COVID-19 PRELIMINARY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (OAR)

SAN JOSÉ OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be understated. Public health leaders and emergency managers around the world navigated many unknowns as they learned as much as they could about the disease caused by the novel coronavirus while simultaneously scaling response operations to protect the public.

As COVID-19 response measures were rapidly ramping up, communities across the world erupted in mass protests and civil unrest due to growing concern over the socially devastating effects of systemic racism. In addition, the State of California and much of the western United States experienced an onslaught of wildfires that engulfed hundreds of thousands of acres and communities. All of the usual response strategies and social services required for managing civil unrest and mitigating wildfires needed to be processed through the "new normal" of responding amid COVID-19.

Through all of these compounding incidents, responders have demonstrated immense self-sacrifice and public service. As the response to COVID-19 stretches on, City of San José staff and their community partners continue to rally around each other, support one another, and creatively address unmet needs when they arise. This Preliminary Operational Assessment Report offers in-depth insight into the City of San José's response to COVID-19 thus far. It also offers actionable recommendations that the City can utilize to bolster its response and recovery efforts going forward as the response effort continues. It should be noted that this report assesses the City's response to COVID-19 during a distinct time period of January 2020 – October 2020. Once the pandemic ends, a formal After-Action Report (AAR) will be developed to encompass the totality of the COVID-19 event beyond the October 2020 timeframe.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of San José Office of Emergency Management (OEM) would first and foremost like to thank all San José personnel, including those staff members who were activated or assisted those activated, and all other healthcare workers for their ongoing efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst extremely difficult times, the dedication of the City employees, partner organizations, and volunteers contributed an incredible amount of resilient and innovative solutions and it has not gone unnoticed. San José OEM would like to recognize those who have provided ongoing support in order to overcome pressing challenges and meet the needs of the community.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues to require support from multiple County, City, State, and Federal responders, hundreds of volunteers, and countless San José residents, all of whom are instrumental in supporting neighbors and community members. Despite the ongoing global pandemic, the response efforts seen from all individuals and groups highlights the unity necessary to help overcome the challenges presented by COVID-19. This effort to help the community heal is universally appreciated by everyone involved in the writing of this Report, and San José OEM would like to thank everyone who offered their selflessness, dedication, and

determination throughout the process.

The authors of this Preliminary Operational Assessment Report (OAR) would also like to thank all those who contributed to the development of this report. Thank you to those who helped author the document, reviewed drafts, participated in small and big group workshops, provided data, and participated in the debriefing meeting. In addition, countless individuals provided thoughtful feedback through a general survey distributed to the City of San José EOC staff.

In particular, the Project Oversight Team for this effort deserves our appreciation for their leadership and review in the development of this document. The dedication to this Report from all involved while in the midst of an active response is commendable.

This OAR was written and developed by Constant Associates, Inc., which is a third-party, private sector emergency management and public health preparedness consulting firm contracted to compile this Report.

SCOPE

This OAR was written with the intent to comprehensively collect best practices and lessons learned during the initial COVID-19 response period of January through October 2020 in the City of San José. The purpose of the Report is to strengthen the capabilities of the City of San José (City) and address key challenges faced during the initial response period.

This Report assessed the capabilities of the City through a comprehensive and data-driven process which allowed relevant partners and stakeholders to share their observations and experiences. Because the COVID-19 pandemic response is ongoing, special attention was paid to emerging practices that have benefitted the pandemic response, and which should be continued or enhanced as the response continues. For San José, the priority to understand and meet the diverse needs across the City by leveraging the whole community approach to emergency management has been beneficial and has led to significant process improvements. By definition, the whole community approach is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. Through this approach, the City's disaster response efforts have progressively aimed to identify and bridge gaps that have disproportionately affected communities of color throughout this global pandemic.

It is the hope of the authors of this document that this OAR will present recommendations for implementation to further improve COVID-19 response efforts in the City. In addition, this OAR serves as a baseline for continued evaluation efforts, through which the City will be able to collect data at key intervals during future COVID response and continue to add to this Report.

Organization of Report

This report aimed to provide readers an overview of the City's response and recovery efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, it aims to provide context to the conditions, events, and factors that occurred during response and recovery efforts.

This report is organized to include an Incident Overview, COVID-19 Timeline, Analysis of Key Findings, and detailed write-ups about the major themes of the analysis of the San José OEM response and recovery efforts. At the end of the report, there are several appendices including incident maps and statistics, additional graphics, and acknowledgements. The end of the report also includes eight white papers as separate appendices on the following topics:

- Food and Distribution Efforts
- Development and Maintenance of Sheltering and Housing
- Services for Vulnerable Populations
- Equity in the City's Response
- Community and Economic Recovery
- EOC Organization and Support for Sustained Response
- Staffing Considerations
- Technological Solutions for Information Sharing

The core content of the report is included in the Analysis of Findings Section. This section organizes key findings into major themes. Those themes then explore the strengths and areas for improvement of the City's COVID-19 response that arose through the data collection process. Recommendations for improvement are included at the conclusion of each theme. These themes will also be indexed and given priority ratings in a separate document, the Operational Adjustment Plan.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

OVERVIEW OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In December 2019, health officials in Wuhan, a metropolitan city in the Hubei Province of the People's Republic of China, identified cases of an unknown viral pneumonia.[1] Symptoms manifested most commonly in the upper respiratory system and included fever, dry cough, and trouble breathing. As cases began to cluster, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched an investigation which confirmed the existence of a novel coronavirus now known as SARS-CoV-2. The virus causes a disease now known by the global community as COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease – 2019). As China instituted public health measures to contain the virus, officials found evidence of communal spread in surrounding countries.

By the end of January, the WHO declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Countries implemented travel restrictions, stay-at-home orders, and controlled screenings for the virus. During the development of this report, there were 46.5 million cumulative confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide, with the highest numbers of confirmed cases in the United States, Brazil, and India.

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[1] World Health Organization, Timeline of WHO's Response to COVID-19. Accessed July 30, 2020. https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/29-06-2020-covidtimeline

COVID-19 presents several key challenges for responders across sectors, including an extended incubation period between infection and the development of symptoms, and asymptomatic carriers that may present no symptoms at all. The extended incubation period of the virus and lack of initial testing capability contributed to initial spread of the disease. Leaders in public health, public service, public safety, education, and other sectors continue to implement multidisciplinary approaches and ongoing collaborative strategies to address the virus. They often sacrifice their own health and safety to ensure the well-being of the public during the ongoing global pandemic.

Challenges in the United States

As of November 1, 2020, there were a total of 9,207,364 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States. Of those cases, 3,630,579 have recovered and 230,996 were fatal.[2] Federal and state public health and safety officials continue working tirelessly to promote and enforce continued social distancing and good hygiene practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Social distancing remains one of the most effective tools to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Without public health interventions, the virus can spread easily and sustainably between people. Current research points to the virus spreading through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can reach up to 6 feet and aerosolized viral particles can remain suspended in the air for long periods of time, spreading the infection. People may also be infected with the virus but may not display any symptoms. These "asymptomatic carriers" may spread COVID-19 when in close contact with other people, unaware they have the disease.[3]

Social distancing measures address the main sources of community spread by physically distancing people from each other which limits the number of people that can spread the disease. States that were early hotspots for COVID-19 such as California, New York, and Washington responded by implementing strict stay-at-home orders. These orders focused state efforts on educating the public on social distancing in order to reduce both the overall number of infections and the number of cases occurring at any one time. This concept is known as, "flattening the epidemic curve," which helps to prevent hospitals from becoming overwhelmed.

Hospitals continue to serve on the frontlines of this global pandemic. Their employees work tirelessly during this unprecedented public health crisis to serve their communities, all while potentially exposing themselves to an invisible enemy. Their only protection against exposure is access to a supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), which includes face masks, face shields, medical gowns, and other protective gear. The increased demand for resources including PPE, ventilators, antiseptics, and cleaning supplies, by the healthcare system, first

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[2] Coronavirus Resource Center, COVID-19 Dashboard. Johns Hopkins University. Accessed August 4, 2020. https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html

[3] Centers for Disease Control, How to Protect Yourself and Others. Accessed August 4, 2020.

responders, and the general public, caused a worldwide shortage of supplies. This impact was especially felt in the United States. The PPE supplies in the Strategic National Stockpile were approximately 90% depleted by April, after distributing equipment to state and local governments.[4]

The United States experienced a shortage of ventilators in hospitals hardest hit by the disease in the early months of response. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) continues to lead the federal response for PPE requests, distributing N95 respirators, surgical masks, face shields, surgical gowns, and gloves to 53 states and territories. Additionally, the President of the United States used the Defense Production Act to boost the acquisition of N95 masks and the production of ventilators. Companies such as Ford Motors and General Motors are also pivoting from their regular activities to manufacture critically needed resources including face shields and ventilators.[5]

Public health and safety officials continue to raise awareness of the effectiveness of social distancing strategies through ongoing public information campaigns that provide continued public health guidance to the public. Due to the fast-paced nature of the COVID-19 global pandemic, interactive tools such as the CDC's COVID-19 Data Tracker and the Johns Hopkins University of Medicine COVID-19 Dashboard provide real-time updates on cases and infections in the United States and abroad.[6]

State and local health departments are also expanding efforts to increase contact tracing of COVID-19 cases. Contract tracing is a public health strategy focused on identifying and isolating people exposed to an infection and is used to contain the spread of infectious disease. Internationally, countries such as China and South Korea that were among the first to be impacted by the virus benefitted from ramping up contact tracing efforts to contain its spread. In the United States, state governments have dedicated significant amounts of staff and resources toward expanding contact tracing efforts, including partnerships with university centers and local health departments. Increasing federal funding for expansion of contact tracing remains a top priority in the fight to contain COVID-19.

The United States experienced challenges when expanding testing for COVID-19. Federal regulations continue to adapt to the need for robust screening across the United States. The initial test the CDC provided to state and local health departments did not work correctly, forcing the CDC to send out new tests. State governors across the country reported a shortage of availability of COVID-19 test kits and the reagents needed for those kits to work. This lapse in testing early on in the pandemic enabled exponential growth of cases.[7] As of the writing of this report, recent expansion efforts have increased United States testing rates to approximately 500,000 people per day for a total of over 107 million test results reported to the CDC.[8]

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[4] Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Emergency. Accessed August 5, 2020. https://www.phe.gov/emergency/events/COVID19/SNS/Pages/FAQ.aspx#sns-depleted

[5] Ford Motors, Personal Protection Equipment Product Information. http://corporate.ford.com/social-impact/coronavirus/ppe.html
General Motors, General Motors Commitment. https://www.gm.com/our-stories/commitment/face-masks-covid-production.html

[6] Centers for Disease Control, COVID-19 Data Tracker. https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data- tracker/#cases_casesinlast7days

[7] Shear, Michael D, et al., "The Lost Month: How a Failure to Test Blinded the U.S. to Covid-19." The New York Times, March 28, 2020. www.nytimes.com/2020/03/28/us/testingcoronavirus-pandemic.html

[8] Centers for Disease Control, Testing Data in the U.S. Updated August 5, 2020. https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcases- updates%2Ftesting-in-us.html#testing_testsperformed

Many states already experienced a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the early summer months. While some states have made significant progress to bring down their case numbers from the summer surge, others are still responding to high numbers of daily new cases. As of the writing of this report, 30 states/territories have reported an increase in their daily cases per capita over a two-week period. An additional 23 states/territories have reported their daily cases per capita remaining the same over that same two-week period.[9] While some states are experiencing a "wave" effect of spikes and drops in daily cases, others have experienced one large "wave" of the disease. This presents an ongoing dilemma for economic relief initiatives. Public leaders are tasked with finding balance between economic recovery efforts and the social distancing strategies that reduce the risk of increasing COVID-19 spread.

In addition to containing the disease in the face of new spikes in cases, officials are working to develop future recovery strategies in preparation for the deployment of a vaccine. Multiple COVID-19 vaccines have entered trial phases and will require efficient systems of distribution to build population herd immunity to the disease.

The Impact of COVID-19 on State and Local Levels

The first case of COVID-19 in California was identified on January 25. The patient had recently returned from travel in Wuhan, China. As of September 30, 2020, California recorded a total of 810,625 cases of COVID-19, and 15,792 deaths. Santa Clara County has recorded over 21,233 positive cases of COVID-19 and 318 deaths. 14,054 of those positive cases are within the City of San José.[10] The hardest hit counties in the state include Los Angeles (257,000 cases), Riverside (56,374 cases), and Orange (52,645 cases).[11]

In early January, before public interest began to rise, leaders at the City of San José began seeking out information about the virus. They conducted outreach to global city partners in Singapore and Hong Kong, among other cities, to understand the scope of the virus and ensure preparedness. In mid-late January, an interdisciplinary team of City of San José Emergency Operations Center (EOC) leaders established a regular meeting regimen to monitor coronavirus in its early evolution, discuss the potential impacts it would have on the City, and explore preparedness measures the City could take. The first confirmed COVID-19 case in Santa Clara County was declared January 31, 2020, making it California's third case.[12] On February 3, 2020, Santa Clara County became the first county to declare a local health emergency.[13] City of San José leaders swiftly began increasing preparation for a potential shutdown, and began to consult the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and Pandemic Plan.

The City activated the EOC on March 4, 2020 to conduct emergency operations, prepare the staff to work from home, and determine San José's response to COVID-19 impacts and community needs. On March 16, 2020, six Bay Area counties, including Santa Clara County,

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[9] The New York Times, Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count. Updated August 5, 2020.
[10] Santa Clara County Emergency Operations Center, Dashboard. Updated September 30, 2020.
https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/dashboard-cases-by-zip-code-and-city.aspx
[11] California Department of Public Health, COVID-19 Dashboard. Updated September 30, 2020.
https://update.covid19.ca.gov/
[12] CalMatters, Timeline: California Reacts to Coronavirus. Updated September 22, 2020.
https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/04/gavin-newsom-coronavirus-updates-timeline/
[13] CalMatters, Timeline: California Reacts to Coronavirus. Updated September 22, 2020.
https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/04/gavin-newsom-coronavirus-updates-timeline/

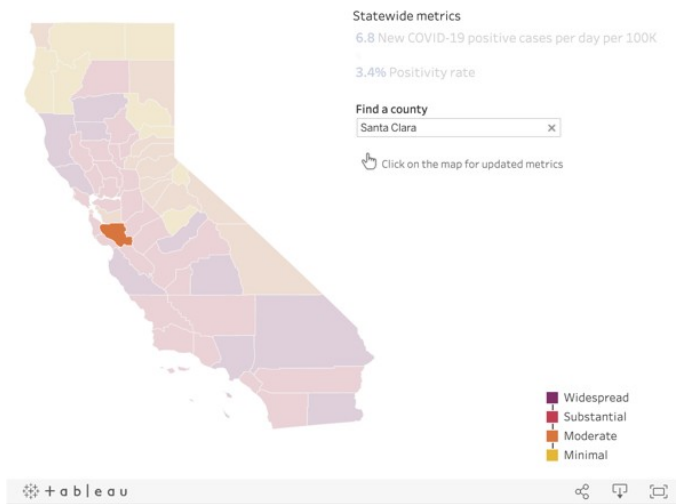declared shelter in place orders effective the following day. By this time, the City of San José had already moved most departments online, doing so over the weekend, in approximately 48 hours. On March 19, 2020, the State of California issued a state-wide shelter in place order. By April 6, 2020 the 14-day rolling average of new daily cases in Santa Clara County was around 56.6, and by its peak on August 23, 2020 was around 288.1.[14]

At the state level, efforts to contain the disease continue by disseminating guidance on healthy personal hygiene practices, encouraging social distancing, and providing services to vulnerable populations. As of the writing of this report, California released a new four- color blueprint for reducing COVID-19 spread in the state, which allows counties meeting specific criteria to resume public activities based on the county risk level. The state has also introduced California Connected, a contact tracing program that offers a confidential and simple process to assess symptoms, offer testing, and discuss next steps. The State has offered relief initiatives targeting vulnerable populations, including a meal delivery program for seniors, funding for foster youth, and additional funding for the acquisition of PPE, ventilators, and other needed equipment San José has a population of over 1,026,658 residents.

Current tier assignments as of October 13, 2020

All data and tier assignments are updated weekly every Tuesday.

Statewide metrics

6.8 New COVID-19 positive cases per day per 100K

3.4% Positivity rate

Find a county

Santa Clara ✕

Click on the map for updated metrics

- Widespread
- Substantial
- Moderate
- Minimal

+ableau

The City of San José serves its residents in ongoing response efforts and continues to work in collaboration with its partners at the local, state, and federal levels. It continues to serve as a center for the City's ongoing measured response and recovery efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community based organizations, Santa Clara County, and other local partners continue to work closely with the City of San José to house and feed many residents within the City. By working with local partners, they were able to expand housing and meal capacity exponentially. They also held consistent press releases and produced "Flash Reports"[15] to keep the community updated on new developments.

In addition to addressing public health and economic concerns, the City seeks to address social anxiety surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic as well. The City continues to provide guidance and resources for schools, senior care, childcare, businesses and employers, and the community at large. These resources include infographics for distribution to populations at elevated risk, guidance for international travelers, guidance for mask usage, guidance for cleaning and disinfection, printed educational materials, and videos.

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[14] California Department of Public Health, COVID-19 Dashboard. Updated September 30, 2020. https://update.covid19.ca.gov/

[15] City of San José, Emergency Notifications Dashboard. Updated January 26, 202. COVID-19.ca.gov. Blueprint for a Safer Economy. October 13, 2020. https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/

While social distancing strategies remain the most effective tool to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the City must continue to strike a balance for community members struggling to feel connected to their neighbors and community. The City also recognizes equity concerns, and the need to focus inclusion and recovery efforts on hardest hit communities. Among them, the Latinx, Asian, and Black populations, nationwide and within San José, have experienced the most disproportionate impacts from COVID-19 as the response effort continues. It should be noted that this report assesses the City's response to COVID-19 during a distinct time period of January 2020 – October 2020. Once the pandemic ends, a formal After-Action Report (AAR) will be developed to encompass the totality of the COVID-19 event beyond the October 2020 timeframe.[16]

County risk level	Adjusted case rate* 7-day average of daily COVID-19 cases per 100K with 7-day lag, adjusted for number of tests performed	Positivity rate** 7-day average of all COVID-19 tests performed that are positive
WIDESPREAD Many non-essential indoor business operations are closed	**More than 7** Daily new cases (per 100k)	**More than 8%** Positive tests
SUBSTANTIAL Some non-essential indoor business operations are closed	**4-7** Daily new cases (per 100k)	**5 – 8% and 5.3 – 8% health equity metric** Positive tests
MODERATE Some indoor business operations are open with modifications	**1 – 3.9** Daily new cases (per 100k)	**2 – 4.9% and 2.2 – 5.2% health equity metric** Positive tests
MINIMAL Most indoor business operations are open with modifications	**Less than 1** Daily new cases (per 100k)	**Less than 2% and Less than 2.2% health equity metric** Positive tests

*Small counties (those with a population less than 106,000) may be subject to alternate case assessment measures for purposes of tier assignment.
**Health equity metric is not applied for small counties.

Image displaying the table of County risk levels, case rates, and positivity

Prior to the pandemic, these communities have navigated vulnerability caused by various systemic, socio-economic barriers. These barriers include but are not limited to the accessibility of healthcare, education, employment, connectivity through technology, and disability support. The areas within the City of San José that have been hardest hit by COVID-19 impacts include the 95122, 95113, 95116, 95111, 95110, 95127, 95121, 95002, 95117, 95112, 95133 zip codes. These systemic inequities and their impacts on the community have been on the City's radar throughout the COVID-19 response. As indicated throughout this report, and particularly in Section 7, the City has taken deliberate strides spanning its COVID-19 response effort to mitigate the disproportionate adverse effects on these communities. In October 2020, the City launched an initiative through its Geographic Information System (GIS) Team to develop dashboards that more acutely track the impacts of COVID-19 across zip codes to promote equitable support for the City's vulnerable communities and populations.

Additionally, the response has magnified inclusion for those with access and functional needs (AFN) and language access needs. The AFN population refers to individuals who have developmental, intellectual, or physical disabilities, chronic conditions, injuries, limited English proficiency or non-English speaking, seniors, children, living in institutionalized settings, low-income, experiencing homelessness, transportation disadvantaged, or pregnant.[17] Those within the AFN community have experienced a range of challenges throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response.

As of October 14, 2020, the State of California has moved Santa Clara County to the Orange Tier, indicating that the risk level is "Moderate" so some indoor businesses may open with safety modifications. The City of San José has synced its response plan with the State's, moving it to Stage 8 of the Pandemic Response Plan.[18]

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[16] American Academy of Pediatrics – A Framework to Approach Racial Health Inequities During the COVID-19 Pandemic

[17] California Code, Government Code - GOV § 8593.3

[18] COVID-19.ca.gov. Blueprint for a Safer Economy. October 13, 2020. https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

1 - EOC ACTIVATION

SUMMARY

The City of San José Office of Emergency Management (SJOEM) is responsible for coordinating programs and efforts across City departments to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and mitigate natural and man-made disasters and emergencies.[19] During the early weeks of January 2020, before there were any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States, the City proactively assumed a forward- leaning posture by assembling a small team of cross-functional and interdisciplinary EOC leaders who convened daily to closely monitor the situation and prepare the City for a coordinated response.

Graphic of essential workers wearing face masks coverings

On January 24, 2020, San José established its Pandemic Management Team and activated its Pandemic Response Plan at Stage 1, Monitoring. The first case of COVID-19 within the state of California was confirmed the following day.[20] One week later, on January 31, 2020, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed within the County of Santa Clara. On February 3, 2020, the County of Santa Clara became the first US county to declare a public health emergency in response to COVID-19. The County's Board voted unanimously in favor of the emergency declaration on February 10, 2020.[21]

The City escalated its outreach and coordination efforts to the County with the aim of establishing a Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS)[22] and to ensure that the City could effectively implement the County's public health and safety guidelines while preparing for the increasing probability of discontinuing normal business functions. Despite participating in calls with the Operational Area, the County did not respond to the City's request.

The California Governor's Office and the County of Santa Clara's Department of Public Health announced that, effective March 16, 2020, protective measures would go into effect to slow the spread of COVID-19 to include the immediate halt of all non-essential services to the public.[23] The City's EOC team worked tirelessly through the weekend of March 13-15, 2020 to finalize the City's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) which enabled the City to seamlessly shut down

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[19] San José Office of Emergency Management https://www.sanJoséca.gov/your- government/departments/emergency-management

[20] City of San José Proclamation of Local Emergency

[21] ABC 7 News, Coronavirus: Santa Clara County to declare local health emergency, resident under quarantine shares support. Accessed October 3, 2020. https://abc7news.com/5919991/

[22] Small Group Workshop

[23] County of Santa Clara, Public Health Department https://www.sccgov.org/sites/opa/newsroom/Pages/covid-19-nonessential-services-close.aspx

its public-facing business functions.[24] The City conducted a conference call on Sunday, March 15, 2020 to officially mark the shift from normal to emergency operations and fully activate its EOC.

STRENGTHS

FINDING 1:
EOC leaders assumed a proactive preparedness and response posture.

Table 1: City of San Jose Pandemic Response Stages

	1 MONITORING	2 LOW	3 MEDIUM	4 HIGH	5 EXTREMELY HIGH
RISK	• No risk to local population	• Low risk to local population	• Medium risk to local population	• High risk to local population	• Extremely high risk to local population
OUTBREAK STATUS	• Emerging Disease present in other locations • No known cases in local population	• Local cases contained • No outbreaks • Containment	• Local cases increasing but still low • Outbreak possible • Containment shifts to Mitigation	• Number of infection cases increasing rapidly • Outbreak likely or imminent	• Full-Blown Epidemic • High # of cases of infection • Increasing mortality
CITY RESPONSE	• Plan • Learn about emergency threat	• Prepare Communications • Order supplies • Proactive cleaning	• Scale up communications • Accelerate preparation	• Service Modification • Social Distancing • Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)	• Shut down non-essential services • Protective Equipment for Employees
EOC ACTIVATION	• None • Activate Pandemic Team	• Regular monitoring • Review and update plans	• Situation Room Activation ○ EPIO ○ OEM	• Partial Activation ○ Plans Section ○ Operations Section ○ EPIO	• Full EOC Activation

Table of City of San José Pandemic Response Stages.

It was highlighted during small and big group workshops that the City of San José's EOC leaders made the early decision to begin convening to monitor the unfolding events surrounding coronavirus well before there were any immediate threats to the local community. The group proactively repurposed a working group that was previously established for Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events and leveraged that existing infrastructure to closely monitor the pandemic and explore strategies for protecting the City's public health.[25] The group conducted outreach to counterparts in COVID-affected nations abroad to gather intelligence and further support the City's preparedness efforts. The group recruited staff who had diverse skillsets and the necessary subject matter expertise to address key strategy and continuity decisions. It was particularly helpful that the group included staff with

extensive public health knowledge which empowered scientifically-sound decisions thus enhancing the City's ability to promote the health and wellbeing of its employees while gearing up for a robust, safe, and effective pandemic response. This proactive approach directly aligns with the first phase of the City's three-phased response process – Increased Readiness.[26]

Recommendation 1.1: The City hired a consultant, Constant Associates, to lead a process of documenting best practices and lessons learned from this EOC leadership group to incorporate them into applicable response plans.

Recommendation 1.2: The City should continue to formalize this cross-functional and interdisciplinary group as a permanent element of the EOC, ensuring staff are trained and rotated into the group to promote continuity and diverse perspectives.

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[24] Small Group Workshop
[25] Small Group Workshop
[26] City of San José 2019 Emergency Operations Plan Base Plan pg. 4

Recommendation 1.3: The City should continue to design and conduct trainings and exercises that build proficiency among City employees for serving in this cross-functional and interdisciplinary capacity within the EOC.

FINDING 2:
**San José staff exhibited an unrelenting commitment to prepare
the City for emergency operations.**

One of the major lessons learned from the February 2017 floods in San José was that the City needed to develop a comprehensive COOP. While the importance of the COOP development was recognized by the City, the resources to complete the planning process were earmarked for the latter portion of the City's three-year corrective action implementation cycle. In January of 2020, the City had not yet made any significant strides with developing its COOP and, therefore, had to essentially start from ground zero during the onset of COVID-19.[27]

Amid the chaos and uncertainty of the pandemic climate, EOC leadership launched a city-wide COOP development process through which it engaged with all department heads to determine which public-facing services, core business functions, and employees would be classified as essential if the City was ordered to shut down its services to the public. This COOP development process yielded mounds of paperwork containing data from across the City's departments. Under the circumstances and short time frame, it was a massive and laborious undertaking but proved to be a critical enabler of operational success.

Recommendation 1.4: The City should establish a means by which to formalize the COOP and acknowledge the and celebrate the hard work and unity of effort that was required to produce a COOP-like plan during COVID-19.

Recommendation 1.5: The City should establish a COOP program that routinely updates the formalized COOP and facilities training within EOC departments on what happens if the COOP would need to be activated.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

FINDING 1:
There is a lack of clarity around the City's authorities when activating its EOC.

Online survey participants and small group workshop stakeholders highlighted the fact that many City staff including some department heads demonstrated a general lack of clarity concerning expectations and authorities when the City activates its EOC. It should be understood that Section 203 of the City Charter provides for the formulation of plans to use all personnel, facilities, and equipment of government for emergency actions in the event of a disaster.[28] While it is the Office of Emergency Management's role to lead the EOC, a deliberate City-wide effort is needed in order to educate all City staff about the authorities and expectations surrounding the activation of the EOC.

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[27] Small Group Workshop
[28] City of San José, City Charter. Accessed September 30, 2020.
https://www.sanJoséca.gov/home/showdocument?id=13907

Recommendation 1.6: The City should engage all department heads in a process of building upon recent COOP efforts to ensure that department-specific plans are in place for supporting EOC activations in accordance with City Charter, Section 203.

Recommendation 1.7: The City should determine the best strategy for promoting awareness of City Charter, Section 203 as part of its existing EOC training program and the City's new employee orientation program.

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FINDING 2:
Activation procedures and expectations were unclear for many City staff.

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On several accounts, small group workshop stakeholders expressed the confusion and frustration they experienced when they were called upon to fill a role within the EOC. Some of those who were called upon after the initial EOC team was already activated stated that they simply received a calendar invite without any detailed explanation of what the expectations were.[29] It should be understood that the number of staff required to respond to COVID-19 surpassed the number of City staff who were familiar with EOC operations. In fact, approximately 80% of the City staff who served in some EOC capacity did not have prior EOC training and/or experience. Additionally, the City has a policy stipulating that all public employees (outside of public safety) can be called upon as Disaster Service Workers (DSWs) providing services and aid during response and recovery phases of a declared emergency or event. Nonetheless, the onus to prepare City staff for successfully onboarding the EOC team and support emergency operations is on the City.

Recommendation 1.8: The City should evaluate how staffing plans were developed for COVID-19; an unusually long-term incident. Establish a staffing process that "deepens the bench" and a program that selects and trains people for the proper positions with other departments.

Recommendation 1.9: The City should refine the documented lessons learned and best practices from the COVID-19 EOC staffing approach and codify them as a repeatable strategy should the City need to rapidly scale up the EOC organization in the future when there are known EOC training and/or experience gaps among City staff.

Recommendation 1.10: The City should develop EOC orientation messaging, dispatch instructions, and other materials to include short videos that can be utilized as just-in-time training for new EOC recruits.

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[29] Small Group Workshop

2 - EOC OPERATIONS

SUMMARY

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has transformed life as we know it. Not since the influenza pandemic of 1918 has a pathogen had such an impact on the economy, health care systems, and day-to-day life on a global scale. The City of San José fully activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on March 4, 2020 to implement the County of Santa Clara's public health orders and manage a coordinated response to COVID-19. It is important to understand the role of the EOC, what its authorities are, and how it functions. According to the City's Municipal Code, the EOC for the City of San José is the centralized coordinating element for all activities of the emergency organization as set forth in City Code. The emergency organization is comprised of all officers and employees of the City. The EOC Director is designated by the Director of Emergency Services which is the City Manager. The Municipal Code further states that the EOC Director is responsible for requesting or issuing a proclamation of local emergency, controlling and directing the efforts of the emergency organization, directing cooperation between, and coordination of, services and staff of the emergency organization, and representing San José on matters pertaining to emergencies. The EOC Director is further empowered, in the event of a proclamation of local emergency, to requisition personnel or material of any city department or agency.[30]

The County functions as the Operational Area (OA) and is responsible for leading regional coordination efforts in response to disasters, particularly when the size and scope of the disaster overwhelms the region's normal operational capacity and resource supply.[31] Well before the City's EOC was fully activated, EOC leaders made numerous attempts through various outreach efforts to align with the County of Santa Clara. Being aligned with the OA is an essential first step for the City to properly function within the State Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The City's preparedness efforts and planning documents, particularly its 2019 EOP Base Plan and associated annexes, have been designed in a manner that promotes seamless integration with SEMS, NIMS, and the Incident Command System (ICS).
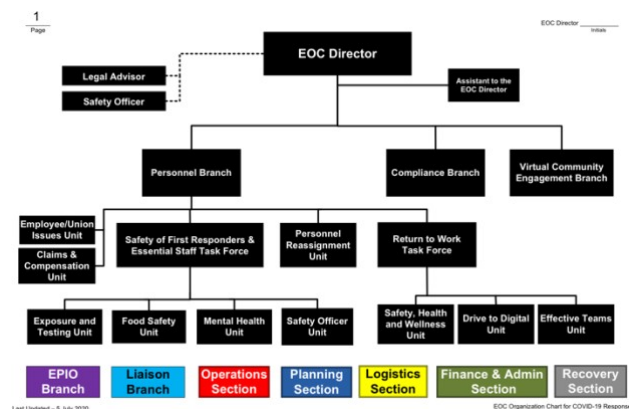
EOC Organization chart

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[30] City of San José – City Municipal Code Chapter 8.08
[31] Santa Clara County OEM Website https://www.sccgov.org/sites/oes/about-us/Pages/about_oes.aspx

Typical EOC staffing requirements for most disasters facing San José call for approximately 50-60 City employees.[32] At the height of the COVID-19 response to date, the San José EOC organization accounted for more that 700 City staff.[33] This 10x growth in required staffing combined with the rapidly evolving demands of the response presented challenges for the EOC leadership.[34]

By and large, the City functioned within the framework established by its EOP in response to COVID-19. However, after comparing the EOC organizational structure the City implemented in response to COVID-19 to the organizational structure outlined in the City's EOP, it was observed that the COVID-19 structure deviated from two of the basic tenants of ICS – Unity of Command and Span of Control.

According to ICS, Unity of Command means that all individuals who are assigned to a role within the organizational structure have a designated supervisor to whom they report. Unity of Command promotes clear reporting relationships and aims to eliminate the confusion caused by staff receiving multiple, conflicting directives. Also, within the ICS framework, Span of Control refers to the optimal range of individuals or resources that one supervisor should manage to sustain managerial effectiveness. As such, maintaining effective span of control means that each supervisor should have between 3 and 7 individuals or resources directly reporting to them.[35]

The City's COVID-19 EOC organizational structure reflects an unconventional construct which exceeds span of control and can be assumed to have contributed to a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities throughout the organization.

From the outset of EOC operations, one of the initial priorities was to equip the City's essential staff with the technology tools they needed to perform their roles remotely. By and large, the City's Information Technology (IT) department executed this colossal task outstandingly and expeditiously. Of the 67 EOC staff who participated in the San José COVID-19 Operational Assessment Report survey, 81% either agreed or strongly agreed that they had the technology and/or equipment they needed to complete their responsibilities.[36] As COVID-19 response operations ramped up, the EOC organization became more intentional about leveraging the use of data to gain clearer pictures of the most critical needs faced by the most vulnerable populations within the community. That data then empowered the creation of service models for effectively meeting those needs.

It was underscored during small and big group workshops that EOC operations and the Emergency Notifications webpage have been established and driven by smart and compassionate leaders who care about vulnerable populations. The EOC's Digital Inclusion Branch developed a Priority Index which has been adopted and utilized by almost all of the EOC branches.
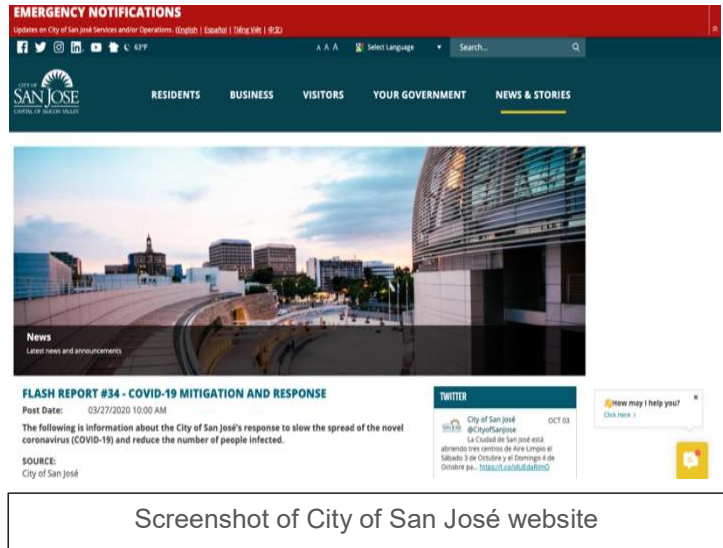
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[32] Small Group Workshop
[33] San José COVID-19 EOC Action Plans
[34] Small Group Workshop
[35] FEMA ICS-100 Introduction to the Incident Command System
[36] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey

The use of data throughout the COVID-19 response has helped improve equity with regards to service delivery to the community.[37] The COVID-19 response marked the first time in the City's history that it stood up a dedicated Language Access Unit during a response. This unit ensures that critical health and safety messaging to prevent the spread of COVID-19 will reach and resonate with marginalized communities across the City, especially those with limited English proficiency.[38] As a first-time effort, it took time to streamline tasks and establish a seamless workflow between the EPIO and the Language Access Unit, which resulted

Screenshot of City of San José website

in some of the early Flash Reports not being translated as quickly as they could have been.[39] The teams continued to refine their workflow and ultimately ensured equity in crisis communications across the City's most widely spoken languages. The Language Access Unit's role is critical as it regularly translates, coordinates translations, and trans-creates EOC products and messages into five different languages, other than English: Spanish, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, and Cantonese, thus making the City of San José a leader among the nation's 25 largest cities

"The use of SCRUM data and visual model has helped clarify how tasks flow from inception to completion. This has been a great tool for accountability and even better for awareness."

In conjunction with professional translation, the Language Access Unit utilizes bilingual City staff to review translations for accuracy and local understanding.

Given its sheer size, one of the biggest challenges experienced by the EOC organization has been maintaining and projecting a common operating picture in a timely manner for all staff to glean from. To address this gap, the EOC leadership team established redundant reporting mechanisms and products for EOC staff, departmental staff, City officials, community partners, and the public. Included in this list of products are the EOC Situation Status (Sit Stat) Reports and more than 132 flash reports which the EOC has disseminated as well as published to the City's website since March 6, 2020.[40] In addition, the EOC has produced and disseminated 20 EOC Action Plans as of the date of this report. Action Plans were developed weekly for operational periods 1-14, then shifted to a monthly cycle beginning the second week of June 2020.

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[37] Small Group Workshop
[38] Small Group Workshop
[39] Stakeholder Interview
[40] San José OEM Website https://www.sanJoséca.gov/news-stories/news/emergency-notifications

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FINDING 1:
EOC staff remained adaptable to address unmet community needs while operating in a rapidly evolving and dynamic response environment.

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Throughout the COVID-19 response, the City of San José has displayed unmatched adaptability with keen focus on serving its public. One example of this is when the EOC launched a Local Assistance and Economic Recovery Task Force to help connect San José's most vulnerable residents to their most basic life-sustaining needs during the pandemic. The Task Force recognized that the traditional local assistance model where disaster-affected community members would visit a physical location and meet face-to-face with staff and volunteers would not be safe during COVID-19. The Task Force focused on non-traditional ways to provide support around issues including but not limited to food, shelter, health care, and reliable income.[41] To comply with the shelter-in-place public health orders, the Task Force established and launched a Virtual Local Assistance Center (VLAC) for community members to access information and resources directly from the City through its website and 311 phone system.

Woman speaking on camera about the City of San José's Virtual Local Assistance Center. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9YOo1cngec

Online survey participants as well as small and big group workshop stakeholders highlighted that some of the EOC's adaptability during the COVID-19 response was required for maneuvering through the City's non-disaster systems and protocols. This includes but is not limited to challenge experienced with the City's procurement policies and permissions as well as the EOC being expected to perform/manage both EOC and departmental work. While it is well accepted that these systems and protocols exist for very good reason, the events and lessons learned from the past 6 months have uncovered some systemic inefficiencies between the City's normal and disaster operations.

Since March 2020, EOC staff have not only managed a massive and ongoing response to COVID-19, they have also managed civil unrest, large gatherings for peaceful protests, PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs, as well as historic wildland fire activity.

Recommendation 2.1: The City should launch a short satisfaction survey to collect feedback from those who have received support through the VLAC with the aim of making immediate modifications and enhancement to the process.

Recommendation 2.2: The City should hold an additional hot wash for EOC leaders to discuss the internal barriers to community-focused emergency operations that were experienced during the initial and continued COVID-19 response. The group should seek to identify any inefficiencies that adversely affect the EOC's ability to swiftly and effectively respond to and recover from disasters and address the community's most pressing needs.

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[41] San José Website https://www.sanJoséca.gov/news-stories/news/virtual-local-assistance-center

Recommendation 2.3: Continue developing the City's multi-year training and exercise program (MYTEP) to include scenarios such as pandemic, and production and development of online/virtual training for onboarding purposes for personnel who have not previously received trainings.

FINDING 2:
The EOC prioritized and focused on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations within the City of San José and surrounding areas.

Through a number of initiatives and distinct response actions, the City of San José has shown an incredible commitment to serving those who are most vulnerable to COVID-19. Small and big group workshop stakeholders highlighted the significance of the City accepting the request for support from the County of Santa Clara to manage its county-wide food provision program for individuals and families impacted by COVID-19. The City created its own food and necessities function and creatively leveraged strategic partnerships with businesses, community-based organizations (CBOs), and volunteers to meet the demand. The City deployed over 6000 volunteers to support the meal distribution effort. The number of meals provided grew exponentially.[42]

City of San José supports those experiencing homelessness during COVID-19.

To infuse data into the City's ongoing feeding and housing operations, the EOC's Digital Inclusion Branch developed a Priority Index – a GIS tool for determining where the greatest needs for resources are throughout the region. This tool has yielded significant positive impacts and has enabled the EOC team to drive effectiveness in service delivery.

The City implemented a number of programs to provide new services to support individuals experiencing homelessness such as Cal OES provided trailers, hotel/motel room rental as well as the provision of sanitation stations at encampments.[43] The City also implemented innovative programs to provide services to support to individuals who needed to quarantine and isolate including the provision of a hotel/motel room rental and nutritious meals.

In addition, the City worked closely with businesses and CBOs to establish the Silicon Valley Strong Campaign – an online tool that allows vulnerable and at-risk populations to identify the food, housing, and other resources that are nearest to their location.

The City launched outreach efforts aimed at connecting with and understanding the needs of

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[42] Small Group Workshop
[43] EOC Action Plans

populations with disabilities and others with AFN amid COVID-19.[44] These outreach efforts included engaging with AFN communities and community-based organizations to assist those with limited English proficiency. This involved the Language Access Unit to provide translations and access to important digital information.

Additionally, the Housing Department and Office of Immigrant Affairs worked with undocumented workers and people experiencing homelessness. Acutely aware of these challenges and needing to meet them, the City made a concerted effort to fix these pervasive issues. To enable technology access among marginalized communities and school-aged youth, the City established a process for disseminating thousands of mobile hot spots as well as connection devices.

Recommendation 2.4: EOC leaders should facilitate a city-wide process of devising a targeted, culturally appropriate, rapidly-deployable, and repeatable response strategy facing the specific communities and populations within the City that are the most vulnerable to the catastrophic impacts of disasters.

Recommendation 2.5: The City should advocate for a meeting with the County of Santa Clara and Cal OES to review the working relationships across each SEMS level and to collaboratively devise a mutual aid strategy for wide-spread disasters impacting the Santa Clara OA.

Recommendation 2.6: The City should advocate for a meeting with CADRE and representatives from the current roster of CBOs that it has worked alongside during COVID-19 to promote ongoing collaboration before, during, and after the City's EOC activations and to establish partnership criteria, capability statements, and a pre-vetted list of CBOs the City can call upon during future disasters.

FINDING 3:
EOC leadership and staff demonstrated a steadfast commitment to the EOC's mission and fostered a safe and collaborative working environment to execute it.

Early on, EOC leadership established three operating principles to help shape the cultural tenants of the EOC organization. They are as follows:

1. Compassion in Action
2. Open, Candid, and Direct Communication
3. One Team

The EOC leadership team also developed the City's Roadmap to the COVID-19 response. The Roadmap is an evolving structure designed to track major activities related to the following 8 high priority actions:

1. Compliance of the "Shelter in Place" Public Health Order
2. Continuity of Essential City Services
3. Supporting our Vulnerable and At-Risk Communities and Populations
4. Powered by People – Support our people, so they can act
5. Supporting Valley Strong Campaign to manage donations and contributions
6. Communications and Engagement with the Community

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[44] EOC Action Plans

7. Funding and Cost Recovery
8. Future Planning

Creation of the Roadmap early on in the operation proved to be a critical step for setting priorities and expectations for the work that needed to be accomplished.

The City took deliberate strides to create a safe working environment for City employees who were performing essential functions. The City provided adequate PPE and implemented COVID-19 testing for essential City workers. While procuring the appropriate PPE was initially a challenge, the City has worked to maintain a sufficient supply of PPE for City staff, which will allow them to safely continue their departmental and/or EOC work.[45] The City has also made provisions to maintain supportive isolation options for City staff who have been exposed to COVID-19 while in the line of work.

> "Working outside departmental silos without layers of bureaucracy and with a sense of possibility made work more efficient, results-oriented and satisfying."
>
> *- Online Survey Participant*

Small group workshop stakeholders expressed appreciation for the overarching bias toward action that permeated the EOC organization.[46] The flexible and dynamic nature of the EOC team emphasizes the advantages of a modular and scalable ICS structure which empower the team to quickly pivot and handle multiple emergencies simultaneously from COVID-19 to civil unrest as well as wildland fires.

EOC staff highlighted the fact that EOC leadership provided Branch/Section lead the autonomy and trust to get their work accomplished without constant oversight.[47] There was increased communication between branches, sections, and departments that some reported often felt siloed before the COVID-19 EOC activation.

Recommendation 2.7: Following the finalization of the OAR and OAP, EOC leaders should discuss and document the most critical lessons they have learned with specific regards to leading large teams through uncertain circumstances while striving to maintain unity of focus on a common mission. These findings can be presented to City Council and make findings available to the public in the capacity they see fit.

Recommendation 2.8: The City should facilitate a short workshop with department heads exploring ways to seamlessly carry forward EOC-specific practices and structures into normal business operations.

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[45] EOC Action Plans
[46] Small Group Workshop
[47] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

FINDING 1:
Additional measures are needed to effectively maintain and project a common operating picture and help EOC staff feel connected while working in a virtual environment.

Online survey participants and small group workshop stakeholders have conveyed that, despite the redundant mechanisms for providing response updates, they still feel disconnected from the larger EOC organization. Small group workshop stakeholders have articulated that their Branch-specific check ins have been their lifeline. Of the EOC staff who participated in the online survey, 61% indicate that they received the most information about the EOC response and next steps from their Branch or Section meetings, which was consistent with their Action Plan. It has been recognized by many stakeholders that the entire EOC organization is experiencing the unique challenges created by operating in a completely virtual environment for over 6 months.
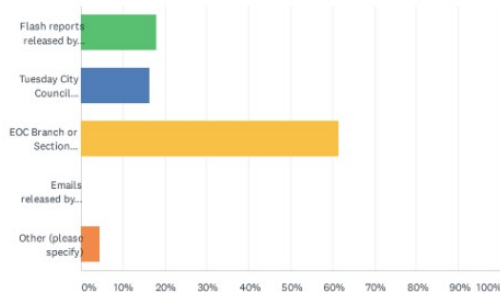
City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey Question 14 results

on staff morale and mental health.

Recommendation 2.9: To promote connectedness across the EOC organization, EOC leadership should continue to conduct and maintain regular Town Hall Meetings specifically focused

Recommendation 2.10: EOC leadership should convene with Branch and Section leads on the necessary components surrounding EOC staff briefings and check ins. EOC leadership should convey the importance of these briefings and check in on EOC staff members' mental health as the response continues. Once these topics are discussed, the expectations should be documented and disseminated for consistent execution.

FINDING 2:
Clarity is needed for untrained EOC staff to fully grasp how the EOC organization functions and what each section is responsible for.

Some online survey participants and small group workshop stakeholders underscore that the size of the EOC organization makes it particularly difficult to maintain awareness of who is responsible for what tasks and what the current status is of both, the work of others and their own. It was reported that members of one EOC Branch spent an entire week developing a process from scratch. They later learned that the same process had already been created by members of another Branch.[48] This type of duplication of effort is avoidable. Additionally, it was underscored during stakeholder interviews that the EOC Operations Section created their own Logistics and Finance Branches with the aim of speeding up processes and bypassing

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[48] Small Group Workshop

bureaucracy.

Recommendation 2.11: EOC leadership should review the command and general staff organizational structure displayed in the City's EOP and devise a strategy for maintaining the integrity of the basic structure in accordance with ICS while scaling the organization's capacity for managing expansive staffing requirements. The strategy should be codified and documented in the City's EOP and other applicable operational doctrine. Further, the strategy should be incorporated into the City's training and exercise program.

Recommendation 2.12: EOC leadership should task the appropriate team member(s) with developing a virtual status board for each Branch and Section of the EOC. At any time, EOC staff members should be able to look at the virtual status board of any organizational element to gain an understanding of its role within the organization, the current initiatives and/or priority projects it is managing, and any potentially helpful tools/resources it has already developed that can be used as a resource. The virtual status board should also enable the staff member to upload a short video in an effort to help introduce EOC staff members to one another.

3 - EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY

San José is one of the most diverse cities in the United States with large Latinx, Vietnamese, and Chinese communities that oftentimes do not speak English as their first language. According to the 2010 Census Data, less than half of the households in San José speak only English.[49] And the language barrier is not the only barrier that exists within the City, making it more difficult to reach all residents with messages or to properly engage them.

For instance, the City estimated that over ten-thousand households do not have access to internet, and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, these households are incredibly difficult to reach with public information efforts.[50] Over the past decade, the Emergency Public Information Office (EPIO) and the Community Engagement Branch of the City of San José EOC have identified social media websites as an effective tool for reaching and communicating with the public.[51] When the County issued the public health order to shelter at home on March 16, 2020 and the City staff were required to shift to virtual work, there were concerns for how vulnerable and at-risk communities that did not speak English or have access to the internet would be reached, informed, and communicated with.

Within a week of the city-wide shutdown, the EOC established the Language Access Unit through the EPIO in order to make sure that non-English speaking populations were being reached. At the same time, the Digital Inclusion Branch initiated an acceleration of their ten-year goal to help those without internet obtain access. Given that disasters often hit groups with Access and Functional Needs (AFN) more severely than other groups, the City knew that creating information briefs and reports in multiple languages and increasing internet access could help reach those communities that can often be under communicated with not just during a disaster response, but in everyday life as well.

STRENGTHS

FINDING 1:
The City of San José EOC established the Language Access Unit as a way to ensure that those populations within the city that did not speak English as their first language were able to receive information regarding the city's COVID-19 response.

City staff quickly recognized that the COVID-19 response would be consistently adapting, especially given the unknown factors, causes, symptoms, public health measures, and treatments for COVID-19. This meant the City would need to be constantly communicating with the community to inform them of changes. The City was also aware of legal mandates for cultural and linguistic sensitivities, such as Executive Order 13166 "Improving Access to Services with Persons with Limited English Proficiency," which requires federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English

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[49] San José 2010 Census Data https://www.sanJoséca.gov/home/showdocument?id=23763
[50] Digital Inclusion and Childcare Small Group Workshop
[51] Emergency Public Information Office Small Group Workshop

proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so persons with LEP can have meaningful access.

As such, the EPIO lead pitched the creation of a Language Access Unit. The Language Access Unit consists of members from the EPIO, Office of Immigrant Affairs, and other bilingual staff with their main objective being to ensure that high quality translations and spoken information/videos were available to the limited-English proficiency community in a timely manner. This included developing a system to use a professional translation vendor, reviewed by bilingual staff, to provide written alerts, information, and guidelines within hours of release of English written materials. A week and a half following the EOC activation, the Language Access Unit was officially stood up within the EOC structure.

Screenshot Los Tigres del Norte band members "influencer" video for San José

The Language Access Unit also utilized an existing vendor pool of professional translators and interpreters so that the City could quickly contract out translation work for upcoming communication briefs and reports intended for public dissemination.[52]

This team was also critical in recognizing that "influencer" videos in a multitude of languages would be more effective at reaching these populations. The City worked with local celebrities including athletes, team mascots, and musicians to create public health messaging videos on topics such as wearing a mask, practicing proper social distancing, washing your hands, etc.

Recommendation 3.1: Formally codify and establish the Language Access Unit as a critical and necessary part of the EOC structure for all future activations requiring major crisis communications efforts. Also, the City should identify and support the development of a permanent Language Access Coordinator.

Recommendation 3.2: Maintain services of translators and interpreters vendor pool during non-activation periods to ensure that city information is reaching as many community members as possible as to establish stronger relationships with target vulnerable communities.

FINDING 2:
San José is the only city of the top 25 most populous cities in the country to disseminate public messaging in five different languages: English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese.

The San José EOC staff were aware that the San José community is not monolingual and that many within the most vulnerable populations speak little to no English.[53] They are also aware that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act requires recipients of Federal financial assistance to take reasonable steps to make their programs, services, and activities accessible by eligible persons with limited English proficiency origin. That is why, even before full activation began, the EPIO made the decision to translate the Flash Reports into Spanish and Vietnamese. The Flash Reports were short posts on the San José website

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[52] Multi-Lingual Small Group Workshop
[53] Multi-Lingual Small Group Workshop

describing what actions and steps the City was taking to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 or help susceptible communities.[54] These reports began on March 6, 2020 and were initially twice daily reports but have been scaled back to once a week as of October 2, 2020.

Once the Language Access Unit was fully established and the Language Access Coordinator, a position that the City had prior only filled as temporary role, was engaged to expand the translations to also include Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese translations for written material, and Cantonese and Mandarin for spoken material. The bilingual EOC staff initially translated the Flash Reports into each of these languages. Once the Language Access Unit was set up, they also translated social media posts, emergency notification pages, and the previously discussed "influencer" videos.[55]

One EPIO staff member stated that they conducted a review of the other twenty-five most populous cities in the United States and that San José was the only one to offer translations in five languages.[56] This displays a concerted effort on the part of San José's staff to reach as many of their community members as possible despite barriers of language and access.

Recommendation 3.3: Conduct a gap analysis of community demographics, engaging with the public and special interest groups to discover if there are any additional languages that it may be appropriate for the city to translate Flash Reports, social media posts, emergency notification posts, and "influencer" videos into.

Recommendation 3.4: Hold virtual or teleconference-based town halls with community-based organization members that represent these foreign language speakers to analyze what other types of messaging or community outreach efforts may be impactful on their community moving forward. Codify these processes and, if feasible, implement them moving forward throughout the COVID-19 response.

FINDING 3:
The Digital Inclusion Branch's hotspot initiative has enabled the City to reach populations they could not before while providing access to multi-lingual resources and digital literacy education.

Given the need to social distance in order to slow the spread of COVID-19, much of a person's daily lives has moved into the virtual environment. Students go to school online, most people go to work virtually, and many people are participating in some form of tele-health to ease the burden on the healthcare industry. Yet, the City of San José conducted an analysis of internet access in their community and found that over one hundred thousand households did not have proper access to the internet.[57] This means that children are not able to attend school virtually and thus fall behind and many people are cut off from their community while sheltering in place.

> "Our plan was to do this over the next ten years, but COVID-19 forced our hand"
>
> *- Digital Inclusion and Childcare Small Group Workshop*

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[54] EPIO Small Group Workshop
[55] Multi-Lingual Small Group Workshop
[56] EPIO Small Group Workshop
[57] Digital Inclusion and Childcare Small Group Workshop

San José had plans prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to address the internet access issue over the next ten years. However, the Digital Inclusion Branch and Silicon Valley Strong Campaign had to rapidly accelerate the timeline due to the exacerbation of the problem by the pandemic.

Following a City Council Meeting on April 23, 2020 that voiced concerns about students falling behind, the Digital Inclusion Branch began to develop the Digital Inclusion Expenditure Plan, which was approved on June 23, 2020. The money for the expenditure plan was made up of CARES Act Funding, CBDG grants, and San José general funds.[58]

After carefully examining a multitude of options, the Digital Inclusion Branch decided that by entering into a partnership with AT&T, they would be able to buy over 10,000 hot spots and provide internet for a year with these devices.[59]

As of August 28, 2020, 8,300 hotspots had been deployed to households and community centers used for virtual schooling. The team has identified the need for additional hotspots that they are in the process of procuring from their partnership with AT&T. To ensure that the hotspots go to households in need, the Digital Inclusion Branch also partnered with local community-based organizations that were able to properly identify those of greatest need for internet access.

San José Staff organizing 4G Hotspots provided by AT&T partnership program

Stakeholders who participated in the Digital Inclusion Small Group Workshop and the Non-profit Partners Small Group Workshop both acknowledged that this was a relationship that has benefitted the community but would likely not have been cultivated under different circumstances.[60] [61]

Recommendation 3.5: Continue to implement the hot spot program post COVID-19 to increase the connectivity of all community members.

Recommendation 3.6: Determine if the City intends to continue to pay hotspot internet fees past the first of the year, and if not, how the City will collect the hotspots following their plan's expiration. Begin developing public information efforts surrounding the use/discontinued use of hotspots as to ease the public transition away from city-provided internet.

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[58] Small Group Workshop
[59] Digital Inclusion and Childcare Small Group Workshop
[60] Digital Inclusion and Childcare Small Group Workshop
[61] Non-profit Partners Small Group Workshop

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

> **FINDING 1:**
> **Some messaging for the community and external stakeholders was not prepared in time for the shutdown orders, leading to public confusion about what services were shut down and what services would continue to operate.**

As one of the first cities in the United States to declare an EOC activation and shutdown of non-essential government functions, San José was also one of the first cities tasked with explaining what was happening in their community. While it has been discussed that the City of San José was tracking the spread of COVID-19 as early as December of 2019, discussions in the small group workshops revealed that some messaging was not fully crafted at the time decisions were made. One example was the clarity of how childcare for essential workers would operate and who exactly was considered as essential and allowed to access these services.[62]

> **"There has to be a shift from simple translation to creating in those languages"**
>
> *- EPIO Small Group Workshop Participant*

Other staff members noted that due to the fact that information about COVID-19, how it spread, and the City's response were changing rapidly that some public messaging was delayed in reaching the public.[63] In addition, some messaging conflicted other information being disseminated and led to some public confusion over which information was the most up to date and accurate.

Recommendation 3.7: Create public messaging standard operating procedures for potential future public health emergencies in order to more quickly develop, approve, and disseminate accurate information to the public.

> **FINDING 2:**
> **Oftentimes messaging, information briefs, and communications are simply translated from English without focusing on another language's cultural and technical idiosyncrasies.**

While flash reports, public messaging, and emergency alerts are translated from English into four other languages by City staff and vendors, some translations cannot easily be done while maintaining the true cultural context. Small group workshop participants stated that oftentimes public messaging will incorporate idioms, metaphors, or sayings that do not have a translatable equivalent in another language. One example presented was a public message developed by the City offering ways "to beat the heat" while maintaining social distancing, yet in Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese there is no comparable saying and if translated directly it would take on another meaning.[64]

City staff state that there is an emphasis on simple translation from English, but that this

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[62] Digital Inclusion and Childcare Small Group Workshop
[63] EPIO Small Group Workshop
[64] EPIO Small Group Workshop

approach actually diminishes potential outreach and effectiveness.[65] If a report or message is simply translated from English, there is a chance that the audience it was intended for may not be able to fully comprehend the message. While the cost of creating messaging in each language that is targeted and written from scratch may be more expensive than translation, it may also provide communities with the pertinent information they need without any confusion due to errors in the translation. Community based organization partners also noted that they oftentimes will receive public messaging from the City and alter the translation, so it is more understandable to members of their communities.

Recommendation 3.8: Establish vendor pools for transcreation or interpretation of public messaging in each of the five languages rather than conducting direct translations to ensure messaging is culturally relevant.

Recommendation 3.9: Develop MOUs with community-based organizations to continue alterations of public messaging to better meet the cultural context of vulnerable populations.

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[65] Multi-Lingual Small Group Workshop

4 - EOC STAFF SAFETY AND WELLNESS

SUMMARY

The ability to protect staff responding to an incident is critical to ensure ongoing incident management to protect the public. To this end, various guidelines and resources have been published on managing and supporting a range of employees who respond to disasters. These guiding agencies identify the risks to responders include medical, environmental, and mental/behavioral health therefore emphasizing the need for employers to go beyond a focus on physical safety to ensuring the wellbeing and resilience of staff.[66][67]

This emphasis on employee wellness is reflected in the San José Powered by People Enterprise Priorities. Part of which emphasizes the importance of creating a dynamic and engaged workforce by attracting talent, providing opportunities for career growth, enabling an environment focused on health, safety, and wellness, and retaining a diverse workforce in a workplace that is equitable and inclusive.[68]

Ensuring the City continues to meet these priorities can be especially challenging during a pandemic of a novel virus. Guidance from federal, state, and local authorities of safety measures and virus prevention techniques rapidly changes as new information arises. There can be interruptions in supply chains and limited resource availability. Fear and stress are amplified by uncertainty, social isolation, and disruptions in daily life.

Staff filling a disaster response role to COVID-19 can experience additional risks to health, safety, and wellbeing that other people within the community may not. They are often called upon to engage in more rigorous safety protocols, experience conflicting or additional work demands, and work with limited resource for longer periods of time.[69]

To manage the unique health, safety, and wellbeing challenges staff may face, guidance suggests going beyond only providing medical countermeasures and personal protective equipment.

Employers should expand their health and safety perspective to include things like building pre-emergency resilience, monitoring staff, limiting fatigue through staff rotations, promoting mental/behavioral and medical support, providing frequent informal trainings, and promoting self-care. Physical access to equipment and resources as well as intangible support and information can increase preparedness, feelings of self-efficacy and confidence, lower stress, and facilitate a safe and healthy response.

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[66] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Public Health Preparedness Capabilities: National Standards for State and Local Planning."

[67] Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness. "2017-2022 Health Care Preparedness and Response Capabilities."

[68] City of San José Office of the City Manager. https://www.sanJoséca.gov/your-government/departments/office- of-the-city-manager/enterprise-priorities Accessed October 2020.

[69] National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. "Managing Healthcare Workers' Stress Associated with the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak." March 2020.

STRENGTHS

> ### FINDING 1:
> **The City's EOC team camaraderie, leadership support, and organizational culture assisted employees' ability to manage an extremely stressful EOC activation.**

Stakeholders from small and large group workshops consistently described their teammates and colleagues as resourceful, thoughtful, passionate, and driven. Department staff care about one another, recognizing that everyone is dealing with a stressful situation both at work and in their personal lives.[70][71] While both San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey respondents and workshop participants described difficulties in continuing the level of engagement with colleagues virtually, they also noted that the most successful aspect of the response was that there were innovations to allow for continued remote contact with colleagues. The importance of relationships also extended to building new connections with outside departments and working with new people.[72][73]

Leadership set the tone within the department by demonstrating care for their staff, being responsive, and encouraging self-care. They were described by stakeholders as having a sense of appreciation and understanding of staff managing a tremendous number of responsibilities at work and at home. Stakeholders appreciated leadership recognizing and showing gratitude for staff's dedication and hard work. Leaders also encouraged staff to check in with each other and reach out for team support when they need it.

> "There were always a few laughs and that made it sane."
>
> *- Workshop Stakeholder*

Stakeholders noted the importance of these relationships when challenges arose during the response. Colleagues were described as pulling together and adapting every time there were changes. An example of the flexibility and support staff provided to one another was the willingness of employees to fill in when people took time off. Although stakeholders described a hesitancy for staff to take time off from work, they also agreed that their teammates would rotate in and help them take breaks from the EOC as needed. When someone needed to take a day off everyone was supportive and understanding. As one stakeholder described, the teams have been successful because of the staff's "can do spirit" and willingness to step in when needed.

The organizational culture was also described by stakeholders as helping to reduce their levels of stress. The environment encouraged humor and light heartedness, when possible. Relating to one another through "dad jokes" and "zoom backgrounds" helped relieve some stress and encouraged staff to stay centered on themselves, their families, and the mission of the organization.[74][75]The cultural value of direct communication helped provided clarity and purpose. Stakeholders noted an increase in check-ins and the creation of townhalls to maintain communication and connection between leadership/management and staff. In the survey,

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[70] Small Group Workshop
[71] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[72] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[73] Small Group Workshop
[74] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[75] Big Group Workshop

respondents overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of consistent communication and opportunities to connect with one another as ways to manage stress and enhance staff wellbeing. Staff could also expect to receive honest feedback when asking questions which helped clarify objectives. As one survey respondent described, everyone was treated equally and everyone was encouraged to provide feedback and input with high level leadership. Lastly, "bias towards action" philosophy of the EOC Leadership was described by stakeholders as a strength. Working within this principle allows staff to be creative, open to new ideas, and room to fail.

Recommendation 4.1: Consider developing virtual strategies for staff to "be there" for their colleagues when they cannot physically be together. Using programs such as Microsoft Teams, Slack, Zoom, etc. to build a virtual support system can address the challenge of being unable to connect regularly and naturally when teams work remotely.

Recommendation 4.2: Continue maintaining clear avenues of communication between leadership/management and staff. The use of townhalls could be expanded to provide opportunities to disseminate information while also answering questions and addressing concerns.

Recommendation 4.3: Continue demonstrating gratitude and encouragement to staff through positive messaging and actions.

FINDING 2:
There was a clarity of purpose and mission.

Small and large group stakeholders expressed that it was motivating to have a clear focus and understanding of the overarching mission objectives throughout the response. Several response personnel further expressed that it was good to have an identified joint mission guiding their efforts and that it felt great being part of one team. Stakeholders pointed out that staff pulled together, were willing to go above and beyond their normal duties, and never said "that's not my job."[76] Survey respondents described it as a "one team mentality" with staff focused on the larger picture together.[77] Staff exhibited a commitment to community service and continued responding even when faced with an overwhelming workload. During EOC briefings, staff could come together to ensure there was a shared understanding of where they were, where they were going, and emphasize the importance of working as a single team. As one stakeholder described it, the staff in the EOC were able to succeed in their response

> "I know that public service is hard work. Even more so in the time of COVID. "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is a chance to work hard at work worth doing". It can be really easy to get lost in the frustrations of the day to day and lose sight of the bigger picture. Trying to find things, even little things, to keep motivated when the work seems so seemingly unsurmountable, so stressful, so hard."
>
> *- Survey Respondent*

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[76] Small Group Workshop
[77] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey

because of the blood, sweat, and tears from their
love for the City.[78]

Recommendation 4.4: Maintain an ongoing
message of the mission with all City staff.
Promote a unity of purpose and spirit of
camaraderie for those responding in the EOC as
well other City staff. Consider recognizing
successes, however small or large, in an effort
to show movement towards meeting the
organization's mission and inspire the continued unity of response efforts.

Recommendation 4.5: Continue regular briefings to help staff focus on the shared objectives
and encourage discussions, troubleshooting, and support between EOC branches.

FINDING 3:
The City of San José took steps to support staff safety and wellness.

EOC staff faced a variety of stressors while responding to COVID-19. There was anxiety around
working in a shared environment, long hours, and high levels of stress.[79] San José COVID-19
Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey results show that respondents, who were
EOC staff primarily serving in management positions, felt EOC Leadership took the necessary
steps to ensure their physical safety. Approximately 34% of survey respondents reported feeling
that adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) was provided. When adjusting for those who
indicated this was not applicable (41 of 67 respondents), that percentage increases to 88% (23
out of 26). Similarly, about 40% of respondents indicated that adequate physical distancing
measures were implemented. After adjusting for those who worked remotely or indicated this
question was not applicable to them (34 of 67 respondents), this percentage increases to about
82% (27 out of 33). The adjusted response rates for these two questions demonstrate
overwhelming satisfaction with the adequacy of personal safety measures implemented by San
José.

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[78] Small Group Workshop
[79] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey

Q8 Adequate personal protective equipment was provided.

Answered: 67   Skipped: 0
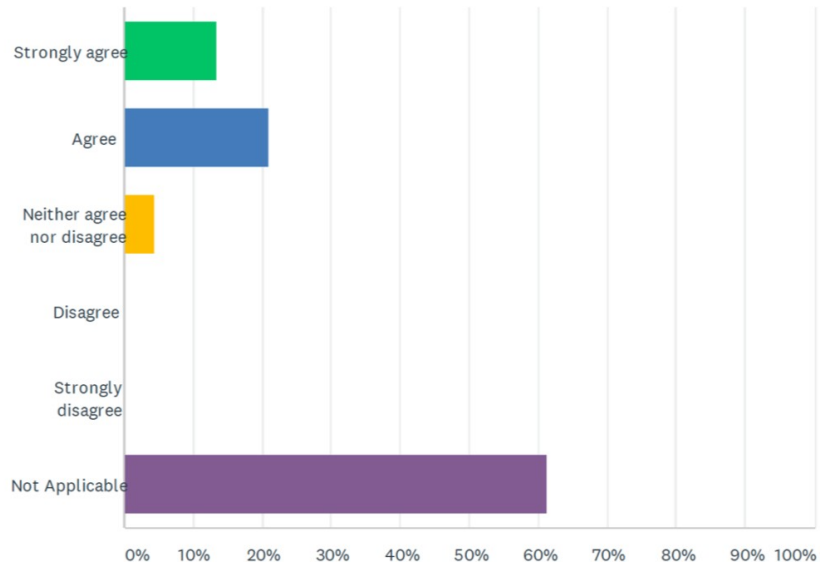
Q9 Adequate physical distancing measures were implemented.

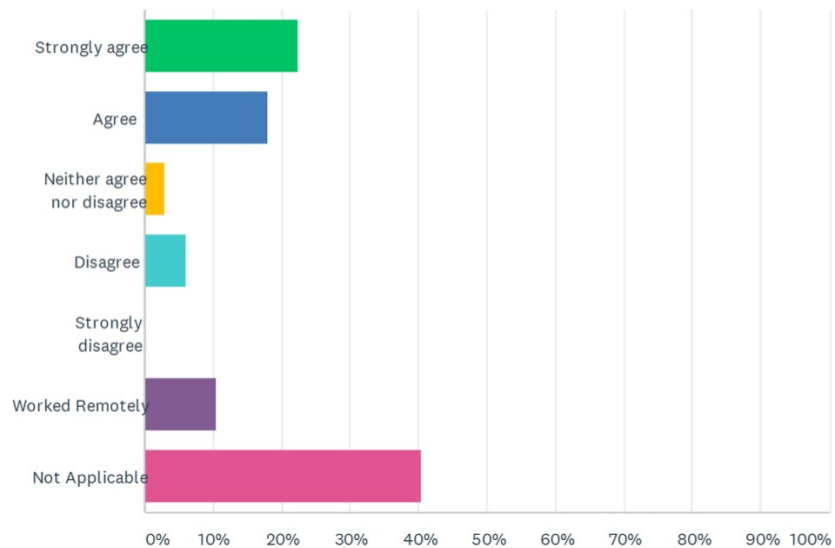Answered: 67   Skipped: 0

Regarding the wellbeing of employees, stakeholders described how EOC Leadership took steps to encourage employees to take breaks and use their leave in order to manage fatigue and stress. In addition, the City of San José instituted policies to support employees by recognizing the increased risk they faced, when possible. Paid administration leave was provided for staff who were potentially at high risk and hazard pay policies were put in place. An employee assistance program and self-care workshops (yoga, meditation, etc.) were offered to help staff manage stress.[80] Additionally, the City partnered with licensed childcare providers to offer day care services to staff for their children.[81]

The San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey also included a question about the perceived availability of mental health support. Over a third of respondents (37%) strongly agreed or agreed that mental health support programs and resources were made readily available to response and recovery staff at their level. However, 27% neither agreed nor disagreed. Without further exploration, it cannot be determined if this neutrality indicates any level of agreement or disagreement, or, if it demonstrates an uncertainty in the availability of resources by respondents.

Q10 Mental Health support programs and resources were made readily available to response and recovery staff at my level.

Answered: 67   Skipped: 0
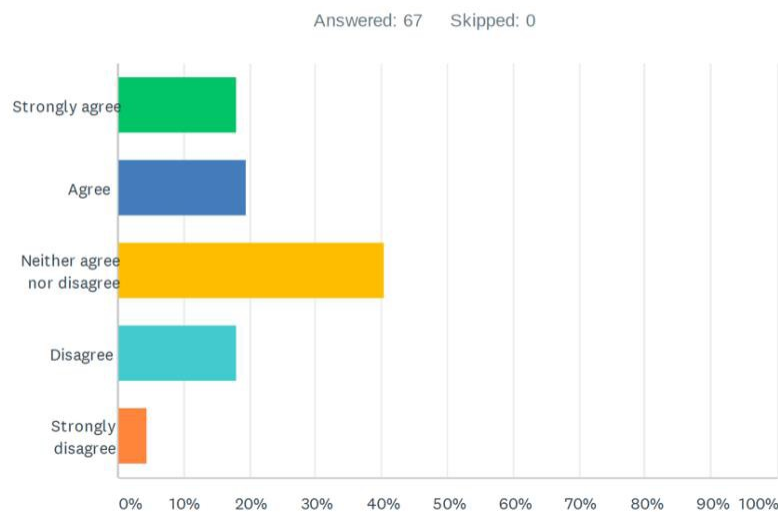
Recommendation 4.6: Continue implementing risk reduction strategies to promote responder health. Review jurisdictional risk assessments to determine increased COVID-19 risks to staff safety and health and identify resources to address these risks (e.g., COVID-19 cloth masks and air quality precautions, donning and doffing in hot or cold temperatures).

Recommendation 4.7: Consider implementing a staff survey similar to what was used within the Logistics Branch to identify concerns and needs of employees. It could further evaluate staff's familiarity with available mental health support programs and resources, assess which programs and policies were perceived as helpful, and identify additional ways EOC Leadership could support staff and assist with stress management.

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[80] Small Group Workshop
[81] City of San José Emergency Operations Center Action Plans

Recommendation 4.8: Increase messaging on the services and resources available to support staff safety and wellbeing. This could include leadership informing staff of workshops or employee assistance program benefits, mass distribution of promotional material, or the inclusion of reminders on regular communication with all staff.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

FINDING 1:
EOC staff are experiencing burnout and fatigue from competing demands.

EOC staff were described by small and large group workshop participants as overworked and burned out. The energy that employees put in at the beginning of the COVID-19 response has been extended perhaps too long, leading to staff exhaustion. There is a growing worry that the careers of staff will be impacted from this overextension.[82] Stakeholders expressed concerns that employees may quit public service after this pandemic. Others noted that there has been encouragement to "use this emergency to make your career and make your mark" but that the challenges of this response have been more than anticipated. Some staff may instead feel that they have disappointed themselves or their colleagues. While there have been examples of individuals exhibiting heroics, there have also been cases where people recognized as star employees have "crashed and burned" during this response.[83]

> "It's time for the City to recognize and adapt that we are in a sustained activation and that there should be a realignment of expectations".
>
> *- Workshop Stakeholder*

Some stakeholders identified that a lack of clarity on how to balance their regular role as well as their role in the EOC was a contributing factor to the high levels of stress staff experienced.[84][85] Both survey respondents and workshop participants described the expectations of staff were to continue 100% dedicated to their day-to-day responsibilities while also putting in 100% to ensuring the COVID-19 response was successful. Staff were described as "trying to do double duty" and "burning the candle from both ends."[86] Some stakeholders attributed this to bureaucratic challenges, artificially imposed deadlines, and a need for prioritization of tasks.

Identifying essential services, limiting activities to focus only on essential tasks, and empowering staff to make decisions on prioritization were identified as important to managing competing priorities. However, a lack of understanding by City Council was noted as a barrier to prioritization. The level of stress placed on the EOC and the number of resources reallocated to response activities was perceived by stakeholders to not be clearly understood by City Council.[87] Therefore, the push from City Council to maintain continuity of all programs without prioritization of services demonstrated to stakeholders a disconnect from realistic expectations. Without focusing on essential services only, SJOEM staff continue to fill multiple roles concurrently,

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[82] Small Group Workshop
[83] Small Group Workshop
[84] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[85] Small Group Workshop
[86] Small Group Workshop
[87] Small Group Workshop

contributing to burnout.

In addition to their emergency response role, EOC staff are overseeing or working within multiple programs, working from home, responding to multiple disasters at once, and managing their personal lives (parenting, caring for family members, etc.).[88][89] They continue to experience the same concerns as the community they serve such as financial constraints, job instability, guilt leaving their partner at home to care for children, etc. As the response continues, additional stressors such as being unable to go outdoors due to poor air quality, ongoing lack of human connection/interaction, and challenges balancing remote schooling with work contribute to staff stress levels.[90] [91] [92]

Recommendation 4.9: Leverage relationships with partners and Subject Matter Experts to identify suggestions for an internal Responder Safety & Health program to advise employee wellness practices. Identify risk areas for extreme fatigue and mitigative measures for prolonged exposure for incident management and response.

Recommendation 4.10: Consider working with management to identify employees who previously had proven their competencies but struggled with the disruptions and challenges caused by COVID-19. Conduct discussions with management and the impacted staff to examine what challenges they faced and determine how to re-engage staff and address raised concerns.

Recommendation 4.11: Assist in determining which services and programs are essential while empowering management and staff to prioritize responsibilities. This may include:
Having executive leadership discussing with City Council the need to identify essential programs and prioritize staff involvement. Assessing which programs are expecting staff to run at 100% in addition to their response positions, encouraging more realistic expectations, and/or supplementing these program's staff when possible.

Recommendation 4.12: Create program and system to ensure training as disaster services workers for all City staff is conducted to provide information and preparedness planning and tools to enable City staff to develop contingency plans for dependent care to support City disaster response.

Recommendation 4.13: Conduct an annual training for Executive Leadership on how to monitor the health and wellbeing of staff. Included how to identify when staff are stressed, referral information, and opportunities to build team support systems.

Recommendation 4.14: Mental illness and substance abuse disorders can be exacerbated during times of disaster. Providing a supportive work environment and encouraging continued access to confidential psychological services outside of the COVID-19 response can enhance the abilities of employees with these conditions and address common barriers for help-seeking behavior.

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[88] Small Group Workshop
[89] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[90] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[91] Small Group Workshop
[92] City of San José Emergency Operations Center Action Plans

FINDING 2:
There are some perceptions by EOC staff that personnel management policies and practices are being inconsistently applied or are unfair.

EOC Leadership took steps throughout the COVID-19 response to support staff leave and protect potentially high-risk employees from contracting the disease. This included offering paid administrative leave to staff who were identified as high risk to negative outcomes of COVID-19. However, both survey respondents and workshop participants described the implementation of this policy as unfair. Employees activated in the EOC as well as others did not qualify for or were not offered the same comp time as other employees. A survey respondent noted that while some people were placed on "extensive paid administrative leave" others were expected to continue working without rest. This perception of unfairness was described as negatively affecting the mental wellness of staff.[93] Management also had a hard time with this perceived inequity as they found it hard to send some employees to work while others were home on paid leave.[94]

Other leave policies likewise resulted in frustration with staff. The City briefly offered "spiked time off" for EOC staff and then switched to offering four days of "respite leave" that did not take away from accrued vacation days.[95] However, workshop stakeholders explained that staff were not allowed to choose when they took this leave. Instead, management dictated which days or afternoons people could take off. Additionally, stakeholders described that when employees inquired about taking the time, management was hesitant, and staff felt they were not allowed to ask for this type of leave. Multiple stakeholders indicated that while respite leave appeared to be a useful program, it has not come to fruition and instead resulted in a lot of confusion.[96] [97]

> "Since we're doing such a great job, it's easy for them to ask us to do more."
>
> *- Workshop Stakeholder*

Another area where stakeholders felt there were inconsistencies or unfairness was in the allocation of pay for duties filled. Many EOC staff were described as going "above and beyond" in their daily EOC role with disaster service work becoming the full-time job position for many employees. However, multiple stakeholders from small and large workshops indicated that staff filled these expanded roles and responsibilities without additional compensation causing their pay rate to not be reflective of the work completed. An example provided by stakeholders is that some staff may be paid extra for doing translations while others have transitioned to doing translations fulltime within their jobs. This is a duty above their normal level of pay without any additional compensation. This was concerning for stakeholders as they believed there could be a recession next year and employees that have given much of their time and energy without additional compensation could still be at risk of losing their jobs, which was seen to be unfair.[98]

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[93] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[94] Small Group Workshop
[95] Small Group Workshop
[96] Small Group Workshop
[97] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[98] Small Group Workshop

Recommendation 4.15: More deeply assess perceptions of personnel and human resource policy implementation around leave and compensation. This could be done through large group feedback sessions, small team discussions, department-wide surveys, or anonymous comment submissions.

Recommendation 4.16: Evaluate the implementation administrative and respite leave policies to ensure it has been applied in fairly throughout the department. Determine if the policies are being promoted and utilized effectively or if they need to be adjusted to better meet the needs of staff.

Recommendation 4.17: Work with managers to examine employee duties and responsibilities to identify those falling outside of the normal scope of work. Work with unions, human resources, and other applicable representatives to identify opportunities to recognize and incentivize employees going above their regular position. This could include financial compensation or alternative supplements such as position title changes, support for education or professional growth opportunities, etc.

FINDING 3:
EOC Staff are working extensive hours and face barriers to taking time off.

The City of San José was described by small and large group workshop stakeholders as being "very lean" with a small City staff managing a large City. While this was noted as a source of pride, it was also identified as a primary obstacle to staff taking time off after working extensive hours.[99] The EOC operated with only two teams to rotate in and relieve staff, which was not sufficient for the staffing needs. The philosophy of "running lean" was seen as coming at the cost of burning out employees.[100] As one survey participant described it, the COVID-19 response should be seen as a marathon, not a sprint. Having clearly identified alternate staff is needed so employees can take time off to rest and not get burned out.[101] In addition to the challenge of managing a lengthy response, staff were also faced with responding to fires and civil unrest. These disasters compounded existing stress and stretched staff further with demands to fill additional hours and responsibilities. With the long hours, and lack of a "deep bench" to pull from, EOC staff worked non-stop without taking time to process or replenish their energy. This has led to many stakeholders voicing that this pace is not sustainable and will lead to even more burnout.

Both survey participants and stakeholders from the workshops recognized there was a general push from the department for employees to take care of themselves and to take time off when needed. Managers participating in both the survey and the workshops noted that they took extra care to push people to take days off and find coverage for employees so they could feel able to take time to care for themselves outside of work. They also described trying to create alternate work schedules for staff to support opportunities for self-care.

Even with the efforts of EOC Leadership to support and encourage staff to take time off, there were barriers to them actually doing so. Stakeholders noted it was difficult for personnel and safety units to be expected to help manage staff burnout when the responsibility did not fit easily

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[99] Small Group Workshop
[100] Small Group Workshop
[101] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey

into a typical EOC structure. There were logistical challenges to encouraging staff to take time off such as tracking how long people have held positions, not having staff available to fill positions, and determining the appropriate length of time for staff to be out of the EOC.[102] [103] There was also the challenge of employee resistance to taking time away from their job and their team.

EOC Staff were frequently described as willing to help their colleagues, even at the expense of their own wellbeing.[104][105] Even when encouraged or allowed to take time off, some staff would hesitate to do so as they felt as though they are abandoning their team, or their sense of duty made it difficult for them to justify taking time for themselves. Others may fear they will be penalized for taking leave or that it would add more stress when they return if there is no one to take their place while they are out. This has led to staff continuing to accrue vacation time, reaching their capped vacation, but still not taking leave.

Additionally, some stakeholders felt messages from leadership encouraging staff to take leave were more lip service without actual efforts to focus on the needs of staff. This was described as leadership sending mixed messages.[106] For instance, although the City promoted leave taking, leadership was simultaneously telling staff "we have a task to be done" and it is crunch time encouraging everyone to continue working. Another example provided by workshop stakeholders was the employee recognition program. On one hand the City encouraged employees to speak up when burnt out while on the other it used the bi-weekly COVID update to acknowledge people for their response efforts, highlighting the people that never say no to additional responsibilities.[107]

This mixed messaging continued into leadership actions as well. Although leaders encouraged staff to take vacation time and get away from the EOC, they do not model that behavior themselves. When leaders refused to take breaks, staff felt they should not be out of sync with them and therefore also avoided taking leave. One group of stakeholders alternately described that when a leader took two weeks off, it helped staff feel more comfortable taking time themselves.

Recommendation 4.18: Enhance staff safety and health messaging by including information on the associated benefits of taking breaks and managing fatigue. Have senior leadership and executive team members mirror these behaviors and genuinely promote benefits to staff.

Recommendation 4.19: Enhance policies that address fatigue including number of hours worked, overtime, requests for breaks, as well as creating a standard threshold for when staff are required to rotate out of the EOC. This can be done in collaboration with occupational safety experts and in consultation with labor unions.

Recommendation 4.20: Monitor and limit staff work hours. Manage staff work weeks to include at least one day off. Continue work schedule flexibility and expand opportunities for staff to participate in occasional work from home days.

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[102] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[103] Small Group Workshop
[104] Small Group Workshop
[105] San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[106] Small Group Workshop
[107] Small Group Workshop

Recommendation 4.21: Further build out position depth. This can include:

- Encouraging managers to work with staff to identify individuals who can fill their roles to reduce the reluctance of taking time out of the office.
- Pairing two people to provide weekly rotating shifts for one position within the EOC. Having a partner to share the stress and shoulder the responsibility of the position can help reduce the workload, provide an emotional boost, and promote camaraderie.
- Developing 3-month rotation schedules and/or contracting with a nonprofit organizations or for-profit business to fill positions.

Recommendation 4.22: Identify potential policy changes to support the use of vacation days for alternative staff support such as for education or professional development reimbursement.

Recommendation 4.23: Identify ways to provide emotional and psychological support services during work hours. This could be breaks for counseling, weekly informal stress management opportunities for all staff, regular group/team support sessions, etc.

FINDING 4:
Safety personnel faced challenges when fulfilling their roles.

EOC Leadership ensured the safety of employees performing essential services through numerous activities. An analysis of City operations to identify COVID-19 associated hazards and hazard controls was conducted.[108] Safety and environmental services staff were deployed throughout the City to inspect city property and identify health concerns, conduct cleaning and sanitizing, and distribute sanitation supplies.[109] There was City-wide engagement with departments to ensure safety information was distributed, assistance was provided to adapt safety measures as needed, and safety practices were implemented. COVID-19 safety training content was developed, and trainings were conducted.[110]

However, personnel ensuring the safety of City employees faced some challenges when fulfilling their role. Identifying and securing PPE and cleaning supplies was a huge challenge in the beginning even though the team started securing PPE in February.[111][112] With guidelines continuously changing, it was also hard to remain up to date on health and safety protocols. Additionally, workshop stakeholders described that, at times, teams providing safety inspections on-the-ground did not feel they were receiving sufficient support from management. There were cases when health and safety concerns were identified during inspections, but it was uncertain if or when they would be addressed by EOC leadership. This resulted in some feelings of "residual bitterness" within teams.[113]

Another challenge safety and environmental teams faced was a lack of clarity within departments as to what was the responsibility of the City versus the County. There was feedback that City safety personnel was not doing enough, but the issues identified fell within the County's purview. This lack of understanding and perceptions that City safety and personnel staff were not doing

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[108] City of San José Emergency Operations Center Action Plan
[109] Small Group Workshop
[110] City of San José Emergency Operations Center Action Plan
[111] City of San José Emergency Operations Center Action Plan
[112] Small Group Workshop
[113] Small Group Workshop

enough to protect fellow employees was demoralizing.[114]

Recommendation 4.24: Include information and details on safety and personnel responsibilities in employee communication. Clarify for staff the responsibilities of city safety versus county responsibility.

