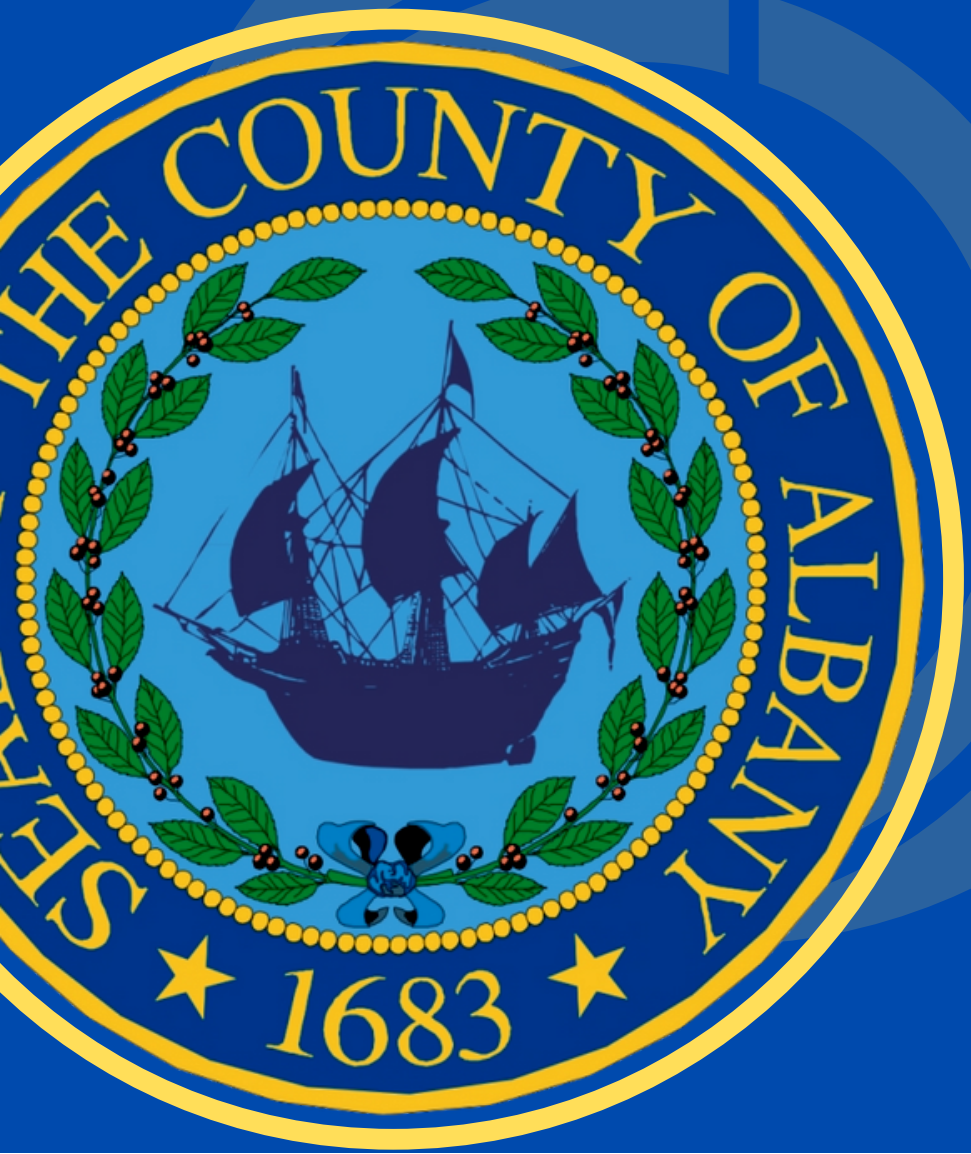
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

# INVESTMENT PLAN




**March 2023**

# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

## ALBANY COUNTY

Harold L. Joyce Albany County Office Building
112 State Street Albany, NY 12207
(518) 447-7000
https://www.albanycounty.com/
https://albanycountyarpa.org

## HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE ARPA INVESTMENT PLAN

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**OR VISIT:**

https://albanycountyarpa.org/newsurvey/

2 Create and share your own ARPA budget

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3 Attend a public meeting

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ALBANY COUNTY

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# Executive Committee Message

Thank you for taking the time to review and provide feedback on Albany County's Strategic Investment Plan for our second tranche of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) recovery funds. The last three years have been an unprecedented challenge for our County, but we are proud to say that our community met that challenge head-on. Albany County is committed to utilizing our ARPA funds in a fair and impactful manner to address the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and position our County on a path toward health, equity and prosperity. We were all impacted by COVID-19 in different ways, and your feedback is vitally important to our process.

