



Annual Strategic Research Plan 2025

County of San Diego
Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics

2025 ASRP Executive Summary

The 2025 Annual Strategic Research Plan (ASRP) serves as a guide to ongoing efforts to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of important County of San Diego programs and services.

Developed by the Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics (OEPA) in partnership with representatives from County departments, this strategic document identifies the highest-priority research questions for the County. The plan does not report on all County research but focuses on the most critical areas aligned with public input and the County's [Strategic Plan](#).

The core of the ASRP is the “Learning Agenda”, which outlines 18 questions to guide the County’s evaluation efforts over the next two to five years. These questions are designed to address long-term, high-priority issues. Each question is aligned with one or more of the County’s five Strategic Initiatives: Community, Empower, Equity, Justice, and Sustainability. The Learning Agenda includes questions related to the following policy areas: homelessness; physical and mental health; children and families; government operations and efficiency; economic development; climate and environment; community engagement and trust; and justice system and public safety.

The ASRP was developed with input from a majority of County departments, the cross-departmental Strategic Advisory, Guidance and Evaluation (SAGE) team, and the public.

Department subject matter experts provided context for upcoming decisions that could be informed by evidence and identified key programs well suited for evaluation. SAGE identified enterprise-wide criteria for selecting which questions to include in the Learning Agenda. Through a survey, 232 members of the public identified what they thought should be priorities including homelessness, infrastructure, and public health.

“Learning activities” are research and evaluation efforts designed to answer the Learning Agenda questions. Since the last Annual Strategic Research Plan published in 2023, OEPA has led or co-lead efforts to answer nine current Learning Agenda questions. The Learning Agenda is designed to address broad, complex questions, that often require multiple evaluation efforts across several years to answer.

The ASRP will be updated annually to ensure they align with evolving priorities and emerging needs. While many questions may remain consistent to address long-term issues, updates will reflect new pressing issues and shifts in the County’s strategic goals.

2025 Learning Agenda

Question number indicates primary Strategic Initiative: C – Community, EM – Empower, EQ – Equity, J – Justice, S – Sustainability

Question		Ongoing Learning Activity
C-1	To what extent is increased investment in prevention services impacting the rate of child abuse and neglect?	Guaranteed Income as a Prevention Strategy in Child Welfare
C-2	How does the County foster trust between residents and County government?	Collaborative Governance Models to Build Trust and Advance Climate Efforts
C-3	To what extent do graduates of the Library High School Program experience changes in their future formal education, career advancement, or earnings?	
C-4	How has the two-year Childcare Blueprint changed the County childcare system?	
EM-1	What County data is most relevant to the community, and to what extent is it available, accessible, and usable?	
EM-2	How can the County make it easier and less time-consuming for residents to learn about and access services?	
EM-3	How can internally facing County departments make processes more efficient so other departments can better utilize their services?	
EQ-1	How can the County most effectively prevent and reduce homelessness?	Rental Subsidies as a Homeless Prevention Tool for Older Adults
EQ-2	What strategies are most effective in reducing social isolation and promoting mental well-being for subgroups experiencing the highest levels of social isolation?	Unconditional Cash Payments on Housing Stability and Well-Being
EQ-3	To what extent do existing equity planning documents and tools enable departments to use an equity lens and utilize the lived experience of the community to design, implement, and improve programs and services?	Shared Housing as a Strategy to Reduce Isolation Among Older Adults
EQ-4	How can the County's procurement process foster equitable economic development?	Equity-Centered Evaluation Framework in County Practice
EQ-5	What outreach methods are most effective for increasing awareness of and participation in Medi-Cal by older adults age 60+?	Equity in County Contracting
J-1	How can the County use alternatives to incarceration approaches to reduce the number of people involved in the justice system?	
J-2	How do the collaborative efforts of law enforcement, social services, public health, and community organizations reduce gun violence in San Diego County?	Systemwide Alternatives to Jail for Low-Level and Behavioral Health Cases
J-3	What effect do behavioral health crisis interventions have on law enforcement resources and client outcomes?	Countywide Strategy to Evaluate Gun Violence Reduction Efforts
S-1	What climate action measures will produce the most return on investment for greenhouse gas reductions, improved air quality, green jobs, and increased equity?	
S-2	To what extent do alternative strategies for green infrastructure project procurement and implementation impact the speed, quality, and co-benefits delivered (e.g., social, economic, and environmental) in comparison to traditional methods?	Impact of Climate Action Plan Strategies
S-3	How can the County most effectively meet regional, state, and federal goals in the Regional Decarbonization Framework?	

I am pleased to introduce the County of San Diego's (County) 2025 Annual Strategic Research Plan, a key tool in our ongoing commitment to building evidence that informs critical decisions that impact the programs and services we provide to our residents. This plan supports the County's mission to "Strengthen our communities with innovative, inclusive, and data-driven services through a skilled and supported workforce."

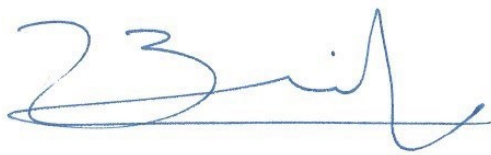
Evaluation and accountability have long been central to how we operate. As outlined in the County's General Management System (GMS), the Evaluation and Accountability component ensures that we track, report, analyze, and adjust our operations to meet our goals effectively. These mechanisms work together to ensure that our programs are not only aligned with our strategic priorities but are also continuously improving.

In 2021, the County deepened its capacity to generate and use evidence by establishing the Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics (OEPA). This office was created to lead countywide efforts in evidence-based policymaking, program evaluation, and metrics. Through OEPA, we are better equipped to support the Board of Supervisors and County leadership with timely, relevant, and rigorous data to guide decision-making.

The Annual Strategic Research Plan identifies high-priority learning questions that, when answered, have the potential to directly inform how we design and deliver services, allocate resources, and invest in our workforce. These questions reflect the needs of our communities, the goals of our departments and business groups, and the vision set forth by our Board of Supervisors.

