

St. Johns County, Florida
Recovery Plan

**State and Local Fiscal Recovery
Funds**

2021 Report

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

On March 11, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) was enacted to provide aid and relief to citizens and communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Act included an allocation of funding for state and local fiscal recovery of which St. Johns County is estimated to receive \$51.3 million.

The County has developed a plan for the initial phase of the multi-year program which focuses the expenditure of \$7.84 million in funding on responding to the current public health emergency, addressing the negative economic impacts caused by the pandemic and providing premium pay for public safety services associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The County will continue to engage the community to determine and address the evolving community recovery needs for future phases of the plan. As required by ARPA, all funds will be obligated to qualifying recovery programs prior to December 31, 2024 and all recovery funds will be fully expended by December 31, 2026.

The County has compiled and is submitting this report of activities completed through July 31, 2021 to maintain compliance with ARPA.

Uses of Funds

In this initial phase of the multi-year program, the County has allocated \$7.84 million of ARPA funding to projects focusing on responding to the current public health emergency, addressing the negative economic impacts caused by the pandemic and providing premium pay for public safety services associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. As of July 31, 2021, the County has not expended any ARPA funding, however the County intends to utilize funding for the initial phase of the program as follows,

Responding to the current public health emergency – \$2,173,500

- The County established and operated a vaccination site at the Solomon Calhoun Community Center which offered residents COVID-19 vaccines through 20 May 2021 with 96,284 doses of vaccine provided to the community. The vaccination site was centrally located in the County and vaccines were offered, free of charge, to all County residents on a first come first serve bases. Vaccination appointments could be made either online or by phone to ensure equitable access to the program for all residents. Additionally, the County operated a COVID-19 hotline seven days a week to assist residents with COVID-19 related questions and scheduling vaccination appointments. Eligible County expenses for the above activities will be retroactively reimbursed to the County from ARPA funds in accordance with the ARPA Funding Appropriation Plan that was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners at the 7 September 2021 Board of County Commissioners meeting.

- The County will be purchasing equipment for first responders to assist in the mitigation and prevention of COVID-19 transmission to and between first responders.

Addressing negative economic impacts– \$4,200,000

- The County will be offering a grant opportunity to county-based businesses and non-profit organizations with less than 100 employees. The grant funds may be utilized to offset the expense of constructing enhanced outdoor spaces for improved mitigation of COVID-19 transmission (e.g. restaurant patios) or eligible organizations may use the funds to improve the built environment of the neighborhood (e.g. building façade improvements). Project construction must be completed by 31 December 2022 and completed requests for reimbursement must be submitted to the County by 31 January 2023.
- The County will be completing improvement projects at parks, public plazas and other public outdoor recreation facilities to enhance and expand the usability of the outdoor space for the public. The selected projects are located throughout the County and include sports facility and lighting improvements, beachside pavilion repair and replacement, facility parking improvements, as well as boardwalk and fishing pier repairs and improvements

Providing premium pay for public safety services – \$1,470,000

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, St. Johns County has experienced an increased community need for first responder assistance. The initial phase of the ARPA Funding Appropriation Plan will include funding for St. Johns County first responder compensation.

Promoting equitable outcomes

The initial phase of the multi-year program includes programs that will or have benefited the community as a whole such as administering COVID-19 vaccinations, assisting with COVID-19 testing programs, mitigation/prevention improvements to County facilities which service the residents at large and premium pay for public safety services.

Although the ARPA projects funded in the initial phase of the project provide services to the County residents at large, to ensure equitable access to residents, the County selected a centrally located accessible facility, the Solomon Calhoun Community Center, when implementing the COVID-19 vaccination program and offered appointments through multiple mechanisms (i.e. both online and by phone) on a first-come first-serve basis. Additionally, the County operated a COVID-19 hotline seven days a week in concurrence with the vaccination program to assist residents with COVID-19 related questions and scheduling vaccination appointments.

The County will continue to consider and prioritize the achievement of equitable outcomes during the planning and implementation of ARPA funded programs.

Community Engagement

St. Johns County is committed to ensuring constituents' and community-based organizations' feedback and suggestions are heard and considered and is using a variety of engagement methods to reach the community.

