

Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management

Emergency Operations Center- Facility Justification

Description of Need:

The Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management is seeking \$6.7 million in funding for the construction of a 20,000 square foot facility constructed to the requirements of the FEMA Safe Room Standards developed to provide near-absolute protection to serve as the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and a centralized location to manage the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency operations and the negative economic impacts in our community. The EOC is the centralized location of emergency response and recovery support operations during incidents as well as supports and helps coordinate operations. The EOC is the coordination structure for collecting, analyzing and sharing information which helps to integrate stakeholders and works with senior officials to facilitate the development of policy direction for incident support. EOC personnel work with legal counsel, authorize relevant protocols and procedures for response and coordination, and ensure the dissemination of timely, accurate and accessible information to the public. In addition, the staff in an EOC liaison with other government agencies at all levels. During large incidents, outside agencies and organizations often send representatives to the EOC. These team members may need specialized communications equipment, power sources and parking for support vehicles.

The proposed site for construction of the EOC would be directly behind the county's current Strategic National Stockpile Warehouse located at 7517 N. Expressway 281 in Edinburg. The EOC would bring together experts to coordinate emergency operations, including, but not limited to, resources, information crisis, and emergency risk communication to strengthen the county's ability to detect and effectively respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and any future public health emergencies. The EOC would directly support the response and recovery from the COVID-19 public health emergency but it would also strengthen and improve the infrastructure necessary for participation in work, education, and health monitoring that will last beyond the pandemic. The EOC would be more sustainable, secured and strategically located, fully integratable with the focus of addressing identified deficiencies and the needs of the county. It would also allow for new technologies into the space. Having a fully functional emergency operation facility is necessary to ensure the continuity of operations and continuity of government in major disasters or emergencies. The facility would need to have sufficient office space for ten full time staff members who operate, manage, and serve as key functions/roles during EOC operations as well as space for an additional 20 county employees that serve and function as support staff, and 10 hotline operators that manage the county's resident hotline during emergencies. The space would need to include: restrooms, showers, kitchen, food pantry, laundry room, communications room, paved parking, overhead garage

door entrance, loading dock, backup generator, furniture, furnishings and equipment included in the project cost estimate.

Justification of a Capital Expenditure:

The Department of Treasury, 31 CFR Part 35, page 4354, 'construction of emergency operations centers and acquisition of emergency response equipment' is an eligible capital expenditure through ARPA funding. The proposed construction would allow for a larger building than the current EOC which can only occupy 15 - 20 personnel. The current EOC lacks the space and the number of restrooms sufficient for the amount of staff scheduled to report to the EOC during disasters. The unpredicted length of the response in an EOC isn't always clear on the onset and the current facility lacks sufficient operating space, showers, a kitchen, and food storage for an extended stay. The request for the construction of a new EOC would allow for more operational space, showers, kitchen, and cafeteria and meet the operational needs for extended stay. The facility would be built to meet hurricane force winds and allow for the staff to be remain in a safe environment during an emergency response and recovery and ensure the continuity of operations and continuity of government in major disasters or emergencies.

Comparison of Proposed Capital Expenditure Against Alternatives:

Leasing Option

The facility considered for leasing would have to be approximately 20,000 square feet or larger to meet the space requirements for an Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The facility would need to serve as a safe room for staff and first responders who need to seek immediate shelter from an impending storm providing the ability to continue ongoing response and recovery operations. The facility would need to have office space for at least 10 staff members and 10 telephone operators to include: restrooms, showers, a fully functional kitchen, food pantry, laundry room, communications room, paved parking, overhead garage door entrance, loading dock and backup generator. There would need to be enough open space for county departments to utilize as well as space for potential sleeping quarters for personnel who would be working multiple shifts. Due to the nature of the facility the location must not be in an area that floods.

Leasing the facility will have a monthly reoccurring cost to include any necessary changes or improvements that will need to be made to fulfill the requirements for a functional EOC to include radio and communication installations.

Cost/Commercial Lease: (10 year option)

Option 1: Lacks Warehouse located at 29012 N. 10th Street in McAllen is 52,000 square feet on 5 acres. The location is not feasible for the ingress and egress of first responders. The facility is a two story facility and remodeling/changes will need to be made. It does not meet the minimum requirements we are seeking. There is sufficient parking and a loading dock but the parking lot is shared with the other tenants of the complex. The cost is \$26,000/monthly, \$312,000/yearly, \$3,120,000/10 years. This cost does not include any remodeling/changes that would need to be made for a functional EOC and multi-training facility. The option for leasing would be very costly with no estimates on the cost for changes that need to be made. This is a commercial lease with no option for purchase.

Option 2: Warehouse located at 135 E. Business 83 in Alamo, 23,952 square feet sitting on 2.42 acres, leasing at \$19,880/month. The facility does have good ingress and egress and is a one story facility. The building is set up with executive office, lobby and reception area, conference room, kitchen and sufficient parking. The facility does however lack restrooms, showers, laundry room, communications room, overhead garage door, loading dock, and backup generator. This office space is designed for medical or professional services so changes will need to be made and additional costs will be associated with this lease for a functional EOC and multi-training facility. The cost is \$19,880/monthly, \$238,560/yearly, \$2,385,600/10 years. This cost does not include any remodeling/changes that would need to be made for a functional EOC. The option for leasing would be costly with no estimates on the cost for changes that need to be made. This is a commercial lease with no option for purchase.

Remodeling Option

The current facility in which the EOC occupies was built in the early 1970's. The facility would need to be expanded for additional office space, parking, restrooms, showers, laundry room, kitchen, food pantry and open space for potential sleeping quarters. The current location does not allow for expansion as it sits on a corner lot and no sufficient space for growth. The parking lot would have to be rebuilt as it currently floods with minimal rain and the building has current drainage issues. The current space has three offices for ten staff members and can only maintain 20-25 individuals when functioning at an EOC.

Cost: We do not have estimates for the cost to expand the current EOC but the potential for expansion is not an option due to the location of the building and the occupied buildings that surround it do not allow for expansion of the space.

Construction Option:

New construction of a 20,000 square foot facility would serve as a fully functional EOC during emergencies and the ongoing response of COVID-19. The facility would be a Type 1 building

construction (concrete and steel) making it non-combustible and secure from hurricane force winds and will provide a safe location for first responders and critical/essential employees to seek shelter during a natural disaster and provide continuous operations to support the county during response and recovery. The facility would serve as office space for at least 10 full time office staff members to include: restrooms, showers, a fully functional kitchen, food pantry, laundry room, communications room, paved parking, overhead garage door, loading dock and backup generator. The Emergency Operations Center would allow for essential personnel to work multiple shifts and allow for first responders and critical infrastructure to stage personnel and equipment from out of the area responding to the disaster. The facility will be built to withstand hurricane force winds and serve as a safe location for personnel and first responders needing immediate shelter from an impending storm. The facility is proposed to remain fully functional EOC for 50 years or more.

Cost: Approximately \$6.7 million.

In conclusion, leasing a building for 30 years would be very costly not including any remodeling/changes needed to the building to meet the requirements for a fully functional EOC and the building would only be leased and not be owned by the County. Remolding the current location is not an option due to the inability to expand the footprint of the current facility. Construction would be the better option in that the facility would be built to last 50 years or more. The cost would run approximately \$6.7 million for a 20,000 square foot Type 1 building constructed of concrete and steel making it non-combustible and secure from hurricane force winds and will provide a safe location for first responders and critical/essential employees to seek shelter during a natural disaster to provide continuous operations supporting the county during response and recovery.