CORE Investments RFP Q&A for Rounds 1 and 2

- Round 1 question period posted on June 21, for questions submitted between 6/3/2024 through 6/17/2024.
- Round 2 question period posted on July 8, for questions submitted between 6/18/2024 through 7/1/2024.

Overview of RFP Question and Response Process

Questions: Responding agencies are encouraged to submit questions related to the CORE Request for Proposal (RFP) process, related documents, and the proposal online-portal to the email: COREfunding@santacruzcountyca.gov.

Responses: To ensure that consistent and transparent responses are provided to all responding agencies, questions sent to the email above regarding the RFP will be grouped in specific themes with the posted County response

Question Deadline: All questions regarding the RFP will have to be submitted to COREfunding@santacruzcountyca.gov by the **deadline of 7/1/24 by 5:00 pm**.

Posting: The "Question and Response" document will be posted to the HSD CORE website at least two times during the RFP process:

- **1st Question and Response posting on 6/21/24** (posting and responding to questions sent by the close of business 6/17/24)
- **2nd Question and Response posting on 7/8/24** (posting and responding to questions received before the 7/1/24 @5:00 pm deadline)

All questions submitted after 6/17/24 but before the question deadline, will be included in 2nd posting date. Responses are intended to be addressed in the final posting to allow enough time for application completion.

CORE RFP Trainings and Technical Assistance (TA)

We encourage those interested in submitting a CORE RFP Proposal to schedule CORE RFP Trainings and TA sessions:

CLICK HERE to find a schedule of Trainings and TA sessions, as well as registration details and links. *Full web address: https://santacruzhumanservices.org/Portals/0/CORE/FY 2025-28/CORE RFP Training-TA Schedule-Links (rev 5-29-24).pdf?ver=nEb-lbOo1UkC8HEnK0PtTw%3d%3d*

CLICK HERE to register for the online portal Technical Assistance session, which will be held on June 26, 20224 from 11am-12pm (will be recorded). *Full web address: http://bit.ly/CORE-RFP-Training-June26*

How is this CORE RFP Q&A Document Organized?

Questions and responses are grouped together based on the following themes:

A. [RFP Item Clarification](#)
B. [Stable, Affordable Housing Carve-Out](#)
C. [Should/How do we Apply?](#)
D. [Age Range Definitions](#)
E. [Specific Program Scenario](#)
F. [Miscellaneous](#)

Questions and responses are numbered sequentially within each theme. The personal names and/or the respective agency that sent the question are not identified.

The questions received during the 2nd round of the Q&A period (June 17th -July 1st) will be distinguished by a yellow-highlighted header or, if grouped with other questions from the 1st round of questions and responses posted on June 21, 2024, the question itself will be highlighted in yellow.

A. RFP Item Clarification

1. **Question:** What is the total CORE funding? Last year was $5.9million. The gentleman who sat on the panel during the last meeting mentioned over $7 million. Is the info on the website below accurate? $3.8 million (with inflation?)

   Response: The CORE Investments total annual funding for the Fiscal Years 2025-2028 is $5,958,853 million divided into the following:

   • $3,790,025 of the total annual funding will be awarded through this CORE RFP focusing on the CORE Conditions of: Thriving Families, Lifelong Learning & Education, and Healthy Environments.

   • $1.5 million of the total annual funding will be allocated to the CORE Condition of "Stable, Affordable Housing and Shelter" and will be determined by a separate process from the RFP to align with the Homelessness Action Plan created by the local Continuum of Care (CoC, known locally as the Housing for Health Partnership) and announced in accordance with County Policies.

   • A combined allocation of $668,828 from the total annual funding will be set aside for the elected officials (The Board of Supervisors and the Santa Cruz City Council) to fund unanticipated priorities.

2. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):
   - **2.i.:** Can you please provide guidance as to what time period you need the documents below to represent? p. Please include the following documents:

     (1) a Statement of Financial Position or Balance Sheet;

     (2) a Statement of Activities or Statement of Revenues and Expenses;

     (3) a Cash Flow Statement;

     (4) a Statement of Functional Expenses; and

     (5) W9

   - **2.ii.:** For question "k" total agency revenue, what is the fiscal period you would like us to use in answering this question?
   - **2.iii**.: For question "q" financial documents, what is the fiscal period you would like us to use in answering this question?
   - **2.iv.:** For the questions that ask about financial information (total revenue, proposed budget, financial documents), which fiscal year should we use when answering those questions?

Response: (address 2.i., through 2.iv.)**:** The documents are requested for the most recent annual time period and the most current fiscal period that reflects the total agency revenue.

3. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):
    - **3.i.:** On item A(n): "Provide exact amount of CORE funding requested," are you looking for an annual amount or the total amount requested over the 3 year period?
    - **3.ii.:** Please clarify if the Tiers listed on the RFP are for annual funding or if the amount listed on the RFP should be equally allocated over three years.
    - **3.iii.:** Are the tiers based on total or annual amounts? So then an organization that wants to apply in tier 3, up to $25,000, that is if their asking for $25,000 per year, not $25,000 total across the 3-years?
    - **3.iv.:** Is the $3.79 million amount the expected ANNUAL allocation from City/County for each of the 3 years in the grant period?
    - **3.v.:** Regarding the amounts in the funding tiers, can you please clarify if those are the maximum amounts per year, or per three-year grant? For example, would the maximum Tier 2 grant be $150,000 per year for three years ($450k total), or $50,000 per year for three years ($150k total)?
    - **3.vi.:** I am reaching out to submit a question on behalf of a program. We intend on applying for the CORE Investments Thriving Families. Is the grant amount for tier 1 up to $500,000 per year for 3 years or in total?
        i. Ex. 1 Total Grant Request: $500,000- spread over 3 year term -YR1 payment $166,666, YR2 payment $166,666, YR3 payment $166,666 OR
        ii. Ex 2. Total Grant Request: $1,500,000- spread over 3 year term- YR1 payment $500,000, YR2 payment $500,000, YR3 payment $500,000

Response (address 3.i. through3.vi): The amount should reflect the dollar amount that the program is requesting for each year in the 3-year funding cycle. The amounts should be the same each year. The funding tier amounts are based on what an awarded program may potential receive on an annual basis, so in the example provided in 3.vi. it would be $500,000 per year for a three year total of $1,500,000.

