Harris County
Recovery Plan

State and Local
Fiscal Recovery Funds
2022 Report

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Recovery Plan

I. Executive Summary

Introduction and Priority Outcomes

When Harris County first launched our State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program, Commissioners Court identified four investment priorities: **Health, Housing, Jobs and Education, and County Operations.** We sought to quickly activate *immediate relief projects* to address pressing challenges communities faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, while researching pandemic impacts and gathering input from 1,000 community members to inform our longer-term strategy. That work, together with guidance from Commissioners Court, yielded the following **Focus Areas** and **Priority Outcomes**, with a broader goal of addressing the root causes of disparities that were only exacerbated during the pandemic. The **equity framework** adopted by Commissioners Court underpins our approach. We now turn to *longer-term strategic projects,* seeking to deliver transformative impacts for residents and ensure we emerge from the pandemic stronger than before.

	Focus Area	Priority Outcomes
Health	**COVID-19**	• Reduce the spread of COVID-19
	Healthcare Access & Coverage	• Increase access to quality, affordable health services and insurance coverage
	Coordinated Care	• Improve patient outcomes and reduce patient burden
	Behavioral Health	• Reduce incidence and impacts of substance abuse • Expand access to and availability of mental health services
	Food & Nutrition	• Reduce number of people who lack food security
	Violence Prevention & Domestic Violence	• Reduce violent crime • Reduce exposure to domestic violence
	Crime Prevention through Environmental Design	• Reduce violent crime
	Environmental Health	• Reduce blood lead levels in children
Housing	**Homelessness**	• Reduce number of residents experiencing homelessness and time experiencing homelessness
	Housing Stability	• Increase access to quality, affordable housing • Increase housing stability for low-income households
	Re-Entry & Re-Integration	• Enable successful transition out of the criminal justice system
	Infrastructure	• Increase access to clean drinking water and functional sewer systems, especially in underserved communities

Jobs and Education	**Individual/ Family Financial Assistance**	• Promote household financial stability; increase income and assets, reduce debt burden
	Small Business	• Support the formation, survival, and growth of small and micro businesses, with focus on women- or minority-owned firms, and firms owned by people living with disabilities
	Employment & Workforce Development	• Increase access to quality jobs with living wages
	Child Care	• Expand access to quality, affordable child care
County Ops	**Justice & Safety**	• Reduce court backlog • Reduce unnecessary exposure to the criminal justice system

These Focus Areas and Priority Outcomes guide consideration of long-term strategic projects. Teams for each Focus Area, comprised of Commissioners Court office members and department staff, conduct additional community outreach and research before recommending investments to our American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Steering Committee, which recommends projects to Commissioners Court for ultimate approval. Efforts across the portfolio are supported by our ARPA Program Management Office (PMO).

Active Projects
During this reporting period (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022), the following projects were approved by Harris County Commissioners Court.[1]

Health

COVID-19

- **Emergency Nursing ($71.0M):** Provided critical medical staff for area non-profit hospitals that struggled to address surges in patient need during the Delta and Omicron waves
- **Vaccine Incentives ($12.6M):** Payment incentives for first doses of COVID-19 vaccines increased vaccine uptake and decreased COVID-19 caseload and risk

Coordinated Care

- **ACCESS Harris ($14.3M):** Supports a care coordination model providing holistic and integrated service delivery to improve outcomes for adults and youth in violence prevention programs, chron26ally homeless individuals with high medical needs, re-entry populations, and transitional age youth; includes an innovative technology platform

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[1] For further detail on each of these projects, please see the next section (Uses of Funds) and the Project Inventory.

Behavioral Health

- **Community Initiated Care ($8.9M):** Three-year "Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities" project to strengthen community behavioral health and resiliency and address the increase in reported mental health struggles, substance use disorder, and suicides
- **Health Management Associates ($0.1M):** Funds consulting and research to help guide the delivery of behavioral and mental healthcare services and provide RFP support

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

- **Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement ($3.0M):** Expands Public Health efforts to abate neighborhood nuisances including unsafe structures, refuse, rubbish, weeds, rodents, and abandoned pools in neighborhoods experiencing high levels of violent crime

Environmental Health

- **Lead Abatement ($20.0M):** Funds blood lead level testing for children and lead abatement in schools and homes to reduce lead exposure and improve health outcomes

Housing

Homelessness

- **Community COVID Housing Program CCHP 2.0 ($35.5M):** Provides permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, homelessness diversion, and other services for individuals experiencing homelessness and enables use of 1,200 ARPA Emergency Housing Vouchers by the local Continuum of Care
- **HAY Center ($5.0M):** Contributes to construction of a 3.3-acre campus featuring 50 affordable apartment units and wraparound services for youth aging out of foster care
- **Employ2Empower ($2.2M)**: Expands a successfully piloted workforce program that employs unhoused individuals while providing them resources to meet basic needs

Housing Stability

- **Affordable Housing Roles ($1.8M):** Supports hiring for an Assistant Director and four Program Managers dedicated to ARPA Affordable Housing projects

Infrastructure

- **Water & Sewer Feasibility Study ($0.4M):** Professional assessment of potential water and wastewater infrastructure investments, with a goal of selecting projects to provide drinking water and/or sanitary sewer services in dense, low-income areas currently served by wells and septic systems

Jobs and Education

Family Financial Stability

- **Flexible Financial Assistance ($65.4M):** Provided emergency cash grants to 40,000 low-income households experiencing economic hardship
- **Child Tax Credit ($0.5M):** Increased community outreach and tax assistance to help low-income families access the Earned Income Tax Credit and expanded Child Tax Credit

Small Business Support

- **Small Business ($32.1M):** Provided cash grants to small businesses to support small business survival, hiring, and economic recovery

Employment and Workforce Development

- **Hire Up Harris ($1.0M):** Administrative expenses will support full-time staff and contractors managing this upskilling initiative and additional apprenticeship programs, for which competitive procurement processes are currently active

Child Care

- **County Connections ($1.5M):** Provides grants for non-profits to expand summer enrichment programs for school-age children, addressing educational disparities
- **Home-based Child Care ($0.9M):** 12-week training and licensing support program to increase the number of high-quality, licensed home-based child care providers
- **Safe Babies ($2.4M):** Supports young children in the foster care system and their families by promoting attachment and addressing impacts of prior trauma and neglect
- **UpWORDS ($4.6M):** Provides families with young children, especially low-income families, with training and resources to increase child brain and language development

County Operations

- **Court Backlog ($17.7M):** Expands jury services, court staff, emergency response dockets, and evidence processing to address the court backlog generated by the pandemic
- **VIPER Violent Persons Task Force ($2.6 M):** Multi-agency effort to accelerate warrant execution for violent crimes and reduce the warrant backlog created during the pandemic

Additionally, revenue replacement has been used to create the **FLEX Fund ($30.0M),** enabling use of County general funds for projects aligned with ARPA Priority Outcomes. In this reporting period, covering eligible Public Health expenses with Local Fiscal Recovery Funds freed up budget to create a Disparity Studies Fund in the general fund, supporting local school districts and community colleges with Minority/Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) assessments.

In support of these and future projects**, Internal and External Administrative funds ($14.4M)** have been allocated for County staff, consulting services, and other service providers to provide portfolio management, financial management, and additional support of all focus areas.

Upcoming Projects

In addition to the approved projects listed above, Harris County has numerous competitive procurement processes underway with awards expected in Q3 2022. The expected funding amounts listed below have been communicated through the associated Purchasing processes but awards have not yet been approved by Commissioners Court. These areas, together with projects approved after the reporting period ending in June 2022, include:

Health

- **Behavioral Health ($20.0M):** The current Request for Proposals (RFP) seeks organizations that can provide the following services expanding access to Behavioral Health supports:
  - *Community-based organization Behavioral Health Provider Grants,* to increase access to counseling staff and behavioral health services in highly vulnerable neighborhoods and schools for students, youth, and their families
  - *Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Services,* to enhance or expand overdose prevention services and/or support services for persons with substance use disorders
  - *Behavioral Health Workforce Program,* to increase the number of behavioral health providers, especially providers of color and multilingual providers

- **Food & Nutrition ($9.0M):** The active RFP targets initiatives reducing the number of people experiencing food insecurity, with a focus on neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, low-income communities, and food deserts, by:
  - Increasing access to food by improving food distribution infrastructure
  - Providing services related to food and nutrition
  - Acting as an umbrella organization to provide small capacity-building grants to hyperlocal food providers within Harris County

- **Maternal & Child Health ($8M):** Approved at Commissioners Court in July, this home visiting program expands resource navigation of social and health benefits for new and expecting families through a systematic approach to care coordination, prenatal care, postpartum care, and infant-early child development. Funding will provide direct assistance to pregnant mothers and infants at risk for severe health complications by increasing enrollment into available health coverage options, increasing the number of prenatal and well-child visits, and increasing the number of home visits for health education and access to care.

Housing

- **Affordable Housing:** RFPs in support of creation and preservation of affordable housing cover include development of program guidelines; single family and multifamily brokerage services; multifamily rehab construction management, inspection services, and independent cost estimating services; and single family rehab inspection, duplication of benefits, and construction management services

- **Water & Sewer Infrastructure:** RFPs for program management and design services will be awarded in conjunction with results of the active feasibility studies.

Jobs and Education

- **Child Care ($48M):** Proposed funds would support projects that improve access, affordability, and quality of child care, especially for low-income households. The following two projects are being developed:
  - *Child Care Capacity: Contracted Slots Pilot Program:* This project would work with existing high-quality child care centers to add around 1,000 new slots in target areas, particularly in highly vulnerable neighborhoods and child care deserts, with a focus on serving infants and toddlers from low-income families.
  - *Subsidy Enrollment Process Improvement:* This project would study and improve the enrollment practices, system and IT architecture that families use to apply for the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's child care subsidy program, ensuring that more eligible families are easily able to complete the application process and access state and federally supported financial aid.

- **Hire Up Harris ($14M):** Proposed funds would support upskilling and reskilling workforce development initiatives which provide participants with sectoral training, job placement assistance, wraparound services, and access to high-quality jobs which pay a living wage. The proposed program would include a Learning Cohort, so that workforce development organizations participating in the program can share best practices to improve services and participant outcomes.

- **Apprenticeship programs ($18M):** Proposed funds would support creation or expansion of US Department of Labor registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs) or provide support and wraparound services to existing apprentice programs. By expanding the number of apprenticeships in both traditional and non-traditional pathways, this program intends to increase the number of people who can access high-quality jobs in high-growth industries.

County Operations

- **County jail capacity ($26M):** Approved at Commissioners Court in July, this contract provides overflow capacity to alleviate overcrowding in the County jail

Initial Results

Harris County has completed five of the projects above, resulting in meaningful progress:

<u>**Flexible Financial Assistance**</u> issued $1,500 payments to 40,000 households across the County, with the overwhelming majority of families using assistance for rent, bills, and food. Overall, 48% of funded households came from census tracts with CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) scores in the highest quartile. The <u>**Child Tax Credit**</u> program has resulted in over 4,000 children being claimed for the credit and **8,950 households assisted with tax filing**, bringing an estimated **$13 million in tax credits** to low-income households with children. Both programs have helped low-income households across the County increase their income and improve their financial stability.

The <u>**Small Business Relief Fund**</u>, which provided grants of $5,000 - $25,000 to 2,577 small and micro businesses, also directed 63% of funding to businesses in high CDC SVI neighborhoods, with more than half of funding going to Black-owned businesses. Small business owners primarily spent funds on employee payroll and paying rent or mortgage expenses to keep businesses open. As of March 2022, 99.5% of recipients had remained open and the number of businesses who estimated they were likely to close without additional assistance had declined compared to September 2021. **36% of recipients indicated the grant helped them keep employees that would otherwise have been laid off**, and 50% of recipients planned on hiring new employees.

The <u>**Emergency Nursing**</u> project supplied approximately 1,000 nurses, respiratory therapists, and other critical medical staff to 18 local hospitals during the Delta and Omicron COVID-19 waves. Based on comparison to changes in vaccination rates in surrounding counties during the same period, <u>**Vaccine incentives**</u> resulted in an estimated **additional 30,000 people being vaccinated**, helping protect community members from COVID-19 and contributing to the reduction of hospitalizations.

Priority outcome: Promote household financial stability; increase income and assets; reduce debt burden

Priority Outcome: Support the formation, survival, and growth of small and micro business; with focus on women- or minority-owned firms and firms owned by people living with disabilities

Priority Outcome: Reduce the spread of COVID-19

Overall, our immediate relief projects sought to address households' basic needs, stabilize families and neighborhood businesses, and prevent the pandemic from further worsening mental and physical health. While there is still a great deal of need to address, our completed projects have advanced each of those goals.

Active programs are on track to deliver additional benefits. Examples of reach & impact include:

- The **"Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities" Community Initiated Care program** is delivering behavioral health training and digital interventions in 10 target zip codes most impacted by the pandemic with limited access to behavioral health services

- The **Community COVID Housing Program** has issued nearly 900 Emergency Housing Vouchers to individuals experiencing homelessness
- **Employ2Empower** will provide employment, workforce training, and services to 160 individuals experiencing homelessness
- The **Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement** team expects to abate 1,100 issues in neighborhoods experiencing high levels of violent crime
- **County Connections** is currently providing summer enrichment opportunities to nearly 7,000 children and youth
- The **HAY Center campus** will provide services to 1,400 current and former foster youth annually

Challenges and Opportunities

Our completed programs highlight challenges and opportunities as we move from immediate relief to strategic transformation.

Our immediate relief projects such as Flexible Financial Assistance and Small Business grant programs were launched on a tight timeline, with limited direct input on program design from households or small businesses, though each leveraged learnings from prior programs. While feedback from grant recipient surveys indicated that most people found the programs easy to navigate, knew where to get support, and appreciated the programs, we are excited for the opportunity to include more community input in current and upcoming program design.

Similarly, due to speed to launch considerations and the desire to maximize funding available to directly help residents, our immediate relief programs did not have evaluation partners or highly rigorous evaluation plans. While all immediate relief programs have tracked Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and gathered data helpful for assessing their impacts on our community, we look forward to ensuring current and future programs provide evidence for detailed evaluations. Already, our Community Initiated Care program and Early Childhood programs are undergoing third-party evaluation. We are actively seeking evaluation partners for services provided by the Community COVID Housing Program (CCHP 2.0) and for upcoming workforce development and Child Care Capacity: Contracted Slots programs. We hope these evaluations will help us demonstrate the extent of program impacts, point toward additional solutions, and share program insights locally and nationally.

Looking towards Year 2, we have three portfolio management goals: 1) Deliver our Priority Outcomes at scale, 2) Provide enhanced portfolio insights, including external data transparency, and 3) Engage the community and tell our stories more broadly. We are focused on launching additional impactful programs at scale, using our equity framework to improve active programs, and sharing the impact ARPA funding has on our communities.

Although COVID-19 mortality rates have declined, Harris County residents still face the pandemic's long-lasting effects as well as a difficult economic environment. **We look forward to driving more equitable outcomes across the County in the coming year.**

II.   Uses of Funds

Overall Strategy & Goals

As noted in our previous Recovery Plan, Harris County's vision was informed by **three initial community input mechanisms** launched in 2021: an *Appreciative Community Inquiry* by BakerRipley, which interviewed 200 residents across the county about pandemic impacts, needs, support systems, and aspirations; approximately 200 stakeholder interviews with community, non-profit, and business leaders as well as academics and public policy experts; and a public survey that secured open community input from 600 residents. (Results are available at budget.harriscountytx.gov/community_engagement.aspx.)

Moreover, Commissioners Court identified **four investment priorities** for the use of ARPA funds: **Health, Housing, Jobs and Education, and County Operations**. These categories were identified based on observations and research on the most significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic together with underlying disparities that the pandemic highlighted and exacerbated. Initial guidance, unanimously approved by Commissioners Court, can be found in the County Judge's letter linked at HarrisCountyARPA.org.

These input streams shared key concerns which have informed our overall goals. Community members echoed one another's experiences: the difficulties families had paying bills, a desire for economic self-sufficiency through living wage jobs, challenges coping with the mental and emotional impact of isolation, grief, and loss, constraints of caring for children and elderly adults, and the stress of attempting to access healthcare or achieve housing stability. Thus there were two broad take-aways that informed our strategy:

- *ARPA funds should be used both for immediate relief and transformational, structural change*. We must quickly help people get back on their feet while also finding ways to build back that do not simply return our County to a pre-pandemic status quo, but actively create a better future.
- *The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing structural inequities*. True pandemic recovery requires tackling these inequities across all our work, focusing on the marginalized communities that have been disproportionately impacted.

Based on the first take-away—including the clear need to address urgent challenges across the County—Commissioners Court approved **eight initial immediate relief programs**, which amounted to $160 million, or approximately 20 percent of Harris County's total SLFRF award.

These programs included: (i) Vaccine Incentives and (ii) Emergency Nursing to address the continued spread of COVID-19, (iii) Community Initiated Care to address pressing mental health concerns in zip codes with high COVID impact and suicide rates, (iv) Permanent Supportive Housing support services to make use of emergency housing vouchers, (v) Flexible Financial Assistance to households, (vi) Child Tax Credit navigation and tax services, (vii) Small Business Grants for struggling businesses, and (viii) Court Backlog Remediation to address the backlog in court hearings.

Based on the second takeaway, Harris County adopted the **ARPA Equity Framework** to guide project selection, design, and implementation and ensure that assistance across all projects is focused on the communities most impacted by the pandemic, including communities of color, those living with disabilities, and those struggling with economic and housing instability. Nearly every project makes use of the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), other demographic data with social and economic variables, data on employment and economic impact, and other measurements of pandemic impact, to make sure the hardest-hit populations are being served. We see ARPA funding as a unique opportunity to address the inequities exacerbated by the pandemic with investments that spur transformational change, addressing gaps in the County's pre-existing services while allowing and encouraging innovation.

To accomplish this, Harris County crafted a structure to direct long-term investments and program development: our **Guiding Principles, Focus Areas, and ARPA Priority Outcomes.** Our Guiding Principles ask each program to demonstrate three characteristics:

1. *Right Funding:* ensure that projects (a) are eligible based on Treasury guidance, (b) maximize all available funding (more specialized funding sources should be used, if possible, before ARPA funding), and (c) minimize creation of long-term overhead beyond the performance period.
2. *Right Strategy:* ensure that projects align with (a) County goals and County-wide Priority Outcomes, (b) the ARPA Equity Framework, and (c) generating transformative material impact for Harris County residents.
3. *Right Program:* ensure that projects (a) use evidence-based approaches, (b) implement robust program evaluation, (c) are supported by the right resourcing, and (d) operate at the right scale.

As referenced in our second Guiding Principle, Commissioners Court adopted a set of County-wide Priority Outcomes in September 2021. These Priority Outcomes spelled out the overall goals, desired outcomes, and outcome measures for eight primary areas of County activity to build a more dynamic, vibrant, and resilient community, while being inclusive, equitable, and transparent.

Similarly, the ARPA team at Harris County also developed a set of **17 Focus Areas** for ARPA-funded activity, and a set of **20 ARPA Priority Outcomes**. These Focus Areas and Priority Outcomes were determined based on input from residents, community organizations, and other key stakeholders, observations and extensive research on COVID-19 impact and need, advice from experts and academics, and guidance from County staff and elected officials.

Each Focus Area is broad enough to encompass a large variety of interventions while being oriented by a specific Priority Outcome, a clear and measurable goal that we expect to make significant progress because of the interventions undertaken with ARPA funding. The structure of these Focus Areas and ARPA Priority Outcomes helps cohesively leverage our funds to create meaningful impact for our communities.

Each Focus Area is supported by a team of Court office members, department staff, and outside experts as appropriate, who carry out additional research and seek community input to craft proposals for long-term projects. Some team members belong to multiple Focus Areas, acknowledging that many different Focus Areas can contribute to and may be necessary to furthering any given Priority Outcome.

These Focus Areas and ARPA Priority Outcomes (PO) are:

Health

- **COVID-19** (PO 1: Reduce the spread of COVID-19)
- **Coordinated Care** (PO 2: Improve patient outcomes and reduce patient burden
- **Healthcare Access** (PO 3: Increase access to quality, affordable health services and insurance coverage)
- **Behavioral Health** (PO 4: Reduce incidence and impacts of substance abuse; PO 5: Expand access to and availability of mental health services)
- **Food and Nutrition** (PO 6: Reduce number of people that lack food security)
- **Crime Prevention through Environmental Design** (PO 7: Reduce violent crime)
- **Violence Prevention and Domestic Violence** (PO 7: Reduce violent crime; PO 8: Reduce exposure to domestic violence)
- **Environmental Health** (PO 9: Reduce blood lead levels in children)

Housing

- **Homelessness** (PO 10: Reduce homeless population and time experiencing homelessness)
- **Housing Stability** (PO 11: Increase access to quality, affordable housing; PO 12: Increase housing stability for low-income households)
- **Infrastructure** (PO 13: Increase access to clean drinking water and functional sewer systems, especially in underserved communities)
- **Re-Entry & Re-Integration** (PO 14: Enable successful transition out of the criminal justice system

Jobs and Education

- **Individual and Family Financial Assistance** (PO 15: Promote household financial stability, increase income and assets, and reduce debt burden)
- **Small Business** (PO 16: Support the formation, survival, and growth of small and micro businesses, with focus on women- or minority-owned firms, and firms owned by people living with disabilities)
- **Employment and Workforce Development** (PO 17: Increase access to quality jobs with living wages)
- **Child Care** (PO 18: Expand access to quality, affordable child care)

County Operations

- **Justice and Safety** (PO 19: Reduce court backlog; PO 20: Reduce unnecessary exposure to the criminal justice system)

Note: The order listed does not indicate order of preference or importance. The numbering on the Priority Outcomes is simply for later reference.

By undertaking projects with the guidance of these Focus Areas, Harris County will achieve a strong recovery, defined by substantive progress in all identified Priority Outcomes. Our strategy aims for a recovery that builds the foundation for a genuinely better life for County residents. By

pursuing and scaling evidence-based and innovative approaches, our ARPA projects can also provide proofs-of-concept for future County-wide efforts.

By utilizing the Equity Framework and having equity centered in our Guiding Principles, every project's focus on populations most impacted by the pandemic contributes to an equitable recovery. This aims to narrow gaps between our residents and elevates neighborhoods routinely underserved before the pandemic. In doing so, Harris County not only hopes that our recovery projects leave the hardest-hit communities stronger than before, but also forms the foundation for continuous efforts to reduce disparities between our residents.

Detailed fund allocations by Expenditure Category

Harris County's programs are listed with further detail under each Expenditure Category and Sub-category. Each project's description below includes its main goals, populations served, and reference to at least one Priority Outcome. Most projects are targeted to serve low-income households, especially people for whom English is a second language, people of color, and people living in high-SVI neighborhoods. Several projects focus on those who are even more at-risk within these groups, such as children and youth, those experiencing homelessness, those dealing with mental and behavioral health challenges, and those with experiences in the criminal legal or foster care systems.

a. **Public Health (EC 1)**

1.1 COVID-19 Vaccination

> Vaccine Incentives ($12.6M, completed): Given high levels of vaccine hesitancy, especially among communities most impacted by COVID-19, the County authorized $100 payment incentives for a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine per recipient. Key outcomes targeted were increasing the population of vaccinated individuals and decreasing the spread of COVID-19 (PO 1). These incentives were impactful for those concerned about taking time off work to get vaccinated, young people ages 20-29, and Black and Hispanic community members. A Rice University report found that zip codes where vaccination rates were lagging saw an upward trend after the incentives were announced. Compared against surrounding counties' trends, an estimated additional 30,000 vaccines were given as a result of the incentive.

1.12 Mental Health Services

> Community Initiated Care ($8.9M, in progress): This project, a collaboration between The Harris Center and the Well-Being Trust, focuses on 10 neighborhoods where communities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, have seen sharp increases in suicide and poverty, and lack access to mental healthcare. It aims to strengthen behavioral health and resiliency by identifying community touchpoints, raising awareness of mental health symptoms and treatment options, offering community-based trainings to respond to mental health problems, and creating support groups for survivors of suicide loss (PO 4, PO 5).

> Health Management Associates ($97K, in progress): These funds support consulting and research services from Health Management Associates, a national firm with strong

understanding of Harris County's healthcare, social services, and behavioral healthcare environment. They will help guide the delivery of behavioral and mental healthcare services and support an RFP to select proposals related to behavioral health and workforce development, recovery housing, substance abuse prevention, and counseling and mental health support (PO 4, PO 5).

1.14 Other Public Health Services

Emergency Nursing ($71.0M, completed): Especially during the Delta and Omicron waves, COVID-19 strained hospitals in disproportionately impacted areas that were already struggling with historically low staffing levels. This funding helped hire emergency medical staffing, including Registered Nurses and Respiratory Therapists, who were supplied to area non-profit hospitals to address the surges and provide critical support to patients and healthcare workers, with a particular focus on ICU, medical surge/trauma, emergency, pediatric ICU, and pediatric medical surge staffing. Harris County, Angel Staffing, and SETRAC worked to identify hospital needs and prioritize and place staff based on need (PO 1).

b. Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2)

2.3 Household Assistance: Cash Transfers

Flexible Financial Assistance ($65.4M, completed): Launched during the previous reporting period and completed during this past one, the Harris County Recovery Assistance program, provided in partnership with Catholic Charities and Connective, provided emergency cash grants to 40,000 low-income families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (PO 15). The program included targeted outreach towards families not traditionally connected to safety net supports and families for whom English is not the primary language. Because the program received so many applications from eligible households, demonstrating an immense amount of need, Harris County doubled the program's original funding of $32.7M. In data gathered from program surveys, recipients indicated grants were vital for covering basic expenses, with grant money overwhelmingly spent on rent, utilities, bills, and food costs.

2.9 Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers

Small Business ($32.1M, completed): Small businesses throughout the County struggled under stay-at-home orders and the broader economic downturn, coupled with continuing supply chain issues. This program, operated in partnership with Lift Fund Inc., provided grants of up to $25K to 2,577 small businesses, with priority for those that are minority- and women-owned, in hard-hit industries, and high SVI neighborhoods, and who had not received past federal or local assistance (PO 16). The program supported the survival and growth of small and micro businesses, with additional spillover goals of preserving pandemic-impacted jobs. Over 60% of approved grants went to businesses in neighborhoods with SVI scores in the top quartile, and data gathered from program surveys shows grants were mostly spent on rent and payroll costs, helping business owners stay open and retain staff.

2.10 Assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers

Employ2Empower ($2.2M, in progress): Last year, Harris County Precinct 2 piloted a workforce program for unhoused individuals living in encampments. Based on positive results, this funding expands the program across the County to serve an estimated 160 individuals (with a large proportion likely from re-entry populations) employing them in public works while providing access to resources and services to meet their basic needs (PO 10, PO 14, PO 17). The program intends to provide a stabilizing experience for its participants to connect participants with permanent housing, benefits, wrap-around services, and higher-skilled workforce programs, and ideally assist them on the path to exiting homelessness and a steady job.

Hire Up Harris ($990K): This program funds (i) transformational upskilling and/or rapid reskilling workforce development programs, (ii) wraparound support services for those programs, and (iii) capacity-building in workforce development organizations by establishing a learning group cohort to facilitate the sharing and uptake of best practices to result in transformational outcomes for program participants. Funds also provide for hiring a full-time Project Manager, as well as an evaluation consultant and a facilitator for a learning group cohort amongst selected workforce development organizations to share best practices and improve programming and results for all participants. Staff hired with these funds will support Hire Up Harris as well as other workforce investments (PO 17).

2.11 Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care

Home-based Child Care ($0.9M, in progress): Operated by The Alliance and expanding on previous trainings they have offered, the Homebased Child Care program is designed to help close the child care gap in Harris County by providing a 12-week training, licensing support, and professional development program for entrepreneurs who wish to operate their own home-based child care programs. The program intends to increase the number of affordable, high-quality child care slots for families in low-to-moderate income communities, especially those who prefer home-based to center-based care for various reasons, and help caregivers enter the workforce (PO 17, PO 18).

2.13 Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare

Safe Babies ($2.4M): The Safe Babies program is implemented by First3Years and aims to protect and support young children in the foster care system by encouraging collaboration between a child's foster and birth parents, with the goal of family reunification (PO 18). The program provides training, counseling, and other support services for foster children and their caretakers, promoting safe attachments and mitigating the harm and trauma of separation and neglect. The program will serve 300 children between the ages of 0-3, their siblings, birth parents, and foster parents over a three-year period.

HAY Center ($5.0M): Youth aging out of foster care have always been an under-supported population, facing social, employment, housing, and other challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. SLFRF funding has been braided with additional funding sources to help construct a 3.3-acre campus providing 50 affordable apartment units and on-site

wraparound services for youth aging out of foster care (PO 10, PO 11). The campus will not only increase access to affordable housing and resources like a computer lab for former and current foster youth, but also supports youth in engaging with a transition coach (mentor), case planning with Transition Age Youth (TAY), and pursuing higher education and/or employment.

2.14 Healthy Childhood Environments: Early Learning

upWORDS ($4.6M): During the pandemic, families have had less access to health and educational resources for young children, further compounded by economic stressors. Operated in partnership with the Texas Children's Hospital, this program provides families with young children, especially low-income families, with training and resources to increase child language development (PO 18). The program also provides a pediatric screening, benefits navigation, and support for maternal mental health. It intends to enroll 20,000 children between the ages of 0-3 and provide participants with books and educational materials, train 6,000 early childhood educators in skills to strengthen instruction, and provide further intensive support, including parenting classes, developmental evaluations, and maternal health home visits, to 2,000 families.

2.15 Long-term Housing Security: Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing Roles ($1.9M): In order to support our Affordable Housing projects, this funding supports hiring for an Assistant Director and four Program Managers. The Assistant Director will lead program management and performance and contract development and implementation, while overseeing the Program Managers. The Program Managers will help design and implement Affordable Housing projects (PO 11, PO 12).

2.16 Long-term Housing Security: Services for Unhoused Persons

CCHP 2.0 ($35.5M): Homeless and housing-unstable populations were both hit hard by COVID-19 and the recession. To address these challenges, Harris County, the City of Houston, and the Coalition for the Homeless launched the Community COVID-19 Housing Program (CCHP) to provide housing and support services to 5,000 people (PO 10, PO 11). This project provides funding for CCHP 2.0, which initially extended those navigation and support services for the recipients of 1,200 ARPA emergency housing vouchers (EHVs), and is now expanding to serve and house additional individuals, including re-entry populations (PO 14). Several community partners coordinate to help provide the services in the program. Five kinds of interventions are provided overall:

- **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH):** Combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of chronically homeless people and homeless individuals with high barriers.
- **Rapid Re-Housing (RRH):** Provides short-term (up to 12 months) of rental assistance and services to help those experiencing homelessness obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed, with no preconditions for resources and services provided.

- **Diversion:** Housing-focused problem-solving, mediation, and conflict resolution paired with limited financial assistance offered to persons seeking emergency shelter or residing in emergency shelters.
- **Essential Client Support Services:** Specialized programs assisting those experiencing homelessness, including those that help with medical, behavioral health, housing, and employment access, social and basic human services, street outreach, mental health and substance use disorder services, domestic violence advocacy, employment supports, and SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) supports.
- **Navigation:** Assists individuals from the point of housing referral until the date of move-in to housing. Navigators provide housing search and placement services to all program participants.

Altogether, these services aim to reduce time spent in homelessness, reduce homelessness recidivism, and help individuals attain a better quality of life.

2.20 Social Determinants of Health: Lead Remediation

Lead Abatement ($20.0M): With the goal of mitigating lead poisoning in Harris County (PO 9), this project funds lead abatement, increases testing in child-occupied facilities, operates mobile testing sites at community events, and increases awareness of lead poisoning to reduce exposure to lead and improve health outcomes.

2.37 Economic Impact Assistance: Other

Child Tax Credit ($0.5M): To combat child poverty (PO 15), Harris County funded community outreach and tax assistance through the community services organization Baker Ripley to help low-income families claim the 2021 expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC), especially those who otherwise would have missed out. By program close, Baker Ripley reached over 30,000 individuals with information about the CTC, helped 1,320 households access the CTC non-filer portal, and helped 8,950 households file taxes. Moreover, they ensured that 2,840 households received Economic Impact Payments (EIP) and Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC), and that 4,076 children were claimed for CTC payments, resulting in an estimated $13 million in tax credits that households were able to claim as a result of assistance.

County Connections ($1.5M): During the pandemic, many children were deprived of learning and socialization opportunities, with low-income families often hardest hit. County Connections provided grants for non-profits to run summer enrichment programs for school-age children, addressing educational disparities exacerbated by the pandemic and providing stimulating opportunities for 7,000 children to learn, bond, and receive mentorship at neighborhood sites (PO 18). Funded programs included those that provided college and career readiness, youth mentoring, fine arts, sports, and academic enrichment.

Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement ($3.0M): Designed to complement the existing neighborhood nuisance abatement (NNA) process, Harris County is funding activities that proactively improve safety in areas experiencing violent crime (PO 7). To reduce and

prevent crime, NNA secures and demolishes unsafe structures, removes refuse and debris, secures abandoned pools, prevents pest harborage, and works with community stakeholders on identifying and addressing further nuisances not yet addressed. The project aims to abate 1,100 nuisances over the next 4 years, including 80+ abandoned pools and 200+ unsafe residential structures, and improve social and environmental conditions in communities with high CDC SVI scores and high rates of homicide and aggravated assault.

ACCESS Harris ($14.3M): This project supports a care coordination model which provides holistic and integrated service delivery to improve patient outcomes (PO 2) in four main cohorts: adults and youth in violence prevention programs, homeless individuals, re-entry populations, and transitional age youth. Funding supports overall program management, staff for the violence prevention cohort, and transformational IT platform and care coordination teams for each cohort. The project aims to improve not just health, well-being, and stability, but also housing, employment, food, and education access for participants, resulting in reduced violence and recidivism and improved well-being (PO 7, PO 10, PO 14).

c. Public Sector Capacity

[No current projects]

d. Premium Pay

[No current projects]

e. Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure

5.18 Water & Sewer – Other

Water & Sewer Feasibility Study ($0.4M): Harris County has identified currently un-serviced subdivisions to receive new ARPA-funded water and wastewater system investments (PO 13). These funds support a professional assessment by 5engineering of initial service connections, supply costs, requirements for service, and other information needed for new connections. 5engineering will also help develop and distribute materials for public meetings and track stakeholder and community feedback.

f. Revenue Replacement

VIPER ($2.6 M): During the COVID-19 pandemic, Harris County has experienced a spike in violent crime, which contributed to an increase in warrants issued and a backlog of outstanding warrants. This funding supports personnel and equipment for the Harris County Violent Persons (VIPER) Task Force, which tracks down dangerous offenders, reduce the backlog of warrants, and accelerate warrant execution, while also addressing bond forfeitures and revocations. The program aims to reduce recidivism and overall violent crime rates (PO 7).

Court Backlog ($17.7M): Because the pandemic stalled court hearings, it has also generated a large backlog of cases to be heard. Both defendants and victims are negatively impacted by having cases unheard for long periods of time. To ensure speedy access to

trial and reduce exposure to the criminal justice system (PO 20), these funds support temporary staffing to accelerate evidence processing, obtain additional court space, and hire judges, jury services, court staff, and attorneys to increase case processing speed and decrease backlog (PO 19).

FLEX Fund ($30M): Revenue replacement has been used to create the FLEX Fund, enabling use of County general funds for projects aligned with ARPA priority outcomes. In this reporting period, covering eligible Public Health expenses with Local Fiscal Recovery Funds freed up budget to create a Disparity Studies Fund in the general fund, supporting local school districts and community colleges with Minority/Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) assessments (PO 16).

III.   Promoting equitable outcomes

Overview of Equity Goals & Strategy

Harris County's pandemic recovery programs begin from an awareness of how the pandemic has deepened pre-existing disparities along lines of race, class, age, gender, and more. We recognize that these disparities have materialized in multiple ways, whether in healthcare access, mental health, sickness and mortality, in lost income and employment opportunity, or in food security and environmental health. Black and Hispanic communities, low-income households, women, undocumented immigrants and those with limited English proficiency, the elderly, the homeless, LGBTQ+, and otherwise already vulnerable populations were more likely to experience severe negative impacts from the pandemic, against a backdrop of historical racial and economic segregation in our communities.

Our pandemic recovery programs aim not only to reach these residents who have been disproportionately impacted, but also to address structural inequalities through our long-term transformational investments. Our **equity goals**[2] ask us to:

- Reverse and close gaps in health, economic, and housing outcomes
- Build capacity within our County government to understand equity and support equity-centered solutions
- Measure existing disparities and remediate systemic harms to people of color
- Incorporate an equity assessment into each project
- Ensure our overall portfolio reaches those most impacted by the pandemic

To do this, our **equity strategies** include the following actions when developing and implementing ARPA programs:

- Disaggregate historical data and outcome measures to identify inequities and ensure programs prioritize disproportionately impacted groups
- Analyze specific factors underlying existing inequities and design program accordingly
- Include community representatives of groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic throughout program development, delivery, and evaluation
- Target resources and strategies to minimize burdens on groups most affected by the pandemic

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[2] For more detailed versions of our full Equity Goals and Equity Strategies, please see our Harris County ARPA Equity Framework (Appendix A).

- Evaluate project performance and seek continual improvement during implementation
- Publish transparent program results and ensure performance information reaches disproportionately impacted groups

The **ARPA Priority Outcomes** which orient all our recovery programs are targeted towards actions which would address existing inequities. For example, food insecurity, environmental hazards like lead, housing instability, and lack of employment opportunity are all issues disproportionately affecting low-income communities of color; addressing these issues necessitates addressing disparate outcomes and access gaps. Other Priority Outcomes, such as access to clean water, reduction of homelessness, and support of small and micro businesses call out the need to prioritize specific historically underserved populations.

By structuring our Priority Outcomes around equity, our pandemic recovery strategy inherently prioritizes addressing the needs of those disproportionately impacted and historically underserved. As a result, the majority of our recovery projects to date fall into Expenditure Category 2, Negative Economic Impacts, and expressly serve residents of low-income neighborhoods, minorities, disconnected youth, the unemployed, and other disproportionately impacted groups and neighborhoods.

Moreover, as referenced in our equity goals, every recovery project goes through an **equity assessment** process.[3] Whenever a project is considered for implementation, equity scorers evaluate whether the project could be improved to better promote equitable outcomes, whether there are any possible equity risks, and flag areas of concern. This feedback is then considered by the team proposing the project and adjustments are made before the project is ultimately sent to Commissioners Court for approval.

Each project, once implemented, is also subject to periodic **equity reflections**[4] to improve program implementation and performance where possible. For example, during an equity review of our Flexible Financial Assistance program, we noticed that Spanish-speaking and limited English proficient households were underrepresented within our applicant pool. Therefore, when funding was expanded, we doubled down on more diverse language outreach and targeted communications to minority and immigrant neighborhoods where applications were disproportionately low compared to need.

As a result of our equity goals and strategies, our equity-oriented Priority Outcomes, and our equity assessment and review process, Harris County has mechanisms in place to ensure our projects promote equity from conception to conclusion. Beyond this, it is clear to all those working on our recovery projects, whether our staff or community partners, that equity is a central priority of our work. As such, these mechanisms simply form the starting point, while our staff and program partners add to our equity impacts through additional ideas and feedback.

Awareness, Access, and Outcomes: Examples

To ensure equity in residents' *awareness* of programs, our programs have detailed **outreach and communication plans** which account for reaching populations in need who might also have difficulty finding out about these services. Key indicators are tracked during outreach to improve

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[3] Please see Appendix B: Equity Assessment Tool.
[4] Please see Appendix C: Equity Reflections.

our strategies and ensure that as many eligible residents for our programs can access information about and opportunities for relief.

