



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COUNTY MANAGER

File #: 20-636

Board Meeting Date: 9/15/2020

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Peggy Jensen, Deputy County Manager
Ken Cole, Director, Human Services Agency

Subject: Informational Report on the Emergency Financial Assistance Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an informational report on the status of the Emergency Financial Assistance Program.

BACKGROUND:

The Emergency Financial Assistance Program has historically provided financial assistance on behalf of eligible low-income residents who are experiencing challenges with maintaining their housing. The most common type of financial assistance is one-time or short-term rental assistance, however financial assistance may also include deposit assistance or assistance with utility arrears. The Emergency Financial Assistance Program is administered by Samaritan House in close collaboration with all of the Core Service Agencies, and residents can apply for assistance at any of the Core Service Agencies located throughout the County.

The Core Service Agencies utilize funding from a variety of sources to help fund the Emergency Financial Assistance Program, including funding from the County, cities, San Mateo County Strong ("SMC Strong"), private foundations, and other funders.

As many residents have experienced losses of income during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is significant need for Emergency Financial Assistance. Thus, on March 24, 2020, the Board of Supervisors (the "Board") allocated \$1 million toward the Emergency Financial Assistance Program through SMC Strong. Then, on August 4, 2020, the Board approved an additional \$2 million for the Emergency Financial Assistance Program and \$300,000 for related administrative costs as part of the County's COVID-19 Housing Impact Program, and requested a report from staff regarding the status of the Emergency Financial Assistance Program at the September 15, 2020 Board meeting.

DISCUSSION:

From April 1, 2020 to September 3, 2020, the Core Service Agencies have:

- Received 3,924 applications for emergency financial assistance
- Approved 2,446 applications for emergency financial assistance
- Distributed \$5,130,381 on behalf of households in need across the County.

The Human Services Agency is in the process of developing a contract with Samaritan House for the additional \$2.3 million for the Emergency Financial Assistance Program, which is planned to be funded with Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds. This additional funding will enable the Core Service Agencies to provide financial assistance for even more County residents.

The Emergency Financial Assistance Program has provided critical assistance to vulnerable residents to help them maintain their housing during these extraordinarily challenging times. The Core Service Agencies are continuing to receive many applications and are processing applications as received. The Core Service Agencies currently still have funding available in the Emergency Financial Assistance Program, but projections indicate a continued high level of need in the coming months, exceeding the currently available resources for Emergency Financial Assistance.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with accepting this informational report.