

CARES CVRF FUNDING IMPACT REPORT

April 18, 2022



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BACKGROUND

On March 9, 2020 the first COVID-19 case in Larimer County was announced. Within a week, as cases rose throughout country, schools, businesses and other public and private spaces closed, and Colorado issued a statewide stay-at-home order. What initially looked like a temporary shift in everyday life grew into a pandemic that continues to disrupt daily life. The City of Fort Collins responded to the immediate crisis and impacts caused by the pandemic and continues to take action to move the community toward recovery.

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The CARES Act established a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund (CVRF), which was distributed to communities throughout the United States, including Colorado. On May 18, 2020, Governor Polis signed Executive Order D2020 070, Directing the Expenditure of Federal Funds Pursuant to CARES CVRF. Through the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), this fund reimbursed costs to Counties, Municipalities and Special Districts for pandemic response efforts. Through an intergovernmental agreement with Larimer County and other municipalities within the county area, the City of Fort Collins was allocated \$9,015,692 of CARES CVRF funds.

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the impact of the CARES CVRF funds on the City's COVID-19 relief efforts.

APPROACH: A Recovery Executive Team was formed to provide strategic oversight and guidance of pandemic response and recovery, including the deployment of CARES CVRF funds. A City Recovery Manager position was hired to focus on the connection of response and long-term recovery within the overall city organization and community. Additionally, staff were redeployed to support the coordination, logistics, operations, and cross-departmental structure put into place during the response. The Mayor and City Council made the strategic decision to use CVRF dollars to respond to the immediate health crisis, advance community strategic objectives and support community small businesses, nonprofits and residents.

The majority of the funding was deployed directly into the community. Funding allocation was structured with 30 percent going to keeping the City organization open and safe, 30 percent to support businesses/economic recovery and 40 percent for direct social and residential recovery.

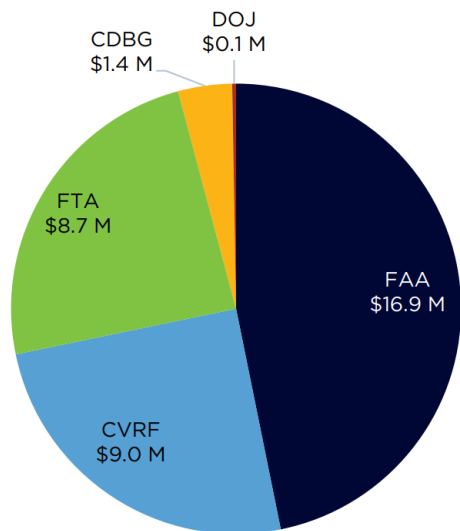


FUNDING SUMMARY

CARES Grants and Amounts Awarded

While this report focuses on the use of CVRF, it was one of several forms of CARES funding received by the City and the region. Under the CARES Act, there were dedicated funds for transportation and emergency services (police). Below is a high-level summary of additional CARES funds received by the City:

Total CARES Funding: \$36.1M



- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) - Northern Colorado Regional Airport
- Coronavirus Relief Fund (CVRF)
- Federal Transportation Agency (FTA) - Used for ongoing operations and offset contributions from General Fund in 2020
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Department of Justice (DOJ) - Used for Police Overtime and Personal Protective Equipment

CVRF Funding Allocations:



30%
Organization

Funding supported safe service delivery by the City.

- Remote work equipment
- Covid PPE Supplies
- Emergency Operations Center
- COVID Testing / Lab Center

Outcome: Provided safe service delivery and support for employees and the community



30%
Business / Economic Recovery

Support for economic recovery and business reopening.

- Restaurant Dine-In Expansion
- Keep NoCo Open
- Small Business Assistance Program
- Inclusive Communication & Engagement

Outcome: Deepened relationships with the business community and was responsive to critical business needs



40%
Residential Support / Social Recovery

Human services projects to support community response.

- Non-Congregate / Congregate Shelters
- Legal Defense Fund
- Utilities Payment Assistance
- Childcare

Outcome: Supported innovation and adaptability to meet most critical community needs and keep people in their homes

CARES CVRF SPENDING TIMELINE

COVID-19 Pandemic

CARES CVRF SPENDING TIMELINE

COVID-19 Pandemic

March
2020

Pandemic Begins

EOC Established

Stay-at-Home Order Begins

ESL & EFML Begin

April
2020

Northside Aztlan
Non-Congregate Shelter
Opens

Stay-at-Home Order Ends

City Face Covering
Requirement begins

May
2020

CARES Lead Team Formed

Outdoor Dining Expansion

Camp FunQuest Programs
Begin

June
2020

Keep NoCo Open
Launches

July
2020

Statewide Mask Mandate
enacted

City receives \$9 million in
CARES CVRF Funding

August
2020

COVID-19 Wastewater
Testing Begins

Community Assistance
Grant Awarded

September
2020

Small Business Recovery
Grant Launched

Mind Matters Exhibit Opens

October
2020

Utilities Assistance Program
Begins

Inclusive Communication &
Engagement to businesses

November
2020

CARES Act Eviction Legal
Fund Launches

VirtuVisit program
launched

NoCo Nosh Partnership
Launches

December
2020

CARES Dashboard Launches

PPE Distribution Events

Vaccine Distribution Begins

NoCo Nosh Free Delivery
Promotion

Level Up Program Launches

January
2021

Utilities Assistance Program
Begins

Inclusive Communication &
Engagement to businesses

Healthy Homes Care Kits
Distributed

City COVID Specialist
begins

February
2021

CARES Act Eviction Legal
Fund Launches

VirtuVisit program
launched

NoCo Nosh Partnership
Launches

EOC Established

March
2021

CARES Dashboard Launches

PPE Distribution Events

Vaccine Distribution Begins

April
2021

Larimer County
Loosens restrictions

NoCo Nosh Free Delivery
Promotion

Drive to 65 Campaign
Launches

May
2021

2021 FunQuest Program
Launches

June
2021

Larimer County Ends Local
Public health Orders

Gardens on Spring Creek
Improvements

Business Accounting
Assistance Program

July
2021

Emergence of Delta Variant
in NoCo

Poudre Fire Authority PPE
Gear

October
2021

County Mask Mandate
reenacted

Additional Non-
Congregate Shelter
Support

November
2021

Omicron detected in CO



ORGANIZATION / DIRECT CITY RESPONSE

Outcome: Provide Safe service delivery and support for employees and the community

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

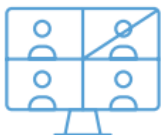
The virtual Fort Collins Operations Center was activated on March 9, 2020 in response to the pandemic. The pandemic, wildfires and floods of 2020 and 2021 highlighted the need to have a formal emergency operation center. CARES funds were used by the City to renovate existing office space to create an Emergency Operations Center. This space can be used as a hub for emergency response operations virtually or in person and improves the City's ability to handle emergencies effectively and efficiently.

COVID Testing / Lab Center



In 2020, the City of Fort Collins partnered with Larimer County and Colorado State University to support free COVID-19 testing. Additionally, Fort Collins Utilities partnered with Colorado State University and other partners to test wastewater samples for SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes the COVID-19 infection. This collaboration was part of a broader Front Range effort to test the wastewater of over 65% of Colorado's population. Wastewater sampling served as another early warning indicator to aid in decision-making for public health officials and continued to be important as the pandemic continued in 2021.

Remote Work and Office Reconfigurations

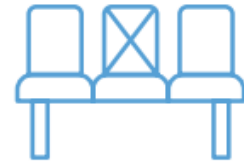


By the end of March 2020, the majority of City staff began working remotely due to the statewide stay-at-home order. The City invested in infrastructure and additional IT support to enable telework capabilities for those working remotely. This allowed critical City services to continue with minimal disruption.

In City offices and buildings, workspaces and meeting rooms were reconfigured to allow for continuation of daily operations and safer public interaction with Council and City staff. As employees transitioned back into the office, or moved to a hybrid work model, these efforts have allowed various City departments and their employees to continue service delivery regardless of work location.

