Lewis County
American Rescue Plan Act Resident and Business Surveys

March 2022
Civic Communication & Analytics Platform
Smarter, better connected communities. A civic surveying, policy polling, and constituent communication tech platform.

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Advanced Survey Science & Performance Analytics
Data insights to help communities move forward. The premiere provider of professional civic surveys and performance benchmarking analyses.

Exclusive partners of:
ICMA
NLC
National League of Cities
The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of community livability. Deciding how to best spend ARPA funds can be challenging with so many competing needs.
"The Treasury urges State, territorial, Tribal, and local governments to engage their constituents and communities in developing plans to use these payments, given the scale of funding and its potential to catalyze broader economic recovery and rebuilding."

The ARPA Engagement Surveys

Administered over time
Throughout ARPA funding to regularly assess needs and measure performance

Intra-Index Engagement Optional
As needed to provide additional information to better understand specific needs

ARPA Surveys

Residents
A subset of key indicators from NRC Benchmark surveys (The National Community Survey and The National Business Survey)

Business Community

Hot topic resolution
Deep dive tools

Hot topic resolution
Deep dive tools
What are we measuring?

Domains of Community Livability

- Community livability
- Challenges faced
- Spending Priorities
## The ARPA Engagement Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Sample questions or topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Community Livability**         | Overall economic health  
|                                  | Quality of utilities  
|                                  | Health and wellness  
|                                  | Feelings of safety  
| Rating: Excellent ↔ Poor         |                                                                                                                                                |
| **Personal Impact**              | Physical health of household members  
|                                  | Making rent or mortgage payments  
|                                  | Lack of technology to work or attend school remotely  
|                                  | Lack of skills/training to get a job that pays a livable wage  
| Rating: Major ↔ None             |                                                                                                                                                |
| **Business Impact**              | Decline in business/sales  
| Business Index                   | Need to lay off employees  
|                                  | Shortage of skilled employees  
| Rating: Major ↔ None             |                                                                                                                                                |
| **Priorities for ARPA Fund Use** | Replenish lost revenues to return local services to pre-COVID19 levels  
|                                  | Provide economic aid to households affected by the pandemic  
|                                  | Provide economic aid to small businesses  
| Rating: Essential ↔ Not important |                                                                                                                                                |
Resident Survey:

- Survey dates: 10/28–12/10 2021
- Postcards to 8000 households
- Outreach methods: Comprehensive Press Release, Facebook posts from Lewis County Commissioners page, Lewis County Website: Home page banner with survey link for duration of survey and ARPA specific page with survey icon and link banner, Advertisement in local paper (English and Spanish), Stakeholder efforts (including but not limited to): Local Superintendents, Local Civics Teachers, TRL Library System, Centralia College, Economic Alliance of Lewis County. Equity Institute (posted on Spanish resource website and social media), Other County Departments and Individuals.
- 891 completed surveys
- Results statistically weighted to reflect the county overall
- Survey available in English and Spanish

Business Survey:

- Survey dates: 10/28–12/10 2021
- Postcards out to approximately 2225 businesses
- Outreach methods: Comprehensive Press Release, Facebook posts from Lewis County Commissioners page, Lewis County Website: Home page banner with survey link for duration of survey and ARPA specific page with survey icon and link banner, Advertisement in local paper (English and Spanish), Stakeholder efforts (including but not limited to): Local Superintendents, Local Civics Teachers, TRL Library System, Centralia College, Economic Alliance of Lewis County. Equity Institute (posted on Spanish resource website and social media), Other County Departments
- 204 completed surveys
National Benchmark Comparison Database

Benchmarks

- Much more favorable
  At least 20 points more favorable than benchmark

- More favorable
  10-20 points more favorable than benchmark

- Similar
  No statistically significant difference

- Less favorable
  10-20 points less favorable than benchmark

- Much less favorable
  At least 20 points less favorable than benchmark

More than 500 comparison communities across the nation.

Representing the opinions of more than 50 million residents.
The best benchmark is your own community over time

- **More favorable**
  At least 7 percentage points more favorable than last measure

- **Similar**
  No statistically significant difference

- **Less favorable**
  At least 7 percentage points less favorable than last measure
The surveys assess both the quality and importance of 10 domains of community livability to identify areas most in need of intervention.
## Community Livability: Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Facet</th>
<th>Percent Excellent or Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusivity</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Design</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellness</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Arts and Culture</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Community Livability: Importance Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Facet</th>
<th>Percent Essential or Very Important Focus in Next 12 Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellness</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Arts, and Culture</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusivity</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Design</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Livability domains that score higher in importance and lower in quality are identified as potential areas of opportunity.
Critical Focus Areas Based on Resident Perspectives

- Natural Environment: 79% positive
- Parks and Recreation: 63% positive
- Safety: 52% positive
- Community Design: 42% positive
- Inclusivity: 42% positive
- Health and Wellness: 40% positive
- Education, Arts and Culture: 33% positive
- Mobility: 31% positive
- Utilities: 29% positive
- Economy: 23% positive
Critical Focus Areas Based on Business Perspectives

- Parks and Recreation: 88% positive
- Health and Wellness: 84% positive
- Utilities: 78% positive
- Natural Environment: 77% positive
- Economy: 76% positive
- Education, Arts, and Culture: 72% positive

**Critical focus topic**

- Safety: 71% positive
- Mobility: 64% positive
- Community Design: 62% positive

- Inclusivity: 58% positive
Community Challenges

Resident and business reports of challenges in the past 12 months help further identify potential areas of intervention.
Biggest challenges

The percentages displayed are the proportion of respondents that rated the challenge as major problem or moderate problem.

