



COUNTY of VENTURA

2023

**COUNTY OF VENTURA
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT
RECOVERY PLAN**



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General Overview

Introduction

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) two-year anniversary provides an opportunity for the Board of Supervisors (Board) to present how Ventura County (County) utilized its \$164.3 million share of federal funds, and to what extent the funding has enabled large-scale investments for disadvantaged regions. The US Treasury Department disbursed State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) funding in two tranches – the first in Spring 2021 and the second in Spring 2022. The County received approximately \$82 million in each tranche for a total funding allocation of \$164.3 million. Given the critical importance of managing and utilizing the SLFRF funds, the County leveraged various resources – the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), the National Association of Counties (NACo), and Treasury guidance – in terms of guiding principles. The County employed a measured approach and an equity lens with its funding strategy while striving for best practices regarding audits, reporting, and compliance.

The Board welcomed ARPA into the County family. Nonetheless, the funds created unique challenges due to a range of factors, including but not limited to: rules related to the eligible uses, obligation and expenditure timelines, and the one-time nature of the funds. The County carefully considered federal parameters and prioritized the most acute needs. This included federal requirements, Board priorities, and external engagement. Based on several rounds of feedback, deep analysis with County stakeholders, and months of deliberate review, staff recommended, and the Board approved a plan to dedicate ARPA and SLFRF resources to the following priorities: housing/homelessness, public health, mental health, sustainability, infrastructure, farmworker programs, economic recovery, early childhood initiatives, park/recreation capital improvements, arts community, and emergency preparedness. The table below provides an overview of this initial spending plan.

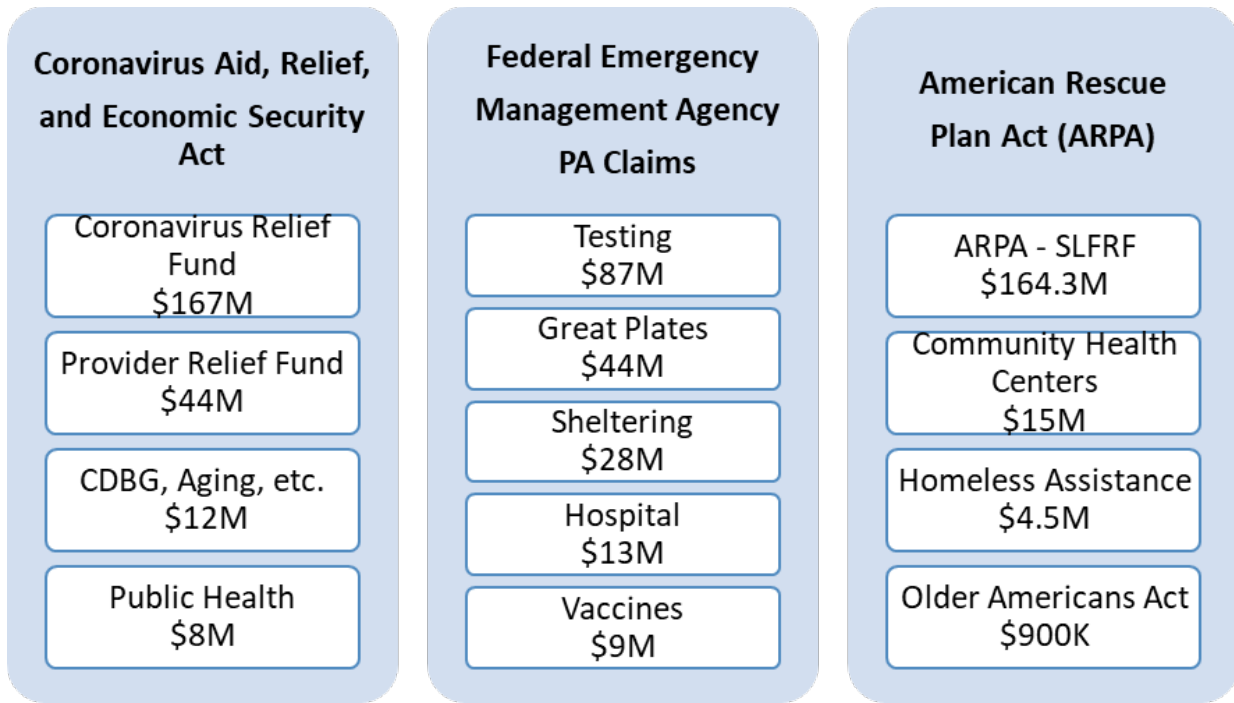
Board Priority	Funding (\$m)	Percent
Housing & Homelessness	\$30.5	18%
Infrastructure: Water, Sewer & IT	\$27.3	17%
Community Parks, Recreation & Facilities Investments	\$24.7	15%
Mental Health Infrastructure	\$22.0	13%
Public Health & Community Interventions	\$15.0	9%
Emergency Preparedness	\$14.5	9%
Stimulate Economic Recovery	\$9.5	6%
Early Learning & Childcare Initiatives	\$8.5	5%
Sustainability	\$3.4	2%
Farmworker Programs	\$3.0	2%
Arts Community	\$1.0	1%
Contingency	\$4.9	3%

