

County of Orange, NY

Recovery Plan

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

2021 Report

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

On January 31, 2020 the Trump administration declared the coronavirus outbreak to be a public health emergency in the United States, setting quarantines of Americans who had recently been to certain parts of China. CDC officials said it was the first quarantine order issued by the federal government in over 50 years. On March 13, 2020 President Trump declared the coronavirus pandemic to be a national emergency. Soon after, guidelines were issued warning Americans to avoid social gatherings of more than 10 people and to limit discretionary travel. This also marked the beginning of the economic downturn as businesses closed and unemployment claims soared as many Americans lost their jobs. The U.S. economy shrank 4.8% in the first quarter of 2020 – its first drop in output since early 2014 and the steepest since late 2008.

The first case of COVID-19 in the state of New York during the pandemic was confirmed on March 1, 2020 and the state quickly became an epicenter of the pandemic. By April 10, New York had more confirmed cases than any country outside the US. The first positive case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the County of Orange on March 10, 2020. As of August 16, 2021 Orange County has had 49,773 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 and 870 known deaths due to COVID-19.

Government response to the pandemic in New York began with a full lockdown from March 2020 to April 2020, followed by a four-phase reopening plan by region from April 2020 to July 2020. At the start of the pandemic, the focus for the County of Orange was on procuring scarce items such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators for its' local partners including hospitals, clinics, FQHC's, first responders, non-profit organizations, homeless shelters, nursing homes and local school districts to prevent and address the spread of COVID-19. As the pandemic progressed, the County's public health and emergency services were consumed with facilitating testing, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine orders, public communications, issuance and enforcement of health orders, and the development and execution of a comprehensive vaccination program.

In responding to the public health emergency and its negative economic impacts, the County of Orange has seen substantial increases in costs to provide critical government services amid substantial declines in revenue due to the economic downturn and closure of many businesses. As a result of the substantial deficits in major revenues and the unforeseen substantial increased cost to deliver government services directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the County of Orange has developed a strategic plan to utilize the funding from the American Rescue Plan in the following ways:

1. Support urgent COVID-19 response efforts to continue to decrease spread of the virus and bring the pandemic under control.
2. Replace lost revenue for the County of Orange to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs.

Uses of Funds

The County of Orange intends to use the funds as described above to:

- **Support public health expenditures (EC 1)**, by, for example, funding COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health, nursing home and public safety staff salaries and benefit costs.
- **Replace lost public sector revenue (EC 6)**, using this funding to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The County of Orange intends to utilize funds from the American Rescue Plan toward the support of COVID-19 mitigation efforts including a safe, effective comprehensive vaccination program. The Orange County Department of Health (OCDOH) has focused some of its COVID-19 fighting efforts on a relatively unique collaboration with private healthcare providers to seek out and isolate COVID-19 clusters in underserved and minority populations within the County.

The County's initial priority was to ensure our frontline/clinical Local Health Department staff obtained their first COVID-19 vaccine prior to engaging in point-of-distribution (POD) activities. Since achieving that goal, our focus now is vaccine administration, taking care to protect and utilize all resources to quickly increase the number of vaccines that can be administered.

Orange County initially opened a closed POD at the Orange County Emergency Services Center located at 22 Wells Farm Road, Goshen. This site is also considered the Counties primary Regional Staging Site (RSS). This POD initially served Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers, OCDOH staff and any other support staff needed to run an independent vaccination operation. Once the primary staff were vaccinated, the OCDOH also vaccinated EMS personnel that were unable to get vaccinations at their local healthcare facility.

Given COVID-19's disproportionately high mortality rates among the elderly, Black and Hispanic communities, the OCDOH is working closely with providers in our most densely populated areas where individuals may have challenges. The OCDOH will be partnering with Horizon Family Medical Group, a local health care provider (LHP) comprised of predominantly primary and family care physicians, and the individuals within the underserved communities to create a "triangular" relationship with the goal of improving community access to preventative testing and treatment. In this program, the local health department (LHD) through its community partnerships, identified organizations, housing and charitable groups which were unable to obtain COVID-19 vaccinations within their communities.

The County has been and continues to work closely with all medical providers that are receiving COVID-19 vaccination and monitors their supply and ability to distribute to the current prioritized population. Data on current vaccination supply information and number of vaccinations administered is provided to the Orange County Department of Health (OCDOH) daily. Healthcare facilities, including hospitals and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's) will

communicate if they are having difficulty meeting the challenges of distribution and vaccination and will give the Department up to 10 days' notice if the OCDOH is needed for distribution assistance.

Mobile units are also a community resource that the LHD can deploy for "flare-ups" of COVID-19 which can potentially endanger the safety of the community at large. The County of Orange intends to use the mobile units and deploy them to numerous "hot spot" locations within the underserved communities as identified by the LHD. These locations will include prioritized populations in the major cities of Orange County and locations such as the Newburgh Ministries homeless shelter in the City of Newburgh; the Middletown Salvation Army; the Middletown RECAP Center; low-income government subsidized senior housing in the City of Newburgh; the Newburgh Armory food bank; City of Middletown Soup Kitchen/Library and Village of Highland Falls community center parking lot.

As part of the County's broader approach to the Covid-19 recovery plan, approximately \$24 million in Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funding is available to help those residents who are facing financial hardship due to COVID-19, who are up to 12 months behind in back rent, as well as to pay up to three months of future rent, depending on eligibility. Tenants and landlords who are owed rent by individuals may apply for the program. Payments will be issued directly to landlords and utility companies.

