

# Cumberland County, Pennsylvania Recovery Plan

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds  
(SLFRF)  
2021 Report



*Submitted: August 31, 2021*

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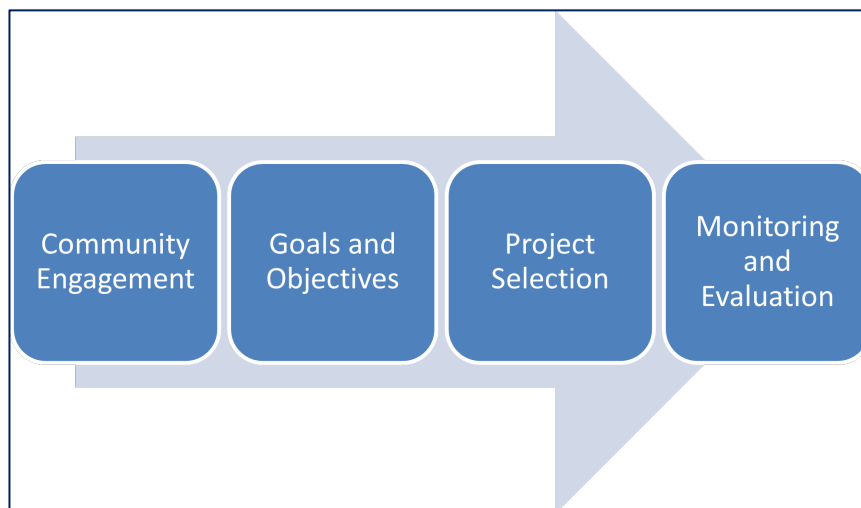
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## Executive Summary

Cumberland County is a Class 3 county in Southcentral Pennsylvania with a population of approximately 260,000. The County has experienced rapid growth in the past decade and as a result, the County has experienced an increase in demand for services. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the residents of the County. There has been a spike in mental health issues and a lack of capacity in the County's human service's network to adequately address the spike as a result of Covid. The County is also home to 5 higher education institutions that are struggling due to declining enrollment compounded by the pandemic. Much like the rest of the country, all sectors of the economy have been impacted by the pandemic and as a result, many small businesses especially in the service sector are struggling to recover.

Since the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, the County has been working to comprehensively identify needs and develop a method to allocate funds. The County's investment strategy will be evidence/fact based to ensure that projects that will have a positive long-term impact to assist residents, including the most vulnerable populations, to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

This inaugural recovery plan describes the County's initial goals and objectives for using State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) funds in our community. The plan also describes the additional outreach strategies the County will employ to further identify needs and prioritize project investments. Investment principles guided in this plan will guide future outreach efforts and project selection efforts. Future Recovery Plans will include the County's final spending plan, associated justification, and applicable performance measures.



*Cumberland County Recovery Plan process.*

## Uses of SLFRF Funds

### *Actual Use of Funds*

Cumberland County has not obligated or spent SLFRF funds as of the date of this report. Future reports will detail actual usage of funds in compliance with SLFRF standards.

### *Intended Use of Funds*

Cumberland County has conducted initial community engagement activities that have led to preliminary identification of community needs. While projects have not been identified to address these preliminary needs, the County is able to classify the various needs into categories of potential spending that are consistent with the SLFRF guidance as noted below.

- ✓ **Public Health (EC1):** The health of County residents, especially for certain at-risk populations, has been significantly impacted by Covid-19. The County intends to develop programs that recoup costs of responding to the pandemic while addressing our residents' short-term physical and mental health needs as well as assisting our residents with longer term recovery from Covid-19 impacts. The innovative programs in development will allow us to improve public health while also lessening the negative economic impacts and providing services to disproportionately impacted communities.
- ✓ **Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2):** Cumberland County is the fastest growing county in Pennsylvania as reported in initial 2020 Decennial Census results. The County's prosperous growth has been temporarily stunted by Covid-19. If the County is to continue its beneficial future growth, the impacts of Covid-19 must be fully mitigated. Institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, and businesses, the key drivers of the County economy, were hardest hit by the pandemic. The County plans to use SLFRF funding to help these key economic drivers recover from Covid-19 that will in turn, provide the necessary goods and services to our residents that are needed for personal pandemic recovery.
- ✓ **Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3):** While Cumberland County has enjoyed prosperous growth, many of our communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Initial outreach conducted through our county departments and nonprofit partners has revealed that Covid 19 had greater impacts on communities challenged by food insecurity, lower incomes, lower educational attainment, inconsistent access to food, housing uncertainty, and lack of reliable transportation. Additional outreach activities will assist the County in better defining these communities and their specific needs. SLFRF spending plans will help to meet residents short term needs while establishing sustainable, longer term community improvement plans that will make our communities resilient to future pandemics and economic uncertainty.
- ✓ **Premium Pay (EC 4):** Throughout Cumberland County essential workers served on the front line of Covid-19 response by helping to make sure our residents remained safe while received necessary, life-sustaining goods and services. The County is evaluating the need and associated cost of providing premium pay to essential county employees as well as essential workers in local government, nonprofit, and private sector. The decision to

invest in premium pay will be considered in the context of the other needs identified through continued community outreach.

