



Recovery Plan

**State and Local Fiscal Recovery  
Funds**

2021 Interim Performance Report

# Luzerne County 2021 Recovery Plan

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## **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

### **Executive Summary**

On March 11, 2021 the American Rescue Plan Act was signed into law. A provision of the Act created the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF), which allocated approximately \$65.1 billion dollars to every county and county equivalent in the United States. On May 19, 2021, Luzerne County received the first tranche of payment from the SLFRF, totaling \$56,445,076. Luzerne County will receive the second tranche of equal amount at least twelve months after the first payment.

Per the rules and regulations of the SLFRF Interim Rule, as provided by the Department of The Treasury, Luzerne County must provide an Interim Recovery Plan Performance Report that details Luzerne County's use of the SLFRF from award date to July 31, 2021.<sup>1,2</sup> Further, it provides Luzerne County the opportunity to detail the intended use of funds as of the submission of the report.

These funds are a once in a generation opportunity to ensure Luzerne County makes a full recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic while strengthening the County's communities. SLFRF can be used in a variety of ways; however, Luzerne County must administer these within the guidelines of the Department of The Treasury. As of this date, a Final Rule has not been issued. As a result, Luzerne County is still in the exploratory phase. Luzerne County elected officials and administration are assessing options for the use of these funds and receiving community feedback.

### **Uses of Funds**

#### *Overview*

As detailed above, Luzerne County has spent or obligated minimal amounts of the SLFRF funds to any expenditure category. The main project undertaken as of the submission of this report was a vaccine clinic held on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 5<sup>th</sup>, with the second dose clinic held on June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, as well as an effort to distribute vaccines to homebound residents and to assisted living facilities. Both of these projects were conducted with the assistance of community partners. However, several uses are under consideration. Currently, Luzerne County is exploring ways to improve storm water and wastewater management throughout the County. Such investments will protect existing sewer and water infrastructure while promoting safe and healthy living environments for residents.

Also under consideration are programs to assist County small businesses as they recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. A variety of programmatic designs could be implemented for this use. As such, Luzerne County officials are currently considering how to create an economic recovery and assistance program that reaches the most impacted industries and socioeconomic groups while ensuring such programs remain highly accessible and easy to navigate. Luzerne County is also consulting with Federal evidence clearinghouses so any such programs utilize an evidence based approach.

Luzerne County will implement the lost revenue provision of the Department of The Treasury's Interim Final Rule. This will allow the County to recoup a portion of these funds that will be

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<sup>1</sup> [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, Interim Final Rule](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Compliance and Reporting Guidance, State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds](#)

deployed for general government services already being provided by the County. By recouping lost revenue, Luzerne County will be able to continue delivering vital services to residents without disruption.

#### *Areas of Focus*

Below is a brief description of how Luzerne County has or plans to use SLFRF in six expenditure categories as provided by the rules and regulations:

##### *a. Public Health*

Luzerne County remains committed to protecting the health of the public, government employees, and individuals that rely on County's services. Therefore, Luzerne County will use SLFRF to keep County services operational and accessible while providing the safest environment possible as the community continues to manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Luzerne County partnered with several other community organizations to hold a COVID-19 mass vaccine clinic that was accessible to those from Luzerne County and the surrounding area. SLFRF also supported a program to distribute vaccines to homebound residents and assisted living facilities. Additional details on these projects can be found in the Project Inventory section of this report.

##### *b. Negative Economic Impact*

As described above, Luzerne County is exploring ways to assist in the economic recovery. The economic impacts of the pandemic are still being felt. For example, Luzerne County's unemployment rate remains approximately 1.3% above pre-pandemic levels. Other economic indicators, such as average weekly wages in the accommodation and food service industry, reveal the industries most impacted by the pandemic have yet to make a full recovery.<sup>3</sup> The County is exploring programmatic designs that have a record of success and are accessible to those in most need of assistance.

##### *c. Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities*

The rules and regulations allow for broad uses of the SLFRF to lend aid to disproportionately impacted communities. Currently, Luzerne County is considering ways to strengthen the wastewater and storm water infrastructure in a number of these communities, which will protect the health and welfare of residents for decades to come.

##### *d. Premium Pay*

Luzerne County is not utilizing SLFRF for premium pay at this time.

##### *e. Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure*

As described above, Luzerne County is considering deploying these funds to strengthen storm water and wastewater infrastructure in a number of areas, including socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.

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<sup>3</sup> [Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, WorkStats](#)

*f. Revenue Replacement*

Luzerne County intends to use the lost revenue provision of the Interim Final Rule to recoup lost revenue for eligible funds for fiscal years 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Replacing these funds will make sure vital government services are not disrupted as a result of the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic.

*Other Programs*

Luzerne County has funds remaining for the Emergency Rental Assist Program. Additional information can be found [here](#).<sup>4</sup> This program is supported by funds from the Department of the Treasury.<sup>5</sup>

Luzerne County has already successfully executed other programs that have mitigated the health and financial impacts of the pandemic. For example, Luzerne County distributed \$28,665,567 from the COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant, with \$10,800,000 going to aid for small businesses, \$952,581 being used to support the tourism businesses, and another \$368,783 for support to nonprofits. Luzerne County also distributed \$3,595,181 from the COVID-19 Hospitality Industry Recovery Program to 207 businesses earlier this year.

**Promoting Equitable Outcomes**

*Overview*

The current approach to the SLFRF is to ensure the funds are spent in a broad based manner so the greatest numbers of residents are benefited. This approach has already been used by providing area residents with a mass vaccine clinic that was highly accessible and designed to serve the largest number of residents possible. Luzerne County also worked with community partners to vaccinate the most at risk residents. Further, any future program design will prioritize ease of navigation, accessibility, and administrative simplification. This will make sure SLFRF are delivered quickly and efficiently while minimizing bureaucratic hurdles. Other than the vaccine clinic, no other programs have been implemented or fully designed as of the submission of this report; however, this is the approach currently being considered by Luzerne County.

*Areas of Focus*

Luzerne County is approaching the use of SLFRF while focusing on the following areas:

*a. Goals:*

As already highlighted, Luzerne County is considering a number of storm water and wastewater projects throughout the County. Many of these projects are interdependent on one another and performing them in isolation would fail to substantially improve the quality and resiliency of storm water and wastewater infrastructure in the County. However, many of these projects will benefit Qualified Census Tracts and other historically underserved groups, thereby improving quality of life in disproportionately impacted communities.

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<sup>4</sup> [Commission on Economic Opportunity, COVID Rent and Utility Assistance Program](#)

<sup>5</sup> [U.S. Department of The Treasury, Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#)

*b. Awareness:*

Other than the vaccination efforts, Luzerne County has not created a campaign to promote awareness of SLFRF projects at this time since the final rule has not been issued by the Department of The Treasury. However, awareness has been promoted by openly discussing the use of SLFRF during public meetings of County Council and also receiving feedback from various constituent groups. County officials are exploring a variety of tools and resources that will ensure programs designed and implemented with SLFRF will be promoted widely to maximize awareness.

*c. Access and Distribution:*

As explained earlier, Luzerne County is still considering and reviewing various program designs within the eligible expenditure categories of the SLFRF. However, any such program designs will emphasize the importance of being accessible to a variety of residents and businesses while serving their practical needs.

*d. Outcomes:*

At this time, Luzerne County is focusing on using SLFRF to promote a broad based, community wide public health and economic recovery effort that will focus on reaching universal levels of service by benefiting the greatest number of eligible residents, businesses, and community groups. Also, funds will be used to continue delivering County services despite the disruptions brought by the pandemic.

Moving forward, Luzerne County will continue to prioritize an approach to the SLFRF that reaches residents and communities most in need of assistance. The County understands the disparate impacts of the pandemic, with some communities and groups experiencing greater levels of economic and public health impacts. Luzerne County's goal is to analyze and understand these impacts in the coming months and use this information to deploy SLFRF in a manner that maximizes community benefit.

To understand how Luzerne County has already designed and executed programs with these areas in mind, please refer to the Project Inventory section of this report for an example. The Mass Vaccination Clinic (MVC) and Vaccinating at Risk Residents provide examples of how Luzerne County is approaching the use of SLFRF.

