2026 Dignity Fund Community Needs Assessment Project Plan

July 2025
Prepared by DAS and Clarity Social Research Group

Project Context

With the November 2016 passage of Proposition I, San Francisco voters established the **Dignity Fund,** creating protected funding for social services that support older people, adults with disabilities, veterans, and caregivers to safely live and engage in the community. The Dignity Fund is administered by the **San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS),** the City's lead agency focused on older adults and adults with disabilities.

The Dignity Fund legislation guided DAS to **institute a rigorous four-year planning, funding, and evaluation process** to ensure that funds are distributed responsibly and transparently to best address community needs. The cycle begins with a **Community Needs Assessment** in the first year to identify equity issues and unmet needs that need to be addressed. This information supports the development of a **Services and Allocation Plan** in the second year of the cycle. This plan outlines how Dignity Fund money will be used to address community needs for a four-year period that begins in the subsequent year. The cycle ends with a **Cycle-End Evaluation,** to assess the impact of the Dignity Fund over the past four years of funding. This planning, funding allocation, and evaluation process is repeated every four years.

Project Scope and Objectives

The **2026 Dignity Fund Community Needs Assessment (DFCNA)** marks the beginning of the third Dignity Fund cycle. The purpose of this needs assessment is to gather community input on the needs of diverse San Francisco older adults, adults with disabilities, veterans, and caregivers. DAS will use findings on our community's needs, service system strengths and gaps, and equity issues to inform Dignity Fund spending to address community needs.

As outlined by the Dignity Fund legislation, this needs assessment must be conducted and completed in FY 2025-26.

Figure 1. Overview of the Dignity Fund Cycle for FY 2027-28 to FY 2030-31
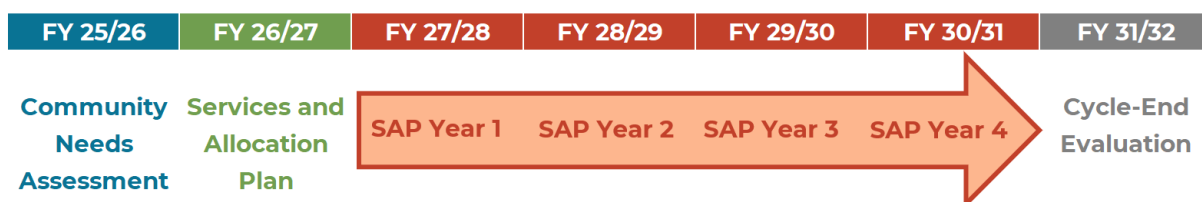
The 2026 DFCNA seeks to answer the following high-level research questions:
1. What are the needs of older adults and adults with disabilities in San Francisco?
2. What are the system-level strengths and gaps?
3. What population subgroups may be underserved?

Methodology

The 2026 DFCNA will include a variety of analytical activities, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data sources including population data, program administrative data, and data gathered through community research. Taken together, these analyses will help DAS to understand current community needs, identify equity concerns and service gaps, and develop recommendations to address these issues.

Community Research

DAS is committed to carrying out a **variety of community research activities to gather input about community needs directly from diverse San Francisco stakeholders,** including actual and potential consumers of disability and aging services, community-based service providers, and other community professionals, leaders, and advocates.

DAS has procured a consultant, **Clarity Social Research Group** (hereafter referred to as "Clarity"), to help plan and carry out the following community research activities:

POPULATION SURVEY
With input from DAS, **Clarity researchers will design and implement a survey** to gather information from older adults, adults with disabilities, veterans, caregivers, and service providers about community needs, experience accessing and participating in services, and other topics relevant for this assessment. DAS will make the survey **available in multiple languages across accessible online and paper formats.**

To maximize opportunity for community input and obtain a representative sample, Clarity will administer the population survey using the following sampling methods:

- **Convenience sampling,** via both online and paper survey formats to maximize community input. In addition to conducting more general outreach for the needs assessment, **DAS will work with our community service providers to promote the survey widely** and encourage participation, using strategies like:
  - **Hosting paper surveys and drop-boxes** at high-traffic DAS sites (e.g., senior centers, communal dining sites, etc.) and other key locations like libraries
  - **Posting desktop shortcuts to the online survey** on computers at SF Connected technology labs throughout the city
  - **Including a flyer with a QR code or link to the online survey** with home-delivered meals and groceries during the survey window

  We aim to gather **2,250 unduplicated survey responses** using this sampling method.

- **Randomized sampling,** via a **survey mailing to approximately 25,000 households** obtain a representative sample of general disability and aging services consumers. The mailing will include options to complete the survey online or to return a paper survey by mail or at a drop-box hosted at one of our service sites.

