



Hidalgo County • Department of Budget & Management
American Rescue Plan Act 2021

Project Description

Project Name:

City of Mercedes: Paramedic Initiative

Project Number:

ARPA-22-110-113

Program Name:

Hidalgo County Emergency Services Program

Department Name:

Hidalgo County Judge's Office

ARPA Expenditure Category:

1: Public Health

ARPA Eligibility Category:

Other Public Health Services^

Project Description:

Pursuant to Section 381.004 (b) of the Texas Local Government Code, Hidalgo County established the Hidalgo County Emergency Services Program which was approved by the Commissioner's Court as Agenda Item 88792 on December 13, 2022. The Hidalgo County Emergency Services Program shall be focused on providing services and assisting residents and businesses in Hidalgo County.

In the last two years, COVID-19 has greatly impacted the nation and, in particular, regions of low socioeconomic status. Currently, 26.9% of Hidalgo County's population lives below the poverty line, and the pandemic's impact on the county's public health is evident. The need for additional first responders has become apparent with the ongoing public health emergency. The rising COVID-19 cases have resulted in a rise in paramedic services and have taken a toll on emergency response services. With an increase in COVID-19 cases, a 2019 study showed a job outlook of a 6% increase for EMTs and Paramedics. A recent 2020 study showed a job outlook of 11%. This increase demonstrates the rise in demand for EMTs and Paramedics due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing a first responder training program will be an investment in the underserved Hidalgo County population and will produce more first responders. The need for first responders is dire, and the training program will ensure underserved residents who have been impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency continue to receive critical lifesaving services.

This initiative will provide funds to the City of Mercedes to initiate a paramedic training program in Hidalgo County. This program has been developed in conjunction with every

municipally operated emergency medical service in Hidalgo County, including the City of Mercedes, the City of Mission, the City of Palmview, the City of Pharr, the City of Weslaco, and the City of Alton. The municipalities collectively agreed that the City of Mercedes is best suited to serve as the operations center for this initiative. The project will assist in the tuition and training materials for the paramedic candidates and other costs associated with the training. Hidalgo County OEM has already partnered with the Texas A&M University System, the Texas Workforce Commission and the City of Mercedes to provide the paramedic project. This project also provides an economic and regional benefit opportunity as it creates emergency medicine jobs for our community and increases the supply of trained individuals. This project provides modern education techniques and opportunities for advancement.

This program includes training for County and City personnel to reach licensed paramedic statuses and serve our communities as trained paramedic first responders. Licensed paramedics are critical in providing quality emergency medical services to our residents and businesses in different emergencies. The use of this project in conjunction with our other current projects will be critical in order to reduce the effects of Covid-19 and increase our emergency medical response capabilities to our community.

This new paramedic training program not only provides an opportunity, but also is an investment into our residents in Hidalgo County. Newly trained paramedics in this program will be able to serve different cities and rural communities in Hidalgo County who may have difficulty accessing medical care and treatment. It is our duty as local government to continue to enhance opportunities and serve the community to improve the quality of life and medical care for residents. Hidalgo County is excited to experience the benefits of this project along with other projects and plans to continue these projects in the future.

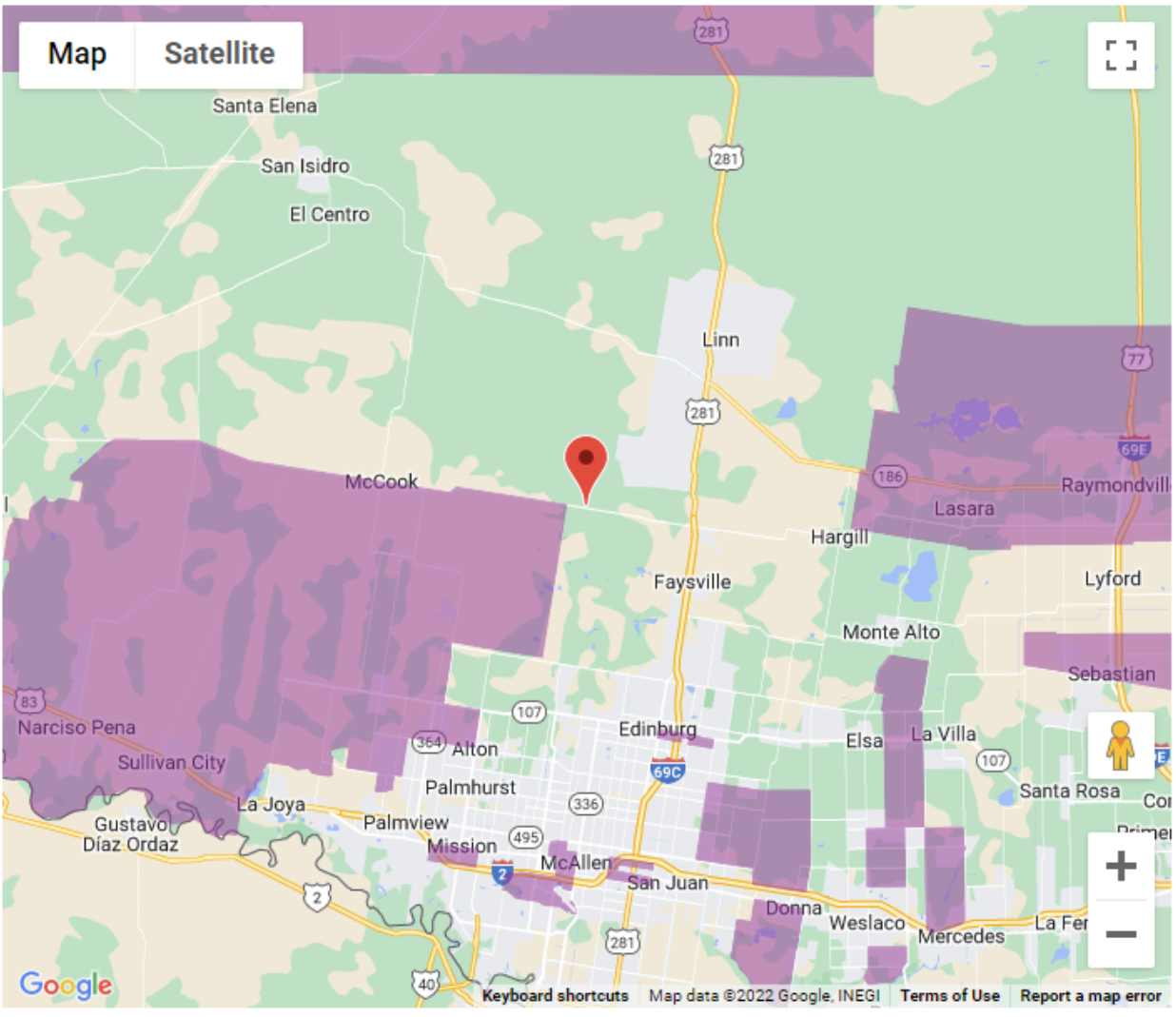
The Final Rule recognizes the broad range of services and programming needed to contain COVID-19, the interim final rule provided an extensive list of enumerated eligible uses to prevent and mitigate COVID-19 and made clear that the public health response to the virus is expected to continue to evolve over time, necessitating different uses of funds. Enumerated eligible uses of funds in this category include other public health responses.¹

Fiscal Impact:

Estimated Budget: \$35, 683.00

¹ Department of the Treasury. (2022). Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. *Federal Register*, 87(18), p. 4352-4353

Below is the Qualified Census Tract Analysis for Hidalgo County.



Source: Office of Policy Development and Research 2021 and 2022 Small Difficult Development Areas (DDAs) and Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs)