

Executive Summary

Bergen County continues its response against the Covid-19 pandemic through mitigation, prevention, and preparedness. As the County's revenues were decimated by the pandemic the SLFRF allows the County to make up for lost revenues without jeopardizing current services and while maximizing new services in areas of need due to the pandemic. These areas vary from public health and behavioral health initiatives, educational disparities, assistance to households, housing and homelessness, wastewater testing, and other infrastructure needs. Additionally, there is current planning to expand to additional areas, such as assistance to small businesses, assisting the unemployed, and focusing on healthy childhood environments.

The County of Bergen will continue to offset salaries directly related to those working directly on COVID-19 missions within the Health, Human Services, and Public Safety departments. Further, when additional COVID-19 duties involving new pandemic programs, grants or other initiatives arrive, the County will consider premium pay for these employees.

Infrastructure and broadband projections have become an essential need to continue serving the nearly million residents of Bergen County. During this pandemic it has become essential to bring more government services to people. The best practice in this regard is to eliminate outdated paper-driven and in-person methods with digital solutions. Bergen also has a County-wide broadband project underway where more internet access will be available for all county residents and specifically the underserved by running fiber to all 70 municipalities and county facilities.

Planning for SLFRF use before the interim final rules were published, May 7, 2021, and without knowing the full allocation amount, received June 4, 2021 made this first report more difficult to include exact numbers as we are still in the planning stage. Some allocations have a budget and full initiatives are still being planned and will be included in future reports.

Use of Funds

The County's ongoing and proposed projects using ARP funding seek to address the expenditure categories in the following ways:

- a. **Public Health** – The County has expansive public health plans regarding the pandemic. The County plans to continue both its testing and mobile vaccination clinics, using federal funding to support such efforts, as Bergen leads the State in vaccination rates.. The County has two mobile vaccination vehicles which are equipped to provide medical care anywhere in the County, allowing the Bergen County Department of Health to target the communities most in need. The County has found that many in underserved communities, particularly those who engage in shift work and/or are undocumented, are reluctant or unable to come to the larger vaccine megasites and using the mobile vans allows the County to remove some barriers to receiving vaccination. The vans will also allow the County to provide more basic health services simultaneously, such as flu vaccinations, as well as checkup and other supporting health services for COVID “long

haulers.” The county has made additional Mental Health funding available to local partner agencies in response to the increased need, allocating an additional 10% of budgetary funding to these agencies in 2021 and 2022, as well as encumbering an additional \$1,000,000 for the County’s in-house mental health division to expand its programming.

- b. Negative Economic Impacts – The County established the Food Security Task Force in 2020 to bring leadership, logistical support, and financial assistance to Bergen County’s network of nonprofit and faith-based food pantries. This has allowed the County to address both chronic hunger and the newly needy in a holistic, regional manner. Continuing to provide funding to the Task Force will allow food pantries to obtain food management logistics software, assist with bulk purchases taking advantage of economies of scale that directly benefits clients, and provide pantries with other needed technology solutions such as refrigerators. This will dovetail into the County’s other efforts to expand Meals on Wheels services and ensure food is delivered to homebound individuals or other vulnerable residents who cannot leave their homes due to the ongoing pandemic.
- c. Services to Disproportionally Impacted Communities – The County’s experience with the pandemic is that many families are newly needy and facing hardships, while many families are still chronically unable to access services, particularly when lacking stable housing. The lack of shelter for an otherwise transient family may pose an additional public health risk, and has impacts on children’s education, nutrition, and development. Partnering with Bergen County’s social service agencies, the County plans to continue supporting its newly established Family Shelter in Hackensack. This shelter provides emergency shelter to families in need, while connecting them with wraparound services and puts them on a path to stable housing. Combined with the County’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program, the County is taking significant steps to prevent or remediate homelessness.
- d. Premium Pay – The County plans on using Federal COVID funds to offset the salaries of those working directly on COVID response in the Health, Human Services, and Public Safety departments. With numerous ongoing COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts, the County will pay a hazard pay premium to its of frontline medical and support personnel who have worked continuously throughout the pandemic to provide necessary COVID-19 response services to residents.
- e. Water, Sewer, Broadband Infrastructure – The County of Bergen has undertaken a large-scale fiber optic installation, linking all County facilities in a broadband loop. This project will include fiber branches to Bergen County’s municipalities, many of whom have their own fiber networks, as well as libraries, community centers, senior centers, and schools. This will create broadband infrastructure redundancy while offering broadband access to municipalities and community organizations at lower cost than private ISPs. The addition of libraries and free wireless internet will ensure residents, regardless of home connectivity, can access services and educational/employment opportunities. Regarding water, the County plans on expanding its COVID-19 wastewater testing program, which has proved a great success in detecting COVID and

guiding response to the areas that need it most, without having to wait for residents to test positive.