From the outset of the SLFRF program, the County also took action to minimize the necessary administrative requirements related to managing the SLFRF funding. In December 2022, the County dedicated the largest percentage of its SLFRF resources under the Provision of Government Services expenditure category. This designation allowed the County to satisfy federal rules and requirements for administering SLFRF with the least administrative effort. More importantly this strategy allowed funding to be allocated to projects within the spending plan through the General Fund, which in turn gave the County the ability to deliver projects and programs more effectively and efficiently to better serve and help the community recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This also greatly reduced the administrative burden for project partners and beneficiaries and allowed funding to be distributed more quickly and efficiently.

This Recovery Plan Performance Report (Recovery Plan) outlines how the County followed Treasury and federal guidance for SLFRF. The Board would like to thank the many residents, businesses, departments, and nonprofits who provided feedback in during the robust community engagement process. The County looks forward to working with all stakeholders in helping Ventura County move forward and prosper. Any questions about the County's SLFRF approach can be guided to arpa@ventura.org.

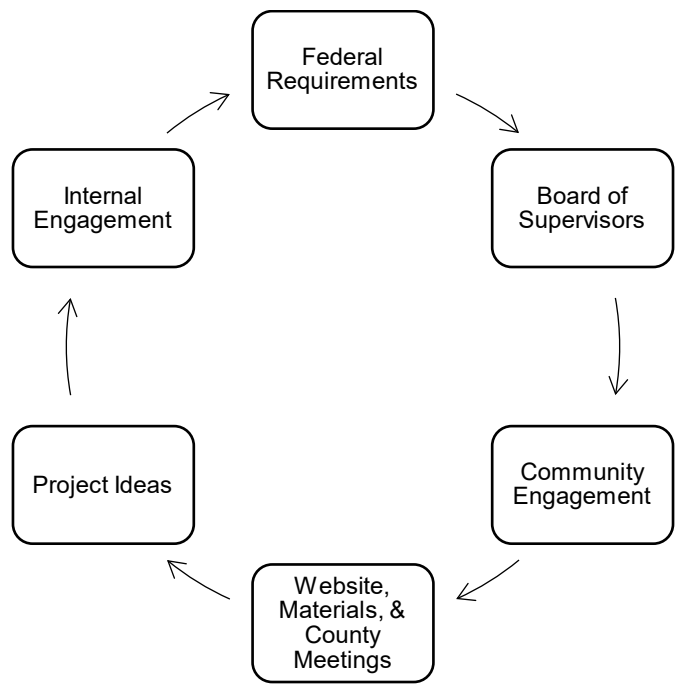
Background

To date, the County has spent approximately \$400 million in federal COVID funding through various programs (including CARES Act and FEMA Public Assistance claims) of which roughly \$202 million was devoted to the key following areas: Project Roomkey/Homekey (housing), senior nutrition, rental assistance, business assistance, food programs, farmworker assistance, and support for nonprofit hospitals; \$87 million for COVID-19 testing; \$44 million for the Ventura County Medical System, and \$9 million for COVID-19 vaccine deployment. Including SLFRF, the County's response and recovery from the COVID pandemic will stand at \$570 million. This historic level of support reflects the County's longstanding goal of improving the quality of life for the region's underserved families and communities. An overview of the federal support and spending areas is provided below.



County Methodology

The County’s SLFRF methodology followed several guidelines. These include requirements set at the federal level, Board of Supervisors priorities and public meetings, internal department subject matter expertise, and diverse community engagement. Below is an overview of the steps involved in the County’s SLFRF funding strategy and framework process.



