



**Hillsborough
County Florida**

2021 Recovery Plan Performance Report (Updated April 2022)

Executive Summary

The Hillsborough County American Rescue Plan (ARP) Investment Plan (Investment Plan), as adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on September 1, 2021, is structured to be consistent with the funding objectives of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) while adapting allowable uses to address the County's unique community needs and economic ecosystem characteristics.

The Investment Plan includes a set of guiding principles that are designed to instruct use of the funds over the next three years. These principles address fiscal responsibility, partnering where appropriate, selection of activities with broad community impact while prioritizing underserved and vulnerable communities, minimization of administrative efforts, etc. Generally, the funds should be used for one-time uses since they must be spent by December 31, 2024. If the Board approves the proposed Investment Plan, it is anticipated that future Investment Plan modifications will be necessary as community needs are further explored. Moreover, due to exigent circumstances, the particular details of the program areas described in the proposed Investment Plan are still under review by staff and the County Attorney's Office for consistency with ARPA and the U.S. Treasury's associated Interim Final Rule, which review may result in the need for further refinements.

Investment Plan initiatives such as new capital projects, services funded through agreements, etc., will go through existing County processes and procedures, which will often result in requests for Board approvals when required. Also, Commissioner proposed projects/uses approved by the full Board will be programmed as an approved activity under the Investment Plan.

Uses of Funds

See the American Rescue Plan Investment Plan of Hillsborough County as approved by the Board of County Commissioners as of September 1, 2021 shown as Appendix A in this document.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes

The Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners has retained a strategic consultant to develop an equity profile for Hillsborough County that will be used to inform strategic equity spaces including, but not limited to, income bias, economic opportunity, health care, criminal justice, housing, land use/zoning, transportation, food security, and educational access/the digital divide. Additionally, the resulting profile and data will be used to guide the design and implementation of an “equity lens” through which actions taken by the County are examined to assess and measure questions of equity.

It is Hillsborough County’s desire to respond to, not only the current social, cultural, economic climate, but also address in a meaningful way the historic disparities within our community. By developing an equity profile of our community, opportunities for equitable growth and thriving

can be identified and nurtured. Hillsborough County is focused on looking forward and promoting growth by capitalizing on the assets and diversity of our community.

Community Engagement

Hillsborough County has a population of over 1.4 million residents. Due to the size of the County, Hillsborough County Government was the recipient of \$256 million in CARES Act funds in April 2020. The receipt of these funds meant that the County had to very quickly determine the needs of its residents and develop short-term programs to meet those needs. Significant staff efforts have been devoted to assisting residents since the early days of the pandemic. Those efforts continue today, and they necessitate constant communication with the public on how we can best service not only residents, but local businesses. Pandemic outreach has been a constant effort for the past year and a half.

At each Board of County Commissioners meeting, a COVID status report is placed on the Board's agenda. The public can review this report prior to each meeting and to make comments during the public comment portion of the agenda. This report began to include details of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) beginning in March 2021. Additionally, the County Administrator delivered her FY 22 Recommended Budget to the Board at a meeting in July 2021. The presentation at this meeting included materials for the American Rescue Plan and residents had an opportunity to weigh in on the budget at this meeting.

During the months of June and July, there were a total of three face to face community meetings held at Hillsborough County facilities in underserved areas of the County. While these meetings were not specifically targeted to the ARP, they were designed to educate citizens on County services and to gather input from residents on their needs. The ARP was discussed at these meetings.

Labor Practices

Infrastructure projects in the Recovery plan will comply with Davis Bacon Act to reflect the prevailing minimum wage rates as required. While the County doesn't have a local-preference ordinance, the Hillsborough County Disadvantaged Minority/Disadvantaged Women (DM/DWBE) and Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Encouragement Programs are designed to provide special opportunities to small businesses, and businesses owned by minorities and women within County procurements.

A recent Hillsborough County ordinance establishing apprenticeship participation requirements for County construction contracts became effective Sept. 1, 2021. The Construction Apprenticeship Program ordinance requires contractors bidding on County construction projects estimated to cost \$1 million or more to participate in an apprenticeship program registered with the Florida Department of Education or the U.S. Department of Labor. For the duration of the construction contract, at least 12% of the labor hours on the construction project must be

performed by apprentices employed by the contractor or subcontractors on the construction project where applicable.

Use of Evidence

As our Commissioners approve specific projects we will identify appropriate metrics for evidence-based interventions which will be included in the Project Inventory as required.

Based on specific project approval, metrics may include measures such as groceries delivered, families housed, infectious disease beds created, miles paved, households moved from septic to sewer.

As of September 1, 2021, when the American Rescue Plan Investment Plan of Hillsborough County was approved by the Board of County Commissioners, two specific projects were approved.

1. C69684000 ROADWAY PAVEMENT PRESERVATION
2. D20000003 01.XX02 EMPLOYEE PREMIUM PAY

Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category

	Category	Cumulative expenditures as of July 31, 2021	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health	\$ 0.0	\$ 0.0
2	Expenditure Category: Negative Economic Impacts	\$ 0.0	\$ 0.0
3	Expenditure Category: Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities	\$ 0.0	\$ 0.0
4	Expenditure Category: Premium Pay	\$ 0.0	\$ 0.0
5	Expenditure Category: Infrastructure	\$ 0.0	\$ 0.0
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement	\$ 0.0	\$ 0.0
7	Administrative and Other	\$ 0.0	\$ 0.0



**Hillsborough
County** Florida

APPENDIX A



American Rescue Plan (ARP) Investment Plan for Hillsborough County

Version 1.0 - August 26, 2021

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1 Introduction

In early 2020, Hillsborough County received \$256.8M in CARES Act Relief Fund funding to address the impacts of the fast-emerging public emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Within nine months and by the original US Treasury December 30, 2021 spending deadline, the County had disbursed almost all CARES Act funds through programs focused entirely on serving our community. Highlights included: \$93.5M to 5,659 local businesses; \$38M for local municipalities; \$35M in housing and utility assistance to 6,864 individuals and families; over 11 million meals served to nearly 2 million people facing food shortages; \$2.1M to help 116 daycare facilities implement safety measures; \$7.9M to 180 safety net nonprofits; \$11.35M to major sports venues and \$2.9M to community venues for public safety protective measures; \$10.5M for public health measures like contact tracing and the TGH COVID-19 Unit; \$2M to drive tourism demand and bookings; and \$15M for jobs programs.

In early 2021, Hillsborough County received \$32.4M in Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funding; by mid-March, the County had partnered with the City of Tampa to launch a county-wide program using pooled County and City funds totaling \$43.5M (90% for payments; 10% for administrative costs). As of August 23, \$21M has been approved and \$16M paid to 4,882 approved tenants via their landlords – an average of \$149K in rental and utility assistance disbursed per working day.

Complementing CARES Act initiatives and ERAP, the County has also received approximately \$40M in COVID-19-based grants covering community needs such as rapid rehousing, meals for seniors, personal protective equipment, and low-income housing energy assistance.

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) into law, providing \$1.9 trillion in economic relief and recovery assistance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ARPA provides additional direct economic support for individuals and families, hard-hit industries and vulnerable populations, and state and local governments. This includes rent, mortgage and utility assistance for low-income households; food and nutrition assistance; additional resources to address the COVID-19 public health emergency such as funding for testing and vaccines; grants for childcare assistance, additional federal unemployment assistance, a third round of direct stimulus payments; additional targeted assistance for small businesses impacted by the pandemic; and more. In addition, the ARPA established a \$362 billion Coronavirus State and Local Recovery Fund to help state and local governments offset increased expenditures, recover lost revenues, and mitigate the negative economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hillsborough County's ARPA allocation from the Coronavirus State and Local Recovery Fund is \$285,912,528. The County received half of its allocation in May 2021 and will receive the second half of its allocation in May 2022. US Treasury requires that funds be incurred (i.e. obligated) by December 31, 2024 and expended with all work performed and completed by December 31, 2026.

The CARES Act funding allowed the County to quickly assist our community and address the impacts of the pandemic through programs that were incredibly staff- and resource-intensive. Given this experience, and the fact that ARPA funding provides direct community support through state and federal programs, including the paycheck protection program, homeowner mortgage assistance, child tax credits, and small business assistance (among others), the County aims to adopt the following guiding principles for considering its ARP investment options: focus on funding projects and/or programs not available through other funding sources; develop a plan of investment – minimize unsolicited funding requests; select investments with a broad community impact while prioritizing underserved and vulnerable communities; partner with local municipalities and others where appropriate; be judicious in the creation and operation of temporary programs; pursue investments with one-time versus recurring operating impacts; apply sound and transparent financial management practices; and, minimize administrative efforts while recovering staff costs where appropriate.

2 Executive Summary

The purpose of this discussion document is to guide decision-making about potential ARP investment options by conveying community needs, explaining potential projects or programs designed to address those needs, and estimating the costs of those projects or programs. The investment options described herein are a starting point; with the BOCC’s input, the County will refine this list, launch and manage BOCC-approved initiatives, regularly report back on progress, and, if necessary, suggest new initiatives to counter the emerging effects of the pandemic on our community (for example, the recent spike in COVID-19 delta variant cases will require unplanned and unforeseen measures).

The County’s investment plan includes 32 potential projects or programs spanning five categories, described below. Since this plan presents *potential* investments, by design the cost of these options exceeds our total funding award of \$285.9M.

