Racial Equity Analysis

Board Item Date	December 16, 2025
Board Item Name	Disaster Gap Analysis & Recovery Operations Plan
Department/Agency (Lead)	Department of Emergency Management
Person(s) Completing Analysis	James Cooper

1. **Overview: Describe your program or policy and the desired results and outcomes?**
   a. What is the program or policy decision under consideration?

      The program under consideration is a Recovery Operations Plan (ROP) and associated Disaster Gap Analysis.

   b. What are the desired results (in the **community**) and outcomes (within your own **organization**)?

      The desired results in the community will be better recovery services provided to community members and areas of the County impacted by disasters.

      The desired outcomes within our organization are adoption of the recommendations found in the Gap Analysis, which encourages investment in the staff and resources needed to position the County for successful recovery efforts. Additionally, adoption of the ROP will provide the County with a scalable structure responsive to the changing needs of a given incident. It will:
      - *Standardize terminology across recovery efforts and organizations*
      - *Provide scalable activation tiers with clear triggers to keep recovery efforts ahead of recovery needs*
      - *Function as a Base Plan, capable of serving as a framework for additional annexes*

   c. What does this proposal have an ability to impact?

      ☐ Alert & warning
      ☐ Community engagement
      ☐ Community preparedness
      ☐ Department practices
      ☒ Emergency planning

      ☒ Coordination/Response
      ☐ Grants administration
      ☐ Hazard mitigation
      ☐ Other:

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?

The ROP is a companion plan to the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). As such, it considers the entire population of Sonoma County and the Operational Area, which includes all cities, towns, and unincorporated areas within the County. Demographic information is included in Section 1 of the EOP to highlight the diverse population of Sonoma County and their unique needs.

County population of 485,375 (2024)

2020 Census demographics.
White (Non-Hispanic) 285,792 / 58.5%
Hispanic or Latino (any race) 141,438/ 28.9%
Two or More Races (Non-Hispanic) 24,599/ 5.0%
Asian (Non-Hispanic) 22,239/ 4.5%
Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) 7,125/ 1.5%
Native American / Alaska Native 3,053/ 0.6%

Population of English speaking at home – 341,113 / 73%
Population of other language speakers at home – 122,563 / 26.4%
Population of Spanish speakers – 89,575 / 19% with 47.7 percent reporting limited English proficiency

      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?

The data tells us that there are large parts of our community which will have difficulty, or reluctance accessing recovery services. Language barriers may impede access to needed services, and a large immigrant and migrant population may not trust Local Government enough to access recovery services to which they may be entitled.

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

Performance level data is provided by incidents impacting Sonoma County, including floods, wildfires, winter storms, heat waves, cold snaps, and tsunamis. These provide valuable, real-world data on the impacts of disasters in our communities. After-action reports and improvement plans were drawn upon in developing the gap analysis and ROP. Additionally, the County's Universal Disaster Intake Process, a streamlined system used to collect data during emergencies which improves County services and recovery outcomes for community members, can provide additional data on those accessing our services during emergencies.

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

One of the hardest things to identify during recovery efforts is who isn't accessing our services. While we have a general sense of who those people may be – immigrant or migrant communities, communities with limited-English proficiency among them – it is challenging to gather good data on who exactly they are and what their needs may be. One way we might continue to strive to obtain better data on those unwilling or unable to access our recovery services, is by deepening partnerships with trusted Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

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?

As part of the review process, we set up a series of four (4) live and four (4) virtual community meetings. These were done in both English and Spanish and were offered in locations across the County. Much of Sonoma County has experience related to disaster recovery, after the devastating fires and floods of the past decade. But we recognize that these lived recovery experiences vary radically depending on an individual's background and socio-economic status.

During the environmental scan step, conducted early in this project's timeline, we initiated a Recovery Partner Survey in part to address this concern. The survey consisted of a combination of open-ended, multiple choice, and Likert-scale questions aimed at understanding participants' perceptions of the County's disaster preparedness, their lived experiences during previous emergency response events, and their views on how well County values align with recovery goals. Many of the agencies filling out these surveys serve the most vulnerable communities in our counties.

   b. What has your engagement process told you about the burdens or benefits for different groups?

