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# Community Safety & The American Rescue Plan:

A Guide to Using Fiscal Recovery  
Grants to Advance Holistic Safety

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# Introduction

## Our country is at a crossroads.

The past year and a half have put unprecedented strain on our public health, economic, and civic institutions. Under this pressure, we have seen the widening of existing inequality and injustices—with the most vulnerable people, disproportionately including Black communities and other people of color, shouldering the brunt of both COVID-19 and its economic consequences. This period has brought tremendous tragedy and hardship, a time of national mourning, and collective efforts to rebuild.

Recent events have also emphasized that this country needs a paradigm shift in how it approaches public safety, as well as how policymakers invest in communities. From the murder of George Floyd to the more than 700,000 who have died from COVID-19, it is clear that our current policies are not keeping us safe. In the 2020 election, Americans sent a clear message: we cannot rebuild on the same faulty foundations; we must have the courage to truly reimagine our institutions and make the once-in-a-generation investments needed to bring those visions alive.

By passing the American Rescue Plan Act and potentially more landmark bills to come, Congress has opened a window of opportunity that state and local policymakers can use to drive this much-needed paradigm shift. These federal dollars have the potential to fuel non-carceral investments that make Americans truly safe—items like public health, housing, and income security. It is now time that state and local lawmakers harness these funds in ways that move us forward, not back, and that create the holistic, life-affirming safety that all people deserve.

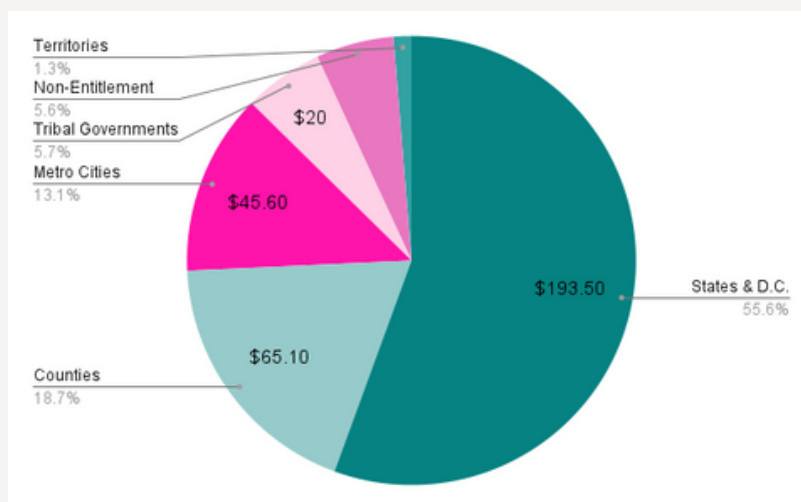
This report will explore the Fiscal Recovery Fund created by the American Rescue Plan Act, showing how it can be a source for funding proven public safety measures that center health and opportunity over punishment.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **Note:** The term “non-carceral” with respect to a program or service, means that the program or service is established or provided in a manner that is disconnected from carceral institutions, including law enforcement, criminal courts, prosecution, probation, child welfare services, or immigration enforcement.

# Basics of Federal Funding and the American Rescue Plan Act

## Spending in ARPA

The American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law on March 11, 2021, is a \$1.9 trillion package [intended to](#) “provide direct relief to Americans, contain Covid-19, and rescue the economy.” The law created or enhanced several grant programs intended to help state, territorial, tribal, and municipal governments respond to the crisis and the underlying problems that it revealed. The largest and most flexible of these is the Fiscal Recovery Fund, which will be discussed in detail in sections III and IV.



The Act included several Medicaid and CHIP provisions that [expand federal reimbursement](#) for certain Medicaid programs and add new optional Medicaid activities. Particularly relevant for funding non-carceral safety is the new [85% federal reimbursement](#) for “qualifying community-based mobile crisis intervention services.” This increased Federal match will last for a 5 year period, beginning in April 2022. Additionally, the bill included a \$123 billion flexible fund for K-12 schools, to be spent over the next 3 school years. To see all the intergovernmental grants that were affected by ARPA, see the [National Conference of State Legislatures Summary](#).