Infrastructure upgrades and improvements:

- Audio/video equipment and other technical hardware in public meeting rooms, including Council chambers
- Video conferencing kits for virtual and hybrid meetings
- Technical equipment (monitors, laptops, etc.) and accessories (peripherals, cables, adapters, etc.) for virtual and hybrid work



IT Support:

- Additional workforce to provide technical and desktop support for remote and hybrid staff, critical for continuation of service delivery
- Applications and tools to deploy, set-up, and manage remote operations

Safety in City Buildings

Along with office reconfigurations to allow for remote work and social distancing, additional cleaning services were implemented to keep employees and community members safe. Face masks and other PPE were also purchased to support safety of employees and community members.

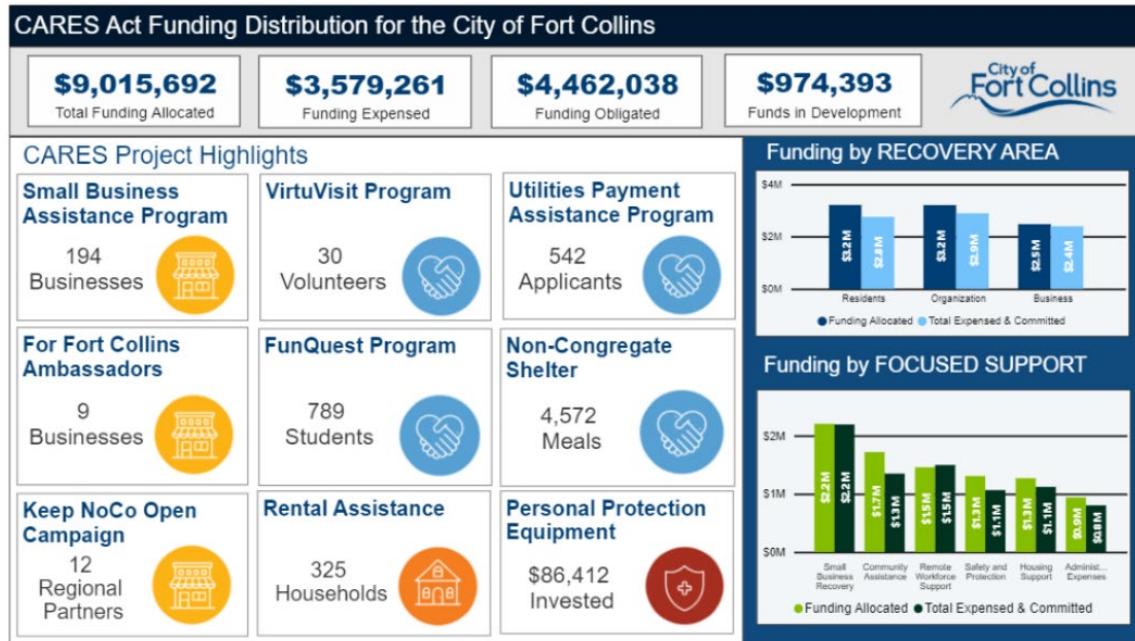
In total, more than 23K hours of touch-point cleaning, as well as other cleaning throughout City buildings occurred to reduce virus transmission. Additionally, disinfection stations and sanitizing supplies were provided in City buildings for staff and the public.

Increased cleaning services also covered the Northside Aztlan Community Center while it served as a temporary shelter for those experiencing homelessness during the early days of the pandemic.



CARES Dashboard

To provide transparency of how the City's CARES CVRF funds were being used, staff created an interactive dashboard highlighting programs and dollars spent. After funds had been allocated and work shifted toward allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and long-term recovery, the dashboard was retired in the summer of 2021.



Additional outreach related to the overall impact of CARES CVRF funding included:

- The City Manager's Column in the Coloradoan, December 2020
- Press releases throughout 2020 and into 2021
- [2020 summary report](#) of City's CARES CVRF work
- Regular reports to City Council





BUSINESS SUPPORT / ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Outcome: Deepened relationships with the business community and respond to critical business needs.

