



NEW FEDERAL FUNDING

WINTER 2022 POLICY MEETING MARCH 16 - 17, WASHINGTON, DC

The past two years have seen an unprecedented amount of federal funding flowing to cities to support public health, infrastructure, economic recovery, and more. This mayors' roundtable will offer an opportunity to share best practices in engagement, prioritization and deployment of funding to promote equity, sustainability, and resilient democratic governance - today and into the future.



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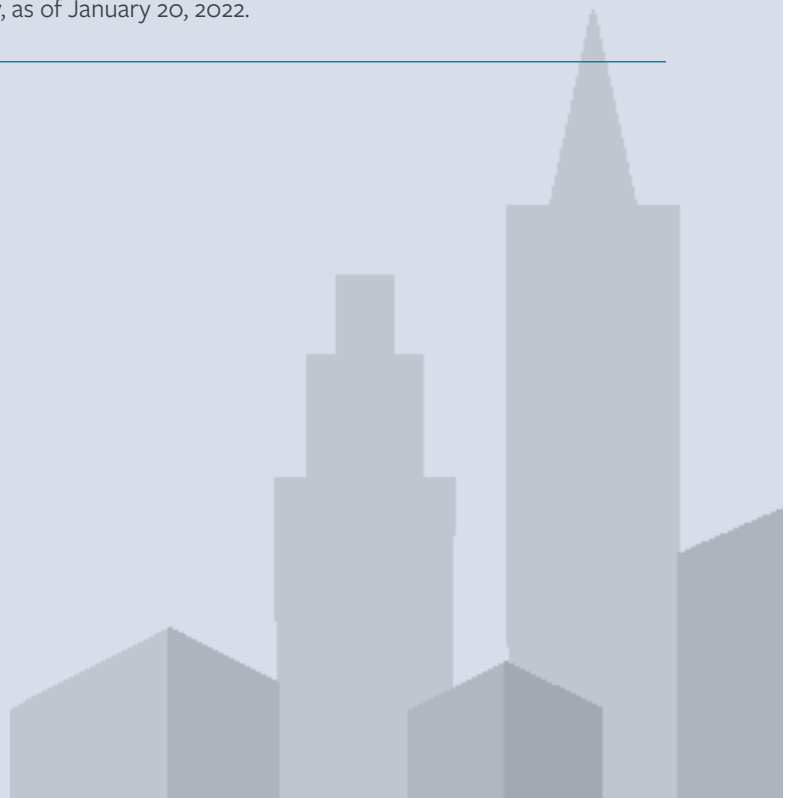
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10 Priorities for Advancing Racial Equity Through the American Rescue Plan

A Guide for City and County Policymakers



In 2020, the extreme inequalities of the Covid-19 pandemic and the outcry against police brutality and systemic racism following the murder of George Floyd pushed racial equity to the forefront of public consciousness and policy debate. Many local leaders acknowledged how current and historic policies have contributed to racial inequities and pledged to focus on advancing racial equity. On his first day in office, President Biden signed [an executive order to address racial equity](#) and redress systemic racism in federal policies, laws, and programs.

With about [250 million Americans vaccinated](#), the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) underway, and the next stimulus bill being crafted in Congress, 2021 offers hope for recovery. After a year of fighting for fiscal relief amidst budget shortfalls and federal austerity during the previous administration, the current recovery package delivers significant, flexible resources to local and state governments. Beginning this month, city and county governments will have \$130 billion in one-time federal resources, through the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, to fill budget holes and pay back borrowed funds, address health and economic issues exacerbated by the pandemic, and invest in critical water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

This infusion of public money to the local governments that are closest to the low-wage workers and communities of color who've lost the most in this unequal pandemic is sorely needed, and a crucial step forward. But equity has never been achieved without a fight or a plan, and the lessons from past recovery efforts are clear: absent a race-conscious approach and sharp focus on delivering measurable benefits to those most impacted, recovery efforts will leave frontline communities and communities of color behind and further entrench racial inequities.

We cannot let this happen: this initial allocation of ARP funds should be used to make a downpayment on an equitable recovery and redesigning our communities to work for all.

PolicyLink defines **equity** as just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. We will have achieved racial equity when race no longer predicts life outcomes.

Racial equity is a moral imperative, and also an economic one: as research from the National Equity Atlas, the [Federal Reserve](#), and others have shown, eliminating racial inequities will strengthen local economies. If the San Antonio region had eliminated its racial inequities in income in 2017, for example, the regional economy would have seen [\\$48 billion more in total economic output](#)—that's 37 percent additional economic growth. Equity is the superior growth model, and crucial to securing our economic future.

To meet the urgency and potential of this moment, municipalities must invest the recovery resources to both stabilize the hardest-hit workers and businesses and make targeted, catalytic investments to advance racial equity and build an equitable economy: one in which working-class people and people of color have good jobs, dignified and rising standards of living, and equal voice, power, and ownership.

To bridge from recovery to equity, local jurisdictions seeking long-term transformative impacts must recognize that threats, risks, and trauma are daily conditions experienced in low-income communities and communities of color and deploy recovery resources in a manner that begins to address the underlying conditions that perpetuate disadvantage.

Ten priorities and accompanying worksheet provide guidance and support to city and county policymakers who seek to deliver on their racial equity commitments and spur an equitable recovery. These equity priorities were developed in consultation with chief equity officers, policymakers, community leaders, economic development practitioners, research and policy organizations, and philanthropic partners that are part of learning and planning networks that span dozens of cities. While our focus is on the distribution of the flexible American Rescue Plan resources, these recommendations apply to all public investments.

The Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund can be used for the following activities:

1. Respond to the Covid-19 emergency and address its economic effects, including through aid to households, small businesses, nonprofits, and industries such as tourism and hospitality.
2. Provide premium pay to essential employees or grants to their employers deemed critical to protect health and well-being of the residents. Premium pay can't exceed \$13 per hour or \$25,000 per worker.
3. Provide government services affected by a revenue reduction resulting from Covid-19.
4. Make investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

Most local jurisdictions will receive half of their funds in early May, with the second disbursement in May 2022. They have until the end of 2024 to spend the money, regardless of when it was received.

10 Priorities for Advancing Racial Equity Through the American Rescue Plan

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5	Restore and expand public services that deliver critical physical and care infrastructure to disadvantaged communities	10	Track disaggregated data to ensure accountability to equity goals

1

Explicitly name racial equity as a goal, with specific targets to produce results at scale

Every city and county in this country faces the challenge of [eliminating racial inequities](#), and every city and county should use these recovery resources to remove barriers to full participation and proactively advance racial equity and inclusion. Recovery plans should explicitly prioritize racial equity as a goal, name specific targets that produce meaningful equity results at scale, and articulate the strategies to achieve those targets. Targets must be defined locally and they should address documented racial inequities (the National Equity Atlas provides extensive metrics that could be used to do this). For illustrative purposes, targets might look like this: 10,000 unemployed and low-wage workers connected to good jobs, with demographics mirroring those of the overall unemployed and low-wage workforce; 15 percent of total contracted resources go to businesses owned by Black people. Publicly naming equity as the goal is just a first step, but it is important that equity is at the center of the debate around how to allocate these resources.

Consider a Community Reparations Program. In March of this year, Evanston, Illinois, established a Restorative Housing Program fund to provide Black residents with \$25,000 grants for homeownership as a form of reparations for housing discrimination via racist zoning in place from 1919 to 1969. In July 2020, Asheville, North Carolina, began the process of establishing a community reparations program focusing on redressing the harms of its urban renewal program in the 1960s and 1970s. Recognizing the significant and irreparable harms to Black residents created by past city policies, [many other cities](#) are considering local reparations programs.

2

Engage historically underserved communities in prioritizing investments

Equitable outcomes come about through equitable processes in which underserved communities that have been systematically denied full opportunities to participate in social, economic, and civic life have a meaningful say in decision-making. These new federal resources create a rare and important opportunity to strengthen multicultural democracy, build community power, and increase trust and belonging through inclusive processes. As funds are released, community demand will intensify for those funds to be used quickly to address unmet needs. Rather than quickly choosing the most “shovel-ready” projects, city and county leaders should partner with the grassroots and resident-led organizations working in the communities most

impacted by structural racism to prioritize and implement recovery projects. These groups bring crucial local knowledge to inform decisions about the most impactful equity investments. Local governments should [co-create policy and program strategies](#) with them, engage them in determining how funds will be spent, and invest in the plans and demands they’ve already put forth.

3 Connect unemployed and low-wage workers with good jobs and careers

The pandemic shined a spotlight on vast inequities entrenched in our labor market: workers of color are both more likely to be in the “essential” workforce and work in sectors hardest hit by the pandemic—often earning abysmally low wages with few benefits or career advancement opportunities as well as greater exposure to Covid-19. Black and Latinx workers—and particularly women—have experienced the steepest job losses while simultaneously facing the most barriers to regaining work. This employment crisis rests atop structural issues: stagnant wages, skyrocketing inequality, an anemic workforce development system, and persistent racial discrimination and occupational segregation. Across cities and counties, Black, Latinx, and Native American workers are far less likely than their White counterparts to earn the bare minimum dignified wage of \$15/hour.

Getting people back to work in good, family-supporting jobs is a major priority of the White House, and city and county governments have valuable tools to make it happen.

- **Provide premium/hazard pay to essential workers** to recognize their value and increase their economic security. Hazard pay is a key demand of frontline workers and their unions and a designated use of the ARP funds, and there is no other dedicated federal funding for it. Hazard pay should be retroactive and progressively targeted to workers earning the lowest wages (Pennsylvania’s program focused on workers earning less than \$20/hour).
- **Require targeted hiring and living wages** for the temporary and permanent jobs created by projects supported by recovery funding. Targeted hiring policies ensure that workers who face barriers to employment (e.g., residents of low-income neighborhoods, disconnected youth, the long-term unemployed, formerly incarcerated people, veterans, people with disabilities), as well as participants in apprenticeship and job-training programs, can access good jobs.¹ Living-wage policies set wage standards for city

employees, government contractors, and companies receiving public subsidies, and can include other standards such as paid sick leave. Both can be standalone policies or a part of community benefits agreements negotiated on large development projects.

- **Fund paid, “learn and earn,” community-based pre-apprenticeship programs** that have a strong track record of preparing new workers, especially women and people of color, for construction jobs and apprenticeships.
- **Fund workforce intermediary partnerships** that are effectively training and placing disadvantaged and low-wage workers in good jobs in growing industries.
- **Require that employers receiving ARP funds comply with the \$15 minimum-wage requirement** established by the administration for federal contractors.

Targeted Hiring and Living Wages Deliver Good Jobs.

Under a community benefits agreement on the Oakland Army Base Redevelopment project, 50 percent of apprenticeship hours have gone to veterans, people with conviction records, the long-term unemployed, and others facing barriers to unemployment—double the agreement’s goals. The City of Saint Paul recently raised its living wage for public jobs to \$20 per hour, elevating the base pay for 480 entry-level employees, 40 percent of whom are people of color.

1. While the federal government currently prohibits local hiring on federally funded projects (see Section 200.319 “Competition” in the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Federal Awards), targeted hiring is permitted and can effectively advance racial equity goals since workers of color are disproportionately among the accepted categories of disadvantaged workers.

Covid-19 devastated many small businesses, and disproportionately those owned by people of color and immigrants. Because of systemic inequities in access to capital and business services, entrepreneurs of color are more concentrated in sectors like retail, restaurants, childcare, and other services that have lower capitalization requirements—the same sectors that were most impacted by stay-at-home orders and social distancing. Between February and April 2020, the number of Black-owned businesses dropped 41 percent, followed by immigrant-owned businesses at 36 percent, Latinx-owned businesses at 32 percent, Asian-owned businesses at 26 percent, and White-owned businesses at 17 percent. Business owners of color were in a more precarious position to begin with, and the design of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) largely failed them. Entrepreneurs of color have been less likely to receive PPP loans and less likely to receive the full amount they applied for.

Local recovery efforts should help build “inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems”—comprehensive systems of business support to help people of color start and scale up businesses. The Nowak Metro Finance Lab describes five key approaches: 1) Provide entrepreneurial support through intermediaries that effectively serve business owners of color; 2) Increase access to capital through new products and community navigators; 3) Expand supplier diversity by building the capacity of subcontractors to become prime contractors and growing intermediaries that connect purchasers to vendors; 4) Strengthen commercial corridors in communities of color; and 5) Grow and diversify sectors through targeted efforts to support and scale people-of-color-owned businesses in growing, higher paying sectors.

The American Rescue Plan Act dedicated about \$50 billion to small businesses including specific funds for restaurant owners, a new “Community Navigator” program to help business owners access recovery resources, and additional PPP funding and loan assistance. Local governments should leverage their flexible ARP resources to manifest their broader plans and set the “rules of the road” for recovery spending.

- **Support plans for building inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems**, and fund priority equity-focused activities that cannot be fully resourced through other sources.
- **Employ inclusive contracting and procurement practices on recovery spending** to ensure that underrepresented entrepreneurs have access to these opportunities, including: setting equity targets for minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) and disadvantaged business enterprises, using “best value contracting” to require prime bidders to propose plans for maximizing utilization of MBEs and hiring practices that create opportunities for disadvantaged workers, streamlining certification processes, breaking up large contracts into smaller subcontracts, helping subcontractors grow into prime contractors, and removing onerous financial burdens for small businesses.
- **Invest in local, nonprofit community development financial institutions** to provide funding and technical assistance for neighborhood-based businesses in communities of color.

Procurement Equity in Memphis. Since a 2016 disparity study found that only 6 percent of \$664 million in spending between 2010 and 2014 went to prime contractors that were minority- or women-owned, the City of Memphis has worked diligently to reduce these inequities, increasing its spending with minority- or women-owned firms by 20 percent within two years and more recently launching an “800 Initiative” focused on helping the 800 Black-owned companies with employees grow their revenue by \$50 million within five years.

Restore and expand public services that deliver critical physical and care infrastructure to disadvantaged communities

State and local governments cut an unprecedented number of jobs during the pandemic—nearly [1.4 million](#) jobs (primarily in education) have been lost since February 2020, according to the Economic Policy Institute. These cuts [disproportionately harm Black and Brown workers](#), who make up an outsized share of the public sector workforce, as well as low-income, frontline, and disinvested communities that rely upon public services and receive too few of them to meet needs.

New York’s New Deal-Style Jobs Program. In April, New York City launched the [City Cleanup Corps \(CCC\)](#) to directly create 10,000 new public jobs revitalizing the city’s neighborhoods, public spaces, parks, green spaces, and public art, with a focus on the 33 neighborhoods hardest hit by Covid-19.

Public sector services are also essential to equitable recovery. The pandemic revealed the need for strengthened public health and care infrastructure, modernized benefits services, and disaster planning and response, among other public services. Overcoming pandemic-related learning losses requires fully staffing our public schools. Building back better will also mean getting to zero carbon emissions and creating community environments that promote health, safety, and economic mobility and dignity—goals that can only be attained through a strengthened public sector.

- **Recovery projects should restore these jobs and expand services and infrastructure** in hard-hit communities. Investments should meet community needs and promote health, economic security, and neighborhood vitality, and should not support activities that harm and negatively target communities of color, such as policing, jails, prisons, and surveillance.
- **Create new, living-wage public sector jobs that deliver on community infrastructure and care** needs, such as community climate corps and public health job corps, and ensure disadvantaged workers can access them.

Where you live determines your health, well-being, and economic success. From safe drinking water and stable housing, to affordable health care, reliable broadband and healthy food, to safe parks, clean air, and quality schools it is clear that controlling the spread and withstanding the impact of a deadly virus is only possible when people's most basic human needs are being met. The pandemic reminded us that far too many Americans, disproportionately low-income people and people of color, lack the essential components of healthy communities.

These disparities are no accident, but stem from years of discriminatory land use planning, inequitable investment, racial segregation, and neglect at all levels of government. Building back better means addressing these injustices and investing heavily in the frontline and environmental justice communities that have been most impacted by the pandemic as well as systemic racism.

- **Build for resilience** by investing in household weatherization, energy efficiency, [climate resilience hubs](#) and other critical infrastructure and services communities need to withstand our changing climate, and by ensuring that infrastructure design and construction accounts for climate risk.
- **Fund water infrastructure projects** that deliver safe and affordable water and wastewater services to vulnerable communities; replace lead pipes; protect natural water ecosystems; and increase resilience in communities that are subject to drought, sea-level rise, and flooding impacts.
- **Fund projects that expand access to transportation and lessen the environmental impact of transportation systems** in the highest-poverty communities of color, including projects that connect transit-dependent communities to job centers, educational opportunities, and public, recreational, and cultural spaces and build climate-resilient transportation infrastructure.
- **Use a “[cumulative impact assessment](#)” framework** to assess the impact of the investment when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.
- **Support projects that [affirmatively further fair housing](#)** by ensuring people of color have equitable access to neighborhoods with good schools and other community assets as well as by investing in low-income communities of color.
- **Evaluate “shovel-ready” projects that are already being considered for funding** and eliminate those that will cause displacement, further concentrate pollution exposure, or cause other harms to low-income communities and communities of color.

