

Executive Summary:

Yakima County allocated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to support recovery from the public health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding was awarded across 66 projects totaling nearly \$50 million, strategically targeted to meet both urgent public health needs and long-term community priorities.

A significant portion of funding supports shovel-ready infrastructure projects aimed at expanding road, utility, and broadband access. These projects will increase the number of households connected to municipal drinking water, sewer, and broadband services particularly in rural and underserved communities. By reducing the distance to service connections, these improvements will directly expand opportunities for affordable housing development, enhance public health and safety, and improve quality of life for residents living in unincorporated areas and small towns across Yakima County.

Yakima County also recognized the severe impact of the pandemic on public safety, mental health, and community stability. The County experienced increases in drug overdoses, domestic violence, gang activity, and youth exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) during the pandemic. In response, SLFRF investments were made in law enforcement and criminal justice programs, including funding for increased patrols, joint agency task forces, youth drug intervention programs, and forensic equipment to strengthen evidence-based investigations. These efforts aim to restore public safety to pre-pandemic levels, reduce long-term criminal justice system costs, and save lives.

To further support public health and wellness, projects also focus on enhancing outdoor recreation infrastructure including trail development and park revitalization which provide accessible ways for residents to improve physical and mental health. Investments in fire and emergency services and local healthcare infrastructure ensure that rural residents receive timely, life-saving care and support community resilience.

Equity and Performance Tracking:

Yakima County prioritized equity throughout its funding process. Emphasis was placed on projects that serve historically underserved populations including rural communities, low-income households, and areas with limited access to infrastructure. The County used a public grant application process, and scoring criteria favored projects with matching funds or in-kind contributions, maximizing return on investment and community impact.

To track performance, Yakima County executed contracts with each subrecipient, establishing clear spending deadlines and reporting requirements. All projects are expected to fully expend their awards by August 31, 2026, a deadline adopted by the

County to allow sufficient time for closeout and compliance activities by the federal deadline of December 31, 2026. Performance measures are tracked by project and Expenditure Category, with regular monitoring of fund disbursement, milestone completion, and community impact.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes

Yakima County prioritized equity in both the design and implementation of its ARPA-funded projects. The County recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected low-income households, rural communities, communities of color, and residents without access to basic infrastructure such as broadband, sewer, and safe drinking water.

To promote equitable outcomes, the County:

- **Established an open application process** for community-based organizations, local governments, and nonprofits, allowing a wide variety of applicants from diverse areas across the County.
- Gave **weighted scoring to projects** that demonstrated clear service to disproportionately impacted populations or census tracts with low-income or high-minority populations.
- Prioritized projects in **unincorporated rural areas and small towns** that have historically lacked capacity to make major infrastructure investments.
- Required all applicants to explain how their project would address disparities in access to services or outcomes and encouraged collaborations that enhanced community reach.

Specific infrastructure projects, such as waterline extensions, broadband installation, and public health improvements, were intentionally targeted to serve areas with known access gaps. Public safety programs addressed the increase in violence and trauma in underserved neighborhoods. Recreation and park improvements emphasized access in low-income or rural zones to ensure all residents benefit from improved health and quality of life.

Intended Outcomes:

Each project includes tracking metrics related to:

- Number of households or residents served in disadvantaged areas
- Reduction in health or safety risk (e.g., access to clean water, broadband, medical care)

- Engagement of community stakeholders from historically underserved communities

As projects progress, Yakima County will continue to monitor impact through periodic reporting and ensure that equitable access remains a guiding principle.

Yakima County aligned its investments with programs and strategies that are grounded in evidence-based practices and national research. This includes investments in public health, criminal justice, substance abuse prevention, and infrastructure — all of which have established evidence supporting their role in improving long-term outcomes.

Projects classified under **Public Health, Behavioral Health, and Violence Prevention** incorporate known interventions that are supported by the CDC, SAMHSA, and DOJ research. For example:

- **Youth drug intervention programs** funded through SLFRF utilize prevention strategies proven to reduce substance use and recidivism.
- **Partnerships with law enforcement task forces** (e.g., FBI Joint Violent Offender Task Force) are data-driven strategies aimed at reducing violent crime in high-risk areas.
- **Ballistic analysis equipment and crime scene technology** improve clearance rates and strengthen prosecutions, which are tied to reductions in repeat offenses.

Yakima County also considered state and federal best practices for **infrastructure and environmental projects**, particularly where improvements affect public health (e.g., septic replacement, waterline extension, broadband expansion). These investments were prioritized based on need, existing data, and alignment with state and federal development plans.

For applicable projects, Yakima County will report whether the intervention is:

- **Evidence-based** (Tier 1–3 under Treasury guidelines)
- Includes **outcome tracking** or
- Incorporates **program evaluation** elements where available

The County is committed to leveraging public dollars in a responsible, data-informed manner that maximizes long-term benefit.