

# Williamson County, Texas

## Recovery Plan Performance Report

### **Executive Summary:**

Williamson County has strived for good communication with key stakeholders throughout the pandemic. The Williamson County Commissioners Court has worked closely with Williamson County Emergency Management; the Local Public Health Authority - Williamson County & Cities Health District (WCCHD); the Local Mental Health Authority – Bluebonnet Trails Community Services; Texas Health and Human Services and Texas Office of Emergency Management. Communication also included local independent school districts (ISD's), cities within the county, emergency service districts (ESD's), local and area medical and psychiatric hospitals, non-profits and safety net providers. This wide range of partners helped ensure that the response to the new coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was inclusive and allowed crucial information on guidance and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be disseminated. With participating partners' assistance, Williamson County leaders were able to gather information on the needs of local communities. The information gathered was vital in creating a plan that met the needs of families and individuals, while also designing a plan that promoted economic recovery and met U.S. Department of the Treasury program guidelines.

After needs were identified through public input, the Williamson County Auditor and Treasurer's offices drafted program designs to meet urgent community needs, which were then approved by the Commissioners Court. Programs adopted created an equitable delivery model, with safeguards and outcome goals for each project. The criteria adopted ensured requests for funding through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 – State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) were for eligible purposes, with no fraud, waste, or abuse.

### **Use of Funds:**

Williamson County has approved and provided funding for Emergency Rental Assistance and Small Business Grants that helped keep families in their homes and small businesses from permanently closing their doors. These programs were funded using the CARES Funding. The Williamson County Commissioners Court has also approved programs funded through the American Rescue Plan - SLFRF program that meet the needs of communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, all of which respond to and promote at least one of the following criteria:

- Public Health
- Negative Economic Impacts
- Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities
- Premium Pay
- Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure
- Revenue Replacement

A brief description of each project and how they respond to the above criteria are outlined below:

### **Felony Justice Disposition Project**

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to have a significant impact on mental health. Isolation, anxiety, and depression has increased in many who are experiencing the impacts of the pandemic. During the pandemic there has also been a steady increase in the incidence and filing of the most serious cases. The number of First-Degree Felony Offenses filed in the District Attorney's office increased 28% from 2019 to 2020 and the data for 2021 is on pace to meet or exceed these numbers. Emergency Orders from the Texas Supreme Court, as well as COVID-19 safety protocols have had an impact on the ability of the DA's office in disposing of cases. These factors have increased the case load of prosecutors and has increased the amount of time it takes for accused individuals and victims to receive justice. At the end of 2019, there were 947 pending cases older than 6 months. At the end of 2020, that number grew to 1421. The addition of a prosecutor in each of the Judicial District Courts (26<sup>th</sup>, 277<sup>th</sup> and 368<sup>th</sup>) will help reduce the number of pending cases and achieve justice for those involved in the criminal justice system. American Rescue Act Plan funds will pay for salary, benefits, supplies and equipment for three felony prosecutors hired to reduce the increasing number of pending felony cases.

**Grantor Department** – Williamson County District Attorney's Office

**Award number** – 445A, Project number 445P

**Award date** – June 15, 2021

**Award amount** – Not to exceed \$1,753,414.41

**Primary place of performance** – Williamson County Justice Center, Georgetown, TX

**Performance period** – August 1, 2021 – December 31, 2024

**Performance Indicators** – Decrease of felony cases placed on inactive status; Increase in the number of felony cases disposed quarterly; Decrease in the amount of time to reach case disposition.

**Funding criteria** – Public Health and Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities

#### **Promoting Equitable Outcomes:**

Williamson County Commissioners Court has worked diligently to gather information from those impacted by the pandemic and to disseminate information on SLFRF programs available to communities throughout the county. Awareness of opportunities for assistance have been dispersed in many ways, including newsletters by Commissioners and the county's Public Affairs Office. Weekly meetings of the Commissioner Court were made available for viewing, both through live broadcasts and with both recorded audio and video available, on demand. Most weekly agendas included an update on funding assistance programs available to individuals, families, and businesses. Court updates also included data on numbers served and funds

distributed. The awareness program has helped reach individuals in need of assistance, throughout the county, in both the more urban and rural areas.

