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## AGENDA ITEM BRIEFING

**Commissioners Court – June 23, 2020**

**AI Number: 76125**

**Project Number: 2020-303**

**Information:** [Requesting authority to authorize an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement for Laboratory services in order to assist with County functions related to medical and public health measures.]

**Description of AI:** A. Discussion, consideration, and action to approve a necessary CARES Act Relief Fund expenditure in order to increase the testing capacity for Coronavirus Disease. B. Requesting approval of an interlocal cooperation agreement for Lab Services.

**Funding Source:** CARES Act Relief Fund (TBD)      **Acct. #** 0-1287-441-42-115-096-0-334

**Requested by:** Eduardo “Eddie” Olivarez, Health Director      **Department:** Health Department

**Prepared by:** Yolanda Velasquez, Contract Specialist II      **Department:** Purchasing Department

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### BACKGROUND

On March 17, 2020, pursuant to the authority under Texas Government Code Section 418.108, Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez issued a Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency due to the imminent threat arising from the Coronavirus (COVID-19). On March 22, 2020, in accordance with Texas Government Code Section 418.108(b), the Commissioners Court of Hidalgo County issued an Order of Continuance of Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency that affirmed the activation of the Hidalgo County Emergency Management Plan and extends the Declaration of Local Disaster.

In coordinating the response to this ongoing public health emergency, the Hidalgo County Health Department is in need of additional laboratory testing for its patients and the continued response to the public health emergency related to COVID-19 and needs to have an available turkey full service lab to perform tests and provide faster analyses of laboratory results during the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency.

In order to increase testing capacity for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), including specimen collection, Hidalgo County Health & Human Services Department needs to have an available turnkey full service lab to perform tests and provide faster analyses of laboratory results during the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency. The Laboratory Response Network (LRN) which is located in Harlingen, Texas is the only public lab

that serves the eight thousand square miles of the Lower Rio Grande region. This LRN has a limited capacity conducting forty (40) test per day. Moreover, during this COVID-19 response the LRN ran out the reagent in order to conduct lab tests forcing all labs to be sent to the LRN in Austin, Texas resulting in delayed lab reading results for our community.

The 2010 Census has indicated that Hidalgo County has a low to moderate income level of 54.76% county wide benefit and the Texas Department of State Health Services estimates Hidalgo County's population to be 1,005,539. With this large impoverished population, but limited lab testing capacity, the detection, mitigation, and response to Covid-19 has been largely impacted. Current public health directives emphasize the importance of having available public health testing in order to detect and prevent the spread of COVID-19. With the Lab Services agreement a much needed service will be established and made promptly available to our county residents by means of their clinical laboratory.

## COMPLIANCE

In compliance to the national preparedness goal under the Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8), the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Capability 12 and pursuant to the Order of Continuance of Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency that affirmed the activation of the Hidalgo County Emergency Management Plan and extends the Declaration of Local Disaster, requests the courts approval for the Lab Service Interlocal Cooperation Agreement for Lab Services to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency.

## ADMINISTRATION

Approval of the item is consistent with Hidalgo County's intended purpose to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

## AGENDA ITEM CAPTION

- A. Discussion, consideration, and action to approve a necessary CARES Act Relief Fund expenditure to cover cost not accounted for in the current budget and cannot be lawfully funded by line item, allotment or allocation, for the **Lab Services Interlocal Cooperation Agreement**, in order to assist with County functions related to medical and public health expenses addressing the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency; the Court having reviewed the Agenda Item Briefing, herein finds that such expenditure is reasonable and necessary for the intended use.
- B. Requesting approval of an interlocal cooperation agreement for Lab Services[ILA] in order to increase the testing capacity for Coronavirus Disease.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Approval of the items will allow the Hidalgo County Health Department to proceed with securing the laboratory design necessary to address the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency.

Recommending that Commissioners Court authorize the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement (ILA) for Lab Services as stated as it is a reasonable and necessary expenditures related to the County's COVID-19 Public Health Response. Expenditures will be charged to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Relief Grant Fund and/or other grant assistance available to address the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Attachments:

- Project Overview
- Interlocal Cooperation Agreement
- Agenda Item Briefing
- Approval by Legal

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