Federal Requirements

Eligible Uses: Eligible uses include COVID-19 expenditures or negative economic impacts of COVID-19, including assistance to small businesses, households, and hard-hit industries, and economic recovery; premium pay for essential workers; investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure; and revenue replacement for the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Project & Expenditure Reporting: To ensure SLFRF funds are used properly, the federal government requires the County to file quarterly financial status reports through the entirety of the project lifecycle. The County has established internal accounting controls to track this data and is working with all project partners to collect the necessary project information.

Audit Readiness: Between the \$400 million in previous rounds of federal funding and the \$164.3 million in SLFRF resources, the County is subject to a federal audit compliance, also known as a Single Audit. As a result, the County's deployment of federal funds has carefully followed federal requirements including 2 CFR 200.

Data Analysis: Per federal guidelines, the County and any subrecipients of SLFRF funding must provide data driven justification for its projects. The County has focused on projects that benefit disadvantaged communities.

Use of Evidence: The County has followed its practice of investing in disadvantaged communities – and is committed to producing information on how SLFRF funds improve the quality of life for the region's disadvantaged areas. The project inventory section provides details on how evidence-based outcomes are crucial to measuring project impact and success.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes: This work was completed in 2021 and 2022. The County focused SLFRF funds on addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities including promoting equitable outcomes. Accordingly, the County collected SLFRF input via 600+ surveys, 113 nonprofit respondents, 250+ community project ideas, 49 community organizations via the Ventura Community Foundation Complete Count Committee, and lastly 21 community organizations via the Ventura Economic Vitality Committee.

Board of Supervisors

The Board of Supervisors priorities and goals are intended to provide a foundation upon which departments and nonprofit partners can base their individual, strategic, business, and operational plans. The Board intentionally identified areas and funding priorities that improve the quality of life for the region's most disadvantaged communities. The County's SLFRF framework considered these key priorities for the project selection process. Since SLFRF funding is not ongoing, the Board placed an emphasis on taking a measured approach and focusing on one-time projects. A snapshot of the Board priorities is listed below.

Housing & Homelessness
Mental Health
Public Health: COVID 19 Programs
Sustainability
Infrastructure: Water, Sewer, and Broadband
Farmworker Programs
Stimulate Economic Recovery
Early Childhood Initiatives
Parks & Recreation Capital Improvement
Arts Community
Emergency Preparedness

All County SLFRF projects were subject to Board approval. The Board’s decisions were informed by several inputs including: (a) strategic community engagement (600+ overall survey respondents, 113 nonprofit survey responses, 250+ community project ideas via survey response and email submittal, engagement with 49 nonprofits via the Ventura County Complete Count Committee, engagement with 21 nonprofits via the Ventura Economic Vitality committee, outreach to 140,000+ people via material distribution in both Spanish and English , a dedicated multilingual website, and regularly scheduled Board hearings with reports, analysis, and public comment sessions dedicated to ARPA); (b) internal engagement (Behavioral Health, Public Health, Human Services Agency, General Services Agency, Executive Office, Counsel, Auditor-Controller, and the COVID-19 Consultant; and importantly (c) federal eligible uses.

Community Engagement

This work was completed in 2021 and 2022. These efforts were aimed to inform the community about funding opportunities and capture diverse feedback from stakeholders, community-based organizations, and the region’s hard-to-reach and underserved communities. The County leveraged community partnerships with community-based organizations and departments to reach people of color, people with low incomes, limited English proficient populations, indigenous communities, and other traditionally underserved groups. The County’s community engagement framework included:

Website, Survey, and Community Projects

- 600+ community surveys submitted in Spanish & English. More information on the survey can be found in the 2022 Recovery Plan.
- 250+ project ideas submitted via email, survey, and in-person meetings.
- Dedicated website with reports, spending plans, videos, and presentations.
- Dedicated email account arpa@ventura.org and phone number to encourage community engagement with populations with limited digital access

Digital and In-person Multilingual Community Outreach

- Presentation to and listening session with 30+ community organizations through the Ventura County Community Foundation provided in English and Spanish
- One-on-one meetings with non-profits by request
- 113 nonprofit survey respondents
- 49 nonprofits engaged via the Complete Count Committee
- 38 nonprofits received funding for multilingual outreach and weekly sessions
- 21 nonprofits engaged via Ventura Economic Vitality Committee
- Multilingual E-newsletter sent to 140,000 community members
- 5+ public Board meetings with opportunities for public comment.
- Information print materials and paper surveys were available at county libraries (English and Spanish). Survey training provided to all County library staff
- Quarterly Board meetings with reports, analysis, and public comment sessions
- Tri-lingual interpretation in Spanish, English, and Mixteco

