



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Raymond Riordan

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 AFTER ACTION REPORT    **DATE:** February 27, 2023

Approved

Date

3/9/23

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept the 2023 COVID-19 After Action Report and Improvement Plan.

## **SUMMARY AND OUTCOME**

The City activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) from March 2020 to February 2022 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. An After Action Report (**Attachment A**) and Improvement Plan (**Attachment B**) were developed in order to document the EOC response and recovery activities, with the goal of identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The City Manager's Office of Emergency Management recommends that the After Action Report and Improvement Plan—which notes 32 strengths, 25 areas for improvement, and 51 recommendations—be accepted by City Council.

## **BACKGROUND**

The City initiated its pandemic planning efforts on January 24, 2020 as news of an unknown virus originating from the City of Wuhan, China, now identified as SARS-COV-2 causing severe respiratory disease (COVID-19), was identified in the United States. The early activation of the Pandemic Management Team and Pandemic Response Plan on January 24, 2020 prepared the City's emergency response as news and evidence of national, state, and community spread was confirmed by the County of Santa Clara (County) Public Health Officer. The City's EOC was activated on March 4, 2020. Early on, EOC leadership established three operating principles to help shape the cultural tenants of the EOC organization. They are as follows:

- Compassion in Action
- Open, Candid, and Direct Communication
- One Team

Within the first year of the pandemic, the Office of Emergency Management conducted an assessment of the City's COVID-19 pandemic response activities, which were compiled into a Preliminary Operational Assessment Report and Operational Adjustment Plan. This report focused on the initial activation of the EOC and response activities conducted from January 2020 to the end of October 2020. This Preliminary Operational Assessment Report was adopted by City Council on May 4, 2021. This type of assessment report is meant to document any strengths in the response, areas for improvement, and recommendations moving forward. However, it is uncommon to create such a report in the middle of an emergency response. The COVID-19 response was unique since it ran for a longer period of time compared to most emergency responses. The Office of Emergency Management felt it was appropriate to complete a preliminary report to document the learnings up to that point, and initiate improvements into the ongoing response.

As a continuation of best practices, the Office of Emergency Management understood the necessity of assessing its response and recovery activities for the remainder of the pandemic. Therefore, an After Action Report and Improvement Plan were developed examining response and recovery operations from November 2020 until the EOC demobilization in February 2022. While this report focused on collecting data and asking questions on the operational period of assessment (November 2020 – February 2022), it should be recognized that response and recovery activities continued throughout 2022. For example, vaccination coordination occurred through November 2022. Where possible, information on milestones and actions conducted through the end of 2022 have been included within this report.

The previous Preliminary Operational Assessment Report and this After Action Report are intended to honor the COVID-19 response and recovery by learning from it.

## **ANALYSIS**

An After Action Report is normally developed following an incident in order to capture information on strengths, lessons learned, and areas for improvement for the EOC response. However, the COVID-19 EOC response was unique in that it spanned a large period of time, with response and recovery activities still underway even following EOC demobilization. The intent of this report is to strengthen the capabilities of the City and address key challenges faced during the response period from November 2020 – February 2022.

After Action Report data was collected using multiple methods, to include the following:

<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Details</b>
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City EOC Staff → 145 responses</li><li>• Public → 48 responses</li><li>• Partner → 38 responses</li><li>• Business → 167 responses</li></ul>
Documentation Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preliminary Operational Assessment Report</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EOC Action Plans</li> <li>• EOC Leadership Meeting notes</li> <li>• City Flash Reports and social media posts developed by Office of Communications</li> </ul>
Data Analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Manager's COVID-19 Updates to City Council</li> <li>• County's census tract maps</li> <li>• City's internal vaccination prioritization dashboard</li> <li>• City vaccination rate (via County open data portal)</li> <li>• COVID Act Now (vaccination data website)</li> <li>• County vaccination dashboard</li> </ul>
Large Group Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 28, 2022 → 15 City staff</li> <li>• May 9, 2022 → 13 City staff</li> <li>• June 29, 2022 → 21 attendees representing government and other community partners</li> <li>• July 7, 2022 → 11 attendees representing community organizations</li> </ul>
Small Group Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 interviews</li> </ul>
One-on-One Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 interviews</li> </ul>
After Action Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 9, 2023 → 16 City staff</li> <li>• January 18, 2023 → 18 City staff</li> </ul>

The After Action Report is organized into eleven sets of findings:

1. EOC Operations
2. City of San José Operations
3. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Staff Safety and Wellness
4. Emergency Public Information and Community Engagement
5. Provisions of Food and Necessities to Populations that are Vulnerable or Underserved
6. Vaccination Planning and Administration Support
7. Resource Requests and Management
8. Planning Factors for Connecting and Assisting Vulnerable Populations
9. Community, County, State, And Federal Coordination
10. Community Recovery Activities
11. Important Findings Outside of After Action Report Scope

The After Action Report identifies 32 strengths and 25 areas for improvements. It also offers 51 recommendations for City consideration. Refer to the Improvement Plan for a consolidated list of these recommendations.

Some notable strengths identified in the After Action Report include the following:

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Finding 2.2: City Council sessions shifted to virtual to allow for continuity of government while remaining publicly accessible and following public health guidelines.	City bodies were able to continue their business and move forward on departmental, programmatic, and development projects. It also allowed for transparent and timely communication between EOC leadership and elected officials while maintaining opportunities for engagement by City residents.
Finding 4.1: Most communication that provided critical information, including flash reports and social media posts, was translated into multiple languages.	The City of San José's communication activities prioritized health equity for its entire population.
Finding 5.2: The City of San José effectively communicated food distribution services to the public.	There was a peak of nearly eight million meals distributed in October 2020 and consistently close to five million meals distributed through 2021 and 2022.
Finding 6.1: The City of San José created a Vaccine Campaign Task Force and supported County vaccination efforts.	By July 19, 2021, 85% of residents within the City of San José were vaccinated with at least one dose of the vaccine. (Note: The City was the first of the ten largest cities in the United States to reach this milestone.)
Finding 8.1: The housing and homeless response team further refined and strengthened its relationship with the County while quickly adapting shelter programs.	Part of this program included the creation of a hotline to assist people in finding available shelters. This was a key development since prior to COVID-19, community members had to call each shelter individually to find out if there was space available. The hotline also supported finding options for medical respite for callers who had contracted COVID-19 and needed a place to safely quarantine (e.g., hotels), particularly for people who were considered immunocompromised.

Some recommendations for improvement identified in the After Action Report include the following:

- Recommendation 1.4.1: Consider the opportunity to continue to create and implement the City's Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan to include expanding the emergency management training and exercise program. As part of the Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan, every six months assess who is assigned to the EOC and target training for those identified staff members.

- Recommendation 1.7.1: Within the Continuity of Operations Plan for the City, consider identifying the number/type of continuity personnel needed to maintain essential functions and the number/type of response personnel needed. Work with departments to ensure departments allow staff to work from the EOC and reassign work, so staff are not overwhelmed completing two jobs.
- Recommendation 2.5.1: Explore working with City departments to expand the number of people who may be sent to the EOC in the event of an activation. This may include tracking what roles these personnel have held during previous activations, the type of training they have, etc.
- Recommendation 3.4.1: Work with Human Resources and Office of Employee Relations to create guidance on monitoring stress, informing supervisors of the priority of work in the EOC, how to include EOC work into the employee annual review, and requirement to give breaks in transitioning staff to ensure the employee's mental wellness.
- Recommendation 8.3.1: Coordinate with City departments and partners to identify ways to improve staff's ability to support persons with disabilities and individuals with Access and Functional Needs.
- Recommendation 10.3.2: Explore necessary training for staff members performing community recovery roles (e.g., behavioral health, trauma informed care) or provided just-in-time training.

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

The Office of Emergency Management will provide regular updates on After Action Report and Improvement Plan recommendations progress to the Emergency Management Work Group Operations Team which includes managers and leaders within all City departments that have responsibilities to carry out emergency management functions. It will also provide an update every August as part of the Office of Emergency Management Work Plan Priorities Annual Report presented to the Public Safety, Finance, and Strategic Support City Council Committee.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and City Manager's Budget Office.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the March 21, 2023 City Council meeting.

**COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT**

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

**CEQA**

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

**PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING**

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

/s/  
RAYMOND RIORDAN  
Director, City Manager's Office of  
Emergency Management

For questions, please contact Raymond Riordan, Director of the Office of Emergency Management at (408) 794-7055.

**ATTACHMENTS**

A - COVID-19 After Action Report, Assessment Period Nov. 2020 – 2022 City of San Jose  
B - COVID-19 Improvement Plan