

# Hennepin County

## Progress report

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF)  
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

March – December 2021



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## General overview

Hennepin County will allocate its receipt of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in alignment with its mission and vision to support residents who are adversely affected by disparities; to support innovative, equitable and sustainable changes in service delivery; to leverage private and public partnerships within our community, and to seek other funding sources to maximize our investments and best position Hennepin County for the future.

Through the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program, Hennepin County has a total award of \$245.9 million to respond to the economic and public health impacts of COVID-19 and to mitigate its impact on the community, residents, and businesses. Key principles and priorities have been set to build upon the county's approach to disparity reduction and to support pandemic recovery efforts. Hennepin County is committed to utilizing a racial equity lens to target resources and focus outcomes on reducing disparities in the following domains: education, employment, health, housing, income, justice, and transportation. In addition to the domain areas, overarching infrastructure and supports have been prioritized.

This February progress report summarizes Hennepin County's SLFRF program from March 2021 through December 2021. Projects are presented by disparity domain area. The following details are provided for each project:

- Project name
- Allocation amount  
*This is the amount of funding allocated for the project. Timelines vary by project.*
- Project description
- Current strategies
- Results  
*This is a description of the results achieved during this progress period (March 2021-December 2021).*
- Next steps  
*This is the work that will occur in the next quarter (January 2022-March 2022).*

# Educational Services

Allocation amount: \$775,000

## Project description

Hennepin County is providing academic tutoring services to county-connected children and youth who are negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic through its Educational Support Services Department. County-connected youth are referred to the program from other services such as Children's Mental Health, Child Protective Services and the juvenile justice system, as well as other county services and programs. Hennepin County's Education Support Services Department strives to address the racial and educational disparities faced by youth who receive county services and address the academic achievement gap of county-connected youth to increase engagement, academic skills, and educational outcomes for students in grades K-12. Academic tutoring services are provided by a contracted provider and students are assessed when they enter the program and again after receiving 30-50 hours of tutoring. Our goal is to provide tutoring services to county-connected youth and help them to grow their skills in math, reading, and other academic subjects.

## Current strategies

Students connected to county services are referred to academic tutoring with a contracted tutoring provider.

Students are assessed when they begin tutoring and a tutoring plan is developed to address any academic needs the student has.

Support is provided to families to help them ensure the students attend tutoring and support the students' educational success.

Staff engage with schools on a regular basis to support tutoring and get input on academic needs for students.

## Results

Academic tutoring services were provided to 181 students during the period of March 3, 2021-December 31, 2022.

## Next steps

During the next quarter, tutoring services will continue for students currently receiving tutoring as needed and new students will continue to be enrolled in academic tutoring services. Academic assessments and reassessments will be completed on a schedule set by the contracted tutoring agency.

# Employment strategies

Allocation amount: \$16,580,000

## Project description

Sustainable employment can make a difference in people's ability to pay for basic needs, bringing stability to individuals and families. This project aims to create and implement a number of employment strategies that will benefit county residents and employers, and, ultimately, the county's overall economic landscape. The county cannot do this work alone. The business community, community-based organizations, educational institutions, and the public workforce system are all critical partners in creating jobs and facilitating access to jobs that pay a livable wage and are in demand. We will work collaboratively to promote equity through the development and implementation of workforce development programs, employment readiness services, and other strategies that prepare and connect residents to employers.

Employment strategies will focus on:

- Partnering with the Housing Stability area to provide employment and training services that will supplement case management and housing-related supports for individuals who already have some level of employment experience and are ready to grow their skills. Services under this project include, but are not limited to, employment coaching, skills development through training and education, and assistance with placement and retention.
- Creating a consortia of workforce development providers that can provide just-in-time employment and training services leading to living-wage jobs by ensuring participants have the skills employers are seeking.
- Creating the Workforce Leadership Council which is the platform the county will use to convene business partners for cross-sector sharing of ideas, promising practices and resources, cultivating strong partnerships to address pandemic-related economic hardships.

## Current strategies

- Provide employment and training services to individuals who have been referred from housing-focused case managers.
- Create a consortia of nonprofit providers that can provide just-in-time employment and training services leading to living-wage jobs by ensuring participants have the skills employers are seeking.
- Create the Workforce Leadership Council which is the platform the county will use to convene business partners for cross-sector sharing of ideas, promising practices and resources, cultivating strong partnerships to address pandemic-related economic hardships.

## Results

For the Employment and Training Services for People Exiting Homelessness initiative:

- Hired program coordinator who will lead this effort in partnership with Housing Stability, Workforce Development and Well-Being.
- Through a competitive RFA process, selected two vendors and negotiated contracts.
- Held meetings with contracted providers and provided an overview, goal of the initiative and discussion of program design.

For WLC and creating consortia of nonprofit providers:

- Completed HR process to classify three limited duration positions and drafted job descriptions.

Worked with internal partners (Purchasing, APEX, Contract Management Services, County Attorney's Office) to identify the umbrella contracting process we will be using to create the consortia of nonprofit providers to provide career pathways programming.

## Next steps

For the Employment and Training Services for People Exiting Homelessness initiative:

- Onboard new program coordinator.
- Identify referral process from housing case managers to the providers.

For WLC and creating consortia of nonprofit providers:

- Hire and onboard three limited duration positions.
  - Finalize Workforce Development contracts.
  - Continue working with internal partners to finalize our umbrella contracting process.
  - Release RFP.
  - Create roster of nonprofit providers.
- Create work plan for creation and launch of Workforce Leadership Council.

# Vaccine Incentives

Allocation amount: \$2,000,000

## Project description

Hennepin County's public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic currently includes significant efforts to provide vaccines to our community, and this incentive program is using this federal funding for vaccine incentives to support those efforts. The research is mixed on the overall effectiveness of vaccine incentive programs, but a widely accepted strategy to increase vaccination uptake involves a focus on rebuilding trust in communities: partnering with communities that have historically experienced medical exploitation, unconsented experimentation, and marginalization is most effective at decreasing vaccine hesitancy<sup>[1]</sup>. Thus, the vaccine incentive programs proposed will be designed to build trust between Hennepin County and its residents with the goal of increasing vaccination rates.

The vaccine incentive program includes:

- Partnering with trusted community groups to host vaccine events and support the provision of free meals, groceries, and/or entertainment.
- Distributing "Thank You" packs to residents who receive vaccinations, the contents of which will be tailored to the targeted population and event location.
  - Community-based businesses may be prioritized for the contents of the "Thank You" packs, e.g., gift cards to local businesses and youth-specific contents such as sports-related items and technology-focused gifts.
- Hosting a lottery program; or
- Other incentives for individuals who get vaccinated, tailored to the needs of the communities served.

