American Rescue Plan Act Funding: Prioritizing Resident Feedback and Community Needs

Howard County intends to utilize its $63.3 million allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act's ("ARPA") State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds ("FRF") to create a stronger, more resilient county. To achieve this goal, the County pursued a variety of community engagement strategies to capture the ongoing COVID-19 recovery needs of residents, businesses, nonprofits, and stakeholders. This summary outlines the County's funded projects and how the County's decisions regarding use of FRF were guided by residents' needs identified through a detailed community engagement process, including:

- State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Survey (Fall 2021, 1,166 responses)
- Project Solicitation via the County's ARPA website (Fall 2021, 23 responses)
- Howard County Health Assessment Survey (2016, over 2,000 responses)
- HoCo Rise Collaborative Report (2021)
- Howard County Local Children’s Board (“LCB”) Community Plan for Children, Youth and Families (2020)
- Howard County Economic Development Authority’s (“EDA”) Strategic Plan (2017)
- Howard County Housing Opportunities Master Plan (2021)

Projects Funded with State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

To date, Howard County has allocated over $23 million to the following initiatives using FRF to promote a strong, equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and address pressing community needs.

Supporting County Schools, Students, and Educators | $10.9 Million

Investing in HCPSS educators and school bus drivers and expanding school-based mental health services to all public schools in Howard County.

- **FRF Survey respondents** strongly support investing in educators and school bus drivers, and dedicating resources to schools and school-based mental health programs for students and educators.
- **Website comments** strongly support providing financial assistance to frontline workers and expanding mental health programming for youth.
- **Health Assessment Survey** results support expanding mental health services for children and youth.
- **LCB Community Plan** advocates for funding mental and behavioral health programs that support children.

Housing Stability Program | $2 Million

Providing grants to homeowners to prevent foreclosures.

- **FRF Survey respondents** strongly support dedicating resources toward housing needs.
- **HoCo Rise Collaborative** identifies housing as one of five critical areas of need and recommends increasing initiatives that keep residents in permanent housing.
- **Housing Opportunities Master Plan** supports the creation of programs that encourage housing stability.
- **Website comments** support housing projects.

Public Safety Initiative | $1.5 Million

Funding the County's body-worn camera program.

- **FRF Survey respondents** support expanding community policing and increasing public safety.

Investing in Health Care, Frontline Workers, Services, and Programming | $7.9 Million

Supporting Howard County General Hospital, Howard County Health Department, and frontline County employees, and expanding community-based mental health services and COVID-19 testing resources.

- **FRF Survey respondents** strongly support funding COVID-19 testing, prevention, and protective efforts, as well as mental health services and outreach programs.
- **Website comments** reveal that mental health is a leading priority of residents.
- **HoCo Rise Collaborative** lists COVID-19 prevention and mitigation efforts as crucial to the County’s ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Health Assessment Survey** results support improving and expanding mental health services.

Industry Support for Tourism, Small Business, and Nonprofit Organizations | $826,000

Providing funding to the tourism industry and assistance to small businesses and nonprofit organizations.

- **FRF Survey respondents** strongly support investing in small businesses, nonprofits, and impacted industries, such as the tourism industry.
- **HoCo Rise Collaborative** recommends supporting local businesses, industries, and nonprofits by providing the support and resources needed to thrive.
- **EDA Strategic Plan** supports the prioritization and retention of existing businesses and industries in the County.
- **LCB Community Plan** supports increased collaboration among government and nonprofit organizations.
- **Website comments** support investments in industries negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Additional Projects in Development

As Howard County continues to respond to COVID-19 and its myriad impacts, additional projects have been identified for consideration for funding with State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

**Support for Child Care Industry**
Funding to attract child care staff, expand and support existing child care businesses, encourage the opening of new child care centers, and provide child care scholarships to qualifying families.
- **FRF Survey respondents** call for expanding funding to support child care providers and families in need of child care in Howard County.
- **HoCo Rise Collaborative** identifies child care as one of five critical areas of need and recommends increasing the availability of affordable, quality child care.
- **Website comments** support increasing the availability of and support to child care providers.
- **LCB Community Plan** advocates for funding for improving early education access and options.

**Prenatal Care Program**
Subsidizing the cost of prenatal care for uninsured mothers.
- **FRF Survey respondents** support improving access to health care services.
- **Heath Assessment Survey** results support improving access to affordable health care.
- **LCB Community Plan** recommends expanding access to affordable and quality behavioral health care.

**Broadband Expansion Project**
Expanding cable television and internet services to an underserved community in the County.
- **FRF Survey respondents** support increasing and expanding the availability of internet for residents.
- **HoCo Rise Collaborative** recommends providing targeted support to close the digital divide and address the need for access to online learning, work, and services.

**Live Where You Work Program**
Providing rental assistance to qualifying employees in downtown Columbia to allow residents to live where they work.
- **FRF Survey respondents** strongly support affordable housing initiatives.
- **HoCo Rise Collaborative** supports the implementation of affordable living plans in Howard County.
- **Housing Opportunities Master Plan** supports increasing the amount of housing that serves low- and moderate-income households.
- **Website comments** support affordable housing initiatives.

**Food Assistance Programs**
Distributing food to communities, supplying food pantries, and providing grants to partners in the food bank network.
- **FRF Survey respondents** support funding food assistance programs.
- **HoCo Rise Collaborative** recognizes food access as critical to long-term recovery in Howard County.
- **LCB Community Plan** recommends increasing access to food to all Howard County residents.

**Utility Assistance Program**
Providing utility assistance to households in Howard County.
- **FRF Survey respondents** support funding utility relief programs.
- **HoCo Rise Collaborative** supports the implementation of housing support programs.
- **Housing Opportunities Master Plan** supports the creation of programs that encourage housing stability and affordability in Howard County.
- **Website comments** support projects designed to provide utility assistance to homeowners.

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**Stay Connected!**
- Website: https://www.howardcountymd.gov/public-information/contact-us
- Phone Directory: 410-313-2022
Summary of Prioritization of Projects Identified through Community Engagement

In determining how best to distribute ARPA funds, Howard County is guided by the feedback received through a robust community engagement process designed to hear directly from County residents, key stakeholders, and organizations about how funding should be allocated. This summary highlights the support identified for each of the County’s priority initiatives.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Survey</th>
<th>County Website</th>
<th>Health Assessment Survey</th>
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