

Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors: ARPA task force endorses strategic framework for funding and recommends proposals to fight homelessness and COVID-19

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MILWAUKEE – Today, Milwaukee County’s [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Task Force](#) endorsed a strategic framework to guide its future work to allocate \$183.6 million in federal funds, and also endorsed two emergency funding proposals that seek to strengthen the county’s pandemic response and its support for individuals facing homelessness and precarious situations. The group also approved a framework for community outreach and engagement to begin this fall.

A strategic framework for Milwaukee County’s ARPA allocations

The ARPA Task Force unanimously approved a [strategic framework](#) providing guidelines for how to allocate Milwaukee County’s \$183.6 million in ARPA funding. The proposal, introduced by Director of Grants & Special Projects Ashley Adsit, recommended that:

- **63% of ARPA dollars (\$115,728,599) be allocated to “revenue loss recovery.”** Sample expenditures could include stabilizing government services; addressing the county’s backlog of capital projects and deferred maintenance; investing in technology, service delivery or facilities to realize cost-savings or efficiencies; and investing in new revenue generating

strategies.

- **20% of ARPA dollars (\$36,739,238) be allocated to “community support.”** Sample expenditures could include immediate, limited-term financial assistance for individuals; evidence-based strategies to address targeted social determinants of health; and collaborative initiatives that match other private and public funds.
- **13% of ARPA dollars (\$23,880,505) be allocated to “COVID-19 mitigation.”** Sample expenditures could include responding to COVID-19 mitigation needs (vaccination administration, PPE, testing, physical distancing measures); culturally-relevant and effective communications planning to support COVID mitigation; prevention of spread in congregate settings and other dense work sites; and payroll expenses for public health, safety and other staff responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **4% of ARPA dollars (\$7,347,848) be allocated to “fund administration.”** Sample expenditures could include complying with fiscal, programmatic and federal reporting requirements; sponsoring project-level evaluation and community engagement contracts; and establishing data collections processes.

“The ARPA Task Force is designing a process so that Milwaukee County can address the immediate and long-term needs of the community,” says Adsit. “We are focused on helping individuals recover from the pandemic and giving residents every opportunity to thrive in their neighborhoods. To do this, the task force prioritizes Milwaukee County’s long-term fiscal health by addressing the historic financial challenges faced by the organization. County services are relied upon by hundreds of thousands of people and a failure to prioritize strategies that will improve our fiscal position will endanger important services they use each day. Our residents count on us to be able to sustain the services and programs that aim to keep Milwaukee healthy, working, and moving.”

New emergency proposals recommended to help fight COVID-19 and homelessness

The ARPA Task Force endorsed a [\\$2.5 million allocation to support ongoing emergency needs related to the county’s COVID-19 response](#). These monies would

enable the county to continue offering COVID testing to employees, vaccine outreach and administration, communications, data analysis, and more. Without additional funding, the county's Budget Director Joe Lamers predicted that the county would exhaust its COVID response funding by October 2021.

"I hope our community will fight like hell to stop the spread of COVID-19 and get vaccinated so Milwaukee County can reallocate future ARPA dollars away from COVID mitigation and toward creating jobs and affordable housing, investing in our health, repairing our parks and parkways, and more," says ARPA Task Force Co-Chair and County Supervisor Shawn Rolland (District 6).

The ARPA Task Force also endorsed a [\\$1.5 million proposal to provide a flexible housing subsidy](#) to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness or in precarious situations at-risk of becoming homeless. Neither of these populations are eligible for emergency rental assistance through current county funding sources. United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County has pledged to provide \$3 million over the next three years to help further strengthen the effort.

"I'm proud of the way our Task Force built a strategic process to evaluate ideas and approve emergency requests for funds," says ARPA Task Force Co-Chair Ricardo Diaz. "We evaluated two well-conceived emergency proposals and we didn't defer, we didn't postpone - we responded quickly to meet the need."

Both of these recommended proposals will be heard by the Milwaukee County Board in the coming weeks.

Framework for community outreach and engagement takes shape

The Task Force also approved [a framework for community outreach and engagement](#) this fall. The high-level plan calls for a series of town hall and "reverse town hall" meetings, outreach to communities - especially those disparately impacted by the pandemic - as well as grants to promote organizational capacity-

building and infrastructure development.

“The Milwaukee County ARPA Taskforce is committed to ensuring the voices of County residents are included in defining what, where, and how ARPA dollars are spent,” says Office on African American Affairs Director and Task Force member Jeff Roman. “The decision to deploy a broad-based community engagement strategy that will inform, listen to, involve, and empower residents will help make our vision of achieving racial equity and becoming the healthiest state in Wisconsin a reality. I look forward to continue working with ARPA Taskforce members, our elected officials, and community partners to build upon the community outreach efforts we’ve initiated over the last year that serve to directly involve residents most impacted by the pandemic in the County’s ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery activities.”

Next meeting expected to be in late September

The next Milwaukee County ARPA Task Force meeting date and time is not yet set, but is expected to occur in late September.

“The Milwaukee County American Rescue Plan Act Task Force has two major roles,” says Supervisor Jason Haas, ARPA Task Force member and Chairman of the county’s Finance Committee. “First, it will guide the county in performing community outreach to ensure our peoples’ voices are heard in the decision-making process. Second, the task force will advise the Milwaukee County Board on how to use ARPA dollars to improve our communities.”