



Bell County  
**Recovery Plan**

**State and Local Fiscal Recovery  
Funds**

2021 Report

**Bell County**  
**2021 Recovery Plan**

**Table of Contents**

**General Overview..... 3**

    Executive Summary..... 3

    Uses of Funds ..... 3

    Promoting Equitable Outcomes ..... 5

    Community Engagement ..... 6

    Labor Practices ..... 6

    Use of Evidence ..... 6

    Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category ..... 6

**Project Inventory..... 7**

    Performance Report ..... 7

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

### **Executive Summary**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government created the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) to address the economic fallout and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery. The County received half of the funds and will receive the remaining funds in June 2022.

Per Treasury guidance, the Recovery Plan Performance Report provides the public and Treasury information on the projects that recipients are undertaking with program funding and how they are planning to ensure program outcomes are achieved in the effective, efficient, and equitable manner. Bell County will create a new report in the following years that will include key performance indicators and some mandatory indicators identified by Treasury. Each Recovery Report will grow each year, as the County increases its spending, projects, and reporting.

Bell County has focused SLFRF on several key areas that have either been affected by or identified as a lacking resource due to COVID-19. SLFRF will be utilized to address these areas in addition to ensuring the programs selected address equity, economic recovery, and pandemic resiliency.

### **Uses of Funds**

As Bell County began the process of planning how to use SLFRF, it started by analyzing the negative economic impacts within the County caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many areas of need that were a direct result of COVID-19, such of PPE, testing, and vaccine clinics, were already being addressed by other resources. Because of this, the County choose to focus on more long-term needs within the County to develop priority areas. These priority areas focus on public safety, mental health, individual assistance, technology and digital infrastructure, small business assistance, tourism, child welfare, childcare, substance abuse, behavioral health, housing, homelessness, and workforce development. All these areas have either had a negative impact or have been identified as a lack of resources caused by COVID-19.

Treasury requested that recipients show how they are prioritizing specific Expenditure Categories (EC), listed below. Bell County can point to how their list of projects explicitly promote certain Expenditure Categories, as defined by the Treasury.

- a. Public Health (EC 1)
  - o Bell County has coordinated several projects to promote testing, vaccinations, and public health. While these projects have been funded by other programs such as CARES and/or FEMA, they are important to include to provide a broader context on the overall approach for pandemic recovery.
  - o Bell County plans to focus on enhancing facilities and technology to ensure safe and healthy operations within its public safety and judicial functions.
    - Current public safety facilities are not adequately designed, constructed, or operated to prevent or mitigate a pandemic. Quarantining measures that have

had to be implemented continually resulted in overcrowding and less than safe operating conditions for both inmates and staff. In addition to the health risk, these conditions have caused substantial negative financial impacts to the County. Bell County plans to redesign and expand jail facilities to address the affects of the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate any future pandemics. This expansion will also include a mental health ward within the jail facility and a separate facility which will house a mental health diversion program. Bell County will be partnering with Central Counties Services and local mental health agencies to staff the diversion program.

- Current judicial facilities do not contain adequate technology to support virtual activities. Bell County plans to design and install technology that will allow multiple judicial activities to be carried out virtually in order to promote public health and mitigate any future pandemics.

b. Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2)

- Bell County plans to focus on small business assistance and workforce development. Utilizing CARES funds in the past, the County contracted with Central Texas Council of Governments to operate a grant program that would assist local small businesses that were forced to close due to the state shutdown. With ARP funds, the County plans to continue this program to reach more small businesses in the community. This will promote the local economy and help to establish stability in the local workforce.

c. Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3)

- Bell County is focusing on individuals that have had a negative financial impact from COVID-19. To accomplish this, Bell County has partnered with a local agency, Hill Country Community Action Association, to provide rental and utility assistance to these citizens. Funds for this program are being provided by the Emergency Rental Assistance program 1 included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and by the Emergency Rental Assistance Program 2 included in the American Rescue Plan Act. Again, while this funding is not included in SLFRF, it is important to include to see Bell County's overall approach for pandemic recovery.
- Bell County plans to focus on housing, homelessness, substance abuse, behavioral health services, child welfare and childcare. By focusing on these goals, Bell County expects long-term positive affects to homelessness, unemployment, judicial recidivism, mental and physical health as well as pandemic resiliency. Planned projects that will support these goals are:
  - Partnering with local Boys and Girls club to expand facilities and operations to provide a safe after school program for students. This program will promote academic success, healthy lifestyles, character and citizenship development in addition to both individual and group mental and behavioral health counseling services.
  - Partnering with local Habitat for Humanity to build and operate a Homeless to Housing program. This program will provide transitional, supported housing and will teach and facilitate independent living with oversight along with job training and mental health services.

d. Premium Pay (EC 4)

- Bell County Commissioners Court approved premium pay during the beginning of the pandemic, which was funded by CARES. No further premium pay is being considered at this time.

