Legislation Details (With Board Report)

File #:	21-487	**Name:**	Funeral Burial Program Options - Ref. 2021.04
Type:	General Agenda Item	**Status:**	Passed - County Administrative Office
File created:	5/20/2021	**In control:**	Board of Supervisors
On agenda:	5/25/2021	**Final action:**	5/25/2021
Title:	Response to Referral No. 2021.04 a. Consider updated options for a Monterey County COVID-19 Funeral and Burial Assistance Program; and, b. Provide direction to staff.		
Sponsors:			
Indexes:			
Code sections:			
Attachments:	1. Board Report, 2. Board Referral No. 2021.04, 3. PowerPoint, 4. Completed Board Order Item No. 14		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
5/25/2021	1	Board of Supervisors	approved - county administrative office	

Response to Referral No. 2021.04

a. Consider updated options for a Monterey County COVID-19 Funeral and Burial Assistance Program; and,
b. Provide direction to staff.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors accept the referral and presentation regarding the Monterey County Covid-19 Funeral and Burial Assistance Program and provide direction regarding the updated options presented for a Monterey County Funeral Assistance Program.

SUMMARY:

The County Administrative Office received a Board referral for the Monterey County Covid-19 Funeral and Burial Assistance Program on February 23, 2021 and additional Board direction on April 20, 2021. This referral was assigned to Gerry Malais (OES) and Ezequiel Vega (Budget Office Director). Currently FEMA has a Funeral and Burial Assistance Program through their Covid-19 Individual Assistance Program. The FEMA program provides financial assistance up to $9,000 and is available to any U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien who incurred funeral expenses after January 20, 2020, directly related to Covid-19. Several options exist for the County to continue or supplement the FEMA program that require Board direction. This is in response to **REFERRAL # 2021.04** and subsequent board direction

DISCUSSION:

FEMA has a Funeral and Burial Assistance Program through the Covid-19 Individual Assistance Program. The FEMA program is available to any U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien who incurred funeral expenses after January 20, 2020, directly related to Covid-19 and provides financial assistance up to $9,000.

Board direction from the April 20th, 2021 session includes:

1. A program cap/fixed amount of $500,000 USD
2. A program that runs through December 31, 2022
3. Eligibility: Low-Income undocumented Monterey County Applicants and decedents

4. Eligibility: Except for County Eligibility changes, the program will follow the FEMA program guidelines for eligibility and expense requirements
5. Board Request for information: Capacity Survey for County agencies to implement the program
6. Board Request for information: Determine the estimated cost in dedicated staff hours

Several options exist for the County to continue or supplement the FEMA program:

1. Option 1: The County can develop its own Program and continue to support the FEMA program with information and navigation assistance:
    a. Provide the same benefits as the FEMA program with the criteria for eligibility limited to undocumented low-income County residents that are ineligible for FEMA program for a defined period-of-time (i.e. through 12/31/2022) capped at $500,000 USD.
    b. Provide the same benefits and limits to undocumented residents that incur funeral expenses as the normal FEMA program.
2. Option 2: Same County Plan as Option 1 with a reduced maximum benefit from $9,000 to:
    a. $6,000
    b. $4,000
    c. $2,000
3. Option 3: Same County Plan as Option 1 but include additional low-income groups excluded by FEMA (Temporary tourist visa holders, Foreign students, Temporary work visa holders, Habitual residents such as citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.)
4. Other direction from the Board of Supervisors

The Board can also direct staff to request the State of California to develop a Funeral and Burial assistance Program like FEMA's to continue after FEMA's Program ends, in addition to or in place of the County plan above.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:
OES coordinates with the CAO Budget Office and County Counsel. Department of Social Services, Department of Health, and Sheriff/Coroner were conferred with about managing this program but have limitations managing it. The following external organizations were also surveyed: 211-United Way Monterey County, Natividad Foundation, Catholic Charites Diocese of Monterey/The Community Foundation for Monterey County

FINANCING:
Funding for this referral program would require Board action to add funding to the Emergency Operation Center Covid-19 response operations. Initial Board funding would be $500,000 for the period until 12/31/22. The cost in staff hours would run an estimated 4 hours per applicant and an estimated 80-400 hours total.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:
The related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives are: Economic Development; Administration: Health & Human Services; Infrastructure and Public Safety.

Prepared by: Gerry Malais, Emergency Services Manager
Approved by: Nicholas E. Chiulos, Assistant County Administrative Officer

Attachments:
Board Report

Board Referral No. 2021.04
PowerPoint

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