7 Prevent displacement and increase community ownership of land and housing

Even before the pandemic, over 40 million US households were spending more than they could afford on housing, and half a million people were unhoused. Women of color suffer the highest eviction rates and cost burden, and Black and Indigenous people face the highest rates of homelessness. Overcrowded housing conditions became a driver of Covid exposure and infections for low-wage workers and families of color.

The economic fallout of the pandemic created a looming eviction crisis that has been largely staved off by eviction moratoria implemented by more than [35 states and 150 municipalities](#), as well as the federal government, but these measures are temporary. Some [5.7 million renter households](#) are currently behind on rent totaling nearly \$20 billion and they are overwhelmingly low-income families that lost employment income during the pandemic, disproportionately people of color.

Preventing displacement and eliminating rent debt are essential to stabilize the renters hardest hit by the pandemic and make equitable recovery possible. And to build back better, local leaders need to invest in long-term solutions, including increasing our stock of community-owned, permanently affordable housing.

- **Maintain strong eviction moratoria for one year beyond the expiration of the pandemic and provide funding to eliminate rent debt** and support struggling landlords and nonprofit affordable housing providers. Landlord assistance should be paired with eviction protections, lease renewals, and protections from exorbitant rent increases, and programs should ensure undocumented people can access it.
- **Expand services and acquire permanent housing** for people who are unhoused.

- **Fund [acquisition strategies](#) to transfer housing and land to community ownership and stewardship**, including rapid-response acquisition funds, [community land trusts](#), and land banks to quickly purchase properties that come up for sale and compete with speculators. Consider using recovery dollars to support nonprofit organizations, particularly tenant-based organizations and groups led by people of color, to acquire, operate, and maintain buildings as permanently affordable housing. Mandate that acquired properties are permanently affordable.

Communities Know How to Steward Housing. In 2020, [tenants in Minneapolis partnered with a community land bank to collectively purchase](#) five buildings from their landlords, preventing the eviction of all residents and securing more than \$6 million in wealth.

Strengthen civic infrastructure that builds the power and capacity of marginalized communities

Amid the disruption of the pandemic, the nonprofit, grassroots community-based organizations that serve, employ, organize, and advocate for underserved residents played a crucial role in delivering needed health care and relief services, administering public aid, and spearheading vaccination campaigns. These institutions have the trust, knowledge, skills, and relationships needed to meet the needs of residents who are often neglected and harmed by other institutions. They will be critical to delivering an equitable recovery, and to ensuring residents who lack money and power can actively participate in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and communities.

More and stronger mechanisms for participation and voice in decision-making will also be needed to increase underserved communities' sense of belonging and connection to local government. In addition, larger nonprofit intermediaries that have strong administrative capacity and reach can be the connectors and glue between government agencies overseeing programs and the community-based organizations that work directly with residents.

Local governments should use their ARP resources to support these elements of essential civic infrastructure.

- **Invest directly in the grassroots, community-based organizations** that have a track record delivering needed services to underserved and marginalized residents, including organizations focused on organizing tenants and workers to advocate for their rights.
- **Invest in effective intermediaries** who have the capacity to administer larger programs and deliver resources to smaller, community-based organizations that can deploy them in underserved communities.
- **Fund participatory budgeting processes** that focus on directly engaging traditionally excluded communities in selecting investments.

Community Networks Deliver Results. In rural Kentucky, [Partners for Education at Berea College](#) combines nearly \$43 million in local, state, federal, and philanthropic funding each year to serve more than 50,000 youth and their families. During the pandemic, the intermediary deployed family coordinators to connect families living across eight counties to health-care workers and financial assistance amidst spikes in unemployment. In the Mission District of San Francisco—the neighborhood historically home to the city's Latinx community—the [Mission Economic Development Agency](#) coordinated with community agencies and the City of San Francisco to distribute relief loans and grants to 419 small businesses disparately impacted by ongoing gentrification and the economic fallout from the pandemic.

9 Prioritize a few deep, cross-sector, high-impact equity investments

The ARP provides significant resources, but spreading them evenly throughout your community will water down their impact. Rather than dispersing small amounts of funding across many programs, local governments should prioritize using their flexible ARP funds to support a small number of high-impact investments that work across sectors to deliver on racial equity goals. Choosing a smaller number of larger scale equity-focused investments can serve to focus energy and attention on those strategies, galvanizing additional support from public, philanthropic, and private sources and capturing the public's imagination.

By thinking bigger, and bringing together different capacities and funding streams, local governments can leverage their ARP dollars for far greater equity impact. Cities and counties could coordinate on partnerships and projects that combine investments in both physical and civic infrastructure. For

example, cities could purchase and rehabilitate vacant buildings to create more available and affordable property for county-provided services like health clinics and early learning centers. By connecting with labor unions and workforce intermediaries, they could incorporate employment programs such as apprenticeships to support and staff the projects. By blending the one-time ARP funds with annual block grants, communities can implement longer term solutions.

Piloting Guaranteed Income. The guaranteed income pilots in [Stockton, California](#), and [Jackson, Mississippi](#) exemplify how well-crafted, bold, equity-focused programs can captivate the public and spark larger scale efforts while delivering meaningful local results.

10 Track disaggregated data to ensure accountability to equity goals

Gathering and monitoring data on program outcomes is critical to successful implementation (and continual program improvement) and to reporting to the public about results. Local leaders need to plan for this tracking from the beginning and set up programs to capture the data needed to track progress toward the equity targets described above. To know whether resources and programs are being equitably distributed and reaching targeted groups, it is critical to collect data by race/ethnicity, nativity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and disability status, as well as by neighborhood. It will also be important to use qualitative methods like focus groups and

interviews, to include residents' experiences and perspectives. The data collected on recovery spending and program progress should be made available to the public via a recovery dashboard. In addition, local governments should directly invest in the data infrastructure of community-based organizations to track disaggregated data related to strategies and facilitate data-sharing agreements with agencies. They should also fund tools, technology, and data partners that provide local jurisdictions a mechanism for assessing and monitoring intermediate and long-term impacts.

American Rescue Plan Project Equity Worksheet

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provides \$1.9 trillion in investments in local communities struggling to recover from the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic. With city and county governments across the nation scheduled to receive hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding, ensuring that investment decisions align with and support the Biden Administration's executive orders to address racial equity must be a high priority for local elected officials. While there are myriad policies and regulatory requirements governing federal spending, the American Rescue Plan Project Equity Worksheet is intended to offer local officials a framework for equitable decision-making around ARP spending and investments. The worksheet is not intended to supersede or supplant local, state, or federal regulatory requirements, offering instead a mechanism for ensuring that racial equity is a factor in decision-making—that the hard questions around racial equity are asked, and answered.

1. Explicitly name racial equity as a goal, with specific targets

- What are the overarching racial equity goals of the project (i.e., expand the availability of permanently affordable housing, expand transit mobility in communities of color, etc.)?
- What are the project's racial equity targets?

2. Engage historically underserved communities in prioritizing investments

- What community engagement strategies will be utilized?
- How will residents of the impact community be engaged? Will engagement with residents of the impact community be prioritized?
- What mechanisms will be utilized to capture input and feedback from residents of the impact community?
- How is the jurisdiction prepared to receive reactions to the project from residents of the impact? How will the jurisdiction respond to opposition and/or resistance to the project?
- What changes or adjustment to the project (if any) will be made based on input or feedback from the impacted community?

3. Connect unemployed and low-wage workers with good jobs and career pathways

- For infrastructure projects:
 - What are the local hire or targeted hiring goals for the project or investment?
 - What mechanisms will be utilized to connect workers with good jobs? What programs are funded by ARP to connect job seekers to jobs on the project (i.e., pre-apprentice program, on-the-job training, etc.)
 - Who is responsible for monitoring and reporting attainment of hiring goals?
 - Who is responsible for monitoring compliance with Davis Bacon wage and minimum wage requirements?
- Do investments in hospitality industry recovery require compliance with minimum-wage requirements? How is this enforceable?
- Minimum-wage compliance is a complaint-based policy. Who will be responsible for managing complaints?
- For small and rural jurisdictions, are regional intermediaries engaged in monitoring and enforcement of workforce development programs? Are partners being funded to enhance capacity at the county level?

4. Stabilize and grow businesses owned by people of color and immigrants

- For infrastructure projects:
 - What goals for utilization of businesses owned by people of color (or Disadvantaged Business Enterprises) have been established for the project?
 - What statutory authority governs the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise requirements for the Project (i.e., USDOT, EPA, HUD, etc.)?
 - Who is responsible for monitoring attainment of the goal?
 - What enforcement mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability?
 - What procurement mechanism will be utilized (i.e., invitation to bid, request for proposals, request for qualifications, etc.)?

- For best-value contracting and/or solicitations for professional services, what is the scoring rubric? What is the scale (i.e., 10 points, 100 points, etc.)? How many points are applicable for values around equity and inclusion (i.e., targeted hire, minority business utilization, etc.)?
- What mechanisms will be utilized to provide contract financing for disadvantaged businesses?
- What is the prompt payment policy? How will the implementing agency ensure prompt payment to prime contractors and to lower-tier contracts?
- For investments in financing and technical assistance for businesses owned by people of color:
 - What funding and technical assistance is targeted to businesses owned by people of color?
 - How will funding and technical assistance be deployed?

5. Restore and expand public services that deliver critical care and infrastructure to disadvantaged communities

- Does the funding prioritize restoration of services to communities that are most impacted by the pandemic?
- Does the funding invest in activities that negatively target communities of color (i.e., policing, jails and prisons, etc.)?
- Are jobs created by infrastructure projects required to provide living wages?
- Are jobs created by infrastructure projects priorities targeted to unemployed and low-wage workers?

6. Invest in frontline, Covid-impacted, and disinvested communities

- What is the impact area for the project?
- What is the racial/ethnic makeup of the impact area? Of the adjacent area?
- Are people of color overrepresented in the impact area?
- Are low-income persons overrepresented?
- Is there a historical predicate of intergenerational poverty, segregation, or environmental racism in the impact community?
- For transit projects, what percentage of persons have access to a vehicle? What percentage are reliant on public transit? How far do residents have to walk to access public transit?

- Do water infrastructure projects take into account the potential for drought, sea-level rise, and flooding in a community? Do they plan to protect natural water ecosystems?
- Does the proposal provide funding for a development activity that exacerbates inequity?
- To what extent does the investment have the potential to lessen disparity?
- Does the proposal have funding for intentional investments in racial equity?
- Were multiple options considered for the investment? If yes, does the selected option proactively address issues of poverty and/or racial equity? Does the selected project provide the greatest benefits to hardest-hit disadvantaged communities? Does the selected project address historic inequities, intergenerational poverty, or racial segregation?

7. Prevent displacement and increase community ownership of land and housing

- For housing investments, what is the percentage of homeownership? What percentage of the population are renters? What is the availability of affordable housing?
- Have there been changes in the socioeconomic status of residents in the impact area that indicate displacement and dispossession?
- Does the project have an anti-displacement strategy?
- Does the project expand the inventory of permanently affordable housing or social housing?
- Does the project require nonprofit and/or community-based development partners?
- Is there a goal for utilization of developers of color?
- What is the goal for utilization of businesses owned by people of color for construction (if applicable)?
- What are the targeted hiring goals?
- Who is responsible for monitoring and enforcement of racial equity goals for hiring and contracting?

8. Strengthen civic Infrastructure that builds the power and capacity of marginalized communities

- What methods of community engagement are being utilized to get community input and feedback?
- How will grassroots organizations and advocates be engaged?
- How will the stakeholders of the impact community for the project be engaged in the decision-making process?
- Does civic infrastructure exist in the impact area? What does it look Like?
- What investments are planned to provide direct financial support for and build the capacity of community-based and grassroots organizations in the project's impact area?

9. Make high-impact, cross-sector equity investments

- What other projects or investments are planned or forecasted for the impact area (including private sector and nonprofit investments)?
- What additional funding sources can be aligned with ARP funds, including other emergency funds that need to be spent immediately as well as those with a longer spending life?
 - To support Universal Pre-K?
 - To create pathways of opportunity for students to good jobs?
 - To create broadband networks as a universal public good?
- Development projects generally have economic growth as an outcome, often at the price of dispossession. Do other planned projects exacerbate segregation and/or dispossession?
- Do other planned projects have investments in racial equity and anti-displacement strategies?
- Do investments in human capital address issues of poverty? To what scale? Can measurable reductions in poverty be achieved (i.e., child tax credit)?
- Does leveraging other projects enhance racial equity or exacerbate inequity and dispossession?

10. Track disaggregated data to ensure accountability to equity goals

- To what extent is data disaggregated? Where can disaggregation be improved to capture race, ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and disability status?
- How often is data collected?
- What processes are in place to support the use of disaggregated data to assess the efficacy of projects and iterate strategies?
- What agency of government has responsibility for collecting and monitoring certified payroll data?
- Do the individual agencies collect data per program (i.e., airport, transit, housing, etc.) or is labor compliance centralized?
- What tool is used?
- What tool is utilized to collect and update socioeconomic impact data? Where is this work institutionalized? What partners are involved in oversight of monitoring impacts around racial equity and poverty reduction?
- Does the capacity for data collection and monitoring exist at the county level? For small and rural jurisdictions, are regional intermediaries engaged in and funded for data collection and monitoring? Are partners engaged in and funded to enhance data collection and monitoring capacity?

Acknowledgments

We extend our deep gratitude to the chief equity officers, policymakers, community leaders, economic development practitioners, research and policy organizations, and philanthropic partners who supported the development of this guidance:

Contributing Members of the Chief Equity Officers Network

Joy Marsh Stevens
Karla Bruce
Majestic Lane
Michelle Menendez
Zan Gibbs

Contributing Members & Partners of the Place Matters Policy Working Group

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The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and Older Adults

Opportunities and Resources for Local Leaders



Prepared by Funkhouser & Associates in partnership with AARP



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Funkhouser & Associates is a consulting firm founded by Mark Funkhouser, a longtime public servant and a former publisher of *Governing* magazine. As mayor of Kansas City during the Great Recession, Mark has direct experience with managing government through a fiscal crisis. Funkhouser & Associates was founded on the idea that we can build a better government by building trusted relationships with each other and government partners.



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AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 or older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families, with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. The AARP Livable Communities initiative's programs include the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and the annual AARP Community Challenge "quick-action" grant program.

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Published August 2021



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The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and Older Adults: Opportunities and Resources for Local Leaders

At AARP, part of our mission is to make sure that the most important issues facing Americans age 50 and older get the attention — and action — they deserve from local, state, and federal leaders. Since March 2020, that's meant a top priority for AARP teams in communities in all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands has been protecting those most at risk from COVID-19.

The pandemic hit older adults incredibly hard and put a spotlight on a host of disparities that persist across the country — from access to health care, nutrition, affordable housing, accessible transportation options,

safe places to enjoy the outdoors, and more. We've also seen how communities can come together to help residents of all ages stay safe and healthy.

As our nation looks to recover from the pandemic, local leaders across the country are making decisions about how to invest federal funding authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that passed Congress in March 2021.

The funding in ARPA represents an incredible opportunity to strengthen counties, cities, and towns with an eye toward the future, while also doing more to support those who were hardest hit by the pandemic.

AARP is committed to working hand-in-hand with local officials and community leaders to help leverage these investments to address pressing needs and strengthen communities for the future.

AARP staff and volunteer teams on the ground can be a partner and an ally as local leaders seek to engage residents, identify best practices, and shape policies so they carry benefit for all.

This resource is intended to serve as a conversation starter and help leaders identify opportunities under ARPA.

Our hope is that you'll use the information and guidance provided and then reach out to your AARP State Office at [AARP.org/States](https://www.aarp.org/states) or email us at livable@AARP.org to tell us the challenges you're facing and what would be helpful.

Nancy LeaMond

Executive Vice President, Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer, AARP

INTRODUCTION

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law in March 2021 and represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance communities.

ARPA provides local governments with the ability to create economic resilience by investing resources to address persistent livability challenges, and creating new and innovative solutions to make communities better for residents of all ages.

As local leaders begin to operationalize ARPA, it is critical that all community members help shape and benefit from this unprecedented moment — and that advancements in livability and economic resilience are felt by everyone.

Livability principles can be a key factor as local leaders consider their many options for

putting this funding to work in their communities. Livable communities are inclusive and resilient. They serve the needs of all people, regardless of income, age, ability, race or ethnicity.

The funding streams made available through ARPA present an opportunity to make catalytic investments.

To capitalize on the moment, leaders must root their decision-making in strong public engagement processes and ensure that all residents can be actively involved.

