



County of Union, New Jersey Recovery Plan

Local Fiscal Recovery Funds 2024 Report

Period Covered: March 3, 2021 – June 30, 2024

**COUNTY OF UNION
NEW JERSEY**

2024 RECOVERY PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

USES OF FUNDS..... 4

 A. Public Health..... 4

 B. Negative Economic Impacts 5

 C. Public Health - Negative Economic Impact: Public Sector Capacity 6

 D. Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure..... 7

 E. Revenue Replacement..... 7

 F. Use or Proposed Use of Other Federal Recovery Funds 8

PROMOTING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES 9

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT..... 11

LABOR PRACTICES 12

USE OF EVIDENCE..... 12

PERFORMANCE REPORT..... 13

PROJECT INVENTORY 14

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) establishing the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (“SLFRF”) program. The SLFRF program provides funds to State, territorial, local and Tribal governments to respond to the economic and public health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities, residents, and businesses. The County of Union (“County”) received a total allocation from the SLFRF in the amount of \$130,591,801.00.

The health and welfare of the citizens of the County of Union is paramount and spending of the County’s SLFRF funds has focused on the County’s public health. Specifically, the County has used SLFRF funds for testing and vaccine programs for COVID-19 with the goal of increasing the number of vaccinated residents and decreasing the number of COVID-19 cases.

To assist its residents and to address the negative economic impact of the pandemic, the County has implemented various programs to address food distribution and job training assistance. These programs were designed to help those households and communities hurt the most by the pandemic, including low-income, unemployed, seniors, and disabled individuals. To date, the County has served more than 53,000 households through the food distribution program.

SLFRF funds have also been used to offset direct salary costs incurred to mitigate the pandemic. These salaries include the salaries of public safety and healthcare workers as well as salaries of those employees who were diverted from their normal duties to address public health issues of the pandemic.

Moving forward, the County continues to assess its pandemic-related needs. To this end, the County is prioritizing funds for all necessary staff, equipment, and supplies required to reinforce public health defense and outreach. The County also intends to develop new programs and supplement its existing relief programs to meet the immediate needs of its communities. This includes targeting assistance to specific populations, households, businesses, and nonprofits. The County is considering opportunities to invest in healthy outdoor environments and outdoor tourism. The County is also implementing a County-wide Park improvements project to rehabilitate and enhance our local parks, which has seen an increase in use since the COVID-19 pandemic. The County seeks to use the park system as a tool to combat the stress, anxiety, depression, and insomnia that has been on the rise as a result of the pandemic and resulting shutdowns and quarantine. The County is seeking to maintain and/or rehabilitate the park system in response to the increase in the number of residents utilizing the County’s park system and address the mental health impacts caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The County encourages its residents to spend time outdoors and become involved in physical exercise. As such, the County has dedicated SLFRF funds to improve the Gerald Green Plaza, Madison Avenue Park, Lighting Brook Park, Berkeley Heights Park, Scotch Plains Park, Mattano Park, as well as other parks.

The County is publishing this Recovery Plan and Performance Report consistent with requirements outlined by the United States Department of the Treasury in connection with the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (“SLFRF”) under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

USES OF FUNDS

A. Public Health

With a population density of 5,238 people per square mile, the County is one of the most densely populated counties in the United States. To date, the primary focus of the County's SLFRF program is to respond to the public health emergency resulting from COVID-19. As such, the County continues to expend funds for COVID-19 testing, vaccination, and contact tracing initiatives, including healthcare professionals, supplies, equipment, scheduling programs, facilities costs, mobile vaccine clinics, information technology and other administrative expenses. As of June 30, 2024, the County has expended and/or obligated \$15,993,012 for public health purposes.

The County further continues to use funding to prevent the spread of the virus through the use of PPE and other mitigation techniques for prevention in congregate settings. In addition, to testing and vaccinations, the County has purchased over 300,000 doorhangers to inform County residents of available COVID-19 services. These doorhangers were multilingual. The County has also purchased two (2) multi-purpose vans to directly reach the community to provide both food assistance and information regarding programs (i.e. social services, COVID-19 services) and has expanded its outreach program to include door to door canvassing, event outreach, phone banking, digital ads and mail campaigns (Civic Operations Group). Monies were also provided to sponsor special events held at the Union County Performing Arts Center, which were targeted to children with special needs.

The County will be instituting a Workplace Safety, Training and Education program in an effort to combat the negative effects of COVID-19. As part of this program, the County will offer Narcan, First Aid, Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training to government staff. Training the employees will ensure they are better prepared when engaging with members of the public in addressing emergent health crises, from opioid overdoses to cardiac emergencies, which are often exacerbated by the virus. This investment also fosters community resilience and preparedness, establishing a safer and more proactive society.

The County is also utilizing funds to continually enhance first responders' ability to safely respond to emergencies and disasters along with advancing support of the County 911 service. Specifically, the County has expended funds to make emergency repairs to the County's main Public Safety radio tower to ensure communications between first responders and their central coordination. Additionally, the County has also purchased radio dispatch consoles and automated quality assurance systems for monitoring 911 medical calls for pandemic protocol compliance. These dispatch consoles will enable the County to double its current emergency dispatch capabilities in order to meet the higher level of emergencies related to the pandemic. The County is in the process of purchasing sport utility vehicles for Union County's ongoing COVID-19 related emergencies due to the pandemic, which has caused and continue to cause, an increase in medical, mental health and public safety emergencies. These emergencies require staff to respond as quickly as possible to provide safety assistance to the most vulnerable parts of its population. The County is considering ways to enhance and support other emergency services for impacted residents such as shelters, food, supplies and other basic needs.

The County has provided the necessary funding to its Sheriff's Office to purchase body worn cameras. These were purchased to aid in the reduction of violence, which increased as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and improve public safety throughout the County. They also act as a tool in recognizing mental illness in perpetrators. Monies have also been provided for emergency response equipment for the Sheriff Office, which results in faster response times, allowing for a more immediate reaction to incidents, including any gun violence. This has the impact of potentially saving lives while officers are responding to violent crimes, which as stated, increased as a result of COVID-19, as well as aiding in mitigation and prevention of crimes.

B. Negative Economic Impacts

The County has and continues to expend funds for household assistance, particularly food distribution. As of June 30, 2024, the County has expended and/or obligated \$55,718,992 for programs related to the negative economic impact of COVID-19. Of this amount, \$7,896,965 went to support direct food assistance to households. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the County focused its efforts to provide funding to address food insecurity and scarcity throughout the County by hosting food distribution events. These food distributions events, which include both drive-thru and walk-up stations are located to best serve the most underserved communities in the County, particularly, providing food and assistance to unemployed households, women and children, seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans. The County utilized SLFRF to address the food insecurity and scarcity issues through its Meals Project. The Meals Project provides meals to senior citizens and shelters, providing assistance to those who have been disproportionately impacted by the public health emergency. Additionally, the County provided funding for Union College of New Jersey's Food Insecurity Program. This program has been instituted to meet the needs of the College's most needy full-time students. Providing access to nutritious meals for College students meets the health needs of County residents, which were negatively impacted by the pandemic. This program will also address the mental health issues caused by the economic impact of the pandemic, which are exacerbated by food insecurity.

The County has dedicated funds to address the education and mental health disparities which disproportionately impacted the population in vulnerable communities through a managed peer-to-peer tutoring platform that offers unlimited tutoring hours to County students in 5th through 8th grades. The goal of this program is to help mitigate learning loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and improve retention and course completion. This program will provide paid opportunities for work-based learning experiences to County high school and college aged students in the field of education to tutor their peers and will also foster increased interest and build confidence of tutors in education and education-related careers.

The County will be holding a "Stepping Up to Mental Health Summit" to support mental health for the County's high school students. Anxiety and depression of teenagers was exacerbated during the height of the pandemic and many students continue to experience mental health issues.

