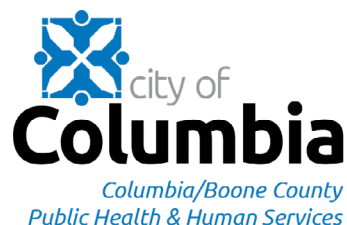


# Revitalize Renew Recover

Columbia's proposed  
process for ARPA funds

February 2022

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# Introduction

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 has provided \$25 million to the City of Columbia to address health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery. It is recommended that the City of Columbia use a community-driven, data-informed process to ensure the effective, efficient and equitable distribution of this federal funding. The planning staff at Columbia/Boone County Public Health and Human Services (PHHS) was tasked with coordinating this process.

The following proposed process is a suggested roadmap of how to proceed with planning, engagement and communication. This document also includes an estimated timeline and proposed budget for this roadmap.

# Planning

The funds associated with ARPA have specific eligible uses that the money can be used for. Eligible uses for funds as authorized under ARPA include:

- Public Health
  - » COVID-19 mitigation and prevention
  - » Medical expenses
  - » Public health and safety
  - » Public health programming
  - » Disparities in public health outcomes
- Economic Impacts
  - » Assistance to unemployed workers
  - » Assistance to households
  - » Small businesses/nonprofits
  - » Rehiring government staff
  - » Aid to impacted industries
  - » Investments in housing and neighborhoods
  - » Educational needs
- Premium Pay
  - » Essential work
- Investments in Infrastructure
  - » Water and sewer
  - » Broadband
- Governmental Services (Revenue Loss)

Each of these sections has additional information that can be found in the Final Rule document on the [U.S. Department of Treasury website for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds](#).

Since the announcement of these funds, City Council has already allocated \$12.5 million to help address the following priority areas:

- Homelessness
- Mental health rapid access
- Community violence
- Workforce development

It is recommended that the remaining funds be distributed based on public input through a robust community engagement process. In order to manage this extensive community engagement plan, it is necessary for Public Health and Human Services to hire two additional Senior Planners. The cost for this additional staff for one year can be found in the attached budget outline.

# Engagement

A vigorous community engagement process is recommended to inform the allocation of funds. In order to proceed with the engagement process, it is important to determine if there are any areas that the City Council would like to prioritize for receiving community input. For example, if Council determines that they only want to allocate funds related to public health needs, then it is not necessary to gather community input on the other funding categories.

If the City Council wants public input to determine what specific categories to focus on, it is recommended that input be obtained with a series of physical and virtual voting systems. This would involve an empty board available at various locations around Columbia where people can mark their preferred funding category by placing a sticker under that eligible use. This is similar to the approach that City staff used at the 2019 City Employee Picnic to gain feedback from employees about their feelings on Strategic Plan priorities. These boards could be placed in areas of high community traffic such as the Daniel Boone Regional Library, City facilities (City Hall, Public Health and Human Services, Activity and Recreation Center, etc.), the DMV, various grocery stores, etc.

In addition to physical voting, virtual boards could also be available and posted on the City's website and social media platforms. This could be built within the City's website or by using a service provider such as SurveyMonkey, whichever is best for both voting and ranking the priority areas. Demographic information would be collected for each participant including race, sex and address. This information would be collected to ensure that feedback is being gathered from a representative cross-section of the community.

Feedback from the physical and digital voting would be presented to City Council for review and to determine which areas to focus on for further community engagement through focus groups. If the City Council would like to decide the specific categories to focus on instead of gathering input from the public, this section can be skipped.

Once priority funding categories have been determined, it is recommended that PHHS staff conduct a total of 10 focus groups to gather important community input. It is recommended that seven of these focus groups be conducted in-person with specific groups of people, depending on the determined priority area. For example, if initial community input determines that 'Economic Impacts' is a funding category of focus, at least one focus group should be made up of small business owners.

It is important to note that the PHHS planning staff would seek focus group locations that are ADA accessible, on a bus route, in a setting that is familiar for the demographic and that meetings are held at a variety of times that coordinate with various work schedules. In addition, childcare, meals and gift cards would be provided to each participant. If a chosen funding category mentions Qualified Census

# Engagement

Tracts (QCT) as a condition of funding, focus groups will be held in QCTs to ensure proper representation.

While in-person focus groups are the goal, we understand that it may not be feasible given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as understanding that virtual options may be more conducive to some residents. For that reason, it is recommended that three focus groups are open to the general public and held virtually via Zoom. This option would be more cost-effective in that child care and meals would not be provided for participants in the virtual focus groups. However, we recommend that gift cards are still given to virtual participants in order to thank them for their time. These can be mailed after the completion of the focus group.

All costs associated with conducting 10 focus groups can be found on the attached budget.

# Communication

Success of a community engagement process largely depends on an effective communications strategy. Without it, residents may not know what ARPA funds mean for them, what eligible uses are or how to participate in the process. The goal of ARPA funding is to rebuild our community and that should start with a versatile communications strategy that promotes transparency and accountability, while also helping reach the most impacted in our community.

A comprehensive communications plan should include delivering information directly to residents with an awareness campaign promoted through multiple forms of media, a detailed webpage, a community e-newsletter and partnerships with community leaders to reach those without regular internet access. The City is already on the way to rolling out a community engagement platform with Bang the Table called BeHeardCoMo and this could be used in multiple ways to both share information and gather input.

Some of these forms of communication can be achieved by staff assigned to this project (such as a website, e-newsletter, BeHeardCoMo and work with community partners) while other parts of a campaign would require the use of an outside agency.