This Strategic Investment Plan outlines the 'rules of the road' set by the Treasury Department, explains the County's process, establishes a timeline for next steps, and provides information on how we propose to invest these funds into our County and community. As you will see in the summary pages below, the $29.4 million in ARPA funds that are the focus of this plan are divided into three categories: Economic Recovery and Growth; Community Development and Public Health; and County Infrastructure and Workforce. In the coming months, we will be soliciting applications for funding in each of these categories, and it is our hope that these funds will serve as a catalyst to encourage further investment in our community.

ARPA ELIGIBILITY OVERVIEW

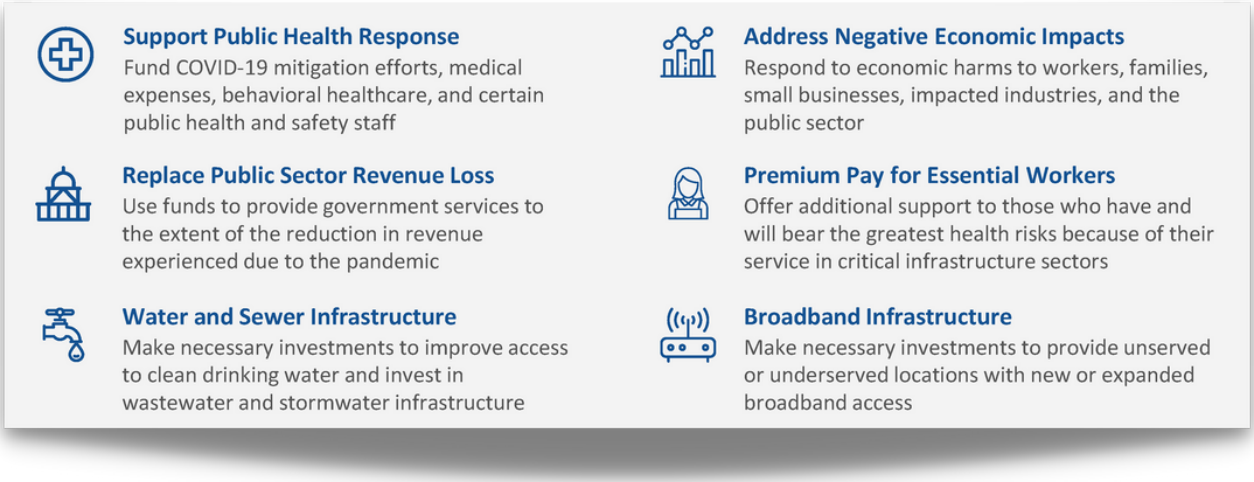
# THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

The $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 ("ARPA") signed into law on March 11, 2021, provides $350 billion in emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to help mitigate the long-term effects of the Pandemic and to remedy the disparity between rising costs and falling revenues.

*Albany County received $59.3 million in two equal tranches, creating a historic opportunity to achieve fiscally responsible yet transformational objectives that will shape the County's recovery and future.*

# ELIGIBLE USES OF ARPA FUNDS

The American Rescue Plan Act provides significant resources for the County to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency and the resulting economic impact through programs and services that fall within several categories of eligible uses:




*Source: US Department of Treasury, Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Quick Reference Guide*

ARPA ELIGIBILITY OVERVIEW

Within these primary categories, governments have some level of flexibility to determine how best to use the stimulus funds to meet the specific needs of their communities and populations. ARPA also allows for broad flexibility in the use of funds for programs and services that target the hardest-hit communities and families or those provided within Qualified Census Tracts and other disproportionately impacted areas.