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Awareness through Outreach: The Child Tax Credit Program

Our Child Tax Credit program originated from the recognition that there were families in need unaware that they qualified for this expanded credit or unsure how to access it. Because the program was designed to help these families, we could not simply craft an outreach plan for low-income parents or households in general. Our Outreach and Communications Plan for this program noted key priority populations we wanted to reach:

- Very low- or zero-income households with children who do not usually have a tax filing requirement (including recipients of TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid)
- Households with low education levels, disabilities, and limited internet access
- Mixed immigration status households, where parents require an ITIN to claim citizen children and may have fears of status exposure

BakerRipley, the community partner that operated the program, normally has twelve Neighborhood Tax Center locations. For this program, BakerRipley operated Mobile Tax Clinics in locations where they normally did not have a presence to reach more households who would benefit from the CTC and free, quality tax preparation. The clinics themselves held several dozen events at libraries, schools, and community centers in immigrant and low-income neighborhoods. Moreover, BakerRipley hosted over 40 outreach events, including virtual and in-person presentations (several at elementary school parent meetings and child care centers), attended community resource, health, and career fairs, and posted flyers in multiple languages in key neighborhoods. Dozens of community partners, including the YMCA, United Way, the Chinese Community Center, community health clinics, and schools also helped spread the word to parents likely to need the service.

In the end, for a $500,000 investment, BakerRipley's tax services were able to help these parents claim $13 million in tax credits, with many parents and children coming from the highest-SVI neighborhoods.

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To ensure equity in *access* and *distribution,* **our programs are designed to minimize administrative and other burdens for those in need**, while collecting the necessary information to provide accurate assistance and confirm eligibility for programming. Not only have we consulted community partners to ensure programs reduce burdens to access relief, but during evaluative phases of our now-concluded projects, we have asked for feedback from applicants on their ease of access and whether they found support to be helpful.

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Minimizing Access Burdens: Employ2Empower

For many unhoused individuals, stability is elusive due to the lack of affordable housing options, criminal backgrounds, inconsistent job histories or displacement from the labor market, behavioral and mental health challenges, and substance abuse disorders. While employment programs can help individuals regain that stability, many programs come with high barriers requiring participants to address the other challenges in their lives before they can receive job training or other employment support.

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The Employ2Empower program takes a different approach and seeks to minimize burdens for those homeless persons interested in building an employment history, skills, and a path to economic independence. Employ2Empower collaborates with community partners to visit encampments and build relationships and trust with unhoused individuals living there, before providing information on the program.

As a low-barrier workforce program, Employ2Empower does not discriminate if individuals have a criminal history; 95% of the active participants in the pilot of this program, which took place in Harris County Precinct 2, had a criminal conviction in their background. Moreover, it provides homeless individuals a judgment-free space where individuals can participate in the program and earn an income, even while they are experiencing behavioral or mental health difficulties and supports them in obtaining treatment.

Individuals are provided with transportation to and from the work site, meals, and any necessary supplies, in addition to retention allowance before the first paycheck. The program also provides peer mentors, individuals with lived homelessness experience, a sober coach to help with resiliency coaching, case management to support mental and behavioral health needs, guidance to obtain additional resources and services, and pays all participants a living wage.

In this setting, with these resources, the program is designed to reduce as many barriers as possible for homeless individuals who would otherwise often be excluded by many workforce development initiatives and who often lack the opportunity to earn an income in other homelessness initiatives. If individuals are interested in the program and seek developing skills through it, the program is designed to support them in their endeavors.

During distribution of benefits, we have carefully considered which populations might be most in need of the kind of assistance any given program provides. **We seek to prioritize distribution on the basis of need.** For example, several of our programs use the CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) scores for our census tracts to assess whether the most vulnerable neighborhoods are being served. CDC SVI scores are compiled based off 15 Census variables and evaluate each tract based on four main areas: socioeconomic status, household composition and disability, minority status and language, housing type and transportation. In addition to SVI, our programs often consider factors such as gender, income, and race, where these factors are relevant to need, in their implementation.

As mentioned above, our **ARPA Priority Outcomes are largely already oriented towards closing gaps** and equalizing outcomes. Beyond having these aims structure the goals of each program, **Harris County also disaggregates our data and outcomes based off relevant demographic and equity variables** to evaluate the success of our programs.

Need-based Prioritization & Data Disaggregation: Small Business Grants
Our Small Business Grants program was designed to help small businesses recover from the economic impact of the pandemic. Harris County and our partner Lift Fund, who operated the program, understood that not all businesses had been impacted equally.

In particular, we knew that neighborhood micro businesses—especially mom-and-pop shops or restaurants with a handful of employees, self-employed individuals, and businesses in care and service industries—had struggled with the stay-at-home orders. National research also revealed that existing PPP and EIDL support was unevenly distributed, and small businesses especially often lacked the technical assistance, know-how, or connection to capital in order to have other sources of support. Moreover, minority- and women-owned businesses were likely to suffer greater losses, as were businesses located in vulnerable neighborhoods.

Given these factors, our Small Business Grants program adopted a scoring methodology that prioritized grant applicants based off overall need, considering factors such as the size of the business, job loss in their industry, the SVI score of their neighborhood, whether previous aid had been accessed, and other business owner characteristics.

Disaggregated program data showed that grants went overwhelmingly to micro businesses who had not accessed any previous aid and were in struggling industries and high-SVI neighborhoods. In contrast to existing capital access conditions, where Black business owners are often denied assistance, over half of our program funding went to Black-owned businesses. Through this program, Harris County provided pandemic relief while helping to close disparities in access to resources for small businesses.

## *Geographic & Demographic Distribution of Funding*

Some of our recovery programs have already specified a geography or demographic in need and directly target the needs of these populations to produce equitable outcomes. For example, our Community Initiated Care program, which seeks to improve mental health outcomes, focuses on 10 neighborhoods that were heavily impacted by COVID-19, had pre-existing health disparities and compromised access to care, poor mental health outcomes and higher suicide rates. Meanwhile, our Lead Abatement program, similar to other programs, prioritizes abatement of hazards in high-SVI neighborhoods with homes built prior to 1978, and prioritizes blood lead level testing for children at schools in these communities.
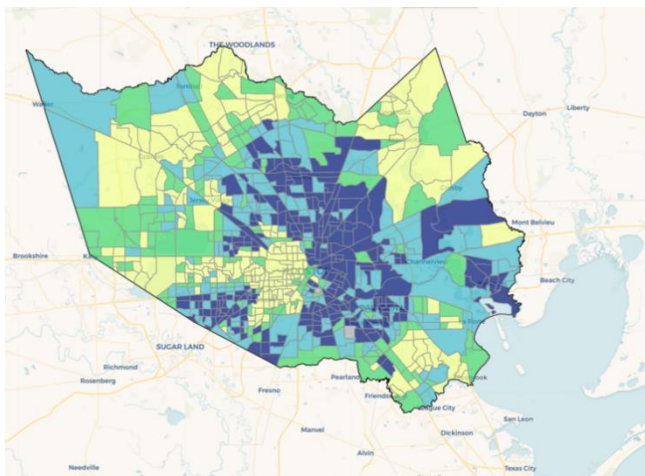
While full data on the distribution of funding for all of our approved recovery programs is still in progress, we have data on the distribution of funding for four of our concluded immediate relief programs: our Child Tax Credit program, Flexible Financial Assistance, Small Business Grants, and Vaccine Incentives. Based off program data from our partners, these funds primarily served people and businesses located in the highest-SVI census tracts.[5]

[5] On this map, yellow indicates an SVI percentile of 0-0.25 (lowest vulnerability), green for an SVI percentile of 0.2501-0.5, light blue for an SVI of .5001-0.75, and dark blue for an SVI of .7501-1.0 (highest vulnerability).

The following graph demonstrates the distribution of funding for these four programs, showing that most residents who benefitted lived in zip codes with SVI scores in the top two quartiles.[6]
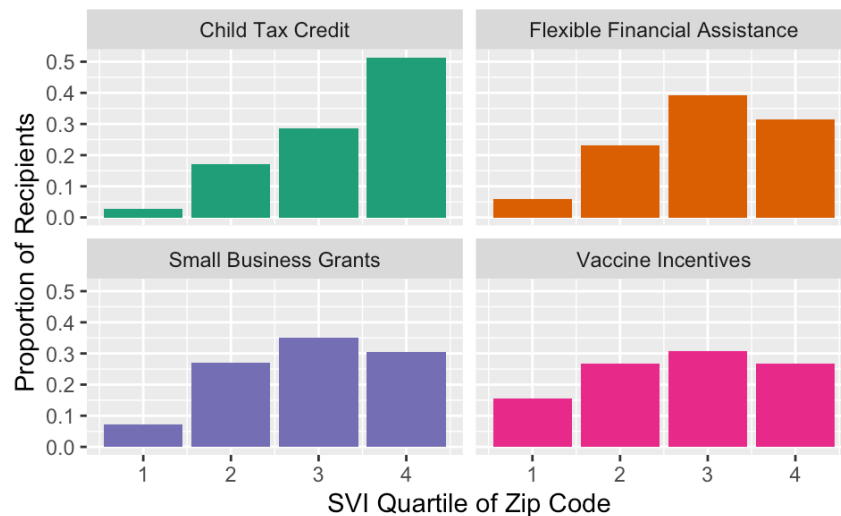
Proportion of Program Recipients by SVI Quartile of their Zip Code

For the Flexible Financial Assistance and the Small Business Relief programs, we also have the Census tracts of the recipients. The following graphs shows the distribution of Flexible Financial Assistance recipients by the SVI quartile of their Census tract, and the distribution of Small Business recipients by the SVI Quartile of their Census Tract, respectively.
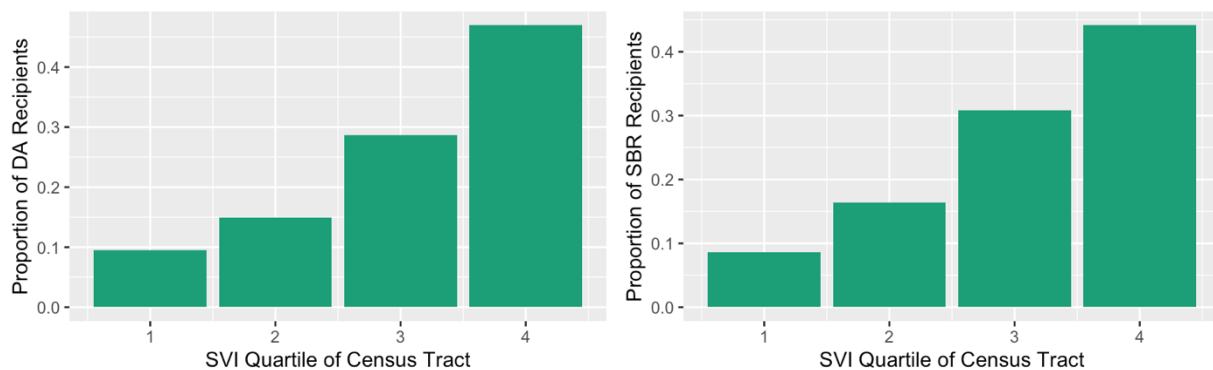
Flexible Financial Assistance Recipients by SVI Quartile of Census Tract

Small Business Relief Recipients by SVI Quartile of Census Tract[7]

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[6] There is not a direct match between Census tracts and zip codes. Thus, while the majority of our funding went to Census tracts in the highest quartile, this does not mean a high SVI tract is necessarily located in a high SVI zip code. The CDC provides SVI scores disaggregated by Census tracts, so these quartiles are a rough approximation for each zip code based on the tracts located therein, weighted by the population of each tract. Our data uses zip codes because they provide the easiest common means of tracking a variety of types of programs.

[7] Note that not every recipient's Census tract could be determined (some provided incomplete addresses or addresses that could not be easily geocoded to a tract). As such, the sum of the bars in this chart may not equal the full program dollar amount.

The map below depicts the cumulative number of recipients from these four programs per zip code, where darker coloring indicates more recipients in the zip code. For context, we've included a map of Census tracts and their associated SVI percentile, with zip codes overlaid, as well as a map of where Spanish is the primary language spoken at home, and where African American communities live in Harris County.
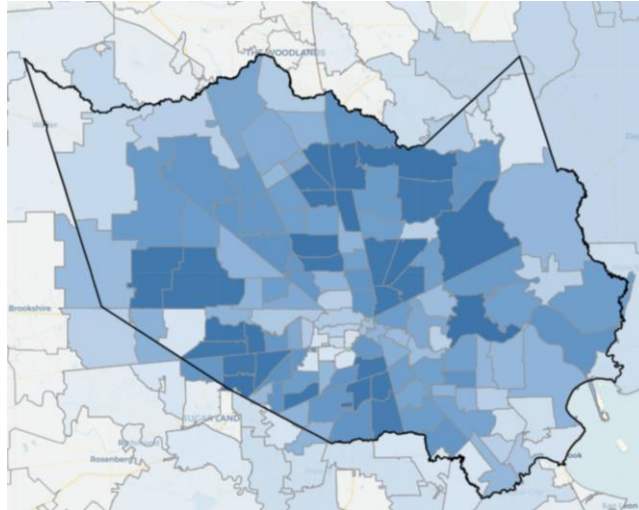
Map of Program Recipients for Four Immediate Relief Programs in Harris County
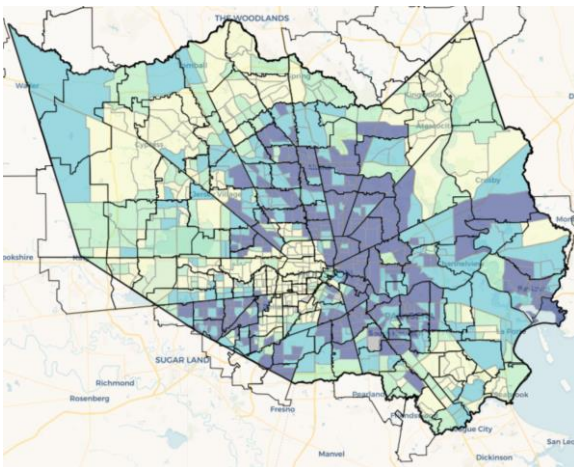
Map of SVI with Zip Codes
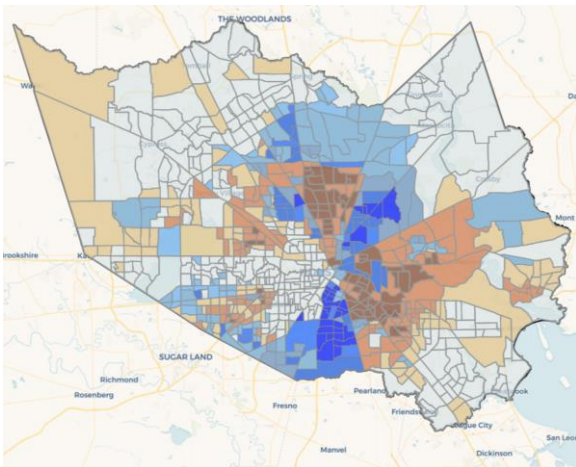
Map of Spanish Language and African American Populations[8]

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[8] Spanish language speaking density is indicated in orange. Dark orange indicates Census tracts where over 75% of residents primarily speak Spanish at home, medium orange indicates tracts where between 50% and 75% of residents primarily speak Spanish at home, and light orange shows tracts where between 25 and 50% of residents primarily speak Spanish at home. Counts of African American residents are indicated in blue. Dark blue shows tracts where over 75% of residents identify as African American, medium blue shows tracts where between 50% and 75% of residents identify as African American, and light blue where between 25% and 50% of residents identify as African American. The lightest shaded areas on the map indicate Census tracts where less than 25% of residents identify as African American and less than 25% of residents speak Spanish at home. Data comes from the 2017 American Community Survey 5-year estimates for Languages Spoken at Home and Race, respectively.

IV.   Community Engagement

Community engagement and input has been an important part of crafting, implementing, and evaluating our recovery projects. We have engaged in **five main phases of engagement** strategies to inform our work. Our first phase of **Initial Outreach,** introduced in our Use of Funds section, informed our overall strategy and included Baker Ripley's Appreciative Community Inquiry, interviews with key stakeholders and community representatives, and a survey open to the public. (Again, results are at budget.harriscountytx.gov/community_engagement.aspx.)

We also received *community-proposed plans* from organizations like the *Gulf Coast AFL-CIO*, the *HOME Coalition*, and *Connective*, which had done their own outreach and listening sessions before compiling comprehensive recommendations on the use of ARPA funds.

Using these insights, Harris County began crafting our overall approach to ARPA funding, including our four investment categories, a dual focus on immediate relief and long-term transformation, and the development of our Focus Areas and Priority Outcomes. We then presented our overall approach to several community groups and sought **Strategy-Oriented Feedback.** Organizations that provided feedback included (among others): the *Harris County Long-Term Recovery Committee,* a collaborative network of over 80 members, the *Health Equity Collaborative,* a group of over 30 organizations working to bridge the health equity gap and advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in healthcare, *Houston Leads,* a diverse, non-partisan coalition of immigrant organizations, *FIEL Houston,* an immigrant-led civil rights organization, and the *American Leadership Forum,* a professional development organization.

This was followed by a third phase of **Program Research & Outreach,** in which members of individual Focus Areas conducted research, surveys, listening sessions, and interviews with impacted populations, local organizations, and other key stakeholders to understand the landscape related to that Focus Area's goals. In these listening sessions and interviews, team members actively sourced ideas and recommendations for investments in their Focus Area.

Program Research & Outreach: Housing Stability

The Housing Stability Focus Area drew on not only those within Harris County who had been working on housing, but also from over two dozen interviews with housing-focused community partners and affordable housing experts to guide their Focus Area's approach.

Organizations like the Houston-Galveston Area Council's Transportation Policy Council and SEARCH Homeless Services, among others, emphasized the need to explore creative options, to address the needs of those without shelter, renters, and homeowners alike, and to invest in long-term affordable housing strategies which account for climate change and disaster risks. Other interviewees offered key considerations for acquiring, developing and repairing affordable housing and highlighted the importance of investing in Community Land Trusts (CLTs), shared equity programs and rent-to-own programs.

Additionally, the Focus Area team members were also greatly informed by *My Home is Here: Harris County Housing Survey*, a needs assessment and 10-year strategy study sponsored by the Harris County Community Services Department and conducted by Rice University's Kinder

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Institute for Urban Research. The study engaged 17,510 respondents and sought to outline how to create an equitable housing system for all residents. The report highlighted that extremely low-income households especially lack housing supply, that affordable homes may not be well-maintained or located in healthy environments, and that affordable homes tend to be located far from our County's center, with few other options besides owning a car for people to get to work.

As a result of this outreach and research, the Housing Stability Focus Area established an overall strategy for investment: *Relief* measures for homeowners and renters to prevent foreclosures and evictions, *Remediation* measures for both homeowners and landlords to weatherize, repair, and ensure that properties are well-maintained, and *Transformation* measures which entail acquisition of land and homes through a CLT to preserve affordable rental housing and paths to homeownership for low-income households.

After this initial research and gaining an understanding of the landscape, the fourth phase of engagement focused on **Proposal Development.** Proposals for potential ARPA-funded projects were brought to organizations closely working on the challenges that a given proposal was seeking to address, experts who could evaluate a proposal's strengths and potential challenges, and those who might be involved in or impacted by its execution. Input in this phase was key for ensuring a proposal was a good fit for the community and for refining a proposal's details before it was presented to Commissioners Court for approval and launch.

Proposal Development: Child Care Focus Area

The activities of the Child Care Focus Area team exemplify the kinds of community engagement undertaken during this phase. In fall 2021, team members conducted over a dozen interviews with academics, child care advocates, and leading organizations working on child care across Harris County, such as the Collaborative for Children, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, Interfaith Ministries of the Woodlands, the YMCA, and First3Years, among others. Team members also conducted site visits to child care centers and community service organizations working on child care assistance.

During these deep dives, our team members learned more about the existing system through which families received financial aid to afford child care, the challenges parents face in finding a child care provider, and the need for navigation and other wraparound services to assist young parents. Team members also heard about difficulties facing both child care centers and child care workers who did not make a living wage.

The Child Care Focus Area had, before these conversations, drafted proposals they hoped to implement speedily. However, feedback from these conversations revealed that these initial proposals duplicated existing efforts, and urgent needs lay unaddressed elsewhere. These deep dives revealed that (i) while subsidies to help families afford care existed, many parents were unaware of the programs or struggled with the application process, and (ii) even parents who successfully received financial aid had difficulties finding high-quality child care providers in their neighborhoods; the pandemic had resulted in the closure of dozens of providers.

