



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: CEO
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: June 22, 2021
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director(s) Contact Info: Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Terri Maus-Nisich, Assistant County Executive Officer
Kelly Hubbard, Director, Office of Emergency Management

DocuSigned by:
Mona Miyasato
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SUBJECT: First Amendment to the Agreement with Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County, DBA CommUnify: 2-1-1 Helpline Service for COVID-19 Community Information and Referrals

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve, ratify, and authorize the Chair of the County Board of Supervisors to execute a First Amendment to the Agreement with Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County, DBA CommUnify, a local vendor, for the provision of 2-1-1 Helpline Services for COVID-19 information and referrals. This First Amendment ratifies the Agreement, updates federal requirements, extends the Agreement term an additional 6 months through December 31, 2021, and increases funding by \$88,551.48 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$315,569.82, inclusive of \$227,018.34 under Purchase Contract CN24298, but which otherwise cancels, nullifies, and supersedes Purchase Contract CN24298; and
- b) Determine that the activity is not a "Project" subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review per CEQA Guideline Section 15378(b)(5), since the activity is an organizational or administrative activity of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda in order to ratify the Agreement and to approve a First Amendment of the Agreement with CommUnify for 2-1-1 Helpline Services to address ongoing community calls for information and linkage to resources resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:

The 2-1-1 Helpline Service is a resource connecting individuals to critical health and human services resources. These services include, but are not limited to, counseling, food assistance, domestic violence services, health care, senior services, legal assistance, and housing. The 2-1-1 Helpline Service also provides local disaster response public information to all residents of Santa Barbara County. This program operates as a resource on behalf of all County individuals 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and in over 150 languages at no cost to the caller. The Department of Social Services (DSS) oversees the current 2-1-1 Helpline Service contract.

On November 4, 2014, the Board of Supervisors approved the original Agreement for the 2-1-1 Helpline Service. CommUnify's administration of 2-1-1 Helpline Services includes resource database maintenance, reporting, community outreach, and subcontracting with Interface Children and Family Services – Ventura County's 2-1-1 call center – to provide 2-1-1 Helpline Services. The Ventura County 2-1-1 call center answers Helpline Service calls for Santa Barbara County and twenty-one other county 2-1-1 Helplines throughout California. CommUnify launched the 2-1-1 Helpline Service in March 2015.

Since its launch, the 2-1-1 Helpline Service has supported various Santa Barbara County disasters, including fire and debris flow related information and recovery referrals. The multi-county call center model provides some flexibility to handle temporary local disaster call surges. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant and persistent call surges for local information, requests for assistance, and linkage to resources – such as testing locations and appointments, vaccination appointment registration, and emergency rental assistance information. This call surge required additional call center resources to sustain. This First Amendment to the Agreement is to address the local ongoing information and assistance needs of Santa Barbara County residents from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Calls to 2-1-1 Helplines nationwide began surging to unprecedented levels as Stay-at-Home Orders were issued and community need for human services and supports increased. 2-1-1 call specialists field multiple calls daily for a myriad of COVID-19 related information and resource requests, including inquiries for emergency financial and housing assistance, emergency food resources, the status of business and school closures, how to access testing, guidance for those who are COVID-19 positive and/or exposed, and vaccination appointment information.

From March 16, 2020 through April 30, 2021, the 2-1-1 Helpline received 22,154 COVID-19 related calls. These calls were in addition to the 7,935 information and referral calls also received by the 2-1-1 Helpline for non-COVID-19 related calls funded by the ongoing contract with DSS. The combined total of COVID-19 related and non-related calls and 2-way text messages for this time period is 30,089, a four-fold increase in the number of County residents who reached out to the 2-1-1 Helpline as compared to call volume data for FY 2018-2019. Without this 2-1-1 Helpline COVID Agreement, the 9,500 allocated calls in the FY 2020-2021 DSS contract would have been over-expended within the first five months of the contract period.