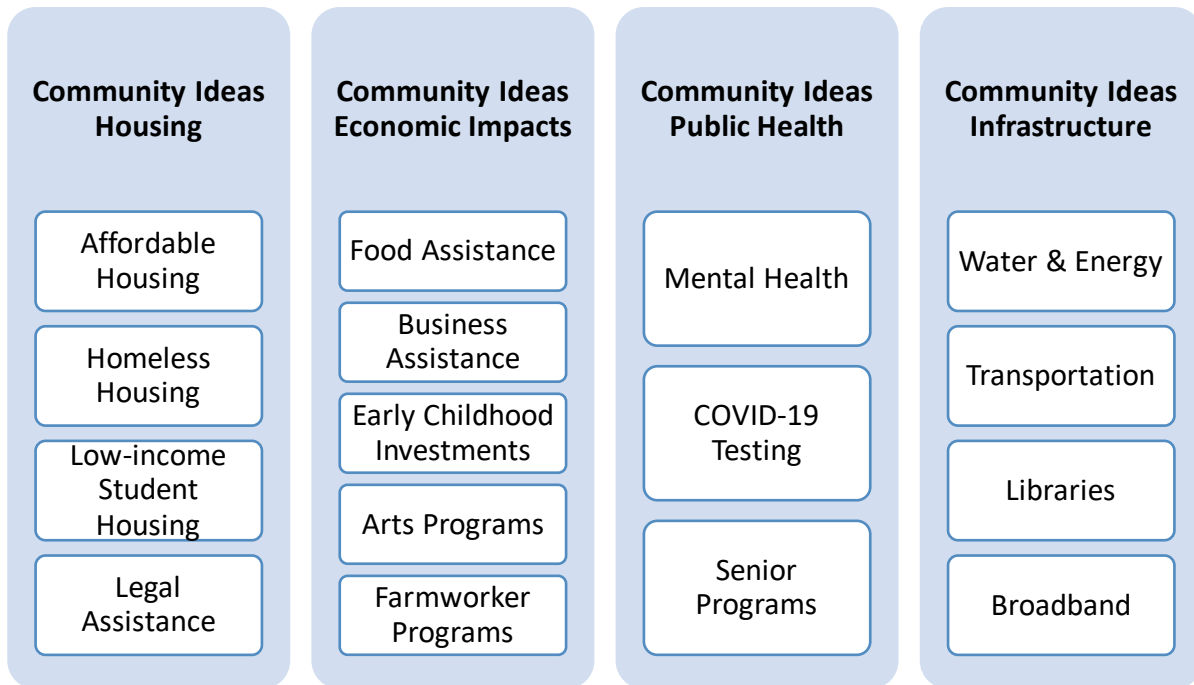
The result of the community engagement detailed above was comprehensive, diverse, inclusive connections with community members and community-based organizations, County agencies, and community non-profits representing traditionally underserved populations. Public awareness about the County's SLFRF framework and strategy was created through these partnerships with nonprofits, the targeted outreach efforts detailed above, and the County's regularly scheduled Board updates.

Website, Materials, & County Meetings

In accordance with federal guidelines, the County set-up a dedicated ARPA website (ventura.org/americanrescueplan). The site allows community members, nonprofits, and interested stakeholders to access the survey, watch Board hearings, download reports, contact the county ARPA team, and submit project ideas and feedback. ARPA and SFLRF materials – including the annual Recovery Plan, fact sheet, and survey - are available in English and Spanish. The County also provides links to Board hearings relating to ARPA (5+ and counting) – this includes materials, presentations, and slides. Additional meetings included engagement with 49 nonprofits via the Ventura Community Foundation Complete Count Committee, 21 nonprofits via the Economic Vitality Committee; and sessions with First Five, Taxpayers Association, etc. The County will continue to regularly schedule ARPA updates during Board meetings.

