

County of Orange, NY

## **Recovery Plan**

### **State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds**

2022 Report

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## 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 July 8, 2022 Orange County has had 123,535 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 and 1,180 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**

### **Support Public Health Expenditures (EC 1)**

The County has determined that at this stage of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the most pressing needs were for COVID-19 testing and the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) for public-facing County personnel. Based on information provided by the County's Department of Health, it is anticipated that the public health emergency will continue for multiple years with flare-ups occurring at different locations throughout the County, concentrated at different locations.

In effort to minimize any potential flare-ups and allow individuals to be informed of their own COVID-19 status, the County has allocated \$6,000,000 of ARPA funding to COVID-19 testing. These tests were distributed at various County locations by County personnel to the general public. To allow the County to be flexible and decisive in responding to the public health emergency, the initial amount approved for this project was anticipated to last through the life of the grant and be used during periods of increased COVID-19 spread. During January 2022 one such flare-up occurred and the County was able to procure and distribute over 40,000 at-home test kits within a short period of time, helping to avert a wider spread of COVID-19 and keep businesses and public institutions open.

Additionally, the County has strived to limit the spread of COVID-19 at the County's own worksites by requiring that public-facing employees' PPE needs are met. This has been achieved through the allocation of \$6,000,000 for the procurement and distribution of masks, gowns, cleaning products, gloves, and other PPE as needed.

### **Replace Lost Public Sector Revenue (EC 6)**

For the years ended December 31, 2021 and 2020, the County of Orange suffered a loss in revenue based on the U.S. Department of the Treasury's guidance of \$74,196,578 and \$8,568,640, respectively, as a result of 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 operational expenses directly related to COVID-19, modernization of cybersecurity, the restoration and retention of public sector workforce, and pay-go building of infrastructure.

As of the date of this report, the County has planned the following projects related to the provision of government services:

- As the population of Orange County continues to increase and excess deaths occur as a result of the COVID-19 and opioid public health emergencies, it is anticipated that the Medical Examiner's Office will continue to see autopsy and case investigations increase through 2025. The current facility is having difficulty accommodating the current workload and is not indicative of the type of space required for such a sensitive workspace. As a response, the County has allocated \$14,000,000 to be used for the construction of an updated and expanded facility.

The current Orange County Medical Examiner's Office operations are spread across five different county structures, with administrative offices located in the basement of the Emergency Services Center, the autopsy room is located in a temporary modular

structure off of an access road, a biohazard waste area is located in a separate shipping container near the autopsy room, an overflow body storage cooler is located in a separate refrigerated tractor trailer, and an additional transportable morgue trailer for mass casualty and overflow storage is located adjacent to the Emergency Services Center.

The new facility will condense these operations to one facility and include a number of upgrades, including providing adequate storage and workspace for the autopsy procedures as well as providing space for observation of necessary staff members, allow for private administrative space with the necessary amounts of storage for records, provide an area where information and support can be provided to loved ones, provide for necessary safety, security, and technology upgrades, as well as provide for accommodation for the areas religious sects.

- As a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, many County employees were required to perform their usual duties at an offsite location. This has been a burden to the County's existing IT infrastructure and increased the risk of various cyber security concerns. To upgrade the County's IT infrastructure to adjust to this new reality, the County has allocated \$3,771,000 in ARPA funding to purchase new hardware and software, as well as the purchase of cybersecurity insurance.
- The County-owned nursing home was found to be in need of various upgrades that were exacerbated due to the loss of staff and residents as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The County has allocated \$6,407,226 in an effort to modernize the nursing home's facilities.

### **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, including "town hall" sessions led by County management. 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.

## Labor Practices

The County of Orange is committed to protecting and promoting workers' safety and health, wages, and working conditions. County employees are represented by various labor unions and all construction projects that use ARPA funds will be performed in accordance with state and federal guidelines, including the payment of a prevailing wage.

## Use of Evidence

The response to the COVID-19 public health emergency is guided by various metrics, including the number of active cases and the number individuals hospitalized within the County, which is summarized in the County's COVID-19 dashboard, accessible at <https://www.orangecountygov.com/1936/Coronavirus>. The County Legislature works closely with the County's Department of Health to identify areas of concern (either geographically or demographically) to focus resources.

As of the date of this report, the County has not allocated ARPA resources that are allocated to evidenced-based interventions.

## Performance Report

The County Legislature has established a "task force" of senior County legislators, County management, and outside consultants that meet regularly to discuss project status as well as future projects associated with ARPA. A majority of the County's projects are in their early stages and most performance reporting has revolved around project spending and construction status.

As of the date of this report, the County has not allocated ARPA resources to projects within reporting categories that have mandatory performance indicators or programmatic data.

## Project Inventory

<b>Project Name:</b>	COVID Rapid Antigen Test Kits
<b>Funding Amount:</b>	\$6,000,000
<b>Amount Spent:</b>	\$527,251
<b>Identification Number:</b>	301001.573270
<b>Expenditure Category:</b>	Public Health, COVID-19 Testing
<b>Main Activities of Project:</b>	Purchase and distribution of COVID rapid antigen test kits to residents of the County.
<b>Timeline:</b>	As needed through life of the grant
<b>Delivery Mechanism:</b>	Distributed at various sites throughout the County by County personnel
<b>Intended Outcomes:</b>	Avert a larger spread of COVID-19 by allowing individuals to assess their likelihood of infection.

<b>Project Name:</b>	COVID Response – PPE
<b>Funding Amount:</b>	\$6,000,000
<b>Amount Spent:</b>	\$6,815
<b>Identification Number:</b>	573870.12.2021
<b>Expenditure Category:</b>	Public Health, Personal Protective Equipment
<b>Main Activities of Project:</b>	Purchase of personal protective equipment for use in direct response to COVID-19. Includes the purchase of masks, gowns, cleaning products, gloves, and other PPE for use in County departments.
<b>Timeline:</b>	As needed through life of the grant
<b>Delivery Mechanism:</b>	Distributed to County personnel
<b>Intended Outcomes:</b>	Avert a larger spread of COVID-19 by limiting contact with public facing County employees.

<b>Project Name:</b>	Consultant Services
<b>Funding Amount:</b>	\$200,000
<b>Amount Spent:</b>	\$28,159
<b>Identification Number:</b>	571870.12.2021
<b>Expenditure Category:</b>	Administrative, Administrative Expenses
<b>Main Activities of Project:</b>	Consulting services for technology, administrative, and compliance functions.
<b>Timeline:</b>	As needed through life of the grant
<b>Delivery Mechanism:</b>	N/A
<b>Intended Outcomes:</b>	Assist the County in accounting for federal funds and complying with federal requirements