As a result, the Child Care Focus Area's projects and proposals have focused on first addressing these two challenges. A working group was formed to facilitate collaboration between the City

of Houston, Harris County, key community organizations, and child care advocates. The working group helped create two proposals: the *Subsidy Enrollment Process Improvement* project seeks to help parents become aware of and succeed in applying for existing child care assistance, while the *Child Care Capacity: Contracted Slots Pilot Program* contracts and works with high-quality center-based providers to expand their operations and increase slots in low-income neighborhoods and child care deserts, while providing workers with a living wage. The *Home-based Child Care* project also tackles increasing the supply of high-quality child care providers by supporting training and licensing for those who are already providing child care in their communities, improving a child care option that some parents prefer to center-based care.

Both the *Contracted Slots Pilot Program* and the *Home-based Child Care* project seek to provide proof-of-concept for new pathways to increase the supply of high-quality and accessible care, pathways which could be further adopted and expanded in the future. Both proposals were also developed and refined in several working sessions with child care providers, experts, and community groups.

Last, but not least, where this has been applicable, our projects have included **public Q&A sessions** and **user experience surveys.**

The former provides an opportunity for us to communicate directly with those who are impacted by programming, and a chance for them to express opinions on the program or future needs. During the launch of our Small Business Grants program, for example, Harris County and Lift Fund held three sessions for open public engagement around the program and small business needs.

The latter allows us to gauge our program implementation and to ask for residents' reflections on what went well or not. These surveys have provided us with real-time data about whether people found programs to be well-designed for their needs, easy to access or engage with, and if they had anything they would change. Moreover, we have sought to use program evaluations as further opportunities for residents to highlight their most pressing needs and tell us what types of possible future programs would most benefit them.

User Experience Surveys: Flexible Financial Assistance

The Flexible Financial Assistance project provided emergency cash grants of $1,500 to eligible low-income households who were negatively impacted by the pandemic. A week after receiving their grant funds, grantees were sent a follow-up survey that not only sought to evaluate the impact of funds, but also solicited feedback from recipients on their experiences in learning about, applying for, and receiving the grant.

Grant recipients were asked about their overall experience with the program, whether they found assigned program staff to be responsive, if the application was easy to complete, and if the payment method generated any issues or deposit fees for them. We also asked whether recipients knew about a call center set up to answer questions and if those used it found it helpful and tried to assess residents' continuing needs by asking about their top concerns.

Beyond and outside of each of these phases of engagement, Harris County strives to be in close and continual contact with our residents and those serving our communities. We know there are

ways for us to improve and increase the number of channels of communication between our communities and our government, and especially as we roll out our strategic portfolio, we look forward to building in even more opportunities for engagement.

V.   Labor Practices

Harris County has obligated funding to two projects that involve capital expenditures: the HAY Center and ACCESS Harris. Overall, Harris County has passed a set of prevailing labor standards for all construction using federal funds built by the County, which would apply to the HAY Center. These labor standards include:

- A $15 per hour minimum prevailing wage rate for all building and multi-family construction contracts, including subcontracted workers
- All prime and subcontractors must provide OSHA 10 training for all workers and OSHA 30 training for supervisors on Community Development Block Grant funded projects (applicable to the HAY Center due to additional CDBG-DR funding)
- A commitment to providing workforce training and apprenticeship opportunities where possible, and suggesting a second chance hiring policy
- Directives for the Purchasing Agent, Engineering, and the County Attorney to evaluate all vendors on the basis of contractor safety record and health insurance coverage

While ACCESS Harris entails capital expenditures, there is no construction involved, as the capitalized expenses are dedicated to the development of IT infrastructure.

Additionally, a minimum wage of $15 per hour has been incorporated into vendor requirements for competitive procurement processes currently underway, such as the Hire Up Harris and Apprenticeship Programs Requests for Proposals.

As input into program guidelines currently being developed for affordable housing projects, the Affordable Housing Focus Area Team has advised that prevailing County standards and OSHA requirements should be leveraged, together with monitoring by the Harris County Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity and potential collaboration with the Harris County Essential Workers Board.

VI. Use of Evidence

Evidence-Based Interventions

Harris County's programs respond to community needs with approaches that are shaped by both community engagement and existing evidence on what works. Our third Guiding Principle, which pushes us to adopt the right program, expressly asks our team members to consider whether we are using an evidence-based approach, and nearly all our projects entail research into best tactics and justification using academic literature or results from programs with a similar approach. In this section, we will discuss examples of our SLFRF programs which are grounded in evidence, including a small subset of the extensive research we examined in the footnotes.

Even our immediate relief projects, which were designed to rapidly address the challenges our residents faced, had at least some evidence backing their approach. Our **Vaccine Incentives** project, like others implemented in jurisdictions nationwide, was supported by preliminary evidence from a UCLA study.[9] Our **Flexible Financial Assistance** program draws from a large literature on the effectiveness of unconditional cash grants for alleviating poverty, as well as more recent studies showing the federal Economic Impact Payments helped families afford basic needs

and stimulated demand.[10] Our **Small Business Grant** program targeted micro, minority-owned businesses which studies showed had been hit especially hard and had struggled to access greater capital loans or federal relief without technical assistance.[11]

In implementing our strategic portfolio, many of our programs have adopted an evidence-based approach, and some have sought to mirror interventions vetted by randomized controlled trials or shown to be successful through rigorous evaluations.

The **Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement** project take an environmental design approach to crime reduction: research shows that crime is often highly concentrated in a few areas, where vacant lots, abandoned spaces, and urban blight triggers a cycle of increased crime and further

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[9] The UCLA COVID-19 Health and Politics Project, cited in this article, found that a cash payment might be effective at increasing vaccination rates.

[10] See, for example: this University of Michigan report on the impact of payments on material hardship, this Census summary of the impact of stimulus payments on poverty, this Brookings paper summarizing studies on the Economic Impact Payments, among other evidence.

[11] See, for example: results from this survey testifying that minority-owned and micro businesses had trouble accessing capital and federal relief; a Dallas Federal Reserve report on challenges the PPP program did not entirely address, and this article about the hurdles that small business owners have faced

abandonment.[12] Nuisance abatement also offers a less expensive and more effective strategy to address public safety and crime compared to strategies that simply increase incarceration.[13]

Meanwhile, our **COVID-19 Community Housing Project** (CCHP 2.0) adopts a housing-first strategy to addressing homelessness and the challenges often faced by those experiencing homelessness. Over the last two decades, several studies have demonstrated that a housing-first approach can reduce homelessness, improve housing stability, and lead to better treatment outcomes for those who have substance use and behavioral health disorders, compared to high-barrier programs that require individuals to adjust behavior before receiving support.[14] In particular, research shows that permanent supportive housing is especially effective for those experiencing chronic homelessness and those with high service needs.[15] The approach that has been taken by Harris County, the City of Houston, and our key community partners has recently been highlighted for its success.[16]

The **Employ2Empower** project takes a different, but also evidence-backed approach to addressing homelessness: a subsidized employment, or transitional jobs model. Research has demonstrated that these kinds of interventions improved several outcomes for low-income individuals, especially those who have been outside the workforce for an extended period.[17] Transitional jobs help individuals develop employable hard and soft skills, provide participants with a routine and sense of responsibility, and connect them to benefits and wraparound services.[18] Especially when paired with job placement activities, they can also have long-term employment effects, and can lead to critical indirect impacts, such as reducing recidivism amongst re-entry populations.[19]

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[12] This article in the American Journal of Public Health, and this article in the journal Public Health Reports discuss how blight remediation has helped decrease crime in Philadelphia and New Orleans.
[13] The Equal Justice Initiative, among several other groups working on the criminal justice system, have made this argument.
[14] The National Low Income Housing Coalition and National Alliance to End Homelessness has compiled a snapshot of the available evidence supporting housing-first approaches here.
[15] This article from the UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative discusses the results of a Santa Clara study focused on providing permanent supportive housing to a high-needs population and rebuts some of the common arguments against a housing-first approach. Additionally, this report from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development outlines some of the ways that housing first can benefit persons with serious mental illness.
[16] This New York Times article describes the success thus far of Houston and Harris County's broader approach to combatting chronic homelessness.
[17] This report provides an evidence snapshot of the effects of subsidized employment on low-income individuals (although not expressly homeless individuals). This academic study evaluating a work-skills program for homeless adults shows that the intervention had positive effects on self-esteem, self-efficacy, and predicted stable housing situations.
[18] This brief highlights some of the benefits of transitional jobs models.
[19] This paper describes further evidence on transitional jobs programs.

Employ2Empower pilot participants on the job site at the Bay Area Community Center. Watch Commissioner Adrian Garcia do a tour of progress on the pilot program in this [video](#).

Our other **Workforce Development** investments, the Hire Up Harris and Apprenticeship Programs initiatives, were also developed after extensive research on what kinds of workforce investments produce results. Our research showed that the most effective workforce programs are sectoral training programs, which develop highly employable hard skills for participants, accompanied by high-quality job placement counseling, personalized coaching and wraparound services.[20] Hire Up Harris seeks programs that emulate successful, RCT-tested workforce programs, such as Project QUEST and Per Scholas.[21] Similarly, our investment in apprenticeships is based off a great deal of literature demonstrating the robust employment results they produce.[22]

And, although many of our **Child Care** programs anticipate having rigorous evaluations to further shore up the evidence base on effective child care interventions, the decision to choose those very programs is informed by extensive research alongside community engagement.

Our **Home-based Child Care** project expands the Alliance's current efforts to train home-based child care providers, increase job opportunities alongside available slots for parents. Taking steps to increase and improve the quality of home-based child care has been suggested several organizations as an innovative way to increase the supply of child care overall, while supporting an option that is often most accessible for low-income and immigrant households.[23] Meanwhile, a Yale University evaluation of a similar program that focuses on quality improvements and licensing

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[20] See this [summary](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities discussing qualities of successful programs, this [paper](#) in the Review of Economics and Statistics demonstrating that employers seek higher skill requirements when workers are plentiful, this Brookings [report](#) on the need to train people in difficult-to-automate, fast-growing sectors, and this Department of Labor [report](#) on what works in job training.

[21] See [here](#) for the evidence on Project QUEST's impacts, and [here](#) for the evidence on Per Scholas.

[22] See this Brookings [report](#) on the need for more apprenticeships, this Urban Institute [article](#) by economist Robert Lerman on the cost-effectiveness of apprenticeships and ways that government can encourage them, and this Department of Commerce [report](#) showing the benefits of apprenticeships to businesses.

[23] See, for example, this [report](#) from Home Grown and this [report](#) from the Urban Institute on supporting home-based caregivers; this [study](#) summarizes research showing that recent immigrants and low-income families often trust and pick home-based care, while those very providers lack access to resources and opportunities to improve their services.

support for home-based care providers showed that programming had significant impacts on quality and providers' intent to remain in child care.[24]

Similarly, our **Safe Babies program** is not only based off research demonstrating the long-term impacts of negative experiences in the foster care system for children and families, but also evidence from the program's previous successful operation in Tarrant and Dallas Counties. Previous evaluation by the University of Texas has shown that this specific program resulted in 51% of children being reunified with parents, versus 27% in a comparison group, and resulted in better caregiving, healthy attachments, increased access to resources, and other positive impacts for foster children, their parents, and caregivers.[25]

As Harris County continues to implement long-term, transformation projects that address our Priority Outcomes, we continue to seek opportunities to adopt evidence-based interventions and ensure that our approaches are grounded in research and demonstration of what works.

Program Evaluations

In some cases, such as with projects whose goals are research (such as our Water & Sewer Feasibility Study) or hiring necessary staff (such as Affordable Housing Roles), evaluation does not apply. However, where applicable, Harris County's projects have all included the tracking of key performance indicators (KPIs) in order to demonstrate the impact of the program and to assess whether the program has achieved its intended goals. Our third Guiding Principal also asks us to strive for robust program evaluation.

Some of these programs, such as Emergency Nursing, were intended to supply immediate relief and filled a clear need, so there was no evaluation plan for the project. Other programs have had evaluation components ranging between tracking KPIs and program outcomes, evaluation plans that involve planned research questions, data collection, and light analysis by Harris County or its partnering subrecipient organizations, or rigorous studies carried out by an academic team or professional evaluator.

The effects of the following programs have one of these kinds of evaluations:

Vaccine Incentives: A brief analysis by Rice University's Kinder Institute found it likely that a combination of incentives and targeted outreach successfully increased the COVID-19 vaccination rate in key neighborhoods. Additional analysis by County staff of vaccination rates

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[24] This Yale University evaluation shows the effectiveness of a home-based care focused program called All Our Kin, which operates in four Connecticut metro areas.
[25] The past evaluation of the Safe Babies program can be found here.

relative to neighboring Counties shows a clear divergence following the launch of the program at Harris County Public Health sites and the subsequent Countywide expansion.
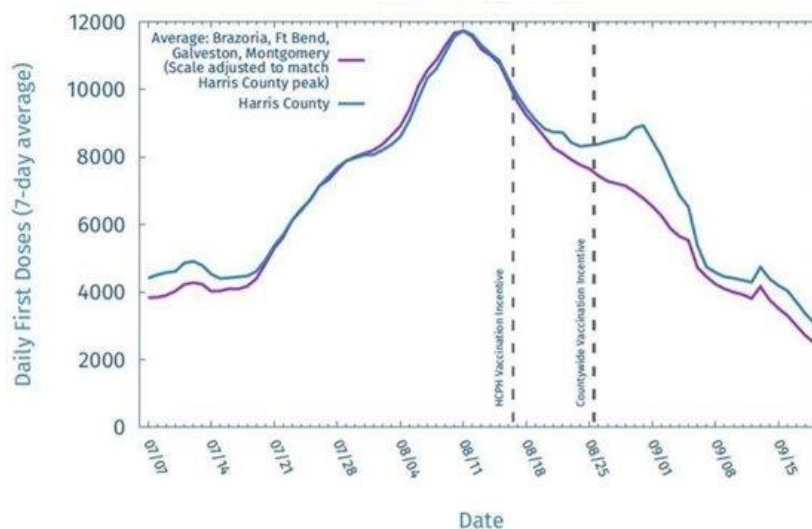
7-Day Average of First Dose Vaccinations by County (as of 9/13/21)

ACCESS Harris: This program tracks cohort-level KPIs to determine whether care coordination results in better housing, behavioral health, economic, and physical health outcomes for each cohort. Individual outcomes will be determined by the specific needs of the patient, but will be assessed as well. A sample of KPIs tracked for the cohorts include: number of people with transitional or permanent housing placements (for homeless individuals and re-entry population), enrollment in Medicaid or health insurance (for homeless individuals and foster youth aging out of care), percentage of violence prevention programming completed (for juvenile justice youth), job placement, education, and employment rates (for foster youth aging out of care), among other metrics tracked. All cohorts will be asked about service satisfaction, which will also be analyzed.

Community Initiated Care: This project has a rigorous evaluation being conducted by an independent team of experts from three universities (University of Houston, University of Texas at Arlington, and University of Texas Health Center), led by Drs. Narendorf, Washburn, and gearing. The evaluation will examine a variety of data sources, including administrative program data from all 10 identified zip codes where this project takes place, pre- and post- training assessments, satisfaction surveys, and in-depth case study methodology. The evaluators will assess whether the CIC project's core activities are implemented as planned, whether they yield desired outcome in terms of behavioral and mental health and assist with improvement of implementation with their results. **This evaluation will be made publicly available once finalized.**

Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement: This program tracks KPIs to ensure that desired program goals are reached. KPIs tracked include the number of different kinds of nuisances abated per year.

Lead Abatement: This program tracks KPIs to ensure that desired program goals are reached. KPIs tracked include the number of new lead abatement applicants as a result of distributing educational material and outreach to families with lead information, number of school and child care facilities tested, number of children and pregnant women tested, number of children with

high lead levels, and number of pregnant women with high lead levels, among other data points tracked. While there is no causal evaluation plan for our desired long-term outcomes (overall reduction in the number of children and families exposed to lead and improved health outcomes), we can confidently attribute future improvements in the neighborhoods targeted to this program.

CCHP 2.0: This program is currently seeking a third-party evaluator to rigorously assess the impact of the homelessness services provided in the program. The RFP asks for a partner with experience in causal methods evaluation, especially those who have conducted randomized controlled trials or can use quasi-experimental designs to evaluate CCHP. The evaluator will examine the causal impact of the program on a client level (e.g. health and mental health indicators), program level (e.g. number of families housed overall), and system level (e.g. reduction of homelessness) and costs. Outcomes examined will go beyond direct housing outcomes to track progress that homeless individuals and families are making in addressing barriers to and preparing for stable housing, metrics related to recidivism, and metrics that capture racial and other disparities whether in program entry, experience, or outcome. The same or different evaluator is also being sought to specifically assess the impact of the program on those who have experienced involvement with the criminal justice system, especially those who were formerly incarcerated. **This evaluation will be made publicly available once finalized.**

Employ2Empower: This program tracks KPIs to ensure desired goals are reached. KPIs tracked include participants' income at program entry and exit, the level of support that participants receive at program entry and exit, and the number of participants who enroll in benefits or receive placements in permanent housing. These data points will allow us to assess the impact of the program. **This evaluation will be made publicly available once finalized.**

Flexible Financial Assistance: This project had an evaluation plan to better capture the impact of the program beyond KPIs. This evaluation plan had two components: (1) surveys to grantees to better understand use of funds, households' concerns, household employment, mental health, and outlook on the future, and (2) surveys to non-grantees, to hopefully provide a comparison baseline (with the caveat that this is not a quasi-experimental or experimental design). Due to logistical challenges, we had difficulties surveying non-grantees, but were able to contact grantees at two points in time: 1 week after receipt of the grant, and 3 months after receipt. While internal analysis of the data is pending, we have received preliminary analysis of the data in a final report from our partners at Connective, who helped administer the grant alongside Catholic Charities. This analysis shows that the grant funds were largely spent on rent, bills, and food, and also suggests that the grant had a positive short-term impact. However, data points on mental health and household challenges from the follow-up survey showed that families were still struggling to afford basic goods, potentially due to the current inflationary environment.

Child Tax Credit: This program tracked KPIs to ensure that desired goals were being reached, and these goals were exceeded. KPIs tracked included the number of households reached with information about the CTC, number of households accessing the CTC via the non-filer portal, the number of households filing 2021 (or prior year) taxes as a result of assistance, number of children claimed under the CTC as a result of outreach and assistance, number of households claiming EITC/EIP as a result of assistance, and the total expected amount of CTC and EITC families received, among other metrics.

Small Business: This project had an evaluation plan to better capture the impact of the program beyond KPIs. This evaluation plan included questions from the application (pre-grant), and two post-grant surveys in March and August 2022, in order to identify the short-term and long-term effects of receiving assistance. The pre-grant survey included questions about here businesses needed additional assistance or resources outside of funding, the biggest challenges that businesses faced, and the likelihood of remaining open absent additional funding. The post-grant surveys included questions about grant utilization, change in number of employees, and whether he grant helped with keeping, rehiring, or planning to hire new employees, among other questions. Preliminary analysis of comparison between pre-grant and post-grant responses suggests that grants have helped keep businesses open and helped them retain or hire additional staff; depending on the size, industry, and other characteristics of the business, the grant may have helped businesses focus less on survival and orient more towards growth. Surveys suggest that while small businesses were more negatively impacted by demand shocks earlier in the pandemic, they are facing greater challenges from supply chain issues now, regardless of the size of the business (as measured by number of full-time employees). **This evaluation will be made publicly available once finalized.**

Hire Up Harris: This program is currently hiring an evaluation consultant to work on assessing the impacts of the Hire Up Harris and Apprenticeship Programs. A rigorous evaluation plan will be defined once the evaluator joins the County team. **This evaluation will be made publicly available once finalized.**

Safe Babies: Through a contract between First3Years, our partner on this program, and the Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing, this program has a rigorous third-party evaluation being conducted, which utilizes a mixed-methods design to examine short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes related to child permanency and wellbeing. **This evaluation will be made publicly available once finalized.**

Home-based Child Care: This project tracts KPIs to ensure that desired goals are reached. Variables tracked include number of child care providers enrolled, number of child care programs licensed, number of caregivers entering the workforce, and number of child care spots added. **This evaluation will be made publicly available once finalized.**

VII. Performance Report

Overall approach to performance management

As described above, our governance approach includes input and approval from three key entities, supported by the ARPA Program Management Office (PMO):

- The **Focus Area Team**, including Commissioners Court office and department staff, develops proposals within their Focus Area aligned with ARPA priority outcomes
- Our **ARPA Steering Committee,** which includes representatives from each Commissioners Court office, reviews program proposals and equity scoring and must approve program design, target outcomes, and funding recommendations before sending to Commissioners Court
- **Commissioners Court** is the only body able to obligate ARPA funding.