As local leaders weigh opportunities and make forward-looking investments, AARP's resources, tools, research, intellectual capital and relationships can help empower communities to best utilize their funding to create inclusive, livable places for all.

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USING THIS RESOURCE

Working with AARP

C OVID-19 has had a devastating impact on communities throughout the United States and older Americans have been among the groups most impacted by the health and economic effects of the pandemic. Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address critical needs, tackle long-standing challenges and engage residents.

This resource can help local leaders identify opportunities within ARPA to help improve livability in their communities. The hope is that after reading this document, local elected officials and staff will seek to:

- Use the information and guidance presented to help inform their thinking and planning as they prioritize investments made with ARPA funding
- Engage with older residents in order to gain a better understanding about their experiences during the pandemic

AARP is a nationwide organization with a national headquarters in Washington D.C., along with hundreds more staff and 60,000 volunteers working in all 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

AARP staff and volunteers work in partnership with local leaders and organizations in communities throughout the country by providing support with community outreach, engagement, and visibility; connecting organizations and individuals to a broader AARP network; granting technical assistance and resources; and sharing research and information.

With its reach, expertise and on the ground presence, AARP can be a powerful partner as local governments seek to make the best use of the ARPA dollars on behalf of their constituents.

Forward-looking leaders recognize that ARPA can be a way to make their communities better places for all residents. The idea that communities can be livable for people of *all* ages is the driving ethos behind the AARP Livable Communities initiative. Creating a more livable community is key to creating a thriving community, one that also attracts new residents and taxpayers.

AARP resources and tools can help local leaders understand how to approach critical investments to ensure that their communities recover and thrive. ►

HOW AARP CAN HELP

Local Outreach, Engagement and Visibility

With 38 million members and tens of thousands of volunteers, AARP offices in all 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands can help local officials reach and engage residents age 50-plus. AARP also has extensive communication channels that can help raise the visibility of promising work locally, statewide and nationally.

Connections to a Network

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities provides a framework and resources to help enrolled communities become more livable for people of all ages. The network currently includes eight states, one U.S. territory and a total of more than 500 towns, cities or counties.

Technical Assistance and Resources

AARP develops and produces resources for local leaders, including free guides, publications, best practices and more — including the annual AARP Community Challenge grant program, which has so far awarded \$9.3 million to 804 quick-action projects.

Research and Data

AARP is able to provide information and insights about the needs and wants of older adults, including about the ways specific policies can or do impact their lives. ■



Attention Local Leaders! Engage with AARP by ...

- Reaching out to their **AARP State Office**. (Find contact information at states.AARP.org or email livable@AARP.org to ask for guidance.)
- Visiting **AARP.org/Livable** to use tools and resources (including many referenced in this publication) to help advance livability work
- Checking **AARP.org/LivableMap** to learn more about livability and the age-friendly work happening throughout the country
- Subscribing to the free, weekly **AARP Livable Communities e-Newsletter** at AARP.org/LivableSubscribe or by texting the world Livable to 50767
- Sharing pressing challenges and requests for helpful resources by emailing **AARP Livable Communities** at livable@AARP.org

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

U.S. Treasury Guidance on the American Rescue Plan

The American Rescue Plan Act is a \$1.9 trillion law that includes \$350 billion in direct, flexible aid to states, counties, cities and Tribal governments with populations over 50,000. The monies are available via the State and Local Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund. Eligible local governments that are classified as non-entitlement units (typically those with population totals under 50,000) should expect to receive the funding through their applicable state government.

On May 10, 2021, the U.S. Treasury Department released its initial guidance, called the “interim final rule,” which included some 150 pages of background, reasoning, spending categories and guidelines for accounting.

The funding is intended to “provide support to state, local, and Tribal governments responding to the impact of COVID-19 and in their efforts to contain COVID-19 on their communities, residents, and businesses.”

There is flexibility within five main categories of eligible spending:

- Supporting public health expenditures
- Addressing negative economic impacts
- Replacing revenue lost because of the pandemic
- Providing premium pay for essential workers
- Investing in infrastructure including water, sewer and high-speed internet

American Rescue Plan Act funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and spent with all projects completed by December 31, 2026. ■

Addressing Community Inequity

The federal ARPA guidance repeatedly encourages officials to put funds toward addressing inequities in their communities.

Low-income populations, older adults and people of color have suffered disproportionately high rates of infection and death during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Treasury Department’s mindset on community inequity is highlighted on page 41 of the rule:

“The Fiscal Recovery Funds provide resources to not only respond to the immediate harms of the pandemic but also to mitigate its longer-term impact in compounding the systemic public health and economic challenges of disproportionately impacted populations. The Treasury encourages recipients to consider funding uses that foster a strong, inclusive, and equitable recovery, especially uses with long-term benefits for health and economic outcomes.”

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) notes in a recent case study that the pandemic revealed how disadvantaged neighborhoods and selected demographics faced unique challenges. From fees and fines to zoning regulations, economic-development incentives, and policing strategies, “an increasing number of local officials are re-evaluating the equity impacts of their operations and investments — and often within programs historically managed by technical experts.”

The rule also makes it easier to spend money on behalf of disproportionately affected populations — including older adults — in two key ways. It allows for greater spending flexibility in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The rule cites “the role of pre-existing social vulnerabilities in driving [the] disparate outcomes” seen during the pandemic and says that investment in programs and services in disadvantaged communities “will be presumed to be responding to the public health emergency.”

The rule specifically identifies programs not strictly tied to immediate pandemic response — such as those focused on affordable housing, early childhood education and remediation of lead paint — as applicable uses of fiscal recovery funds in these communities.

In addition, governments that invest in this broader category of programs and services within a Qualified Census Tract will not have to provide additional documentation that the investment is in response to the pandemic. This helps streamline use of funds for the above-mentioned program types so that, as the Treasury rule states, it “may speed implementation and decrease administrative burden, while identifying areas of need.” ■

KEEP IN MIND

Localities that receive ARPA funds are required to submit regular reports about their spending and account for and track where every dollar goes. As local leaders plan their ARPA-related

spending, it can be hard for them to fully know their capacity to administer the funds. Even for cities and counties accustomed to dealing with federal funds, this can be daunting. For smaller jurisdictions with limited staff, this can be crippling. Ensuring that adequate systems

Fostering Livable Communities

The timeline for funding delivery also allows for thoughtful planning of how best to use ARPA to encourage improved livability.

Half of the ARPA recovery funds were delivered to governments in the spring and summer of 2021. The second half of the funding will be delivered approximately 12 months after the first tranche.

With wide latitude about how to spend the money, and a year separating the deposits, state and local governments can direct their first round of funding toward more immediate needs and then plan for longer-term investments. ARPA “provides a substantial infusion of resources to meet pandemic response needs and rebuild a stronger, more equitable economy as the country recovers,” the rule states.

The National League of Cities (NLC) advises that municipalities consider several principles in determining how to use their fiscal recovery funds. Two highlights are the prioritization of funding to ensure fiscal stability, which includes returning residents to work, and collecting input from key municipal staff and stakeholders.

The NLC and GFOA also encourage local officials to strategically use their fiscal recovery funds for gaps and priorities that aren’t eligible for other federal and state assistance programs that have been created or enhanced as a result of other ARPA funding.

From small towns to large cities, local leaders recognize that this funding is both an opportunity to respond to the pandemic *and* transform their communities in diverse ways reflecting the unique needs and opportunities of each locality.

As San Jose, California, Mayor Sam Liccardo notes, his city has an opportunity to “expand transportation infrastructure, digitally connect families and create much needed living-wage employment opportunities.”

As part of a far-reaching plan, in Phoenix, Arizona, Mayor Kate Gallego and the Phoenix City Council approved setting aside a significant portion of their city’s ARPA funding to help vulnerable residents with utilities, rent and mortgage payments.

Like many rural towns, Sesser, Illinois, hopes to use its funding to make much-needed and overdue improvements to its sewer system. ■

and personnel are in place to manage the spending and implementation of new federally funded projects is a very real concern for local finance officials — especially after a downturn that saw more than one-million local government jobs disappear. Local nonprofits and other

community partners can play a critical role in filling this capacity gap. As explained by Harry Black, the city manager of Stockton, California: “We know what to do and how to do it — it’s just finding the right local partners who can handle it.” ■

COVID-19 and Older Adults

The impact of the pandemic on their health and economic well-being

People age 50 or older represent roughly 95 percent of the deaths from COVID-19, with long-term care facilities in particular seeing extremely heightened cases of mortality. (As of August 2021, the month of this report's publication, more than 184,000 residents and staff at these facilities have succumbed to COVID-19 or related complications.)

While coronavirus containment actions — including confinement measures, physical distancing, and restrictions on movement and social gatherings — helped prevent deaths, they also had repercussions, particularly for older adults.

- For older people who didn't have parks or safe outdoor places nearby, the pandemic underscored how not having access to green space poses health risks that can impact one's longevity and mental health.
- Even before the pandemic, reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that many older adults were already more socially isolated and experiencing greater loneliness than other population groups.
- Older workers also suffered higher rates of unemployment due to COVID-19. During the first six months of the pandemic, workers age 55 or older were 17 percent more likely to lose their jobs than employees who were just a few years younger.
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 350,000 older adults age 55 to 64, and 122,000 aged 65-plus, who wanted to work, were unemployed for 27 weeks or longer in 2020. These adults are also being rehired more slowly than their younger counterparts

This translates into a staggering toll on the health and financial security of older adults. In addition, new programs implemented in response to the pandemic have sometimes fallen short in meeting the needs of older adults.

Vaccine distribution is a prime example.

Although older adults were among the demographic groups prioritized for early vaccine eligibility, many struggled in actually securing the vaccine because of, for instance, requirements to register online, a lack of transportation for getting to the vaccine sites, or a general lack of information about how and where to get vaccinated.

Some localities swiftly pivoted in response with initiatives including establishing “pop-up” vaccine clinics; using volunteers to sign people up online and drive them to appointments; and including faith leaders and churches in vaccine outreach. The experience showed how engagement and outreach are critical first steps when designing and implementing a new policy.

Many local leaders are recognizing the benefits of a more-targeted approach to community support that prioritizes the needs of older adults. Given the longer timeline for spending ARPA recovery funds, leaders can implement creative solutions that incorporate the community's feedback about how they'd want to see ARPA money spent.

The pandemic reinforced the importance of using multiple communications platforms. These included multi-lingual online and paper surveys, telephone hotlines, email, and both in-person and virtual community meetings. ■

Leveraging ARPA Funds for Livability

“A livable community is one that is safe and secure. It offers choices in where to live and how to get around. And it equitably serves residents of all ages, ability levels, incomes, races, ethnicities, and other backgrounds.”

— AARP Public Policy Book

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES ...



Enhance personal independence



Allow residents to remain in their homes and communities as they age



Provide opportunities for residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to engage fully in a community’s civic, economic and social life



AARP Work, Tools and Resources COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Local leaders and residents can use the free AARP publication ***Engaging the Community to Create Community*** for ideas about how to engage the public.
- AARP supports engagement efforts for communities through the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** by assisting with outreach to older residents and providing resources and survey tools for communities.
- Communities enrolled in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities conduct **community assessments** that gather input from residents about their priorities, needs and wants. Local leaders can reference these assessments to understand priorities of older residents.
- The **AARP Community Challenge** has funded projects throughout the nation that have focused on community engagement during the pandemic. For example, the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee, a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, received funds to develop a “Senior Technology Support Team” of volunteers to help older adults with technology needs during the pandemic. This effort trained and empowered volunteers to assist older adults and extend the reach of the city’s efforts.

TRANSIT, MOBILITY AND OPEN SPACES

Drivers typically outlive their ability to safely operate a vehicle by, on average, 7 to 10 years. Many older adults rely on transportation alternatives, such as public transit, to live independently. ARPA's transit funding is therefore a critical resource for communities that have seen declines in ridership and fare revenue during the pandemic.

Many transit agencies, particularly those in large cities that rely heavily on passenger fares to pay for operating costs, are at a funding crossroads.

Public health fears around public transportation (whether founded or not), plus more people working from home (and therefore not commuting), could keep ridership and revenues low for years. If rider demand and revenue remain low, transit agencies may be forced to reduce service levels for the foreseeable future.

That could lead to a transit “death spiral,” in which fewer routes and more limited hours provide less incentive for people to use public transit, an experience borne out by academic studies. Early in the pandemic, numerous major transit systems warned that their systems would collapse without an infusion of federal funds.

These trends, and the threat of further service cutbacks, have a direct impact on the many workers who rely on public transit to work, as well as those who depend on transit for access to medical care and services — many of whom are older adults and people with disabilities.

The pandemic highlighted the connection between transit and essential workers, proving public transportation to be an essential public service. For many older adults on fixed incomes, public transit remained the only affordable option for getting to the grocery store or a medical appointment.

As policymakers plan their ARPA spending, expanding and improving affordable and accessible public transportation programs is a critical area of opportunity.

Promoting public transit resilience can include requiring systems to implement and enhance safety regulations, along with efforts to actively promote the broad use of public transportation.

This can be done by encouraging transit authorities to reduce or eliminate fares for vulnerable populations, such as low-income

ARPA TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

\$26 billion to urban transit systems

\$25 million in competitive planning grants

\$50 million for Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program funding

\$317 million to states and possessions for rural transit

\$1.7 billion for rail and bus capital investment grants

riders and people with disabilities. Free transit is already a practice in some small urban areas, and mid-sized Kansas City, Missouri, has embraced the concept to a large degree. Policymakers can also encourage ride-sharing and other low-cost programs to help meet the transportation needs of older adults, as West Sacramento, California, is doing with its dial-a-ride service.

It is also critical that residents have safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle access to transit routes. As local leaders make improvements to transit investments, street and sidewalk infrastructure that is safe for users of all ages and abilities can also be a consideration.

For instance, the pandemic inspired innovative ways of providing residents with much-needed

access to open spaces and outdoor recreation.

Among the most popular approaches were “Slow Streets” pilot programs, which restricted portions of mainly residential streets to local and emergency traffic and lowered speed limits as a way to support outdoor activities and enhance safety for those traveling by bike or on foot. In some places, streets were closed to traffic entirely.

Not only did local leaders create new walking routes and connect residential neighborhoods with retail areas, but Slow Streets became a safe option for residents to enjoy the outdoors in their own communities while practicing social distancing and other COVID-19 safety protocols. Slow Streets programs are another potential outlet for ARPA transportation spending. ►



AARP Work, Tools and Resources TRANSPORTATION

- AARP state offices have worked with organizations and local governments nationwide and advocated to advance the adoption of policy changes that make streets, sidewalks and trails safer for pedestrians, including **Complete Streets** and **Vision Zero** policies.
- AARP teams have also advocated and engaged older adults in discussions as communities have considered **ballot measures to expand access** to transportation. This includes successful efforts in Los Angeles, California (Measure M); Phoenix, Arizona (Prop 104); Marion County, Indiana (Marion County Transit Plan) and other more places.
- **AARP Community Challenge** grants have funded engagement efforts and direct improvements related to sidewalks, roadways and transportation infrastructure in hundreds of communities. For example, in Ada County, Idaho, the community received a 2021 grant from AARP to help fund a workplace mobility pilot program to assist small businesses in making facility or mobility enhancements that increase transportation options for employees.
- Through its **Future of Transportation** initiative, the **AARP Public Policy Institute** has profiled several critical policy advancements and improvements that communities can consider.
- Residents and organizations can also use the free **AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit** for information and worksheets about how to identify and address unsafe streets and sidewalks.

Access to public spaces is critical for older adults, particularly given their disproportionately low use of parks. One study of the 20 largest cities in the U.S., noted that while older adults represent 20 percent of the population living around parks, they account for only 4 percent of park users.

Temporary measures enacted during the pandemic, such as Slow Streets or Open Streets, were effective in reducing this disparity. ARPA provides a mechanism for making those temporary measures permanent. Many communities are already doing so. The result is increased access to public spaces (including outdoor dining) and improvements to the accessibility of public spaces for people of all ages and abilities.

San Francisco now views Slow Streets as “critical infrastructure” that attracts a diverse set of neighborhood users, including children, older adults, people with disabilities and people of color.

“In order to support further reopening of the economy,” the city’s website states, “we need to make San Francisco more welcoming and accessible for people who want to travel on foot, bicycle, wheelchair, scooter, skateboard or other forms of micromobility.”

Ensuring that older adults have access to public spaces and downtown corridors can also be a critical tool for local leaders to generate economic activity.

According to AARP’s *Longevity Economy Outlook*, the 50-plus population contributed \$8.3 trillion in economic activity to the nation’s economy in 2018. Looking forward, the amount is expected to more than triple to \$26.8 trillion by 2050. ■



AARP Work, Tools and Resources: PUBLIC SPACES

- AARP state offices work to increase equitable access to public spaces and **Main Streets**
- AARP state offices work with local officials to help ensure that older adults are included in **engagement and planning** discussions.
- The **AARP Community Challenge** has funded hundreds of grants that make improvements in public spaces, including those with an emphasis on pandemic recovery in 2021. In Honolulu, Hawaii, a grant supports pandemic recovery by installing parklets to serve as traffic calming interventions and provide additional outdoor spaces for people to safely gather.
- Members of the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** are working to improve access to public spaces, many of whom have included items in local budgets to add exercise equipment for older adults and make improvements to parks so they are more accessible with paved sidewalks, trails and more.
- Local leaders can use the free AARP publications, ***Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages*** and ***The Pop-Up Placemaking Tool Kit*** for inspiration and resources.

Case Study

OPEN, LIVABLE SPACES

AARP can help with:

- Engagement
- Resources
- Needs assessment

“Parks are such a critical part of the city fabric,” says Tori Kjer, executive director of the **Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust**. While that’s always been true, the pandemic prompted people to take greater advantage of parks and other open spaces in their communities. As local leaders prioritize investments in new public spaces and improve or reimagine existing parks, they must keep the needs of all residents in mind.

Community engagement is key to creating livable spaces for people of all ages. For instance, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, using input from the community, designed Golden Age Park as an intergenerational facility. The space incorporates age-appropriate, functional designs for senior residents as well as children. Kjer says an AARP Community Challenge, which is part of the AARP Livable Communities initiative, was critical to the project’s success by helping to fund park amenities.

The AARP Community Challenge is designed to bring communities together in order to quickly bring their visions to life. Just over half of the challenge grants have gone to improving access to parks and open spaces.

Since 2017, \$9.3 million in grant funding has been distributed among 804 organizations for implementing “quick action” projects. A full 100 percent of past grantees say they have seen greater overall awareness and engagement in their work (as indicated by attracting new volunteers and partner organizations), and 45 percent have used the grant to leverage additional funding.

Civic engagement are critical elements of the AARP Community Challenge. In 2020, both helped **Penn State Extension** educators to develop an online, intergenerational community assessment tool and supported materials for its “One Community– Many Generations” effort.

The process defined in the training materials helps community leaders and residents use the feedback to identify top priorities and take action. To test and refine the product, the team worked with a pilot project community to hold virtual sessions and a virtual walk to identify needs. Through that process the community identified a project it cared about and then used the grant funds toward its implementation. The assessment tool and training materials are available online and can be used by any community to gather feedback about livability from residents of all ages.

Finding success with AARP Community Challenge grants proves that a project is viable, which can convince others to invest in it.

Laura Semmelroth, director of creative placemaking for the **Wilmington Alliance** in Delaware, says an AARP Community Challenge grant helped a neighborhood garden and park qualify for and receive additional funding to finance a pergola. The garden is part of a project that revitalized a downtown neighborhood filled with many vacant lots. The work began with public engagement sessions about what to include in the new spaces.

“We asked residents what type of programming they were interested in to ensure there was local buy-in,” Semmelroth said. “The highlight of the project has been the positive community reaction. The green space has become a community staple and the neighbors are embracing the opportunities the garden presents. An increase in livability can have a dramatic effect on residents, and especially on older adults, who might have been socially isolated due to a fear of crime.” ■

As COVID-19 recovery work continues, a greater focus on equity and access in public spaces will allow all community members to take advantage of these spaces and amenities.

HIGH-SPEED INTERNET

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the nation's growing digital divide. As work, school and appointments shifted online, tens of millions of Americans were excluded because of a lack of affordable, reliable internet access.

Some 30 million Americans (9 percent of the population) don't have high-speed internet service (also known as broadband) in their homes, according to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The problem is particularly acute for older adults, who are already at increased risk of isolation. AARP studies show that 15 percent of adults age 50 or older do not have access to any type of internet and 60 percent say the cost of high-speed internet is a problem.

The gap also affects areas like health and telemedicine because those who don't have internet access also are more likely to have underlying health issues. According to the FCC's Connect2Health initiative, almost half of the nation's counties face a "double burden" of having high rates of chronic disease and a need for improved broadband connectivity.

In response, ARPA includes significant funding for broadband expansion through the Recovery Fund and Capital Projects Fund. It also builds upon funding in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 designed to reduce consumer prices via the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.

Combined, these two initiatives add up to billions in new funding and are "the broadband down payment the country needs," as the Brookings Institution noted in early 2021.

Leveraging ARPA funds and promoting the Emergency Broadband Benefit can help residents expand home broadband access, increase digital literacy for those who do not regularly use the internet, and reduce the overall cost of internet access to everyone in the community. ■

FEDERAL BROADBAND FUNDING

Capital Projects Fund

\$10 billion for states, territories, and tribes to cover the costs of capital projects like broadband infrastructure

Emergency Connectivity Fund

A **\$7.2 billion** competitive grant program for schools and libraries to purchase equipment and broadband connectivity for students, staff and library patrons in need during the pandemic

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

\$3.2 billion in aid to help reduce monthly bills for families and households struggling to afford internet service during the pandemic

Case Study

REINVIGORATING AND DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE POST-COVID

“Quite simply, our economy is changing so we need action now,” San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg said last fall during a Facebook Live conversation with Ismael Herrera, who leads AARP’s work in **San Antonio, Texas**.

The pandemic has wreaked havoc on communities across the country, as many faced both a health crisis and an economic one.

In San Antonio, more than 150,000 residents filed for unemployment, and a quarter of those lost jobs may never be available again. To address this dire situation, the city put forth a ballot initiative in the fall of 2020.

“Proposition B is an economic workforce recovery strategy to get the workforce back up on its feet,” Nirenberg explained about the measure to support workforce development and redevelopment aimed at the 40,000 residents with permanent job losses.

Passed overwhelmingly by voters, San Antonio’s four-year, \$154 million “Ready to Work” program puts forth two paths for reinvigorating the workforce. The first allows people to obtain a training or professional certificate in a short period. The second path, designed for individuals who already have some post-secondary credentials, enrolls workers in a two- to four-year degree track in targeted industries.

“The emphatic win for Prop B is a testament that our community supports one another and wants to invest in the people of San Antonio,” Nirenberg said about the multigenerational program, which includes wraparound services, ranging from child care to transportation supports that mitigate obstacles for older workers.

Because of the impact on older workers displacement,” the city will work closely with AARP and other organizations to get the word out about enrollment

AARP can help with:

- Innovation and best practices
- Communication
- Getting the word out about this new program

opportunities and to include older San Antonians in the workforce-recovery effort.

San Antonio’s investment in a multigenerational workforce approach is aligned with AARP research that shows how age-diverse workforces have a positive impact on employee engagement, productivity and the bottom line. Multigenerational teams also perform better and build a stronger pipeline of talent by providing continuity, stability and the retention of intellectual capital, as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The pandemic has accelerated trends that were already underway, forcing businesses and communities into a grand experiment about the future of work — pushing telework and flexible work practices forward with unexpected urgency.

As people live longer, they’re working longer, giving employers and employees of all ages the opportunity to reimagine what it means to earn and learn over a lifetime. San Antonio’s approach illustrates how local governments and communities can implement innovative strategies to embrace this unprecedented opportunity to redefine and redevelop its workforce.

More information about these trends and age-diverse workforces can be found in “Living, Learning and Earning Longer,” a resource compiled with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development so local governments can access and implement standards, policies and practices that reflect an age-diverse and inclusive workforce. ■

The pandemic has accelerated trends that were already underway.

WATER, SEWER AND UTILITIES

Local governments can use their ARPA fiscal recovery funds for “necessary investments” in infrastructure, particularly investments that meet health-related standards and improve resilience to climate change.

Investments to improve, repair or expand utility systems can achieve the goals of reducing costs for ratepayers (if special assessments be avoided). This can be critical for many low-income households, including adults on fixed incomes.

In addition, ARPA-funded investments to ensure greater reliability in energy and water systems protect people against the health and safety risks associated with blackouts, water restrictions and other weather-related crises.

Disruptions to these utilities — whether driven by a natural disaster or deteriorating infrastructure — disproportionately impact lower-income and older residents, particularly those who rely upon power for medical support equipment or don’t have the means to acquire generators or bottled water.

Projects such as the removal and replacement of lead pipes and system upgrades to withstand extreme weather contribute to a healthier and more secure home environment, and can ensure greater reliability and affordability for all residents. The fiscal recovery fund money can also be used to help offset rate increases that local governments would otherwise use to pay for drinking water or wastewater infrastructure projects.

ARPA also creates several new funding resources to assist targeted, low-income households with the cost of utilities, including a new funding program (see box) modeled after an existing federal program to subsidize utility costs for low-income households. The cost of water has been increasingly expensive in western states.

Other ARPA programs for homeowners and renters (detailed in the next section) can be used to help residents pay overdue utility bills that have accumulated as a result of the pandemic and avoid a service disconnection or displacement. ■

LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLD WATER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

ARPA has provided an additional **\$500 million** for a new emergency **Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)** to be administered by states.

The program was first authorized by the **2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act** for **\$638 million**. States are required to stand up LIHWAP before funds can be allocated to eligible households. Local officials will need to engage their state governments to understand access to the program.

HOUSING AND HEALTH

The affordability and supply of housing has been strained as a result of the economic impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationwide, more than 10 million renter and homeowner households were significantly overdue on their regular housing payments as of December 2020, placing them at heightened risk of losing their homes to foreclosure or eviction.

Even before the pandemic, many older adults struggled to pay their rent or mortgage, were living in units that are inaccessible or isolated, and were anxious for solutions that would help them stay housed in the future. Fears of the future became especially acute as national, state and local eviction moratoria came to an end.

ARPA allows flexibility when spending on homeowner and renter assistance through the recovery fund and includes additional money for the housing-insecure.

One of the most pressing matters for many localities is keeping residents in their homes. Even as employment is rising, millions still aren't caught up on their housing payments. Low-income households and people of color are especially at risk.

The housing assistance funding included in ARPA provides a remedy to many of these challenges by reducing requirements that housing instability be related to COVID-19, thereby allowing housing stability funds to be spent on programs including “specialized services for individuals with disabilities or seniors that supports their ability to access or maintain housing.”

ARPA also allows for rental assistance to be sent directly to renters if landlords opt out of the program. Governments can also direct immediate financial assistance to renters beyond direct rent payments. This assistance can include food, utility bills and moving expenses.

In addition, federal dollars can be used to help localities institute more housing solutions for older adults by increasing affordable housing options, which help at-risk older adults age in place. Recovery funds can be used to reduce homelessness, incentivize affordable housing development, grant housing vouchers, and provide residential counseling and housing navigation assistance.

ARPA funds can help create programs that incentivize home modifications, which are another way of helping older adults live safely in their existing homes.

An example of this type of program is Maine's Community Aging in Place Grant, which was put in place before the pandemic and is based on an aging-in-place initiative launched in Bath, Maine, in 2017. The program offers no-cost home safety checks, minor maintenance repairs, and accessibility modifications to eligible low-income elderly and disabled homeowners. Such initiatives offer older adults relatively simple solutions that can help them live independently in their homes — and out of the type of long-term care facilities that posed a deadly risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. ►

ARPA HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE FUNDS

ARPA included **\$9.9 billion** for a **Homeowner Assistance Fund** to prevent mortgage delinquencies, defaults and foreclosures.

The act also nearly doubled the money available for **Emergency Rental Assistance** to more than **\$46 billion**, and allows for more flexible use of funds.

ARPA, ADUs and HCBS

ARPA provides an opportunity for communities to reassess their approach to housing and consider policy changes that provide more housing choice for older adults, particularly those who wish to remain in their home community.

One solution can include encouraging and promoting state and local policies that allow for **Accessory Dwelling Units** (ADUs), such as backyard cottages and garage apartments. ADUs have numerous benefits for older homeowners, including helping them maintain their independence by providing additional income to offset property taxes, maintenance and repair costs, or by providing housing for a caregiver. ADUs can also become the primary residents' home if they wish to downsize, allowing older adults to rent out the larger house, or have family move into it.

ARPA also included several programs to expand access to **Home and Community-Based Services** (HCBS) that help older adults remain in their homes. While most of these programs are directed at the state level, local governments and their partners have a role to play in helping to ensure community members have access to this funding. Local leaders can benefit from staying in close touch with their Area Agency on Aging and other aging network organizations to ensure funds are distributed locally and to identify ways to help connect residents with HCBS that can help them safely age in place.



AARP Work, Tools and Resources: HOUSING

- AARP state offices actively participate in discussions about housing. In 2020, **AARP Pennsylvania** supported and advocated through webinars and letters of support for the Philadelphia City Council to pass an Emergency Housing Protective Package. The package enabled renters to avoid eviction, waived late fees, restored funding to the Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund, and directed federal CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act resources to critical housing programs.
- Through five years of grantmaking under the **AARP Community Challenge**, AARP has provided grants totaling nearly \$500,000 to expand the range of housing solutions. In 2021, a grant helped in the conversion of a hotel to transitional housing for Jackson County, Oregon, residents displaced during the pandemic and concurrent wildfires.
- Localities enrolled in the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** are involved in age-friendly housing efforts, including in the advancement of policies on ADUs, home modifications, accessibility and affordability.
- AARP's publications about ADUs — including ***The ABCs of ADUs*** and ***Accessory Dwelling Units: A Step by Step Guide to Design and Development*** — provide an overview of the benefits of ADUs and how local leaders can encourage their adoption.
- AARP programs including **AARP HomeFit** can educate residents, local leaders and remodeling professionals about ways to make a home safer and more comfortable for residents of every age.

The health consequences of the pandemic have been especially debilitating for older Americans. Additional funding in ARPA directs aid specifically toward nutrition programs, food assistance, and vaccine access in rural areas.

With the ongoing expansion of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to local farmers' markets, the additional funding means that low-income Americans in food deserts can more easily access healthy food options.

In at-risk neighborhoods, recovery fund dollars can be used for a wide range of services, such as helping residents access health services; home-based care or counseling; as well as services to support healthy living environments, such as lead-paint removal. ■

ARPA HEALTH AND HUNGER FUNDING

15 percent increase in **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP) benefits for all participants is extended through September 30, 2021

\$37 million for senior nutrition through the **Commodity Supplemental Food Program**

\$500 million in **Community Facility Program** funds to help rural hospitals and local communities broaden access to COVID-19 vaccines and food assistance

ARPA SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FUNDING

\$460 million for **Older American Act** (OAA) supportive services

\$25 million for OAA services for **Native American** communities

\$44 million for OAA evidence-based **health promotion and disease prevention** programs

\$145 million for the **National Family Caregiver Support Program**

\$10 million for the **Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**

\$276 million to fund the **Elder Justice Act**

\$50 million for grants to public transit systems to **improve transportation access** for older adults and people with disabilities

\$10 million to create a **new technical assistance center for kinship families** in which the primary caregiver is an adult age 55 or older or the child has one or more disabilities

Case Study

THE VACCINE ROLLOUT

Volunteers and AARP Resources Help Communities Get a Job Done

AARP can help:

- Leverage resources
- Enhance communication
- Implement programs

Even though the federal and state governments prioritized older adults during the initial COVID-19 vaccine rollout, many older adults struggled to access the vaccines.

Vaccines were often not available through primary-care physicians so had to be obtained at clinics, mass vaccination sites or pharmacies, with appointments available only through unstable and decentralized online portals. Those with physical limitations or who had trouble with technology struggled.

“We heard so much fear and desperation from older people during the confusion of the vaccine rollout,” said Anne Schroth, co-director and healthy aging coordinator of Maine’s **Healthy Peninsula**, which represents communities in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. “Our efforts seemed to help to ease the anxiety and frustration, especially for people who don’t have access to or facility with technology”

In Colorado, Niki Delson, co-chair of the **Carbondale Age-Friendly Community Initiative**, was part of a three-woman team of self-dubbed “Shot Whisperers” who researched and shared information about unused vaccine doses in pharmacies, clinics and vaccination sites that would otherwise have gone to waste. Their outreach targeted older adults with health issues who were having trouble figuring out their vaccine eligibility and access.

In **Sarasota County, Florida**, which has an active age-friendly program, several vaccination clinics were staffed largely by volunteers, including retired nurses and doctors. About 40 percent of the county’s population is over 65, so the county created a registration system to save older residents from having to hunt for the small number of initially available doses.

Communities, local leaders and volunteers involved in the AARP age-friendly network shared information with and reached out to vulnerable residents who didn’t know where to get vaccinated

Another Florida county worked with faith leaders and churches, Hispanic community organizations, and the local NAACP to dispel vaccine skepticism among people of color. Those efforts were largely successful, with more than half of the county’s Black and Hispanic residents over age 65 getting vaccinated during the first round.

In Massachusetts, which is a state member of the AARP age-friendly network, the **Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing** created an illustrated card to provide information about preventive measures such as hand-washing and social distancing. The card also shows pictures depicting COVID-19 symptoms and preferred methods of communication (such as writing and lip-reading), as well as resources for finding vaccinations. The resource is available in eight languages, in large print, and in a screen-reader-accessible version. The state’s website also provides a version that can be adapted for use by health care practitioners outside of Massachusetts.

Such efforts demonstrate how AARP programs can support communities and assist in communicating with citizens. Local governments should consider how these models might be transferable for project management and the required tasks of accounting and documenting the use of ARPA funds. ■

IMPLEMENTING AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN INVESTMENTS: **Working With AARP**

AARP can be a partner and ally for local governments seeking to leverage funding under ARPA by helping local officials face three specific challenges:

1. Engagement and Communications

Public communications requires so much more than simply churning out press releases. It's a way for local officials to let residents know what they're doing and why, and for residents to hold local governments accountable.

Public communications is also the way residents can acquire information or share their views with policymakers. However, it has become increasingly more difficult for local officials to keep residents informed.

In April 2021, a coalition of organizations surveyed local officials to learn what they would be focused on in the coming year. The top choice of the nearly 600 respondents was community engagement.

Successful local officials understand that engaging their residents in general — and especially now as they plan for how to spend ARPA funds — is critical for achieving good outcomes. But engaging residents is a heavy lift, one that requires a certain level of intimacy since community engagement is essentially an ongoing dialogue, and engaging in a superficial or inauthentic way can actually strain the relationship between residents and their governments.

Older adults are an influential population group in many communities. They are growing in numbers as communities age, they are incredibly engaged, they care about their communities — and they vote at a much higher rate than younger voters.

AARP's state offices can help local officials develop communications strategies and events that engage older adults in their outreach regarding ARPA planning.

For example, after hosting hundreds of state and local tele-town halls during the coronavirus pandemic, AARP is hosting online events with mayors and county officials. The conversations allow local leaders to share their vision and hear directly from residents.

In May 2021, AARP arranged a tele-town hall in which Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego joined AARP Arizona for a discussion with 1,000 older adults about their pandemic-recovery priorities. The conversation was a two-way street: Mayor Gallego spoke about the ways Phoenix is focusing on older adults under ARPA and older residents told her about their concerns and priorities.

Beyond tele-town halls, AARP can support local leaders by providing an

important constituency with critical information. That ability to communicate is key to engagement (by letting constituents know how and where to share their views with local leaders) and to transparency (by letting constituents know where and how to access information about their government's plans and activities).

During the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, AARP state offices worked with local governments and organizations to connect with older adults. AARP Alabama worked with the Alabama United Way's 2-1-1 system to help residents register for a vaccine. AARP Maryland launched a similar effort by placing messages in English and Spanish on buses and bus shelters with the goal of reaching people who lack internet access. ►

2. Capacity Building

A tremendous barrier for many local leaders is the lack of staff and the capacity to plan, manage and execute ARPA-funded projects.

Countless local governments lost staff during the Great Recession that were never replaced. Prior to the pandemic many were struggling to have the capacity required for performing efficiently and effectively. Today, many municipalities and local governments are reluctant to hire even temporary staff to help manage and properly use their infusion of federal money.

Local officials have used the “Pig in the Python” analogy (a large bulge in an otherwise level pattern) to describe the situation regarding the huge but temporary workload on their staffs and systems.

Others point out that the staff shortages within their governments are made even more challenging because the community agencies, nonprofits, and other funding recipients they often work with also lack the people-power and expertise to meet the documentation and reporting requirements that come with ARPA funds.

Experienced older adults often represent a critical untapped resource for local governments — for volunteer and for paid positions.

Three in four adults age 50-plus volunteered in the past year. Many older adults have valuable and applicable work experience and are interested in learning new skills.

According to a recent AARP survey, two-thirds of older workers are interested in additional job or

skills training, which can be a great match for local governments looking to fill both short- and long-term staffing gaps. Many communities already know about this phenomenon and intentionally engage older adults.

For example, North Yarmouth, Maine, a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, has implemented a “first-greeter” program that has older volunteers working in close coordination with the local government and partners to help connect new residents to resources in town.

As one chief financial officer told AARP: “We’re looking at two- to three-year jobs. With the new federal stimulus resources, jurisdictions have tremendous needs to add experienced workers. It would be great to have a pool of people in their post-retirement years to do these jobs. It would be even better to have a partner who would help us market these jobs to experienced workers who would embrace temporary employment.”

Through its network of partners, members and volunteers, AARP can share information about opportunities among older adults who have the skills to manage and implement local projects.

For example, through Experience Matters (a pilot program with Cities of Service) and the AARP Livable Communities Corps (a pilot with Public Allies), AARP state offices helped recruit volunteers and AmeriCorps VISTA placements within state and local governments and organizations. The partnerships benefited livability efforts. The recruitment efforts identified experienced residents the partner organizations could tap to help advance their missions.

3. Identifying Opportunities

AARP can help local leaders identify specific opportunities for using ARPA funding to help older residents. AARP can also provide guidance about local policies and programs that can be initiated using ARPA support. Through its research, expertise and connections with hundreds of communities across the country, AARP is equipped to support local officials and help shape policies to better support older residents and people of *all* ages.

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities provides a programmatic framework and serves as a way for local leaders to engage residents and implement the types of changes that make communities more livable for people of all ages, especially older adults. The towns, cities, counties and states enrolled in the network have conducted community assessments and developed (or are developing) action plans that provide a set of clear recommendations and actions in their unique localities. Local officials often look to their existing plans, including age-friendly action plans, to identify priorities and peer communities as a source of ideas.

The age-friendly action plans completed by network members are robust work products that are informed by extensive public engagement efforts at the local level. They provide a detailed list of actions the community plans to take to help older adults.

As elected officials and leaders pursue opportunities and best practices for ARPA plans, AARP staff and volunteers can help by providing input and identifying promising actions.

Leaders in communities not yet enrolled in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities can use AARP resources and reach out to AARP to receive guidance about age-friendly policies. Links to all of the action plans are available on the searchable AARP Livable Communities map: [AARP.org/LivableMap](https://www.aarp.org/LivableMap). ■

Case Study

SMALL BUSINESS RECOVERY

AARP can help with:

- Collaboration
- Technical assistance
- Innovation support for small businesses

Despite the devastating economic impacts of the pandemic, the inherent drive toward innovation and adaptation found among many Main Street commercial district leaders and business owners serves communities well.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit small businesses hard, forcing many to shutter their doors temporarily or even permanently. The impact trickled down to individuals, including older adults, who lost their jobs or were forced to leave the workforce due to increased caregiving demands at home, a consequence of the pandemic that has disproportionately impacted women and minorities.

Economic-recovery strategies that are safe, equitable and age-friendly are key to ensuring the revitalization and stability of small businesses and communities. As longtime centers of small business innovation, commercial districts nationwide are natural incubators for creative approaches to place-based entrepreneurship and engagement. This has never been more apparent.

Soon after COVID-19 temporarily closed businesses downtown, the city of Florence, South Carolina, and its Main Street program **Florence Downtown** mobilized to help small businesses.

That response has been diverse and multi-level, offering an e-commerce technical assistance program, a grant program and guidance on the adaptive use of spaces.

In April 2020, **Main Street America**, a frequent AARP partner, found that nearly two-thirds of the 6,000 small businesses it surveyed had no online sales component. However, since then, in response to the pandemic, many tenacious small businesses have incorporated e-commerce platforms into their business models. .

In Florence, innovation and collaboration supporting e-commerce have taken center stage. The Main Street staff help business owners identify their e-commerce goals and provide technical expertise to add new baseline functions, such as

Digital lifelines enabled business owners to diversify their revenue streams while attracting and supporting a diverse pool of remote workers

shipping or updated payment systems, to their online platforms. For businesses that don't have a full e-commerce platform, the city provides alternative training and guidance on e-gift card launches, website checklists and best practices, and sharing of partner information on essential website elements. Though created in response to the pandemic, the city plans to continue offering these services free of charge.

The new hybrid-online approach put small businesses in a better position to weather COVID-19 impacts while fostering overall resilience that will allow them to better withstand inevitable disruptions in the future.

As these examples illustrate, continued collaboration, innovation and investment in infrastructure (particularly in rural communities) are critical to championing recovery. Local-government support of entrepreneurship, e-commerce, adaptive use of physical spaces, and digital enhancements (public Wi-Fi and high-speed internet services) have been and will remain critical to ensuring the recovery of small businesses and commercial districts.

In 2020, Main Street America and AARP collaborated on resources local-government leaders can tap to explore strategies that can assist in the economic recovery of small businesses and communities that are navigating the impacts of the pandemic and the aftershocks of the shutdowns. A link to the collection can be found by visiting the “A-Z Topics: Economic Development” landing page at [AARP.org/Livable](https://www.aarp.org/Livable). ■

CONCLUSION

Many questions remain about the long-term toll the COVID-19 pandemic will have for the health and economic security of Americans and the communities where they live. The pandemic shed a light on the challenges many communities face and showed many Americans and communities how resilient they can be.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 has presented local governments with an opportunity to invest in their communities in a way that addresses local needs today while preparing for the future. By using a framework of livability for all, that vision can be achieved.

AARP can help local leaders understand how to approach these critical investments to ensure that they deliver benefits for people of all ages, abilities, races and incomes, and allow communities of all locations and sizes to recover and thrive.

By helping with a community's engagement and communications needs, capacity building and the need to identify suitable opportunities, AARP can be a partner and ally to local governments and local leaders seeking to leverage funding under ARPA. ■



Consider AARP an Engagement Partner

- Reach out to an **AARP State Office**. (Find contact information at states.AARP.org or email livable@AARP.org to ask for guidance.)
- Visit **AARP.org/Livable** to use tools and resources (including many referenced in this publication) to help advance livability work
- Check **AARP.org/LivableMap** to learn more about livability and the age-friendly work happening throughout the country
- Subscribe to the free, weekly ***AARP Livable Communities e-Newsletter*** at AARP.org/LivableSubscribe or by texting the word Livable to 50767
- Sharing pressing challenges and requests for helpful resources by emailing **AARP Livable Communities** at livable@AARP.org

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and Older Adults

Opportunities and Resources for Local Leaders

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law in March 2021 and represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance communities.

The law provides local governments with the ability to create economic resilience by investing resources to address persistent livability challenges, and creating new and innovative solutions to make communities better for all residents.

This publication — *The American Rescue Plan Act and Older Adults: Opportunities and Resources for Local Leaders* — was created to help local leaders identify opportunities within ARPA that can improve livability in their communities.

As local leaders weigh opportunities and make forward-looking investments, AARP's resources, tools, research, intellectual capital and relationships can help empower communities to best utilize their funding to create inclusive, livable places for all.

- Visit the **AARP Livable Communities Library** at AARP.org/LivableLibrary to download, share or order this and other free publications
- Learn more about the **AARP Livable Communities** initiative at AARP.org/Livable
- Stay informed and know when AARP releases new livability resources for local leaders by reading the free, weekly **AARP Livable Communities e-Newsletter** — sign up at AARP.org/LivableSubscribe or text the word LIVABLE to 50757



Photo: University of Texas at Austin

Dell Medical District at the University of Texas at Austin (Certified to SITES, LEED and PEER)

GUIDE TO ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY WITH AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDS

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Green Building Council is committed to a sustainable, prosperous future. Our mission is to transform the way buildings and communities are designed, built, and operated, enabling an environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and resilient world.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) is the latest COVID-19 relief package, enacted in March 2021. The bill allocated \$195.3 billion to states and the District of Columbia and \$140.2 billion to local governments, to be disbursed over two years. The State and local ARP funds are to be used to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and public health impacts. States and local governments have various opportunities, outlined by the U.S. Department of Treasury *Interim final rule*,¹ to invest in infrastructure projects with a nexus to pandemic impacts to advance public health and sustainability in their communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted exacerbated preexisting public health disparities, and expanding green infrastructure is a beneficial approach to address and improve place-based health. The ARP funding can be used for targeted infrastructure investment, specifically investments in public outdoor spaces, water and energy efficiency, business districts, low-income housing, and schools. Such project types can have a long-lasting impacting on public health and economic resilience post-pandemic.

¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury, [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds; Interim final rule](#), 86 Fed. Reg. 26786 (May 21, 2021).

This brief outlines possible infrastructure investment projects² that could qualify for funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The Treasury *Interim final rule* makes clear that infrastructure projects with a relationship to public health or economic resilience post-pandemic qualify under ARP. Additionally, any activity that could be eligible for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) and Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) qualifies. To help state and local governments consider these infrastructure investments, below we provide, for several potential project types: (1) a description of the project type, (2) a representative project to illustrate the nature and benefits of the project type (but not conducted with ARP funds); and (3) identification of the specific funding authority in the Treasury *Interim final rule*.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS

Development and renovation of public outdoor spaces

ARP allocated funding can be used to develop and renovate public outdoor spaces.

Investments in quality green spaces such as public parks and other outdoor spaces have a direct relationship with [public health](#). Improvements to green infrastructure support climate resilience and increase accessibility to outdoor spaces. These improvements can include but are not limited to increased tree cover, rain gardens, and other stormwater reduction systems.

Investing in outdoor spaces in communities that are underserved and vulnerable improves community wellbeing and public health outcomes for those individuals whose health was likely to have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. For example, increased, high quality green space can help reduce urban heat island effect and improve localized air quality, or can manage stormwater runoff to reduce risk of flooding and protect water quality. Well-designed green space and connectors can encourage residents to take advantage of outdoor spaces. Exposure to green space, even in limited settings such as residential streets and small parks, has a positive impact on physical and mental health and [can limit damage caused by COVID-19](#).

These projects can achieve deep sustainability and resilience outcomes by applying and certifying to the [Sustainable Sites Initiative \(SITES\)](#). SITES is a sustainability-focused framework that encourages ecosystem protection, carbon storage, flood mitigation, and other benefits to our communities.

As an example of how green infrastructure projects connect with public health is Denver's Platte to Park Hill project. Last year, [the city of Denver](#) used a stormwater detention project as an opportunity to prioritize health equity and increase green space with a mile-long, 12-acre greenway.

- *Funding authority: CWSRF eligible projects (Treasury Interim Guidance pp. 26803), nexus with public health outcomes (Treasury Interim Guidance pp. 26791).*

Water fixtures and major water appliances

ARP also allocates funds to improve water fixtures and major water appliances. State and local governments can use ARP funds to upgrade water appliances to be more efficient and be WaterSense and ENERGY STAR compliant. This can be particularly beneficial for residents of low-income housing. Higher water efficiency can improve affordability for low-income housing residents. As noted above, projects that would be eligible to receive financial assistance through the EPA's CWSRF or DWSRF qualify under ARP.

² This brief is based on our interpretation of the Treasury *Interim final rule*, and state and local governments are advised to determine eligibility of a particular project based on the criteria and with input from their counsel.

[Freedom Commons](#), for example, is an affordable housing development in Syracuse, New York. The development has all low flow water fixtures with WaterSense labeling as part of its LEED Gold Certification.

- *Funding authority: DWSRF eligible projects (Treasury Interim Guidance pp. 26802).*

Energy resilience

Recent increases in extreme weather events due to climate change have highlighted the importance of energy resilience. Energy resilience projects with a connection to economic resilience and public health disparities can qualify for ARP funding. Energy resilience can affect public health when residents, businesses, or core municipal services lose access to heating or cooling systems in extreme heat or cold, lose broadband access, or lose access to power. Economic impacts can include impacts on businesses as well as costs for local or state governments due to power loss.

Examples of possible energy resilience projects may include upgrades to buildings such as community centers, schools, affordable housing, and other public buildings. Upgrades to these buildings or facilities that would address economic resilience and qualify under ARP could include improving energy efficiency through envelope, heating and cooling, lighting, energy controls, and other systems upgrades; renewable energy and energy storage through batteries or thermal storage, for resilience; and related systems such as improving indoor air quality.

The city of [Alexandria, Virginia](#), has proposed a number of energy resilience projects for use of its direct ARP funding allocation. These projects include a resilient power system that combines a solar energy system, battery storage, and existing natural gas emergency power generation. Officials have also proposed solar power system and battery energy storage installation at various city facilities.

- *Funding authority: Responding to COVID-19, Responding to Negative Economic Impacts (Treasury Interim Guidance pp. 26788-26791)*



Photo: Stuart Isett

Kirke Park, Seattle, WA (SITES-certified)

Neighborhood and housing projects

Certain shovel-in-the-ground neighborhood and housing infrastructure upgrades also qualify for ARP funding due to their nexus with economic and public health consequences of the pandemic. Qualified projects would have public health and economic benefits to neighborhoods and communities. Activities such as increasing tree cover, adding outdoor green space in community centers, and building or upgrading community facilities that could be used to support public health, resilience, or disaster recovery.

Such projects should focus on disadvantaged communities and take a broad view of health, aiming to improve mental and physical wellness. Projects can include building improvements, street and sidewalks, and green space. We recommend state and local governments consider projects in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, to address disparities such as air quality, stormwater runoff, the urban heat island effect, and access to green space. For example, air quality can be improved through integrating building energy upgrades to reduce onsite use of gas and oil, thereby reducing emissions, and modifying traffic and adding trees and vegetation with “green streets” approaches to reduce localized impacts of vehicle emissions.