  This approach uses a probability sampling methodology known as **"address-based sampling"** to select a random and representative sample of a population from a comprehensive list of residential addresses available through the United States Postal Service. Based on estimated response rates for address-based sampling, we anticipate gathering about **250 unduplicated survey responses** using this sampling method.

COMMUNITY FORUMS

DAS will host a total of **12 facilitated town hall-style events** to capture high-level community input on areas of need, barriers to participation in services, and broader service system issues. These events include one in-person forum in each of the city's 11 supervisorial districts and one virtual citywide forum. **DAS will partner with our Community Service Center providers to host most of these events** and host the rest at popular neighborhood hubs like libraries.

At each community forum, **Clarity facilitators will guide participants through a structured conversational process** designed to foster open dialogue, explore complex issues, and generate insights. Participants will have the option to share their feedback in multiple formats, including through **small group discussions** and via **written comments** they can add at poster stations located throughout the room or drop anonymously in a comment box.

2026 DFCNA Community Outreach and Engagement
In addition to carrying out direct participant recruitment for focus groups and the tailored strategies to boost survey response rates described above, DAS will conduct more generalized outreach to encourage participation in needs assessment activities, including:
- **Circulating a flyer** (print and digital formats) with survey and forum details among DAS community partners and other key stakeholders
- **Conducting a social media campaign** via popular platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as informal social networks like WeChat
- **Providing short blurbs for publication in newsletters** issued by community-based service providers, the Board of Supervisors, neighborhood networks, etc.
- **Inviting local news outlets (including multicultural media)** to provide print, online, radio, and/or TV coverage of the needs assessment

FOCUS GROUPS

DAS and Clarity will facilitate **14 focus groups** — more narrowly focused discussions to supplement community forums. Each focus group will take place with about 8-10 individuals, allowing for a deeper dive into specific issues and with distinct stakeholder populations.

DIGNITY FUND SERVICE PROVIDER WORK GROUP LISTENING SESSION
To **inform community outreach strategy and other research design considerations,** DAS will facilitate a focused discussion with DAS service providers during the 2026 DFCNA project planning phase. During this session, we will also **gather input on community needs and service system issues** from the service provider perspective.

Equity Analysis

DAS will also complete a **quantitative equity analysis to help us evaluate how well the Department is serving the city's diverse populations** — particularly communities that face barriers in access to resources and opportunity — and identify possible disparities in service provision and utilization. The equity analysis leverages **population data** and **program administrative data** to develop a set of standardized metrics that help to answer the following questions:

1. Are populations with the presence of an equity factor utilizing services at the same rate as the population citywide?
2. How do service utilization rates among low-to-moderate-income populations compare across districts in the city?
3. How are funds spent across city districts?

In particular, the equity analysis examines service participation rates and resource allocation across the city for the DAS client population overall, and for **subpopulations with the presence of one of the following equity factors:**

- Low-to-moderate income
- Limited English Proficiency
- Living alone status
- Communities of Color
- LGBTQ+ identification

Table 1. Equity Analysis Data Sources

Data Source	Description
Population Data 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	DAS will use publicly available population data to estimate the size of eligible client populations overall and with the presence of an equity factor, both citywide and in each supervisorial district. We will use this data to develop a demographic profile of San Francisco older adults and adults with disabilities, as well as an analysis of service participation rates to answer the first two equity analysis questions.
Program Administrative Data DAS Office of Community Partnerships client enrollments	DAS will use client enrollment data, primarily available through the centralized SF DAS GetCare database, to develop a demographic profile of DAS Office of Community Partnerships clients, as well as an analysis of service participation rates to answer all three equity analysis questions. Of note, the Department will also leverage other program administrative data across SFHSA and DAS systems (e.g., CalSAWs, CMIPS II, etc.) to ensure client demographic information is as complete as possible.
Program Administrative Data DAS Office of Community Partnerships budget	DAS will use program budget data available through the F$P database to develop analysis of resource allocation to answer the third equity analysis question.

Gaps Analysis and Recommendations

DAS will synthesize findings from the community research and equity analyses to answer the high-level research questions that guide the 2026 DFCNA overall. Based on the community needs, service system strengths and gaps, and equity issues we identify, DAS will develop recommendations to address areas of need, particularly unmet need.

