



Legislation Text

File #: 2023-0104, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Administrator's Office

Staff Name and Phone Number: Christel Querijero, 565-7071

Vote Requirement: 4/5th

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Community Disaster Immediate Needs Fund

Recommended Action:

3:00 P.M.

- A) Ratify the County Administrator's approval of \$300,000 for the pilot project to provide emergency financial assistance to residents who experienced economic losses due to the 2023 Winter Storm and authorize the Director of the Office of Equity to determine the appropriate distribution of such funds to eligible applicants.
- B) Should the Board decide to increase funding for the pilot project, authorize the County Administrator to fund the increase from the Community Disaster Immediate Needs Fund, which the Board established during Fiscal Year 2022-2023 budget hearings, or from other appropriate funding sources.

(4/5th Vote Required)

Executive Summary:

This item requests the Board to ratify the County Administrator's approval of \$300,000 from the Community Disaster Immediate Needs Fund for the pilot project to provide emergency financial assistance to residents impacted by the 2023 Winter Storm event. On January 14, 2023, the County Administrator approved an agreement with Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD), through its fiscal sponsor, Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County (CAP Sonoma) in the amount of \$300,000 to allow COAD, through CAP Sonoma, to distribute financial assistance to qualifying residents who completed the eligibility forms during the time that the physical Recovery Centers and phone hotline were operational. This item also seeks the Board's direction on whether to increase funding for the pilot project from the Community Disaster Immediate Needs Fund, or another appropriate funding source.

Discussion:

Background. In response to a series of storms that began in late December 2022, and resulted in flooding, power outages, road closures and property damage, the Director of Emergency Services issued a Proclamation of Existence of Local Emergency in the Sonoma County Operational Area on January 3, 2023. The County's Emergency Operations Center was activated on January 4, 2023. The Board ratified the local emergency proclamation on January 10, 2023. During the 2023 Winter Storm, communities along the Russian River were under evacuation warning for seven days and some areas were without power for more than a week.

On January 15, 2023, the County opened two Recovery Support Centers to support an equitable recovery for

community members who were disproportionately impacted by economic loss from the storms. In partnership with Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD), the County has created a pilot program to provide emergency financial assistance to impacted residents through these centers. Using intentionally designed screening and eligibility criteria, financial aid and services have been targeted to help people who have not been able to access unemployment and other insurance, paid sick leave or vacation, or other disaster assistance. Aid has also been directed to disproportionately impacted individuals and families who suffered economic losses during the storms, including damage to homes and vehicles; lost wages because of inability to work; lack of childcare due to school closures; and the costs of purchasing fuel and water due to the storm or replacing spoiled food. Under the pilot program, those individuals who met financial eligibility requirements and who experienced impacts from the disaster would receive between \$250 - \$800 per family, depending on the severity of the impact.

Funding Source. During Fiscal Year 2022-2023 budget hearings, your Board approved \$2,000,000 to establish the Community Disaster Immediate Needs Fund to enable community-based organizations to rapidly surge capabilities and resources to address urgent community needs in the first 30 days of a disaster. The County, through Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and the Office of Equity (OoE), is currently engaged in an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) project with COAD and COVID-19 Urgent Response and Aid (CURA) to develop a County-CBO Culturally Responsive Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery framework. This partnership and the resulting funds that your Board approved to support this project, provided the foundation for the project piloted at the Recovery Support Centers with Community Disaster Immediate Needs Funds. On January 14, 2023, the County Administrator approved an agreement with Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County (CAP Sonoma) in the amount of \$300,000 to allow CAP Sonoma to act as fiscal agent to distribute emergency financial assistance to residents impacted by the 2023 Winter Storm event. (Attachment A.)

Recovery Assistance. Recovery Support Center operations closed on January 18, 2023. 423 people received services at the Guerneville center and 651 received services at the Healdsburg center based on intake data collected by COAD and County staff. In addition, a virtual Recovery Support Center set up to serve North Coast residents served 36 people and continued to take applications until 7:00 p.m. on January 20, 2023.

Recovery Center staff and COAD partners utilized an intake tool which took applicants through a series of questions that will provide significant data for future analysis. Staff worked to align eligibility requirements with emergency financial assistance programs (e.g., CURA, Undocufund, West County Community Services). The intake tool also included an internally developed scale system that distributed points across a series of questions, which was meant to be used as a tool to appropriate the \$300,000 in funds available. See Attachment B for Eligibility Questions and Funding Basis.

In addition to the intake and application form for emergency financial assistance, County staff from the Human Services Department, the Department of Health Services, the Community Development Commission, the Economic Development Board provided County services at each location, including information about enrollment in disaster and other public benefits programs, mental health programs, Environmental Health water quality inspections, housing resources, and economic development opportunities.

While most of the visitors to the centers are expected to receive some financial assistance through the pilot project, the number of eligible individuals exceeds the initial \$300,000 by approximately \$300,000 if the

internal point system is utilized in lieu of the original fixed \$300,000 for the pilot project or some other fixed funding amount that the Board may decide to authorize. Staff is currently assessing the data and will be presenting the information to the Board at the Board meeting.

Additional Local Assistance. Residents impacted by the 2023 Winter Storm event may also qualify for direct assistance from organizations that received American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding through the County in 2022. These organizations have their own criteria for eligibility and provide a variety of assistance including financial, food, and housing. (Attachment C) In addition to the programs funded through ARPA, the Human Services department provides many services to assist vulnerable members of our community.

State and Federal Assistance. At this time, the County is not included in the President's Major Disaster Declaration for this event. Currently, there is no state or federal individual disaster assistance available to County residents. County staff have worked with representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) to ensure the full scope of the storms' impact on the County is documented and validated. FEMA and CalOES staff are preparing reports which will be used by FEMA to determine if the County should be included in the Major Disaster Declaration and if the FEMA Individual Assistance program should be made available to County residents. Given the widespread impact of the recent storms across the state, it is unclear as to when FEMA will make this determination - possibly in several weeks.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

January 10, 2023 - Board ratified the local emergency proclamation

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This item is for policy consideration. Fiscal impacts and associated budgetary adjustments will be incorporated into the consolidated budget adjustments to align with the Board's approved direction.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

NA

Attachments:

Attachment A - CAP Sonoma Agreement

Attachment B - Eligibility Questions and Funding Basis

Attachment C - ARPA Direct Assistance Organizations
Presentation

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

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