

Polk County, Iowa

Recovery Plan

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

July 31, 2021 Report as submitted August 31, 2021

Note: The Recovery Plan Performance Report will provide the public and Treasury information on the projects that recipients are undertaking with program funding and how they are planning to ensure program outcomes are achieved in an effective, efficient, and equitable manner. While this template includes the minimum requirements for the Recovery Plan, each recipient is encouraged to add information to the plan that they feel is appropriate to provide information to their constituents on efforts they are taking to respond to the pandemic and promote an equitable economic recovery.

Each jurisdiction may determine the general form and content of the Recovery Plan, as long as it meets the reporting requirements, and recipients are encouraged to tailor this template to best meet their needs. Use of infographics, tables, charts, pictures, case studies, and other explanatory elements are encouraged.

Polk County, Iowa
July 31, 2021 Recovery Plan

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

Polk County has utilized ARPA funds to implement several measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Plans are underway for additional measures to reduce the rate of COVID-19 infections, promote economic recovery, and address the general public needs targeted by ARPA. We are planning to ensure program outcomes are achieved in an effective, efficient and equitable manner and a process is in place for public input. Polk County plans to expend funding in the following categories:

Near future intended uses

Projects are underway to address the immediate impacts of COVID-19 in our community, meet public health and safety needs, and initiate efforts around water quality issues. These initiatives include:

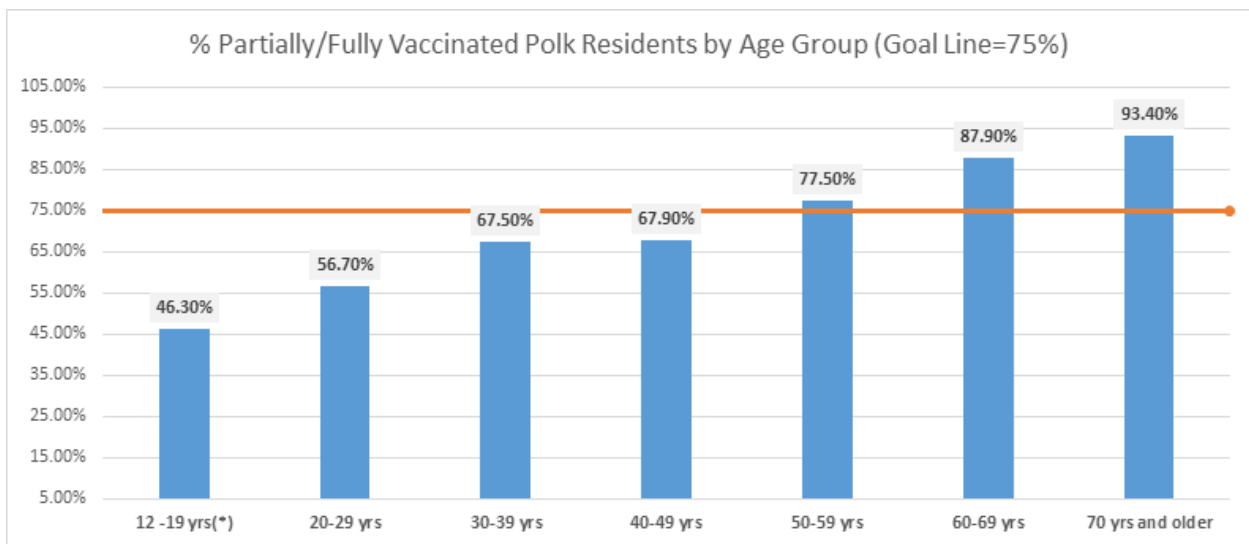
- Ongoing efforts to maximize vaccination rates among Polk County residents. Upon receiving the first round of ARPA funds on May 20th Polk County initiated a series of vaccine incentives on June 15th with the goal of reaching a 75% county vaccination rate by Labor Day Weekend. On June 15th the percentage of Polk County residents who were vaccinated was 61.2%. On August 30th, the CDC reported the Polk County vaccination rate was 73%. A key focus of the county's targeted vaccine outreach has been and will continue to be to residents residing in underserved census tracts. See *Chart 1 below*.
- The Polk County Emergency Operations Center is currently utilizing technology that is outdated. Bids have been secured to replace and upgrade technology in order to continue coordinated response to the pandemic.
- In order to address mental health issues that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, Polk County will be investing in a sobering center that will help triage individuals who are struggling with drug and alcohol issues and direct them to long-term recovery services.
- We will also be investing in training and equipment that will better prepare law enforcement for responding to mental health calls.
- Discussions are underway with local jurisdictions to merge the Public Safety Answering Points' Computer Aided Dispatch systems into a single system that will reduce response time for fire and police who are responding across multiple jurisdictions.
- Polk County intends to recoup lost revenue in conformity with U.S. Treasury rules.
- Polk County will be investing in the tourism and hospitality industry by funding select operational and capital expenditures.
- Polk County will be launch a pilot project to guide further investment in a watershed protection effort to address regional water quality and safe drinking water supply concerns.

