



Health & Human Services

# 2023 Gwinnett Human Services

## **Five-Year Strategic Plan**



GWINNETT COUNTY  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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December 4, 2023

Dear residents, partners, and stakeholders:

Gwinnett sets the standard as a benchmark community, demonstrating our ability to optimize resources for lasting and meaningful impact. Our acclaimed community assets, top-tier public infrastructure, and rich cultural diversity make us a sought-after community to live, work, and thrive.

As a result, we've seen tremendous growth through the years. Despite our growth, we have not completed a comprehensive Human Services Needs Assessment since 1991. To put this in perspective, our population was approaching 200,000 back then. Fast forward to today, and now we stand strong with more than a million residents and counting. As our population grows, so do our needs.

That's why I'm delighted to announce the launch of our long-awaited Gwinnett Human Services Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. Our commitment to the betterment of Gwinnett remains unwavering, and having a better understanding of human service needs is fundamental in our pursuit of a community where everyone thrives.

Gwinnett is ever-evolving, requiring us to adapt and tailor our services to tackle unique challenges and amplify new opportunities. The goal of this plan is to create a roadmap for informed decisions, resource allocation, and collaboration. By conducting an in-depth assessment of our current community needs, identifying gaps, and leveraging strengths, we aim to optimize the delivery and accessibility of human services. In doing so, we strive to build a more resilient, responsive, and interconnected support system that uplifts our entire community.

As a social worker, I hold this endeavor close to my heart. As Chairwoman, this initiative is foundational to my decision making in planning for our shared future. I call upon you to help us by engaging in this process from start to finish. Your input will be integral to the success of the assessment and will ensure the resulting plan reflects the aspirations and needs of Gwinnett today and tomorrow.

I extend my deepest gratitude to each stakeholder, partner, and resident for your ongoing commitment to Gwinnett's well-being. Together, we can shape a future where human services are tailored to meet the unique needs of every individual who calls Gwinnett home.

Warm regards,

Nicole Love Hendrickson  
Chairwoman, Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners

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# GWINNETT COUNTY OVERVIEW

## The Gwinnett Standard

The Gwinnett Standard is an expectation of excellence in service, stewardship, and integrity in everything we do. It is a connecting thread that runs throughout County government and is reflected in the excellence of our schools, libraries, businesses, community organizations, and residents.

## Vision

Gwinnett is the preferred community where everyone thrives!

## Mission

Gwinnett proudly supports our vibrantly connected community by delivering superior services.

## Values

- **Integrity:** We believe in being honest, building trust, and having strong moral principles.
- **Accountability:** We believe in stewardship, transparency, and sustainability.
- **Equity:** We believe in fairness and respect for all.
- **Inclusivity:** We believe in engaging, embracing, and unifying our communities.
- **Innovation:** We believe in continual adaptation of technology, process, and experience.

# GOALS

The six goals below provide the necessary focus for future planning efforts; each goal frames the high-level picture of what needs to be accomplished and is supported by a narrower SMARTBE (Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, and centered in Belonging and Equity). Each high-level goal includes actionable objectives that specify what needs to happen and what needs to be achieved to meet the goals. To get even more specific into what needs to be accomplished, this sequence of high-level goals, SMARTBE goals, objectives, and measures is supported by a new delivery model and detailed strategies, the components of which have been developed for each of the six goals, that when implemented with fidelity will ensure the County and partners accomplishes its mission on behalf of residents. This new model and strategies constitute the Strategic Action Plan that begins on page 8. We recommend revisiting and updating the Action Plan biannually starting in late CY25.



# THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Gwinnett Human Services 5-Year Strategic Plan, found herein, is designed to provide direction to the entire Gwinnett County Human Services Ecosystem by creating a common framework and articulating the County's priorities for the next five years (2024 – 2029). It focuses on developing sustainable infrastructure and a robust service array to reach shared goals across the community. This Strategic Plan is designed to be a north star for the County as well as the guiding document for communicating the goals and plans to the broader Human Services community.

The Plan loosely contains two components:

- 1. Goals, Objectives, and Measures**
- 2. The New Model and Model Strategies**

The process of developing the strategic plan centered on community and stakeholder input and other tasks below; alignment to the greater mission, vision, and standard of Gwinnett County; a deep analysis of the current state of delivery of human services throughout the County; and an understanding of current and future demographic shifts and increases in socio-economic diversity.

The County human services ecosystem provides a dynamic portfolio of ever-evolving services to meet the needs of Gwinnett County residents. In addition, the County plays a critical role in identifying health and human service needs, distributing funding, and working closely with partners to meet human services needs in the County. Our review found that there were significant needs in the areas of food security, housing, health and wellbeing, and youth, literacy, and learning services.



## Launched

In August 2022, the HMA and Gwinnett County team, led by the Department of Community Services, kicked off the Human Services Needs Assessment & Strategic Planning project.



## Analyzed

We analyzed over 70 historical documents from across the human services ecosystem including plans, reports, dashboards, publicly available data, partner services, and system outcomes/outputs.



## Facilitated

We facilitated 42 interviews and focus groups with County staff and human service providers and led four community conversations with close to 300 participants.



## Asked

We sought resident and stakeholder feedback through a survey where we received over 1,300 responses.



## Developed

HMA and the County co-created the Strategic Action Plan that will guide the county's efforts through 2029.



## Measured

Recommendations were made to further measure the efficacy of the system and the new model.

# ADDRESS KEY SERVICE GAPS IN BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

## Human Services Goals 01


Programmatically, the County has four areas of significant need: food security, housing affordability and stability, health and wellbeing, and youth, literacy, and learning services. It is worth noting that key gaps vary throughout the county, however, some of the same communities struggle in multiple areas.


See the *Human Services Ecosystem Map* document for additional detail on key gaps.


## SMARTBE GOAL


The county and partners should work together to address key gaps – identified through the Human Services Needs Assessment – in the county’s human services ecosystem, with a goal of closing those gaps by 2027.

## KEY GAPS

 Significant pockets of food insecurity exist across the County, especially in the southwest portion of the County, along the I-85 corridor and around Lawrenceville and Snellville. This, coupled with inflation and the high cost of housing, puts many county residents on the precipice of significant food challenges.

 The lack of affordable housing in the County has led to human services needs and challenges such as constrained household budgets, overcrowding, frequent moves, wait lists, reliance on extended stays, and eviction.

 Health and well-being gaps and challenges include an acute and rising need for behavioral health services, healthcare access barriers, high rates of uninsurance, and a severe lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate health services, particularly around mental health.

 Youth, literacy, and learning needs include youth-specific behavioral health services, quality and affordable childcare, coordinated programming for school-age youth, and better support for English language learners. This will support the room for improvement of the 505 Census tract neighborhoods of the total Gwinnett 1,260 that are trending toward lower child well-being counteracted by the increase of additional funding and resources provided by both public and private organizations.

