



# PANDEMIC RECOVERY FUNDS PROJECT / IDEA SUBMISSION PROCESS INSTRUCTIONS

*Please read all instructions and provide the required material. Incomplete submissions will cause delays in processing.*

**Submission Portal** – All submissions must be made through County’s website at [www.montcopa.org/recoveryoffice](http://www.montcopa.org/recoveryoffice).

**Pre-Submission Assistance** – Montgomery County has contracted with the Pennsylvania Health Access Network (PHAN) for technical assistance services available to anyone using the County’s portal to submit a project or idea. Please contact Technical Assistance for:

- General support and technical help to answer questions, explain process and help navigate application systems
- Pre-submission review of proposals
- Training and assistance on how to craft a clear, effective proposal
- Assistance with finding supporting data
- Support to applicants in Spanish, Korean, and Mandarin Chinese
- Support to applicants with disabilities or impairments

To Contact Pennsylvania Health Access Network:

Phone/ Text (SMS): (610) 750-8200

Email: [montcota@pahealthaccess.org](mailto:montcota@pahealthaccess.org)

Website: <https://pahealthaccess.org/montcota/>

**Estimated time to complete** – There is no defined time to complete a submission. The application portal allows users to save draft submissions in progress, and the application is additionally available in word format on the County website.

**Submission deadline** – All submissions are due online by 11:59 pm on April 30, 2022.

## I. BACKGROUND

On March 11, 2021, Congress enacted the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), including the \$350 billion Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) allocation to states, counties, metropolitan cities, Tribal governments, territories, and nonentitlement units of local government to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of these funds is to provide relief to support the public health response to the pandemic and contribute to a strong and equitable economic recovery.

Montgomery County’s SLFRF allocation is \$161,395,498, referred to as the County’s **Pandemic Recovery Funds**. The County must obligate all funds to specific projects by December 31, 2024.

All project funds must be spent, and the period of performance must end, by December 31, 2026.

Montgomery County will use the Pandemic Recovery Funds to ensure an equitable recovery, given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and economic crisis on certain demographic groups, neighborhoods, and industries over the last two years. The County continues to focus on engaging the community to determine local priorities for funding.

These instructions describe the County Recovery Office process to determine how the Pandemic Recovery Funds will be expended. We seek to maximize benefit of this opportunity through transformative projects focused on unserved and disproportionately impacted communities.

## II. SUBMISSION PROCESS OVERVIEW

This process includes two distinct ways to submit a funding request:

- 1) Project Submissions** are fully developed submissions for a specific project that the submitter (organization, business, faith group, etc.) either intends to carry out themselves or would like to partner with the County to help them carry them out. This is similar to a typical grant application for a nonprofit or a bid proposal for a for-profit company. Project Submissions must include a description of the project need and impact, activities, milestones, budget, responsible entities, and other supporting information to sufficiently demonstrate alignment with the Pandemic Response Fund priorities and eligibility requirements.
- 2) Idea Submissions**, which are unique to this process and intended to allow a broader range of community members, non-incorporated neighborhood groups, grassroots organizations, and others to submit ideas for projects that they themselves are not able to carry out without more support. Idea Submissions will identify a need in the community that the submitter(s) would like the County to consider for funding, but that still needs to be developed further with support from Community Partners or the County itself, or that another entity is better suited to manage.

*For example, a neighborhood group may identify the need for a shared community space but lack the capacity to oversee the construction themselves. This group could submit an Idea Submission for the space. The Recovery Office could help turn the Idea into a Project by supporting the group in budget development, identifying contractors, providing, or identifying project managers, and managing the project to completion, or referring the project to another office/ department.*

Both Project and Idea Submissions are submitted through the OpenGov Submission Portal, linked above. The Project and Idea Submission forms contain a unique set of questions and requirements. [The full question list for each submission type can be found here.](#)

Each unique Project and Idea Submission must be submitted separately through the Portal.

## III. FUNDING PRIORITIES

Based on community feedback, federal guidance, and local data on the impacts of the pandemic, the County is prioritizing projects for funding that:

- 1) Address a community priority of affordable housing, mental health/behavioral healthcare services, childcare, public health emergency response, or digital access.
- 2) Specifically target and are led by historically underserved communities or communities impacted by the pandemic who live or work in Montgomery County, PA.
- 3) Can clearly describe how the intended work of the project provides a direct response to the impacts of the pandemic or to issues made more severe by the pandemic; and
- 4) Have the potential for long-term, transformative impact.

Key definitions:

- 1) **Community priorities:**
  - a. Affordable housing: Projects that address issues related to access to or quality of housing that is safe and affordable for a variety of income levels.
  - b. Mental health/ behavioral health: Projects that address issues related to access to or quality of mental health or behavioral health services or treatment.
  - c. Childcare: Projects that address issues related to access to or quality of childcare services.
  - d. Public health emergency response:
  - e. Digital access: Projects that address access to or quality of technology available, inclusive of technology infrastructure (broadband), user capacity/ skills, or equipment.
- 2) **Underserved communities:** Communities or geographic groups that have been systemically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civil life. This includes populations or communities that have experienced long-standing disparities that were amplified by the pandemic, or who face continued barriers to a full and equitable recovery. It also includes historically marginalized communities who have been adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.
- 3) **Impacted communities:** Communities or demographic groups that have been caused severe impacts by the pandemic. Generally, this includes low-income households, households residing in a Qualified Census Tract, households that qualify for government benefit programs (such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Free and Reduced Price School Lunch/Breakfast program, etc.), or Title I schools for projects addressing educational disparities.
- 4) **Projects led by these communities:** Projects that have been submitted by, are organized by, include in leadership positions or other positions of decision-making authority, or otherwise provide opportunities for regular and meaningful participation by members of the targeted community.
- 5) **Potential for long-term, transformative impact:** Projects that address root causes or systemic barriers to achieving economic opportunity or overall well-being, with impact occurring at a neighborhood, community, or broader level. This may include changing discriminatory or inequitable policies or practices, regulations, or cultural norms; or addressing historic lack of investment in communities, lack of access to services or goods, or other historic means of exclusion from community benefits or full participation in civic life. These projects typically will go beyond providing direct assistance to individuals or families and will instead focus on challenges at a neighborhood, community, or broader level (such as school district-wide or county-wide) by changing longstanding policies, practices, norms, regulations, or structures that prohibit underserved or impacted communities from full participation in economic opportunity or in achieving overall well-being.

*For example, a project that leads to the creation of new municipal regulations on lead-based paint standards in rental housing would provide long-term, transformative change for disproportionately impacted communities in the entire municipality, as opposed to the relatively more limited benefit of a project that would provide individuals of a disproportionately impacted community with assistance for lead paint remediation in their own rental home.*

#### IV. ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Please note that the descriptions below are summaries and examples of eligible project types; more detailed information on eligibility is linked in each section. It is highly recommended that submitters review the detailed information on the eligibility requirements of their project category prior to starting their submission.

- 1) **Respond to the Public Health Emergency** by, for example, funding COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff, such as:
  - Vaccination programs, testing, contact tracing, and Personal Protective Equipment
  - Enhancement of public health data programs
  - Capital investments in public facilities to meet pandemic operational needs
  - Services to address behavioral healthcare needs such as mental health treatment, substance use, crisis intervention
  - Payroll and covered benefits expenses
- 2) **Respond to Negative Economic Impacts Caused by the Public Health Emergency**, including economic harm to individuals and households, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector, such as:
  - Aid to workers and families for food, housing, or other financial insecurity
  - Supporting small businesses through grants, loans, and counseling programs
  - Speeding the recovery of tourism, travel, and hospitality sectors
  - Rebuilding public sector capacity
  - Addressing health disparities and the social determinants of health through community health workers, benefit navigators, lead remediation, violence intervention
  - Investments in Housing and neighborhoods through assistance to those experiencing homelessness, housing affordability programs and housing navigation assistance
  - Addressing educational disparities through early learning services, afterschool programs, additional resources to high-poverty districts
  - Promoting healthy childhood environments including new or expanded high quality childcare, home visiting programs
- 3) **Replace Lost Public Sector Revenue** using this funding to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the pandemic.
- 4) **Provide Premium Pay for Essential Workers** offering additional support to those who have and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors.
- 5) **Invest in Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure** making necessary investments to

improve access to clean drinking water, support vital wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and to expand access to broadband internet.