Public Health Response

US Treasury’s interim final rule outlines that the fiscal recovery fund provides resources to “meet and address these emergent public health needs, including through measures to counter the spread of COVID-19, through the provision of care for those impacted by the virus, and through programs or services that address disparities in public health that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.”

Note that recent spike in COVID-19 cases and the emergence of the Delta variant will likely require new investment options not listed within this plan, e.g. support for local hospitals or the leasing of quarantine facilities.

Summary of County Investment Options	Estimated Budget
The six options presented in this category are designed to address a range of community public health needs: expanded food programs, substance abuse counseling, opioid epidemic prevention and treatment services, efforts to curb pandemic-based mental health impacts, and a health literacy program designed to help racial and ethnic minorities who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.	\$25M - \$37M

Negative Economic Impacts

Per US Treasury guidance, funds in this category may be used to assist households or populations, preferably those most disproportionately impacted, by the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Per the Interim Rule, “Eligible uses that respond to the negative economic impacts of the public health emergency must be designed to address an economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency. In considering whether a program or service would be eligible under this category, the recipient should assess whether, and the extent to which, there has been an economic harm, such as loss of earnings or revenue, that resulted from the COVID-19 public health emergency and whether, and the extent to which, the use would respond or address this harm.”

Summary of County Investment Options	Estimated Budget
The six options presented in this category are designed to stimulate tourism, spur job growth through workforce development, mitigate pandemic-exacerbated homelessness through affordable housing, assist vulnerable qualified census tract populations through tailored services, support our nonprofits in the provision of community safety net services, and stimulate the local economy through targeted business recovery incentives.	\$61M - \$92M

Essential Worker & Public Health & Safety Employee Compensation

These funds may be used to provide premium pay to eligible County workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency or to provide grants to third-party employers within the county to compensate with eligible workers who perform essential work. To ensure that premium pay is targeted to workers who faced or face heightened risks due to the character of their work, the Interim Final Rule defines essential work as work involving regular in-person interactions or regular physical handling of items that were also handled by others.

Additionally, the Interim Final Rule states, “Fiscal Recovery Funds may be used for payroll and covered benefits expenses for public safety, public health, health care, human services, and similar employees, to the extent that their services are devoted to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Accordingly, the Fiscal Recovery Funds may be used to support the payroll and covered benefits for the portion of the employee’s time that is dedicated to responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency.”

Summary of County Investment Options	Estimated Budget
The two options presented in this category are designed to cover premium pay for essential COVID-19 public health emergency workers and enable the County to be reimbursed for the payroll expenses of employees that have been and will be dedicated to pandemic response.	\$6 - \$12M

Revenue Replacement-Funded Government Services

Counties may use payments from the Fiscal Recovery Funds for the provision of “government services” to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. This means that the amount determined as “lost revenue” may be used prospectively for most regular government purposes in addition to eligible uses under the Interim Rule, which implements these provisions by establishing a definition of “general revenue” for purposes of calculating a loss in revenue and by providing a methodology for calculating revenue lost due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Note that revenue recoupment cannot be used for rainy day funds or debt service.

For Hillsborough County, our first-calculated revenue loss during the pandemic totaled \$72.5M, caused by severe negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These negative impacts have particularly affected sales tax, tourist tax and fuel tax revenues due to the shutdown of the economy during spring 2020 and have persisted, at less severe levels, as tourism and travel to work have remained constrained even after the economy reopened.

Summary of County Investment Options	Estimated Budget
Investment options in this category span a range of public works projects for road resurfacing, bridge repairs, traffic signal repairs and replacements, and a traffic safety initiative. Also covered to expand fire rescue capabilities are five replacement fire stations, a station alerting system, and a new fire rescue warehouse. One option focuses on improvements to parks and another on securing the County through enhanced cyber security defenses.	\$78M - \$137M (Note: Final options cannot exceed \$72.5M in this category)

Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure

This category of funding is intended to help counties meet the critical need for investments and improvements to existing infrastructure in water and sewer. The Interim Final Rule outlines eligible uses within each category, allowing for a broad range of necessary investments in projects that improve access to clean drinking water, improve wastewater and stormwater infrastructure systems.

Additionally, the COVID-19 public health emergency has underscored the importance of universally available, high-speed, reliable and affordable broadband coverage as millions of Americans rely on the internet to participate in, among critical activities, remote school, healthcare and work. Recognizing the need for such connectivity, the ARPA provides funds to make necessary investments in broadband infrastructure.

Summary of County Investment Options	Estimated Budget
Investment options in this category include projects to protect and preserve groundwater resources through septic-to-sewer conversions, implement stormwater drainage improvements, improve water quality and biodiversity through the removal of lake nutrients, protect and restore habitats and biodiversity through stream and wetland restorations. Bringing high-speed internet to underserved areas in the County is also included in this category.	\$86M - \$108M

3 Public Health Response

3.1 Mitigate Food Insecurity through Food Provider Support

Statement of Need

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) states that the goal of the funds is to mitigate the pandemic’s “longer-term impact in compounding the systemic public health and economic challenges of disproportionately impacted populations,” and encourages uses “that foster a strong, inclusive, and equitable recovery, especially uses with long-term benefits for health and economic outcomes.”

The COVID-19 public health and economic crisis is bigger than any other we have seen in our lifetime. While residents have experienced food insecurity prior to the pandemic, the economic recession coupled with the public health crisis increased the growth of food hardship as well as revealed opportunities to strengthen and design a more efficient system. It is estimated that pre-COVID19, there were approximately 180,000 food insecure people in Hillsborough County. This number has grown to an estimate of 260,000 who are now challenged with food access. In 2021, Florida is ranked third in the nation with the highest number of individuals living in food-insecure households. Food insecurity models are based on the changes to the unemployment rate as well as poverty levels. Both variables have increased during this pandemic.

Racial disparities in food insecurity which existed before COVID-19 remain in the wake of the pandemic. In 2019, 1 in 12 white, non-Hispanic individuals (8.1%) were food insecure, compared to 1 in 6 Latino individuals (15.8%), 1 in 5 Black, non-Hispanic individuals (19.3%), and 1 in 4 Native American individuals (23.5%).¹ Focusing on food insecurity with American Rescue Plan investments will assist in meeting the objective of an equitable recovery that focuses on the most vulnerable and underserved portions of the population.

In addressing food insecurity, there is a need to increase capacity for our community’s regional facility to manage resources effectively and efficiently. The lack of space for storage and equipment does affect the ability to scale and fully deploy strategies to end hunger. There is a need for a larger, regional community facility that has greater capability and larger capacity in working with the current 450+ partners (200+ in Hillsborough County) that work as part of the food relief system. This capital project will not only increase food resources to the community but also provide job training and other support.

Investment Option Overview

Partner with existing food providers to supply meals to our community. Extend existing CARES Act-funded contracts (in force through 9/30) with Feeding Tampa Bay, Metropolitan Ministries, East Tampa Civic Business Association, and the United Food Bank & Services of Plant City to ensure the food resources and support continues to address the increased demand. Additionally, partner to support an investment for a facility as part of a multisector collaborative partnership that will create a more efficient and effective regional food resource facility that will provide food resources and access to social-determinant related resources in the community.

Estimated Budget Range

\$10M - \$15M

¹ Feeding America COVID Impact Report.

3.2 Improve Community Health through Substance Abuse Step-Down Services

Statement of Need

The Hillsborough County Health Care Services Department in partnership with various partners including government entities and community-based organizations are actively developing an innovative and cost-effective Orient Road pilot project for a substance abuse community-based step-down (respite) facility in Hillsborough County. This project will assist individuals with substance abuse and behavioral health issues transitioning from jail back into the community, leaving Baker Act, or individuals exiting local hospitals who are Hillsborough County Health Care Plan members. This project brings expertise together from the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners, Sheriff's department, Hillsborough County Health Care Services, Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, faith-based organizations, community substance abuse and mental health providers, the University of South Florida, and other stakeholders.

County jails and prisons are the largest providers of behavioral health services in the United States. Individuals with behavioral health issues have challenges during the reintegration phase and recidivism is common. This has been identified as an issue in Hillsborough County and a unique group of stakeholders is meeting to do something different. The project has brought providers and other stakeholders together to address the issues faced by individuals leaving the jail or exiting local hospitals.

Investment Option Overview

Renovate current space of approximately 23,000 square feet to house the program. The costs are inclusive of land use changes, design, permitting, construction, furniture and fixtures, etc. The completed facility would have a capacity of 85 beds.

The step-down unit would be operated by a local nonprofit agency, and it will function as a Residential Level 2 - step down respite facility with 85 beds, serving approximately 340 people annually with voluntary participation up to 60-120 days length of stay. The facility will be for individuals with a primary diagnosis of substance abuse with potentially a co-occurring mental health diagnosis. Participants would receive peer services, case management and clinical assessment evaluations including services related to the Social Determinants of Health.

Primary goals of the program would include successful completion of treatment; reduced readmissions, savings recognition for the criminal justice system; gainful employment and self-sufficiency of participants; overall improvement of community health; etc.