During the approval process, each project is evaluated for its eligibility for ARPA funds and other compliance considerations, ensuring that expenditures align with Treasury guidance. Once projects are approved and implemented, every project is managed on three levels to ensure satisfactory performance and address any challenges. These are:

- **Project owner:** A County department takes ownership of managing each project, including communicating with vendors and community partners, reviewing detailed designs, guiding implementation, and monitoring progress. The project owner is also responsible for Equity Reviews of the project during its lifespan. For example, the Department of Equity and Economic Opportunity has owned implementation of the Flexible Financial Assistance and Small Business programs.
- **The ARPA Program Management Office (PMO):** Following initial Focus Area Team and Steering Committee directives and referencing US Treasury guidance on programmatic data, the PMO and project owner further develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), performance targets, and target milestones for each project. On a monthly basis, the project owner ensures submission of relevant **KPIs, project milestone statuses, and project narratives** as appropriate. The PMO and project owner then review these together with any risks, help needed, and other next steps.
- **The ARPA Steering Committee** reviews performance of one of the four portfolios associated with our main priorities (Health, Housing, Jobs & Education, or County Operations) every week, including overall funding allocations, risks and milestone statuses, and KPIs.

In addition to collecting project-specific KPIs, **granular data** is submitted periodically by each project owner or subawardee, enabling aggregate reporting across Focus Areas. Granular data includes beneficiary location data, demographic information such as race, ethnicity, household income, and gender, and other project-specific data.

The **Equity Scoring** and **Equity Review** processes also ensure that projects consistently use an equity lens and contribute to our Equity Goals. In addition to publicly displaying reports required by the US Treasury, Harris County also provides additional information on total investments for each of its programs under each priority area at HarrisCountyARPA.org.

✚ HEALTH

COVID-19

ARPA_EMERNURSES: Emergency Nursing

Funding amount: $71,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 – Other Public Health Services

Project Overview: Harris County's Emergency Nursing project provided $71M in two waves of emergency funds to support an increase in medical workforce staffing levels in the County's non-profit hospitals, working to address COVID-19 case surges, consistent with the rise of the Omicron and Delta variants, and provide critical support to patients and healthcare workers. COVID-19 created strain on hospitals in disproportionately impacted areas, and during both the Delta and Omicron wave, hospitals across Texas struggled with historically low staffing levels.

Harris County collaborated with Angel Staffing and the SouthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council (SETRAC) to place healthcare staff in area hospitals. SETRAC specifically worked to identify hospital needs, prioritize and place staff based on those needs. Angel Staffing recruited and placed emergency medical staff in area hospitals and managed the associated payroll.

Through these services, registered nurses, respiratory therapists, and other medical staff were supplied to hospitals across the County, with a particular focus on ICU, medical surge/trauma, emergency department, respiratory specialists, pediatric ICU, and pediatric medical surge staffing.

Project Websites:

- https://www.setrac.org/emergency-medical-services/
- https://angelstaffing.net/
- https://publichealthharriscountytx.gov/Resources/2019-Novel-Coronavirus

Use of Evidence: Having adequate medical staff on hand to treat those with COVID-19 has been vital throughout the pandemic. Many medical professionals are leaving the field due to burnout, risk of infection, or for more lucrative positions. As a result of nationwide nursing shortages, many state and local governments have had to create new avenues to employ nurses in hospitals experiencing critically low staffing levels. The Emergency Nursing project aimed to bring qualified health care staff into hospitals with critical needs in Harris County. This project was based off studies completed and guidance provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange (TRACIE).

As stated by TRACIE, "Ongoing and close coordination with local, county, state, territorial, and tribal public health agencies, and coordination among healthcare facilities to ensure staffing

remains at functional levels are vital throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters."

This project is in lock step with TRACIE's guidance to complete the following practical considerations when supplementing the Healthcare Workforce at local levels:

- "Hire staff through staffing agencies with which a relationship already exists.
- When limitations exist, identify additional agencies able to provide the necessary cadres.
- Refer to and implement Healthcare Coalition (HCC) staff sharing plans
- Consider hiring furloughed or underutilized staff from other local providers who may have reduced/discontinued nonessential medical procedures."

Harris County is not required to report on the dollar amount of the total project spending allocated towards evidence-based interventions or whether a program evaluation is being conducted due to the Expenditure Category assigned to this project.

Performance Report:
Between August 26, 2021, and September 1, 2021, Harris County had a total of 16,395 cases, 1,888 hospitalizations, and 206 deaths due to COVID-19. In comparison, from June 27 to July 3, 2021, the total confirmed cases were at 376 and no confirmed deaths during this time period. This means, over the period of two months, there was over a 4,200% increase in cases in Harris County. $71 million was devoted between two waves of funding consistent with the Omicron and Delta variants, in order to provide much needed support to area hospitals.

Harris County collected the following Key Performance Indicators:

- Number of staff requested during the Delta wave: 783
- Number of staff rostered during the Delta wave: 602
- Number of staff requested during the Omicron wave: 400
- Number of staff rostered during the Omicron wave: 361

APRA_VAX: Vaccination Incentives

Funding amount: $12,550,143

Project Expenditure Category: 1.1 COVID-19 Vaccination

Project Overview: To counter high COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, this program authorized $12M for the provision of $100 payment incentives, per recipient, for a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Providing $100 incentives has been shown to be helpful to communities facing access barriers, such as concern about taking time off from work or the cost of transportation to a vaccination site. This program, combined with incentive payments, was open to all Harris County residents.

The Harris County Office of County Administration and Harris County Public Health partnered with local organizations, including Blackhawk, USIO, and HEB to provide gift cards to support additional incentivization for this program. Harris County Public Health distributed the gift cards and tracked vaccination rates by demographic variables and changes in vaccination rates relative to the surrounding counties.

The key outcome goals of the project were to increase the population of vaccinated individuals in Harris County and therefore, reduce the strain placed on local hospital systems and improving health outcomes for all patients.

Project Website: HCPH Partner Incentive Program (harriscountytx.gov)

Use of Evidence: Per CDC findings, higher vaccination rates have been shown to help slow the spread of highly contagious variants and prevent serious hospitalization and illness, especially in the most vulnerable communities.

Based on experiences with other non-mandatory vaccine efforts (i.e., influenza, H1N1 pandemic, etc.), evidence-based research shows that offering monetary incentives can result in higher adherence to promoted immunizations. In a brief authored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) research showcased the following:

- "In 2015, the CDC Community Preventative Services Taskforce recommended incentives to increase vaccination rates. After a review of several meta-analysis studies of incentive programs implemented between 1980 and 2012, the Taskforce concluded that incentives increased vaccination rates by a median of 8 percentage points.
- A literature review of numerous vaccine incentive programs for people experiencing homelessness found that incentive programs increased vaccination uptake. During the H1N1 pandemic, 46 percent of individuals residing in homeless shelters participating in the incentive study chose to receive the H1N1 vaccine. This rate of vaccination is much higher than the 10 percent of the general population who chose to receive the vaccine. The authors find that incentives work best when paired with education about vaccines and interventions to ease vaccine concerns."

Various U.S. territories, states, cities, and counties across the country have created vaccine incentive programs to encourage individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Harris County's use of $13.8M for the COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive Program to increase the number of vaccinated residents was a reasonable use. Furthermore, this incentive was reasonably expected to increase participation in vaccination in Harris County.

 Harris County allocated the full adopted budget of this program $13.8M to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be conducted and will be made publicly available once finalized.

Performance Report: With an increase in vaccination rates being the core objective of this program the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) reviewed was the increase in vaccination rates by demographic variables and changes in vaccination rates relative to surrounding counties.

 At the time of the program launch, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DHSH) of those eligible to receive the vaccine in Harris County (ages 12 and up), 71.7% had received one dose and 59% were fully vaccinated. In recent weeks after incentives were announced, the County saw a spike in daily vaccinations. The initial results showed particularly strong impacts for young people (age 20-29) and Black and Hispanic community members.

Harris County collected the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Number of gift cards distributed: 79,919
- Amount Distributed: $8,000,000

Coordinated Care

ARPA_ACCESS: ACCESS Harris

Funding amount: $14,279,953.00

Project Expenditure Category: 2.37 Economic Impact Assistance: Other

Project Overview: ACCESS (Accessing Coordinated Care and Empowering Self Sufficiency) Harris is a care coordination model that improves outcomes from vulnerable individuals through holistic and integrated service delivery. ACCESS will be used to improve patient outcomes and reduce patient burden through improved coordination among County and City health departments, nonprofits, health providers, and the community. KPIs tracked will be cohort dependent. The outcomes for the prioritized cohorts involve secured housing and sheltering, behavioral health and medical services, economic and employment assistance, food assistance, education assistance, reduced violence and recidivism, and improved well-being and stability for each client.

The ACCESS Harris County Initiative will target support for four cohorts: adults and youth participating in violence prevention programs, homeless individuals with physical and behavioral health conditions, re-entry populations, and transitional age youth. The initiative is designed to improve the health, well-being, sustained recovery, and self- sufficiency of the County's most vulnerable residents. IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) is providing a holistic care management technology solution that will enable the delivery of coordinated community care for the ACCESS Harris County Initiative.

Project Website: https://publichealth.harriscountytx.gov/About/Organization-Offices/ACCESS-Harris-County

Use of Evidence: ARPA funds are eligible to be used for a wide range of programs aimed at helping marginalized populations. The Coordinated Care program aims to address violence prevention, homelessness, foster youth transitions, and adult re-entry transitions. Recognizing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on certain communities, a broader range of services are eligible in communities experiencing a pandemic-related increase in crime and gun violence. The program includes services to address health and educational disparities, support neighborhoods and affordable housing, and to promote healthy childhood environments.

By coordinating services, Harris County was able to provide services efficiently and effectively to vulnerable individuals. Harris County estimates that the cost per participant in ACCESS Harris County would be $7,887. However, without the program, Harris County would spend approximately $24,837 in ER/hospital costs and incarceration costs to address violence prevention. To address homelessness Harris County would spend almost $21,955 per participant on emergency room visits, hospital stays, and emergency housing, but with ACCESS Harris, the county will save $14,068 per participant. To address re-entry for those recently released from incarceration, the county would spend $7,998 on emergency room visits, emergency housing, and reincarceration, ACCESS Harris will save $111 per participant. Finally, to address foster youth transitioning out of the system, the county would spend $28,539 on emergency room visits,

hospital stays, incarceration, and emergency housing, however ACCESS Harris stands to save the county $20,652 per participant.

Performance Report:

ACCESS Harris will be collecting the following Key Performance Indicators based on the cohorts they are focusing:

Foster Youth, Aging Out:

- Number of completed individual and family assessments
- Number of health insurance programs enrollments
- Number of continuing education placements and referrals
- Number of job placements or successful hires

Homeless:

- Number of individuals reached, enrolled, referred
- Number of transitional housing placements
- Number of permanent housing placements
- Number of participants enrolled in Medicaid/Health Insurance
- Number of participants enrolled in mental health services
- Number of established medical homes

Juvenile Diversion, Re-entry & Juvenile Justice:

- Number of transitional housing placements
- Number of permanent housing placements
- Number of job placements and successful hires
- Number of continuing education placements and referrals
- Recidivism rate (percentage)
- Employment rate (percentage)
- Number of completed individual and family assessments
- Number of established medical homes and appropriate care plans
- Completion of violence prevention programming (percentage)

The project will also track the Service Satisfaction Rate across all cohorts.

Behavioral Health

ARPA_COMBHEALTH: Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities: Community Initiated Care

Funding amount: $8,931,880

Project Expenditure Category: 1.12-Mental Health Services

Project Overview: As the pandemic changed the landscape of the world, an increased need in support of behavioral health immerged. Low-income communities with pre-existing factors, such as individual and institutional discrimination, were identified as most at risk as they were least likely to receive adequate healthcare. With the Commissioners Court approving $8.9M in ARPA funding to support these communities most at risk, the Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities (Community Initiated Care, CIC) program was established. The funding provides for a three-year

CIC program, Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities, gearing to strengthen community health and resiliency, focusing on the 10 neighborhoods identified by the Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD, in collaboration with Well-Being Trust. These identified neighborhoods house communities of color disproportionately impacted by Covid-19, with historical underutilization of behavioral healthcare, higher rates of poverty, and an increase in suicide. The program's implementation process will begin by identifying community touchpoints, conducting outreach/ raising awareness on mental health and treatment options, offering community-based training, and establishing support groups for survivors of suicide loss.

Project Website: https://www.theharriscenter.org/

Use of Evidence: In the United States, COVID-19 has resulted in worsening mental health conditions. Two-thirds of adults reported increased stress during the pandemic, and 19 percent described their mental health state as worse than at the same time in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic also led to increased substance use. The impact of behavioral health caused by COVID-19 has increased the need for behavioral health resources. Nationally, six population segments have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19: young adults, women, Blacks, Hispanics, low-income populations, and people experiencing homelessness.

In Harris County, a survey from Episcopal Health determined that 44 percent of Harris County residents believe COVID-19 related stress or worry has negatively impacted their mental health. Subsequently, an increase in substance use-related deaths and suicides per capita occurred in Harris County in 2020. The Harris Center selected the population of focus through a targeted zip code approach to identify communities both heavily impacted by COVID-19 and known to have pre-existing health disparities, compromised access to care, and social and economic scarcities, which correlate to poor mental health outcomes and higher suicide rates. This program intends to deploy four types of evidence-based interventions in collaboration with community leaders and marketing agencies to address health disparities, primarily centered on lowering suicide rates that have worsened due to the pandemic.

The program will be evaluated by tracking participant and stakeholder satisfaction from community events, learning and clinical outcomes, engagement based on resources and programs provided, and other metrics specific to each initiative. The evaluation will be led by a team from University of Houston, assessing the program's impact on individual level mental health, health equity, and community resiliency.

Harris County has allocated the full adopted budget of $8.9M to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be conducted and will be made publicly available once finalized.

 Performance Report: Harris County has identified the following Key Performance Indicators for the Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities program.

- Number of events hosted
- Number of events engaged in
- Number of digital engagements
- Number of participants reached

ARPA_HMA: Health Management Associates

Funding amount: $97,000

Project Expenditure Category: 1.12-Mental Health Services

Project Overview: Harris County has contracted with Health Management Associates (HMA), a national research and consulting firm in the healthcare industry, to aid the county's efforts in selecting behavioral health initiatives to match the needs of its constituents based on a strong understanding of the county's health care, social services, and behavioral health environment. This program aims to utilize ARPA funding to provide expert input on selection for the delivery of behavioral and mental health care services in order to impact the community positively. HMA will provide support through an RFP process to select programs related to behavioral health workforce development, recovery housing, overdose and substance abuse prevention, and expanding counseling and other mental health support services through investments in community-based organizations.

Project Website: https://www.healthmanagement.com/services/behavioral-health/

Use of Evidence: Harris County is not conducting a program evaluation due to the nature of this project. The purpose of this project is to assist Harris County with selecting programs related to behavioral health workforce development, recovery housing, overdose and substance abuse prevention, and expanding counseling and other mental health support services. As a result, a program evaluation is not relevant.

Harris County allocated the full adopted budget of this program $97,000 to evidence-based interventions. Due to the nature of this program, a program evaluation is not being conducted.

Performance Report: Due to the nature of this project, no key performance indicators have been created for this project.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

ARPA_NNA: Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement

Funding amount: $2,999,988

Project Expenditure Category: 2.37-Economic Impact Assistance: Other

Project Overview: The Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement project has been established to complement current neighborhood nuisance abatement efforts in Harris County being implemented by the Harris County Health Department.

Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement (NNA) is an initiative focused on reducing crime and improving public health in Harris County's most impacted communities. The program aims to decrease crime and improve public health through proactive efforts, such as securing or demolishing unsafe structures, removing rubbish, securing abandoned pools, removing weeds to prevent pest infestation, and other nuisance abatement efforts.

NNA will target existing nuisance properties in areas of highest need based on the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), homicide rates, and aggravated assault rates. Additionally, NNA will work with stakeholders to identify unreported nuisances in the community.

The goal of the NNA project will be to abate 1,100 nuisances over the course of the next four years, including the abatement of more than 80 unsecured abandoned pools, 200+ unsafe residential structures, 850+ refuse, rubbish and weed nuisances, and 8 unsafe commercial structures. Through the abatement of these nuisances, the program will improve the social and environmental conditions of the community, reduce blight, and positively impact community health and development.

Project Website: Information about Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement is at
https://publichealth.harriscountytx.gov/services-programs/services/neighborhoodnuisance

Use of Evidence: Among populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, public nuisances are more common in socially vulnerable communities. Neighborhood nuisances negatively impact community and individual health outcomes. Public nuisances can increase violent crime rates in the impacted communities, which can lead to diminished mental health among individuals and at-risk populations. By reducing the number of neighborhood nuisances, Harris County will mitigate the impact of crime and other public health issues on socially vulnerable communities.

In addition to funding physical abatement efforts, Harris County is using ARPA funding to hire staff members, including a project coordinator, field specialist, and financial reporting specialist to administer this program.

Harris County has allocated the full adopted budget of $3M towards evidence-based interventions.

Performance Report:

Harris County will collect the following Key Performance Indicators:

- Number of items in backlog
- Number of items prioritized for abatement
- Number of items in process of abatement
- Number of abatements completed
- Number of unsafe residential structures abated
- Number of refuse, rubbish, and weeds nuisances abated
- Number of unsecured abandoned pools abated
- Number of unsafe commercial structures abated
- Number of cases closed

Environmental Health

ARPA_LEAD: Lead Abatement & Prevention Program

Funding amount: $20,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: 2.20-Social Determinants of Health: Lead Remediation

Project Overview: The Lead Abatement and Prevention Program will mitigate lead poisoning in Harris County by assisting in the abatement of lead-based paint hazards in child-occupied facilities and owner or renter-occupied, single-family housing units for the purpose of providing safe and decent housing for low-and-moderate-income households. The program will focus on the most vulnerable residents of Harris County, who often reside in buildings built prior to 1978 and are at a higher risk of lead poisoning. The program will increase testing in child-occupied facilities, like daycares and preschools, constructed before 1978. The Lead Abatement and Prevention Program will operate mobile testing sites at school and community events, in order to increase testing of children under the age of 6 and pregnant women. Mobile testing sites will increase awareness of lead poisoning and address concerns about access to transportation to testing sites in impacted communities. The program's goal is to increase the number of lead abatements from 60 to 200 homes per year and provide an additional five thousand blood level tests per year in schools. The program will track the number of outreach events, the number of children and pregnant women tested, the number of assessments of homes and child-occupied facilities, and the number of facilities abated. The goals of this program are to reduce exposure to lead, improve health outcomes, enhance quality of life, and increase awareness of lead concerns.

Project Website: Information about Harris County lead abatement efforts is at https://publichealth.harriscountytx.gov/Services-Programs/Programs/Lead-Hazard-Control.

Use of Evidence: The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a public health emergency that exacerbated many of the issues that marginalized populations face and highlighted the inefficiencies in the systems that respond to those issues. In the Final Rule, the Treasury indicated that social determinants of health, including the conditions of residential, neighborhood, and educational facilities, can impact health outcomes. Lead exposure is identified as a social determinant of health. The program will focus on the most vulnerable populations of Harris County, who often live in buildings built prior to 1978 and are, therefore, at higher risk of containing lead-based paints. By focusing abatement efforts on child-occupied facilities, like daycares and preschools, and owner or renter-occupied single housing units, the program will reduce exposure for children, pregnant women, and other vulnerable populations. The Treasury's Final Rule stated that eligible uses of funds include lead remediation efforts in existing facilities.

Harris County has allocated the full adopted budget of $20M to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation is not being conducted.