To assist the County's most vulnerable populations and combat housing insecurity, the County has provided more than \$800,000 in direct aid to senior citizens and disabled veterans for the purpose of mortgage and rental assistance. Notably, the program provided cash assistance to qualified County residents, those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, to help defray the

costs of housing, including maintenance and utility costs. Monies were used to support the County's efforts to assist Senior Citizens and Veterans who were negatively impacted as a result of COVID-19 pandemic by providing assistance for filing real estate appeals. Additionally, the County used funds to supplement a program already in place for emergency rental assistance. That program provides significant economic relief to help low and moderate-income households which are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. It provides assistance with past due rent, temporary rentals and utility arrears. Participation in the program is limited to households which meet specific criteria, including having a household gross income at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income for Union County, having rental arrears on or after April 1, 2020, and experiencing financial hardship directly or indirectly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The County has provided the necessary funding to improve community parks and plazas. Specifically, improvements were funded for the Gerald B. Green Plaza (Plainfield, NJ), Madison Avenue Park (Rahway, NJ). The County seeks to combat the growing mental health crisis that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdowns. By improving, rehabilitating and maintaining the parks throughout the County, the County seeks to encourage residents to go outside and participate in physical activities. To date, funds have been provided to enhance Gerald Green Plaza, Madison Avenue Park, Lighting Brook Park, Berkeley Heights Park, Glenside Avenue Park, Green Lane Park Trails, Watchung Stables, Echo Lake Dog Park, and Mattano Park. The county has also provided funding for the turf field replacement at the UC Vocational Technical School to improve the educational facilities, which benefit a disproportionately affected community that is predominately non-white and densely populated, two types of communities severely impacted by the effects of the COVID pandemic. A program offering swimming lessons to children and seniors was also funded with the goal of offering enrichment and learning opportunities, as well to afford this population the mental health benefits from exercising, which had been detrimentally impacted as a result of social isolation during the pandemic.

The County is considering ways in which to increase tourism back into the County in order to assist entertainment and residents in job creation as a result of COVID-19. To date, funds have been provided to enhance services at Galloping Hill and Ashbrook Golf courses. These golf courses provide recreation services to all County residents as well as a way to encourage residents to spend time outdoors and combat the mental health crisis.

The County has expended funds for job training assistance to those who lost their job and employment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the County has held job fairs for its residents that were negatively impacted by the pandemic, particularly those left unemployed.

C. Public Health - Negative Economic Impact: Public Sector Capacity

The County utilized SLFRF to support payroll and covered benefits to compensate for time that was dedicated to responding to the COVID-19 public emergency. As of June 30, 2024, the County has expended and/or obligated \$11,113,036 related to the public sector's capacity to respond to the public health needs and negative economic impacts of the pandemic. This included payroll for public health employees involved in providing medical and other health services to patients. This program included personnel expenses related to the County establishing COVID-

19 testing sites, vaccination sites, and contact tracing. This program also included payroll and covered benefits for public safety and similar employees who spent time mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The County has also provided funding for the administration of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). The County has also upgraded its document management system for the Division of Social Services and Cornerstone Behavioral Health Hospital. High-tech scanners were implemented to record all vital information and statistics electronically.

D. Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure

While the County is considering ways to increase broadband access to its citizens, especially the County's underserved and unserved citizens, which is expected to have an economic impact for generations to come, the County has already utilized funds to provide for a more secure network. Particularly, the County has utilized funds for a County-wide Fiber Ring. The fiber optic network provides a secure, high-speed network to ensure reliable communications between County agencies and County and local governments. This reliable communications network is vital to public agencies, particularly first responders and public health workers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of June 30, 2024, the County has expended and/or obligated \$12,214,777 related to Broadband Infrastructure.

The County is reviewing and determining infrastructure deficiencies within the County's neighborhoods with the intent on focusing strategically on the infrastructure needs in the County's urban areas.

The County is considering infrastructure deficiencies with regard to public roads, streets and sidewalks, to better serve the County's citizens and communities, including those underserved and unserved citizens.

E. Revenue Replacement

The County has a calculated "revenue replacement" of \$233.5 million in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis regarding revenue replacement is based on the formula in the Final Rule effective as of April 1, 2022. The growth adjustment used was 5.2% percent over 3 years prior to the pandemic. Major losses were felt across the board. Particularly hard-hit were revenues from the County Hospital Board of Pay Patients and Parks & Recreation. Using this analysis as the total amount available regarding Revenue Replacement Funds, the County has begun reviewing opportunities for use of American Recovery Act 2021 funds.

In accordance with the Compliance and Reporting Guide: State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds issued by the United States Department of Treasury, the County has utilized the eligible costs identified as Revenue Replacement Funds to cover certain government services as reflected in the County of Union 2021 and 2024 Budget. As of June 30, 2024, the County has expended and/or obligated \$12,907,700 related to revenue replacement. The governmental services were allocated in the following areas by the Revenue Replacement Funds for the reporting period.

- Public Safety – Salaries & Wages
- Public Safety – Operating Expenses

In accordance with Treasury’s guidance, the County will **NOT** use SLFRF funds for expenses associated with obligations under instruments evidencing financial indebtedness for borrowed money, including interest or principal on any outstanding debt instrument, including, i.e., short-term revenue or tax anticipation notes, or fees or issuance costs associated with the issuance of new debt; or for the satisfaction of any obligation arising under or pursuant to a settlement agreement, judgment, consent decree, or judicially confirmed debt restructuring in a judicial, administrative, or regulatory proceeding, except if the judgment or settlement required the provision of government services; or to replenish financial reserves (e.g., rainy day or other reserve funds).

F. Use or Proposed Use of Other Federal Recovery Funds

The County was awarded the following federal recovery funds:

Emergency Rental Assistance Program in the amount of \$21,162,837 to assist households in the county that are unable to pay rent or utilities.

Area Plan Contract Coronavirus Consolidated Appropriations Act (CCA) funds in the amount of \$279,064 to provide home delivered meals program services throughout Union County.

Area Plan Contract Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funds in the amount of \$115,263 to augment the Older Americans Act programs during the Coronavirus pandemic for Adult Protective Services.

Area Plan Contract-ADRC/NWD COVID-19 Access Supplemental Funding in the amount of \$35,227 to assist vaccine access to older adults and people with disabilities.

Area Plan Contract Vac 5 COVID-19 Vaccine Funding in the amount of \$80,975 to connect older adults and their caregivers to support activities related to vaccine access including disseminating and directing individuals to credible information about COVID-19, identifying individuals who may need help getting a COVID-19 vaccine and assisting the individuals with scheduling, arranging, reminding, transporting and other support.

Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccination Supplemental Funding Program in the amount of \$990,000 to increase vaccine distribution throughout the County, vaccinate under-served communities, partner with organizations, and leverage local partnerships to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence in racial and ethnic minority and increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

CARES Act – BOE Drop Box Surveillance – Maintenance and Archiving Grant in the amount of \$74,988 to pay for a contract award for the maintenance and archiving on the ballot drop box surveillance system.

Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccination Supplemental 2022 Funding Program in the amount of \$200,000 to develop, cultivate and strengthen community-based partnerships in order to reach

disproportionally impacted populations. In addition, the program will identify community leaders, coalitions and local health clinics to support COVID-19 education, outreach and administration.

SNAP Administration funding in the amount of \$667,221 to provide County welfare agencies administrative relief from additional costs incurred due to increased burdens cause by the pandemic and post-pandemic changes.

Department of Human Services Recovery Mobile Van Program in the amount of \$200,000 as a startup initiative to provide a comfortable and stigma-free setting to provide services and critical support to individuals who are struggling with addiction.

Area Plan Contract 2022 Area Agency on Aging funding totaling \$1,067,616 to augment the Older Americans Act programs during the Coronavirus pandemic for Adult Protective Services.

Public Health Workforce Expansion funding in the amount of \$78,610 to hire staff focused on responding to COVID-19 and the corresponding challenges.

Area Plan Contract 2023 Area Agency on Aging funding totaling \$1,288,552 to provide massive COVID relief, recovery, and expansion of services. It shall support AAA's/ADRC's in their work connecting older adults and people with disabilities to community resources, ensuring coordination across state and agencies and addressing pressing needs resulting from the pandemic including social isolation, food insecurity and access to personal care services along with resources for caregiver support and evidenced-based disease, prevention and health promotion programs.

SNAP American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-SNAP Timeliness in the amount of \$447,586 to improve SNAP timeliness rates. This additional funding is being provided to support County administrative expenses specifically related to improving and attaining at least 50% SNAP application timeliness efforts.

