

2021 EMPG-ARPA Competitive Grant Program Project Narrative Worksheet

PROJECT TITLE: **Improving Critical Warning Notifications to At-Risk Populations**

FFY 2021 FUNDING REQUEST AMOUNT: **\$50,000.00**

Summary Description and project

Scope of the problem:

At risk populations are less likely to have access to emergency backup power, emergency notification and communication tools and may have limited resources and support networks to help them before, during and after emergencies and disasters. Emergency and weather related events may require protective measures or the need for persons at risk to convey and receive information, have an emergency power source to charge communication devices and provide emergency lighting during infrastructure interruptions. Gaps and the After Action Improvements identified for Hurricane Irma, in the areas of Warning and Evacuation and Communications and Critical Infrastructure included¹:

- Increasing community preparedness and compliance with evacuation orders
- Maximizing notification methodologies to reach the public
- Education to the public on restoration and back up communication methodologies
- Redundancy and fortification of critical communication infrastructure

Pinellas County will improve the bi-directional communications with people within our at-risk communities by providing a weather alert radio that operates off of electric, battery, crank and solar power with a flashlight and a USB port to be able to charge portable communication devices.

How will the competitive grant funds address alleviate this issue (provide strategies)?

Grant funding will assist Pinellas County to purchase an estimated 1500 – 2000 multi-source powered weather alert radios with a built-in flashlight and USB charging port for portable communications for distribution in at-risk communities. These communities include areas in Pinellas County identified through the Social Vulnerability Index, populations of people identified with special needs, residents of mobile home parks and people who may receive community assistance with feeding or other supportive community services.

These multipurpose resilient weather alert radios will be distributed to at risk areas previously identified in the 2013 Update to the Economic Impact of Poverty Report, focusing on the lower

¹ Pinellas County Hurricane Irma After-Action Report – Follow Up, January 2019

income mobile home parks first; then as supply allows, other low income households or identified at risk communities.

These radios can be utilized to receive weather alerts from the National Weather Service (NWS) and messages sent out via the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). They also include the ability to receive broadcasts from FM and AM channels. Messaging for severe weather from NWS can require immediate action of those in a risk area and having a weather alert radio provides a direct mode of communication. IPAWS messaging from emergency management will provide critical messaging on protective measures and hazards and if people have no other means of communication can be lifesaving. IPAWS messaging can be sent in multiple languages.

What is the overall goal or objective of this proposed project?

The project objective is to provide approximately 1500 - 2000 at risk residences with access to critical warning and notification with phone charging capability and an emergency lighting source and ultimately increase their preparedness for emergency events.

Identify a list of involved stakeholders and timeframe of the proposed project completion

Pinellas County has a very robust Whole Community Engagement program. We work closely with our municipal emergency management partners and their community outreach personnel. We coordinate year round with the American Red Cross, Department of Health, Salvation Army, our Hispanic and Asian Community partners, faith-based partners, over 120 feeding partners and through our newly formed Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters. Pinellas County Emergency Management has worked over the last three years to focus outreach engagement and campaigns within our mobile home park communities. This has included the creation and distribution of door hangers with key messaging for tornado and hurricane safety tips, surveys, presentations to mobile home park managers and residents. We have partnered with feeding partners such as the Salvation Army, Meals on Wheels, the Area Agency on Aging and high risk community partners to develop and distribute hurricane hygiene kits. These kits have contained hurricane guides, first aid kits, can opener, small disposable battery flashlights, mosquito spray, sunscreen, rain ponchos, paper soap, toothbrushes, shampoo, sanitizer wipes, duct tape, tarp, emergency whistle, garbage bags, and disposable face masks, large zip lock bags, and additional information on evacuation services and the Salvation Army provided Meals Ready to Eat for households for their hurricane supplies. PCEM and partners distributed 1,000 kits in 2018, 1,500 in 2019 and 2020 and 3,000 in 2021. During Covid-19, we partnered with many entities to provide outreach presentations and create Facebook Live videos to inform the community via multi-lingual presentations on risks and actions as well as helping to disseminate masks and hand sanitizer through our community feeding partners that saw a 560% increase in feeding needs.²

During Covid-19 we worked closely with the Department of Health, Community Health Centers, and the Center for Health Equity, and minority community partners to help identify pockets of populations that may not traditionally receive emergency information to help provide Covid-19

² Pinellas County Situation Report #91 June 2, 2021, as reported by the Feeding Working Group

vaccines. This process has increased our breadth, depth and relationships in communities to help us reach vulnerable at-risk individuals.