- ✓ **Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure (EC 5):** Covid-19 had minimal impacts on sewer and water infrastructure in Cumberland County aside from the temporary stay at home order that anecdotally resulted in higher waste flows and water usage. Water and sewer infrastructure is provided by municipal governments and not county government. Municipalities in the County have planned for and financed investments in such infrastructure. Municipalities receiving SLFRF funding may choose to use that funding to address revenue losses by infrastructure authorities or undertake capital projects that could free up local revenues to provide government services that address pandemic impacts. As such the County currently does not intend to invest considerable SLFRF funding in water and sewer and infrastructure. Regional municipal sewer and water infrastructure projects with substantial community wide benefit may be considered for county support in the context of other competing priorities.

Nearly 96% of Cumberland County is covered by broadband, a key factor that helped County residents successfully weather the Covid-19 storm. Given this high level of existing coverage and other state and federal programs aimed at closing remaining coverage gaps, the County does not intend to spend considerable SLFRF funding on broadband access. County assistance requested by municipalities for regional broadband projects may be considered in the context of other competing community priorities. Municipalities experiencing coverage deficiencies may use their SLFRF funding for local broadband purposes.

- ✓ **Revenue Replacement (EC 6):** Cumberland County's Finance Department has analyzed its Covid-19 revenue loss in accordance with Department of Treasury SLFRF guidance. The 2020 calculation has revealed significant revenue loss which in turn has impacted the County's ability to deliver important county services. The County expects significant spending in this category to provide the important services to our community that have been delayed, suspended, or permanently discontinued as a result of Covid-19. Restoration of Covid-19 impacted county services through revenue replacement spending will address needs identified in the other eligible SLRF spending categories.

#### *Coordination with other COVID-19 Recovery Investments*

Cumberland County has received other funds to assist in the recovery from COVID-19. As the County plan takes shape for SLFRF funds, the County will be coordinating its projects to ensure equity and to maximize leveraging outcomes with other funding both past and present. Some of those funds that the County plans to consider as SLFRF projects are selected are as follows:

- Municipal SLFRF Investments
- Emergency Rental Assistance
- Covid-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program
- Library and School District Broadband Needs and Investments.

## Community Engagement

Cumberland County has conducted initial community engagement activities including meetings with over 40 county departments that provide services to the County's 260,000 residents. Previous outreach efforts conducted in 2020 under the CARES Act programs provided the County with insight into Covid-19's impacts on our nonprofit organizations, businesses, and municipal governments. The County needs to build upon those preliminary outreach efforts and transfer our focus from response to recovery activities. Over the course of the next 6-12 months, Cumberland County plans to meet with the following groups to discuss needs and prospective projects that will lead to a sustainable, long-term recovery from Covid-19 for Cumberland County:

- ✓ **Non-Profits:** A focus group meeting was conducted as well as individual outreach to non-profits in Cumberland County that provide or assist with human focused services to County residents. These meetings have been focused on gather needs in the eligible expenditure categories. Future meetings will contact a broader cross-section of non-profit organizations to gain a holistic perspective of community need that will inform development of project prioritization and selection.
- ✓ **Businesses:** A meeting with the county economic development corporation was conducted to gather a broad understanding of needs for the business community. As noted in this report, considerable outreach has already been made to the severely impacted hospitality and tourism related businesses in the County. The County will be conducting additional outreach to businesses through a survey and meetings with the Chambers of Commerce.
- ✓ **County Government:** Focus groups were conducted with all County departments and elected officials. The initial list of project needs provided insight into the deep need of County services in our communities. Revenue loses severely hampered the County's ability to provide services to our communities at required levels. Future meetings with County departments will align County programs with needs expressed to develop specific projects that best address the impacts of Covid-19 in our communities.
- ✓ **Municipalities:** The County has informally met with our municipal government partners to discuss respective SLFRF spending plans. To date, municipalities have not identified projects supported by SLFRF funds. Additional County outreach will be structured to gather input and discuss how County and local SLFRF be coordinated to address broader, regional projects in the County that are consistent with SLFRF funding guidelines.
- ✓ **Residents:** As the County begins to identify needs and priorities, the County intends to conduct surveys and other outreach with the public and residents in the County to discuss those needs and gather input on the strategies to invest funds to address the needs. The Recovery Plan and progress reports will be posted on the County website to keep residents informed.

## Cumberland County SLFRF Investment Principles

The SLFRF identifies the key issues listed below that must be considered by grantees as they develop Recovery Plans and associated project investments:

- ✓ Promoting equitable outcomes
- ✓ Labor practices
- ✓ Use of evidence

These issues are not new to Cumberland County. Cumberland County routinely receives federal, state, nonprofit, and private funding to execute a variety of programs with defined community impacts. As stewards of public tax dollars, Cumberland County has a responsibility to its residents and partner organizations to ensure that such funding is transparently invested in our communities to maximize impact.

Cumberland County has developed the following Investment Principles that address the issues identified in the SLFRF guidance and will guide the identification, prioritization, selection, and execution of all projects using SLFRF funding. These institutionalized principles will be followed by all County departments and partner organizations that receive County SLFRF resources.

