

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER
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SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

**IMPLEMENTING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICE FOR COORDINATED
FAITH OUTREACH**

The County of Los Angeles has endeavored to strengthen relationships with faith-based organizations (FBOs) and houses of worship (HoWs) to assist communities and vulnerable populations. These relationships have led to an increase in programs assisting homeless individuals, providing emergency aid during disasters, helping foster youth and their families, and supporting those with mental illness.

On May 17, 2022, the Board passed “Coordinating Faith-Based Outreach by County Departments” which directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to work with the Center for Strategic Partnerships (CSP), representatives from several County departments, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), philanthropy, FBOs and HoWs, to assess existing needs and opportunities for the County to develop a robust and comprehensive partnership with FBOs. Reports with recommendations were issued on May 19, 2023 and June 9, 2023, based on 12 listening sessions conducted across the County in all Supervisorial Districts. A landscape analysis was also completed of local, regional, and national faith-based/governmental models.

The result of this feedback provided clear direction for the County to coordinate faith-based outreach across County departments in a more strategic way. Aligning the work of various county departments and advisory bodies into one cohesive team that has a clear mission and maximizes community engagement will facilitate a supportive and nurturing environment for our most vulnerable and impacted residents.

In the community, an interfaith coalition has been established for networking and convening. This Interfaith and Religious Partnership (I&RP) is supported by philanthropy and is establishing a way to move forward with the County so that once a Community Engagement Office is established, the County will have an established organization to work with.

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On January 23, 2024, the Board passed “Coordinating Faith-based Outreach in Los Angeles County” which directed the CEO, in consultation with the CSP and other relevant departments to report back to the Board with an analysis of establishing a Community Engagement Office (Office) for the County’s internal coordination and external interface with FBOs and HoWs. The motion asked for a recommendation for the most appropriate department for the Office to reside in and laid out roles and responsibilities of the Office.

On August 9, 2024, the Board received the CEO’s report back which presented options for this new office. The report indicated that the CEO’s office could play a role in facilitating or coordinating and exchanging information between the County and the faith community, and that staffing assistance from other departments would be needed. The CEO’s office has played a leading role in working with the faith community since 2022, working to gather feedback and learn more about the important work the faith community is engaged in as a result of the abovementioned Board motions. The CEO’s office also worked closely with County contractors to put together a detailed and lengthy report on what a Community Engagement Office could look like within the County. The report notes the Department of Mental Health has experience working with the faith community and has staff that leads their Faith-Based Advisory Council. Formally establishing a Community Engagement Office will achieve the vision of centralized faith outreach with all departments.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to:

1. Establish a community engagement office within the CEO’s office, with the appropriate number of staff as listed in the report back and utilizing existing staff where possible, to liaise between County departments and the Interfaith and Religious Partnership (I&RP) and with FBOs/HoWs with common goals and outcomes. The community engagement office will coordinate similar outreach efforts, initiatives, and functions across departments; to ensure access to relevant trainings, capacity building efforts and technical assistance; and monitor progress made by County initiatives. The January 23, 2024 Board approved motion, “Coordinating Faith-Based Outreach in Los Angeles County” provides guidance to the roles, responsibilities, and goals of this new office.
2. Work with the Internal Services Department to provide programmatic support and/or training to assist FBOs and HoWs who are interested in contracting with the County. Promote County offered training, programs, and services as it relates to contracting.

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3. Engage with the Center for Strategic Partnerships to explore if philanthropic funding could be used to help pay for the staffing costs of this office, or any other programs or costs that the Office may incur. Philanthropy has been engaged in DCFS' efforts to partner with the faith community so as to best support foster families and youth in LA County. Several philanthropic organizations have expressed interest in supporting and potentially funding these efforts to centralize the County's efforts. Report back in 90 days with efforts on outreach to the philanthropic communities, and how this Office could be funded, if philanthropic dollars cannot be used to fund County staffing costs.

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