Keep NoCo Open Campaign

NoCoRecovers.com was created to provide a single source of up-to-date pandemic relief resources for the business community. Resources on the site included relief funding and grant opportunities, along with public health summaries, recovery metrics and the Keep NoCo Open educational campaign materials.

The Keep NoCo Open Campaign encouraged businesses and community members to take action and follow safety guidelines to keep the community open for business. Throughout 2020 and 2021, a variety of specific Keep NoCo Open messages were deployed widely throughout the region:

- Social distancing, masks, and capacity messaging
- Vaccination messaging - “Drive to 65” campaign
- Actions businesses were taking to keep customers and staff safe
- Reminders to be kind and support each other



Fort Collins Marketplace



The [Fort Collins Marketplace](https://FortCollinsMarketplace.com) is an eCommerce marketplace for local businesses to sell products, gift cards or experiences. The creation of the site was partially funded by CARES dollars. All participating businesses are small businesses or solo-entrepreneurs, and the marketplace boosted sales and publicity throughout 2020 and 2021. The marketplace continues to be a hub for local businesses to promote their products.

PPE Distribution for Fort Collins Small Businesses and Nonprofits

When crucial PPE supplies were still in short supply, the City of Fort Collins held PPE distribution events for small businesses and nonprofits needing safety supplies for their staff. Supply boxes included masks, hand sanitizer, reusable gloves, face shields and dish soap. Children’s masks and protective eyeglasses were also available.

A total of **95 boxes** were given out. Extra supplies were given to the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce for distribution to their members.

In 2020, the City also supported the development of NoCoSafetySupply.com with CARES dollars. The site, created in partnership the Chamber of Commerce and other local partners, served as the region's marketplace for PPE.



Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP)

In both 2020 and 2021, the Economic Health Office administered multiple rounds of the Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP). This program targeted small businesses disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, including those who had not been able to obtain other forms of assistance. The funding helped offset the loss of revenue and the impact of public health orders on local businesses.

The City supported four rounds of funding in 2020 and 2021. Businesses had to prove revenue loss and business impacts from the pandemic in order to be eligible for grants:

- **Round 1:** Focused on businesses of less than 20 employees with less than \$2 million in annual revenue
- **Round 2:** Program expanded to include sole proprietor businesses
- **Round 3:** All food and beverage businesses regardless of number of employees.
- **Round 4:** \$500 awards to businesses to support accounting services

	Number of Approved Applicants	Total Award
ROUND 1	77	\$847,278
ROUND 2	99	\$760,899
ROUND 3	29	\$290,000
ROUND 4	45	\$22,500
TOTAL:	250	\$1,920,677

With each round of the program, the City prioritized inclusive business engagement to ensure funds went where they were most needed. Engagement strategies included hiring local cultural brokers and business engagement staff. In **53 workdays**, more than **130 contacts** were made with more than **90 businesses**. This included more than **50 bilingual engagements**. Relationships built with these businesses have continued into 2022 and will continue beyond the pandemic.

TESTIMONIALS FROM SBAP RECIPIENTS:

“We were able to focus on making sure our staff were taken care of and able to keep their jobs”

“I have three employees and myself. When I shared with them that the City had helped us with this money, two cried and one just said that this had made her feel less alone. I know I cried; this pandemic has left us all so isolated and knowing that the City cared if we continued to stay in business was a huge moral boost for all four of us.”

Nosh NoCo Food Delivery Partnership



Local restaurants were especially impacted by pandemic capacity restrictions and public health orders. To support local restaurants and incentivize community members to support their favorite eateries, the City partnered with a local, independently-owned food delivery company Nosh NoCo.

Through the partnership, the City covered the restaurant portion of delivery fees and the first \$0.50 of the delivery fee charged to community members ordering food. This helped increase usage of the Nosh platform both by restaurants and customers. After the partnership began in

2020, Nosh NoCo sales went from an average of \$4,300/week to \$5,700/week, and the majority of participating restaurants reported that their sales increased by using Nosh delivery.

The City also partnered with Nosh NoCo for several special promotional campaigns in 2020 and 2021, including free delivery of orders during the annual State of the City event.



Restaurant Outside Dine-In Expansion

After the pandemic began in 2020, the City created a temporary program with a streamlined permitting process to expand options for restaurants, retail, and bars to operate in outdoor patio settings adjacent to their businesses, including parking lots, sidewalks and street parking spaces.

The City's Art in Public Places program, in partnership with the Engineering, Streets, and Traffic Operation Departments as well as the Downtown Fort Collins Creative District and the Jason and Lucy Greer Foundation for the Arts, hired local artists to paint **15 temporary murals** on the concrete barriers around outdoor dining areas throughout Downtown.



As the pandemic continued in 2021, City staff engaged with community members and businesses to explore longer term program options for expanded outdoor dining. This new program is expected to come before City Council for approval in 2022.





RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT / SOCIAL RECOVERY

Outcome: Supported innovation and adaptability to meet the most critical community needs and keep people in their homes

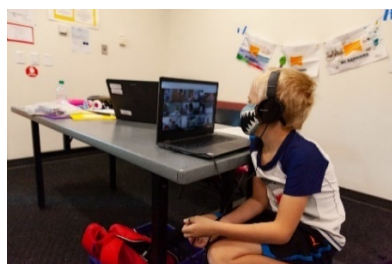


Assistance Program Camp FunQuest

Camp FunQuest is a long-running, licensed childcare program in the City's Recreation Department serving children ages 5-12 with full-day summer camp.

Before the pandemic began, 2020 Camp FunQuest was scheduled to run June 1 – August 14. However due to increased childcare needs and capacity restrictions as a result of the pandemic, demand for the program was higher than first expected. Since certain recreation facilities were closed, the camp operated in an elementary school facility in collaboration with Poudre School District. This partnership also reserved **220 camp enrollments** for PSD McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program participants, whose enrollment fees were subsidized by the Recreation's Reduced Fee Program.

In the fall of 2020, the FunQuest program shifted to providing remote learning support for students when schools were in virtual and hybrid phases.



CARES funding was not initially allocated to support FunQuest programming, however later in 2020, funds were used to support ongoing costs related to program expansion. Funds were used to:

- Hire additional staff to accommodate smaller cohorts
- Hire inclusion aides for children with special needs
- Train staff on safety, inclusion and trauma-informed care

- Purchase educational health, safety and program supplies
- Recover lost revenue subsidized through Recreation's Reduced Fee Program

In summer 2021, Camp FunQuest continued to have expanded programming, adding a second facility site with 70 full-day licensed school-age childcare slots.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- **2,508 enrollments** for summer programming
- **758 Remote Learning enrollments** Fall 2020 – Spring 2021
- **1,320** hours of inclusion support for children with disabilities and special needs
- **658** Reduced Fee Participant enrollments



Utilities Assistance Program

CARES Act Utilities Assistance provided financial assistance to both residential and commercial customers who had an account through the City of Fort Collins Utilities. Grant funds covered past-due balances for Utilities services (electric, water, stormwater and wastewater) on bills dated on or after April 20. Residential customers were eligible to receive up to \$600 towards their past-due balance, and commercial customers were eligible to receive up to \$1200 towards their past-due balance.



Though the program **\$575,910** was distributed to **1,372 residential** and **51 commercial customers**.

Additional details about the program, along with other actions Utilities took to support customers impacted by the pandemic can be found [here](#).

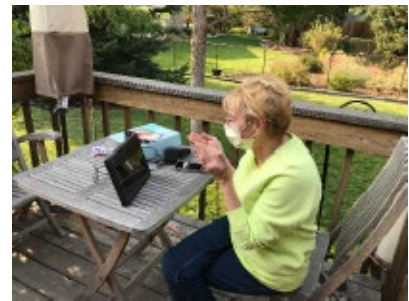
VirtuVisit program

Launched at the end of October 2020, the VirtuVisit program expanded resources and support for older adults in the community. Older adults were often especially isolated throughout the pandemic, unable to connect as easily with family, friends and needed services.

VirtuVisit provided seniors with user-friendly digital tablets at no cost, along with startup and tech support by trained volunteers. After receiving the tablets and being trained on how to use them, participants were able to virtually connect with family and friends, along with virtual appointments, classes and events. Program participants shared that the ability to connect with family and friends was very important for their well-being, reducing feelings of isolation. Many of the relationships established between participants and volunteers continue today.

DECEMBER 2021 PROGRAM METRICS:

- 36 Participants
- 26 Volunteers
- 60 device purchases



Mind Matters Museum Exhibit



In October 2020, the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery opened the special exhibit called "Mental Health: Mind Matters".

The goal of the interactive exhibit was to build a greater understanding of the importance of mental health and create a safe space for important conversations about mental illness during the pandemic and beyond. The exhibit was free to the community in 2020 partially due to CARES funding from the City.

Legal Defense Fund

City staff allocated CARES Act funding to support community members at risk of eviction and losing housing. Housing instability and eviction rates were exacerbated by the pandemic.

Funds were distributed through a competitive process to identify and contract with community partners for eviction avoidance education, “Know Your Rights” training, legal clinics, and direct client representation for Fort Collins residents facing eviction. Training and outreach was also provided to landlords, along with tenants.



8 Community partner organizations coordinated efforts resulting in:

- **Free legal advice**
- **205 clients/families** directly represented in eviction cases
- **4,320 informational flyers** distributed in English & Spanish within mobile homes parks
- **150+ calls** received by Fuerza Latina hotline related to housing insecurity, rent assistance, legal assistance, landlord communication support or other housing issues
 - Callers were directed to resources offered by community partners funded by CARES
- **796 participants** receiving Know Your Rights self-advocacy training and attending legal advice clinics
- **602 low-income participants** attending self-advocacy programs and legal advice clinics
- Training to **21 local attorneys** on eviction-related case types
- An average of **4 families per week** kept housed between October 2020 and October 2021

Housing & Homelessness Shelters

CARES CVRF funding also supported work of local homelessness service providers, focusing specifically on the safety of those experiencing homelessness.

Northside Aztlan Center Emergency Shelter Program - 2020



In late March 2020, Northside Aztlan Community Center was transitioned into a 24/7 shelter for those experiencing homelessness that allowed for proper physical distancing and safety protocols.

A temporary outdoor shelter space was also approved in **Heritage Park** and officially opened in mid-April 2020.

Both indoor and outdoor shelters operated into mid-June 2020. All told, the indoor shelter served **7,432 overnight guests** and provided over **30,901 meals**.

Non-Congregate Shelter

A non-congregate shelter, hosted at a local hotel in August 2020, provided safe, temporary housing for community members age 65+ and/or with medical conditions that indicated higher risk of complications from COVID-19.

From August-December 2020, this program provided safe shelter for **51 people**. 16 were successfully moved into permanent housing.

The Food Bank provided **8,608 lunches and dinners**, and Precision provided **2,027 hours** of on-site security.

Congregate Shelter

Throughout 2020 and 2021, local congregate shelters expanded capacity to allow for increased physical distancing and safety protocols.

Fort Collins Rescue Mission: Temporary Shelter at Blue Spruce

The Fort Collins Rescue Mission temporarily moved to a larger space, Blue Spruce, where it serviced up to **150 men per night** in November and December 2020.

In 2021, the City provided an additional \$73,000 to Fort Collins Rescue Mission to cover increased staff capacity to support additional 24/7 sheltering, support and security. By providing 24/7 shelter to those experiencing homelessness, the Mission was able to provide safety, security and stability to vulnerable community members. People experiencing homelessness with access to 24/7 shelter have statistically higher rates of securing housing and employment compared to those without access to 24/7 shelter.

During the first two months of the project:

- 35+ users gained employment
- 20+ users left the shelter to enter into housing

Catholic Charities: Temporary Shelter for Women and Families

Catholic Charities built a temporary heated structure in their parking lot for women and families to stay warm and protected while waiting to enter the shelter each evening. In November and December of 2020, **2,025 women and 167 families** were sheltered overnight.

Homeward Alliance

In 2020, Homeward Alliance expanded its daytime hours at the Murphy Center and purchased heaters for their outdoor seating area.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Summary

Key themes of **resiliency**, **innovation**, and **collaboration** emerged across all the projects and programs supported by CARES funding.

Resilience meant drawing on the capacity to meet short- and long-term community needs. Staff utilized innovative problem-solving and approached programs and services in new and different ways. Furthermore, there was an ongoing commitment to **adaptability** as community conditions evolved and needs changed as the pandemic continued. The importance of continued **collaboration** internally, as well as with external partners was one of the biggest takeaways of CARES work.

Outcomes of CARES CVRF

Stronger connection to the community.

- CARES work allowed the City to connect to the community in new ways, including engaging more with historically underserved communities.
- Virtual City Council meetings, work sessions and remote listening sessions held in English and Spanish to increase access increased inclusion and accessibility.
- More authentic conversations with community members about needs and ongoing struggles were sparked.
- Strengthened existing partnerships and formed new ones with external partners and businesses throughout the region.
- Deepened business engagement to support businesses that have traditionally been underserved.

Delivered critical services with greater impact.

- Critical services delivered to most vulnerable community members with efficiency that would not have been possible without CVRF funding.
- Funds supported those most impacted by the pandemic.

Adapted new work environments to meet emerging priorities.

- Balanced flexibility and adaptability with the funds with consistent framework and processes.
- Hired and redeployed staff for implementation / management of response and recovery project.
- Balanced coordinating processes across the City while providing autonomy to design and manage CARES projects.
- Implemented rapid-cycle continuous improvement processes throughout the life of the program.
- Prioritized the greater good of the organization and community.
- Balanced leadership oversight and mid-level management autonomy to enable responsive decision-making.

Lessons Learned from CARES CVRF

Demonstrated opportunities for internal efficiencies.

- Found that atypical funding structures like CARES require adaptation to processes as they do not always fit the traditional reporting structure of the City.
 - These lessons have carried forward into deployment of ARPA funds.
- Created a greater need for cross-departmental and cross-service area coordination.
- Bringing in the financial analysts sooner in the process helps streamline systems, as well as having a lead financial coordinator on grants and programs.
- Highlighted the opportunity to reevaluate personnel structures and utilize temporary staffing positions in some cases to deploy underutilized employees to add greater value and support needed work.
- Consolidated process for reporting and storytelling earlier in the process would have created efficiencies.

Highlighted gaps that exist within the community.

- The pandemic as a whole magnified preexisting gaps and inequities in the community.
 - Elevated the need for an equity office, as well as new and different programs and approaches to address root issues in the community.
 - Highlighted greater opportunity to leverage internal and external experts to drive programs and funding.
 - Many community partners are already doing transformative work to support those most impacted by the pandemic, so supporting their efforts, rather than the City leading programs is often a best practice.
 - Not all businesses met qualifications to receive / accept funding, therefore it was important to work with them to set them up for success, like providing accounting resources, so they could be eligible for future funding opportunities.

Created ongoing need for adaptability.

- As additional funding opportunities become available, including American Rescue Plan funds, the City will continue to be a need to stay connected and informed on a regional, state and federal level.
 - This allows the City to better navigate challenges of ever-changing policies, requirements and deadlines for funding as well as opportunities to collaborate.

Long-Term Recovery

In January of 2021, the City began shifting into recovery planning, while continuing to deploy CARES CVRF funds and respond to immediate impacts of the pandemic.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, 2021, established an additional \$1.9 trillion in COVID-19 relief funding, including \$350 billion in aid to specific to state and local governments. Colorado received \$6 billion for state and local governments, which included \$28.1 million for the City of Fort Collins. This funding is being used to address the pandemic and its negative impacts.

To help guide both the long-term spending of ARPA funds and resilient recovery efforts, Leadership identified the need for a specific Recovery Plan. to lay out priorities for long term resilience and recovery. The City's Recovery Plan was created in 2021 and adopted in early 2022 based on extensive community engagement, analysis of existing city plans, and alignment with other local and regional recovery efforts. View the Fort Collins Resilient Recovery Plan [here](#).