Thank you for your continued partnership in this important work. By aligning research with our strategic initiatives, we are reinforcing a culture of continuous learning and improvement that will help us better serve every resident of San Diego County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ricardo", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ricardo Basurto Dávila
Chief Evaluation Officer
County of San Diego

Introduction

Is a \$500 monthly rent subsidy effective in preventing homelessness among low-income older adults? What actions, programs and services will most effectively help keep people from going to jail or returning to jail? How can the County streamline operations and make programs and services more efficient?

These are some of the questions that the County of San Diego will address through evaluations guided by the Annual Strategic Research Plan (ASRP).

The ASRP identifies the County's most important research and policy questions to determine which key service areas and program models need evaluation. It is a strategic document that helps organize and guide research and evaluation efforts across departments, though it does not encompass all ongoing research. The ASRP defines the County's highest priority questions that will inform decisions related to policy, services, operations, and allocating resources. The County's Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics (OEPA) will collaborate with departments to develop high-quality, rigorous evaluations that help ensure that key decisions are supported by evidence and are aligned with the public's needs.

Community engagement is at the center of the County's [General Management System](#). We believe that residents should be informed and consulted on research that impacts them. OEPA will provide ongoing opportunities for the public to learn about the County's evaluations through our website, [Government Delivery email listserv](#), and other County channels. Public survey feedback during ASRP development highlighted interest in broader communication. So, we will explore additional opportunities to share findings via social media, local media, interactive meetings, and County department partner networks

A Learning Agenda for the County

The core of the ASRP is the Learning Agenda, which identifies the questions that will guide the County's evaluation efforts over the next two to five years. Coordinated by OEPA, the majority of County departments and the cross-departmental Strategic Advisory, Guidance, and Evaluation (SAGE) team helped create the Learning Agenda. In addition, 232 residents from 15 incorporated cities and the unincorporated area provided input through a survey on the [Engage San Diego website](#).

The Learning Agenda questions were chosen based on four main factors: alignment with public input, connection to the Board of Supervisors' priorities, how well they help the County use resources efficiently, and how useful they are for informing important decisions. Each question is aligned with one or more of the [County's Strategic Initiatives](#): Community, Empower, Equity, Justice, and Sustainability. By making sure research is aligned with the Strategic Initiatives, we provide practical, evidence-based insights that support innovation and continuous improvement. The Learning Agenda spans diverse issues—from homelessness and climate change to public safety and government efficiency.

The ASRP will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that research efforts remain aligned with evolving priorities and emerging needs. The Learning Agenda is designed to address long-term, high-priority issues. Because of that, Learning Agenda questions may not change from year to year. However, questions might be updated when new, pressing issues arise or when there are shifts in strategic goals.

Focusing on Actionable Insights through Learning Activities

To answer Learning Agenda questions, OEPA and other County departments conduct Learning Activities. These are specific evaluations, projects, or efforts designed to generate evidence and insights that can be used to strengthen programs and services. Since the launch of the first ASRP in 2023, OEPA has collaborated with County departments to conduct such evaluations. These evaluations are used to assess the impact of innovative solutions and to identify ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of

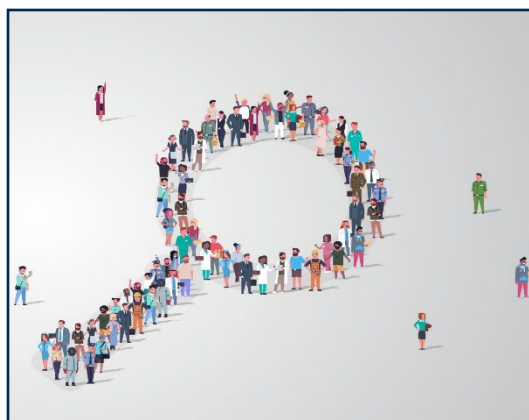
programs and services. They are also used to assess important issues. For example, they evaluate strategies to reduce homelessness. They look for ways to strengthen child welfare support. They determine how to expand alternatives to incarceration. And they study the effectiveness of environmental justice initiatives and the [County's Climate Action Plan](#).

Through rigorous but practical evaluation methods—such as randomized controlled trials, process evaluations, and the development of best practices—we aim to identify important findings. They answer questions that include: what works; who does it work for; and under what conditions? At the same time, these methods highlight opportunities for improvement. The final section of the ASRP outlines current Learning Activities and how we will develop new Learning Activities for unanswered questions.

Anchoring Our Evaluations in Core Values for Effective Decision-Making

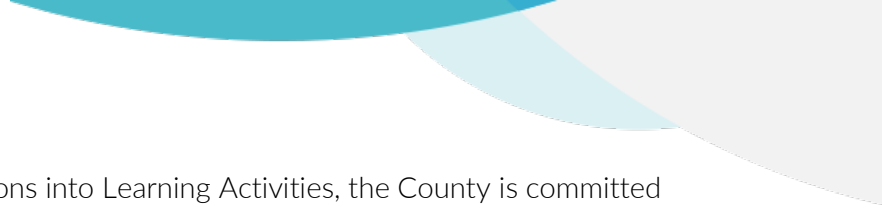
The ASRP's Learning Activities are tailored to address the specific needs and regional context of San Diego County, to ensure our research directly applies to and helps residents. They are designed to produce actions that policy and decision makers can take to improve high-priority programs, policies and operations.

Like policymaking, research and evaluation require making value judgements. What questions should be asked? What outcomes should be considered successes? What methods should be regarded as credible? These are just some examples that show that perspective and values matter throughout the evaluation cycle. Recognizing that evaluation can be approached in different, equally valid ways, The County is dedicated to anchoring our work in core values, such as respect for all people, transparency, independence, rigor, relevance and equity.