Long term intended uses

Polk County will undergo a strategic planning process that will include stakeholder discussions and public input sessions around four large categories of work that will address

human services and equity in our community. These four categories include affordable housing, mental health, water quality and economic wellbeing. Criteria will be developed that seek proposals which go above and beyond current operations and plans. Proposals will be sought that address gaps in human services, equity issues and sustainability issues and that promote collaboration. Additionally, planning is underway for a third party local research to study rent assistance recipients and their long-term needs. This concept would include interviews of individuals receiving Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds that are currently being administered through our local Impact Community Action Network with the goal of learning more about the circumstances that have led recipients to need assistance. This data would be used to make informed and strategic decisions about how to invest ARPA funds to impact affordable housing.

Chart 1



Uses of Funds by Expenditure Category

a. Public Health (EC 1)

Polk County is committed to a strong and equitable recovery by empowering the Polk County Health Department to prioritize the importance of a robust vaccination effort and to devote the resources to ensure this message is delivered to residents of Polk County, especially the hard to reach communities, such as the recently immigrated, the transient and the non-electronically connected citizens of Polk County. Tactics that will continue to be deployed include vaccination incentive campaigns, targeted marketing, a senior call center, and funding health navigators in immigrant and refugee communities to assist in vaccination education campaigns.

b. Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2)

Strategic planning is underway to address negative economic impacts at the household level. Current recipients of housing assistance dollars through ERAP will be surveyed to identify long-term, systemic issues around housing so housing initiatives funded by ARPA can address long-term housing instability and economic opportunities for low-income

residents. Additionally, Iowa State University Extension is currently conducting a multi-county survey of small businesses and non-profits to assess current needs and gaps. This information will be used to inform decision making on future assistance to small businesses and non-profits.

Polk County intends to use ARPA funds to address the negative economic impacts of the pandemic on the County-owned Iowa Events Center and associated hotel. Financial assistance will be provided to offset revenue losses experienced by this facility and to invest in capital improvements, thereby allowing continued operations in a safe and sustainable manner.

c. *Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3)*

When applicable, programs and policies will be informed by relevant census tract data and previously gathered economic data to ensure all Polk County residents can participate in a strong and equitable recovery. Inclusion, diversity and community wide participation will be priorities of all programming.

d. *Premium Pay (EC 4)*

N/A

e. *Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure (EC 5)*

Polk County is participating in several regional projects that are underway to address these issues. Many of the political subdivisions in Polk County are making plans to expend ARPA funds on storm water management. The Central Iowa Water Trails project is an initiative that aims to increase access to Iowa's rivers while using the recreational interest in water to generate momentum on critical water quality projects. The Greater Des Moines Partnership is currently undertaking a survey on regional broadband access. Polk County is participating in the survey process and establishment of desired outcomes to ensure access and affordability to disadvantaged families.