Through our robust network of partners, we plan to do the following:

- Identify at risk communities that can benefit most from the resilient weather alert radios and prioritize our distribution depending upon the numbers we can fulfill from the grant.
- Develop training materials on how to set up, use and maintain the resilient weather alert radios for dissemination with each radio, as well as create video tutorials that can be viewed from our website, native information within our Ready Pinellas app.
- Create a follow up survey tool to gather information from the recipients and determine what additional needs they may have for disasters to continue our mission to engage and empower at Risk Communities.

Once we have received approval to proceed, we will go through the approved federally compliant procurement process to get quotes on the items desired. While we are waiting on receipt of the items, we will begin working with partners on the educational components to design easy to follow and understand multilingual handouts along with videos that can be posted on our website and integrated into our Ready Pinellas App.

Our goal is to be able to disseminate the resilient weather alert radios along with other hurricane information and supplies by May 2022 as part of our initiatives to help prepare the community for the hurricane season. Timelines or distribution may be adjusted if there are delays in the ability to receive the items by May 2022. We will gather follow up survey information to help inform us of any additional gaps or needs so we can continue to find solutions along with our community partners.

How will this proposed project enhance and close the identified core capability gap?

This project will enhance our bi-directional communications and provide a resilient communications capability to our at-risk communities as each device disseminated will:

- Provide a critical warning and notification device that can receive emergency alerts sent out by the NWS or via the IPAWS system and local emergency managers.
- Provide a device that can be charged by solar, battery or crank power that has a charger for cellular devices. This will provide the ability for people to recharge their phones to be able to communicate and receive information via phone, the internet or via text. Pinellas County has text to 911 as well as Live Chat for government services that transitions to 24 hour operations when the County Information Center is activated. For users that will have our new Ready Pinellas App installed they will also receive push notifications from emergency management as well as have access to natively installed emergency information with safety guidelines for what to do for varying events.
- Provide emergency lighting along with a flash and siren feature that could be used to help signal others for help during emergencies.
- Increase timely awareness of critical protective measures that are needed to be taken to reduce loss of life, such as shelter in place or evacuation. In the case of tornados this could be a matter of minutes.

Problem Statement and analysis

Provide a description of the problem(s) that can be addressed through the project's proposed strategies

- People that rely upon news reports or monitoring messaging on their phone for emergency information will only see information that is sent when they are actively monitoring their devices. Many people turn off their phone ring tones and alerts off at night or during the day when they are busy they may not see a warning until it is too late.
 - Weather alert radios with S.A.M.E technology do not require monitoring and will sound an alarm of an event. Lessor expensive units without S.A.M.E. technology are mobile and specific units can be purchased to include NOAA radio transmissions for extreme alert messaging. Either unit provides a level of warning and notification our intended recipient will not already have.
- When people lose power, their phones cannot be recharged unless they have an alternate power source, such as a generator or even a vehicle that they could recharge it. Many of our at-risk community members do not have these resources.
 - These devices can be charged by solar or battery power and are able to charge cellular devices. This will provide the ability for people to recharge their phones so they can communicate and receive information via phone, the internet or via text.
 - Pinellas County has text to 911 as well as Live Chat for government services that transitions to 24 hour operations when the County Information Center is activated.
 - For users that will have our new Ready Pinellas App installed on their phones, they will also receive push notifications from emergency management as well as have access to natively installed emergency information with safety guidelines for what to do for varying events.
- When power goes out people that do not have emergency generation will be left in the dark.
 - These devices have a built in LED flashlight that uses little power on the stored power source and also provides a very bright light.
 - These flashlights also have a beacon flash feature and siren that could be used to help signal others for help during emergencies.
- Warnings for severe weather can be a few days or only a few minutes before impact.
 - Lives can be saved by increasing timely awareness of hazards to allow people to take critical protective measures such as sheltering in place or evacuation.
- Loss of power and regular communications can leave disaster survivors with no real time updates to know what has occurred, what actions to take or what services may be available.
 - These devices will provide a way for people to recharge their phones to reach out for assistance or monitor emergency broadcasts including AM/FM radios stations for post event information.

Who will this project benefit/affect (provide community demographics, it target audience)?