Learning Agenda Selection Criteria

- Alignment with public input
- Focus on efficient resource allocation
- Consistency with the Board of Supervisors' priorities
- Potential to inform key decisions



As we translate our Learning Agenda questions into Learning Activities, the County is committed to building robust processes and structures that hold us accountable to our core values. This commitment ensures that our evaluations are designed not only to measure progress but also to foster continuous improvement. By doing so, we aim to provide evidence to enhance programs, policies, and services, ultimately ensuring that the County is better equipped to serve its diverse population.

Learning Agenda Overview

The Learning Agenda is comprised of a wide range of questions – 18 in total- that reflect the many roles of County government. Each Learning Agenda question is aligned with one or more Strategic Initiatives and covers one or more topic areas that are of interest to the public and County government. These include homelessness, physical and mental health, children and families, government operations and efficiency, economic development, climate and environment, community engagement and trust, and justice system and public safety. A full list of questions is listed below, and a detailed description and summary table is included in Appendix A.

Nine of the 18 questions have evaluation efforts – called “Learning Activities” – already started. Learning Activities will be developed and implemented for the remaining nine questions over the next 2-5 years. The following section describes the current Learning Activities, what we expect to learn from them, and timelines for when they will be completed.

Learning Agenda Questions by Strategic Initiative and Ongoing Learning Activity

See Appendix A for an extended list that includes topic area.

Learning Agenda Questions Community (C), Empower (EM), and Equity (EQ)		Strategic Initiative					Ongoing Learning Activity
		Community	Empower	Equity	Justice	Sustainability	
C-1	To what extent is increased investment in prevention services impacting the rate of child abuse and neglect?	✓		✓		✓	✓
C-2	How does the County foster trust between residents and County government?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C-3	To what extent do graduates of the Library High School Program experience changes in their future formal education, career advancement, or earnings?	✓	✓	✓		✓	
C-4	How has the two-year Childcare Blueprint changed the County childcare system?	✓		✓		✓	
EM-1	What County data is most relevant to the community, and to what extent is it available, accessible, and usable?	✓	✓				
EM-2	How can the County make it easier and less time consuming for residents to learn about and access services?	✓	✓			✓	
EM-3	How can internally facing County departments make processes more efficient so other departments can better utilize their services?	✓	✓			✓	
EQ-1	How can the County most effectively prevent and reduce homelessness?	✓		✓		✓	✓
EQ-2	What strategies are most effective in reducing social isolation and promoting mental well-being for subgroups experiencing the highest levels of social isolation?	✓		✓			✓
EQ-3	To what extent do existing equity planning documents and tools enable departments to use an equity lens and utilize the lived experience of the community to design, implement, and improve programs and services?	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
EQ-4	How can the County's procurement process foster equitable economic development?		✓	✓		✓	✓
EQ-5	What outreach methods are most effective for increasing awareness of and participation in Medi-Cal by older adults age 60+?	✓		✓			

Learning Agenda Questions (Continued) Justice (J), Sustainability (S)		Strategic Initiative					Ongoing Learning Activity
		Community	Empower	Equity	Justice	Sustainability	
J-1	How can the County use alternatives to incarceration approaches to reduce the number of people involved in the justice system?	✓		✓	✓		✓
J-2	How do the collaborative efforts of law enforcement, social services, public health, and community organizations reduce gun violence in San Diego County?	✓			✓		✓
J-3	What effect do behavioral health crisis interventions have on law enforcement resources and client outcomes?	✓		✓	✓		
S-1	What climate action measures will produce the most return on investment for greenhouse gas reductions, improved air quality, green jobs, and increased equity?	✓		✓		✓	✓
S-2	To what extent do alternative strategies for green infrastructure project procurement and implementation impact the speed, quality, and co-benefits delivered (e.g., social, economic, and environmental) in comparison to traditional methods?	✓	✓	✓		✓	
S-3	How can the County most effectively meet regional, state, and federal goals in the Regional Decarbonization Framework?		✓			✓	

Note: Question numbers are not consistent between iterations of the ASRP. Numbers will change from year to year when the ASRP is updated as questions are added, removed, or modified.

Learning Activities

The Learning Agenda includes 18 questions. Many of these are already being addressed through various Learning Activities—evaluations, projects, and studies designed to generate evidence to inform programs, policies, and resource allocation. Future learning activities will address the remaining questions.

Learning Agenda Questions Under Active Study

Since the last Annual Strategic Research Plan was published, OEPA has led or co-led efforts to answer nine current Learning Agenda questions. Learning Agenda questions are intentionally broad so it may take multiple Learning Activities to answer them. At the same time, the results from Learning Activities might help answer multiple Learning Agenda Questions. Some questions, such as those related to homelessness, are long-term in nature and will require ongoing study over time. This section highlights only those Learning Activities that are being conducted in collaboration with OEPA and does not reflect all evaluation efforts happening across the County. Once available, OEPA will report results and recommendations for action to department and community stakeholders and the Board of Supervisors.

Learning Activities are in progress for the following questions:

C-1

To what extent is increased investment in prevention services impacting the rate of child abuse and neglect?

C-2

How does the County foster trust between residents and County government?

EQ-1

How can the County most effectively prevent and reduce homelessness?

EQ-2

What strategies are most effective in reducing social isolation and promoting mental well-being for subgroups experiencing the highest levels of social isolation?

EQ-3

To what extent do existing equity planning documents and tools enable departments to use an equity lens and utilize the lived experience of the community to design, implement, and improve programs and services?

EQ-4

How can the County's procurement process foster equitable economic development?

J-1

How can the County use alternatives to incarceration approaches to reduce the number of people involved in the justice system?

J-2

How do the collaborative efforts of law enforcement, social services, public health, and community organizations reduce gun violence in San Diego County?

S-1

What climate action measures will produce the most return on investment for greenhouse gas reductions, improved air quality, green jobs, and increased equity?