In addition to the 2-1-1 Helpline, the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operated a Call Center from January 12, 2021 until May 28, 2021 to specifically assist the community with vaccine related concepts. The Call Center was open 7 days a week from 9 am – 5 pm for a majority of this period of time. The Call Center staff answered 37,618 calls from the community, of which 6,472 calls were Spanish only speaking community members. Spanish speaking community members were assisted by bilingual call center staff or with the support of contracted translation services through Language Line. The OEM and General Services worked together to implement solutions to decrease dropped calls and wait times, establish call queuing, and implement other improvements in call center operations that will be used for future events. These improvements and increased operational costs (not inclusive of staffing) are estimated to be \$88,551.48 and eligible for FEMA reimbursement. The County Call Center staffing ranged from 6 to 22 Call Takers and Call Center Manager's per day. This effort significantly reduced the burden to 2-1-1 and the costs that would have been associated with 2-1-1 upstaffing to meet this significant surge in community vaccine support.

As a result of extensive public information messaging over the past 15 months directing community members to call 2-1-1 for COVID-19 related services, the 2-1-1 Helpline has gained considerably more visibility in the community as a resource to access COVID-19 related assistance, as well as general health and human services. The 2-1-1 Helpline has been especially vital for vulnerable segments of the population disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including seniors, individuals with limited access to computer technology, migrant and agricultural workers, and non-English speaking communities. Additionally, the County Call Center, which has served as the vaccination appointment registration and information line since January 12, 2021, was demobilized on May 28, 2021 due to decreased call volume. The 2-1-1 Helpline has absorbed the remaining call volume from the County Call Center and the State's My Turn hotline is also available now. It is anticipated that county residents will continue to seek information and referrals for vaccination, testing, financial resources, senior services, mental and emotional wellness resources, and other forms of assistance for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the recovery phase.

The initial Purchase Order established a contract amount not to exceed \$49,029 for the period from March 16, 2020 through June 3, 2020 (Period 1), and a contract amount not to exceed \$177,989.34 for the period from August 22, 2020 through June 30, 2021 (Period 2), for a total contract amount not to exceed \$227,018.34. This First Amendment extends the Agreement term an additional 6 months, or through December 31, 2021, with an additional contract amount of \$88,551.48, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$315,569.82.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

This First Amendment to the Agreement provides for reimbursement for COVID-19 related 2-1-1 Helpline calls through December 31, 2021 (an additional 6-month period in alignment with FEMA guidelines). Additionally, this Agreement allows for suspension and reactivation of 2-1-1 Helpline Services based on community needs and progression of the COVID-19 incident, including significant reductions in calls or call surges. The County EOC and Joint Information Center (JIC) personnel will periodically monitor performance, call volume and review data provided by 2-1-1 to identify call trends. A JIC Call Center Liaison has been designated to provide updated incident information, assist with complex questions, and address customer service and quality concerns.

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The costs associated with the operation of a COVID-19 call center are potentially eligible for 100% reimbursement under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance program through September 30, 2021. The County plans to pursue FEMA reimbursement for these incurred costs. CommUnify will submit eligible costs to the County with the appropriate documentation required per FEMA's cost recovery policies. The County would be required to pay CommUnify for all eligible costs for which they submit appropriate documentation in accordance with this Agreement, regardless of FEMA reimbursement. Staff will pursue reimbursement of eligible expenditures from external funding sources, including any COVID-19 associated state or federal funding for any costs not approved by FEMA or costs incurred past September 30, 2021.

Funding for the original Agreement was included in the County Executive Office's (CEO) FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21 Budgets to cover CEO and Office of Emergency Management (OEM) COVID-19 incident costs, including 2-1-1 Helpline Services. Funding for the 6-month extension is included in the CEO's FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget.

Fiscal Analysis:

| <u>Funding Sources</u> | <u>FY19/20</u> | <u>FY20/21</u> | <u>FY21/22</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| General Fund | \$ 49,029.00 | \$ 177,989.34 | \$ 88,551.48 | \$ 315,569.82 |
| State | | | | |
| Federal | | | | |
| Fees | | | | |
| Other: | | | | |
| Total | \$ 49,029.00 | \$ 177,989.34 | \$ 88,551.48 | \$ 315,569.82 |

Special Instructions:

Please send a copy of the executed contract to Wesley Welch and Yaneris Muñiz.

Attachments:

Attachment A: First Amendment with CAC, DBA CommUnify
Attachment B: Agreement for Services of Independent Contractor with CAC
Attachment C: Purchase Contract CN24298

Authored by:

Wesley Welch, CEO Business Manager
Yaneris Muñiz, Emergency Manager