As identified in our 2021 Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, Pinellas County is the sixth largest population in Florida with an estimated 978,045 permanent residents. Pinellas County has over 4,300 people on our Special Needs Registry. The county has over 250 mobile home parks with about 85,000 units, which amounts to about 9% of our housing total that is very vulnerable to severe weather events, including tornadoes, when limited time for warning and notification is available. Approximately 4.9% of our residents are estimated to have hearing loss or be hard of hearing. Pinellas County has an estimated population of over 94,000 persons with a disability including those with hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care and/or independent living disabilities. Pinellas County's per capita income as of 2020 is \$34,978. This project will benefit the at-risk populations within Pinellas County. The Update to the Economic Impact of Poverty Report, completed in 2013 and presented to the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners showed five (5) At-Risk areas within Pinellas County that are most vulnerable socially and economically. Our review indicates many mobile home park residents live in these target areas.

Describe how the problem was discovered and the impact it poses on the whole community. (Include data that relates to the nature of the local problem and compare to the problem statewide. In addition, include local trend data and the project will assist in meeting community goals.

Communication gaps were reported during the hotwash and documented in the Hurricane Irma After Action Report. Solutions such as text to 911, and the county's Live Chat feature that rolls over into our County Information Center when the Emergency Operations Center opens, enable people to communicate via messaging to ask for information, request assistance and get information. During a storm that impacted Louisiana, Pinellas County Emergency Management received a call from one of their residents asking for help. His phone had limited charge left to it and our staff worked to connect with providers in Louisiana to assist him. It is critical that people in impacted areas be able to receive information and communicate needs. If this gentleman's phone had lost all power and service, he would not have been able to reach out and would have been reliant upon rescue crews finding him. A similar story after Hurricane Andrew involved an elderly homeowner who had no phone and was discovered by a utility worker in the area after crying out for help for days. Text messaging is often still available even when cellular voice service may be limited or nonoperational. Without the ability to recharge phones, people cannot monitor information or be able to reach out once power is out and their phones have died.

When large swaths of the county are impacted by a disaster and communications are lost, it is difficult to assess the impacts on individuals, and especially at-risk community members. Post Hurricane Irma the county spent a lot of time trying to conduct wellness checks and would receive calls from family and friends outside of the area looking for loved ones because they could not communicate with them. Knowing where the pockets of need are after a disaster and the ability of family and friends to connect with one another helps alleviate the strain on calls and follow up that are not emergent.

Pinellas County Emergency Management has spent the last three years working with our mobile home parks to increase their awareness of tornado and hurricane risks and protective measures

that need to be taken. These educational campaigns have been effective at conveying information. The missing link is the ability to provide timely warning and notification and provide resources to help people during the immediacy of the event.

Keeping communications as simple as possible for people to receive is essential. Weather alert radios do not require people to search for information and IPAWS messaging is sent to everyone in the listening area. This will help with technology challenges that were encountered especially amongst senior populations for registration for Covid-19 vaccines.

Seniors prefer to speak with someone and are familiar with local media and radio as reliable news sources. The charging capability of these weather alert radios will allow people to keep their phones charged so they can call and speak to the County Information Center for information or non-life threatening assistance or have the ability to call 911 for emergency assistance. These weather alert radios can also broadcast local radio stations to allow people to hear broadcasts with emergency information before, during and after an event.

Provide Project Description, Challenges and Project Milestones

Provide a detail description of the full project to be implemented

Upon award of the EMPG-ARPA Competitive Grant, Pinellas County would initiate the procurement process to obtain quotes for purchasing a large quantity of weather alert radios. While the procurement process is underway, the Whole Community Engagement Program will coordinate with our partners to determine which areas to focus on first. Once the weather alert radios are received our Whole Community Engagement Program will coordinate for distribution events to the identified populations, providing training materials and follow up survey information to help us monitor efficacy of the program. Data will be collected on the populations receiving the weather alert radios and community surveys conducted post event will help gather information on how people received information and what additional needs they may have.

Identify target population(s), parties responsible for implementing/administering project and any partners/stakeholders involved. Please see project description located on the competitive application information)