Recommendation 4.25: Continue maintaining a sufficient stock of PPE and sanitations supplies to avoid potential future delays when resources are needed.

Recommendation 4.26: Provide ongoing communication and support to staff deployed on the ground clarifying priorities and establishing timelines for feedback and/or action on raised concerns. Even if response to an issue is not a priority, ensuring timely follow-up for re-evaluating when action will be taken can demonstrate support.

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[114] Small Group Workshop

5 - DIRECT PROVISION OF FOOD AND OTHER NECESSITIES TO VULNERABLE AND AT-RISK POPULATIONS

SUMMARY

As one of the major cities in the Silicon Valley region, stakeholders that attended both small and big group workshops stated that the City approached COVID-19 response with an approach that mirrored a "start-up" approach.[115] A "start-up" approach, in contrast to a typical bureaucratic government approach, emphasizes a hybrid work environment, quick decision-making, purpose driven work.[116] This was precisely the approach that the EOC and the Food and Necessities Branch would need to adequately respond to the food insecurity needs within the community of San José.

On March 16, 2020, San José EOC leadership received a call from the Santa Clara County EOC asking if the City would be able to undertake leading the initiative to ensure that the increased food insecurity challenge resultant of COVID-19 could be addressed. While county-wide food distribution would typically fall to the County, given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the county sought the City's assistance.

San José EOC leaders agreed to head up the provision of food and other necessities and quickly established three objectives for their Food & Necessities Branch: feed the most vulnerable, maximize existing food distribution infrastructure, and prepare the ability to scale up in order to address a widespread food crisis if it occurred. By creating these three objectives at the outset of the project, the Food & Necessities Branch was able to leverage established partnerships with non-profit organizations and build partnerships with private Silicon Valley companies, such as Google, to assist with the immense food and necessity needs vulnerable populations were experiencing. Without the City's rapid response and commitment to bypass normal bureaucratic channels in order to more quickly assist vulnerable populations, there is the possibility that some people may not have received the help they needed in the midst of a devastating global pandemic.

STRENGTHS

> **FINDING 1:**
> **The City of San José effectively and efficiently established a new branch within the EOC, the Food and Necessities Branch, in only five weeks' time.**

Once City of San José leadership agreed to take on the task of food distribution, they began to build the branch from scratch that would be tasked with achieving their identified objectives. In only five weeks, the San José EOC team was able to implement the Food and Necessities Branch within the Operations Section of the EOC and begin to immediately handle food distribution not only city-wide, but county-wide as well. Leveraging the City's technological capabilities, this team was able to create a virtual dashboard that helped monitor and track where

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[115] Small Group Workshop
[116] Nordstrom, T & Sturt, D (2020). "Why A 'Startup Mentality' Is Key To Your Success" https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidsturt/2016/01/28/why-a-startup-mentality-is-key-to-your- success/#34582975017

food was distributed.[117] The Food and Necessities Branch also worked with GIS experts on staff and Silicon Valley Strong Campaign to create a map of the City's feeding sites that helped the public adequately locate the site that fit their needs.[118]
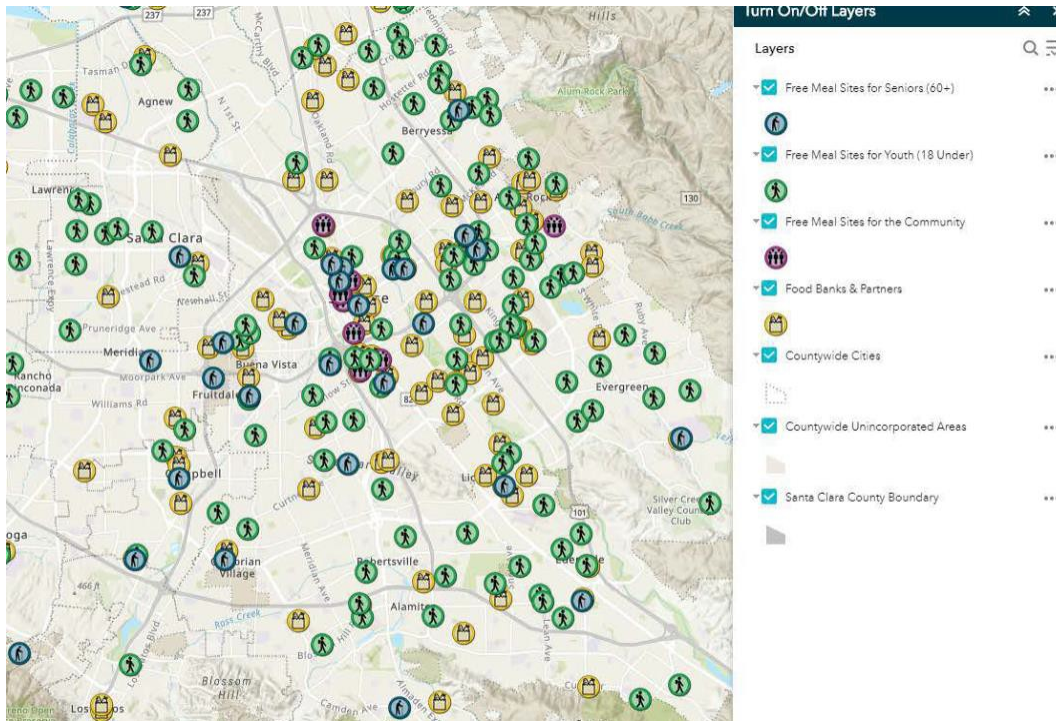
GIS Map of City Feeding Sites. https://siliconvalleystrong.org/

Recommendation 5.1: Given that the Food and Necessities Branch was established within the EOC, the City of San José should determine a department for these capabilities to exist outside of an EOC activation and response. The City should engage in inter-departmental dialogue about the implications, opportunities, and risks associated with retaining and building upon its food and necessities distribution capability in order to decide if the program will continue as city-wide initiative.

Recommendation 5.2: Develop a Food and Necessities annex to the City Emergency Operations Plan and codify the best practices implemented during COVID-19, such as the GIS tool and feeding distribution dashboard.

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[117] Food & Necessities Small Group Workshop
[118] Liaison Branch, Local Assistance Unit, and Silicon Valley Strong Campaign Small Group Workshop

FINDING 2.
The City of San José, through the Food and Necessities Branch, met food insecurity needs and served nearly 3.3 million meals to those in need during the week of May 29th.

With assistance from the Liaison Branch and GIS experts the Food and Necessities Branch was able to create a food insecurity index to discover what populations would be most affected in order to target their efforts in those areas. At the peak of food distribution in late May and early June 2020, the City of San José was providing 3.3 million meals to the most vulnerable populations (i.e., low income, Access and Functional Needs [AFN] elderly, etc.).[119] This task was completed by leveraging the knowledge of local non-profit organizations and community-based organizations to help reach these populations. The City of San José also entered into an agreement with Google, who helped provide a reserve capacity of food that was necessary in the case that the food

> "City of San José has an obligation to stay involved in food security. We are 50% of the population but 80% of the need."
>
> *- Food & Necessities Small Group Workshop*

insecurity issue worsened. The partnership with Google helped with scaling capabilities and capacity to provide food and necessities. The Food and Necessities Branch was incredibly resilient in their scaling efforts and deployed 6,051 volunteers to support meal distribution and provide backup for curbside delivery, meals on wheels, and school deliveries.[120]

Recommendation 5.3: Organize, at the downturn of the COVID-19 response, an opportunity to safely acknowledge and celebrate the immense accomplishments of the Food and Necessities Branch and their ability to help the City of San José's most vulnerable populations.

Recommendation 5.4: Organize an event safely thanking healthcare, City staff active in the COVID-19 response, and community partners who supported the City throughout COVID-19 response.

Recommendation 5.5: Use the momentum created by the COVID-19 response to formally codify these partnerships with non-profit organizations, Community based organizations, private companies, and the Food and Necessities Branch through Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) to quickly and adequately respond to food insecurity crises should they arise in the future.

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[119] Food & Necessities Small Group Workshop
[120] Food & Necessities Small Group Workshop

FINDING 3:
Staff identified vulnerable populations needed more than just meals provided and quickly pivoted to provide necessities in addition to meals once this need was identified.

Given the confusion that surrounded the COVID-19 pandemic in the early months of 2020, many people began to "panic buy" everyday necessities such as diapers and toilet paper. While this was initially attributed to an overwhelmed and disrupted supply chain, experts now argue that those with the means to purchase an immense surplus of necessities did so, leaving those without the financial capability to buy in bulk the opportunity to obtain products.[121] City staff that were working in the food distribution centers reported back to the Food and Necessities Branch and EOC leadership that people who were picking up meals had asked if there was any toilet paper and other products that they could also take home.[122] In an effort to help resolve another community need, the Food Distribution Branch became the Food and Necessities Branch and began to procure and distribute toilet paper, baby diapers, wet wipes, paper towels, and other necessities to help alleviate community anxiety that they would be unable to obtain these items before they ran out.

Recommendation 5.6: Anticipate the need for commodity resources early in the onset of a public health crisis and create and/or codify plans, partnerships, and agreements to ensure that these items can be obtained quickly, and food distribution sites can double as sites for distribution of daily necessities.

Recommendation 5.7: Review and emphasize the Food and Necessities community points of distribution (CPODs). Ensure the facilities accommodate populations with AFN, are easily accessible by public transit, and are large enough to accommodate public health guidance associated with pandemics (e.g., social distancing).

Recommendation 5.8: Establish agreements with companies to procure and provide necessities for vulnerable populations in advance to emergency response, if possible, in order to avoid lack of availability or "price gouging" from providers.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

FINDING 1:
Given the costs of establishing, coordinating, and distributing food and necessities to vulnerable populations, the Food and Necessities Branch should have engaged the Finance and Administration Section at the onset of the branch's implementation.

Given the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need to rapidly respond to challenges as they occur. That is what the Food and Necessities Branch did as EOC leadership stated that a "lean-in" mentality would be critical to solving problems as quickly as they arose. Given the fact that the Food and Necessities Branch was a completely new city and EOC function, along with how quickly they needed to scale up to meet their distribution goals of

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[121] Moore, Andrew. "How the Coronavirus Created a Toilet Paper Shortage" (May 19, 2020). https://cnr.ncsu.edu/news/2020/05/coronavirus-toilet-paper-shortage/#:~:text=Many%20attribute%20the%20shortage%20to,%2Dbuying%2C%20according%20to%20Dr.&text=Many%20attribute%20the%20shortage%20to%20disruptions%20in%20the%20supply%20chain.,-But%20the%20supply
[122] Food & Necessities Small Group Workshop

over three million meals, there were large costs that occurred. The Finance Section of the EOC was not informed of each cost and oftentimes would receive an invoice or receipt for costs that had never received approval or had documentation filled out prior.[123] In some small group workshops, it was stated that while the Finance Section needed to look at the budget holistically, the "siloed" nature of the branches hampered communication on how much money was being spent in each section/branch. The reason for this is, with most EOC activations, the response phase lasts between 12-48 hours before moving into the recovery phase. However, COVID-19 called for a sustained activation and a more proactive and comprehensive approach to managing financial aspects of the response across EOC sections and branches.

Recommendation 5.9: For future EOC Activation that appear as though they will extend past 48 hours both the Recovery Section and Finance Sections of the EOC should be activated at the same time as all other sections/branches, at the onset of the incident to avoid duplication of workstreams.

Recommendation 5.10: Ensure documentation liaisons are fully trained and equipped with proper technology and software to assist their branch/section in filling out the proper request forms, documentation, and invoices promptly and successfully in order to avoid duplication of roles and responsibilities.

> **FINDING 2:**
> **The Food and Necessities Branch did not proactively engage non-profit organizations or Community based organizations who could assist in the response. Instead, these organizations had to contact the city and offer their assistance.**

When undertaking the food distribution assignment, non-profit organizations and community-based organizations felt as though they were not consulted early enough in the effort to address food insecurity.[124] Many of these organizations are very aware of the challenges the Food and Necessities Branch faced in the early days of building the section while scaling up response capacity at the same time. However, many felt as though they could have helped alleviate many of these issues or had the expertise and experience to mitigate them outright. For example, in the Non-Profit Partners Small Group Workshop, a number of participants stated that while the city was able to allocate funding to non-profit organizations and community-based organizations, these organizations had to advocate to receive that funding. However non-profit organization representatives have stated that as COVID-19 response has continued they do feel as though the city has been more communicative, than during the initial phase.

External stakeholders invited to the non-profit partner Small Group Workshop noted they do have support from the EOC and Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS). Many non-profit partners believe that they will need additional funding provided by the City as their donations are unable to match the demand of services needed. Some stakeholders in that same Small Group Workshop fear they may have to close their doors if they do not receive additional funding from the City or other government entity.

Recommendation 5.11: Create a pre-vetted NPO and CBO partner organization list and establish MOUs with these organization in an effort to have the City be able to rapidly coordinate with non-profit organizations and community-based organizations in the event of another food insecurity emergency.

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[123] Finance & Recovery Small Group Workshop
[124] Non-profit Partners Small Group Workshop

Recommendation 5.12: Allocate additional funding and resources for non-profit organizations that assist with food distribution and face collapse due to the sustained COVID-19 response and loss of donors as the City will face additional costs if local Non-profit organizations are forced to close.

Recommendation 5.13: Capitalize on the collaboration and relationships built with non-profit organizations and CBOs during the COVID-19 response and continue to convene regularly with these organizations following the downturn of COVID-19 to foster a deeper partnership with the City and sustain built relationships.

Recommendation 5.14: Take time to recognize the hard work performed by non-profit organizations and community-based organizations in helping to not only feed vulnerable populations, but to also clean up trash, help cloth the homeless population, provide medical care to those in need, amongst other "unseen" tasks.

> **FINDING 3:**
> **Many of the City Staff tasked with work for the Food and Necessities Branch did not have prior experience with food distribution and were unable to initially meet all community needs.**

As mentioned in the strengths section above, food distribution in previous activations has been handled at the county level but given their need to respond to an overwhelming public health crisis, the City of San José agreed to take this challenge on. However, few members of the City staff had adequate training or expertise in food distribution and the team immediately reached out to the County of Santa Clara for some assistance. They did not have a point of contact at the county for over a month and had to continue to build the Food and Necessities Branch without any county input or guidance.[125] After a point of contact was established at the county, they referred the San José EOC team to Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, a network of Non- profit organizations that interact through a variety of grocery programs in order to reach vulnerable populations. By not having a prior communication channel with the county EOC for food and necessities operations, the Food and Necessities Branch was forced to make decisions without input from both the county and Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, whose already structured program could have helped the Food and Necessities Branch identify and target populations that needed the most assistance.

Recommendation 5.15: Foster a relationship with Santa Clara County food distribution staff in manner that mirrors the City and County agreements that Homeless Support Services had established prior to COVID-19 response. This would include creating a joint task force and creating a liaison position to actively work with the county.

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[125] Food & Necessities Small Group Workshop

6 - RESOURCE REQUESTS AND MANAGEMENT

SUMMARY

The response to COVID-19 has put tremendous financial strain on many U.S. governmental jurisdictions. There has been an increased need for supplies such as PPE or sanitation products for governmental staff as well as requests from partner agencies to help supplement their own supplies. In the community, residents have faced their own challenges, resulting in a need for increased governmental resources to be dedicated to COVID-19 relief services and programs. The City of San José has invested in programs to help its residents with resources like feeding, supplemental healthcare supplies, medical isolation, and housing. It has also taken steps to relieve pressure on their residents by halting things like parking or ticket enforcement.

> "If you stop paying bills and paying people, stuff stops happening".
>
> *- Workshop Stakeholder*

However, the COVID-19 response as a whole has placed an extra burden on the City of San José's budget. The pausing of collecting money at parking meters, ticketing parked cars, etc. has been a huge loss of revenue and may pose economic challenges to the City, its business and communities for years.[126][127] This raises a concern that the budgets for non-disaster related programs may be reduced.[128] As many programs deemed non-essential have already experienced cuts following the 2008 recession, this could be especially challenging without guidance on program priorities from Financial and City Manager's Offices.[129]

To manage the financial strain, San José and EOC Leadership recognized the importance of recouping as much money as possible during and after the response. This prioritization of fiscal responsibility was reflected in the City Roadmap which included a key action of Funding and Cost Recovery. Within the San José EOC, the Finance section supported this priority through the development of detailed plans to support funding and cost recovery with objectives such as determining the need for separate budget appropriations, ensuring compliance with funding requirements, and monitoring federal and state grant opportunities.[130] The City also invested in this priority by contracting Witt O'Brien to provide support for cost recovery efforts.[131]

Financial and resource management activities highlighted the need for the EOC to track costs and identify sources of funding to mitigate the financial impact on the City. The processes to manage resources and track expenditures were continuously adapted and improved throughout the ongoing COVID-19 response. This was especially beneficial as federal and other funding streams became available over time but will require diligent tracking to be used and/or to reimburse past costs.

Managing resource allocation can be challenging during non-disaster times as there are limited

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[126] Small Group Workshop
[127] SJOEM EOC Document Review
[128] Small Group Workshop
[129] Small Group Workshop
[130] SJOEM EOC Action Plans
[131] SJOEM EOC Action Plans

resources, budget constraints, and competing priorities. During a disaster this becomes even more challenging as existing processes may not be applicable or adaptable to the disaster environment, resource needs are expanding, and there are competing priorities for existing and new programs. Yet San José EOC staff adjusted and sought out ways to improve the system so that resources would be distributed as quickly as possible while also being tracked to be reimbursed in the future.

STRENGTHS

FINDING 1:
The City of San José was flexible in reallocating resources to meet the needs of staff.

Small group workshop participants described that the City put a tremendous amount of effort into reorganizing resources rather than asking for additional money or tools. This was demonstrated as City employees transitioned to partial or full work from home schedules and the need for mobile equipment grew. While some respondents to the City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey indicated additional access to resources would aid in their ability to work, the majority of respondents (81%) indicated they had the technology and equipment they needed to complete their responsibilities.[132] The respondents who completed the follow up question of what could be improved noted things like, VPN remote access, improved WIFI or a mobile hotspot, faster access to laptops or City provided equipment, as well as electronic and office equipment such as a second monitor, printer, mouse, ergonomic chairs, etc. Additionally, this would include an incidental stipend for City employees to work remotely. The City additionally showed their flexibility when organizing childcare for staff and essential workers. Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services was described as having created services using funds and facilities already available. Although additional funding was granted through the Coronavirus Relief Fund and Community Development Block Grants, the majority of services were developed within existing frameworks.[133]

Recommendation 6.1: Determine if all employees working from home have the necessary resources to fulfill their responsibilities without personal costs and fill any outstanding technological or equipment needs. Participants indicated that staff could feel abandoned when they are expected to pay for work equipment/supplies on their own.[134]

FINDING 2:
Resource request, procurement, and reimbursement processes were adapted to electronic format and became more accessible.

One of the most frequently identified innovations and strengths of the COVID-19 response in the EOC was the switch to SimpliGov and the implementation of an electronic resource request and tracking system by the Logistics section.[135] [136] [137] The openness to adjustment and the movement to a brand-new process in the middle of a pandemic was described as indicative of the section. Logistics was said to be innovative, open, and ready for suggestions in order to improve the system.

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[132] City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[133] Small Group Workshop
[134] Big Group Workshop
[135] City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[136] Small Group Workshop
[137] Big Group Workshop

In the beginning of the response there were challenges when submitting resource requests using ICS Form 213RR. The forms were submitted electronically via email, but this resulted in hundreds of forms being sent to the team which then needed to be entered into spreadsheets. EOC staff recognized the need to shift this process into an automated system and proceeded to move this direction, ultimately instituting SimpliGov. This new process was described as more robust and innovative. [138][139] Using this software streamlined resource requests and provided opportunities to continue to improve resource management during a disaster.[140] [141]

An additional resource management process that has been automated and improved is the contracting system. The City moved from physical to electronic submissions for contract applications and extensions. Through this adjustment, the turnaround time was much faster and expedited project submittals and approvals.[142] These continuous improvements and adjustments to processes demonstrated the EOC staff's flexibility and prioritization of system enhancements.

Recommendation 6.2: Perform a review of employee experiences with SimpliGov to identify what worked well and what could be improved.[143] This could include exploring system capabilities with the manufacturer for potential improvements such as consolidating like items to feed into the procurement process, pre-generating approval flow so forms can be automatically directed to the appropriate people, or creating outputs that better reflect the amount of equipment and supplies that have been used during the COVID-19 response.[144] [145]

Recommendation 6.3: Document successful financial and human resource processes to provide guidance for future activations. This could include how to incorporate emergency information into regular City systems and reports, the current workflow system, tips on deploying new processes in the midst of a disaster, etc.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

FINDING 1:
There was ongoing confusion around funding as well as resource request documentation.

Funding for the COVID-19 response was initially limited.[146] The granting of funds from FEMA and the CARES Act provided additional resources, but there was a lack of clarity with staff around what the EOC could afford or buy.[147] [148] The federal government did not clearly delineate what could be procured or how each funding stream could be used, leading to a feeling of having to "catch up" to the rules in the midst of a crisis.[149] This lack of clarity made it challenging for the City to communicate with its employees what resources would be available or what the City could

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[138] Small Group Workshop
[139] City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[140] Big Group Workshop
[141] City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[142] City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[143] Small Group Workshop
[144] City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
[145] Small Group Workshop
[146] Big Group Workshop
[147] Small Group Workshop
[148] Big Group Workshop
[149] City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey

promise the community. There was also confusion internally as to what EOC staff could request.

Large group workshop participants described instances where resource requests would be made for non-disaster related items. Although urgent requests were answered as promptly as possible, others were discussed at length in order to determine their necessity.[150] Financial marshaling and spending policies were not initially in place to assist in determining how to equitably allocate resources when there was limited availability.[151] Without these policies, the approval and distribution of resources was perceived by some to be challenging and slow.[152] [153] Stakeholders noted that involving these sections at the beginning of a response would have been ideal to aid in the understanding of financial implications of the response efforts.[154] [155]

Resource request documentation, while improved by SimpliGov, did continue to pose challenges for staff as well. When the submission process went fully digital, it was not made clear to all staff and the procedure or directions for completing forms could have been more widely distributed.[156] Without clear guidance there was confusion around how much detail was needed on the forms. Another challenge was consistent indication of funding source (i.e., visible code or viscode) on resource request documentation.[157] [158] EOC staff submitting requests often forgot to complete the funding source section of FEMA form 213RR or did not use the correct viscode for concurrent disasters unrelated to COVID-19.[159] There was an assumption that if the requests were approved, then the forms were complete and there would not be any issues around payment regardless if a viscode was included. Often these errors were not caught until the resource request was processed through to the financial recovery team. This resulted in a need to backtrack and attempt to determine which vis code should have been used to ensure appropriate budgeting and financial tracking.[160]

Recommendation 6.4: Increase the level and frequency of communication regarding changes to systems with staff, including information on why systems are currently in place.[161]

Recommendation 6.5: Provide just-in-time training or "cheat sheets" to staff on viscodes they should be using, what the viscodes mean or link to, budget approval process, etc.

FINDING 2:
The system for procuring and tracking resources and services could be improved.

The systems in place for procurement and accounting of resources prior to COVID-19 were described by a survey respondent as not as effective for emergency response.[162] There was a need for enhanced infrastructure to document and track goods and services that were purchased. Orders were assigned tracking numbers late in the purchasing process which made

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150 Big Group Workshop
151 Big Group Workshop
152 City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
153 Big Group Workshop
154 City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey
155 Big Group Workshop
156 Small Group Workshop
157 Small Group Workshop
158 Big Group Workshop
159 Big Group Workshop
160 Small Group Workshop
161 Small Group Workshop
162 City of San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey

it very difficult to link the items to the original request. This was especially challenging as there were many similar purchases (e.g., PPE). Additionally, there was not a process in place to inform the person who originally submitted the request that it was fulfilled.[163] Without bringing the request full circle, staff who asked for the resource were unaware if it had been purchased, how much had it cost, or if it had been delivered.

Recommendation 6.6: Evaluate and update policies and procedures around procuring materials and resources that may be needed in an emergency. Ensure they are straightforward and provide clear guidelines/checklists. Consider having these protocols approved by Council so they can be enacted quickly in an emergency.[164]

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FINDING 2:
Nonprofit partners experienced delayed approval of funding or were unable to access resources to support their community programs.

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Communication between nonprofits and San José EOC was described by stakeholders as limited. Small group workshop participants noted that there were limited relationships between nonprofit organizations and the City. Many of the nonprofits involved in feeding services needed to advocate for themselves to ensure that funding was allocated to them as well as the private sector.[165] Small group workshop participants indicated this was a source of contention as the nonprofits believed that if they did not speak up, the City would have only funded for-profit corporations while nonprofits needing the resources to serve clients would not have received them.[166] Participants pointed out that nonprofits serve as a vital resource in the community and during the COVID-19 response they double or tripled their feeding output while waiting for the City to determine who should be funded.

Part of the complication in contracting or supporting these nonprofit services was that the City had not previously funded several of the nonprofits with missions that supported the City's COVID-19 response objectives (e.g., feeding, housing). At one point, nonprofits attempted to submit resource requests to the jurisdiction, but the process did not work well. The service providers were unsure of the cost to attribute to a resource (e.g., temporary housing) and the jurisdiction was unsure how to process or manage the requests.[167] There were other resources nonprofit partners would have liked to request from the EOC but were ineligible. For example, San José nonprofits faced a major challenge in procuring PPE. Since the local governmental focused their distribution of this resource to City staff, nonprofits serving a key function in the community were unable to receive them.

> "It would be devastating to the community and those who we support" to go back to how it was – no funding to nonprofits while relying on for-profits.
>
> *- Workshop Stakeholder*

Recommendation 6.7: Develop systems and policies for determining if/what resources can be made available to nonprofit organizations fulfilling key services in the community.

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[163] Small Group Workshop
[164] Small Group Workshop
[165] Small Group Workshop
[166] Small Group Workshop
[167] Small Group Workshop

Recommendation 6.8: Explore additional opportunities to improve contracting with nonprofit organizations in order to streamline funding and resource requests.[168] Consider surveying or discussing experiences with nonprofit applicants to capture lessons learned to refine documentation processes and procedures. For instance, pre-vetting or pre-approving nonprofit providers through Requests for Quotation or Memorandums of Understanding could result in a cadre of providers eligible for contracting when needed.

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[168] Small Group Workshop

7 - PLANNING FACTORS FOR CONNECTING AND ASSISTING VULNERABLE AND AT-RISK POPULATIONS

SUMMARY

The response to COVID-19 throughout the City of San José and the United States as a whole has highlighted the inequities that exist for minority, impoverished, access and functional needs (AFN), and the homeless communities. While all communities have faced major challenges in adapting to the pandemic, these vulnerable communities' inequities specifically in healthcare, housing, and discrimination have been exacerbated.[169][170] These affected populations include communities of color, people with disabilities, the elderly population, and many more.[171] San José is facing an economic downturn and unemployment levels that have already and will continue to cause major economic losses. As a result of widespread unemployment, many are battling financial and housing challenges that have, in turn, highlighted the inequities that have been amplified as a result of the pandemic.[172] It was found that 60% of respondents identified rental assistance was one of their top priorities for future COVID relief. With lack of financial support and employment stability, these communities have become more exposed to some of harshest impacts of the pandemic.[173]

Shelter in place and social distancing orders due to COVID-19 have affected travel, transportation, restaurants/bars, and physical retail amongst other sectors. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, these employment sectors have a higher percentage of women, African Americans, and Latinx employees meaning that the pandemic has displaced a disproportionate number of women and people of color.[174] The Latinx community in East San José is the community that has seen the highest infection and death rates in Santa Clara County. The large number of positive cases have been attributed to the fact that a large number of the Latinx community in those areas work in the service industry and were more likely to live in multi-family households where social distancing measures were more difficult to adhere to.[175] The death rates have been attributed to a large number of long-term care facilities and skilled nursing facilities in East San José, that housed populations more likely to contract a severe case of COVID-19 given age and pre-existing medical conditions.[176] While it can be assumed that there is a correlation between case rates and death rates, this report does not provide an in-depth causal analysis between these two statistics.

These same populations were also more likely to struggle at home given the shutdown of schools and day care centers and with children at home full-time this created a burden for both essential

[169] The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies. "Failures in COVID-19 Response Harm People with Disabilities and Older Adults." https://disasterstrategies.org/report-failures-in-covid-19-response-harm-people- with-disabilities-and-older-adults/

[170] Kantamneni, Neeta. "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on marginalized populations in the United States: A research agenda." *Journal of vocational behavior* vol. 119 (2020)

[171] The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies. "Failures in COVID-19 Response Harm People with Disabilities and Older Adults." https://disasterstrategies.org/report-failures-in-covid-19-response-harm-people- with-disabilities-and-older-adults/

[172] COVID Intervention. For the Prevention, Care, Relief, and Recovery for the Latinx Community in Santa Clara County

[173] Financial and Survey Assistance COVID Relief Survey Feedback

[174] Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey.

[175] COVID Intervention. For the Prevention, Care, Relief, and Recovery for the Latinx Community in Santa Clara County

[176] COVID Intervention. For the Prevention, Care, Relief, and Recovery for the Latinx Community in Santa Clara County

workers and those who needed to work from home. For those considered essential, many had to either pay out of pocket to pay for private childcare, ask family members for assistance, or in some cases leave their children at home alone.[177] For those switching to remote work it was also difficult to adjust with children as they needed to both work and assist their children with activities such as online learning.[178] [179]

Shelter-in-place mandates also had devastating impacts on households, particularly on women and young girls. As a result of the strict shelter periods, there was a concern that the negative impacts on the community would include an increase in domestic violence cases in households. While these cases are typically delayed in reporting, law enforcement is expecting an uptick in cases when communities eventually return to regular interactions, including with teachers, medical personnel, and police officers. It was acknowledged that future planning should account for the social impact and emotional stress that has been experienced during the pandemic.[180]

The Police Department also found that while there was a decrease in the overall rape and sexual assault cases, the domestic numbers rose by 140% and 400% respectively.[181] During shelter-in-place, certain months saw more reported sexual assault cases. For example, there were 174 sexual assault cases reported in July 2020, compared to 109 in May 2020.[182] It is necessary to note that these increased numbers occurred, while it is also likely that cases went underreported. When children are left unsupervised and live in a multi-family household or complex there is an increased chance for potential abuse. This along with typical mandated reporters decreased visibility over the past year likely means that the expected uptick in cases that is expected may be larger than in past years. Future emergency response initiatives will need to consider alternatives to the normal mandated reporter process to ensure that all woman and children are better protected from domestic violence and abuse. Moving forward, the City should coordinate with Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, and collaborate with their data and reporting.

While the State of California has an eviction moratorium that has been in place since the beginning of the pandemic, many vulnerable and at-risk residents will face the inability to pay the rent in full once the moratorium is lifted. An estimated 30-40 million Americans face eviction from their homes once COVID-19 rent and eviction moratoriums are lifted, these numbers disproportionately affecting the African American and Latinx communities[183]. The City of San José will need to examine its own policies regarding rent and eviction moratoriums as researchers suggest that the United States could face a long-term housing crisis that will affect communities of color and AFN populations, who already face a heightened risk of economic hardship during the pandemic.

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[177] Small Group Workshop

[178] Kantamneni, Neeta. "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on marginalized populations in the United States: A research agenda." *Journal of vocational behavior* vol. 119 (2020)

[179] The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies. "Failures in COVID-19 Response Harm People with Disabilities and Older Adults." https://disasterstrategies.org/report-failures-in-covid-19-response-harm-people- with-disabilities-and-older-adults/

[180] City of San José Police Department Memorandum – Sexual Assault and Strategy Annual Report. https://sanjose.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4770857&GUID=7C41E637-F91D-42C8-88F5-4C042AC51AA3&Options=&Search

[181] City of San José Police Department Memorandum Pg. 6 – Sexual Assault and Strategy Annual Report. https://sanjose.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4770857&GUID=7C41E637-F91D-42C8-88F5-4C042AC51AA3&Options=&Search

[182] City of San José Police Department Presentation. Police Department Operations & Performance Bi-Monthly Status Report, Slide 12. https://sanjose.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4746295&GUID=A9DD2DC9-4CA2-40FD-BD36-B588AE0377F6&Options=&Search=

[183] Benfer, Emily et. al. "The COVID-19 Eviction Crisis: an Estimated 30-40 Million People in America Are at Risk". *The Aspen Institute*

Many residents of San José do not fall into one of these categories, but multiple categories forcing the City to create a nuanced approach to addressing community needs. In order to reach out to vulnerable and/or harder to reach populations, there was an emphasis on "place-based" community outreach.[184] The large facility testing center, which will be described in more detail in the strengths section, is an example of the City focusing on assisting minority, AFN, multi-lingual, and impoverished communities simultaneously. Additionally, this would include the continuous efforts to provide multiple language translations.[185] However, given the rapid response and multitude of challenges that the City faced during the beginning stages of COVID-19 response there are still issues that arose for these communities which need to be addressed.

STRENGTHS

> **FINDING 1:**
> **The City of San José established a mass testing center in East San José in an effort to increase testing capabilities and focus on communities most affected by COVID-19.**

In both Small and Large Group Workshops conducted with San José EOC Staff members they noted that the Latinx community in East San José is the community that has been most impacted by COVID-19. In a partnership with Verily's, an Alphabet Company, "Baseline COVID-19 Program," the City made an effort to provide further resources and testing in an area with a high volume of known cases. The testing program was one of the first to focus specifically on vulnerable populations.[186] Not only was the large facility testing center located in one of the zip codes with the most known cases and highest spread rate, East San José had 40% of Santa Clara County's positive cases, but only made up 20% of the testing being conducted.[187] Within the East Side of San José, more than third of the first 100 victims lived in these four zip codes –

San José Mayor Sam Liccardo announces the opening of a free COVID-19 testing site in East San José

95116, 95127, 95122, and 95148.[188] In the fall of 2020, the City enhanced its monitoring efforts to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 across zip codes. This yielded data which indicated heightened vulnerability within these additional eight zip codes – 95113, 95111, 95110, 95121, 95002, 95117, 95112, and 95133.

The Logistics Section of the EOC coordinated with other departments to ensure that the site was accessible to all who needed to take advantage of the site. It was accessible by both vehicle and on foot in order to ensure that those with AFN were able to take advantage of the site, given that

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[184] Stakeholder Interview
[185] Stakeholder Interview
[186] City of San José (2020). "EXPANDED FREE COVID-19 TESTING FOR HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS IN EAST SAN JOSÉ". https://www.sanjoseca.gov/Home/Components/News/News/1200/4699
[187] NBC Bay Area Staff. "Free COVID-19 Testing Now Available for All Santa Clara County Residents". (2020)
[188] The Mercury News. "Death reports show coronavirus hit San Jose's poor, Latino neighborhoods hardest". https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/05/10/coronavirus-deaths-east-san-jose-poor/

many were unable to be tested at drive through sites due to mandated restrictions and legal liability.[189] There was also signage and instructions that were posted in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese to ensure residents understood the instructions and organizational flow of the testing site. The site was able to test over 16,000 residents in East San José and Santa Clara County and to enhance testing above adequate levels for the hard-hit community.

Additionally, the City found that smaller, more local pop-up testing sites in vulnerable areas were largely successful. Ultimately, the most well-received outreach methods are ones that can make authentic connections with the community. For these communities, it was important that these efforts were culturally competent and representative of the people they served. As a result, these pop-up sites were aligned with the communities' culture, and were more importantly operated by the people in those areas. In return, this fostered trust and saw immediate success. While large venues were able to serve large portions of the community, small pop-up sites were also equally successful and provided engagement that was ultimately positive.[190]

Recommendation 7.1: Establish agreement with large outdoor and/or small venues to use their facility as a testing center in the future should there be a resurgence of COVID-19 in the final months of 2020 or in 2021.

Recommendation 7.2: Utilize large outdoor and/or small venues and best practices from initial COVID-19 activation testing centers discovered during this process to create a Point of Dispensing (POD) location upon FDA Approval and mass distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine.

FINDING 2:
The establishment of free childcare programs for essential city employees was successful enough that the city was able to scale up the program to assist those dealing with "Multiple Role Conflict".

> "We had a duty to make sure that those that needed help taking care of their children in order to continue their duty had the help they needed."
>
> *- Online Survey Respondent*

Schools within the City of San José and Santa Clara County were shut down on March 13th, 2020 initially for an indefinite amount of time before switching over to virtual and online learning. The City made the decision to use facilities such as community centers and libraries to create childcare centers for first responders and essential City employees who needed to physically be away from home. Despite some initial confusion of eligibility, the program was able to alleviate the burden of those facing a heighted multiple role conflict. Multiple role conflict refers to a construct relating to the differential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for individuals who have historically been marginalized within the labor force.[191] Those marginalized groups facing multiple role conflict are disproportionately women, minorities, and those facing financial hardship.

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[189] Small Group Workshop
[190] Stakeholder Interview
[191] Kantamneni, Neeta. "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on marginalized populations in the United States: A research agenda." *Journal of vocational behavior* vol. 119 (2020)

By identifying that the City could use their current after-school program infrastructure while adjusting the time to fit better within the typical workday, they were able to establish childcare programs with little additional funding required.[193] The City also noted that during the summer months they would need to broaden their support for childcare to the general public and implemented a plan to provide a summer childcare program with a fee for service model. The fee was not considered to be large but would allow the City to pay for the program's scale up costs.[194] By continuing to mirror their normal operations with adjustments made for COVID-19 response and requirements the City has also been able to provide an eight week fall program that focuses on students who need an environment to virtually learn so they are able to do so.

> "Cutting our losses in a public way was a hard thing to do, but the general attitude was we can't be afraid to fail, we needed to do something
>
> *- Small Group Workshop Participant*

Recommendation 7.3: Create a plan to extend and expand childcare services and programs past Fall 2020 and into 2021, in an effort to continue assisting parents that need to work and provide children with an adequate environment for virtual learning.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

FINDING 1:
San José's use of FEMA Trailers to house vulnerable and at-risk populations was quickly dismantled due to inability to properly maintain them as well as unforeseen financial costs.

The City of San José and Santa Clara County had received 109 trailers from CalOES to support the Homeless Support Services Unit and establish a community to house those in need. The FEMA trailers were received without a request from the City or notification from CalOES. Additionally, only a small portion of the trailers were habitable; with the remaining in disrepair and the trailers were offered with little to no guidance.[195] Before the EOC activation in March 2020, the City was actively working on creating a Housing Disaster Plan but did not have a draft of the plan upon activation. However, the trailers had arrived, and the City needed to quickly identify an area where 109 trailers could be located to meet zoning regulations, and which was equipped with sewage and water. These limitations led to a chosen location that was incredibly far from the main hubs of San José. While the City had repaired more than half of the trailers, they were in such poor condition that the City needed to hire a subcontractor to refurbish the remaining trailers.[196]

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[192] Nohe C., Meier L.L., Sonntag K., Michel A. The chicken or the egg? A meta-analysis of panel studies of the relationship between work-family conflict and strain. Journal of Applied Psychology. 2015
[193] Small Group Workshop
[194] Small Group Workshop
[195] Small Group Workshop
[196] Small Group Workshop

Due to requirements set by FEMA on who could be housed in their trailers, the Homeless Support Services Unit selected those who were considered "medically vulnerable".[197] Given the size of the trailer location this quickly caused challenges as many of those considered "medically vulnerable" had other AFN considerations that made it incredibly difficult for them to maneuver the community. For example, some within the population were unable to travel to the dumpsters forcing them to leave their trash outside their trailer creating a buildup of waste.[198] Due to a lack of guidance from the state and experience with trailer maintenance, there were a myriad of issues including fuel shortages, power outages, and sewage backups. After eight weeks, mounting pressure from the public, and ballooning financial costs to the City, the FEMA trailer program was shut down. Before the decision to decommission the trailers was made, the Homeless Support Services Unit quickly pivoted and was able to acquire hotel and motel rooms for those who were housed in the trailers. The City is currently in the process of purchasing a motel to convert into a disaster housing facility in an effort to mitigate future housing needs.

Recommendation 7.4: Complete the development of the San José Disaster Housing Plan for future responses.

Recommendation 7.5 Communicate with Cal OES regarding the information they need to provide when supplying jurisdictions with FEMA trailers for proper use.

Recommendation 7.6: Create an appendix for the Disaster Housing Plan that includes how to establish a FEMA trailer complex and write guidelines for proper set up, maintenance, and demobilization of program.

Recommendation 7.7: The City should identify and support the development of a trained, permanent AFN Coordinator in the City Manager's Office, who can represent the City as a liaison to the AFN community and can consistently invest into a strong and mutually respected working relationship.

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[197] Small Group Workshop
[198] Small Group Workshop

8 - COUNTY, STATE, AND FEDERAL COORDINATION

SUMMARY

Given the extensive and expansive nature of the COVID-19 pandemic the City of San José is not only required to respond, but to coordinate with other entities at the county, state, and federal level. Experts argue that a successful and functional emergency response infrastructure requires the coordination, collaboration, and communication of all levels of government given the delineated responsibilities of all parties. These parties include various departments within County of Santa Clara, the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The City was proactive in the early stages of response to reach out to these entities and attempted to establish communication channels in order to properly function with State Emergency Management System and to best follow SEMS, NEMS, and ICS guidelines and protocols.

As previously discussed, the City of San José undertook the task of food distribution at the request of the County, which was inundated with public health response efforts.[199] Due to the overwhelming nature of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first few months the City faced challenges communicating with these other entities. The CalOES trailers previously discussed in this report were not requested by the City, but rather they were told only days before they arrived that the State would be dropping of FEMA trailers to assist with the City's sheltering efforts.[200] This lack of communication led to employees lacking proper of understanding of SEMS structure, in turn slowing down efforts that would help the community and forcing the City to bear a financial cost. While some departments had built relationships with their governmental counterparts in order to sustain COVID-19 response and bolster activation and response operations in the future these connections with county, state, and federal entities will need to be formed.

STRENGTHS

FINDING 1:
San José's Homeless Support Services Branch had an established relationship with County of Santa Clara counterparts.

The City of San José's Homeless Support Services Branch has had a partnership with the County of Santa Clara's Homeless Support Services Division for over 5 years when city staff believed that they could not achieve their goals without the support of the County.[201] The two agencies have established a Joint Departmental Operations Center (JDOC) in recent years, that had monthly meetings, in addition to establishing more informal relationships allowing for efficient communication. At the height of COVID-19 response in the spring and summer of 2020 city staff stated that they were meeting with county partners weekly and oftentimes daily to ensure that their goals for supporting those suffering from homelessness were aligned.[202]

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[199] Small Group Workshop
[200] Small Group Workshop
[201] Small Group Workshop
[202] Small Group Workshop

While other city and EOC departments struggled to communicate and discuss response efforts with their counterparts, the Homeless Support Services Branch was able to immediately mobilize response efforts in coordination with the County. The reliance on combined expertise and strategic staff placement allowed for quick decision making including the placement of hand washing stations and other sanitizing equipment to be placed near populations of those suffering from homelessness.[203] The City along with county and non-profit partners were able to easily assign roles and coordinate so as not to duplicate any efforts and incur wasted costs. The City even went so far as to place a liaison in Santa Clara County's EOC to ensure lines of communications remained open, something other city EOC branches struggled to do because they had not formed relationships prior to COVID-19 response.

Recommendation 8.1: Continue Homeless Support Services JDOC meetings and liaison placement to ensure that a strong relationship with Santa Clara County remains and have Homeless Support Services Branch act as an example for other EOC branches.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

FINDING 1:
Lack of clarity around federal financial documentation rules and requirements.

Prior to COVID-19 response the City did not require that each member of the staff be trained in SEMS, NEMS, or ICS prior to beginning work at the City. So, when the EOC was activated in March 2020, a large number of the staff had no experience with how to properly fill out federal financial documentation. In particular the EOC staff faced confusion of how to properly submit resource requests using ICS Form 213 RR. Initially the forms were submitted electronically via email, but this resulted in hundreds of forms being sent for approval without having been entered into spreadsheets. The Logistics Division quickly adjusted to using a processed deemed "smartsheets" to accelerate and uncomplicate the process and have found that by creating one simplified vis code there was far less of a need for the financial recovery team to backtrack and confirm that the proper vis code had been used to ensure budgeting and financial tracking. While EOC staff in other branches was aware that a change in the process had been made there was still a number of workshop participants throughout the 18 small group workshops that were still unsure of how the process worked.[204]

Recommendation 8.2: Provide training sessions newly automated 213 RR form system in order to alleviate any potential staff difficulties.

FINDING 2:
Several departments have a strained or no relationship with County of Santa Clara, State, and Federal partners.

This report has previously discussed that the City's COVID-19 response was slowed due to a lack of established relationships with County officials as well as the lack of communication received from CalOES and federal agencies. This lack of communication has led to mismanagement of the COVID-19 response as the County and State have attempted to assist in response without discussing it with the City first. The first example of this is when CalOES sent

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[203] Small Group Workshop
[204] Small Group Workshop

105 FEMA trailers to assist with housing for those suffering from homelessness. They failed to ask the City of San José if providing this resource would be beneficial and according to staff members in the Homeless Support Services Branch and EOC staff, they were only given a few days' notice that the trailers would be deployed to the City.[205] Not only were nearly 90% of trailers unusable without renovations, but the State and FEMA failed to provide any guidance on how to deploy these trailers and the level of maintenance needed.[206]

The City of San José faced a similar communication challenge when Santa Clara County staff requested that the City's EOC staff handle food distribution to those in need. While the City took on the task and was able to successfully build the Food and Necessities Branch within the EOC they were unable to communicate with the County and food distribution efforts were duplicated in some parts of the City.[207] EOC leaders attempted to improve communication and collaboration with the County and sent a liaison from the City to work at the County, however due to a lack of relationship building between the entities the liaison was not aware of who their counterpart was.[208] While the City has faced challenges in their attempts to open lines of communication with other government entities, they have been able to successfully communicate COVID-19 response to their community. Applying a similar strategy with other government organizations as they do with the community at large, may potentially garner the attention of the staff at those organizations, and begin to build relationships that will be critical for success in a long-term sustained response and for future emergencies.

Recommendation 8.3: Send flash reports to the County, state, and federal government to exemplify how funding is being utilized and how beneficial this assistance is to the City's operations.

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[205] Small Group Workshop
[206] Small Group Workshop
[207] Small Group Workshop
[208] Small Group Workshop

CONCLUSION

The Coronavirus pandemic has warranted an unprecedented global response and has taxed public health and safety infrastructure at all levels of government. To add to the already complex nature of the COVID-19 response, local governments across the country have simultaneously responded to civil unrest, hurricanes, and catastrophic fires during the first half of 2020, further straining the already overwhelmed response infrastructure and complicating the COVID-19 response. With this complex disaster landscape, the City of San José has acknowledged the importance of critically evaluating its disaster response to date, identifying corrective actions to improve response efforts going forward, and continuing this process as the COVID-19 response endures.

This OAR details the strengths and areas for improvement exhibited during the City of San José's response to COVID-19 through the date of this report. Each corrective action and recommendation delineated herein was synthesized into a COVID-19 Operational Adjustment Plan (OAP), which provides a roadmap for the City to follow to improve it COVID-19 response as well as all other future responses to communicable disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies. While the OAR and OAP acknowledge both progress made and progress yet to occur, with the ever-changing COVID-19 environment, it is important that the City continue to critically review their response efforts to ensure previously established improvement recommendations remain relevant and new corrective actions are captured.

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

SUMMARY

This OAR has been compiled using a mixed-method data collection approach. This included a comprehensive review of the City's existing plans and incident documentation, an online survey distributed to Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff, small group workshops, big group workshops, and assessment reviews. Additionally, the data was reviewed and approved through various Project Oversight Meetings.

Small and big group workshops were used to gather multiple perspectives of the City of San José COVID-19 response. Assessment reviews provided a space for the EOC staff to give feedback on the initial draft of the report. All data was reviewed and analyzed by a team of emergency management professionals to provide a fair and honest analysis of the response and development of realistic and actionable improvement recommendations.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Experts from Constant & Associates (CONSTANT) collected and reviewed established policies and procedures in the City of San José to compile the notes for this Report. The team conducted a review of documentation and resources provided by the City relative to the COVID-19 response.

Through this process, CONSTANT performed an analysis of response activities and used that analysis to supplement information provided through the online survey and small and big group workshops. A sampling of the reviewed documents includes:

- City of San José PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN, ANNEX P to the Emergency Operation Plan, March 11, 2020
- EOC Action Plans for the COVID-19 response
- EOC Situation Status Reports for the COVID-19 response
- City Manager's COVID-19 Update – Copy included in the EOC Action Plan
- EOC Action Planning and Administrative Updates

SURVEY

Constant Associates, Inc., in conjugation with EOC staff, developed an online survey in collaboration with the San José OEM Project Planning Team and distributed it to key stakeholders, including EOC management staff members, to collect individual feedback.

67 stakeholders participated in the electronic survey. Survey participants were asked to share what they observed as strengths as well as areas for improvement regarding the City of San José response and recovery efforts thus far. Data from the surveys informed the construction of themes in this OAR. The survey provided a forum for all participants to have an opportunity to contribute to this Report and enabled CONSTANT to identify key issues ahead of other planned data collection events. A summary of survey data and questions is provided within the appendices of this document.

Workshops

Small and big group workshops were conducted to review major events that highlighted the critical issues and strengths related to the City's response and recovery efforts. Interviewees were identified by the Project Planning Team as key stakeholders during the initial COVID-19 response period.

These interviews allowed participants to outline critical preparedness activities that occurred prior to the pandemic, as well as explain self-identified key strengths and areas for improvement relating to their response efforts. Data collected from the interviews helped inform the development of recommendations for future implementation by the City of San José and its Emergency Operations Centers.

The Report research team conducted 17 small group workshops and 2 big group workshops with key stakeholders in the response as identified by the Project Planning Team. Those interviewed included personnel from organizations and jurisdictions involved in many aspects of the response, such as Emergency Operations Staff; Food and Necessities Distribution Branch; Homeless Support Services Branch; Essential Services Branch; Digital Inclusion Branch; Liaison Branch; Nonprofit and Community-based Organization Leaders; Silicon Valley Strong Campaign; Emergency Public Information Officer Branch; Recovery Section and Finance Section; Planning Section; Logistics Section; Futures Branch; Community Engagement Branch; Recovery Taskforce; and Personnel Branch including Safety and Return to Work Powered by People.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY DATA

SUMMARY

To help inform the City of San José's Comprehensive COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Report, a twenty-one (21) question survey was distributed to City department/agency representatives who have provided ongoing support to the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey enabled these representatives to anonymously provide their perspectives on the existing City departments'/agencies' strengths and gaps in regard to readiness and training protocols that have been implemented. As of October 02, 2020, sixty-eight (68) representatives had responded to the survey. The following shows a breakdown of the City departments/agencies representative that provided a response:

City of San José Department/Agency	% of Respondents
Recovery Section & Finance Section	22.06%
Planning Section	22.06%
Liaison Branch (to include Local Assistance Unit)	14.71%
Logistics Section	14.71%
Emergency Operations Center General Staff	13.24%
Emergency Public Information Officer Branch	11.76%
Food and Necessities Distribution Branch	8.82%
Personnel Branch including Safety and Return to Work Powered by People	7.35%
Digital Inclusion Branch	4.41%
Recovery Taskforce	2.94%
Homeless Support Service Branch	1.47%
Essential Services Branch	1.47%
Silicon Valley Strong Campaign	1.47%
Community Engagement Branch	1.47%
Futures Branch	1.47%
Other	11.76%

In relation to organizational levels, 64.71% of the respondents represented the City Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Staff, 26.47% represented Senior Leaders/Policy Groups, 2.94% represented Field-level Responders, and 14.71% represented other (i.e., GIS, Unit Lea, Construct Emergency House, Airport Employee (DSW), EOC Support).

KEY FINDINGS

During the data analysis phase, the research team identified strengths and areas for improvement, along with specific recommendations in relation to readiness and training protocols that have been implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE TRAINING AND PREPAREDNESS

Although 54.41% of the representatives stated that they had attended/completed emergency management training prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half (48.53%) felt that there was a lack of support and/or they had to either create their own procedures or did not use the existing procedures in order to appropriately respond within their roles. 30.88% felt that they were adequately supported. It may be of interest to explore if those that felt adequately supported were in higher management positions and those that may have felt a lack of support were delegated tasks by management or vice versa in order to determine better future practices in specific role preparedness.

Several representatives specifically stated that it would have been more helpful if they had been explicitly instructed on the City's EOC organizational structure and what their individual roles are within the structure before the ongoing response. Some addressed concerns that they did not understand roles outside of their own department/agency. Others did not feel adequately prepared in their roles. In order to address these concerns, preparing a City EOC organizational structure seminar for all departments involved may be of interest.

"I think EOC organization, understand specifics of the branches and decision-making process. Also better understanding all the paperwork."

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

In response to improvements through a Corrective Action Program, there were several representatives concerned with the lack of communication and coordination between City departments/agencies and with the County EOC. They felt that the County did not provide adequate support to the City and that information was not transmitted. Exploring options to work more collaboratively in receiving/transmitting vital information to/from the County EOC and City departments/agencies need to be addressed to ensure correct information is provided on a timely basis.

In regard to communication within the City, 61.76% of the respondents stated that they received most of their information about the EOC response/next steps directly for EOC Branch or Section meetings. Flash reports released by Emergency Public Information Office accounted for 17.65%, and Tuesday City Council Meetings accounted for 16.18%.

Some of the innovative strategies and procedures implemented were given kudos by the representatives. This included Sit State document tracking tools, incorporating SimpliGov, and automating 213RR process. Ongoing staff training on how to effectively utilize the tools may aid in further streamlining the process.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION TO THE CITY RESIDENTS

A few respondents specified that they provided information to the City residents in different languages, recognizing the diverse community. Several respondents addressed concerns over

the need for more training to support people with disabilities, individuals with access and functional needs, and those with language barriers.

Some of the innovative tools implemented to communicate with City residents were social media outlets, Next Door, Flash Info Reports, and Resident Assistant Chat Bot for quick information. Assessing the public's approval for the communication methods implemented may help inform future decisions on methods of information dissemination.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

79.44% of the representatives stated that they had access to the technology and/or equipment they needed to complete their responsibilities, while 10.29% stated that they did not. Although the majority of the representatives had access, many specifically stated that some of the equipment/utilities they needed (i.e., printers, scanners, copiers, ink, laptops, cell phones, Internet access, VPN) were unreliable at times, and they had to pay for/use personal equipment and/or they received access to City-funded equipment after a significant delay. Another concerned addressed was that there are numerous communication channels utilized (i.e., Zoom, Slack, etc.), making it difficult to streamline the communication process. Ways to alleviate these financial and technological burdens need to be addressed as working-from-home has become more common.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

A vast majority of the representatives (74.24%) were working from home since March with 92.43% by May 2020. This may explain why 61.76% of the representatives stated that providing adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was not applicable, and no respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that they were not adequately provided. In regard to adequate physical distancing measures being implemented, 51.47% also stated that this was not applicable or that they worked remotely. 39.71% agreed/agreed strongly, while 8.82% disagreed/disagreed strongly. The survey did not address if and when the representatives started working again outside of their home. It may bode well to assess if proper PPE protocols are currently being and/or will be implemented as more representatives physically return to work.

The response to mental health programs/resources being readily available to the representatives and their staff was mixed. 39.71% responded that they were neutral, and 38.24% expressed that they agreed/strongly agreed that these measures were in place. However, 22.06% felt that adequate measures had not been made readily accessible.

Many of the respondents specifically stated that some of the best practices that have strengthened during this time have been inter-departmental/agency communication and camaraderie. They addressed that staff members have been increasingly flexible, creating innovative solutions, and keeping open lines of communication. Regular check-in meetings where great teamwork and weekly accomplishments are acknowledged along with celebrating birthdays and special occasions have helped boost morale.

Some representatives expressed that they did not feel that there was enough time off and/or they did not know how to effectively implement it. One stated that the EOC staff addressed the time-off, but follow-up discussions have yet to be scheduled. It would be advisable to actively explore options on how to create ongoing support systems to address issues with physical and mental fatigue before they become more acute.

APPENDIX C: ACRONYMS LIST

AFN- Access and Functional Needs

CBO(s)- Community-based Organization(s)

COOP- Continuity of Operations Plan

COVID-19- Coronavirus Disease 2019

DSW- Disaster Service Worker

EOC- Emergency Operations Center

EOP- Emergency Operations Plan

EPIO- Emergency Public Information Office

FDA- Food & Drug Administration

FEMA- Federal Emergency Management Agency

ICS- Incident Command System

IT- Information Technology

MACS- Multi-Agency Coordination System

MOU- Memorandum of Understanding

MYTEP- Multi-Year Training and Exercise Program

NIMS- National Incident Management System

OEM- Office of Emergency Management

OA- Operational Area

OAP- Operational Adjustment Plan

OAR- Operational Assessment Report

POD- Point of Dispensing

PPE- Personal Protective Equipment

PRNS- Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services

PSPS- Public Safety Power Shutoff

SEMS- Standardized Emergency Management Systems

SJOEM- San José Office of Emergency Management

VLAC- Virtual Local Assistance Center

WHO- World Health Organization

APPENDIX D: INCIDENT STATISTICS & MAPS

Table 1: Cumulative cases and deaths in Santa Clara County as of 11/20/20[209]

Cases	29, 631
Deaths	459

Table 2: COVID-19 cases in Santa Clara broken down by demographics, last updated from the Santa Clara County COVID-19 Demographics Dashboard on 11/20/20[210]

CATEGORY	PERCENT OF ALL CASES
BY GENDER	
Male	49.4%
Female	50.3%
Other	0.1%
Unknown	0.3%
BY AGE	
19 or under	17.5%
20-29	20.3%
30-39	18.4%
40-49	16.2%
50-59	12.8%
60-69	7.7%
70-79	3.8%
80-89	2.2%
90+	1.1%
Unknown	0.1%
BY ETHNICITY	
Asian	13.2% (group makes up 13.2% of County's population)

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[209] "Santa Clara County COVID-19 Snapshot." County of Santa Clara.
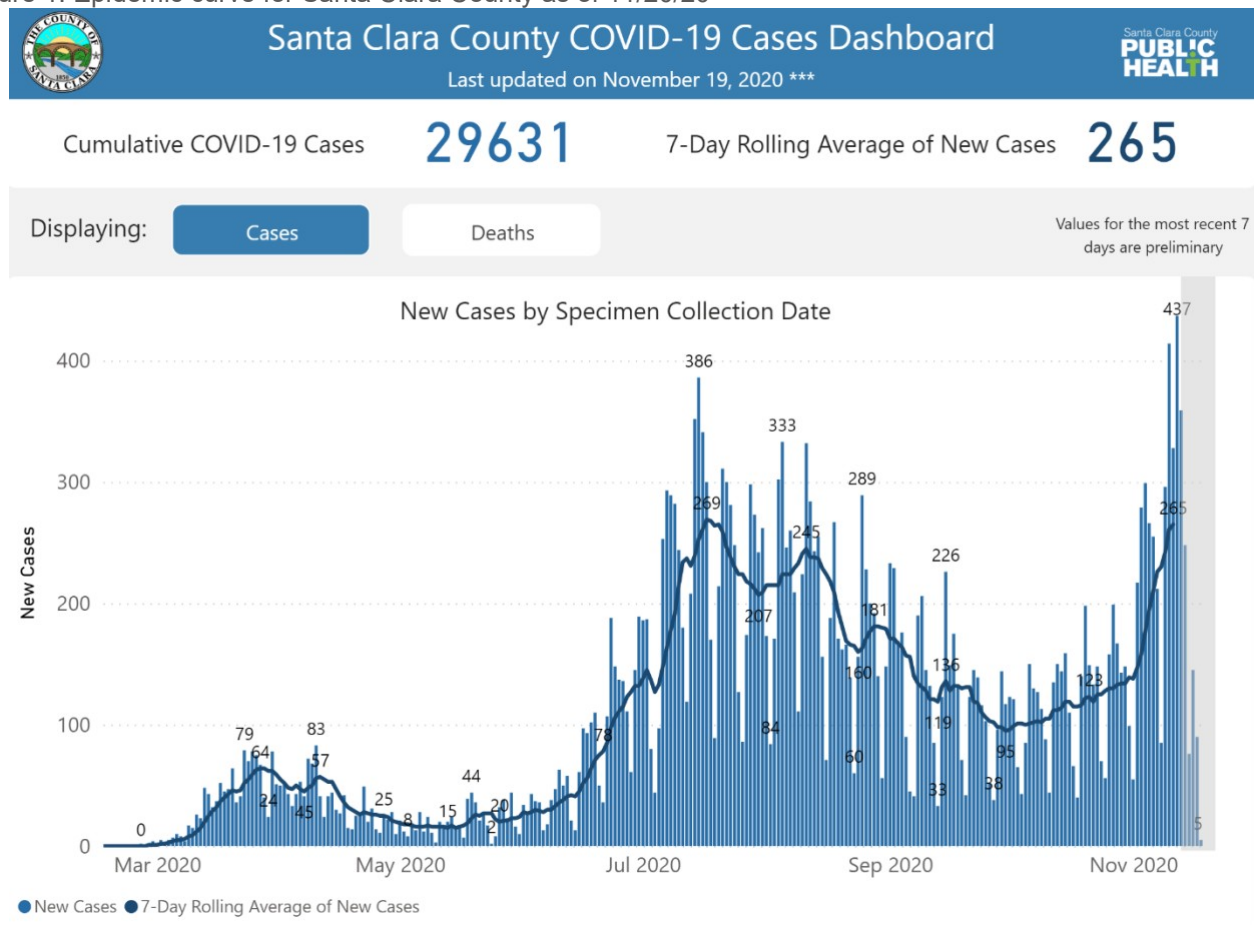https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/dashboard.aspx
[210] "Santa Clara County COVID-19 Demographics Dashboard." County of Santa Clara.
https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/dashboard-demographics-of-cases-and-deaths.aspx

African American	▪ 1.9% (group makes up 2.4% of County's population)
Latino	58.7% (group makes up 25.8% of County's population)
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	▪ 0.5% (group makes up 0.3% of County's population)
White	12.1% (group makes up 32.0% of County's population)
Other	4.7% (group makes up 3.9% of County's population)
Unknown	8.9%

Figure 1: Epidemic curve for Santa Clara County as of 11/20/20[211]

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[211] Santa Clara County COVID-19 Cases Dashboard." County of Santa Clara.
https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/dashboard-cases.aspx

Figure 2: Map of the City of San José, with districts[212]
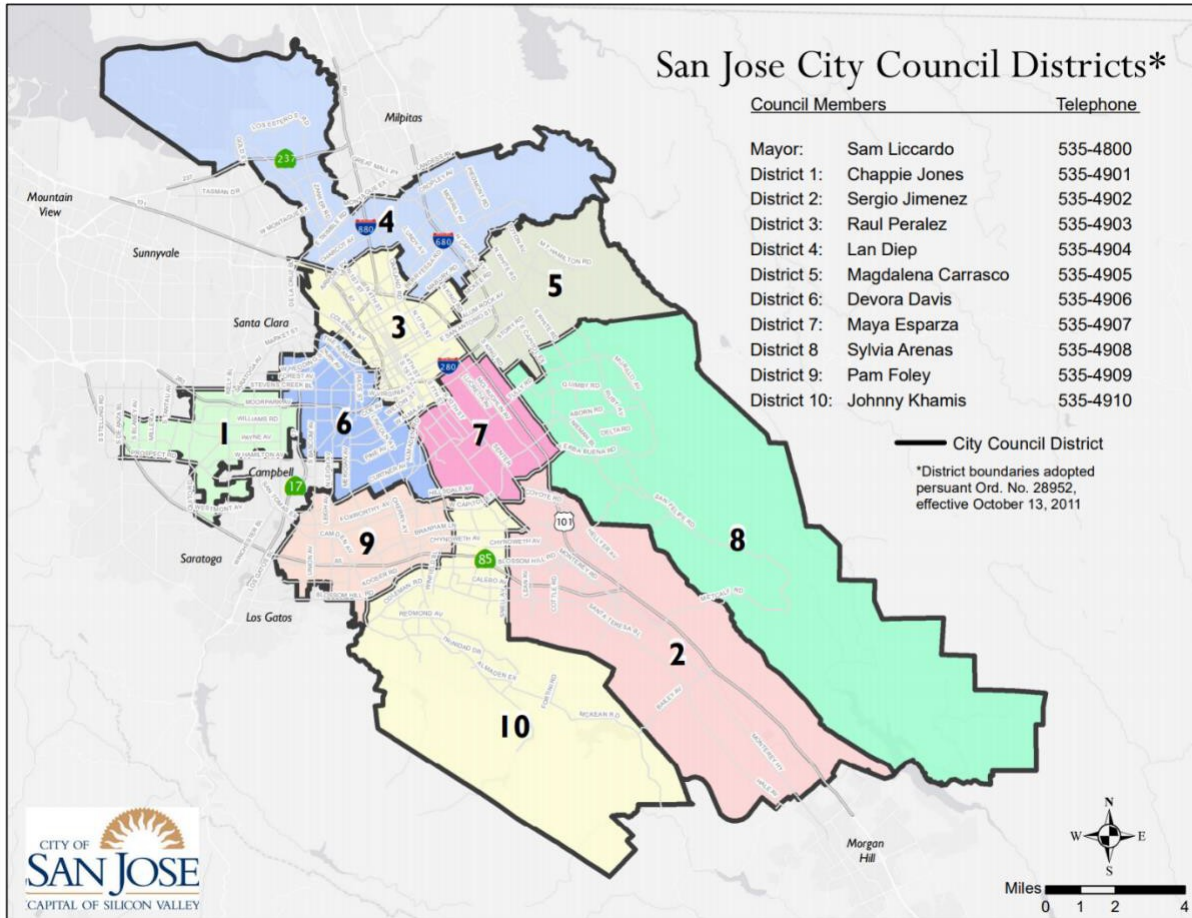
Figure 3: Map of Santa Clara County with cities outlined in red. City of San José is shaded light green.[213]

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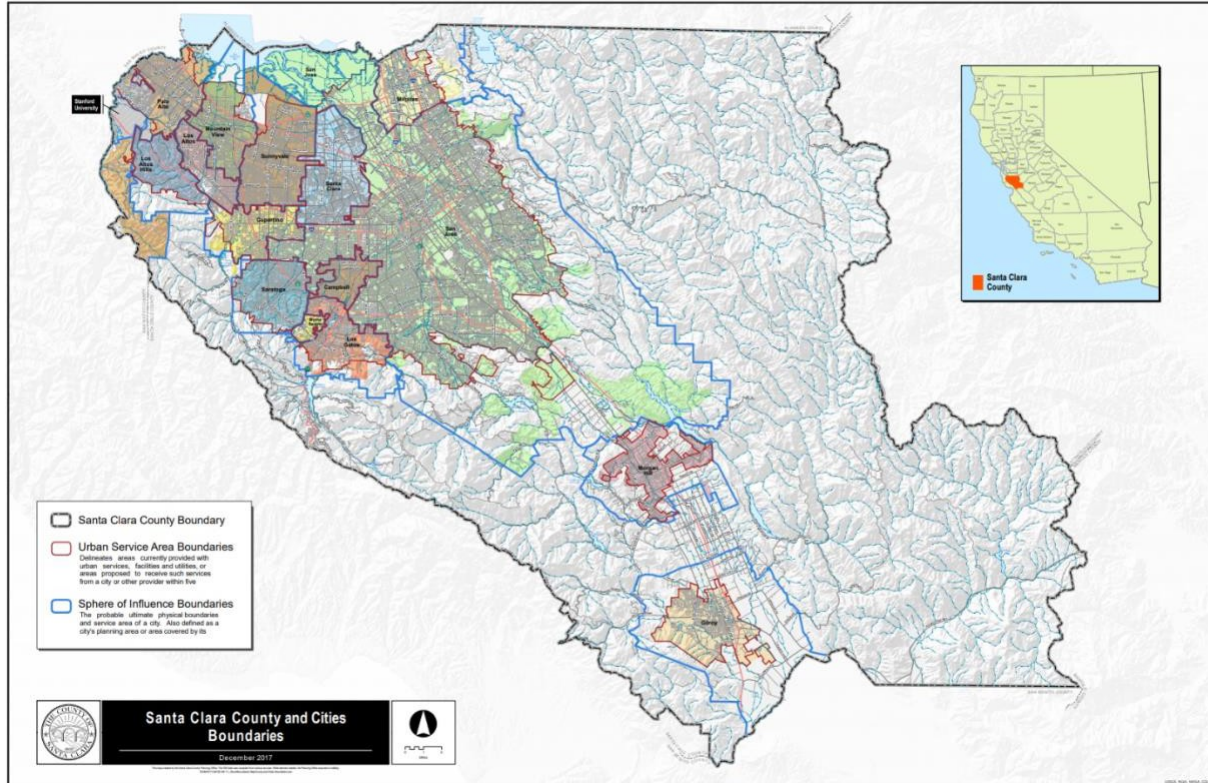
[213] County of Santa Clara. https://www.sccgov.org/sites/dpd/DocsForms/Documents/SCC_BoundariesMap.pdf

APPENDIX E: WHITE PAPERS

As part of the City's efforts to create a robust examination of the initial response to COVID-19, 8 separate papers were created focusing specifically on the following topics:

- Food Insecurity
- The Development and Maintenance of Sheltering and Housing Efforts
- Serving Vulnerable and At-Risk Populations During the COVID-19 Response
- Impact of Race Equity in City Response
- Finance and Recovery
- Preparing for Sustained Response
- Staffing Considerations for the Ongoing COVID-19 Response
- How the City of San José Leveraged Technology to Solve Problems Caused by COVID-19

The white papers are meant to act as summary extracts of various topics identified by the San José OAR Planning Team and act as a report that concisely informs the reader about how the City responded. Each paper follows a similar structure and contains 5 main sections: Executive Summary, Situation Overview, Accomplishments & Steps to Meet Challenges, Lessons Learned & Gaps, and Conclusion. The purpose of these documents is for dissemination to the public and other interested parties at the discretion of the San José Office of Emergency Management, Emergency Operations Center, and other city staff. These white papers are available for public review in addition to the OAR.

Food Insecurity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of San José was challenged to quickly address issues surrounding food insecurity. Food security is a serious public health problem with potential long-term impacts associated with poor cognitive and emotional development in children and depression and poor health in adults.

Despite expanded eligibility and enrollment in federal food assistance programming, there still remains a gap locally in how to address the rising demand both logistically and through sustainable funding as more individuals and families have found themselves needing food assistance for the first time in their lives due to the pandemic. This growing demand has been compounded by the increased risk factors to food insecurity such as homelessness, high cost of living, as well as existing poverty and income levels, all of which the City of San José was experiencing before the pandemic.

This paper explores the key challenges and accomplishments the City of San José faced while identifying the human resources, funding, interdisciplinary partners, and logistical methods required to provide an inclusive expansion of the food system infrastructure to serve individuals and families within the City of San José and throughout the entire County of Santa Clara during COVID-19.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

In March 2020 the City was tasked as the lead organization for food distribution for all of Santa Clara Count. While the City had agreements with community-based organizations (CBOs) and some limited food distribution programs, taking on the responsibility of the entire county presented new challenges. These challenges included concentrated risk, distributed governance, and lack of scalable capability. The City was not only going to have to ensure food insecurity needs were met, but they would also need to create entirely new departments to ensure that food distribution was completed, and the data was gathered, reported, modeled, and monitored accurately.

Families and individuals that experience food insecurity lack access to enough food for an active, healthy life.[1] Before the coronavirus pandemic hit, San José was already experiencing multiple risk factors to food insecurity.

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[1] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate in San José-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA (MSA) [SANJ906URN], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SANJ906URN, October 20, 2020.

Homelessness

Prior to COVID-19, the 2019 San José Point- In-Time Homeless Census and Survey, on any given night, reported that there were 6,097 individuals experiencing homelessness within the city's limits. This number reflects an increase of 42% from the count conducted in 2017 and the highest number   reported during the last 15 years.[2] Furthermore, more than one third (39%) of those who completed the 2019 City of San José Homeless Count and Survey indicated that they were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Rising Cost of Living

In January 2020 the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics reported an unemployment rate in San José-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of 2.7 percent.[3] This was below the national average of 3.6 in January 2020.[4] However, in San José like many other California communities, having a job does not equate to having financial security. This phenomenon is reflected in the familiar sight of residents using personal vehicles as their permanent home. San José residents need to earn a household income of $132,343 in order to pay 28% or less of their salary in rent. The median income in San José is $104,675 which categorizes many individuals and families as housing-cost burdened, even before the pandemic.[5]

This is further exacerbated by the fact that millions of American employees, approximately 74%, live paycheck to paycheck earning just enough to pay the bills each month.[6] Furthermore, 28% of American adults don't have enough or any emergency savings[7] which indicates that, for many households, difficult decisions for sustaining basic life needs have been occurring on a regular basis, even before the pandemic.

Poverty & Income

The 2020 Taking Count, a University of Berkley study on poverty in the Bay Area, estimated that 16% of Santa Clara's residents were living in poverty based on the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM).[8] Black and Latinx residents suffered the highest rates of those below the poverty level living in the Bay Area.

The income disparity between the City of San José's Silicon Valley tech industry and blue-collar jobs is not a new finding. In 2019, 42.4% of students within the San José Unified School District were eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals.[9]

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[2] Applied Survey Research (ASR). "2019 Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey," San José. www.sccgov.org/sites/osh/ContinuumofCare/ReportsandPublications/Pages/HomelessnessCensusandSurvey.aspx

[3] Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily.

[4] Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily, www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2020/unemployment-rate-in-january-2020.htm

[5] Smartasset. "The Income Needed to Pay Rent in the Largest U.S. Cities." (July 2019). smartasset.com/career/income-needed-to-pay-rent- in-us-cities-2019

[6] American Payroll Association, National Payroll Week 2019. "Survey Finds Majority of Americans Live Paycheck to Paycheck."

[7] Bankrate. "A growing percentage of Americans have no emergency savings whatsoever." (July 1, 2019).

[8] UC Berkley Tipping Point. "Taking Count: A study on poverty in the Bay Area" https://tippingpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Taking-Count-Executive-Summary-2020.pdf

[9] Data collected by the California Department of Education (CDE) through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). Aggregate data files are provided by the CDE – Data Reporting Office at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesenr.asp. http://www.ed-data.org/district/Santa-Clara/San-Jose- Unified

In 2015, of the total number of adults over age 65 living in the City of San José, 29,755 were considered low-income. This means that they earned less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.[10] The pandemic has only exacerbated these factors and pre-existing inequities, leaving many individuals and families even more vulnerable to the reality of food insecure.

Early in the pandemic the City of San José experienced sharp increases in unemployment as the regional "shelter in place" order went into effect on March 17, 2020. The ongoing impact of COVID-19 has led to increased financial hardship as many seek food assistance and face tough decisions each day in order to put food on the table.

The City of San José was quickly challenged to 1) leverage existing food system infrastructure to meet the surge of families, individuals, and children in need, 2) support organizations in the delivery of emergency food operations including the resources and logistics necessary to provide safe and healthy food, and 3) engage Whole Community partners including public and private organizations to help mitigate local food insecurity and crisis in the community.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STEPS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Food security programs are structured to provide access to healthy food and nutrition through food banks, mobile food pantries, school lunch programs, and government assistance. Many of these programs provide emergency and short-term relief from hunger and are not structured to address the underlaying factors of food security.

However, due to the pandemic, more families and individuals are relying on local food programs as their primary source of food and nutrition with thousands of people newly at risk of experiencing food insecurity due to COVID-19 each day.

The City of San José took on the challenge of directly providing food service in March 16 as the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and City EOC Directors quickly stood up the Food Distribution Branch by May 2020.

The City of San José deployed 6,051 volunteers to supplement various functions by CBOs and non-profits to successfully get meals in the hands of those that need it most. Volunteers have been assigned various roles such as delivering meals, supplying back-fill to Meals on Wheels, and deliveries of School Lunch and reduced cost meal programs to schools.

This response operation has been so complex that the Incident Command Structure (ICS) was required to expand in order to include large-scale food security operations within their Operations branches.

To date, food security operations for the City of San José includes the successful distribution of over 3 million meals and counting thanks to the support and commitment of thousands of volunteers. In March 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom deployed nearly 500 service members to food banks across six Bay Area counties including Santa Clara County and the City of San José on a humanitarian support mission. This helped support many non-profits to supplement their volunteer workforce and meet increased demand for services.

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[10] Healthtrust. "Food for Everyone." Accessed October 16, 2020. healthtrust.org/wp- content/uploads/2018/10/Food-for-Everyone.pdf

National Guard troops have been able to support by sorting and boxing food items, delivering food, and providing safe crowd control and organization for individuals receiving services. They have also been able to provide translations at non-profit call centers to meet the surge of phone calls from community members seeking food services.

Social Safety Nets and Nonprofits are crucial to issues of food security for families and individuals alike. Food distribution requires significant resources to provide what for some will be their only source of food and nutrition.

The City of San José was able to approve a $22 million contract through City Council for food security in case of mass hunger. This proactive action and foresight into the months that would follow helped to support one-time funding to select non-profits and CBOs for food services. Direct funding of this type is a first for the City of San José to service organizations that are essentially the safety net for the community.

Organizations such as Second Harvest have been able to provide direct service program for seniors, families with children, and individuals. According to Second Harvest Silicon Valley, there has been a significant rise in demand. The non-profit prior to COVID-19 served about 270,00 people a month and now serves 500,000 an increase of nearly 85 percent.[11]

For-profit organizations such as Revolution Foods have been contracted by the City of San José to provide food to families with children on free and reduced lunch programs. This aides in covering the gaps experienced by students when schools are not open and dispensing on weekends and holidays. Google donated 3.75 million on behalf of Revolutionary Food to reserve food.

For free meal delivery programs, the City of San José has worked with nonprofits including Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, The Health Trust, Loaves and Fishes Family Kitchen, Hunger at Home, FIRST 5 of Santa Clara and Team San José.

The City of San José in partnership with World Central Kitchen has been able to provide county-wide food and necessities distribution to meet the needs of vulnerable and at-risk populations.

World Central Kitchen is actively working with local restaurants to provide over 2,000 meals a day to over 1,085 at-risk seniors through the Great Plates Delivered Initiative. What makes this program special is by leveraging relationships with diverse restaurateurs culturally appropriate meals are able to be provided and delivered to seniors within the community.

Pre-pandemic, many non-profits modeled distribution sites similar to famer's markets where people could see and choose their own produce. However, to meet physical distancing rules to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and meet increased demand, drive-up centers now allow individuals to remain in the car while pre-boxes of produce are quickly and safely load pre-packaged boxes of produce into their cars. Modified walk-up services have been maintained to address populations that may not have access to transportation.

Mobile food pantries increased access for seniors, displaced individuals, and individuals who lack transportation. The CityTeam neighborhood program expanded its mobile operations from 13 to 24 mobile pantries. According to CityTeam, the initiative has served between 11,000 to 17,000 meals monthly through their mobile food pantries.[12]

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[11] Second Harvest Silicon Valley. www.sanjoseca.gov/Home/Components/News/News/1570/

[12] City of San José, City of San José Blog. CityTeam In The Neighborhood Helps Vulnerable SJ Communities Access Food and Necessities. (October 16, 2020). www.sanjoseca.gov/Home/Components/News/News/

Additionally, expanded home delivery options have been made available allowing many individuals who are elderly, home- bound, or at increased risk of COVID-19 to remain at home minimizing their exposure. Many of these new methods have also helped to overcome early barriers identified by Envision San José 2040 that food pantries and other food security program centers were located far from shelters and other affordable housing centers where the majority of residents depended on services.

LESSONS LEARNED & GAPS

There have been early lessons gained throughout the COVID-19 response to organize a multi-partner food system that effectively and efficiently provides emergency mass food distribution and services. Food security will remain an issue as the secondary impacts of economic loss such as loss of housing, dual/single-income families leaving jobs to take care of dependents, and difficult decisions to pay housing or put food on the table continue in the response and recovery phases of the pandemic.

Multiple methods were considered to identify distribution sites owned by the City of San José and other partners. These sites required ample square footage, refrigeration, truck/trailer equipment/supplies, and central access to help ensure resources to support the food system.

The majority of outreach to identify those in need of food assistance has been conducted by non-governmental and community-based organizations. At times food counts are not accurate leaving under/overages of meals and no centralized process to identify secondary sites to receive or coordinate redistribution and dispensing.

Once a centralized and refined procedure has been developed, education and training will be required of all partners to ensure efficiency throughout the entirety of the food system. Successful response actions have been supported by a combination of proactive policy development and commitment by the City of San José prior to COVID-19 to improve access to healthful foods through Envision San José 2040.[13]

However, it is critical for city government and local non-profits and CBOs to discuss funding strategy to support food service programs to address long-term mass food assistance needs within the community and strategy to meet the demand. Currently the one-time funding for select partners to provide food service programs for the San José's growing at-risk and vulnerable populations has mitigated a local food crisis and hunger for the thousands of individuals, families, and children served daily.

Partners at all levels of government should be convened as a best practice to identify resources that may be leveraged for cost- sharing and identify feasible solutions to add to the local, state, and national dialogue how to meet the growing need for food assistance as the pandemic continues.

Administrative Preparedness plans should include a mechanism for emergency contracting with non-profits and CBOs to quickly encumber funds for all-hazard incidents by Mutual Aid Agreements (MAAs) or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).

Engage local partners providing primary functions of food security programs. This can

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[13] Health Trust. "Food for Everyone" healthtrust.org/advocate/food-for-everyone/

also be expanded to critical ancillary functions of food operations including translations, transportation, fleet services, volunteers, warehousing, security, and distribution.

Working with internal contracts and finance, develop a mechanism for rapid allocation and contracting for funds from state, to county, to city in order to ensure local partners can encumber funds quickly to provide critical emergency response operations without interruption.

These early lessons will help to shape the ongoing pandemic response and recovery strategy as the short/long-term economic impacts of COVID-19 continue to be felt by many in the community.

CONCLUSION

As in many cities across the Nation, food security could continue to dramatically grow as COVID-19 continues. While the City of San José has been able to rapidly develop and expand the established food system to meet the increasing demand for assistance, there are still critical barriers to overcome to ensure ongoing funding for organizations that are providing food operations and services for the community.

While challenges still exist, the city's ability to rapidly deploy volunteers, provide culturally appropriate food services, and tailor inclusive strategies to ensure access for individuals with access and functional needs has been a shared success among Whole Community partners.

As other jurisdictions approach food insecurity issues, the City of San José may serve as a model to directly fund non- profits, CBOs, and leverage partnerships with for-profit organizations to establish an expanded local food network that can be used as a larger safety net for those experiencing food insecurity. This infrastructure will be important as the likely impacts of COVID-19 will be long-term and highly depend on relief from the related economic crisis due to COVID-19.

The Development and Maintenance of Sheltering and Housing Efforts

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of San José was in the process of developing its Disaster Housing Plan and coordinating associated trainings and exercises when COVID-19 became a threat. As more information and guidance concerning COVID-19 became available, the City recognized the need to revisit the framework that it had established for disaster housing and include concepts for noon- congregate sheltering as part of shelter operations. Leveraging existing relationships and previously established coordination infrastructure, the City of San José convened with counterparts at the County of Santa Clara to establish a Joint Departmental Operations Center (JDOC) to coordinate the homeless response. Through this effort, the City and the County were effectively able to jointly develop a multi-pronged written shelter plan to facilitate a coordinated sheltering and housing response to COVID- 19214. The plan delineated clear responsibilities and tasks for both organizations and established a common mission to protect those who were most vulnerable (older adults with underlying health conditions or persons with three or more underlying health conditions) from contracting the virus. Ultimately, this collaborative effort was aimed at helping reduce the spread of the virus among individuals who were experiencing homelessness and, by extension, throughout the region.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Approximately six years ago, the City of San José and the County of Santa Clara launched a deliberate and collaborative planning effort to end homelessness in the region. The global outbreak of COVID-19 merely amplified the need for housing and shelter for those who were already experiencing homelessness and those that have become economically displaced by loss of jobs and income due to the public health shelter-in-place mandate.

On March 19 and March 20 of 2020, the City received 104 trailers from the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES). The trailers were delivered to the City with very little time to thoroughly plan for a feasible disaster housing operation. The City had to quickly identify a San José owned site to stage the trailers and prepare to provide healthy, safe, and acceptable accommodations for those experiencing homelessness. In addition, many of the trailers were not in a habitable condition and needed to be refurbished. After the refurbishing process was complete, only 90 of the 104 trailers were deemed habitable. The trailers also were delivered to the City with little guidance provided on how to properly assemble and maintain them. City staff were already stretched thin across the COVID-19 response organization. The staff assigned to the disaster housing site did not have prior training on how to set up, operate, and maintain the trailers. The plethora of challenges presented by these factors created even more risks to public health and safety. The City ultimately determined that it was best to decommission the use of the trailers and return them to CalOES. This very difficult decision to decommission the use of disaster trailers was made on behalf of the community.

Although there was a clear need for disaster trailers to support the housing need during COVID-19, the lack of prior planning and coordination between the State, the County, and the City proved to produce more risk- potential than healthy and safe solutions. The initial determination was for the trailers to be used to house the "medically vulnerable". However, the trailers were not set up or configured in a way that was conducive for safely housing individuals with preexisting medical conditions. It took eight weeks to set up the trailers. The personnel that were to set up the trailers were not trained and, as a result, resorted to watching YouTube tutorial videos in order to perform the task. The trailers required ongoing maintenance for which the City needed to hire a subcontractor.

The City moved forward and, in coordination with the County and other community partners, was able to house individuals experiencing homelessness in six area motels. Feeding community members once they were housed proved to be an ongoing challenge due to vendor inconsistency as well as stringent guidelines around nutrition and requirement for safe food packaging. Nonetheless, continued communication and perseverance on the part of those managing the logistics allowed for the provision of three meals per day to all housed individuals.

Working within the parameters for healthy and safe food handling during the COVID-19 response was a major challenge for the City. To establish a consistent delivery of health and safe foods within this response environment, many individuals were provided the same types of meals every day which they were not pleased about.

The shortage of EOC staff who had prior EOC training and experience was another challenge facing the disaster sheltering and housing mission. Because many of the staff that were working in the EOC under the Homeless Support Services Branch had not worked in an EOC before nor with the homeless population, there was a lack of following standard EOC procedures.

Although resources were able to be obtained, the resource request process was cumbersome and needs to be refined in order to support future disaster operations. While the Homeless Support Service Branch was able to make requests to the EOC, once resource requests were submitted and were being processed, there was a lack of follow- up communication regarding the status of those requests as they were being fulfilled as well as the cost of the resources that were procured. In many instances, requestors did not have visibility on when their requested resources were scheduled for delivery and what the cost of the resources were until they arrived.

This made created a detrimental blind spot for those submitting the requests and planning for the disaster shelter and housing operation.

Overall, the City and County were able to house and feed the populations they were aiming to and have maintained strong relationships between themselves and with businesses and community-based organizations (CBOs) which bolsters their response capabilities for future disasters.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STEPS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Although the City and County faced challenges with sheltering, they found ways to mitigate those challenges through existing partnerships, communication, and innovative ideas. Due to long standing relationships between the County and the City with regards to working with the homeless population, it took one 30-minute phone call for the City and County to coordinate and come up with a plan, set assignments and formed the JDOC to coordinate the homeless response. A city staffer was embedded into the County EOC which helped facilitate that coordination. Daily morning and afternoon calls were scheduled with the Housing and Human Services Branch of the City's EOC where relevant updates were shared concerning the work being done. These calls also served as an opportunity to efficiently coordinate with the Logistics Branch as the determination was being made to decommission the trailer program.

Because there was already a standing relationship with the homeless population, the JDOC had a solid understanding of many of the most pressing needs individuals experiencing homelessness were faced with during COVID-19. This catalyzed the City's ability to immediately take action and start setting up resources for those individuals. The City moved quickly to get those resources and set up new housing sites. The City rapidly set up four temporary shelters: Parkside Hall shelter, South Hall shelter, Camden Community Center shelter, and Bascom Community Center which had 435 beds combined. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was well stocked and available at all City and County sites. A flyer was created and used for outreach services with the number to a homeless hotline to get individuals the resources they needed. In addition, the City worked closely with businesses and CBOs to establish the Silicon Valley Strong Campaign – an online tool that allows vulnerable populations to identify the food, housing, and other resources that are nearest to their physical location.

Although the trailers did not end up being the best solution for housing, there was strong interdepartmental coordination and communication that went into the initiative. To infuse data into the City's ongoing feeding and housing operations, the EOC's Digital Inclusion Branch developed a Priority Index– a GIS tool for determining where the greatest needs for resources are throughout the region. This tool has yielded significant positive impacts and has enabled the EOC team to drive effectiveness in service delivery.

LESSONS LEARNED & GAPS

It should be understood that homelessness is fueled by a number of systemic factors. Among them are the rising gap between the rich and the poor across communities, the lack of affordable housing, particularly for those at the lowest income levels, and longstanding structural and

racial inequities. These challenges have been compounded by the novel coronavirus pandemic, placing ever-more pressure on the nearly 10,000 individuals County-wide currently experiencing homelessness and the tens-of- thousands more who are at risk of falling into homelessness in the coming months and years.

The 213RRs process is still not set up in a way that is fully useful to the requestor. Adding to the process a piece that provides the person who submitted it with information such as the request was fulfilled, x was delivered and it cost this amount would save time and the hassle of running down the information. Providing appropriate resources and having the appropriate personnel to manage those resources is crucial to them being properly utilized. Training for EOC positions and any fieldwork should be continuous and mandatory for anyone who is being asked to work in a position outside of their normal job tasks.

CONCLUSION

The combination of circumstances surrounding COVID-19 presented never- seen-before obstacles for protecting public health and safety. The City of San José, in close coordination with the County of Santa Clara and other community partners, was able to create and maintain safe disaster housing operations for those among the most vulnerable populations. The coordination and planning that had already been underway between the City and the County was leveraged to take swift action and address the needs of the homeless community. Amid less than perfect systems and a shortage of previously trained response staff, the City exhibited a deep concern for its residents in need and a great sense of self-determination by quickly learning while simultaneously acting. The City demonstrated agility by exploring unconventional ways to provide housing and food for those experiencing homelessness. This allowed for employees who had no prior experience to set up disaster housing. The lessons learned during the COVID-19 response should be codified and incorporated into future planning efforts and reinforced through training and exercise programs. Collaboration, open communication, and acting quickly with purpose were critical components to executing the housing project that was necessitated by COVID-19.

Serving Vulnerable and At-Risk Populations During the COVID-19 Response

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic is revealing stark truths regarding the needs of vulnerable and at-risk populations during times of crisis and disaster. Responders around the world have found that populations that were already considered vulnerable or at-risk prior to the pandemic are now more vulnerable than before.[1] Infection rates have been shown to increase among populations most directly impacted by social vulnerabilities.[2] Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has created new economic, social, and health vulnerabilities for populations that were not vulnerable prior to the pandemic.

For all active responders, it remains a significant priority to close gaps between vulnerable and at-risk populations and the services to meet their needs. In the City of San José, city officials, first responders, healthcare providers, and community stakeholders took initiative to create innovative approaches to complex problems presented by the pandemic in order to best reach and support vulnerable and at-risk populations. Many of these populations are those who are considered to possess Access and Function Needs (AFN). The City of San José in alignment with California Government Code 8598.3 defines the AFN population as "individuals who have developmental or intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, chronic conditions, injuries, limited English proficiency or who are non-English speaking, seniors, children, people living in institutionalized

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[1] The United Nations Sustainable Development Group, *COVID-19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together,* April 2020. https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020- 04/COVID-19-and-Human-Rights.pdf

[2] Ibraheem M. Karaye and Jennifer A. Horney, "The Impact of Social Vulnerability on COVID-19 in the U.S.: An Analysis of Spatially Varying Relationships," *American Journal of Preventative Medicine,* vol:59:3, September 1, 2020, pp. 317-325. https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749- 3797(20)30259-2/fulltext

settings, or those who are low income, homeless, or transportation disadvantaged, including, but not limited to, those who are dependent on public transit or those who are pregnant[3]." This paper highlights key successes and best practices utilized by the City, as well as areas for improvement and existing gaps that will inform future responses by both the City and other jurisdictions.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Before the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the United States, the City established regular meetings to discuss active response and to prepare for the pandemic. They reached out to international partners in Singapore and Hong Kong to attain a better understanding about the scope of the virus, and what their city could soon be facing. Like every city in the United States, the City continues to face significant challenges during the ongoing response. Many of these challenges were due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the United States those within in the AFN community were affected far more than other individuals within the community. An outsized number of COVID-19 deaths occurred in congregate facilities including but not limited to nursing facilities, assisted living communities, and correctional facilities and as of August 2020 those in these facilities made up 42% of all COVID-19 deaths in the United States despite making up only 0.6% the population[4]. Given the correlation between impoverished communities and race in the United States it became evident that the African American, Latinx, amongst other communities were more likely to contract the virus, yet the necessary healthcare requirements needed to assist these communities did not meet the need[5]. The City of San José was no exception to this finding as their less affluent and more racially diverse neighborhoods saw higher rates of COVID-19 cases than others. This was exponential for the elderly population in East San José as this population was ravaged by COVID-19.

New information about the novel coronavirus rapidly evolved in the midst of the response. City officials and first responders were required to maintain an adaptable approach while still responding to information requests and the needs of the public. However, some of these challenges are unique to the characteristics of the City. San José is one of the most diverse cities in the United States. Less than half of the households in San José speak English as their primary language.[6] Imbalance in technology is also a concern, with over 10,000 households having no access to the internet.[7] This limited the platforms available for use in order to spread awareness of services and perform outreach to vulnerable and at-risk populations. It also created barriers to virtual education as public schools across California began to shut down in mid-March. In addition to technological constraints the City was unable to meet the needs of its most at-risk citizens and could not provide and prioritize personal protective equipment (PPE) dissemination to AFN community partner organizations or individuals[8].

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[3] Government Code 8593.3. *California Legislative Information.*
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_display Section.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=8593.3.
[4] The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies. "Failures in COVID-19 Response Harm People with Disabilities and Older Adults." https://disasterstrategies.org/report-failures-in-covid- 19-response-harm-people-with-disabilities-and-older- adults/
[5] Ibid.
[6] San José 2010 Census Data https://www.sanJoséca.gov/home/showdocument?id= 23763
[7] Digital Inclusion and Childcare Small Group Workshop
[8] AFN Small Group Workshop

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most unpredictable and far-reaching disasters in modern history and further revealed the inequities that face the AFN community on a day-to-day basis. City staff and community partners attempted to address many of these gaps in services by creating new resources for response and inclusion yet were unable to meet these needs for a myriad of reasons. A number of the City's innovative and synergistic approaches became best practices during the response and may benefit future responses to crises that require a multi-jurisdictional activation. The City was tasked with taking a proactive stance to meet translation needs as new health guidance regarding slowing the spread of COVID-19 for their diverse and multidimensional residents.

Additionally, many residents require assistance with immediate needs, such as food security, housing, and transportation. Because of health guidance related to social distancing, responders needed to plan their approach to housing and transportation access with public health at the forefront of concern. They recognized key strategic partners already involved on the frontlines of addressing the needs of vulnerable and at- risk populations and leveraged those relationships to expand outreach efforts. The City recognizes that there are still significant forward strides to be made. As such, City officials launched a community survey to better understand the problems facing the AFN community during COVID-19. Further, the City is working collaboratively with key community stakeholders to plan two AFN Community Sessions with the goal of devising actionable solutions to the most common problems uncovered by the survey.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STEPS TO MEET CHALLENGES

The San José community is one of the most diverse in the 25 most populous cities in the United States. First responders were tasked with taking a proactive stance to meet translation needs alongside new emerging health guidance regarding slowing the spread of COVID-19. Hand in hand with that task came the issue of ensuring the internet platforms used for publishing these materials were accessible so that vulnerable and at- risk populations could easily read and use them.

To meet these needs, the City Emergency Operations Center (EOC) established the Language Access Unit within the modular structure of the Incident Command System (ICS) as a way to ensure populations within the city that did not speak English as a first language received timely information regarding the City's COVID-19 response.

While establishing the Language Access Unit was a monumental step toward ensuring equitable crisis communications, the City initially struggled to establish a rhythm that yielded timely and culturally-effective translations during the early phases of the COVID-19 response. The City of San José is the only city in the top 25 most populous cities in the United States to disseminate public messaging in five different languages, including English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese. During the response, the Emergency Public Information Officer (EPIO) within the EOC produced Flash Reports which were published twice per day (morning and afternoon). These reports contain pertinent updates and resources in a creative way to keep the residents and community stakeholders informed about ways to promote personal and community health and safety. Inefficiencies were uncovered as the early Flash Reports were developed in English and once finalized and published to the City's website, were then provided to the Language Access Unit for translations to occur. This workflow created a barrier to the Language Access Unit's ability to release the same information across the City's most widely

spoken languages.[9]

Improvements were made and success was achieved. Working collaboratively, the EPIO and the Language Access Unit refined the workflow and reduced the time required to translate and trans-create Flash Reports and other public messaging. The EOC also produced "Flash Reports," which were developed by the Public Information Officer and translated into Spanish and Vietnamese. These bite-sized updates kept residents up to date in a creative and accessible way.

The City also identified key influencers from the community including local celebrities, athletes, and sports mascots to market and spread awareness of public health messaging videos covering key public practices such as wearing a mask, practicing proper social distancing, and personal hygiene measures such as handwashing.

Additionally, many residents require assistance with immediate needs, such as food security, housing, and transportation. Because of health guidance related to social distancing, the City recognized they needed to plan their response to housing and transportation access with public health at the forefront of concern.

To meet these needs, the City's EOC launched a Local Assistance and Economic Recovery Task Force to connect with the most vulnerable and at-risk residents of San José, reaching out with basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, and reliable income using innovative and nonconventional methods. The Local Assistance and Economic Recovery Task Force launched a Virtual Local Assistance Center (VLAC) for community members that connected citywide information and resources with the pre-existing 311 telephone line.

The City recognized the growing need to address food insecurity and expanded its food and necessities function to support the County of Santa Clara with its food provision program for individuals and households impacted by the pandemic. They deployed over 6,000 volunteers to support the meal distribution effort. At the peak of the City's food distribution efforts, they were able to provide more than 3.2 million meals per week to those in need. For more information on these efforts please refer to "Food Insecurity" White Paper attached to the OAR.

To address community needs for shelter during quarantine or for individuals experiencing homelessness, the City implemented programs that provided new services, such as utilizing Cal OES-provided trailers, hotel/motel room rentals, and setting up sanitation stations at encampments.

Creative innovations in technology improved the resilience and efficiency in response and supported both the City and its partners while providing assistance to vulnerable and at-risk populations. The EOC launched a Digital Inclusion Branch, which launched a Priority Index as a GIS tool to determine the regions with the greatest need for resources throughout the City, which enabled the EOC team to quickly identify and respond to gaps in services to the community. The Digital Inclusion Branch in partnership with AT&T also launched the SJ Access Hotspots Program which distributed free Wi-Fi hotspots to the community in order to provide internet and technology access to marginalized communities. A specific focus of this effort was to provide access to school- aged youth as they transitioned from in- person to virtual learning. As the program

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[9] Stakeholder Interview

continues and achieves the goal of providing this equity amongst students it could easily transition to providing technology equity across the entire City population.

LESSONS LEARNED & GAPS

As the operational period for the COVID-19 pandemic response continues on, the following are identified areas for improvement for the City while addressing gaps in services to vulnerable and at-risk populations and lessons learned. These areas for improvement may benefit future response efforts as well as inform ongoing COVID-19 response activities for other jurisdictions.

Translation and public-facing information services for the diverse community of San José have experienced success. However, a few groups have not had their needs met as messaging to the community is not disseminated in Tagalog, a language for which the number of primary speakers meets the City's requirements for translation. The Language Access Unit initially did not focus on translating into simplified English for those community members with low literacy rates or English language learners.

At the beginning of the pandemic some messaging for the community and external stakeholders was not prepared and translated in time for landmark events such as the statewide and local stay-at-home orders and non-essential business shutdowns. While the creation of the Language Access Unit seeks to solve this issue, the City should continue to prioritize the translation and distribution of public- facing information and could use templates of materials developed from this response in order to more rapidly deploy information in the future.

Messaging materials related to COVID-19 also deployed the use of idiosyncrasies that translate well in English, but do not have an equivalent in other languages. This creates additional confusion and sometimes requires community organizations to alter the translation for vulnerable and at-risk populations. The City can avoid this occurring in the future by using translation vendor pools and drawing upon the resources available from community partners to create public messaging in the native language, rather than translating English materials. languages.

Another language barrier that has arose through COVID-19 response is how the City communicates using American Sign Language (ASL) and closed captioning for meetings and messaging. The City should prioritize ways to communicate messaging through ASL and closed captioning channels in the same way it employs messaging for other languages mentioned throughout this paper. The City needs to ensure consistent ASL and all messaging for the community. The City should also employ the use of Otter.ai for closed captioning creation during tele-conferencing on platforms like Zoom. Addressing this issue will solve a technology barrier that is stopping some AFN members from being a part of the conversation.

AFN community members have also raised a number of concerns regarding issues involving access to transportation to both food distribution and COVID-19 testing sites. While the food distribution effort was an incredible success for the City the effort did not include a delivery service method for those who did not qualify for Meals on Wheels, which is limited to individuals over the age of 60. If food distribution of this scale is going to remain an operation of the City, it is prudent that the Food & Necessities Branch works with the Transportation Department to bolster a food delivery program or a way to transport individuals in need to the distribution sites.

Another concern raised by the community was fact that many large-scale COVID-19 testing sites were not accessible to some members of the AFN community. City transit staff was not allowed to take community members to drive through testing sites, due to guidelines put into place by the City to mitigate the risk of driver exposure.

However, the large-scale testing sites were oftentimes set up far away from the accessible entrances and thus made it extremely difficult for members of the AFN community to access the testing site. In addition, there were multiple complaints that the vehicles used for transport were unsanitary and had not been properly cleaned in between passengers. In the future the City will need to make every effort to ensure community members can easily access large-scale testing sites and should brainstorm solutions and guidelines for allowing drivers to take individuals to drive through sites. This would not only be helpful for testing sites but would proactively assist in planning for assisting AFN community members receive vaccinations from these sites.

Given the rapid nature of COVID-19 response the City was required to act at an incredibly fast pace to mitigate issues facing the AFN community. In doing so they were unable to engage with community-based organizations (CBOs), such as FAST, that the City did not already have active MOUs with. This breakdown in engagement led to a number of missteps that led to wasted costs and time. In the future the City should engage these partners more in meeting such as the City Council's AFN Subcommittee, where partner organizations can assist with disaster services efforts and provide continual input.

CONCLUSION

In the face of a rapidly evolving global pandemic, the City of San José acted quickly to anticipate the needs of vulnerable and at-risk populations within its jurisdiction. By focusing on ensuring public guidance was easily accessible by a diverse community, the City succeeded largely in overcoming language barriers to vital public health and safety information. Additionally, the City showcased its ability to creatively problem solve to meet unanticipated needs while operating in a long and grueling response. New and pre-existing partnerships with CBOs and businesses were utilized to rally the community in support of those most vulnerable and at-risk.

The City used innovative technology to streamline response approaches and identify gaps in services for vulnerable and at-risk communities, resulting in targeted outreach campaigns to those most at need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other jurisdictions could benefit from incorporating a Language Access Unit into their EOC structure during activation. The establishment of this unit centered EOC efforts to respond to gaps in services to vulnerable and at-risk populations, and provided the resources needed to undertake the task of translation all informational materials into five different languages for the public.

Additionally, the creative problem solving with strategic partners from the community could benefit future response by thinking outside of the box, innovating using technological tools, and anticipating barriers to internet and other platforms for the distribution of informational materials.

The successes and areas for improvement experienced by the City of San José are only a surface-level view of the complexities of this unprecedented response. This paper demonstrates that future responders have the capacity to build upon these successes, empowering them to meet critical gaps in services during crisis and disaster events.

Impact of Race Equity in City Response

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the world and changed life as we know it. With an unprecedented public health emergency, jurisdictions across the globe are continually learning of new and innovative practices to assure the overall health of the community.

A challenge that has been significantly addressed during response has been the inequities with the public health and social system. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has recognized that communities of racial and ethnic minorities are more at risk due to overarching discrimination, access to healthcare, and various other factors.

As one of the most diverse cities in the United States, the City of San José has had the responsibility to ensure equity considerations in their response planning efforts. With large Latinx, Vietnamese, and Chinese, the City's response eventually reflected the diverse communities they serve.

Among their accomplishments, the City had set up a Language Access Unit and Digital Inclusion Unit in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This planning effort helped address inequities in response servicing underserved populations. This included monumental efforts in multi-language translations, local community engagement, and identifying necessities for vulnerable populations.

These response efforts reflected the City's positioning in addressing issues and concerns for their diverse community. With that responsibility, the City has shown strides in incorporating equity considerations as a necessity in good governance.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many long-standing systemic health and social inequities that have put communities of racial and ethnic minorities at risk. Some inequities that exist include poverty, discrimination, access to primary education (K-12), income and wealth gap, housing, and healthcare access. These factors have directly affected and influenced these communities during the course of this ongoing response. Effectively, it puts these communities at the highest risk as the City navigate pandemic response.

These systemic inequities were especially important for the City of San José to acknowledge in their ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. San José is one of the most diverse cities in the United States with large Latinx, Chinese, and Vietnamese populations, within those communities, many have limited English proficiency. With language and cultural barriers, the City had acknowledged the importance of serving harder to reach communities, recognizing the likely difficulties that may be prevalent.

The City also understood that there were other communities that experienced difficulties during response. As a result of the pandemic, there is a continuing challenge to meet the needs of underserved populations, including those who are experiencing homelessness, as well as individuals and families economically displaced by loss of jobs and income. With physical and social distancing measures in place, basic services and interactions have been limited and/or cut off. These challenges forced the City to take on innovative and more substantial efforts to serve all communities. For the City, these efforts were a necessity. This was demonstrated in their strong efforts to ensure that vulnerable populations were being considered in the multitude of response planning efforts.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STEPS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Given the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to assume a forward-leaning posture in assessing, understanding, and appropriately responding to the myriad of life-sustaining needs throughout the community is a hallmark for any jurisdiction. One of the concerns that has been a focal point in San José has been to address the deeper systemic issues that have disproportionate adverse effects on its diverse populations. These same populations have shown to be most vulnerable to the catastrophic impacts of the pandemic.

As one of the most diverse cities in the U.S., San José has had to address their pandemic response efforts with a lens of equity. With large communities of Latinx, Chinese, and Vietnamese populations, these planning efforts resulted in a multitude of innovative and inclusive practices. According to the 2010 Census Data, less than half of the households in San José speak only English. This language barrier could result in many households not receiving direct information or communication from City officials; leaving them out of important updates as the City navigates pandemic response. The City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during the pandemic response created the Language Access Unit to ensure that non- English speaking populations were being reached through translated materials and communications.

As an example, the official City of San José website has been set up for five languages: English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Traditional and Simplified Chinese. Additionally, there is an option to translate into eight additional languages, however these are machine translations and potentially contain a number of errors, but still provide general information to the community.

While translations helped alleviate language barriers, there was still an immense cultural obstacle in earning the trust of these diverse communities. It was found that these populations were more comfortable receiving updates and news from non-City official social media. In an effort to create a bond with the community during the response, the City had partnered with local influencers in each of the communities. These local celebrities had established trust with those populations and were able to speak on public health messages like wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, and properly washing your hands.

Along with communicating with the diverse community, the City had taken serious steps to address the necessities of vulnerable and underserved populations. Through their efforts, the City was able to identify vulnerable communities, whether it was through a priority index or existing data on the percentage of the population that were experiencing homelessness during the on- going pandemic. The priority index mapping and modeling assisted in their ability to determine which necessities were important to distribute. As an example, the City, in collaboration with regional partners, had set up a "Silicon Valley Strong" campaign aimed at aligning vulnerable communities with housing. Recent data found distinct disparity in those experiencing homelessness, specifically within the Latinx/Hispanic and Black or African American community. Along with the recent purchase of a hotel for the un- homed, the City has displayed exemplary efforts towards extending care and vital services to all populations in the community.

Another example of these innovative solutions was setting up the Digital Inclusion branch in the EOC. As a result of social and physical distancing, many services had moved to an online presence, including education. However, many households did not have access to the internet and were at a severe disadvantage with distanced learning and online services. It was found that over 100,000 households did not have proper access to the internet. To enable technology access among marginalized communities, the City expanded access to Wi-Fi by offering mobile hot spots and other connection devices. This effort helped bridge a gap for underserved communities that were disconnected as a result of several pandemic response procedures.

LESSONS LEARNED & GAPS

While the City has made tremendous strides in servicing the diverse community, there are lessons learned and gaps that they have identified moving forward in the response.

In their efforts to bridge communication between diverse communities, it was found that core messages were not consistently maintained when making direct translations from English to other languages due to the fact that they contained idiomatic phrases that did not bear the same significance or meaning in the translated language. The City learned from this, and moving forward, ensured that all disaster-related public messaging accounted for nuanced, cultural interpretations. Additionally, the City acknowledged that translating communications in conjunction with the English language materials was important to promote equity in information sharing across all communities during the response. Through this, the City has made concerted efforts to expand its Language Access Unit and strengthen its working relationships with key community partners who can provide surge capacity in the City's efforts to equitably connect

with diverse communities in future disaster preparedness and response efforts.

With their tremendous success expanding their outreach to difficult to reach communities, the City has had to assess the continuation of these services beyond the pandemic response. Due to the circumstances of the pandemic, services like Digital Inclusion became a necessity to ensure connectivity for all communities. This is a gap that the City is currently responding to and will continually monitor throughout the duration of the response.

CONCLUSION

It should be understood that impacts of COVID-19 merely amplified the deeply-rooted, societal inequities that existed long before the virus emerged. For San José, the priority to understand and meet the diverse needs across the City by leveraging the whole community approach to emergency management has been beneficial and has led to significant process improvements. By definition, the whole community approach is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. Through this approach, the City's disaster response efforts have progressively aimed to identify and bridge gaps that have disproportionately affected communities of color throughout this global pandemic. With new challenges resulting from the nature of the emergency, the City demonstrated great stride in addressing racial equity within their ongoing response.

With a significant diverse population, the City had the distinct responsibility to ensure that the unique needs across the entire community were taken seriously, attended to, and addressed throughout response. This started with their efforts to include multiple languages in their community engagement and communication plans. With over half of the population identifying with limited-English proficiency, it was important for the City to address the language access needs. As a result, the Language Access Unit was set up in the EOC; which allowed for materials to be translated into five languages. In addition, the City also leveraged local influences for those communities who were initially hesitant of City-officials. Through the use of public health messaging with local celebrities, the City was able to build trust in those communities.

The City also demonstrated the value of equity in the response by addressing significant gaps in minority communities. Data sets found that underserved areas were most at a disadvantage due to the physical and social distancing measures. With over 100,000 households lacking internet access, this led to the establishment of a Digital Inclusion Branch in the EOC. The branch implemented internet access to those vulnerable populations who may have needed it to access online services like distance learning.

With the pandemic response still ongoing, it is important for these efforts to continue and improve upon themselves. The rapid ability to assess and implement new practices for the whole community will only strengthen their resilience and the City's future response to emergencies.

Finance and Recovery

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Finance Section and Recovery Section holds the critical responsibility for management of COVID-19 financial management, federal, state, and local funding streams, and all relevant grant related requirements. In addition, the section maintains everyday financial responsibility for San City. Staff assigned to this section in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) may not typically work in an emergency environment, however their role is critical to the COVID-19 response, as it is any disaster response.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an exceptional financial commitment by San City of San José to support the community with personal protective equipment (PPE), social services programs, and other safety measures. Such efforts required a significant need for financial management to include oversight of procurement, and all associated certification and validation mechanisms.

This document will provide an overview of the achievements, challenges overcome, and gaps identified within San City of San José EOC's Finance Section and Recovery Section during the first six months of the COVID-19 response. It includes their success in developing a new system for tracking response-related expenditures and the process for navigating multiple funding streams. In addition, it will discuss gaps identified in communication and coordination, training, and sustainability.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a Nationwide Emergency, subsequently making FEMA Public Assistance funding available to every state, territory, and tribe in the United States. On March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law by the President, making way for additional funding for government and other entities in the United States. In the weeks and months to follow, additional grants and other funding streams would become available to San City of San José from federal, state, and local resources.

Concurrently, San City's need to expend financial resources was increasing quickly as it faced the need to provide support to healthcare facilities, infrastructure providers, essential workers, City employees, and the public. The need to procure and distribute emergency and public health supplies grew exponentially in a relatively short period of time.

Finance Section and Recovery carried a significant role in these operations. First, the section held the responsibility for ensuring processes and procedures were implemented for purchasing, tracking, and documenting all material and human resources used in the response, in accordance with federal public assistance, CARES Act, and other grant requirements.

In addition, the section was tasked with ensuring San City's sustainability to support their citizens from an economic, health, and social services perspective throughout the COVID-19 response and subsequent recovery.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STEPS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Perhaps the most significant challenge faced by the team was also their most significant accomplishment. The Finance Section and Recovery team was tasked with ensuring procurement, tracking, and documentation procedures were being implemented for the duration of the event. An initial gap in communication and coordination between the EOC leadership and the Finance Section and Recovery Section during the initial days and weeks of the response perpetuated this challenge. However, the Finance Section group successfully bridged this gap in a relatively short period of time.

Initially, Finance Section and Logistics Section were documenting purchases in two independent systems with separate procedures. The systems were operating parallel to one another and each had different, intricate naming systems. An additional challenge was a lack of understanding between Logistics and Finance department of the previously established processes and the requirements each were trying to meet. Furthermore, some purchases had not been documented at all due to a perceived urgency in the response.

Upon identification of the challenge and the gaps, The Finance Section began to work to develop a system which would ensure all expenditures were tracked following the same process, and that they would meet reimbursement requirements.

Finance Section developed a new structure, from scratch, which included a dedicated Visible Code (VisCode) for COVID-19 expenses. The system was developed and implemented within 12 weeks of the start of the event. In addition, specific procurement guidelines and contract templates were developed for use in all COVID-19 purchasing.

Although it may have been ideal to have the process in place prior to the disaster, the team now has a successful system which can be used during future disasters. The new system has already cleared a few hurdles by proving to remain intact and relevant as funding guidance and requirements changed. In addition, it was applied in the concurrent 2020 wildfire, protests, and public safety power shutoffs.

Another success of the Finance Section and Recovery section was their approach to navigating the numerous funding streams available for COVID-19. San City created a decision-making process early on which included a city-wide grant working group. The working group studied and compiled the latest guidance, identified opportunities and challenges, and provided direction on the allocation of funds. This process helped ensure funds were being spent in an efficient manner and provided useful when navigating changing and conflicting information and guidance. The strategy enabled San City to minimize impact

to the general fund and take greater advantage of relevant grants and other funding.

The final success to highlight is the established Continuity of Operations (COOP) Reserve fund. A significant amount of COVID-19 funding is set to expire December 30, 2020, leaving concern by some on maintaining operations moving forward. However, San City was able to redirect cost savings to the COOP Reserve fund to prepare for 2021 COVID-19 expenses. In addition, an Emergency Operations Roadmap has been established to help prioritize resources and effect decision making during the event. This Roadmap provided direction to decision makers when prioritizing COOP Reserve Fund allocations.