Estimated Budget Range

\$3M - \$4M

3.3 Protect County Employees & Residents via Public Safety Protective Measures

Statement of Need

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) includes an objective to support urgent COVID-19 response efforts to continue to decrease spread of the virus and bring the pandemic under control. To date, Hillsborough County invested over \$31M in mitigation efforts (utilizing CARES Act funding) at County facilities, libraries, parks, sports venues, non-profit cultural attraction sites, non-profit youth sites and festival grounds. The investments focused on HVAC disinfection, personal protection and separation, and expanding virtual options and programming when possible. As more facilities and venues resume in-person activities at greater capacities, the County will need to provide further mitigation improvements particularly with variants of the COVID-19 virus that can spread even more rapidly.

Investment Option Overview

The primary focus of the funding is to allow additional resumption of in-person activities and/or provide alternative virtual use or methods of providing services so that the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus is mitigated to the maximum extent possible. The funds will be directed primarily at the following strategies: improvement of indoor air quality, providing alternate areas outdoors as needed, providing services and products used for cleaning and disinfection and providing additional virtual equipment capabilities that are an alternative to in-person where appropriate. The funds will be used for Hillsborough County facilities, supporting partners, and in support of DOH and Emergency Management missions. It is estimated that the improvements will take from 4 to 12 months to implement.

Estimated Budget Range

\$8M - \$10M

3.4 Mitigate Opioid Epidemic through Coordinated Health & Treatment Services

Statement of Need

The ongoing opioid epidemic has worsened over the last two years, with increased overdose cases in Hillsborough County during 2020 (Medical Examiner data presented to HCAB; CDC 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly accelerated the opioid epidemic and disproportionately affected lives of many with opioid dependence. During the COVID-19 pandemic, access to substance use provider services, infectious disease prevention and treatment and mental health treatment has been delayed. Many county residents either go without care secondary to the COVID-19 pandemic or are forced to seek care in the county emergency departments. County residents that find support and assistance through the Hillsborough County Healthcare plan represent over 1 in 5 patients that access IDEA Exchange or HIV/HCV services either through the existing Tampa General Hospital Emergency Department bridge program (medication for opioid use disorder and linkage to care, infectious disease screening and linkage to care, management of soft tissue skin infections and other complications of untreated disease or comorbid disease with opioid, HIV/HCV and COVID-19).

Investment Option Overview

This project would develop a coordinated County strategy through the IDEA Tampa and Tampa Bay Street Medicine program that would focus on harm reduction, substance use disorder management, HIV/HCV screening and linkage to care is needed amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy would integrate COVID-19 testing and prevention (e.g. vaccination) into efforts while serving vulnerable populations. In addition, a coordinated strategy would work across multiple sites, building bridges from acute care into the community utilizing existing relationships with partner agencies (e.g. TGH ED - DACCO, TGH ED - ACTS, TGH ED - Gracepoint, and all agencies interplaying the co-managed efforts of the syringe services program operated by IDEA Tampa and Tampa Bay Street Medicine, USF).

This program will help all residents of Hillsborough County avoid high cost hospital admissions and decrease hospital volume and surge. In addition, this program will serve many participants of the Hillsborough County Healthcare plan and lead to decreases in overdose deaths, HIV and HCV transmission, and, potentially, decreases in COVID-19 transmission amongst vulnerable populations who may not seek care in other places. The specific one-time request would fund:

- Increased staffing and hours of availability of syringe service program (SSP) services
- Expansion of the evidence-based Peer Navigator program to cover the SSP
- Telemedicine availability for SSP and emergency department (ED) medications for opioid use disorder (MDOUD) patients for buprenorphine and HIV/HCV medication initiation
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling
- Dedicated social work for substance use pathway implementation across sites
- Evaluation of cost-saving ED/Hospital Admission Avoidance
- Expansion of opt-out, non-target & anonymous HIV, HCV testing; screening & linkage to care
- Transportation services for ED MOUD and SSP participants to initial downstream linkages
- Law enforcement and community training on harm reduction and points of patient disposition (e.g. ED and, potentially jail avoidance)
- COVID-19 vaccinations for SSP participants
- Provide evidenced based output and outcome measurements (Note: state law limits the use of state and local funds for SSP programs)

Estimated Budget Range

\$1M - \$2M

3.5 Mitigate Pandemic Mental Health Impacts through a Coordinated Community Services Pilot

Statement of Need

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased concerns about mental health and substance use including concerns about suicidal ideation. In a recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, “In January 2021, 41% of adults reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder a share that has been largely stable since spring 2020. In a survey from June 2020, 13% of adults reported new or increased substance use due to coronavirus-related stress, and 11% of adults reported thoughts of suicide in the past 30 days. Suicide rates have long been on the rise and may worsen due to the pandemic. Early 2020 data show that drug overdose deaths were particularly pronounced from March to May 2020, coinciding with the start of pandemic-related lockdowns.”

Hillsborough County is not isolated from these challenges when evaluating drug overdoses the Hillsborough County Medical Examiner’s office has seen a 73% increase in fatal overdoses from 310 in 2019 to 538 in 2020 as an indirect or direct result of the societal impacts from COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a major effect on our lives. Individuals across the economic and social spectrum “are facing challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but they can make us feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety.” (CDC 2021).

Investment Option Overview

Partner with ACTS, Tampa Crossroads, Gracepoint, Northside Behavioral Health, Phoenix House, DACCO, and other community service providers to offer a continuum of care for individuals experiencing mental health and substance abuse issues or other life challenges because of the pandemic. Precise services will be determined at a later date, but could include in-person and remote counseling, positive messaging campaigns, community case management, and rehabilitation-recovery assistance.

Estimated Budget Range

\$.2M - \$1M

3.6 Mitigate Pandemic Effects on Vulnerable Populations via Health Literacy Program

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County has a significant racial and ethnic minority population that has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Hillsborough County has a robust Health Care plan for vulnerable citizens, and an impressive COVID-19 media platform; many of the County's vulnerable residents remain uninformed, and/or reluctant to follow CDC pandemic guidelines. This opportunity will allow Hillsborough County to increase our outreach efforts, focusing on the most vulnerable target populations, and potentially improve our healthcare delivery systems.

The Health Care Services Department will work with the Florida Department of Health, Hillsborough County to increase the availability, dissemination, adaptation and use of culturally and linguistically appropriate, evidence-based health literacy practices and interventions. Community outreach efforts will be guided by the Health Care Services Department's Manager of Education and Outreach.

All included partners for this project will have a history of working with Hillsborough County and the HCHCP specifically. These partners will be or are currently contracted with the Health Care Services Department to provide primary care and ancillary services to eligible, low-income Hillsborough County residents. This opportunity is within the Departments mission and will increase public safety, enhance the quality of care, and improve communication, understanding, and informed decision-making.

The Health Care Services Department and all partners will ensure accurate, accessible, acceptable and actionable training, health literacy practices and intervention resources for the identified populations.

Investment Option Overview

The Health Care Services Department will partner with the local health department and two community health centers to develop and implement a health literacy plan and a plan for sustaining adherence to COVID-19 and other future public health recommendations. The Health Care Services Department manages the Hillsborough County Health Care Plan (HCHCP) and has 13 participating hospitals, and four Medical Service Organizations (MSO) which include 27 health center locations. Two of the MSOs are Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's), which receive funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to provide primary care services in underserved areas.

The Health Care Services Department will also partner with an entity (to be determined) to establish and implement an ongoing quality improvement process and project evaluation. The project evaluation will determine whether the health literacy intervention was implemented as planned, whether it reached the target population described in the disparity impact statement, and whether there were any changes in the access, use and outcomes of COVID-19 vaccination, testing, and related activities (e.g. contact tracing, and preventive behaviors).

Estimated Budget Range

\$3M - \$5M

4 Negative Economic Impacts

4.1 *Provide Community Safety Net Services through Nonprofit Partnerships*

Statement of Need

After the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it quickly became apparent that many County residents were immediately faced with critical service needs created by job loss, health issues, business shutdowns, etc. On March 27, 2020, the United States Government enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) to, among other things, provide federal funding to certain local governments to use for expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hillsborough County received approximately \$256M in CARES Act funding and immediately began planning and implementing programs to meet the emergency needs of our residents. Many of the initiatives undertaken involved identifying community partners to assist.

One of the initiatives undertaken by the County was to establish various grant programs to engage many local nonprofits to expand their safety net services to both current and new clients affected by the pandemic. One program involved engaging the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay to oversee award and distribution of funds. Through this program and other similar nonprofit efforts of County staff, 180 nonprofits ultimately received \$7.9M to serve thousands of County residents.

Many of the COVID-19 needs identified in calendar year 2020 persist today.

Investment Option Overview

Partner with either The Community Foundation of Tampa Bay or another identified Administrative entity to further engage nonprofit partners to continue to address COVID-19 related needs that persist in the community. These needs may include housing, food insecurity, child care, job loss, physical and mental health, domestic violence, education, etc.

Estimated Budget Range

\$5M - \$7M

4.2 Stimulate the Local Tourism Economy through Marketing & Outreach

Statement of Need

COVID-19 and the overarching pandemic impacts to Hillsborough County's Tourism industry were significant and represent one of the hardest hit portions of our local economy. Our estimates show approximately \$24M in lost Tourist Development Tax revenue over the combined FY20 and FY21 time period. In addition, the BOCC allocated out of the TDT reserves an extra \$4M to help begin a mitigation and recovery marketing strategy through Visit Tampa Bay. These adverse impacts solely to the hotel industry amount to a diminishment in our local GDP of over \$400M. Although the signs of industry recovery are encouraging, much can be done to continue the positive momentum and concerns still exist as to the adverse impacts that may manifest from the new Delta variant.

