



COVID-19

July 2022

To: County Judge Hidalgo
Commissioners Ellis, Garcia, Ramsey, and Cagle

From: Leah Barton, Managing Director Strategic Initiatives, Office of County Administration
Romeo Solis, Director, ARPA Program Management Office

Re: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Monthly Report

Since our last report, Commissioners Court approved three key investments: adding outsourced County jail capacity to relieve overcrowding, initiating a Public Health program to address maternal and infant mortality, and creating a disparity studies fund to support regional school districts and community colleges in expanding opportunities for MWBE firms. Commissioners Court also accepted the second tranche of Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (\$457.8M) and approved initial orders to abate for the expanded neighborhood nuisance abatement program.

The White House held the [American Rescue Plan and Workforce Summit](#) highlighting model American Rescue Plan investments in workforce development. Commissioner Garcia joined to share best practices from the Employ2Empower program, providing a low-barrier employment model for individuals experiencing homelessness.

GOVERNANCE, COMPLIANCE, AND PLANNING

Two critical reports to the U.S. Treasury are due at the end of July: the quarterly Project and Expenditures Report covering commitments and expenses through the end of June 2022, and the annual Recovery Plan summarizing overall investment strategy and program results to date. The PMO is on track to submit these on time; the updated Recovery Plan will be posted at [HarrisCountyARPA.org](https://harriscountyarpa.org).

Supporting the competitive procurement of programs remains a focus for the ARPA Program Management Office. One RFP is open for public solicitations:

- **22/0276 Construction Management and Inspection Services**

This program seeks proposals providing construction management and inspection services of multi-family housing rental properties for the Harris County Community Services Department (CSD).

RFPs currently under review and contracting across the Health, Housing, and Jobs & Education portfolios include:

Health

Early Childhood Contracted Slots Pilot Program: This program will serve childcare deserts and focus on children who have the least access to care: infants, toddlers, and 3-year-olds from families with low incomes in high poverty areas. The program will prioritize funding to centers that are rated 4-Stars in Texas Rising Stars

- **Food & Nutrition:** Solicitation for transformative programs to address food insecurity and strengthen our food & nutrition infrastructure
- **Behavioral Health:** Solicitation for programs to expand access to behavioral health services for children and families, grow our behavioral health workforce, support recovery housing, and treat substance use disorders
- **Lead Testing & Abatement:** Two HCPH solicitations for contractors to support expanded lead testing and abatement of lead in homes and facilities where children's exposure is likely

Housing

- **Brokerage Services:** Two solicitations for brokerage services to support ARPA Affordable Housing efforts through acquisition and resale of single-family and multi-family units.
- **Homelessness:** Request for Expressions of Interest (REI) in collaboration with the City of Houston and the Coalition for the Homeless for the Community COVID Housing Program (CCHP 2.0)
- **Housing Stability:** Three solicitations for affordable housing advisory services covering program guideline development and single family and multi-family acquisition.
- **HAY Center Construction:** One invitation to bid for the construction of two new building for the HAY Center Foundation: one administrative building, and one building providing housing for youth aging out of foster care.
- **Water & Sewer Infrastructure:** Five RFQs for water and sewer feasibility studies are now under evaluation with one RFP for program management and design; these initiatives have the goal of increasing access to clean drinking water and functional sewer systems, especially in underserved communities

Jobs & Education

- **Workforce Development:** Two solicitations for the Hire Up Harris and Apprenticeship Workforce Programs; both RFPs include an emphasis on wraparound services and place a focus on underemployed or unemployed individuals, opportunity youth, people of color, women, and those without a college degree

On a monthly basis, the Steering Committee continues to review funding allocations and the overall project pipeline, milestone statuses, key performance indicators, and compliance findings for active projects across our focus areas:

Health	Housing	Jobs & Education	County Operations
Behavioral Health	Affordable Housing	Child Care	Justice: Court Backlog
Coordinated Care	Homelessness	Family Financial Stability	
Crime Prevention through Environmental Design	Re-entry / Re-integration Housing	Small Business Support	
Environmental Health: Lead	Water & Sewer Infrastructure	Workforce Development	
Healthcare Access & Coverage			
Food & Nutrition			
Violence Prevention			

NEW INVESTMENTS

Maternal and Child Health: Commissioners court approved a \$7.7 million allocation of funds for a maternal and child health pilot program. This initiative aims to expand resource navigation of social and health benefits for new and expecting families through a systematic approach of care coordination, prenatal care, post-partum care, and infant-early child development. COVID-19 devastated the black community with high rates of mortality and morbidity and this program will provide the social support needs for black mothers and babies diminished during the pandemic.

Disparity Fund: Commissioners Court approved a \$2.2 million allocation from the FLEX Fund to the Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity (DEEO) for the implementation and administration of the Disparity Study Fund. The goal of the fund is to increase knowledge and capacity to address disparities that may exist across institutional contracting within Harris County through the analysis of previous procurement history.

