

Pinellas County Government Initial Recovery Plan

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund

Report to U.S. Department of the
Treasury - October 2021

Pinellas County Government
Initial Recovery Plan

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) to provide direct relief to Americans, mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and jump-start the economy. ARPA included an allocation of \$362 billion in state and local fiscal recovery funds to assist state and local governments in the recovery.

The Pinellas County Government (the County) will receive approximately \$189 million in ARPA Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (the funds). On August 12, 2021, the County received half of this total allocation. Staff have been monitoring the evolution of Treasury rules and guidelines for the recovery funds and are in the beginning stages of determining the best use of these funds. The County Administration plans to bring a series of proposals to the Board of County Commissioners to invest these funds in critical infrastructure, public health and identified community needs, especially in unincorporated areas that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. At the time of writing, none of the goals and project proposals in this report have been officially approved.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on everyone's lives, the level of impact has been uneven. Some residents transitioned to working from home, greatly reducing the risk of exposure to the disease; yet public-facing, front-line workers faced more risk in the workplace. The County recognizes the unequal impact of the pandemic and intends to use the funds to build a more equitable, healthy, and sustainable community.

Staff have identified communities that have fallen behind their neighbors in terms of quality of life and health outcomes. These recovery funds provide an opportunity to make transformative investments in these communities: for example, completing sidewalks to create safe routes to schools for children or developing and upgrading parks and playgrounds in underserved communities so residents can enjoy outdoor recreation. These types of investments have been identified as priorities within many underserved communities during previous public engagement efforts to create community development plans.

One of the first initiatives in creating Pinellas County's spending plan is the proposed development of a public benefits navigator to guide residents to existing ARPA-funded programs and assistance. The navigator will be available on the County's COVID-19 website. This tool will also help to identify gaps in public assistance, and it may inform new programming to address unmet needs.

Pinellas County is Florida's most densely populated county with frequent, large-volume rain events; that means it has high infrastructure needs with respect to water, sewer and stormwater management. The County is proposing to use a significant portion of the fund for capital improvement projects that will prevent sewage leaks and spills into local waterways due to outdated infrastructure and stormwater inflow.

As of the publication of this Initial Recovery Plan Performance Report, no projects will have received official approval. Furthermore, if alternate funding sources become available for any of

the proposed projects, the allocated funds will be shifted to another eligible project. As such, it is important to keep in mind that these proposals are preliminary and subject to change.

Uses of Funds

a. Public Health (EC 1)

The County is evaluating the public health needs of local communities based on availability of COVID-19 vaccination, monoclonal antibody treatment and testing. Input from human services and information technology staff have revealed a need to update the software used by social service providers to support an improved client experience by streamlining communications. Other technology upgrades to public health facilities are also being evaluated.

The pandemic has exacerbated mental and behavioral health issues in the county. Staff are assessing how the funds can be used to support programs and initiatives that address the nexus of human services institutions and clients with mental and behavioral health issues.

b. Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2)

The County is assessing the needs of its residents who have lost income and opportunity because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have assembled a comprehensive list of financial and other support available to individuals, businesses and non-profits seeking assistance and has posted the information on the County's COVID-19 website. County staff are analyzing the available state and federal assistance to determine if any additional local programs are warranted to address unmet community needs. This analysis will include a workforce assessment to determine the most effective approach to matching job seekers with high quality employment.

c. Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3)

Pinellas County has identified Qualified Census Tracts and other underserved communities within the unincorporated areas of the county that have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These regions contain historically marginalized communities, including manufactured home parks, and often lack infrastructure, such as stormwater drainage and sidewalks that make a community safe for children to walk to school.

The residents of these communities have engaged with the County to seek local infrastructure improvements that will improve their health and safety and those of their neighbors. Potential projects include, but are not limited to:

- the availability of outdoor recreational space,
- safe passage for people with disabilities,
- infrastructure for safe pedestrian and cyclist use, including continuous, separated pathways and effective stormwater drainage, and
- appropriate lighting.

The County is in the process of identifying the most pressing needs of these neighborhoods and will propose using funds to address many of their stated concerns.

d. Premium pay (EC 4)

No project proposals have been put forward for this expenditure category.

e. Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure (EC 5)

Pinellas County is Florida's most densely populated county and experiences frequent, high-volume rain events. Much of the sewer infrastructure is outdated and in need of replacement and repair. Stormwater inflow and infiltration into the sewer system is a recurring event, which has a negative environmental impact on the surrounding waterbodies, threatening our important tourism and ecological assets. The County will likely propose to put a large portion of the funds toward developing, repairing, and upgrading sewer and stormwater infrastructure.

f. Revenue Replacement (EC 6)

According to the Treasury Department's formula, Pinellas County Government experienced a revenue shortfall of \$24,923,931 in the year ending December 31, 2020 because of the pandemic, which reduced available funding for important transportation and technology projects. This approximately \$25 million figure is arrived at using the following financial data:

Base Year Revenue: \$1,264,828,417

Growth Adjustment: 5.9% (average of the previous three fiscal years' year-over-year increase in revenue)

Actual General Revenue \$1,333,238,395

The \$25 million will be proposed to fund road and sidewalk resurfacing and cybersecurity projects throughout the county.

Promoting equitable outcomes

Pinellas County intends to focus ARPA funds to serve the 287,200 residents and 7,800 businesses in unincorporated areas of the county and will work with the 24 municipalities to coordinate programming to attend needs identified among city residents in underserved neighborhoods.

Over the years, the County has made efforts to invest in underserved areas through Community Development Plans. Pinellas County intends to propose to use ARPA funds to focus on improvements within Qualifying Census Tracts, such as Lealman, Highpoint, Ridgecrest and unincorporated Seminole. In addition, many low-income residents reside in one of the county's 251 manufactured home parks, 122 of which are in unincorporated areas.

The County will target these communities by proposing location-based projects, such as enhancements to parks and outdoor facilities, creating walkable neighborhoods and providing incentives for rehabilitating homes that have fallen into disrepair.

Community Engagement

The first phase of the County's spending plan will include broad public input from residents, community organizations, and other stakeholders who have participated in previous outreach events.

The communities of Lealman, Highpoint and Ridgecrest each have Community Development Plans with goals and priorities identified by residents, service providers, business owners, educators, clergy and law enforcement through a collaborative process resulting from in-person meetings and online surveys. The needs identified by these communities persist, and the County intends to respond to public input by making targeted investments in these communities that will contribute to the health, safety, and wellness of their residents.

In addition, ongoing concerns about sewage and wastewater leaks have continually been identified as a top priority for public investment by concerned citizens through outreach events, surveys, and other forms of community engagement. Many of the County's 24 municipalities have dedicated most or all their allocation to sewer system upgrades and repairs and the County will propose to use these funds to continue bolstering these critical investments throughout the community.

Throughout the grant eligibility period, the County intends to incorporate ARPA-related funding questions in ongoing community engagement to keep up with citizens' issues and priorities as they arise.

Labor Practices

All infrastructure projects will be carried out using contracts that ensure compliance with both State and Federal labor laws, in addition to the guidelines set out by the Treasury Department.

Use of Evidence

Once projects have been approved, appropriate evaluation protocols will be developed to ensure that the program collects the information needed to evaluate its success in meeting projected outcomes.

Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
7	Administrative and Other	\$7,664	\$7,664
7.1	Administrative Expenses	\$7,664	\$7,664

Project Inventory

No projects have received approval by the Board of County Commissioners for the period covered by this report. The County intends to submit an updated Recovery Plan Performance Report after the first group of projects have received approval.