## Objective 1.1

**Address food insecurity.**

### **Success Measures**

- Reductions in the Food Security Index for the five highest-need zip codes.
- Enhanced coordination between food-distributing organizations.
- Improved efficiency in resource deployment.
- Reduction in transportation/access barriers.

## Objective 1.2

**Source all food security to better meet the nutritional needs of Gwinnett County's diverse residents.**

### **Success Measures**

- Increased number of new or existing relationships focused on culturally relevant foods.
- Atlanta Community Food Bank annual survey results.
- Enhanced partners' purchasing power.

## Objective 1.3

**Reduce the County's uninsured rate and improve access to health care services.**

### **Success Measures**

- Expanded health insurance enrollment assistance capacity in the County.
- Increased awareness of the end of the five-year waiting period for Medicaid for pregnant women and children who are legal immigrants.

## Objective 1.4

**Address access needs to youth mental and behavioral health services.**

### **Success Measures**

- Increase in the number of behavioral health providers.
- Access to Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility beds and Qualified Residential Treatment Programs.
- Increase in the number of youths behavioral health providers speaking one of the top five languages in the county.
- Identify additional sustainable prevention strategies and program opportunities through youth prevention partners, GUIDE, Inc., and other substance/recovery/drug assistance agencies to counteract rising substance and alcohol use among teens and young adults.

## Objective 1.5

**Improve access to adult mental and behavioral health services.**

### **Success Measures**

- Expanded partnerships with nonprofits that provide counseling and mental health services to adults.
- Increased health insurance enrollment.
- Successful implementation of the co-responder model with embedded behavioral health units.

## Objective 1.6

**Improve the safety and stability of housing.**

### **Success Measures**

- Movement from the worst quartile to the top half of counties nationally on the county wide severe housing problems indicator.
- Implementation and monitoring of the comprehensive housing strategy.

## Objective 1.7

**Improve wraparound services for youth and their families.**

### **Success Measures**

- Improved school attendance and student outcomes.
- Increase in the number of youths engaged in after school/summer activities.
- Increase in family engagement with school-related services/opportunities.

## Objective 1.8

**Provide a single point of entry for specialized populations including those who need information and referrals to services.**

### **Success Measures**

- Build a veterans' services hub.
- Increased focus on and alignment of services for seniors.
- A well-developed, whole person delivery model and training that support veterans, seniors, youth aging out of foster care, and people with disabilities.

# CREATE SYNERGY AMONG PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS

## Human Services Goals 02

The Gwinnett County Human Services Ecosystem comprises a dynamic and ever-changing collection of many human services providers and hinges on maximizing everyone's strengths to work together toward a shared vision. Formal and informal networks are critical to successfully delivering services to meet the community's needs.

### SMARTBE GOAL

By the end of FY 2024, the county will have identified, trained, and nurtured a diverse set of partners who are working together to advance shared outcomes.

#### Objective 2.1

**Create, strengthen, and leverage partnerships.**

##### Success Measures

- Create and empower a diverse and inclusive Human Services Advisory Board (and subcommittees).
- Sustained up to 21-member Board membership.
- Positive results on an annual provider survey.

#### Objective 2.2

**Build capacity of partners and the system.**

##### Success Measures

- Identified capacity gaps in partner agencies.
- Identified first cohort of nonprofits and partner organizations.
- Engagement in contract(s) for capacity-building support.
- Engagement of partners in professional development and growth opportunities to cultivate leadership and investment.

#### Objective 2.3

**Identify and implement Continuous Quality Improvement.**

##### Success Measures

- A chosen and implemented Continuous Quality Improvement model.
- Established measures for success.
- Communication of processes and measures across social services ecosystem.





## **DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL**

### **Human Services Goals 03**

A sustainable model doesn't rely primarily on County funding for success but maximizes funding from outside sources such as state, federal, and sustain, as well as drives growth across the ecosystem so that county funding can be strategically directed to areas of significant need, gaps in the system, and used to sustain in times of crisis.

### **SMARTBE GOAL**

The County should develop and provide leadership for a new model that maximizes non-county revenue sources and strategically spends county dollars in direct alignment with plan goals, starting in the FY 2025 budget cycle.

### **Objective 3.1**

**Prioritize leveraging federal and state funding and programs to meet resident needs.**

#### **Success Measures**

- Developed structures to communicate/ share with human services partners in seeking and obtaining non-county funding.
- Increases in SNAP and WIC participation.
- Increases in non-county revenues used to sustain human services providers.
- Reduction in the overall and child-specific uninsured rates in the County.

### **Objective 3.2**

**Develop model contract(s) for provider partners that describe expectations, deliverables, outcomes, and timelines for human services delivery.**

#### **Success Measures**

- Contract structure developed.
- Contracts moved to a new structure on the next funding cycle.
- Outcomes (and outputs) measured.
- Implementation of a holistic contract review cycle/process.

# BE A NATIONAL BENCHMARK FOR HUMAN SERVICES

## Human Services Goals 04

To be a national benchmark means to achieve a standard of excellence against which other counties, communities, and/or government agencies will judge themselves or the services they provide. Striving to be a national model in the delivery of human services will require a focused, collaborative effort from the County and partners to try, fail, learn, and try again.

### SMARTBE GOAL

By the end of the plan cycle, Gwinnett County will be a model for local governments across the nation on how to lead a community to deliver equitable, high-quality services in a growing, diverse County.

#### Objective 4.1

**Increase engagement with national peers to learn from and share the County's work.**

##### Success Measures

- Externally published outcomes.
- Participation in national work groups.
- Shared lessons learned, challenges, and successes.
- Presentations at statewide and national conferences and in webinars, forums, etc.

#### Objective 4.2

**Formalize a consistent approach to regularly obtaining and incorporating feedback from County residents into delivering human services.**

##### Success Measures

- Survey structure developed to elicit a diverse set of responses.
- The creation of a periodic open meeting/ engagement process.
- Engagement with community partners.

#### Objective 4.3

**Nurture and model a culture of "good governance."**

##### Success Measures

- Defined characteristics of "good governance" (continuous improvement, humility, transparency, reflection, equity, diversity, and others).
- Results from the survey of staff and partners.
- Shared successes and failures – honestly, transparently, and with continued frequency.

# PROVIDE COORDINATED CARE

## Human Services Goals 05

The Gwinnett Department of Community Services will provide coordinated care and process referrals while receiving data from the provider network using a cloud-based digital solution. The solution will use non-medical drivers of health to uncover high-need populations. The platform will enable the community and its residents to realize significant benefits and opportunities.

### SMARTBE GOAL

The County will launch the technology and infrastructure to support the system of providers in staying coordinated in real-time to provide timely and responsive one-stop access to a referral network.

## EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE, AND COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT PLATFORM

- Electronic referrals
- Data collection
- 2-way data feed
- Real-time referrals
- Social need scores
- Community Navigators

### Objective 5.1

**Support successful development, implementation, and ongoing system usage.**

#### Success Measures

- Formalized expectations for the use of the platform.
- Clear expectations for who can use it, what is needed, and when.
- Technical assistance provided.
- All users trained on system through Unite Us online program.
- Structured feedback loops.
- Frequently asked questions and internal/external communication materials.

### Objective 5.2

**Develop regular reporting and information-sharing to reduce duplication.**

#### Success Measures

- Development of 5-8 key reports.
- Execution of training on reports/report usage.
- Mechanism for consistent sharing of reports.
- Formal collaboration/communication structure.

# CENTER SERVICE DELIVERY ON EQUITY AND BELONGING

## Human Services Goals 06

Incorporating equity and belonging, as well as inclusion, diversity, cultural competence, and intersectionality principles into a human service model, can help to create a more inclusive, equitable, and effective system that better serves the needs of all clients and providers.

### SMARTBE GOAL

By 2024, the County has created and is delivering upon a service delivery model whose services, principles, data, and structures are rooted in equity and belonging.



**Equity** refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of resources and opportunities, and it ensures that all clients have access to the same level of service and resources.



**Belonging** refers to creating a sense of connectedness, community, and ownership among all members of an organization or system. Inclusion (valuing and respecting all individuals) should be considered as part of belonging.

### Objective 6.1

**Model a culture of equity and belonging.**

#### Success Measures

- Universal sharing of the Gwinnett Standard .
- Incorporation of lived experience into significant program/process initiatives.
- Diversity in county human services delivery staff that matches county demographics.
- Survey responses that individuals feel valued, supported, and included.

### Objective 6.2

**Support and drive equity externally across the human services ecosystem.**

#### Success Measures

- Representation across service by language.
- A developed strategy for engagement with non-traditional community partners.
- Shared purchasing power for interpreter services.

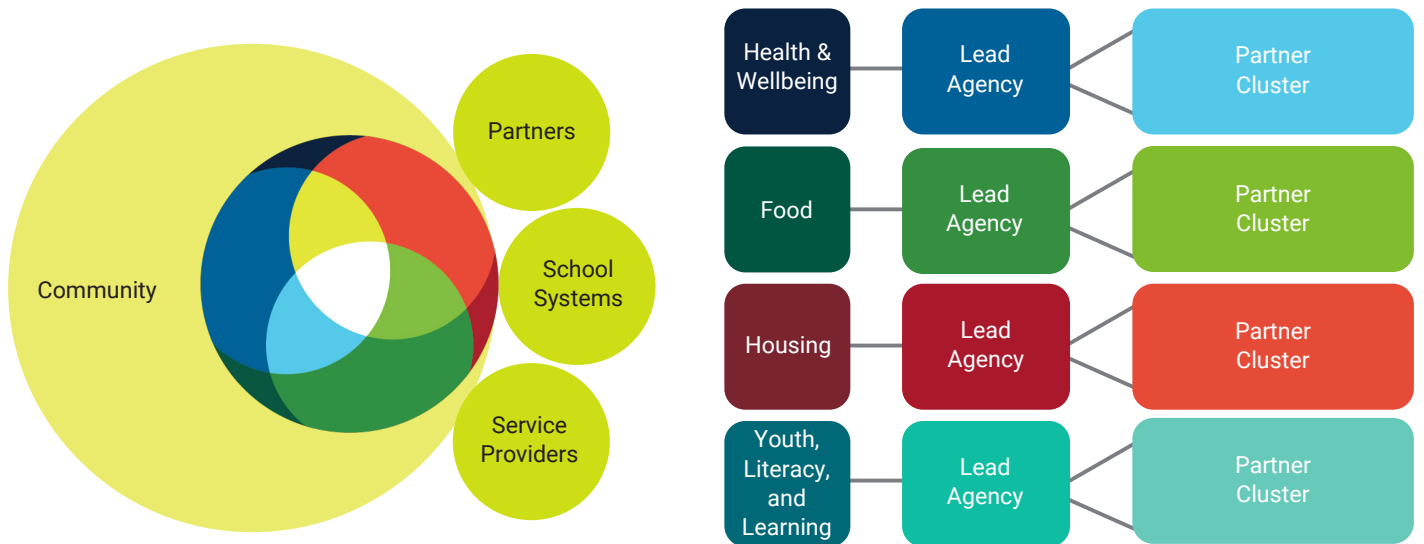
# STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

## Overall Model Description

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated ripple effects have caused significant disruption to the menu of human services the County provides for the needs of the residents of the County but also offered opportunities to formalize and advance the service delivery system. To successfully lead and support change efforts across Gwinnett County, the County will roll out a new service delivery model for safety net services that have clear roles, structures, and goals for advancing outcomes in human services and has, at its core treating people with dignity and respect, by the end of FY24. This new model is the linchpin in the County’s ability to deliver on the six goals and objectives listed in the previous pages.

This new model will drive the County’s direction and work and guide how it engages with partners in the community. Given the ecosystem needs and gaps, the necessity for system-wide outcomes and accountability, and the desire to reduce duplication and strategically use County dollars across the system, the County has chosen a hybrid delivery model that will lead with issue areas: Food Security, Housing, Health and Wellbeing, and Youth, Literacy, and Learning.

Gwinnett County has identified an approach that is a unique hybrid blend of public-private partnership with County government, public schools, other non-county public agencies, and key private sector and community stakeholders. The County will select lead agencies around the four key priority service areas. It will engage in contracts with crucial lead agencies who, in turn, will contract with an array of community-based organizations to build out the service array to meet the safety net needs of all residents of the County. The new model is shown below.



# KEY MODEL COMPONENTS

The model’s key features are described briefly below, and specific strategies – including resource, communication, system, and change management needs – are detailed further on the following pages in alignment with the objectives they will seek to achieve. These steps need to be taken to realize the value proposition of this organization and delivery system model.

## Governance and Leadership

The core of a service delivery model consists of a partnership between county leadership, County Commissioners, and human services partners to sustain a culture of community well-being in policy-making, service delivery, financing, and accountability. Governance and leadership elements include:

- Vision and strategy-setting (setting specific strategies)
- Defining shared success
- Roles and responsibilities
- Accountability
- Advocacy
- Governance structure
- Advancing policy
- Providing collaboration and convening leadership
- Providing capacity-building support
- Cultivating community engagement and ownership

## Foundational Infrastructure

The new model will deliver on the value principle of an equitable and responsive human services ecosystem and will require the development of some core foundational content. This includes emphasizing key infrastructure, including staffing, contracting, facilities, accounting, partnerships, and technology. The County should consider the following to successfully update/build the infrastructure needed for the model’s success:

Component	Detail
<b>STAFFING</b>	<p>The selected hybrid model will require resourcing, either with minor adjustments to current resources or the allocation of new resources. Considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An adequately funded dedicated staff. This should not be someone’s “in addition to” job.</li> <li>• All the critical back-office operations and resources necessary to execute the strategic plan and track the impact on the residents.</li> </ul>
<b>DATA AND REPORTING</b>	<p>Managing data is critical for building trust and credibility around any strategic plan. Consider the following to support transparent and regular reporting of progress to key stakeholders across the ecosystem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing shared measurement practices.</li> <li>• Regular reporting of progress.</li> <li>• Shared outcome measures.</li> <li>• Disaggregating of data.</li> <li>• Continuing to build out and prioritize dashboard data.</li> <li>• Build standardized monitoring practices into agreements.</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNICATION AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT</b>	<p>This plan should be broadly communicated to ensure an understanding of priorities, goals, and objectives that are accompanied by identified strategies to operationalize this plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and executing a communication plan</li> <li>• Developing and executing an engagement plan</li> </ul>
<b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<p>In addition, it is worth developing a partnership strategy that defines how to engage all human services providers, especially engaging and building capacity among small emerging non-profits who may have the trust of diverse communities but no experience with government contracting. This strategy should have built-in processes for continual engagement of providers.</p>

Component	Detail
<b>CONTRACTING</b>	Gwinnett County Government will want to define contracts and subsidies more clearly (vis-à-vis each other) and institutionalize those various vehicles' structure, expectations, legal requirements, and accountability strategies.
<b>FUNDING</b>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic led to an unprecedented authorization of federal funds – through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021– to states and localities, including cities and counties. These funds were combined with a host of legislative and regulatory flexibilities, allowing states and counties to meet food creatively, emergency assistance, energy housing, eviction prevention needs of their residents, and expanded unemployment payments. This funding will, however, sunset (timing depends on funding source) and leave jurisdictions struggling with strategizing about what the future state of public health, behavioral health, health care, and social services will look like. In the meantime, the County has accountability of the human services ecosystem for the funding provided to meet community needs, including developing and implementing a transparent framework for effective use of County dollars.</p> <p>All systems must work together to leverage resources and assets to mitigate the impact of reduced state and federal funding. This includes the County developing a performance-based contracting framework for these lead agencies, using the budget-building process to fund programs within the County and private partners to prioritize and allocate funds to close the service gap incrementally, using appropriate financial incentives and disincentives to leverage capacity across sectors and build a more responsive and effective system of care to meet the needs of its residents and develop supporting financing and accountability structures. In addition, the County has opportunities to procure funding and/or mobilize resources to leverage additional funds.</p> <p>Below are a few identified fund sources and opportunities for Gwinnett County to think differently about how to braid and leverage these funds across the health and human services agency ecosystem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 related health care dollars and large public health infrastructure funds have been made available to public health departments to reconstitute their services and operations post COVID; these dollars are available for another three years.</li> <li>• The Safer Communities Act of 2023 has led to increased funds for school based mental health services.</li> <li>• Continued expansion of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration funded dollars in states and counties to address behavioral health needs across the life span.</li> <li>• Opioid settlements are driving funding opportunities that can address substance use treatment and other SDOH interventions that lead to relapse prevention and primary prevention.</li> <li>• State Opioid Response Funds can help with treatment options for substance use with a focus on pregnant and parenting moms and young adults in addition to methadone treatment clinics.</li> <li>• Federal funds to treat re-entry populations and new Medicaid flexibilities to connect re-entering citizens to Medicaid 90 days before their discharge from prison or jail.</li> <li>• Medicaid State Plan Amendment options (through the state) can be used to build mobile crises, crisis response, and stabilization benefits. The county can participate in/drive those conversations.</li> <li>• Medicaid 1115 waivers can build out homelessness benefits in response to the prevalent point of view that housing is healthcare.</li> <li>• Philanthropic dollars are a nice avenue to catalyze innovation, both by driving collaborative investments around county priorities for county community-based organizations and to innovate and test new ideas.</li> <li>• Hospital and health community benefit is another strategy to build out services to address gaps in SDOH or to address healthcare and behavioral health delivery gaps.</li> </ul> <p><i>With Federal and state funds, it is important to analyze where there may be opportunities to grow federal fund participation with current federally funded programs and if leveraging in a multi-sectoral way, such as with SAMHSA system of care grants or Medicaid 1115 Waivers for housing benefits can draw down federal funds and free up state and local dollars for other unfunded or underfunded services.</i></p>

### The County as Direct Service Provider

Currently, the County is serving as a direct service provider, a role it will always have to play to meet state and federal requirements and also to meet the critical needs of County residents. When considering which activities the County should undertake as a direct service provider in future years, consider the following assessment elements.

- Is this a mandated service (meaning the County HAS to provide them), or is this a non-mandated service?
- Is the service gap a strategic priority for leadership?
- What is the risk of not offering the service or program?  
What happens to the resident or the system if the service isn't offered?
- Who are the best individuals to utilize to reach hard-to-serve people? What delivery system makes sense?
- Is the County best positioned to draw down the most money?
- Can capacity be built in the community quickly enough?



## **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATIONS**

### **Strategies and Owners**

## **GOAL 01 – ADDRESS KEY SERVICE GAPS IN BASIC HUMAN NEEDS**

### **SMARTBE GOAL**

The County and partners should work together to address key gaps – identified through the Human Services Needs Assessment – in the County’s human services ecosystem, with a goal of closing those gaps by 2027.

While Gwinnett County generally performs better than the state of Georgia and the United States on measures of food insecurity, there are communities with substantial unmet needs within this large and diverse County. What this looks like are census tracts with much higher rates of food insecurity within the County itself, lower rates of residents receiving SNAP as compared to the rest of the state, transportation and housing barriers to access (specific) food/food supports; and language, cultural and fear-based barriers.

### **Objective 01.01**

**Address food insecurity.**



## Objective 01.02

**Source all food security to better meet the nutritional needs of Gwinnett County's diverse residents.**

### **FY24 Strategies**

- The County should enhance coordination between food-distributing organizations. There are well over 100 organizations actively addressing food insecurity in the County that comprise both a formal and informal network of providers. While 70 are Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB) partners, many smaller organizations have no connections to the broader food-supporting community. To do this, or in addition to regular working groups, the County should consider developing a Human Services Advisory Board subcommittee on Food Security.
- Building on the work of current providers, the County **should provide leadership to the community to nurture new relationships or the expansion of existing services** to better serve: areas of high need (I-85 corridor in the Southwest part of the County as well as around Lawrenceville and Snellville), address transportation issues or expand hours, and improve language.
- **Fund based on the ability of an organization to address an identified need** that aligns with the specific needs in the County (see Needs Assessment/Ecosystem Map).
- **Leverage relationship with the ACFB to provide guidance and direction for their work in the County.** The County should continue to work closely with ACFB and work to align their work within the County with what has been identified as high-need areas. In addition, the County should consider using the Food Bank's size and purchasing power to do/support doing culturally relevant foods at scale.

### **FY25 (and beyond) Strategies**

- **Track and report on food insecurity across the County** at the census tract level by key measures such as food security, food deserts, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) enrollment, percentages of students receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL), food inflation rates, and food box/package distribution at community food banks and pantries.
- **Enhance partners' purchasing power** (vans for transportation, meals, supplies, fuel, etc.). And letting nonprofits be the face of it, as they're the ones who are trusted deep inside the community.
- **The County should consider providing (funding) support, or contractual requirements, for organizations to provide culturally relevant meals.**
- **The County should routinely survey the community on meal-specifics** and require this as part of their contracts for community meal sites.