<sup>[1]</sup> *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine. National Academies Press; 2020.*

## Current strategies

- Partner with community organizations to promote and support vaccination opportunities for the people they serve and provide the organizations with stipends to offset their costs.
- Visa gift cards are provided to vaccine recipients at county-sponsored events, county clinics, and jail health services.

## Results

- 16,653 \$50 gift cards have been distributed to vaccination recipients.



- Approximately 80 community organizations have provided more than 180 events and received stipends ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000 for their contributions to Hennepin County vaccination efforts, including hosting vaccination clinics at their locations where community members are familiar and comfortable, providing cultural meals to volunteers, and hosting vaccinations at work sites.

### **Next steps**

Public Health will continue the ongoing effort to reduce vaccine disparities while leveraging existing trusted community leader influence. These efforts will include providing community organizations with vaccination support stipends, outreach support and information, and linkages to other partners with similar goals in the community. Public Health is reprioritizing the provision of gift cards. Beginning in January and continuing through March, Public Health will transition to providing gift cards at Hennepin County clinics only.

# Behavioral Health

Allocation amount: \$20,000,000

## Project description

The Behavioral Health project will invest in early interventions, prevent overreliance on deep-end services, and reduce disparities for Hennepin County residents through behavioral health strategies and interventions.

Initiatives toward these intended outcomes include:

1. Expanding School Based Mental Health
2. Developing and expanding a network of culturally specific mental health services
3. Expanding Family Home Visiting
4. Expanding Caring Connections 4 Kids
5. Reforming 911
6. Expanding hours at 1800 Chicago
7. Expanding the embedded police social workers
8. Launching a juvenile behavioral health initiative
9. Expanding Family Response and Stabilization Services
10. Piloting a family-based recovery program
11. Launching a mental health awareness campaign

The measures supported through this effort will provide more than 11,000 people with low-barrier, upstream, whole-person and family supports designed to meet the complex needs of diverse communities. They will leverage multiple funding sources and expand the reach of Hennepin's current investment.

## Current strategies

- Hiring direct service providers and key administrative support to ensure successful launch and sustainability of programs.
- Publishing and preparing RFPs to contract out for services with a focus on culturally specific providers.
- Conducting landscape analysis to determine expansion needs and best approach to growing existing programs being funded with a focus on culturally specific services.
- Developing data infrastructure to measure impact and outcomes of the work and gauge who benefits from the services.

## Results

Results are yet to be seen related to impact on residents.

Current achievements include:

- Hiring 19 staff.
- Releasing 3 RFPs.
- Setting up data collection infrastructure for three programs.
- Engaging culturally specific community providers to build awareness of opportunities and mold plans to best meet community need.

## Next steps

Over the next quarter we will:

- Serve residents.
- Continue to hire staff.
- Complete RFPs and start contracts for services.
- Build out additional data collection tools.
- Begin building Power BI reports for programs administered by county staff.
- Continue community engagement with culturally specific providers.

# Public and Maternal Health

Allocation amount: \$20,000,000

## Project description

This project focuses on rebuilding and strengthening critical public health capabilities and services that are essential to protect community health during the pandemic and in a post-COVID era. Efforts will focus on bolstering public health infectious disease response and coordinated immunization outreach and delivery; increasing and enhancing capacity to respond to public health emergencies; strengthening health promotion programming to mitigate the impacts of COVID in the community; coordinating early childhood development strategies to improve access to early childhood services for families; and supporting maternal health through community-initiated solutions to improve maternal health outcomes for people experiencing poor health outcomes, especially Black and Indigenous birthing individuals in Hennepin County. Foundational to these efforts will be expanded assessment capabilities and increased project management capacity with the aim to address long-standing and newly emerging public health challenges.

The project activities include:

- Expanding existing programs focused on improving maternal health outcomes for Black and Indigenous persons and people of color affected by disparities.
- Developing and implementing a birth justice plan to improve maternal and infant health outcomes.
- Investing in community-initiated solutions and culturally congruent and innovative practices to reduce disparities.
- Increasing departmental capacity for data collection, reporting and analysis to support measurement strategies.

## Current strategies

Strategies for this reporting period included developing professional service agreements to provide funding to programs to expand their services in scope and reach.

## Results

A project manager from Internal Services assisted in developing a project plan and timeline as well as project management infrastructure. A core project team met weekly to accomplish project tasks and planning.

Contract Management Services assisted in developing service agreements to get funding to county partners to expand on existing maternal health and wrap-around services. Budgets and scope of work have been developed and agreements are almost finalized.

A request for applications is being created for the facilitation of the Birth Justice Collaborative and development of a strategic plan.

### **Next steps**

- Hire five FTEs to support the work of the initiative.
- Execute professional service agreements with county partners to expand services.
- Release a request for applications for a consultant to assist with developing the Birth Justice Collaborative; contract with consultant and begin community engagement and collaborative work.
- Develop evaluation plan.

# Food Insecurity

Allocation amount: \$2,825,000

## Project description

The purpose of the Food Insecurity project is to provide financial support to organizations providing food access to communities impacted by COVID-19. Awards will be made through an application process.

Organizations must meet the following criteria:

1. Provide for the food insecurity needs of Hennepin County residents through the distribution of perishable and non-perishable food items including culturally specific food to mitigate the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis for people of color and low-income communities, since the organizations' services prioritize racial equity, inclusion, and culturally specific outreach.
2. Be registered as "active/good standing" with the Minnesota Secretary of State.
3. Have the capacity to serve Black, Indigenous, and people of color in a manner that considers culturally specific foods.
4. Deliver healthy food items whenever possible.
5. Be a trusted faith-based organization, community organization, educational institution or nonprofit.
6. Be part of a longer-term strategy to address food insecurity issues in Hennepin County.

## Current strategies

Currently we have 75 community agencies that have been awarded funding for food insecurity. Each agency determines how they want to distribute, advertise, etc., food products. The award period for 2021 is drawing to a close in that most agencies have spent funds and are in the process of submitting final reports. All but one organization has expressed interest in continuing to address food insecurity in 2022. All amendments to the current award agreements providing for adding funding to the existing awards in 2022 should funds become available.

## Results

We have provided continued funding for 75 organizations.

85% of organizations were able to meet or exceed food distribution efforts.

We have distributed 96% of all funds earmarked for food insecurity.

