



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: County Executive Office
Department No.: 012
Agenda Date: July 1, 2025
Placement: Administrative Agenda
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director(s): Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Contact Info: Tanja Heitman, Assistant County Executive Officer
SUBJECT: **Grant Award Funding of Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Dispute Resolution Programs Act (DRPA) for Fiscal Years 2025-26 through 2028-29**

DocuSigned by:

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County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve and authorize the Chair to execute an Agreement with Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley for grant funding from the Dispute Resolution Program Account (Fund 1073) for an annual amount of up to \$137,500 for Fiscal Years (FY) 2025-26 through 2028-29 and an overall grant award total not to exceed amount of \$550,000;
- b) Delegate to the County Executive Officer, or designee, the authority to carry out the County's administrative, noticing, and reporting obligations under the Dispute Resolution Program Act and its regulations; and,
- c) Determine that these activities are exempt from California Environmental Quality Act review per CEQA Guideline Section 15378(b)(4), since the recommended actions are government fiscal activities which do not involve commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

Summary Text:

The County Executive Office seeks the Board's authority to enter a four-year contract with Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley (FBSMV) for countywide Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) services, including mediation of small claims and temporary restraining order disputes. This grant award was the result of a competitive bidding process, in which FBSMV was the sole responding entity. The grant funding of up to \$137,500 annually derives from court filing fees established by the Dispute

Resolution Program Act (DRPA). The Santa Barbara County Superior Court will provide contract oversight and program administration in accordance with the California Rules of Court. A County that elects to participate in DRPA must adhere to the Act and its regulations, and must hold a contract with the grant recipient. The County's share of costs are funded by DRPA fees collected by the Superior Court.

Discussion:

This four-year contract with FBSMV promises dispute resolution services countywide, primarily for small claims and temporary restraining order disputes. FBSMV has a standing relationship with the County, focused on mediation and restorative services in schools and through juvenile probation programs. FBSMV recently acquired Conflict Solutions Center (CSC), the former DRPA grant recipient, who historically delivered ADR services for the Courts. The two organizations are now integrated, with CSC operating as a program under FBSMV; all former CSC staff are currently employed by FBSMV, with the added capacity and support of the full FBSMV team.

The contract ensures compliance with DRPA and its associated regulations including mandatory annual reporting to the County and Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), quarterly reporting to the County, and outreach and training regarding dispute resolution services. In accordance with the Act, the County is responsible for up to 50% of the cost of the DRPA Program, with FBSMV matching the other 50% with funds including in-kind donations, volunteer services, materials or property. The Superior Court will serve as the program administrator for the DRPA program.

This item also requests that the Board delegate authority to the County Executive Office to comply with the noticing and reporting requirements under the Act.

Background:

The Dispute Resolution Programs Act of 1986 provides for the local establishment and funding of informal dispute resolution programs. The goal of the Act is the creation of a state-wide system of locally funded programs which provide dispute resolution to county residents. These services assist in resolving problems informally and function as alternatives to more formal court proceedings. The Act's statutory provisions (codified at California Business and Professions Code §§ 465-471.5), and its Regulations (contained at California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Chapter 36) operate in tandem to govern the implementation of county dispute resolution programs. The California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) serves as the DRPA oversight agency.

The Board initially implemented the DRPA program in December of 1987, enacting Board Resolution 87-614, and has enacted superseding Resolutions for the Program, the latest of which is Resolution 94-178 of April 5, 1994. The Superior Court provides administration and support staffing to ADR Programs, per Rule 10.783 of the California Rules of Court.

Since 1984, DRPA-funded resolution programs have provided countywide services, focusing on community mediator training as well as providing actual mediation services. The broad scope of these services has included specialized programs such as juvenile offender/victim mediation, civil harassment/temporary restraining order mediation, and small claims court mediation. There has also been a focus on general dispute resolution advocacy and referral services. One of the program's primary goals is a heightened public awareness and understanding of mediation and other informal methods of dispute resolution.

The prior contract in place related to the DRPA program was a contract between Conflict Resolution Services of Santa Barbara, a non-profit ADR organization, and the Superior Court. Conflict Resolution Services provided ADR services until it was acquired by FBSMV in 2024, at which point FBSMV began providing such services.

The present contract between FBSMV and the County is necessary to ensure compliance with the Act and its Regulations.

Performance Measure:

In accordance with DRPA and its corresponding Regulations, FBSMV will provide an annual statical report to the County, an annual fiscal report to the County and DCA, and an annual fiscal reconciliation report to the County and DCA. Additionally, FBSMV will provide the County a quarterly report regarding its budget, training, advocacy, outreach, and mediation services. FBSMV will also conduct one awareness building activity per year designed to increase public awareness of its dispute resolution services and will participate in bi-annual meetings with the Superior Court.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

Consistent with the Act's intent, the DRPA program allows for dispute resolution absent costly, time-consuming, and often complex court intervention, resulting in potential savings to the community, to local government entities, and to the trial court system of the State of California. The potential savings in time, attorney fees, litigation costs, and "adversarial aggravation" for litigants, is also of benefit to the citizens of Santa Barbara County.

All funding for the DRPA contractor comes directly from dedicated Dispute Resolution fees collected as part of an initial filing fee pursuant to Section 470.3 of the Act. The Superior Court collects these fees on behalf of the County.

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Source	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28	FY 2028-29	Total
Fees/ Collections	\$63,000	\$63,000	\$63,000	\$63,000	\$252,000
Fund Balance	\$74,500	\$74,500	\$74,500	\$74,500	\$298,000
Total	\$137,500	\$137,500	\$137,500	\$137,500	\$550,000

There is currently \$345,000 in the Dispute Resolution Program Fund Balance and the County has historically received approximately \$63,000 per year from fees stipulated in the Act. This historical average was taken over a ten-year period. The new contract amount is anticipated to ensure that the full annual revenue is utilized as well as draw down the Dispute Resolution Program Fund Balance reserves over the next four years.

To satisfy the requirement of section 470.2 of the Act, the County's share of funding shall not exceed 50% of the approved estimated cost of the program. As described in Section 3640 of the Act's regulations, in-kind donations, including services of volunteers and materials and/or property, shall be reported or credited as revenue or expenditures and may be utilized by FBSMV to match the County's 50% contribution.

Funds generated under the Act can only be used to fund services authorized by the Act and its Regulations. Such funds cannot be used for: (a) family conciliation court or conciliation and mediation services pursuant to sections 3170 and 3175 of the Family Code; (b) judicial arbitration pursuant to section 1141.10 et seq. of the Code of Civil Procedure or any other formal or mandatory judicial arbitration program; or (c) any other programs or services not expressly authorized by the Act or these Regulations.

Staffing Impacts:

There are no staffing impacts associated with this contract.

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Special Instructions:

Please provide Rana Warren, Deputy CEO in the County Executive Office, with a conformed copy of the Board Minute Order and two (2) conformed copies of the signature page, following execution by the Chair of the Board.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Executed Agreement for Services with Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley

Contact Information:

Rana Warren

Deputy CEO

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