

**FY 2021-22 Budget Board of Supervisor Inquiry Form**

Deadline: April 30, 2021

Please email: [CAO-Budget@sonoma-county.org](mailto:CAO-Budget@sonoma-county.org)

Board Member	
Gorin	
Rabbitt	
Coursey	
Gore	X
Hopkins	

Department: Equity

Date: 5/3

Inquiry Number: BIR-68

**Request/Question:**

**Subject 5:** Equity Drive Projects for review during budget

**Response:**

Requests on impact and future needs:

- CURA: Ongoing funding and organizational role during disaster and peacetime.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has not only further provided a spotlight on the systemic inequities that exist in Sonoma County, it has also highlighted the necessity of engaging communities who have been historically marginalized in the development and implementation of services aimed at meeting immediate and long-term needs. Communities rendered vulnerable by systemic inequities are experiencing the harshest outcomes during the Pandemic and have a continued need for support services as the pandemic continues.

The current culturally responsive and community-designed safety net of services of the CURA program needs continued support. And, to ensure that the lessons learned from the community engagement efforts with the Latinx (now Equity) Health Work Group are not lost, this critical disaster response structure needs to be cemented and institutionalized into the County's disaster response over the long term. Our community based organizational partners can no longer shoulder an ad hoc emergency response effort with every subsequent disaster, and we have an opportunity to ensure that we activate these community assets with the requisite level of support and respect for their work.

The Sonoma County Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Office of Equity (OoE) have identified a potential path, pending Board's approval, to transition from CURA's disaster response services currently held by DHS to a longer term recovery structure held by the OoE (with other options being DEM or COAD) to ensure a seamless experience for disproportionately impacted communities of color who remain at high risk and with little safety net when disaster resources are exhausted. The

Office of Equity and Department of Health Services submitted a combined proposal, “Equity in Disaster Response and Resilient Recovery,” for consideration of funding CURA or similar disaster response services with the American Rescue Plan Act. While there is no funding yet identified to fund or manage the long term recovery services or contracts with CBOs, the results of the community engagement process described below will include a deeper fiscal analysis as well as possible funding sources if this process is approved.

Supporting two specific strategies – 1) outreach and community engagement and 2) case management and resource navigation, with a particular focus on food access - working together, will result in meeting current needs from the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 in communities of color as well as to cement a foundation under this service model that provides a path to equity in future disaster response as well as in long term recovery. In this way, CURA will be supported to continue to provide culturally responsive and holistic services and preventative health awareness to address immediate and ongoing needs of the pandemic. Continuing to support CURA will also allow for an opportunity for the Equity Health Work Group to co-design with the OoE and DHS what a culturally responsive long term recovery services structure looks like, as well as to identify the future needs of CURA (or its post-COVID iteration) in order to maintain the structure and collaboration created during this disaster for use in future disaster response. Essentially, the OoE will facilitate an equity design process to ensure future surge capacity for culturally responsive disaster services as well as a long term recovery structure.

Recent studies have uncovered the relationship between disasters and social inequity. (*Damages Done: The Longitudinal Impacts of Natural Hazards on Wealth Inequality* (available at: <https://academic.oup.com/socpro/article/66/3/448/5074453?login=true>)).

The recent lessons learned and the nascent collaborations that have resulted from the poly-crises of a global pandemic and concurrent wildfires provide valuable information about the efficacy and reach of investments, programs, and services to the most impacted low income communities and communities of color. The County has made great strides in strengthening its culturally-responsive disaster response capacity, including the creation of the Department of Emergency Management with bilingual and bicultural staff, its upcoming revision of a culturally-responsive Emergency Operations Plan (and the first county in the State to implement the new requirements of SB 160), and in the creation of CURA, the COVID Urgent Response and Aid Project.