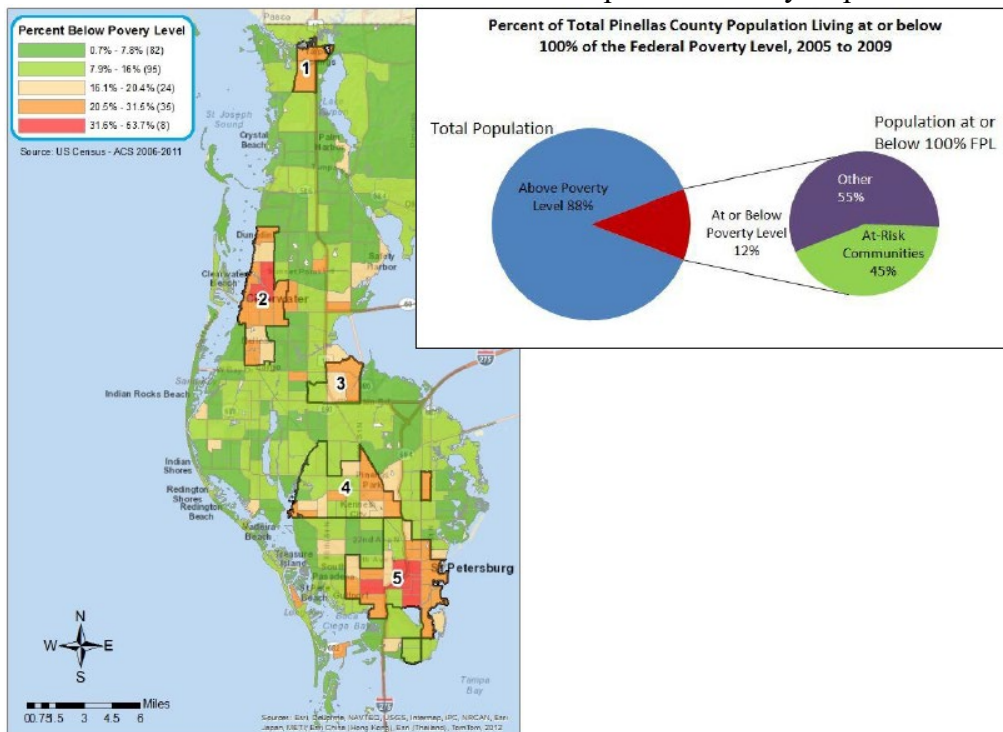
The proposed target population for Pinellas County's funding request will be the five (5) At-Risk Communities who currently reside in mobile home parks and low-income communities within Pinellas County. Additional populations will be assessed by our whole community partners.

1. Implementation – Select the weather alert radio model that will best serve our needs for notification and the needs of the community; purchase single recommended units and test each for performance; start planning process for training forums
2. Coordinate with Purchasing for an Invitation to Quote (ITQ) for multiple vendors; write training programs setup, usage, maintenance in both English and Spanish
3. Execute Agreements with vendor authorization Boards
4. Order the weather alert radio(s)

5. Coordinate with community educators and whole community partners for training and distribution. Partners may include the Public Education Officers and Public Information Officers at fire districts, the Red Cross, CERT, and other service providers who regularly support the Whole Community program. We will also work the managers and associations of the communities.
6. Make training information available on our website, through printed collateral and personal instruction.
7. Follow up with the recipients and community providers to determine efficacy of the program and identify other gaps that may exist.

Where will the project take place? (Provide geographic areas and location)

At-Risk Areas identified in 2013 Economic Impact of Poverty Report



Provide justification for choosing the proposed project and how will this project be used continually.

Pinellas County chose this project as one of our strategic initiatives to improve communications with our at-risk population base. These multi-purpose devices provide a variety of tools to support warning and notification, preparedness, alternative power and lighting during power outages, allows users to be able to continue to utilize their personal cell phones to communicate and access and receive information. This technology is easy to utilize and train people on. It can

be utilized year round for a variety of hazards and benefits an entire household. It is easily portable so if the recipient needed to relocate they can take it with them.

Pinellas County will identify additional monies within our budgeting process over the next two years to continue building upon our goal to Engage and Empower at Risk Communities. Based upon the survey data collected Pinellas County Emergency Management will work with community providers to identify and provide efficient and effective programs to assist our at-risk communities. Future project appropriations will depend on improvement indicators from the initial project performance. During the initial drive Pinellas County will capture and analyze data to determine the success of the program and continuance into future years.

Describe any non-financial challenges that may impact the ability to successfully complete the proposed project;

The world-wide supply chain breakdown has been considered as a potential road-block to this project. However, a review of the timelines from award of the grant, procurement processing, approvals processing, and product delivery indicated sufficient time to occur within the one-year term being offered and not include the three-month extension offered.

Provide and describe project's milestones listed below that demonstrate progress towards the objective/goal of the project. These milestones must fall within the POP date.

Milestones are as follows:

January/February 2022:

Notice of Award – Agreement Process; Board of County Commissioner Approval **(10%)**

February/March 2022:

Procurement Phase – ITQ/Vendor Selection **(10%)**

Planning Phase – Training Program **(10%)**

April 2022:

Units Ordered; Engage Non-Profits, Co-create Training Program/Pilot Forums **(20%)**

May/July 2022:

Shipment Arrival, Training & Distribution **(40%)**

Hold Training Forums

August/Sept 2022:

Review inventory (if applicable); re-assess needs for additional distribution **(5%)**

Additional Training Forums

October/November 2022:

Close Grant **(5%)**

** Note there is an extra 2 months built in for delay in case the agreement needs to go until January 2023; not including an extension.

Proposed Project Goal, Objectives and Outcomes

What is the primary goal of the proposed project and how will the expenditures support the selected core capability?

Pinellas County has a primary goal to improve Public Information and Warning. This project focuses on at-risk populations and the ability to convey timely lifesaving information, provide a resilient power and lighting device that can help people stay connected before, during and after an event.

This project also supports Environmental Response/Health and Safety by helping populations receive warning information to allow them time to implement protective measures. Community members that are aware of hazards and risk are able to take life protection measures.

Logistics and Supply Chain Management is supported by providing a resilient alternative power source tool to support the ability of the community to receive emergency communications, stay connected via phone and text messaging capacity, and provide emergency lighting when power outages occur. This measure provides self-reliance as the community works on emergency restoration.

Please select one or more of the following categories that relates to your project (please see overall project categories located on the Competitive Application Information; under Goal, Objectives and Outcomes).

Objectives: What are the objectives that will identify how gaps will be lessened with the completion of the project? (Objectives must be specific measurable, attainable, relevant and timely).

Our SMART goals for the proposed project are as follows:

Specific: Increase warning and notification to at-risk communities during severe or tropical weather events.

Measurable: Compile data on the population receiving the devices. Utilize survey data from events on the efficacy and utilization of the items.

Attainable: Pinellas County Emergency Management and whole community partners have engaged in similar distribution projects to at-risk communities in previous years and with the support to purchase the items, the project can be completed within the timeline proposed.

Relevant: As recommended in the Hurricane Irma After Action Report, Pinellas County needs to improve communications. Based upon analysis we have determined our

communication needs to improve through access, alternative power sources, technology awareness and training, and language barriers.

Timely: The goal is to have the project completed and distributed either before hurricane season 2022 or prior to peak season 2022.

Outcomes: What are the desired results that the proposed project will accomplish? (Provide desirable outcomes which the applicant strives to achieve that can include visionary language

The desired result is to assist at risk populations in the following ways:

- Provide a device that can provide active warning and notification of imminent threats.
- Provide alternative power sources to allow people to continue to receive emergency information from various channels (weather radio, AM/FM, emergency alerts).
- Provide alternative power sources to enable people to charge their phones and provide the ability of them to call or text emergency services or emergency management, maintain contact with friends and family, access critical information sources, reach out for assistance or report needs.
- Provide an emergency lighting source for power outages.
- Provide an emergency beacon/siren to alert people to their need for assistance.
- Increase the preparedness level of persons who may not be able to afford these resources on their own.

Additional info will be required for below items:

Capabilities Building: Describe the criteria that supports a new “Build” core capability and a current “Sustain” core capability.

The initiative Pinellas County is proposing will build and sustain a number of core capabilities:

Planning (All Mission Areas): This program will sustain and grow our whole community engagement through strategic planning to assist at-risk populations, operational planning through the development and execution of a comprehensive outreach program and tactical level by providing resources and materials to provide the end users. These resources assist at the individual level of planning and will also assist with planning for response by helping to identify people in need after an event.

Public Information and Warning (All Mission Areas): This program will build our capacity within the at-risk populations through the delivery of a tool to support the delivery of prompt, reliable and actionable information through proven tools and communication methodologies. The ability of at-risk persons to be able to receive critical warning information in a timely manner can be lifesaving. The ability of at-risk persons to stay connected will help ensure we can identify needs, provide coordinated emergency response and disseminate safety information to people even when critical infrastructure may have been impacted.

Risk and Disaster Resilience Assessment (Mitigation): This program will build our ability to assess risk or our at-risk communities and identify areas where gaps still exist. It will help build our disaster resilience as with the receipt of emergency information community members can make informed decisions on how to protect themselves and increase their resilience and preparedness. The alternate power sources and ability to charge a cellular device provides back up communications that will build upon the individual capabilities to receive and convey information.

