



# **Bay Area Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program (RCPGP) Case Study**

Fiscal Years (FY) 2019 and 2020

December 2024



**FEMA**

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# 1. Overview

In 2023, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) conducted a grant effectiveness case study with the San Francisco Bay Area Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) to better understand how the region used its fiscal year (FY) 2019 and FY 2020 Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program (RCPGP) awards to build state and local capacity to manage catastrophic incidents. To develop this case study, FEMA conducted an on-site visit to San Francisco, California to meet with key stakeholders across the region. Overall, this case study resulted in the following key findings:

- The interconnectedness of the Bay Area UASI region, including twelve counties and the jurisdictions within, creates unique challenges and opportunities that require both localized and regional preparedness strategies.
- The Bay Area UASI uses a jurisdiction-focused approach to provide technical assistance and develop customizable templates/tools. This approach empowered jurisdictions to overcome enduring challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic related to staffing, turnover rates, loss of institutional knowledge in emergency management, and more.
- RCPGP awards supported the creation of 80 new Commodity Point of Distribution (C-POD) site plans and five iterations of a two-day C-POD Operations and Management training followed by a two-day Disaster Logistics for Practitioners training, all of which provided trainees with experience in all-hazards scenarios that can be applied to real-world incidents.
- The annual regionwide Golden Eagle Exercise, currently supported by RCPGP, builds momentum among stakeholders that carries over into ongoing collaboration at the state and local levels and allows regional partners to better cooperate to allocate scarce resources during catastrophic incidents.

This case study is part of a series of case studies FEMA is conducting to better understand the implementation of RCPGP awards. These case studies explore RCPGP grant recipients' efforts to improve regional collaboration, communication, trust, and stakeholder relationships, in addition to grant recipients' efforts to improve regional capability in areas targeted by the RCPGP.

The following section describes the background of the Bay Area UASI and its unique challenges. Next, the report outlines investment priorities to illustrate the Bay Area UASI's regional approach to preparedness. Finally, the report highlights specific RCPGP-funded projects throughout the Bay Area UASI region and describes the experiences of jurisdictions, their communities, and project stakeholders.

## 2. Background

The 12 counties and three core cities (San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland) in the Bay Area UASI, highlighted in **Figure 1**, are home to a culturally, linguistically, economically, and geographically diverse population with deep interregional dependencies.<sup>1</sup> The Bay Area UASI region comprises communities that range from densely urban areas including San Francisco and Oakland, as well as more rural agricultural areas such as San Benito County. Jurisdictions share common labor and overlapping media markets as well as many regional commuters. For example, an individual may live in Sonoma or Contra Costa County but work in the City and County of San Francisco. During this individual's daily commute, they may pass through multiple areas with different radio or news stations offering different narratives and guidance. Additionally, the geographic terrain is diverse, resulting in commutes by bridge, underground subways, boats, and tunnels through mountainous portions of the region. This highly diverse and mobile population necessitates a unique approach to emergency preparedness to ensure consistent messaging, community-specific planning, and a unified response during an incident. This approach is critical for addressing both natural hazards and manmade threats, such as earthquakes and potential complex coordinated terrorist attacks – the two most challenging scenarios identified in the Bay Area UASI's Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (THIRA/SPR) in 2022.



**Figure 1: The Bay Area UASI Region**

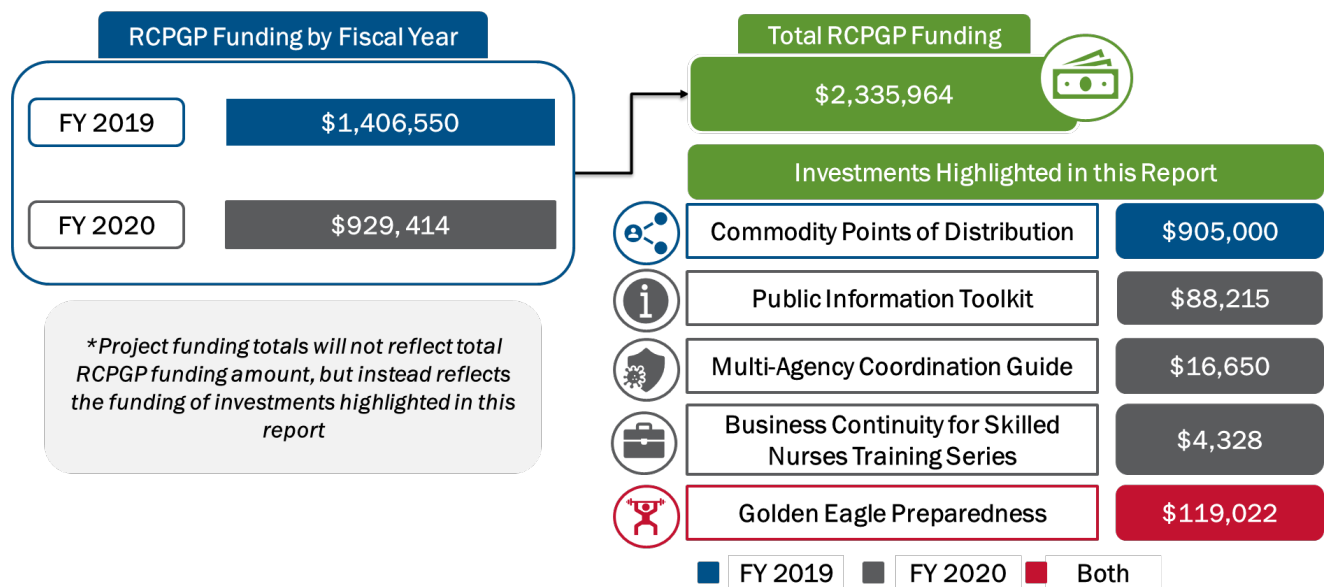
The Bay Area UASI Management Team – located within the City and County of San Francisco's Department of Emergency Management – plays a critical role in ensuring the region's needs are met by administering programs and grants designed to enhance public safety and security throughout the Bay Area.<sup>2</sup> The UASI Approval Authority provides policy direction, priorities for the use

<sup>1</sup> The 14 jurisdictions (three core cities and 12 counties) included in the Bay Area RCPGP award include the cities of San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose and the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma. The City and County of San Francisco are counted as a single entity when totaling the number of jurisdictions in this report.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, please refer to: <http://bayareauasi.org>.

of grant funds, and oversees the Bay Area UASI Management Team. The UASI Approval Authority’s 11 members represent the region’s three major cities of San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose, and the 12 counties, to ensure representation across the Bay Area.<sup>3</sup> These jurisdictions are primary partners throughout the Bay Area UASI’s grant application process and during the development of a regional preparedness strategy.

The Bay Area UASI used its FY 2019 RCPGP award to build capability in the Logistics and Supply Chain Management core capability and its FY 2020 award to build capabilities in pandemic preparedness. The Bay Area UASI Management Team also funds one full-time regional project manager position through its multiple RCPGP awards. **Figure 2** illustrates total RCPGP funding that the Bay Area UASI received in FYs 2019 and 2020 and highlights a subset of RCPGP-funded investments across the region.



**Figure 2: RCPGP Funding by Fiscal Year**

The following sections describe the Bay Area UASI’s approach to regional preparedness and how the Bay Area UASI prioritizes investments. These sections also provide insight into the jurisdictions’ experiences with RCPGP-funded preparedness efforts at the jurisdictional level.