Performance Report:

Harris County will collect the following Key Performance Indicators:

- Number of outreach events attended
- Number of new applicants
- Number of school and child care facilities tested
- Number of child testing sites
- Number of children tested
- Number of pregnant women tested
- Number of children with high lead levels
- Number of pregnant women with high lead levels

- Number of home risk assessments conducted
- Number of children referred for home assessments
- Number of homes abated
- Number of child-occupied facilities abated
- Number of children referred to case management and/or Safety Net
- Number of educational materials distributed to the public

HOUSING

Homelessness

ARPA_CCHP2: CCHP 2.0

Funding amount: $35,488,436

Project Expenditure Category: 2.16-Long-term Housing Security: Services for Unhoused Persons

Project Overview: COVID-19 has especially increased the vulnerability of Harris County's homeless residents. As a result, the 1,200 ARPA emergency housing vouchers received by the Harris County and City of Houston Housing Authorities are vital to ensuring that those experiencing homelessness receive permanent supportive housing.

To allow the vouchers to be used for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Commissioners Court initially approved $5M to extend services provided by the Community COVID-19 Housing Program (CCHP). An additional $29.5M extends and expands previous PSH, Rapid Rehousing, and Homelessness Diversion programs enabling additional residents to become housed while also providing intensive case management, mental health and substance abuse support, domestic violence-related services, and other supports.

This program's key goals are to reduce the population experiencing homelessness, reduce time spent in homelessness, reduce homelessness recidivism, and increase the number of successful housing placements. Potential spillover effects include improving economic prospects and providing support for individuals to successfully exit domestic violence, substance abuse, or poor mental health situations. To evaluate the impact of services provided, the service providers track these data points closely and an external program evaluator is being identified.

THE CCHP 2.0 project will be implemented by The Coalition for the Homeless and The Harris Center, together with other subawardees selected during a joint Coalition for the Homeless / Harris County / City of Houston Request for Expressions of Interest process.

Project Website: https://www.homelesshouston.org/CCHP and https://www.theharriscenter.org

Use of Evidence: The annual Point-in-Time Homeless Count & Survey is a requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the local Continuum of Care (CoC) known as The Way Home. In a typical year, the Count illustrates trends over time (increases or decreases) in homelessness and provides insights into the effectiveness of a community's housing programs and homeless services.

The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County serves as lead agency to The Way Home and coordinates the Count as part of those responsibilities. The Way Home encompasses Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties, Texas. In the 2021 Count, the key findings identified 3,055 persons experiencing homelessness, and that 1 in 7 unsheltered people cited COVID as the reason for their homelessness. 2021 Fact Sheet Located Here. These figures may have been higher if not for the innovative Community COVID Housing Program (CCHP), a housing-focused pandemic response focused on providing permanent housing solutions for Harris County's most vulnerable.

The National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) reported that homeless individuals are at increased risk of infection with SARS-CoV-2 owing to their lack of safe housing and conditions in shelter and drop-in facilities. The NCBI suggested modelling of the potential effect of SARS-CoV-2 among the US homeless population showed a potential peak infection rate of 40%, with an estimated 4.3% of individuals who experience homelessness likely to require admission to hospital. Among 408 individuals experiencing homelessness who were in shelters in Boston, Massachusetts, 36% tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

Harris County allocated the full adopted budget of this program $35M to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be conducted and will be made publicly available once finalized.

Performance Report:
The CCHP2.0 project was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.16-Long-term Housing Security: Services for Unhoused Persons" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment.

- Total number of households receiving eviction prevention services: Not Applicable
- Total number of housing units preserved or developed: Not Applicable

CCHP2.0's project design does not include providing eviction prevention services or preserving or developing housing units. The CCHP2.0 has housed 346 individuals as of June 30th, 2022.

Harris County collects the following Key Performance Indicators for the CCHP 2.0 program:

- Number of Participants Enrolled: 1,413
- Number of Individuals Housed: 346
- Number of Individuals Exiting: 243
- Number of Participants Receiving Behavioral Health Services: 616
- Number of Participants Receiving Domestic Violence Services: 214
- Number of EHV Vouchers Issued: 889
- Units Leased using EHVs: 346

ARPA_HAY: HAY Center

Funding amount: $5,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: 2.13- Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare System

Project Overview: The Houston Alumni Youth (HAY) Center provides resources and services for youth and young people exiting the state foster care system. The HAY Center campus will be a 3.268-acre complex which will house a wraparound service building and 50 affordable apartment units for youth aging out of foster care. The main building will include office space for county staff, meeting rooms for case planning with Transition Age Youth (TAY), and a computer lab that TAY can utilize.

The HAY Center Campus is being designed to meet the need of affordable housing and wrap around case management for youth aging out of foster care and former foster care and has a high level of stakeholder engagement, as the program is designed to leverage the voices and experiences of program participants.

The project aims to empower current and former foster youth to be successful, productive adults through training and mentorship in education, employment, and personal achievement. Onsite staff at the HAY Center will provide training classes, transition planning, and life skills classes for youth before they exit the foster care system. Youth will also have an opportunity to live in one-bedroom apartments on the HAY Center campus.

Project Website: https://www.haycenter.org/

Use of Evidence: Access to affordable and stable housing and wraparound services are essential to TAY, helping participants successfully transition to independent living. A national study indicated that up to 36% of former foster youth in the United States will become homeless within the first two years of leaving care. As a result, there is a higher risk for negative outcomes for TAY, including low education attainment, unemployment, criminal justice system involvement, mental health issues, and transient living.

Each year, more than 250 youth in the Houston area will exit the foster care system. Often, these youth do not have the support of a responsible adult to assist their transition to adulthood. The HAY Center allows for meeting the needs of TAY through affordable housing units and wrap around services.

This project supports the need to increase access to quality affordable housing and reduce homelessness in Harris County.

Harris County allocated the full adopted budget of this program $5M to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation is not being conducted for this program, as this project involves the construction of the HAY Center Campus.

Performance Report:
The HAY Center project was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.13-Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare System" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment:

- Number of children served by child care and early learning services: 0
- Families served by home visiting: Not Applicable

The HAY Center campus is in the process of being constructed. As of June 30th, 2022, the completion status was "Completed less than 50%". As construction is completed and the program is rolled out, it will collect the following Key Performance Indicators:

- Number of you that remain stably housed for 12 months
- Number of youth who are actively participating in higher education and/or workforce activities
- Number of youth who are engaged with a transition coach or mentor

ARPA_E2E: Employ2Empower

Funding amount: $2,157,911

Project Expenditure Category: 2.10-Assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers

Project Overview: The Employ2Empower (E2E) program will help the unhoused and those living in encampments to reenter the workforce. The program aims to provide a low barrier for participants to gain employment, along with access to social services, such as housing navigation, healthcare, and income support. Career & Recovery Resources, Inc will be using the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Benefits Administrator to connect program participants to income supports. Additionally, the program will provide bi-weekly meetings with employment coaches to assist with training, job opportunities, and job placement.

The expanded program plans to serve 160 individuals who will be employed by the E2E program for up to 32 hours a week at a pay rate of $15 per hour, while providing access to resources to meet their basic needs. The participants' work will include graffiti removal, illegal dumping abatement, and upkeep of public properties. E2E provides steady income, wrap-around services, and workforce development training, and connects participants to a pathway to a permanent housing solution.

Project Website: https://www.careerandrecovery.org/employment-services/

Use of Evidence: Based on a pilot program launched by Harris County's Precinct 2, E2E is a workforce program that employs unhoused individuals living in encampments. By utilizing lessons learned from the pilot program, the goal is to provide a consistent stabilizing experience for program participants who require time and intensive support to alleviate the effects of experiencing homelessness.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in homelessness and housing instability. The Employ2Empower program is designed to provide support for Harris County's unhoused and homeless population. Fifty percent of the homeless population in the Houston area indicated an economic crisis as the cause of their homelessness. In 2021, the Point-In Time Homeless Count & Survey found that one in seven people in the unsheltered population cited COVID-19 as the reason for their homelessness. Individuals experiencing homelessness often struggle to obtain or maintain employment – or are limited in the types of employment available to them – due to barriers like low educational attainment, limited work experience, limited marketable job skills, lack of transportation, chronic health issues or disability, or mental health or substance abuse problems. The Employ2Empower program supports Harris County's homeless population by providing employment opportunities, access to social services, assistance with housing navigation, healthcare, job training, and other additional sources of support.

Harris County has allocated the full adopted budget of $2.1M to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be conducted and will be made publicly available once finalized.

Performance Report: The Employ2Empower project was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.10-Assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment.

- Workers enrolled in sectoral job training programs: 6
- Workers completing sectoral job training programs: 0
- People participating in summer youth employment programs: Not Applicable

The Employ2Empower project model does not involve people participating in summer youth employment programs. The Employ2Empower program will collect the following key performance indicators:

- Number of participants served
- Number of participants enrolled in a cohort
- Number of participants graduated from cohort
- Number of participants who have secured permanent employment
- Number of participants who remain employed for 6 months or longer
- Number of participants placed in permanent housing
- Number of participants receiving

Housing Stability

ARPA_AFRH: Affordable Housing Roles

Funding amount: $1,799,594

Project Expenditure Category: 2.15-Long-term Housing Security: Affordable Housing

Project Overview: The Affordable Housing Roles program will aid the housing programs portfolio by providing funding to hire five employees assigned to the Harris County Treasury ARPA Housing portfolio. The roles hired will include an assistant director and four program managers.

The assistant director will implement the program by leading program management, overseeing the four program managers, consultant management, contract development and implementation, and managing program performance metrics. The duties of program managers will include collaborating with external consultants and the county housing department to develop and design Affordable Housing programs. Additionally, program managers will provide support by working on specific focus areas, such as new multi-family housing supply, new single-family housing supply, multi-family housing preservation, and single-family housing preservation.

Project Website: For more information on Harris County's ARPA Portfolio, please visit harriscountytx.gov.

Use of Evidence: Harris County has allocated the full program amount of $1.8M to evidence-based interventions. Harris County is not conducting a program evaluation due to the nature of this project.

Performance Report:
The Affordable Housing Roles project was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.15- Long-term Housing Security: Affordable Housing" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment:

- Number of households receiving eviction prevention services: Not Applicable
- Number of affordable housing units preserved or developed: Not Applicable

The purpose of this project is to fund the salaries for the positions that will lead the implementation of the Affordable Housing Portfolio. Since the initiative is funding full-time employees, key performance indicators and program evaluation will be measured in accordance to the success of the Affordable Housing Portfolio as projects are launched.

Infrastructure

ARPA_FEASE: Water & Sewer Feasibility Study

Funding amount: $388,251

Project Expenditure Category: 5.18- Water & Sewer - Other

Project Overview: Harris County has allocated funding to increase access to clean drinking water and sanitary sewer systems in areas currently without access. 5engineering LLC, a water resource engineering firm, will provide a professional assessment of five potential water and wastewater infrastructure projects previously identified by the Infrastructure Focus Area Team. Services will include collecting information on service connections, providing detailed supply costs separated by the level of effort, developing and distributing information regarding public meetings, preparing public meeting materials and presentations, tracking stakeholder responses and documentation, determining requirements for providing services to specific areas, negotiating with utility service providers to secure capacity and service, and providing a project assessment report.

Project Website: The Water & Sewer Infrastructure program is currently under development. Future information about the program will be available at HarrisCountyARPA.org.

Use of Evidence: 5engineering LLC, a full-service water resource engineering firm, has extensive experience in managing water and wastewater projects, as well as working on storm water projects, coastal engineering, and infrastructure management. The firm employs certified Floodplain Managers, Geographic Information Systems Professionals, Project Management Professionals, and Envision Sustainability Professionals.

According to a study on the Economic Benefits of Investing in Water Infrastructure, commissioned by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Value of Water Campaign, reliable water service is an enabling force for economic growth and prosperity. On the other hand, unreliable water service and deteriorating infrastructure can put communities and the economy at risk. The COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified the need to act and invest across all levels of government and failing to act now could lead to prolonged economic and public health vulnerability.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), septic systems sited in densities exceeding the treatment capacity of regional soils and systems that are poorly designed, installed, operated or maintained can cause problems. These can involve the contamination of surface and ground water, excessive nitrogen discharges to sensitive coastal water, and phosphorous pollution of inland surface water.

The five projects selected for evaluation were identified as part of a broader opportunity ranking, prioritizing projects in high-SVI neighborhoods without water and/or sanitary sewer services, with older homes, and with significant septic violations or water contamination, among other factors.

Performance Report: The Water & Sewer Feasibility Study was assigned the Expenditure Category "5.18-Water & Sewer: Other" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment.

- Projected/actual construction start date: January 1st, 2024
- Projected/actual initiation of operations date: April 1st, 2026
- Location Type: Address Range
- Location Details: The feasibility study will examine five candidate project areas
- Public Water System (PWS) ID Number: Not Applicable
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Number: Not Applicable
- Median Household Income of service area: $43,038
- Lowest Quintile Income of the service area: $13,870

JOBS AND EDUCATION

Family Financial Stability

ARPA_DAP: Flexible Financial Assistances

Funding amount: $65,400,000 (total funding approved)

Project Expenditure Category: 2.3 Household Assistance: Cash Transfers

Project Overview: The Flexible Financial Assistance program provided $1,500 in flexible financial assistance to 40,000 low-income households that experienced economic hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic. To be eligible for the program, applicants were required to be Harris County residents and have a current household income at or below 60% of the HUD Average Median Income. Households could demonstrate income eligibility through participation in qualifying public benefits programs.

The application launched on July 28th, 2021 and remained open through August 11th, 2021. The first payments were distributed on August 12th, 2021. All funds were distributed by December 30th, 2021.

The program provided $60 million in flexible financial assistance ($30 million approved in reporting period). Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Great Houston was responsible for operating the program including application processing and payment, contact center operation, technology platform development, and outreach to vulnerable populations in partnership with nonprofits and other local entities.

The primary goal of the project was for an increased ability for families and individuals to be able to pay for basic needs in Harris County. Intended outcomes for the program included a decrease in the number of households that reported were behind on their bills and an increase in the number of households that reported they could pay for essential needs (e.g., food).

Project Website: harriscountyrelief.org/

Use of Evidence: The project was based on the evaluation of a previous direct assistance program offered by Harris County under the CARES Act (by Notre Dame's Lab for Economic Opportunities), as well as a rich literature surrounding direct cash assistance.

Ample research has shown that households have been unable to afford basic needs during the pandemic. By April 2020, a Pew Research study reported that only 23% of households had emergency funds that w last 3 months; about half of low-income Americans had reported a job or wage loss due to COVID-19 by that point. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Urban Institute, and the Federal Reserve all indicate that families struggled with food insecurity, paying for bills and other basic expenses, and that the impacts were felt especially by those who entered the pandemic with fewer resources and/or experienced a layoff. While the impacts have been blunted by safety net programs, for many households, such assistance has not been enough.

Meanwhile, a large literature shows that unconditional cash transfers can be a quick and efficient way to aid households in crisis. There are also few labor market side effects; preliminary research on pandemic unemployment benefits showed that those who received larger benefits became unemployed at and resumed work at similar rates to those with smaller benefits. In general, work on cash transfers suggests fewer negative labor market effects (although most research is done and may even help increase adult labor supply by alleviating liquidity and risk constraints. Although most work is done in developing country contexts, cash transfers are regarded as a cost-effective methods of poverty reduction. More relevant to our program, analysis of CARES Act payments and other pandemic stimulus payments show that, for low-income families, cash payments had faster effects than previous stimulus programs (in 2001 and 2008), and resulted in larger increases in spending on food, rent, and debt payments. Research by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Opportunity Insights second this, finding that households making lower incomes, in lower-wage jobs, experiencing job loss, or sick/affected by COVID-19, were especially likely to use their stimulus payments on basic household expenses rather than paying off debt or increasing savings. Research by Opportunity Insights also pointed out that traditional macroeconomic tools used to stimulate employment had little effect during the pandemic, making social insurance and hardship alleviation more effective channels of public spending.

 The full program spend ($30 million, plus $2.7 million in administrative and outreach costs, approved in the previous period, with an equivalent amount approved after the period) was allocated toward evidence-based interventions under Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2).

 A brief summary of the evaluation design and approach are included here:

- For the purposes of evaluation, there are 2 groups: **grantees and non-grantees.** Both groups will receive one follow-up survey **1 week** after grants are distributed, and a second follow-up survey **3 months** after grants are distributed.
- Incentives will be provided to increase the probability of a high response rate; the incentive amount is tentatively set at $15 per survey after discussion with community partners and other evaluative organizations. We expect this should provide us with a relatively high (30-50%) response rate on our surveys, with at least 330 grantee respondents and 330 non-grantee respondents. We plan to distribute incentives and surveys via electronic gift cards and a reputable survey platform such as Qualtrics.

- Follow-up surveys include a section that evaluates how effective the program was for grantees. They also include a section of questions that allow us to compare between grantees and non-grantees.

A draft of grantee-specific questions follows:

Payment: Did you pay a fee to cash or deposit your payment?

a. Yes
b. No
c. I don't know / I don't remember

Impact: What did you and your household mostly spend your Harris County Recovery Assistance payment on? Select all that apply.

a. Food (groceries, eating out, take out)
a. Clothing (clothing, accessories, shoes)
b. Household supplies and personal care products
c. Household items (TV, electronics, furniture, appliances)
e. Recreational goods (sports and fitness equipment, bicycles, toys, games)
f. Rent
g. Mortgage (scheduled or monthly)
a. Utilities and telecommunications (natural gas, electricity, cable, internet, cellphone)
b. Vehicle payments (scheduled or monthly)
j. Paying down credit cards, student loans, or other debts
a. Charitable donations or giving to family members
b. Savings or investments
c. Other; if other, please describe.

A draft of comparative questions sent to both grantees and non-grantees follows:

Concerns: Thinking about the next 3 months, what are your top 3 concerns?

a. Paying for food, clothing, and/or basic household supplies
a. Paying for utilities, vehicle payments, or other bills
b. Paying for rent or mortgage
c. Paying down credit card debt, student loans, or other debts
e. The physical health and well-being of myself and/or my family members
f. The mental health and well-being of myself and/or my family members
g. Finding a job
a. Finding care providers for my children or other family members
b. Sending my children back to school and/or concerns about my child's education
j. Other; if other, please describe

Employment: What best describes your current employment situation?

a. Employed in a full-time job
a. Employed in a part-time job
b. Unemployed
c. Furloughed or on a reduced work schedule due to the pandemic

e.   Other; if other, please specify

Usual household expenses: In **the last 7 days,** how difficult has it been for your household to pay for usual household expenses, including but not limited to food, rent, or mortgage, car payments, medical expenses, student loans, and so on? Select only one answer.

a.   Not at all difficult
a.   A little difficult
b.   Somewhat difficult
c.   Very difficult

Mental health: Over **the last 14 days,** how often have you felt down, depressed, anxious, or unable to control worrying about something? Select only one answer.

a.   Not at all
a.   Several days
b.   More than half the days
c.   Nearly every day

Outlook: Thinking about **the next 3 months,** how hopeful do you feel about your and your family's future?

I feel very hopeful

I feel somewhat hopeful

I feel sometimes hopeful, sometimes worried

I feel somewhat worried

I feel very worried

All grantees and non-grantees also received questions about their demographics, such as owner/renter status, household composition, race and ethnicity, and gender. Information collected on their original application about language preference will be retained, as well as their addresses, which can be used to map to neighborhood and local SVI.

Performance Report:
The US Treasury requires the following programmatic data from projects assigned Expenditure Category 2.3 Household Assistance: Cash Transfers:

- Number of households served: 40,000

Harris County collected the following Key Performance Indicators for the Flexible Financial Assistance Program:

- Total Program Dollars Spent: $60,000,00
- Total Number of Applications Received: 250,216
- Total Number of Applications Processed: 76,493
- Total Number of Applications Approved: 40,000
- Total Number of Applications Paid: 40,000

ARPA_CHILDTAX: Child Tax Credit

Funding amount: $500,000

Project Expenditure Category: 2.37-Economic Impact Assistance: Other

Project Overview: According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Child Tax Credit (CTC) has not been claimed for at least 30,000 children in Harris County, representing over $90 million in missed payments to low-income households with children. To combat child poverty and increase the number of eligible families enrolling in and receiving the expanded 2021 CTC, Harris County allocated $500,000 to support BakerRipley's efforts to provide targeted community outreach, non-filer form preparation assistance, and tax preparation assistance to low-income households with children. The program's main goal is to ensure that low-income families at risk of missing out on the CTC access advance payments in 2021 and file for the CTC in 2022 which could lead to a significant decline in child poverty.

