



County of Monterey

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Board Report

File #: RES 23-065, **Version:** 1

Adopt a resolution to:

- a. Receive an oral report on Board Referral No. 2023.04 regarding the planning and potential implementation of a Storm Recovery Rent Subsidy program for farmworkers negatively impacted by the recent weather disaster events; and
- b. Provide direction for implementing a rental subsidy program for farm workers and others affected by the winter storms who are not eligible for other State and Federal rental assistance programs;
- c. Authorize and direct the Auditor-Controller to amend the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Adopted Budget by increasing appropriations by \$378,000 to provide a rent subsidy program for farmworkers for Social Services Community Program Fund 001-5010-SOC004-8258, financed by a decrease in appropriations in General Fund contingencies 001-1050-CAO020 (4/5ths Vote);
- d. Authorize the Department of Social Services Director or Assistant Director to negotiate and execute a Contract with Catholic Charities for \$198,000 to provide a rent subsidy program for farmworkers for the period upon execution through June 30, 2023; and
- e. Authorize the Department of Social Services Director or Assistant Director to negotiate and execute Contract Amendment #5 with the United Way of Monterey County to provide a rent subsidy program for farmworkers adding \$180,000 for a revised contract total of \$52,599,682.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution to:

- a. Receive an oral report on Board Referral No. 2023.04 regarding the planning and potential implementation of a Storm Recovery Rent Subsidy program for farmworkers negatively impacted by the recent weather disaster events; and
- b. Provide direction for implementing a rental subsidy program for farm workers and others affected by the winter storms who are not eligible for other State and Federal rental assistance programs;
- c. Authorize and direct the Auditor-Controller to amend the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Adopted Budget by increasing appropriations by \$378,000 to provide a rent subsidy program for farmworkers for Social Services Community Program Fund 001-5010-SOC004-8258, financed by a decrease in appropriations in General Fund contingencies 001-1050-CAO020 (4/5ths Vote);
- d. Authorize the Department of Social Services Director or Assistant Director to negotiate and execute a Contract with Catholic Charities for \$198,000 to provide a rent subsidy program for farmworkers for the period upon execution through June 30, 2023; and
- e. Authorize the Department of Social Services Director or Assistant Director to negotiate and execute Contract Amendment #5 with the United Way of Monterey County to provide a rent subsidy program for farmworkers adding \$180,000 for a revised contract total of \$52,599,682.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

Board Referral No. 2023.04 Storm Recovery Rent Subsidy Program for Farmworkers, seeks to establish a Rent Subsidy Program for agricultural workers adversely impacted by the recent weather-related disaster who do not otherwise qualify for other forms of Federal or State disaster recovery assistance.

The original planning for this subsidy program was done in response to the recovery from the atmospheric river

events which occurred at the beginning of 2023. The plan was to create a targeted program for the most vulnerable and in need farmworkers negatively impacted by the January storms who do not have access to other forms of State and Federal disaster recovery assistance programs. The assistance was based on the needs identified as a result of the January weather disaster which primarily impacted farmworkers and agricultural businesses.

However, while the recovery efforts were underway for the January disaster, the March atmospheric river weather events occurred, thereby, evolving the needs assessment. In addition to the March emergency event further impacting farm working families, County low-income hospitality and small business households were impacted.

Since the referral receipt, the department in coordination with the County Administrative Officer, has utilized direction provided by the Board of Supervisors on March 21, 2023, to begin work to determine a potential Rental Subsidy program for farmworkers. However, the planning has evolved. With the re-entry and eventual re-population of the community of Pájaro, coupled with the re-impacted south valley many more low-income individuals have had disruptions in their employment and ability to generate income for their households. While many of these are farmworkers, there are also hospitality and small business workers, also. Given the impact on these individuals and households, the benefit amount previously proposed for the pilot program would not be sufficient to meet the current need, have the capacity to reach enough people, and to be financed in a sustainable way or upscaled if the pilot program demonstrated promise.

Since the time the pilot program was considered by the Board, Monterey County was included in a Federal Disaster Declaration followed by the Department of Social Services connecting with state and federal representatives to plan and implement various forms of disaster assistance now becoming available to impacted residents.