The majority of distribution efforts included culturally appropriate food specific to Spanish-speaking, African and Asian communities.

### **Next steps**

We are seeking additional funding for 2022. If approved for funding, we will secure new budgets and amend all agreements. Once agreements are in place, we will continue processing payments to local organizations to address food insecurity issues. A larger group is meeting to discuss long-term strategies for addressing food insecurity needs including the development and issuance of an RFP for release in 2023.

# Services for Unhoused Persons

Allocation amount: \$36,070,000

## Project description

There are multiple projects included in this umbrella description including (but not limited to) diversion, shelter services, encampment response, and the housing-focused case management team called Homeless to Housing Program. The purpose of Homeless to Housing is to provide housing-focused case management services and direct assistance to persons transitioning to permanent housing. Case management is at the heart of the housing-focused response system. The Street Voices of Change Shelter Bill of Rights includes the right to case management, and, in the county's previous re-visioning work, case management was directed to be the number one funding priority. This project sustains the efforts that have expanded as a result of the pandemic operation to work with people in shelters and unsheltered settings year-round. Case managers work with any individual who is experiencing literal homelessness (sheltered or unsheltered settings). While the primary focus is housing, case management may include assistance with benefits, connection to supportive mainstream services and basic needs.

Also, part of the Services for Unhoused Persons is funding for shelter diversion, eliminating self-pay in shelter, continuing 24/7 shelter access, funding for low-barrier and culturally specific shelters, and capital improvement funding for shelters and board and lodge facilities, as well as a two-year encampment response that will contract 1-2 agencies to create a coordinated and housing-focused encampment response ongoing. The purpose of these initiatives is to continue and expand on the progress made with previous pandemic funding by increasing outflow into permanent housing from sheltered and unsheltered settings and to make people's homelessness as brief and non-recurring as possible.

## Current strategies

Have employed national best practices such as person-centered care and progressive engagement for the new housing-focused case management team (Homeless to Housing). Have already received over 200 referrals since 11/15/21 with 15 people housed to date and counting.

Drafting and releasing RFPs in partnership with city of Minneapolis and state in order to create as much impact with funding as possible.

People with lived experience are advising on all RFPs and program development.

## Results

Shelter diversion



Completed a procurement plan for a direct select, one-year contract with Catholic Charities for family diversion to continue current programming.

Completed procurement plan for a system-wide diversion contract that would start by or before September.

Continuing to explore whether this service would be better operated if brought in-house. Knowing the timelines involved in an RFP, we are pursuing both options simultaneously.

Lowering barriers (e.g., eliminating self-pay)

Successfully amended Salvation Army's Harbor Light Center contract to implement funding to eliminate self-pay.

#### 24/7 shelter

Procurement plan was submitted for a competitive RFP (hopefully released by March).

#### Low-barrier shelters

Direct select contracts are in the works for both low-barrier shelters (AICDC Homeward Bound and Avivo Village).

#### Shelter and board and lodge capital

Both RFPs have been released and close at the end of January.

#### Encampment response

RFP was released and closes on January 13. Hope to have a provider in place by March.

#### Homeless to Housing case management team

The entire team has been hired and onboarded. The only exception is the final supervisor position that is currently externally posted.

Team goals have been established and a weekly and bi-weekly data analysis established to ensure continual improvement.

Taking community referrals (began on 11/15/21) and working with people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

Over 15 housing outcomes to date (with many more in progress).

### **Next steps**

#### Shelter diversion

Manage a thoughtful RFP process and articulate the vision of a system-wide diversion provider.

Draft a memo to guide the decision around whether we should pursue the RFP or bring this service in-house.

#### 24/7 shelter

Release the RFP, host a bidder meeting for Q&A. Evaluate proposals (including people with lived experience of homelessness on the review panel).

Low-barrier shelters

Finalize and implement contracts with Avivo Village and AICDC Homeward Bound.

Shelter and board and lodge capital

Respond to questions from applicants and evaluate proposals (including people with lived experience of homelessness on the review panel).

Choose providers while prioritizing projects that would have the most impact and be completed the fastest.

Will coordinate with the state regarding their simultaneous shelter capital RFP to maximize funding opportunities.

Encampment response

Evaluate proposals (including people with lived experience of homelessness on the review panel) and select provider(s).

Begin working on Phase 1 of the project implementation which will include people with lived experience of homelessness.

Homeless to Housing team

Continue to work toward team goal of housing 1,000 people per year.

Will continue to strengthen partnerships with community to ensure quality referrals.

Continue to invest in team so they have the training, resources and support needed to meet the team's housing goal.

# Housing Recovery

Allocation amount: \$46,000,000

## Project description

The economic impacts of COVID-19 were most heavily felt by people with low incomes, and by Black and Indigenous people and people of color (BIPOC). Of individuals requesting emergency rental assistance in Hennepin County, nearly two-thirds have incomes below 30% of the area median income (AMI), and 80% are BIPOC.

Housing Recovery will create or preserve approximately 2,000 units of affordable housing and support more than 100 households in buying homes through the following activities:

1. Investments to immediately increase affordable multifamily housing production, such as:
  - Gap and acceleration funding for affordable housing projects serving populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency.
  - Investments to address a backlog of deferred rehab need in naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) properties (a primary source of housing for populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency) and support for additional nonprofit preservation acquisition of at-risk NOAH properties.
2. Acquisition of properties supporting affordable housing along the housing continuum, especially for single adults who were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency and are now struggling with homelessness/housing instability.
3. Homeownership programs targeting populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

## Current strategies

- Completed procurement plans for all funds and analyzed regulations in discussion with the ACA and other ARP recipients in order to refine implementation plans.
- Completed RFP for affordable housing development projects with construction cost increases incurred due to COVID-19.
- Released RFP to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing.
- Developed RFP for projects that will accelerate the development of affordable housing and homeownership opportunities.
- Secured a proprietary dataset to inform NOAH financing strategies.

## Results

Recommended first funding awards: \$1.48 million to cover pandemic-related construction cost increases in order to create 225 units and preserve 122 units of affordable housing.

## Next steps

- Award the remainder of funds for affordable housing development projects with construction cost increases incurred due to COVID-19.
- Award first round of funds to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing.
- Release RFP for projects that will accelerate the development of affordable housing and homeownership opportunities.

