

Middlesex County, NJ
Recovery Plan

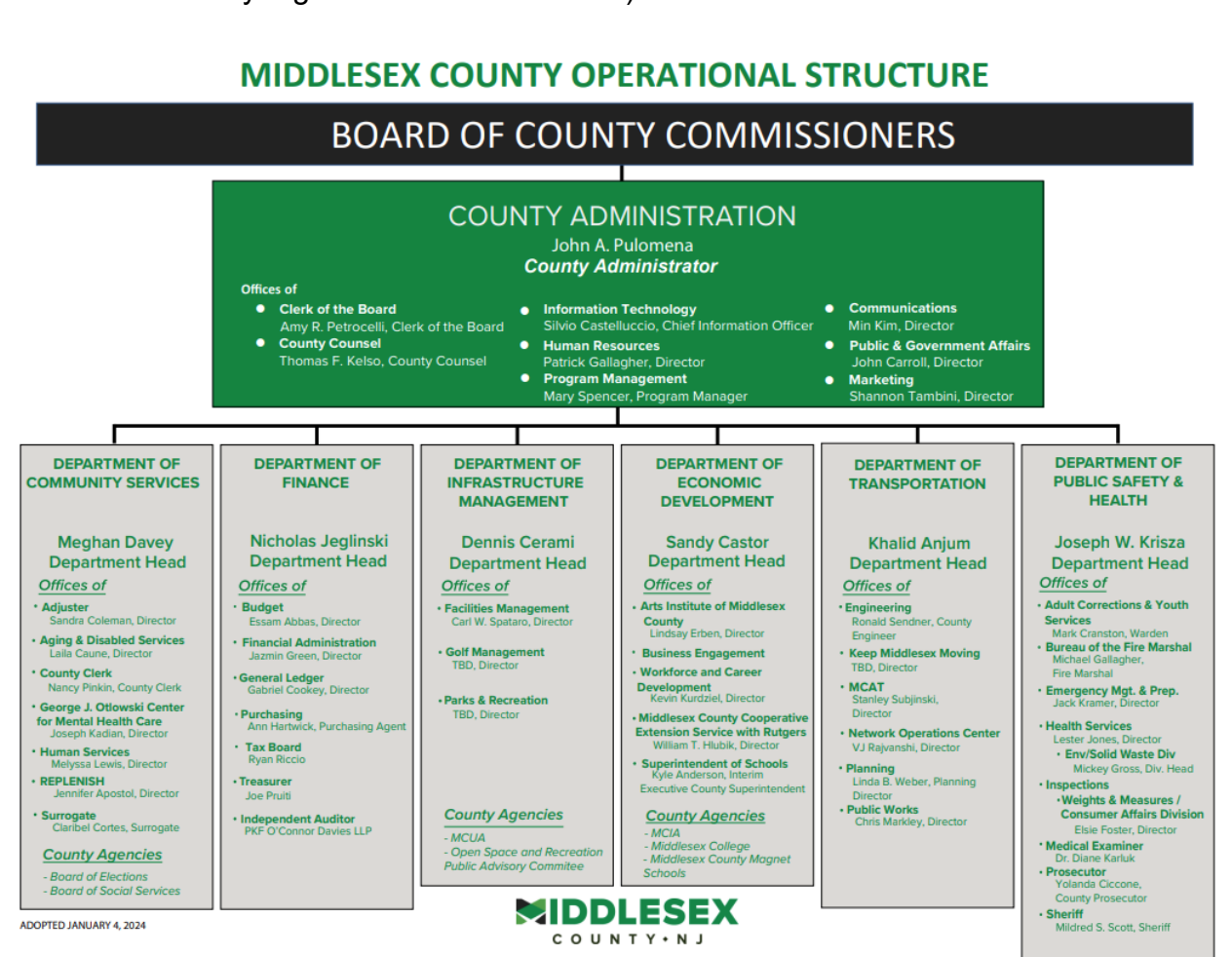
**State and Local Fiscal Recovery
Funds**

August 2024 Report

The County of Middlesex, New Jersey (“County”) is pleased and fortunate to have been awarded more than \$160M in necessary State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (“Funds”) to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus far, the County has received the complete grant of \$160,258,621.

As with all other counties in the United States, Middlesex County has been adversely impacted by the pandemic. As such, the County is judiciously approaching utilizing these critical Funds. The County leveraged its existing “Strategic Leadership Team” (“Team”) to research and arrive at well-calculated recommendations to County officials on the usage of the Funds for the greatest benefit of the County and its constituents.

