

American Rescue Plan

Overview

New Hanover County will receive \$45,543,632 from the American Rescue Plan, which was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. The funds must be obligated by Dec. 31, 2024, and New Hanover County has developed a framework to utilize these funds over the next three years to strengthen our community. The Board of Commissioners approved the initial framework at its April 5, 2021, board meeting and has approved revisions since then.

Each initiative has been vetted by county staff to ensure compliance with the law and the U.S. Treasury Department Rules and Guidance.

In some programs, the italicized figure is the administrative cost in addition to the program cost.

Broadband Connectivity - \$1,468,900

The Congressional language permits using the funds for broadband purposes, so the county has undertaken the following:

Broadband Access: A program to connect homes to broadband, focusing on households with children who qualify for Medicaid or Food and Nutrition benefits, for two years in order to increase access and affordability to reliable high-speed internet for students and families. (\$1,380,000)

Administrative Cost: \$88,900

Business and Employment Assistance - \$3,946,142

The legislation allows for assistance to businesses and nonprofits. New Hanover County's leisure and hospitality sectors were particularly hard hit during the pandemic and the county has undertaken the following:

Business Assistance: Business grants, scaled in size based on a business' number of employees, focused on the retail, service, leisure and hospitality sectors and child care facilities. (\$2,302,112)

Administrative Cost: \$15,225

Nonprofit Assistance: Grants to nonprofits that have been negatively impacted and were not able to continue operations at some point during the pandemic. (\$661,667)

Administrative Cost: \$22,138

Job Training: Two jobs programs, to be administered in partnership with Step Up Wilmington, to include a six-week paid job training and placement program for up to 200 people with a particular focus on the local film industry, and a six-month paid internship and job placement for an additional 10 to 20 people to develop long-term skills and employment. Includes administrative expenses equaling 5 percent of the programs' cost. (\$900,000)

Administrative Cost: \$45,000

Housing - \$4,873,426

The legislation allows assistance to households who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and for the development of affordable housing, so the county has undertaken the following:

Mortgage Assistance: Provide assistance to homeowners who are in arrears on mortgages because of impacts from COVID-19. *This would be in addition to the \$7 million Emergency Rental Assistance Program that is currently underway through the county.* (\$2,000,000)

Administrative Cost: \$109,573

Workforce Rental Housing Assistance: A pilot project to provide residents who qualify under workforce housing guidelines – 60 percent to 120 percent of area median income – by providing direct payments to landlords. (\$600,000)

Administrative Cost: \$1,724

Starway Village Gap Financing: To support the development of nearly 300 affordable housing units off Carolina Beach Road. (\$1,896,729)

Housing Specialist: A position at the Department of Social Services to provide counseling around housing. (\$133,200)

Emergency Rental Assistance Program Manager: A position at the Department of Social Services to manage the ERAP program. (\$132,200)

Physical and Mental Health - \$20,243,834

The well-being and mental health of children, students and seniors suffered during the pandemic and the legislation allows local governments to use funds to mitigate the public health impact of the pandemic. The county will use funds as outlined below to help address these issues and provide long-term positive impacts. *With the exception of the infant and toddler initiatives, the intention is to fold the services into the county's continuation budget beginning in Fiscal Year 2023-24.*

Community Violence Initiatives: To support the Board's commitment to reduce violence in schools and the community through several innovative approaches. (\$10,468,329)

Mental Health in Schools: Ensure access at each public school to mental health counselors through the county's Health and Human Services Department. (\$3,666,990)

Mental Health for Seniors: Establish mental health counselors and a mobile health outreach team based at the Senior Resource Center to serve our county's older adults. (\$366,146)

Virtual Outreach Position: Based at the Senior Resource Center, the position develops and maintains virtual programs for the SRC, which allows broader reach and service delivery. (\$106,156)

School Nurses: Reclassify two school nurses into school nurse leads and provide one school nurse supervisor through the county's Health and Human Services Department, in addition to the school nurses that the county already provides at each school. (\$211,892)

Afterschool Transportation: Providing New Hanover County Schools students with transportation needs for afterschool and tutoring programs (\$600,000)

Health Educator: A health educator position. (\$153,874)

Senior Resource Center: A congregate site in southern New Hanover County for the Senior Resource Center for meal distribution and social interaction. It also provides for enhanced meal distribution at the SRC's existing sites. (\$436,790)

Senior Resource Center: To cover the costs of providing transportation to seniors for two years. (\$223,500)

Infant and Toddler Mental Health: Provide two years of recovery-related mental health services for families with infants and toddlers through five county staff positions at Health and Human Services. (\$854,040)

Infant and Toddler Mental Health Scholarships: To provide scholarships to mental health professionals to earn advanced certificates and training focusing on early childhood mental health. (\$100,000)

Pandemic Operations Team: Establish a dedicated team of professionals to manage the ongoing pandemic response. (\$3,056,117)

Infrastructure - \$1,551,340

Congressional language explicitly allows the American Rescue Plan allocations for water and sewer projects. The county will use funds in the following ways:

Water & Sewer:

- Water and sewer infrastructure to support Habitat For Humanity's development of two affordable housing neighborhoods in northern New Hanover County. (\$1,116,751)
- Bill assistance program (\$159,589)
Administrative Cost: \$25,000
- To extend water and sewer to Eden Village, which is being established to address chronic homelessness in the community. (\$250,000)

Essential County Government Services - \$12,825,147

The American Rescue Plan allows for use of lost revenue funding for essential government services and for "premium pay" for employees who provided essential government services and for testing of the coronavirus, so the county has used funds in the following ways:

Essential Services:

- Use funds under the Treasury Department's "lost revenue" category to provide essential government services. (\$6,817,567)

Employee Pay:

- Provide employee premium pay in fixed dollar amounts based on an employee's length of service during the pandemic and full- or part-time status. This is in recognition of county staff who have remained on the frontlines, continued important public services, and ensured residents received the help they needed at a time when it was critical. (\$5,284,811)
- Provide additional premium pay for employees working directly in the vaccine response to compensate them for their dedication, long hours and constant work in vaccinating our community and saving lives. (\$346,801)

Testing:

- To provide weekly tests for unvaccinated employees to ensure continuity of service. (\$375,968)

Reserve and Administration - \$634,843

The legislation allows the county to set aside funds as a reserve for potential future allowable expenses as well as funds to administer and provide reports as needed. These funds do not include amounts already factored into individual programs.

- A reserve fund for future needs, administration and reporting. (\$634,843)

Total Amount of Funding Outlined in the County's Plan: \$45,543,632