

**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: LIAISON IN THE TIME OF COVID**

**DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION:** JULY 22, 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

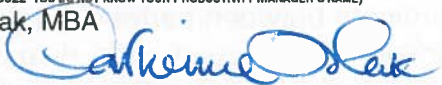

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.

- 1 **Challenge:** The emergence of a deadly novel coronavirus resulted in widespread
- 2 confusion and fear. Exacerbating the situation, information was rapidly changing and
- 3 misinformation also circulating. Our communities needed a reliable partner to educate,
- 4 clarify, and guide them through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5 **Solution:** The Liaison Section directly engaged community sectors, including
- 6 governments, businesses, schools, community and faith-based organizations, and other
- 7 community partners. They coordinated with sector partners on implementing COVID-19
- 8 safety protocols where our communities work, live, learn, worship, and play. It was an
- 9 efficient and effective means of implementing safety practices, disseminating
- 10 information, distributing resources including vaccines and PPE, and providing guidance
- 11 on COVID-19 exposure management.
- 12 **Benefits:** Public Health Liaisons are a reliable source of guidance and support for LA
- 13 County community sector partners and have addressed over 33,000 inquiries.
- 14 Engagement with one partner impacts everyone in the organization, and in turn, their
- 15 stakeholders.

**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
\$	\$	\$	\$	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

<b>SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH, 313 N. FIGUEROA ST., 8TH FLOOR, LA, CA 90012	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> 213-288-8117
<b>PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME</b> Stella Fogleman sfogleman@ph.lacounty.gov	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (213) 637-3600 <b>EMAIL</b>
<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> <small>(PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME)</small> Catherine Mak, MBA 	<b>DATE</b> 6.25.21 <b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> 213-288-7240 <b>EMAIL</b> cmak@ph.lacounty.gov
<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> Dr. Barbara Ferrer, MPH, MEd, PHD 	<b>DATE</b> 06/25/21 <b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> 213-288-7240

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

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**The Challenges:** News of a novel coronavirus began circulating worldwide in late fall 2019. The novel pathogen was known to be highly transmissible and a deadly virus, but the transmission pathways were not well understood, and beyond basic respiratory hygiene, it was unclear which interventions would prove to be most effective. Over the course of what became one of the deadliest global pandemics, scientific information and guidance rapidly changed, and the Department of Public Health (DPH) led efforts locally to implement prevention measures based upon the latest science and national and state guidance. Making sure that communities have timely and accurate information on COVID-19 and how to prevent it and keep safe is essential for lowering rates of transmission and avoiding overwhelming the healthcare system. Community mitigation actions were vital before vaccines became widely available.

Communication during the COVID-19 pandemic became paramount and was uniquely challenging in our modern, rapid media environment. First, COVID-19 was an emergent not-well-understood virus, so complex information and circumstances evolved quickly and frequently. Evolving guidance often conflicted with previous information, was confusing, and, though based on federal and state guidance, was sometimes more strict locally, making it difficult for the public to understand and follow --and in some cases generated resistance or backlash. Second, a lot of misinformation about COVID-19 circulated and unfortunately the pandemic became politicized, complicating messaging about the severity of the pandemic and safety recommendations. Third, with our globally diffuse media environment including cable news and social media, the public and constituencies receive information from a variety of sources, which are not always credible or reliable.

On top of communications challenges, it was essential that COVID-19 safety measures were implemented across the community and multiple sectors. Educating and motivating individuals, businesses, schools, places of worship, and other organizations to implement COVID-19 safety measures was challenging, because safety measures were often inconvenient or costly.

Understanding these challenges, DPH established points of contact to key sectors to effectively communicate and build trust with key stakeholders. The unique challenges of a new, deadly, and highly transmissible virus in the age of social media makes direct connections with stakeholders especially important.

**The Solution:** DPH activated the Incident Command System (ICS) to manage the emergency response before the first confirmed COVID-19 case reached LA County. Within ICS, the Liaison Section works to coordinate between partnering agencies and organizations. Liaisons establish and maintain engagement with diverse sectors across the County to ensure strong bi-directional understanding of public health needs and the impacts of protective measures on the numerous, diverse sectors of LA County communities.

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Over the past year plus, Public Health expanded its COVID-19 Liaison Section to ensure direct engagement with a broad array of community sectors. At the beginning of the pandemic, Liaisons compiled contact lists for different community sectors, including schools, childcare, senior community care facilities, elected officials, houses of worship, personal care services, film and television, and other community sectors. Each list contains thousands of contacts, which allows Liaisons to quickly send email updates regarding Health Officer Orders, COVID-19 alerts, vaccine news, and telebriefing invitations. The mailing lists allowed DPH to send targeted messaging to specific sectors.

Liaisons also coordinate with Public Health’s Communications Office to host telebriefings to engage with each sector. Invitations are sent through the Liaison mailing lists. The telebriefings include situational updates and provide stakeholders an opportunity to receive answers to their questions. Approximately six telebriefings are held each week, some held every week and other sectors held periodically. A call center was established to handle additional inquiries just for these sectors that connected sector partners with liaisons and subject matter expertise.

Liaisons work with a variety of business sectors, community-based and faith organizations, and other stakeholders to implement COVID-19 safety measures. They clarify Health Officer Orders and elevate stakeholder concerns. When sector partners have COVID-19 cases or outbreaks, Liaisons assist with exposure management and provide a warm handoff to Acute Communicable Disease Control for outbreak management. In addition, the call center assists partners with obtaining resources, including personal protective equipment, testing, and vaccinations. The call center became a reliable channel for various sectors to connect with DPH for guidance and resources.

To augment the capacity of Public Health’s Government Affairs unit in the ability to reach out and respond timely and effectively to a heavily increasing volume of inquiries from the Board of Supervisors, cities, elected officials, and constituents, a team of Supervisorial District (SD) liaisons was established, assigning one liaison per each District, to interface with and provide information and resources to the Board of Supervisors, city officials, other elected officials, businesses, and constituents and other stakeholders. The team fostered and leveraged relationships with city elected officials and staff and Board office staff responsible for providing up-to-date, accurate information to the public, employers, employees and other stakeholders about COVID, COVID testing resources, clarifying HOO, vaccination related questions, enforcement, and other inquiries. The SD liaisons responded to a high volume of inquiries, handling often challenging, sensitive matters while building relationships with elected officials and other stakeholders to disseminate timely information and ensure greater compliance with public health preventive measures. Liaisons were also assigned to interface with County departments to provide guidance and education for County department management, employees, and responding to

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inquiries related to services for the public.

Liaisons also convened focus groups with key sector partners to get input on health orders, recovery strategies, and to identify potential areas requiring special attention and focus to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19.

Based upon stakeholder feedback and Board direction, Public Health established the Public Health Councils program to support workers to conduct peer-to-peer education with their co-workers, identify potential Health Officer Order (HOO) violations, and work to increase HOO compliance at their worksite. The Councils focused on hard hit sectors including apparel manufacturing, food manufacturing, warehousing and storage, restaurants, and groceries and supermarkets. The Councils are distributing PPE to businesses with workers most impacted by pandemic and working on leveraging vaccine resources.

Another program that emerged from focus groups is the School Technical Assistance Team. They provide education and information to education sectors and supports development of plans and strategies to minimize risk and exposure to students, faculty, and staff. This team reviewed school reopening plans and waiver applications and conducted site assessments on campuses to assure adherence to HOO.

When COVID-19 vaccine became available, the COVID-19 Vaccine Workgroup and Committees were instrumental in engaging sectors about vaccine resource allocation, communications, and equity. All Liaisons received training to provide general information about vaccine, and specific Liaisons were assigned to engage with various stakeholder groups. Liaisons provided guidance on vaccinations, assisted with setting up mobile vaccination clinics, and located vaccination records.

**Benefits:** The DPH COVID-19 Liaison Section has been instrumental in establishing and maintaining meaningful collaborations and relationships that have been leveraged for implementing effective prevention and response measures that along with vaccination efforts have substantially reduced COVID-19 transmission and kept communities safe.

Liaisons have responded to and addressed over 33,000 inquiries from stakeholders, which includes assisting them with developing COVID-19 workplace safety plans, exposure management for COVID-19 case outbreaks, obtaining PPE and/or vaccines, and understanding and improving complicated policies and protocols. These activities resulted in safer worksite, school, and public environments, local governmental actions to protect LA County residents, and recovery efforts to maintain a safe reopening.



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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.

**GOAL I. Make Investments That Transform Lives:**

Liaisons have responded to and addressed over 33,000 inquiries from stakeholders, including residents, employers, employees, organizations, governmental partners and other stakeholders. By disseminating accurate and credible information, Liaisons helped implement COVID prevention and control measures that effectively reduced case transmission, increased vaccination efforts, and helped protect individuals, families, communities, and worksites. Liaison activities established and maintained meaningful collaborations and relationships to improve COVID response and recovery efforts that will have long lasting impact.

The Public Health Councils program has created capacity to support workers in maintaining safe workplaces that reduce disease transmission and keep workers, their families, and communities safe. PH Councils focus on hard hit sectors including apparel manufacturing, food manufacturing, warehousing and storage, restaurants, and groceries and supermarkets, which have predominantly low wage workers many of whom are people of color that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The PH Councils aims to address some of LA County's most complicated social, health, and safety challenges by supporting workers to conduct peer-to-peer education with their co-workers regarding safety measures and worksite compliance. Since communities of color are particularly vulnerable when there is a lack of workplace compliance, and exposures at worksites contribute to significant inequities in health outcomes, the PH Councils are an important prevention program which links it to Strategy I.1, Increase our Focus on Prevention Initiatives. This novel program's importance will likely continue after the pandemic as feeling safe and protected at one's job is significant to one's health and well-being.

**GOAL II. Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities:**

Liaisons provide COVID-19 guidance and education to foster resilient communities. By educating sector partners on COVID-19 prevention, we have safer schools, workplaces, houses of worship, and communities. Liaisons provided one-on-one support to partners to respond to their questions about safety protocols and worked through unique situations presented by concerned partners who wanted to make sure they were operating as safely as possible during the pandemic. Partners came to rely on their liaison contacts as new questions and situations came up. Through this effort, existing relationships were strengthened, and new, trusted relationships were built between various community sectors and Public Health. Residents were able to pursue many daily activities as safely as possible which contributed to the continued wellness and resiliency of our communities during these challenging times.

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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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\$	\$	\$	\$	x <input type="checkbox"/>

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We are unable to estimate the cost avoidance/savings of the COVID-19 Liaison section. By providing guidance and timely information, Liaisons saved lives and mitigated the financial impact of the pandemic. Nonetheless, it's difficult to estimate the impact of the Liaison section mitigation efforts.

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