COUNTY OF CALDWELL

Department of Social Services

Memorandum

Date: February 4, 2025
To: Donald Duncan, County Manager
From: Kimberly Arnett, Director
RE: Work First Block Grant Plan

I am writing this memo to give history of the Work First Block Grant and Electing County Plan as well as outline the requirement and purpose of the commissioners' approval. This item is set on the consent agenda for the Commissioner's Meeting, February 10th.

Around '96-'97, the State gave counties an option to become an "Electing County," electing to utilize their cash savings from a reduced Work First (WFFA) caseload in varied ways. This gave counties flexibility to come up with better plan to utilize these funds. Currently, approximately 7 counties are an electing county.

At that time, the State used a set formula to determine the amount of WFFA funds each county received and that formula is still used today. Our county typically has around 400K-500K in cash savings that is used to support other positions in the Department. However, before these funds can be assessed, the county is required to expend all of our Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds, which for this fiscal year is $546,172. Our MOE money is used to pay for our two Community in Schools social workers, our two Childcare Assistance workers and our one WFFA worker. Then, the cash savings we receive is mostly utilized in our Child Welfare program area as a supplement since most of the funding in that area is capped by the State and ends up being all county money.

This electing county status has been highly beneficial for our county since the beginning. However, if the State ever takes that option from counties or we fail to meet performance standards as outlined in the WFFA Block Grant Plan for two years then, we would be in a position to make up that supplemental funding for Child Welfare staffing.

As part of being an electing county, we must develop a plan to meet performance standards every two years that includes involvement and input from other community agencies. We must also provide an avenue for public comment. After this all has been completed, it is required that the commissioners approve the plan in order for DSS to operationalize the plan.

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

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