



Board Report

File #: 23-244, Version: 1

- a. Receive an oral report 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 assistance program for farm workers affected by the winter storms.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receives an oral report 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 assistance program for farmworkers affected by the winter storms.

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 benefit program was done in response to the recovery from the atmospheric river weather disaster event which occurred at the beginning of 2023. The plan was to create a targeted response to those most vulnerable and in need farmworkers negatively impacted by the storms who do not have access to other forms of state and federal disaster recovery assistance programs.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Monterey participated in the Local Assistance Center (LAC) operations after the first weather disaster and received at least 2000 requests for services, with majority of those seeking assistance identifying the agricultural industry as their major source of income. 82% of people in this group had reduced income as a result of the storms. Those who connected with Catholic Charities at the LAC requested the following services: 48% rent assistance 28% food assistance 6% utilities assistance. Area of residence: 38% Salinas 31% Greenfield 10% Soledad, Gonzalez, Chualar and King City 9% Pajaro, Royal Oaks, Las Lomas, Prunedale 3% San Ardo, San Miguel. Less than 15% suffered damages to their home.

Currently, the USDA is working with a number of local community-based agencies to offer a \$600 cash benefit to eligible farmworkers who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2021.

The assistance to eligible farmworkers was based on the needs identified as a result of the previous weather disaster which occurred at the beginning of the year. The recovery efforts were still underway for this disaster when this most recent atmospheric river disaster weather event occurred. It is therefore recommended, due to this most current weather disaster, that this program be operated as a pilot program. The pilot program provides additional time and effort while assessing whether the needs or scope of the proposed Storm Recovery Rent Subsidy Program for farmworkers is sufficient and or relevant in its current form to meet the combined needs of those farmworkers impacted by the cumulative effects of both weather events.

The initial recommendation is to authorize a community-based organization to administer a pilot program to provide 100 qualifying farmworkers with an \$800 rental assistance payment to their landlord to assist in maintaining housing stability.

The proposed pilot program would also authorize a community-based organization to administer a program to provide 300 qualifying farmworkers with a \$600 cash assistance payment in the form of a gift card to assist with those with nontraditional housing arrangements or other needs as a result of the weather disaster.

Priority for these assistance benefits would be based on a priority point system which is currently being developed.

The proposed amount for direct rent and cash assistance in this pilot program is \$320,000. The cost to administer this program is estimated at \$80,000. Total cost of the proposed Storm Recovery Rent Subsidy Program for Farmworkers is \$340,000.

It is recommended that this program be operated as a pilot program due to the current weather disaster while further analysis will be conducted to determine the appropriate scope and scale of a rental assistance program to farmworkers. The pilot program will run for 90 days or till the funds are exhausted, whichever comes first. A report will be provided to the Board of Supervisors at a future meeting after the recovery period from this most recent weather disaster has commenced.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office will be contacted to engage for possible involvement in this referral response.

FINANCING:

Two funding sources have been identified to finance this program. It is recommended the Board of Supervisors authorize the use of cannabis assignment to fund this Storm Recovery Rent Subsidy Program for Farmworkers. In the event funds are not available from cannabis assignment, or an alternative funding source is desired, it is recommended that contingency funds be made available to fund this program.

Based upon the Board's direction for this pilot program and funding, the Department will negotiate and bring back an agreement for the Boards' approval and recommendation to increase the Departments' appropriations and release cannabis assignment.

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

X Health & Human Services

Infrastructure

Public Safety

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