
Sponsor: Finance

Meeting Date: 5/3/2022

Title: American Rescue Plan Act Funding Request for Additional Administrative Items

File Number: 2022-168

Background and Rationale:

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 was signed into law on March 11, 2021. The relief package provides funding in several areas such as state and local aid, education, rental assistance, transit, stimulus payments for individuals and other provisions. In addition, ARPA provides \$350 billion in funding for state and local governments. In April 2021, Ramsey County received \$53,446,702 of the total grant amount of \$106,893,403 from the US Treasury Local Government ARPA funds. The second installment will be sent to the county from Treasury in May 2022. The ARPA funding must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and can be spent through December 31, 2026. This allows time for planning and investment in various tiers from immediate needs through bold investments that impact the systems and residents of Ramsey County.

Over the last year, the County Manager presented an overall approach to the ARPA funding for the county and has made multiple requests for ARPA funding to the Ramsey County Board. The approved investments include Right Track + workforce initiative (\$2.1 million), affordable housing investment (\$20 million), Racial Equity and Community Engagement work (\$2.7 million), violence prevention (up to \$16.5 million) and workforce ecosystem (up to \$9.5 million) plus administrative funding. This request for board action is seeking authority for additional administrative items as outlined below.

Bargaining Stipends for Pandemic Recognition (up to \$5 million)

In January 2022, collective bargaining with nine American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees bargaining units resulted in agreements for three-year contract. The contract included a one-time lump sum pandemic recognition investment as detailed below:

- One-time, lump sum payment of \$1,000 to employees who have been required to work on-site and provide direct in-person services/care throughout the ongoing pandemic as determined by the employer.
- One-time, lump sum payment of \$500 to all other employees who were not required to work in person or provide in-person services/care throughout the ongoing pandemic and have had the option to work from home, as determined by the employer.

These recognition payments have been provided to bargaining units that have finalized agreements and will be offered to the remaining bargaining units through their collective bargaining efforts. This action includes up to \$5.0 million in ARPA funding to provide these one-time payments to Ramsey County employees in recognition of their ongoing and dedicated work during COVID.

Furniture, Equipment and Technology beyond what the county provides for at alternate worksites for mobile and hybrid employees (up to \$2.2 million)

To support a flexible work environment, hybrid and mobile employees are eligible for a one-time \$500 home office and connectivity stipend. This stipend is intended to help offset the cost of setting up the home office including chairs, monitors, keyboards and mice. The payment is subject to taxes and will be made in 2022 based on the phased return to office plan. Stipends are conditioned upon

return of furniture and equipment taken home under the county’s Ad Hoc Telecommuting Policy and completion of the Flexible Workplace Policy training. Hybrid and mobile employees hired between the start of this program and December 31, 2024, are eligible for a one-time \$500 home office and connectivity stipend. The payment is also subject to taxes and will be made automatically after completing six months of employment.

This action includes up to \$2.2 million in ARPA funding to provide these one-time payments to Ramsey County hybrid and mobile employees for furniture, equipment and technology beyond what the county provides for.

Project for 2022-23 Budgeted Funds (\$20.15 million)

In the 2022-23 budget, \$20.15 million of ARPA funding was included to ensure that critical services continue to be provided to residents during very challenging times, while also recognizing the economic realities of our community and the need to keep tax increases low. To properly track these funds, Finance is requesting to create a project.

Accept Additional Treasury Funds

This request seeks authority to accept the second federal payment to Ramsey County of \$53,446,701, which is anticipated to be received in May 2022. With this payment, Ramsey County will have received a total grant amount of \$106,893,403 from the US Treasury Local Government ARPA funds. As noted above, the majority of these funds have been approved by the Ramsey County Board. More information on ARPA investments can be found at www.ramseycounty.us/rise <<http://www.ramseycounty.us/rise>>.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Allocate up to \$5,000,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funds for employee recognition payments included in bargaining agreements.
2. Allocate up to \$2,200,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funds for furniture, equipment and technology beyond what the county provides for at alternate worksites for hybrid and mobile workers.
3. Create a project account for the \$20,150,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funds included in the 2022-23 budget.
4. Authorize the County Manager to accept \$53,446,701 from the US Treasury Local Government American Rescue Plan Act funds.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McGuire, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Motion passed.

Aye: - 5: Carter, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

Absent: - 2: Frethem, and MatasCastillo

By: 
Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board