Our engagement process has told us that the people who engage with our outreach are not necessarily representative of the whole community. We've tried to balance against this by working early, consistently, and closely with CBO partners who are closely tied into these communities, and with the Office of Equity (OOE).

   c. What has your engagement process told you about the factors that produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this proposal?

The folks who attend our community meetings especially tend to be white and English-speaking. This raises the voices of those who have the means to engage in the process over those who do not. In the current political climate, it is understandable that there may be a mistrust in government meetings and gatherings, and a general reluctance to participate.

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?

   The Gap Analysis puts forward a number of recommendations drawn directly from our research and stakeholder involvement, all of which would help decrease racial inequity. These include:
   - *hiring a full-time recovery manager, who would in part be responsible for breaking down inequities in disaster recovery outcomes*
   - *Expanding the availability of disaster case management services*
   - *Expanding the County's outreach to, and support for the post-disaster needs of temporary workers and undocumented immigrants*
   - *Expand the County's efforts to provide language access for non-English speakers during emergencies*
   - *Provide better essential transportation services to rural residents, including those with limited mobility and lower incomes.*

   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?

   As with any emergency plan, the ROP provides a framework for response and will inevitably have unintended or unexpected outcomes once operationalized. As a Base Plan, the Recovery Operations Plan provides high-level guidance on how the County will conduct recovery operations. In the coming year, the Department of Emergency Management will be developing a series of annexes to the ROP, including one focused on Local Assistance Centers and recovery support to communities. These annexes will each provide opportunities for modifying or enhancing the positive impacts of the ROP, and mitigating negative impacts as they are discovered. Additionally, the plan will be placed on a three-year review cycle, allowing for a regular process to reevaluate impact.

   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?

The best complementary strategy will be to continue deepening our partnership with CBO partners. Often, these partners are more deeply trusted by the communities we serve. Already we have empowered select CBO partners to conduct recovery intakes on the County's behalf, to serve as a trusted face in the community.

    d.   Are the impacts aligned with your community outcomes defined in Step #1?

Yes.

5. Implementation: What is your plan for implementation?

Describe your plan for implementation:
The draft ROP will be implemented as soon as it is adopted by the Board of Supervisors. Beginning in calendar year 2026, DEM will start work on four annexes to the plan including the Watershed Task Force Annex, Debris Management Annex, Hazardous Materials Annex, and Local Assistance Center Annex. *The draft Gap Analysis identifies 14 gaps. Of these some have already been closed since the development of the Gap Analysis and others are in progress. Those which have not yet begun may have to wait for budget approval from the Board of Supervisors, or for inclusion in future work plans.*

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?
Some gaps require investment of money, staff time, and the hiring of an FTE position currently non available.

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?

The ROP will on a three-year review cycle. When it is up for review, it will be evaluated against any after-action reports generated from incidents in which it was activated.

b. What are your messages and communication strategies that will help advance racial equity?

During an activation, recovery information will be messaged in English and Spanish, on County platforms and through our trusted CBO partners.

Beyond that, DEM utilizes our Preparedness Division to lead the community outreach efforts for disaster preparedness and reaching diverse populations by working with community-based organizations, faith-based groups, and established community leaders. Their efforts promote readiness activities in all communities, establishing emergency plans before a disaster, and preparing yourself and your family for the potential need to evacuate during an emergency. Our Alert & Warning program also ensures that all emergency messaging is pushed out in both English and Spanish to reach a wider audience that may not be proficient in a single language. Working with our Communications Office, information on the EOP and other emergency management initiatives are shared on both DEM and County social media pages in both languages.

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?

Our community-based organizations and partners are a vital part of our emergency management program. We will continue to incorporate them into trainings and exercises to ensure we maintain strong relationships and build new connections to harder to reach populations. Our Preparedness Team is building new capacity in the local communities with their Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) trainings that are being offered in both English and Spanish to any interested individuals or community groups. We are always looking to develop new relationships and utilize the skills and abilities of our local community organizations to promote emergency preparedness and disaster readiness programs and information.