## Objective 01.03

**Reduce the County's uninsured rate and improve access to health care services.**

## Objective 01.04

**Address access needs to youth behavioral health services.**

- GUIDE has used data-driven, evidence-based strategies since 1986 to reduce and prevent the use, misuse, and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs by focusing on environmental systems to achieve community-level change. Although 61% of drug use went up among 8th graders between 2016 and 2020, teenagers in Georgia are 19.01% less likely to have used drugs in the last month than the average American teen.
- 62% of teenagers in 12th grade have abused alcohol. They're 21.27% less likely to use alcohol than the average American in their age group.

*Source: Teenage Drug Use Statistics [2023]: Data & Trends on Abuse (drugabusestatistics.org)*

## Objective 01.05

### Improve access to adult mental health services.

The County's direct role in health care services is purposefully limited. The current slate of partners providing physical and mental/behavioral health services in the County deliver high-quality services. There are, however, still areas of need, and those areas of need look different across each community within the County. The needs center mainly around awareness of gaps in the system, communication with the community about what is out there, and capacity-building focused on adding providers in some spaces. Providing services is not necessarily the County's role, but the below strategies can further support the community to address the needs across the community.

#### **FY24 Strategies:**

- **The County should continue to work to create trust in the community.** This includes being a good partner, being present where it makes sense, and supporting the initiatives and programs of others.
- **The County should continue to meet first responder needs.** The County plays a vital role as a first responder (Police, Sheriff, Fire and Emergency Services). It is, in some ways, the eyes and ears on the ground for referrals to mental health services and to align community needs with resources as well as identify – for County leadership – new or emerging trends.
- **The County should coordinate partners/system alignment,** share knowledge of gaps, and continue to work closely with View Point Health and Gwinnett County schools to fill in gaps in behavioral health prevention.

## Objective 01.06

### Improve the safety and stability of housing.

Gwinnett County released a Comprehensive Housing Study in 2022 that identified the themes of access to and supply of affordable and workforce housing, housing instability, and homelessness as significant issues in the County. The study presents a wide range of potential solutions that are grouped into seven categories: establish Gwinnett County housing goals and priorities; support and develop organizational infrastructure; review current zoning and land use regulations for potential housing-related amendments; leverage public land ownership and development priorities to promote affordable and workforce housing; expand housing affordability to improve access to housing for low and moderate-income households; preserve existing lower-cost and affordable housing units; and sponsor and support housing stability.

#### **FY24 Strategies:**

- Implementation and monitoring of comprehensive housing strategies. The County should continue to provide resources and work to support the study.
- In addition, the County should also work to ensure extended stays and unsafe housing situations are part of the plan to improve the safety and stability of housing.
- As part of a national trend, the County should clearly define what constitutes a “shelter” and expand the definition and formalize it. The definitions of shelter by providers can be numerous, and the term can be subject to many interpretations. A standard definition of “shelter” can create a shelter system network in the County.
- The County should use the warming stations as a critical entry point to address the unhoused/those needing housing.

## Objective 01.07

### Improve wraparound services for youth and their families.

Combining COVID-19 disruptions to school life and academics, the prevalence of alcohol and drugs, cyberbully, and social media pressures, increasing rates of anxiety and depression, and youth taking on adult pressures and responsibilities with limited positive youth development services puts the County's youth at risk for suicide, teen pregnancy, dropping out, and substance abuse. There are several strategies the County can consider for increasing impactful services for youth and their families.

#### **FY25 (and beyond) Strategies**

- The County should identify and support a lead entity responsible for working closely with the school systems and other County providers to vet, coordinate, and navigate wraparound services for youth and their families.
- The County should tap informal community leaders to enhance linkages between the school system and the human services delivery ecosystem.
- The County should continue to partner with internal and external providers to offer (and support) activities such as out-of-school time, mentoring, tutoring, high school wellness centers, anti-gang activities, summer youth employment, sports, homework clubs, etc.

## Objective 01.08

### Provide a single point of entry for veterans who need information and referrals to services.

With a little over 39,500 veterans in the County (a trend that has been steadily decreasing and is expected to continue to do so despite the overall population of the County increasing), Gwinnett falls in the lowest tier statewide in the percentage of veterans. The total female percentage continues to grow from 15% today. The population's age breakdown is evenly split between 18-44, 45-64, and 65-84.

Military veterans have served in many ways, often putting their lives on the line for their country, but for each of the cohorts who have served our country, the challenges and the needs look different. For example, the more than 2 million women and men who served in the war on terror have experienced significant and other challenges than many of their direct predecessors who served in much smaller conflicts, both in duration and troop deployment. As Vietnam and Korean War veterans age, their needs also change. In addition, a large contingent of peacetime veterans who served from 1975-1990 have never experienced the horrors of war. The County's role in supporting the evolving needs of the veteran population should be centered on referrals and coordination of support.

#### **FY24 Strategies:**

**Ensure coordinated care includes processes to assess and refer veterans for services.** As the County rolls out the structure and procedures for the new coordinated care platform, it is imperative that the system includes resources for veterans and that staff are trained on those resources and serving this population.

#### **FY25 (and beyond) Strategies**

- **Continue to support veterans as a critical population area of need.** Ensure that veterans are considered in the continued assessment of human services across the County and that their specific needs are understood.
- **Continue to build out veterans' services centers and partnerships** to focus on assisting veterans with benefits and claims (increasing sign-up and participation with Federal Veterans Administration and state benefits, assisting veterans in navigating the health care system, and providing access to employment opportunities for veterans. This also includes supporting veteran-serving organizations with space and shared resources.
- **Continue to address substance and mental/behavioral health strategies among veterans and their families as a supportive network.** Veterans in Gwinnett County, like veterans elsewhere, may face unique substance abuse and addiction challenges. Gwinnett County, located in Georgia, has resources and programs to help veterans struggling with substance abuse, including the Veteran Affairs Health System, to address addiction and mental and behavioral health support. The support strategies include detoxification, inpatient and outpatient treatment, counseling, and support groups.



## STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATIONS

### Strategies and Owners

## GOAL 02 – CREATE SYNERGY AMONG PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS

### SMARTBE GOAL

By 2024, the County will have identified, trained, and nurtured a diverse set of partners who will be working together to advance shared outcomes.

### Objective 02.01

**Create, strengthen and leverage partnerships.**

The linchpin to a successful Strategic Plan covering the County-wide Human Services ecosystem is clear coordination and collaboration with community partners, including acknowledging that the County cannot (and should not) do this alone. The community has a tremendous amount to offer, and the County and human services providers are stronger together.

#### FY24 Strategies

- **The County should workshop this plan widely within and across the community.** One of the first things the County should do is develop a structure to engage the human services provider system about the goals and strategies in this plan. This should include a bi-directional feedback mechanism consisting of town halls, community conversations, one-on-one meetings, community events, and using embedded, respected community members.
- **The County should formalize its role as convener.** The County can serve as a convener to get as many organizations as possible to collaborate to share resources, ideas, and information to collaborate on ecosystem solutions.
- **The County should develop/explore a non-profit consortium to work toward the American Public Human Services Administration's five north star model.**

## **FY24 Strategies Continued**

- The County should formalize structures for ongoing communication and collaboration – between and among – County staff, providers, and community leaders.
  - The County should create and empower a Human Services Advisory Board. The Board should be chaired by the Community Services Director and a designated member of the Board of Commissioners identified through a formal selection process. The membership will be appointed and processed through a Board of Commissioners’ approved Gwinnett County resolution. The membership will specify and include voting and non-voting members, not to exceed 21 voting members. Membership, along with county service provider representation, could include the lead agencies by contract function, key public service agencies, capacity-building agencies of non-profit organizations, and advocacy organizations in the areas of work. They could also include the lead agencies by contract function, the backbone organization, the capacity-building trade association of non-profit organizations, and at least two persons with lived experience. Working subcommittees should be created on certain programmatic areas, populations, zip codes, initiatives, and/or shared outcomes.
  - The County should develop structured Memorandum of Understanding with each human services provider and the County that specify roles and responsibilities and the contributions of each partner agency.

## **Objective 02.01**

### **Beyond FY25 Strategies**

The community should continue strengthening and leveraging its state partnerships, including those with The Georgia Division of Family & Children Services and their local offices, Gwinnett Newton, and Rockdale Department of Health, the multi-county regional Health Department, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Atlanta Regional Commission, including the Office of Aging Services, Governance, Transportation and Air Quality, Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, Community Resources Committee, the Senior Policy Group of the Urban Area Security Initiative, and CRC Housing.

## **Objective 02.02**

### **Build capacity of partners and the system.**

To combat a lack of understanding about the impact and importance of human services providers and the often-mistaken perception of nonprofits as ineffective and/or poorly managed charities. Additional money flowing into the County for capacity-building, combined with the shifting role of one of the County’s nonprofit agencies, allows the County to further strengthen and expand the human services ecosystem by developing community-building initiatives to support area organizations.

### **FY24 Strategies**

- The County should continue to move forward with contracting the build of a lead agency for capacity-building work aimed at helping the provider community by increasing the operational efficiency effectiveness and filling existing and future gaps across the breadth of human services in the County. Specifically, the County should:
  - Decide how prescriptive the County wants to be regarding the operationalization of the lead agency in capacity-building work and subsequently provide clear directives around vision, roles, responsibilities, communication, and any structural components they want to dictate.
  - Develop measurable, achievable outcomes tied to funding.
  - Provide formal guidance and/or a process for equity and inclusion.
  - Support providers in bolstering their data and evaluation capacities, which are needed investments that are critical and will pay off in the future.
  - Include key components of human-centered design.
- The County should embrace a “systems-building” leadership mindset. Communities can achieve better outcomes for individuals and families when they collaborate across systems and when services are connected and coordinated. Being a systems-building leader means purposefully working across sectors, organizations, program areas, and even funding streams for the betterment of the entire system.
- The County should develop an internal system and allocate capacity to provide best practice, research, and support to the County’s human services provider network. As part of the County’s role in becoming a national benchmark and the needed work to support the greater ecosystem in that effort, one opportunity is to provide some amount of information sharing and technical assistance to the provider system.

### **Beyond FY25 Strategies**

The County should also, as part of the capacity-building contract or separately under their leadership, develop/support learning collaboratives where network participants (by zip or by service function) meet in a cohort model to learn from each other, share ideas and resources, and tackle shared outcomes.

## GOAL 02 – CREATE SYNERGY AMONG PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS NEEDS

*Continued*

### Objective 02.03

**Identify and implement continuous quality improvement.**

Service delivery models, relationships, capacity, and organizational cultures are constantly exposed to environmental changes. These changes impact the effectiveness of systems and can hamper a County and partners' abilities to serve residents in the way they desire. If, internally, there is no system whereby leadership and staff are constantly reviewing, measuring, and monitoring the ecosystem and outcomes, they may continue to miss opportunities to improve or address emergency needs, increasing the likelihood of issues that require outside assistance to fix. To mitigate this, we recommend the County make space for building a more formalized culture of continuous quality improvement into everyday business. When making the caliber and quantity of significant changes to systems that the County will undertake and the responsibility for leadership the County will need to employ moving forward, the need for a long-term CQI focus is significantly essential for ensuring County staff have the tools and structured focus, to evaluate the system and their strategies and actions moving forward. It answers questions like: *How are we doing? How can we do it better?*

#### **FY24 Strategies:**

The County should develop a common language and process used across the County and partners to manage overall system performance. One option for consideration is Results-based Accountability, a structured model that starts with the end in mind. Regardless, the County should look for a model that best fits and improves upon the County's (and the ecosystem's) stated goals, culture, and structure.

#### **Beyond FY25 Strategies**

Building on the measures currently in the Gwinnett Dashboard, the County should consider implementing a shared reporting model on the overall health/wellness of the community. This includes engaging with partners on the key measures currently part of the dashboard, those that may be included in new contracting requirements, and additions from the coordinated care platform to develop a scaled-down list set of outcomes that show how successful initiatives and systems are performing. The County would develop or highlight and benchmark against metrics that provide line of sight into service delivery quality and timeliness; these should be built into the current data dashboard and shared (e.g., time to connect with "entry point" or navigator, time to referral, length of wait for services, satisfaction with services, and others).



## STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATIONS

### Strategies and Owners

## GOAL 03 – DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

### SMARTBE GOAL

The County should develop and provide leadership for a new model that maximizes non-county revenue sources and strategically spends County dollars directly aligning with plan goals, starting in the 2025 budget cycle.

### Objective 03.01

**Prioritize leveraging federal, state, and private funding to meet resident needs.**

The delivery of human services is a complex web of federal, state, and local general funds, as well as philanthropic contributions, fees generated by providers, and fundraising efforts by non-profit partners. The County and partners, through leadership and (some amount of) direction from the County, should leverage outside funding sources, thereby freeing up county funding to address high-priority and gap areas. County funds should be strategically appropriated to maximize impact, draw down additional funding (or levels of funding that non-governmental providers cannot), or fill critical gaps in the community in alignment with the strategic plan.

### **FY24 and FY25 Strategies**

- The County should complete an updated funding mapping exercise. While every human services ecosystem has multiple funding sources, rarely is there a successful attempt at mapping these funds across public and private sector providers and braiding them to leverage across service lines for maximum benefit. Given audit requirements, while the County cannot blend funds unless they are entirely unrestricted funds, they can braid almost all funding sources if those funds can be discretely maintained for audit purposes. Results may offer additional opportunities to blend funding and programs to align and extend the capacity of both the funding and the program.
- The County should explore the opportunity of a more formal partnership with Georgia Department of Family and Children Services – and educate navigators on resident enrollment options – to increase SNAP, WIC, and Medicaid participation, thereby reducing County costs related to health care and food insecurity.

