

County of Burlington Recovery Plan



State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds 2024 Report

COUNTY OF BURLINGTON

2024 Recovery Plan

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

The County of Burlington in New Jersey was awarded approximately \$86.5 million under the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF). Although the threat of the pandemic is over, the County of Burlington, along with our residents and businesses are still in the recovering stage economically.

Like most counties across the nation, the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for our government operations, local businesses and our residents. As our economy and communities struggled, Burlington County created new programs that offered assistance to both businesses and residents through the use of state and federal funding. These programs were vitally important and served to help both residents and businesses recover and help our economy grow.

Burlington County is utilizing the funding in several focus areas: public health, business grants & loans, residents assistance, mental health, food assistance, public safety, revenue loss, connectivity and infrastructure improvements.

Uses of Funds

The County is utilizing funding under the following expenditure categories: Public Health (EC1), Negative Economic Impacts (EC2), Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC3), Infrastructure (EC5), and Revenue Replacement (EC6).

Public Health (EC 1)



Throughout the pandemic, Burlington County made safeguarding public health its top priority and expended operating funds for testing, vaccination, contact tracing, outreach campaigns and personal protective equipment (PPE) for first responders, long-term care facilities personnel and frontline public employees.

Mental Health Services (EC 1.12) – Suicide Prevention



Mental Health is an important topic that the Burlington County Commissioners are addressing. The Commissioners have created a teen suicide prevention program that addresses mental health concerns and issues young adults within our most vulnerable communities are facing. The Commissioners have authorized the Department of Human Services to manage this project that includes guest speakers, seminars and sessions where peers discuss mental health and other topics. This program is beginning for the 2024-25 academic year.

Other Public Health Services (EC 1.14) - Community Outreach Program



Community outreach is also an important aspect in assisting our residents. Many people need county, state or federal services and help, but they do not know where to go to get it or how to apply. Burlington County launched a Community Outreach team that traveled into disadvantaged and underserved communities within the county. Team members knocked on doors to educate and assist residents with accessing services and programs. The outreach team also made phone calls and sent text messages.

Burlington County utilized these outreach teams multiple times to ensure our residents had access to services. Many residents in the areas that the team visited had difficulty with transportation, so having access and information brought to them bridged a huge service gap.

Public Safety Training

Training our public safety professionals is another top priority for Burlington County. When first responders are properly trained and equipped, our residents are better protected. The County is undertaking various vital upgrades to public safety training systems and existing equipment.

Community Violence Interventions (EC 1.11) – Firearms Automated Training Simulator



An upgraded and updated Firearms Training Simulator, also known as FATS, is currently being installed in the Burlington County Public Safety Building. The original version was more than a decade old and needed to be enhanced to reflect current situations and new best practices. This system provides local and regional police officers and federal agents with real-life scenarios they may encounter on patrol or in investigations to test their split-second reactions and decisions.

Virtual training simulators have been proven to improve speed, accuracy, judgment in the use of force, and overall ability while reducing training time, logistics, and cost for law enforcement officers. The County's FATS system trains county, local, state, and federal officers and is vital to public safety.

Other Public Health Services (EC 1.14) – Fire Training Academy Updates



The Burlington County Fire Training Academy at the Emergency Services Training Center trains thousands of area firefighters and other emergency personnel each year. This training is critical to public safety and to the wellbeing of first responders. The Fire Academy uses life-like fire training houses and a vehicle to simulate real fire conditions.

Burlington County has used the funds to update this equipment to ensure that first responders are properly trained and that the residents of Burlington County remain safe. The fire training simulators were nearing the end of their useful life and updates to the technology were no longer available. The County replaced the technology, hardware and software of the burn buildings and vehicle. The burners and other fire safety equipment were also updated and enhanced. The entire system was renovated so that the firefighters have the best and safest equipment possible while they learn to protect the public.

Office of Emergency Management

Burlington County takes the lead in our county for emergency response and supports local emergency management offices. Our county is the largest county in New Jersey, covering 827 square miles. That is a vast area to support if a disaster or emergency situation occurs. Having the proper vehicles and equipment to respond to those critical, time-sensitive situations is vital to keeping our residents safe.