Investment Option Overview

Overall Marketing and Communication Activities: Additional funds would enable Visit Tampa Bay to take the "always on" marketing approach to maintain our positive momentum. This approach allows for consistent brand awareness and ensures Hillsborough County remains top of mind in the vacation planning process. The performance reporting and subsequent ROI formulas will focus solely on the Marketing & Communications function's 'direct-to-consumer' efforts. However, it should be noted that marketing and communications efforts can also span the spectrum of convention and travel trade segments. Visit Tampa Bay has a track record for a very healthy return on ad spend (ROAS) performance. As reference, FY21 recovery campaigns have generated a return on ad spend (ROAS) of 12:1 to 40:1 with over \$83M in hotel revenue to-date and 541k room nights booked. The economic impact to Hillsborough County was estimated to be over \$81.2M in direct and indirect spending.

Convention, Sports and Events Business: Additional funds would allow Visit Tampa Bay to generate awareness for Tampa Bay as a top destination for meetings, conventions, and sporting events. This strategy would generate leads, RFPs and confirmed bookings through Visit Tampa Bay, Tampa Convention Center and/or partner hotels, directly support the Tampa Bay Sports Commission and the many sporting events they represent and assist our local film industry. As part of the \$4M reserve dollars, Visit Tampa Bay was able to market and relocate over 15 meetings and conventions equating to over \$30M in economic impact to Hillsborough County for the months of March – August 2021.

Travel Trade and International Business: Initiate a recovery strategy for the travel trade and the international visitor market. This strategy will increase international leisure visitor volume, visitor spending and economic impact for the destination through the promotion and distribution of Hillsborough County's travel products to the travel trade. In addition, funds would allow for partnership with Tampa International Airport and participation in International Air Carrier Incentive Programs. Air carrier incentive programs provide guidance to airport sponsors interested in offering promotional incentives to attract air carrier service into TPA. While international tourists have made up only 2.1% of trips, they represent 16.4% of total spending, and Visit Tampa Bay can promote and capitalize on growing that market share.

Cruise and Port of Tampa Partnerships: As cruise lines are beginning to sail again, travelers are dreaming of the destination experience. It's important for the cruise lines and Visit Tampa Bay to align and determine what the right messaging is for each unique traveler and leverage first-party data to promote both the cruise and destination. Visit Tampa Bay should be instrumental in highlighting the Port of Tampa and Hillsborough County to travel agents through sales missions or e-marketing communication.

Estimated Budget Range

\$5M - \$10M

4.3 Spur Job Growth through Workforce Training & Employment Services

Statement of Need

The State of Florida and Hillsborough County are continuing to experience a threat to the personal health and economic well-being of residents of Hillsborough County that were unemployed or economically displaced due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) is designed to mitigate the pandemic's "longer-term impact in compounding the systemic public health and economic challenges of disproportionately impacted populations," and encourages uses "that foster a strong, inclusive, and equitable recovery, especially uses with long-term benefits for health and economic outcomes." Although the signs of economic recovery are encouraging, much can be done to continue the positive momentum and concerns that exist regarding the adverse impacts that may manifest from the new Delta variant.

Focusing on workforce development with American Rescue Plan funds will assist unemployed and underemployed residents meet the objective of an equitable recovery that focuses on the most vulnerable and underserved portions of the population. As such, an allocation of funds would be supportable given these negative impacts and continued uncertainty.

Investment Option Overview

These requested funds would be spent on operational and support services for the delivery of workforce reemployment and retraining programs for Hillsborough County residents that suffered economic injury due to the COVID-19 outbreak with emphasis on placement of residents displaced by COVID-19.

CareerSource Tampa Bay (CSTB) will deliver workforce training and employment programs for up to 500 unemployed or underemployed Hillsborough County residents to complete and earn industry recognized occupational skills certification and/or training, and up to 800 residents to complete a paid work-based learning employment opportunity. This result of which will develop a pipeline of talent with the foundational skills, aptitude and/or work experience to obtain employment or advance along career pathways of high-demand, middle to high skill jobs. Special consideration will be given to underrepresented populations with a focus on the County's eight new Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSA) as well as an emphasis on assisting those exiting in the foster care system, escaping human trafficking, and ex-offenders.

This program will utilize expanded eligibility and a job-driven approach focused on meeting the needs of employees and employers in a resilient strategy responsive to change as employer, industry and economic needs change, creating a foundation for financial stability and economic mobility. These program funds will augment existing Federal funds awarded to CSTB by the US Department of Labor and be used for tuition reimbursement as well as funding for payroll costs so participants can earn while they learn.

Note that in addition to CSTB, the County will explore partnerships with other workforce development organizations to ensure that a full range of services best meets the needs of our community.

Estimated Budget Range

\$10M - \$15M

4.4 Mitigate Homelessness through Affordable Housing & Relocation Assistance

Statement of Need

The American Rescue Plan encourages uses “that foster a strong, inclusive, and equitable recovery, especially uses with long-term benefits for health and economic outcomes.” Much like in the aftermath of the “Housing Crisis,” the pandemic is prompting well-capitalized individuals and institutions – many from outside the County or even country - to acquire real estate in communities where land values are low but likely to rise.

Consequently, working families in some of our struggling neighborhoods are being priced out and displaced at alarming rates. The pressure is upon local municipalities to help families at risk of losing their homes. When the eviction moratorium ends, it is anticipated that thousands of families will be displaced when investors buy current properties. Pre-pandemic, over 40% of households in Hillsborough County were paying greater than 30% of their total household income for rent. The pandemic has only increased the need for our most vulnerable families to provide for basic needs. Health experts have determined that housing is one of the greatest social determinants of health. ARP funds – used solely or as an augmentation to existing funding sources – provide an opportunity to address some of these structural issues exposed over the past year and help provide stable and affordable homes for some of our most vulnerable residents.

Investment Option Overview

Through the “Buy Back the Block” (3B) program, the County would partner with existing non-profit housing providers to support multifamily rental preservation efforts for vulnerable residents that have been impacted or displaced by the pandemic. This program affords a transformative opportunity to ensure that resources make a long-term difference for communities harmed by COVID-19 and poverty. This effort will include the following activities: purchasing and improving multi-family properties for sale in low/moderate income neighborhoods and/or occupied by low/mod clients, acquiring land and developing a facility for a Beginning of the End - Abolishing Chronic Homelessness (BEACH) house that would provide supportive housing for chronically homeless residents, and acquiring land and developing a facility for human trafficking victims.

This option may also include relocation assistance for those who are at risk of becoming homeless. Leveraging ARP’s broader usage provisions vis-à-vis the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, support may include rental and utility deposits and initial rent payments to secure housing.

Lastly, note that the County has received funding from the federal and state levels as part of a coordinated effort to infuse funding into communities that have been impacted by the pandemic. The funds are being used for several projects and activities to include but not limited to permanent housing projects, public service activities, emergency assistance to persons experiencing homelessness, and public facilities. While the funds have been allocated at this time, there are opportunities to leverage funds with new activities or projects funded through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) while avoiding a duplication of efforts.

Estimated Budget Range

\$25M - \$35M (the majority for multifamily property acquisition)

4.5 Assist Vulnerable Populations through Qualified Census Tract Services

Statement of Need

The Treasury's Final Rule states the following: "economic disparities that existed prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency amplified the impact of the pandemic among low-income and minority groups. These families were more likely to face housing, food, and financial insecurity; are over-represented among low-income workers; and many have seen their livelihoods deteriorate further during the pandemic and economic contraction. In recognition of the disproportionate negative economic impacts on certain communities and populations, the Final Rule identifies services and programs that will be presumed to be responding to the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency when provided in these communities. Specifically, Treasury will presume that certain types of services, outlined below, are eligible uses when provided in a Qualified Census Tract (QCT), to families and individuals living in QCT's, or when these services are provided by Tribal governments."

Some of the example services provided include homeless services, affordable housing development, housing services, educational services/early learning, mental health services and child care. The ARP does not allow for general infrastructure projects unless they are part of certain categories. Guidance in the Final Rule was not clear if infrastructure projects were allowable within QCT's. Therefore, Hillsborough County submitted the following request to the Treasury: "Hillsborough County, Florida requests that Community Centers and Parks Facilities in Qualified Census Tracts be included as allowable infrastructure uses in Category A. Specifically, page 41 of the Interim Final Rule states "Treasury encourages recipients to consider funding uses that foster a strong, inclusive, and equitable recovery, especially uses with long-term benefits for health and economic outcomes." Services provided at these facilities are clearly aligned with this objective."

Subsequent to this request, the Treasury issued additional guidance stating the following: "the Interim Final Rule identifies certain types of services that are eligible uses when provided in a Qualified Census Tract, to families and individuals living in QCTs...These programs and services include services designed to build stronger neighborhoods and communities and to address health disparities and the social determinants of health. The Interim Final Rule provides a non-exhaustive list of eligible services to respond to the needs of communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and recipients may identify other uses of funds that do so, consistent with the Rule's framework. For example, investments in parks, plazas, and other public outdoor recreation spaces may be responsive to the needs of disproportionately impacted communities by promoting healthier living environments and outdoor recreation and socialization to mitigate the spread of COVID-19."

Investment Option Overview

The American Rescue Plan places great emphasis on providing services to underserved communities and, therefore, allows for great spending flexibility in QCTs. Many of the eligible uses identified, however, are for services. While there certainly may be a need to address some of these services on a short-term basis, the County should be cautious about providing services that will lead to a recurring funding need. The greater opportunity may be in creating community assets and improvements that improve the health and welfare of these communities on a long-term basis. Some of these may include new or improved parks, community centers, etc. Other infrastructure options could be planned that would improve the safety of residents including sidewalks, repaving, intersection improvements, etc.

Estimated Budget Range

\$15M - \$20M

4.6 Stimulate the Local Economy via Targeted Business Sector Recovery Incentives

Statement of Need

In addition to the obvious, deleterious impacts of the COVID-19 to Hillsborough County's small businesses, tourism-dependent businesses, food and beverage establishments and performance venues, the pandemic has also sent shockwaves through targeted industries that form the pipeline for external investment that grows the County's economy and supports community-based establishments. Targeted industries such as Financial and Professional Services, Information Technology, Life Sciences and Healthcare, Defense and Security, Advanced Manufacturing, Corporate Headquarters and Film and Television Production are impacted in varying degrees by workforce disruptions, supply chain disruptions, erratic demand and revenue loss. COVID-19 has blanketed business in a cloud of uncertainty that impedes their willingness to relocate or expand their operations, thus making it necessary for the County to have a mechanism to overcome the reluctance of these critical industries to bring quality jobs and investment to the market.

Investment Option Overview

The funds requested for this recovery initiative would be used to develop performance-based incentives tied to job creation, capital investment and further industry development. Like past County programs, any agreement developed would include clear timelines, benchmarks and reporting requirements. Additionally, each opportunity will be analyzed for its expected economic and community impact in order to develop a right-sized incentive award amount to ensure net benefit to the County. These inducements should have a material impact to a business's decision-making process. Application for these programs must be made and approved/certified prior to beginning the hiring process, signing any real estate transaction, or announcing a final decision. Any announcement made prior to final BOCC approval automatically forfeits the company's eligibility. Projects that clearly do not require inducement will not be approved.

Estimated Budget Range

\$1M - \$5M

5 Essential Worker & Public Health & Safety Employee Compensation

5.1 Recognize Essential Workers through Premium Pay

Statement of Need

The American Rescue Plan states “Fiscal Recovery Funds payments may be used by recipients to provide premium pay to eligible workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency ...”. The ARP further states, “These are workers who have been and continue to be relied on to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure sectors, including those who are critical to protecting the health and wellbeing of their communities.” The premium pay provision also emphasizes that this pay is for workers whose well-being was put at risk to meet the needs of their community. Finally, the Treasury’s Final Rule describes that lower compensated workers are more at-risk to the impacts of COVID-19 and premium pay should be targeted to this employee group.

Examples of workers eligible for premium pay per the Treasury’s guidance include public health and safety staff, social service and human services staff, childcare workers, transit staff, and warehouse workers. While these are used as examples, Hillsborough County certainly has other positions that meet the definition as described in Treasury guidance. Generally, work involving in-person interactions or regular physical handling of items that were handled by others is a qualifying factor.

Premium pay is an amount up to \$13 per hour in addition to wages and cannot exceed \$25,000 per eligible worker.

Investment Option Overview

While the U.S. Treasury has a specific definition and requirements for premium pay reimbursement, Hillsborough County believes that all our employees provide valuable services to County residents. Therefore, it is recommended that all County employees (including the County Attorney’s Office and the Internal Auditor’s Office) receive a one-time payment to acknowledge their value to the community. This payment will be considered a pay raise for FY 21 for non-union employees, subject to Human Resources’ pre-requisites. Compensation for Union employees is subject to the collective bargaining process as required by law. County Administration will then seek reimbursement from the American Rescue Plan for employees that meet the U.S. Treasury’s definition premium pay.

Estimated Budget Range

\$1M - \$2M

5.2 Free General Funds via County Pandemic Response Salary Reimbursement

Statement of Need

The Treasury's Final Rule acknowledges that responding to the public health emergency and negative economic impacts of the pandemic has required a substantial commitment from State and Local governments. Therefore, the Final Rule states, "... the Fiscal Recovery Funds may be used for payroll and covered benefits expenses for public safety, public health, health care, human services, and similar employees, to the extent that their services are devoted to mitigating or responding to the COVID19 public health emergency." It also allows that if an employee is primarily dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency that he or she can be fully covered, and this may also apply to their entire unit or operating division. When assessing an employee's pandemic efforts, routinely tracking hours is not required; however, adequate documentation and periodic reassessments are required.

Investment Option Overview

The County chose to commit almost all its CARES Act funding to direct emergency support of County residents. Very little of these funds have been or will be used to reimburse County staff time (less than 1%) despite that salaries and overtime were substantial during the pandemic. In fact, the County estimates that employees worked 67,772 hours on application-based CARES Act programs alone (8,472 days of effort), peaking at over 100 people per month working on these programs during the busiest period. If temporary employees are included in this calculation, the total hours worked on CARES Act programs increases to 88,572, or just over 11,000 days of effort. Contractor support was also extensive. Ernst & Young was engaged for most of 2020 to help the County stand up and maintain a self-service application portal, review small business and housing and utility assistance applications, and implement a full-service call center. On the nonprofit front, the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay administered the second phase of our Safety Net Nonprofit Program. Finally, beyond employee and contractor efforts on application-based programs, many County department personnel saw their duties increase significantly or made considerably more difficult as a result of the pandemic, such as employees in the Facilities department who led disinfection efforts across 220 locations.

County Administration believes that American Rescue Plan funding should be viewed as more for long-term recovery and investment. By actively pursuing ARP reimbursement of staff efforts related to the pandemic, the County will be able to free up funding/budget in the County's two general funds, resulting in more flexible funding on an entity-wide basis being available to meet the needs of County residents.

Estimated Budget Range

\$5M - \$10M

6 Revenue Replacement-Funded Government Services

6.1 *Secure the County through Enhanced Cyber Defenses*

Statement of Need

The United States faces persistent and increasingly sophisticated malicious cyber campaigns that threaten the public sector, the private sector, and ultimately the American people's security, safety, and privacy. Protecting the County from malicious cyber actors requires adaptation to the continuously changing threat environment, ensuring that the products used are built and operate securely, and partnering with State and Federal agencies to foster a more secure cyberspace Hillsborough County has a robust and complex computing environment. The County's IT infrastructure spans hundreds of buildings, supports thousands of endpoints, and houses terabytes of data in storage. Additionally, within the environment are numerous mission critical systems, such as a SCADA network that helps to facilitate the County's management of water supply and wastewater systems as well as the County's traffic management control network -- automating and preempting light cycles for the routing of citizen vehicles and emergency response apparatus. The County's geographic location is also of paramount importance due to the proximity to national security assets such as MacDill Air Force Base increasing the need for a hardened and reliable County infrastructure.

Along with the requirement for a secure and reliable infrastructure, the County's response to telework and automation with the global COVID-19 pandemic revealed a need for capabilities not previously identified for a consistent and rapid response in the event of a long-term disaster. Continuity of business plans have been in place and implemented in the past, however, the need for continued attention and expansion of these efforts was made clear in our response to the pandemic. The expansion of telework, automation and digitization efforts to ensure the business of government and availability of services is critical for our ability to serve our stakeholders and the community at large and goes towards the enhancement and efficient delivery of services during disasters and potential future pandemic scenarios that will require a sound and solid cyber posture.

The County continues to work towards improving our overall cyber security posture through strategic technology investments. ARP funding can significantly help accelerate implementation timelines and in-turn greatly reduce the possibility of a cyber security event that could be catastrophic.

Investment Option Overview

The County engaged with a well-regarded technology consulting firm, Gartner, in 2020 to identify weaknesses in our security posture. That plan identified remediations that are being implemented over a four-year period. ARP funding can be leveraged to accelerate this implementation to address remediations in a shorter timeline utilizing staff augmentation and funding capital purchases in a timelier manner, thereby hardening our security posture in a shorter timeframe, and reducing risk. Additionally, funding will be used to expand our current Microsoft Azure licensing to add functionality to our environment specifically for security functions, providing integration with our current environment and eliminating the need to acquire "point products" that would add cost and workforce requirements to address disparate products and systems not currently in place.

Estimated Budget Range

\$8M - \$10M

6.2 Enhance Fire Rescue Capability via Fire Station Replacements

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Fire Rescue (HCFR) is responsible for the timely emergency response to fire, medical and other hazards. HCFR's almost 1100+ first responders currently serve our citizens from 44 fire stations distributed throughout Hillsborough County.

HCFR presently operates five (5) fire stations that are at, or near, fifty (50) years in age. These stations are beyond their functional life expectancy, are dated in their design/features and require increasing operational costs to maintain and keep functioning at the expected service level necessary to protect the citizens of Hillsborough County.

- Fire Station #10 – Armdale located at 8430 North Grady Avenue
- Fire Station #23 – Dover located at 3138 Sydney- Dover Road
- Fire Station #15 – Palm River located at 715 South 58th Street
- Fire Station #13 – Gunn highway located at 7502 Gunn Highway
- Fire Station #30 – Midway located at Charlie Taylor Road

By funding and programming the replacement of these stations, HCFR is able to house our first responders in stations with advanced design features such as: individual bunk rooms designed to provide social distancing protections in the event of a pandemic or other infectious situation, decontamination suites which allow first responders to remove protective gear which often contains carcinogenic and other harmful particulate matter and decontaminate their persons before entering the station. These design and technology advancements create a clean living and working environment for first responders during their respective 24-hour shift in the station. Additionally, by increasing the size and number of apparatus bays at the station, additional response units such as rescue units and other specialized equipment may be deployed at more stations, in more locations, around Hillsborough County.

This additional capacity will provide HCFR with the ability to more efficiently respond to an ever-increasing call volume, a rapidly growing and aging population, and effectively allocate resources and personnel to adequately respond to global epidemics and natural hazards.

Investment Option Overview

Establish funding to program Capital Improvement Projects for the design and construction of replacement stations to replace the subject five (5) dated stations. By building replacement stations for these stations HCFR can appreciate the cost savings of already having crews and equipment currently in the existing stations and results in less capital expenditure than building, staffing and equipping an entirely new station. Additionally, these stations are anticipated to be constructed on their present property thereby preventing the need to expend funding on the cost of additional land acquisition. This investment will aid in the prompt and improved response to calls for emergency fire rescue services to citizens in all areas of Hillsborough County.

Estimated Budget Range

\$10M - \$15M

6.3 Accelerate Fire Rescue Response Times via Station Alerting Technology

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Fire Rescue (HCFR) is responsible for the timely response to fire, medical and other hazards. HCFR's almost 1100 first responders currently serve our citizens from 44 fire stations distributed throughout Hillsborough County.

Alerting and dispatching first responders to calls for service is presently undertaken using dated technology which has been in place in our stations for decades. Station alerting technology has advanced to aid in not only faster responses to calls for emergency services, but also addressing certain health-related issues impacting HCFR personnel. The repeated, startled awaking of first responders using dated, loud alert broadcasts and bright lights in the station has cardiac and other health-related implications for our first responders. The station alerting system that HCFR is presently considering provides alerts to first responders using broadcast tones and lights which activate immediately upon notification from the County Emergency Dispatch Center and gently ramp upward in intensity and volume thereby reducing the impact on our crews from being repeatedly startled to an awakened state.

Presently our response is partially guided by dispatch data transmitted to printers where crews utilize paper copies of dispatch data carried with them to the call. The new station alerting system provides the ability to utilize a mobile device application which pushes out dispatch data to impacted personnel directly to HCFR devices or personal devices allowing situational awareness from practically anywhere. This new station alerting technology also brings digital countdown timers in the station providing immediate awareness to first responders as to the progress of their response. Additionally, these displays provide dispatch data such as the responding HCFR and other public safety units, the event location, the call type, the assigned public safety radio channels and other pertinent data to ensure the appropriate and timely response to calls for service.

Investment Option Overview

Establish funding to secure the turnkey installation, technology, training and warranty support to improve station alerting to calls for service and the related systems in HCFR's 44 existing fire stations, our two new stations coming online in 2022 and Emergency Dispatch Center. This investment will aid in the prompt response to calls for emergency fire rescue services to citizens in all areas of Hillsborough County.

Estimated Budget Range

\$5M - \$10M

6.4 Expand Fire Rescue Capabilities via New Warehouse and PSOC Facility Improvements

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Fire Rescue (HCFR) and Emergency Management (OEM) need a 60,000 square foot warehouse facility. HCFR currently is responsible for procuring, receiving, storing, delivering, and processing payment for materials, supplies, services, and equipment on behalf of Fire Rescue, Emergency Management, the 911 Office, and Aging Services. HCFR supports facilities such as, but not limited to, fire stations, feeding centers, points of distribution, and evacuation shelters. The HCFR/OEM Warehouse has reached its full capacity, but the Department's responsibilities continue to increase. Temporary solutions have been adopted by using Conex boxes to supplement the existing warehouse, but these solutions are neither economic or efficient. As the County continues to grow, more and more services are required and thus materials and supplies will need to be in place to address the increased demand. Currently Fire Rescue is using spaces located at the Public Safety and Operations Complex as well as at the MOSI facility. The use of the MOSI space is a convenient but a short-term solution.

To efficiently, effectively, and safely carry out the County's mission requires a large warehouse space that can accommodate the amount of materials and supplies that are required both during normal day-to-day operations and large-scale disaster responses. Building a suitable warehouse space properly designed to accommodate the combined HCFR/OEM operational needs will be the most beneficial and cost-effective investment to fulfill our ever-growing mission in support of the citizens of Hillsborough County and allow us to use the vacated warehouse space for a much-needed break/sleeping area during full deployments.

Investment Option Overview

Establish a capital improvement project to fund a consolidated 60,000 square foot warehouse facility. Renovate the vacated warehouse to create a suitable break/sleeping area for PSOC staff when the EOC is fully deployed. Identify and address additional PSOC improvements to support emergency operations. These facility improvements could be funded partially or fully with American Rescue Plan funding. Fire Rescue and Emergency Operations services are provided to all County residents in an equitable manner. All areas of the County would be served.

Estimated Budget Range

\$5M - \$15M

6.5 Increase Public Safety through Roadway Pavement Resurfacing

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Engineering & Operations Department needs funding to support maintenance and resurfacing of the County's 7,250 miles of paved roadway lanes. This is approximately the same distance from Tampa to Tokyo. The Engineering & Operations Department serves the community through responsive, current, collaborative and cost-effective engineering solutions supporting Public Works Administration's operation, maintenance and improvement of the County's transportation and stormwater systems. The Department's Maintenance and Vulnerability Work Plans includes projects for the preservation and preventative maintenance of County owned assets, such as roads, bridges, signals, sidewalks, trails, and stormwater culverts, inlets, ponds and ditches. Projects involve the replacement of failing and obsolete infrastructure to restore acceptable levels of service. Projects also involve the preservation of infrastructure in good condition to prevent future failures and optimize life cycle costs.

The Department's Maintenance and Vulnerability Work Plans includes projects for the preservation and preventative maintenance of County owned assets, such as roads, bridges, signals, sidewalks, trails, and stormwater culverts, inlets, ponds and ditches. Projects involve the replacement of failing and obsolete infrastructure to restore acceptable levels of service. Projects also involve the preservation of infrastructure currently in good condition to prevent future failures and optimize life cycle costs.

Roadway pavement preservation programs include annual pavement condition inspections, routine repairs, preventive maintenance treatments, and repaving of countywide roads. The County currently conducts periodic physical condition assessments and projected deterioration modeling for all paved roadways every three years. The assessments and modeling are used to determine whether the roadways are being maintained at an adequate level of service. Most recent results indicate 24% of the road pavements are in a poor or worse condition. At current funding levels the road pavements in poor or worse condition are projected to increase to over 70% within the next ten years.

Investment Option Overview

Provide funding for roadway pavement resurfacing projects. Resurfacing projects would be completed based on the roads with the poorest condition. These improvements will reduce potholes, preserve assets, improve safety and bring the network average condition up to fair or better.

Estimated Budget Range

\$25M - \$40M (depending on miles resurfaced)

6.6 Increase Public Safety through Bridge Repair & Rehabilitation

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Engineering & Operations Department needs funding to support repair, rehabilitation and replacement of the County's 275 bridges. The Engineering & Operations Department serves the community through responsive, current, collaborative and cost-effective engineering solutions supporting Public Works Administration's operation, maintenance and improvement of the County's transportation and stormwater systems. The Department's Maintenance and Vulnerability Work Plans includes projects for the preservation and preventative maintenance of County owned assets, such as roads, bridges, signals, sidewalks, trails, and stormwater culverts, inlets, ponds and ditches. Projects involve the replacement of failing and obsolete infrastructure to restore acceptable levels of service. Projects also involve the preservation of infrastructure currently in good condition to prevent future failures and optimize life cycle costs.

Bridge preservation programs include annual bridge condition inspections, routine repairs, preventive maintenance treatments, and rehabilitation and replacement projects. The County currently conducts periodic physical condition assessments and projected deterioration modeling for the bridge inventory every two years. The assessments and modeling are used to determine whether the bridges are being maintained at an adequate level of service. Most recent results indicate less than 30% the bridges are in fair or worse condition. At current funding levels the bridges in fair or worse condition are projected to increase to over 90% within the next ten years.

Investment Option Overview

Design and construction of these bridge repairs and rehabilitation will preserve these aging assets, ensure continued safe operation and connectivity, and reduce risk of closure and/or weight restriction. These 20-25 projects are focused on those most at risk of falling into a poor condition in the next five years. The work includes repairs to structural components such as bridge piles, sheet pile walls, as well as bank restoration and stabilization.

Estimated Budget Range

\$6M - \$10M

6.7 Increase Public Safety through Traffic Signal Repair & Replacement

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Engineering & Operations Department needs funding to support repair and replacement of the County's 446 traffic signals. The Engineering & Operations Department serves the community through responsive, current, collaborative and cost-effective engineering solutions supporting Public Works Administration's operation, maintenance and improvement of the County's transportation and stormwater systems. The Department's Maintenance and Vulnerability Work Plans includes projects for the preservation and preventative maintenance of County owned assets, such as roads, bridges, signals, sidewalks, trails, and stormwater culverts, inlets, ponds and ditches. Projects involve the replacement of failing and obsolete infrastructure to restore acceptable levels of service. Projects also involve the preservation of infrastructure currently in good condition to prevent future failures and optimize life cycle costs.

Traffic signal repair and replacement programs include condition inspections, routine repairs, and replacement projects. Current projections indicate that over 50 signals will require replacement within the next ten years. Traffic signal replacements are currently unfunded in the County's capital improvement program.

Investment Option Overview

Replace traffic signals in design for replacement. At this time, these locations include Bryan Rd and E Lumsden Rd, Memorial Hwy and Eisenhower Blvd N, and Gibsonton Dr and Gibsonton Elementary School – however, needs may expand over time. This project will improve sustainability and resiliency through replacement of the signal heads to enhance visibility and safety, and replace the signal poles due to age, damage and to meet higher wind loading standards.

Estimated Budget Range

\$1M - \$2M

6.8 Reduce Traffic Fatalities through Vision-Zero Road Safety Improvements

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Engineering & Operations Department needs funding for designing and constructing road safety improvements. The Engineering & Operations Department serves the community through responsive, current, collaborative and cost-effective engineering solutions supporting Public Works Administration's operation, maintenance and improvement of the County's transportation and stormwater systems. The Department's Transportation Safety and Mobility Work Plans include projects and programs to provide safer roadways for all individuals, including motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and other vulnerable users through improved facilities and mobility options. These improvements include expanded sidewalks, multi-use paths, trails and increased access to transit through complete street improvements. Furthermore, congestion on existing roadways will be reduced by addressing bottlenecks with intersection widening and improved travel time reliance. Travel time reliance will be improved by the modernization of existing signal control and traffic incident management systems.

In 2016, Hillsborough County, its three Cities, the Planning Commission and the School District all adopted resolutions supporting the long-range vision of achieving zero traffic deaths. Known as Vision Zero, this initiative spurred the Hillsborough Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) to collaborate with its partners to create the Vision Zero Action Plan, followed by the Speed Management Action Plan.

As a commitment to Vision Zero, the Board of County Commissioners allocated \$500,000 to the TPO to study eight of the top 20 high injury corridors under the County's jurisdiction. Working with the County Engineering and Operations Department, the TPO was tasked with analyzing crashes, and with consideration of funding challenges, recommending short-term, immediately implementable engineering countermeasures to reduce serious injuries and fatalities. The MPO studied the following corridors, shared ideas, and considered input from the communities living and working in the areas around the roadways: 78th Street (Causeway Blvd to Palm River Rd); Gibsonton Drive (I-75 to Balm Riverview Road); 15th Street (Fowler Avenue to Fletcher Avenue); CR579 /Mango Rd (MLK Boulevard to US 92); Sheldon Road (Hillsborough Ave to Waters Ave); Lynn Turner (Gunn Highway to Ehrlich Road); W. Fletcher Ave (Armenia Ave to Nebraska Ave); and Bruce B. Downs (Fowler Ave to Bearss Ave). Design and construction of the low-cost engineering countermeasures identified in these studies is currently unfunded in the County's capital improvement program.

Investment Option Overview

Design and conduct low-cost road safety retrofit improvements on the studied vision zero corridors. These projects would put in place engineering countermeasures that would go a long way towards causing drivers to slow down, provide additional and safer crosswalks, and in some cases give cyclists their own lane or side-path.

Estimated Budget Range

\$2M - \$3M

6.9 Enhance Safe Recreational Experiences through Local & Regional Park Improvements

Statement of Need

The COVID-19 pandemic forever changed the way we think about physical, emotional, and social wellness. It also revealed a disparity for certain populations and communities, such as the elderly, people of color, and the historically underserved where a lack of access to wellness opportunities exist. Parks and greenspaces address this critical need, and the pandemic reminded citizens worldwide of the importance of equitable distribution of assets and services to the general public. Additionally, programs offered by park and recreation agencies have supported the COVID-19 recovery effort by providing childcare, athletics, character development, skills development, and socialization opportunities.

Parks and Recreation is responsible for continuing to meet and address emergent public health and wellness needs while providing more attention to disproportionately served communities. The 10-Minute Walk Campaign—a partnership between the Trust for Public Land, National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and Urban Land Institute—identified that seventy-six percent of the population in Hillsborough County does not have access to a neighborhood park in walking distance. Additionally, NRPA surveys reveal that eighty-three percent of adults agree that visiting their local parks, trails, and open spaces is essential for their mental and physical wellness during this pandemic. Across multiple characteristics, such as age, education, gender, education, and race (to name a few), 60% of adults say it is very or extremely essential to exercise in parks and green spaces to maintain mental and physical wellness. Hillsborough County has 170 parks and 51 recreation centers, and citizens found enjoyment in these spaces, with visits increasing 25.8% between FY20 and FY21.

Mitigating the disparity among disproportionately underserved communities can be accomplished by adding new amenities and facilities and renovating existing facilities. Additions such as trails, playgrounds, splash pads, synthetic turf athletic fields, and pavilions along with the infrastructure to support these items will provide equitable access to wellness in all areas of Hillsborough County.

Investment Option Overview

Review the data from the Trust for Public Land’s 10 Minute Walk study, as well as County studies, to determine where amenities might be best located in Hillsborough County. Solicit information from the community to determine what amenities are most desired. Scope park improvements and develop a plan for implementing them. Note that per-park improvements may range from \$250K to \$750K depending on the extent of improvements made; this estimate was used for determining a potential budget range.

Estimated Budget Range

\$5M - \$15M

6.10 Increase Public Safety through Stormwater Culvert Repair & Replacement

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Engineering & Operations Department needs funding to support repair and replacement of the County's over 1,300 miles of stormwater culverts. The Engineering & Operations Department serves the community through responsive, current, collaborative and cost-effective engineering solutions supporting Public Works Administration's operation, maintenance and improvement of the County's transportation and stormwater systems. The Department's Maintenance and Vulnerability Work Plans includes projects for the preservation and preventative maintenance of County owned assets, such as roads, bridges, signals, sidewalks, trails, and stormwater culverts, inlets, ponds and ditches. Projects involve the replacement of failing and obsolete infrastructure to restore acceptable levels of service. Projects also involve the preservation of infrastructure currently in good condition to prevent future failures and optimize life cycle costs.

Culvert preservation programs include annual culvert condition inspections, routine repairs, preventive maintenance treatments, and rehabilitation and replacement projects. Current projections indicate that more than 5,500 culverts will require rehabilitation or replacement within the next five years.

Investment Option Overview

Initiate culvert repair and replacement projects to replace aging and failing stormwater pipe infrastructure, in order to preserve the County's infrastructure assets as well as ensure continued functionality of the stormwater system.

Estimated Budget Range

\$10M - \$15M

6.11 Decrease Flooding through Stormwater Drainage Improvements

Statement of Need

Hillsborough County Engineering & Operations Department needs funding to support design and construction of stormwater drainage improvement projects to reduce local nuisance flooding and enhance neighborhood resiliency. Reduction of roadway flooding will improve roadway safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Water quality benefits may also be achieved by reducing nutrient loads.

Investment Option Overview

Conduct the following stormwater drainage improvement projects.

- Armistead Lane. Install curb and gutter to provide connectivity to existing stormwater infrastructure. Potential water quality benefit may be achieved through nutrient uptake in swales.
- Patterson Road. Install cross drain to reduce existing roadway flooding. Installation of a treatment sump may provide water quality benefit prior to discharge onto Hillsborough County ELAPP (Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program) Property.
- Juniperus Place. Install connection to existing stormwater infrastructure. Installation of curb inlet baskets (CIBs) may help to reduce nutrient loads associated with vegetative debris from the upgradient contribution area.
- Lake Magdalene Blvd at Dyer Road. Install a swale that will provide connectivity with existing stormwater infrastructure. Swale conveyance may provide water quality improvement prior to discharge.
- May Street. Install a swale that will provide connectivity with existing stormwater infrastructure. Swale conveyance may provide water quality improvement prior to discharge.

Estimated Budget Range

\$1M - \$2M

7 Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure

7.1 *Preserve Groundwater Resources via Palm River & Gibsonton Septic-to-Sewer Conversions*

Statement of Need

The Gibsonton and Palm River communities are located near the bay, south of the Palm River and north of Bullfrog Creek. The neighborhoods were built before County wastewater service was available, so the area uses septic tanks for collection of waste water. The area is low and vulnerable to storm surges and high-water events.

Septic to Sewer initiatives are important to protect and preserve our groundwater resources. Septic tanks, no matter how efficient the claims may be, are a source of nutrient loading to the groundwater system. Research has shown that these nutrients contribute to algae blooms as well as other detrimental water quality impacts.

Additionally, septic tank systems rely on relatively dry soil to allow for proper drainage. If the ground is saturated from rain or localized flooding, the system will not operate properly. In these instances, waste can back up into the home or can just as easily contaminate the local waterways. This is an impact to public health and safety that must be mitigated.

These communities are vulnerable to rising water and the impacts of non-functioning septic systems. A central collection system ensures sustainable wastewater service to an underserved part of our County.

Investment Option Overview

Establish Capital Project funding for construction of the Gibsonton and Palm River septic to sewer projects. Design for the Gibsonton portion is currently being funded by BP Funds previously approved by the BOCC. Construction for both neighborhoods is anticipated to be accomplished in phases. Phase I will construct all major pipelines and pump stations along with connection to approximately 500 homes in each.