Beyond aid to state and local governments, ARPA provides direct relief to residents of all 50 states and the territories. Some of the largest [provisions include](#), but are not limited to: a temporary increase of the Child Tax Credit that will give parents \$3,000 per child over 6 years old and \$3,600 for every child 6 and under; expansion and extension of unemployment benefits and nutrition programs; public health measures to combat COVID-19; rental and mortgage assistance; increased access to health insurance; and another round of stimulus checks.

## Federal Funding Flows to States, Tribes, and Localities

Even prior to ARPA, state, tribal and municipal governments received significant funding from intergovernmental transfers, with Federal grants accounting for [about a quarter](#) of all state and local government spending in 2018. This figure will be considerably higher for both 2020 and 2021.

Federal grants generally fall into one of three categories:

**Formula grants:** Formula grants are “[allocated](#) among recipients according to factors specified within enabling legislation or administrative regulations” such as population, per capita income or poverty rate. Many other programs understood as federal-state partnerships, including much of [K-12 education](#), are funded this way. The local portion of the Fiscal Recovery Fund [is a formula grant](#) because unlike states, they received their funds automatically (See Part III, Section B).

**Competitive or project grants:** For competitive or project grants, a unit of government must submit an application; some portion of those applications will be awarded a grant based on (a) the quality of the application; and (b) the degree to which it matches the grant criteria. For grantees, competitive grants tend to be the most restrictive because the grants have specific requirements and often require frequent reporting.

**Block Grants:** Block grants are funds that can be used for a specific set / type of program, but these grants are not usually now narrowly limited in the way that formula and competitive/project grants are. These grants are considered less restrictive, and they tend to have fewer performance requirements. Historically, turning federal funding for a program into a block grant has been used as a way to reduce said funding, as was [the case with TANF](#). This funding reduction happens because, when Block Grants are set as a flat dollar amount, they shrink over time relative to population growth and inflation.

	Do all eligible entities receive it?	Are there performance requirements?	Likely to be for a specific program?	Example from ARAP
Formula	Yes	Some	Maybe	State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds
Project competitive	No	Many	Yes	Federal Transit Authority Competitive Planning Grant
Block	Yes	Few	No	Community Mental Health Service Block Grant

## On the Legislative Horizon

In the months since ARPA passed, Federal lawmakers have made progress on other bills that would mitigate the harms of COVID-19 and set the country on track for an equitable recovery. While legislative prospects remain uncertain, it is likely that some future legislation—particularly the infrastructure plan—will bring additional funding to states, territories, tribes, and localities.

# Explaining Fiscal Recovery Funds

## Overview

The American Rescue Plan Act established a \$350 billion Fiscal Recovery Fund for eligible state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments. The purpose of this money is to help these governments respond to the continued public health and economic fallout that has been caused by COVID-19 and rebuild in a way that addresses the long-standing inequities this pandemic has laid bare. All levels of government will receive these funds. See table 1 for a detailed breakdown.

## Timing and Distribution

After a short certification process, States started receiving funding from the Treasury department in May 2021. \$22.5 billion of the allocation to states will be divided equally among the states (including DC) and the remainder will be dispersed in proportion to the state's number of unemployed workers in late 2020. Counties will receive funding in proportion to their population but metropolitan cities will receive funding based on the Community Development Block Grant formula which takes into account factors like poverty, housing overcrowding, and age of housing stock. Of the \$20 billion allocation to tribal governments, \$1 billion will be divided in equal parts to all eligible tribes, while the remaining \$19 billion will be divided at the discretion of Treasury, in consultation with tribal governments.



While most governments will receive their grants directly from the Treasury Department, small local governments (referred to in statute and hereafter as Non-Entitlement Units of Local Government or NEUs) will receive funds through their respective states.

The statute establishes that local governments will get their funding in two “tranches,” with the second coming 12 months after the first. The Treasury Department has decided to apply this to states as well, except for those with persistently high unemployment rates—2 percentage points or more above their pre-pandemic levels—who received all of their funds this year.

Most grantees received their first tranche of funding during the summer of 2021. While governments should act quickly to identify their most pressing needs, they will have several fiscal years to obligate and spend the grant money. All funds not obligated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026 must be returned to the Treasury.