Other Public Health Services (EC 1.14) – Emergency Operations Command Vehicle



The Burlington County Office of Emergency Management will be replacing our existing mobile emergency operation vehicle that has reached the end of its useful life. The mobile command vehicle is used to support planned community educational activities and is available to respond to emergency events throughout the County. Having a fully functional emergency command vehicle allows County personnel to respond rapidly to various situations where coordinated relief and recovery operations are needed.

The vehicle has been ordered and the county is waiting for it to be built to specifications.

Negative Economic Impacts (EC 2)

The County's residents' health, safety and wellbeing are top priorities for the county. The County of Burlington wants to ensure our residents have access to programs and services they need.

Household Assistance: Food Programs (EC 2.1) – Programs for Food Distribution and Addressing Food Insecurities



Food insecurity has been an issue for many years, but the pandemic brought the topic to the forefront, demonstrating that thousands of residents need assistance with providing basic nutrition for their families. The Commissioners partnered with a local food pantry to distribute free fruits and vegetables, meats, prepared meals and shelf stable boxes of food each month. Thousands of residents were able to feed their families because of this important initiative. Many free food distribution programs in the region ceased to operate after only a few months. Burlington County continued to provide this much-needed help for the past couple of years, but the County realized that local pantries are much more equipped to assist residents in their areas.

Burlington County created a grant program for area food pantries, food banks and soup kitchens. Local non-profit organizations that offer relief for residents experiencing food insecurity can apply for funding. The funding can be used for operational costs, food and other supplies.

Housing Support: Other Housing Assistance (EC 2.18) – Housing Stabilization Programs



Keeping our residents safe and in their homes is a primary goal for Burlington County. Many were out of work for extended periods of time, laid off or their place of employment went out of business. This created a hardship for thousands of residents, and many fell behind on rent and mortgage payments. They also put off needed repairs to their homes because of lack of funding, building supplies costing much more than before COVID-19 and other factors. In some instances, these repairs, if not completed, could lead to homelessness.

Burlington County created a program for Housing Stabilization that includes funding the Heater Repairs Program, the Emergency Home Repairs Program, and other housing assistance for low-income homeowners. These programs provide financial assistance to low-income Burlington County homeowners to avoid homelessness.

Long Term Housing Security: Affordable Housing (EC 2.15) – Grant Funding for Affordable Housing Projects



The Commissioners created a grant program for affordable housing to be created or built in Burlington County. Grants will be given to qualifying proposals who will create affordable houses in the county. Rental fees and housing prices have skyrocketed causing many residents to no longer be able to afford their homes. More low rent and low-cost housing options are vitally important to the residents of Burlington County.

Not-For-Profit Assistance (EC 2.34) – Arts Grant Program



The Burlington County Commissioners recognize that not-for-profits also struggled during the pandemic and have been slower with their recovery. Art groups and organizations were hit particularly hard so the Commissioners established an Arts Grant program where local art entities can submit a proposal for funding projects that will benefit the community and enrich the lives of the residents. These arts grants can be used for programming or operational continuation. Many of their funding sources had stopped during COVID-19 or had been repurposed away from the arts. These organizations are an important part of our County's economy.

Other Programs to Support Communities and Address Negative Economic Impacts:

Veteran-Owned Business Grants



The County Commissioners are dedicated to assisting local businesses. Veteran-owned businesses had the opportunity to apply for a grant to help them recover from the effects of the pandemic. Many had to close their doors, lost revenue or had to make significant changes to their businesses in order to meet public health concerns. These grants will assist in their recovery.

Premium Pay (EC 4)

Public Sector Employees (EC 4.1) – Premium Pay



The County Commissioners recognized county employees for going above and beyond during the pandemic, risking their health and wellbeing.

Infrastructure (EC 5)

Water and Sewer: Other (EC 5.18) - Sewage Line Infrastructure Improvements



Sewerage infrastructure is vital for residents' health and wellbeing. Burlington County is planning sewer improvements at the Burlington County Resource Recovery Complex. Water treatment facilities at the complex will be created to recycle and renew wastewater that is generated

The County Commissioners and Farmers Against Hunger of New Jersey entered into an agreement that allows the organization to farm a section of Rainbow Meadow Park to help provide free fruits and vegetables to those in need. The park, which was formerly a farm, lacks sewer service. The Commissioners are partnering with Delran township to use funds to run the sewer line and connect the park to township utilities. This service will allow Farmers Against Hunger to expand their services for the good of our residents.