## SPENDING REQUIREMENTS

ARPA funds must be obligated no later than December 31, 2024, and fully expended by December 31, 2026.

*Obligated By:*

no later than December 31, 2024

*Fully Expended:*

no later than December 31, 2026

Funds that are not fully spent by December 31, 2026 are required to be returned to the U.S. Treasury.

COUNTY PROCESS

# STRATEGIC RECOVERY & RESILIENCY INVESTMENT PLAN

It is in the best interest of the County to identify best practices and procedures, and to identify a strategic plan for ensuring that the County, including its residents, businesses and stakeholders realize the maximum relief and benefits available as a result of ARPA aid.

*This Investment Plan is a living document and will continue to evolve as the County engages stakeholders and monitors additional Federal actions and other possible funding sources that could shift the demands on its ARPA funding.*

## KEY GOALS

In order to best address the needs pf the County, we must reflect upon what we learned from COVID-19. As we have navigated our way through this pandemic, we have:

1. Reimagined our operations and workforce;
2. Developed a better understanding of the health disparities in our communities and the need to address them;
3. Seen the progression of growth industries, the introduction of clean, green energy sources, and the necessity in fostering development of their technology and infrastructure;
4. Made a commitment to economic development and are cognizant of the fact that the strategic location of some projects can be the catalyst to strengthen communities;
5. Developed a deeper understanding that partnerships with governments, community organizations, and businesses are essential to achieving sustainable change;
6. Recognized the importance of the intersection of health, mental health and recreation for our youth and for the public as a whole, and the need to break down barriers to create broader opportunities for all citizens; and
7. Seen the internet/broadband challenges that exist in both rural and urban areas, and the significant hindrance this has had on our students.

COUNTY PROCESS

Moving forward, key goals in the County's recovery include support for community members and organizations that have been impacted or disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. There will be a continued effort to achieve systematic changes that will provide the most strategic and sustainable long-term benefits for the County's stakeholders, rather than investing in short-term solutions, with an overarching vision of creating a more inclusive and sustainable economy in our County.

## ARPA COMMITTEES

A decision-making framework has been established to oversee the use of ARPA funds that will adhere to Treasury guidelines, combat the negative impacts of COVID-19, and set the County on a path to sustainable and inclusive economic growth. This framework includes an Executive Committee comprised of key County officials, including the County Executive, bipartisan representation from the County Legislature, the County Comptroller, and the Office of Management and Budget, as well as focused subcommittees comprised of County representatives and public stakeholders. Subcommittees have worked collaboratively to establish priority areas of investment based on member expertise and community input. Their recommendations were the basis for this Investment Plan, which we are publishing for community feedback as we prepare to release applications for funding.

# COUNTY PROCESS

Funding requests, both internal and external, will be carefully evaluated to ensure prospective projects maximize the County's allocation of ARPA aid, promote the long-term fiscal health of the County and comply with U.S. Treasury guidelines and requirements.

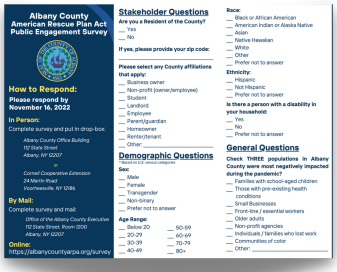
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

# OVERVIEW

The County is committed to ensuring that our ARPA investments directly respond to the needs of County residents and that they address the inequities exposed by the pandemic. As such, the County developed a four-pronged community engagement strategy to shape its ARPA decision-making. More information will be included as we move through this process.

## ARPA Website

August 2022




## Stakeholder Survey

October 2022

## Investment Plan Public Comment & Meetings

March 2023

## Information Sessions/Office Hours*

Once Applications Start
*(April - June 2023)*

*More information will be available

To date, the County's public engagement efforts have fostered meaningful conversations and provided key data points which have informed the development of this investment plan.

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

On October 17, 2022, the County launched a website and interactive survey for the community to provide input on needs and priorities for ARPA funding. Response highlights from the public engagement survey are provided below. For more a more comprehensive breakdown of survey responses, please visit: https://albanycountyarpa.org.

## Response Highlights from Public Engagement Survey:

Total Responses: 1,591

Key Demographics: Below are a series of demographic highlights from the respondents:

*Respondent Age:* Youth and young adults ages 39 or younger accounted for 34.9% of respondents, adults between the ages of 40 to 59 accounted for 39.7%, while the remaining 25.4% were 60 or older.

*Respondent Sex:* Female respondents accounted for 55.4% of responses, male respondents accounted for 39.8% of responses, non-binary respondents accounted for 1.1% of responses, transgender respondents accounted for 0.6% of responses, while the remaining 3.1% of respondents indicated they preferred not to answer.

*Respondent Race:* Approximately 74.9% of respondents identified their race as white, 10.8% were black or African American, 9.0% preferred not to answer, 0.9% were Asian, 0.3% were Indian or Alaska Native, 0.1% were native Hawaiian and the remaining 3.9% identified their race as other.

*Respondent Ethnicity:* Approximately 5.1% of respondents identified their ethnicity as Hispanic, while the remaining 94.9% were either not Hispanic or preferred not to answer.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

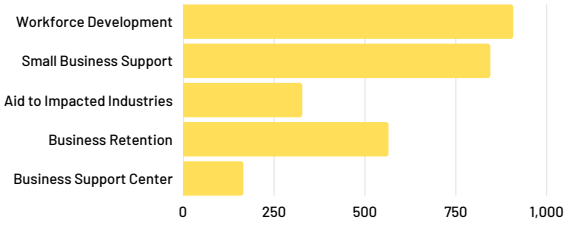
**Most Impacted County Populations.** When asked to identify the most negatively impacted populations in the County, the top three (3) identified populations, in order, were the:

- Front-line and/or essential workers
- Families with school-aged children
- Small businesses

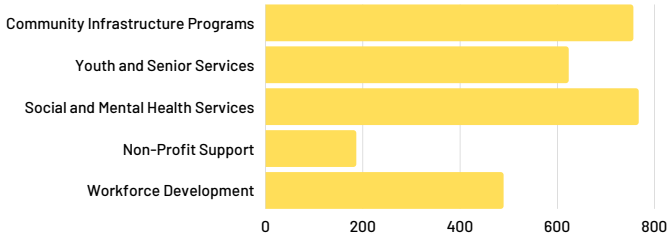
**Overall Funding Priorities.** When asked about the importance of eight (8) different ARPA eligible funding priorities, respondents gave the highest votes of importance to community health and wellness, homeless and housing services and public infrastructure.

**Subcommittee Specific Funding Priorities:** Respondents were asked to rank funding priorities specific to each of the County's four (4) ARPA subcommittees. Below is a summary of the results.

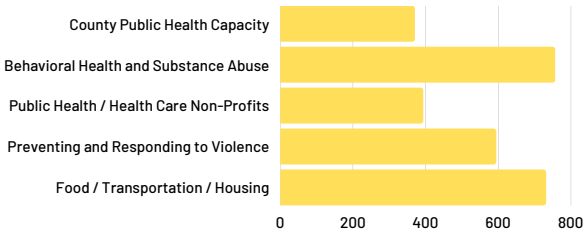
Economic Development Subcommittee



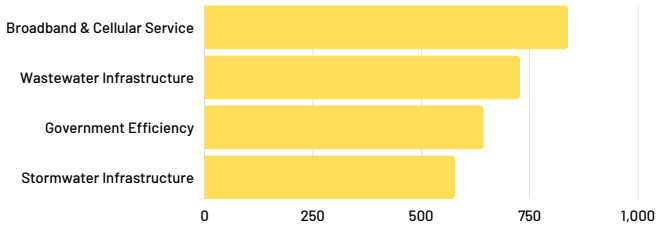

Community Development Subcommittee




Public Health Subcommittee




County Projects Subcommittee



# ARPA INVESTMENT PLAN SUMMARY

Using community input and an internal review of the County's highest priorities, Albany County has developed this Strategic Investment Plan to ensure ARPA funds are used to meet the County's immediate needs as well as to provide long-term, transformative investments for tomorrow. We are seeking public comment in order to further refine this plan as we prepare to make funds available for County priorities and to the community. The following plan is broken into three funding categories: Economic Growth and Recovery; Community Development and Public Health; and County Infrastructure and Workforce. Within each category, key focus areas are ranked in current order of funding priority based on subcommittee and public input. Please consider taking our Investment Plan survey to offer feedback on the plan. (visit: https://albanycountyarpa.org/newsurvey)

There are three ways to provide feedback:

1. Complete our *NEW* Investment Plan Survey
2. Create a sample budget
3. Attend a public meeting

The following 2 pages include a summary of the County's Key Focus Areas.