Individual Assistance (IA) through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be available to eligible residents. FEMA benefits include rental and housing assistance. Eligible households include a household where one member of that household is a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national or qualified non-citizen. A parent or legal guardian must apply as co-applicant and the minor child must be under age 18 at the time the disaster occurred when applying when the minor citizen in the eligible household member. The assistance would include one to two months of rental funds up to Fair Market Rate, which in the County is approximately \$2,500.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is currently working to contract with local Community Based Organizations (CBO's) to administer their Disaster Case Management program and Rapid Response Fund program. Catholic Charities is one of the CBOs that will receive funds through this program, which will provide funds to individuals and families who would not qualify for any other forms of federal disaster assistance. While the exact amount of assistance benefit has not been set, it is expected to cap at \$2,500 per award, and can be used for housing stability.

The Federal Declaration also makes the Disaster CalFresh program available to residents to provide additional food support regardless of documentation status.

Currently, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working with several local CBOs, including Catholic Charities, to offer a \$600 cash benefit to eligible farmworkers who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2021.

Many of the CBO's are in process of applying with the State to participate in providing Disaster Case Management as well as the Rapid Response Fund program. Ramping up operations to work these initiatives on behalf of the State is likely to be a stress on already stretched thin organizations. It is important that these organizations be prepared to and focused on identifying and serving those who are eligible to participate in these significant state and federal assistance programs.

Due to the significant state and federal financial assistance soon to be available, and the need for local CBO's to focus on getting this assistance to people and families in need, the original Farmworker Rent Subsidy program as presented no longer maintains its initial relevancy. However, it is anticipated for various reasons, including documentation status restrictions, that some individuals and household will not be able to access these substantial assistance programs as was found during the COVID pandemic response. To address a similar situation, a "gap fund" was established to provide rental assistance to those who did not qualify for other rental assistance programs due to their documentation status. The fund was authorized by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey, administered by the United Way of Monterey (United Way) and distributed through their partner CBO service providers. The fund was fully expended during the pandemic but was a meaningful and useful program to provide housing stability to many who would not otherwise be served through traditional programs.

The United Way of Monterey is currently under contract with the Department of Social Services to provide rental assistance and has expressed a willingness to once again work with their CBO partners to administer additional gap funding to farmworkers who will not be able to participate in any other rental assistance programs, with preference, given to those still impacted by the first disaster event. Once farmworker rental assistance gap funding is approved, the existing contract with the United Way of Monterey will be quickly amended to increase the contract by \$180,000 if recommendation was approved. No additional processes would have to be set up and there would not be a need for administration as it will fit into their existing structure.

In addition, through the CDSS Disaster Case Management program, Catholic Charities receives case management funds and has the capability to layer rental assistance to support individuals and families who would not qualify for any other forms of federal or state disaster assistance. Catholic Charities would require 10% (\$18,000) of indirect costs to distribute the funds through their Disaster Case Management team, and (\$180,000) for direct rental assistance (gap funding) for a total funding agreement of \$198,000 which would be negotiated and executed if the recommendation was approved.

The proposed rental subsidy gap funding for impacted low-income farm labor, hospitality and small business workers in the amount of \$800 to \$1,200 per month, based upon need, and capped at \$2,400 would be made available per eligible household. A total gap fund amount of \$360,000 for direct assistance will serve a minimum of 150 households.

Other potential sources of funding such as the Community Foundation could be invited to contribute to the Rental Assistance gap funds directly through the United Way of Monterey County to serve additional households.

It is recommended that due to the current weather disaster and signing of the Federal disaster Declaration, this second alternative be considered instead of the previously proposed pilot program. If recommendations are authorized, Department of Social Services will develop and execute a contract amendment with United Way of Monterey County for \$180,000 and an agreement for \$198,000 for Catholic Charities of Monterey to provide a rental subsidy program through June 30, 2023.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

There is no other agency involvement.

FINANCING:

Initially, there was two funding sources identified to finance the proposed \$378,000 program, Cannabis funding which has been exhausted and County Contingency Funding. The Department is requesting the one-time release of Contingency Funds which currently has a balance of \$503,926.

An increase in appropriations will be required in the amount of \$378,000 in the Social Services Community Programs 001-5010-SOC004 FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget, financed by an authorized one-time release from the contingency fund 001-1050-CAO020. Approval of these actions will leave a balance of \$125,926 in the Contingency Fund.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

This farmworker assistance program fulfills the Strategic Initiative in the policy area of Health and Human Services by improving the quality of life for farmworkers impacted by the recent disaster. This program further addresses the Key Objective of developing a strategy for a social service that will enhance the quality of life for farmworkers and maintain the economic viability of this critical industry.

Check the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives:

- Economic Development
- Administration
- Health & Human Services
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety

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Attachment: Resolution