

Cobb County Government
Recovery Plan

**State and Local Fiscal Recovery
Funds**

2021 Report

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Table of Contents

General Overview..... 2

- Executive Summary 2
- Uses of Funds 2
- Promoting Equitable Outcomes..... 3
- Community Engagement..... 3
- Use of Evidence 3
- Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category 4

Project Inventory..... 6

- Projects 6
- Performance Report..... 8

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

Cobb County's top priorities for the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act funding is to maximize the economic value by helping with long-term economic recovery and growth, addressing capacity building, and supporting the public health response. A consulting firm will be hired in September 2021 to help advise the County on how to best deploy the funds across a wide spectrum of program priorities as well as codifying constituency and partner requests for funding and administering program management throughout the duration of the project.

Uses of Funds

Cobb County, like many other jurisdictions across the United States, has experienced significant strains while trying to provide increased services related to setting up emergency medical facilities, stand up vaccination sites, supporting struggling small businesses, and assisting households while also addressing the loss of local revenue. The County is still in the process of developing their overall plan for the use of funds, but the following Expenditure Categories have been addressed or considered for the use of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds thus far:

- a. *Public Health (EC 1) – the County has several projects for Public Health under the Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities and Payroll Costs for Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19.*

For the Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes, the County has appropriated funds to renovate various County courtrooms to implement COVID-19 safety measures while facilitating court operations. The Courts have been severely impacted by COVID. Many constitutionally required hearings and other statutorily required duties were delayed, cancelled or stayed. In order to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID, the court system adopted detailed protocols pursuant to health guidance. While PPE, mandatory masks, plexiglass barriers and other things are the most visible precautions, social distancing is one of the most effective but also most challenging issues to court operations. Courts have a legal duty to hear cases in a timely manner and sometimes within time periods set by state law. For criminal cases, the confrontational clause of the United States Constitution requires in-person confrontation of the witness against an accused. Courtroom improvements are further described in the Project Inventory section.

For Payroll Costs for Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19, the County has appropriated funds for Court personnel to assist with the Emergency Rental Assistance Program created by the County in February 2021. Due to an increase in filing of eviction cases as the CDC Moratorium nears an end, the personnel will aid in the administration and facilitation of the rental assistance program as well as help with the planning, developing and implementing of additional housing stability programs such as Eviction Diversion.

b. *Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2)*

The County will continue to respond to the needs of those negatively impacted by COVID-19 by providing food and housing assistance. Currently, the County has the Food Program Assistance in which local nonprofits will be able to purchase food vouchers, food boxes, food from food banks or pantries and distribute food. The primary goal is to distribute emergency food to insecure populations.

c. *Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3)* – no projects at this time

d. *Premium Pay (EC 4)* – no projects at this time

e. *Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure (EC 5)* – no projects at this time

f. *Revenue Replacement (EC 6)* – no projects at this time

In addition, the County received funding from the U.S. Department of Treasury for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERA). These funds are providing Cobb County residents with rental and utility assistance who are affected directly or indirectly by COVID-19. The ERA Funds have rigorous eligibility requirements in which applicants must provide thorough documentation and go through a screening process. The program is for rental and utility assistance for renters. Applicants are eligible for up to 12 months of assistance and must meet income eligibility requirements and provide proof of COVID hardship.

Promoting equitable outcomes

The projects mentioned are in the early stages as the County works to obtain a consulting team to determine how to best utilize the remaining funding. Once the additional projects are underway, the County will also determine how to prioritize economic and racial equity for those negatively impacted by the economy and will report the type of assistance provided as well as the strategies for these projects.

Community Engagement

Cobb County is working with five Service Providers to disburse Emergency Rental Assistance funds to qualified households. Many Cobb citizens still face deep rental debt, fear evictions and the loss of basic housing security. Funding will help these Service Providers with administrative support as they assist with the distribution of rent relief funds. In addition, 28 local nonprofits applied for the Food Program Assistance to support the significant need for food to those negatively affected by COVID-19. Funding will support food vouchers, food boxes, food banks or pantries and for food distribution. Direct mailings will be sent to apartment residents to notify renters of the availability of assistance. This allows contact with over 31,000 households.

Use of Evidence

No current evidence-based interventions and/or projects at this time.

Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

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		
1.3	COVID-19 Contact Tracing		
1.4	Prevention in Congregate Settings (Nursing Homes, Prisons/Jails, Dense Work Sites, Schools, etc.)		
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		
1.10	Mental Health Services		
1.11	Substance Use Services		
1.12	Other Public Health Services		
2	Expenditure Category: Negative Economic Impacts		
2.1	Household Assistance: Food Programs		
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		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
2.12	Aid to Other Impacted Industries		
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		
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		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
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		
5.16	Broadband: "Last Mile" projects		
5.17	Broadband: Other projects		
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement		
6.1	Provision of Government Services		
7	Administrative and Other		
7.1	Administrative Expenses	\$10,714.28	
7.2	Evaluation and data analysis		
7.3	Transfers to Other Units of Government		
7.4	Transfers to Nonentitlement Units (States and Territories only)		

Project Inventory

Project

Project [Identification Number]: Grand Jury room expansion

Funding amount: \$875,000.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.7, Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency

Project overview

- Grand jury proceedings were temporarily halted due to the Georgia Judicial Emergency. However, in late fall of 2020, grand jury proceedings were allowed to reconvene if social distancing and safeguards could be taken. The necessary space is no longer available to allow for safe and healthy grand jury proceedings.
- There is existing unfinished space for an additional grand jury room which will allow for the necessary precautions and the room will be renovated to allow for grand jury proceedings.

Project

Project [Identification Number]: Superior Court 12th jury trial courtroom (5th) build-out

Funding amount: \$1,125,000.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.7, Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency

Project overview

- Superior Court handles contested criminal matters that cannot be done virtually. The existing courtrooms were designed purposefully small. Thus, in order to conduct a socially distanced trial, live stream to a second courtroom is required. This substantially impacts the efficiency of the courthouse. In order to more timely resolve the current backlog, an additional courtroom is needed to conduct more than two jury trials simultaneously while allowing for remaining courtrooms to conduct non-jury matters.

Project

Project [Identification Number]: Superior Court multi-purpose courtroom

Funding amount: \$840,000.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.7, Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency

Project overview

- Superior Court is experiencing a logistical space challenge as the more complex, lengthier trials with multiple defendants spill over into a second week. A multi-purpose courtroom will be built on the fourth floor with a holding cell. This room can also be utilized for bench trials, public viewing areas, jury deliberation room and a meeting room.

Project

Project [Identification Number]: Magistrate renovation

Funding amount: \$625,000.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.7, Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency

Project overview

- There is a current backlog of cases due to the needs for social distancing with new filings increasing. In order to meet tight statutory timelines and maintain adherence to public health guidelines, the renovation for Magistrate court consists of two courtrooms. The renovation also includes the reconfiguration of spaces with the Clerk's office and mediation areas to fully allow for social distancing and the protection of Cobb citizens and staff.

Project

Project [Identification Number]: Probate courtroom

Funding amount: \$492,800.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.7, Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency

Project overview

- In order to handle increased demands of the Estates Division and to meet the current health guidelines, it is necessary to reconfigure the second courtroom to use as a non-jury courtroom.

Project

Project [Identification Number]: Food Program Assistance

Funding amount: \$1,575,000

Project Expenditure Category: 2.1, Household Assistance: Food Programs

Project overview

- Food assistance for Cobb citizens continues to be an urgent need. Providing this assistance will alleviate some of the economic and emotional tolls on the families in need. \$1,500,000 will be available to nonprofits and awarded on an application basis. Funds can be used to for the purchase of food vouchers, food boxes, food from food banks or pantries and for food distribution.
- \$75,000 will go towards the administration services for the food allocation to develop the grant application, conduct the application reviews and general monitoring and oversight of the program until the funds are fully reimbursed and expended.

Project

Project [Identification Number]: Court Personnel and Technology

Funding amount: \$1,778,429.16

Project Expenditure Category: 1.9, Payroll Costs for Public Health, Safety, and Other Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19

Project overview

- To create positions and extend temporary positions to reduce the COVID-19 pandemic related case backlog, assist with Mediation and to serve as a critical bridge between tenants most at risk for eviction, the landlords that need aid and the approved County Service Providers charged with administering the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.
- Magistrate Court has been assisting with the County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program. To aid in getting the assistance to those in need, the Magistrate Court provides information to parties to direct them where assistance is available both before and during hearings, coordinates with Service Providers to provide court case information and provides space and resources to the Service Providers.

Performance Report

- As the County moves forward with any future projects, those that involve funding for individuals negatively impacted by their current economic situation will be presented with performance data to include race, ethnicity, gender, income, and other relevant factors, if possible.