For additional information on the Key Focus Areas below please refer to pages 14 to 17.

# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT
## ALBANY COUNTY

## ARPA INVESTMENT PLAN SUMMARY

| Strategic County Priority | Allocation | Priority Rank | Key Focus Areas | ARPA Eligibility Category |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Economic Growth And Recovery** | **$7.9 Million** | **1** | Small Business Grants | Loans or Grants to Mitigate Financial Hardship |
| | | **2** | Workforce Development Grants | Loans or Grants to Mitigate Financial Hardship |
| | | **3** | On-the Job Training Funding | Technical Assistance, Counseling, or Business Planning |
| | | **4** | Tourism, Arts, and Culture Grants | Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality |
| | | **5** | Blighted Property Demolition/Rehabilitation Grants* | Rehabilitation of Commercial Properties or Other Improvements |
| | | **6** | Commercial Property Conversion/Reinvention Program | Rehabilitation of Commercial Properties or Other Improvements |
| | | **7** | County Tourism and Economic Development Capacity | Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality |
| **Strategic County Priority** | **Allocation** | **Priority Rank** | **Key Focus Areas** | **ARPA Eligibility Category** |
| **County Infrastructure and Workforce** | **$12.2 Million** | **1** | Wastewater and Stormwater Infrastructure | Clean Water: Stormwater Water and Sewer: Other |
| | | **2** | Broadband Infrastructure | Broadband: Other projects |
| | | **3** | County IT Infrastructure | Public Sector Capacity: Administrative Needs |
| | | **4** | County Workforce Retention/Attraction | Public Sector Workforce: Other |
| | | **5** | Effective Service Delivery Investments | Public Sector Capacity: Effective Service Delivery |
| | | **6** | County Public and Mental Health Initiatives | Mental Health Services |
| | | **7** | Parks and Open Space Funding | Provision of Government Services |

**Limited to Qualified Census Tracts*

# ARPA INVESTMENT PLAN SUMMARY

| Strategic County Priority | Allocation | Priority Rank | Key Focus Areas | ARPA Eligibility Category |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Community Development And Public Health** | **$8.8 Million** | **1** | Behavioral Health, Substance Abuse & Telehealth Grants | Mental Health Services Substance Use Services |
| | | **2** | Affordable Housing & Housing Support Grants | Long-term Housing Security: Affordable Housing |
| | | **3** | Community Improvement Capital Grants | Economic Impact Assistance: Other |
| | | **4** | Food Access Grants | Household Assistance: Food Programs |
| | | **5** | Frontline Worker Support Program | |
| | | **6** | Non-Profit Recovery Grants (Other) | Assistance to Impacted Nonprofit Organizations |
| | | **7** | Preventing and Responding to Violence Grants | Community Violence Interventions |
| | | **8** | Youth Services Grants | Other Public Health Services |
| | | **9** | Senior Services Grants | Other Public Health Services |
| | | **10** | Transportation Services Grants | Assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers |
| **Strategic County Priority** | **Allocation** | **Priority Rank** | **Key Focus Areas** | **ARPA Eligibility Category** |
| **Flex Funds** | **$0,5 Million** | **N/A** | To be allocated based on demand | To be determined |

# PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

| | |
|---|---|
| **March 2023** | **Investment Plan Public Comment and Meetings** |
| **April 2023** | **Economic Development Funding Application Launches**<br>• Small Business Grants<br>• Workforce Development Grants<br>• Tourism, Arts, and Culture Grants<br>• Blighted Property Demolition/Rehabilitation Grants |
| **May/June 2023** | **Economic Development Awards Announced** |
| **June 2023** | **Community Development & Public Health Application Launches**<br>• Behavioral Health, Substance Abuse & Telehealth Grants<br>• Affordable Housing & Housing Support Grants<br>• Community Improvement Capital Grants<br>• Food Access Grants<br>• Non-Profit Recovery Grants (Other)<br>• Preventing and Responding to Violence Grants<br>• Youth Services Grants<br>• Senior Services Grants<br>• Transportation Services Grants |
| **July/August 2023** | **Community Development & Public Health Application Awards** |

# ARPA INVESTMENT PLAN DETAIL

## Economic Recovery and Growth
## $7.9 Million

*Small Business Grants:* Grants to help small businesses in the County recover and grow.