### *Grassroots input, grassroots impact*

Understanding residents' problems and needs can only be accomplished by engaging them where they are at; in the communities they live in, the schools they attend, the businesses they solicit, and the commercial establishments where they receive goods and services. Through the community engagement plan identified in this plan, the County will actively reach out to our communities and the associated services providers to gain a sound understanding of the needs created by Covid-19. Likewise, those same communities will be instrumental in developing the solutions and projects that will work best to advance short- and long-term recovery efforts. After projects are implemented, the local contact networks developed during the outreach phase will provide important and dynamic information on the success of projects and initiatives while offering opportunities for adjustment to respond to changing conditions.

### *Right resources, right purpose, right recipient.*

Equality has to do with giving everyone the exact same resources, whereas equity involves distributing resources based on the needs of the recipients. The County is committed to equitable outcomes as a regular practice of the functions of county government. The County is using the data collected over time regarding pandemic impacts on neighborhoods and underserved or disadvantaged populations to assist in prioritizing projects for funding. The County intends to both use quantitative data as well as qualitative data gathered from the community engagement process to establish targets and measure success.

The following activities will guide the County's equitable consideration of SLFRF projects and programs:

- ✓ Evaluation of underserved, marginalized, and adversely impacted communities in the County.

- ✓ Outreach efforts conducted through a variety of media to ensure that all residents have input in the process, are aware of outcomes, and have access to selected projects and programs.
- ✓ Simplification of program administrative requirements to broaden and streamline access to SLFRF-funded programs and initiatives.
- ✓ Performance based programs that ensure intended outcomes are achieved through ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and alteration as needed.

#### *Local labor first, fair labor always.*

The County has a long history of following all applicable fair labor practices for internal projects as well as community projects that must follow state and federal requirements. All opportunities to bid on infrastructure projects or compete for SLFRF resources will be conducted in a fair and open way with public advertising and criteria-based award selections. Prevailing wage requirements will be a component of all applicable projects. Local labor will be specifically solicited and encouraged to bid on all projects, especially minority, women, and veteran owned businesses.

#### *Data driven decision making.*

All projects will be evaluated and prioritized based upon criteria and data that will show evidence of need related to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is the intent of the County to establish project criteria and regularly evaluate return on investment related to the County's goals and the goals of the SLFRF program. The County has assigned a consultant manager that will assist the County in tracking outcomes and making recommendations for adjustments to projects to improve outcome achievement. Detailed evidence information will be developed for applicable projects and included in future project inventories as they are developed.

#### *Sustainable investments that have long term positive impacts.*

Collectively, Cumberland County and its constituent municipalities will receive over \$80 million in SLFRF. This extraordinary level of funding must be strategically invested to not only recover from Covid-19 but to establish sustainable initiatives that will help to secure the County's long-term quality of life. Every project funded through SLFRF will be evaluated to make sure that its identified benefits address a pressing need and can continue after SLFRF is exhausted.

## Recovery Plan Goals, Objectives and Projects

From the outreach completed to date the County has developed the following draft goals and objectives for SLFRF resource investment. As the community outreach process continues, projects will be identified that correspond to specific goals and objectives. More detail on those projects will be provided in future SLFRF compliance reports. The County will continue to refine and improve these goals and objectives over the next several months as our outreach and prioritization process continues. Later in 2021, the County will adopt the goals and objectives and identify the projects that it intends to fund to help the recovery effort.



*Goal 1: Improve the physical and mental health of County residents directly and indirectly impacted by Covid-19.*

- Objective 1 – Stabilize and increase overall mental health professional capacity.
- Objective 2 – Divert people from prison by providing community mental health rapid response teams that support police in the communities
- Objective 3 -- Add Resources to the Step Up Program to support people with mental health issues to be prepared for and be successful in prison release.

*Goal 2: Revitalize Cumberland County communities negatively impacted by Covid-19.*

- Objective 1 – Provide housing assistance to ensure individuals can afford and have access to adequate, safe housing.
- Objective 2 – Connect jobs, services, and neighborhoods with improved transportation options.
- Objective 3 – Enhance the natural resources that form the quality-of-life foundation for Cumberland County communities.
- Objective 4 – Train and deploy a skilled workforce to address gaps in critical infrastructure and other priority employment sectors.
- Objective 5 – Provide support for job training and assistance in finding jobs

*Goal 3: Restore and deliver government services impeded, delayed, or cancelled by the Covid-19 pandemic.*

- Objective 1 – Pursue capital improvements to County buildings that enhance accessibility and safety of residents seeking County services.
- Objective 2 – Upgrade County information technology infrastructure to provide residents broader, safer access to County services
- Objective 3 – Supplement the County workforce to provide expanded services to residents recovering from Covid-19 impacts.

## Table of Expenses by Category

At this time, the County has no expenditures of funds to report.

## Project Inventory

This will be developed over the coming months as additional input is gathered from the stakeholders and public.

## Ineligible Activities: Tax Offset Provision

At this time, the County has nothing to report in this area.