The opportunity for community evaluation of recent efforts is unprecedented and ripe. Engaging with the communities in need and served by recent efforts will support strengthening the structure for the collaborative disaster response created to respond to COVID-19 and can help to cement the structure to support surge capacity when the next disaster occurs. Essentially, our lessons from COVID-19 have laid bare the need to have a structure that pops up during any disaster that has the capacity to serve people who otherwise will experience marginalization without it. Engaging with the communities who continue to experience needs to secure their long term recovery from this pandemic will also ensure that the County’s long term recovery efforts are directed and focused on community needs.

While recent experiences have lent themselves to understanding the significant need for long-term recovery services, little is known about the elements that should be included in long term recovery efforts focused on BIPOC communities in Sonoma County. As recently presented to the Board of Supervisors, the Sonoma County Office of Equity has developed an ARPA Equity Workgroup to advise the County in its investments in community based organizations to address disproportionately

negative impacts from the COVID pandemic. This project proposes that the Work Group's recommendations be utilized to assist the Equity Health Work Group in the institutionalization of a culturally responsive disaster response network of community based organizations, with capacity for both immediate and long term needs. There needs to be additional staff capacity in the Office of Equity to develop this disaster response network infrastructure as well as to develop the longer term recovery strategy, and there need to be funds to stipend community engagement efforts over the longer term.

Comprehensive community engagement with BIPOC communities will create a clearer understanding of the kind of structure necessary for immediate surge capacity and for longer term recovery needs. The DHS' excellent work in quickly gathering information for the COVID-19 Point in Time Report should be deepened and broadened.

Working with Human Services' Upstream Investments team to support an equity-driven and results based process, the Office of Equity could work with community members to identify and support local organizations with expertise and true connections to BIPOC communities to engage with the community to build the structure and identify the services needed to support the healthy recovery of BIPOC communities.

- Sonoma Secure Families: Impact and needs?

Since its inception in November 2018, the Sonoma County Secure Families Collaborative has assisted over 700 of Sonoma County's most vulnerable immigrants by providing quality legal services, mental health access, benefit enrollment assistance, and other social services. The Collaborative is the only non-profit in Sonoma County that provides pro bono removal defense for Sonoma County immigrants. In Sonoma County alone, there are an estimated 83,300 immigrants, 40,000 undocumented people, and 120,000 residents that have an immediate family or household member that is without legal status. The 2017 Sonoma Complex Fire, the 2019 Kincade Fire, and the current COVID-19 pandemic, together, have greatly exacerbated the needs of our local immigrant community.

Through this Collaborative, the County has increased the capacity of our local organizations to provide legal and social services to this community, who are an integral part of our socioeconomic framework. Your Board's leadership has been essential in drawing funds from the private sector, the philanthropic community, and other tribal and local governments. The Collaborative's purpose is to increase the capacity of local legal service organizations for immigrants in Sonoma County by enhancing their legal safety net, ensuring that families are safe and remain together, and enhancing the culturally-responsive provision of vital social and mental health services, while simultaneously promoting a sustainable model that can be exported to other communities.

Core partners of the Collaboration include the Immigration and Deportation Defense Clinic at the University of San Francisco (USF), Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, the Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) and its DREAM Center, Immigration Institute of the Bay Area (IIBA), and Corazon Healdsburg. This network of non-profits work together to meet the Collaborative's goals and the community's needs.

The Collaborative is funded by the Sonoma County Secure Families Fund, which was initially established to raise the \$2 million needed to fund low- and no-cost immigration legal and social

services over a three year period. One key component to early fundraising efforts was your Board's leadership and commitment of \$100,000 per year for three years made as part of the FY17-18 budget process. That three year period has expired and fundraising must continue to support these invaluable community services. As part of the FY 2019-20 Budget Hearings, your Board approved a 4<sup>th</sup> year of funding for FY 2020-21. That commitment of \$100,000 has not yet been finalized in FY 2021-22 or ongoing to assure that these services can continue for all immigrants in our community. A preferred approach to an annual allocation is to continue a \$150,000 per year for the next three-year allocation to ensure that the Collaborative is able to plan for its strategic growth and change to meet the changing challenges in immigration legal service provision due to changing priorities and status at the federal level. \$150,000 is now being requested as the Secure Families Collaboration has been restructured to a 501c3, providing different and higher levels of support to CBOs and partners. Funding for the Secure Families Collaboration will be potentially discussed with the Board during the Fund Balance Review in November of 2021 or included as a funding request during the Strategic Plan Implementation.