(address 3.iv.): $3.79 million is the total annual amount for each of the three years of the funding cycle.

4. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):
   - **4.i.:** What makes a client "solely benefited by CORE funds"? Are they served 100% with CORE funds or can they be served with a blend that includes CORE funds. Is the percentage of their service funded with CORE funds relevant?
   - **4.ii.:** Qus 11-14) Can you please clarify the relationship between unduplicated participants and the % of the program which would be funded by CORE? If the funding supports program functions that impact all participants, are all unduplicated participants reported along with the corresponding demographic and impact data?
   - **4.iii.:** How will the CORE funding only work with the Leveraging of funds? For example, if we are using CORE funds to match or leverage other funds, do we count all services or just the % proportional to CORE Funding?

   Response(address 4.i., 4.ii., 4.iii.)**:** In order to collect information on the impact of CORE funding, agencies are required to report on clients being served using CORE funds. The County and City recognize that in many cases agencies utilize CORE funds in combination with other funding sources, which makes it difficult to report on the clients who are only being served by CORE dollars. In those cases, when an agency is filling out those parts of the application, they should identify total participants and impacts specific to CORE funding only, regardless of any known or proposed leveraged funds. Additional impacts from leveraging may be described in question #6.

5. **Question:** How broadly or narrowly will the CORE condition categories be interpreted? Will the Category and Impact statement be the guide and the indicators listed in the link simply examples that can be expanded upon?

   Response: It is up to the applicant to demonstrate the connection between the CORE Condition and Impact Statement selected and their proposal. Indicators listed on the DataShare website may be included in proposals but should not be considered the sole source of data or information about the CORE Conditions and Impact Areas.

6. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):
   - **6.i.:** Can you clarify if this is the sole intended focus of Healthy Environments funding this cycle? Safe, affordable, accessible recreation space
   - **6.ii.:** Yes I had the same question. In the RFP it only references one of 4 of the CORE aspects in Healthy Environments: the Recreation Spaces one.
     - i. Quality of the natural environment and natural resources
     - ii. Climate change resiliency
     - iii. Safe, affordable, accessible recreational spaces

iv. Safe, affordable, accessible transportation system

Response (address 6.i. and 6.ii)**:** Yes, safe, affordable, accessible recreation spaces is the impact (service) area for Healthy Environments in the CORE Funding cycle. Of the total CORE Conditions of Health and Well-Being (Core Condition) and their multiple (impact areas) service areas, this CORE RFP will prioritize and focus on the following CORE Conditions and their service areas (impact area):

a. Lifelong Learning & Education: Equitable access to high-quality education and learning opportunities
b. Thriving Families: Increased resilience of children and youth
c. Thriving Families: Increased resilience among older and dependent adults
d. Healthy Environments: Safe, affordable, accessible recreation spaces

Organizations are encouraged to utilize the TA available to explore more about the CORE Conditions and Impact Statement, as the CORE Conditions and the impact statements are interrelated. Sign up for a TA session here: https://bit.ly/CORE-RFP-TA-Signup.

7. **Question:** Can you clarify if the impact statement for Lifelong Learning and Education, "Equitable access to high-quality education and learning opportunities," is intended to be applicable for a specific range of education topics, or if it can be applied broadly to education about any topic? For example, in our program we teach nutrition to adults. Would that be a good fit for this CORE condition?

    Response: In the CORE RFP, it is the responsibility of the Responding Agency to establish and demonstrate how their proposed program services/activities is applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen.

8. **Questions (**the following are grouped due to similar context):
    - **8.i.:** How is applying for no more than 25% of the CORE funding defined? Will the $3.79 million amount be used to calculate the 25% limit, or the CORE funding including the affordable housing/shelter carve out, of the $5,290,025 amount used to calculate the 25% limit?
    - **8.ii.:** For the 25% CORE funding proposal ask max, do we use the $3.79 million, or the overall $5.96 million amount to determine what the 25% limit is?

    Response (address 8.i., 8.ii.) The 25% limit will be calculated using the available CORE RFP $3.79 million. The funding limit for proposals per agency would therefore be $947,506.

9. **Question:** In regards to question 3 on the application, for the following statement "Please select one CORE Condition for Health and Well-being and associated Impact Statement that the program will primarily impact," - beyond indicating that our program aligns with one of the included "Impact Statements," do we need to include how well our program aligns with any of the indicators included on the CORE dashboard on Datashare?

    Response: Once a CORE Condition and impact statement are chosen, some application questions refer to this choice and how your program activities/goals fall under this CORE Condition/impact statement. Some questions ask you to identify relevant data from secondary sources and/or primary sources, which can include data and indicators found on Datashare. A proposal does not necessarily need to justify alignment with indicators included on the CORE dashboard found on DataShare.

10. **Question**: If our participant surveys are not adequate to accurately tell the story of the demographics of our participants (for example, in a scenario where, despite all efforts, only 25% of participants fill out demographic surveys), is it acceptable to use county-level demographic information to approximate demographics of those served? In this example, the program would serve the entire county, geographically.

    Response: Question#13 in the CORE RFP Proposal invites programs to 'describe how your program will collect unduplicated participant data and their demographics from the CORE funding'. This question is the opportunity to explain all efforts and approaches that your program will attempt to collect and report data on the CORE program participants.

11. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context)
    - **11.i.:** I have a question for clarification regarding the CORE RFP: Can an NPO write one RFP for the entire organization? Not just to fund one program? For example, to help cover their funding for staffing so they can continue to provide much needed services in the field of Lifelong Learning to students in Santa Cruz County?
    - **11.ii.:** Can a NPO submit one RFP for the entire organization? Or should an RFP be submitted for the different programs

    Response (address 11.i. and 11.ii.)**:** The CORE RFP is intended to allow agencies to submit proposals for specific programs within their agency or for their entire agency. In addition, the CORE RFP is designed to support direct services, activities or actions that directly benefit a target population. The intention of the RFP is to support direct services and includes the work required by an organization to effectively achieve the desired outcomes of the proposal, and the specific budget expenses needed to do so. In carrying out services

that directly impact a target population, there may be expenses for activities that support the organization's ability to provide the service.

12. **Question:** When I submit the RFP, is there a separate place for us to attach a Reference Page showing our citations and where our data and research were collected? Or are we expected to include the citation in our answers and the citations are considered part of our wordcount ?

    Response There is no separate reference page or attachment for citations.

13. **Question:** WEB LINKS: If a nonprofit CONTRACTOR has an organizational website, it is a requirement of this Contract to provide links to the HelpSCC (URL_1), Santa Cruz County Government (URL_2), and Workforce Santa Cruz County (URL_3) websites. (None of these sites are working)

    Response: All material found in Exhibit D: Independent Contractor Agreement (example) is for informational purposes only. This includes the Web Links requirement. If an agency's proposal is selected for funding the County will work with the agency to create an agreement and resolve the Web Links issue.

==The following questions, questions A.14 through A.40, were received in the 2nd round of the Q&A period.==

14. **Question**: My question is about Impact Statements, specifically one's that have no definition. Specifically: Social Emotional Regulation
    - What exactly is this referring to? What do you mean by "regulation," i.e., internal or external?
    - There is no definition supplied for this Statement; without one doesn't the County risk, as an example, 50 proposals coming in with different definitions?

    Response: Social emotional regulation (sometimes called self-regulation) generally refers to the ability to understand and manage one's own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, particularly in response to stress. For additional guidance and suggested resources on social emotional regulation or other indicators that are not linked to community-level data on DataShare, view the recording and slides from the June 25 CORE RFP training on Finding & Using Community Indicators or DataShare & Other Sources and/or request individualized technical assistance from the CORE consultants (https://bit.ly/CORE-RFP-TA-Signup).

    The impact statements applicants are required to address (e.g.," Increased Resilience of Children and Youth," under the CORE Condition of Thriving Families) are different from the

community-level indicators (such as social-emotional regulation) that help illustrate the impact statement.

In the RFP, applicants must address one of the impact statements in their proposals, but are welcome to provide a variety of data that describe the needs and strengths related to their proposed programs and activities from DataShare *and/or other sources.*

15. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context)**:**

- **15.i.:** Curious about the indicators for each priority. Do our programs need to rely on the indicators in data share?
- **15.ii**:. In regards to Thriving Families and the impact statement of increased resilience, does the county have any additional information on the definition of resilience for the purpose of the CORE program beyond the broad or general definition? And do we need to align with one of the indicators already listed on the Data Share site? Or can we submit applications with areas of impact beyond those indicators listed?
- **15.iii.:** Since lifelong Learning only has data for ECE, does that mean it really is about childcare, or just that we can use other data and there is interest in targeted, equity driven adult learning?
- **15.iv.:** Can you say more about "impact statements" that you have mentioned. Is that something in writing - where found?

Response (address 15.i. through 15.iv.) **I**t is up to the applicant to demonstrate the connection between the CORE Condition and Impact Statement selected and their proposal. Indicators listed on the DataShare website may be included in proposals but should not be considered the sole source of data or information about the CORE Conditions and Impact Areas.

Some questions ask you to identify relevant data from secondary sources and/or primary sources, which can include data and indicators found on Datashare. A proposal does not necessarily need to justify alignment with indicators included on the CORE dashboard found on DataShare. DataShare includes examples of indicators but applicants are not limited to those indicators and may use indicators from other sources in their proposals.

For additional guidance and suggested resources on increased resilience or other indicators that are not linked to community-level data on DataShare, view the recording and slides from the June 25 CORE RFP training on Finding & Using Community Indicators or DataShare & Other Sources and/or request individualized technical assistance from the CORE consultants (https://bit.ly/CORE-RFP-TA-Signup).

More information about the CORE Condition Impact statements may be found on DataShare here: https://www.datasharescc.org/tiles/index/display?alias=CORE.

There is no further definition on increased resilience than what the RFP provides. Lifelong Learning is intended for individuals across the life span.

16. **Question**: Re: Q7, can we select Evidence-based Practice if the program has been informed by/contains EBPs or can we only select that option if our program specifically has been formally evaluated?

    Response: Programs should choose their place on the CORE Investments Continuum of Results and Evidence based on the online guide found here: https://www.datasharescc.org/content/sites/santacruz/CORE/CORE_Continuum_of_Results_and_Evidence_with_Questions_Bilingual.pdf , which includes definitions and various factors including how the evidence (data) is typically gathered and the degree of formality and structure in collecting and reporting the evidence.
    If a program contains multiple levels of results and evidence, the program should choose the highest level (e.g. Effective Practice or Evidence-based Practice).

17. **Question**: Re: Q8, does every "a" activity link to a "b" field? Or is "b" a calculation across the described activities/services?

    Response: In Question #8, programs should include at least one activity but may include up to six activities. In (8a.) you can describe the specific activity that your program is proposing and in (8b.) provide the total number in counts of the specific activity or service described in 8a. Responses to 8a and 8b should be linked to each other and not other activities. Depending on how many activities are chosen, programs will describe the specific activity in (8a.) followed by providing the total number or services in counts of that specific activity in (8b).

18. **Question**: Re: Q9, can we embed the county survey questions in an existing survey instrument, process, timeline?