Timeline

Learning Activity	Funding Status	FY23-24	FY24-25	FY25-26	FY26-27	FY27-28
Guaranteed Income as a Prevention Strategy in Child Welfare (FIEP Evaluation)	Funded	Design	Execution		Reporting	
Collaborative Governance Models to Build Trust and Advance Climate Efforts	Funded		Design	Execution Reporting		
Rental Subsidies as a Homeless Prevention Tool for Older Adults (SRSP Evaluation)	Partial	Design	Execution		Reporting	
Impact of Unconditional Cash Payments on Housing Stability and Well-Being (RAFT Evaluation)	Funded	Design Execution		Reporting		
Shared Housing as a Strategy to Reduce Isolation Among Older Adults	Funded	Design Execution		Reporting		
Equity-Centered Evaluation Framework in County Practice	Funded		Des. Execution	Reporting		
Equity in County Contracting	Funded		Ex. Rep.			
Systemwide Alternatives to Incarceration for Low-Level and Behavioral Health Cases	Partial	Design	Execution	Reporting		
Countywide Strategy to Evaluate Gun Violence Reduction Efforts	TBD		Design		Execution*	Reporting*
Impact of Climate Action Plan Strategies	Seeking Funding		Design		Execution*	Reporting*

Design	Scoping completed, funding secured, analysis plan under development
Execution	Analysis plan complete, data collection and/or analyses underway
Reporting	Analysis completed; reporting and dissemination of results
*	Denotes tentative timelines

Learning Agenda Question C-1:

To what extent is increased investment in prevention services impacting the rate of child abuse and neglect?

Evaluating Guaranteed Income as a Prevention Strategy in Child Welfare

The Family Income for Empowerment Program is a lottery-based, guaranteed income pilot led by the Health and Human Services Agency's (HHSA) Child and Family Well-Being department and implemented with Jewish Family Service of San Diego. The program provides direct cash payments to 452 low-income families who have had prior involvement with the County's child welfare system. The evaluation includes a causal impact study on future child welfare involvement and well-being outcomes, a process evaluation to inform improvements, and a cost analysis to assess fiscal implications for the County.

What we will learn: This study will assess whether guaranteed income reduces recurrence of child abuse or neglect, improves quality of life for participating families, and offers a cost-effective model for prevention.

Deliverables and timeline: A report evaluating program implementation will be available in September 2025. A final impact report will be available in July 2027, with preliminary results in December 2026. We are currently developing a cost-benefit analysis and will follow the other deliverables.



Resident perspective:

The County should research...

"cash aid [provided] to low-income families during COVID. The cash assistance programs seemed to have great results... Giving low-income families cash could help youth and even decrease domestic violence which is wild and yet so helpful."

Resident, Public Engagement Survey

Learning Agenda Question C-2:

How does the County foster trust between residents and County government?

Evaluating Collaborative Governance Models to Build Trust and Advance Climate Efforts

The Environmental Justice Workgroup was launched in 2025 by the Land Use and Environmental Group's (LUEG) Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice. The group was created to build trust between community members and local government by fostering authentic relationships and shared leadership in addressing climate injustices. The group includes 21 members representing Tribal communities, youth, academics, residents, and community-based organizations from across the region. Through ongoing collaboration, shared learning, and co-developed strategies, the Workgroup aims to create a foundation for more inclusive and equitable environmental decision-making.

What we will learn: This evaluation will explore how well the Environmental Justice Workgroup model fosters trust, supports sustained and meaningful collaboration, and contributes to more equitable outcomes in environmental governance throughout San Diego County. The evidence generated from this Learning Activity will also inform Learning Agenda Question EQ-3 (*To what extent do existing equity planning documents and tools enable departments to use an equity lens and utilize the lived experience of the community to design, implement, and improve programs and services?*).

Deliverables and timeline: The logic model for this program was completed in April 2025. An evaluation framework will be finalized by June 2025, with initial results available in April 2026.

Learning Agenda Question EQ-1:

How can the County most effectively prevent and reduce homelessness?

Evaluating Rental Subsidies as a Homeless Prevention Tool for Older Adults

This study evaluates the causal impact of the Shallow Rental Subsidy Program, a pilot offering \$500 per month rent subsidies and light-touch case management to low-income older adults who struggle to pay rent. Among 1,133 eligible households, 382 were selected through a random lottery to receive the subsidy



Resident perspective:

The County should research...

"potential/creative solutions to homelessness. Most people experiencing homelessness are desperate for temporary or permanent housing options that aren't lifestyle restrictive, and (they are) often are limited in choice to options that are degrading, judgmental, or impractical to their circumstances."

Resident, Public Engagement Survey

for 18 to 30 months. This pilot is being implemented in collaboration with HHSA's Office of Homeless Solutions.

What we will learn: Through this study, we will learn whether this type of intervention reduces homelessness risk and improves housing stability, especially for low-income older adults. Subsidies are set to conclude by June 2026.

Deliverables and Timeline: The reporting will be conducted in two phases. Phase one will analyze the program outcomes after the subsidies end, with results available by December 2026. Phase two will assess the outcomes 12 months after subsidies end, with the final report scheduled for December 2027.

Assessing the Impact of Unconditional Cash Payments on Housing Stability and Well-Being

This evaluation of the Recovery Action Fund for Tomorrow program explores the effects of a one-time \$4,000 cash transfer provided to 2,250 low-income families and seniors in areas hit hardest by COVID-19. In collaboration with HHSA's Self Sufficiency Services, Jewish Family Service of San Diego, and academic researchers, the evaluation focuses on changes in economic security, well-being, and—among high-risk participants—homelessness prevention outcomes.

What we will learn: This study will provide insights into the effectiveness of cash assistance as a tool for homelessness prevention and economic resilience, helping inform future County investments in economic support programs.

Deliverables and timeline: Preliminary results will be available in December 2025, with final results shared with the Board in early 2026.

Learning Agenda Question EQ-2:

What strategies are most effective in reducing social isolation and promoting mental well-being for subgroups experiencing the highest levels of social isolation?

Exploring Shared Housing as a Strategy to Reduce Isolation Among Older Adults

The Shared Housing for Older Adults Program is a pilot program designed to match low-income older adults looking for housing with other residents who have available rooms in their homes. Operated by HHSA's Housing and Community Development Services and ElderHelp of San Diego, the program includes assessments, matchmaking, and ongoing support for up to 25 shared housing arrangements. This study will evaluate the program's effectiveness in preventing homelessness, reducing housing costs, and enhancing social connection and a sense of belonging.

What we will learn: The evaluation will help us understand strengths and weaknesses of program design and implementation, and whether, how, and for whom shared housing improves housing stability, supports aging in place, and helps reduce loneliness and social isolation among older adults in the region. If the pilot shows promising results, it could provide evidence to recommend expanding it. If it does not, the evaluation will provide insights for future program development. The evidence generated from this Learning Activity will also inform Learning Agenda Question EQ-1 (*How can the County most effectively prevent and reduce homelessness?*).

Deliverables and timeline: A report will be delivered by December 2025. The final report date may change if the pilot's term is extended.

Learning Agenda Question EQ-3:

To what extent do existing equity planning documents and tools enable departments to use an equity lens and utilize the lived experience of the community to design, implement, and improve programs and services?

Testing an Equity-Centered Evaluation Framework in County Practice

The County is piloting a new evaluation framework to better understand how equity is incorporated into programs and services. This effort is led by the Office of Equity and Racial Justice. The framework will assess how well programs adapt to meet the needs of different groups. It will recommend ways to apply an equity lens to evaluation, such as centering the stories of people impacted by a program or providing opportunities for community members and the County to partner on evaluations. This effort is part of a larger collaborative with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity and is being co-created with 23 other local jurisdictions.

What we will learn: This project will assess whether the County's new approach helps departments apply an "equity lens" to more meaningfully plan and evaluate their work. If successful, the framework will enable stronger integration of community knowledge and power-sharing to make programs effective for the communities they serve.

Deliverables and timeline: The framework will be finalized in October 2025 and implemented thereafter.

Learning Agenda Question EQ-4:

How can the County's procurement process foster equitable economic development?

Tracking Progress Toward Equity in County Contracting

The Equity in Procurement initiative is led by the County's Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs. The initiative aims to give local small businesses greater access to County contracts. OEPA completed a baseline analysis in the fall of 2024 that will be used to measure progress over time. The evaluation supports a broader effort to remove barriers in the competitive bid process and diversify the County's vendor base.

What we will learn: This work will assess whether current efforts are increasing small business participation in County contracting and advancing equitable economic opportunity throughout the region.

Deliverables and timeline: A baseline analysis was completed in fall of 2024 that will be replicated annually.

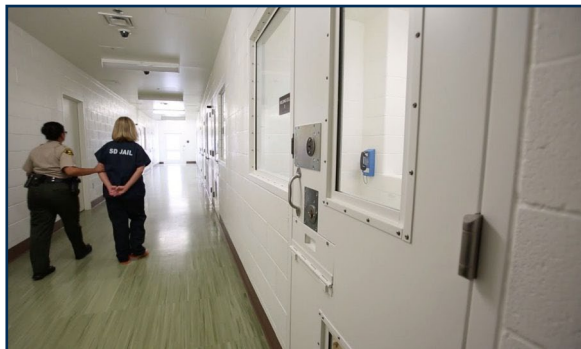
Learning Agenda Question J-1:

How can the County use alternatives to incarceration approaches to reduce the number of people involved in the justice system?

Assessing Systemwide Alternatives to Incarceration for Low-Level Offenders and Behavioral Health Cases

The Alternatives to Incarceration initiative is led by the Public Safety Group (PSG). It seeks to keep people who do not pose a public safety threat from going to or returning to jail. The initiative does this by expanding the use of community-based services and transitional supports for people reentering communities after being in jail. The evaluation focuses on how the collaborative initiative is designed and implemented. It assesses utilization and effectiveness of services across different groups of people, with special attention equity in service delivery.

What we will learn: This Learning Activity will help determine whether Alternatives to Incarceration efforts are appropriately designed, equitably implemented, and if they are effective in addressing the needs of the focus population and reducing recidivism rates. The study will also lay the groundwork for future impact studies.



Resident perspective:

The County should research...

“how to reduce the negative impacts of imprisonment on individuals by providing opportunities for rehabilitation, addressing underlying issues like addiction or mental health, and keeping people connected to their support systems while still holding them accountable for their actions”

Resident, Public Engagement Survey

Deliverables and timeline: A Measurement and Evaluation Framework was presented to the Board of Supervisors on March 12, 2024. Additional key deliverables include: a Program Theory and Design Report in August 2025; Performance Metrics with initiative-wide indicators and an interactive storytelling dashboard by December 2025; and two final reports in FY 2026–2027. Those reports will be a Process Evaluation Report and an Equity Evaluation Report. A future impact evaluation phase would examine how well the initiative’s programs meet their goals, with a focus on client outcomes and overall effectiveness. Planning for this is ongoing.

Learning Agenda Question J-2:

How do the collaborative efforts of law enforcement, social services, public health, and community organizations reduce gun violence in San Diego County?

Building a Countywide Strategy to Evaluate Gun Violence Reduction Efforts

Following a comprehensive 2024 needs assessment led by Health Assessment and Research for Communities, the County is launching a 17-item, “Gun Violence Reduction implementation plan,”

coordinated by PSG. OEPA and PSG will work together to conduct performance measurement and evaluation to track and assess the performance and impact of the implementation plan to support continuous learning.

What we will learn: This effort will clarify two important items. First, which strategies are most effective in reducing gun violence. And second, how a collaborative infrastructure can support successful, sustained, data-informed action.

Deliverables and timeline: OEPA completed a literature review of hospital-based interventions—such as case-management, mental health, educational support and job training—in May 2025. Program theory workshops were conducted in summer of 2025. The measurement and evaluation framework will be completed June 2026. That framework will include a dashboard for annual reporting efforts.

