

August 2022
OIG File #20-1629

Why We Did This Audit

DFSS works with approximately 350 delegate agencies and has issued 1,600 contracts, with a total annual community investment of \$346 million, to provide social services for vulnerable Chicagoans. The performance of delegate agencies is key to the success of each program. We sought to determine whether DFSS' processes for selecting delegate agencies align with outcomes-based goals, in line with its Commitment to Outcomes.

Background

DFSS adopted the Commitment to Outcomes to transition to an "outcome-oriented model that focuses on how many people leave better off after receiving DFSS' services, versus how many people come through the door."

DFSS defined a new mission, and set new priorities and goals, in Phase 1 of the Commitment to Outcomes—the Strategic Framework. The Department developed results-driven requests for proposal and contracts in Phase 2 of the Commitment to Outcomes—Strategic Contracting. This audit focused on the selection of delegate agencies through Strategic Contracting.

We thank DFSS staff and management for their cooperation during the audit.



City of Chicago
Office of Inspector General
igchicago.org

Audit of the Department of Family and Support Services' Strategic Contracting

OIG concluded that the Department of Family and Support Services' (DFSS) Strategic Planning and Impact division's involvement in developing requests for proposal (RFPs) and evaluation tools—critical steps in the Strategic Contracting process—helps align those steps with the Department's Commitment to Outcomes. The Strategic Planning and Impact division could provide more guidance for the evaluation of RFP applications. In addition, RFPs, evaluation tools, and contracts could be improved if the division ensured the inclusion of the Commitment to Outcomes' key elements.

Finding

DFSS developed RFPs, tools for evaluating RFP applications, and contracts that largely align with the Commitment to Outcomes, but it could strengthen its process by ensuring the inclusion of key elements that match the Commitment to Outcomes. Moreover, RFP application evaluators inconsistently applied scoring guidance.

Recommendations

OIG recommends that DFSS develop procedures to ensure that it includes key elements of the Commitment to Outcomes in all future RFPs, evaluation tools, and contracts, and that evaluators consistently score applications according to the Department's scoring guidance. OIG also recommends that DFSS ensure that all divisions share an understanding of outcomes-based goals, outcome metrics, and the key elements of the Commitment to Outcomes. To assist in fulfilling these recommendations, the Strategic Planning and Impact division could provide additional guidance across the phases of the Strategic Contracting process.

Department Response

In response, DFSS stated that it would continue to provide guidance and training on the Commitment to Outcomes to program divisions through the Strategic Planning and Impact division. The department will also provide guidance and procedures to help divisions include relevant and appropriate elements in RFPs, evaluation tools, and related contracts. Finally, DFSS stated it will improve the scoring guidance it provides to evaluators.