

Quality and Productivity Commission
34th 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: THE COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR NETWORK (CAN)

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: MAY 2020

(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 The Community Ambassadors Network (CAN) is a Department of Mental Health (DMH)
 2 community outreach and empowerment effort that was born out of the challenges
 3 brought on and magnified by the COVID-19 global pandemic—health inequities,
 4 systemic racism and social unrest in L.A. County. Developed in May 2020 as part of a
 5 Mental Health Services Act Innovation Project, CAN sought to empower and train L.A.
 6 County residents with lived experiences to become Community Ambassadors in order
 7 to help others in their communities. By creating a career path for community members
 8 interested in building their skills, making an impact, and earning an income as
 9 Community Ambassadors, CAN enabled more than 200 Community Ambassadors to
 10 become trusted members and trained navigators and mobilizers in their neighborhoods.
 11 Within a year, CAN expanded as DMH partnered with DPSS and the CalWORKs
 12 program to employ 50 CalWORKs participants as CAN Interns to provide additional
 13 community outreach, education, activities, referrals and support. The commitment and
 14 success of the CAN Community Ambassadors indicated an effective outreach method
 15 to engage/assist diverse communities across L.A. County during unprecedented times.

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
\$ UTA	\$ UTA	\$ N/A	\$ UTA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Mental Health, 550 S. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, CA	TELEPHONE NUMBER (800) 854-7771
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Wendi Tovey EMAIL WTOVEY@DMH.LACOUNTY.GOV	TELEPHONE NUMBER (213) 738-4142
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE <small>(PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME)</small> Angel Baker Email: abaker@dmh.lacounty.gov	DATE 6/23/2021 TELEPHONE NUMBER (213) 351-1918
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Dr. Jonathan Sherin	DATE 6/23/2021 TELEPHONE NUMBER (213) 738-4601

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

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1st 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.

Challenge

By spring 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic had created unprecedented crises for Los Angeles County residents with increased public health issues, racial justice issues and the subsequent resulting emotional trauma. Distrust of law enforcement extended to growing distrust of government entities. As the largest Mental Health Department in the nation, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) ensures access to care and treatment for the most vulnerable residents of more than 10 million people in Los Angeles County. With seven identified underserved cultural community groups, DMH’s goal to reach everyone in our service areas were met with additional challenges brought on by the global pandemic and innovative, creative solutions for outreach needed augmentation and strengthening.

Solution

In order to reach our diverse audiences, DMH determined that it was imperative to enhance the role of peers and community members in neighborhoods most in need. As such, DMH created the Community Ambassadors Network (CAN) in May 2020 as part of a Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovation Project. The CAN program was designed to hire, train, and certify community members who will be able to champion and promote COVID-19 educational resources in their own neighborhoods and help those in need find relevant resources. These Community Ambassadors participated in a COVID-19 training developed in collaboration between the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health and Health Services. This training was beneficial in educating the county, early in the pandemic, on how COVID-19 was impacting all areas of our lives, provided accurate information and resources where the public could turn for help and ongoing/updated information. By May 25, 2021, 223 individuals had become Community Ambassadors. This number included 16 new community members hired in 2021, 84 new community members hired through the CARES ACT in 2020, as well as 123 Transitional Age Youth (Age 16-25 ys) peers, navigators, parent partners and DMH health promoters. To date, Community Ambassadors have educated 9,720 individuals, community partners and groups across diverse, underserved communities throughout the county about COVID-19.

Benefit

Through the dedication of CAN and Community Ambassadors, diverse, underserved communities were engaged and educated about COVID-19 and the pandemic. Community Ambassadors researched resources and information daily from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Los Angeles County Public Health Department to ensure up-to-date information and resources were distributed and made available in their various service areas. Infographics with facts about COVID-19 symptoms, safety precautions, quarantine guidelines, proper use of

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Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), location and registration of COVID-19 testing, vaccinations, and more were created and shared on an ongoing basis.

Community Ambassadors conducted **2,285** outreach and engagement events where they delivered and shared this information, and they also included provision of masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to the community. CAN assisted at several testing sites and vaccination centers across L.A. County and recorded supporting the testing and/or vaccination of **2,101** people.

The fact that Community Ambassadors had lived experiences and hailed from diverse communities created trust among community members and enabled acceptance of the information and resources being shared. To date, CAN and Innovative Programs staff have provided a total of **10,587** COVID-related referrals within the community. A primary focus of the CAN's work is community engagement and training on a variety of important matters.

Amidst the pandemic, CAN also embarked on social empowerment campaigns like the Census and Voting Rights. Community Ambassadors trained and engaged residents about the importance of the Census, voting in both local and national elections and understanding the reality that each vote matters. These efforts were conducted in conjunction with educating communities about the global pandemic.

A portion of CAN's budget also provided concrete supports to individuals and families most impacted by the pandemic. Several families participating in CAN became ill from COVID-19; Innovative Program staff provided linkages for **1,462** individualized family supports for participants, such as diapers, wipes and cleaning supplies for the home, hygiene products, educational toys and books for children. These and other basic needs were delivered to their homes and any assistance and connection to resources and linkages were made as needed.

To help residents avoid homelessness and decrease the risk of progressive illness and death due to COVID-19, the CAN pivoted to focusing on meeting the basic needs of community members, often by building relationships with local organizations and businesses when providing supports. Organizations that CAN worked with provided **9,703** linkages to address food insecurity for participants, which included providing hot meals, grocery vouchers from neighborhood markets, grocery and meal home delivery, and linkages with Cal fresh and local food banks. One provider partnered with a local restaurant whose business was suffering due to the pandemic to supply 150 families in East LA with warm meal boxes each week for several months. Each meal box would feed five people and included wellbeing tips, arts and crafts and other activities for families to do together.

Agencies that worked with CAN provided **2,934** linkages for housing resources, such as motel vouchers and rental assistance, thus ensuring that hundreds of participants who were impacted financially due to the pandemic remained housed. After stay-at-home orders were implemented, one Innovative Program lead agency partnered with a local hotel to assist in temporarily housing their older adult participants experiencing homelessness—who were at a higher risk for severe illness or death from COVID-19—and some Transition Aged Youth (TAY),

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at a vastly reduced rate. With this creative partnership, over 100 participants avoided contracting COVID-19 and no participants were lost to the pandemic.

Community collaboration included partnering with a local library who donated iPads during stay-at-home orders so community members remained connected to services and supports. TAY CAN made activity bags for senior community members and taught them how to use online platforms and new technology. DMH Innovative program agencies provided 266 linkages for technology (laptops, WiFi, cell phones) to support virtual learning, employment and decrease isolation.

Throughout the pandemic, the CAN provided ongoing activities and weekly “check-in” calls to all participants. The monthly Community Partnership meetings saw a massive expansion as they transitioned to online platforms, allowing for increased participation across communities. Attendance at these meetings more than tripled from previous numbers and continue to grow. Traumas facing communities were the focus of meetings for discussion, support, and action planning.

Through CAN, trust was built in communities most impacted by COVID-19 and with trust came increased access to support, referrals, and linkages, resulting in stronger communities. CAN increased communities understanding of mental health issues, resources and awareness of COVID-19 spread, testing and vaccination. Activities supported teachers and teens; storytime was conducted for families; and technology education provided to help parents navigate their children’s education.

The DMH CAN, CalWORKs and DPSS Intern collaboration drives workforce development and to provide interns and all Community Ambassadors with the skills needed to compete for future high demand jobs. This project will support and supervise 50 CalWORKs participants to engage in part to full-time employment for the final year of the Innovation project. This project will expand the CAN to over 250 Community Ambassadors across the County. The interns will be supervised by and partner with other Community Ambassadors in the program to have built in support while providing outreach and engagement, training and activities.

CAN and providers worked collaboratively with UCLA in the development of the curriculum being delivered for this project, including training from motivational interviewing to resiliency in the workplace. CAN monthly meetings called Promoting Learning, Action and Networking (PLAN) meetings were implemented in January 2021. The CAN have joined as a community to discuss racial and health inequities and the impacts across Los Angeles County, how separate communities are being impacted and how collaborating across the county benefits the whole. Initial discussions with law enforcement have begun regarding bridging the gap and addressing injustices and sustaining change and improvement.

Moving forward, the Community Resiliency Model (CRM) is a promising practice that is used to train and empower communities and support and expand wellbeing. Nearly 100 Community Ambassadors are trained in the model at this time, with additional trainings scheduled to train new Community Ambassadors and the Interns. This model trains the Community Ambassadors as “teachers”, they then take the training to the community to teach them about the resiliency of their communities, addressing traumas and becoming stronger together.

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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.
Foster resilient and communities

The CAN is in alignment with and addresses both Goals I and II of the County's strategic plan. Goal I is dedicated to “making investments that transform lives” and Goal II is focused on “fostering vibrant and resilient communities.” The strategic plan supports that LAC's goals are only sustainable when grounded in strong communities. This project focuses on community capacity building with the right people, in the right place, at the right time to connect those to the right and necessary resources.

This project supports many strategies encompassed within the Goals I and II. The CAN is a preventative initiative using the promising CRM practice to increase community capacity building and enhanced cohesion across communities. CRM also supports and increases the wellness of LAC communities. This project not only engaged in workforce development but supports local workforce and job creation and implementation and will expand the CAN to in excess of 250 individuals working and advocating for their communities. A large part of this expansion of the workforce, includes the development of individual skills which will assist the CAN in being competitive in attaining future employment in high demand jobs. The training and informing of communities have exponentially increased awareness of supports and services and improved an understanding of mental health resources and wellbeing across communities. The CAN has addressed and trained on society's most complicated social health and public safety challenges. The CAN connects to the community in a trusting way, while also combatting and addressing social injustices, homelessness issues and promoting supportive parenting, employment and housing.

The CAN have been able to bridge the span of the entire county, through conversation and collaborative understanding about the differences across communities and learning from one another and how to address the specific needs and build upon resiliencies. Strengthening and educating communities, breeds sustainable strength and empowerment of LAC communities.

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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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\$ UTA	\$ UTA	\$ N/A	\$ UTA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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While there is not a manner in which to estimate the exact cost avoidance/savings, this project lent to keeping many families housed and safe from hospitalization, expanded employment within communities and infused the economy in support of local businesses.