The [Smart Surfaces Coalition](#) offers resources and data for cities to learn how transforming roofs, roads, sidewalks, and other public spaces from dark, non-porous materials to “smart surfaces,” which are light colored, porous, generate clean energy or are vegetated, reflect heat to save money, improve air quality and reduce flood risk.



There are many options for shovel-in-the-ground projects to address public health via green infrastructure investments. For example, the [Edison Eastlake One Vision](#) Plan in Phoenix, Arizona, was implemented to address the urban heat island effect in the area. The project resulted in sidewalks with 75 percent minimum shade cover, heat resiliency centers, cool paving technologies, and increases in open public space.

- *Funding authority: Responding to COVID-19, Responding to Negative Economic Impacts (Treasury Interim Guidance pp. 26788-26791)*

Business district projects

Business district projects can also be implemented alone, or in conjunction with neighborhood and housing improvements, to improve community health and economic resilience. Projects to improve business districts that would be eligible for ARP funds could involve improvements and expansions of outdoor spaces for dining, shopping, and recreation that may have been temporarily implemented during the pandemic, or development of new outdoor spaces for dining and other uses.

Projects need to have a benefit to public health or economic resilience. Some examples include increasing green space and tree cover in business districts and implementation of green streets, to make the business area more attractive and desirable. Projects could reduce urban heat island effect, mitigate stormwater runoff such as with rain gardens or other green infrastructure, and increase pedestrian and bike-friendliness. Increased walkability and access to green space can also improve economic resilience in business communities affected by the pandemic, especially those in undervalued communities by encouraging pedestrian traffic. More green space in central business districts can also be used to address air pollution and public health disparities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The [Golden Triangle Business Improvement District](#) in Washington, DC, is the first business improvement district to be named a LEED-certified community. The district contains 17 rain gardens and the project involved conversion of 12,000 square feet of asphalt and concrete to green space, which capture and filter stormwater while simultaneously reducing the area’s heat island effect. The project also involved installation of 500 bike racks in the neighborhood which accommodate 1,000 bikes.

- *Funding authority: Responding to Negative Economic Impacts (Treasury Interim Guidance pp. 26791).*



Photo: Golden Triangle BID

Golden Triangle Business Improvement District, Washington, DC (LEED-certified)

Schools

ARP funding can also be used to invest in greener, healthier schools. Upgrades to schools to improve public health and sustainability include upgrades to high-performance HVAC systems, remediation of sources of poor indoor air quality (IAQ), improved ventilation and filtrations systems, and installation of on-site solar or wind systems for power generation to enable schools to remain open despite power outages. Energy resilience and water efficiency can also be addressed in school improvement projects. While ARP provided specific funding, through the ESSER program, to local educational agencies,³ states and local government funds can also be used to support improving schools, which is especially important in areas which entered the pandemic with schools in poor condition.

Projects to improve schools that relate to public health can include school building improvements for indoor environmental quality and energy systems, as well as school grounds. These projects can also include increased tree cover and green space outdoors and infrastructure for outdoor learning spaces, and playground amenities to increase attractiveness and use. This is particularly important in areas where students have limited access to outdoor recreation. Projects should advance equity in schools and address the needs of students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Durham public schools](#) have prioritized IAQ and outdoor space in their use of COVID relief funds. The district has invested in HVAC systems and air filtration in order to maintain IAQ targets. Funding will also improve outdoor learning spaces to ensure teachers and students have access to safe and healthy options for classes.

- *Funding authority: COVID-19 Mitigation and Prevention (Treasury Interim Guidance pp. 26790).*

To learn more, contact us at publicpolicies@usgbc.org

³ The funding authority discussed in this brief differs from the specific funds allocated to school infrastructure in the ARP. To learn more about dedicated educational funds, see, e.g., The Center for Green Schools and K12 Undaunted, [Five Guiding Principles: How Schools Can Use COVID Relief Funds to Ensure Healthy, Green Schools](#) (2021).



Tishaura Jones

Mar 29, 2021

The People's Agenda: A Plan for the Federal Stimulus Funds

Introduction

Deep racial inequities, compounded by an unprecedented pandemic, economic recession, and wave of violence have brought St. Louis to a crossroads, one we've been at before, and families across our city are on the brink. The over half a billion dollars coming to the city through the American Rescue Plan Act represents a lifeline, and my first priority as mayor will be to expedite delivery of direct relief in the form of mobile and stationary mass vaccination clinics, rental and mortgage assistance, relief for small businesses and their workers, and wraparound support for the unhoused.

I will work to ensure that we seize this once in a generation opportunity to transform an intolerable and unsustainable status quo. We need to make bold investments designed to chart a new course towards justice, equity and democracy. And while I have plenty of proposals — affordable housing, public transit, school renovation, free Wi-Fi, community centers, land remediation, upgrading 911 dispatch, workforce development and more — I'm committed to listening to and incorporating your ideas, and making this the people's stimulus.

Process is policy, and I believe that bringing in diverse perspectives will help us make wise investments and build a diversified portfolio. At the end of the day, the truth is that half a billion dollars is too much money for the city to allocate alone, and we'll need help. That's why I plan to allocate a portion of the funds through a participatory budgeting process. Additionally, I plan to transfer funds to public entities like SLPS, BiState, the Continuum of Care and the Housing Authority, and to capitalize public-private partnerships focused on equitable development and college promise programs.

At the end of the day, the money will flow through the city, and as Mayor, I will immediately plug in to the federal stimulus command center, connect with statewide partners to bring mobile and stationary mass vaccination clinics to St. Louis, work with the Board of Estimate & Apportionment and Board of Aldermen to appropriate stimulus funds, negotiate Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) to transfer funds to other public entities with the capacity to deliver direct relief, and issue RFPs to partner with community organizations across the city to reach out to vulnerable communities — senior citizens without internet access, single mothers too busy to navigate confusing bureaucratic processes, and countless others — to ensure that they have access to the vaccine, rental assistance, and other resources.

I am committed to full transparency throughout this process, including an open data portal tracking appropriations and expenditures. I will also establish an intergovernmental task force with working groups focused on implementation: negotiating intergovernmental transfers and MOUs, working with city departments to issue RFPs, designing and staffing an office of participatory budgeting, and more. All working group meetings will be open to the public, and the task-force will hold regular hearings, providing all residents with the opportunity to ask questions and offer comments. Finally, I will dedicate stimulus funds to hiring a robust and independent auditing team to work with Comptroller Green.



From north to south, Tishaura has gotten out, listened to our community, and made plans and policy that works for everyone. But, she still needs your input, your ideas, and she needs to hear what YOU, the people of Saint Louis, require from your government.

What is the American Rescue Plan Act?

The American Rescue Plan of 2021 is the Biden-Harris Administration's federal effort to end this pandemic and help rebuild our economy. The bill is a \$1.9T investment in communities across

our Nation, and Saint Louis will receive over \$500M through this bill, half coming in May of 2021 and the other half coming 12 months later.



Limitations on Spending

While the City has great flexibility in the ways that it spends these incoming funds, the money must be spent for the following purposes:

- To respond to the public health threat posed by COVID-19 and its “negative economic impacts.”
- To support and provide premium pay to essential workers in the public and private sectors.
- To fund any government services, up to the amount of revenue loss due to COVID, calculated

relative to real revenues collected in FY2019.

- To invest in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.
- Transfers: The city may transfer funds to “special-purpose unit[s] of state or local government.”
- Funds may not be used to offset tax cuts or to pay pension funds.

My Immediate Priorities: Direct Relief

I have always believed that those closest to the problem are closest to the solution. I am pledging to listen to those who have been most adversely affected by this pandemic: to the thousands of tenants with evictions hanging over their heads, protected only by eviction moratoria under constant attack; and to the small businesses hanging on by a thread, supported by communities which treasure them, and trying everything to make it to the other side of the pandemic.

I have heard their dissatisfaction with the city's ongoing failure to effectively disburse funds, and I have a responsibility to deliver.

Rental, Mortgage & Utility Assistance

- The city's decentralized approach is widely recognized as dysfunctional and inefficient. Not only has the city failed to disburse funds in a timely manner, applicants are frequently tossed from one entity to another, creating multiple opportunities for vulnerable people to get lost or disengage.
- I will streamline the application process for rental and mortgage assistance, centralizing disbursement in a trusted partner, establishing both an online intake portal and multiple in person intake sites across the city, and funding direct service organizations to conduct outreach to marginalized communities.
- Housing is a human right, and I will work to establish and fund a permanent rental assistance fund.

Small Business Grants

- I will work with the St. Louis Development Corporation to expand the city's small business grant program. This program will fund business interruption costs, new operational costs created by COVID, and reopening costs. Eligible costs will include rents, utilities, salaries, benefits, and more.
- Funds will be allocated according to demonstrated need, as determined by applicant's income statement and balance sheet, and according to neutral principles which prioritize getting support to the sectors that need it most. All participants will be required to provide an update to determine the effectiveness of the program, and a random subset of participants will be audited to protect against fraud.

Emergency Shelter & Rapid Re-Housing

- As soon as the eviction moratorium runs out, hundreds, and possibly thousands of city residents will be left without a home. I will instruct the Department of Human Services to work hand in hand with the Continuum of Care to set up hundreds of new shelter beds as soon as possible.
- I believe that, as a city, we must wrap our arms around our most vulnerable communities, and provide unhoused individuals with basic necessities including food, transportation vouchers, mobile phones, healthcare, including mental health services, and more. These shelters must be hubs for supportive services, including social workers and case managers who can plug families into rapid-rehousing programs.



Targeted Basic Income

- Between stimulus checks, expansions to the child tax credit and unemployment insurance, thousands of St. Louisans are already receiving a form of basic income. I will dedicate funds to supplement these programs, supporting those who fall through the cracks, including refugees and undocumented residents, expanding monthly allocations to those with demonstrated need, and extending the support through 2024 to the extent funds allow.

Wi-Fi in Public Spaces

- This pandemic exposed many of the inequities that we've always known were there. The digital divide that exists within our City is stark, and as Mayor, I will address this head-on.
- We will work to bridge the divide by installing free, public Wi-Fi in city parks, bus stations, traffic lights, and on public property.

Preparing our City for Long-Term Growth

As Mayor, one of my top priorities will be working to ensure the long-term health and growth of our City. Schools are closing and neighborhoods are being hollowed out because we have failed to plan for the futures of our most vulnerable neighborhoods.

As Mayor, I will develop strategies that prepare our children for the increasingly competitive workforce, stabilize neighborhoods and attract young families to grow our population, and create robust and thriving communities.



We'll Need Your Help and Your Insight

Recovering from this pandemic will require your input as well. I am committed to creating a plan for the future of Saint Louis that uses a participatory budgeting process for a significant portion of the funds we are going to receive. I believe that empowering and engaging citizens in the democratic process improves the quality of public investments, is a direct response to the public's lack of trust in

government, and contributes to a sense of community in the City. You'll be able to engage in the process in many different ways: town hall meetings, surveys, and public comment.

Conclusion

As we rebuild, we must also bear in mind that in our globalized world, another health crisis is inevitable. With my background in public health and a strong partnership with a licensed physician in County Executive Dr. Sam Page, I stand ready to prepare our region for a healthier future.

These proposals are not meant to be comprehensive; they are a starting point, and I welcome your feedback and insight. But though I am committed to a robust community engagement process, I am also committed to moving quickly. I am the only candidate in this race ready to distribute these funds quickly, equitably, and with a focus on those struggling the most.

We stand at a historic moment which demands renewed investment in communities who have been left out and left behind, who have been knocked down but who have refused to be knocked out, and those for whom the pandemic has hit the hardest.

I am ready to serve, ready to lead, and ready to unify our City on day one. We do not have time for leadership to learn on the job or leadership that hasn't shown up in our communities.

The money that we have incoming from the federal government is an incredible opportunity for our City to hit reset and grow into a more equitable home for the people who live here.

I am up to the challenge of disbursing these funds with an **eye towards equity**, and I come equipped with the executive experience to move quickly. Delivering relief to those who need it most is a matter of saving lives and protecting people's families and homes.

I'm ready to get to work and deliver results. It's what the people of Saint Louis deserve.

Mayor Tishaura O. Jones Enacts \$135 Million in American Rescue Plan Act Funding, Delivers Aid to St. Louis Families

The package will invest more than \$135 million into helping support and stabilize neighborhoods in anticipation of more federal funds down the line.

August 16, 2021

Today, Mayor Tishaura O. Jones, joined by faith, labor and elected leaders, announced that she will sign the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) direct relief package passed out of the St. Louis Board of Aldermen. The total package will invest more than \$135 million into families and neighborhoods across St. Louis, helping support and stabilize neighborhoods in anticipation of more federal funds down the line.

"This is a public safety plan, a public health plan, and an economic relief plan all in one. We have to boost our vaccination rates, help keep families in their homes and address the root causes of crime," said Mayor Tishaura O. Jones. "I'm grateful to Congresswoman Cori Bush, Comptroller Darlene Green, the St. Louis Board of Aldermen, and the public for their work in making this a reality. My administration's top priority is now getting this urgent relief, including \$500 direct payments, to thousands of St. Louis families. But this is just the beginning; we still have hundreds of millions of federal dollars in the bank to transform and revitalize St. Louis, and I will work to make sure those investments benefit our entire city."

The final package was informed by more than 2,500 comments from the public and multiple community feedback sessions. Highlights of the relief package include:

- **\$500 direct cash assistance payments** to 10,000 St. Louis families negatively impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

- **\$8 million in public health infrastructure** to connect people with the resources they need and get more people vaccinated with mobile vaccine clinics, vaccine incentives, and community canvasses to meet St. Louisans in their neighborhoods and homes.
- **\$49 million in direct economic relief**, including housing and utility assistance, support for unhoused neighbors, legal assistance, and public benefits navigators to help residents connect with these services
- **\$11.5 million to address the root causes of crime** and improve public safety through increased funding for violence intervention programs and youth programming and jobs to keep youth engaged and safe.
- **\$30 million to grow jobs and opportunities across the city**, including a hub in North St. Louis to assist small business owners, a small business loan fund, workforce development, and expanding broadband and public wifi.

With nearly \$500 million in ARPA funds total heading to St. Louis, as well as likely federal infrastructure support, Mayor Jones also laid out her vision for spending the next round of funds to reverse historic wrongs by investing in disinvested neighborhoods throughout North St. Louis and in pockets of South City. These priorities, which will help make sure residents can meet basic needs and benefit equally from development, include affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, economic empowerment with small business loans and technical assistance, workforce development, neighborhood beautification and revitalization, and more.

Mayor Jones also used power established in the City Charter to line item veto \$33 million in allocations from the final package that violated US Treasury rules regulating the spending of ARPA funds. The City's CARES Act and ARPA auditor, City Counselor, and longtime federal lobbyist warned that such spending outside of federal regulations could result in St. Louis being forced to pay millions back to the federal government. As fiduciary stewards of St. Louis, the Mayor and Comptroller Darlene Green previously stated their firm commitment to not spend federal funds at risk of a clawback from the US Treasury. Mayor Jones' multiple efforts to work with bill sponsors to bring the legislation in line with federal rules were rebuffed every time.



Department:

Department Head Sign-off:

Priority #:

One Time Funding Needs:

Description of need and how it impacts City services (in two sentences or less):

--

Is this a new program? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If no, what program does this support?

--

What identified priorities of this funding will this program support?

- ☐ Stimulate the economy
- ☐ Short-term Investment to create efficiencies
- ☐ Short-term investment to reduce future levy impacts and department reductions
- ☐ Aligning Duluth with goals of Imagine 2035/PBB
- ☐ Creating a More Equitable City
- ☐ Other:

	2021	2022		
Investment Amount:	<table border="1"><tr><td></td></tr></table>		<table border="1"><tr><td></td></tr></table>	



Department:

Department Head Sign-off:

Priority #:

One Time Funding Needs with Ongoing Savings:

Description of need and where savings occur (in four sentences or less):

Is this a new program?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, what program does this support?

What identified priorities of this funding will this program support?

- ☐ Stimulate the economy
- ☐ Short-term Investment to create efficiencies
- ☐ Short-term investment to reduce future levy impacts and department reductions
- ☐ Aligning Duluth with goals of Imagine 2035/PBB
- ☐ Creating a More Equitable City
- ☐ Other:

Estimated Annual Savings:

avg w/benes

Total Savings

Reduction in FTEs

0

\$ -

Energy Savings

\$ -

Maintenance Savings

\$ -

Solar production from
100 kw of new solar
generation at city sites

\$ -

Other

\$ -

Increase in xxx (negative #)

\$ -

Total:

\$ -

Initial Investment Amount:

Annual Savings:

Payback Timeframe:

\$ -
#DIV/0!