The CTC, expanded under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), is available to most families whose children have social security number (SSN), and to households with children that usually do not have a tax filing requirement due to their low or lack of income. Populations targeted for outreach include extremely low-income families, households with low education levels, disabilities, or limited internet access, and mixed-immigration status households.

To ensure more families are aware of the program, BakerRipley will expand its outreach efforts through:

- Tax assistance clinics in high-need areas
- Expanded tax outreach and assistance for filing 2021 taxes and Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) applications
- Bilingual staff conducting in-person outreach
- Bilingual phone line available to guide callers
- Social media and traditional outreach in multiple languages

Project Timeline:

- Extend BakerRipley's Two Year-Round Tax Preparation Centers' services to December 17th
- Targeted outreach and phone line guidance
- Assist households with children in enrolling for the advanced payments via GetCTC.org/BakerRipley
- Assist households with children with SSN in applying or renewing their ITIN
- Assist households with children with free, quality tax preparation of their 2021 tax return, so they can claim the CTC and other pending Economic Impact Payments

As the Treasury's FAQ 4.12 explicitly states, ARPA funds may be used for outreach to increase uptake of federal assistance for federal programs, which include the CTC, this is a reasonable program to fund with CLFRF. BakerRipley, the program administrator, estimates that there are approximately 5,000 children who could benefit from the CTC in Harris County and helping just 170 children receive these payments would be a $500,000 return on investment. Additionally, reaching all 5,000 children would mean those children receive a combined $1.5 million through

the CTC outreach program. AS of 2019, 26.2 percent of Harris County children under the age of five were living in poverty.

Project Website: https://www.bakerripley.org/services/baker-ripley-tax-center

Use of Evidence: According to a study by the National Academy of Sciences, the Child Tax Credit project is amongst the most successful major federal assistance programs at alleviating child poverty. The same study also noted child poverty rates are disproportionately higher for children of color. The Center on Poverty & Social Policy predicts that, if all likely-eligible children are covered, the expanded CTC has the potential to reduce monthly child poverty by up to 40 percent and that "expanding coverage to all eligible children is key to achieving the Child Tax Credit's full anti-poverty potential, with the greatest gains to be realized for Black and Latino children."

The Treasury Department estimates that most eligible children will receive their CTC payments automatically because their families filed tax returns in the preceding two years or used the IRS' non-filer portal to claim Economic Impact Payments (EIPs). However, an estimated four million children will not receive automatic payments, therefore aggressive outreach is crucial in order to help the lowest-income and hardest-to-reach families access the CTC. These four million children come from very low-income families, families with immigrant parents whose children have social security numbers but who may be hesitant or unable to file their tax returns, and families not required to file taxes (for example, caregivers receiving benefits such as Social Security). The latter group may include grandparents who have dependent children in their care.

The literature indicates that minority households (most significantly Black and Hispanic or Latino households), families with the lowest income levels, and those with earnings from self-employment are among the least likely to file taxes and, thus, are most at risk of failing to claim and receive the CTC. Studies have also shown that immigrant and Hispanic populations are among the largest groups with the lowest tax-filing rates and highest amounts of unclaimed tax benefits; therefore, these families may benefit from extra assistance from trusted messengers who can help with navigating IRS requirements and forms, many of which are provided only in English.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's weekly Household Pulse Survey, introduction of the expanded CTC coincided with a decrease in food insufficiency in households with children. These households also reported less difficulty paying weekly expenses, which is further explained by data collected from the same survey showing 91 percent of low-income households nationally (and 93 percent in Texas) used their monthly CTC payments to cover basic household necessities (food, utilities, rent or mortgage, clothing) or education costs.

Harris County allocated the full adopted budget of this program $500,000 to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be not be conducted for this program.

Performance Report:
To measure the impact of this program, BakerRipley is tracking metrics on households that receive information about the CTC, the number of households accessing the CTC non-filer portal as a result of assistance, the number of households filing taxes as a result of assistance, the number of children claimed under the CTC as a result of outreach and assistance, and other key metrics on tax-related services accessed. While difficult to measure, increased uptake of the CTC will help to

combat child poverty across the County. Through the reporting period, 4,086 children have been claimed under CTC because of outreach and assistance efforts and 8,950 households have filed taxes as a result of assistance.

Harris County collects the following Key Performance Indicators for the Child Tax Credit programs:

- Number of individuals reached with information on Child Tax Credit: 31,120
- Number of households filing taxes: 8,950
- Number of children claimed under Child Tax Credit: 4,076
- Number of households receiving Economic Impact Payments/Earned Income Tax Credit: 2,840
- Number of phone consultations about Child Tax Credit: 842
- Number on in-person consultations about Child Tax Credit: 156
- Total expected amount for all Child Tax Credits and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC):
  - o EITC: $5,560,273
  - o Child Tax Credit: $7,479,082

Small Business Support

ARPA_SMALLBUS: Small Business

Funding amount: $32,052,000.00

Project Expenditure Category: 2.9-Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers

Project Overview: Small businesses throughout the County struggled due to stay-at-home orders and the broader economic downturn associated with COVID-19. Funds provided grants ranging from $5,000 to $25,000 to 2,577 businesses. In order to receive a grant, businesses needed to be located within Harris County, have 30 or fewer employees (including part time, contractors and full-time employees), have been in operation before April 2020, have experienced negative impact on operations due to the pandemic, have had an annual revenue of less than $500,000 dollars in 2019 and 2020, and be in good standing with the Texas Comptroller's office with no outstanding tax obligations or liabilities.

The program prioritized minority and women owned businesses, as many of these businesses were hardest hit by the pandemic while lacking access to loans and capital, as well as businesses in hard-hit industries measured in terms of job loss, those located in vulnerable neighborhoods, and those who have received no past local or federal assistance.

Lift Fund Inc., a Texas Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) with over 25 years of experience serving small and underserved entrepreneurs, was responsible for operating the grant program. This included application processing and payment, contact center operation, technology platform development, and outreach to vulnerable small businesses, in partnership with nonprofits and other local entities. Over 60% of grants approved were for businesses in neighborhoods deemed the most socially vulnerable by the CDC (in top quartile SVI census tracts).

Project Website: https://www.liftfund.com/, https://www.harriscountybusinessrelief.org

Use of Evidence:

The Final Rule states that American Rescue Plan Act Funds can be used to aid small businesses. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many small businesses experienced decreased revenue, financial insecurity, increased costs, capacity to weather financial hardship, challenges covering payroll, rent or mortgage and other operating costs, and other reasonable factors determined by the county. Loans or grants to mitigate financial hardship (i.e. support payroll and benefits, costs to retain employees, and mortgage, rent, utility, and other operating costs).

According to the National League of Cities, small businesses closed at a rate of 25-33% above normal levels during the pandemic's first year. COVID-19 was especially difficult for minority-owned businesses, who typically faced greater difficulty accessing early aid opportunities and experienced more severe income losses during 2020. A report titled "Houston's Small Business Community: Expanding Access and Opportunity for Minority and Women Business Owners", produced by next street, identified several gaps specific to Houston's minority and women owners. At the time of the study, 42.5% of Houston's small businesses were minority owned. In Houston, only 24% of small businesses were women-owned. One gap that was identified was access to microloans for amounts under $50,000. The Harris County Small Business project met these needs by providing grants of $5,000 to $25,000.

Harris County allocated the full adopted budget of $32M towards evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be conducted and will be made publicly available once finalized.

The key outcome goals for this program were supporting the survival and growth of small and micro businesses, ideally with spillover effects of preserving pandemic-impacted jobs. To evaluate whether the program achieved this, both grantees and non-grantees will be sent two follow-up surveys. Grantees were asked to submit "success stories", which discussed their use of funds and how grant funds affected their business.

A brief summary of the evaluation design and approach is included here:

- Applications for the grants tracked the following variables: precinct, SVI percentile, race/ethnicity, gender, veteran status, number of current employees, industry, prior receipt of federal or county COVID funds, business revenue in 2020 and 2019 (if applicable), business address, business owner address, and business owner household size.
- In follow-up surveys to both grantees and non-grantees, the following data variables were tracked:
  - Operational status of the business
  - Use of funds
  - Change in revenue
  - Change in number of employees (hired, furloughed, re-hired, future hires)
  - Change in average wage per employee
  - Business owner's outlook on sustainability of operation and expected duration of pandemic
- A sample of questions for non-grantees can be found here:

o   Is your business still in operation?
    a. Yes
    b. No (if No, ask "Do you plan to reopen your business?")
o   What areas of your business do you need assistance in?
    a. Sales: Grow/Digital
    b. Finance: Budget/Accounting
    c. Talent: Hiring/Training
    d. Funding: Capital/Grants
    e. Other (If selected, "Please specify what other area of assistance")
o   What are the biggest challenges your business is facing currently? (Select all that apply)
    a. Employee health
    b. Inadequate staffing
    c. Supply chain issues
    d. Demand/orders
    e. Other (If selected, "Please specify what other challenges")
o   Did your number of staff in December 2021 increase or decrease compared to December 2020?
    a. Decreased (if selected, "How many fewer employees did you have in December 2021 compared to December 202?")
    b. Increased (if selected, "How many more employees did you have in December 2021 compared to December 2020?")
    c. No change
o   Did you annual revenue in 2021 increase or decrease compared to 2020?
    a. Decreased (if selected, "How much less revenue did you make in 2021 compared to 2020?" and "What was your revenue in 2021?")
    b. Increased (if selected, "How much more revenue did you make in 2021 compared to 2020?" and "What was your revenue in 2021?")
    c. My 2021 revenue was approximately the same as my 2020 revenue.

While establishing this evaluation process, Harris County identified a few objectives. One of the major goals of the evaluation process was to identify the needs of micro- and small businesses and how small business grant programs can alleviate these needs. By collecting this information, Harris County will have a knowledge base when designing future grant assistance programs. Harris County was also able to compare how businesses in different areas of the County, in different industries, and businesses with different business owner characteristics compare. The County collected surveys from both grantees and non-grantees, in order to better understand the impact of these grants.

In a final report published by LiftFund states that 30.6% of awardees were in the service industry, 14.3% were in retail, 12.7% were in accommodation and food services, and 8% were in healthcare social services. This report also states that 54% of grants funded were awarded to African American business owners, 24.6% of business owners were Hispanic, 15.3% were Other: Minority, and 5.9% were White. 69.2% of grants were awarded to females and 30.5% were awarded to males. A public link to the report can be found here.

Performance Report:
The Small Business project was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.9-Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment.

- Total Number of Businesses Served: 2,577 businesses

Harris County collected the following Key Performance Indicators for the Small Business project:

- Total Amount Paid: $30,000,00.00
- Total Program Amount Paid: $30,000,000.00
- Total Administrative Amount: $2,052,000.00
- Total Number of Applications Received: 10,268
- Number of Applications Denied: 2,481
- Total Number of Applications Paid: 2,577
- Total Number of Applications Approved: 2,577
- Total Number of Applications Processed: 5,058

Employment and Workforce Development

ARPA_HIRE: Hire Up Harris

Funding amount: $990,000

Project Expenditure Category: 2.10-Assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers

Project Overview: Workforce Development has been identified by Harris County as an ARPA focus area. The goal of the Workforce Development Focus Area is to increase access to quality jobs with a living wage. The Workforce Development programs will target those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and communities with the highest unemployment rates. The programs will also target jobs in emerging fields to advance and diversify the local economy.

The focus of the Hire Up Harris program is to administer career support for residents allowing for pathways into high quality jobs/careers that provide a living wage, provide benefits, and have the potential for economic advancement. The program will implement funding for high-quality job training programs that offer residents technical or sectoral-based training, licenses, degrees, or other industry-recognized qualifications, coupled with career success training, a concrete pipeline to employment, and wraparound services support. Contracts will be awarded through an RFP process to organizations which run high-quality programs. Funds awarded through the contract will help cover the costs of tuition and program expenses for additional participants, so that recipient organizations can improve their capacity and provide transformational services at scale.

This project will also support administrative costs for Workforce Development projects. Administrative costs covered under these expenses include staffing a full-time project manager, program evaluation contractor, and a learning cohort facilitation contractor. These hired positions will provide support for future Workforce Development projects.

Project Website: Future information about the program will be available at HarrisCountyARPA.org and via the Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity https://deeo.harriscountytx.gov/.

Use of Evidence: The COVID-19 pandemic created and accelerated shifts in the job market by eliminating certain jobs and highlighting the precarity faced by many low-wage workers. Harris County residents, and people across the United States, need stable jobs that allow them to make a living wage and provide opportunities for upward mobility. Increases in worker compensation in Houston were the lowest out of the 15 major metropolitan areas tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Index. For these reasons, Harris County will be implementing reskilling and apprenticeship programs.

Harris County allocated the full adopted budget of this program $990,000 to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be conducted and will be made publicly available once finalized.

Performance Report: Hire Up Harris was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.10-Assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment.

- Workers enrolled in sectoral job training programs: 0
- Workers completing sectoral job training programs: 0
- People participating in summer youth employment programs: Not Applicable

At this point in time, funding has only been approved for administrative costs associated with Hire Up Harris and other programs in the Workforce Development portfolio. The completion status for this project was entered as "Not Started" on the Project and Expenditure report, so Harris County is not required to report on this data in this reporting session.

Child Care

ARPA_HCDE: County Connections

Funding amount: $1,500,000

Project Expenditure Category: 2.37-Economic Impact Assistance: Other

Project Overview: County Connections Youth Summer Initiative grants program, operated by the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE), will serve 7,000 children ages 5-18 to address pandemic-related gaps in enrichment offerings. HCDE will support non-profits in implementing full and part-day programming for school-age children and programs to advance college and career readiness for older children. College and career readiness programs can be delivered virtually through the CASE for Kids Level Up online learning platform. HCDE will provide resources to summer programs allowing them to expand their offerings and offer scholarships to low-income families. The program will track the number of non-profits selected, the number of students enrolled, and the number of grants issued. The expansion of the County Connections Youth Summer Initiative will allow the county to advance its strategic initiative to expand access to quality, affordable child care. In addition, the contract will allow the County to address educational disparities that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Project Website: https://www.hcde-texas.org/county-connections

Use of Evidence: The program intends to provide high-quality summer enrichment opportunities for Harris County youth ages 5 through 18. These programs will provide safe learning and social

spaces that support children to connect with peers and trusted adults while participating in activities that support their development and wellbeing. Youth and children have faced unique challenges due to the ongoing health, economic, and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures and disruptions to normal learning routines have caused children to fall behind academically, with greater gaps occurring in communities most impacted by COVID-19. Even as schools have re-opened, regular schedules have yet to return, with key social and academic building blocks like recess, extracurricular & after-school activities, and field trips often cancelled. Because of the pandemic, there are far fewer enrichment and learning activities and programs open and accessible for all children in general, and even fewer opportunities for especially vulnerable and underserved kids. County Connections will help counter this by enabling more programs to provide high-quality services to more kids. HCDE hopes to serve 7,000 students during the summer of 2022. By serving kids, these programs combat social insecurity and isolation, and offer kids opportunities to build relationships, think about their futures, and learn.

Harris County has allocated the full adopted budget of $1.5M to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation is not being conducted.

Performance Report:

Harris County is collecting the following Key Performance Indicators:

- Number of non-profits selected
- Number of grants issued
- Number of students enrolled
- Total dollar amount of program administration paid

ARPA_ECIFHOME: Home-based Child Care Programs

Funding amount: $906.173.46

Project Expenditure Category: 2.11-Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care

Project Overview: The need for home-based child care in the United States is crucial. The Home-based Child Care Program, administered by The Alliance, aims to assist in closing the child care gap in Harris County. The Alliance plans to provide support by increasing access to affordable, high quality, state-licensed child care, while simultaneously providing professional development for undertakers who operate their own homebased child care program through a 12-week training program. Areas in which providers will receive training include business development, child development principles, and the state licensing process. Subsequently, families in low-to-moderate income communities will gain access to more affordable, yet high-quality, child care within their neighborhoods. Quantitative goals of this program include enrolling 60 child care providers, licensing 23 additional child care programs, introducing 92 caregivers into the workforce while assisting them to remain employed, and adding 179 additional slots in Harris County. This assistance will allow for promoting healthy childhood environments, including childhood education.

Project Website: https://thealliancetx.org/child-care-training-program/

Use of Evidence: The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on child care with nearly 4.5 million child care slots lost nationwide. Prior to COVID-19, Harris County experienced a significant

shortage of affordable child care options. According to a February 2021 report, 25% of all child care centers in Texas closed due to COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, Harris County experienced a significant shortage of affordable child care options. Many child care programs are not licensed and only 43% of licensed child care providers accept subsidies resulting in a lack of affordable, quality child care. Moreover, many families suffered financial hardship during the pandemic and child care is the second most expensive item in the family budget, falling just behind housing.

During the pandemic, fewer families enrolled their children in child care programs, which resulted in the closure of many child care facilities. Child Care facilities also saw an increase in employee shortages and turnover during the pandemic, which created challenges for ensuring child care centers were adequately staffed. As families returned to work, they experienced obstacles finding child care. Working families need access to culturally competent, accessible, and affordable child care. A major goal of this program is creating additional child care spots at high quality, affordable child care locations.

To measure satisfaction of the program including all stakeholders, pre and post surveys will be conducted for participants.

Harris County has allocated the full adopted budget of $906,173.46 to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be conducted and will be made publicly available once finalized.

Performance Report: The Home-based Child Care project was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.11-Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment.

- Number of children served by child care and early learning services: 12
- Number of families served by home visiting - Not Applicable

Harris County will track the following Key Performance Indicators for this project:

- Number of child care providers enrolled
- Number of child care programs licensed
- Number of caregivers entering the workforce
- Number of child care spots added
- Number of applications for child care spots received by

ARPA_ECIFSAFE: Safe Babies

Funding amount: $2,400,609

Project Expenditure Category: 2.13-Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare System

Project Overview: Partnering with First3Years, whose mission is to educate, advocate, and collaborate to advance healthy development of infants, toddlers, and their families, the Safe Babies Program is a drive towards providing protection for young children in foster care systems. First3Years will implement a collaborative approach between the child's natural parents and foster parents. With the goals of increasing the number of family reunifications, promoting safe attachments, alleviating derangement of separation, neglect, and abuse, all stakeholders,

including young children in foster care, siblings, birth parents, and guardians, will receive training, counseling, and other services identified to be a need by the program. First3Years will also administer birth parents with coaching and counseling to help them regain custody of their children. This training will allow for more sensitive and effective caregiving for both birth and foster parents. At present, 51% of children enrolled in the Safe Babies Program are reunified with their natural parents compared to 27% of children in the foster care system overall. Over a three-year period, Safe Babies will serve 300 children between the ages of 0-3, their siblings, natural parents, and foster parents. All children participating in the program will be in recipient of developmental screening and relevant referrals.

Project Website: https://first3yearstx.org/safebabies/

Use of Evidence: During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a rise in the number of children in foster care due to increased familial stress, including significant economic hardship and emotional distress. An increase in familial stress can result in an increase in child neglect and abuse. An increase in the number of children involved in the child welfare system results in an increased need to ensure the system is safe and that children and families receive the support they need. The Safe Babies program strives to increase family reunifications, promote safe attachments, and provide birth parents and foster parents with the tools they need to navigate the foster care system.

Harris County has allocated the full adopted budget of $2.4M to evidence-based interventions. A program evaluation will be conducted and will be made publicly available once finalized.

Performance Report:

The Safe Babies project was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.13-Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare System" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment.

- Number of children served by child care and early learning services: 13
- Number of families served by home visiting: Not Applicable

Harris County will track the following Key Performance Indicators for this project:

- Number of children 0-36 months served
- Number of additional siblings 3 years and older served
- Number of birth parents served and trained
- Number of foster parents served
- Number of foster parents receiving training
- Number of relative and kinship parents being served and trained
- Percent of family reunifications cases closed
- Number of child welfare professionals getting training
- Number of family determined outcomes (versus court determined)
- Number of cases receiving technical assistance

ARPA_ECIFWORDS: upWORDS

Funding amount: $4,607,487

Project Expenditure Category: 2.14-Healthy Childhood Environments – Early Learning

Project Overview: The Language and Brain Development in Infants program, operated by Texas Children's Hospital, will support new parents and parents of young children through upWORDS. Texas Children's Hospital will use the Community-Based Universal and Targeted Intervention Model to recruit families with young children (age 0-5), particularly low-income families. The program has trained community liaisons within target communities to do outreach at local community hubs and events. Texas Children's Hospital will refer families to targeted and tailored resources as needed. These resources include a screening by a pediatrician, additional speech and language support, benefits navigation, and support for maternal mental health. Parents will get the tools, training, and feedback to help increase their child's language development. The program will enroll 20,000 children between the ages of 0-3 and provide participants with books and educational materials. The program will also provide training for 6,000 early childhood educators to strengthen instruction. Up to 2,000 families will receive intensive support including parenting classes, developmental evaluations, and maternal health home visits. The program will increase knowledge of speech and language development in young children by providing training for parents and early childhood educators. The program will provide support for mothers through maternal health home visits and increased access to support services for children.

Project Website: https://www.texaschildrens.org/departments/upwords-program

Use of Evidence: The Final Rule explicitly states that assistance to impacted and disproportionately impacted households includes programs and services that address lost instructional time and educational disparities, including early programs, making upWORDS a reasonable program to fund with CLFRF. The Final Rule also indicated that expanding early learning services and increasing access to impacted households is an eligible use of funds. Funding from Harris County will allow Texas Children's Hospital to reach additional families through an expansion of the upWORDS intervention model.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had negative impacts on children's brain development. Recent research indicates that children born during the pandemic score lower on developmental screening tests than children born pre-pandemic. During the pandemic, infants experienced a lack of exposure to early learning opportunities and parents experienced higher rates of stress. In addition to these factors, COVID-19 decreased access and availability of programs that support early childhood development.

Texas Childrens' Hospital began the upWORDS program in 2016, focusing on early childhood language development. Texas Children's Hospital has served 1,200 families in the Houston area through this program and has seen great improvements nurturing responsive parent-child relationships. Due to this success, Texas Children's Hospital expanded this program to more families, especially targeting those whose children are at risk of developmental delays. Additional services include developmental evaluations, continued parenting support classes, a bridge program for children with speech delays, home visitation program for mothers with signs of postpartum depression, and coordination with community resources for families with unmet basic needs.

The upWORDS program will support children by providing opportunities for the development of early childhood literacy skills. Providing a strong foundation for young students is integral to future

reading success. In June 2021, 60% of incoming Houston Kindergarteners did not meet the expected reading-readiness skills.

Performance Report:
 The upWORDS project was assigned the Expenditure Category "2.14 Healthy Childhood Environments-Early Learning" and is required to report the following programmatic data based on this assignment.Number of children served by child care and early learning services: 0

- Number of families served by home visiting: Not Applicable

Harris County has also identified the following Key Performance Indicators for the upWORDS program:

- Number of children enrolled
- Number of books distributed
- Number of welcome bags and flip kits distributed
- Number of educators trained
- Number of families referred
- Number of families receiving parenting classes
- Number of developmental evaluations
- Number of families receiving maternal health support
- Number of families receiving social services
- Number of children and families who graduate from upWORDS

COUNTY OPERATIONS

ARPA_CRTBLOG: Court Backlog

Funding amount: $17,677,316.11

Project Expenditure Category: 6.1 Revenue Replacement-Provision of Government Services

Project Overview: Addressing the backlog in court hearings generated by pauses during the pandemic is key to ensuring speedy access to trial for defendants and victims. ARPA funding has been dedicated to increasing the speed and efficiency of these operations. Commissioners Court has allocated funds to provide temporary staffing to accelerate evidence processing, provide additional court space, judges, jury services, court staff, and attorneys to mitigate the impact of the pandemic-related court backlog. Both defendants and victims have been negatively impacted by having cases remain unheard for extended periods of time.

The key outcome goals are reducing exposure to the criminal justice system and improving access to a speedy hearing or trial. Initially, the impact of the funding will be measured in terms of the increased number of staff hired and increased speed of evidence processing. As the impact of new staffing takes place, outcomes will be measured in terms of the decrease in the number of unheard cases over 360 days old, improvements in the average time to disposition, and improvements in the overall caseload level.

Project Website: Court backlog statistics are available at https://www.justex.net/dashboard/.

Use of Evidence: The Court Backlog project is a Revenue Replacement program designed to support Harris County in reducing and responding to the negative economic impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, courts experienced interruptions to court operations, which lead to a significant court backlog. Harris County's multi-faceted approach will allow the County to expand jury operations, provide additional staffing of court judges, and access additional resources, ultimately reducing the backlog. The pandemic caused the Country Criminal Courts at Law to limit trial activity, adding to backlog of jury trials. Expanding jury operations will allow for addressing the pending jury cases. Harris County's Emergency Response Dockets address judicial backlogs, therefore expenses related to additional visiting judges, hired support staff, and purchasing necessary equipment would allow for addressing the backlog appropriately. Additionally, discovery of evidence has been a significant contributor to the backlog and hiring temporary staff to process evidence would allow for an expedited discovery process. Additional staffing is also required in areas of programing to modernize evidence intake procedures, evidence review personnel at the District Attorney's Office, and support staff for operations to help expedite court backlog. Adding six associate judge positions and one judge position would also allow for alleviation of court backlog and improve the efficiency of the process.

Performance Report: This project prioritizes initiatives that reduce cases in the backlog (cases older than 180 days for misdemeanors and 360 days for felonies) and reduce the time to case disposition, while protecting due process through initiatives that reduce the number of individuals in jail awaiting hearing by raising court system efficiency on a long-term basis together with near-term increases in court system capacity. The following actions have been taken to address the current court case backlog:

- Addition of space and resources to add more jury panels
- Providing additional spaces and resources for jury panels
- Addition of visiting judges and associate staff to increase the court's capacity to hear and move backlogged, serious felony cases
- Addition of visiting judges and associated staff to increase the Courts capacity to hear and move backlogged, misdemeanor cases
- Addition of temporary staff to process backlogged body worn cameras evidence requests and temporary positions for 911 call processing
- Additional public defenders to process the increasing caseloads
- Request for addition of associate judges to aid with some of the "administrative" portions of case management for District Courts
- Request for additional staff to process evidence requests at the DA's office

ARPA_VIPER: VIPER

Funding amount: $2,613,919.00

Project Expenditure Category: 6.1 Revenue Replacement-Provision of Government Services

Project Overview: Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the landscape of the United States has been significantly changed. Harris County, during this time, has experienced a rise in violent crimes, which has added to an increase in warrants issued and an accumulation of outstanding warrants. The Harris County Violent Persons Task Force (VIPER) has been established

as a multi-agency task force dedicated to tracking down the most dangerous offenders in efforts to reduce the stockpile of warrants outstanding in Harris County. The offenders prioritized under this project will be those accused of aggravated offenses and murder warrants. ARPA funding is being provided to the program to support personnel costs and equipment required for the VIPER Task Force. These funds will also provide the Criminal Warrants Division with additional measures needed to address the growing number of bond forfeitures and retractions. Escalating warrant execution should allow for a reduction of violent crime rates and relapse opportunities.

Project Website: General information about the program is available at HarrisCountyARPA.org.

Use of Evidence: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Harris County experienced a spike in violent crime. A direct result of the rise in crime contributed to an increase in warrants issued and, in turn, created a backlog of outstanding warrants, leaving dangerous and violent criminals out on the streets. As of March 2022, the Harris County Sheriff's Office had 50,247 outstanding warrants. Out of these warrants, 4,833 were for aggravated offenses and 703 were for murder. Prior to 2019, the Criminal Warrants Division had been receiving between 3,000 and 4,000 warrants per month. In 2022, the Criminal Warrants Division received an average of 6,000 new warrants per month. At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the division had to temporarily re-assign investigators from executing warrants to providing additional support to other jurisdictions to address security concerns. This redistribution of labor contributed to the growing number of outstanding warrants.

The project's ultimate goal is to reduce the backlog of warrants. The project is prioritizing warrants for aggravated offenses and murders which will improve community safety, reduce opportunities for recidivism, and reduce violent crime rates.

Performance Report: Harris County has identified the following Key Performance Indicators for the VIPER project:

- Number of individuals being arrested
- Number of outstanding warrants
- Number of warrants for different offenses (i.e., aggravated assault, murder, aggravated robbery etc.)

ARPA_FLEX: FLEX Fund

Funding amount: $30,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: 6.1 Revenue Replacement-Provision of Government Services

Project Overview: The FLEX Fund supports projects aligned with ARPA priority outcomes and is funded from budget made available by transferring ARPA-eligible expenses from departments' general funds to Harris County's ARPA fund. To facilitate projects for which general funds are a better fit than federal funds, Harris County is charging eligible payroll or other eligible expenses currently budgeted in the General Fund to the ARPA grant, as allowed under the ARPA guidance. Moving eligible expenses to the grant opens budget to create a new FLEX Fund reserved for projects aligned with ARPA priority outcomes and approved via the ARPA governance processes. Payroll expenses are expected to be the primary expenses transferred to the ARPA Fund. The fund

currently supports ARPA-eligible expenses made by Harris County Public Health including salaries.

Project Website: General information about the program is available at HarrisCountyARPA.org.

Use of Evidence: According to The Final Rule, the U.S. Treasury Department indicates that State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds may be used to pay for government services in an amount equal to the revenue loss experienced by the recipient due to the COVID-19 health emergency.

Harris County is not required to report on the dollar amount of the total project spending allocated towards evidence-based interventions or whether a program evaluation is being conducted due to the Expenditure Category assigned to this project.

Performance Report: Due to the nature of this project, no key performance indicators have been created for this project.

ARPA_ExtAdmin: External Administrative Expenses

Funding amount: $12,161,579.00

Project Expenditure Category: 7.1-Administrative Expenses

Project Overview: In order to effectively and efficiently complete the duties outlined within ARPA, Harris County has applied $12M worth of funding to various sub-awardees in the execution and oversight of active, ongoing projects. The sub-awardees are:

- Boston Consulting Group (BCG)
- Qualtrics
- The Pierre Law Firm, PLLC and
- Jackson Walker, LLP
- A-1 Personnel Staffing of Houston

Harris County awarded BCG a contract to assist with three main areas – strategy development and program design, program execution, and compliance support. BCG works with Harris County to develop their strategic portfolio by researching pandemic impacts to facilitate an extensive stakeholder engagement and community input process. Additionally, BCG collaborates with Harris County to establish a robust and centralized Program Management Office (PMO) in order to track program milestones and key performance indicators (KPIs) and implement efficient program approval processes and associated governance items such as the implementation of Harris County's equity framework. Lastly, BCG supports the evaluation of program eligibility, informs program designs relative to compliance considerations, and performance compliance monitoring of active projects.

The sub-award to Qualtrics enables Harris County to implement its own data and impact analysis from programs where evaluation is not covered by another party. Using Qualtrics, Harris County can survey program participants, collect feedback, and assess whether program participants experienced positive benefits from a particular project in both the short and long term.

The Pierre Law Firm, PLLC and Jackson Walker, LLP will be assisting Harris County with Special Counsel Services in connection with ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Jackson Walker LLP is a

Houston-based full-service legal team with more than 90 lawyers. The firm works with many community and civic organizations.

The Pierre Law Firm, PLLC will be assisting Harris County with preparation of federal contracts associated with ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

A-1 Personnel of Houston, a female-owned, minority staffing agency, specializes in supporting Harris County in hiring of positions associated with supporting ARPA portfolio. Harris County was able to hire a Pandemic Recovery Manager through their service.

Project Websites: Contractor websites include www.bcg.com, qualtrics.com, Jackson Walker LLP (jw.com), Home - Goodwille Pierre, A1 Personnel | Staffing in Houston (a1personnelinc.com)

Use of Evidence: Harris County is not required to report on the dollar amount of the total project spending allocated towards evidence-based interventions or whether a program evaluation is being conducted due to the Expenditure Category assigned to this project.

Performance Report: The Harris County PMO team has embedded opportunities for reflection on performance in its management of external contractors. Due to the nature of this project, no key performance indicators have been created for this project.

ARPA_IntAdmin: Internal Administrative Expenses

Funding amount: $2,248,119.00

Project Expenditure Category: 7.1-Administrative Expenses

Project Overview: These internal administrative expenses fund salaries of three employees hired to aid Harris County in managing ARPA funded projects. These roles include a pandemic recovery manager, a compliance manager, and a director of the Harris County ARPA PMO.

Project Website: Overall information about portfolio management including guidelines from Commissioners Court is available at HarrisCountyARPA.org.

Use of Evidence: Harris County is not required to report on the dollar amount of the total project spending allocated towards evidence-based interventions or whether a program evaluation is being conducted due to the expenditure category assigned to this project.

Performance Report: Due to the nature of this project, no key performance indicators have been created for this project.

Appendix A: Harris County ARPA Equity Framework

Harris County Equity Framework
for Investments Funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to all, but it has not impacted all Harris County residents equally. Instead, it has exacerbated long-standing inequities. Black and Hispanic residents, already facing disproportionately negative health outcomes, have suffered the highest coronavirus disease burden and death rates.[1] With lower pre-pandemic wages and less money available to cover shortfalls, Black and Hispanic families have felt the economic fallout of the pandemic acutely, facing additional loss of income and greater-than-average housing insecurity.[2] Women, and particularly women of color, have also experienced higher rates of unemployment, dealing with virtual schooling, reduced daycare and afterschool options, and inflexible work schedules on top of the collapse of essential industries like retail and hospitality. These are just a few of the disproportionate impacts that have affected already-struggling households.

Equity Goals

Advancing equity means striving for the same outcomes and opportunities across different groups, not simply delivering the same treatment when it fails to yield fair, just, and equal results. With this Equity Framework, Harris County will ensure an equity lens is applied to investments made possible by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA).

In determining how to deploy ARPA funds, Harris County will pursue investments that advance the following equity goals:

- Reversing negative pandemic-related trends and closing gaps in health, economic, and housing outcomes; positioning disproportionately impacted groups and neighborhoods for improved future outcomes.
- Building capacity within County government, creating a shared understanding of and commitment to equity, and developing tools and practices to support equity-centered solutions.
- Measuring racial and ethnic disparities in health, economic, social, and environmental outcomes so that pandemic recovery plays a role in the long-term remediation of systemic harms to populations of color.
- Incorporating an equity assessment in each project, with opportunities to reflect and adapt based on interim results and community input throughout the project.
- Monitoring investment across the entire program to ensure the overall portfolio is reaching populations and neighborhoods most impacted by the pandemic.

Equity Strategies

To ensure Harris County addresses existing and exacerbated inequities, we will employ the following strategies when developing, selecting, and delivering ARPA programs.[3]

- ***Disaggregate historical data and outcome measures by race, ethnicity, gender, and/or geography and other demographic variables*** to identify inequities and ensure programs are prioritizing disproportionately impacted groups.

- ***Analyze specific factors underlying inequities*** such as racial and gender discrimination, disparate policy impacts, and institutional and structural barriers, adjusting program design accordingly.
- ***Include community representatives*** of groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic throughout program development, delivery and evaluation.
- ***Target resources and strategies*** to minimize incremental burdens on groups most affected by the pandemic while maximizing their access to relief.
- ***Evaluate the performance of projects through defined metrics and provide opportunities for reflection,*** creating space for continual improvement throughout implementation.
- ***Publish transparent program results*** via a publicly available website and other outlets, ensuring performance information reaches disproportionately impacted groups.

Equity Approach
An equity-oriented approach will be embedded throughout the lifecycle of each ARPA-funded project and across the full ARPA program as follows:

1. **Capacity Building:** The Budget Management Department will identify resources to provide training and technical assistance on equity-centered program development to support ARPA Working Groups, relevant Department staff, and project administrators.

2. **Project Development:** All project proposals should incorporate responses to the Equity Reflections (Appendix A) or other materials describing implementation of the Equity Strategies listed above.

3. **Project Selection:** An Equity Assessment tool (Appendix B) will be used to inform project selection. The tool includes questions assessing each project's application of the Equity Strategies. It must be completed by the Working Group Lead, approved by voting members of the associated Working Group, and included in the project's submission to the Steering Committee.

4. **Project Monitoring & Evaluation:** At an interim checkpoint and at the end of each project, qualitative and quantitative responses to the Equity Reflections (Appendix A) will be refreshed to ensure consistency with the original project intent and identify opportunities for improvement.

5. **Program Evaluation & Accountability:** Program-wide financial analyses will be conducted by the Budget Management Department to determine ARPA funding impact on targeted populations and geographies where feasible. Reporting on investment relative to social vulnerability, reporting on investment by race, ethnicity, gender, and/or other specific populations where available, and/or other program-level equity analyses will be provided to Commissioners Court on a quarterly basis beginning in Q4 2021 and also made available online.

Equity Framework Modifications
Modifications to this Equity Framework may be required based on learnings throughout its use. Minor modifications may be approved by the ARPA Steering Committee, comprised of Commissioners Court Chiefs of Staff or their designees, and transmitted to Commissioners Court. Substantive modifications must be approved by Commissioners Court.

Appendix B: Equity Assessment Tool

	Does the project proposal...	Score
Leverage clear outcome measures & disaggregated data	Include a statement of inequities to be addressed: specific outcomes, disaggregated by race, gender, geography, or other relevant variables (using appropriate proxies for these if not available)?	
	Identify specific groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic?	
	Prioritize disproportionately affected groups as primary audiences?	
Analyze specific factors underlying inequity	Describe how discrimination, policy impacts, institutional barriers, or other social or environmental conditions have contributed to the identified inequities?	
	Consider if other groups, not identifiable in data, may also be affected by the identified inequities based on the factors above?	
	Articulate how the program design takes into account discrimination, policy impacts, institutional barriers, or other social and environmental conditions?	
Include voices of community representatives	Identify potential partners from community institutions, non-profits, and other organizations representing disproportionately affected groups?	
	Incorporate meaningful moments to engage with representatives or individuals from the disproportionately affected groups?	
	Incorporate input from representatives of disproportionately affected groups who have participated in project development, taking into account their lived experiences?	
Target resources and strategies to minimize burden & maximize access	Target resources and strategies to minimize burden on disproportionately impacted groups?	
	Target resources and strategies to maximize access for disproportionately impacted groups?	
Evaluate performance through defined metrics and reflection	Include a plan to measure and evaluate outcomes, specifying metrics to be tracked and how data will be disaggregated by race, gender, geography or other demographic variables?	
	Include a plan to expand access to relevant data if original data sources were insufficient?	
	Include plans to engage in Equity Reflections and adapt the project as needed based on interim results and community impact?	
Publish transparent program results	Discuss channels for disseminating reports and information?	
	Include means of reaching disproportionately impacted groups within the results dissemination plan?	
	Total Proposal Score	

Scoring:
 -1 = Not done, or including adverse impacts contrary to the Equity Strategy
  0 = Minimally completed
+1 = Thoroughly completed

Proposals are scored by the relevant Working Group.
Proposals with a negative score are rejected or sent back for significant redesign.
Proposals with a neutral score are further reviewed and refined by the Working Group.
Proposals with a positive score may be considered for submission to the Steering Committee.

Appendix C: Equity Reflections
Equity Reflections

For each project, the following questions addressing the Equity Strategies may be adapted for use in the initial project proposal, at interim checkpoints, and in a final look-back. Team members responsible for proposing and implementing a project should reflect on the project's impact on equity via overall project results and associated community engagement.

1. How does your project leverage clear outcome measures and disaggregated data from beginning to end to identify inequity and ensure programs are prioritizing disproportionately impacted groups? Who has been disproportionately impacted?
2. How have you analyzed specific factors underlying inequities? What did the analysis reveal?
3. How does your project include voices from disproportionately impacted groups? How have community members been engaged in project development and / or evaluation?
4. How does your project minimize additional burdens and maximize benefits for disproportionately impacted groups?
5. How does your project evaluate performance through defined metrics and provide opportunities for reflection? What do the evaluation and reflection reveal and what changes may be needed?
6. How are you sharing information about the project? Is it reaching people from disproportionately impacted groups?