## Permitted Uses

There are four intended uses of Fiscal Recovery Funds:

1. Responding to the public health and economic impact of the pandemic, including assistance to households, small businesses, and other affected entities
2. Premium pay for essential workers
3. Backfilling services that were cut due to budget shortfalls
4. Making investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

Treasury has laid out many specific programs that could be funded under one or more of these categories (we will highlight many of these in Part IV), but they have also stated that there are many acceptable options outside of what they suggest. As long as the project proposal fits under one of the four intended uses, governments are encouraged to be creative with their funds.



The statute generally prohibits three uses of ARPA funds: offsetting tax cuts (applies specifically to states and territories); contributing to pension funds, which many states have left underfunded; and paying off their bonds. All of these are intended to make sure Fiscal Recovery Funds actually lead to new services. Additionally, states must distribute funds to their NEUs in proportion to population, meaning that they cannot put additional restrictions of their own on the money.

Importantly, governments can re-grant to community-led organizations that are undertaking projects in line with the goals of the Recovery Fund. Empowering organizations that represent the lived experience of vulnerable community members can be an ideal use of ARPA funds, as we will discuss in Part IV.

Much of the detail regarding how the grants can be spent is contained in Treasury's [Interim Rule](#). Future guidance from the agency as well as a finalized rule will likely clarify even more use cases.

## Reporting Requirements

Most recipients are required to produce [quarterly reports](#) that will include financial data and project information through the end of the award period on December 31, 2026. All governments who received their funds directly (i.e., all except NEUs) were also required to submit an interim report detailing uses of funds from the date of award to July 31, 2021. This interim report was due on August 31, 2021.

 Acceptable Uses	 Unacceptable Uses
Public health measures	Offsetting tax cuts
Financial assistance to residents (cash, rental housing, health, & more)	Padding pension funds
Backfilling government services	Paying off bonds
Water, sewer, and broadband investments	



# Using Fiscal Recovery Funds to Promote Holistic Public Safety

## Treasury Guidance

For lawmakers looking to foster safety in their communities, ARPA's Fiscal Recovery Fund provides a unique opportunity. Policymakers should focus on strategies that are proven to keep their constituents safe, namely those holistic, multidisciplinary approaches that genuinely advance public safety by preventing violence and harm.

When determining how best to use their grant dollars, elected officials and their constituents can turn to both Treasury guidance and the example of communities nationwide that have already implemented effective programs. Among the non-carceral safety investments that were explicitly highlighted by Treasury as encouraged uses of ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds are:

- Behavioral health care including: mental health treatment, substance misuse treatment, other behavioral health services hotlines or warmlines, crisis intervention, overdose prevention, infectious disease prevention, and services or outreach to promote access to physical or behavioral health primary care, and preventative medicine;
- Funding community health workers to help community members access health services and services that will address the social determinants of health;
- Funding public benefits navigators who can assist community members with identifying, navigating, and applying for available Federal, State, and local public benefits or services;
- Housing vouchers, affordable housing projects and other efforts to improve housing quality, access or quantity;
- Lead remediation, free childcare, care for expectant parents, and other earlychildhood interventions; and
- Proven community violence intervention programs to prevent violence.

Treasury also highlights that state and local governments can use the funds to provide households direct aid, including for food assistance; rent, mortgage, or utility assistance; counseling and legal aid to prevent eviction or homelessness; and more.

Many states and localities have already implemented programs that address the root causes of harm and violence—with great success. Often, the most effective programs have been routed through community-led organizations run by individuals who have deep connection to the issues that they address. In working with these organizations, it is vital that funding is provided upfront, rather than in reimbursement, so that smaller, less-resourced organizations are able to access grants.



## Process Recommendations

The time-limited nature of the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds has important implications for how the grants can best be used. If necessary, jurisdictions should prioritize immediate needs, such as public health responses to the pandemic, as well as investments in capital infrastructure, such as building or improving affordable housing. Similarly, hiring shorter-term staff who can assess the needs of the community, providing assistance to students as they return to in-person school, or other hiring projects that are intended to last for a few years or less would also fit the structure of the grant.