<https://medium.com/city-budgeting-for-equity-recovery/three-ways-austin-philadelphia-are-integrating-equity-into-the-budget-process-3cb2469be60f>

[What Works Cities](#)

Jan 27, 2021



What Works Cities | Bloomberg
Philanthropies

CITY BUDGETING FOR EQUITY & RECOVERY

Three ways Austin & Philadelphia are Integrating Equity into the Budget Process

Insights from participants in WWC's City Budgeting for Equity and Recovery program

Cities are facing extreme fiscal challenges, from increased costs associated with pandemic response and civil unrest to an economic recession that has caused severe losses in revenue. COVID-19 has revealed underlying racial disparities in access to healthcare and economic opportunity, making more salient the need to integrate equity as a core principle in the municipal budgeting process.

Given this context, the Bloomberg Philanthropies' [What Works Cities](#) initiative launched the [City Budgeting for Equity and Recovery](#) program in October 2020. The program is helping 29 U.S. cities develop plans to drive financial recovery while strengthening their commitment to equity and provides a unique opportunity for cities to share lessons and problem solve with peers.

We spoke with two leading City Budgeting for Equity and Recovery program participants, Marisa Waxman, Budget Director for the City of Philadelphia, and Ed Van Eenoo, Chief Financial Officer from the City of Austin, who shared their experiences building equity into budget and finance processes. Here are three lessons from Philadelphia and Austin who are innovating to make budget decisions more equitable.

1: Pursue Formal Structural Changes to Advance Equity

Both Austin and Philadelphia have committed to advance equity in all aspects of city operations by formally establishing Equity Offices.

In 2015, Austin's newly elected City Council directed the City Manager to evaluate the impact of city policies and practices on [racial equity](#). Austin officials developed an [Equity Assessment Tool](#) in partnership with the community to establish a baseline for the city's impact on equity.

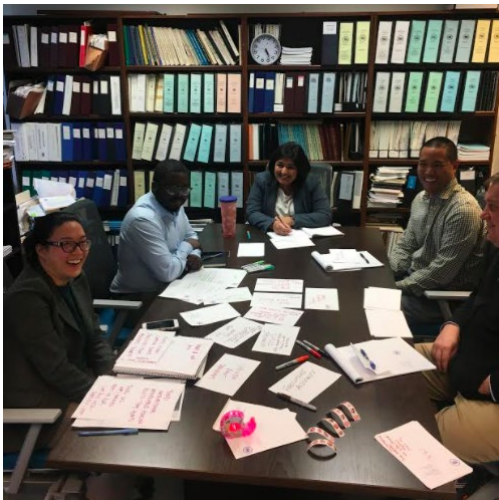
In 2016, the city's first Equity Office was established to lead and guide the equity initiatives. Van Eenoo highlights that "the Equity Office and our Council Members in Austin are the major allies and leaders in advancing equity in budgeting."

In Philadelphia, Mayor James F. Kenney exercised his authority to make equity a top priority. In 2016, the Mayor established the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#), and in 2020 expanded it to be the [Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) with the authority to execute a citywide Racial Equity mandate.

In light of the fiscal challenges this year, Waxman explains that a new "Budget Equity Committee was established to dramatically revise our budget proposal and held focus groups with community leaders to provide input into what to preserve and what we could cut to get the budget in balance with an emphasis on racial equity."

2: Be Deliberate in Finding Opportunities to Prioritize Equity

Austin and Philadelphia are being deliberate in formalizing the incorporation of equity principles in budget processes and decisions.



Philadelphia's leadership staff from the Budget Office sorting out high-level priorities for the upcoming budget through sticker voting to see where the team was aligned. Image courtesy of the City of Philadelphia. [Note: This photograph was taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.]

In Philadelphia, the [official budget forms](#) require each city department to reflect on how their departmental budget impacts racial equity. There are racial equity questions in the forms for [existing budgets](#), [new spending](#), and [budget cuts](#), in part to help departments identify and understand any disproportionate disadvantages that certain decisions might confer on various communities. Moreover, in their annual budget meetings with departments, the Budget Office prioritizes having departments reflect on their

procurement goals for contracting with minority- and women-owned businesses.

Making adjustments to the tool has made it possible to operationalize conversations about racial equity in the budget process. Waxman highlights that departments are at different stages of the equity journey, and the goal shouldn't be solely about metrics but to "*just get started*" in normalizing conversations about racial equity as a budgetary priority.

Meanwhile, Austin's [Equity Assessment Tool](#) takes departments through a critical examination of their policies, procedures, planning, programs, personnel, and budgeting which has contributed to normalizing equity conversations with departments. "Previously, City



departments and staff made annual budget requests based solely on operational needs. Now, advancing equity is used as a baseline before any new program or initiative is added to the budget,” Van Eenoo explains.

Community members participate in conversations about the City of Austin budget priorities at the LGBTQIA+ Quality of Life Advisory Commission’s community budget forum. Image courtesy of the City of Austin. [Note: This photograph was taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.]

The City of Austin has also established nine Equity Commissions that aim to improve the quality of life for the communities they represent, including African American, Hispanic Latino, Immigrants, and LGBTQIA+, among others. In the

FY 2021 budget, the Commissions used the equity assessment tool to make [recommendations](#) on how to advance health outcomes in these communities. **This led to an increase of \$1.8 million to the Public Health Department budget. This funding will be used for mental health services, family violence prevention programs and immigrant legal services.**

In order to ensure budget documents are accessible and easy to comprehend, Austin utilizes “icons in the budget document to highlight new programs and initiatives that are designed to promote equity.” Van Eenoo explains that these actions represent a huge shift in the way the city used to work. Equity can be seen in processes, but also in how information is being communicated to the public.

3: Redefine Collaboration — The *How* and the *Why*

Committed to advancing equity in collaborative ways, both Austin and Philadelphia have redefined how they collaborate with others on equity, and why those collaborations are necessary.

In Philadelphia, Waxman notes that designing new equity-focused budget questions and standing up processes for increased community input requires collaboration. The Budget Office identified city agencies that were already embedding equity in their resource allocation decisions and engaging minority populations to learn from their experiences and determine approaches on how to incorporate new voices into the budget process.

Members of Philadelphia’s Re-Imagining Philadelphia Steering Committee meet in their Kick-off Zoom meeting. The committee’s first project is to co-design Participatory Budgeting. Image courtesy of the city of Philadelphia.

Waxman explains, “Our goal wasn’t for the Budget Office to invent something brand new or build trusted relationships with community members that would require a year to take root. We are not staffed for that in terms of size or expertise in the Budget Office. We were happy to tap into existing networks of connections between City government staff and offices with expertise in community engagement to accelerate the work.” This collaborative effort developed transformative cross-agency buy-in, enabling Philadelphia to launch a [Participatory](#)

[Budgeting](#) initiative, which will allow — for the first time in the City’s history — direct community involvement in City spending decisions.

For Van Eenoo one key aspect for integrating equity principles into the budget process in Austin was to “allow room for co-creation and not pre-determining the process — in other words, letting it happen through stakeholder collaboration and thoughtful deliberation.” Departments and public commissions engage with one another to make budgetary recommendations in advance of the city manager. Austin created a [dashboard](#) that includes the city’s definition of equity and links to equity dashboards for every department. Increased transparency paves the way for increased opportunities to collaborate and to share decision-making power, which represents a major shift in how local government collaborates with its residents.



Community members discuss budget priorities for the City of Austin at the Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission’s community budget forum. Image courtesy of the City of Austin. [Note: This photograph was taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.]

Austin also collaborates with external partners, such as the [Center for Place-Based Initiatives](#) (CPBI) at The University of Texas Dell Medical School, to [evaluate equity assessments](#) from city departments including

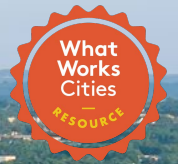
the [Budget Office](#). Departments are then further empowered to create an Equity Action Plan with measurable indicators.

In the wake of COVID-19, cities have the challenge of allocating scarce resources to help residents with the most urgent needs. Incorporating equity in city budgeting is more critical than ever. Waxman highlights that “there is no need to start from scratch” and urges cities to start conversations with an equity lens and build up from existing experiences in city agencies. Van Eenoo highlights “this is not a one-off project,” and that integrating equity into the budget process requires a willingness to depart from the status quo, have honest conversations, and continually evolve practices and operations — a complete culture shift.



Launched by Bloomberg Philanthropies in April 2015, [What Works Cities](#) helps local governments improve residents’ lives by using data and evidence effectively to tackle pressing challenges.

[Philadelphia](#) is What Works Cities silver Certified and [Austin](#) is on the What Works Cities Certification Honor Roll. [What Works Cities Certification](#) is the national standard of excellence for well-managed, data-driven local government.



REPORT:

EQUITY IN

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT
PLANNING PROCESSES**

What Works Cities

| Bloomberg
Philanthropies



CITY BUDGETING FOR EQUITY & RECOVERY

CITY BUDGETING FOR EQUITY & RECOVERY

**This What Works Cities City Budgeting for Equity
and Recovery resource was written in
collaboration with the Public Financial
Management Company (PFM):**



About PFM

PFM is one of the nation's leading independent financial and investment advisors, serving a diverse base of clients from locations in every region of the country. Our consultants, financial advisors and asset managers work across a broad range of local, state, and regional governments, as well as non-profit and other institutional clients, to provide advice that will help our clients transform their world.

About What Works Cities

Launched by Bloomberg Philanthropies in 2015, What Works Cities helps local governments across the country drive progress in their cities through the effective use of data and evidence to tackle pressing challenges that affect their communities. The City Budgeting for Equity and Recovery program is a new effort that helps U.S. cities confront budget crises while strengthening their commitment to equity in the wake of COVID-19.

Why This Matters?

Capital budgets and improvement plans present exceptional opportunities for governments to drive equitable outcomes in municipalities, particularly when budgeting for recovery. The significant spending power authorized through capital budgets – multiple billions for some jurisdictions – can allow for increased, targeted spending on geographies that historically lacked investment from the public and private sectors. In addition, the job creation necessary to complete these projects offer workforce and economic development opportunities for residents and businesses. Because the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) typically requires a multi-year plan and planning process, it provides a framework that can be adapted to equitable purposes rather than created from scratch. When taken together with the scale of funding available, the CIP presents a ready-made strategy for planning, implementing, and evaluating projects that achieve enduring equitable outcomes.

Introduction

Infrastructure is the fabric that enables community connection, economic opportunity, and civic life in the United States. Eighty percent of public spending on these vital projects (from roads and bridges to parks and recreation centers) is provided by state and local governments. Yet despite its importance to everything from commerce to public health, the national total deferred maintenance on infrastructure assets could be as high as \$1 trillion.¹



Additionally, most cities have no structured mechanisms to incorporate equity considerations into their capital investment planning. Equity-based approaches to funding, project selection, and community input are still evolving and imperfect at best – but such approaches are now developing rapidly for operating budget allocations. To next integrate equity into longer-term financial strategies, Finance Directors, City Managers, and senior Elected Officials must all double-down on their efforts, sharpening their focus on capital investment planning. While there is no single solution that works for most cities – when it comes to matters of equitable impact, the best option is one that is place-based and reflective of the needs of a specific community. Ultimately, the process for equitable capital budgeting must be developed collaboratively and implemented through a thoughtful change management strategy.

This resource outlines a few strategies and case examples (related to equity in capital planning), from across the country, that can be adapted to the local context.

1 Zhao, Jerry Zhirong, et al. The Volcker Alliance, 2019, pp. 1–40, *America's Trillion-Dollar Repair Bill*.

Using Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) Process to Drive Equitable Outcomes

To approach the CIP process in a manner that creates consistent, measurable, equity-focused results, PFM recommends first mapping the current process being used (including a timeline for key milestones) and bucketing the tasks into phases. Each of the following examples can be considered as a potential improvement to one key phase (i.e., swapping a current practice for a new tactic) or as part of a more comprehensive effort across the full process. Depending on local readiness, needs, and priorities, government staff can choose an approach that is politically feasible while building toward maximized impact.



Prioritize Projects that Align with Long-Term Strategic Goals

The Government Finance Officers Association identifies “identifying, tracking, and communicating” performance measures in budgeting, including the capital budget, to be a financial best practice.² To make such performance measures most impactful, city staff must align these metrics to the overall goals set by city leadership. In the City of Seattle, WA, for example, equity goals have been set by the Seattle 2035 comprehensive plan – and the City’s scorecard for capital investments uses detailed, quantifiable criteria to rank projects in terms of alignment with these goals.³ Projects that score high on these measures (and, thus, are highly aligned to the plan) receive higher priority for funding than those with relatively lower scores.



Develop a More Impactful Community Benefit Agreement Structure

If well-designed, Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) centered on equity issues can be extremely impactful for cities. In Sacramento, CA, for example, a recent CBA developed for a multi-billion-dollar mixed use development generated \$50 million in funding for affordable housing, anti-displacement investment, prioritized hiring for residents, and improved public transit infrastructure. These benefits were developed, prioritized, and supported by direct resident input. The evaluation firm highlighted dialogue with community members (versus presentations) – designing projects that not only increase revenues, but also deliver non-monetary benefits to residents and businesses. The firm also recommended reevaluating success measures (i.e., rethinking straight, or traditional, financial return-on-investment).⁴

² *Performance Measures*, www.gfoa.org/materials/performance-measures.

³ City of Seattle, Office of Planning & Community Development. *Community Planning: Practice + Prioritization*, pp. 4–32.

⁴ Hackler, Darrene. Smart Incentives, 2021, pp. 1–5, *Community Benefit Agreements: An Equitable Tool for Innovation District Development*.



Formalize “% for X” Investment Goals in Major Capital Projects

The strength of the capital budget and plan as a tool to promote equity is that its spending power, especially when viewed over a multi-year time horizon, can dwarf the operating budget of a municipality. With this scale in mind, cities should consider a formal set-aside of X% in major capital projects (e.g., all projects with budgets over \$2 million) – for the sole purpose of funding an equitable priority project. As an example, the City of Austin, TX, recently dedicated \$300 million of a +\$7 billion transit expansion program to affordable housing and anti-displacement programs for the nearby neighbors of the new transit line.⁵ Not only does this provide funding for an equitable priority, but also enhances the value of the transit assets themselves through potential increases in ridership.



Connect Capital Budgets and Workforce Development

All cities seek a robust, skilled workforce and a strong local economy – however, oftentimes workforce development funding is tied to imminent or even pre-existing job opportunities. By taking advantage of capital investments to drive small business growth and the development of local supply chains, municipalities that design creative programs (or partnerships) can generate a positive feedback loop of a stronger labor market, growing local firms, and increased quality and efficiency of capital projects. For example, one city in the current Bloomberg Philanthropies/What Works Cities City Budgeting for Equity and Recovery cohort is working to design a sidewalk maintenance program that would include a set amount of work conducted each year by apprentices and workers seeking employment. This helps to improve walkability and economic activity, while also training residents to work in trades that offer family-sustaining wages and add value to businesses in the City.



Seek Strategies for Co-Investment

State and federal funding can be a source of “fuel” for capital project development. Enterprising city staff can apply for grants that award funding for not-as-obvious capital investments that expand program capacity, and, in the best-case scenario, generate a return to both the city and its residents. The Philadelphia Energy Authority’s Solar Savings Grant Program, for example, leverages funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for green energy projects to offset the cost of installing solar panels on low- and moderate-income households’ roofs.⁶ The grants lower the overall costs of the program, residents save money on their electric bills each month, and the city decreases its overall carbon footprint.

5 Young, Harrison. “Austin Transit Partnership OKs Anti-Displacement Funding.” *Austin Monitor*, 18 Mar. 2021, www.austinmonitor.com/stories/2021/03/austin-transit-partnership-oks-anti-displacement-funding/.

6 Philadelphia Energy Authority, “Solar Savings Grant Program.” <https://solarizephilly.org/solar-savings-grant-program/>



Set a Future-Focused Investment Strategy

An additional way to better leverage capital budget dollars is to invest in growing service areas based on demographic trends, and strategies that can reallocate funding to more equitable priorities. For example, there are mobile crisis teams operating in at least 25 cities across the country, and many more around the world. In Eugene, OR, the CAHOOTS program, a pioneer in this space, cost approximately \$2 million to operate (in 2019), and is estimated to have saved approximately \$23 million in public safety and public health costs.⁷ While models for service delivery vary depending on the local context, cities that choose to develop this capacity internally can leverage capital investment to establish facilities, and potentially to procure first-response vehicles and other durable goods, that contribute to the treatment process. With such support, mobile crisis programs have the ability to lower the needed capacity in public safety (e.g., police and/or EMS/EMT first responders) and public health (e.g., hospital beds and social worker FTEs) over time. Investments like these also create an equitable outcome of clinically appropriate care delivered to residents in need (i.e., instead of holding residents in prison or police custody without timely treatment) while diverting from corrections populations and overburdened emergency rooms.