- f. Revenue Replacement – With many of its facilities closed, the County incurred significant revenue loss from parks revenue, public works permit fees, grant opportunities, etc. ARP funding will help offset revenue loss for 2020, 2021, and the first 6 months of 2022.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes

Overall Equity

- a. Goals: The County’s use of ARP funding is aimed at addressing historically underserved communities in Bergen County. The County’s overall goal in this regard is to develop programs that emphasize assistance to these groups, increase outreach and information efforts to these groups, and ensure programs can be accessed easily by the most underserved.
- b. The County can provide significant assistance to these groups with COVID-19 and other related response, however the largest barriers are linguistic as well as community reluctance to engage with services. The County has engaged with media outlets to publicize programs, including Spanish and Korean language media, and has access to linguistic translation services to serve the sizeable foreign-born populations in Bergen. The County also plans on working with houses of worship, community leaders, and civic organizations to coordinate on programming and assist with getting the word out.
- c. The County intends on removing barriers to access wherever possible. All websites will be designed with accessibility and readability in mind, low-bandwidth versions wherever possible, and give an option for telephone conversations for those without computer or internet access. The County will constantly assess its eligibility criteria for various programs to ensure they are accessible and equitable.
- d. Outcomes are intended to close gaps in areas such as internet access, hunger/nutrition, educational and internship opportunities, and assistance to the mental health and disability communities, as well as elderly/homebound individuals.

Economic & Racial Equality

- a. Negative Economic Impacts – The County has established the Food Security Task Force and Family Shelter to assist with food and housing needs. These tend to draw from underserved communities but the County has made consistent outreach efforts to these communities to ensure awareness of the programs and remove barriers to entry (such as language or eligibility criteria). The County also intends to provide additional services to disabled, elderly, or mentally ill individuals, with additional funding for adult daycare, recreational and job opportunities for the disabled, housing support, and mental health crisis intervention and awareness.
- b. Services to Disproportionally Impacted Communities – The County’s mobile vaccination vehicles will be outfitted with additional services such as flu vaccines, health support personnel for long-haul COVID sufferers, and other basic medical screening and

assistance. These will allow the County to put “boots on the ground” in disproportionately impacted communities and offer not just COVID assistance, but routine medical care as well. Additionally, planned job training and apprenticeship programs will assist high school students with educational support and assist with retraining of adult workers. The County is also exploring assistance with childcare and aftercare, particularly for those who must return to work but still have the financial and logistical burdens of childcare.

Qualitative and Quantitative Data

With the Food Security Task Force, the County has measured local need and responded to communities that need it most. This is made more difficult due to the newly needy/hungry across the County, but the County’s network of nonprofit partners have been invaluable in ensuring efforts are focused equitably and help often overlooked and underserved communities.

Community Engagement

The County is using a holistic method of engaging with the community, to receive feedback from residents, promulgate information about programs, and raise awareness. The County maintains internal communications personnel who engage with media outlets, and plan to expend advertising funds focused on robust media engagement including web, social media, billboard, and newspaper advertisement, including sizeable investment in Spanish and Korean to serve the largest non-English speaking populations in the County. To further engage with these groups and communities of color, the County externally engages with community leaders, houses of worship, and civic organizations to ensure penetration into these communities. The County also has employed translation services to accommodate for additional communities of limited English proficiency such as Turkish, Polish, Chinese, Filipino, and other groups. The County further will work with these aforementioned groups, local elected leaders, and others to incorporate this feedback and improve programming or remove barriers.

Labor Practices

The County of Bergen contracts pursuant to the New Jersey Local Public Contracts Law and related acts to ensure that all contractors are competing on a fair and equal footing to achieve an award to the lowest responsive responsible bidder. The technical requirements of all public works projects include references and requirements to the following statutes, which are provided below with a brief explanation.

- A. N.J.S.A. 10:5-31 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 17:27 et seq., this statute stipulates Affirmative Action compliance requiring all construction contracts to report on the diversity of their workforce which will, or have worked on the job site.
- B. NJSA 34:11-56.25 et seq, known as the New Jersey Prevailing Wage Act. This statute sets forth the minimum wage at which each craftwork shall be paid depending on the task being performed. Often referred to as NJ’s Little Davis Bacon Act, the wage rates generally match that of the Davis Bacon Act, however if there is an inconsistency the worker would be entitled to the higher of the two conflicting wage rates.