# Eviction Reduction

Allocation amount: \$2,200,000

## Project description

During the COVID-19 public health emergency there has been a dramatic loss of income for many households in Hennepin County, placing people at high risk for losing their housing. While evictions were halted during the moratorium, that has now been lifted and Hennepin County's most vulnerable renters are faced with eviction. Even if renters can pay overdue balances and maintain their housing, they still face future barriers associated with having an eviction filing on their record. Providing legal representation to prevent evictions, expunging unlawful detainer records, and assisting clients in navigating housing issues is vital to ensure housing stability.

The primary goal of the Eviction Reduction: Tenant Navigation Services project is to connect households facing an eviction filing with financial help and any other resource that will prevent eviction or loss of housing.

As the eviction moratorium sunsets, more households in Hennepin County will be facing eviction filings. Non-payment of rent is the stated reason for over 90% of tenants receiving an eviction notice. The project will place three navigator positions in housing court as well as at the Tenant Resource Center, where they will actively engage tenants during the pre-filing as well as on the date of court appearance with connection to programs that can help pay rent, utilities and other household needs. This team is part of a broader group that includes legal, mediation and other resources.

## Current strategies

- Tenant Resource Center hotline for tenants is staffed.
- Outreach at eviction filing to offer legal and economic support.
- Rent assistance triage occurs at first appearance and pre-trial hearings.
- Legal staff represent tenants at no cost to help avoid eviction.
- Staff address barriers for housing stability such as health, economic and legal record of eviction.

## Results

As of December 31, 2021, 100% of clients experiencing poverty have received representation on eviction matters in Hennepin County. Of the clients represented in court, the majority have had a favorable outcome which often includes a settlement that expunges the filing from the client's record to remove barriers for future rentals. Housing Stability and ARS partnered to broadly communicate with residents by creating help lines and sending resources to tenants in all filed eviction matters. Both

departments staff all the eviction court calendars to be readily available to connect tenants with legal, economic and social services.

**Next steps**

Increase staffing to handle eviction cases in court and expungement of eviction cases and to expand outreach to individuals who are facing an eviction that is not yet filed.

# Emergency Shelter Facility

Allocation amount: \$3,500,000

## Project description

The existing Simpson emergency shelter is operated at the Simpson United Methodist Church building at 2740 First Avenue South in Minneapolis. However, the building's deteriorating condition means that Simpson's ability to continue operating the shelter safely there will soon be seriously affected. Simpson's plan to re-develop the site of the church building will address that with a new 5-story building comprising a new shelter designed to support person-centered services for at least 70 individuals, 42 units of permanent supportive housing for persons who have experienced homelessness, and community and service space to provide intensive services to both shelter and permanent housing residents.

The demand for shelter has fluctuated throughout the pandemic but the Simpson shelter has been at or near full capacity throughout. The new shelter will provide an invaluable resource for those experiencing homelessness, including any people displaced through the economic impacts of the pandemic. It will have two components: a permanent supporting housing component and an emergency shelter component. In alignment with the CDC guidance on community health during the pandemic, the new facility will improve upon spacing and separation of sleeping spaces by doing away with bunk beds, adding space between sleeping areas and reducing the number of guests sleeping in each room. These measures, along with the on-site health clinic, will make for much safer shelter operations during the pandemic. Finally, Simpson will be able to build on what has been accomplished so far in providing emergency shelter for adults experiencing homelessness and implement a safe, healthy, person-focused and housing-focused program.

The Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority has supported this development with an award of \$840,000 in Supportive Housing funds for the permanent supportive housing component of the proposed development. Similarly, the City of Minneapolis, has committed \$1,260,000 from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) to support the permanent supportive housing component. However, the lack of financing options for the shelter component of this development has been a barrier in obtaining other financing to support the permanent supportive housing component.

This project utilizes the county's federal ARPA-SLFRF to contribute funding for construction of the new shelter component of this project. Staff from the City of Minneapolis are proposing a matching allocation from their federal ARPA funding. Transferring the county funds to the city will allow the city to manage this project. Simpson has also secured \$3.5 million in private gifts and pledges from the community to support the project. All these allocations of funding together would close the funding gap for the shelter and will greatly assist the whole project in moving forward. This will ensure that Simpson can continue providing emergency shelter as part of our homeless response system, which

has been a critical resource during the pandemic and as a result of the economic impacts of the pandemic. The community cannot afford to lose this resource.



# Economic Recovery: Aid to Nonprofit

Allocation amount: \$2,900,000

## Project description

Many nonprofit organizations face significant challenges because of the pandemic, including organizations that provide meaningful services in disadvantaged communities. Many are vital community and cultural assets, such as performing arts organizations, youth- or family-oriented activity centers, and others that serve as community gathering spaces. In some cases, the same nonprofits that faced the most acute financial hardship from the pandemic are now called upon to increase their programming to meet higher levels of need in the communities they serve.<sup>1</sup> Some organizations have physical space constraints in light of increased capacity needs, and face challenges accessing capital needed to expand or renovate.

In response, Economic Recovery Aid to Nonprofits initiatives are designed to address the range of economic impacts and needs that nonprofits are experiencing. An initiative focused on community assets is designed to advance economic recovery of the hardest hit communities through financial support of nonprofits who, in turn, provide some of the most impactful resources in disadvantaged communities. Project funding aims to address the financial needs of the organization, enabling the community asset to renovate or expand and provide increased programming, services and capacity.

In-depth technical assistance aims to address ongoing needs of small nonprofits and build capacity for long-term sustainability beyond recovery. Building on the successes to date of Elevate Business, an expanded network of technical assistance providers will offer inclusive support for Hennepin County nonprofits negatively impacted by the pandemic. Services will include enhanced "back-office" support with specialized consultants able to target specific needs of nonprofits facing economic recovery challenges.

Initiatives supporting economic recovery of nonprofits include:

- Elevate Nonprofits technical assistance
- Community Asset Fund

## Current strategies

The initial phase of the project involves gathering and analyzing data, including community expertise, and evaluating successes and lessons learned from the first year of implementing Elevate Business HC and other pandemic-related relief strategies that included, but did not center, nonprofits. Initiatives are

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<sup>1</sup> See FR p 154 for a similar argument about the importance of nonprofits "helping Americans weather the multitude of challenges presented by the pandemic."

being designed based on these inputs, with intention to center racial equity as well as place-based disparities. Investments in capacity for implementation and inclusive outreach are underway.

## **Results**

Hiring of staff to implement the multiple economic recovery and assistance initiatives for small businesses and nonprofits is underway. One staff person has been hired to develop and implement program evaluation across multiple initiatives, and interviews have been scheduled for an assistant project manager/economic development analyst position.