Broadband: Other Projects (EC 5.21) – Burlco Connects

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of infrastructure, particularly access to high-quality internet that can enable work, education and health care access. Individuals and communities that lack affordable access are at a severe disadvantage.



To help close the digital divide, the County is installing fiber optic upgrades and replacements in county parks and buildings near disproportionately disadvantaged communities and others lacking high-quality internet access. The need for reliable high-speed internet service became vital to continuing education, doing business, receiving government services, and even healthcare virtual visits. The Commissioners created the Burlington County Connects initiative that provides free wi-fi in all county buildings and also county parks facilities.

Fiber optic cabling will provide the public access to high-speed reliable internet service in areas that are lacking the service. The upgrades are also expected to expand opportunities for employment, enhance public safety and help bolster economic activity. 60% done – 100% done parks WiFi.

Revenue Replacement (EC 6)

Revenue Replacement (EC 6.1) – Provision of Government Services



To date, the County has allocated approximately \$42 million to replace public sector revenue loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding to replace revenue losses is critical to health and wellbeing of Burlington County’s residents because it ensures that vital government services throughout the county continue. The County’s allocation covers each of the four years of the program.

The calculation used to determine revenue loss is based on the formula in the Final Rule, as of December 31, 2020. General revenues subject to the loss calculation include amounts collected by subordinate agencies, as defined by the Census Bureau’s Individual State Descriptions 2017 Census of Governments report.

In accordance with the Compliance and Reporting Guide: State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds issued by the United States Department of the Treasury, the County has utilized the eligible costs identified as Revenue Replacement Funds to cover various government services. Of the \$28.6 million in revenue losses disbursed to date, \$17.5 million was anticipated as revenue within the 2022, 2023 and 2024 Operating Budgets and approximately \$2 million was used to reimburse the Motor Vehicle Fines Fund. Toll revenue losses of \$15.6 million were disbursed to the Burlington County Bridge Commission to fund the Burlington-Bristol Bridge Tower Span Deck Replacement Project.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes



The County's infrastructure and public health programs are designed to promote equitable outcomes and address disparities. The County invested in testing, vaccinations, food-security assistance and outreach to ensure that all populations have access to critical services and support. The County also created broadband improvements specifically to ensure all residents can access affordable high-speed internet to try to bridge any digital divides within local communities.

Community Engagement



Burlington County has a strong connection with our communities, civic leaders, faith-based leaders and local town governments. The County Commissioners attend as many community meetings and events as possible and are always opening dialogues about services and programs that effect the community. The County has been soliciting ideas and comments from the community and welcomes additional input from our stakeholders. More community engagement will be planned.

Labor Practices



As infrastructure projects are identified, the County will review applicable labor standards to promote effective and efficient delivery of high-quality infrastructure projects that also support economic recovery. Prevailing wage requirements will be utilized for any work done on behalf of the County.

Use of Evidence & Performance Review

Burlington County promotes equity and inclusion throughout the county and recognizes the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 had on low- and moderate-income communities. All of the programs and services created through the usage of SLFRF funds are designed to bridge gaps and distribute funding and services to those in need.



Many of the programs and projects Burlington County is undertaking are in the planning or initial purchasing phase. Once the projects are completed or near to completion, they will allow for assessment and evaluations. The County intends to use relevant sources to assess the level of evidence for any interventions and will identify evidence-based models that could be applied with State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) funds.

Burlington County has begun gathering data and statistics from all of the programs that have are currently in place. The County has made tremendous progress in reaching the individual project goals and initial data show thousands of Burlington County residents are benefiting from our programs and services.

More than 20,000 individuals annually have received monthly food boxes during our food distribution events and an estimated 25,000 additional residents will benefit from the County's food pantry grant program.

A veteran-owned business was able to remain open because of an SLFRF funded grant program, and another dozen small businesses were helped through their recovery with other County programs.

Nearly 50 families were able to remain in their homes thanks to aid received through the Burlington County Housing Stabilization Program, which provides assistance to low- and moderate-income homeowners for emergency repairs and other improvements to keep homes safe and livable.

Another 66 low- and moderate-income families will be able to access safe, clean and affordable housing thanks to a new SLFRF-funded grant program that supports the construction of new affordable housing units.

More than 2,500 firefighters train at our fire academy each year, helping to save lives and protect property. Improvements at the Burlington County Emergency Services Training Center will assist with their training and allow them to use the latest technology and best practices to improve response times and other safety measures for our first responders.

More than 3,000 law enforcement officers train on our Firearms Training Simulator system each year to enhance their reaction times, improve split-second judgment calls, and protect the safety of our residents. When first responders are well trained, our residents are safer.

Sewerage infrastructure improvements will also enhance Rainbow Meadow Park in Delran and allow it to become a premier family-friendly outdoor recreation spot. Those improvements will also assist the nonprofit Farmers Against Hunger, which has its headquarters and grows field crops at the park. Last year the organization distributed more than 1.4 million pounds of food that helped feed an estimated 8,000 people weekly.

PROJECT INVENTORY

Project 6.1: Revenue Replacement

Funding amount: \$42,154,700

Project Expenditure Category: EC 6.1 Revenue Replacement - Provision of Government Services

Project Overview

- The County calculated general revenue loss for 2020, 2021 and 2022 as compared to the base year of 2019 at \$42.1 million, which includes revenue losses of subordinate agencies, as defined by the Census Bureau's Individual State Descriptions 2017 Census of Governments.
- The County intends to utilize revenue replacement in each of the four years of the Recovery Program and has projected future years' revenue losses based on 2020 deficits.

Project 4.1: Premium Pay

Funding amount: \$5,005,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 4.1 Public Sector Employees

Project 3.3: Retention Incentives

Funding amount: \$2,838,500

Project Expenditure Category: EC 3.3 Public Sector Workforce: Other

Project 2.15: Affordable Housing

Funding amount: \$3,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 2.15 Long-term Housing Security: Affordable Housing

Project Overview

- The Commissioners created a grant program for affordable housing to be created or built in Burlington County.
- Grants will be given to qualifying proposals who will create affordable houses in the county.
- More affordable and low-cost housing options are vitally important to the residents of Burlington County.

Project 1.14c: Community Outreach

Funding amount: \$1,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 1.14 Public Health – Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Burlington County launched a Community Outreach team that traveled into disadvantaged and underserved communities within the county.
- Team members knocked on doors to educate and assist residents with accessing services and programs.
- The outreach team also made phone calls and sent text messages.

Project 5.21: Burlington County Connects – Broadband Improvements

Funding amount: \$7,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 5.21 Broadband: Other projects

Project Overview

- To help close the digital divide, the County is installing fiber optic upgrades and replacements in county parks and buildings in disproportionately disadvantaged communities and others lacking high-quality internet access.
- The need for reliable high-speed internet service became vital to continuing education, doing business, receiving government services, and even healthcare virtual visits.
- Provides free wi-fi in all county buildings and county parks facilities.
- The upgrades are also expected to expand opportunities for employment, enhance public safety and help bolster economic activity.

Project 5.18a: Sewer Line Infrastructure - Resource Recovery Complex

Funding amount: \$7,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 5.18 Water and Sewer: Other

Project Overview

- Sewerage infrastructure is vital for residents' health and wellbeing. Burlington County is planning sewer improvements and a wastewater treatment plant at the Burlington County Resource Recovery Complex.
- Water treatment at the complex will be created to recycle and renew waste water that is generated.

Project 2.1a: Emergency Food Distribution

Funding amount: \$320,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 2.1 Household Assistance: Food Programs

Project Overview

- The Commissioners partnered with a local food pantry to distribute free fruits and vegetables, meats, prepared meals and shelf stable boxes of food each month.
- More than 20,000 residents annually were able to feed their families because of this important initiative. Residents are still struggling to recover from the pandemic and this free food assistance helps them not have to choose between feeding their families and paying other bills.

