

**Quality and Productivity Commission  
34<sup>th</sup> Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program  
"Leading with Excellence"**

**2021 APPLICATION**

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12-point font):

**NAME OF PROJECT: WHY WE RISE**

**DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION:** MAY 2018

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2020)

CHECK HERE IF THIS PROJECT IS BEING SUBMITTED FOR THE **COVID-19 IMPACT AWARD ONLY**. (Projects must be implemented on or before December 31, 2020. **Note:** Projects implemented less than one year ago will not be eligible for any other PQA awards. In addition, once a project is submitted, you cannot submit the same project for awards consideration in subsequent years).

**PROJECT STATUS:**  Ongoing  One-time only

**HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT?**  Yes  No

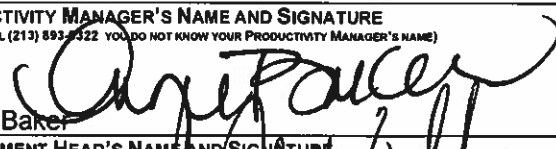
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.

1 This year, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors unanimously declared May 2021 the  
2 "most important [Mental Health Awareness Month] ever" and confirmed support for Why  
3 We Rise (WWR), a campaign of the L.A. County Department of Mental Health. A  
4 cornerstone of the WWR campaign is the transformative annual WE RISE initiative held  
5 during May, which encourages wellbeing and healing through art, connection,  
6 community engagement and creative expression. Originally launched in 2018 and now  
7 in its fourth year, WE RISE 2021 featured a full month of COVID-safe, in-person and  
8 virtual experiences, including art installations, workshops, panels, performances, and  
9 outdoor community programs for children and families across all five Supervisorial  
10 Districts. In partnership with numerous County departments, WE RISE has been a  
11 source of connection, resources and societal healing across L.A. County in response to  
12 the unprecedented national experience of a pandemic and long-standing social  
13 injustice. In doing so, WWR continues to ignite a growing movement to raise awareness  
14 for mental health, combat stigma and advocate for accessibility, early intervention and  
15 treatment. For more information, please visit [werise.la](http://werise.la).

**BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY**

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$	\$	\$	\$	X

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

<b>SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> Department of Mental Health 550 S Vermont Ave., 12 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90020		<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (800) 854-7771
<b>PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME</b> Imee Perius EMAIL: IPerius@dmh.lacounty.gov		<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (213) 364-5832
<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-4322 YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME)	<b>DATE</b> 6/23/2021	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (213) 351-1918
Angel Baker		<b>EMAIL</b> abaker@dmh.lacounty.gov
<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b>
Dr. Jonathan Sherin	6/23/2021	(213) 738-4601

**\*\*ELECTRONIC, WET, OR SCANNED SIGNATURES ARE ACCEPTABLE\*\***

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**1<sup>st</sup> FACT SHEET – LIMITED UP TO 3 PAGES ONLY:** Describe the **challenge(s), solution(s), and benefit(s)** of the project to the County. What quality and/or productivity-related outcome(s) has the project achieved? Provide measures of success and **specify assessment time frame**. Use Arial 12 point font.

**Most Important Mental Health Month Ever**

In April 2021, L.A. County Supervisor Kathryn Barger, author of the Board Motion recognizing Mental Health Awareness Month in May as the “most important ever,” gave voice to the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health’s (LACDMH) readiness to lead saying: “WE RISE is a celebration of wellbeing, healing and resiliency, which is of greater importance as we emerge from the challenges created by the public health pandemic. This initiative, and our ongoing efforts to enhance mental health resources and services for our residents, is an integral part of the County’s ongoing commitment to support our communities.”

This unprecedented unanimous Board Motion is a testament to the County’s wisdom and visionary leadership and was a swift call-to-action that LACDMH answered the fourth year in a row of the Why We Rise campaign and WE RISE initiative.

**An Imperative to Help Residents Heal**

In 2021, residents of L.A. County are still experiencing a dangerous mental health emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, worsening racial injustice and other social stressors. As a result, “none of us are well until all of us are well.” Now more than ever, there is an urgent need for hope, recovery and wellbeing through connection and healing across L.A. County.

In the wake of these multiple traumas, reaching underserved populations like youth and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) is especially important. These groups are both the hardest to reach and the most in need of support. Now is the time when we must reach out to others, engage as a community and build a path towards healing.

**Leveraging the Power of the Arts**

LACDMH recognizes that art and creative expression have a transformative power to heal, inspire and build relationships. As a tool for both social justice and profound introspection, art transcends cultures, speaks truth to power, compels us to ask difficult questions and to take action unifying our communities.

In June 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic intensified, L.A. County adopted a first-of-its-kind “Countywide Cultural Policy,” a cultural equity and inclusion initiative served as a road map to meaningful access to arts and culture:

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“In good times and in bad, the arts provide us the clearest window into the human experience. Equity is at the heart of Los Angeles County’s efforts to embrace and empower the voices of our local artists. Only they can unify and heal us at this critical moment through their artistic storytelling. Arts and culture play a critical role in the economic and social resiliency of L.A. County, not just in our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and recent civil unrest, but also in the long-term health and vitality of our community,” said L.A. County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. “By adopting the Countywide Cultural Policy, L.A. County prioritizes equity in the arts and recognizes that cultural inclusion is vital to the health and wellbeing of our communities.”

Further, there is a growing body of research, including reports from the World Health Organization, that solidifies the relationship between art and healing. The arts are powerful tools for community-building and post-disaster development. There is evidence that the arts are valuable both in the immediate aftermath of trauma and in the decades that follow. Additional benefits include encouraging healthy behaviors, supporting caregiving and, as it pertains to Why We Rise, helping people experience mental health.

**Cultivating Engagement Across the County**

Why We Rise and WE RISE inspired and challenged L.A. County residents to re-emerge and unify after months of isolation through art and creative expression. The pandemic reinforced mental health as a community priority, and Mental Health Awareness Month in May heralded a critical opportunity to join together and experience healing. The campaign cultivated a sense of connectedness, community and social belonging.

LACDMH launched Why We Rise in 2018 to show residents they are not alone, that resources are available and their County cares about them. As its signature initiative, WE RISE seeks to transform mental health, help break barriers by defying old assumptions, combat stigma and recognize the role that social conditions play in the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

**Improving Lives and Advancing Mental Health**

The campaign’s impact over the past four years is profound. In 2018, a RAND study found that one in five County youth (ages 14-24) were exposed to the campaign and reported an increased awareness of the challenges people with mental health issues face, from stigma to treatment access. They also felt empowered and mobilized toward mental health activism and were more likely to know how to get help. In its first year, WE RISE grew to 40,000 strong.

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In 2019, RAND found that WE RISE increased to one in three youth (ages 12-24) who were exposed to the campaign and grew exponentially, showcasing a world-class art exhibition featuring works from more than 200 local and national artists.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, WE RISE quickly pivoted from in-person events to an all-virtual format. Dramatically, the initiative saw a 90% increase in social media impressions over 2019, including a 26% increase in followers and a 31% increase in organic social media engagements compared to 2019, amassing more than 20,000 total followers on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube and an estimated 15M impressions across social media. The virtual panels, discussions, performances and other programs accrued almost 283,000 total broadcast views, more than 34,000 website visits and generated a massive 6.2M digital ad impressions.

In 2021, as in previous years, WE RISE worked as a model for broad, County-wide, cross-departmental coordination creating connections across multiple County departments (Library, Parks & Recreation, Arts & Culture, etc.). The initiative was an effective way for the County to connect with hard-to-reach or underserved populations. WE RISE 2021 was inclusive and welcomed all communities, supporting County residents who speak English, Spanish, Mandarin, Korean and Armenian, among others. The initiative welcomed residents of diverse backgrounds including Native Americans, LatinX, LGBTQ+, Black, Asian, Veterans and youth (ages 14-24).

WE RISE 2021 expanded to include 103 COVID-safe community programs, 21 art installations and 24 digital experiences. For the first time, WE RISE hosted a family-friendly “Rising with Chalk” program in 55 L.A. County Parks and ran a poetry-writing “Love Letters in Light” program with all 10 County libraries. In 2021, WE RISE welcomed a diverse array of more than 375 community and business partners.

Early reports reveal continued growth in 2021 including more than 1.6M social media impressions, over 72,000 website page views and more than 1,600 total YouTube video clicks. WE RISE 2021 has earned more than 250 pieces of media coverage reaching an estimated 625M viewers.

Why We Rise and WE RISE were created to serve as a model for other counties and organizations in California and nationwide to create, host and promote their own initiatives. A comprehensive digital toolkit includes step-by-step guides covering all aspects of the initiative, and the virtual format makes many campaign elements even more accessible to others seeking to reach local audiences and strengthen mental health in their communities.

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**Linkage to the County Strategic Plan – 1 page only.** Which County Strategic Plan goal(s) does this project address? Explain how. Use Arial 12-point font.

In April 2021, the LA County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a Board Motion proclaiming May to be the “most important [Mental Health Awareness Month] ever.” Now in its fourth year, the WE RISE initiative addresses the following County Strategic Plan goals:

**COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL 1: Make investments that transform lives**

WE RISE is aimed at prevention and early intervention of mental health struggles and promotes wellbeing by combatting negative stigmas and removing barriers to resources and support. In 2018, WE RISE focused on 14-24-year-olds due to mental health struggles that manifest at this age. In 2019, secondary target audiences also included parents, educators and mental health professionals. In 2020 and 2021, WE RISE’s scope expanded to support the mental health needs of all County residents. Over the years, WE RISE has pivoted to address timely issues such as mass shootings in schools (2018), gun violence (2019) and the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021) to support individual and collective healing and wellbeing.

**COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL 2: Foster vibrant and resilient communities**

Each year, WE RISE fosters vibrant and resilient communities by supporting and amplifying high-profile public-private partnerships with local community organizations, artists and nonprofits through workshops, panels, art installations, performances and more. WE RISE also partners with other County departments, such as Parks and Recreation, Arts & Culture and the Library, in an effort to support the wellbeing of communities and their residents.

**COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL 3: Realize tomorrow’s government today**

WE RISE serves as a model for what government can be and is always responsive to the emerging needs of its residents and their diverse communities. WE RISE collaborates by bringing communities together and by uniting County Departments to work as partners. RAND reports commissioned by WE RISE in 2018 indicate that one in five youth were exposed to the campaign, which increased to one in three in 2019. RAND also found that youth exposed to WE RISE reported an increased awareness of the challenges people with mental health struggles face. WE RISE collects data to refine and adapt the approach and execution of the initiative. Additionally, WE RISE solicits feedback from the community to assure residents that they are not alone, resources are available and their County cares about them and their families.

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**COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY):** If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. Please indicate whether these benefits apply in total or on a per unit basis, e.g., per capita, per transaction, per case, etc. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation. Use Arial 12-point font

**Cost Avoidance:** Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these are costs to the County or to other entities.

**Cost Savings:** A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these were expenditures by the County or by other entities.

**Revenue:** Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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COST \$	\$	\$	\$	X

**ANNUAL= 12 MONTHS ONLY**

**SPECIAL ENHANCEMENT PROJECT**

WE RISE is funded by dedicated state tax funds earmarked for prevention and early intervention. These state mental health dollars were made possible by the voters of California who passed Prop 63 in order to increase funding for mental health services.