Equity Lens On Future RFPA Appointments, etc:

- Specific opportunity around use and deployment of STIMULUS Funds for community benefit.

The Office of Equity has been collaborating with the CAO, HSD, and EDB on Sonoma County's American Rescue Plan funding program design and input to identify funding areas, engage the community, and provide input on proposals for an equitable distribution of the funds. Per Board Direction, Town Halls are occurring now with the involvement of the Office of Equity to discuss with the community on how best to invest the APRA money.

After receiving applications for participation in the ARPA Community Work Group, we are happy and proud to share the names of our community members who will lead and guide us to prioritize areas for funding to ensure an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Chelsea Rose
- Daniela Bravo
- Evette Minor
- Faith Ross
- Grace Cheung-Schulman
- Gregory Fearon
- Hector Velazquez
- Herman J Hernandez
- Jon Wheeldin
- Mary Sandberg
- Patrick McDonell
- Rebekah Sammet
- Regina Brennan
- Ronit Rubinoff
- Sandra Uribe

The mission of this group will be: to establish priorities, metrics, and accountability measures for the use of ARPA funds towards the recovery of Black, Indigenous, communities of color, and low income

communities; to nourish effective community partnerships rooted in racial equity to ensure broad access to ARPA funds.

The ARPA Community Work Group began receiving Results-Based Accountability training this month to ensure that the County's work centers equity as the group, and staff, develop recommendations for the equitable distribution of ARPA funds for the Board of Supervisors approval.

#### Stipends for Appointees

- Question: Do we need to create a stipend program based on need rather than a flat fee structure? Example: Should someone who makes \$100k a year get same stipend as someone who makes \$30k a year?

The County of Sonoma has embraced a definition of equity that recognizes the importance of centering the voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color who experience disproportionate negative burdens and outcomes in comparison to their white counterparts in our processes. Equity is an **outcome** whereby you can't tell the difference in critical markers of health, well-being, and wealth by race or ethnicity, and a **process** whereby we explicitly value the voices and contributions of people of color, low income, and other underrepresented and underserved communities who identify solutions to achieve that outcome. In order to resolve long standing challenges, we recognize that the people who live closest to the problem are also closest to the solution.

However, ensuring that "community voice" is meaningfully represented in our processes can place an additional burden on community members who may have little time or resources to volunteer their time. The County of Sonoma, like many other jurisdictions, are recognizing that if these voices are so valuable, then they should be reflected as such – through fair compensation for their time.

There are two main ways in which the County pays stipends – 1) through a formal Board of Supervisors' appointment to a position with which a stipend comes; and/or 2) through contracting with community based organizations or community members to provide specific areas of feedback on a plan or process a more informal process (e.g. SB 160 implementation, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Community Equity Work Group). A demographic analysis of who receives a stipend with their appointed position would help to illuminate whether the people currently holding appointed positions on boards and commissions and receiving a stipend are reflective of the community and whether there are additional steps to be taken to ensure representation.

In both the SB 160 implementation and in the formation and scoping of the ARPA Community Equity Work Group, staff clearly articulated the kind of feedback and input they sought to ensure worked with community based organizations to mirror their stipend structure as well as to estimate the number of hours to be spent so as to ensure there was sufficient value reflected for community members' time, energy, and expertise. Additionally, properly compensating community members for their time and participation needs also to consider the impact of the relationship between local governments and their underrepresented or underserved constituents and to ensure that it does not result in a transactional relationship but in an authentic partnership.

stipend policy as a part of a larger proposal for Boards and Commissions procedures and policies

Organizational Structure For Equity Work:

- Role of Office of Equity, departments and members of Board.

[See response to BIR-121]