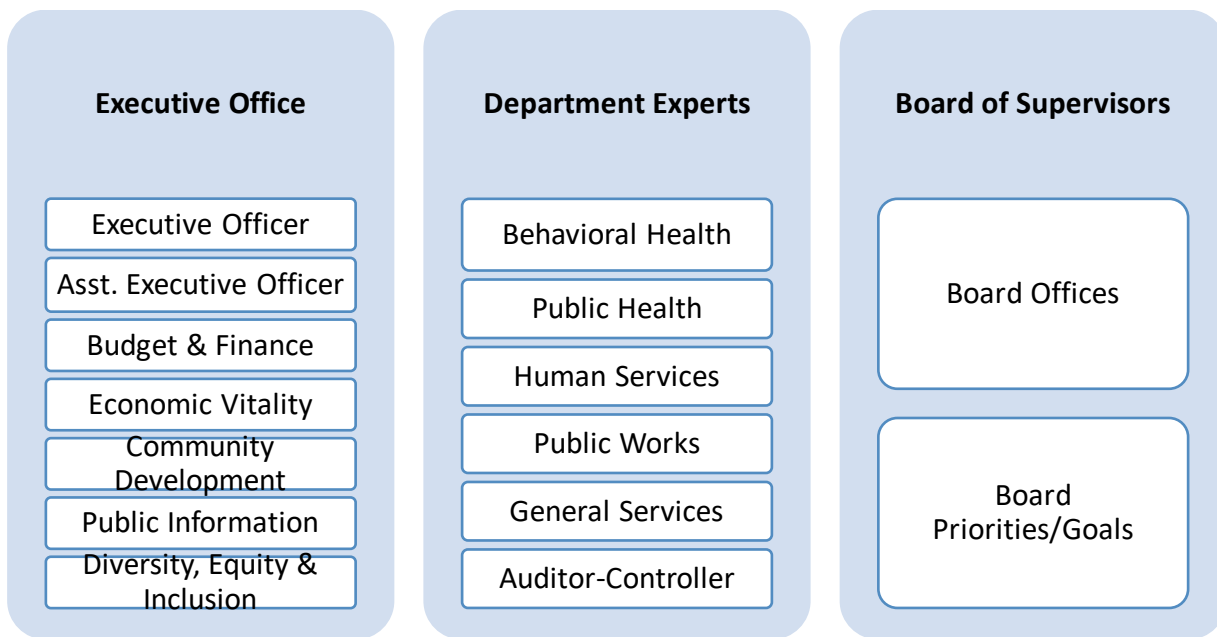
Project Ideas – Email & Survey

The County reviewed project submittals from nonprofits and community members, and thoroughly assessed submissions to ensure Board alignment. In 2021 and 2022, community-based groups and members of the public sent project ideas directly to the dedicated email account (arpa@ventura.org). In total, the County received 250+ projects ideas from nonprofits and community members. A sample of submitted community ideas is provided below:



Internal Engagement

The County’s internal SLFRF Advisory Team was structured to engage with subject matter experts. This team acted as a sounding board to evaluate the impact, completeness, and compliance of potential SLFRF projects. Members of this team included stakeholders from Behavioral Health, Public Health, Human Services Agency, General Services Agency, County Executive Office, County Counsel, Auditor-Controller, and the County’s COVID-19 consultant.



County Timeline

The Board's actions related to the American Rescue Plan are highlighted below:

Date	Action
June 2023	Adjustments related to the list of previously approved projects and the County's revised funding/reporting strategy
March 2023	Recommendations associated with the list of previously approved projects and the County's revised funding and reporting strategy
December 2022	Approve the majority of funds as being expended and reported under the Provision of Government Services expenditure category
October 2022	Approval of select projects and consideration of future projects
April 2022	Approval of select projects and consideration of future projects
November 2021	Update on the preliminary funding plan and priorities

Miscellaneous

Labor Practices:

For all publicly funded construction projects the County is required by the California Labor Code to pay prevailing wage as determined by the California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), and to have apprentices employed on the project at set minimum ratios to journeymen – all to provide strong employment opportunities for workers. Contractors who bid on County projects are required to be properly licensed by the State, registered with the DIR, and not be present on any debarment lists. These are all processes and procedures that Ventura County implements before awarding a construction contract which helps ensure a qualified contractor that promotes strong labor standards and efficient delivery of a project are engaged.

