Racial Equity Analysis

Board Item Date	May 13, 2025
Board Item Name	Emergency Food Services RFP Multi-Agreement Award
Department/Agency (Lead)	Department of Emergency Management
Person(s) Completing Analysis	Jorge Rodriguez

1. **Overview: Describe your program or policy and the desired results and outcomes?**
   a. What is the program or policy decision under consideration?
   b. What are the desired results (in the **community**) and outcomes (within your own **organization**)?
   c. What does this proposal have an ability to impact?

   ☐ Alert & warning   ☒ Emergency planning
   ☐ Community engagement   ☐ Grants administration
   ☒ Community preparedness   ☐ Hazard mitigation
   ☒ Coordination / response   ☐ Other:
   ☒ Department practices

The County of Sonoma's Department of Emergency Management is establishing as-needed contracts for Emergency Food Services. These contracts will ensure the County can quickly and effectively deliver meals to disaster workers, first responders, shelter residents, and evacuees during emergencies. The services will include breakfast, lunch, dinner, and two snacks daily, with the capacity to serve between 25 and 500 people per a designated site.

This proposal directly supports the County's mission to safeguard community health and safety during disasters. Importantly, it advances the County's equity goals by ensuring emergency food services are culturally appropriate and accessible to populations with language, mobility, and dietary needs.

The anticipated outcomes include improved coordination during emergency activations, timely delivery of food services across impacted sites, and enhanced care for the most vulnerable communities during crises. The proposal will impact community preparedness, response coordination, and departmental practices in emergency planning.

2. Data: What's the data? What does the data tell us?

    a. Will the proposal have impacts in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)? What are the racial demographics of those living in the area?

    b. What does population level data, including quantitative and qualitative data, tell you about existing racial inequities? What does it tell you about root causes or factors influencing racial inequities?

    c. What performance level data do you have available for your proposal? This should include data associated with existing programs or policies.

    d. Are there data gaps? What additional data would be helpful in analyzing the proposal? If so, how can you obtain better data?

A. While the proposal does not impact a specific area as the Proposal applies to services countywide, it is important to note that Sonoma County is home to diverse populations, with 29% of residents identifying as Latinx, 5% as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% as Black, according to the most recent Portrait of Sonoma County.

B. These communities are more likely to live in census tracts with lower Human Development Index (HDI) scores and are disproportionately impacted by disasters due to systemic inequities, language barriers, and limited access to healthcare and transportation.

C. Historical data from previous shelter activations shows challenges in delivering meals that meet cultural and dietary needs, including for food allergies, medically vulnerable individuals, and residents with religious dietary restrictions. Feedback from shelter managers and community partners has highlighted these gaps.

D. The County lacks disaggregated data on meal recipients by race or ethnicity, limiting its ability to evaluate service equity during past activations. Strengthening demographic tracking and feedback systems during future emergencies will be crucial to improving equitable food distribution.

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3. **Community Engagement: How have communities been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?**
   a. Who are the most affected community members who are concerned with or have experience related to this proposal? How have you involved these community members in the development of this proposal?
   b. What has your engagement process told you about the burdens or benefits for different groups?
   c. What has your engagement process told you about the factors that produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this proposal?

A. This Proposal was informed by learnings from past emergency activations and through engagement with shelter managers and community-based organizations (CBOs). Organizations affiliated with Sonoma County COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) have consistently advocated for the inclusion of culturally familiar meals and the need for equitable distribution of resources across evacuation centers.

B. Community partners emphasized that Latinx, Indigenous, low-income, and immigrant populations—many of whom work outdoors and may be displaced during disasters—are often underserved in emergency food operations. These communities face barriers such as language inaccessibility, unfamiliar food offerings, and dietary restrictions that are not adequately addressed.

C. This engagement process underscored that equitable food provision must go beyond quantity—it must also reflect the dignity, preferences, and health needs of those served. Proactively including community voice in disaster planning and service design is essential to reducing disparities.

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4. Analysis and Strategies: What are your strategies for advancing racial equity?
   a. Given what you have learned from research and stakeholder involvement, how will the proposal increase or decrease racial equity? Who would benefit from or be burdened by your proposal?
   b. What are potential unintended consequences? What are the ways in which your proposal could be modified to enhance positive impacts or reduce negative impacts?
   c. Are there complementary strategies that you can implement? What are ways in which existing partnerships could be strengthened to maximize impact in the community? How will you partner with stakeholders for long-term positive change?
   d. Are the impacts aligned with your community outcomes defined in Step #1?

A. This Proposal represents a significant opportunity to improve racial equity in Sonoma County's disaster response. By requiring vendors to provide medically tailored and culturally appropriate meals, the County is acknowledging and addressing past inequities in food access during emergencies.

B. Communities most likely to benefit include Latinx residents, people with disabilities, older adults, and those with food allergies. By contrast, there is a risk that smaller, local vendors rooted in these communities may struggle to meet compliance or capacity requirements unless supported.

C. To enhance equity outcomes, there may be opportunities where technical assistance to BIPOC-owned and local small businesses is offered through service providers and community resources, encouraging their participation in the bidding process. Including community nutrition organizations in planning can help shape menus that are inclusive and respectful. Additionally, the Proposal allows flexibility in meal types and service methods—such as grab-and-go options or mobile kitchens—can address diverse needs across sites.

D. These strategies are aligned with the County's emergency response goals and long-standing equity commitments, as they prioritize access, dignity, and safety for all residents during crises.

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5. Implementation: What is your plan for implementation?

Describe your plan for implementation:
The Department of Emergency Management will oversee the implementation of as-needed emergency food contracts through a structured activation and mobilization process. Once activated, vendors must be prepared to mobilize and begin food service delivery within 4 to 6 hours of County notice during a disaster event. Services will be coordinated through the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and supported by the Human Services Department and Environmental Health staff to ensure compliance with food safety standards.
Implementation will rely on a clear and rapid deployment model, including the identification of vendor capacity, staging areas, and food safety oversight protocols. Existing resources, such as the County's logistics team and pre-approved shelter sites, provide a foundation for effective delivery. However, additional funding or personnel may be required to scale services or improve language accessibility during high-impact events.
The implementation plan includes built-in flexibility to accommodate multiple contractors, allowing the County to tailor service deployment based on geography, meal volume, or community needs.

Is this implementation plan:	Yes	No	I'm Not Sure
Realistic?	☒	☐	☐
Adequately funded?	☐	☐	☒
Adequately resourced with personnel?	☒	☐	☐
Adequately resourced with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement?	☒	☐	☐
Adequately resourced to ensure on-going data collection, public reporting, and community engagement?	☒	☐	☐

If the answer to any of these questions is no, what resources or actions are needed?

This proposal assumes that emergency food contracts will be activated during a large-scale incident where a local proclamation of emergency is issued. The availability of adequate funding is contingent upon the nature and scope of the emergency, and whether state or federal reimbursements are made available through that proclamation.

It is also assumed that the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be activated during such incidents, providing sufficient staffing, logistical support, and coordination resources. The EOC activation includes access to established processes for response operations, data collection, and community engagement. Should the scope of the emergency expand beyond current planning assumptions, additional funding or surge staffing may be required to maintain service equity and compliance with County standards.

6. **Accountability and Communication: How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?**
    a. How will impacts be documented and evaluated? Are you achieving the anticipated outcomes? Are you having impact in the community?
    b. What are your messages and communication strategies that will help advance racial equity?
    c. How will you continue to partner and deepen relationships with communities to make sure your work to advance racial equity is working and sustainable for the long-haul?

A. The County will evaluate vendor performance and community impact through After Action Reports and post-incident debriefs with stakeholders. These evaluations will assess the timeliness of meal delivery, food safety compliance, community satisfaction, and the cultural responsiveness of services provided. Vendors will be expected to maintain documentation required for federal (FEMA) reimbursement and auditing, including records on staffing, delivery logs, and subcontractor involvement. Community feedback—especially from shelter guests—will be used to identify areas for improvement and inform future procurements.

B. To advance racial equity, the County will use bilingual communication strategies, including signage, intake materials, and public information campaigns tailored to priority communities. Partnering with CBOs during both planning and response phases will ensure that messaging and service design remain rooted in community needs.

C. Ongoing engagement with COAD members and shelter managers will support long-term improvements. Embedding equity metrics into menu selections, service evaluation, and emergency planning ensures that racial equity remains a core standard in Sonoma County's disaster operations.