

\$350K for Homeless Outreach Yielded Unclear Results

Office of the Inspector General



Investigation Results

BART paid a charitable organization \$350K for homeless outreach resulting in just one confirmed unsheltered person entering treatment. Other tangible results from the organization remain unclear. In July 2020 and August 2021, the BART Board of Directors approved one-year agreements for \$250K with the organization, for a total award amount of \$500K to deploy an outreach team to make contact with unsheltered persons in downtown San Francisco BART stations. When the outreach team encountered an individual with a substance use disorder who was willing to enter treatment and remain abstinent from drug and alcohol use, the organization was to enroll them in their residential treatment program. The agreements lasted from July 2020 through July 2022, and BART paid a total of \$350K in invoices under

them. Our office received an allegation that the organization was not making four shelter beds available to persons who identified as homeless in the BART system as required under the agreements. We launched an investigation to review this as well as related allegations concerning shelter access and agreement outcomes. We concluded the following:

- The allegation that BART was not given access to the four shelter beds it was paying for was unsubstantiated. The agreements did not offer emergency overnight shelter, only referrals to emergency shelters and access to up to four beds as part of the residential treatment services. There is a distinct difference between emergency shelter services and residential treatment services. This was not understood by the BART employees who expected to be able to use the contract services to aid in their work. Additionally, the terms “shelter,” “beds,” “treatment,” “care,” and other similar variations were unwittingly used interchangeably in Board briefings and by and among District staff when discussing the terms of the agreements, even though they have different meanings.
- Metrics in the charitable organization’s monthly reports did not clearly communicate outcome results and, in at least one instance, changed without a clear explanation.
- Only one confirmed person over the 24-month period received residential treatment services, despite the outreach team reporting 3,217 contacts from January 2021 to May 2022.
- The allegation that the charitable organization did not provide services to transgender persons was unsubstantiated. The single person confirmed to have received recovery services under the agreement is transgender.
- The allegation that the organization was not conducting homeless outreach as required in the agreements was unsubstantiated. The organization fielded an outreach team at the required San Francisco BART stations.
- The agreement uses an abstinence-only model for recovery versus a harm-reduction model. The latter is generally known to be more effective and appealing to persons with a substance use disorder and who identify as homeless.
- The outreach efforts do not appear to have had the intended results for BART, as the District’s January through March 2022 Quarterly Service Performance Review disclosed a 21 percent increase – an average of 42 versus 35 – in the daily unsheltered population at the San Francisco stations as compared to the same quarter in 2021.

Recommendation

Ensure all future agreements with any organization clearly identify outcome metrics to be captured and monitored, and require evaluation as to the accuracy of those metrics and correction of any incorrect reporting.

Management agreed with our recommendation. See next page for details.



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Providing independent oversight of the District’s use of revenue.



BART OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER RESPONSE TO OIG FINDING & RECOMMENDATION

Report Title: \$350K for Homeless Outreach Yielded Unclear Results

1	Recommendation:	Ensure all future agreements with any organization clearly identify outcome metrics to be captured and monitored and require evaluation as to the accuracy of those metrics and correction of any incorrect reporting.
	Responsible Department:	General Manager
	Implementation Date:	Immediately
	Corrective Action Plan:	<p>All future homeless outreach and quality-of-life related programs will have defined outcomes and metrics developed using a Results-Based Accountability framework that the Quality-of-Life team is adopting to be the guiding principle for contracted agreements going forward. The forthcoming Homeless Action Plan that will be presented to the Board of Directors on 01/12/2023 outlines metrics to be collected by the District's Quality-of-Life contractors.</p> <p>Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that can be used to improve the quality of life in communities, cities, counties, states, and nations, as well as to improve the performance of programs. RBA is an approach to measurement that puts the focus on the ends and works backward to the means using simple, plain language.</p> <p>The contract for the non-profit that was the subject of the investigation was not renewed for this current year in part due to less than desired outcomes from their team, and those outcomes helped inform the forthcoming RBA-based Homeless Action Plan.</p> <p>In addition to quality-of-life related programs, RBA or specific metrics will be applied to future agreement contracts as management deems appropriate and applicable.</p>