Court Backlog: Commissioners Court approved a \$25.7 million agreement with Management & Training Corporation (MTC) to temporarily relocate Harris County Jail inmates to a correctional facility outside of Lubbock, Texas. This passed along with the motion to direct the Deputy County Administrator for Justice & Safety to work with OMB to provide recommendations to Commissioners Court in September to prioritize the allocation of ARPA funding toward initiatives addressing jail standards and reducing the court backlog.

ACTIVE PROJECTS

Progress on active projects follows:

Health

Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement: 16 initial nuisances prioritized for abatement were approved by Commissioners Court on July 19. The Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement program is a public health response to violence in impacted communities which have experienced pandemic-driven increases in rates of criminal activity including violent incidents. With the successful hiring of three new full-time employees, the Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement program will serve more communities impacted by the pandemic.

“Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities”: The Harris Center’s innovative community-initiated care program has launched after hiring staff and developing initial program materials. Community Learning Circles began

in April through July. These meetings with community members will inform community engagement efforts to be initiated in 10 high-priority zip codes.

Lead Abatement and Prevention: The Harris County Public Health department is expanding current lead abatement efforts. The program will protect children from lead poisoning and exposure in schools, childcare facilities, and homes. This expansion of blood and facility lead-level testing, along with the acceleration of lead abatement of homes and child-occupied facilities in vulnerable communities aims to improve health outcomes, enhance quality of life, and increase awareness of lead concerns in our communities. The outreach program has begun distributing educational materials to the public and is hiring staff and procuring contractors to support program expansion.

ACCESS Harris: Harris County Public Health is making transformational technology investments and bringing together County safety net departments through ACCESS Harris. The purpose of this program is to coordinate care for vulnerable populations through shared data, goals, and strategies. Commissioners Court approved a transformational technology award to IBM and extended funding for five program support staff. The ACCESS Harris Program Director has been hired, and the team is now focused on launching the first cohort with a violence prevention emphasis.

Housing

Employ2Empower (E2E): Expansion of this workforce development program officially launched, providing employment opportunities to Harris County's unsheltered population. The program provides steady income, wraparound services, and workforce development training, and connects participants to a pathway to permanent housing solutions.

Rental Assistance: The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (houstonharrishelp.org) has pledged or paid more than \$288 million in assistance to 72,470 families. Harris County has accepted \$17.5 million in reallocated funds from other jurisdictions and continues to apply for additional funds. Recoupment efforts continue for payments made for the same property in the same month from both the local and the state program; new functionality was added to allow landlords to apply duplicate payments to future months for eligible tenants.

Legal Aid: Lone Star Legal Aid, South Texas College of Law, Houston Volunteer Lawyers, the Earl Carl Institute at Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law, and the University of Houston Law Clinic have expanded eviction intervention services. To date, assistance had been provided to 2,058 individuals.

COVID Community Housing Project 2.0 Support Services: Over 1,385 unsheltered individuals have been engaged in case of management services as the first step toward potential permanent supportive housing. 844 emergency housing vouchers have been issued and 314 individuals have been housed. Additional priorities include developing opportunities to expand the supply of one-bedroom units and confirming the evaluation approach for the program.

Jobs & Education

Early Childhood: Three investments in early childhood will benefit Harris County children, families, and caregivers. The Texas Children's Hospital upWORDS community-based training model will support infant and toddler brain and language development. The Safe Babies program from First3Years works with families and children within the child welfare system to minimize the harm of family separation and prior maltreatment. The Alliance's home-based childcare support program will provide training to home-based childcare providers, including helping unlicensed programs gain certification and increasing the quality of programming, care, and business operations.

Digital Access: Efforts to expand the availability of public wi-fi across Harris County community centers, parks, and libraries and support household access are nearly complete. Mesh site construction is done, with 105 sites now online. LTE zone expansion has accelerated, with 17 sites recently completed and 31 now online (active locations are listed at broadband.harriscountytexas.gov).

County Connections Summer Programming: Commissioners Court approved an interlocal agreement with the Harris County Department of Education for the County Connections Youth Summer Initiative. Building on the success of last year's program, County Connections is expected to provide summer programming to 7,000 children ages 5-18 and address pandemic-related gaps in enrichment offerings. HCDE completed the selection of participating nonprofits; 99 programs applied for funding and 40 were selected.

County Operations

Court Backlog: Efforts to expand jury services, increase staff, establish emergency response dockets, and accelerate evidence processing are ongoing in support of reducing the Court backlog.

Harris County Violent Persons (VIPER) Task Force: Commissioners Court approved creation of the Harris County Violent Persons (VIPER) Task Force, a multi-agency initiative led by the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) in collaboration with Harris County Constable Offices (HCCO). The program was allocated \$2.6 million to address the backlog in outstanding warrants and reduce extradition costs through accelerated execution of warrants related to the most violent offenders. Memorandums of Understanding have been executed between HCSO and seven HCCO precincts. The VIPER program aims to accelerate the prosecution and resolution of victims and reduction in violent crime by repeat offenders.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

Child Tax Credit: ARPA temporarily increased the Child Tax Credit (CTC), providing a credit of up to \$3,600 per child under age 6 and \$3,000 per child ages 6 to 17. The CTC is refundable for all families, including those whose income is below the threshold required to file tax returns. To help eligible families claim the CTC, the County approved a program for community outreach, non-filer form preparation assistance, and tax preparation assistance. Mobile tax assistance took the program directly into neighborhoods that needed it most. By the end of April, the credit had been claimed for 4,076 children and 8,950 households filed taxes, with a total expected benefit of both the CTC and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) of \$13M.

Emergency Nursing: Over 602 nurses, respiratory therapists, and other medical staff were temporarily placed with 18 area hospitals in response to the Delta surge, with an additional 361 placed during the Omicron surge, substantially alleviating staffing shortages and providing critical support to patients. This program is now in the close-out stage, including final compliance monitoring.

Houston Food Bank: The labor services agreement allowed the Food Bank to hire a temporary workforce to assist with inventory and distribution, make home deliveries to seniors, and fill in for responsibilities normally covered by volunteers. To date, County funding has enabled the delivery of over 65 million meals during the pandemic.

Small Business Relief: LiftFund completed distribution of \$30 million in Small Business Relief Fund grants, assisting 2,577 small businesses. Final compliance reviews are currently underway.

Flexible Financial Assistance: The Harris County Recovery Assistance program administered by Catholic Charities has completed distribution of funds, with \$60 million in assistance provided to 40,000 families.

Vaccine Incentives: The countywide vaccine incentive offer ended at the end of September, after incentivizing more than 30,000 incremental vaccinations above baseline forecasts.

PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

The current portfolio of projects managed via the ARPA governance process follows. A total of \$351.8 million has been allocated toward COVID relief from the ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, with additional funding approved in 2021 & 2022 from other COVID relief sources.

Funding Source	Focus Area	Project	Obligated (\$M)
Health			142.6
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	COVID-19	Emergency Nursing	71.5
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Environmental Health	Lead Abatement and Prevention	20.0
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Coordinated Care	ACCESS Harris	14.2
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	COVID-19	Vaccine Incentives	12.5
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Behavioral Health	Community Initiated Care	8.9
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Healthcare Access & Coverage	Maternal and Child Health	7.7
Response & Recovery	Food & Nutrition	Houston Food Bank Labor	3.9
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Crime Prevention through Environmental Design	Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement	3.0
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Behavioral Health and Food & Nutrition	Public Health contract administration	0.9
Housing			212.0
Consolidated Appropriations Act	Housing Stability	Emergency Rental Assistance 1	90.5
ARPA Emergency Rental Assistance	Housing Stability	Emergency Rental Assistance 2	71.4
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Homelessness	CCHP 2.0 PSH, RRH, and Diversion	35.0
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Homelessness	HAY Center Campus for Youth aging out of foster care	5.0
CARES	Housing Stability	Emergency Rental Assistance Bridge	4.2
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Homelessness	Employ2Empower Expansion	2.2
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Housing Stability	Affordable Housing Strategy & Program Mgmt	1.8
Response & Recovery	Housing Stability	Legal Aid	1.0
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Homelessness	Homelessness Strategy	0.5
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Water & Wastewater	Drinking water and sanitary sewer feasibility studies	0.4
Jobs & Education			114.1
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Family Financial Stability	Harris County Recovery Assistance	65.4
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Small Business	Harris County Business Relief	32.1
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Child Care	Early Childhood Impact Fund Awards	7.9
Response & Recovery	Digital Access	Public WiFi & Student Home Broadband	2.2
FLEX Fund	Small Business	Disparity Study Fund	2.2
CARES	Digital Access	Public WiFi & Student Home Broadband	1.6
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Child Care	County Connections Summer Programming for Youth 2022	1.5
Response & Recovery	Child Care	County Connections Summer Programming for Youth 2021	0.7
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Family Financial Stability	Child Tax Credit Outreach	0.5
County Operations			60.8
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Justice & Safety	County Jail Capacity	25.7
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Justice & Safety	Court Backlog	19.0
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Admin	Strategy, Project Management, and Compliance	13.2
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Justice & Safety	Harris County Violent Persons (VIPER) Task Force	2.6
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Admin	Outside Counsel	0.3
Total 2021 - 2022 Commitments			529.5
ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	All	All	351.8
Other Pandemic Recovery	All	All	177.7