Automated License Plate Reader funding totaling \$250,500 to be used for Intelligence-Driven Prosecution Unit to enhance the License Plate Reader technology by building a network of ALPRs.

NJ Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services funding totaling \$11,000,000 to be used for improvements and upgrades for Warinanco Park in Elizabeth, NJ.

NJ Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services funding totaling \$13,750,000 for development, capital and operating expenses within the County of Union for the Warinanco Sports Center and Ashbrook Park.

NJ Department of Environmental Protection funding totaling \$10,000,000 to address current deficiencies including dredging associated with the Middlesex Reservoir located in Clark, NJ.

PROMOTING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

With a population of 23.8% African American and 33.6% Hispanic, the County serves a diverse population and aims to prioritize both economic and racial equity. To best assist those communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, the County seeks and will continue to allocate funds to projects and programs that address system public health issues, provide economic

stabilization to households, and build strong communities through investments in housing and neighborhoods.

The County recognizes the inequity of vaccine administration among racial and economic communities. Pursuant to the Centers for Disease Control, some African American and Hispanic or Latino individuals and families are less likely to be vaccinated against COVID-19 than individuals in other racial and ethnic minorities.¹ Additionally, African American and Hispanic or Latino individuals are more likely to become seriously ill and die from COVID-19.² Based upon this data, the County has dedicated a significant amount of funding and time to its vaccination and testing clinics, focusing on communities in the QCT, other low-income communities, as well as the County's African American and Hispanic populations, in order to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19 and minimize the impact of the COVID-19 virus on those populations most susceptible.

The County also recognizes that reaching those most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including minority populations and low-income households, can be difficult. To facilitate outreach to serve these populations and communities, the County has purchased two vans to facilitate on-the-go enrollment and resources regarding the County's Department of Human Services programming. These programs include General Assistance/TANF, rent and utility programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), employment assistance, Medicaid, health care service, and other key support services for residents in need.

Also keeping in mind the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic has on the County's low-income population, the County established a food distribution program to respond to the food insecurity and scarcity problem caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this program, the County held sixty-four (64) events to distribute emergency boxes of produce, dairy, and shelf stable food with sufficient quantities to sustain a family for several days. The County holds both walk-up and drive-thru events in various locations to best target low-income communities and families, including those in the Qualified Census Tract (QCT). Additionally, the County has implemented a program to provide prepared meals to its senior citizens and residents in shelters. The County has teamed with local restaurants to prepare and package meals for pick-up at various shelters and senior centers throughout the County. To date, the County has held more than sixty-seven (67) events providing such meals to the low-income and senior residents.

As the County continues to obligate the remaining SLFRF funds, it will continue to consider the demographic and geographic reach of the funding, including funding to prioritize both economic and ethnic equity. The County is considering the following programs:

- Providing services to address homelessness such as supportive housing, and to improve access to stable, affordable housing among unhoused individuals;

¹ Covid-19 Vaccine Equity for Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/vaccine-equity.html> (March 29, 2022).

² Covid-19 Vaccine Equity for Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/vaccine-equity.html> (March 29, 2022).

- Providing affordable housing development to increase supply of affordable and high-quality living units; and
- Providing housing vouchers, residential counseling, or housing navigation assistance to facilitate household moves to neighborhoods with high levels of economic opportunity and mobility for low-income residents, to help residents increase their economic opportunity and reduce concentrated areas of low economic opportunity;
- Creating new, expanded, or enhanced early learning services, including pre-kindergarten, Head Start, or partnerships between pre-kindergarten programs and local education authorities, or administration of those services;
- Aiding high-poverty school districts to advance equitable funding across districts and geographies;
- Creating new or expanded high-quality childcare to provide safe and supportive care for children;
- Creating home visiting programs to provide structured visits from health, parent educators, and social service professionals to pregnant women or families with young children to offer education and assistance navigating resources for economic support, health needs, or child development; and;
- Providing enhanced services for child welfare-involved families and foster youth to provide support and training on child development, positive parenting, coping skills, or recovery for mental health and substance use challenges.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The County seeks and welcomes input from its residents, businesses, and non-profit organizations. The County’s website provides information for all residents regarding attendance at public meetings, finance information, information relating to COVID-19, and the numerous programs established by the County in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the County’s website and attendance at the Union County Board of Commissioners’ meetings, all residents, businesses, and local organizations have the opportunity to comment and provide feedback to the County on the various programs as well as bring recommendations for future use of funds.



Images of advertisements for the County’s Food Distribution and Vaccination programs.

The County also issued a survey made available to all residents of the County for input as to the use of SLFRF. The purpose of the survey was to gauge the County’s residents’ strongest needs as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was made available on the County website and via paper copies. It was available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The County has reviewed and considered the responses to the survey in developing a plan of action to best address the community’s needs.

LABOR PRACTICES

To date, the County’s focus for the use of SLFRF has been towards providing much-needed services to the County residents. The County has almost completed several capital projects including significant improvements to the parks and outdoor space throughout the County in order to respond to the negative impact of COVID-19. Additionally, another capital project that involved improving the fiber optic network that connects the County owned buildings is nearly complete. These capital projects, the County have complied with all applicable laws, including, but not limited to the Davis-Bacon Act, the New Jersey Prevailing Wage Act, the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act, and other applicable laws to ensure that the contract award is only made to a contractor authorized to perform such work in accordance with the New Jersey Public Works Contractor Registration Act.

USE OF EVIDENCE

With each funding request, the County reviews the proposed project or program and evaluates the purpose and the potential impact on the community at-large. Based upon the project or program, the County will consider either strong evidence, meaning the evidence base can support causal conclusion for the specific program with the highest level of confidence, or

moderate evidence, meaning the reasonably developed evidence base can support causal conclusion.

PERFORMANCE REPORT

The County is managing project and program performance through tracking and oversight. Key performance indicators for each SLFRF program and project are included in the Project Inventory.

PROJECT INVENTORY

Project: 1.1 Vaccination

Funding Amount: \$4,983,919.56

Project Expenditure Category: 1.1 Covid-19 Vaccination

Project Overview

- Funding to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19 through Union County's vaccination campaign. This program includes the expenses related to the COVID-19 vaccination program and sites, including staffing, acquisition of equipment or supplies, facilities costs, mobile vaccine clinics, information technology and other administrative expenses.
- To this effect, the program currently provides vaccinations through its mobile operation that traverse the County and offer services at at least one location per week. Additionally, homebound operations take place on a weekly basis, as needed.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this program is to serve all residents of the County in order to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The goal is to increase vaccination rates and continue to slow the spread of the virus through the continuation of the campaign for the general public, booster doses, and our children. Although, specifically, the program has targeted the most vulnerable populations, including minorities and low-income individuals.
- An additional goal of this project is to stay current as new guidance and potential new or updated vaccinations are introduced. The County currently offers all formulations including the Bivalent Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines for all ages 6 months and up.

Performance Report

- The program is ongoing and is being evaluated based on vaccination rates throughout the County. Performance is tracked by analyzing and comparing weekly reports of vaccine administration with the Union County COVID-19 Vaccination Coverage Report sent by the New Jersey Department of Health. All outreach activities target areas within the County with low vaccination/booster rates.
- This program utilizes the New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard and the New Jersey Immunization Information System to track vaccination rates throughout the County.
- Currently, in Union County, the total number of primary doses administered was 889,763. The total number of people with at least one vaccine is 492,820 and the total number of people who have completed the primary series is 433,355. This translates to 861 residents per 1,000 have received at least one vaccine dose. Comparatively, 757 residents per 1,000 population have completed their primary series.
- The County also utilizes zip code data to focus mobile vaccinations in communities with low vaccination/booster rates. The County is continuously reaching out to provide vaccinations at convenient locations including but not limited to health fairs, food distributions, municipal buildings, schools, faith-based organizations, family success

centers, senior housing establishments, concerts and local events. The mobile unit also vaccinates the County's homebound residents.

