



STAFF ANALYSIS— VENTURA COUNTY

Innovation (INN) Project Name:	Suicide Prevention Project: Bartenders as Gatekeepers
Total INN Funding Requested:	\$ 241,367
Duration of Innovative Project:	Three (3) Years

Review History:

Approved by the County Board of Supervisors:	April 10, 2018
County submitted final INN Project:	June 8, 2018
MHSOAC consideration of INN Project:	July 26, 2018

Project Introduction:

Ventura County proposes to create and engage in a program and campaign consisting of targeted advertisements and training for bartenders and alcohol servers to address the suicide rates for middle aged men between 45-64 years of age.

In conjunction with a contracted graphic design agency, men with lived experience (defined as men in the targeted age range who are survivors of attempts, have experience with suicidal ideation, or family members of those who have committed suicide) and bar owners will work together to create the campaign design, materials, and messaging.

In the balance of this brief we address specific criteria that the MHSOAC looks for when evaluating Innovation Plans, including:

- *What is the unmet need that the county is trying to address?*
- *Does the proposed project address the need?*
- *Are there clear learning objectives that link to the need?*
- *Will the proposed evaluation allow the county to make any conclusions regarding their learning objectives?*

In addition, the MHSOAC checks to see that the Innovation meets regulatory requirements, that the proposed project aligns with the core MHSA principles, promotes learning, funds exploration of a new and/or locally adapted mental health approach/practice, and targets one of the four (4) allowable primary purposes: increases

access to mental health services to underserved groups; increases the quality of mental health services, including better outcomes; promotes interagency collaboration; and increases access to services, including, but not limited to, services provided through permanent supportive housing.

The County states this Innovation Project meets the primary purpose of increasing access to mental health services and meets the innovation project category by making a change to an existing mental health practice that has not yet been demonstrated to be effective, including but not limited to, adoption for a new setting, population, or community. In this instance, the County states this practice has not been demonstrated to be effective among the population of bartenders serving as gatekeepers and would like to assess the feasibility of this population in observing those at risk of suicide.

The Need

Ventura County states that men between the ages of 45-64 years of age experience the highest rates of suicide in America (19.7 deaths per population size of 100,000) and between 1997 and 2014, that amount amplified by 43% during that time period. Causes for the increase may be attributable to high rates of divorce, economic recession resulting in the loss of homes and jobs, as well as alcohol and substance abuse often viewed as a method of coping with the aforementioned stressors.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also indicate that suicide rates have risen almost 30% since 1999, citing mental health conditions as being one of the factors that may contribute to suicide. Statistics also show that consumption of alcohol increases suicidal risk and at least one-third of the people who committed suicide met the criteria for alcohol abuse disorders. Additionally, research indicates that suicide risk among alcoholics increases with age, meaning that those who are middle age and older are more vulnerable to suicide compared to those who are younger and who abuse alcohol.

The County states that reaching the target population of middle aged men between the ages of 45-64 years is difficult since they are not typically treated or reached by conventional methods such as behavioral health clinics. In the County's research into this area, the County determined that previous attempts to reach this target group have included other counties working in collaboration with their local chapters of the National Rifle Association to provide information and resources at local gun shops and ranges regarding suicide prevention. Other efforts to study the efficacy of suicide prevention campaign materials in an effort to reach this target population of 45-64 year old men have also been conducted by San Diego and Santa Clara County. In 2010, San Diego began a campaign to empower their community to talk openly about mental health issues and the stigma that is attached; part of this campaign focused largely upon men. Santa Clara's research involved studying the efficacy of suicide prevention campaign materials in reaching men and reducing stigma. These counties found that this particular population was difficult to effectively reach and engage. Ventura would like to learn if bartenders are an appropriate group to reach the target population of men between the ages of 45-64 years of age.

The Response

For this project, Ventura County would like to address the risk of suicide in middle aged men by expanding upon previous campaign efforts that have been completed in other counties; in addition, the County would like to collaborate with community partners to provide training for bartenders and alcohol servers who may assist in recognizing individuals who may be showing signs of being at risk for suicide and provide referrals to resources within the County. Additionally, Ventura County will also use findings from previous campaign efforts and incorporate men with lived experience and family members who will assist in the development of this outreach campaign.

Ventura County proposes to offer an evidence-based training during the first two years of the innovation project. This training, known as Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) was recommended by Cal MHSAs previous campaign "Know the Signs" and is designed to teach lay and professional gatekeepers (those who may have control or access to something) to recognize the warning signs of suicide crisis and how to respond appropriately. The "Know the Signs" media campaign is deemed to be aligned with best practices and a well-known media campaign in regards to suicide prevention.

According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, the premise of QPR training is to follow three (3) basic steps:

1. Question the individual's desire or intent regarding suicide
2. Persuade the person to seek and accept help
3. Refers the individual to appropriate resources

Individuals receiving QPR training will receive a booklet and a wallet card as a memory reminder that will also include local resource referrals.

The County would like to provide QPR training for alcohol servers in three target areas within the county: Ventura, Simi Valley, and Conejo Valley, where completed suicides appear to be at the highest.

Although the County indicates this project is for the prevention of suicide, the County also states it is innovative because there appears to be very little research conducted in the past 40 years that involve training bartenders as gatekeepers. What little research there is seems to propose that bartenders may be a suitable group to train in providing referrals and limited crisis intervention, but thorough research has yet to be conducted regarding the training of bartenders to assess the risk in the prevention of suicide. For this reason, the County contends that this piloted research campaign is suitable for innovation funding as opposed to Community Service and Supports or Prevention and Early Intervention funding.

As part of the media campaign, the County will hire a graphic design company to coordinate with men who have lived experience and bar owners to collaborate and develop campaign materials consisting of messages promoting hope and will guide individuals in accessing suicide prevention websites, crisis lines, and county resources, as needed. These campaign materials will be distributed in liquor stores, bars, bartending schools, and restaurants that are located in areas having the County's highest suicide

rates. Additional visual media will be developed to include an interactive website, coasters, pens, bathroom advertisements and social media ads. To assist in addressing the stigma that can accompany mental health, a local celebrity with lived experience will be the face of the campaign and will share his story on the interactive website and has offered to be a spokesperson in the County and provide images and video testimony of his/her personal story.

The Community Planning Process

Ventura County held Community forums in three different geographic regions within their county with translation services provided for its community. In an effort to seek input from its community, the County trained its members on MHSA regulations and innovation criteria during these forums and then solicited ideas from the community for innovative concepts that were needed in the community. Community members were encouraged to submit their ideas by attending any of these forums or going online to the County website to provide input. As a result of community input, a total of 52 innovation concepts were compiled in addition to a list of needs established by the community.

All of the 52 innovation concepts submitted were then reviewed by Ventura County's MHSA Planning Committee, comprised of consumers, youth, transitional age youth, law enforcement, older adults, and adults. The innovation concepts were reviewed with literature to include training materials and resources to assist the Planning Committee in sorting out what concepts could be considered innovative. Submitted concepts were eliminated until the most popular five (5) concepts – indicated by receiving the highest number of votes - were presented to the MHSA Planning Committee Board for approval.

In addition to the MHSA Planning Committee, Ventura County's Suicide Prevention Council has conducted monthly meetings over the past three (3) years and is active within the community bringing forward suicide prevention strategies and outreach into the community. The Suicide Prevention Council includes, community members who are suicide survivors, family members, members of the LGBTQ+ community, crisis line workers, school district employees, law enforcement, and mental health workers. As part of the Community Planning Process, the Suicide Prevention Council has provided valuable input and support over the past year in the development of this project.

As part of MHSA General Standards and meaningful stakeholder involvement, the County has included individuals with lived experience from the targeted age group, who will continue to be part of the ongoing project and evaluation.

The MHSOAC shared this Innovation Project with stakeholders beginning March 9, 2018 while the project was in the 30-day review at the County level. It is unknown if any comments or letters were received at the County; however, no letters of opposition or support were received at MHSOAC in response.

Learning Objectives and Evaluation

Ventura County has proposed implementing a suicide prevention project that centers on creating an outreach and training plan for bartenders as mental health gatekeepers. There are two targeted populations for this project; 1) 12 bars or 50 bartenders will be

targeted for QPR training, and 2) the focus of these preventative trainings will be males aged 45-64 years who are at risk of serious mental illness.

In order to guide the project, The County has laid out five research questions:

1. Will a targeted outreach campaign increase the online traffic on the local suicide prevention site?
2. Will a targeted outreach campaign increase the number of calls to the local crisis line for men ages 45-64?
3. Does a suicide prevention training increase the knowledge, skills, and abilities of alcohol vendors to address a customer exhibiting risk signs of suicidality?
4. Are alcohol servers an appropriate population to target in suicide prevention training?
5. Will the combined effect of a sustained, targeted outreach campaign and mental health training for alcohol servers lower the rates of completed suicides for men ages 45-64 in the county?

The County states that their evaluation plan focuses on two parts: 1) evaluating the effectiveness of the outreach campaign, and 2) evaluating the effectiveness of the QPR training. Campaign materials will be developed and tested through focus groups, with the goal of directing the targeted age group to access local websites and helplines.

To measure increased access to these services, the County will monitor website traffic and total calls to helplines by age group. In order to measure the effectiveness of the QPR training, the County will examine changes in knowledge among bartenders on QPR literature, number of times bartenders identified and intervened with patrons, and rates of suicide among men aged 45-64. Expected outcomes include: increased use of services, improved knowledge and self-efficacy, and lower rates of completed suicides among men ages 45-64 (**see pgs. 7-8 of County plan**). The County will enter into a contract with Evalcorp to assist with data collection methods and data analytics in order to complete the final evaluation.

The Budget

The proposed budget for this Innovation Project is \$241,367 over three (3) years. The largest portion of the budget is for consultant and contract costs totaling \$189,643, or 79% of the total budget. The proposed consultant and contract costs are comprised of the following: the total evaluation component is estimated to be \$25,000 (13.2%); the information technology and design is estimated to cost \$151,043 (80%); a celebrity/talent unlimited spokesperson fee of \$10,000 (5.3%); and consultants who will provide training to bartenders and servers for a proposed amount of \$3,600 (1.9%).

A total of \$51,724 (21.4%) is proposed for the County's operating costs. Direct operating costs total \$20,240 (8.4%) which accounts for training materials, training for the trainers, and spot training for turnovers and the indirect costs total \$31,484 (13%) and will be for County administrative costs to include personnel who will be overseeing the project in addition to equipment, office space, and taxes.

Dependent upon the success of this Innovation Project, the County indicates they would like to sustain the project by utilizing Prevention and Early Intervention funds to be able to offer the training on a permanent basis in addition to continuing its advertising efforts. In reference to Assembly Bill 114 regarding reversion of funds, the County states they will be using \$241,367 from Fiscal Year 2009/2010 to fund this project entirely.

Additional Regulatory Requirements

The proposed project appears to meet the minimum requirements listed under MHSAs Innovation regulations.

References

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6722a1.htm>

<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA16-4935/SMA16-4935.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6301.pdf>

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR800/RR818/RAND_RR818.pdf

<https://www.verywellmind.com/alcoholics-suicide-risk-increases-with-age-63111>

<https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/qpr-gatekeeper-training-suicide-prevention>

Full project proposal can be accessed here:

<http://mhsoac.ca.gov/document/2018-06/ventura-county-innovation-plan-bartenders-gatekeepers-july-2018>