Rockingham County (New Hampshire)

Recovery Plan

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

2021 Report

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Executive Summary

Rockingham County, New Hampshire ("the County") has been awarded approximately $60.2 million from the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund ("SLFRF") under the American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA"). In May 2021, the County received $30.1 million, representing one half of its total allotment of SLFRF monies. The funds received are being treated as federal grant funds and therefore recorded as part of the County's Contingent Grant Special Revenue Fund, outside of the General Fund.

The County set up an "ARPA" committee, comprised of State Representative Patrick Abrami, County Commissioner Brian Chirichiello, Human Resources Director Alison Kivikoski and Finance Director Charles Nickerson. This committee spent two months conducting discussions with Division Directors and Elected Officials regarding potential projects that could be funded by the distributions from the SLFRF.

Based upon these discussions and current Treasury guidelines, a framework of eligible projects was composed, including the following items:

- $25 million for construction of a new building to house the County Attorney's Office, Registry of Deeds, Sheriff's Office, and Delegation Office, which will alleviate overcrowded working conditions and poor HVAC systems at the State-owned courthouse building and provide a proper worksite for County public safety operations.
- $8 million for construction and operation of a Community Corrections facility, which will be run by the Department of Corrections and provide mental health and substance use services with a 90-day in-house program.
- $8 million for construction of a solar array on County property that will generate enough megawatts to cover 100% of the County complex's electricity needs. This project would be funded from monies available from the Revenue Replacement expense category established by the U.S. Treasury.
- $3.9 million for Countywide HVAC infrastructure projects to mitigate the occurrence and spread of COVID-19, notably in Long Term Care Services and the Department of Corrections.
- $3.2 million for premium pay to essential County employees
- $2.7 million for Job Training Assistance, including support for LNA, MNA and LPN training programs, employee scholarship programs, Nursing leadership education courses, and new hire/referral incentives for critical County positions (notably Nursing Department vacancies and Correctional Officers).
- $2.2 million for services to disproportionately impacted communities
- $2 million for water-related infrastructure projects
- $1 million to provide assistance to nonprofit organizations and local businesses involved in tourism, travel or hospitality that were negatively impacted by COVID-19.

The Board of County Commissioners will ultimately determine the funds spent for each eligible project that has been identified and, depending on Final Rule guidance from the U.S. Treasury, the listing of projects and allocated amounts may change.

Uses of Funds

Rockingham County's initial listing of eligible projects covers all of the Expenditure Categories cited by the U.S. Treasury in its Compliance and Reporting guidance:

a. Public Health (EC 1)
b. Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2)
c. Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3)
d. Premium Pay (EC 4)
e. Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure (EC 5)
f. Revenue replacement (EC 6)

Public Health

The largest project proposed to be partially funded by SLFRF monies is the construction of a new building to house the County Attorney's Office, Registry of Deeds, Sheriff's Office, and Delegation Office. The first two departments cited are in the State-owned courthouse building, which has a dilapidated HVAC system and extremely poor water/wastewater system which has led to those departments experiencing poor air quality and several septic system backups. The County Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center are also very overcrowded worksites, and in need of relocation. (*EC 1.4*)

Another major project of the County is to construct a Community Corrections facility, which will provide a 90-day treatment program with mental health and substance use services. The opioid epidemic has been an ongoing issue for Rockingham County, and there has been a sharp increase in inmates needing mental health services. (*EC 1.10 and EC 1.11*)

Rockingham County also plans to upgrade or replace HVAC equipment for several County buildings, including those for its nursing home, assisted living facility and Department of Corrections. This should help to mitigate the occurrence and spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and congregate settings. (*EC 1.4*)

The Sheriff's Office has two communications projects: one is to replace and improve their Dispatch Center communications system, and the other is to install an antenna that will provide adequate signal coverage for the western part of Rockingham County. (*EC 1.8*)

Rockingham County is also supporting a project to cover COVID-19 testing for Long Term Care staff and residents, as other sources of State and Federal funding are set to expire at the end of the 2021 calendar year. It is also setting aside a small amount of funds for mobile vaccination units, in case Federal passthrough monies to the State assigned for this purpose lapse. (*EC 1.1 and EC 1.2*)

Negative Economic Impacts

Rockingham County is setting aside funds to provide assistance to nonprofit organizations and local businesses involved in tourism, travel or hospitality that were negatively impacted by COVID-19, with a preference/focus on those organizations and businesses that received little or no prior financial assistance from prior COVID-19-related aid programs, such as Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. (*EC 2.10 and EC 2.11*)

The County intends to provide support for LNA, MNA and LPN training programs, employee scholarship programs, Nursing leadership education courses, and new hire/referral incentives for critical County positions (notably Nursing Department vacancies and Correctional Officers). There is a great shortage of direct care Nursing staff and Correctional Officers being experienced by Rockingham County and counties across the country. Hopefully, some of these programs and incentives will attract and retain employees in these key positions, and also provide jobs to some individuals who are currently unemployed. (*EC 2.7*)

Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3)

The County is looking to support services to disproportionately impacted communities by providing subawards to area nonprofit organizations to enhance the services that they are already providing to minority communities and/or lower income households. Depending upon the services being provided, these subawards could cover several subcategories under EC 3.

Rockingham County is also providing services to disproportionately impacted communities by running its own Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which is funded from federal recovery funds under the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act. This program has assisted many minority groups and lower income households, and the number of requests and program inquires has increased sharply over recent weeks.

Premium Pay (EC 4)

Rockingham County intends to utilize some of its fiscal recovery funds for various premium pay programs in an effort to attract and retain essential workers, with higher amounts for critical staffing positions such as those in the Nursing Department and Correctional Officers.

Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure (EC 5)

Some of the County's water/wastewater infrastructure is in need of repairs and/or replacements. One project would be to replace water pipes that run under North Road, the major thoroughfare that runs through the County complex. Other funds would be dedicated for individual water-related projects that have not been fully analyzed yet. The County would also like to do a localized complex broadband project, which would result in high-speed internet access for each resident room in the nursing home and assisted living facility.

Revenue replacement (EC 6)

The County is still formulating projects for use of funds under this category, which may change depending upon the yearly lost revenue calculations under SLFRF. One possible major capital project under EC 6 may be installation of a 4.4 megawatt solar array on County property. A solar project of this magnitude would cover all of the complex's electricity needs, generate renewable energy credits, help reduce future budgetary impacts to County taxpayers, and have a positive environmental impact.

While there is a preliminary plan on how to allot the $60.2 million award under the SLFRF amongst the approved Expense Categories, details of several projects are still a work in progress, pending Final Rule guidance from the U.S. Treasury and ultimate individual expenditure approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

Promoting equitable outcomes

Rockingham County is looking to equitably distribute assistance to *local* small nonprofits and businesses negatively impacted by the coronavirus pandemic by placing a focus on distributing funds to those organizations that received little or no assistance from previous COVID-19 aid programs, such as the Payroll Protection Program. Through review of a detailed application process, it will be determined which entities should receive financial assistance.

The County will also have a detailed application process for area nonprofit organizations to apply for subawards to enhance their efforts in providing services to communities disproportionately affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Preference will be given to those nonprofits that provide vital assistance to the most vulnerable communities in Rockingham County. Through subrecipient monitoring, metrics and various data points will be collected to determine how services are being distributed to minority groups and low income households. As part of individual subrecipient agreements, nonprofit agencies will agree to collect such data and provide it to the County in a timely manner.

To promote awareness of Rockingham County programs and services funded by the SLFRF, the County will take the following steps:
1. Publish details of the SLFRF projects, programs and services on the County website
2. Communicate directly to the 36 towns in the County details of programs and services available to residents and businesses
3. Make posts to the County's Facebook page and Twitter account to inform the general public of SLFRF-funded programs and services
4. Periodically place notices in local newspapers regarding availability of programs and services
5. Reach out directly to area nonprofit organizations to inform them of programs and services funded by the SLFRF

Community Engagement

The County's ARPA Committee met with and received feedback from Division Directors and Elected Officials for potential projects that could be funded with SLFRF monies. A few nonprofit organizations have also reached out to inquire if Rockingham County would be issuing subawards so that they could enhance/increase services that they were already providing in the community, which would benefit those disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Labor Practices

No infrastructure projects under Expenditure Category 5 have been approved yet by the County Commissioners, though some of the funds awarded to the County under the SLFRF have been allocated to water/wastewater capital projects. If infrastructure projects are approved in the future, reporting on workforce practices will be included in future compliance reports to the U.S. Treasury.