Learning Agenda Question S-1:

What climate action measures will produce the most return on investment for greenhouse gas reductions, improved air quality, green jobs, and increased equity?

Testing the Impact of Climate Action Plan Strategies through a Randomized Evaluation

OEPA is partnering with the County of San Diego's Planning and Development Services, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, and the University of California San Diego to design and implement randomized experiments to evaluate one or more strategies in the County's Climate Action Plan.

What we will learn: Using a rigorous randomized evaluation design, we will be able to better understand the causal relationship between certain Climate Action Plan efforts, such as installation of electric vehicle charging stations, on greenhouse gas reduction, air quality improvement, green job creation, and equity advancement.

Deliverables and timeline: An evaluation plan will be developed before the start of the program in 2026. The final report timeline will be developed in collaboration with program and research partners.



Resident perspective:

The County should research...
“how to implement sustainability and actions that address the climate crisis throughout County initiatives and processes. The impacts of climate change effect the ability for every County department to meet their mission and goals.”

Resident, Public Engagement Survey

Future Learning Priorities

The County's work is ever-changing. Programs evolve, community needs shift, and new opportunities for learning emerge. To keep pace with this change, we have identified a set of nine additional high-priority Learning Agenda questions that have not yet been answered that will guide future research and evaluation efforts. These questions emerged through extensive input from County departments, the public and other stakeholders.

Each question was selected because it:

- Aligns with public input (See Appendix C).
- Supports efficient resource allocation.
- Reflects Board of Supervisors' priorities.
- Has strong potential to give decision-makers the data, information, and analysis they need to improve County services and programs.

These questions reflect the County's commitment to building an evidence-based decision-making culture and answering important questions that will enable us to provide more effective and efficient programs and services to residents.

Learning Activities will be developed for the following questions:

C-3	To what extent do graduates of the Library High School Program experience positive changes in their future formal education, career advancement, or earnings?
C-4	How has the two-year Childcare Blueprint changed the County childcare system?
EM-1	What County data is most relevant to the community, and to what extent is it available, accessible, and usable?
EM-2	How can the County make it easier and faster for residents to learn about and access services?
EM-3	How can internally facing County departments make processes more efficient so other departments can better use their services?
EQ-5	What outreach methods are most effective for increasing awareness of and participation in Medi-Cal by older adults age 60+?
J-3	What effect do behavioral health crisis interventions have on law enforcement resources and client outcomes?
S-2	To what extent do alternative strategies for green infrastructure project procurement and implementation impact the speed, quality, and co-benefits delivered (e.g., social, economic, and environmental) in comparison to traditional methods?
S-3	How can the County most effectively meet regional, state, and federal goals in the Regional Decarbonization Framework?

How Future Learning Activities Will Be Developed

OEPA, in collaboration with County departments, will take an iterative and responsive approach to developing new Learning Activities. Questions will be prioritized and scoped based on several factors. Those include: department readiness and capacity; policy and operational priorities; program maturity; direction from the Board of Supervisors or County Chief Administrative Officer; resource availability; and public demand.

To make it easier for the County to answer these important questions and to build our organizations' capacity for evaluation, OEPA will:

- Co-design projects with departments, which will encourage them to lead or support the implementation of Learning Activities.
- Distribute projects based on complexity, timing, and resource availability.
- Build evaluation models that departments can easily duplicate, adapt and use on their own.
- Establish opportunities for collaboration with external researchers and universities that want to do work that has direct impacts on local government.

In line with its mandate from the County Board of Supervisors, OEPA is working towards embedding evaluation into the very core of County operations, transforming it from a periodic activity into a core practice. This shift will support a culture of learning, accountability, and data-informed decision-making into everyday work.

Appendix A: 2025 Learning Agenda

Strategic Initiatives: Community – C Empower – EM Equity – EQ		Topic*								Strategic Initiative*					Ongoing Learning Activity
		Homelessness	Physical and Mental Health	Children and Families	Government Operations and Efficiency	Economic Development	Climate and Environment	Community Engagement & Trust	Justice System & Public Safety	Community	Empower	Equity	Justice	Sustainability	
C-1	To what extent is increased investment in prevention services impacting the rate of child abuse and neglect?	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
C-2	How does the County foster trust between residents and County government?				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C-3	To what extent do graduates of the Library High School Program experience changes in their future formal education, career advancement, or earnings?					✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
C-4	How has the two-year Childcare Blueprint changed the County childcare system?			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
EM-1	What County data is most relevant to the community, and to what extent is it available, accessible, and usable?				✓			✓		✓	✓				
EM-2	How can the County make it easier and less time consuming for residents to learn about and access services?	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
EM-3	How can internally-facing County departments make processes more efficient so other departments can better utilize their services?				✓					✓	✓			✓	
EQ-1	How can the County most effectively prevent and reduce homelessness?	✓	✓			✓				✓		✓		✓	✓
EQ-2	What strategies are most effective in reducing social isolation and promoting mental well-being for subgroups experiencing the highest levels of social isolation?	✓	✓					✓		✓		✓			✓
EQ-3	To what extent do existing equity planning documents and tools enable departments to use an equity lens and utilize the lived experience of the community to design, implement, and improve programs and services?				✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
EQ-4	How can the County's procurement process foster equitable economic development?				✓	✓					✓	✓		✓	✓
EQ-5	What outreach methods are most effective for increasing awareness of and participation in Medi-Cal by older adults age 60+?		✓					✓		✓		✓			

*Primary Topic and Strategic Initiative highlighted

Strategic Initiatives:

J – Justice
S – Sustainability

Strategic Initiatives: J – Justice S – Sustainability		Topic*								Strategic Initiative*					Ongoing Learning Activity
		Homelessness	Physical and Mental Health	Children and Families	Government Operations and Efficiency	Economic Development	Climate and Environment	Community Engagement & Trust	Justice System & Public Safety	Community	Empower	Equity	Justice	Sustainability	
J-1	How can the County use alternatives to incarceration approaches to reduce the number of people involved in the justice system?	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
J-2	How do the collaborative efforts of law enforcement, social services, public health, and community organizations reduce gun violence in San Diego County?		✓					✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
J-3	What effect do behavioral health crisis interventions have on law enforcement resources and client outcomes?	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓			
S-1	What climate action measures will produce the most return on investment for greenhouse gas reductions, improved air quality, green jobs, and increased equity?		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓
S-2	To what extent do alternative strategies for green infrastructure project procurement and implementation impact the speed, quality, and co-benefits delivered (e.g., social, economic, and environmental) in comparison to traditional methods?		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	
S-3	How can the County most effectively meet regional, state, and federal goals in the Regional Decarbonization Framework?				✓		✓			✓				✓	

*Primary Topic and Strategic Initiative highlighted

Appendix B: ASRP Development Process

On May 18, 2021, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted to launch a comprehensive approach to evidence-based policy making and to establish an Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics (OEPA). This action instructed OEPA to develop an Annual Strategic Research Plan (ASRP) designed to: identify the most important research and policy questions, key service areas, and program models on which to focus evaluation efforts; and be incorporated into the County's annual strategic planning process. The ASRP was first developed in 2023, and this document represents the first update. The ASRP will continue to be updated regularly to identify how the past year's research and evaluation efforts have forwarded the plan—and to ensure the plan and its goals continue to be aligned with key administrative priorities. The 2025 update process had, and accomplished the following goals:

1. Assess how well the current ASRP is meeting County **leadership priorities**.
2. Identify **progress made** on Learning Agenda questions.
3. Update the ASRP to **strengthen alignment** with the [County Strategic Plan](#).
4. Build **shared understanding** of and **buy in** for learning priorities across County groups and other relevant parties.
5. **Prioritize learning agenda questions** that will guide the upcoming years' activities.
6. **Focus the Learning Agenda**, narrowing from 33 questions in 2023 to less than 20 in 2025.

Process

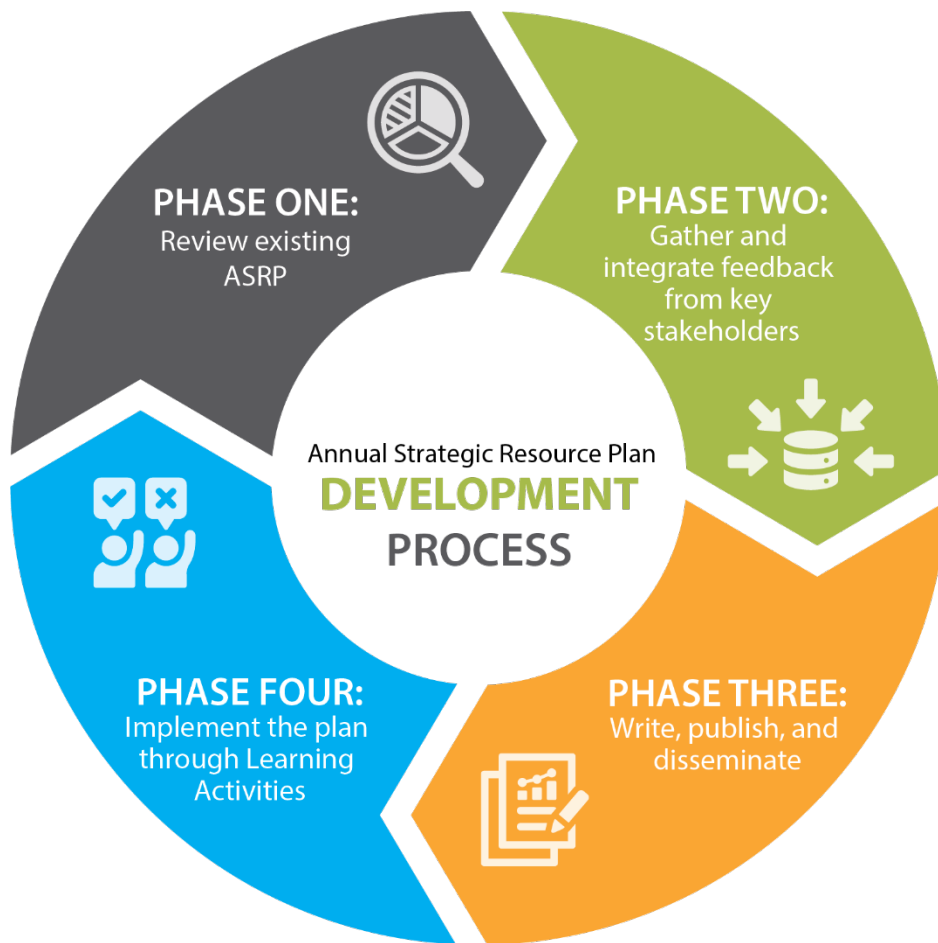
OEPA designed a process to achieve the goals outlined above and to develop and revise the ASRP between July 2024 and May 2025. This cycle will be repeated annually to ensure the ASRP remains timely, collaborative and useful for helping guide County decisions. The process follows a recurring cycle designed to keep the plan relevant and ensure it produces data and evidence that decision-makers can use to take actions to improve services and programs.

Phase One: OEPA reviews the existing Learning Agenda to assess if it continues to be relevant and aligned with the County's Strategic Plan, and that it identifies key stakeholders to involve in the update process.

Phase Two: OEPA engages both County departments and public stakeholders to refine existing learning agenda questions, propose new ones, and prioritize a focused set for the updated ASRP.

Phase Three: Using this input and additional feedback from County leadership, OEPA drafts and publishes the ASRP.

Phase Four: OEPA and other County departments design and carry out Learning Activities—evaluations, projects and studies—designed to answer the prioritized learning Agenda questions.