Project: 1.2 Testing

Funding Amount: \$4,604,081.58

Project Expenditure Category: 1.2 Covid-19 Testing

Project Overview

- Funding to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19 through the testing of residents. This program included the costs of providing COVID-19 testing, monitoring of case trends and genomic sequencing for variants. Union County offered COVID-19 testing for all Union County residents, which was available at multiple locations throughout the County. The County set-up multiple testing locations, including mobile operations, to provide COVID-19 testing to the County's residents.
- Union County's testing program terminated operations as of May 31, 2023.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project was to serve all residents of the County in order to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The goal was to increase awareness and continue to slow the spread of the virus through the continuation of the campaign for the general public. The testing program was also used to test Union County's population including those residents that are hardest to reach.
- An additional goal of this program was to administer timely PCR testing and results to slow down the spread of COVID-19 and ensure timely public health action.

Performance Report

- Performance is measured by the timeliness of results ensuring timely public health action to slow the spread of COVID-19. Efficiency of sample collection and availability of appointments are also other performance measures that the County utilizes to assess the success of the testing program.

Project: 1.7 Communication

Funding Amount: \$534,061.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.7 Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses

Project Overview

- Funding to aid the County in effectively communicating with the community regarding the COVID-19 public health emergency. The County strives to keep the public informed regarding their efforts in mitigating and preventing the spread of COVID-19. The communication includes distributing door hangers, a direct link to COVID-19 programs offered by the County, notices within Union County that include information about the Union County vaccination program, testing and social distancing practices.
- The program is striving to inform Union County's population including those residents that are hardest to reach about the Coronavirus. The County has launched a campaign to reach its most vulnerable populations to spread awareness, assist the community in locating

testing centers and vaccination sites, as well as to clarify misinformation about testing and the vaccine.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project is to serve all residents of the County in order to educate the general population and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The goal is to increase awareness and continue to slow the spread of the virus through the continuation of the campaign for the general public.

Performance Report

- The program has attempted to reach all households in the County to provide them with critical information about the COVID-19 virus, testing, and vaccinations.

Project: 1.7 Sheriff's Office Radio & Equipment

Funding Amount: \$1,699,979.87

Project Expenditure Category: 1.7 Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses

Project Overview

- Funding for the purchase of Motorola APX radios and related equipment to replace the legacy first generation APX mobile and portable radios used by the County's Sheriff's Officers for front line communications, which was used to assist in the response to the increased health and safety concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this program was to ensure available channels of clear communication for front line workers who were responding to all residents of the County.

Performance Report

- The County's Sheriff's Officers are currently being trained on the use of this equipment, and use will begin being rolled out in the near future.

Project: 1.11 Body Worn Camera

Funding Amount: \$1,328,957.94

Project Expenditure Category: 1.11 Community Violence Interventions

Project Overview

- Funding to license, maintain and store videos of Body Worn Cameras of the Detectives of the County's Prosecutor's Office and the members of the County's Emergency Response Team and the Union County Sheriff's Office. This funding is to support Union County's Body Worn Camera Program. This program is part of an initiative to reduce violence that increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve public safety throughout the County.
- This funding is in addition to grant funds received from the State of New Jersey.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of the Body Worn Camera project is to address the rise in crime and prevent future violence by strengthening police accountability, resolving officer-involved incidents and complaints, improving transparency, identifying and strengthening officer performance, and improving evidence documentation for investigations, prosecutions, administrative reviews, and civil actions.
- Specifically, according to the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and the Department of Homeland Security, there are 57 Critical Infrastructure and Key Recourse sites in Union County, including Newark International Airport, Port Elizabeth, Kean University, Union College, Jersey Gardens Mall, Linden Airport, and the Bayway Refinery. Additionally, Union County has a high population density and significantly high rate of crime, which relates proportionately to drug activity, gun violence and a gang presence. This is compounded by major corridor roads, railways, two airports, a seaport, a major east coast import center, and an unrestricted access to the waterfront make for an extremely accessible and desirable area for criminal activity. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the County has reported a significant increase in crimes. In the first six months of 2024, the UCSO has arrested 7 individuals on bench warrants for firearms offenses, executed 6 search warrants for firearms, arrested 3 individuals for firearms offenses, responded to 12 threats for bomb/weapons, processed 13 crime scenes related to homicides or shootings, and processed 59 firearms.
- \$607,546.49 of the total project spending is allocated toward evidence-based intervention.

Performance Report

- To date, the project has funded the software and storage of the video captured by 176 body worn cameras for the Union County Prosecutor’s Office and Emergency Response Team. An additional 215 have been purchased for use by the Union County Sheriff’s Office, and will be used in the near future.

Project: 1.14 Workplace Safety, Training & Education

Funding Amount: \$1,000,000.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- In response to the negative impact on mental health and wellness the County is seeking to create a “Workplace Safety, Training and Education” Program. The program will offer training to government staff on the use of Narcan, First Aid, Automated External Defibrillator (AED), and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).
- Training employees will ensure that they are better prepared when engaging with members of the public on a daily basis so that they have the skills to identify and triage emergency situations.
- These skills are essential in addressing emergent health crises, from opioid overdoses to cardiac emergencies which were often exacerbated by the virus.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project is to train employees who come into contact with County citizens to be better prepared for the emergency situations that have increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The training will include how to use Narcan, which tackles the opioid epidemic and can potentially save lives in crisis, which were heavily impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The training also includes first aid skills, and training for use of and AED and CPR, both of which provide for immediate response to emergency situations.

Performance Report

- This project has not yet started.

Project: 1.14 Ambulance and SUVs

Funding Amount: \$2,039,608.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Funding to purchase two replacement ambulances for Union County. Union County's Division of Emergency Services requires ambulances in order to respond to emergencies throughout the County, including COVID-19 emergencies. The purchase of the two ambulances is an acquisition of emergency response equipment for COVID-19 prevention and treatment. The County is addressing both the spread and prevention of COVID-19 by ensuring that its emergency vehicles are fit to care for the most vulnerable in the community.
- This project will also be funding the purchase of approximately thirty (30) SUVs, which will be used by the County's Public Safety staff and Department Directors, who are 24-hour employees and who respond to various emergencies within the County.

Use of Evidence

- The acquisition of two ambulances and the SUVs will allow Union County's Division of Emergency Services, Public Safety staff and Department Directors to effectively respond to emergencies throughout the County.

Performance Report

- This project has not yet started.

Project: 1.14 Community Outreach Program

Funding Amount: \$1,810,304.88

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Funding to facilitate outreach aimed at targeting unserved and underserved communities where services are not accessible. Communities throughout the County were

disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency. This program includes the purchase of two vans that would facilitate outreach efforts by the County to its citizens by providing on-the-go enrollment and resources regarding the County's Department of Human Services programming. These programs include General Assistance/TANF, rent and utility programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), employment assistance, Medicaid, health care service, and other key support services for residents in need.

- The program is striving to inform Union County's population including those residents that are hardest to reach about the Coronavirus. The County has launched a campaign to reach its most vulnerable populations to spread awareness, assist the community in locating testing centers and vaccination sites, as well as to clarify misinformation about testing and the vaccine.
- Once the County receives the vans, they will be sent throughout Union County municipalities providing resources for on-the-go enrollment for entitlement and community programs. Programs include, but not limited to, General Assistance/TANF, rent and utility programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), employment assistance, Medicaid, health care services, and other key support services for residents in need. The mobile vans are in support of meeting people where they are to link residents to community resources. Vans will hold a stock of shelf stable food and other non-food items that would be helpful on the go. Vans will be positioned in communities that are economically disadvantaged, unserved and/or underserved. Outreach will begin in the communities of opportunity as identified in the Union County Community Needs Assessment (Elizabeth, Hillside, Linden, Plainfield, Rahway, Roselle and Union). These are areas where the needs of some populations are intensified, and where priorities should be placed for addressing unmet needs and eliminating barriers to services and supports.
- The vans would provide service and be active during normal business hours and after hours/weekends as identified where services are needed.
- This program is also funding the Civic Operations Group, which is providing multilingual outreach services within the community to help address community needs, which were increased following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project is to serve all residents of the County in order to educate the general population and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The goal is to increase awareness and provide resources to those residents who are most in need.

Performance Report

- The vans began servicing Union County residents in August 2023.
- To date, the Civic Operations Group has spent a total of 2,952 hours canvassing within the community.

Project: 1.14 Medical Examiner

Funding Amount: \$211,040.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Funding for costs associated with paying additional per diem medical examiners and the increased costs of livery transportation and storage caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency. Since the onset of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the medical examiner's duties have expanded to aid in the County's medical response to the crisis. This along with the increased death rate caused by COVID-19 has forced the County to retain the services of per diem medical examiners to keep up with the increased workload. The increased death rate due to COVID-19 has also put a strain on the County's ability to transport and store bodies.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this program was to provide additional funding to the County's medical examiner to cover the costs associated with the expanded responsibilities and aid to the County as a result of the pandemic.

Performance Report

- Union County medical examiner's time in the office increased substantially due to COVID-19. As such, there was an increased need for per diem medical examiners, who worked, on average, 25 days per month and performed approximately 220 autopsies. On some days, performing 3 to 4 autopsies. These per diem medical examiners were onsite from June 2021 through the end of December 2021.

Project: 1.14 Prevention/Social Distancing

Funding Amount: \$135,247.77

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Funding to allow for more effective social distancing practices throughout County buildings. These efforts help prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This project includes the hosting of online training courses for County employees that would previously have been held in-person, additional furniture to allow for more efficient social distancing within County offices and other measures that help prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the Union County office space. This project also includes the cleaning supplies and sanitizing service that help keep the County offices and public spaces safe.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this program was to implement social distancing practices throughout the County-owned buildings.

Performance Report

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, training courses for County employees occurred in-person. This program allowed the County to continue providing training courses for its

employees remotely while encouraging and maintain social distancing. 2,157 County employees completed the training course remotely so as to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 virus among the County's employees.

Project: 1.14 Radio Dispatch Consoles & Quality Assurance

Funding Amount: \$1,732,646.20

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Funding to purchase eleven operational radio dispatch consoles and an automated quality assurance system for monitoring 911 medical calls for pandemic protocol compliance. The additional dispatch consoles will enable the County to double its current emergency dispatch capabilities. In order to meet a higher level of emergencies related to the pandemic and other emergencies throughout the County, an expansion in equipment related to handling such emergencies is warranted and necessary. Similarly, the automatic quality assurance system will review all 911 medical calls throughout the County and ensure that emergency medical teams are compliant with pandemic protocols.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project is to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring compliance with COVID-19 protocols on a larger scale.

Performance Report

- The County's quality assurance system and additional dispatch consoles are currently in use.

Project: 1.14 Radio Tower Repair

Funding Amount: \$54,639.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Funding to repair the County's main radio communications tower, which is used by forty-seven of the sixty-two public safety agencies in Union County. The repair to the existing structure is essential for the County to meet operational needs in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency as response to the emergency requires open channels of communication between first responders and other public safety officials.
- The radio tower, which connects the County dispatch with units in the field, developed a crack in one of its support pylons. This crack required permanent repairs to ensure the tower was able to withstand severe weather. Otherwise, if the radio tower was to fall, the County's ability to respond to emergencies, including COVID-19-related emergencies, would cripple.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project was to reconstruct the radio tower to ensure that communications between first responders and their central coordination continues unhindered.

Performance Report

- The radio system is used Countywide and benefits all 575,345 residents of Union County. Upon completion of the work, the County is secure in knowing that the radio tower will continue to operate, particularly in severe weather conditions.

Project: 1.14 Sensory Friendly Theater

Funding Amount: \$19,937.37

Project Expenditure Category: 1.14 Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Funding for in-person events hosted through the Sensory Friendly Theater program at Union County Performing Arts Center. The funds were used to support the County's efforts in addressing the challenges faced by those with special needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing a behavioral health service for said individuals.
- This project consists of two events, which occurred in October 2021 and December 2021. These events included the performance of "Bubble Trouble" and the "Nutcracker".
- The website for this program is located at the following: <https://ucnj.org/sensory-friendly-theatre/>

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project was to help those individuals with behavioral health issues.

Performance Report

- These events were attended by more than 900 children and adults.

Project: 2.1 Food Distribution

Funding Amount: \$7,573,522.39

Project Expenditure Category: 2.1 Household Assistance: Food Programs

Project Overview

- The County hosts food distribution events including drive-thru events and walk-up events. There are also additional pop-up distributions aimed at underserved or unserved communities.
- In 2021, the County hosted forty (40) food distribution events.
- In 2022, the County hosted twenty (20) food distribution events at various locations.
- In 2023, the County hosted four (4) food distribution events at the following locations:
 - Kean University on November 18, 2023 and December 17, 2023.
 - Mid-Town Elizabeth Avenue (Between South Street and 2nd Avenue) in Elizabeth, NJ on November 18, 2023 and December 17, 2023.
- As part of these food distribution events, recipients will receive an emergency box of produce, dairy, and shelf stable food with sufficient quantities to sustain a family for several days.
- Food distributions continue to assist including, but not limited to unemployed households, women with children, seniors, persons with disabilities and veterans.

- To promote the food distribution events, the County issued press releases, issued event flyers, and promoted the events on the County website and social media sites. Advertisements were posted in local news on TAPinto.net news in several Union County Municipalities listserv. Through the press releases, there were several events advertised on News 12 NJ when picked up by local media. Flyers were also distributed through email outreach to DHS Advisory Boards, subcommittees, superintendents of schools and other community organizations for posting/handed out onsite at partner agency locations. The DHS Director’s Action Line, Division of Social Services, and information & referral teams referred residents to attend the food drives.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project was to address the food insecurity and scarcity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing food and meals to the most underserved individuals in the County.
- This program seeks to target the most underserved individuals. As such, food distribution is targeted in Qualified Census Tract areas as well as low-income geographic areas of the City of Elizabeth, City of Plainfield, Township of Hillside, City of Rahway, Borough of Roselle, and Township of Union. Since the inception of the program, food distribution events have occurred at the following locations:
 - Union County Vocational Technical School
 - Warinanco Park
 - Plainfield High School
 - Immaculate Conception Church
 - Kean University
 - Division of Social Services, Gerald Green Plaza
 - Our Lady of Fatima Church
 - Township of Union Senior Center
 - Elizabeth Waterfront
 - Conant Park
 - Cranford Community Center
 - Rahway Recreation Center
 - Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church
 - Roselle Borough Hall
 - Cedar Brook Park
 - City of Elizabeth Board of Education Lot
 - Hamilton Stage
 - Second Macedonia Baptist Church
 - Elizabethport Community Center
 - Elizabeth Public Library
 - The Mouth Olive Baptist Church
 - Family Promise
 - Olympia Square
- Evidence-based intervention:

*Food Insecurity and Delayed or Forgone Medical Care During COVID-19 Pandemic*³

As of December 2020, 18.8% of U.S. adults reported experiencing food insecurity. This study found “elevated odds of food insecurity . . . among non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and low-income” individuals. The study also concluded that “food insecurity was significantly associated with greater likelihood of foregoing any type of medical care as a result of cost concerns.”

\$7,573,522.39 of the total project spending is allocated toward evidence-based intervention.

Performance Report

- Key performance indicators include the number of households served by the food distribution program. Under this program, 53,785 households have been served through this program as of June 30, 2024.

Project: 2.1 Food Insecurity

Funding Amount: \$500,000.00

Project Expenditure Category: 2.1 Household Assistance: Food Programs

Project Overview:

- Funding used to provide support to the Food Insecurity Program at Union College of New Jersey. It is known that low-income communities were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, further exacerbating problems that already existed with food insecurity. Students on college campuses are a microcosm of the community at large and accordingly students from low-income households were impacted in much the same way. The program exists to aid students at the college who are experiencing food insecurity.
- Students self-identify, and are referred to a social worker for assessment. The social worker then refers the students to various state and local resources.
- Specifically, at UCNJ, students participating in this program are provided a “grub pass” for lunch, invited to visit the Owl Food Pantry on a weekly basis, and occasional access to the Farmer’s Market on campus.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project was to address the food insecurity and scarcity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing funds for food and meals to the most underserved individuals within the College population of the County.

Performance Report

- This project only began on July 1, 2024 and therefore there is no measure of performance at this time.

³ Food Insecurity and Delayed or Forgone Medical Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic, J. Bertoldo, J. Wolfson, S. Sundermeir, J. Edwards, D. Gibson, S. Agarwal, A. Labrique, AMER. J. OF PUB. HEALTH (May 2022).

Project: 2.1 Senior Citizen & Shelter Meals

Funding Amount: \$107,075.00

Project Expenditure Category: 2.1 Household Assistance: Food Programs

Project Overview

- Funding to support Union County’s efforts in addressing food insecurity and scarcity by providing meals for shelter and senior citizen residents. This program provided funding to provide meals for shelter and senior citizen residents, those that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency. This program also supported the County’s local small businesses that were negatively impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Specifically, meals are prepared at local restaurants and packaged for grab-and-go pick-up onsite at locations in disadvantaged communities where food scarcity is most prevalent.
- The County’s initial program provided meals through December 31, 2021. The County extended this program in the Fall of 2022 to provide additional meals and more site locations.
- As the project has continued the County has focused on including sites near the Union County Fresh Start Mobile Shower van and other non-profit locations in disadvantaged communities. The Fresh Start Mobile trailer is equipped with bathrooms, showers and laundry facilities.
- Meals were delivered to seventeen(17) senior centers, shelters, and locations including O’Donnell Dempsey Senior Center, Peterstown Community Center, Stephen Sampson Center, Liberty Square Center, Proceed, Inc., Jewish Family Services of Central New Jersey, The Gateway Family YMCA (Elizabeth Branch), YWCA Union County, Elizabethport Community Center, Elizabeth Public Library, Plainfield Public Library, Bridgeway Rehabilitation Services, The Mount Olive Baptist Church, Second Macedonia Baptist Church, Family Promise, Prevention Links and St Joseph’s Social Service Center. These locations include populations in the Qualified Census Tract and low-income areas to best serve the most negatively impacted populations of the County.
- To advertise this program and reach those individuals most in-need of these services, the County issued press releases and promoted the events of the County website and social media sites.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this program is to address the food insecurity and scarcity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic amongst those individuals most negatively impacted by the pandemic.
- Evidence-based intervention:

Food Insecurity and Delayed or Forgone Medical Care During COVID-19 Pandemic⁴

As of December 2020, 18.8% of U.S. adults reported experiencing food insecurity. This study found “elevated odds of food insecurity . . . among non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic,

⁴ Food Insecurity and Delayed or Forgone Medical Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic, J. Bertoldo, J. Wolfson, S. Sundermeir, J. Edwards, D. Gibson, S. Agarwal, A. Labrique, AMER. J. OF PUB. HEALTH (May 2022).

and low-income” individuals. The study also concluded that “food insecurity was significantly associated with greater likelihood of foregoing any type of medical care as a result of cost concerns.”

\$73,443.25 of the total project spending is allocated toward evidence-based intervention.

Performance Report

- This program engaged six (6) local restaurants, those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, to prepare and deliver nutritious meals to low-income, senior citizens, and homeless individuals at sixty-seven (67) events.
- As of June 30, 2024, there were 8,066 households served meals.

Project: 2.2 Emergency Rental Assistance

Funding Amount: \$2,067,662.97

Project Expenditure: 2.2 Household Assistance: Rent, Mortgage, Utility Aid

Project Overview

- Funding to supplement Union County’s existing Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). The County’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program provides significant economic relief to help low and moderate-income households at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability by providing rental arrears, temporary rental and utility arrears assistance. There are various criteria that need to be met in order to be eligible to receive rental assistance including having a household gross income at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), residing in Union County, having rental arrears on or after April 1, 2020, and experiencing financial hardship directly or indirectly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The County’s website for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program is located at the following: <https://ucnj.org/rental-assistance/>. The website contains additional information regarding the program including application guidance, eligibility criteria, and frequently asked questions.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of the project is to address the negative economic effects and housing instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Evidence-Based Interventions:

Building Housing Stability Infrastructure⁵

“The Emergency Rental Assistance program addresses the immediate financial distress faced by tenants and landlords during the COVID-19 pandemic. ERA also serves as a

⁵ Building Housing Stability Infrastructure, U.S. DEP’T OF THE TREASURY, <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/emergency-rental-assistance-program/promising-practices/housing-stability>.

catalyst to pilot solutions for existing gaps in the housing ecosystem and support long-term housing stability for renters.”

*Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*⁶

Research has found that Rental Assurances reduces hardship and provides opportunities for low-income families. Notably, rental assistance reduces poverty, improves outcomes for children, and reduces health costs.

- \$2,067,662.97 of the total project spending is allocated toward evidence-based intervention.

Performance Report

- There have been 212 households served through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program funded through the American Rescue Plan. This is in addition to those households funded through other federal funds (non-ARPA).

Project: 2.3 Senior Citizen & Veteran Aid

Funding Amount: \$804,385.00

Project Expenditure: 2.3 Household Assistance: Cash Transfers

Project Overview

- Funding to provide a one-time direct cash assistance to qualifying senior citizens and veterans as a result of the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on these two populations. This program will provide direct aid in the amount of \$500 to qualified County residents who meet the New Jersey Criteria for 100% Property Tax Exemption for Disabled Veterans or Senior Citizens who have annual income of \$10,000 or less. This aid to disabled veterans and senior citizens will help to defray the costs of housing, including maintenance and utility costs.
- Funding to assist eligible senior citizens and veterans with the property tax appeal process. The County will pay the filing fee for real estate tax appeals for qualifying veterans and senior citizens. The County seeks to alleviate the negative economic impacts of the pandemic, particularly in providing housing security to senior citizens and veterans who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- The County held 4 workshops on the tax appeal program, where filing assistance and additional information was provided to attendees. The workshops were conducted by staff attorneys with the Union County Office of the County Counsel.
- The County’s website for the Tax Appeal Program is located at the following: <https://ucnj.org/taxappealworkshop/>.

⁶ W. Fischer, D. Rice, and A. Mazzara, CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (Dec. 5, 2019).

Use of Evidence

- The goal of the project is to address the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic felt by two of the disproportionately effected populations, senior citizens and disabled veterans.
- An additional goal of the project is to provide senior citizens and veterans with information regarding their property and possibly reduce their property taxes through appeal.
- Evidence Based Interventions:

It is well-established that Senior Citizens are at a higher risk for hospitalization, intensive care, or requiring a ventilator to assist with breathing as a result of COVID-19.⁷

*The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Adults: Findings from the 2021 International Health Policy Survey of Older Adults*⁸

In addition to health risks, senior citizens are more likely to have suffered economically from the COVID-19 pandemic, with more senior citizens losing their job or using up all or most of their savings. During the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic, workers age 55 and older were 17% more likely to lose their jobs than younger employees. This increase in unemployment impacts, in addition to the health risks to this population, threatens the financial security of senior citizens.

*Veterans Took an Especially Bad Hit During the Pandemic*⁹

Veterans also have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with these individuals' facing unemployment, homelessness, lack of health care, and even delays in receiving financial support.

\$735,385.00 of the total project spending is allocated toward evidence-based interventions.

Performance Report

- As of June 30, 2024, the County has provided direct cash assistance to 1,467 qualifying senior citizens and disabled veterans.
- As of June 30, 2024, there have been 4 households assisted through the senior citizen and veteran tax appeal program.

⁷ COVID-19 Risks and Vaccine Information for Older Adults, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL, <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/covid19/index.html>.

⁸ The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Adults: Findings from the 2021 International Health Policy Survey of Older Adults, Reginald D. Williams II et al., COMMONWEALTH FUND (September 2021), <https://doi.org/10.26099/mqsp-1695>.

⁹ Veterans Took An Especially Bad Hit During the Pandemic, Jamie Rowen, (May 2021), <https://theconversation.com/8-ways-veterans-are-particularly-at-risk-from-the-coronavirus-pandemic-135619>.

Project: 2.10 Job Fairs

Funding Amount: \$3,738.00

Project Expenditure Category: 2.10 Assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers

Project Overview

- The County hosted job fairs to assist the unemployed and/or job seekers in obtaining interviews and offer on-the-spot hiring by employers. Job Fairs were held on September 22, 2021 at Warinanco Park and on October 5, 2021 at Jersey Gardens Mall.
- The County targeted job-seekers most impacted by COVID-19 including adults, youths, and dislocated workers, minority and low-income, disadvantaged populations, working in partnership with community and non-profit organizations.
- To advertise this program, the County promoted the job fairs on its website, social media sites, and through its community and non-profit partners.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this program was to address unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The negative economic impacts of the pandemic particularly effected unemployed workers and their households.
- \$0 of the total project spending is allocated towards evidence-based intervention.