The County should consider developing structures to communicate/share with human services provider partners on basics of how to seek and obtain non-county funding.

### **Beyond FY25 Strategies**

The County should consider investing in prevention programs and reporting on subsequent cost avoidance. A few good examples of worthwhile areas to invest in prevention include housing programs as well as early childhood prevention investments in partnership with schools to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn. The Building Brains Anywhere initiative demonstrates the County's commitment to early learning and continues to grow. This effort will yield cumulative benefits to young children and their families.

## **Objective 03.02**

**Develop model contract(s) for provider partners that describe expectations, deliverables, outcomes, and timelines for human services delivery.**

For a County that is partnering with and/or funding programs that are administered externally, the contracting process is critical to ensuring that the County's and residents' needs are being met and that spending is judicious. In addition to funding additional infrastructure, the County will also want to update funding mechanisms for community subsidies, grants, and contracts.

### **FY24 (for FY25) Strategies:**

The County should align and update funding and contracts to meet system goals. This includes:

- Considering movement to performance-based and funding only those projects that demonstrate value, outcomes, and progress toward the County's goals. The County should develop a schedule to modernize contracting practices and complete contract modernization and improvements by the next funding cycle.
- Conduct process mapping of all current contracting and grant-making steps, focusing on efficiency, equity, and streamlining.
- Review all statutory and regulatory permissions and restrictions in County and state procurement laws, regulations, and policy.
- Review all human services contracts, grant agreements, subsidies, and the authorities and accountability vehicles attached to the agreements.
- Identify pain points and opportunities for improvement.
- Develop ideal state workflows and map workforce and workload capacities for contracts development staff and contract monitoring staff.
- Develop an updated, equitable, holistic contract review cycle/process.

### **Beyond FY25 Strategies**

The County should optimize revenue potential to determine whether the program is yielding a return on investment or there is a social return on investment that measures more than efficiency and effectiveness but speaks to social good.





## **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATIONS**

### **Strategies and Owners**

## **GOAL 04 – BE A NATIONAL BENCHMARK FOR HUMAN SERVICES**

### **SMARTBE GOAL**

By the end of the plan cycle, Gwinnett County will be a model for local governments across the nation on how to lead a community to deliver equitable, high-quality services in a growing, diverse County.

### **Objective 04.01**

**Increase engagement with national peers to learn from and share the County's work.**

Engaging with national leaders, thought partners, and other counties who similarly — and dissimilarly — deliver/lead the delivery of human services offers tremendous advantages to Gwinnett County. By participating with peers, the County will be able to strengthen its skills through the experience of hearing from and sharing with others and support its organizational development. To be a national model, it is imperative that the County draw on the rich network of social capital available throughout the community.

## FY24 and FY25 Strategies

Gwinnett County should further engage with peer counties in Georgia and nationwide through both formal and informal channels. In addition to continuing to be very active in Metro-Atlanta activities, there are other counties that “look” like Gwinnett that can offer opportunities for addressing similar HS delivery challenges.

These can include:

County	Population + Growth '10-'21	Majority-Minority Percentage	Avg. Median Household Income
Gwinnett Co, GA	965k (up 19.4%)	68%	\$75,853
Sacramento, CA	1.59M (up 11.8%)	58.6%	\$76,422
Alameda, CA	1.65M (up 9%)	71.2%	\$112,017
Orange, FL	1.4M (up 23.9%)	61.4%	\$65,784
Ft. Bend, TX	859k (up 45.5%)	70.7%	\$102,590
Prince George's, MD	955k (up 10.3%)	88.6%	\$91,124
Franklin County, OH	1.3 M (up 13.3%)	39.2%	\$65,988

- **The County (and partners) should engage with national organizations** such as the National Association of Counties, the American Public Human Services Association, which has an active National Council of Local Human Services Administrators, and others. This engagement should include attending conferences, serving on committees, co-authoring publications, sharing on social media, and engaging with state and national leadership.
- **The County (and partners) should transparently share and publish results**, both the good and the “lessons learned.”
- **The County should develop a site** and include metrics as part of the Gwinnett County website to share narrative progress and lessons learned.

## Objective 04.02

**Formalize a consistent approach to regularly obtaining and incorporating feedback from County residents into the delivery of human services.**

### **FY24 and FY25 Strategies**

- The County should develop and implement feedback processes — for individual services and community needs — that may include point-in-time surveys, annual surveys, follow-up emails/calls, connecting with providers to understand how services were accessed/delivered, environmental scans, community conversations, and other mechanisms. All of this should be done by focusing on culturally appropriate services, equity, and inclusion. Some of this follow-up can/should be done as part of the contract evaluation process.
- The County should update the human services strategic plan bi-annually, starting in late 2025, and update the ecosystem review on a five-year cycle.
- The County and partners should develop a cadence to have ongoing dialogue through Community Conversations. These can be broken down in many ways: geographic area, population group, language, focus/need area, or time-sensitive issue.
- The County should emphasize engaging with individuals and the community in diverse and inclusive ways. This includes focusing on smaller Community Based Organizations (a non-profit organization that operates at the local level and is focused on addressing the needs and concerns of a specific community), community partners, and organizations with deep roots within under-served populations and/or neighborhood.

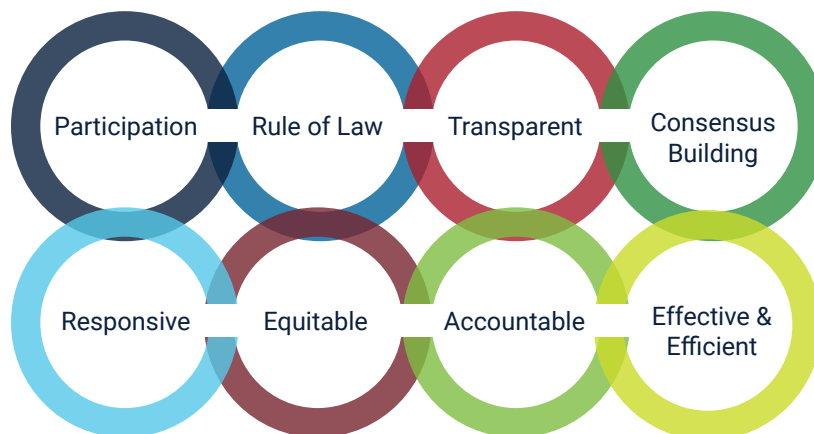
## Objective 04.03

**Nurture and model a culture of “good governance.”**

As the County rolls out the new model, leadership can lead in modeling critical characteristics of good governance so that non-profits can reset what is expected of them and their partnerships with the County. Generally, good governance defines the institutional — overt and less obvious — processes and outcomes necessary to achieve organizational results and goals.