In the past, PHHS has worked with local advertising agencies to reach community members in order to educate them on a variety of health-related topics. The most comprehensive campaign was conducted in 2021 in collaboration with Bucket Media to educate Boone County residents on the COVID-19 vaccine. The \$200,000 investment in that campaign was able to generate interest from thousands of community members including:

- More than 20,000 clicks on Facebook
- More than 4,000 clicks through Google Ads
- More than 5,000 swipe-ups on Snapchat

Additionally, there were nearly 200,000 views on subscription television programs within more than 30,000 unique households. This was over a four month period. The attached communications budget is estimated based on the proposal of that campaign, however, it is recommended that an ARPA awareness campaign run for two months.

While the COVID-19 vaccine campaign was the largest campaign contracted through PHHS, other campaigns have also been successful with budgets ranging from \$6,000 to \$30,000, depending on target audience and scope of work. This shows that there are a variety of communication mechanisms to use based on desired outcome and budget.

# Estimated Timeline

The timeline below is a suggestion and can change based on the City Council's decisions regarding how to proceed with the proposed process.

## **April 2022**

- Hire and onboard two additional PHHS Senior Planners to implement and manage the plan.
- Create a detailed communications plan and hire an outside agency to help achieve the goals of the plan related to reaching the community.

## **May 2022**

- Work with City IT and communications staff to create ARPA webpage.

## **June 2022**

- Launch awareness campaign for ARPA.
- Launch voting system.

## **July 2022**

- Share voting system results with Council and determine priority funding areas.
- Schedule and reserve spaces for focus groups.
- Craft focus group questions.

## **August-September 2022**

- Conduct focus groups.

## **October-November 2022**

- Analyze focus group data.
- Create a report with findings and provide to Council, as well as publish on ARPA webpage.

# Budget

The cost of the process will vary depending on what approach the City Council chooses to take. Attached is a full list of all estimated costs based on the recommendations detailed above.

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Cost per Item</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Total Costs</b>
Salary and benefits for Senior Planner	\$82,334.00	2	\$164,668.00
Ancillary personnel costs	\$5,812.00	2	\$11,624.00
Meals for focus groups (10-15 participants)	\$300.00	7	\$2,100.00
Gift cards for focus group participants	\$25.00	150	\$3,750.00
Child care during focus groups	\$60.00	7	\$420.00
Office supplies	\$400.00	1	\$400.00
Venue rental	\$50.00	7	\$350.00
Transcription fee	\$1,700.00	1	\$1,700
Communication plan	\$99,169.00	1	\$99,169
<b>Total Cost</b>			<b>\$284,181.00</b>
<b>Percent of Project Total</b>			<b>2.3%</b>



# Budget Breakdown

## Ancillary Personnel Costs

Expenditure	Cost per Senior Planner	Total Costs
Senior Planner phone	\$312	\$312
Senior Planner workspace and chair	\$2,000	\$2,000
Senior Planner computer equipment	\$2,000	\$2,000
Training for Senior Planner	\$1,500	\$1,500

**Total: \$5,812**

## Comprehensive Communications Estimated Costs

Platform	Cost Per Unit	Number of Units	Total
Broadcast TV	\$12,000	2	\$24,000
Traditional Radio	\$8,000	2	\$16,000
Spotify	\$2,000	2	\$4,000
Pandora	\$2,353	2	\$4,706
COMO magazine print ad	\$1,725	3	\$5,175
Inside Columbia magazine print ad	\$1,406	3	\$4,218
Vox magazine print ad	\$2,070	1	\$2,070
Online search	\$1,500	2	\$3,000
YouTube	\$2,500	2	\$5,000
Connected TV	\$2,000	2	\$4,000
Facebook/Instagram	\$1,500	2	\$3,000
Twitter	\$1,000	2	\$2,000
Snapchat Stories	\$1,000	2	\$2,000
Creative	\$20,000	1	\$20,000

**Total: \$99,169.00**

# Possible Next Steps

An important element of ARPA is the evaluation of programs after RFPs are submitted and funding is allocated. PHHS can help coordinate this evaluation process in order to ensure that projects are meeting deliverables. This would be done in coordination with the Finance Department. Evaluation could be done by the requested Senior Planners initially hired for the community engagement process. They would be responsible for delivering evaluation reports to Council as needed.

# Summary

ARPA is an unprecedented opportunity for the City of Columbia to leverage one-time, non-recurring federal funds to respond to the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. This suggested process would aim to deliver transformative change through community-driven solutions. The goal is that aid and investments would be targeted toward communities with the greatest needs and aligned with the priorities of people most impacted by the pandemic and resulting economic crisis.

To summarize, it is recommended that Council consider what, if any, areas of focus they would like to prioritize. If there are not specific areas that Council has in mind, a voting system could be implemented both in-person and virtually to allow for community input in determining priority funding categories. Once that is determined, PHHS staff would conduct 10 focus groups (seven in-person and three virtually) within target demographics based on the funding category.

In order to bring awareness to this process and promote participation, it is highly encouraged that a comprehensive communications campaign be executed with the support of an external agency. It is important to meet people where they are at by working with community leaders and using social media, digital media and traditional forms of media.

The City of Columbia has an opportunity to work with our communities to invest strategically in people, organizations and projects that will have a positive, long-term economic impact for years to come. Creating a thorough process for allocating these funds with equity at the forefront will help Columbia revitalize after the COVID-19 pandemic. We greatly appreciate your trust and support in allowing PHHS to spearhead the community engagement portion of this process. We look forward to gathering your feedback.