



MEMORANDUM

TO: Snohomish County Council

FROM: Kara Main-Hester, Chief Recovery & Resilience Officer

DATE: July 20, 2023

RE: 2023 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Shelter and Homelessness Spending Plan

Background

In February 2022, the Office of Recovery and Resilience (ORR) launched a countywide community engagement effort to guide investment strategies for the County's remaining ARPA funding. As a result of this process, the County was able to establish a clear set of pandemic recovery priorities from the community to directly inform all programs and spending decisions. Shelter and homelessness were identified as one of the six key [priorities](#) for spending ARPA funds between now and December 2024.

The need for additional investment in shelter and services to address homelessness is clearly demonstrated by the increase in the number of individuals who were unsheltered in the Snohomish County Point in Time Counts conducted before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In January 2020, prior to the onset of the pandemic, there were 426 Snohomish County residents living in shelters. Of the 669 who were unsheltered, 19 were living in abandoned buildings, 332 were living in vehicles, and 318 were living outside. Of the total number of individuals counted, 532 were chronically homeless with 495 having a serious mental illness. A complete count was not conducted in 2021 to protect the safety of both residents being counted and volunteer counters.

The count in 2022 demonstrated the efforts made to provide temporary congregate and non-congregate shelter to individuals as the number of residents in shelters rose to 576, a 35 percent increase. This increase related to a corresponding decrease in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness to 582 with 15 living in abandoned buildings, 221 in vehicles, and 346 living outside. The total count included 582 individuals who were chronically homeless with 467 having a serious mental illness. That the total count did not increase more dramatically was largely due to the infusion of pandemic-related legislation and resources to prevent landlords from evicting households as well as an infusion of a massive amount of funds to move individuals into motel rooms and provide emergency rental assistance.

As the pandemic continued, the count in 2023 showed that the number living in emergency shelters had reached a plateau of 575 while the number who were unsheltered rose back up to 686 with 15 living in abandoned buildings, 281 in vehicles, and 390 living outside. The number of chronically homeless individuals rose significantly to 629, an eight percent increase, with 573 having a serious mental illness, representing a 23 percent increase, and 558 having a substance use disorder. These trends demonstrate the need for both shelter and supportive services to meet the needs of the individuals served.

As emergency pandemic-related resources phase out, the County will need to rely on an infusion of new, temporary funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the State Legislature coupled with ARPA investments to create a bridge for supporting the sustainability of those investments with State HB 1406 and 1590 funds.

Additionally, we have experienced an influx of refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine since the fall of 2021. We have 3,483 Ukrainian and 1,100 Afghan newly arrived refugees, which is second only to King County in the state. Many of these individuals and families have arrived with minimal resources and the ARPA investments we've made have helped leverage support for approximately 3,000 refugees. That support has included providing short-term emergency shelter, longer-term rental assistance and housing support, legal aid, food and essentials, medical treatment, dental services, employment, and assistance in getting children enrolled in school.

As noted in the *Community Pandemic Recovery Priorities Report*, communities, residents, and businesses are all impacted by the increase in people experiencing homelessness, and more families are at risk of falling into homelessness with the end of the eviction moratorium and the winding down of federal and state emergency rental assistance. Some of the possible solutions identified by participants in the community engagement sessions included increasing the number of shelters and emergency housing units, increasing the types of shelters, increasing the geographic spread of shelters, and ensuring that sheltering is coupled with an array of services to help households increase their resilience in the face of an economy still recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proposed ARPA programming identified below has been designed to implement these strategies for the focus population to achieve the investment goals identified.

This memo is meant to satisfy the ARPA Spending Plan required by the 2023 Adopted Budget Note No. 8.

Focus Populations & Goals

To ensure those furthest from opportunity can benefit from the shelter/emergency housing and associated services identified below, the County recommends focusing on meeting the needs of those individuals who are currently unhoused as well as those who are unstably housed and most at risk of becoming homeless. This includes youth, justice-system involved individuals, individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders, and people who cannot easily access the supports needed to stabilize their lives and become economically and emotionally resilient.

The objectives of the ARPA funds to support shelter and homeless services are as follows:

- Continue to refine the streamlined, user-friendly coordinated entry system that supports individuals through enhanced staffing, better technology infrastructure, and assessment;

- Continue enhanced sheltering/emergency housing options to address the immediate needs of individuals experiencing homelessness;
- Assist individuals in becoming economically and emotionally resilient by providing shelter/emergency housing coupled with child care, transportation, behavioral health services, language access, employment and training, and other supportive services; and
- Develop a countywide model for distributed access to shelter/emergency housing and services by supporting community-based organizations to continue to serve as trusted outreach, engagement, and short-term services providers.