### 3. Investment Priorities

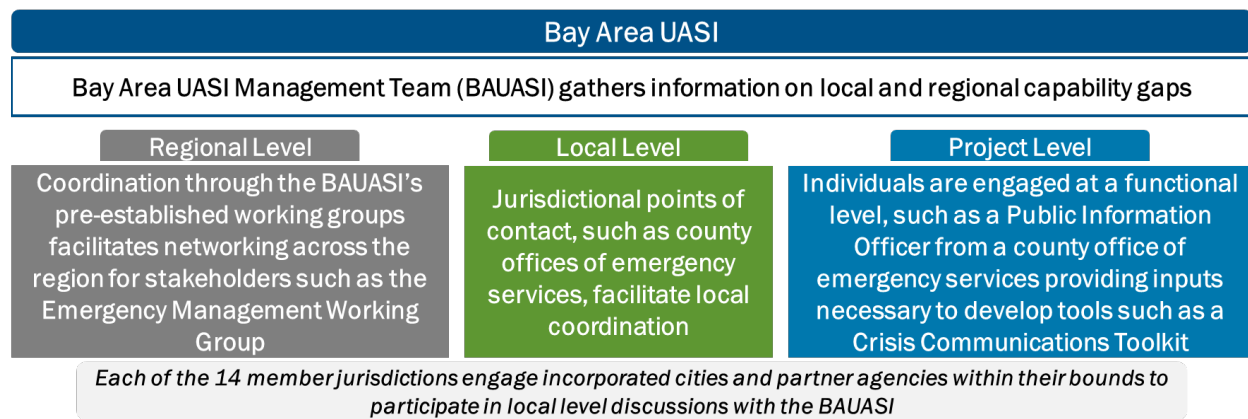
When establishing a regional strategy for emergency and catastrophic incident response, the Bay Area UASI strongly emphasized the importance of building preparedness capability in each community. The Bay Area UASI used determining factors such as the greatest risks identified through

<sup>3</sup> Additional details about the current UASI Approval Authority can be found at <https://www.bayareauasi.org/approval-authority/march#block-views-members-block-1>.

the THIRA/SPR process, grant funded priority areas, and allowable core capabilities specified by the RCPGP. The Bay Area UASI also considers stakeholder input regarding unmet needs to prepare for, prevent, and respond to disasters, and local real-world after-action report findings when identifying specific investment priorities.

As part of this larger regional strategy – which centers on developing local capability – the Bay Area UASI Management Team facilitates resource development and template creation, as well as conducts training and exercises. This coordination encourages collaboration across jurisdictions, empowering them to conduct their own training and exercises and validating regional capabilities in exercises that simulate disasters impacting the entire region (such as pandemics and catastrophic earthquake scenarios). During the case study interviews, the Bay Area UASI Management Team described individual jurisdictions’ capability-building efforts as the foundation for creating a collectively resilient region.

Section 3.1 describes how the Bay Area UASI Management Team works closely with regional partners to understand the jurisdictions’ preparedness needs at the local level to establish RCPGP investment priorities. **Figure 3** highlights how the Bay Area UASI Management Team interacts with stakeholders at various levels across the region:



**Figure 3: Bay Area UASI Management Team’s Coordination Process**

### 3.1. Regional Strategy

The Bay Area UASI uses a multi-step grant application process to establish regional investment priorities. Each year, the Bay Area UASI Management Team begins this process by presenting the RCPGP Notice of Funding Opportunity in its regional platforms (such as working groups and other relevant forums). After presenting information to regional stakeholders, the Bay Area UASI Management Team organizes regional listening sessions through which jurisdictions discuss their inputs for proposed RCPGP-

*“If we make each individual jurisdiction stronger, then as a region, we are collectively stronger.”*

*-Corinne Bartshire, Regional Program Manager, Bay Area UASI Management Team*

supported projects and hear ideas from jurisdictions as to which types of projects and activities would be most beneficial to fund with the RCPGP. At the conclusion of these listening sessions, the Bay Area UASI Management Team compiles each jurisdiction's feedback to analyze and understand common goals and interests across the region. The Bay Area UASI Management Team relays this feedback to the regional platforms and workgroups to present potential RCPGP-supported projects, writes a description of all proposed activities, and engages each jurisdiction in one-on-one meetings to validate all proposed projects. After validating with local jurisdictions, the Bay Area UASI writes and submits a final RCPGP grant application. The Bay Area UASI Management Team and the UASI Approval Authority coordinate this multi-step process which helps to ensure engagement, efficiency, and alignment across all jurisdictions in the region.

Throughout each project, the Bay Area UASI Management Team works closely with hired consultants and stakeholders throughout the member jurisdictions to ensure that resulting products are accurate, useful, and help to close identified gaps. During this process, the Bay Area UASI Management Team's regional project manager adopts what the team describes as a "consulting mindset." This involves leveraging input on capability gaps derived from the grant application process and feedback from regional partners to develop toolkits, templates, and frameworks and provide technical assistance that can be tailored to the specific needs of each jurisdiction and their local communities.<sup>4</sup> As a result of these efforts, local agencies and their partners within the Bay Area and the state of California improve cross-jurisdictional collaboration in addition to building capabilities to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

The Bay Area UASI Management Team is well-positioned to coordinate with state-level stakeholders, frame regional planning efforts, and continue providing resources that facilitate ongoing collaboration and capacity building.

## 4. Key RCPGP Investments

This section describes specific investments made by the Bay Area UASI using their FYs 2019 and 2020 RCPGP awards. Through these grant awards, the Bay Area UASI funded the development of plans, trainings, a pandemic-related Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Guide, local and regional exercises, planning toolkits, and a project manager position to oversee the creation and dissemination of these products across the region. These projects focused on building capability in the Logistics and Supply Chain Management core capability in FY 2019 and in pandemic response in FY 2020, in accordance with RCPGP priority areas. The Bay Area UASI specifically developed these projects to better understand how resources may flow during an emergency incident and the ways in which capabilities could be built to support public messaging and continuity of operations during

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<sup>4</sup> An example of these local communities would be the 20 cities in the County of San Mateo, which is one of the 12 counties and three core cities making up the Bay Area UASI.



emergency incidents. These projects exemplify how the Bay Area UASI leverages jurisdiction-level investments to build regional capability.

To gain insight into how the region implemented these projects and how investments made using

*“All of those working groups feed information back into the projects that are being done. Those working groups involve people in all the different Bay Area counties...”*

*-Jessica Feil, UASI Approval Authority, City of Oakland*

RCPGP funds have helped improve regional relationships and capability, the FEMA case study team conducted interviews with emergency managers and representatives across the region that collaborate with the Bay Area UASI Management Team and the UASI Approval Authority. These sessions highlighted the benefits of RCPGP-funded projects, discussed in detail in the following sections, as well as the benefits of collaboration through the Bay Area UASI’s approach to building regional capability.

#### **4.1. Commodity Points of Distribution (C-POD)**

The Bay Area UASI used \$845,000 in FY 2019 RCPGP funds to expand jurisdictional C-POD site planning to holistically prepare the region for catastrophic incidents and to support building logistical and supply chain management capabilities. C-PODs are specific points throughout a jurisdiction where infrastructure and accessibility are likely to remain intact after a disaster. These points can be used as operational bases for providing essential resources to affected areas throughout a response effort. The RCPGP award supported the creation of additional C-POD plans and an expansion of trainings on C-POD management and operations throughout the region.

*“C-POD, it cuts across multiple hazards, multiple events, and that’s how you deal with [generating interest], it’s something that [participants] want to exercise and bring in.”*

*-Rick Filippuzzi, Training and Exercise Work Group, County of Santa Clara*

The Bay Area UASI promoted interconnectedness between regional partners and allowed for improvement of C-POD site action plans to meet the expected needs of jurisdictions’ supply chains in a catastrophic incident. The FY 2019 RCPGP award supported the development of 80 new C-POD site plans, resulting in a total of 104 C-POD specific activation plans throughout the region, including activation plans created in prior years. The Bay Area UASI also mapped potential C-POD locations using geographic information systems (GIS), which facilitated collaboration with state and federal entities through the identification of sites and efficient resource allocation and allowed for the dissemination of C-POD maps and plans to state and federal logistics points of contact.

In addition to developing C-POD site action plans, the Bay Area UASI invested \$60,000 of the FY 2019 award to support five iterations of a new two-day C-POD Operations and Management training curriculum. The RCPGP-supported curriculum includes instructor and student manuals to enable the continuation of these trainings by jurisdictions in the future. Trainees gain experience in all-hazards

scenarios and build their capabilities to address real-world incidents. The revised training curriculum also includes specifics on C-POD staffing, the role of C-POD managers during an incident, and logistical best practices for practitioners that better enable individual jurisdictions to implement C-PODs in a catastrophic scenario, such as a major earthquake. Training materials can be accessed on the [Bay Area Training and Exercise Program](#) website.