The aforementioned Team comprises all County department leaders, including the office of information technology, legal counsel, human resources, communications, marketing, and public & government affairs. This group will provide valuable input to the deliberations regarding the management and disbursement of such Funds (see Middlesex County organizational chart below).



Additionally, the County's Board of Commissioners are also tasked with the development of the strategic plan along with the County's Utility Authority (MCUA) and Improvement Authority (MCIA).

Outreach to various community groups, elected officials, and the public has resulted in recommendations from the broadest universe of constituents on how to leverage the Funds. Moreover, the Team has engaged and communicated with the private sector, and separately the County's public College and Vocational Schools are working on a number of efforts that are underway (e.g., telemedicine in the health care sector).

The County's main objective, and biggest challenge, is to ensure that the broadest universe of individuals, including County staff, community groups and the public, are able to voice their ideas and are represented in the process applying the Funds for the greatest benefit of the County.

As we continue to identify areas of targeted expenditures for the use of the Funds in the Public Health category, the following are examples, but not limited to, of what we have expended Funds on and are still evaluating for future **expenditures**:

1. Salaries of County staff (public safety, public health, health care, human services) who have been working in response to the pandemic. For example, Health Office staff members who worked on testing, monitoring and contact tracing. Others worked on vaccinations programs and operations, including the management of supplies, equipment, facilities, administrative expenses, and the call center.
2. County staff also worked on the emergency medical response to the pandemic, including transportation expenses, supplies and equipment.
3. The staff at the County's Office of Sheriff manned testing facilities, vaccination sites, and aided in other public safety related efforts in response to the pandemic.
4. Communications and marketing expenses to publicly promote the availability of COVID testing and vaccinations.
5. Ventilation improvements in congregate settings, public health facilities, or other public facilities.
6. Purchase of PPE and disinfection supplies for facilities and public areas.
7. Capital investments towards public facilities such as hospitals and health clinics.
8. Enhanced services that address the mental health needs of the community exacerbated by the pandemic.
9. Expand the use of telehealth services to assist our most vulnerable populations.

The County intends to investigate the disproportional impact that COVID-19 has had on its communities, to offer proper attention in the various areas of with the greatest need. For example, housing instability and service needs; childcare and child welfare services; access to health services; education; lead paint remediation; expanded use of telehealth in the impacted communities, etc. The County's Office of Public and Government Affairs, in conjunction with the Finance Office and Information Technology Office, are spearheading collaborative efforts to conduct studies regarding these issues, supported by the Strategic Leadership Team.

The County anticipates utilizing SLFRF funds for various improvements to the existing infrastructure, including water and sewer. There is an opportunity to improve and repair wastewater treatment plants; improve the resilience of infrastructure to severe weather conditions; protect waterbodies from pollution; improve flood control; ensure compliance with federal and state environmental safety requirements; improve and address those conditions that cause the most risk to human health, etc.

Additionally, the County seeks to address the insufficient broadband capabilities across the County, but in particular, identifying the disparities for those unserved and underserved households who do not have adequate broadband capabilities or access. This inadequacy can ultimately impact their connection to the internet and adversely affect the education of children.

The pandemic has severely impacted Middlesex County, with millions of dollars lost in revenue from a variety of areas. For example, the lack of real estate transactions, decreased motor vehicles fees, sheriff's revenue, Adult Correction Center revenue, reimbursement of elections expenses from municipalities, etc. It is anticipated that the County will employ SLFRF funds towards revenue lost during the past 18 months, and future periods of budget cycles. The reimbursement of loss revenue will contribute directly to our annual capital improvement program in future years.

Lastly, the County has successfully received Emergency Rental Assistance Program ("ERA" or "Program") funding, \$24M from ERA 1 and \$28M from ERA 2. It has engaged the services of an outside consultant to assist in the development, management and oversight of the Program and has enlisted a digital web portal provider to enable applications to be processed and managed electronically to facilitate payments, track important data and to maintain a robust audit trail.

Multiple community-based organizations have also been engaged to provide case managers to assist applicants and landlords in completing their applications, determining eligibility, and providing recommendations on rental and utility assistance payments to County officials. To date, the County has distributed more than \$20M in rental and utility assistance to more than 1500 applicants.

One project that is being funded with ARPA Funds that will contribute towards addressing the disproportional impact that COVID-19 has had on County communities, is the following capital construction project.

