

2021 COVID-19 Recovery Grant **Request Summary**

COVID-19 Recovery Grant Application

In response to the strain the COVID-19 virus pandemic is placing on the local healthcare system and community-based organizations, the Desert Healthcare District and the Regional Access Project have made available grant funds to provide additional support and resources to our local healthcare and service providers.

Mizell Center, Grant #1229

About the Organization

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Organization Type:

501(c)(3)

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Proposal

Project Title: Mizell Center Health and Safety Upgrades

Total Project Budget: \$11,081.25

Requested Amount: \$10,000.00

Start Date: 5/3/2021

End Date: 5/28/2021

Project/Program Description

Community Need: *Define a specific need(s) for the project and describe the alignment to ongoing COVID-19 relief, recovery, and assistance efforts.*

Our Meals on Wheels program remains at heightened productivity, preparing 650± meals every weekday for delivery to homebound clients and congregate meal sites at the Desert Hot Springs, Cathedral City, Indio and Coachella Senior Centers, in addition to our own site. Due to the size and configuration of our kitchen, our cooks and kitchen assistants (7 staff total) are unable to distance while working. And, we receive up to 10

food and beverage deliveries weekly, each of which is brought into the building by a driver and one or more assistants.

With the approval of the City of Palm Springs, we partnered with Desert Care Network to serve as the host site for January 30th and February 27th vaccine clinics for those 65 and older. Our auditorium was set up for the medical workers and those being vaccinated with an adjacent patio set up to accommodate the 15 minute post-shot waiting period. We have agreed to host additional clinics with Desert Care Network, based upon their receipt of additional vaccines.

While vaccinations are becoming more accessible, we must remain vigilant in our protective measures and protocols. We have shut down our building twice due to staff members becoming infected with COVID-19. It is essential that we do as much as we can to ensure a safe environment to avoid infection or re-infection among our staff, volunteers, member, visitors and anyone else working or visiting our building. Additionally, we cannot rely on a long lead time with regard to the opening our building. We must proactively put into place as many safety protocols as possible while our building remains closed.

With our funding directed at keeping our staff in place and maintaining our programs to the fullest extent possible, grant funds would be applied exclusively to health and safety upgrades.

Project Description: *What program/service are you performing or providing that is vital to your target population during the current COVID-19 public health crisis and describe its importance.*

Meals on Wheels home delivery and congregate meal site programs remains a critical component of our clients' overall health and well-being. For seniors who are homebound due chronic health and/or age-related issues, the Meals on Wheels program is a true lifeline. The isolation many of our clients were already experiencing has been exacerbated by the onerous restrictions of the pandemic. While our drivers have been unable to enter the homes of their clients, eye contact and a brief conversation can still be accomplished from a safe distance. It is often the only human interaction our clients experience on any given day.

Under the best of circumstances, many who participate in the congregate meal program are challenged to keep their homes well-provisioned. Even now, their reluctance to go into the crowded aisles of a supermarket is understandable, especially when mask and distance requirements are frequently not enforced. Our congregate meal program assures seniors of a nourishing meal they can enjoy at home. The overarching goal of our Nutrition Programs is to keep seniors in their homes, where they are able to age in place and are more likely to remain healthy, feel more secure and live longer.

Providing a safe and secure environment for the distribution of vaccines could not be more important. As a trusted source and frequent destination for seniors for 47 years,

we feel a profound sense of responsibility to our community and to those we serve. We hope to be able to serve in this capacity many more times, in partnership with Desert Care Network, and look forward to being a part of this life saving effort.

In every instance, our environment must be as safe as it can be for the sake of our staff, our clients and all those we welcome into our building.

Is this a new project or an expansion of a preexisting project? Please describe if the proposed project has been developed recently or if a preexisting program has been modified to address the impact of the COVID-19 virus

This is an expansion of the safety protocols and protective measures we currently have in place. Beyond the basics, which are adhered to by all staff, volunteers and visitors, we have installed a large-scale plexiglass shield around our front desk. As finances have permitted, we have also installed shields around the desks of some staff members who do not have their own office and must work out in the “open.” While not a long-term solution, we had our building sanitized after each COVID outbreak utilizing a local company that specializes in professional disease and biohazard remediation. Grant funding enabled us to proactively replace all of our worn fabric chairs with new chairs covered in washable vinyl.

We are expanding on these protocols for several reasons, the most significant of which is that we believe continuous protection is the best protection. We all have reason to hope that the expanding distribution of vaccine doses will bring about a healthier, more resilient population, however, the vulnerabilities of older adults remains a factor in light of the several COVID-19 variants presently identified and the reality of those who opt out of being vaccinated.

We believe this technology is an effective way to further protect and shield our kitchen staff preparing meals, the drivers who deliver them, our remaining active staff members who are supporting these efforts, our valued volunteers and the medical professionals and seniors we hope to welcome back for additional vaccine clinics. And, it will give us and our members immeasurable peace of mind when we are finally able to open our doors.

How will the grant funds be used? Please describe specifically how the grant funds will be used towards operational and/or programmatic support?

We are respectfully requesting funding to further elevate the level of safety at the Mizell Center. Funding will be applied to the cost of having highly effective “air scrubbers” professionally installed in all 9 of our HVAC condensers. Air scrubbers will not only keep the circulated air significantly cleaner within the Center, they will keep surfaces cleaner, as well. If funded, we will be installing Aerus brand scrubbers that utilize ActivePure Technology. We’ve selected this technology based on our own research and the recommendation of our longtime HVAC service provider. This technology will seek out

and destroy over 95% of a room's pathogens and contaminants in real time, 24 hours a day.

This technology will not give us license to relax existing protocols, rather, it will add a vital level of heightened security and protection to everything we are already doing. And, even when we have reached a critical mass with vaccinations for COVID-19 to no longer be a significant threat, this system will continue to serve our staff, members, clients and visitors with respect to the flu, allergies and other airborne irritants.

The remainder of the funding will be applied to the purchase of lucite shields for the six work stations of our Nutrition Department administrative staff, including its Director. Limited floor space prevents us from being able to place these desks further apart, hence the protective shields will provide a heightened level of comfort and security for each of these staff members.

Geographical Area Served

Cathedral City; Coachella; Desert Hot Springs; Indio; Mecca; North Shore; Palm Springs; Sky Valley; Thermal; Thousand Palms

Population Served

Seniors (65+ years old); Uninsured; Individuals with a compromised immune system; Individuals with pre-existing medical conditions; Homebound individuals

How many residents will be served? *Please provide the number of unduplicated number of individuals and/or number of services provided*

4,000

Evaluation *Please describe how the success and/or impact of on-going operations or the proposed project will be evaluated*

Evaluation

The efficacy of the air scrubbers and the lucite shields can be measured by the absence of COVID infections among our staff, members and visitors, both in the short and long term. We believe, however, that the impact of these measures can be gauged in equally important ways.

We are facing a long road back to the vibrant, busy Center of early 2020. We know that there are many seniors who will remain hesitant and fearful of returning to a place that was closed down twice due to infections among the staff and that has overlapping classes and activities with many people in the building at the same time. We believe these upgrades will be key to assuring members, those considering membership, visitors and guests that we have done everything possible to ensure their health and safety. We will also be able to provide that same assurance to the many community group and professional associations that rented meeting space at the Mizell Center on a regular basis, providing a reliable revenue source for the organization.

The presence of the air scrubbers and strategically placed lucite shields will be specifically mentioned in our re-opening announcements on all platforms and on signage located within the building.

The Mizell Center maintains and stores detailed records of the attendance of each class and activity, the number of people served in our dining room and the revenue from room rentals. We have a basis of comparison by which to judge and report on the efficacy of our efforts to welcome people back into the building and reengage their participation.

The impact of this project will have far reaching effects, both in terms of health and safety and the financial well-being of the Mizell Center.