After the FY19 RCPGP award, the Bay Area UASI produced the “Supply Chain Considerations for People with Disabilities and Access and Functional Needs: Serving Vulnerable Populations Through Commodity Points of Distribution Guide,” which builds upon the C-POD planning to enhance support of vulnerable populations during disasters and emergency incidents.

#### **Just-in-Time Training during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The FY 2019 RCPGP award allowed the Bay Area UASI to create additional C-POD training materials. The Bay Area UASI developed a four-part just-in-time training to help trainees better understand the C-POD activation process.

Just-in-time training emphasizes the rapid training of volunteers or staff to take on new roles in an emergency management structure, particularly when those roles fall outside of their normal or routine duties. Just-in-time training allowed the Bay Area to quickly implement C-PODs during the COVID-19 pandemic and enabled jurisdictions to work more effectively with local food banks and distribute resources to the public.

## **4.2. Public Information Toolkit**

The Bay Area UASI’s FY 2020 RCPGP award implementation focused on pandemic response and preparedness to both respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and to prepare for similar future incidents. The Bay Area UASI used \$88,215 in RCPGP funds to create the Public Information Toolkit (referred to as the Pandemic Crisis Communication Toolkit on the Bay Area UASI website), with the goal of establishing a repository of materials that can be accessed by local and partner public information officers (PIOs). The Public Information Toolkit is the result of a collaborative effort between the region’s jurisdictions and their associated communities through the Bay Area Joint Information System. Any individual from emergency management agencies and jurisdictions across the region may create resources (e.g., templates, plans, and messaging) and upload them to a shared database on the [Bay Area UASI website](#), where this toolkit and others produced through the Bay Area UASI can be accessed. These materials are publicly accessible and are designed to be customizable to meet the specific needs of agencies and departments.

*“The Toolkit went beyond where we work. Information flows outside of our individual jurisdictions so this was a lifeline for others to help us achieve our goals in [the public information] space.”*

*-Betsy Burkhart, Public Information and Warning Work Group, Joint Information System (JIS) Co-chair*

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued, the Public Information Toolkit was an essential resource for PIOs, who worked collaboratively across the region to craft consistent messaging on topics such as social distancing and mask-wearing. The Public Information Toolkit saved time for many PIOs because it allowed them to simultaneously address other tasks that required their attention, such as managing staff and coordinating with other emergency management stakeholders. The Toolkit also provided translated public health messages in 24 languages, meeting the needs of the diverse population of the Bay Area and surrounding jurisdictions. In some cases, jurisdictions were able to locate the necessary translated materials in approximately 10 minutes.

As the Public Information Toolkit continues to grow to meet the Bay Area region's long-term needs, senior PIOs have noted the Toolkit's utility for training new staff members. As personnel transition to new roles, departments, or professions, institutional knowledge can often go with them. For PIOs, the Public Information Toolkit has been instrumental to onboarding new staff members or training additional personnel with on-demand knowledge-sharing. The Public Information Toolkit continues to expand, and in 2023 the Bay Area UASI relabeled the Toolkit and added additional content focused on helping PIOs and emergency managers reach the most disadvantaged communities in the Bay Area.

#### **Public Health Messaging During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Public Information Toolkit enhanced Bay Area jurisdictions' ability to develop consistent public health messaging, a crucial aspect of the region's early response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In communities such as Monterey, public reaction to mask-wearing mandates varied. Using the Toolkit, Monterey worked with surrounding communities to share information, create cohesive messaging, and better inform the public about social distancing and mask wearing guidelines, regardless of the local media market. The Toolkit served as an important asset to address the COVID-19 pandemic and has since been shared with over 100 communities across the region as well as state and federal agencies. The Toolkit continues to be updated with new resources to support vulnerable populations and to create continuity in staff knowledge across communities.