Performance Report

- The County registered 617 jobseekers with 409 attending the job fairs. Notably, thirty (30) employers participated in the job fairs.

Project: 2.22 Green Plaza Repairs

Funding Amount: \$935,747.86

Project Expenditure Category: 2.22 Strong Healthy Communities: Neighborhood Features that Promote Health and Safety

Project Overview

- This project will provide funding to repair and replace portions of the concrete plaza, sidewalk, and metal tree grates at the Assemblyman Gerald B. Green Plaza located in the City of Plainfield. These repairs and replacements will help County residents within the community better utilize the facilities. These repairs will allow the County to provide healthy environments and safer outdoor recreation areas to its citizens, including disproportionately impacted communities, particularly minorities and small businesses.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this program is to provide outdoor, healthy and safe environments to the residents of the County.

Performance Report

This project has been completed.

Project: 2.22 Union County Parks

Funding Amount: \$51,565,610.38

Project Expenditure Category: 2.22 Strong Healthy Communities: Neighborhood Features that Promote Health and Safety

Project Overview

- Funding for the planning and improvements of parks located throughout Union County. The County seeks to improve and enhance its park system for the social, cultural, and environmental wellbeing of the community, particularly children. The funding includes the design and construction improvements to the Berkeley Heights Park, Glenside Avenue Park, Lightning Brook Park, Green Lane Walking Trail, Watchung Stables Therapeutic Riding Ring, Echo Lake Dog Park, Mattano Park, Union County Vocational Technical School Park, and a program to improve the general safety and cleanliness of all parks throughout the County. The planned rehabilitation and improvements to the parks systems will create green spaces for recreation to be used by both adults and children. These green spaces and parks are responsive to the residents' needs in combatting the mental and physical health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Berkeley Heights project includes funding to improve the vacant 1.5 acres parcel and the adjacent county-owned parkland at 735-737 Springfield Avenue in Berkeley Heights. The concept of the development includes the design of a passive park with trails along the river and play nodes along the pathway. The vision of the park is for large fields of grass that will contain benches and walkways for senior citizens. The improvements will include parking, a restroom building, gazebo, and a boat launch.
- The Glenside Avenue Park project includes the redevelopment of the park located at 175 Glenside Avenue in Scotch Plains. The park will provide passive recreational opportunities, with an accessible parking area, small play feature, spray equipment, a restroom, seating areas and walking trails to provide connections to the regional trail networks.
- The Lightning Brook Park project includes funding to install a turf field at Lightning Brook Park in the Township of Union. The field will provide better access for the community to improve their overall health while socially distancing, lessening the potential impacts of COVID-19 and reduce the maintenance needs of the park. This park will serve the residents of the Township of Union, which has been identified as a disproportionality impacted community based upon the density and racial background of the population. In addition, the project will include a walking path, lighting, a parking lot expansion and a restroom facility.
- The Green Lane Park project includes funding for the development of the current vacant parcel, which is approximately 4.9 acres in the Township of Union. The project will include the construction of walking trails and a parking lot on the property.
- The Watchung Stables currently provides accommodations for 99 horses, an indoor riding ring, paddocks and other amenities. The planned improvements include the addition of an enclosed therapeutic riding ring, bathroom improvements, the renovation of two riding rings, improvements to the manure shed and various other smaller improvements.

- The Echo Lake Dog Park site is an existing 3-acre dog park, which contains walking and water management issues. The County is planning improvements to create separate facilities for large and small dogs as well as separate areas for play and for running.
- Funding for the purchase and installation of new playground equipment at the Madison Avenue Park in the City of Rahway. Children were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 emergency partially due to the closing of school buildings and the transition to remote learning. The new playground equipment will give children in the community a way to get much-needed exercise while maintaining social distance and obeying any restrictions on indoor gatherings.
- The Mattano Park project includes the addition of 2 artificial turf, regulation sized, soccer fields, 1 small-sided grass soccer field, 2 tennis courts, pathway improvements, including lighting throughout the park, renovation of the existing bathroom building and an increased number of parking spaces. The park will now be better able to serve both children and adults who will benefit from the increased access to green space and time outdoors.
- The Union County Vocational-Technical School Park project includes improvements to the grass field with an artificial turf soccer/baseball field. As students experienced negative effects from COVID-19 on both their physical and mental health, the park improvements aim at combatting those issues with increased access to physical outdoor activities.
- The Union County Park Cleanup project includes the removal of dead trees and branches to improve the parks' general safety and accessibility for County residents. Additionally, the County purchased a garbage truck for the park system, which will help ensure the safety and cleanliness of the parks.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of the project is to rehabilitate and enhance the parks and green spaces throughout Union County.

Performance Report

- This project is ongoing.

Project: Swimming Lessons & Learning Loss

Funding Amount: \$1,562,600.00

Project Expenditure Category: 2.25 Addressing Educational Disparities: Academic, Social, and Emotional Services

Project Overview

- Funding for enrichment and learning opportunities for children and seniors in households that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- One of the goals is to supplement a child's educational opportunities, especially for families who generally do not have the means to provide this type of opportunity. The swimming program not only offers additional enrichment. It is known that exercise is a benefit to the mental health and well-being of individuals, so this program also aids in curbing the impact of social isolation that was experienced during the pandemic.
- The learning loss program is aimed at a peer-to-peer tutoring platform, which offers unlimited tutoring hours to County students in 5th to 8th grades, in an effort to mitigate the

learning loss that was associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This program also offers paid opportunities for work-based learning to County high school and college students ages 16-22 in the field of education.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of the program is to provide enrichment and learning opportunities to aid youth and seniors who were impacted by the social isolation experienced as a result of the pandemic.
- Another goal was to help youth within the County catch up on some of the learning that was undeniably lost as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- \$0 of the total project spending is allocated towards evidence-based intervention.

Performance Report

- For the Summer of 2023 two (2) age groups were offered swimming lessons for the period of August 21, 2023 to August 25, 2023. A total of 24 children received free swimming lessons with 12 ages 3-6 and 12 ages 7-12, for a total of 93 lessons.
- For the Fall of 2023, lessons were made available to children ages 3 through 12, and 69 children utilized this program during the period of October 30, 2023 to December 21, 2023.
- For the Summer of 2024 lessons have been provided to 93 youth and will prospectively be open to seniors.
- The learning loss program has not yet started.

Project: Mental Health Summit

Funding Amount: \$15,000.00

Project Expenditure Category: 2.26 Addressing Educational Disparities: Mental Health Services

Project Overview:

- This program provided funding for an event which will be held on September 21, 2024. It will feature speakers, presenters, and activities all aimed at supporting mental health for the County's high school students.
- Speakers will teach students coping skills for dealing with anxiety and depression, which were shown to have increased in adolescents as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The activities are also aimed at teaching skills to deal with anxiety and depression such as yoga, art, music, dance therapy and meditation.

Use of Evidence:

- The goal of this program is to aid students at the County's high schools with coping mechanisms for depression and anxiety, which were known to have increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- \$0 of the total project spending is allocated towards evidence-based intervention.

Performance Report:

- This project has not yet occurred.

Project: 2.35 Golf Course

Funding Amount: \$366,762.76

Project Expenditure Category: 2.35 Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality

Project Overview

- Funding to cover increased day-to-day maintenance and labor costs at County operated golf courses, Ash Brook and Galloping Hill, including costs associated with increased use of County golf chemicals and supplies. The increased maintenance costs have been necessitated by an increase in play at County golf courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this program is to provide outdoor, healthy and safe environments to the residents of the County.

Performance Report

- The total number of rounds played at Ash Brook and Galloping Hill in 2021 and 2022 golf courses increased 26% and 21% compared to the number of rounds played in 2019. In 2022, there were 112,742 rounds played at Ash Brook and Galloping Hill, compared to a total of 92,907 in 2019.

Project: 3.1 Public Sector Payroll

Funding Amount: \$8,638,515.47

Project Expenditure Category: 3.1 Public Sector Workforce: Payroll and Benefits for Public Health, Public Safety, or Human Services Workers

Project Overview

- This program funded the payroll and covered benefits from a portion of Human Services employees' time that was dedicated to responding to the COVID-19 public emergency, particularly time spent at food distribution events, including drivers and food packers, staffing of temporary career counselors, staffing of the Intoxicated Drivers Resource Center and payroll expenses of the Division of Social Services associated with the increased workload related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This program also funded payroll and covered benefits from a portion of Public Health employees' time that was dedicated to responding to the COVID-19 public emergency, particularly providing medical and other health services to patients and supervisory personnel. This program includes the personnel expenses related to the County established Medical Reserve Corp, COVID-19 Testing, vaccine sites and contact tracing.
- This program also funded payroll and covered benefits for Public Safety and similar employees to the extent that the employee's time is spent mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Public Safety employees, including emergency responders are essential to the County's COVID-19 response.

Use of Evidence

- The purpose of the program was to restore and bolster the County's public sector capacity to provide much-needed resources directly responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Performance Report

- The County reviews performance of this program by reviewing and assessing time spent on American Rescue Plan events and programs through tracking logs submitted by each County Department.

Project: Human Services

Funding Amount: \$131,263.26

Project Expenditure Category: 3.4 Public Sector Capacity: Effective Service Delivery

Project Overview

- This program was used for the purchase of scanners, printers, a SMART board, and a Qmatic/QLess System all for use by the County's Department of Human Service in connection with various client needs around the County.
- The Qmatic/QLess System was installed at the Division of Social Services, where direct services are provided. This system allows clients to check-in, reserve a virtual place in line and are able to be called in an organized fashion based on the queue. The population served by the Department of Social Services, which is primarily low-income households, were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and accordingly, the number of clients seen following has been increased.
- With respect to the additional technology updates, these items were used to improve access and the user experience when clients interact with the Department for the delivery of services.

Use of Evidence

- The purpose of this program was to improve the delivery and efficiency of services to clients served by the Department of Social Services, which are predominantly low-income households that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Performance Report

- At this time the system has been purchased and received but will not be installed until August of 2024.

Project: 3.4 IDRC Program Assistance

Funding Amount: \$64,800.00

Project Expenditure Category: 3.4 Public Sector Capacity: Effective Service Delivery

Project Overview

- Funding to support Union County's Intoxicated Drivers Resource Center (IDRC) and the administration of the IDRC program. The IDRC program is a state-mandated program with individuals identified as having an alcohol or drug involvement in connection with the operation of a motor vehicle. The administrative expenses include the Union County IDRC operator and the purchase of equipment, supplies and other expenses that will be used in the operation of the IDRC program.

Use of Evidence

- The purpose of this project is to support and rebuild the IDRC program back to its operational state prior to the pandemic. In addition, this project will allow the program to accommodate the client back-log and provide increased program support through comprehensive services to Union County residents.

Performance Report

- As of June 30, 2024, the County has funded twenty-six (26) 12-hour courses. These courses were attended by a total of 996 participants.

Project: 3.4 Software & Assistance to ERAP

Funding Amount: \$615,316.88

Project Expenditure Category: 3.4 Public Sector Capacity: Effective Service Delivery

Project Overview

- This project involves the purchase of software, which shall aid individuals in receiving housing assistance through Union County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program by gathering applicants' required information to apply for the program. In addition, this funding will be used to advertise the software system to those who require housing assistance through television and New Jersey Transit advertisements. This project will also include administrative expenses associated with administering the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Use of Evidence

- The purpose of this project is to address housing instability as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Performance Report

- As a result of this project, the software allowed the County's service provider and community partners to assist virtually to submit, track, and disperse assistance to much-needed recipients.
- The County received 3,386 ERAP #1 applications. These submissions include applications specifically from individuals and families under the 30% area medium income and those with the greatest need.

Project: 3.5 Cyber Security Network and Network Connectivity

Funding Amount: \$574,950.00

Project Expenditure Category: 3.5 Public Sector Capacity: Administrative Needs

Project Overview

- This project includes the County retaining a cyber security company to ensure the integrity of Union County's computer network. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused increased traffic to online County resources and increased use of the County's networks. The security of that network and the information contained therein is vital to the County's efforts to

maintain a safe environment for employees and citizens, and in turn, limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Threats to that network could include loss of sensitive data or an attack designed to slow or disable the County's network.

- Particularly, the County established and encouraged the use of remote resources to allow the County government to continue to function while complying with social distancing and stay-at-home orders. These resources include the ability of County employees to work remotely and County residents to access public information on the County's website. Providing these additional resources resulted in an expansion of network requirements, increasing access to the County's network and increase in traffic to online County resources.
- The County Sheriff's Office is also seeking to update its network infrastructure and firewall to combat cyber threats, which have become more sophisticated. As the Office maintains sensitive data, it is critical that the data be protected to help ensure continued and reliable access for its first responders. This has become even more important in light of the increased need to respond to violent crimes since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project is to assist the County in maintaining a fast and secure network to ensure the government can continue to function while still observing social distancing.
- The network connectivity project shares the goal of updating network infrastructure and also seeks to upgrade the firewall to ensure its sensitive data is stored in a safe and accessible manner so that its first responders can rely upon it.

Performance Report

- The vendor for this project submits quarterly reports on the network environment to allow the County to best assess performance and outcomes.
- Significantly, the County's website was visited approximately 3,601,891 times in 2021, approximately 2,065,124 in 2022, approximately 1,468,959 in 2023, and 369,000 times as of July 3, 2024, evidencing the importance of the County's network in providing information to its residents.
- The network connectivity project has not yet started.

Project: 3.5 Scanning & Document Management

Funding Amount: \$1,864,425.22

Project Expenditure Category: 3.5 Public Sector Capacity: Administrative Needs

Project Overview

- This project includes the digitization and management of files in Union County's Division of Social Services and Cornerstone Behavioral Health Hospital. This service will allow for easier and more efficient access to files by employees. The Division of Social Services has seen an increased demand for services due to the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of the major impacts to the economic security of many of Union County's citizens. The scanning and document management service will improve the data infrastructure of the Division of Social Services and Cornerstone Hospital.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of this project is to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus by allowing for more effective social distancing in the workplace. In addition, converting critical case file documents from paper to digital will enhance service delivery to clients.

Performance Report

- This project is ongoing. As of June 30, 2024, there have been 1,042,605 files scanned at Cornerstone Hospital and 16,350,452 files scanned at the Division of Social Services.

Project: 5.19 Fiber Ring

Funding Amount: \$12,214,777.56

Project Expenditure Category: 5.19 Broadband: “Last Mile” projects

Project Overview

- Funding to support Union County wide fiber optic network that will connect County buildings and County parks within Union County, which covers approximately 105 square miles, over a secure, reliable high-speed network. This high-speed network will ensure reliable communication between County agencies, which is crucial to the effort to combat the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Use of Evidence

- The goal of the project is to upgrade the fiber optic network, which will allow for more reliable communication within the County and with local government units. The upgraded network will also improve the County’s capacity to support remote work.

Performance Report

- The project is still ongoing.

Project: 7.1 Administrative Services

Funding Amount: \$818,191.84

Project Expenditure Category: 7.1 Administrative Expenses

Project Overview

- Funds to support the County’s efforts to efficiently administer the SLFRF program. This project includes the payroll expenses of County employees that are involved in the administration and monitoring of the American Rescue Plan Act funds. It also includes the expenses of legal and financial consultation for ensuring compliance with legal, regulatory and reporting requirements.
- This project is ongoing.

Use of Evidence

- Not Applicable

Performance Report

- The County reviews performance of this program by reviewing and assessing time spent on American Rescue Plan events and programs through tracking logs submitted by each County Department. All professionals are required to submit detailed invoices.

Project: 6.1 Revenue Loss

Funding Amount: \$12,907,700.00

Project Expenditure Category: 6.1 Provision of Government Services

Project Overview

- The County allocated \$12.8 million based upon its existing budget process for Public Safety salaries and related employee benefits. The County also allocated \$138,000 for Public Safety operating expenses.

Use of Evidence

- The purpose of the program was to restore and bolster the County's public sector capacity to provide much-needed resources directly responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Performance Report

- The County allocated funds to offset public safety expenses.