LESSONS LEARNED & GAPS

The initial six months of the COVID response have produced multiple lessons learned within Finance and Recovery, however some gaps remain as well.

The previous section discussed the achievements in the tracking and documenting expenditures, including the new VisCode and tracking system. This has demonstrated the benefit of maintaining and enhancing a system for use in all emergencies and disasters. In addition, the importance of communication and coordination between Logistics and Finance Section is critical to success moving forward.

However, it appears a related gap still exists in the collection of data. Significant time is spent identifying needed information and documents to meet the federal and other grant requirements. Streamlining this process to ensure information flows into the appropriate channels would benefit the team.

In addition, it was evident EOC and emergency response training could be strengthened to reduce the learning curve seen in staff who respond to the EOC infrequently. Training at periodic intervals, expanding beyond traditional Incident Command System (ICS) training would benefit the Finance Section and Recovery Section and the EOC as a whole. Drills, tabletop, or functional exercises would further reinforce the experience.

The final area to discuss is focused on looking towards long term sustainability and recovery of San José and the community. Regarding city sustainability, significant discussion was heard regarding employee burnout. Staff expressed concern over the ability to maintain EOC operations and everyday work in an already lean environment. Comments included stress from expectations perceived to be unrealistic, challenges associated with late night and weekend requests, the inability to take a day off or go on vacation, and "Zoom- fatigue". Concern was expressed that burnout would increase as the event continues through next year.

CONCLUSION

The City of San José and the Finance Section and Recovery Section has faced an unprecedented event in COVID-19. Multiple funding streams, while beneficial to the City and the community, also bring a significant level of complexity to Finance Section operations. In addition, the long-term duration of the event presents challenges, however it has also provided an opportunity to build and refine systems.

The Finance Section and Recovery Section has proven to be resourceful and innovative in overcoming challenges and obstacles. In addition, newly developed systems, such as the COVID VisCode system, will continue to benefit the City in future disasters. Utilization of City-

wide Grant Working Group for allocation of funding and the redirection of funds to a COOP Reserve Fund are both innovative best practices which could serve as models for other communities.

Continuous improvement requires the identification of gaps and commitment to improving on identified challenges as well. As the Finance and Recovery team moves forward and continues to support COVID-19 response and recovery operations, it would be a benefit to focus on programs which enhance communication and coordination between Logistics and Finance Section, identify training and exercise opportunities, and address the potential for staff burnout. Such efforts will strengthen San José and build sustainability for the remainder of the COVID-19 response and any future disasters.

Preparing for a Sustained Response

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in one of the longest Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activations and response systems ever seen in the United States. In the course of the last 10 months (January 2020 – October 2020) Cities, Counties, and States have continued to expand and adapt to the rapidly growing and changing response environment. However, there is no indication that there will be a quick end to this pandemic. The City of San José recognized the need to assess what has already facilitated their ability to respond while also identifying opportunities to preposition their organization for continued success during a sustained response. The completion of a San José COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report (OAR) showed that San José's ability to pre-identify and address potential concerns before they arise supported rapid adaption and adjustment. Developing plans and support structures such as the Language Access Unit within their Incident Command System prior to the event expedited their ability to address organizational and community concerns.

Additionally, building off established staff wellness programs can provide avenues to address burnout stemming from an unexpectedly long and arduous response. To prepare for sustained response and potential increase in COVID-19 cases, leveraging successful response structures and programs while pre-emptively building up the organization's capacity to manage new challenges is key.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a lengthy and arduous response worldwide. For the City of San José, it started in January 2020 with monitoring the coronavirus outbreak in China. Within one month the County of Santa Clara, where San José is located, became the first county in the United States to declare a local health emergency due to COVID-19. By March, public protective measures were put into place, public health notifications were distributed, and work from home procedures were activated. While San José Office of Emergency

Management (OEM) staff actively worked to anticipate potential disruptions to operations, engaged in planning initiatives, and conducted community outreach to pre-emptively address potential concerns the duration of this response could not be anticipated.

Over the last eight months (until October 2020 at the time of this writing), San José EOC staff have worked continuously to support their community and the City. The EOC has undertaken numerous actions internally to support staff and maintain continuity of services while also engaging in a variety of external initiatives to facilitate public health interventions and implement COVID-19 response activities. Yet the pandemic continues with the potential for added challenges such as a rapid increase of cases and the risk of co-occurring disasters. Additionally, San José staff are not immune to the stress and exhaustion of responding to a disaster with no end in sight. The work pace set by this pandemic and the dual responsibilities of managing day-to-day job tasks with an EOC role can lead to fatigue and burnout.

In an unrelenting response environment with the potential for rapidly changing circumstances, it is important to moderate ongoing impacts on programs, staff, and the community. Just as essential, is to prepare, while in the midst of a response, for its continued impact with the ability to expand to an increase in cases or a compounding event (e.g., flu season). To do this, San José commissioned the completion of a COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report (OAR). Stakeholder workgroups, individual interviews, a survey, and document assessments provided information necessary to identify what activities have previously expedited San José's ability to respond during this public health emergency and what may preposition them for successful continuation of efforts in the event of a sustained or elevated response need.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STEPS TO MEET CHALLENGES

With a rapidly evolving disaster, the ability to pre-identify and address potential concerns before they arise can facilitate a response agency's ability to adapt and adjust to the circumstances. The City of San José demonstrated how anticipating challenges and planning for them can reduce time implementing solutions as they recognized the need for a comprehensive Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). As early as mid-late January 2020, an interdisciplinary team of City EOC leadership began regularly meeting to monitor the rising severity of the pandemic and anticipate how it may impact San José. They also identified that the lack of a formalized COOP plan hindered the initial amount of preparedness efforts that could be undertaken. EOC leadership launched a city-wide COOP development process engaging all department heads to determine which public-facing services, core business functions, and employees would be classified as essential if the City was ordered to shut down its services to the public.

This COOP development process yielded extensive amounts of data which, under the circumstances and short time frame, was a massive and laborious undertaking. However, the push by San José to work tirelessly through the beginning of March 2020 to finalize the plans they needed proved to be a critical enabler of operational success. The weekend prior to Santa Clara County declaring a shelter in place order, San José finalized their COOP and began moving departments online. They activated their EOC to conduct emergency operations,

prepare staff to work from home, and determine San José's response to COVID-19 impacts and community needs. This 48-hour push allowed them to seamlessly shut down public-facing business functions and transition many staff to a virtual work format as soon as the shelter at home order was enacted.

Another example of proactive engagement that facilitated a successful response and positions the City to maintain activities as the pandemic wears on is uniquely established Incident Command System Branches and Units. Being identified as the most diverse city in the 100 largest metros of the United States presents San José with an exciting challenge to ensure all of its citizens are included in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. City staff have been well aware of the importance of engaging with representatives of their community and outreaching to populations traditionally underserved and underrepresented. To do so, their Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) structure used in the EOC pre-COVID-19 included a Digital Inclusion Branch and Language Access Unit. Both of these features proved to be vital in managing the City's COVID-19 response.

With the extended need for citizens and employees to stay home, life quickly transitioned into a virtual work, learning, and communication environment. However, not all community members have equal access to internet or digital devices. San José had plans to address internet access issues over the next ten years, however, COVID-19 created a heightened urgency which rapidly accelerated the timeline. The Digital Inclusion Branch was quickly activated within the EOC and partnered with the Silicon Valley Strong Campaign to develop and implement the Digital Inclusion Expenditure Plan. Not only has this plan already deployed 8,300 hotspots into households and community centers, it also has created a sustainable infrastructure that can be amplified if/when a city-wide stay at home order is reactivated

The San José EOC Language and Access Unit while designed before 2020, has not been stood up during an active response until COVID-19. This unit ensures critical health and safety messaging will reach and resonate with marginalized communities across the City, especially those with limited English proficiency. Through its continued use during the pandemic, the Language and Access Unit has led major U.S. metropolitans by translating all official messaging into five language while also having the opportunity to establish diverse methods of outreach that can be utilized for an ongoing response.

LESSONS LEARNED & GAPS

The length of the response and the potential for an increase in cases or complications due to co-occurring disasters can and has strained many jurisdictions. The City anticipated a need for sufficient staffing anticipating that 50-60 City employees may be sufficient based on past EOC activations. However, at the height of the COVID-19 response, more than 500 City staff were activated to support response operations. The sheer size of staffing needs created challenges such as sufficient training in SEMS roles, communicating to personnel a clear and common operating picture, and managing the physical and emotional strain on staff.

San José took steps to empower employees to fill new response positions, consistently disseminated flash reports to EOC staff, and expanded their human resources services for staff wellness. Building off these lessons learned, there are opportunities to continue to enhance San José employees' capacity to continue responding in this elongated response. Increased SEMS and EOC training to more staff can not only increase the number of people

available to fill positions but also increase employee's confidence in their abilities. Additionally, continued and increased attention to the potential for stress and fatigue is necessary to mitigate burnout. Enhancing and promoting opportunities for staff participation in wellness programs and identifying successful rotation schedules that encourage breaks and time off can bolster the workforce's capacity to managing the chronic stress of the COVID-19 response.

CONCLUSION

Ongoing transmission of COVID-19 unfortunately shows no signs of abating. Responding jurisdictions need to prepare for the potential of a long-enduring response. Additionally, there is a continued risk for additional hazards to impact communities while the pandemic continues. In May 2020, while managing the COVID-19 response, the City of San José additionally experienced a proclaimed local emergency due to civil unrest following the peaceful protests of the death of George Floyd. Then in August 2020, the SCU Lightning Fire Complex inundated Santa Clara County with San José establishing temporary evacuation points for evacuees and experiencing extremely poor air quality. Now, at the time of this writing, influenza season is rapidly approaching increasing the need for all jurisdictions to gear up for a sustained and potentially complex COVID- 19 response.

The City of San José demonstrated the value of identifying and building out COOP components beforehand could ease the transition into altered levels of service and an adapted work environment. The EOC activation of the Digital Inclusion Branch and the Language Access Unit showed the power of understanding community needs and developing unique ways to meet them. Yet even though the City of San José has emphasized that it is "Powered by People" and its workforce is the key to its success, with the unprecedented length of this response, there is also a need to augment existing supports. Established wellness programs may not be enough to overcome the level of stress employees continue to face. For organizations managing EOCs, leveraging successful response structures and programs while pre-emptively building up the organization's capacity to manage new challenges can be the key to a sustainable COVID-19 response.

Staffing Considerations for the Ongoing COVID-19 Response

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The staff of the City of San José Office of Emergency Management have been the key to the City's successful COVID-19 response. These staff have exhibited resilience and dedication for nearly eight months, and many are experiencing extreme levels of stress leading to fatigue and burnout, with no end to the response in sight. One major obstacle to mitigating staff burnout has been the availability of enough qualified employees to fill essential positions in the EOC. This, in addition to gaps in pre-event and just-in-time staff training, has made it difficult for staff to rotate out of essential roles and take leave.

Another key staff-related consideration for the department is the protection of the physical health of its employees through workplace health and safety initiatives like COVID testing for essential employees and the adoption of physical distancing protocols. The promotion of employee emotional and psychological wellbeing is another crucial element of a successful ongoing COVID response.

This White Paper will provide a brief overview of the staffing success and concerns that SJOEM has faced during the COVID-19 response. It will highlight the crucial considerations the department must account for in preparing for the department's ongoing response activities.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Since the beginning of the City's COVID-19 response in early March, the staff of SJOEM have worked long hours in demanding circumstances to protect the health of the residents of the City of San José. City employees have displayed resilience, adaptability, and dedication throughout the response. However, as the response now enters its ninth month, staff are feeling overworked and burned out. Since March 2020, in addition to the COVID-19 response, SJOEM staff have managed civil unrest, peaceful protests, and historic wildfire activity. Few have been able to take restorative leave from their response roles, and stakeholders have expressed concern that some staff will leave public service entirely once the response ends.

People are the department's most valuable resource and response asset. The ability of OEM to nurture its people and manage staffing needs will be critical to ensure a successful sustained response. The San José Powered by People Enterprise Priorities emphasize the importance of creating an equitable and inclusive work environment focused on health, safety, and wellness and should continue to serve as a guidepost for the department's continued COVID-19 response.

The major staffing considerations facing the City for the continued COVID response can be conceptualized in four broad categories: 1) maintaining adequate levels of staffing and enabling staff to take leave, 2) building staff preparedness both pre-event and during the response, 3) physical health promotion, and 4) nurturing mental health resilience.

The City EOC operated throughout the response with only two teams to rotate in to provide staffing support, which was not sufficient to provide meaningful relief for staff.[1] Despite efforts by the department to encourage personnel to take time off, staff were still hesitant to do so, and there were logistical challenges such as tracking how long people have held positions, not having staff available to fill positions, and determining the appropriate length of time for staff to be out of the EOC.[2][3]

Many City staff (~80%) who served in the EOC during the response did not have prior training or experience with EOC duties. Some also felt there was a gap in just-in-time training availability for their roles which limited their ability to successfully execute their responsibilities early during the response.

The City took steps to protect employees' physical health by acquiring and distributing PPE to staff and implementing physical distancing protocols for those who had to report to work in-person. It also worked with the County of Santa Clara to implement COVID-19 testing for essential City workers. Continuing to provide these services and resources to employees will be essential for the ongoing response.

Finally, SJOEM will need to continue to offer guidance and resources to nurture the psychological and emotional health of staff. Some staff expressed a need for additional guidance on balancing their normal role in the department with their response role to help them better manage stress. The department will also need to find ways to provide emotional and psychological support services to staff during work hours.

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[1] Small Group Workshop
[2] Small Group Workshop
[3] Survey

Improving and sustaining staff availability, preparedness, physical health, and mental health resilience will be crucial for the City's sustained response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other concurrent disasters.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STEPS TO MEET CHALLENGES

The City of San José Office of Emergency Management has recognized many of the staffing and staff wellness challenges that have arisen during the response and has already implemented several strategies in response.

Maintaining Adequate Staffing Levels

During the early days of the response, the City of San José's EOC leaders convened a working group to monitor the global pandemic and to begin developing strategies to protect the health of the local community. This working group was "repurposed" from a group that was established to support Public Safety Power Shutoff events and consisted of staff members with diverse skillsets and with expertise from across the field of public health. The City should formalize this interdisciplinary group as part of the EOC and develop a plan to rotate staff members into the group so it may continue to benefit from diverse perspectives.

The City has been experimenting with different surge leave policies to provide employees with a clear way to step away from the response and mentally and physically recover. This briefly included "spiked time off" and then an offer of four days of "respite leave" that were separate from vacation days.

Additionally, managers in the department have been encouraging employees to exercise self-care and take time off when needed. Management is trying to create alternative work schedules to better support staff in being able to do so.

Building Staff Preparedness

The City developed COVID-19 safety training content and provided training to Safety and Environmental Services Staff who were deployed throughout the city early in the pandemic to inspect property, identify health concerns, conduct sanitization, and distribute cleaning supplies.

Physical Health Promotion

The department has done a good job at providing PPE to personnel who need it in their roles, as well as practicing necessary physical distancing. During the early response, the City successfully worked with the County of Santa Clara to establish COVID-19 testing procedures for EOC employees. Maintaining an effective staff testing program will be a crucial component of a successful continued response.

Nurturing Mental Health Resilience

To assist staff in managing stress, the City started an employee assistance program and offered self-care workshops such as yoga and meditation.[4]

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[4] Small Group Workshop

To help mitigate some of the stress staff were feeling from home responsibilities, the City partnered with licensed childcare providers to offer day care services for essential employees' children.[5]

LESSONS LEARNED & GAPS

As the City gains experience and knowledge about the COVID-19 response, it continues to implement successful strategies to manage the pandemic and better meet its staffing needs as well as the needs of its staff. The City continues to learn from suboptimal strategies and has considered the feedback of staff to identify lessons learned from and outstanding gaps in its staffing strategies.

The City offered paid administrative leave to staff who were at high risk for negative outcomes from a potential COVID-19 infection. While this was a good practice that was appropriately accompanied by the adoption of hazard pay policies, some staff were concerned about fair implementation of these policies. Employees activated in the EOC did not qualify for administrative leave or were not offered the same comp time as other employees.

One of SJOEM's most crucial needs for the continued COVID response as well as for its long-term integrity as an organization is to build the depth of its "bench". The lack of a large group of trained City personnel that could rotate in to EOC roles to relieve staff exacerbated the stress and burnout felt by those who were filling those roles.

The department needs to train current personnel to be prepared for future long-term EOC activations. This should include an expansion of pre-event training as well as development of additional just-in-time training and EOC activation orientation resources. The department also needs to recruit personnel with health emergency expertise to have a more robust staff.

Finally, leadership from SJOEM should meet with the San José City Council to discuss prioritization of services moving forward. With the COVID-19 response continuing, the start of flu season, and the inevitability of other emergencies, it will be essential for the City Council to have realistic expectations of the services the department can and should provide so as not to overload them with tasks and increase staff stress levels.

CONCLUSION

The staff of the San José Office of Emergency Management have been resilient through the challenging conditions that the COVID-19 response has imposed. They have been called upon to fulfill additional work demands, comply with more rigorous safety protocols, and work with limited resources for a long-term response.

Staff and management have risen to the challenge have supported each other through the most difficult aspects of the response, enabling the "bias towards action" philosophy of the department. This philosophy has been displayed through the implementation of several noteworthy practices that deserve additional recognition for their potential value-add to other jurisdictions. These practices include:

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[5] City of San Jose EOC Action Plans

The City of San José partnered with licensed childcare providers to offer day care services to EOC employees who had to report to work in-person.

Each EOC Section was made up of team members from different departments within the City, allowing for a mix of unique perspectives to identify solutions to problems.

The department has been exploring different "surge leave" policies to allow staff flexibility outside of vacation time to take a physical and mental break from the response.

SJOEM created an Employee Assistance Program to support employee mental health and wellness and has been offering self-care workshops to staff throughout the response.

The department is looking to engage with the San José City Council as a next step to set a mutual understanding of the prioritization of services given financial constraints and the unknown timeline of the city's COVID-19 response.

In addition to its own staffing considerations, the City of San José should also consider how it can better support the staffing-related concerned of other essential partners in the COVID-19 response moving forward. The resilience of these partners, especially including healthcare providers, first responders, and other emergency managers, will be another important consideration in the ongoing COVID response in San José.

How the City of San José Leveraged Technology to Solve Problems Caused by COVID-19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up day-to-day operations in every city in the United States. However, one city had a particularly innovative approach of responding to COVID-19 related challenges by utilizing technology, tech partnerships, and data to solve and mitigate the most crucial issues in the area.

The City of San José is situated within Silicon Valley among tech giants like Google, Facebook and AT&T. It includes a very culturally diverse population of approximately 1.03 million residents.[1]

When COVID-19 hit, the City immediately snapped into action by utilizing digital platforms and relationships, and leveraging technology to:

- Aggregate all resources addressing food shortages, housing, COVID-19 testing and other relevant information into a dynamic online dashboard.
- Create an expansive strategy to communicate with hard-to-reach populations and those with limited or no English proficiency.
- Bridge the digital gap in education, by providing students with much-needed internet access in order to learn virtually.
- Move staff to be fully remote in 48 hours.
- Use startup methods like SCRUM to track goals and ensure accountability.
- Create resourceful solutions and partnerships between tech, government, and nonprofits.

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[1] United States Census Bureau. 2018. https://www.census.gov/glossary/#term_Populationes

By pivoting fast to find the right solution, advancing technological capabilities, and utilizing existing relationships, the City of San José has proven that much of the startup approach can be utilized to respond to crises, and effectively serve communities.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

In December 2019, health officials in Wuhan, China discovered a highly contagious, unknown Coronavirus, which would later become known as COVID-19.[2] On January 24, 2020, the City of San José activated its Pandemic Response Plan in Stage 1, Monitoring, and established a Pandemic Management Team. The next day California received its first COVID-19 case – and the second followed shortly after. The third case of COVID-19 was identified in Santa Clara County, home of the City of San José, and the booming tech region of the Silicon Valley[3]. By February 3, 2020, Santa Clara County became the first county in the United States to declare a local health emergency.[4]

Like many organizations, the City of San José had the onerous task of transitioning staff to a virtual working environment over the weekend of March 13, 2020. The Information Technology (IT) staff worked tirelessly to set up remote work capabilities in 48 hours. That same weekend, City Emergency Operations Center (EOC) leaders spent their 48 hours determined to establish an EOC with some virtual components and disseminate information in the most effective way possible.

Over the next several months, City staff used creativity, efficient startup methods, and an incredible amount of dedication to solve and mitigate complex issues create by the COVID-19 disruption.

With constantly evolving information about the novel Coronavirus, and regular updates to City-wide response, the City needed a platform that they could constantly update. EOC branches needed to organize, without duplicating effort. Residents, as well as employees, needed to understand the steps that the City was taking in response to the pandemic.

Another challenge, familiar to many cities, is engaging hard-to-reach populations and vulnerable communities. Some communities have limited English proficiency, unreliable internet access, or other hardships that prevent them from receiving information virtually. Although Santa Clara County contains a bustling tech economy, they also have farming regions, individuals at and under the poverty line, and just over 6,000 individuals experiencing homelessness, with only 16% of those sheltered as of 2019.[5] This would pose intense challenges for the City to ensure that residents were able to safely shelter in place to reduce the spread of the disease.

In 2017 the City established a partnership with Zoom Technology in an effort to make the City more virtually inclusive and enhance the ability of City Staff to participate virtually.

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[2] World Health Organization, Timeline of WHO's Response to COVID-19. https://www.who.int/news- room/detail/29-06-2020-covidtimeline

[3] CalMatters. Timeline: California Reacts to Coronavirus. Updated September 22, 2020. https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/04/gavi n-newsom-coronavirus-updates-timeline/

[4] City of San José Proclamation of Local Emergency https://www.sanJoséca.gov/home/showdocument?id= 38890

[5] San Jose COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Survey

This partnership's adoption prior to the pandemic allowed the City to quickly meet the requirements for remote work and holding online public meetings. Given that Zoom and other teleconference software became a defining solution for how to keep workplaces connected throughout the United States, the long-term partnership helped to expedite this transition.

To add on to the challenges of transitioning to virtual work, ensuring all residents had information access, and figuring out a plan to shelter those experiencing homelessness, the City then learned that there was a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), certain foods, and other necessary items, like diapers, due to a disruption in the supply chain, which was guaranteed to make their work more challenging.

"Bias toward action"

One of the phrases commonly heard at the City of San José is the mantra of having a "Bias Toward Action". In the early months of the EOC activation, the City engaged numerous subject matter experts, Community-Based Organization (CBO) Experts and private sector partners to establish goals and get to work.

EOC staff immediately worked on ensuring that employees could work from home. They started working on creating a COVID-19 informational hub in the form of a dashboard on the website. Simultaneously, other EOC branches began looking into options for the unhoused population.

Internal recruitment for those with special skills, including language skills, began, with the intention of increasing engagement with vulnerable communities by translating important information about COVID-19.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND STEPS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Internally, 81% of EOC staff who participated in an Operational Assessment Report survey, conducted in September and October of 2019, either agreed or strongly agreed that they had the technology and/or equipment necessary to complete their responsibilities.[233]

However, a functional virtual working environment was only one piece of the puzzle. Employees needed frequent and accurate updates on how the City was responding.

Digital Resources

The EOC developed a Digital Inclusion Branch and a Language and Access Unit in order to maintain and expand inclusivity efforts and identify needs.

One of the first accomplishments of the EOC was to swiftly establish a dynamic online dashboard that allowed both employees and the public to see the latest information regarding COVID-19 data and response, which was updated frequently. This dashboard acts as a hub with resources such as health information, where to get tested, help for businesses and more. The hub also includes a Virtual Local Assistance Center, or VLAC, which provides vital information for residents, including where to get food during the food shortage, immigrant resources, housing, employment and job training, health and wellness, utilities and internet, and family resources. This information is offered in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese. The City utilized technology to maintain inclusivity one step

further by integrating a Google translate dashboard for eight other languages. Accessibility instructions are provided for those with auditory or functional needs (AFN), and a 311-phone system was also established to diversify communication options.

The VLAC displays emergency notifications and links to the latest updates on the City of San José Services and Operations through "Flash Reports". Several staff members commented on the importance of utilizing Flash Reports to keep staff updated on the latest news within the City.

Social media posting in multiple languages also helped to keep residents informed. The team worked with local influencers, such as Los Tigres del Norte, to create informational videos about COVID-19 to appeal to non- English-speaking communities.

As the EOC ramped up to respond to the expanding list of COVID-19 related needs, City staff became intentional with leveraging data that could help to pinpoint the more critical needs in the community and create streamlined processes.

A Priority Index, a GIS tool which used data to determine where the highest needs were throughout the region, was developed. This assisted the City in identifying specific zip codes that needed extra support.

Additionally, the City partnered with local organizations and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation to create #SiliconValleyStrong, an online platform specifically intended for the most vulnerable populations in the area to find free meals, financial help, and other needed resources.

Digital Inclusivity

In addition to creating accessible resources for hard to reach communities, the Digital Inclusion Branch focused on speeding up their 10-year timeline of implementing digital inclusivity for all families in the area. As soon as schools went online, there was a need for families to have adequate internet connectivity. Through a public-private- partnership with AT&T, the City was able to provide 11,000 hotspots with unlimited 4G LTE and highspeed internet to residents. 8,000 of those hotspots were distributed to students in need. The other 3,000 hotspots are available for check out at the San José Public Library and the City plans to purchase and distribute more.[6]

"I am grateful for the partnership with the San José City leaders, San José libraries and AT&T. Together, we will support students and families in need with resources that can provide meaningful education experiences outside the classroom and succeed academically." – Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mary Ann Dewan.

LESSONS LEARNED & GAPS

Silicon Valley Mindset

As the San José EOC began rapidly expanding, new branches began taking on projects to ensure the community's needs were being met. It was clear there was a need for a simple way to organize tasks. So, the San José EOC adopted the use of Trello, a SCRUM platform, that allows users to see tasks and move them to different visual buckets depending on the status. SCRUM is very popular in the startup world and allows teams to quickly "sprint" towards sections

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[6] San Jose Website August 3, 2020. https://www.sanJoséca.gov/Home/Components/News/News/1681/4699

of goals, stay accountable for their work, and pivot quickly to address what's not working and find the best solution.

Feedback on SCRUM methods and the "Bias Toward Action" mindset have remained very positive and could be included as a best practice for the future.

Gaps and Challenges

While the successes and newly discovered best practices from the City of San José are certainly impressive, there are always areas for improvement. The City has expressed interest in further improvement by commissioning a Preliminary Operational Assessment Report (OAR) to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the COVID-19 response.

One area identified is the involvement of diverse voices at the table during the initial response. In determining solutions for the community, it is crucial the City include the perspectives of local community-based organizations (CBOs) who already work with affected populations and might be better positioned to identify community needs. Additionally, the City can expand the table of decision makers to include members of the AFN community, and non-English speaking communities.

City leaders were proactive in making sure that information was produced for many of these communities. However, they can continue to learn from diverse perspectives who may be able to offer insight on fine tuning and interpreting information so that it is relevant to communities, and on reaching communities through their most utilized platforms and preferred methods of communication.

Another challenge for the City was their process for streamlining and recording documentation for the exorbitant amount of resource requests via 213RR forms. The City initially started managing the huge influx of forms through a basic process of using email and spreadsheets. When it was determined that the requests were overwhelming inboxes, the City pivoted to adopting Smart Sheets. Again, the City noticed that improvements needed to be made and pivoted again, this time utilizing the SimpliGov platform, which uses automation to simplify the process of managing forms. The latest process has received positive feedback from staff compared to its predecessor.

CONCLUSION

The City of San José offers valuable insight on assessing digital equity of residents and putting those in need at the forefront of discussions instead of an afterthought.

There are several lessons in the way the City utilized what they had to create solutions and maintain resourcefulness. The City was able to establish a partnership with Google and Second Harvest to secure food and necessities, because of already existing relationships with them. This highlights the importance of establishing relationships with both public, private, and government organizations during non-emergency time.

Technologically speaking, there was a great need for digital inclusivity for communication purposes. Through months of creatively leveraging platforms like the City website, videos, social media and the Priority Index, the City was able to bridge the technology gap and get residents the supplies and information they needed.

When we think of City management, terms like rule-based, bureaucratic, political often come to

mind. However, the mobilization of the City of San José could not be further from this depiction. The City has accomplished a revolutionary feat that can serve as an example for city leadership across the United States. Adopting a Silicon Valley mindset allowed leaders to *not* get caught up analyzing every detail and become paralyzed by choice – the common practice of making "perfect" the enemy of "good" -- but instead to focus energy on doing *something* and making incremental improvements later. This mindset resulted in staff acting quickly to take care of people but being open-minded enough to receive critical feedback and improve over time.

Thanks to the planning, innovation, and unrelenting dedication of staff committed to serving the residents of San José, this EOC activation has proven to be one-of-a-kind in the best possible way.

CITY OF SAN JOSE
CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

C Constant
ASSOCIATES

COVID-19 PRELIMINARY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (OAR)

SAN JOSÉ OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT