



## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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The Department of Self-Sufficiency Services (SSS) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the evaluation of the Recovery Action Fund for Tomorrow (RAFT) program conducted by the Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics and the Better Government Lab. SSS implemented, in coordination with Jewish Family Services (JFS) RAFT as designed and approved by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (BOS) in 2022. The evaluation provides insights into the impacts and limitations of one-time cash assistance within the broader context of San Diego County's high cost of living and ongoing economic challenges.

The evaluation found that:

- The one-time \$4,000 payment did not produce measurable long-term changes in participant well-being, including flourishing, family function, social support, or food security over six to twelve months post-payment;
- There was no reduction in the use of homeless services or County-administered benefits (CalFresh, CalWORKs) in the six months following payment distribution, with recipients using services at rates similar to non-recipients;
- Participants commonly used the payment for immediate needs—groceries, utilities, housing costs, and debt—which provided meaningful short-term financial relief but did not translate into sustained improvements;
- Findings align with national research indicating that one-time cash transfers typically offer short-term stability but are unlikely to drive long-term economic outcomes without sustained or complementary supports.

The evaluation underscores both the importance and the limitations of one-time cash assistance as a strategy for promoting economic stability. RAFT successfully reached more than 2,200 households with significant financial need, providing immediate, flexible support during a period of high costs and economic uncertainty. Participant feedback demonstrates that these funds alleviated acute stressors and supported urgent household needs—consistent with SSS's mission to help residents stabilize during times of crisis.

At the same time, the findings support a position that sustained economic mobility often requires sustained support. In a region where housing, food, utilities, and transportation costs are among the highest in the country, a one-time payment—while impactful in the moment—is generally insufficient to shift long-term outcomes. The evaluation also highlights an opportunity to ensure future cash assistance efforts are tightly aligned with realistic, evidence-informed program goals

and supported by complementary services such as case management, financial coaching, or resource navigation.

SSS remains committed to working collaboratively to strengthen future program design so that resources are deployed in ways that maximize both resident impact and Countywide value.

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