*Workforce Development Grants:* Grants to support development or expansion of workforce development programs in Albany County serving strategic industries including clean energy manufacturing, health care, nanotechnology, and advanced manufacturing.

*On-the Job Training Fund:* In partnership with the Capital Region Workforce Development Board, the County will provide additional funding to support expansion of on-the-job training and existing working training in Albany County.

*Tourism, Arts, and Culture Grants:* Grants to help tourism, arts, and cultural institutions recover from the impacts of COVID-19 or launch new initiatives to attract tourists to Albany County.

*Blighted Property Demolition and Rehabilitation Grants:* Grants to support the demolition or rehabilitation of commercial properties in qualified census tracts.

*Commercial Property Demolition and Rehabilitation Grants:* Grants to support the conversion of vacant or underutilized commercial office properties to other uses or to attract new out-of-County tenants to fill vacancies.

*County Tourism and Economic Development Capacity:* Funding for Discover Albany and the Advance Albany County Alliance to offset lost revenue, build capacity, and enhance their presence in the community in order to assist with economic recovery.

## County Infrastructure and Workforce
## $12.2 Million

*Wastewater and Stormwater Infrastructure:* Investments in County water infrastructure including wastewater, stormwater, and green infrastructure.

*Broadband Infrastructure:* Funding for standalone broadband expansion programs and/or funding to leverage against state and federal grant funding.

*County IT Infrastructure:* Funding for hardware/software needed to protect and prepare County IT infrastructure for increased stress on the system resulting from remote work, virtual meetings, telehealth, etc.

*County Workforce Retention/Attraction:* Funding to retain and/or attract workers to County service.

*Effective Service Delivery Investments:* Investments in technology, software, equipment, etc. to improve the delivery of County services.

*County Public and Mental Health Initiatives:* Core Public Health and Mental Health initiatives to address the impact of the pandemic, underlying conditions, and/or social determinants of health.

*Parks and Open Space:* Funding to improve County parks and open space to promote recreation in Albany County.

## Community Development & Public Health
## $8.8 Million

*Behavioral Health, Substance Abuse, Telehealth Grants:* Funding for programs or initiatives focused on behavioral health and/or substance abuse, including telehealth, that were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Affordable Housing/ Housing Support Grants:* Funding to address housing insecurity. Examples include increasing the supply of affordable housing, rent assistance, tiny housing, financial planning services, building improvements, and prevention programs.

*Community Improvement Capital Grants:* Capital grants to support community infrastructure. Examples include, but are not limited to, physical improvements to homeless shelters, parks and recreation facilities, etc.

*Food Access Grants:* Funding to increase food accessibility in Albany County (e.g. education and outreach, home delivery, and food assistance).

*Preventing and Responding to Violence Grants:* Funding to support community violence intervention/prevention programs.

*Frontline Worker Support Program:* A County-led program to support frontline workers most impacted by the pandemic including, but not limited to, health care, public health, emergency services, and long-term care workers.

*Nonprofit Support Grants (Other):* Competitive grants for nonprofit organizations impacted by COVID-19 that are not eligible under the other categories in this section.

*Youth Services Grants:* Funding for programs and initiatives focused specifically on youth. Examples include, but are not limited to after school programming and services for foster youth.

*Senior Services Grants:* Funding for programs and initiatives specifically targeted toward senior citizens in Albany County.

*Transportation Services Grants:* Funding for programs that address transportation challenges, including, but not limited to, health care, food access, and employment.

NEXT STEPS

# PROVIDE FEEDBACK

There are three ways to provide feedback:

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