Tenants may apply to receive rental and utility bill assistance if, since March 13, 2020 and due to COVID-19, they are behind in payments; have a member of the household who has received unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in income; and meet income and other requirements. To be eligible, adjusted gross income for 2020 cannot exceed \$54,950 for an individual, \$62,800 for two-person households, \$70,650 for three, \$78,500 for four, \$84,800 for five, \$91,100 for six, \$97,350 for seven and \$103,650 for eight.

Renters who meet eligibility criteria and landlords who have eligible tenants in arrears are encouraged to apply and funds will be distributed on a rolling basis. The application process opened on Tuesday, June 1, 2021.

The County also has a 311 hotline which can help residents locate immediate housing for those living in unlivable or temporary conditions, and individuals fleeing domestic violence. The hotline also provides collaborative and professional telephone support and outreach 24-hours a day to anyone in Orange County in need of emotional support, crisis intervention, or connection to food resources.

The County of Orange suffered a loss in revenue of \$67,823,839 for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2020 due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The County intends to utilize funding from the American Rescue Plan Act for the provision of government services including salary and benefit costs for health and safety employees, health services, operational expenses directly related to COVID-19, modernization of cybersecurity and the restoration of public sector workforce.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes

In order to promote equitable outcomes, Orange County Department of Health staff will start conducting street outreach, visiting residents where they live, work, and socialize and at events throughout the target cities. The public health staff will work to expand and strengthen public health messaging regarding the importance of COVID-19 testing, following public health prevention measures, cooperating with contact tracing, and registering for vaccinations. These messages will focus on racial and ethnic minority populations who are at highest risk for health disparities, low health literacy and are not being engaged or reached through existing COVID-19 public health messages. Staff will work with the Health Equity Director to conduct short information sessions at various times and locations to engage the target population. These sessions will not only focus on COVID-19 mitigation measures but also work to encourage the development of a primary care provider-patient relationships that are based on communication, understanding and trust. OCDOH will use this community engagement to work with CFH to not only increase health literacy pertaining to COVID-19 testing, contact tracing and public health prevention practices and vaccinations, but also to develop strong, comprehensive relationships between health care providers and patients.

In recognition of individuals who are homebound, and do not have access or the ability to attend one of the local vaccine clinics offered by the Orange County Department of Health, those individuals may now sign up to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Upon signing up, homebound individuals will be contacted to schedule their COVID-19 vaccine appointment at their convenience.

To promote equitable outcomes for those most in need of the ERAP program, the County has identified communities within Orange County that are at or below 30% of Area Median Income (AMI) using data from the most recent census and the NYS Department of Labor. We will provide outreach to those communities by working with our partners within those communities, both non-profit and local government, to ensure that information about the ERAP program, as well as assistance with applications is provided. We will also contract with former Department of Social Services (DSS) and non-profit staff versed in housing assistance and utility arrears programs to assist with outreach. We are working with a local media company to assist us with informing eligible households in the target population about the ERAP, required documentation, and how to access the Application Portal prior to its opening; as well as how to access application assistance within Orange County. The Newburgh Housing Policy Outline presents preliminary suggestions for policy themes, goals, and actions that could potentially shape the City of Newburgh's long-term strategy for meeting local housing needs.

We have used data from the NYS Department of Health to identify communities most impacted by COVID in Orange County. We looked at the 12-month growth in unemployment claims, as well as COVID-19 mortality rates and infection rates per 100,000 people by zip code. The greatest growth in unemployment claims has been in the Monroe area. The City of Newburgh and the greater Newburgh area has had the highest incidents of both infection and mortality in Orange County. This area has a larger percentage of persons of color. The partners that we will work with to ensure access to ERAP are the local government, local school district, and community partners based in the City of Newburgh such as Regional Economic Community Action Program (RECAP), RUPCO, the Newburgh Ministries, the local hospital, medical

centers, libraries, Veterans groups, groups that work with undocumented persons, and Office for the Aging. We will maintain a presence at the Newburgh Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI), which is a monthly meeting attended by agencies and advocates who serve the City of Newburgh. We will give monthly updates and offers of assistance at each meeting.

Community Engagement

Community engagement and involvement in the County of Orange is a critical factor in our pandemic response and recovery efforts. Feedback from constituents, community-based organizations and communities is encouraged and solicited through various formal and informal platforms. Since the start of Covid-19 in March of 2020, the County Executive has provided updates via a weekly radio show where constituents may call and discuss any concerns and questions they have, or simply offer feedback or suggestions. The County also has an active Facebook page where the County Executive has been providing daily (or as needed) updates on Covid-19 via recorded video messages. Following the pre-recorded messages, many constituents have submitted comments, questions, or feedback related to the County's response and recovery plan. The County actively monitors this page, collects the feedback provided from both individuals and organizations and responds as appropriate.

Outreach to solicit feedback and provide opportunities for engagement with people with significant barriers to services, including people of color, people with low incomes, limited English proficiency populations, and other traditionally underserved groups is supplemented by the efforts of the Director of Health Equity and the Director of the Orange County Human Rights Commission.

Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health	\$0	\$0
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.)		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
1.5	Personal Protective Equipment		
1.6	Medical Expenses (including Alternative Care Facilities)		
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		
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement	\$0	\$0
6.1	Provision of Government Services		
7	Administrative and Other	\$0	\$0
7.1	Administrative Expenses		