Project: Multi-Purpose Community Venue/Student Center
Funding amount: \$20M

Middlesex County's project comprises the construction of two essential facilities: the Student Center and Multipurpose Community Venue, focusing on "Maternal, Child, and Family Health." The Student Center will become a key contributor to the enhancement of Maternal, Child, and Family Health within Middlesex County. Through diverse healthcare services, including health clinics, vaccination events, and cancer screenings, it provides comprehensive support to mothers, children, and families, addressing a wide array of health needs. This proactive and accessible approach plays a critical role in disease prevention, early diagnosis, and ensuring that families have equitable access to essential clinical care. Moreover, the Student Center's proposed approach to combat food insecurity, exemplified by its emergency dining area, kitchen facilities, and food distribution events, create a holistic approach that addresses the immediate nutritional needs of families, further bolstering its role in advancing the holistic well-being of mothers, children, and families in Middlesex County.

Middlesex County faces a pressing need to enhance its public health infrastructure and support vulnerable populations, particularly those experiencing a lack of basic needs, including essential healthcare services. As such, the Student Center and Multipurpose Community Venue will play a pivotal role in meeting these urgent needs. The Student Center will address healthcare services, including pop-up health clinics, vaccination events, and cancer screenings. Meanwhile, the Multipurpose Community Venue will provide essential shelter and emergency services during crises, ensuring vulnerable populations have a safe haven. Furthermore, these facilities aim to increase awareness about available support services and promote health equity through partnerships and collaborations with local organizations and agencies

Middlesex County is steadfast in its pursuit of health equity, striving to ensure that every resident, irrespective of their background, enjoys equitable access to vital healthcare services, resources, and opportunities. By constructing the Student Center and Multipurpose Community Venue in a strategically chosen location, the County is actively working to reduce barriers to access for vulnerable populations. Through collaborations with local organizations and agencies, the County aims to pool resources and expertise, fostering a collective commitment to addressing the multifaceted health challenges faced by our diverse communities. These facilities not only provide immediate support for basic needs and healthcare services but also empower individuals with knowledge and awareness, creating a more equitable, inclusive, and healthier Middlesex County where everyone can thrive.

Project: Fire Academy Warehouse
Funding amount: \$12M

The County has determined to utilize ARPA funds for use of a new Fire Academy Warehouse (“Warehouse”) for the County’s Fire Training Facility located in the Borough of Sayreville. The Warehouse will provide for the increased storage of: personal protection equipment (“PPE”) that may be needed for future disasters and other safety equipment; cleaning supplies; additional essential parts kept as a precaution due to supply chain issues; use for training and additional office space to ensure social distancing for essential work to continue in the event of another pandemic; placement of an Emergency Operations Center (“EOC”) for (an incident management/backup EOC for Middlesex County’s OEM).

The Borough of Sayreville is located nearby the City of New Brunswick and City of Perth Amboy, both Qualified Census Tracts that include disproportionately impacted households, and nearby other similarly situated communities. Residents in these communities will benefit from the Fire Academy Warehouse being constructed for the reasons stated above.

For future infrastructure projects utilizing SLFRF funds, vendors must comply with the following ‘workforce’ related requirements by state statutes:

- EEO/Affirmative Action compliance
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- NJ Anti-Discrimination Provisions
- Prevailing Wage (when applicable)
- Public Works Contractor Registration

In conclusion, the County is deeply committed to addressing the disproportionate impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on low-income and marginalized communities. The County will continue examine and assess this issue closely and ensure that SLFRF funds are utilized to address the greatest areas of impact identified from this investigation.



RECOVERY PLAN 2024

	Expenditure Category	Expended	Obligated
1.1	Vaccination Support	679,461	679,461
1.12	Mental Health	405,069	405,069
1.14	Public Health	549,672	549,672
1.2	Covid Testing Support	1,389,954	1,389,954
1.3	Contact Tracing Support	139,662	139,662
1.4	Prevention in Congregate Settings	4,119,483	4,119,483
1.5	PPE	180,703	180,703
1.7	Other Health Expenses	7,008,179	13,274,179
1.7a	Fire Academy	1,907,775	12,762,000
1.7	LANDFILL	2,225,304	2,225,304
	MCUA		12,044,696
	CIO Project		27,000,000
2.1	Household Assistance: Food Program:	50,614	50,614
2.16	Long-Term Housing Security	759,461	759,461
2.2	Negative Economic Impacts	2,715	2,715
2.22	Strong Healthy Communities	25,151	25,151
2.37	Economic Impact Other	6,043,053	6,043,053
7.1	Administrative Support	474,448	974,448
9.2	Surface Transportation	3,373,136	3,373,136
3.1	Payroll Costs for Public Health, Safety	36,881,939	64,249,062
6.1	Revenue Replacement	10,000,000	10,000,000
	Total Grant	160,247,822	160,247,822
	Total Remaining	-	-