Estimated Budget Range

\$33M - \$40M (Gibsonton: \$25M - \$30M; Palm River \$8M - \$10M)

7.2 *Preserve Groundwater Resources via Ruskin & Wimauma Septic-to-Sewer Conversions*

Statement of Need

The Ruskin and Wimauma Low Pressure Sewer System (LPSS) was initially constructed in the late 1980's, as an alternative collection system to septic tanks. At the time, the LPSS was considered the best option for central collection and transfer of wastewater. Over time, the system has proven to be unreliable and inefficient to operate. In addition, the system is susceptible to failures and overflows causing concerns for public health and safety. Because of the proximity to the water and sensitive estuaries, overflows are an immediate threat to water quality and environmental damage.

The conversion to a conventional collection system with newer technology for collection will significantly improve the operation of the system and ensure our customers have reliable service. This project is essential to safeguard public health and protect the environment.

Investment Option Overview

Establish Capital Project funding for construction of the Ruskin and Wimauma Low Pressure Sewer System conversion to central collection and transmission. The design for this project is currently underway with funding previously approved by the BOCC. Construction is anticipated to be accomplished in phases. Phase I will construct all major pipelines and pump stations along with connection to approximately 500 homes in each.

Estimated Budget Range

\$26M - \$30M

7.3 Enhance Habitat & Environmental Health through Stream & Wetland Restorations

Statement of Need

The Alafia River Corridor Site in eastern Hillsborough County consists of wetlands and an unnamed creek that flows into the North Prong of the Alafia River. The site is part of Hillsborough County's Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program (ELAPP) properties. The wetlands and unnamed tributary on the ELAPP parcel are full of invasive vegetation and in need of restoration to improve the habitat and increase the biodiversity of the ecosystem. Without restoration efforts, further degradation of the creek and wetland habitat will occur.

Bullfrog Creek in south Hillsborough County winds from its headwaters in the Wimauma area to the west and north to Gibsonton where it flows into Tampa Bay. Part of the headwaters area of the creek is situated on the Balm Scrub Preserve which is part of Hillsborough County's Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program (ELAPP) properties. A segment of the creek and adjacent wetlands on the ELAPP parcel is full of invasive vegetation and in need of restoration to improve the habitat and increase the biodiversity of the ecosystem. Without restoration efforts, further degradation of the creek and wetland habitat will occur.

The Little Manatee River Site in south Hillsborough County consists of wetlands and an unnamed creek that flows to the Little Manatee River. The site is part of Hillsborough County's Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program (ELAPP) properties. The wetlands and unnamed tributary on the ELAPP parcel are full of invasive vegetation and in need of restoration to improve the habitat and increase the biodiversity of the ecosystem. Without restoration efforts, further degradation of the creek and wetland habitat will occur.

The restoration and conservation of stream and wetland systems has a significant number of benefits for natural systems, water resources, and people. They provide habitat for an array of animals especially fish and bird species, and support biodiversity. Wetlands act as a natural filter for surface water systems adsorbing nutrients and pollutants that might negatively impact local riverine systems and Tampa Bay. Wetlands also attenuate potential flood damage and damage to surrounding properties.

Investment Option Overview

Establish capital improvement projects to restore and enhance these three sites, including invasive vegetation management. The project could be funded either partially or fully with American Rescue Plan funding.

Estimated Budget Range

\$13M - \$15M (\$2M - \$4M for Little Manatee River; \$4M - \$6M for Bullfrog Creek; and \$4.5M - \$6.5M for the Alafia River Corridor)

7.4 Improve Water Quality through East Lake Nutrient Removal

Statement of Need

East Lake is an approximately 100-acre lake situated on the northside of Interstate 4 in central Hillsborough County surrounded by residential and commercial land use. It is a hypereutrophic lake and is listed as the number two priority waterbody on Hillsborough County's TMDL Prioritization List. It requires nutrient reduction to meet State water quality criteria. Helping the lake to meet its nutrient water quality criteria will improve the lake and its habitat, as well as helping to improve water quality in Tampa Bay where the lake discharge ultimately flows to. As development increases in the area, further degradation of the lake will occur if nutrient load reduction efforts are not implemented.

To meet load reduction goals for the lake, a study has been completed identifying nutrient hot spots within the lake. Dredging and removal of the nutrient laden sediments in these areas, along with the application of Phoslock, will greatly reduce the nutrient loading to the water column and improve the water quality and habitat within the lake.

Investment Option Overview

Establish a capital improvement project to dredge hot spots within the lake and apply Phoslock to reduce the nutrient load within the lake. The project could be funded either partially or fully with American Rescue Plan funding.

Estimated Budget Range

\$2M - \$3M

7.5 Improve Water Quality through East Lake Outlet Nutrient Reduction Projects

Statement of Need

East Lake Outlet receives the discharge from East Lake which is an approximately 100-acre lake situated on the northside of Interstate 4 in central Hillsborough County surrounded by residential and commercial land use. The outlet system flows through commercial and residential areas to the Tampa Bypass Canal which flows to Tampa Bay. East Lake Outlet is in need of nutrient reduction to meet State water quality criteria. Helping the outlet system to meet its nutrient water quality criteria will improve habitat, as well as helping to improve water quality in Tampa Bay where the discharge ultimately flows to. As development increases in the area, further degradation of the system will occur if nutrient load reduction efforts are not implemented.

To meet load reduction goals for the East Lake Outlet system, a study has been completed identifying alternatives to achieve nutrient reductions. Each alternative may be done independently, but collectively they work together to meet the nutrient load reduction needs for the Outlet system.

Investment Option Overview

Establish a capital improvement project to conduct the parcel acquisition, channel restoration, and installation of the weirs with bioreactive media; conduct channel widening and restoration; install nutrient separating baffle boxes.

Estimated Budget Range

\$250K - \$1.5M

7.6 Enhance Biodiversity & Water Quality through Wetland Habitat Development

Statement of Need

The Northwest Regional Water Reclamation Facility in northwest Hillsborough County consists of a large water reclamation facility and surrounding undeveloped land. The undeveloped land consists of uplands and wetland areas. A combination of forested and wetland creation is proposed to increase the biodiversity of the ecosystem.

The creation of wetland systems has a significant number of benefits for natural systems, water resources, and people. They provide habitat for an array of animals especially fish and bird species, and support biodiversity. Wetlands act as a natural filter for surface water systems adsorbing nutrients and pollutants that might negatively impact local riverine systems and Tampa Bay. Wetlands also attenuate potential flood damage and damage to surrounding properties.

Investment Option Overview

Establish a capital improvement project create forested and herbaceous wetlands. The project could be funded either partially or fully with American Rescue Plan funding.

Estimated Budget Range

\$2M - \$3M

7.7 Bring High-Speed Internet to Underserved Areas via New Broadband Infrastructure

Statement of Need

In Hillsborough County, there is a notable disparity in community access to broadband technology. The gap is further widened by a growing dependence on high-speed internet (broadband) for a variety of facets of daily life. In 2020, the emergence and proliferation of the novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) resulted in an unprecedented and swift reliance on the cyberspace for daily operations that included work, school, commerce, etc. An unintended yet salient consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was an unearthing of disparities that exist in digital literacy as well as economic and physical access to internet services in communities such as Hillsborough County. As such, these disparities have far-reaching community development implications including employment (the ability to attain and sustain a job that requires broadband access), psychosocial well-being (i.e. social connectedness and social support during quarantine and social isolation), and physical location (rural vs. urban areas).

Rural areas are often unreached by conventional providers of telecommunication services (FAC, 2021). Contributing factors to this include low population densities, large geographic areas (increases cost of business and decreases the incentives for providers to serve these areas), and little to no competition among providers in these areas. This may result in increasing costs to the subscriber which in turn, renders services as unaffordable and thus, unavailable to the average resident. About 18 million Americans lack internet access (FCC 2020 Broadband Development Report). Furthermore, approximately 14.7 million of these Americans reside in rural areas, of which about 10% are Floridians. From preliminary data, we assume that in Hillsborough County areas with limited or no broadband are the North Eastern, Eastern and the South Eastern rural areas of the County. From the most recent census estimates, approximately 300,000 people live in these parts of the county (2021 Population Estimates, ESRI). However, there is a need to assess and definitively determine populations in need (i.e. how many people in Hillsborough County are without access to broadband services) in order to provide targeted and effective services. In view of this, a survey will be conducted in the North Eastern, Eastern, and the South Eastern rural areas.

The benefits of introducing broadband in rural areas of Hillsborough County include diminishing or eliminating insecurities in accessing public WIFI for School coursework, filing taxes, searching/applying for jobs, and sharing sensitive information. It is critical to promote access to high speed internet in communities and businesses; these safeguard economic growth and promote equity. Investment from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) will assist in developing practical and sustainable programs to promote digital literacy, internet service affordability, and subsidize the cost of access.

Investment Option Overview

Conduct a survey to concretize the exact population in need. Collaborate with existing internet service providers to deploy state of the art high speed internet to the unserved/underserved areas of Hillsborough county. Partner with community organizations, local leaders, and educational institutions to develop sustainable and cost-effective programs that promote digital literacy, broadband service, and device affordability.

Estimated Budget Range

\$10M - \$15M