

## ARPA Needs Assessment Executive Summary

Between May 2021 and July 2021, Sedgwick County undertook a comprehensive approach to assessing needs among residents and their families, as well as businesses, educational institutions, community organizations and health care providers. Activities were conducted for the purpose of gathering current, significant feedback on how the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact those living and working in Sedgwick County. The information received will be used by county leaders to help determine priority use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding awarded to Sedgwick County (\$100,235,100.00). Assessment feedback will also assist leaders to strategically utilize funds alongside those awarded to Unified School Districts (\$86,047,628.67) and cities (\$88,299,253.00) across the County.

Assessment activities included:

- (1) **Internal Assessment** of county departments utilizing a written survey in May 2021, with 36 departments submitting requests for funding,
- (2) **External Assessment** of the general public utilizing a priority need survey May 20 – June 30, 2021, available 24/7 on the county website, with almost 1,500 participants completing the survey, and
- (3) **Focus Group** (in-person) discussions conducted, on behalf of the COVID-19 Task Force, including cities/towns, businesses, organizations, schools and other entities operating in the county. Six (6) Focus Groups were held at the WSU Technical South Campus in Wichita, July 20 - 29, 2021, with more than 100 representatives from these sectors in attendance.

The following provides a summary of priority needs identified by participants in each of the three activities:

### *Internal Survey of County Departments*

#### COVID-19 Response

47% (17/36) indicated need for additional Personal Professional Equipment (**PPE**) supplies.

44% (16/36) indicated need for additional **cleaning** service

28% (10/36) also indicated need to have additional **cleaning** supplies on-hand in 2021.

16% (6/36) requested ongoing or expanded **COVID-19 testing** for staff and/clients. This included INTRUST Bank Arena, COMCARE, Health Department, EMS, SCFD #1, and the Sheriff's Office.

8% (3/36) are requesting **additional communication materials** to educate the public and others during the COVID-19 recovery. This includes departments of the County Manager & Communications, COMCARE, & the Sheriff's Office.

5% (2/36) are requesting funds for anticipated **medical expenses** for clients/customers at COMCARE & the Department of Corrections.

Support Social Distancing to prevent COVID-19 infection

16% (6/36) requested renovations/changes to **physical work space** due to continued, long-term plan for employees to telework. This includes Exploration Place, Accounting, Budget Office, CFO Office, Manager's Office and SCDDO.

14% (5/36) believe they will need **extra facility space** in order to continue to provide to social distancing to reduce exposure to COVID-19 and other variant virus. Those departments are Health Department, the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, Emergency Communications & EMS.

Recovery/continuity of County operations

14% (5/36) of Departments reported they will incur **additional operation costs in 2021** to continue COVID-19 response & recovery. Includes: Exploration Place - \$48,125; COMCARE - unknown; 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court - \$42,500; District Attorney - \$270,000; EMS - \$26,000. **Total - \$386,625**

14% (5/36) of Departments experienced **revenue loss** in 2020.

INTRUST Bank Arena - \$3,747,256/ 58% of expected 2020 revenue (to submit Shuttered Venue Grant to Fed. Government), COMCARE - \$5,346,231.88; Health Department - \$317,640 (Immunizations - \$186,449, Travel Immunizations - \$61,613, Family Planning - \$36,207, Healthy Babies - \$14,339, STD Clinic - \$19,032); Department of Corrections - \$505,000; Sedgwick Co. Zoo - \$1,000,000.00. **Total - \$10,916,127.88**

25% (9/36) of Departments are reporting **broadband issues** within the county facility and/or among county employees working from their residence (teleworking).

11% (4/36) of Departments reported needs to **improve to water or sewer infrastructure**. This includes Exploration Place (est. cost \$15,000), Lake Afton (est. cost \$21,574.64), Facilities (est. cost \$1,146,000), and Public Works.

Support of Personnel to continue COVID-19 Recovery

58% (21/36) requested continued support for **remote work technology**.

19% (7/36) requested support for **temporary positions** to support COVID-19 related work. These included: Accounting, CFO Office, Purchasing, Risk Management, Human Resources, Health Department, & EMS.

8% (3/36) stated need for **enhanced overtime** for existing positions to support COVID-19 related work in the Accounting Department, Health Department & EMS.

8% (3/36) indicated they have experienced additional and/or different **demand for services** from the public due to COVID-19 or its impact, including Exploration Place, Sheriff's Office, & Department of Corrections.

This survey and follow-up discussions with departments focused on specific funding needs and detailed requests. Meetings were also held with public safety departments and departments impacted by the court backlog due to COVID-19. All of this feedback was utilized by the County Finance Department to develop the "immediate ARPA spend plan" totaling **\$37,980,197.00**, subsequently adopted by the Sedgwick County Board of Commissioners on July 27, 2021.