*Additional Priorities*

SLFRF use will also prioritize other goals to facilitate the economic recovery in Luzerne County while also benefiting communities that have been most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*a. Negative Economic Impacts:*

As detailed earlier, Luzerne County is considering a variety of program designs to address the negative economic impacts brought by the pandemic. Creating an equitable recovery that reaches a large number of impacted small businesses and nonprofits will be a principle goal of any such program.

*b. Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities:*

The SLFRF provide an opportunity for a once in a generation investment in community water and sewer infrastructure needs. Luzerne County's goal is to use the SLFRF to improve community infrastructure, including areas that are historically disadvantaged.

To date, Luzerne County has taken a patient approach to deploying SLFRF, which will allow the County to design programs and projects that use a quantitative methodology to promote equitable outcomes for residents. The intent is to use SLFRF in a manner that is evidence driven and is capable of capturing data after the fact in order to conduct program evaluation. Programs that take this approach often maximize the benefits brought by public funds. This approach requires time for research and development as well as community input; therefore, many of the considered uses of the SLFRF are still in the exploratory phase.

One of the Luzerne County's priorities in regard to the SLFRF is distributing the funds in a manner that benefits a variety of residents and communities while also investing in the future of socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. The County is currently exploring various options that will advance that goal.

### **Community Engagement**

Currently, Luzerne County has received numerous requests of community input regarding the use of SLFRF. Elected officials that represent the residents of the County have also been in communication with County officials to propose various uses of these funds. Luzerne County is considering other approaches to promote community engagement but have not committed to a strategy at this time.

### **Labor Practices**

Infrastructure related and other SLFRF projects will support local businesses by providing them the opportunity to bid on contracts. Luzerne County will award bids and enter into contracts as outlined in the County's Home Rule Charter and Administrative Code.<sup>6,7</sup> Any sub-recipient of the SLFRF funds will also be required to follow the guidelines. This process increases participation and transparency in the award and contracting process. Further, Luzerne County will adhere to Pennsylvania's prevailing wage rates as set forth by the Bureau of Labor Law Compliance for SLFRF projects when applicable. This will support strong wage rates for labor and help promote an equitable recovery from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Use of Evidence**

The rules and regulations provided by the Department of The Treasury emphasize the use of evidence for certain SLFRF supported projects. As mentioned previously, Luzerne County is currently researching and developing potential SLFRF programs. Part of this effort is consulting with federally recognized evidence clearinghouses to ensure any such programs are supported by evidence and have a proven record of success.

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<sup>6</sup> [Home Rule Charter of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Luzerne County Administrative Code](#)

**Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category**

As of the date of submission, Luzerne County has not expended any SLFRF. However, the County has obligated funds for expenditure category 1.1, COVID-19 Vaccination and 6.1, Provision of Government Services. Those will be reported as obligations on Luzerne County’s Project and Expenditure Report.

The below chart was included in the Interim Recovery Plan Performance Report so residents have the opportunity to see a full list of expenditure categories.

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health		
1.1	COVID-19 Vaccination		
1.2	COVID-19 Testing		
1.3	COVID-19 Contact Tracing		
1.4	Prevention in Congregate Settings (Nursing Homes, Prisons/Jails, Dense Work Sites, Schools, etc.)		
1.5	Personal Protective Equipment		
1.6	Medical Expenses (including Alternative Care Facilities)		
1.7	Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency		
1.8	Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine)		
1.9	Payroll Costs for Public Health, Safety, and Other Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19		
1.10	Mental Health Services		
1.11	Substance Use Services		
1.12	Other Public Health Services		
2	Expenditure Category: Negative Economic Impacts		
2.1	Household Assistance: Food Programs		
2.2	Household Assistance: Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Aid		
2.3	Household Assistance: Cash Transfers		
2.4	Household Assistance: Internet Access Programs		
2.5	Household Assistance: Eviction Prevention		
2.6	Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers		
2.7	Job Training Assistance (e.g., Sectoral job-training, Subsidized Employment, Employment Supports or Incentives)		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
2.8	Contributions to UI Trust Funds*		
2.9	Small Business Economic Assistance (General)		
2.10	Aid to nonprofit organizations		
2.11	Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality		
2.12	Aid to Other Impacted Industries		
2.13	Other Economic Support		
2.14	Rehiring Public Sector Staff		
3	Expenditure Category: Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities		
3.1	Education Assistance: Early Learning		
3.2	Education Assistance: Aid to High-Poverty Districts		
3.3	Education Assistance: Academic Services		
3.4	Education Assistance: Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Services		
3.5	Education Assistance: Other		
3.6	Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care		
3.7	Healthy Childhood Environments: Home Visiting		
3.8	Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare System		
3.9.	Healthy Childhood Environments: Other		
3.10	Housing Support: Affordable Housing		
3.11	Housing Support: Services for Unhoused persons		
3.12	Housing Support: Other Housing Assistance		
3.13	Social Determinants of Health: Other		
3.14	Social Determinants of Health: Community Health Workers or Benefits Navigators		
3.15	Social Determinants of Health: Lead Remediation		
3.16	Social Determinants of Health: Community Violence Interventions		
4	Expenditure Category: Premium Pay		
4.1	Public Sector Employees		
4.2	Private Sector: Grants to other employers		
5	Expenditure Category: Infrastructure		
5.1	Clean Water: Centralized wastewater treatment		
5.2	Clean Water: Centralized wastewater collection and conveyance		
5.3	Clean Water: Decentralized wastewater		
5.4	Clean Water: Combined sewer overflows		

Category		Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
5.5	Clean Water: Other sewer infrastructure		
5.6	Clean Water: Stormwater		
5.7	Clean Water: Energy conservation		
5.8	Clean Water: Water conservation		
5.9	Clean Water: Nonpoint source		
5.10	Drinking water: Treatment		
5.11	Drinking water: Transmission & distribution		
5.12	Drinking water: Transmission & distribution: lead remediation		
5.13	Drinking water: Source		
5.14	Drinking water: Storage		
5.15	Drinking water: Other water infrastructure		
5.16	Broadband: "Last Mile" projects		
5.17	Broadband: Other projects		
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement		
6.1	Provision of Government Services		
7	Administrative and Other		
7.1	Administrative Expenses		
7.2	Evaluation and data analysis		
7.3	Transfers to Other Units of Government		
7.4	Transfers to Nonentitlement Units (States and Territories only)		

## **Project Inventory**

### **Mass Vaccination Center**

Project Identification Number: 2021.1.1A

Funding amount: \$4,824.69

Project Expenditure Category: 1.1, COVID-19 Vaccination

#### *Project Overview*

As discussed earlier, Luzerne County coordinated with several community partners to hold a MVC at the Mohegan Sun Pocono Hotel on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 5<sup>th</sup> from 2:00PM to 8:00PM. Second doses were given at the same location on June 1<sup>st</sup> and June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Luzerne County intends to use SLFRF to reimburse the wages of the EMS personnel who administered the vaccines, the wages of Plains Township Police Officers who provided security and traffic control, and EpiKits that were needed on site in case of severe allergic reaction.

The goal of the MVC was to provide residents an opportunity to receive the vaccine in a convenient, centralized location. Luzerne County partnered with local media outlets and the Mohegan Sun Casino to promote the MVC.<sup>8,9</sup> Information about the MVC was also provided on Luzerne County's website.

Also, the location of the MVC made it highly accessible. It is close to I-81, I-476, and Pennsylvania Route 309. The clinic was held in a large ballroom, which allowed it to accommodate many individuals at once while still adhering to social distancing guidelines. The center also has ample parking spaces. Public bus lines serve the Mohegan Sun Pocono Hotel, which made this location favorable to those who rely on public transportation.

Administrative burdens were kept at a minimum. While residents were encouraged to register for a vaccine online or by telephone appointment, walk-ins were also provided a vaccination.

The location was advantageous for other reasons. The program was designed to serve as many residents as possible to achieve universal levels of service. However, the site of the MVC is located near several Qualified Census Tracts and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Projects which allowed historically disadvantaged groups to also be served by the clinic.<sup>10</sup>

The MVC was not exclusively designed to serve disadvantaged communities, but the design features described above highlight how this program ensured historically disadvantaged communities and at risk residents were given equal access the vaccine.

#### *Use of Evidence*

The body of scientific evidence regarding MVC, and COVID-19 MVC in particular is surprisingly scant. Despite this, available evidence suggests Luzerne County's MVC was conducted in a manner consist with available evidence. A study that reviewed existing literature on MVC in June of 2021 found, "MVCs are usually acknowledged as the best solution to administer vaccines in the shortest time to the greatest number of people."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Vaccinate NEPA: Luzerne County set to sponsor first regional vaccine clinic at Mohegan Sun Casino](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Luzerne County Homepage](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Office of Policy Development and Research, 2020 and 2021 Small DDAs and OCTs](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Challenges and Opportunities of Mass Vaccination Centers in COVID-19 Times: A Rapid Review of Literature](#)

Not only are MVCs effective in mass vaccination campaigns, the design of Luzerne County's MVC used best practices. For example, the aforementioned study found "an MVC could be started up in sites that are not originally designed for providing healthcare services. Secondly, an MVC may be only temporarily used, with the aim to centralize as much as possible the vaccination procedures, ensuring high volumes in the shortest time period." This describes the approach taken by Luzerne County.

Luzerne County's MVC utilized best practices and followed available evidence. However, since the use of MVCs remain an understudied area; this program was supported by preliminary evidence.

### **Vaccinating at Risk Residents**

Project Identification Number: 2021.1.1B

Funding amount: \$7,465.00

Project Expenditure Category: 1.1, COVID-19 Vaccination

#### *Project Overview*

In addition to the MVC, Luzerne County partnered with a local EMS company, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, NEPA Alliance, and others to distribute first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to homebound residents and assisted living facilities. SLFRF are being used to reimburse the wages of EMS personnel who participated in this project.

The principle goal of the program was to distribute vaccines to residents who are most likely to suffer serious medical outcomes should they be infected with COVID-19. Therefore, the program was not designed to explicitly assist economically disadvantaged residents. However, homebound individuals are often socioeconomically disadvantaged. For example, a 2016 study published in JAMA Internal Medicine found "that homebound or semi-homebound" individuals "are associated with markers of greater socioeconomic vulnerability, such as advanced age, low income, and higher prevalence of hospitalization."<sup>12</sup>

The program delivered the first dose of the vaccination to homebound and assisted living facility residents from May 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 5<sup>th</sup>. Second doses were delivered on June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.

#### *Use of Evidence*

The above referenced study demonstrates the homebound population is a high priority for receiving the COVID-19 vaccination and suggests this intervention was a success. Further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend "residents of long-term care facilities (LTCFs) be included among those offered the first supply of COVID-19 vaccines."<sup>13</sup> Based on available evidence and guidance, this vaccination program is based on the best available preliminary evidence.

### **Revenue Replacement**

Project Identification Number: 2021.6.1

Funding amount: \$6,295,579.00

Project Expenditure Category: 6.1, Provision of Government Services

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<sup>12</sup> [The Epidemiology of the Homebound in the United States](#)

<sup>13</sup> [The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Interim Recommendation for Allocating Initial Supplies of COVID-19 Vaccine — United States, 2020](#)

*Project Overview*

Luzerne County will utilize the reduction in revenue provision from the Interim Final Rule to replace lost revenue in 2020 relative to the base year revenue of 2019. Revenue recouped under this provision will be utilized for general government services to ensure the COVID-19 pandemic does not disrupt the activities of Luzerne County. As of the submission of this report, these funds have not been transferred into Luzerne County's General Fund. However, it is Luzerne County's intent to transfer these funds before the end of 2021; therefore, these funds are currently considered obligated.

Please see Appendix A for the calculation of this figure.

## Appendix A

### Background Information

1) Fiscal Year End	December	Notes:
Base Year Revenue Period	12/31/2019	FY used for base year calculation
2) Calculation Date	12/31/2020	
Number of Months	12	Months between Base Year and Calculation Date

### Estimate Revenue

3) Base Year Revenue	\$ 242,350,083	<a href="#">Use Worksheet to Calculate</a>
4) Growth Rate	4.1%	<a href="#">Use Worksheet to Calculate</a>
Counterfactual Revenue	\$ 252,286,436	Estimated Revenue Without Pandemic
5) Actual Revenue	\$ 245,990,857	<a href="#">Use Worksheet to Calculate</a>

### Reduction in Revenue

		<i>Fiscal Year Ended</i>	12/31/2020
Revenue Reduction	\$ 6,295,579		
Revenue Reduction %	-2.5%		