



December 13, 2018

William Koch, Chief Deputy Director
California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development
1325 J Street, 18th Fl.
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Koch:

CHEAC is a statewide organization of county and city health department and agency directors, who are responsible for the administration, oversight and delivery of a broad range of local public health and indigent care services. Funding from the California Community Reinvestment Grants, created by the Adult Use of Marijuana Act through Proposition 64 (2016), will be allocated directly to local health departments and community-based organizations and as such, CHEAC urges the funding to be allocated in a way that maximizes the benefit for the communities it is intended to serve.

Harsh state and federal drug policies enacted during the "war on drugs" led to the mass incarceration of people of color, decreased access to harm reduction programs, loss of educational attainment due to lost federal financial aid eligibility, prohibitions on the use of public housing and other public assistance, and the separation of families. Many communities continue to be haunted by the impact of the war on drugs. The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) has a unique opportunity to invest in the very communities disproportionately affected by the war on drugs through the California Community Reinvestment Grants.

As GO-Biz creates the grant application and award parameters, CHEAC asks that GO-Biz incorporate the following recommendations:

Targeting Communities Disproportionately Impacted by the War on Drugs

CHEAC recommends that GO-Biz target and prioritize grant funding to defined areas of the State with communities most disproportionately impacted by the "War on Drugs"

The intent of the legislation was to reinvest in the communities most impacted by the "war on drugs." Rather than equally distribute funding for these grants throughout the State, effort should be made to target these funds to those communities that historically have been most impacted. CHEAC recommends using key indicators that are a result of the "war on drugs." It will be important that the indicators selected to define target communities for this funding are made transparent and agreed upon in advance.

Suggested indicators include high rates of:

- poverty,
- incarceration of people of color for drug possession,
- disproportionate arrests of unemployed persons of color,
- high school drop outs,
- high incidences of single parent households,
- violence, and
- children in foster care/out of home care

Funding Amounts

CHEAC recommends increasing the award amounts beyond \$50,000 - \$250,000, especially for Local Health Departments that will need to coordinate efforts in their jurisdictions and ensure that funds reach the communities with the most need first, as defined by indicators, and others, using a tiered approach as the funding grows each year.

CHEAC recognizes the need to ensure the funds are distributed equitably throughout the state, but to make an impact, award amounts must be substantial. The existing funding amounts are insufficient for communities to build the necessary infrastructure for new programming. Funding opportunities that are long term should not seek to only serve more people but also help to create and build on the existing infrastructure of agencies, so that they can be better resourced to conduct the important work they have historically and successfully been doing. CHEAC urges Go-Biz to consider a tiered approach to funding local health departments and community-based organizations starting in areas of the state most impacted by the “war on drugs” and funding additional entities in later years as the grant funding pool increases in order to maximize the reach of limited funding.

Invest in Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change

CHEAC recommends investing in both community-based and individual service-based approaches.

Proposition 64 identified six key areas for which the funds must be utilized. These six areas are important funding foci. However, it ignores the impact of entities who have been at the center of social justice and advocacy from a prevention approach (e.g. youth and adult education; outreach and mobilization for community-level, built environment change, etc.).

CHEAC encourages Go-BIZ to also support innovative models in which individuals may access care, and impactful programming that addresses the root causes of community issues that resulted from the “war on drugs.” Because the terrible harm that was done also affected those individuals’ families, friends, and neighbors, the funding should extend to activities that help re-instill trust and pride and a strong sense of connectivity at the community level. Community approaches may allow for the limited funds to impact more clients than can be served through individual programs. Consideration should also be given to policy and system change proposals (not just program proposals) that address the six funding areas such as equity financing or permitting reform that can lead to increased access to economic opportunities and reinvestment

into the affected communities. Finally, cross-cutting innovative models also are aligned with the “Whole Person Care” implementation concept.

For example, many of the communities in Los Angeles County that were impacted by the “war on drugs,” experience higher rates of violent crime. Los Angeles County has implemented a program known as “Parks After Dark (PAD)” which combines system navigation, enrollment in programs such as Medi-Cal, SNAP, and WIC; mentoring for youth in the probation system; after school homework clinics; sports programming, Zumba classes and walking clubs; family movie nights, free concerts, and other benefits. An evaluation of the program showed a substantial decrease in violence in the communities surrounding the parks where PAD was implemented, along with other positive outcomes. The number of families and individuals who benefit from the PAD is logarithmically larger than the number of individuals served by any one program. Investing in community-based approaches accomplishes the aims of the funding while serving larger numbers of clients and having broader impacts than any one program alone. PAD focuses on building safe public spaces to improve social and recreational opportunities in communities disproportionately impacted by the “war on drugs,” while also bringing in community supports to assist with service enrollment and navigation.

Other innovative approaches might intersect with youth diversion efforts, with cross-cutting initiatives to combine legal services and system navigation services.

Promote Coordination within Jurisdictions

CHEAC recommends GO-BIZ grants require collaboration between awarded entities in a particular jurisdiction to ensure that the funding is maximized to serve the community.

CHEAC recognizes the requirements and importance of community reinvestment grants to be awarded to both local health departments and community-based organizations within the same jurisdiction. To the extent that this occurs, CHEAC would encourage GO-BIZ to recognize the role that local health departments play in coordinating community wide activities. Requiring coordination among funded entities in the same jurisdiction is not uncommon to local health departments and community-based organizations as several programs under the purview of the California Department of Public Health, including Tobacco Control and the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Programs have these requirements in place. Most local health departments have established relationships with longstanding community-based organizations in their counties/cities.

Encourage Partnerships in Applying for the Funding

CHEAC recommends that GO-BIZ encourage partnerships in applying for the funding that allow local health departments and community-based organizations to supplement existing programs rather than have to build new programs with this funding.

Many local health departments and community-based organizations already have existing programs that address many of the six areas outlined for funding under the community reinvestment grants. Since the funding amounts, at least initially, are quite low, it would make

sense to use that funding to support the expansion and further development of existing programs rather than have to start new programs. Also, by supporting partnerships at the local level, these dollars can be leveraged with existing funding to support more robust investments in the communities impacted by the “war on drugs.”

CHEAC also recommends that there be more clarity and expansion in defining the types of organizations that are considered “community-based.” This definition should incorporate the unique needs of the communities most impacted by the “war on drugs.” Many of these communities rely on both traditional and non-traditional community leader organizations for receiving messages, services, and care. This includes faith-based organizations, *Promotoras*, and other non-traditional service providers.

CHEAC appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the implementation of this grant program and stand willing to partner as needed. We strongly advocate for awards to applicants that provide the greatest benefit to the communities with the most need and can provide additional examples should the Go-Biz find it helpful. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (916) 327-7540 or mgibbons@cheac.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Gibbons", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Michelle Gibbons
Executive Director
County Health Executives Association of California