority Area 2) \$35,000 (\$35k thru 2022, \$55k thru June 2023)		
<p>Program Description: South Bay Cities and providers are seeking easily accessible client aid funds for prevention and bridge strategies to support people experiencing homelessness. The SBCCOG is seeking \$35,000 for a 12-month program, 100% due upon execution of this SOW, to administer the Client Aid program that will include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motel stays for those who cannot go into traditional shelter settings or are in transition to permanent housing • Move-in assistance: rental & utility deposits • Boot fees, car impound fees, and temporary auto insurance to help sustain employment • Minor medical fees to help sustain employment such as glasses and hearing aids • Bridge rental subsidy for those not eligible for Rapid Rehousing or Problem Solving. Not to exceed \$600 a month for 6 months. After 6 months, clients must transition to rapid rehousing or other funding subsidy. Suitable only for those with income between \$800-\$1,500. 		
	Deliverables/Performance Targets	Timeline
4.a	Develop a Client Aid program that aligns with the County homeless eligibility requirements and metrics. Program will include process to link clients who have not been connected to homeless services.	
4.b	Conduct targeted Outreach to partners including agencies and city staff.	
4.c	Serve at least 18 unduplicated individuals or families who are at risk of becoming homeless (to avert homelessness), or who need a bridge to shelter and/or permanent housing. Metrics to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of people receiving prevention services (auto related expenses, job related expenses, rental related expenses, and others) • # of people transitioned to interim housing (bridge housing, storage fees, and others) • # of people transitioned to permanent housing (document fees, bridge housing, storage fees, and others) 	Quarterly

Attachment 2: Google form for providers to access client aid:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScsBckIGeWuFp5L82QAKihoLKSR4_8gvsXYzqH48Ct2F5im3Q/viewform

Attachment 3: Debit Card Agency Agreement Letter:

Dear Provider:

By signing this letter you are agreeing to adhere to the South Bay Cities Council of Governments (“SBCCOG”) Client Aid 2.0 Program guidelines as stipulated in the program Google Form which can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScsBckIGeWuFp5L82QAKihoLKSR4_8gvsXYZqH48Ct2F5im3Q/viewform

Client Aid should be given as a solution of last resort to clients in the Coordinated Agency system in Service Planning Area 8 (<https://www.sbceh.org/homeless-count-2020.html>). As stated in the Google Form, in order to qualify for Client Aid 2.0, cities and provider agencies must first exhaust all other available options, including but not limited to accessing: internal city/agency resources, LAHSA Problem Solving, Safe Parking, Rapid Rehousing, Shallow Subsidies, Prevention Services, Interim Shelters, Medi-Cal/CalAIM, other State/Local resources. Additionally, Client Aid 2.0 recipients must already be in the Los Angeles County Coordinated Entry System (“CES”).

Once the Google form has been submitted, and the SBCCOG has given the email approval, a debit card can be obtained by the approved partner agencies by completing a debit card check out form. Debit cards should not be given to the client. Cardholder must obtain a W9 and receipt from the vendor and send back to SBCCOG within 5 business days for each use. Lastly, cardholder must ensure that staff has recorded the Client Aid in HMIS per the guidelines in the Google Form. Include signed receipt from recipient.

If the debit card is lost or stolen, the SBCCOG must be notified immediately. Failure to do so, can result in a loss of funds.

SBCCOG Name and Signature
Signature

Provider Name and

Date:

Attachment 4: Debit Card Check Out Form

Sign Out	Sign In
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Sign Out Name	Date	Sign out Signature	Sign In Signature	Date	Amount Used	Vendor W9? (Y/N)	Receipt? (Y/N)	HMIS Entry? (Y/N)