

# North Sound RADAR Program

## 2019/2020 MIDD Budget Revision Response

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### **Early Program Underspend**

North Sound RADAR Program was awarded MIDD funding in April of 2019. Since that time, there have been several unanticipated challenges in the early implementation of the Program, leading to significant underspend of the MIDD allocation. This underspend is largely driven by challenges to getting the program fully staffed. These challenges are threefold: 1) the nature of the program, 2) the time it takes to move through the hiring process, and 3) the COVID-19 Pandemic.

*Current Program Manager started in February 2020*

RADAR initially hired a Program Manager in mid-2019 who turned out to not be a good fit. The current Program Manager started in February of 2020. That turnover set back the timeline for implementation of all elements of the program. Since that time, hiring has been a primary focus.

*Staffing for a law enforcement/ social service program is challenging and time consuming*

It has been more challenging and time-consuming to recruit and hire appropriate MHP Navigator staff for RADAR than initially anticipated for several reasons. First, co-response work requires a very special skillset which isn't commonly taught in masters programs. Co-response is an emerging field nationwide, and we believe that RADAR will be on the forefront of setting norms and best practices for a new specialty in social services. Because it is so new, however, it naturally has taken extra time to recruit and orient candidates to this emerging area of practice.

Law enforcement and social work are disciplines with very different cultures. Law enforcement personnel were wary from the start that social service staff would not work well with them, or would carry biases about law enforcement into their work with RADAR. From the beginning, we sought to be extremely sensitive to this dynamic and recruit carefully. We see it as critical that law enforcement officers have a good experience with the RADAR Navigators, as they could easily be dissuaded from wanting to work with social service staff. It's worth noting that an evaluation of the early implementation of the RADAR program by George Mason University showed significant improvement in positive feelings about the program and in empathy for people with behavioral health and developmental disabilities.<sup>i</sup>

In addition, the background check process can take months. It has always been important to the RADAR partner agencies that Navigator staff be adequately vetted, because they have access to private and confidential criminal history information. The thorough law enforcement background check has made the hiring process slower than in other sectors.

Finally, all recruiting and orientation was frozen when the COVID-19 pandemic started. The City of Bothell was responding to the crisis, and was not able to move candidates through the Human Resources process. The Program Manager was not able to conduct interviews due to social distancing requirements. We are beginning to resume hiring activities at this time and have one new Navigator now on board and another at the final stages of contracting.

All told, staffing took far longer than anticipated, and RADAR will not be fully staffed until late in 2020.

*Costs accrued by the City of Bothell have not been adequately captured*

In the original MIDD budget, a line item was included as a placeholder for City of Bothell Administrative support. The City has provided support in the form of information services, administrative services, background checks and office space, nothing has been invoiced to MIDD. While there was no amount assigned to this line item in the budget, it does represent a program cost. In the future as city budgets shrink in the wake of the COVID pandemic, the City of Bothell may be less able to provide this support without reimbursement.

## Projections for 2020

With a Project Manager now established, the program is ready to truly come to fruition. Unfortunately, just 6 weeks after the new PM started, the COVID-19 pandemic meant program development virtually ground to a halt. Hiring and other activities are now beginning to resume. Additionally, the Project Manager will be taking maternity leave this summer, further delaying some hiring and orientation activities. Staffing has been our biggest challenge and most significant underspend. The following chart represents a projection of staffing for the rest of the year.

### 2020 Staffing Discussion and Projections

Month	Navigators	Discussion
Jan	1	Acting PM conducting Navigator interviews.
Feb	1	PM Hired. 2 candidates identified. Background check process started.
Mar	1	Background checks and contracting in process for the two candidates, then paused in mid-March due to pandemic response.
Apr	1	Background check and contracting process paused due to pandemic response.
May	1	New Navigator onboarded and trained late May.
Jun	2	Existing Navigator gave notice to resign. New Navigator training and doing outreaches. Navigator candidate completing contracting process. Initial interviews with a new batch of candidates with multiple very promising candidates.
Jul	2	New Navigator candidate will be onboarded, trained and start doing outreaches. Second round of interviews for remaining two positions. PM will start on maternity leave.
Aug	2	Background check and contracting process for two selected candidates. PM on maternity leave.
Sep	2	Background check and contracting process for two selected candidates. PM on maternity leave.
Oct	3	New Navigator start training and orientation shifts.
Nov	4	New Navigator start training and orientation shifts.
Dec	4	Fully staffed.

## Looking to the Future: A Changing Environment

While RADAR will be significantly underspent to projections for the current biennium, **with full program staffing the total budget for the 2021-2022 biennium is \$780,760.**

In the coming years, it will be more important than ever to invest in alternative approaches to law enforcement. All five of the RADAR Chiefs have expressed a deep commitment to RADAR as a way to ensure that people in their communities with behavioral health needs are supported the most qualified professionals (MHP Navigators). In recent weeks, they have all heard and engaged with people in their communities, who are demanding that law enforcement embrace alternatives to police response. **The Chiefs are more committed than ever to meeting people where they are with preventative services and referrals to the network of care *before* their crises necessitate direct police involvement.**

Law enforcement officers are often the first called to the scene when someone is having difficulties. Especially in small communities, law enforcement officers often know when there is a slow burn that is heading toward crisis- but aren't equipped themselves to intervene or refer. In our North King County community, RADAR's relationship with law enforcement allows us to identify and intervene with individuals who likely would otherwise enter into the crisis system and the "institutions of last resort" of jail and emergency departments.

In the future, there are several ways RADAR can continue to meet this demand and, with an evolving program model built on the strong programmatic foundation and infrastructure created over the last two years with MIDD funding, continue to move the intervention earlier in the crisis to minimize criminal legal system involvement.

Some possibilities for the future include:

1. Collaborate further with our local fire departments' low acuity responses to wrap services around individuals who are chronic 911 utilizers but who have not engaged with the system of care.
2. Move further back on the SAMHSA GAINS Center Sequential Intercept Model continuum<sup>ii</sup> to deploy MHP Navigators at the time of 911 call, rather than deploying law enforcement officers in to communities for social service needs.
3. Partner with the DCRs and local Evaluation and Treatment units to address peoples' needs when the first come in contact with first responders, or upon discharge from a short involuntary hold.

<sup>i</sup> Gill, Charlotte, Jensen, Rachel, and Vovak, Heather. *RADAR: Response Awareness De-Escalation, and Referral, Final Evaluation Report*. George Mason University Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy. 2019.

<sup>ii</sup> The SAMHSA GAINS Center Sequential Intercept Model is "a conceptual model to inform community-based responses to the involvement of people with mental and substance use disorders in the criminal justice system."

