



How Should Arizona Spend Federal Pandemic Funds?

Statewide Report

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Most Important Areas to Address Disparities in Health and Well-Being

Housing assistance and human services programs should take priority when it comes to this funding. Stable, affordable, safe housing is an important foundation for families and individuals. Lack of access to affordable housing affects many groups of people in many different ways and raises concerns for communities affected by addiction, seniors, young families, and families with children. Home ownership is a piece of the affordable housing picture, as it helps families build wealth and contributes to their financial stability as well as providing affordable housing.

Mental health impacts individuals and families on a large scale. It contributes to homelessness and affects physical health and all aspects of life. We need funding to train mental health professionals and first responders to deal with mental health and behavioral health issues.

We also need to fund K-12 education, and should educate and provide for youth, particularly those who are homeless or struggling with mental or behavioral health issues.

When considering this issue, we should recognize the administrative burdens associated with these programs, which can prolong the time it takes to get benefits to those who need them and reduces the funds available. We should seek to minimize the complexity and administrative burdens where possible.

It is important to get health care and other services to communities of color, and to provide social support for moms and kids, who are among the most vulnerable and the most affected by the pandemic.

The infrastructure that is the base on which we build our social safety net is extremely fragile. Even with funding it is difficult to get relief out to those in need when this infrastructure is so fragile and insufficient. Some of the available funding should be used to build up this infrastructure and build support to keep it going when the pandemic relief funds are no longer available.

Priorities for Utilizing One-Time Funding

Some funds should be spent on legal representation for low-income individuals. Having help to address the multitude of legal issues, including eviction and benefits entitlement, can affect housing stability and health. This can be done through a mix of public education programs and individual legal representation. Eviction defense will be critical to establishing housing stability with so many families facing delayed eviction or repairing credit/rentability for those who have already been evicted.

Even before the pandemic social isolation was a serious health problem for older adults. These health impacts are more serious than obesity, smoking, and other ailments. The pandemic made the problem worse. Some funds should be spent to address this issue.

We should recruit, train, and deploy a network of community health workers, especially in communities of color.

We should prepare for the next pandemic by examining the impacts of tax cuts on our social services infrastructure and restoring that infrastructure to fully functioning status.

Data systems should be improved to make information from state agencies more accessible. The application system for various types of assistance should be modified so that it is easier for people in need to get the help they need. For example, we might devise a single assistance application that could be used for multiple purposes.

Money should be spent on affordable housing development and infrastructure. Affordable units built with this one-time money will never go away.

In allocating this funding we should prioritize entities that have a track record, with partnerships in place, and are already operating effectively to provide services.

Universal pre-K would be very impactful.

Investing in building infrastructure for and making broadband internet available to all who need and want it would be an excellent use of one-time funds.

Making funds available for vaccinations and early childhood health care would significantly reduce health disparities.