Commissioners, representing all four sections of the county, also directly communicated with constituents, businesses, non-profits, providers, and others in their precincts, to determine needs. The information brought forward by Commissioners, from outreach with their constituents, was used to help design and implement programs that were effective in meeting identified needs and filling the gaps in resources available. Programs created or under development have safeguards in place to avoid misuse of funds, but at the same time guidelines were created that were understandable, efficient and did not create administrative barriers to receiving assistance. Programs in place and those under design and planning, have been created to bring resources to underserved communities, many who are low income, often suffering from mental health and/or substance abuse issues, and frequently under or uninsured. Programs are being designed to help increase access to resources and to divert non-violent individuals in crisis from the criminal justice system.

**Community Engagement:**

Community engagement has been an important priority of Williamson County, well before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Input and ideas are routinely sought from a broad cross-range of residents in the community. Public information campaigns are common, and some collaborations have been in existence for nearly two decades. For instance, the Williamson County Behavioral Health Task Force is a multi-disciplinary group of professionals, from many areas, including the fields of mental health, social service, law enforcement and justice. Advocates for mental health improvements and individuals with first-hand experience in an often-complex delivery system, also share their input. Staff from Williamson County, the Health District (WCCHD), and the Local Mental Health Authority (Bluebonnet Trails Community Services), and the Local Federally Qualified Health Center (Lone Star Circle of Care) are all comfortable in gathering opinions from individuals with varying opinions and perspectives, including those of low income and often marginalized groups.

This pre-established system of collaboration and community engagement is continuing to be an effective mechanism for obtaining feedback from a diverse group of people and organizations on the effects of COVID-19. In addition, Commissioners and other elected officials will continue to listen to the needs of their constituents, through meetings, public comment periods offered at meetings, telephone, e-mails, and fax. In Williamson County, we strive to provide exceptional public service and recognize the importance of listening to constituents needs.

**Labor Practices:**

Williamson County has no projects during this reporting period that involved construction and/or infrastructure projects. Williamson County does have a strong record of providing

effective and efficient delivery of high-quality projects. Williamson County is very familiar with prevailing wage requirements and has policies and procedures in place to ensure that labor standards are followed, and taxpayer's money is carefully spent.

Infrastructure projects in the future, that will be implemented with SLFRF funding, will continue to follow these policies and procedures. SLFRF funded projects will help stimulate the local economy by hiring local firms, which helps reduce the unemployment rate in our county.

**Use of Evidence:**

Williamson County has a strong history of using data-driven and evidence-based programs, not only in mental health, public health, and social services, but in departments throughout the county government. The Commissioners Court recognizes the importance of data and evidenced-based solutions to ensure that the best possible results are achieved with taxpayer's dollars. If metrics and performance measures are not being met, the county is able to make corrections and adjustments to programs, helping ensure continuous improvement, performance measures are met, and excellent results delivered.

**Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category:**

To be included in future reporting periods, as expenditures occur.

**Project Inventory:**

Williamson County will include a project inventory and description of future SLFRF funded projects as they become implemented in future reporting periods. The project inventory will include project name and description, funding amount, identification numbers, a timeline of the project, and performance measures. Anticipated expenditure categories are expected to be included, but are not limited to, public health (both physical and mental) and infrastructure.

**Performance Report:**

Williamson County will provide timely reporting as required for the SLFRF funded expenditures. Reporting will include goals set, key performance indicators, including output and outcome measures.

**Required Performance Indicators and Programmatic Data:**

Williamson County will report on all required performance indicators and understand the importance of reporting these measures. Williamson County will strive to include data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, income, and other relevant factors, when possible.