Use of Evidence

The preliminary listing of projects does include some that would include SLFRF funds being used for evidence-based interventions or rigorous program evaluations that are designed to build evidence. However, until the Commissioners approve finalization of these specific projects or applicable assistance awards (e.g. to nonprofit agencies under EC 2.10), or subrecipient agreements are made with nonprofit organizations as part of EC 3, the amount of SLFRF funds specifically dedicated for evidentiary purposes will not be known. When these specific amounts are determined, they will be part of future compliance reporting to the U.S. Treasury.

Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

Note: Rockingham County did not have any SLFRF funds expended through July 31, 2021. The Category rows represented below are indicative of the potential subcategories based upon the preliminary projects listing composed by the ARPA committee.

	Category	Cumulative expenditures to date ($)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health		
1.1	COVID-19 Vaccination		
1.2	COVID-19 Testing		
1.4	Prevention in Congregate Settings (Nursing Homes, Prisons/Jails, Dense Work Sites, Schools, etc.)		
1.7	Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency		
1.8	Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine)		
1.9	Payroll Costs for Public Health, Safety, and Other Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19		
1.10	Mental Health Services		
1.11	Substance Use Services		
2	Expenditure Category: Negative Economic Impacts		
2.7	Job Training Assistance (e.g., Sectoral job-training, Subsidized Employment, Employment Supports or Incentives)		
2.10	Aid to nonprofit organizations		
2.11	Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality		
2.14	Rehiring Public Sector Staff		
3	Expenditure Category: Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities		
3.1	Education Assistance: Early Learning		

	Category	Cumulative expenditures to date ($)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
3.2	Education Assistance: Aid to High-Poverty Districts		
3.3	Education Assistance: Academic Services		
3.4	Education Assistance: Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Services		
3.5	Education Assistance: Other		
3.6	Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care		
3.7	Healthy Childhood Environments: Home Visiting		
3.8	Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare System		
3.9.	Healthy Childhood Environments: Other		
3.13	Social Determinants of Health: Other		
3.14	Social Determinants of Health: Community Health Workers or Benefits Navigators		
3.15	Social Determinants of Health: Lead Remediation		
3.16	Social Determinants of Health: Community Violence Interventions		
4	Expenditure Category: Premium Pay		
4.1	Public Sector Employees		
5	Expenditure Category: Infrastructure		
5.1	Clean Water: Centralized wastewater treatment		
5.2	Clean Water: Centralized wastewater collection and conveyance		
5.3	Clean Water: Decentralized wastewater		
5.4	Clean Water: Combined sewer overflows		
5.5	Clean Water: Other sewer infrastructure		
5.6	Clean Water: Stormwater		
5.7	Clean Water: Energy conservation		
5.8	Clean Water: Water conservation		
5.9	Clean Water: Nonpoint source		
5.10	Drinking water: Treatment		
5.11	Drinking water: Transmission & distribution		
5.12	Drinking water: Transmission & distribution: lead remediation		
5.13	Drinking water: Source		
5.14	Drinking water: Storage		
5.15	Drinking water: Other water infrastructure		
5.17	Broadband: Other projects		
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement		
6.1	Provision of Government Services		

	Category	Cumulative expenditures to date ($)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
7	Administrative and Other		
7.1	Administrative Expenses		
7.2	Evaluation and data analysis		

Project Inventory

While the ARPA committee did compose a preliminary listing of SLFRF eligible projects with allotted amounts (which were in part disclosed under the Executive Summary and Use of Funds sections), the County Commissioners have not yet approved individual projects aside from partial use of funds set aside to assist local businesses

Example Project
Project 2.11.A: Local Business Gift Card Purchase Program
Funding amount: $5,000
Project Expenditure Category: 2.11, Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality

Project overview
- Gift cards are purchased by the County from local business in the tourism, travel or hospitality industries.
- The gift cards are then distributed to County essential workers that were nominated by their supervisors and have shown exceptional performance during the coronavirus pandemic. Individual employees are only eligible to awarded one gift card.
- Purchase of the gift cards help to support local businesses, with an added goal of increasing employee morale and retention.

Performance Report

The County Commissioners have not yet approved individual projects aside from Local Business Gift Card Purchase Program cited above. There were no expenses or activity regarding this particular project through July 31, 2021. As projects are approved and funds expended, future reports will provide key performance indicators for projects in the Expenditure Categories that have these mandatory performance indicators.