### **FY24 and FY25 Strategies**

- While generally, good governance has eight significant characteristics (shown below), the County should build on these to define good governance in a way that is meaningful to them and creates a culture where they and providers will thrive. This may include adding common characteristics that have humility, honesty, reflection, continuous improvement, inclusion, listening, and others.



- As part of the regular engagement with staff and partners, the County should assess the County’s own — and the provider networks’ — ability to meet the characteristics of good governance and partnership satisfaction.



## **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATIONS**

### **Strategies and Owners**

## **GOAL 05 – PROVIDE COORDINATED CARE**

### **SMARTBE GOAL**

The County will launch the technology and infrastructure to support the system of providers in staying coordinated in real-time to provide timely and responsive one-stop access to a referral network.

### **Objective 05.01**

**Support successful development, implementation, and ongoing system usage.**

Many of the same individuals/families served in one area of human services have needs in another area. The system fragmentation often fails to recognize or address those needs. To take the lead on providing coordinated care across the breadth of human services programs, the County is implementing a cloud-based digital solution that will process referrals and receive data from the human services provider network. The system will use a two-way data feed and electronic real-time referrals to allow Community Navigators to connect to services faster via vetted community-based partners/providers. The system will also provide critical data enabling social needs scores, which can help identify opportunities to support individuals across categories of social conditions. The system will collect essential data for equitable service delivery and open accessibility for inclusive and comprehensive support.

### **FY24 Strategies**

The key to the success of the coordinated care system is successfully launching the project, which is almost entirely dependent on the human services provider network for its success. Before launch, the County should (work with the vendor, as needed):

- **Develop an overall approach/goal for the “Coordinated Care System.”** This includes a commitment to stop re-traumatization by reducing fragmentation, duplication, and the effort needed to access services and directly match people to their needs.
- **Develop processes that focus on a no-wrong door** for accessing human services with a clearly defined and dynamic referral process that effectively incorporates warm hand-offs and closed-loop referral concepts. This is done by creating central “points of entry” and will be used to guide system development and implementation (vs. the other way around).
- **Scale up OneStops** and fully utilize them as the foundation to assess better, understand, and address need/demand in real-time through the coordination platform. Ensure these staff are culturally and linguistically responsive to the community.
- **Gauge perceptions of the chosen coordinated care vendor, especially among large providers.** Vendor reputations often pre-date these kinds of initiatives. The County will want to ensure, especially with the larger providers/Community Based Organizations, that you are aware of any experience they’ve had and mitigate any issues.
- **The County should consider developing a community engagement team.** This embedded team will lead efforts to engage at the organization and even (sometimes) individually in the field. The County should learn from others who have implemented this similar system that it will take a multi-pronged effort to get people to engage with and use it.
- **Determine how, or if, you will incentivize the human services provider ecosystem** to use the system. Some states/counties have paid providers for each task, and reviews are mixed on the success of such structures. Some more successful structures use community navigators, contracting requirements, and realizing that organizations must want to use it.

Moving forward, the County is best served to roll out a successful coordinated care platform if it:

- **Formalizes expectations for use of the platform with the provider network.** This should start with executing MOUs (or a formalized agreement) with all external users (providers) and providing clear expectations for how the platform is to be used, what infrastructure is needed, and expectations around responsiveness, duplication, information being entered (and when), and reaching out to residents about services.
- **Develops Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** for those organizations that will utilize the platform.
- **Develop the infrastructure and processes to provide users with technical assistance and training (on system usage, procedures, and reporting).**
- **Creates regular, structured, inclusive feedback loops for residents and providers** to share best practices, ask questions, coordinate, and present concerns/issues.
- **Ensures that support for the platform and the Community Navigator team are appropriately staffed** – a necessity for coordinated care to be successful. If not enough resources are dedicated to this infrastructure, then the County runs the risk of inadvertently supporting the creation of a duplicative system in the community.
- **Includes defined workflows for residents who need transparent services,** universally shared among service providers, accessible, and widely publicized in the community.

## Objective 05.02

### Develop regular reporting and information-sharing to reduce duplication.

For the coordinated care model and system to work, the County will need to regularly report on and discuss outcomes with users.

#### FY24 Strategies

- **The County should develop a myriad of reports,** including those that focus on outcomes (clients impacted, onboarded users and organizations, referrals sent, referrals followed-up on, services requested) and outcomes (services utilized and improvements in overall health, housing, and food security).
- **The County should push this data to the Gwinnett Dashboard** to share with the community.
- **The County should develop a formal communication structure** that provides a regular, structured communication channel with user groups. Benchmark and the needed work to support the greater ecosystem in that effort, one opportunity is to provide some amount of information sharing and technical assistance to the provider system.



## **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATIONS**

### **Strategies and Owners**

## **GOAL 06 – CENTER SERVICE DELIVERY ON EQUITY AND BELONGING**

### **SMARTBE GOAL**

By 2024, the County has created and is delivering upon a service delivery model whose services, principles, data, and structures are rooted in equity and belonging.

### **Objective 06.01**

**Model a culture of equity and belonging.**

Incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion/Belonging principles into a human service model is essential for creating a more responsive, effective, and equitable system – with improved outcomes for everyone. In addition to what has already been articulated in the preceding strategies, below are some key DEI/B principles that should be incorporated into the new human service model.

### **FY24 and FY25 Strategies**

- **The County should create an orchestrated systemic response to addressing areas of need** that everyone is bought into, knowing that creating buy-in is a lot of work and will require focused efforts.
- **The County should continue to build and develop a workforce that reflects the County and the populations served.** People want to see themselves reflected in their service providers, and it helps ensure that the County is more clearly able to meet the needs of residents.
- **The County and partners should encourage open communication and feedback** with each other and residents to foster a culture of transparency, trust, and responsiveness to all communities.
- Through capacity-building work, **the County should provide opportunities for professional development** and growth of small, minority-focused organizations and/or organizations focused on under served areas to increase the sense of ownership and investment in the organization or system.
- **The County should make sure to celebrate diversity, promote cultural awareness, anchor equity, and incorporate lived experience and a sense of belonging** across all efforts focused on engaging the community; this creates a sense of shared identity and purpose where everyone can see themselves (and their purpose) in the model.
- **The County should** look to reduce any unconscious bias in decision-making and grant-making processes.
- **The County should shift the balance of power to the community.** One way to do this is through participatory grant-making, where community residents and community-based organizations actively participate in the grant-making process (funding allocations, shared performance measures, funding cycles, etc.).

## **Objective 06.02**

### **Support and drive equity externally across the human services ecosystem.**

In addition to continuing to advance its own internal DEI/B goals and the Gwinnett Standard, the County should look beyond government doors and focus additional efforts on its external stakeholders and what role the County can play in delivering equitable human services. Together, the Human Services ecosystem – focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging – can create an even more significant impact.

### **FY25 Strategies**

- The County should develop a structure to support and engage non-traditional partners and create opportunities for collaboration and teamwork among providers, clients, and community partners.
- The County is embarking on an equity study, and it should collect, analyze, and use disaggregated data to advance equity and impact and expect the same in data reported by partners.