A series of interviews with key nonprofit service providers, as well as community stakeholder listening sessions with over 65 participants, were held in November-December 2021. Feedback gathered will be used to inform the design and implementation of nonprofit-focused economic recovery initiatives.

## **Next steps**

Next steps include further assessment of specific needs of nonprofits and gaps in resources available. Following further assessment, a series of requests for proposals will be conducted to secure a variety of specialized, culturally competent professional service providers who will deliver enhanced technical and practical assistance to impacted nonprofits. A request for applications will be developed to identify specific projects and beneficiaries eligible for increased support through the community asset initiative.

# Economic Recovery: Small Business Economic Assistance

Allocation amount: \$16,100,000

## Project description

The pandemic devastated Hennepin County small businesses, with disproportionate impacts to very small businesses, minority-owned businesses, and businesses in low-income communities. As a result, the number of businesses open in early 2021 declined by 22% over early 2020. Hardest-hit industries include leisure/hospitality, arts/entertainment, restaurants, fitness and personal services. Race- and gender-based disparities in business ownership and access to capital pre-date and were exacerbated by the pandemic.

As “the agents of change in an economy and the source of increased productivity,”<sup>2</sup> entrepreneurs will drive economic recovery. As a foundational recovery strategy, Elevate Business HC offers enhanced entrepreneur development, a widely accepted evidence-based strategy to grow economic opportunity, growth, and resiliency. It achieves this through specialized and culturally competent technical assistance. Elevate Business HC services represent a multi-faceted approach to support entrepreneurs, mitigate businesses’ financial hardship from the pandemic, and build long-term capacity of local businesses to succeed and grow.

### Innovations include:

A new digital platform with “one-stop” access to business support resources.

Inclusive outreach in disadvantaged communities, with community-based organizations serving business owners of color, that drives equitable access to resources.

Working capital and affordable commercial space strategies that will provide deeper financial support for businesses facing the most significant financial challenges and demonstrating substantial benefits to disproportionately impacted business districts and communities.

Initiatives toward small business economic recovery include:

Elevate Business HC technical assistance, technology platform, and inclusive outreach.

Elevate Business HC Working Capital Fund.

Affordable Commercial Investment Fund.

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<sup>2</sup> Feldman, et al. “Economic Development: A Definition and Model for Investment,” University of North Carolina, May 28, 2014.

Economic Mobility: wealth-building pathways research and technical assistance.

### **Current strategies**

The initial phase of the project involves gathering and analyzing data, including community expertise, and evaluating successes and lessons learned from the first year of implementing Elevate Business HC and other pandemic-related relief strategies.

Initiatives are being designed based on these inputs with intention to center racial equity as well as place-based disparities. Planning for improving technology infrastructure, such as the Elevate Business HC platform, and investments in capacity for implementation and inclusive outreach are underway.

### **Results**

Hiring of staff to implement the multiple economic recovery initiatives is in progress. One staff person has been hired to develop and implement program evaluation across multiple initiatives, and interviews have been scheduled for an assistant project manager/economic development analyst position.

Data analysis of negative and disproportionate economic impacts of COVID-19 to Hennepin County businesses by size/scale, geography, industry, and demographics of business owners was completed in November 2021.

Community stakeholder listening sessions with over 65 participants were held in November -December 2021. Feedback gathered will be used to inform the design and implementation of small business economic assistance initiatives.

Three procurement processes were initiated to select consultants to provide communications support for inclusive outreach to business owners, to gather direct feedback and stories from local business owners, and to provide training to support disadvantaged businesses impacted by the pandemic.

A partnership with the University of Minnesota was established securing the assistance of graduate-level researchers to not only assess benefits, but also identify ways to avoid potential negative implications of economic mobility efforts such as guaranteed basic income strategies.

### **Next steps**

Next steps include a series of requests for proposals to secure a variety of specialized, culturally competent professional service providers who will deliver enhanced technical and practical assistance, community navigation, and working capital funding to impacted businesses. A request for applications will be developed to identify specific projects and beneficiaries eligible for support through the affordable commercial space initiative. Design of the enhanced digital platform for Elevate Business HC will begin.

# Gun Violence

Allocation amount: \$5,000,000

## Project description

According to Scientific American, more Americans died from gun violence in 2020 than during any previous year on record — a spike directly attributable to the pandemic — and homicides rose by 50 percent or more in over a dozen cities. In Hennepin County, gun violence disproportionately impacts communities of color and specifically Black and African American residents, with firearm-related death rates that are more than twice that of White residents.

As of October 28, there have been 500 gunshot incidents and 78 people killed in Minneapolis. There have been three times as many gunshot incidents in 2021 thus far than in all of 2019. In Hennepin County, 2021 homicides total 111, exceeding those in all of 2020. About 80% of (Minneapolis) homicide victims are Black (Star Tribune, October 15).

Hennepin County is committed to reducing gun violence by identifying drivers of violence, addressing risk and protective factors, and adopting evidence-based policies, programs and strategies that improve outcomes. In June 2021, the Hennepin County Board authorized \$5 million in ARPA funding for costs, operations and services to prevent, reduce and mitigate gun violence.

## Current strategies

- Funding Hennepin County's Next Step Program, a hospital-based violence interruption service for victims ages 12-28 who are hospitalized due to violent injury. The program provides wrap-around services including basic needs, food and transportation, safe housing, job training and employment, and access to crime victim resources.
- Funding 24/7 gender-specific violence intervention services tailored to the immediate needs of youth (up to age 24) and their support systems through credible messengers in Hennepin County's most impacted communities.
- Funding violence interruption/intervention and outreach and supportive services by community providers in neighborhoods experiencing high levels of crime and violence.
- Funding trauma-informed services and programming for clients who are Black, Indigenous or persons of color in Adult Probation (starting 2022).
- Increasing resources in law enforcement forensics to support investigations of violent crime cases and cases involving firearms.
- Building community capacity by funding violence intervention programs, neighborhood revitalization efforts, youth programming and mentoring, and services and restorative practices for those experiencing trauma in communities disproportionately impacted by gun violence.

- Enhancing partnerships and communication channels with the Minneapolis Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) and the State of Minnesota to align efforts, maximize resources and strengthen impacts.
- Developing a data collection and tracking system and building analytics to monitor effectiveness and outcomes.

## Results

- 75 applications were received from community organizations in response to the request for applications (RFA). All were reviewed by a selection committee that included service area experts, community members, youth, and people with lived experience. The application process was evaluated using the Race Equity Impact Tool.
- 52 organizations were selected to receive grants totaling approximately \$2.8 million.
- Contracts have been executed with about 35 providers to date.
- Contracts were executed with four community providers for immediate intervention services in key areas specific to outreach activities, community patrols and supportive services for targeted probation clients.
- Developed a partnership with Minneapolis Office of Violence Prevention to collaborate and align strategies.
- Collaboration was formed and is ongoing with Brooklyn Park Police Department to identify long-term strategies to support violence interruption efforts in key areas needing support.
- Developed a data collection model/survey to collect provider data for ongoing analysis and reporting.

## Next steps

- Finalize contracts with remaining community-based organizations, monitor use of funds and collect output and outcome data.
- Seek additional funding to maintain ongoing and/or expanded efforts through 2023.
- Explore collaboration with Hennepin County Attorney's Office to support violence reduction efforts arising out of MN Heals 2.0 programming.
- Research best practices in violence prevention and partner with local stakeholder on comprehensive violence reduction strategies.
- Develop a long-term, sustainable gun violence prevention strategic plan.

# COVID-19 Related Court Backlog

Allocation amount: \$4,511,066

## Project description

This project aims to support costs, operations and services for the Public Defender's Office to provide adequate staffing and resources to address the COVID-related court backlog. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Fourth Judicial District operated at a significantly reduced capacity with few in-person proceedings, and that significantly impacted the government's ability to effectively administer justice-related services and to process these cases in a fair and efficient manner. To address the backlog, the Fourth Judicial District will assign additional judicial officers to criminal cases and add more court calendars. This, in turn, will stretch the resources of the Public Defender's Office, whose caseloads swelled during the pandemic, as cases continued to be charged but could not advance toward resolution. The Public Defender's Office will need additional staffing on an interim basis to meet the demands of the additional court calendars and increased court appearances to process the backlog of cases.

A large percentage of the clients represented by the Public Defender's Office are Black, Indigenous or people of color. Increased staffing, which ensures that clients have attorneys adequately prepared to handle their matters in a timely manner, reduces disparities in the justice system. A judge appoints public defenders to juveniles and to adults that are unable to afford a private attorney. Access to the services (legal representation) provided under this program is limited.

## Current strategies

We needed to increase the dates attorneys were able to dedicate to trials in the "serious felony" unit. Hired four attorneys to handle cases and provide case/calendar relief and free up full-time employees to be in trial. Two attorneys handled "serious felony" cases (where the court backlog appeared to be most significant). Two attorneys handled twice-weekly calendars in juvenile court, allowing us to avoid the need to transfer an attorney from the adult division to backfill the need.

## Results

We were able to provide caseload relief to attorneys to allow them more time to focus on their cases set for trial. A total of 54 felony cases were handled by contract lawyers from September through December 2021. In addition, between October and December 2021, contract lawyers in juvenile court staffed 24 separate ½ day calendars and handled 19 child protection cases. This allowed us to avoid transferring an attorney to juvenile court to staff these calendars.

### **Next steps**

Starting January 1, we have contracted with additional staff (3.5 FTE) to further focus attorney resources on felony cases in the trial backlog. We continue to look for qualified employees to fill additional contracts.



# Anti-Hate Initiative

Allocation amount: \$1,000,000

## **Project description**

Due to a number of barriers, current data collection for instances of violence motivated by hate is limited within Hennepin County.

Primary goal of the Anti-Hate Initiative is to reduce those barriers, enhance data collection efforts to determine the scope and prevalence of hate-based violence, and conduct community engagement activities to reduce the occurrence of hate-based violence.

## **Next steps**

Planning for this initiative will begin in Quarter 1 of 2022.

# Broadband and Digital Inclusion

Allocation amount: \$10,000,000

## Project description

The Connecting Hennepin initiative aims to eliminate the digital divide in Hennepin County. This funding continues the most successful parts of the initiative and will leverage the county's fiber-optic infrastructure on behalf of the community to resolve broadband gaps. Staff will be assigned to coordinate with federal, state, and local government partners, internet service providers, and community organizations to develop and implement a digital equity plan for Hennepin County.

Programmatic work includes an all-of-the-above approach, including:

1. Office and digital equity plan
2. Connectivity
3. Digital literacy and navigation
4. Devices
5. Community-based digital adoption/navigation programs
6. Community engagement and coalition building
7. Metrics and evaluation

Data from the American Community Survey and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, among other sources, show geographic, racial and economic disparities in digital equity. Households that are Black, Indigenous, Hispanic or other people of color are less likely to own PCs and have home broadband. There are geographic, racial, housing and economic disparities in access to technology, which, among other effects, cause an inherent disparity in the awareness of new public programs. To overcome these barriers, this project plans to invest funds in community engagement, public and nonprofit partners and multimedia communications to ensure that all residents in need are aware of and able to engage with our programs. The goal is to ensure universal access across Hennepin County to quality, affordable broadband choices, technology tools and equipment, training and digital literacy.

## Current strategies

Our current approach is to lay the foundation to continue and scale successful work begun in 2020 as well as meet gaps we could not meaningfully address, leveraging best practices with the "three-legged stool" to invest in devices, connectivity, and skill building to eliminate digital barriers. We are moving to implement a digital navigator model which has proved successful elsewhere. In addition to bringing on navigation staff, we will work with staff and community providers to ensure culturally and

linguistically appropriate services. We will use an iterative approach that includes time for internal and external engagement using the REIT framework and a disparity reduction lens, and for developing an evaluation and engagement plan with the Hennepin-University Partnership.

## Results

### Digital navigation and skill building

2 digital navigators hired and onboarded (December 2021).

RFPs in process to engage community-based organizations to provide digital navigation services and digital skills training.

### Devices

Soft launch of Technology Needs Assessment intake form for staff to use to request devices or other technology needs for clients.

Amended contract with PCs for People for ongoing distribution and support of devices.

Provided devices for back-to-school needs and to the jail for GED classes.

### Internet connectivity

Received funding for Emergency Connectivity Fund for hotspot lending and Comcast Internet Essentials sponsored service. Marketing and administration for programs will be funded from ARPA.

Promotion of Emergency Broadband program for eligible residents.

Updated Emergency Broadband materials to reflect Affordable Connectivity Program offerings for 2022.

Contracted with PCs for People, a nonprofit Minnesota-based digital equity partner, to assist in the development of a wired internet service pilot as an alternative to traditional commercially available services for hard-to-connect populations in North and South Minneapolis. Fiber deployment has begun, with subscribers enrolling in early 2022.

Supported Comcast's efforts to connect a mobile home park in Osseo that was previously without internet service.

### Online safety

An RFP closed for an internet safety public awareness campaign.

### Evaluation

Hennepin University Partnership created an evaluation plan.

## Next steps

Finalize contracts with community partners for digital inclusion services.

Launch Technology Needs Assessment countywide to identify clients in need of devices, connectivity or other technology support and connect them with the appropriate services.

Develop a procedure to assess clients' digital skills and refer for training based on their needs.

Create feedback loops to drive programmatic changes, help open troubleshooting cases, and propel our advocacy for needed legal and regulatory change.

Develop and refine Digital Equity Plan.

# Voter Participation, Elections

Allocation amount: \$1,300,000

## Project description

The Elections Division will support a countywide voter registration campaign, an absentee voting education campaign, and the purchase of an additional high-speed absentee ballot scanner. These campaigns build on the successful absentee voter outreach campaign that was conducted in 2020 using Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. Investing in pre-registering voters prior to election day and in ensuring absentee voters do not make mistakes on their absentee voting materials is cost-effective for the county. Processing voter registrations prior to election day saves in time and materials as compared to processing election-day registrations, and reduces wait times in polling places. Helping absentee voters complete their paperwork correctly the first time saves time and materials costs in avoiding the necessity of issuing replacement materials to correct mistakes. Furthermore, increasing pre-registration rates helps increase elections integrity by minimizing the number of outdated voter records.

## Current strategies

### Community partner grants for voter outreach and education services

7 organizations selected through requests for proposals (award up to \$10,000).

Media campaign (digital advertising, print and radio advertising, on-air programming) focused on voter registration and absentee voting education.

## Results

ANIKA Foundation shared their voter guide with over 35,000 people electronically and in print. They also worked with youth at Patrick Henry High School to register them to vote.

CAPI USA led a coalition of six organizations to reach immigrant and refugee communities and communities of color through language-specific phonebanks. They registered 715 voters.

FairVote MN Foundation hired Somali and Latino community organizers who had over 1,200 direct conversations with Somali voters and over 8,200 Latino voters. They also reached an additional 30,000+ voters via community-specific TV and radio.

Open Access Connections trained nine volunteers to complete 100 shifts of nonpartisan voter registration. Recruited six more volunteers to be door captains at their low-income housing facilities to talk to their neighbors about voting. Made follow-up calls to those who registered and pledged to vote to answer questions about voting by mail, voting with a felony, and same-day registration.

Somali Community Resettlement Services reached 120 people through door knocking, and about 1,000 people through voter outreach at the 24 Somali Mall and each week before Friday prayer at 24 Somali Mall. They registered over 700 people to vote and worked with people who came into their office for other services. They had volunteer drivers available to bring voters to their voting locations.

NACDI registered 432 Native American voters at pop-up events in high-traffic areas. They also educated former felons about their voting rights and registered 18 people.

COPAL created Spanish-language-specific videos and hosted a Spanish language podcast talking about civic education and voting education. They reached out to voters through door knocking, phone banks and community events as well.

Hennepin County Elections and Communications teams worked with a digital media agency and BIPOC-oriented radio, print, and community media organizations to reach very broad audiences in multiple languages.

### **Next steps**

We will build on the success of outreach and education tactics used in 2021 by continuing and expanding these strategic efforts through the 2022 election cycle.

# Engagement Services

Allocation amount: \$1,680,000

## Project description

The Engagement Services project will increase and enhance engagement staffing, services, and programs as part of the county's ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response. The community will be connected to new, expanded programs and services funded by ARPA, including continued mask distribution and education about the importance of getting vaccinated, a variety of human services, housing, economic development, and employment services.

With a focus on disparity reduction, these efforts will demonstrate the county's commitment to our residents along with providing Engagement Services the capacity to advance engagement systems and practices while sustaining community relationships as it moves forward. While this work is foundational to the county and will require long-term funding strategies to support continued development, immediate resources are needed now to continue the county's response to COVID-19.

## Current strategies

Extend trusted messenger contracts through the end of 2021.

Work on community engagement principal agreements language with Purchasing and Contract Services as a foundation to launch the umbrella contract program.

Continue mask distribution to organizations, individuals and schools, due to delta variant.

The BAR approved on September 21 for Engagement Services infrastructure and programs will build upon the solid foundation for the work that has been done over the past 18 months, funded by the CARES COVID-19 response.

## Results

Work continues to find the best way to tangibly measure results. Some early examples:

Mask distribution – number of masks distributed to community organizations and distributed directly to community members.

Community events attended, inclusive of vaccination events.

Trusted messenger evaluation reports – who did they serve, how many members reached.

Newly established translations program and process countywide

Number of translations completed.

### Newly established engagement umbrella contracts program

Improved coordination, number of contracts supplied, easier access to community supports, etc.

Community members reached through media directed to Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color domain infrastructure.

Enhanced involvement and strengthened relationships with multijurisdictional engagement partners, expanding the trusted-messenger model across jurisdictions.

## **Next steps**

### Trusted Messenger

Finalize and execute trusted messenger contracts from January 1 through December 31, 2022.

Attend biweekly and monthly meetings with Hennepin County engagement coordinator and cultural engagement liaison.

Connect the community to COVID-19 resources, services, and programs available at Hennepin County.

Engage individuals, families, and community organizations to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Identify people within the community who may be exposed to COVID-19 or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and link eligible individuals to COVID-19 testing and vaccination locations.

Participate in COVID-19 booster and vaccination planning, and promote vaccination messages.

Provide mask and test kit distribution from the county to organizations, individuals, and schools, due to increasing variants.

### Translation Program

Continue to work on establishing the translations program and process countywide.

Develop charter and policy and procedures.

Establish a translation and accessibility committee.

### Community Engagement Principal Agreement

Continue to work on community engagement principal agreements language with Purchasing and Contract Services.

Launch/implement a communication and training plan for internal and external community partners.

### Healing Circles

In 2022, Hennepin County Engagement Services Division will hold up to four panel discussions focused on different ways of cultural healing, wellness tips and learning. In addition, we will host up to 10 healing circles/wellness sessions for the following priority populations:

- African American, African immigrant, Latino/Latinx, Asian American/API, Native American, youth, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and White allies. We intend to



partner on these events with other jurisdictional partners and community organizations.

Mask Distribution/Testing Kit Distribution

In partnership with Minnesota Department of Health, Hennepin County Engagement Services will be distributing 6,000 rapid self-tests in January to up to 50 community organizations. We will also be distributing at least 5,000 KN95 masks to children 5-9. (These are from a donation of 11,000 made to the county.)

# Enterprise Integrated Data System

Allocation amount: \$4,000,000

## Project description

Develop the technical and business processes to meaningfully integrate data across all county programs and services for the purposes of conducting summary analyses to identify insights to support the county's ability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, its disparity reduction efforts, and other enterprise initiatives.

## Current strategies

- Quality assurance and testing of the network and data infrastructure.
- Draft of governance framework established and currently under review.
- Implementing work iteration cycles related to data acquisition, integration, and analysis.

## Results

- Network infrastructure established
- Initial ad hoc data sources incorporated.
- First repeatable data process established.
- Initial governance framework drafted.
- Processes and documentation for work cycles established.
- Initial record linkage protocol identified.
- Initial data acquisition plan developed.
- Initial business cases and analyses plans developed.

## Next steps

- Network infrastructure testing.
- Staff training on new data query and analysis tools.
- Additional data sources will be incorporated; transition ad hoc data processing to repeatable processes.
- Draft initial data model.
- Establish initial metadata tool to document data and data processes.
- Establish initial governance structure (i.e., get approval and hold first meetings).
- Implement iterative work cycles. Conduct preliminary analyses.
- Update data acquisition plans. Update business case and analysis plans.

# Digital Experience

Allocation amount: \$5,700,000

## Project description

From the beginning, the COVID19 pandemic required Hennepin County to rapidly shift to providing services to residents from in person to online. When physical locations closed to the public, the ability to serve digitally was critical to meeting ongoing resident needs. To date, the ongoing pandemic continues to fundamentally shift the county's service approach, making clear our need to build on these initial changes and provide a consistently positive and accessible experience for residents. In response, this request seeks funding to sustain and advance the digital transformation that has been required to respond to the pandemic by piloting a scalable, repeatable digital experience delivery model.

The Digital Experience team in the Operations line of business will lead this work, in partnership with teams in the Communication and Engagement Services department, the IT community, and departments delivering these services. This model will join key business, technology, and communication and engagement partners together to deliver a digital experience that meets the residents' varying digital needs. Funding will also resource the increasing digital content, user experience, and web infrastructure work that supports the county's digital service platforms, including Hennepin.us and HCLib.org. Teams will address both technical debt and continuous improvement needs to keep pace with increasing digital delivery.

The Digital Experience team will manage rapid change with an agile mindset and principles, determine long-term staffing and resource needs to support the model, and drive identified digital priorities that support Future Ready Hennepin. These efforts create digital equity and engagement for Hennepin County residents.

## Current strategies

- County staff conducted workshops to align and prioritize goals.
- County staff finalized the accessibility policy and presented to county administration to secure approval.
- County staff finalized language for accessibility training RFP.
- County staff scoped roles and hired people into identified key positions.

## Results

- Leadership approval of the Accessibility Policy and adoption of policy into the Administrative Manual.
- A user experience (UX) designer was hired.
- Completed four IT strategy activities to "better understand residents' digital needs."
- Five additional positions on the Digital Experience and UX teams were posted.

## Next steps

- Hire and onboard new staff.
- Define responsibilities of remaining five positions.
- Post and hire for remaining five positions.
- Review Accessibility RFP proposals and make recommendation.
- Complete two additional IT strategy activities to "better understand residents' digital needs."
- Convene Digital Experience advisory committee.
- Set date for workshop with Open Systems Technologies (OST).

# Countywide HVAC COVID-19 Response

Allocation amount: \$5,000,000

## Project description

As a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and based on recommended best practices per the Centers of Disease Control and the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) for providing safe buildings to the public, Hennepin County made improvements to the ventilation system in its facilities to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This project will maintain this safe level of ventilation while improving operational efficiency and reducing energy use. By providing safe buildings the county is protecting the health and wellness of the staff and residents that visit the facilities. Priority will be given to 24/7 facilities such as correctional institutions, plus other key buildings serving residents such as the Government Center.

Funding will be used to study and implement needed improvements to building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) and control systems in county facilities. This will allow better management of energy use and reduced operational costs associated with maintaining pandemic-level ventilation requirements.

## Current strategies

- Select a consultant under the county's Consultant Services Program by issuing an RFP to all firms listed.
- Review proposals for responsiveness and select a firm based on requirements of the RFP.

## Results

An RFP for consultant services was created and issued for an HVAC pandemic preparedness study. One proposal was received. The consultant was approved to do the work.

## Next steps

A kick-off meeting with the consultant will occur and work will commence to evaluate, study and provide a report on recommendations to the county prepared by the consultant.

# Information Technology

Allocation amount: \$4,000,000

## **Project description**

The IT Department will partner with all business lines to develop and deliver solutions to technology needs resulting from the pandemic. By engaging with each line of business, IT is identifying numerous applications and technology solutions that will significantly advance the county's ability to deliver services digitally. Funds will support IT work in four areas:

### Improving the design and execution of health, public health, and relief programs

Improvements include modernizing systems, automating manual transactions, and gathering and using data to make informed decisions to support public health and relief programs.

### Modernizing hardware and software

Future Ready Hennepin includes working and delivering services remotely. IT seeks to ensure staff will have the necessary technology to work in any approved county location and residents will be served by upgraded hardware for new or updated service offerings and provided with additional technology for public use. A modernized technology infrastructure allows for greater agility and faster innovation.

### Protecting our critical infrastructure

To help protect county and resident data, IT will need to ensure our hardware and software is as up to date and secure as possible.

### Modernizing business processes

IT created new solutions to connect residents with health care and services during the pandemic. These solutions and the relief programs they support now need to be operationalized and improved so Hennepin County can continue to dedicate resources to provide care to impacted persons, improve health outcomes for residents and build a healthier environment for all.

## **Next steps**

Planning for this initiative will begin in Quarter 1 of 2022.

# Information Technology Community Connectivity

Funding amount: \$4,000,000

## **Project description**

The IT Community Connectivity project aims to meet the growing need for high-speed broadband by establishing secure, reliable, and redundant high-speed broadband connections to county facilities and equipment. The project partners with the State of Minnesota, the Metropolitan Council, cities and school districts within Hennepin County, and other public agencies to share fiber assets and provide mutual benefits. This project supports critical public service program needs such as 911 dispatch, libraries, human services and public health regionalization and data redundancy. The project works closely with the Public Works line of business to leverage existing fiber infrastructure for traffic management programs, and to share fiber planning, funding, and maintenance services. This project is the backbone that provides the foundation for future expansion of the county's fiber infrastructure.

## **Next steps**

Planning for this initiative will begin in Quarter 1 of 2022.

