

2017 Wildfire Recover Program

OVERVIEW: The Wildfire Recovery Program is a partnership between OC Community Services (OCCS) and OC Parks that provides unemployed individuals with jobs repairing damaged wildfire areas.

CHALLENGE: On October 9, 2017, the Canyon Fire 2 started near the intersection of the 91 and 241 freeways in Orange County. Of the more than 9,000 acres estimated to be damaged in the Canyon Fire 2, 7,060 acres are within four County park properties managed by OC Community Resources/OC Parks: Irvine Regional Park, Santiago Oaks Regional Park, Peters Canyon Regional Park and Irvine Ranch Open Space. Additionally, other County facilities, including some structures and several regional trail segments, were also damaged. OC Community Services applied for and was awarded \$1,000,000 through the California Employment Development Department (EDD) to create temporary jobs for individuals to assist with clean-up and recovery efforts in the four OC Parks regional parks impacted by the Canyon Fire 2. Due to the timing of the fire, starting the burn recovery process was crucial in order to stay ahead of the rainy season. County facilities within the burn area were at an increased risk of mudslides caused by the debris, mud, rocks and water that can be carried away by the rain.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION: Two departments within OC Community Resources: OC Parks and OC Community Services, partnered to submit a grant application to the California EDD in order to create temporary jobs for unemployed individuals to assist with clean-up and recovery efforts in the four OC Parks' facilities impacted by the Canyon Fire 2. OC Community Services served as the lead agency and fiscal agent. OC Community Services administers the Orange County One-Stop Centers/America's Job Centers of California, who recruited and enrolled unemployed temporary workers for the program. These workers cleaned-up trails, repaired erosion control mechanisms, fencing, vegetation, trail markings, stonework, walls and other fire damaged building features including display boards, and kiosks. OC Parks assessed and identified project priorities,

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provided instruction to supervisors on worksite activities, feedback, and coordinated work projects at the regional parks affected by the wildfires.

ORIGINALITY: Since OC Community Services and OC Parks are situated within the OC Community Resources agency, project start-up was quick and collaboration was straightforward. In fact, due to the grantors extremely short deadline, OCCR finalize its plan and submitted an application in less than 48 hours. This project was unique, as it utilized agile collaboration that met several needs of the community, including clean-up and recovery of the burn areas and providing long-term unemployed individuals with meaningful, paid work experience.

COST EFFECTIVENESS: A total of \$1,000,000 was awarded and allocated to this program. Since OC Parks and OC Community Services are within the same agency and a vendor was already procured, there was no need to spend funding on any procurement related activities. Additionally, this unique funding opportunity allowed OC Parks to utilize its limited financial resources on other critical aspects of the recovery effort. This project saved OC Parks over \$350,000 in wages and benefits and 50,000 labor hours to clean-up the burn areas.

RESULTS: To date, more than 40 temporary workers have been hired to conduct clean-up and recovery efforts in the four regional parks affected by the Canyon Fire 2. Work crews removed miles of burned/melted posts, and installed new barbed wire and equestrian fencing to delineate public trails. Crews continue to clear burned and fallen trees and vegetation near lowland drainage areas and will install sandbags for soil stabilization and to prevent run off into adjacent streets and neighborhoods.