- e. Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure (EC 5)
  - o Bell County Commissioners Court wants to focus on the digital infrastructure needs in their community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this was identified as a lack of resources within the County. To accomplish this, Bell County initiated meetings of all local jurisdictions to ensure efforts were not duplicated. The outcome of these meetings was a study to be conducted by the Central Texas Council of Governments to document and develop a plan to build broadband infrastructure that will cover Bell and surrounding counties in the most efficient, effective, and financially feasible method.
- f. Revenue Replacement (EC 6)
  - o Bell County has calculated their 2020 revenue loss, based on the Treasury provided calculations and will continue to calculate this revenue loss on December 31 of each year through 2023. The County's focus of these funds will be on tourism and will provide updates in future Recovery Reports.

### **Promoting equitable outcomes**

Bell County has selected several priority areas that promote equitable outcomes. While Bell County had several non-profit agencies request SLFRF funding, The Commissioners Court chose projects that will serve these priority areas. These projects will focus on historically underserved and/or marginalized sections of the population. Bell County will strive to ensure all targeted populations are aware of and have access to these programs. Future annual reports will provide updates to these projects as they develop along with how they promoted equitable outcomes.

Bell County's overall equity strategy translates into specific services or programs in the following Expenditure Categories:

- Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2): assistance to households to address impacts of the pandemic, which have been most severe among low-income populations. This includes assistance with rent and utilities. The funding for this program is being provided by the Emergency Rental Assistance program 1 included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and by the Emergency Rental Assistance Program 2 included in the American Rescue Plan Act.
- Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3): services to reach children, the majority of which are designated as "Low Socio-Economic Status", by giving them a safe, healthy environment that will provide mental and behavioral health services, promote health lifestyles, provide resources for academic success, and promote a passion for civic engagement. These services will address educational disparities and promote healthy childhood environments.
- Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3): services to reach the unhoused, a disadvantaged group, by giving them a safe community that will provide substance abuse counseling and mental health resources while promoting stability, self-reliance, and health lifestyles. This program will also provide access to education, jobs, and opportunities with a support structure for continued success and integration into society.

Actions taken so far to work towards equity in Bell County include:

1. Selecting priority areas of individual assistance, housing, homelessness, substance abuse, behavioral health services, child welfare, and childcare
2. Selecting local non-profits for funding that will support these priority areas

### Community Engagement

Bell County understands how COVID-19 impacted its community, and they continue to listen to their residents, medical providers, businesses, and non-profits to best respond to their needs. The Bell County Commissioners Court has already accomplished the following:

1. Held public workshops with the Commissioners Court to hear local non-profit requests for funding
2. County Judge and Commissioners engaged with their communities to better understand current needs

### Labor Practices

Bell County will ensure strong labor standards to promote effective and efficient delivery of high-quality infrastructure projects, to support the local economy and local employment. Once infrastructure projects are started, Bell County will report policy or measurements in following Recovery Plan Reports.

### Use of Evidence

During this reporting period, Bell County does not have any active projects that fall under this category.

### Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

Per Treasury guidance, once Bell County completes applicable contracts and an amount is incurred as a liability, Bell County will report on the projects or programs.

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)</b>	<b>Amount spent since last Recovery Plan</b>
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health		
1.7	Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency	0.00	0.00
2	Expenditure Category: Negative Economic Impacts		
2.9	Small Business Economic Assistance (General)	0.00	0.00
3	Expenditure Category: Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities		
3.6	Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care	0.00	0.00
3.11	Housing Support: Services for Unhoused persons	0.00	0.00

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
5	Expenditure Category: Infrastructure		
5.17	Broadband: Other projects	0.00	0.00
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement		
6.1	Provision of Government Services	0.00	0.00

**Project Inventory**

During this reporting period, Bell County does not have any active projects to report. Bell County will add to this section as projects begin.

**Performance Report**

During this reporting period, Bell County has not incurred as a liability any major SLFRF projects. In the future, Bell County will report the following metrics, at a minimum, for major SLFRF projects:

- a. Small Business Economic Assistance (EC 2.9)
  - Number of businesses assisted
- b. Healthy Childcare Environments (EC 3.6)
  - Number and demographics of youths participating in after school prevention programs
- c. Housing Support (EC3.11)
  - Number and demographics of unhoused persons participating in housing community

Additional metrics may be identified in future reports as projects develop.