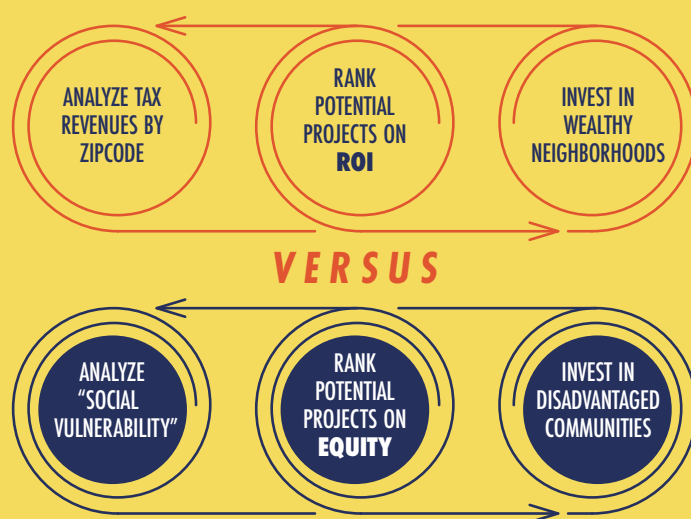
⁷ Reach out Response Network, November 2020, pp. 1-91. *Final Report on Alternative Crisis Response Models for Toronto*.

Redefining Return on Investment (ROI) through an Equity Lens

Moving towards equitable formulas for funding CIPs will naturally raise questions regarding ROI (i.e., will projects generate a financial return). Evaluation is a critical component of all capital investments, and these examples provide a clear guide.

- In Harris County, TX, officials recently moved away from the historical practice of using traditional ROI based on the financial value of property protected by its flood projects (which tilted investment heavily towards high-income neighborhoods) to using a social-vulnerability index created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which moves more funding to areas with the most at-risk populations.⁸

- In Raleigh, NC, the city explicitly measures environmental and social, as well as economic, outcomes of projects (the “triple bottom-line”) in its 2030 Comprehensive Plan.⁹



⁸ Wallace, Don. “A Climate Plan in Texas Focuses on Minorities. Not Everyone Likes It.” The New York Times, 24 July 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/24/climate/houston-flooding-race.html>.

⁹ City of Raleigh, Office of City Planning. *2030 Comprehensive Plan - Update*, pp. 123-124.

Use Change Management Best Practices to Build Support

Our most successful clients take a strategic approach to engaging internal and external stakeholders who are considered potential champions or detractors to implementation.

- For example, traditionally information is presented to community groups for comment and approval, but a fully equitable approach would be to engage the community up-front in a true dialogue to understand priorities, concerns, and opportunities for both sides while the program is still under design.
- Tools to consider include using steps from Dr. John Kotter's Model¹⁰, adapted and customized for more effective "place-based" or local use.

10 "The 8-Step Process for Leading Change: Dr. John Kotter." Kotter, 7 May 2021, www.kotterinc.com/8-steps-process-for-leading-change/.



Conclusion: Importance of Investments in a More Equitable Future

Many municipalities currently face a myriad of deferred maintenance and equity imperatives – all of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The path to reversing severe long-term under- and disinvestment must include large-scale, strategic capital program initiatives. Through engaging their communities, cities can address both historical disparities and identify investments that can build towards a more equitable future.

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, the second-best time is now."

A common theme across the strategies documented here is the importance of change management to creating sustainable change. Whether starting from a top-down directive (e.g. executive order) or a bottom-up approach (e.g. employee-led, department level change), understanding the stakeholders involved and the relevant processes is critical to designing a more equitable approach. Another factor embedded in each of these strategies is the availability and monitoring of disaggregated data to ensure that all residents benefit from the changes implemented.



As equitable considerations take hold and begin to shift the balance of capital investment dollars to the previously neglected corners of the local map, municipalities should become better places to live, work, and enjoy for all residents. When combined with strong community engagement, data-driven project criteria, and thorough measurement and evaluation, funds that seemed too limited will deliver results above and beyond their scale. With the first American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds arriving to cities, states, and counties in the last month, and recent, additional infrastructure spending discussed at the federal level – now is the time to prepare stakeholders to rise and meet the moment.

END
OF REPORT.

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

BUILDING A BETTER AMERICA

BUILD.GOV

FACT SHEET:

Competitive Infrastructure Funding Opportunities for Local Governments

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes billions of dollars in competitive funding available to cities, towns, and municipalities across dozens of new and existing programs. As local governments begin to rebuild and reinvest in their communities, the Biden-Harris Administration stands ready to support local leaders as they combine funding streams, organize around their priorities, and build local support for long overdue infrastructure projects.

At the U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting, White House Infrastructure Implementation Coordinator and former New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu will highlight 25 already available or soon-to-be-available sources of funding that local governments – particularly cities – can compete or apply for directly. Listed below is the latest available information on these key programs, including links to agency websites, application timing, and descriptions. Highlighted programs were selected based on their size and cross-cutting objectives. Using these available sources of funds, cities can begin to plan to build in-line with President Biden’s economic, equity, climate and resilience, Made in America, and labor goals. The White House will also be releasing a comprehensive guidebook of all available funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in the coming weeks.

The federal government cannot build a better America alone – it needs state and local leadership to act as coordinators and help prepare communities to benefit from transformative infrastructure funding. Outlined below is a short overview of how cities and towns can begin to prepare, as well as contact information for relevant federal agencies. The support of mayors is essential to fulfilling the Biden-Harris Administration’s goal of equitably rebuilding America on time, on task, and on budget. Building back better is going to be a multi-year effort, and we need the help of all local leaders to start building the foundation for years to come.

Program information as of January 20th, 2022

25 Competitive Infrastructure Funding Opportunities for Local Governments¹

Transportation

1. **[Rebuilding American Infrastructure Sustainably and Equitably \(RAISE\) Grants](#)**– This existing competitive grant program at the Department of Transportation provides \$7.5 billion with an additional \$7.5 billion subject to Congressional approval in funding for road, rail, transit, and other surface transportation of local and/or regional significance. Selection criteria safety, sustainability, equity, economic competitiveness, mobility, and community connectivity. **Applications will open in the first quarter of 2022.**
2. **[Port Infrastructure Development Program Grants](#)** – This existing \$2 billion Department of Transportation program funds investment in the modernization and expansion of U.S. ports to remove supply chain bottlenecks, ensure long-term competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability while reducing impacts to the environment and neighboring communities. The infrastructure law expanded the program’s eligibilities to include projects that improve goods movement, as well as port electrification projects, idling reduction solutions, equipment charging infrastructure and related worker training initiatives. **The Department of Transportation expects to open applications in February 2022.**
3. **[Bus & Bus Facilities Competitive Grants](#)** – This existing \$2 billion program at the Department of Transportation provides capital funding to replace, rehabilitate, purchase, or lease buses and bus related equipment and to rehabilitate, purchase, construct, or lease bus-related facilities – as well as capital funding for low or no emissions bus projects. Fiscal Year 2021 grant selections will be announced soon. **Applications are expected to open for the Fiscal Year 2022 grant program in the first quarter of 2022.**
4. **National Infrastructure Project Assistance (also known as “Megaprojects” or MEGA)**– This \$5 billion competitive grant program supports multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects of regional or national significance. Communities are eligible to apply for funding to complete critical large projects that would otherwise be unachievable without assistance. **Selection criteria for the program will be posted on the [Department of Transportation](#) website in February 2022.**
5. **[Infrastructure for Rebuilding America \(INFRA\) Grants](#)** – This Department of Transportation program supports highway and rail projects of regional and economic significance. **Applications will open in the first quarter of 2022. Learn more about how to apply [here](#).**

¹ Funding amounts includes programs’ contract authority, advanced appropriations and mandatory appropriations. Funding subject to appropriations not included.

6. **Safe Streets and Roads for All** – This new \$5 billion competitive grant program at the Department of Transportation will provide funding directly to and exclusively for local governments to support their efforts to advance “vision zero” plans and other complete street improvements to reduce crashes and fatalities, especially for cyclists and pedestrians. **Applications are expected to open in May 2022.**
7. **Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grants** – In addition to the \$5 billion formula program distributed to states, this \$2.5 billion discretionary grant program at the Department of Transportation will fund the strategic deployment of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure, as well as hydrogen, propane, and natural gas fueling infrastructure, along designated alternative fuel corridors and in communities. **The Department is seeking comments on program design by January 28th [here](#), and after January 28th [here](#).**
8. **Clean School Bus Program** – This new \$5 billion competitive grant program at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will provide funding to replace existing school buses with low- or zero-emission school buses. **Applications for funding will be made available [here later this spring](#).**
9. **Reconnecting Communities** – The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law creates a first-ever \$1 billion program at the Department of Transportation to reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure – particularly historically disadvantaged communities too often nearly destroyed or cut in half by a highway. This new competitive program will provide dedicated funding to state, local, metropolitan planning organizations, and tribal governments for planning, design, demolition, and reconstruction of street grids, parks, or other infrastructure to address these legacy impacts. **Applications will open in the second quarter of 2022.**
10. **Rural Surface Transportation Grant** - This new \$2 billion competitive grant program at the Department of Transportation will improve and expand surface transportation infrastructure in rural areas, increasing connectivity, improving safety and reliability of the movement of people and freight, and generate regional economic growth. This amount includes specific set asides for small projects (\$200 million), rural roadway lane departure improvements (\$300 million), and the Appalachian Development Highway System (\$500 million). **Applications will open in the first quarter of 2022.**

Climate, Energy & Environment

1. **[Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program](#)** – This existing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) program will distribute \$1 billion to support communities undertaking hazard mitigation projects to reduce the risks they face from disasters and other natural hazards. FY21 applications are open until January 28th, 2022 and hundreds of millions of dollars in funding remains available. Communities will apply as sub-applicants

under their states. **Applications for FY22 are expected to open no later than September 30th, 2022.**

2. **Flood Mitigation Assistance** – \$3.5 billion from this existing FEMA program can be used for projects that reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings insured by the National Flood Insurance Program. FY21 applications are open until January 28th, 2022. Communities will apply as sub-applicants under their states. **Applications for FY22 are expected to open no later than September 30th, 2022.**
3. **Brownfields Remediation Program** – This existing EPA program will provide \$1.2 billion in grants and technical assistance to communities to assess and safely clean-up contaminated properties and offer job training programs. Communities are currently able to request funding for Targeted Brownfields Assessments through their regional EPA office. **Additional competitive funding opportunities will be announced this spring.**
4. **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants** – This Department of Energy block grant program will provide \$550 million to states, local governments, and tribes for projects that reduce energy use, increase energy efficiency, and cut pollution. **The first funding opportunity is expected for release in the Fall of 2022.**
5. **Grants for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Improvements in Schools** – This new Department of Energy Program will provide \$500 million for local government education agencies and nonprofit partners to make energy efficiency, renewable energy, and clean vehicle upgrades and improvements at public schools. **The opportunity to apply for funding is expected to be open in the Fall of 2022.**
6. **Energy Improvement in Rural or Remote Areas** – This new Department of Energy program will provide \$1 billion to entities in rural or remote areas (defined as cities, towns, or unincorporated areas with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants) to increase environmental protection from the impacts of energy use and improve resilience, reliability, safety, and availability of energy. **Applications for funding are expected to be open in the Fall of 2022.**
7. **Grants for Energy Efficiency and Resilience Code Adoption** – This Department of Energy program will provide \$225 million to state energy agencies, in partnership with local building code agencies, codes and standards developers, utilities, and other entities, to enable sustained, cost-effective implementation of updated building energy codes to save customers money on their energy bills. **Applications for funding are expected to be open by the end of 2022.**

8. **Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs** – This new Department of Energy program will provide \$8 billion to support the development of at least four regional clean hydrogen hubs to improve clean hydrogen production, processing, delivery, storage, and end use. **Applications for funding will open in the Summer of 2022.**
9. **Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program** – This new \$1 billion program at the Department of Agriculture will provide grants to communities at risk from wildfire to develop or revise their community wildfire protection plans and carry out projects described within those plans. It will include a mix of formula and competitive funds. **Applications are expected to open early in 2023.**

Broadband, Cyber, and Other Programs

1. **ReConnect Program** – This existing Department of Agriculture program will provide almost \$2 billion in loans and grants for projects that provide broadband in rural areas. **Applications will likely open in the 3rd quarter of 2022 (and towns in rural areas can apply to the current \$1.15B in loans and grant funding, application deadline: February 22, 2022).**
2. **Middle Mile Grants Program** – This new \$1 billion program at the Department of Commerce provides grants for the construction, improvement or acquisition of middle mile broadband infrastructure. **Applications will likely open during the second quarter of 2022.**
3. **State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program** – This new \$1 billion program at the Department of Homeland Security makes available federal funds to state, local, and tribal governments to address cybersecurity risks and cybersecurity threats to information systems that they own or operate. **Applications will likely open during the third quarter of 2022.**
4. **Smart Grid Investment Grant Program and Energy Sector Operational Support For Cyber Resilience Program** – These two Department of Energy programs will provide \$3 billion and \$50 million, respectively, for electric utilities, including municipal and co-operative utilities, to modernize the electricity grid and increase resilience to cybersecurity threats. **Applications for the Smart Grid program are expected to be open by the end of 2022, and applications for the Cyber Resilience program are expected to be open in the Summer of 2022.**
5. **Water & Groundwater Storage and Conveyance** – This existing \$1 billion program at the Department of Interior provides funding for water storage projects with capacity between 2,000 and 30,000 acre-feet – as well as projects

convey water to or from surface water or groundwater storage. **The Department will hold its final stakeholder sessions this month and open applications later this spring.**

6. **[Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#)** – This existing Department of Agriculture program will provide \$300 million in technical and financial assistance to project sponsors for the design and construction of measures to help repair damages from a recent disaster. **Applications open in February.**

Other Opportunities

The law further significantly increased the amount of non-competitive formula funding that will flow first to states and then on to cities and local governments. Examples include funding available through Surface Transportation Block Grant sub-allocations for local governments, which now include significantly expanded the flexibilities for cities to determine how these funds can be used, as well as increases for states' [Clean Water](#) and [Drinking Water](#) State Revolving Funds. We encourage cities to reach out to the state or regional offices for various federal agencies, as well as state governments' infrastructure coordinators, to better understand forthcoming increases in formula funding.

Getting Ready to Apply for and Receive Federal Infrastructure Funds

Building a better America is a shared endeavor no one can do alone, and investing federal infrastructure dollars will require significant coordination between cities, states, Tribal governments, community stakeholders, and other key partners.

Earlier this month, the White House Infrastructure Implementation Coordinator [sent a letter to Governors](#) recommending a series of preparatory actions, including appointing infrastructure coordinators to manage the flow of funds to their states. Cities can also begin to coordinate across their departments and with metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) to:

1. Prioritize your community's capital needs and develop a project pipeline – taking time to think about the projects previously considered impossible due to lack of funding or regional coordination. This is a once-in-a-generation funding opportunity that will require bold, inclusive thinking.
2. Use the forthcoming Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Guidebook to identify federal funding streams to target.
3. Ensure all transit, railway, road, highway, and bridge projects are a part of your MPO's Transportation Improvement Plan.
4. Begin mapping sites for electric vehicle and alternative fuel charging stations.
5. Inventory and map the lead pipes in your city. Read through the Biden-Harris Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan [here](#) for additional federal resources for this effort.
6. Work with your state's broadband agency to ensure your city or region's needs are appropriately mapped and inventoried.

7. Establish relationships with the regional offices for key federal agencies, who can help direct you to resources and provide technical assistance.

The American Rescue Plan also provided over \$350 billion in critical resources to every state, county, city, and unit of local government to support their response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, including in making the investments needed to ensure a durable and equitable economic recovery. Cities should look to leverage those resources to help prepare for the transformative investments included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law including training the workers needed to build high quality infrastructure; hiring back the public sector workers needed to help manage potential federal investments; and getting a jump start on water, sewer, and broadband projects that could complement investments from the infrastructure law.

We recognize local capacity may be strained due to the pandemic, historic underinvestment, or just the challenges of day-to-day governance. A city's lack of capacity to apply for federal funds can create significant inequities – and for many communities, this will be their first time applying for funds from a suite of federal agencies. While many funding streams in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law specifically set aside funds for disadvantaged communities, the White House Infrastructure Implementation Team will be engaging states, Tribal governments, territories, federal agencies, philanthropies, and others to leverage all available resources to quickly deliver the necessary technical assistance and capacity to underserved communities.

Agency Contact Information

Environmental Protection Agency: State&Local@epa.gov

Department of Transportation: intergov@dot.gov

Department of Interior: OIEA@ios.doi.gov

Department of Commerce: CommerceIGA@doc.gov

Department of Energy: DL-RegionalSpecialists@hq.doe.gov

Department of Agriculture: EIA@usda.gov

Department of Homeland Security: dhs.iga@hq.dhs.gov

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