Proposed ARPA Programming

In the 2023 adopted budget, \$13.5 million in ARPA funding was appropriated for shelter and homelessness services. Based on conversations with highly impacted individuals, businesses, human services providers, and elected officials, the County recommends the following estimated appropriations. Estimated funding may change as outreach continues and programmatic costs are further refined and as the State clarifies its requirements for expenditure of related funds passed in the 2023 Legislative Session.

Expanded and Enhanced 2-1-1 Services - \$1,500,000

The County recommends investing \$1.5 million in expanding and enhancing the ability of Volunteers of America Western Washington to utilize its 2-1-1 Information Line to help individuals experiencing and at risk of homelessness access shelter/emergency housing and register for permanent affordable housing through the Coordinated Entry System.

Continued Non-congregate Sheltering, Housing and Services - \$3,000,000

The County recommends investing \$3.0 million in continuing to ensure that those individuals currently being housed in non-congregate shelters, including motels, continue to be stably housed and receive economic and emotional resiliency services being provided by The Salvation Army and the County's Human Services Department. Additionally, funding will be used for housing assistance for individuals and families ready to move onto a more permanent housing solution.

Continued Emergency Housing and Services for Refugees - \$500,000

The County recommends investment of \$500,000 in continuing to fund sheltering and the provision of transition services to refugees from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine. These services are being provided by Refugee and Immigrant Services Northwest and Volunteers of America Western Washington.

Preparation of New Start Centers for Services - \$5,000,000

The County recommends investment of \$2.5 million in remodeling, security, and services for each motel to complete their transition into "gold standard" New Start Centers that are fully equipped to address the housing and services needs of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness compounded by other challenges. Funding includes staffing in Human Services and Facilities to oversee projects.

Intimate Partner Violence and Poverty 101 Staff Training - \$250,000

The County recommends investment of \$250,000 into training to be provided by Domestic Violence Services regarding rules, regulations, options, and services for individuals who are fleeing intimate partner violence, and to Everett Gospel Mission to provide Poverty 101 training, addressing two leading causes of homelessness.

Distributed Access and Staffing - \$1,000,000

The County recommends investment of \$1,000,000 into staffing and start-up grants for the Human Services Department to work with trusted community partner agencies to develop and implement a plan to distribute access to shelters and services to prevent and end homelessness throughout Snohomish County.

Upgrading of Facilities to Serve as Climate and Public Health Response Shelters - \$1,500,000

The County recommends making an investment of \$1,500,000 into grants to community facilities to ensure their ability to serve as safe and effective climate shelters from cold, heat, and smoke in the atmosphere along with appropriate precautions from pandemics. Investments will be made to allow the facilities to upgrade their temperature control and air quality systems in exchange for being listed on the County's climate shelter portals and providing day and/or nighttime shelter under predetermined conditions (using criteria such as temperature, humidity, and air quality) to be established in conjunction with the Snohomish County Health Department.

Dispute Resolution Eviction Prevention Services - \$750,000

Given the end of the eviction moratorium and exhaustion of emergency rental assistance, the County recommends making an investment of \$750,000 into the Volunteers of America Western Washington Dispute Resolution Center to provide services to landlords and renters to prevent landlords from having to initiate costly eviction proceedings and help renters remain safely and stably housed, reducing the pressure on and cost of the County's homeless housing and law and justice systems.

Timeline

Given the urgency of need in the community and ARPA's compressed timeline, the County's intention is to have the vast majority funding from the remaining \$13.5 million available during the third quarter of 2023 through 2024.

Expenditures and outcomes associated with investments will be available through quarterly U.S. Treasury reporting and a public transparency dashboard ORR is currently developing in partnership with County departments.

Appendix

TABLE 1. Shelter and Homelessness Recovery Investments

STRATEGY	INVESTMENT
Expanded and Enhanced 2-1-1 Services	\$1.5 million
Continued Non-congregate Sheltering, Housing and Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Motel Vouchers ✓ Rental Assistance 	\$3.0 million
Continued Emergency Housing and Services for Refugees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Rental Assistance ✓ Move In Costs 	\$0.5 million
Preparation of New Start Centers for Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Remodeling ✓ Security ✓ Equipment and Supplies for Service Delivery 	\$5.0 million
Intimate Partner Violence Staff Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Trainers and Training Supplies ✓ Venue Costs 	\$0.25 million
Distributed Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Community Meeting Supplies 	\$1.0 million
Upgrading of Facilities to Serve as Climate Shelters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Equipment and Retrofitting 	\$1.5 million
Dispute Resolution Eviction Prevention Services	\$0.75 million
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	\$13.5 million

Conclusion

By making smart, strategic investments with our federal ARPA dollars, the County can help ensure an effective and sustainable bridge to equitable and widespread recovery across Snohomish County, a recovery that includes the opportunity for a new start for hundreds of County residents who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability.