COUNTY *of* VENTURA

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September 1, 2021

CSAC Challenge Awards
California State Association of Counties
1100 K Street, Suite 101
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Endorsement Letter Authorizing Challenge Award Nominee

Dear CSAC Challenge Awards Administrators,

I am pleased to endorse and authorize the submittal of the attached CSAC Challenge Awards nomination for the following project from our Human Services Agency:

- Mass Care and Shelter Reimagined

This endorsement letter recognizes the ingenuity of the Human Services Agency, as well as their adaptive and continuous improvement to strengthen our mass care and shelter efforts for the County. After a series of fires that has greatly affected our community, the Mass Care and Shelter team took the initiative to closely examine our experience and build systems that will improve our response should we be faced with another disaster. With a focus on our Disability, Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) population, the Human Services Agency has built a system that will respond to the unique and critical needs of this population, as well as collect data to continuously improve our response. With this more holistic and real-time approach, we hope that we can lessen the impact of disaster events to those who often feel it most.

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for this prestigious award.

If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact Steven Karnazes, Disaster Response and Recovery Officer, at 805-765-7050.

Sincerely,

Michael Powers
COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Executive Summary: Mass Care and Shelter Reimagined

Overview: Ventura County has reimagined Mass Care and Shelter using partnerships and technology to improve immediate response and support long-term recovery for vulnerable community members.

Challenge: With the frequency and intensity of natural disasters increasing, organizations responsible for the safety of their residents must continuously implement more efficient and effective ways to meet the immediate and longer-term needs of community members affected by disasters. While cross-system partnerships are essential for assembling the necessary resources for disaster response and recovery, they can be challenging given disparate protocols and systems. Despite best intentions, partnerships may also produce duplicated efforts, inconsistent information or miss needs that fall between organizational lines; potentially creating more confusion for community members who must navigate stressful, chaotic situations during and after disasters.

Solution: To address these challenges, the Ventura County Human Services Agency (HSA) partnered with the Office of Emergency Services, the American Red Cross and local cities to identify Temporary Evacuation Points (TEPs) across the county, enhance coordination protocols, formalize partnership roles and responsibilities through written agreements, improve Disaster Service Worker training, and develop a technology system that streamlines mass care and sheltering processes as well as lays the foundation for meeting longer-term recovery needs. In the event of an evacuation, a TEP is set up to provide residents with a locale to receive event information and to capture intake data online that can be used to facilitate shelter placement as needed, with prioritization for those with Disability Access and Functional Needs (DAFN). Through a partnership with a technology vendor, HSA developed the Disaster Response and Recovery Management System (DRRMS) to facilitate quick, web-based intake upon arrival to a TEP and to encourage data sharing and management across partner organizations. The DRRMS system expedites intake through the scanning of a driver's license and ensures that standardized data collection processes are utilized by disaster teams from various organizations during wellness checks, secondary reviews and shelter placement of residents during evacuations that ultimately require overnight stays. The collection of data in a centralized system also facilitates the data-driven deployment of staff and resources to ensure efficiency and critical support for those with DAFN considerations. By adopting this model for intake and

support, a technology foundation has been built that can support referrals to services, connectivity to Local Assistance Centers, and longer-term case management of needs with assistance from multiple service providers all working in one system. Further, as the system evolves and data are collected and analyzed, HSA will be better able to anticipate the needs of the community and direct specialized response and recovery efforts to those who are most likely to be disproportionately affected by disaster events.

Innovation: Using lessons learned from responding to increasing demands for mass care and shelter activities during fire season, HSA has partnered with government and community-based organizations to enhance and standardize systems, replacing error-prone paper-based shelter intake processes that made it difficult to report real-time data and support households in a coordinated and collaborative manner from initial sheltering through longer-term recovery, with a centralized technology system that creates efficiencies and can ultimately facilitate the best use of partner resources to achieve recovery, as well as produce insights into unique community needs and opportunities for improved outcomes (with paper-based forms available for back-up use if needed).

Results: HSA has conducted two full-scale TEP drills with participation from multiple government and community partners to test enhanced processes and DRRMS technology elements. Doing so has improved local coordination protocols and revealed strengths and areas that need improvement to best serve the community. Efforts are planned to extend the technology to support not only shelter intake but coordinated, collaborative case management to meet the longer-term needs of Ventura County's most vulnerable residents following disasters.

Replicability: This model and supporting technology can be utilized in any county to support immediate sheltering needs efficiently and effectively, with an eye toward capturing key data at the outset of disaster events that can be utilized to sustain connections with affected populations through coordinated, collaborative long-term recovery efforts supported by multiple service providers working in a centralized system.

Program Contact: Steven Karnazes, Disaster Response and Recovery Officer, Mass Care and Shelter, Ventura County Human Services Agency, 855 Partridge Drive, Ventura, CA 93003, Steven.Karnazes@ventura.org, 805-765-7050