

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: March 31, 2016

To: The Mayor
The Council

From: Miguel A. Santana, City Administrative Officer

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Subject: **INNOVATION FUND RECOMMENDATION – LAFD SOBER UNIT**

The City Administrative Officer herewith transmits the recommendation of the Innovation and Performance Commission (IPC) to approve funding in the amount of \$255,498 from the Innovation Fund (IF) for the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) SOBER: “the SOBERing center Emergency Resource” Unit. Please note, as with all IPC recommendations, this report presents the idea as submitted by the Department and approved by the IPC along with the necessary recommendations to implement the idea as presented.

LAFD SOBER Unit - \$255,498

LAFD has proposed a 12-month pilot program to staff a new SOBER Unit. LAFD has partnered with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS) on this pilot program that would pair a social worker and a Firefighter/Paramedic (FF/PM) to provide assistance to serial inebriates (patients who are transported multiple times to emergency rooms (ERs) for intoxication) who, according to LAFD, tie up scarce emergency resources due to acute alcohol intoxication or medical or traumatic complications. LAFD indicates that serial inebriates comprise a significant percentage of its Emergency Medical Services (EMS) paramedic transports, which sometimes occur more than once per shift, to local emergency rooms where they receive episodic care, potentially unnecessary testing, and are released back onto the streets. The SOBER Unit would work closely with a new, free standing Sobering Center, owned and operated by DHS, opening on Skid Row in July 2016 to provide assistance to serial inebriates by helping the individual detox and find housing.

According to the Department, the SOBER Unit will identify public and serial inebriates in the Skid Row area. The FF/PM will perform a rapid medical evaluation, including vital signs and neurologic exam, checking for any evidence of acute head injury along with a blood glucose reading. If the patient does not meet any of the medical exclusion criteria, some of which are listed below, then the patient will be transported to the Sobering Center. The social worker will work to identify the serial inebriates and transport these patients to the Sobering Center. If the patient refuses service and is able to care for him or herself, he or she will either be left on scene or transported to an ER for medical care as necessary. The Medical Exclusion Criteria for transport to the Sobering Center include, but are not limited to:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

- Abdominal pain
- Gastrointestinal bleeding
- Suicidal ideation or behavior
- Recent head trauma
- Inability to ambulate
- Inability to give name
- Suturable laceration
- Acute fracture

The success of the SOBER project will be measured by the number of patients that the SOBER Unit transports to the free-standing sobering center, which will equate to one less ambulance transport for each of these patients. It will also be measured by the decreased rate of 911 utilization for those individuals who are transported by the SOBER Unit in the ensuing months after their initial transport. Finally, fewer ambulance transports will also result in a decrease in ambulance "wall time" at the already overcrowded hospital emergency departments.

The Commission recommends funding of \$255,498 to implement this pilot. Funding of \$160,620 would be used to cover the overtime cost of a Firefighter/Paramedic who is "hired behind," or who covers the field assignment of, the FF/PM assigned to the SOBER Unit. Funding of \$94,878 would be used to cover the cost of one Social Worker III. Contingent upon the availability of funds, the Department would implement this pilot on July 1, 2016 effective with the opening date of the County Sobering Center. Thus, it is recommended that this funding be transferred to the Fire Department effective July 1, 2016 for pilot implementation at that time.

LAFD does not currently have position authority for a Social Worker III to staff the SOBER Unit. Consequently, resolution authority is needed now to allow sufficient time for the Personnel Department to allocate the position, the CAO to make the paygrade determination, and for LAFD to recruit and hire so that the pilot can be implemented July 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor:

1. Authorize by resolution one position of Social Worker III, Code 2385-3, within the Fire Department, for the period through June 30, 2016 to staff the SOBER Unit, subject to position allocation by the Civil Service Commission and paygrade determination by the Office of the City Administrative Officer.
2. Create a new account to be titled LAFD – SOBER Unit in the amount of \$255,498 within the Innovation Fund No. 105/10.
3. Instruct the City Clerk to place on the agenda for the first regular meeting on or after July 1, 2016, the following item:

- a. Transfer \$255,498 from the Innovation Fund 105/10, Account to be Established, LAFD - SOBER Unit to Fund 100/38 Fire Department accounts as follows:

<u>Account No.</u>	<u>Account Name</u>	<u>Amount</u>
001010	Salaries General	\$ 94,978
001093	Salaries, OT Constant Staffing FF	\$160,620

4. Instruct the Fire Department to:
 - a. Separately track all encumbrances and expenditures of Innovation Fund monies so that unspent funds can be returned to the Innovation Fund at the end of the fiscal year; and,
 - b. Report to the Innovation and Performance Commission with an accounting of the funds, the lessons learned, and any obstacles faced.
5. Authorize the CAO to make technical corrections as necessary to those transactions included in this report to implement Mayor and Council intentions.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Approval of these recommendations will allocate \$255,498 of the remaining \$758,416 Innovation Fund 2015-16 budget balance. This \$255,498 will be transferred to the Fire Department to begin implementation of the SOBER Unit, consistent with the idea that was submitted to the Innovation and Performance Commission. If this idea is deemed successful, the department will incur ongoing costs.