### **4.3. Training and Exercises**

The Bay Area UASI Training and Exercise Work Group identifies and advocates for activities that contribute to the training and exercising of public safety agencies (including public health professionals and first responders) to better prepare the Bay Area for emergency and catastrophic incident response. The following section highlights how the Bay Area effectively supported training and exercises with RCPGP award funding to improve response procedures and to gain a better understanding of existing capabilities and opportunities.

### 4.3.1. GOLDEN EAGLE EXERCISE

The Golden Eagle Exercise is an annual, full-scale regional exercise currently supported by RCPGP funding. It began in 2013 as the “Yellow Command” portion of the Urban Shield exercise, and in 2019, the region rebranded the exercise as Golden Eagle and aligned its focus to regional capability-building as emphasized by RCPGP.

The Golden Eagle Exercise prompts participating communities to assess their emergency response capabilities by simulating a real-world incident with the potential to impact the entire region. Scenarios may include identifying how scarce resources will be allocated, setting expectations for local planning, preparedness, and capability building, and simultaneously carrying out day-to-day operations. Past Golden Eagle Exercise locations and participants have included local and operational area Emergency Operation Centers (EOC), the California State Operations Center, regional ports, local businesses and suppliers, C-PODs, shelters, and other sites associated with catastrophic response. The exercise allows the Bay Area UASI jurisdictions and associated entities to test, validate, and highlight capability gaps that may be addressed in future capability-building efforts.

*“[Golden Eagle] has become known as a time where EOCs can actually activate and prepare. Over 30 EOCs and 17 shelters participated in 2018 and we have been building on that momentum.”*

*-Christophe Arnold, RCPGP Regional Project Manager, Bay Area UASI Management Team*



**Figure 4: Contra Costa County tests its new EOC during the 2023 Golden Eagle Exercise**

Over 400 individuals across the 14 regional jurisdictions participate annually in the Golden Eagle Exercise, and the Bay Area UASI has supported their participation with a combined total of \$119,022 of RCPGP funds across FYs 2019 and 2020. RCPGP financial support also allows jurisdictions to meet their EOC exercise requirement through the RCPGP-funded Golden Eagle Exercise rather than through self-funded exercises at the jurisdiction level.

The Bay Area UASI Management Team noted that the Golden Eagle Exercise not only increased excitement surrounding exercise planning and implementation, but also led to secondary impacts whereby individual jurisdictions now pursue their own exercises based on gaps identified during the Golden Eagle Exercise. This was the case for San Jose in May of 2023, which collaborated directly with the Bay Area UASI Management Team and their RCPGP-funded project manager to plan a tabletop exercise specific to their community’s needs.



**Figure 5: C-POD vehicle distribution during the 2023 Golden Eagle Exercise**

The Golden Eagle Exercise’s broad scope continues to provide opportunities for jurisdictions and their local communities to test specific incident response capabilities and build relationships between the region’s various agencies and public safety stakeholders. These capabilities include C-POD management, public information, situational awareness, resource allocation, mutual aid, and other capabilities that may be required by various catastrophic scenarios in a multifaceted, dynamic way.

#### **4.3.2. BUSINESS CONTINUITY TRAINING FOR SKILLED NURSING PROFESSIONALS**

Bay Area hospital systems were deeply affected by a deficit of skilled nursing professionals after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This deficit led to turnover of both healthcare workers and organizational leaders in the nursing home and assisted care industry. The Bay Area UASI used \$4,238 in FY 2020 RCPGP award funds to support the “Business Continuity Training for Skilled Nursing Professionals” program, aimed at improving the region’s capability to respond to future pandemic-related threats. By expanding the reach of the Business Continuity Training for Skilled Nursing Professionals curriculum to include in-person training options, the Bay Area UASI built capabilities in pandemic preparedness and created a deeper understanding of business continuity planning in both private and non-profit organizations in the nursing home and assisted care sector.

In May 2023, the Bay Area UASI conducted this in-person training with over 100 participants and focused specifically on business continuity efforts related to nursing homes. Participants learned about creating business continuity plans, staffing procedures, and objective management, and received tools and templates to use during future emergency incidents. As an example, trainees

*“Expanding our commitment from just hospital-based training will help us expand our readiness.”*

*-Marina Zamarron, Hospital Program Healthcare Preparedness, County of Santa Clara*

used staffing templates provided during training to help facilities within the California Association of Health Facilities Network transition from 8-hour shifts to 12-hour shifts to account for staffing challenges. The training illustrated best practices for making this transition and highlighted effective techniques for implementing emergency staffing procedures more broadly.

The Bay Area UASI Training and Exercise Work Group continues to look for opportunities to expand these trainings to better prepare the healthcare and skilled nursing communities. The Training and Exercise Work Group has noted that focusing on nursing home-related concepts – in addition to a more holistic healthcare approach that includes mental health subject matters – would be beneficial in the long-term when addressing future incidents.

#### 4.4. Regional Pandemic Framework and Multi-agency Coordination Guide

Using \$16,650 in FY 2020 RCPGP funding, the Bay Area UASI updated the California Region II Multi-agency Coordination (MAC) Guide to include lessons learned and best practices based on real-world COVID-19 response efforts across the Bay Area. Health officers, such as those in the Association of Bay Area Health Officials (ABAHO), noted that the MAC Guide provided guidance and information at the regional level, enabled jurisdictions to operate using the same baseline of information, and created clear messaging and expectations regarding pandemic response. Although the MAC Guide played a major role for health officers during their response to COVID-19, RCPGP support also allowed for health officers to capture newly identified best practices from the pandemic response for future response efforts.

*“We were able to learn from how [the MAC Guide] was used, [make] improvements and see how it can be used in other ways.”*

*-Emma Hunter, Association of Bay Area Health Officials Coordinator*

In addition to the MAC Guide, RCPGP funding supported the creation of a Regional Pandemic Preparedness Framework (RPPF). This framework preserves institutional knowledge by serving as a repository of best practices and information related to pandemic response. The RPPF leverages the Regionwide COVID-19 After Action Report (AAR) to include the lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations for future reference. ABAHO noted that the high turnover rates of medical professionals pose a challenge to retaining institutional knowledge; therefore, having a resource such as the RPPF allows multiple health organizations across the region to reference a common framework and collaborate to address future pandemics. In 2023, ABAHO conducted a workshop and tabletop exercise during which 80 participants validated concepts established in the MAC Guide as another means of enhancing the Bay Area’s preparedness.

## 5. Conclusion

This case study highlights the Bay Area UASI’s experience with using and implementing the region’s FYs 2019 and 2020 RCPGP awards to better prepare the region and local jurisdictions for catastrophic incidents.

The Bay Area’s FYs 2019 and 2020 awards, in combination with the Bay Area UASI’s individualized approach to working with member jurisdictions to build emergency response capability, helped to strengthen the Bay Area UASI’s community-focused regional strategy. The success of these awards did not come without challenges. After the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many public safety and emergency management stakeholders were affected by high staff turnover, leading to a loss of institutional knowledge and capacity to implement new capability-building efforts. Additionally, the virtual nature of trainings, exercises, and technical assistance conducted during COVID-19 sometimes posed challenges for building rapport between stakeholders. Nonetheless, the Bay Area UASI Management Team helped the region to overcome these barriers by taking an active role in providing communities with the assistance they needed, including: socializing newly developed

toolkits and just-in-time training; helping communities to develop tabletop exercises for localized plans; proactively offering extensive exercises and trainings, and continuing to facilitate discussions and workshops with partner jurisdictions.

Through projects funded by the Bay Area's FYs 2019 and 2020 RCPGP awards, the Bay Area UASI Management Team guided the region toward achieving its long-term preparedness goals. Specifically, projects included the creation of C-POD site activation plans to combat logistical and supply chain management challenges during incidents like a pandemic, the development and use of a Public Information Toolkit to rapidly train and onboard staff and ensure consistent and multi-lingual public safety messaging throughout the region, and the delivery of in-person trainings and full-scale exercises (such as the Golden Eagle Exercise) to simulate real-world scenarios on a regional scale. Through this lens, the Bay Area UASI Management Team leveraged the region's FYs 2019 and 2020 awards to streamline the region's ability to prepare for and respond to emergency and catastrophic incidents and to ensure the continuity of essential function.