Project Inventory – Federal Methodology

Total: \$7.4 Million

Housing & Homelessness							
Exp Category	Name	Description & Goal	Entity	Project Total	Equity – Race and/or Poverty	Outcomes/Performance	Evidence – Race and/or Poverty
2.16	Project Homekey	<p>Description: Purchase and development of property in Ojai – for homeless housing</p> <p>Goal: Secure new housing for residents impacted by homelessness, to minimize risk of long-term homelessness</p>	County Executive Office Community Development; Mesa Independent Living; Peoples Self Help Housing Corp	\$1,200,000	The project exclusively provides housing for homeless and at-risk transitional aged youth (TAY)	15 units for homeless youth ages 18 to 24	<p>Evidence I: According to Harvard University's Teamcore Group, youth housing systems are ideal for provider-driven decisions. Housing enhances vulnerability screenings and matching the right social services</p> <p>Evidence II: According to the US Dept. of Health & Human Services, homeless youth are 5 times more likely to become homeless adults. Early intervention is a key prevention strategy</p>

Infrastructure							
Exp Category	Name	Description & Goal	Entity	Project Total	Equity – Race and/or Poverty	Outcomes/Performance	Evidence – Race and/or Poverty
5.1	Piru Wastewater Treatment Facility	<p>Description: ARPA funding compliments an ongoing state grant to complete a water treatment facility in Piru</p> <p>Goal: Address infrastructure and water quality issues in disadvantaged communities</p>	Public Works Agency	\$4,000,000	Piru has been identified as a disadvantaged community by the State of California. According to the US Census, Piru's median household income is \$30,000 less than the countywide average	Low-income residents of Piru save \$4 million – ARPA covers the cost of a new wastewater facility	<p>Evidence I: According to the IOP Institute of Physics, low-income areas lack access to safe water. A major barrier is low technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity. An investment in TMF can induce legal pathways to safe water, including funding access. The County has engaged with the Piru community regarding this project</p> <p>Evidence II: According to the Environmental Working Group, a research organization, low-income communities are more likely to have poorer quality drinking water with more toxic contaminants than their wealthier counterparts</p>

Negative Economic Impacts							
Exp Category	Name	Description & Goal	Entity	Project Total	Equity – Race and/or Poverty	Outcomes/Performance	Evidence – Race and/or Poverty
7.1	Microbusiness COVID 19 Relief Grant Program	<p>Description: Support the administration of a state grant for small businesses</p> <p>Goal: Expand the County's economic recovery model by aiding small business support programs, with in emphasis on racial minorities and women</p>	County Executive Office Economic Vitality	\$229,742	<p>This program provides assistance for small businesses disproportionately impacted by the pandemic</p> <p>The county's approach to business grants (\$70 million) already focuses on racial minorities, and women</p>	The County is in the process of following its historic practice of prioritizing minority and female-owned business for this program. More data will be available once the program is operational	<p>Evidence I: According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, there is evidence the first round of PPP loans were disproportionately disbursed to non-minority communities. The County's program looks fill the gap and target racial minorities and women</p> <p>Evidence II: According to McKinsey & Company, the pandemic disproportionately affects minority-owned small businesses because they are more likely to be concentrated in industries impacted by COVID 19.</p>
4.1	In-home Support Services Provider Payments	<p>Description: One-time Payment of \$250 to home health aide providers</p> <p>Goal: Support the wellbeing of health workers – especially low-income workers and racial minorities who provided services throughout the pandemic</p>	Human Services Agency	\$1,627,960	<p>Health care providers are doing critical work on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19</p> <p>These providers support low-income seniors and people with disabilities (including children) stay in their own homes instead of moving to residential care facilities.</p>		<p>Evidence I: According to the Brookings Institute, most of these workers are women, and they are disproportionately people of color. Median pay is just \$13.48 an hour. The County's action meets ARPA's framework for essential workers; and its commitment to communities of color</p> <p>Evidence II: According to the Center for American Progress, women of color represent much of the home health aid workforce. An increase in wages can address wealth disparities for these key workers.</p>

Project Inventory – Provision of Government Services Methodology

Total: \$156.9 million.

On October 11, 2022, the Board approved the County’s ARPA spending plan. On December 13, 2022, the Board approved use of the County General Fund to resource projects, in lieu of ARPA. This action was guided by the federal government’s Provision of Government Services policy. It allowed the County to allocate ARPA funds more efficiently to partner organizations, while also reducing their administrative burden. Accordingly, the County is the responsible party for ARPA-related audits, reporting, and compliance. A full list of County projects can be found at ventura.org/americanrescueplan/.

Board Priority	Project Name	Project Description	Expenditure Category	Funding
County Projects	Provision of Government Services	Fund eligible salaries and benefits costs for County departments	6.1 - Provision of Government Services	\$157,269,046



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