Deliverables

The 2026 DFCNA will result in following deliverables:

Table 2. 2026 Dignity Fund Community Needs Assessment Deliverables

Deliverable & Lead	Description
Project Plan *DAS + Clarity*	This document serves as the 2026 DFCNA project plan. It outlines key project components, relevant activities, required resources, and anticipated timeline — including methodological detail describing how our consultant, Clarity, will carry out community research activities in alignment with the broader scope of the project and timeline set by DAS. In accordance with the Dignity Fund legislation, this project plan must be presented to the DAS Commission, Dignity Fund Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC), and Dignity Fund Service Provider Work Group by September 1, 2025.
Community Research Findings *Clarity*	Clarity will provide DAS with two standalone written reports synthesizing preliminary findings from: (1) community forums and focus groups, and (2) the population survey. Clarity will present these community research findings to the OAC in late 2025.
Equity Analysis Findings *DAS*	DAS will present findings from the quantitative equity analysis to the OAC in late 2025.
Written Report *DAS*	DAS will develop the 2026 DFCNA report with input from the OAC. This report will provide summary data and synthesize findings across the various research and analytical activities described in this project plan, and also provide recommendations to address identified issues. In accordance with the Dignity Fund legislation, DAS will share a full, publicly available report draft with the OAC by March 1, 2026. The Department will present the draft report at a subsequent OAC meeting to obtain feedback from the OAC.

Deliverable & Lead	Description
Public Presentations *DAS + Clarity*	DAS and Clarity will present at the following OAC meetings throughout the 2026 DFCNA process: **DAS + Clarity presentations** • **July 2025:** Project plan • **December 2025:** Preliminary research findings **DAS presentations** • **March 2026:** Draft report • **April 2026:** Final report (joint hearing with DAS Commission)
Research Materials and Documentation *Clarity*	Clarity will provide DAS with copies of research materials and related documentation, including: • Notes from community forums and focus groups • Participant demographic dataset from community forums and focus groups • Dataset from population survey • Analytical guides corresponding to all quantitative and qualitative analysis

Intended Audience

The intended audience for the 2026 DFCNA includes, but is not limited to, the following City and community stakeholders:

- City leaders (e.g., Mayor, Board of Supervisors, Commissions)
- City departments (e.g., SF Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing)
- DAS community advisory bodies (e.g., OAC, SPWG, DAS Commission, Mayor's Disability Council, etc.)
- Community-based service providers, leaders, and advocates
- General public

Project Team

The 2026 DFCNA will be facilitated by the following project leads and other key stakeholders:

Table 3. 2026 Dignity Fund Community Needs Assessment Project Team

Lead	Role
SFHSA Planning	• Support the community research consultant procurement process, including development of IBs • Project manage the DFCNA, including responsibility for directing consultant work on community research activities, equity analysis, and report development • Provide technical expertise in planning, executing, and interpreting community research • Prepare population and client profiles + equity analysis • Facilitate DFCNA project team discussions to develop overall findings and recommendations • Prepare full DFCNA report and related presentations
DAS Office of Community Partnerships	• Lead the community research consultant procurement process, including coordination with SFHSA Contracts • Manage the consultant contract(s), including responsibility for routine administrative matters as well as any action required to address compliance issues • Coordinate OCP analysts to facilitate community research engagement/participant recruitment via City and community partners • Coordinate OCP analysts to support in-person and virtual community research events like forums and focus groups • Coordinate OCP administrative staff to facilitate on-site survey administration at select DAS service sites • Participate in discussions to develop overall report findings and recommendations • Provide feedback on the draft DFCNA report and any interim materials to support development of final report
Clarity Social Research Group	• Plan and execute community research activities, including community forums, focus groups, and population survey • Prepare a written report and related public presentations summarizing preliminary community research findings
SFHSA Budget	• Provide DAS budget data to support equity analysis
SFHSA Communications	• Develop a communications plan to support community outreach and engagement in DFCNA research activities • Facilitate development of communications materials such as web pages, fliers, email/text campaigns, notices in SFHSA and community newsletters, social media posts, etc., aligned with Citywide accessibility standards
DAS Executive Leadership	• Participate in discussions to develop overall report findings and recommendations • Provide feedback on the draft DFCNA report and any interim materials to support development of final report

Timeline

Activity	2025												2026					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Procure consultant	█	█	█	█	█	█												
Develop project plan, including community research methodology						█	█											
Share project plan with OAC, DAS Commission, and stakeholders (by Sept 1, 2025)							█											
Conduct needs assessment research activities • Develop survey instrument and forums/focus group protocols (Jul-Aug 2025) • Gather survey, forum, and focus group data (Aug-Sept 2025) • Prepare equity analysis (Aug-Sept 2025) • Analyze all data and develop findings (Oct-Dec 2025)							█	█	█	█	█	█						
Draft report										█	█	█	█	█				
Share draft report (by March 1, 2026)															█			
Share final report (by April 1, 2026)																█		
Hold joint public hearing of the OAC and DAS Commission																█		
DAS Commission approval vote (by May 1, 2026)																	█	
BOS approval vote (by June 1, 2026)																		█