## V. ELIGIBLE SUBMITTERS

Project Submissions must be submitted by the organization or entity that will be leading the project, which is called the Lead Organization. Most organizations are eligible to serve as a Lead Organization under the Pandemic Response Fund, including for-profit businesses, nonprofits and other 501c', fiscal sponsors, faith groups, schools, and municipalities. Individuals are not permitted to serve as the Lead Organization on a Project Submission through the Pandemic Response Fund.

Lead organizations must be in good standing with the County to be eligible to receive funds. This includes, but is not limited to, being current in all taxes and fees. Any property with an open violation or revocation of licensure will not be eligible. A review of the Lead Organization's standing with the County, and eligibility to serve as the Lead Organization, will be conducted during the submission review process.

For Idea Submissions, both organizations and individuals may provide a submission.

## VI. OTHER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Pandemic Recovery Funds cannot be used to pay for costs incurred prior to March 3, 2021 or for costs incurred after December 26, 2026.
- 2) Ineligible uses of these funds include projects that:
  - Violate Existing Laws or Regulations
  - Conflict With or Contravene Purpose of the American Rescue Plan Act
  - Undermine Efforts to Stop Spread of COVID-19
  - Deposit into Pension Funds
  - Funds for Debt Service, Replenish Financial Reserves, Satisfy Obligation Arising from Judicial Settlement or Judgment
  - Self-Deal or Violate Ethics Rules
- 3) Submission Requirements: All submissions must include a Project Budget, at a minimum. Additional documents may be submitted to further support the project rationale, project plan, or project costs. Final approval for funding or eligibility determination may require additional documentation prior to funding awards.

## VII. REVIEW AND SCORING PROCESS

The Montgomery County Recovery Office staff will compile and review all submissions received by the deadline of April 30, 2022. The office will reach out to submitters as needed for additional information or questions on submissions.

All submitted projects will be evaluated for meeting the basic eligibility requirements of the Pandemic Response Fund. Submissions that are eligible will then be scored and ranked according to how well they meet the priorities established by the County and its community

partners. [The scoring rubric is available here.](#)

Once scored and ranked, a summary of all project submissions and their eligibility determination, scores/ranks will be posted publicly on the County website.

Funding requests are expected to exceed available monies. The decision does not reflect the value of the project/submitter, but on the need to be selective due to limited resources.

#### **VIII. FUNDING PROCESS AND PUBLIC COMMENT**

Once all submissions have been reviewed and scored, the Montgomery County Recovery Office will publish a Draft Recovery Plan that includes a listing of all Projects that it proposes to fund through Pandemic Recovery Funds. The public will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Recovery Plan. Information on how to provide feedback will be published at a later date.

After the public comment period is closed, the Recovery Office will review comments and make adjustments to the plan as deemed appropriate, in consultation with community partners and submitters. A Final Recovery Plan will be created based on the Draft Recovery Plan and any incorporated feedback, and will be presented to the County's Board of Commissioners for adoption in June 2022.

#### **IX. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS**

Following the publication of the Final Recovery Plan, the Recovery Office will begin to allocate funds to Lead Organizations for all approved Project Submissions. Before funds can be allocated, Lead Organizations must enter into a Project Management Agreement with the County. This agreement process will be unique to each project based on the specific Federal and County reporting requirements for each type of project. More information about the Federal compliance and reporting requirements for each type of project can be found [here](#). Additional County requirements may also be necessary. Lead organizations will be contacted to complete this process as quickly as possible.

#### **X. SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

Submissions must be received by 11:59 pm on April 30, 2022.