Additionally, Polk County will be undertaking an extensive infrastructure project that will connect 150 rural residences to a city water main. These homes have been utilizing sand-point wells that were unsafe and unreliable. During a recent large storm, these homes were cut off from a potable water source. Polk County's financial commitment to this project will be \$2.5 million.

f. *Revenue Replacement (EC 6)*

Polk County has completed a comprehensive review of all lost revenue and will continue to utilize U.S. Treasury guidance in compiling future projections. The current amount of this revenue replacement calculation is approximately \$24 million.

g. *Other Federal Recovery Funds.*

Polk County has been a leader in administering Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds that were distributed from the CARES Act. Both Polk County and the City of Des Moines requested these funds directly from the State of Iowa and administered them through IMPACT Community Action Partnership. IMPACT has delivered assistance to households more efficiently than the state and was able to provide up to three months rental

assistance without requiring the renter to first become delinquent on payments. We are currently working with the State of Iowa to access an additional \$30 million to be administered in our community. Additionally, at the beginning of the pandemic Polk County committed \$800,000 for rental assistance that was administered at the Polk County Courthouse by staff from Iowa Legal Aid and the Polk County Housing Trust Fund. Staff worked with landlords who were at the Courthouse for eviction proceedings. In almost all cases, a direct payment to the landlord was made in lieu of evicting the tenant, and the landlord was connected to additional resources to mitigate future eviction efforts. Polk County provided additional funds and helped leverage private contributions. These funds were not ARPA funds but this narrative has been included in this report as an example of how ARPA funds could potentially be expended and to illustrate the collaborative and creative nature of our community.

Polk County and IMPACT are currently implementing a non-mandatory study of rental assistance recipients to assess ongoing housing needs.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes

Polk County will promote equitable outcomes throughout the ARPA process. This will be accomplished by conducting open meetings, soliciting input, publicizing the target area of concern. We will directly communicate with neighborhood organizations, civic and community groups. A 2020 report by One Economy found that African Americans and Africans comprise 7.1% of the total population in Polk County, representing 27% of all African Americans and Africans living in the state of Iowa. However, the median household income for an African American or African household was \$33,816 compared to the \$63,530 median household income for all of Polk County. On nearly every economic measure examined, including banking, housing and employment, racial wealth disparities were evident. Addressing these disparities will be a primary focus of Polk County's use of ARPA funds to address economic well-being and utilizing current data to establish benchmarks.

- a. *Goals* - As plans are made for utilization of ARPA funds, Polk County will add additional focus on historically underserved, marginalized or adversely affected groups or areas, such as the historically "redlined portion of Des Moines." This includes African Americans, immigrants and refugees and the Latinx community.
- b. *Awareness* - Polk County has a strong group of community, civic, fraternal, service and neighborhood organizations that will be utilized in the dissemination of information regarding ARPA services. The One Economy report outlines disparities in our community and includes a Blueprint for Action that will be used to implement COVID-19 recovery strategies equitably. The priority topics in the report include financial inclusion, employment, education, health and housing. These priority topics align with several of the priority topics identified by the Polk County Board of Supervisors.
- c. *Access and Distribution* - Polk County is committed to an open and transparent process that ensures equal access to benefits and services for all residents of Polk County. As part of the COVID-19 recovery process Polk County will examine the administrative

requirements of all of the assistance programs available to the community specifically to address disparities that negatively impact disadvantaged and underserved communities.

d. *Outcomes* - Polk County's ARPA plan and process is rooted in the belief that closing gaps and achieving universal levels of service and eliminating any equity disparities is an essential focus of ARPA funding efforts. The Board of Supervisors will host a series of workshops with subject matter experts and community members for each identified priority area. The goal of these sessions will be to identify areas where ARPA funding can be strategically used and establish benchmarks and outcomes. Each priority topic will include outcomes related to resolving racial inequity.

e. *Equity Strategy by Expenditure Category*

Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2): Refer to paragraph above regarding data collection and public input.

Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC 3): The Polk County Health Department has worked extensively with local neighborhood and community groups to reach as deeply as possible into disproportionately impacted communities. Additionally the Polk County Community, Family and Youth Services Department has worked collaboratively with the City of Des Moines to coordinate all aspects of rental housing assistance. Local funds have been used to create a "health navigator" program that pays leaders of immigrant and refugee communities to participate in COVID-19 mitigation training and conduct outreach in their respective communities. Additionally, COVID-19 vaccination rates are available by zip code and current Polk County data shows that a disproportionately lower number of people are vaccinated in underserved communities. Vaccination incentive campaigns will be tailored this fall to reach these neighborhoods.

Directing the use of ARPA funds towards establishing affordable housing, addressing mental health issues, and promoting economic well-being specifically support the goal of providing needed services and opportunities for disproportionately impacted communities.

f. *Data* - With the exception of expending ARPA funds for a few immediate needs as identified in our Executive Summary – near future intended uses, Polk County is in the early stage of establishing a process for public input in our four strategic areas. Qualitative and quantitative data will be sought and required for future funded projects to ensure equitable outcomes are achieved.

g. *Geographic Distribution of Funding* - To date the largest amount of ARPA funding has been directed at incentive programs to increase vaccination rates. These education efforts have been targeted to the general population in Polk County. Additional investments have been made to fund vaccine promotion through Latinx and African American media. Grassroots outreach efforts have also been made to reach immigrant and refugee communities.

Community Engagement

Polk County has proactively reached out to as many traditionally underserved groups as possible through various means including: community meetings, visiting neighborhood associations, and implementing a paid and free media strategy. Additionally, funds have been expended to hire health navigators from immigrant and refugee populations. They completed a training session with the Polk County Health Department and are now paid to host community education sessions.

In the creation of long-term strategic investments, Polk County is committed to expanding our outreach efforts to acquire this information and to ensure the public is well informed and has multiple avenues to provide this information. These efforts will include public input forums, requests for public written comments through regular mail, email and public surveys on the Polk County website. Outreach to civic groups, community-based organizations and any other group or organization that responds to the county's request for invitations to make presentations and receive public input. Media outreach, both paid and through public service announcements will be conducted with a special emphasis to underserved communities to invite input and participation in addressing the strategic investment areas for economic recovery and building safe communities.

Examples of tactics that have been used successfully to date include paid media on Spanish language media outlets, community outreach, paid health navigators and a call center for seniors and individuals without internet access.

Labor Practices

Polk County strongly believes in paying a fair and living wage to all workers currently and for any future ARPA projects. Paying the Prevailing wage and complying with Davis Bacon are County policy on all federally funded construction and infrastructure projects.

Use of Evidence

As Polk County begins to create a strategic plan on how to invest ARPA funds, evidence-based benchmarks and evaluations will be determined.

Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health		
1.1	COVID-19 Vaccination	\$230,810	\$230,810
1.2	COVID-19 Testing		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
1.3	COVID-19 Contact Tracing		
1.4	Prevention in Congregate Settings (Nursing Homes, Prisons/Jails, Dense Work Sites, Schools, etc.)		
1.5	Personal Protective Equipment		
1.6	Medical Expenses (including Alternative Care Facilities)		
1.7	Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency		
1.8	Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine)		
1.9	Payroll Costs for Public Health, Safety, and Other Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19		
1.10	Mental Health Services		
1.11	Substance Use Services		
1.12	Other Public Health Services		
2	Expenditure Category: Negative Economic Impacts		
2.1	Household Assistance: Food Programs		
2.2	Household Assistance: Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Aid		
2.3	Household Assistance: Cash Transfers		
2.4	Household Assistance: Internet Access Programs		
2.5	Household Assistance: Eviction Prevention		
2.6	Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers		
2.7	Job Training Assistance (e.g., Sectoral job-training, Subsidized Employment, Employment Supports or Incentives)		
2.8	Contributions to UI Trust Funds*		
2.9	Small Business Economic Assistance (General)		
2.10	Aid to nonprofit organizations		
2.11	Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality		
2.12	Aid to Other Impacted Industries		
2.13	Other Economic Support		
2.14	Rehiring Public Sector Staff		
3	Expenditure Category: Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities		
3.1	Education Assistance: Early Learning		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
3.2	Education Assistance: Aid to High-Poverty Districts		
3.3	Education Assistance: Academic Services		
3.4	Education Assistance: Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Services		
3.5	Education Assistance: Other		
3.6	Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care		
3.7	Healthy Childhood Environments: Home Visiting		
3.8	Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare System		
3.9.	Healthy Childhood Environments: Other		
3.10	Housing Support: Affordable Housing		
3.11	Housing Support: Services for Unhoused persons		
3.12	Housing Support: Other Housing Assistance		
3.13	Social Determinants of Health: Other		
3.14	Social Determinants of Health: Community Health Workers or Benefits Navigators		
3.15	Social Determinants of Health: Lead Remediation		
3.16	Social Determinants of Health: Community Violence Interventions		
4	Expenditure Category: Premium Pay		
4.1	Public Sector Employees		
4.2	Private Sector: Grants to other employers		
5	Expenditure Category: Infrastructure		
5.1	Clean Water: Centralized wastewater treatment		
5.2	Clean Water: Centralized wastewater collection and conveyance		
5.3	Clean Water: Decentralized wastewater		
5.4	Clean Water: Combined sewer overflows		
5.5	Clean Water: Other sewer infrastructure		
5.6	Clean Water: Stormwater		
5.7	Clean Water: Energy conservation		
5.8	Clean Water: Water conservation		
5.9	Clean Water: Nonpoint source		
5.10	Drinking water: Treatment		
5.11	Drinking water: Transmission & distribution		
5.12	Drinking water: Transmission & distribution: lead remediation		
5.13	Drinking water: Source		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
5.14	Drinking water: Storage		
5.15	Drinking water: Other water infrastructure		
5.16	Broadband: "Last Mile" projects		
5.17	Broadband: Other projects		
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement		
6.1	Provision of Government Services		
7	Administrative and Other		
7.1	Administrative Expenses		
7.2	Evaluation and data analysis		
7.3	Transfers to Other Units of Government		
7.4	Transfers to Nonentitlement Units (States and Territories only)		

PROJECT INVENTORY

Project: COVID-19 Vaccination Incentive Campaign
 Funding Amount: \$230,810 through July 31, 2021
 Project Expenditure Category: 1.1 Public Health COVID-19 Vaccination

Polk County has initiated a cash and tuition scholarship incentive program to encourage all Polk County citizens to become vaccinated. From June 25 to August 27 a weekly drawing was held each Friday. Every Friday ten \$1,000 winners were randomly selected. In addition, every other Friday one \$50,000 winner and one \$5,000 scholarship winner were randomly selected. The vaccination lottery was an opt-in promotion that any Polk County resident who had received one J&J vaccination or both of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccinations was eligible for.

Other promotions include:

- In the weeks leading up to the Iowa State Fair, Polk County provided two free state fair tickets and hosted state fair food trucks at the Polk County Health Department. Several radio stations participated in live remotes during these events. They successfully saw up to 215 new vaccinations per day.
- In order to encourage more community conversations about the importance of vaccination, Polk County sponsored a non-profit challenge in which a non-profit would receive \$50 per individual vaccinated at the Polk County Health Department on their behalf during the campaign. Youth organizations who work with youth 12 years of age and up were eligible for \$100 for each newly vaccinated youth. The goal of these campaigns was to serve as a conversation starter among trusted community leaders. The promotion will end on September 3.

List of weekly winners - <https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health-department/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-vaccine-lottery-winners/>

Performance Report on Project Inventory

Since the beginning of the incentive program, Polk County has increased countywide vaccinations from 61.2% to 73% of eligible residents.