Noticed Meetings

- ARPA funded programming has been and will continue to be discussed as noticed agenda items at regularly scheduled Board of County Commission meetings. These ARPA agenda items include an opportunity for the attending public to provide comment.

Web-based Platforms

- St. Johns County's website will serve as the primary platform through which the community can find information about ARPA programs offered by the County.
- A web-based survey is currently being offered to residents and community groups providing an opportunity to suggest projects and services for future phases of the APRA program. The survey is available to all constituents and will not require an invitation to participate.

Community Partners

- St. Johns County will continue working with various community partners to vet ARPA programs and share information about those programs with the community.

Social Media

- St. Johns County will use its social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Nextdoor to communicate information about ARPA funded programs and services being offered.

Traditional Media Coverage

- The County's exterior improvement grant program and community survey has been covered by the local media outlets and publications. The County will continue to promote initiatives along with our media partners to increase community awareness.

Labor Practices

St. Johns County is committed to promoting the effective and efficient delivery of high-quality infrastructure projects. The County's existing Purchasing Procedures outline the procurement process and ensures all County projects follow the required Federal, State and local laws. All ARPA funded infrastructure projects implemented by St. Johns County will be procured in accordance with the St. Johns County Purchasing Procedures which can be found in Section III of the County Administrative Code.

Use of Evidence

The initial phase of the ARPA funded program for St. Johns County does not include a project that would require the Use of Evidence. However, the County is committed to evaluating all potential projects and pursuing only those that have a meaningful impact for the community. As ARPA encourages the use of evidence and metrics to gauge the outcomes of program interventions, staff will continue to consider the Use of Evidence requirements when evaluating the community impact of ARPA funded projects in future phases of the program.

Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

Although the County did not expend ARPA funds prior to July 31, 2021, the ARPA Funding Appropriation Plan adopted by the Board of County Commissioners at the September 7, 2021, meeting will retroactively reimburse the County for the following activities that occurred prior to July 31, 2021.

	Category	Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan	Amount Approved in Initial Funding Appropriation Plan
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health			
1.1	COVID-19 Vaccination	\$0	\$0	\$1,669,000
1.2	COVID-19 Testing	\$0	\$0	\$31,000
7	Administrative and Other			
7.1	Administrative Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$85,000

Project Inventory

Although the County did not expend ARPA funds prior to July 31, 2021 the ARPA Funding Appropriation Plan adopted by the Board of County Commissioners at the September 7, 2021 meeting will retroactively reimburse the County for the following activities that occurred prior to July 31, 2021.

COVID-19 Vaccination Site Operation, Project Number 4451

Funding amount: \$1,669,000

Project expenditure category: Category 1.1 COVID-19 Vaccination

Project overview

- The County established and operated a vaccination program at the Solomon Calhoun Community Center offering residents free vaccinations in order to contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Through this program, vaccines were offered to residents through 20 May 2021, and the County administered a total of 96,284 doses of vaccine to the community. The vaccination site was centrally located in the County and vaccines were offered, free of charge, to all County residents on a first come first serve bases. Vaccination appointments were offered to the public both online and by phone to ensure equitable access to the program for all residents. The County also operated a COVID-19

hotline seven days a week to assist residents with COVID-19 related questions and scheduling vaccination appointments.

COVID-19 Testing, Project Number 4452

Funding amount: \$31,000

Project Expenditure Category: Category 1.2 COVID-19 Testing

Project overview

- St. Johns County provided financial support to Flagler Hospital for COVID-19 testing.

Performance Report

- **COVID-19 Vaccination Site Operation.** The County administered a total of 96,284 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to the community on a first-come-first-serve basis.
- **Household Assistance and Housing Support.** The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) allocated \$25 billion to the U. S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) to provide funds directly to states, territories, local governments, and tribes for households that are unable to pay their rent and utilities due to the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. St. Johns County received \$7,991,953 for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program which may be used to provide financial assistance for rent, utility and home energy, and housing stability services to low-to-moderate-income households with rent-related expenses and utilities. The program offers up to 12 months of assistance with a maximum of \$5,000 in total assistance. The County administered program began accepting applications on July 9, 2021 and as of October 15, 2021, St. Johns County has awarded \$263,522 in assistance.