

identify microorganisms that cause disease including bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites. The PHL provides testing with associated whole genome sequencing for communicable disease surveillance purposes, surge events and other public health emergencies. The PHL also serves as a reference laboratory for local hospitals and health care agencies.

Public Health Microbiologists (PHMs) are highly sought after in the employment market. PHMs receive additional education, training, and certification in microbiology beyond what is required for Clinical Laboratory Scientist/Technologist working in hospitals and commercial laboratories. There is currently a shortage of certified Public Health Microbiologists and Public Health Laboratory Director-qualified professionals in California. The professional struggles, long work hours, and personal sacrifices made by PHMs during the COVID-19 pandemic have further intensified the shortage due to concerns about workplace safety, violence, stress, burnout and worsening mental health condition ([Symptoms of Depression, Anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Suicidal Ideation Among State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Public Health Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic - United States, March-April 2021 | MMWR \(cdc.gov\)](#)).

In order to increase opportunities for local laboratory professionals to train and remain in our community, the Department applied for and was awarded \$228,034 in HERO funding to provide professional training for public health laboratory professionals. The grant will provide funding retroactively for the PHL to train two candidates as PHMs during Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (\$60,000). The grant will also provide funding to support two PHM's participation in the LabAspire program from FY2022-2023 through FY2024-2025 (\$90,000). LabAspire prepares certified Public Health Microbiologists for positions directing public health laboratories. The grant funds laboratory and training materials, tuition reimbursement, travel, and program oversight costs. The grant will increase opportunities for local laboratory professionals to train and remain in our community.

The Department applied for HERO grant funding in early 2023 at the request of the California Department of Public Health so that the County of Monterey PHL could start training a new cohort of trainees in January 2023 to coincide with when other PHLs started their cohorts. However, the PHL did not receive the draft Agreement from California Department of Public Health until June 6, 2023. This is why the Agreement is being requested retroactively.

This work supports the Monterey County Health Department 2018-2022 Strategic Plan Goals: 2. Enhance public health and safety through prevention; 3. Ensure access to culturally and linguistically appropriate, customer-friendly, quality health services; and 4. Engage MCHD workforce and improve operational functions to meet current and developing population health needs. It also supports three of the ten essential public health services, specifically: 1. Assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets; 2. Investigate diagnose, and address health problems and hazards affecting the population; 8. Build and support a diverse and skilled public health workforce.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The Office of the County Counsel has reviewed and approved this Agreement as to legal form. Auditor-Controller has reviewed and approved this Agreement as to fiscal provisions.

FINANCING:

There is no cost to the County in accepting this grant. There are sufficient appropriations in the Health Department's (001-4000-8124-HEA003) FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget and the Requested FY 2023-24 budget.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Check the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives:

Economic Development:

- Through collaboration, strengthen economic development to ensure a diversified and healthy economy.

Administration:

- Promote an organization that practices efficient and effective resource management and is recognized for responsiveness, strong customer orientation, accountability and transparency.

Health & Human Services:

- Improve health and quality of life through County supported policies, programs, and services; promoting access to equitable opportunities for healthy choices and healthy environments in collaboration with communities.

Infrastructure:

- Plan and develop a sustainable, physical infrastructure that improves the quality of life for County residents and supports economic development results.

Public Safety:

- Create a safe environment for people to achieve their potential, leading businesses and communities to thrive and grow by reducing violent crimes as well as crimes in general.

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Approved by:

Date: _____

Elsa Mendoza Jimenez, Director of Health Services, 755-4526

Attachments:

Board Report

Agreement

Award Letter

Intent to Apply Memo