Environmental Response/Health and Safety (Response): This program will build on our ability to protect the health and safety of the public by providing tools for them to stay informed and be able to receive and convey information before, during and after an event. This program will build on the safety of response workers through understanding where there is need in our community we can direct resources in a more coordinated fashion and reduce the number of calls that come into 911 for wellness calls from outside of the area from friends or family that have not been able to communicate with a loved one.

Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services (Response): this program will build on the ability to provide lifesaving medical treatment via Emergency Medical Services and related operations and avoid additional injury by providing targeted public health, medical, and behavioral health support, and products to at-risk populations.

Situational Assessment (Response): This program will build upon our situational assessment by helping people in our community to be able to utilize their communication devices to convey impacts and needs.

Logistics and Supply Chain Management (Response): This program builds upon our ability to deliver essential equipment to impacted communities and survivors by providing tools in advance of an event. The various power sources will allow end users the ability to have a limited back up power source that supports communications and emergency lighting.

Operational Communications (Response): This program builds our capacity for timely communications for situational awareness and operations between affected communities in the impact area and provides a link for the assessment and coordination of response operations.

Mission Area: Applicants must choose the appropriate mission area that supports in fulfilling the National Preparedness goal. (Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery)

Based on the identified core capabilities that will be built and sustained, the project proposal for improving the warning and notification system for at-risk communities has the capacity to support all five of the mission areas has defined by the National Preparedness Goal.

Prevention: Through Planning and Public Information and Warning, this tool has the capability to engage the whole community and deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable

information through alert and notification to avoid an imminent, threatened, or actual act of terrorism.

Protection: Through Planning and Public Information and Warning, this tool has the capability to engage the whole community and deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information through alert and notification to protect our citizens and residents against the greatest threats and hazards in a manner that allows our interests, aspirations, and way of life to thrive.

Mitigation: This project focuses on to at-risk populations and the ability to convey timely lifesaving information, provide a resilient power and lighting device that can help people stay connected before, during and after an incident. Through identifying the target population for this project, Risk and Disaster Resilience Assessment will be conducted to place weather alert radios in at-risk communities to mitigate accidents and loss of life for both at-risk citizens and first responders.

Response: This project will allow at-risk populations the ability to stay connected during and after an incident, allowing them to receive messaging for life safety information as well as to contact 911 if they need emergency services. The weather alert radios will prompt warnings to those who have them to act in response of the message that is being sent. Providing for back up communications will also allow impacted community members to communicate any needs they have or impacts they have incurred. This will better inform our common operating picture and help Pinellas County quickly to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs in the aftermath of a catastrophic incident.

Recovery: Through Planning and Public Information and Warning, this tool has the capability to engage the whole community and deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to provide recovery information to at-risk citizens to a focus on the timely restoration, strengthening and revitalization of infrastructure, housing and a sustainable economy, as well as the health, social, cultural, historic and environmental fabric of communities affected by a catastrophic incident.

Core Capabilities: Applicants must choose the one core capability gap that the proposed project is targeting.

The most important core capability based upon an identified gap is Public Information and Warning. As the title of this reads, our goal is to improve the ability of at-risk community members to receive emergency messaging before, during and after an event. Without proper warning and notification, we leave citizens at risk of danger and exposure to harm. Ensuring they can have uninterrupted access to information after an event helps keep them safe and allows them to receive and transmit messages to emergency responders as needed, and to family and friends to provide their status.

How will County/Region capabilities be enhanced by this project?

By helping at-risk communities to be better prepared and have access to warning and notification, communications, and emergency lighting Pinellas County can reduce the loss of life, provide an essential life line of connectivity and enhance the ability to convey information.

What is the long-term plan to sustain the capabilities developed, enhanced or supported by this project?

Based upon performance data obtained from this initial drive, Pinellas County would consider a recurring drive to provide weather alert systems to community members. Through our robust Whole Community partner group, we would look to build upon this capability and continue to engage and empower at-risk communities. Initial focus would be on a limited subset of the at-risk communities due to demand and expanded as additional quantities are secured.

Project Implementation Management

Identify the baseline for implementation according to whether it builds on a previous project.

Pinellas County has been working in over 250 mobile home parks for three years providing educational materials for tornado and hurricane preparedness. Distribution has been focused on income and transportation challenged communities through our many whole community partners. We have an established base of contacts and locations that we can identify where our initial efforts are most needed. This project continues to build on our educational outreach project as well as our hurricane kit projects that we did in conjunction with municipal, community, and feeding partners. The ability to provide a resilient multifunctional weather alert radio builds upon the limited resources we have been able to provide in past years.