However, grantees should not be limited by the one-time funding, but instead see this cash infusion as a bridge to making longer-term investments in holistic public safety. Often these programs have substantial upfront costs that a one-time injection of capital could help overcome. On average, communities have seen revenue growth nearing [4 percent annually](#), meaning that, by the end of the grant window, many jurisdictions would be able to sustain these programs even after the grant expires in 2026.

Additionally, as the programs continue to operate outside of the grant window, the reductions they cause in criminal-legal and other state expenses can mitigate the need for additional funding. While averted justice spending is hard to precisely calculate, [several states](#) have calculated substantial savings.

To manage non-carceral safety investments, grantees should consider standing up either Community Safety Agencies (local) or Divisions of Community Safety (state) whose purpose would be to fund, research, and coordinate interdepartmental work on non-carceral safety approaches. To understand these models, please see [Roadmap to Community Safety: A Guide for Local Lawmakers](#) and [Roadmap to Community Safety: A Guide for State Lawmakers](#). Most importantly, though, policymakers should ensure that their non-carceral safety investments would center the multidisciplinary needs and desires of residents, especially those from marginalized communities. A few models to draw inspiration from are below.

- [Solidarity Budget](#) in Seattle. In Seattle, community members have come together to present a holistic, comprehensive vision of non-carceral community safety. The [recommendations](#) emerging from this coalition are holistic and multidisciplinary because of the [diverse set of stakeholders](#) who were enlisted to craft it including labor, transit, and housing justice groups.
- Reimagining Public Safety Collaborative. The Reimagining Public Safety Collaborative in Ithaca, New York [created a countywide coalition](#) of municipalities that united under a shared vision of community safety outside of policing. The Collaborative has built out [a mechanism](#) for residents to submit ideas on policy design and implementation, as well as engage in open dialogue around the proposals, which are then reviewed by the Collaborative and issue-area experts they enlist. So far, plans proposed by the Collaborative include [implementing a city-wide unarmed response unit in the City of Ithaca](#) and [developing a community healing plan to address trauma in the relationship between residents and law enforcement for Ithaca and Tompkins County](#).

## Evidence and Examples from the Field

Once jurisdictions identify the needs and desires of their local community, there are a plethora of models they can look to for guidance and inspiration. In the following sections, we will explore examples of non-carceral programs, interventions, and investments aimed at increasing public safety that can be created or expanded using the Fiscal Recovery Fund. We will also highlight the existing research that proves how effective these strategies can be

### Housing and Infrastructure

Investments in housing and infrastructure are proven to be very effective for reducing crime and promoting overall well-being. Research has shown that:

- At the local level, increasing access to [affordable housing](#) by building more low-income housing units results in significant reductions in violent crime.
- In multiple jurisdictions, including [Philadelphia](#), [Baltimore](#), and [Youngstown](#), maintaining green spaces has reduced certain types of crime.
- [Reducing socio-economic segregation](#) of neighborhoods—such as through housing vouchers that enable low-income families to move to neighborhoods of opportunity—reduces youth arrests for violent crime.
- In New York City, research demonstrated that streetlights can reduce “index crimes”—including murder, robbery, aggravated assault, and some property crimes—by more than a third.

There are several ways that ARPA grants can be used to fund investments in affordable housing, green space, and other housing and infrastructure improvements. On top<sup>2</sup> of directly investing in new affordable housing or housing vouchers, lawmakers should consider directing funds to community-led organizations, including community land trusts, as many states, cities and towns have done.

**[Community land trusts, or CLTs](#), are nonprofit, community-led organizations that are designed to ensure community control and stewardship of land. CLTs can be used for a variety of developments, including commercial and retail projects but their main function is to ensure long-term affordable housing for residents of a given community.**

Grantees should also look to some of the improvements cities have made to their built environment, which are particularly appealing as one-time investments:

#### [Green Stormwater Infrastructure program Philadelphia, PA](#)

Philadelphia undertook a major green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) effort, a form of urban greening. Philadelphia’s approach is what the city refers to as the “triple bottom line”: that investment in GSI not only helps meet environmental engineering standards but has social and economic benefits by improving health and safety outcomes. A [study](#) of the GSI program found that urban greening resulted in significant reductions in local arrests for several types of offenses, including drug possession and burglaries.

## Youth Support, Education and Employment

Improving social, educational and economic opportunities for youth comes with a myriad of health and safety benefits, including a reduction in crime. For example:

- Increasing students' [educational attainment](#)—i.e., ensuring students stay in school longer—can decrease the likelihood of future incarceration by as much as 16 percent according to one study.
- Improving [school quality](#) can reduce the probability of serious crimes and incarceration, particularly for at-risk youth.
- Promoting [youth employment](#), such as through summer jobs programs, has been found to reduce violent crime by 35 percent—with long-lasting, positive effects.
- Youth-focused sports and therapy programming can reduce the [likelihood of future arrests](#) for a violent crime by 50 percent.
- [Safe Passage to School programs](#)—which place civilian guards along specified routes to keep students safe on their way to and from school—have been found to reduce violent crime by 14 percent.
- [Multiple randomized controlled trials](#) conducted by the University of Chicago showed that Chicago's youth mentorship program, Becoming a Man, reduced violent crime arrests by 50% and improved graduation rates by 19% for the students in the program.

ARPA grants are a great opportunity for state and local governments to expand or kick start the sorts of non-carceral programs that have found success in jurisdictions across the country. Given the strain the pandemic has put on youth socialization and education, such investments are more necessary than ever.

### [Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation](#) Chicago, IL

PBMR offers broad-based programming to support young people and families in the Back of the Yards and Englewood neighborhoods who are involved in the criminal-legal system. As part of its practice of radical hospitality, PBMR provides safe and welcoming spaces for youth, facilitates peacemaking circles and healing programs, and offers GED tutoring, job training, and case management.

### [Parramore Kidz Zone](#) Orlando, FL

The mission of Parramore Kidz Zone (PKZ) is to level the playing field for Parramore's children, equipping them to become successful, healthy, well-educated adults in Orlando's highest poverty neighborhood, and ultimately replicate this model in other Orlando neighborhoods. PKZ is achieving this by investing in things that make a difference in children's lives – such as quality early childhood education, after school programs, programs that build family economic success, youth development programs for teenagers, access to health care, mentoring, tutoring, college access assistance and more. A [study](#) of the PKZ found it produced a 61 percent decline in juvenile arrests, a 56 percent decline in teen pregnancies, and a 38 percent decline in child abuse cases in the neighborhood.

## Direct Financial Assistance

Direct financial support for residents is one of the chief uses of Fiscal Recovery Funds highlighted by Treasury. Programs to directly increase income security will help community members rebuild after the devastation of the pandemic, and have been shown to increase safety across the board:

- [Emergency financial assistance](#) for those experiencing economic insecurity, one study showed, reduced total arrests, including a **51 percent reduction in arrests** for violent crimes. Short-term financial assistance, especially when [combined with cognitive behavioral therapy](#), has been shown to decrease violence and crime. Many studies have demonstrated that cash transfers reduce domestic violence events in particular.
- [Decreasing unemployment](#) has been shown to reduce property crime. In fact, much of the reduction in property crime seen during the 1990s can be attributed to the declining unemployment rate.
- Economic inequality predicts homicide rates "[better than any other variable](#)": it predicts approximately [half of the variance](#) between American states and between countries. Data from 39 countries shows that even small [decreases in inequality](#) would reduce homicides by 20 percent and cause a 23 percent longterm reduction in robberies.
- [Decreasing the gender wage gap](#) has been found to reduce domestic violence against women. Reductions in the gender wage gap can explain 9 percent of the domestic violence decline between 1990 and 2003, as measured through hospital admissions.

Several states and localities have already implemented model programs, many of which work on a one-time or emergency basis that would make them ideal for using ARPA funds. As these programs find success, jurisdictions will likely find that they contribute to a virtuous cycle, in which the government spends less on other services and the carceral system. These savings increase the budgetary resources that jurisdictions have to available for non-carceral, non-punitive programs, thereby allowing these programs to continue operating outside of the grant window. Examples include:

### [Homelessness Prevention Call Center](#) Chicago, IL

The Homelessness Prevention Call Center connects homeless families and individuals with emergency financial assistance as needed. A study of the financial assistance offerings found that those who received emergency funds were significantly less likely to be arrested in the subsequent one to two years after the receipt of assistance.

