American Rescue Plan Act

DRAFT Action Plan

Overview

The City of Morgantown is set to receive $11,243,509 in ARPA funds over the next two years. The city has received the first of two installments in the amount of $5,621,754.50. A second installment is anticipated in the same amount in the Spring/Summer of 2022. The city has until December 31, 2024, to obligate funds and December 31, 2026, to spend the funds.

The U.S. Treasury Department has limited the use of ARPA funds to the following areas:

- To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;
- To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;
- For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID–19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; and
- To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

The city also considered the following factors when determining uses for ARPA funds:

- Community feedback

- Ongoing guidance from the U.S. Treasury

- Existing funding/programs

Community Engagement Process

The city sought community input using an online survey which ran from August 1 through August 21, 2021, and through two public meetings which took place on August 18, 2021, and September 1, 2021, at 7 p.m. at the Marilla Center. The public was also encouraged to submit written comments to the City Manager's office.

Residents, businesses, and community organizations were encouraged to participate in the planning process by one of the various means listed above. The city encouraged the community to focus on recovery goals during the community engagement process. The intended outcome was to determine what specific goals that citizens would like to accomplish with this funding.

The city received 540 responses to its online survey and approximately 30 citizens attended the first public meeting held on August 18. All public comments received during the community engagement process will be made available on the city's website at morgantownwv.gov/ARPA.

Categories rankings based on survey results:

1. Water and Sewer Infrastructure
2. Public Health and Social Services
3. Downtown/Community Investment
4. Strong Vibrant Businesses
5. Emergency Services and Planning
6. Technology

Project and Program Process

The city reviewed input received from the online survey and the August 18 public meeting to develop a draft action plan. Common themes and keywords were used to develop project ideas, which were then grouped by recovery goal and scored by city staff. This was used to develop the draft action plan, which was presented at the September 1 public meeting. Comments received during the second public meeting will be taken into consideration, the draft action plan updated/revised as necessary, and a final action plan will be presented to City Council for approval.

Based on the above considerations, projects that are eligible for use of ARPA funds will be scored from 1 through 4.

1. The highest possible score is a four (4). These projects are quick to implement, have an immediate impact, and are very important.

2. Projects scoring a three (3) can be implemented relatively quickly, but the impact of these projects may take a little longer to feel. They are still very important projects. The projects scoring a 3 can be scaled depending on available funding.

3. Projects scoring a two (2) may take longer to implement or have a less reaching impact than those scoring a 3 or 4. Projects can be easily scaled depending on availability of funds.

4. The lowest score for a project/program that is eligible for ARPA funds is one (1). A project may be given a 1 if use of funds don't appear initially feasible within the allotted timeframes, have less urgency than the other projects, or aren't quite ready to implement. These projects may be more appropriate for the second installment of funds.

Recovery Goal 1: Strong Vibrant Businesses

Common Themes and Keywords from Community Input:

Business support, grants, loans, incentives, clean, façade improvement, wages, promotions, parking, outdoor dining, workforce development

Overview: Small businesses are a critical piece of the city's economic vitality and are also one of the industries hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. This recovery goal is intended to aid new and existing businesses by providing them with tools to recover and lessen the ongoing negative impact from the pandemic.

Justification: To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality.

Recovery Goal:	**Strong Vibrant Businesses**	**Score**
Projects:	Small Business Assistance Grants	4
	Façade and Interior Improvements	3
	Low Interest Loan Program	2
	Promotions	4
	Outdoor Dining	4
	Business Incentive Program	2
	Support Services and Mentoring	3
	Workforce Development	2

Recovery Goal 2: Downtown and Neighborhood Investment

Common Themes and Keywords from Community Input:

Vacant and dilapidated structures, sidewalks, roads, safety, homelessness, connector trails, park improvements, recreation, flooding, greenspace

Overview: Strong neighborhoods and Downtown Morgantown are the heart and soul of the city. This recovery goal is intended to assist city neighborhoods and the downtown area with improved safety, sense of community, and recreation.

Justification: To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality.

Recovery Goal:	**Downtown and Neighborhood Investment**	**Score**
Projects:	Eliminating Vacant, Dilapidated Housing	4
	City Ambassador Program	3
	Housing Support	4
	Creating Neighborhood Greenspaces	3
	Trail Connections and Recreation	2

Note: Sidewalks and roads were not included in the list of projects as they are not eligible for ARPA funds. The issue of new and improved sidewalks is being reviewed internally and will be addressed in a different manner. The paving and maintenance of city streets is currently funded through the Municipal Service Fee. City staff is seeking alternative ways to increase funding of the current paving and maintenance plan and ways to collaborate with the WV Division of Highways on the maintenance of state roads in city limits.

Recovery Goal 3: Physical and Mental Health Resources

Common Themes and Keywords from Community Input:

Clinics, drugs, homelessness, education, mental health, physical health, rent/utility assistance, recreation, social services

Overview: Public resources and services are a critical asset to the mental and physical wellbeing of our community. The intent of this recovery goal is to improve and increase access to tools and services that promote mental and physical health.

Justification: To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality.

For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID–19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency;

Recovery Goal:	**Physical and Mental Health Resources**	**Score**
Projects:	Enhanced Free Clinic	3
	Educational Campaign	3
	Non-profits working on physical/mental health	4
	Access to Recreational Amenities	2

Note: Rent and utility assistance was not included in the list of projects because it is currently funded through CDBG-CV funding. The city is currently working with United Way of Monongalia and Preston County to assist residents with rent and utility assistance with CDBG-CV funds.

Recovery Goal 4: Dependable Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Common Themes and Keywords from Community Input:

Flooding, clean water, drainage, maintenance, water quality, stormwater, separating CSOs.

Overview: Dependable water and sewer infrastructure is vital to the livability of our city. The intent of this recovery goal is to support the maintenance of and make new improvements to existing water and sewer infrastructure in order to protect against flooding and improve water quality.

Justification: To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

Recovery Goal:	**Water and Sewer Infrastructure**	**Score**
Projects:	Flood Mitigation	2
	Improving Water Quality	3
	Clean River	3

Recovery Goal 5: Technology

Common Themes and Keywords from Community Input:

Digital services, WiFi, broadband, traffic lights, energy efficiency

Overview: Technology is an essential aspect of the city's infrastructure. The intent of this recovery goal is to improve the technological capabilities and digital services in the city.

Justification: To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality.

For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID–19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency;

To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

Recovery Goal:	Technology	Score
Projects:	Enhance Digital Access to Public Services	4
	Traffic Lights Study	3
	Underground Utility Line Study	3

Note: it is our understanding that the County is considering undertaking a comprehensive broadband study, which would encompass the city boundaries of Morgantown.