



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Raymond Riordan

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 PRELIMINARY
OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT
REPORT**

DATE: February 16, 2021

Approved

Date

02/18/21

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the 2020 COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report (OAR), Operational Adjustment Plan (OAP), and white papers.

OUTCOME

Approval of the OAR recommendations will solidify a path forward for the City of San José as it continues to respond to COVID-19 and the drastic impact it has had on the community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been activated since March 4, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Typically, an After Action Report is completed following an EOC response in order to capture the lessons learned and areas for improvement. Given the COVID-19 situation, the EOC has been activated for a prolonged period, with no current end date available. The COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report was developed in order to be able to learn while we are still in the emergency and not wait until later.

Since the EOC's activation, the team has improvised a number of innovations and improvements from on the ground partnerships, new uses of data, streamlining of planning processes and paperwork to ways of organizing a virtual EOC, and ensuring a focus on the most vulnerable. The team has been challenged to adapt to the length and depth of this emergency and the complexity of coordinating in a rapidly shifting, multi-faceted emergency unlike any other we have faced in our lifetime. The Office of Emergency Management and EOC leadership decided it vital to start documenting these learnings and best practices now to allow us to continually improve our operations in service to the community. Constant Associates was hired to help develop a COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report. This report captures the EOC's COVID-19 experience, and provides recommendations on how to further COVID-19

response and recovery efforts. Eight white papers were also developed to provide additional discussion on specific report topics.

The report identifies 89 recommendations for the City to implement. The City should start incorporating these recommendations into ongoing EOC response and recovery efforts. The top eight long-term recommendations are complex. City staff need to identify smaller steps that can make progress toward these recommendations.

- Identify the appropriate office and funding source for a permanent Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Coordinator
- Stand up a Language Access Unit for future activations as was done for this activation. Identify the appropriate office and funding source for a permanent Language Access Coordinator
- Maintain sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies to avoid potential future delays
- Refine Food & Necessities community points of distribution to meet needs of populations with AFN and those that are dependent on public transit
- Complete San José Disaster Housing Plan for future responses
- Draft and implement memorandums of understanding with community-based organizations to continue altering public messages so that they are more culturally sensitive
- Identify essential services and prioritize staff assignments to reduce excessive workloads while trying to accomplish EOC responsibilities and departmental responsibilities
- Continue hotspot program post-COVID. Logistics for hotspot program post-COVID (e.g., how to continue paying hotspot fees, or how to ease public transition away from City-provided internet)

The following are the top five short-term recommendations that the City can work on immediately:

- Create and implement just-in-time training or “cheat sheets” to staff on key skills such as how to purchase needed resources or charge staff time
- Create & implement training for staff to acquaint them with resource request process
- Maintain staff-leadership communication channels (e.g., expanding use of EOC town halls)
- Maintain ongoing messaging with all City staff to provide unity of purpose
- Provide ongoing communication and support to staff deployed on the ground, clarifying priorities and establishing timelines for feedback and/or action on raised concerns

BACKGROUND

Planning & Roadmap

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 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

To date, the City's EOC organization has been in sustained pandemic response for over 10 months. 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 high priority actions:

- Compliance with Public Health Orders
- Continuity of Essential City Services
- Supporting our Vulnerable Communities and Populations
- Powered by People – Support our people, so they can act

The City continues to carry out priorities outlined in the COVID-19 Response Roadmap, especially continuing to deliver essential city services to our community, provide targeted services to our unhoused populations, open additional services and facilities as County and State restrictions allow, and continue coordination efforts with our partner agencies as we navigate the ever changing landscape of this pandemic. As of February 10, 2021, the City accounts for 70,912 COVID cases.

EOC Leadership continues to keep City Councilmembers updated on the status of the EOC's COVID response efforts through item 3.1 during Tuesday Council Sessions. This forum continues to be an opportunity to obtain feedback from Councilmembers, which helps inform the direction of future EOC activity.

Racial Equity

COVID-19 has exposed and magnified inequalities across all sectors of our society. The pandemic's negative effects disproportionately impact communities of color. Prior to the pandemic, vulnerable communities were already facing socio-economic barriers, challenges to accessing healthcare, dis-connectivity within a large digital divide, inadequate access to employment services, and inconsistent disability support continue to face higher risk and higher

test positivity rates. Among the Latinx population, despite totaling about a quarter of the County's population, data from the Santa Clara County's Demographic of Cases and Deaths Dashboard shows that Latinx individuals attribute to over half (51% to date) of the County's COVID-19 positive cases.¹ Some of the areas within Santa Clara County with the highest rates of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population are found within the City of San Jose's zip codes.²

San Jose Zip Code	COVID-19 Case Rate per 100,000 Population
95122	13,037
95113	12,326
95116	11,075
95111	10,195
95110	10,177
95127	10,132
95121	8,102
95002	7,922
95117	7,191
95112	7,139
95133	6,659

Part of the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color has been structural factors which prevent those communities from practicing safe social distancing. Marginalized populations in the US disproportionately make up the majority of the "essential workers" such as restaurant staff, retail grocery workers, public transit employees, health-care workers, and custodial staff. As front-line workers who don't have the privilege of "staying at home" or working remotely, the risk of contracting COVID-19 is much higher; moreover, marginalized communities tend to have worse health outcomes and are more likely to be uninsured than non-marginalized communities.³ Notably, health outcomes are affected by forces including structural racism, higher incarceration rates, poverty and the disproportionate prevalence of underlying conditions such as asthma and heart disease, and inequitable access to social and healthcare resources among Latinx and African American communities. The differences in health outcomes related to COVID-19 are most stark in COVID-19 deaths. Data from the CDC Provisional Death Counts for Coronavirus Disease shows that a total of 57.4 % of nation's COVID-19 related deaths, for adults 18 and older, are Latinx (26.9%), African Americans (18.4 %), Asian (12.1%).⁴ The proportion of COVID-19 deaths in African Americans is about double their population representation across all adult age categories.⁵

¹ [Santa Clara County COVID-19 Demographics of Cases & Deaths Dashboard](#), Accessed February 10, 2021

² [Santa Clara County COVID-19 Case Rates by Zip Codes](#), Accessed February 10, 2021

³ [COVID-19 and Health Disparities in the United States, June 19, 2020](#)

⁴ [American Academy of Pediatrics - A Framework to Approach Racial Health Inequities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

⁵ [State Officials Announce Latest COVID-19 Facts, May 2020](#)

Report Development

To document the City's COVID-19 response from January to October 2020, the City hired a consultant to develop a COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report (OAR), Operational Adjustment Plan (OAP), and 8 white papers around specific topics. The Request for Proposal was released on June 18, 2020, and a Notice of Intended Award was posted on July 17, 2020 announcing contract award to Constant Associates, Inc., a private sector emergency management and public health preparedness consulting firm.

A contract with Constant Associates in the amount of \$75,352.00 was entered into on August 10, 2020. The contract amount has increased to \$90,352.00 as of December 21, 2020. The project was funded with CARES Act funding. Research conducted by Constant Associates to develop the OAR included the following:

- EOC survey distributed to 130 EOC staff, with receipt of 67 responses
- Seventeen 1 to 2-hour small group workshops with EOC staff and community stakeholders—to include County partners and Access and Functional Needs community advocates—to gather information on the COVID response efforts, including successes and areas for improvement

Small Group Workshops for COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report		
EOC Branch / Topic	Date of Workshop	# of Attendees
Digital Inclusion + Childcare	August 26, 2020	8 EOC staff
Liaison Branch	August 27, 2020	7 EOC staff
Community Engagement Branch	September 3, 2020	5 EOC staff
Food & Necessities Distribution Branch	September 4, 2020	7 EOC staff
Personnel Branch + Safety + Return to Work / Powered by People	September 9, 2020	6 EOC staff
Essential Services Branch	September 10, 2020	3 EOC staff
Homeless Support Services Branch + Emergency Housing Branch	September 10, 2020	17 EOC staff and community partners
Emergency Public Information Officer Branch	September 11, 2020	8 EOC staff
Non-Profit Meal Distribution	September 11, 2020	11 community partners
Compliance Branch + Futures Branch	September 16, 2020	6 EOC staff
Planning Section	September 16, 2020	14 EOC staff
EOC Leadership Gold Shift	September 23, 2020	9 EOC staff
Logistics Section	September 23, 2020	7 EOC staff
EOC Leadership Blue Shift	September 24, 2020	9 EOC staff

Small Group Workshops for COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report		
EOC Branch / Topic	Date of Workshop	# of Attendees
Recovery Section + Finance Section	September 25, 2020	6 EOC staff
Access & Functional Needs	September 30, 2020	15 EOC staff and community partners
Multi-Language	October 2, 2020	8 EOC staff and community partners

- Two 2-hour big group workshops to verify data collection, material review, and understanding of the City EOC's response
 - September 14, 2020: Attended by 23 EOC staff
 - September 28, 2020: Attended by 30 EOC staff
- Two 2-hour assessment reviews to highlight key findings and outcomes in the OAR and solicit feedback for the OAP. The draft OAR was shared with 47 EOC staff and 16 community partners. Individuals were encouraged to provide feedback on the OAR.
 - October 9, 2020: Attended by 9 EOC Staff
 - October 14, 2020: Attended by 10 EOC staff and community partners.
Community partners that were invited include: County staff focused on housing efforts, County AFN Coordinator, County Social Services Agency, Catholic Charities, Silicon Valley Independent Living Center (SVILC), Collaborating Agencies' Disaster Relief Effort (CADRE), and Valley Transportation Authority.

Information from one-on-one interviews, including sessions conducted by the EOC Directors and Planning Section Coordinators with the individual City Councilmembers, were also incorporated into the OAR.

ANALYSIS

Preliminary Operational Assessment Report

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 is unique in that it has been underway since early 2020, and continues into 2021. OEM and EOC leadership agree it is critical to complete a preliminary operational assessment of the City's EOC response in order to capture the many months' worth of work that have been completed. At a future date, when the City EOC is able to scale down substantially and/or deactivate, OEM may prepare a COVID-19 After Action Report.

The 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. Some updated information was included to reflect developments from November 2020 to mid-February 2021. The purpose of the report is to strengthen the capabilities of the City and address key challenges faced during the initial response period. The

recommendations presented in the OAR are intended to improve COVID-19 response efforts in the City. In addition, this OAR serves as a baseline for future evaluation efforts.

The OAR is organized into eight sets of findings:

- EOC Activation
- EOC Operations
- Emergency Public Information and Community Engagement
- EOC Staff Safety & Wellness
- Direct Provision of Food and Other Necessities to Vulnerable and At-Risk Populations
- Resource Requests and Management
- Planning Factors for Connecting and Assisting Vulnerable and At-Risk Populations
- County, State, and Federal Coordination

The OAR identifies 19 strengths and 19 areas for improvement for the City's EOC response, and offers 89 recommendations as the EOC response continues. With the ever-changing COVID-19 environment, it is important that the City continue to critically review its response efforts to ensure previously established improvement recommendations remain relevant and new corrective actions are captured.

Operational Adjustment Plan

Each corrective action and recommendation outlined in the OAR was synthesized into a COVID-19 Operational Adjustment Plan (OAP), which provides a roadmap for the City to follow to improve its COVID-19 response as well as all other future responses to communicable disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies.

EOC leadership participated in rank prioritization sessions on January 22 and January 28, 2021 to rank-prioritize the recommendations noted in the OAR and OAP. A process known as Weighted Shortest Job First (WSJF) was applied to the prioritization process. In WSJF, the recommendations are scored using the following characteristics: community value, opportunity enablement / risk mitigation, time criticality, and job duration.

It is important to note that when job duration (i.e., length of time to accomplish task, complexity of task) is removed from the equation, different recommendations are prioritized. Due to the complexity of these recommendations, it is critical to identify clear next steps that can work toward accomplishing the larger recommendation.

#	COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Recommendation	TOTAL VALUE
7.7	Identify the appropriate office and funding source for a permanent AFN Coordinator	47
3.1	Stand up a Language Access Unit for future activations as was done for this activation. Identify the appropriate office and funding source for a permanent Language Access Coordinator	42
4.25	Maintain sufficient PPE supplies to avoid potential future delays	39
5.7	Refine Food & Necessities community points of distribution to meet needs of populations with AFN and those that are dependent on public transit	39
7.4	Complete San José Disaster Housing Plan for future responses	35
6.5	Create and implement just-in-time training or “cheat sheets” to staff on key skills such as how to purchase needed resources or charge staff time.	34
8.2	Create & implement training for staff to acquaint them with resource request process	34
3.9	Draft and implement memorandums of understanding with community-based organizations to continue altering public messages so that they are more culturally sensitive	34
4.11	Identify essential services and prioritize staff assignments to reduce excessive workloads while trying to accomplish EOC responsibilities and departmental responsibilities.	34
3.5 & 3.6	Continue hotspot program post-COVID. Logistics for hotspot program post-COVID (e.g., how to continue paying hotspot fees, or how to ease public transition away from City-provided internet)	32

Based on WSJF scoring, the below recommendations should be undertaken first by City and EOC leadership. The full list of recommendations, organized by their WSJF score, can be found in the OAP.

#	COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report Recommendation	WSJF SCORE
6.5	Create and implement just-in-time training or “cheat sheets” to staff on key skills such as how to purchase needed resources or charge staff time.	34.00
8.2	Create & implement training for staff to acquaint them with resource request process	34.00
4.2	Maintain staff-leadership communication channels (e.g., expanding use of EOC townhalls)	18.00
4.4	Maintain ongoing messaging with all City staff to provide unity of purpose	18.00
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	16.00
5.9	Reinforce early activation of Recovery & Finance Sections for any EOC activation that appears like it will extend past 48 hours	16.00
4.8	Increase messaging on the services and resources available to support staff safety and wellbeing	14.00
4.23	Identify ways to provide emotional and psychological support services during work hours	12.00
3.9	Draft and implement memorandums of understanding with community-based organizations to continue altering public messages so that they are more culturally sensitive	11.33
4.24	Communicate safety and personnel responsibilities to employees.	11.00
6.4	Regularly communicate changes to EOC systems with staff, including information on the reasoning for why systems are in place.	11.00

White Papers

Constant Associates also developed white papers on the EOC response and the following eight topics:

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

Each white paper provides further discussion on recommendations noted in the larger COVID-19 report. EOC staff that played leading roles in the various topic areas were asked to provide feedback on the corresponding white paper. Community partners were also asked to review and provide feedback to the white papers on 1) sheltering and housing efforts, and 2) serving vulnerable & at-risk populations. Drafts of these white paper were distributed in late October 2020, feedback was received during early to mid-November 2020, and feedback was incorporated during December 2020 through February 2021.

Access and Functional Needs Sessions

In developing the OAR, OAP, and white papers, the City has engaged with various community advocates and leaders within the AFN community. The City would like to deepen that conversation with the AFN community by organizing and facilitating two AFN sessions in Spring 2021. These AFN sessions will bring together City Staff and AFN community advocates to discuss barriers to equal access that impact AFN populations in our COVID-19 environment. Topics for these AFN sessions include:

- Physical barriers (e.g., Americans with Disability Act compliance, public transportation and paratransit)
- Technological barriers (e.g., distance learning, access to technological devices and Wi-Fi)
- Communication barriers (e.g., dissemination of public health information and resources in accessible formats and languages)
- Economic barriers (e.g., food insecurity, housing and eviction concerns)

A Community and Resident Assistance Survey was released on December 18, 2020 and closed on January 22, 2021. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese. There were 586 respondents. Survey responses will be used to inform the development of the AFN sessions.

A Planning Team made up of 7 City Staff and 3 AFN community advocates has been assembled. Constant Associates is assisting the Planning Team to develop and execute these AFN sessions.

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 its COVID-19 response as well as 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 that improvement recommendations remain relevant and new corrective actions are captured.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

After final Council direction is received, the Office of Emergency Management will work to add the COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report recommendations to the City's COVID-19 Response Roadmap and Emergency Management Roadmap. Plans and programs will be updated accordingly to reflect progress on the recommendations.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the March 2, 2021 Council Meeting.

COORDINATION

This attached COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

February 12, 2021

Subject: COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report

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CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-010, City Organizational and Administrative Activities resulting in no changes to the physical environment.

/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:

1. COVID-19 Preliminary Operational Assessment Report and White Papers
2. COVID-19 Operational Adjustment Plan