    Response: Yes, you can provide the survey in a manner that best fits your program. The County will provide the standardized client satisfaction survey to the awarded CORE programs. Question # 9 provides the opportunity for applicants to share and describe their approach, methods, on how they will provide and distribute the client survey to the people served by their program.

19. **Question**: For question "l" proposed program budget, what is the fiscal period you would like us to use in answering this question?

   Response: The proposed program budget should reflect the amount needed to implement the proposed program in Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and should be the same amount entered into the budget template found in question 17.

20. **Question:** For question "14", will organizations be required to collect income information of participants (and their families if they're youth)?

   Response: The county currently has no plant to require income data-collection from program participants. Question 14 provides an opportunity provide an estimated intended program's participants and their estimated household income level using the 2024 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines.

21. **Question**: In writing the scopes of work (if funded) for the 2022-25 cycle, the outcomes were very limited compared to both our proposal outcomes and actual outcomes for the participants. Will this be the same format this time?

   Response: If awarded funding, the scopes of work will be negotiated when contracts are developed.

22. **Question**: Is CORE open to continuation funding for aspects of projects that were started in the current funding cycle?

   Response: Agencies are welcome to apply for their currently awarded CORE programs. The current CORE RFP does not award any additional points for previously funded CORE programs.

23. **Question**: Qu 17) The budget scoring rubric indicates "admin overhead does not exceed 15%". The example budget identifies "Program Director" under personnel costs but also identifies "leadership and support staff salaries" under Administrative Overhead.
    - Can you please clarify if a director and/or coordinator who is responsible for program delivery but not the identified activities is considered a personnel cost or an administrative overhead?
    - Does the 15% admin cap include the organization's indirect cost rate, otherwise known as a Facilities and Administrative (F&A) rate? Is the indirect cost rate capped at a certain amount?

Response: If the director (or other staff) is involved in the services provided and any part of their salary or benefits would be funded by CORE dollars should be included in the Personnel Costs. Staff that are not involved in the program, but are needed by the organization to maintain operations should be included in the Administrative Overhead. The organization's indirect cost rate would be included in the 15% overhead.

24. **Question:** Is there an idea of distribution across the three priority areas?

    Response: Currently neither the RFP nor the Board of Supervisors or City of Santa Cruz gave direction about the dollar amounts that will be allocated to each priority area. In September, during a Board and City Council meeting details about the application patterns for the RFP will be presented and then the Board and the Council will determine priorities and funding levels for the three CORE conditions.

25. **Question:** How were the three priority areas chosen?

    Response: HSD analyzed the County's General Fund investments in the various CORE Conditions as well as community data and recommended the priority areas to the Board of Supervisors and City Council which adopted the priority areas.

26. **Question:** Regarding "results-based accountability," will there be a consideration of outcomes, quality measures, and other measures of current contractor performance in the decision-making process for recommended awards for the next cycle?

    Response: There are no additional points for past performance in the current RFP process. Agencies that are disqualified from contracting with the County are not eligible for CORE funds.

27. **Question**: So an organization can decide which of the tiers to apply to: Tier 1 or Tier 2 if your total revenue exceeds $7.5M? Any other guidance on which Tier to use?

    Response: It is up to each organization to decide which funding tier their program is best suited for and create a proposal in that tier. Only organizations that have less than $7.5 million in annual revenue are eligible to apply for Tier 3 funding.

28. **Question:** If we are a current awardee but we were not able to meet all of our goals for something out of our control, does this count against us when we reapply?

29. **Response:** As long as an organization is not disqualified from receiving County or City funds, past performance is not scored in the current CORE RFP.

30. **Question**: Does "unduplicated program participants" mean people can only participate in the program once?

    Response: No, some programs are designed for several interactions with clients and this is allowed. However, when reporting on program performance, an agency would only count that client once for the purposes of the services given to clients and the demographics of who the program served.

31. **Question**: Will all the RFPs be evaluated together or are there goals for funding of each CORE condition and in the various tiers?

    Response: All of the proposals will go through a panelist process and be ranked and that will determine how all the proposals get recommended to the County and Council for funding. There will be multiple panels so different panelists will evaluate proposals in the various CORE Conditions.
    Currently neither the RFP nor the Board of Supervisors or City of Santa Cruz gave direction about the dollar amounts that will be allocated to each priority area. In September, during a Board and City Council meeting details about the application patterns for the RFP will be presented and then the Board and the Council will determine priorities and funding levels for the three CORE conditions.

32. **Question:** Where do we find (the RFP) document?

    Response: You may find the RFP here:
    https://santacruzcountyca.gov/Departments/GeneralServices/Purchasing/Solicitations.aspx

33. **Question**: For clarification, a 501c6 with a proposal that falls within one of the three priority areas may apply but must apply through a 501c3. Is this correct?

    Response: A 501c6 must apply through a 501c3.

34. **Question:** Two of the questions asks about a dedicated grant writer assisting with the CORE application, either in-house or outside source. Does the answer to this have an impact on the way one designates a score on a response. For example will there be more weight given to a "professional" grant writer answer vs a "non-professional" grant writer?

    Response: There is no scoring impact or weighting for this response. This was something that our Board of Supervisors was particularly interested in understanding for agencies in

the community applying to CORE, what resources that they had available, and so this will be simply informational to report back to the Council and the Board.

35. **Question:** What time do you expect to publish answers to the written questions submitted to the CORE Funding email to date?

    Response: All responses will be posted by 5pm on the date they are scheduled to be posted, 6/14/2024 and 7/8/2024.

36. **Question:** This may be in the information already provided, but how does the City funding vs. the County funding impact for programs that are located in and serving City residents? Are both included in the 3.7 million? So is the City funding included in that 3.7 million?

    Response: The City funds are included in the $3.7 million. City funds will be used for programs that serve city residents, although County funds may also be used.

37. **Question:** Last round the Tier 3 application was "easier" - is that still true?

    Response: The RFP questions have been simplified compared to the previous RFP, however, there is no difference in the questions between the three Tiers of funding in this RFP.

38. **Question:** Is there a link that breaks down eligible focus areas for the 3 categories of funding?

    Response: Applicants may refer to DataShare for further information about CORE Conditions and Impact Areas **https://www.datasharescc.org/tiles/index/display?alias=CORE**. In addition, applicants may access further information and discussion with the CORE Consultants by signing up for a TA session here: https://bit.ly/CORE-RFP-TA-Signup.

39. **Question:** Back to my original question re: results based accountability that was said had a more complex answer, I'm just wanting to clarify how results based accountability applies across contract cycles? Do exceeding goals count for the next round? I meant, if the program is highly successful, is it more likely to get finding for the next round?
    Part2: It is not exactly getting at my question if I may jump in here. As an organization who has CORE funding for the first time this cycle we worked really hard to meet and exceed our outcomes did exceed almost all them. The question is does that count for anything in the next round or not? The fact that we in the framework that is called results based accountability that was our assumption that if we get our results that would make it more

likely that we would get funded again. I am kind of hearing that that is not true but I wanted to clarify that. Part3: I was not talking about if I received funding, I was talking about for that did previously received funding and that did well so there is no points, thank you.

Response: There are no additional points for past performance in the current RFP process. Agencies that are disqualified from contracting with the County may not be eligible for CORE funds.

40. **Question:** Are there any major changes when compared to the current Grant RFP submitted in FY23

    Response:
    - A simplified application
    - Small tier (Tier III) application restrictions (Only agencies with less than $7.5 million in annual revenue can apply
    - A modified conflict of interest for panelists
    - Inclusion of a detailed scoring rubric
    - Bonus points for leveraging in the medium and large funding tiers (Tiers I and II)
    - Three prioritized CORE Condition Areas

B. Stable Affordable Housing and Shelter Carve-Out-

1. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):
   - **1.i.:** Will the separate process for "Stable, Affordable Housing and Shelter" awards be open to any eligible agency? Or only agencies that have previously received funding? Or only by invitation? Or some other criteria?
   - **1.ii.:** Is there a separate RFP for the Stable, Affordable Housing and Shelter service area? If not and we are supposed to use the same RFP where can I find the specific criteria and application instructions for the Stable, Affordable Housing and Shelter service area?)
   - **1.iii.:** When is the affordable housing/shelter services carve-out process going to be presented and will it have the same due date as the CORE application?
   - **1.iv.:** Is there a timeline for the Stable and Affordable Housing RFP and where should we check to find updates?
   - **1.v.:** Do the proposal limitations apply across this RFP and the Housing RFP?
   - **1.vi:** Can we apply for the same project under this RFP and the Housing RFP?

Response (address 1.i. through 1.vi.)**:** This CORE RFP does not include funding for the CORE Condition of "Stable, affordable housing and shelter". The funding for this CORE Condition will be managed through a separate process to align with the Homelessness Action Plan created by the local Continuum of Care (CoC, known locally as the Housing for Health Partnership) and announced in accordance with County Policies.

1.iv.:More information will be available at a later date.

1.v:The County cannot speak to the limitations and parameters of a future RFP at this time.The 25% proposal funding limit only applies to the CORE RFP and not future RFP's.

1.vi: If an agency believes they have a program that falls within the prioritized CORE Conditions and Impact Areas they are encouraged to apply during this RFP.

C. Should/How do we Apply?

1. **Question:** My program serves adult survivors of child sexual abuse through therapy groups. We also provide educational and prevention training/workshops for parents, and outreach in the community to provide educational and preventional materials to schools, parents, and other organizations that serve children. Could/should we apply under "Thriving Families" , Impact 2: Increased Resilience Among Adults? It seems we would fit according to:
INDICATORS-Reports of Adverse Experiences During Childhood (adult retrospective)-Data unavailable at this time. INDICATORS Access to Counseling/Support for Healing-Data unavailable at this time. INDICATORS Parental Confidence -Data unavailable at this time (Will more data be available for these indicators?)

   Response: An agency must determine how a proposal fits into a specific prioritized CORE Condition, and it is up to the agency to determine the best fit of their program within the prioritized CORE conditions. In the CORE RFP, it is the responsibility of the Responding Agency to establish and demonstrate how their proposed program services/activities is applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen.

   At this time it is unknown if and when more Datashare data and indicators will be available. Applicants may use other relevant data from secondary sources and/or primary sources other than Datashare.

2. **Question:** This agency has been providing free mediation to landlords and tenants facing eviction proceedings. Funding for this program has not been renewed but the need in the community for this service remains. Does housing mediation or any mediation fit into any of the current categories? --It would seem that mediation would fit under the Thriving Families category, however, that category is divided into children and youth and older and dependent adults. We serve all people of all ages. How do I apply for core funding?

   Response: An agency must determine how a proposal fits in a specific prioritized CORE Condition, and it is up to the agency to determine the best fit of their program within the prioritized CORE conditions. In the CORE RFP, it is the responsibility of the Responding Agency to establish and demonstrate how their proposed program services/activities is applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen.

3. **Question**: How do you advise we submit an application with one program, which has several activities which are a mix of evidence-based practice and other?

   Response: If a program utilizes multiple activities along the CORE Investments Continuum of Results and Evidence, the program should report the activity on the continuum with the most evidence, e.g. Effective Practice or Evidence-based Practice. In question #8 on the RFP, applicants may include in their narrative that they use multiple activities along the continuum.

4. **Question**: If a program serves all ages of adults and an application to support the program is submitted under Thriving Families, should we estimate the percentage of participants that will be "older adults" and apply for that percentage of program costs?

   Response: Applicants submitting a proposal for a program that serves multiple ages within Thriving Families: Increased resilience of children and youth or among older and dependent adults, should focus their response on the primary age group that would be impacted by the funding. In the CORE RFP, it is the responsibility of the Responding Agency to establish and demonstrate how their proposed program services/activities is applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen.

The following questions, questions C.5 through C.9, were received in the 2nd round of the Q&A period.

5. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):

- **5.i.:** Can a nonprofit in Santa Cruz County use the 2025-2028 RFP funding to provide food for homeless families under the "Thriving Families" CORE Condition without being disqualified? Or, is it appropriate to submit this proposal for the $1.5 million Housing and Shelter RFP. Thank you for your time and response.
- **5.ii.:** Can homelessness prevention or intervention program proposals be submitted in the CORE RFP if they meet the focus of one of the 3 selected CORE conditions?
- **5.iii:** 3 CORE conditions of "Health and Wellbeing" do not neatly cover the scope of what our organization does as a Poverty-Fighting NP in the county. Any advice for organizations like ours?
- **5.iv.:** Could proposals under Lifelong Learning & Education include staff training for client outcomes in the behavioral health and social services realm?
- **5.v.:** Does health education for adults apply to the Lifelong Learning & Education focus area?
- **5.vi:** Does health education for youth fall into the Thriving Families focus area?
- **5.vii:** Is Health and Wellness not a category any more or is it now included within the new 3? Can it fall into Thriving families?

Response: (address 5.i. through 5.vii.)**:** An agency must determine how a proposal fits in a specific prioritized CORE Condition. The CORE Proposal questions provide an opportunity for programs to establish who their intended population is, including demographics, and what the intended services/activities, *which could include staff-related training*, are. It is the program's responsibility to demonstrate and establish how the proposed services/activities are applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen.

Agencies may utilize the available technical assistance sessions to explore how their programs relate to the CORE Conditions. To sign up for a TA session https://bit.ly/CORE-RFP-TA-Signup.

The Health and Wellness CORE Condition is not prioritized in this cycle of funding.
At this time the county cannot speak to the Stable, Affordable Housing RFP and its parameters, more information will be available at a later date.

At this time it is unknown if and when more Datashare data and indicators will be available. Applicants may use other relevant data from secondary sources and/or primary sources other than Datashare.

6. **Question**: I am writing to inquire about our program for the CORE RFP - Lifelong Learning & Education category. Our program that we would like to propose for CORE funding

focuses on a smaller cohort of youth participants while providing multiple outdoor experiences. I wanted to inquire if this type of program would be considered competitive versus other education programs that may engage with more youth participants but with less frequency? To provide you a little background on our program, Junior Sanctuary Stewards is a field trip based afterschool program that focuses on in depth environmental education, experience based learning, and relationship building for underserved and disadvantaged youth. This program focuses on allowing youth participants to make connections and build healthy relationships with the outdoors across 10-12 weeks. In essence, is CORE looking to see funders engage as many youth as possible or would a program that engages less youth in a more long term and meaningful way be just as competitive? I would appreciate any insight you can provide, thank you.

Response: The county cannot speak to the competitiveness of a proposal at this time. All CORE submissions will be scored using the Scoring Criteria located in Appendix B of the RFP. An agency must determine how a proposal fits in a specific prioritized CORE Condition. The CORE Proposal questions provide an opportunity for programs to establish who their intended population is, including demographics, and what the intended services/activities are. It is the program's responsibility to demonstrate and establish how the proposed services/activities are applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen. Agencies may utilize the available technical assistance sessions to explore how their programs relate to the CORE Conditions. To sign up for a TA session click here: https://bit.ly/CORE-RFP-TA-Signup.

7. **Question:** I asked a question previously about a mixed age program for the Thriving Families CORE condition, and the answer that was given doesn't help me understand better. I will try to make the question clearer here: If a program serves a mix of ages and an application will be submitted under Thriving Families: Increased resilience among older and dependent adults, should the amount requested from CORE Investments in the budget be a percentage of the total program cost that is commensurate with the percentage of older adults (in relationship to total participants) that we anticipate serving?

Response: Yes, the budget should reflect the CORE condition, Impact Statement, and the associated age group. In your example this would be older adults.

8. **Question**: If our organization received CORE funding in FY 22-25, are we eligible to apply for the FY 25 - 28 CORE funding?

Response: Yes, assuming the agency has not been disqualified for receiving funding from the County or the City.

9. **Question:** I'm also wondering about the discretionary funds that the BOS will have control of. If a project can be made to fit within one of the three priority CORE conditions, but really fits best within one of the other CORE conditions, would you recommend agencies approach the BOS about the discretionary funds?

   Response: The County cannot recommend an approach at this time.

D. Age Range Definitions

1. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):
   - **1.i.:** Is there a specific age range for any/all of these CORE conditions for "Thriving Families"?
   - **1.ii.:** Can you please clarify what the age range is for "older adults" in the impact statement for Thriving Families?
   - **1.iii.:** What is the age range for seniors in the thriving families CORE condition and please define "dependent" seniors?
   - **1.iv.:** What is the age range for children and youth in the thriving families CORE condition?
   - **1.v.:** Can you please clarify what the age range is for "children and youth" in the impact statement for Thriving Families?
   - **1.vi.:** In the Thriving Families category, what age group is considered "older adult?" Or more specifically, what is the youngest age included in that category?
   - **1.vii.:** What ages are considered by the county to be "older adults" for the thriving families category?
   - **1.viii.:** What is the age range for children and youth in the thriving families CORE condition?

   Response (address 1.i. through 1.viii.)**:** For the purposes of CORE funding and the Thriving Families Impact Statement:

   - **Older adults** are considered those **aged 60 and over**.
   - **Dependent adults means**: regardless of whether the person lives independently, between the ages of **18 and 60 years** and who has physical or mental limitations that restrict his or her ability to carry out normal activities or to protect his or her rights, including, but not limited to, persons who have physical or developmental disabilities, or whose physical or mental abilities have diminished because of age.
   - **Children and youth** are considered those age **0 to 24 years old.**

E. Specific Program Scenario

1. **Question:** In the thriving families, child and youth resiliency condition, does the work need to be limited to just working with the children/youth, or can we include work with the parents of those youth as well, in order to contribute to youth/child resiliency? Would we count just the children/youth as clients in this scenario, or their parents as well?

   Response: In the CORE RFP, it is the responsibility of the Responding Agency to demonstrate and establish how their proposed program services/activities is applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen. Questions in the CORE RFP proposal allow for an explanation and description of the intended population that will receive the program services/activities, and how those services/activities correlate and contribute to the CORE Condition and Impact area.

2. **Question:** Can a program apply to provide Thriving Family resiliency services to both seniors and children in the same application?

   Response: Each proposal should include an identified impact area, though the narrative and the demographic section may be used to identify additional impact areas and/or demographics served.

3. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):
   - **3.i.:** Can a program apply for different activities across different CORE conditions. For example, one program applying for Thriving Families for a youth/children program and the same program applying for Lifelong Learning for adults served with training. It would be the same program name, but different activities and strategies, with different demographics served.
   - **3.ii.:** If a single program serves both youth AND seniors, would we submit two separate proposals, with our larger program separated into "sub programs" that include the unique objectives and activities for each separate age demographic?

   Response (address 3.i. and 3.ii)**:** While there is no limit to the number of Proposals submitted per agency, there are key multiple-Proposals parameters related to budgeting outlined in section 2.4 of the RFP which includes: agencies may not submit a Proposal for a program or project to more than one funding tier or more than one CORE Condition. Once a program decides their CORE Condition and service area (impact area), it is their responsibility to demonstrate and establish how their proposed program services/activities

and target population is applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen. The RFP defines a program or project as: An organized effort to implement a set of services with a specific purpose, for a specific population, with dedicated staff, policies, and procedures. Other commonly used terms: Services, Plans.

4. **Question:** Can a program that provides services to homeless clients, either children/youth or seniors, or homelessness prevention services to children/youth or seniors apply under the Thriving Families CORE condition, or are they limited to the homeless services cut-out?

   Response: An agency must determine how a proposal fits in a specific prioritized CORE Condition. The CORE Proposal questions provide an opportunity for programs to establish who their intended population is, including demographics, and what the intended services/activities are. It is the program's responsibility to demonstrate and establish how the proposed services/activities are applicable and relevant to the respective CORE.

   ==The following questions, questions E.5 through E.8, were received in the 2nd round of the Q&A period.==

5. **Questions** (the following are grouped due to similar context):
   - **5.i.:** Is it acceptable to submit two applications, provided they are for separate projects into separate CORE condition categories? For example, may we submit a youth academic enrichment program proposal as part of Lifelong Learning & Education, and a youth mental health program proposal as part of Thriving Families?
   - **5.ii.:** Can you please confirm if we can apply this way?
     - Program 1- $500,000 - Tier 1 - Thriving Families - older and dependent adults
     - Program 2 - $200,000 - Tier 1 - Thriving Families - older and dependent adults
     - Program 3 - $200,000 - Tier 1 - Thriving Families - children and youth
     - Program 4 - Tier 2 - $47,500 others still deciding
     - Total for all programs= $947,506 (25% of $3.79m)

   Response (address 5.i. and 5.ii): Yes, submitting two different programs or projects in two different CORE condition categories is acceptable. The 25% limit will be calculated using the funds available in the CORE RFP $3.79 million. The funding limit for proposals per agency would therefore be $947,506. A description of the requirement is below.

   While there is no limit to the number of Proposals submitted per agency, there are key multiple-Proposals parameters related to budgeting outlined in section 2.4 of the RFP

which includes: agencies may not submit a Proposal for a program or project to more than one funding tier or more than one CORE Condition. Once a program decides their CORE Condition and service area (impact area), it is their responsibility to demonstrate and establish how their proposed program services/activities and intended population is applicable and relevant to the respective CORE Condition and Impact area chosen. The RFP defines a program or project as: An organized effort to implement a set of services with a specific purpose, for a specific population, with dedicated staff, policies, and procedures. Other commonly used terms: Services, Plans.
The County will review submitted proposals and will inform programs if their proposal is not within the parameters of the RFP.

6. **Question**: For question "8c" key activities, we intend to perform these activities across all three fiscal years but the question only let's you choose one. Shouldn't we all be performing these activities each fiscal year if we're funded? Please advise.

   Response: Programs can identify in their description of the activity (8a) which fiscal year(s) the activity will be conducted. The purpose of 8c is for agencies to indicate when the activity will be implemented during the funding period. If an agency is implementing multiple activities, programs will have to select the FY that those activities will be implemented which may or may not be in the same FY.

7. **Question:** For question "10", do you consider outcomes that strengthen the resilience of the family as factors that create resiliency in youth as well? In other words, if we distribute resources to the entire family in a way that centers youth resiliency, should we include this full view of our work? Or should outcomes be strictly about youth in particular. (We're applying for the Thriving Families conditions that is focused on youth resilience).

   Response: Agencies should also review the scoring criteria found in Appendix B of the RFP (p. 35) in crafting responses to specific questions. To gain maximum points a response will ensure, "The relationship between all outcomes and inequities, CORE Condition and Impact Statement is strong." While the response may include additional impacts of the outcome measure, the response should address the particular impact statement chosen. Programs can choose up to 3 specific measurable outcomes that will track and reflect that your programs activities/services are working as intended.

8. **Question**: We will be implementing programs at new school sites in year 2. How do we account for this in program outcomes and descriptions because they will change that year for each of the cities? Is it enough to write a line indicating the program(s) described is will be located in a 2nd location in years 2 & 3?

In the same year, we will be implementing a totally new program into Santa Cruz County in Watsonville. I can write this program's description and simply say it will debut in year 2 and continue in year 3?

Response: Agencies may have up to three outcomes for their program. If an agency believes a singular outcome would apply across the program, despite changes (such as a change in school program site) an agency may explain that in the narrative description of the outcome. Alternately, an agency could list multiple outcomes that would be measured at different points in the funding cycle as the program changes (e.g. a new school site). Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the agency to determine how best to describe the programs outcomes. Please also refer to the scoring criteria in Appendix B on p. 35 of the RFP.

F. Reviewr Online Portal
<mark>The following questions, questions F.1 through F.9, were received in the 2nd round of the Q&A period.</mark>

1. **Question**: Can I re-label the tabs in the Budget and Leveraging sheets to match FY 25-28 (they're currently 24-27)

   Response: You may update the budget and leveraging sheets manually, however, newly updated Budget template forms and Leveraging template forms have been updated in our Reviewer online platform as well as on our [HSD CORE website](#). An addendum was posted on the budget and leveraging templates which can be found here: https://santacruzcountyca.gov/Departments/GeneralServices/Purchasing/Solicitations.aspx

2. **Question**: Is it possible to advance through the application, out of sequence? EX: Does each page and associated uploads have to be completed in an order that disallows you to move forward without adding financial documents first?

   Response: The online Reviewr portal has required fields and/or document request that must be filled out or uploaded before moving on to the next page. If a program does not have the required financial documentation to upload in the 1st page of the Reviewr portal and still wishes to move forward to the other questions in the proposal, a work around for this would be to upload "Mock" or "Fake" documents into the required document fields. However, it is the responsibility of responding agencies to provide all required final documentation when submitting a proposal, as established in the RFP.

3. **Question:** On the online portal it looks like we can select different activities for different fiscal years. If we are doing the same activity for all 3 fiscal years, how do you want that inputted.

   Response: In the activity description, program can describe the timeframe of the activity. In question (8c), programs are to choose the Fiscal Year (FY) their specific activity in 8a. will be implemented. If choosing multiple activities, programs will have to select the FY those activities will be implemented which may or may not be the same FY. Once a program chooses the FY that the specific activity will be implemented, it is expected that the activity will be conducted until the end of the CORE Contract FY 25-28 unless otherwise noted. In the description, you are able to identify how many years the activity will be provided.

4. **Question**: Also, on the online portal under outcomes it does not give you the option of outcomes divided up by fiscal year so if you choose different activities each year all those activities have to have the same outcomes? Is that correct, so best to choose same activities each year since we can not have various outcomes by fiscal year?

   Response: Question 10 in the RFP asks the agency to provide at least one and up to three outcome measures for their program. If an agency wishes they may choose three different outcomes, one for each year of the funding period or for different activities. It is up to the agency to ensure the outcomes will show the program or service success and are linked to the CORE Condition and Impact Statement selected.

5. **Question:** During the online portal webinar, they talked about submitting budget information and documents. Do we submit information for the current year (24-25) or are we projecting for when the contract starts if we are awarded in 2025-26 fiscal year.

   Response: Budgets for proposed programs should begin with the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and entered in question #17 using the budget templates.

6. **Question**: Qu7)Up to six activities are allowable, however on the submission portal, each one is also assigned to a FY. To reflect each year, it seems that one activity will have to be displayed as three separate activities.
   a. Activity A - 25.26
   b. Activity A - 26.27
   c. Activity A - 27.28
      Is it possible to show one activity for 25.28?

   Response: In the activity description (8a), programs can identify the FY(s) that the activity will be conducted. In question (8c), programs are to choose the Fiscal Year (FY) their

specific activity will be implemented. If choosing multiple activities, programs will have to select the FY the multiple activities will be implemented which may or may not be the same FY.

7. **Question:** Do we need a separate account for each proposal from a single agency?

   Response: The Reviewr account set-up should be determined by each agency. Your organization should decided whether you want have one person submitting all proposals or if you want to create separate log-ins for people to work on different proposals. There is no way for two different log ins to work the same proposal. An agency would have to share a log-in with two different people in your agency in order for both to log-in and work on a proposal.

8. **Question:** Where can we see the character count for each question in the application? Can you advance to the next page if you have not completed all the questions on the current page?

   Response: Above each entry box where there is a character limit in Reviewr there is posted the number of characters left in the response. Reviewr will not let you advance until all required questions have a response. If you wish you may put in placeholder text or documents and return to a question later to finalize.

9. **Question**: Will (the Reviewr) training be recorded/shared if cannot attend?

   Response: All trainings including Tuesday's are recorded and posted at https://www.santacruzhumanservices.org/Home/FundingOpportunities/COREInvestments/COREFY2025-2028.

G. Miscellaneous
Questions that do not fit into other categories.

1. **Question:** Can you please send the required participant survey

   Response: The current CORE FY 2022-2025 participant survey can be found using this link: Microsoft Word - CORE FY22-25 Quality Measure Survey Question.docx (santacruzhumanservices.org).

   More CORE resources for the CORE FY 2022-2025 can be found here**: CORE FY 2022-2025 (santacruzhumanservices.org)**.

2. **Question**: what is the average cost of foster care that our County uses to pay a foster family?

   Response: The current base rate is $1,258 however the rates may change based on the specific child needs. For more information please see the following resources: https://cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACLs/2024/24-46.pdf?ver=2024-06-28-135402-340   and https://www.santacruzhumanservices.org/FamilyChildren

3. **Question**: In order to leverage volunteer help, does the County have a recommendation for an hourly rate? Or should we use the local minimum wage?

   Response: We recommend using the California minimum wage found here: Minimum Wage (ca.gov)

4. **Question**: Is it possible for an Agency to review the proposal they submitted in 2022?

   Response: Yes. If an agency will like to receive a copy of their 2022 submitted proposal, please email COREFunding@santacruzcountyca.gov with the subject line "2022 RFP Copy"