Project 2.1b: Food Insecurity Grants

Funding amount: \$2,500,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 2.1 Household Assistance: Food Programs

Project Overview

- Burlington County created a grant program for area food pantries, food banks and soup kitchens.
- Local non-profit organizations that offer relief for residents experiencing Food Insecurity can apply for funding.
- The funding can be used for operational costs, food and other supplies that will directly assist residents.

Project 5.18b: Sewer Line Infrastructure – Rainbow Meadows Park

Funding amount: \$1,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 5.18 Water and Sewer: Other

Project Overview

- Use funds to run the sewer line and connect the park to township utilities.
- This service will allow Farmers Against Hunger to expand their services for the good of our residents.

Project 2.34: Grants for Non-profit Arts Organizations

Funding amount: \$250,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 2.34 Assistance to Impacted Nonprofit Organizations (Impacted or Disproportionately Impacted)

Project Overview

- Art groups and organizations were hit particularly hard so the Commissioners established an Arts Grant program where local art entities can submit a proposal for funding projects that will benefit the community and enrich the lives of the residents.
- These arts grants can be used for programing or operational continuation.

Project 1.14b: Emergency Operations Command Vehicle

Funding amount: \$1,600,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 1.14 Public Health – Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Purchasing the vehicle and outfit with equipment for responding to disasters and emergencies to prevent community violence.
- Critical to public safety and to the wellbeing of residents.
- This vehicle can respond to those critical, time-sensitive situations is vital to keeping our residents safe.
- An emergency command vehicle can be taken to any situation where coordinated relief and recovery operations can be organized from the vehicle.

Project 1.11: Firearms Automated Training Simulator

Funding amount: \$135,800

Project Expenditure Category: EC 1.11 Public Health - Community Violence Interventions

Project Overview

- Purchasing the hardware and software for law enforcement training to prevent community violence.
- Provides police officers with real-life scenarios they may encounter on patrol or investigations to test their split-second reactions and decisions.
- Virtual training simulators have been proven to improve speed, accuracy, judgment in the use of force, and overall ability while reducing training time, logistics, and cost for law enforcement officers.
- The County's FATS system trains county, local, state, and federal officers and is vital to public safety.

Project 1.14a: Fire Training Academy Updates

Funding amount: \$339,200

Project Expenditure Category: EC 1.14 Public Health – Other Public Health Services

Project Overview

- Purchasing the hardware and software for first responder training to prevent community violence.
- Critical to public safety and to the wellbeing of first responders.
- Uses life-like fire training houses and vehicle to simulate real fire conditions.
- Burlington County will use funds to update this equipment to ensure that first responders are properly trained and that the residents of Burlington County remain safe.

Project 1.12: Diversity & Other Inclusion Programs

Funding amount: \$250,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 1.12 Public Health – Mental Health Services

Project Overview

- Commissioners will provide a grant to the Superintendent of Schools to create a mental health program for schools that will target teens and pre-teens in disproportionately disadvantaged communities.
- This grant will allow for schools to create peer counseling and professional programming for at-risk youth.

Project 2.37a: Small Business Grants for Veteran Owned Businesses

Funding amount: \$100,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 2.37 Economic Impact Assistance: Other

Project Overview

- A grants program for veteran-owned businesses.
- These businesses can apply for grants to help them recover from the effects of the pandemic. Many had to close their doors, lost revenue or had to make significant changes to their businesses in order to meet public health concerns.
- These grants will assist in their recovery.

Project 2.37b: Housing Stabilization Programs

Funding amount: \$1,250,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 2.37 Economic Impact Assistance: Other

Project Overview

- Burlington County created a program for Housing Stabilization that includes funding the Heater Repairs Program, the Emergency Home Repairs Program, and other housing assistance for low-income and senior citizens in disproportionately impacted communities can stay in their homes.
- These programs provide financial assistance to low-income Burlington County homeowners to avoid homelessness.

Project 1.12: Teen Suicide Prevention & Other Mental Health Services

Funding amount: \$100,000

Project Expenditure Category: EC 1.12 Public Health – Mental Health Services

Project Overview

- The Commissioners created teen suicide prevention programming that will address teen mental health concerns within our most vulnerable communities.
- The Commissioners authorized the Department of Human Services to create seminars and workshops to address teen suicide.