## *External Survey of County Residents*

This on-line survey provided participants' opportunity to rank by importance, up to 6 of 15 ARPA eligible funding opportunities they believed would help respond to COVID-19 and support recovery efforts in Sedgwick County. Those 15 priority options included:

- 1) Assist licensed childcare providers so they can improve their childcare facilities.
- 2) Assistance to small businesses and non-profits to help them re-open and stay open safely to serve residents of Sedgwick County.
- 3) Assistance for businesses providing travel, hospitality and promoting tourism in the County.
- 4) Continue to purchase and distribute Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE).
- 5) Ensure county services and offices remain open and operating.
- 6) Expand early learning services and tutoring programs in areas with high poverty.
- 7) Expand free COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing programs.
- 8) Financial assistance to households affected by COVID-19 that don't have any other resources.
- 9) Fund programs that provide services to foster care families.
- 10) Fund programs that address community-violence intervention, homelessness, affordable housing development, housing counseling and/or lead remediation.
- 11) Improve ventilation systems and spaces in order to prevent new COVID-19 infections, in day care facilities, schools, nursing homes, jails/prisons, homeless shelters, and other group facilities.
- 12) Offer mental health care services to vulnerable populations.
- 13) Provide Medical, Mental Health and Substance Use treatment care to those impacted by COVID.
- 14) Provide funds to hospitals, clinics, schools, child care providers, and other businesses that provide essential services for premium pay ("hazard pay") for essential workers.
- 15) Provide or improve broadband services in areas of the County with unreliable service.

Compiling responses resulted in these top four (4) funding needs (selected by aggregate and by priority designations):

◆ **Assistance to small businesses and non-profits to help them re-open and stay open safely to serve residents of Sedgwick County.**

◆ **Fund programs that address community-violence intervention, homelessness, affordable housing development, housing counseling and/or lead remediation.**

◆ **Offer mental health care services to vulnerable populations.**

◆ **Provide funds to hospitals, clinics, schools, child care providers, and other businesses that provide essential services for premium pay ("hazard pay") for essential workers.**

Half of all survey participants reported living in 10 of the 57 zip codes for Sedgwick County, with 65% of participants living in the County for 20 years or more. 87% were working in the County at the time of completing the survey and 42% were professionals employed in health care, legal services, science & engineering, educators/teaching and information technology. Three out of four participants reported living in a household having up to four persons, with almost 40% of households having one to three children/teens in the home.

## ***Focus Group Recommendations***

The following priority recommendations were present in the majority of the six (6) Focus Groups discussions conducted.

- 1. Workforce Challenges:** Need to attract new, skilled workers demanding higher pay rates, benefits & ability to work remotely (hybrid). Businesses & non-profits voiced clear need for funds to purchase additional technology and training to expand on-line retail, promote travel/tourism, provide services (such as on-line learning) for a fee.
- 2. Need for additional/expanded Child Care Services:** Major obstacle is regulatory requirements for new hires to pass fingerprint/ criminal background checks taking more than 30 days to process in Topeka, Fire Marshalls to conduct re-opening inspections have delayed hiring/opening 30-90 days. Providers will have to pay higher wage for skilled workers and retain them to work for non-traditional hours of child care (evenings & weekends); needed predominately by hospital workers.
- 3. Assistance with finding ‘best’ ARPA source of funds, submitting applications, management of project and reporting to the U.S. Government:** Provision of “Community Navigator” program by County to assist applicants and reporting, provision of workshops (in-person & on-line), provision of coordinated communication (e.g. web page on County site) listing other ARPA funding opportunities with State of Kansas & U.S. Government.
- 4. Grants from the County to small businesses, organizations and cities to support safe re-opening/remain open in safe environments:** Most participants stated operating support grants would be necessary to get through 2022.
- 5. Expanded/Available Mental Health Services:** With children/teens returning to schools, expectation of increased need for behavioral health/mental health care, greater presence of mental health workers in-schools, in communities 24/7 – includes support to families who have suffered loss of family members, incidences of domestic violence, evicted from home; and increased access to treatment for those suffering from substance use abuse.
- 6. Continue COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts so individuals and businesses can go back to work, attend school and travel safely:** All participants noted that unless vaccination rates increase, full re-opening and recovery will not be achieved; encourages the County to continue efforts to achieve 70% or more of ALL residents vaccinated before end of 2021.
- 7. Specific to the Local Government Focus Group (July 29, 2021), financial support from Sedgwick County for infrastructure projects is a clear priority (sewer/water projects were predominately discussed, along with need for broadband in some areas).** Recommended next step would be in-person or virtual meeting with the cities/towns and County to determine priority need and estimated costs. All agreed they would be willing to “pool” ARPA funding for infrastructure purposes.

*Revised 9/7/2021*

Detailed information and data is available to support the priority of recommendations for each Needs Assessment activity.