### [Community Love Fund Guaranteed Income Initiative](#) Boston, MA

The Community Love Fund is a landmark guaranteed income initiative that will distribute recurring, direct cash relief to formerly incarcerated women in the Roxbury community for one year. Families for Justice as Healing and the National Council have created the Community Love Fund to demonstrate that directly affected women can establish and distribute the funds necessary to develop the infrastructure to support each other. This guaranteed income initiative pilot is the first of its kind in the city of Boston.

## Health

Like many of the aforementioned investments, using ARPA funds to expand accessibility and quality of health care directly addresses the effects of the pandemic while also building towards a vision of holistic public safety. Many studies have shown that increasing public health has a direct effect on violence and crime:

- One study shows that [Medicaid expansion](#) reduced crime by 3 percent annually, producing crime-related cost savings of \$13 billion each year.
- Further research has shown that Medicaid expansions led to significant reductions in robbery, aggravated assaults, and larceny theft. This was primarily due to increased [uptake of substance use disorder treatment](#) through Medicaid coverage.
- Additional research demonstrates that when the number of substance abuse treatment facilities increases in a particular area, [violent and financially-motivated crimes decrease](#) locally.
- Expanded access to [mental health treatment](#), and to psychiatric treatment in particular, has also been found to reduce violent crime.
- Targeted [interventions for children who have suffered from lead poisoning](#)— including lead abatement, medical care, and public assistance—have long-term positive impacts, including a reduction in future arrests for violent offenses.

State and local governments have a tremendous opportunity to improve health and safety by kickstarting lead abatement programs, health clinics, programs to enroll eligible residents in Medicaid or other low-cost health insurance options, and more. Here, not only do jurisdictions have the option of using Fiscal Recovery Funds, but they can also access the expanded Medicaid provisions created by ARPA. While this section primarily discusses long-term and/or physical health conditions, the following will explore options for funding non-carceral first responders for those facing acute mental or behavioral health crises.

## Non-Carceral Crisis Response

When experiencing a mental or behavioral health crises, community members and those around them should have access to options for safe, de-escalatory, and responsive care. Several states, cities, towns, and other localities have created alternatives to traditional 911 operations, often routed through community-led organizations. A study of [Denver's STAR](#) program found great success in connecting individuals with the resources they need while reducing law enforcement interaction. Lawmakers should look to the success of these programs as inspiration for using ARPA funds:

**Mental Health First Sacramento**, CA and Oakland, CA

Mental Health First, a program run by the Anti Police-Terror Project, offers a non-police response to mental health crises, substance use disorders, and domestic violence situations that require victim extraction. MH First aims to interrupt and eliminate the need for law enforcement in mental health crisis first response by providing mobile peer support, de-escalation assistance, and nonpunitive and life-affirming interventions. This service is operated by volunteers who are trained by social workers, psychiatrists, and counselors and includes a free hotline open three days a week.

**Powderhorn Safety Collective**, Minneapolis, MN

The Powderhorn Safety Collective (PSC) envisions a new form of community response that calls upon the resources of the neighborhood rather than the police. Powderhorn volunteers patrol the Powderhorn Park area and receive reports of incidents through the app Discord, where their neighborhood group chat has more than 1,000 active members. They also proactively monitor activity through the Citizen app, which culls 911 logs for geo-located crimes-in-action, as well as police scanners and the sound of gunshots. Their intervention is “full-service”: they arrive at the scene of the incident, assist in whatever way they can, and report back with updates. Volunteers are trained on mental health, mediation and de-escalation, and they have become a visible presence in the neighborhood, there to break up assaults and relieve tension on the street.

## Violence Interruption and Intervention

While all the aforementioned policies reduce crime and promote safety, there are also a range of noncarceral programs that communities can implement to directly address and interrupt violence. These programs are highlighted by Treasury in their [Fiscal Recovery Fund Guidance](#) and many are eligible for an [85% Medicaid match](#). Some examples include:

**Mothers and Men Against Senseless Killings**, Chicago, IL

Mothers and Men Against Senseless Killings (MASK) is a group of mothers in Chicago who have reduced violence by transforming a troubled block into a community without police. The moms are present on the block every evening, barbecuing, feeding residents, and building relationships with young people. They help diffuse tensions between young people and watch out for police, protecting young people who have been subject to stop and frisk.