- **49%** rated having access to good internet/broadband service as problematic.
- **47%** rated affording good internet/broadband service as problematic.
- **41%** rated lack of affordable quality child care as problematic.

Other challenges (30% or more): Lack of technology to do work or school work from home (38%), Feeling like your voice is heard in the community (33%), Exposure to COVID-19 (33%), The emotional health of household members (33%), Lack of affordable quality mental health care (32%), Not knowing what services are available in your community (31%)
Business Challenges

Biggest challenges
The percentages displayed are the proportion of respondents that rated the challenge as major problem or moderate problem.

- **66%** rated a shortage of skilled employees as problematic.
- **55%** rated having access to good internet/broadband service as problematic.
- **45%** rated affording good internet/broadband service as problematic.

Other challenges: Lack of technology for employees to work from home (44%), Employees getting burned out due to increased workloads (38%), Decline in business/sales (35%)
COVID-19 Impacts on Businesses

- About 3 in 10 businesses surveyed reported to laying off employees
- 60% reported revenues lower than projected for 2020
- About half of businesses are back to pre-COVID levels or are doing better than before
- About 4 in 10 businesses report it will take 6+ months to return to pre-COVID levels
Community Disparities

- Low income communities
- People of color
- Tribal communities

Because the pandemic impacts were not equally shared, it is important to monitor disparities and plan interventions that help reduce the gaps.

Experienced higher rates of:
- COVID-19 infection, hospitalization and death
- Unemployment, lack of food, lack of housing
- Educational challenges

Source: Department of Treasury Interim Final Rule ARPA
## Disparities in Household Challenges in Lewis County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARPA Challenge</th>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Rent or Own Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Health Challenges</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Challenges</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational/Child Care Challenges</td>
<td>No disparity</td>
<td>No disparity</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>No disparity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Challenges</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>No disparity</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>No disparity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Security Challenges</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>No disparity</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Challenges</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion Challenges</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>No disparity</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Challenges</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and Sanitation Challenges</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>No disparity</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Reported Knowledge of ARPA

Residents
42% informed

Businesses
55% informed

Percent very or somewhat informed
Understanding the priorities of stakeholders can help identify opportunities for intervention and education.
ARPA Funding Priorities for Residents

- rated investments in broadband infrastructure (e.g., high speed internet) as important (69%)
- rated economic aid and assistance to small businesses and nonprofits experiencing financial hardships due to the pandemic as important (61%)
- rated services or programs to promote healthy childhood environments (e.g., expanded childcare, enhanced services for child welfare-involved families and foster youth) as important (61%)

Other high priority issues: Investments in the water and sewer system (61%), Services to address behavioral healthcare needs increased by the pandemic (59%), Economic aid to households experiencing housing, food, or other financial hardships (59%)
ARPA Funding Priorities for Businesses

Most important funding categories
The percentages displayed are the proportion of respondents that rated the funding category as essential or very important.

- 81% rated investments in broadband infrastructure (e.g., high speed internet) as important.
- 67% rated services to address behavioral healthcare needs increased by the pandemic (e.g., mental health treatment, substance abuse services, hotlines, etc.) as important.
- 64% rated financial aid to high poverty school districts to help reduce gaps in educational achievement as important.

Other high priority issues: Services or programs to promote healthy childhood environments (57%), Increased services and programs to address the health of communities and residents hardest hit by pandemic (56%), Investments in the water and sewer system (54%), Economic aid and assistance to small business and nonprofits experiencing financial hardships due to the pandemic (54%)
Summary

- Critical focus areas in community livability related to utilities, economy, education, arts and culture
- The biggest challenges for households related to having access to good internet/broadband service, affording good internet/broadband service, lack of affordable quality child care
- Businesses struggled with shortage of skilled employees, access to good internet/broadband, affording good internet/broadband
- Investments receiving the highest level of support:
  - Investments in broadband infrastructure
  - Healthy childhood environments
  - Economic aid and assistance to small businesses and nonprofits
Moving Forward

- Review the survey results and identify areas of focus
- Dig deeper as needed
- Develop strategies and interventions to address community areas of greatest need
- Measure our progress (next iteration of surveys)
Debriefing The Survey Results

What findings did you expect?

What findings were surprising?

Are there areas where you need to dig deeper?

In what areas should you focus?
Digging Deeper with Polco

**Identify needs and baseline measurement**
- Gauge resident satisfaction with community amenities and government service
- Establish a baseline for performance measurement

"Please rate the overall economic health of the county"

**Understand stakeholder knowledge, sentiment and behaviors**
- Understand knowledge gaps
- Identify stakeholder interests
- Measure behavior

"What sort of amenities would you like to see more of downtown?"

"How often, if ever, did you attend the farmers’ market in last 12 months?"

**Prioritize initiatives & alternatives**
- Engage residents on fund/resource allocation and budgeting
- Determine community priorities

"How important is it for the City to focus on economic development?"

"How much do you support the County giving tax incentives for businesses to move downtown?"

**Evaluate performance**
- Periodic surveys to provide performance metrics
- Starts the process again as a needs assessment

"Please rate the overall economic health of the county"