



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA REQUEST & STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 9, 2023

SUBJECT: Oregon Health Authority funding for Medical Reserve Corps

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

- Move approval to accept Oregon Health Authority's funding under Program Element 12 for Medical Reserve Corps.
- Move approval of Resolution No. 2023-043 adding 1.0 regular FTE position and increasing appropriations within the Health Services Fund and the 2023-24 Deschutes County budget.

BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Early in 2023, Deschutes County Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program was granted approval for an official Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) for Deschutes County (DCMRC). One of the benefits of the establishment of a MRC is additional funding opportunities to support MRC operations and management. One such funding opportunity is through Oregon Health Authority (OHA), which notified Deschutes County Health Services (DCHS) in June 2023 of its intent to award \$297,000 of Federal funds to strengthen the recently-approved Deschutes County Medical Reserve Corps. Funding is for a two year term, which started June 1, 2023 and will run through May 31, 2025. Funding will be forthcoming as amendments to intergovernmental agreement (IGA) #180009 and funded under Program Element (PE) 12, Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program.

The DCMRC will support the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program by cultivating a robust, well-trained team of volunteers to provide medical and non-medical support services for pre-planned events, public health crises, and emergency response activities.

The goals of the unit are to:

1. Be prepared to respond to community needs that overwhelm existing health services before, during and following public health crises and emergencies.
2. Establish a framework for training and exercises.
3. Provide organizational structure, administrative oversight, and recruitment tools for volunteers.

4. Facilitate and foster collaboration and a whole community approach to preparedness, response, and recovery for Deschutes County.
5. Provide education and outreach for community-based organizations and Deschutes County residents regarding public health issues, behavioral health issues, and general emergency preparedness.

Examples of potential deployment of DCMR volunteers include; supporting medical needs for sheltering operations in partnership with other organizations, medical triage for evacuations, and point of distribution centers for medical counter measures.

The Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services leads the nation's medical and public health preparedness for response to, and recovery from, disasters and public health emergencies. The Office of Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), within the Office of Preparedness in ASPR, is a national network of 300,000 volunteers organized into approximately 750 local community-based groups which are committed to improving local emergency response capabilities, reducing vulnerabilities and building community preparedness and resilience. In June 2023, ASPR awarded \$50 million (MRC Strong grant funds) to 33 states and jurisdictions to strengthen Medical Reserve Corps network. Oregon Health Authority is using almost \$2 million of this funding to provide sub-awards to Deschutes and other Oregon Counties.

The goals of the funding are as follows:

- Reducing resource scarcity by providing tangible assets MRC units lack and identifying methods for allocating resources more efficiently.
- Accelerating program development by developing and expanding programs and initiatives that enhance effectiveness and community presence.
- Standardizing MRC unit readiness by planning and implementing initiatives with an equity lens to understand factors contributing to inconsistent MRC capacity to respond to emergencies or disasters.

On the assurance of funding from OHA, DCHS is requesting approval to accept PE 12 funding and add a 1.0 regular FTE Community Health Specialist II position to serve as a full-time MRC unit coordinator, with a September 1, 2023 start date. Responsibilities would include, but not be limited to, management of Deschutes County MRC deployment, partnering with community-based organizations, seeking funding opportunities, and managing general program responsibilities such as recruitment and new member orientation.

The budget for the two year award will be used as follows: fund the MRC Unit Coordinator (Community Health Specialist II), which is estimated to begin September 1, 2023, \$236,604; a large storage container for emergency supplies, \$11,000; contracted services for table top

exercises and other trainings, \$12,000; materials and supplies, \$7,870; emergency supplies, \$2,526; and \$27,000 (10%) of indirect costs. Health Services is recommending the MRC Unit Coordinator be regular instead of limited duration due to the expectation of maintaining a robust, active volunteer corps ongoing, as well as anticipation of additional resource allocations due to the creation of the DCMRC. However, should funding no longer support the increase in the position, DCHS will consider the future of this position within the budgeting process.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

Revenue \$297,000, June 1, 2023 through May 31, 2025. A five-year fiscal analysis is attached.

ATTENDANCE:

Emily Horton, Public Health Program Manager
Cheryl Smallman, Business Officer, Health Services
Cam Sparks, Senior Budget Analyst