- C. NJSA 34:11-56.48 et seq, known as the NJ Public Works Contractor Registration Act. This act sets forth a minimum standard all public works contractors need to meet in order to be eligible to perform public work in the State of New Jersey. This includes a basic requirement that the contractor applying for a registration application comply with at least one of five ways to participate in a registered apprenticeship program including but not limited being a signatory to a collective bargaining agreement, or to be a sponsor of an US Department of Labor apprenticeship program.

Additionally on a case-by-case basis and as allowable by law the County of Bergen requires a Project Labor Agreement be included into all bids specifications for public works contracts, which will equal or exceed \$5,000,000 in direct construction costs. Each project labor agreement executed pursuant to the provisions of NJ Public Law 2021 Chapter 69 shall:

- a. Advance the interests of the public entity, including the interests in cost, efficiency, quality, timeliness, skilled labor force, and safety;
- b. Contain guarantees against strikes, lock-outs, or other similar actions;
- c. Set forth effective, immediate, and mutually binding procedures for resolving jurisdictional and labor disputes arising before the completion of the work;
- d. Be made binding on all contractors and subcontractors on the public works project through the inclusion of appropriate bid specifications in all relevant bid documents;
- e. Require that each contractor and subcontractor working on the public works project have an apprenticeship program;
- f. Fully conform to all statutes, regulations, executive orders and applicable local ordinances regarding the implementation of set-aside goals for women and minority owned businesses, the obligation to comply with which shall be expressly provided in the project labor agreement;

Use of Evidence

The County has established significant experience in COVID-19 related programs due to implementation of CARES and other funding, and has used those lessons to improve programs planned for ARP. Program evaluation will be performed to assure that funding is being spent efficiently and with the stated program goal of increasing equity to underserved and disproportionately impacted groups. The County carefully weighs feedback from programs on an ongoing basis and determines what, if any, rule changes or programmatic changes must be made to improve service delivery.

Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

In this section, list the amount of funds used in each Expenditure Category. The table should include cumulative expenses to date within each category, and the additional amount spent within each category since the last annual Recovery Plan.

Jurisdictions may modify the table as needed by deleting unused rows where they have not expended any funds or by adding columns to more clearly characterize their program expenditures over time.

For the initial Recovery Plan, the amounts listed for “Cumulative expenditures to date” and “Amount spent since last Recovery Plan” will be equal.

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health		
1.1	COVID-19 Vaccination	\$52,500.00	
1.2	COVID-19 Testing		
1.3	COVID-19 Contact Tracing		
1.4	Prevention in Congregate Settings (Nursing Homes, Prisons/Jails, Dense Work Sites, Schools, etc.)	\$68,047.46	
1.5	Personal Protective Equipment		
1.6	Medical Expenses (including Alternative Care Facilities)		
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	\$1,200,000	
1.10	Mental Health Services	\$163,000	
1.11	Substance Use Services		
1.12	Other Public Health Services		
2	Expenditure Category: Negative Economic Impacts		
2.1	Household Assistance: Food Programs	\$875.75	
2.2	Household Assistance: Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Aid		
2.3	Household Assistance: Cash Transfers		
2.4	Household Assistance: Internet Access Programs		
2.5	Household Assistance: Eviction Prevention		
2.6	Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers		
2.7	Job Training Assistance (e.g., Sectoral job-training, Subsidized Employment, Employment Supports or Incentives)		
2.8	Contributions to UI Trust Funds*		
2.9	Small Business Economic Assistance (General)		
2.10	Aid to nonprofit organizations		
2.11	Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality		
2.12	Aid to Other Impacted Industries		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
2.13	Other Economic Support		
2.14	Rehiring Public Sector Staff		
3	Expenditure Category: Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities		
3.1	Education Assistance: Early Learning		
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		
3.10	Housing Support: Affordable Housing		
3.11	Housing Support: Services for Unhoused persons		
3.12	Housing Support: Other Housing Assistance		
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	\$250,000	
4.2	Private Sector: Grants to other employers		
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		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
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		
5.16	Broadband: "Last Mile" projects		
5.17	Broadband: Other projects		
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement		
6.1	Provision of Government Services	\$58,26,461.00	
7	Administrative and Other		
7.1	Administrative Expenses		
7.2	Evaluation and data analysis		
7.3	Transfers to Other Units of Government		
7.4	Transfers to Nonentitlement Units (States and Territories only)		

See Section C(7) on page 27 of the Reporting Guidance for additional information.