**Success Stories**, Soledad and Santa Barbara, CA

Success Stories is working to build a world free of prisons and patriarchy with their 12- week curriculum that helps people who have harmed to get clear on the people and goals most important to them, as well as obstacles like patriarchy they’ve placed in their way. After graduating, Alumni receive support, and programming from Success Stories for life. Success Stories was cofounded by two incarcerated young men, Charles Berry and Richie “Reseda” Edmond-Vargas at the California Training Facility prison in 2014. It was completely developed and ran by incarcerated people there and still is to this day.



### [Safe OUTside the System Collective](#), Brooklyn, NY

The Safe OUTside the System (SOS) Collective is an anti-violence program by and for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans, and Gender Non-Conforming people of color. Their projects include the Safe Neighborhood Campaign, which organizes and educates local businesses and community organizations on how to stop violence without relying on law enforcement, and a community support referral and service network for survivors of police and hate violence in Central Brooklyn. The SOS Collective has also produced a Safe Party Planning Toolkit to help build safety in party spaces without relying on the police or state systems. The kit, available in English and Spanish, includes information about preventing and intervening in violence, making a community atmosphere where violence is not welcome, and supporting survivors of violence.

## Survivor Safety

To truly address and prevent harm, some of the most important investments communities can make are those that break cycles of violence and promote healing. Many of the most effective are those run by community-led organizations. Below are examples of some programs that center the material and emotional needs of survivors and create spaces for those who have perpetrated harm to be held accountable in settings that don't reinforce systems of violence:

### [Community HEAL Circles](#), King County, WA

Collective Justice recently launched Community HEAL Circles, where small groups of participants join in restorative justice circles and explore topics such as trauma, shame, resilience, accountability, socialization, structural and generational violence, and their impacts on our bodies. Participants who join circles will share and witness each other's stories, grow, and create community. Circles are tailored for individuals who have lost loved ones to violence, formerly incarcerated individuals, and people who have incarcerated loved ones. Groups are held by and for the community to create healing spaces that respond directly to the loss, grief, and violence faced in their daily lives.

### [The Ahimsa Collective](#), Santa Cruz, California

The Ahimsa Collective offers a number of restorative justice programs to address harm in ways that foster wholeness for everyone. Their program, Restorative Justice in the Community, is focused on those cases of harm that the legal system is least well-equipped and least-likely to address: sexual, intimate partner, and interpersonal violence. They work in deep community with people who have survived harm and abuse, those who have caused it, and families impacted by violence. In all of their work, they center agency, liberation, dignity, and transformation. While much of their work is around processes that lead to an eventual facilitated dialogue between people, they also work one-on-one with survivors on their healing journey and one-on-one with those who have caused harm who are looking to heal and explore accountability for themselves.

Of course, it will be crucial to consider which investments not only meet the needs of your community, but are feasible within the constraints of the Fiscal Recovery Fund. Please feel free to reach out to any of the individuals listed at the end of this document if you would like technical assistance in crafting grant-appropriate proposals.



### Housing and Infrastructure

- Fiscal Recovery Funds
- Emergency rental assistance, emergency housing vouchers, homeowner assistance fund
- Increases to Native American Housing Block Grants, Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant and Indian Community Block Grant Programs
- Increased transit agency grants
- Infrastructure package

### Youth Support, Education and Employment

- Fiscal Recovery Funds
- Flexible K-12 Grant Program
- Increased Child Care and Development Block Grant
- Increased funding for IDEA and Head Start programs
- Increase Child and Dependent Care Credit

### Direct Financial Assistance and Debt Relief

- Fiscal Recovery Funds
- 15% increase in SNAP monthly benefits
- SNAP administration grants
- Expanded unemployment benefits and state loan assistance
- Increased and fully refundable Child Tax Credit
- Increased and expanded Earned Income Tax Credit

### Health

- Fiscal Recovery Funds
- Enhanced Medicaid Home and Community Based Services
- Increase funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Certified Community
- Behavioral Health Clinic Block Grants
- New incentives to states to expand Medicaid

### Survivor Safety

- Fiscal Recovery Funds
- \$198 million in grants to support survivors of sexual assault

### Non-Carceral Crisis Response

- Fiscal Recovery Funds
- 85% Medicaid match for community-based crisis intervention

## Thinking Beyond ARPA

In the coming years, states, tribes and localities are likely to continue receiving Federal funding, whether it is for infrastructure, social programs, or more open-ended use. Using ARPA’s Fiscal Recovery Funds for non-carceral safety can therefore be seen as the first step towards reshaping our priorities and making lasting change. Local leaders should use the lessons that come from implementing alternatives for public safety, strengthening the most effective programs and filling in gaps where needed. This approach will allow jurisdictions to create a web of programs for health, housing, violence interruption, and more that will collectively foster true community safety.

# Further Reading

## Understanding ARPA and the Fiscal Recovery Fund

- [American Rescue Plan Act bill text](#)
- [Treasury's Interim Rule on the Fiscal Recovery Fund](#)
- [Treasury's Fiscal Recovery Fund FAQ](#)
- [Treasury Explainer: Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Allocations to Tribal Governments](#)
- [Ensuring Fiscal Recovery Funds Support Communities, Not Cops](#)
- [The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: American Rescue Plan Act Will Help Millions and Bolster the Economy](#)
- [National League of Cities: ARPA Local Relief Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [National Conference of State Legislatures Summary of ARPA Provisions](#)
- [Congressional Research Service: American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 \(P.L. 117-2\): Private Health Insurance, Medicaid, CHIP, and Medicare Provisions](#)
- [Harvard University's Stimulus Learning Series](#)
- [Civilytics: Eligible Uses of Fiscal Recovery Funds FAQ](#)

## How the Fiscal Recovery Fund is Being Used

- [Pew: How Far American Rescue Plan Dollars Will Stretch Varies by State](#)
- [ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund Allocations Tracker](#)
- [How Medicaid Can Advance Mental Health and Substance Use Crisis Response](#)
- [Understanding ARPA Allocations to NEUs](#)

## Basics of Federal Funding to States and Localities

- [Congressional Research Service: Federal Grants to State and Local Governments: A Historical Perspective on Contemporary Issues](#)
- [The Problems with Block-Granting Entitlement Programs](#)

## Basics of Federal Funding to States and Localities

- [The Breathe Act](#)
- Roadmap to Community Safety: A Guide for Local Lawmakers
- Roadmap to Community Safety: A Guide for State Lawmakers
- [John Jay College of Criminal Justice: Future of Public Safety](#)
- [Center for American Progress: The Community Responder Model](#)
- [The Urban Institute: Public Investment in Community-Driven Safety Initiatives public safety](#)
- [35 States Reform Criminal Justice Policies Through Justice Reinvestment](#)
- [Council of State Governments: Justice Reinvestment](#)
- [Pricing Public Programs Calculator](#)
- [How to Take Back the Budget: A Guide to Reviewing and Changing the Police Budget in Your Community](#)
- [A Guide to Alternative Mental Health Crisis Responses](#)

# Technical Assistance & Contact Information

## About the Authors

This policy guide was prepared by Thea Sebastian, now Executive Director at The Futures Institute, and Sam Washington, Policy Associate at Civil Rights Corps. It was produced while The Futures Institute was embedded in Civil Rights Corps. Special acknowledgement to Lily Bou, Policy Associate at Civil Rights Corps, for research that made this report possible.

## The Futures Institute

The Futures Institute is a nonprofit organization that advances policies for safe and thriving communities. Using policy research and design, state and federal advocacy, and multidisciplinary coalition-building, we help to create policy systems that prevent gun violence and other harms before they claim lives — while providing all youth a chance to thrive. For more, see our website at [www.futures-institute.org](http://www.futures-institute.org).

## CRC

Civil Rights Corps is a non-profit organization dedicated to challenging systemic injustice within the United States' legal system—a system that is built on white supremacy and economic inequality.

The organization uses impact litigation, policy, and strategic communications to dismantle criminallegal injustice, create new paradigms for keeping people safe, and shift power to community-led movements, particularly those led by Black, brown, and poor people who are most affected by this legal system.

## Technical Assistance

For technical assistance when drafting and advancing your local policy, please contact:

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