The remainder of this section describes in more detail how this process was rolled out for this year's update of the ASRP.

County Stakeholder Engagement

The ASRP was developed through an iterative process, led by OEPA and with input from key stakeholders. County leadership; the Strategic Advisory, Guidance and Evaluation (SAGE) team; departments; and the public were engaged. They provided input and feedback on the questions, criteria for inclusion, and overall priorities for evaluation at the County.

Departments

Departments reviewed existing learning agenda questions that aligned with their work. For each question, departments answered the following questions:

1. How would the information from answering this question be used by your department?
2. For this information to be useful, when would you need the answer to the question?
3. Is there a specific program or effort that this information would inform or advance?

4. Who is invested in this question being answered (Board of Supervisors, Chief Administrative Office, Department Leaders, Program Managers, the Public, etc.)
5. Is there any additional information needed for leadership to accurately consider this learning agenda question?

Departments also had the opportunity to propose new learning agenda questions.

Strategic Advisory, Guidance, and Evaluation (SAGE)

SAGE is an advisory team comprised of senior staff from across the County government. Members provided guidance on what criteria should determine which questions to include in the ASRP. OEPA facilitated a virtual workshop with SAGE, which led to four main criteria that were used to select questions for the 2025 ASRP:

1. Alignment with public input.
2. Focus on resource efficiency.
3. Consistency with the Board of Supervisors' priorities.
4. Potential to inform key decisions.

SAGE could also propose new questions on high priority topics not already included in the Learning Agenda and provide feedback on the ASRP.

Business Group Managers and Chief Administrative Office

County leadership, including SAGE, Business Group Managers, and the Chief Administrative Office, provided feedback on and final approval of the ASRP.

Office of Evaluation, Performance and Analytics (OEPA)

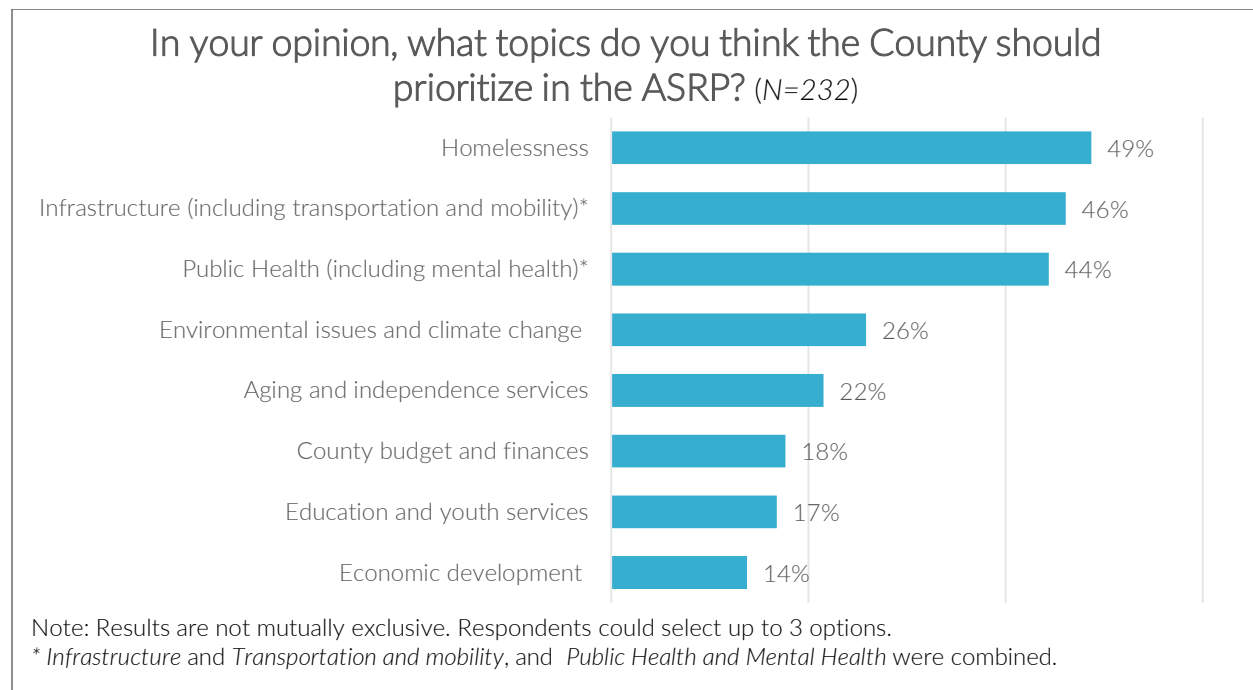
In addition to facilitating the development process, OEPA assessed the technical feasibility of answering the Learning Agenda questions and led the writing of the ASRP.

Appendix C: Public Engagement

Between Jan. 9, 2025 and March 10, 2025, 232 people from 15 of 18 incorporated cities and the unincorporated area responded to the ASRP survey through the [Engage San Diego website](#). The results of this survey informed the update of the ASRP to ensure that the public's highest priorities are represented in the questions that will guide research and evaluation in upcoming years.

The survey was publicized through County social media accounts, the County Library website, listservs, and in person at meetings. Most respondents were residents of the City of San Diego (42%) and the unincorporated area (21%).

People surveyed reported their highest priority policy areas as: **Homelessness** (49%), **Infrastructure** (46%), and **Public Health, including Mental Health** (44%).



In open-ended comments, respondents provided additional research suggestions, such as the following ideas:

- How to improve mental health services, reduce substance abuse, and understand environmental factors that impact health.
- How to ensure that County resources are used efficiently and effectively to reduce unnecessary spending.

When asked how the County should decide what to research, the top reasons people surveyed gave were: **to better understand the community's needs** (65%), **to improve programs and services** (57%), **to support data-driven decision making** (46%), and **to create accountability** (42%).

OEPA will provide opportunities for the public to learn about research being done at the County through our website, [GovDelivery email listserv](#), and other County channels.

