

Yakima County American Rescue Plan Act Recovery Plan

Executive summary:

Through a focus on shovel ready infrastructure projects, Yakima County will expand existing road and utility infrastructure which will increase the ability of existing households to connect to municipal drinking water, superior wells, sewer or superior drain fields and expand broadband access across the county. These improvements will increase public health and safety while simultaneously increasing affordable housing development opportunities by reducing distances to newly established connection points. This increased access to connectivity will also have a positive economic impact across the entire community and enhance quality of life for residents living in unincorporated portions of Yakima County or within city limits of our many small towns and cities who historically have lacked the ability to make large infrastructure investments and whose residents are among the most impoverished within the county and state. These investments will strengthen vital public services and contribute to stabilizing the Yakima County economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Yakima County recognizes the negative impact that COVID-19 had on the safety and security of our residents. Yakima County saw increases in drug over-dose deaths, suicides, domestic violence and homicide as result of the extensive COVID shutdowns mandated by the Governor. Gang violence and criminal activity also saw a sharp increase as a result of students being out of school and falling victim to gang recruitment and lack of supervision. Increased exposure of children to Adverse Childhood Experiences is a known contributor to adult addiction, recidivism and homelessness. It is vital to the public health and safety of every community member that a portion of funds be allocated to the Yakima County Sheriff's office and Criminal Justice divisions within Yakima County to increase emphasis patrol and assign deputies to assist with other partner agencies such as the FBI and Joint Violent Offender Task Force to investigate, charge and convict criminal agents and remove them from our community, purchase equipment such as ballistic analysis machines to increase evidentiary capabilities and create or expand drug intervention programs to the youth in our community. This will reduce crime to pre-pandemic levels, lessen the economic burden that Yakima County currently spends as a proportion of our overall annual budget to respond, investigate, charge, house and convict criminal agents and save lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of a healthy immune system and saw residents increasingly use our natural resources to exercise and breathe fresh air. Yakima County is diversely beautiful with unique topography and pleasant year-round weather yielding numerous opportunities to improve and expand access to outdoor recreation activities. Through expansion and refurbishment of trails and parks, the residents of Yakima County will enjoy the benefits of good health while also experiencing the wonder of nature and the visible signs of our agricultural community's investments in our land to preserve and protect a clean environment benefitting both our residents and food production. Investments in fire and emergency response and our local healthcare system will also increase the quality of care and emergency response to those in need of vital healthcare services who reside in the most rural areas of our county.

Weighted emphasis for grant applications will be placed on projects that have multiple funding sources, cash investments or in-kind investments, in addition to Yakima County's requested investment, to maximize impact and efficiency. Yakima County will seek grants from state and federal agencies for county sponsored projects to increase impact for internal projects. Eligible projects will build community

capacity, reach underserved populations and utilize labor practices that promote effective and efficient delivery of high-quality infrastructure projects.

Grant Application Process

Yakima County will hold up to three consecutive grant application periods in 2022, 2023 and 2024. All projects shall be ranked and approved by the BOCC for funds obligation by December 31, 2024 and all funds must be expended by December 31, 2026. Applicants will complete the Uniform Yakima County ARPA Grant Application which will be available on the Yakima County Website. Applications will be considered during the grant application period. If an application is not selected, or is not funded up to the full request, applicants may re-apply in the next open grant application period. Grant applicants must attest to their project readiness for expenditure of all county provided funds by December 31, 2026. If an approved application does not achieve the funding required to complete the specific project identified in the application, the funds committed by Yakima County must be returned.

The BOCC may create by appointment an advisory committee of community members to assist with review and recommend projects to the BOCC for approval using the weighted criteria established by the BOCC. The committee shall have no authority to obligate funds on behalf of Yakima County. All successful grant applicants must supply quarterly reporting of information requested in a timely manner to the Yakima County Financial Services Director or designated county employee.