

Quality and Productivity Commission
33rd Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
“Empowering Innovative Solutions”

2019 APPLICATION

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

NAME OF PROJECT: HELPING THE HOMELESS-THAT’S HOW WE ROLL

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: JANUARY 2018

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2018)

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 Homeless Mobile Unit of the Los Angeles County Public Defender was launched in
 2 January 2018 with Measure H funds as part of an effort to improve the lives of
 3 individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County. The unit is
 4 made up of nine team members who bring the function of a law firm into the community.
 5 The services include providing information about clearing warrants, as well as reducing,
 6 dismissing and expunging criminal records to clear a path for homeless, justice-involved
 7 individuals, to obtain homes and jobs. The project has evolved to add additional team
 8 members, vehicles, and new collaborations with community-based organizations
 9 throughout the county. The goal is to provide the most effective and compassionate
 10 service to our most vulnerable population. Service areas include community events,
 11 county offices which serve the homeless population, as well as riverbanks and
 12 encampments. The team receives ongoing training on topics such as motivational
 13 interviewing and sealing record options for victims of human trafficking. Since 2018, the
 14 team has helped over 2000 homeless clients seek redemption from their criminal
 15 records to further their goals of re-entering society as productive citizens.


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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Law Office of the Los Angeles Public Defender 210 WEST TEMPLE STREET, 19 TH FLOOR LOS ANGELES, CA 90012	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-974-2980
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PROGRAM MANAGER’S NAME Justine M. Esack 	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-974-3019 EMAIL jesack@pubdef.lacounty.gov
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PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME) Gail M. Bristo 	DATE 6/27/2019	TELEPHONE NUMBER 310-727-6262 EMAIL gbristo@pubdef.lacounty.gov
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DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE Ricardo D. Garcia 	DATE 6/27/2019	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-974-7485
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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:

Today in Los Angeles County, nearly 59,000 people are experiencing homelessness. (Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, 2019). Homelessness can be a cause and a consequence of having a criminal record. The criminalization of many behaviors associated with homelessness, for example sleeping in public areas, contributes to a cycle of incarceration, release, and new arrest. Many people caught in this cycle need help addressing outstanding warrants, fines, fees, and court cost. Combined, the problems create barriers to obtaining housing, employment, and other resources that help people achieve stability. “The barriers formerly incarcerated people face creating a housing crisis-and no one (has been) paying attention.” (“The Homeless Problem We Don’t Talk About”, Tanvi Misra, August 16, 2018, CityLab). The Public Defender’s Office routinely helps people facing these issues in our offices located throughout the county. But how can we help those without access to vehicles, bus passes, or other means of transportation? By rolling out into the community to meet our most vulnerable clients where ever they are located.

Measure H was passed in March 2017, providing \$355 million per year in revenue for ten years to allow Los Angeles to fight homelessness. The Homeless Initiative is tasked with assigning lead agencies throughout the County of Los Angeles to utilize this money to fight homelessness, each in their own creative way. The Los Angeles Public Defender is one of these lead agencies, and we have implemented a plan for a fully functional mobile unit, taking comprehensive legal services into the communities most deeply affected by homelessness.

Solution:

Our unprecedented project vision was to provide comprehensive legal service to people experiencing homelessness in the most sensitive and convenient way possible for them. Our idea was “let us lighten your load – we will come to you.” We set up shop right in the heart of homeless encampments, as well as partner with community-based organizations at events where basic needs of people experiencing homelessness are met. Our teams of lawyers, paralegals and legal secretaries go out into communities and interview clients to assess what record clearing options are available, and then draft motions, complete the necessary paperwork, and appear for them in court. We often obtain a clean record for the client without the need to have them travel to the courthouse.

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Use Arial 12 point font.

Benefits:

Prior to the inception of the Homeless Mobile Unit, obtaining legal representation in court for record clearing efforts was not guaranteed. Traditionally, legal services are provided within an office or the cold intimidating confines of a criminal courtroom. For homeless clients with no information about their prior case(s), and no transportation to court, the goal of having a clean record was onerous and untenable. For the most acutely suffering of the homeless population (including people with substance use disorder, physical disabilities and mental health diagnoses), this had not just a chilling effect, it was a total barrier to relief.

With our Mobile Unit, a person experiencing homelessness can simply see one of our brightly colored Public Defender Homeless Mobile Unit vans parked near a DPSS office, a Homeless Connect Day fair, a community/faith-based organization, or a homeless encampment, and walk over and engage with our team. We will confidentially interview the client with compassion and patience, use our legal expertise to identify what record clearing options are available to him or her, and right there on the spot, prepare the appropriate motions and declarations, all free of charge. Our team will file and serve the motions, and where called to do so, will appear in court on behalf of the client to zealously advocate for him or her to achieve a clean record.

Our Mobile Homeless Unit reaches clients in the spaces in which they live, and this gives them a unique understanding of the obstacles they face. Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative is quoted as saying, “(i)f you are willing to get closer to people who are suffering, you will find the power to change the world.” By leaning in and getting close to people who are often ignored, our Mobile Homeless Unit changes Los Angeles County, one client at a time. To date, our innovative approach has reached out to over 2000 clients. We are constantly working to do more and increase access by spreading our footprint in the county of Los Angeles. We have partnered with other county agencies, community and faith-based organizations at 150 different events, serving clients throughout the county’s five districts, including but not limited to Pomona, Compton, Malibu, Downey and Lancaster. After a client’s record is cleared, he or she is eligible for enhanced job opportunities through county agencies like WDACS, permanent housing through LAHSA, family reunification through DCFS, and countless other benefits and services.

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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.

Strategy E, designed to create a coordinated entry system, recognizes the complex needs of homeless individuals, families and youth who touch multiple County departments. There is a recognition that services have not been well coordinated, compounded by “disparate eligibility requirements, funding streams and bureaucratic processes” (“Approved Strategies to Combat Homelessness,” Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, February 2016). This strategic plan focuses on a collaboration between the County, cities, and community partners to forge a coordinated system to smooth the path for people experiencing homelessness. The Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Homeless Mobile Unit has taken this vision on in the most caring, straightforward way possible – to overcome the terrifying monolith that can be the criminal justice system and literally put boots on the ground to meet people experiencing homelessness where they are.

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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

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