

A Couple Billion Here, A Couple Billion There:

Where Have All of Ohio's COVID Relief Dollars Gone?



The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed in to law in March 2021 to help provide states with resources to recover from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It was intended to provide direct relief quickly. The largest funding program, the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, allocated \$350 billion to state and local governments with Ohio receiving \$5.4 billion in flexible State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF). Half of the funding landed in Ohio's coffers in May 2021 and the remainder was sent in May 2022. Ohio's counties and cities were awarded another \$5.3 billion. These dollars need to be appropriated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026.

SFRF are also the most flexible of all ARPA funding programs. This federal funding represented an opportunity for the State of Ohio and local communities to invest not only in fighting the pandemic and maintaining vital services throughout the public health emergency, but to build an equitable recovery and support long-term growth.

In August 2022, Advocates for Ohio's Future (AOF) and Ohio Poverty Law Center (OPLC) launched [OhioARPATracker.org](https://ohioarpatracker.org), an impartial tracker following more than ten ARPA funding streams received by Ohio and local governments, focusing largely on the SFRF.

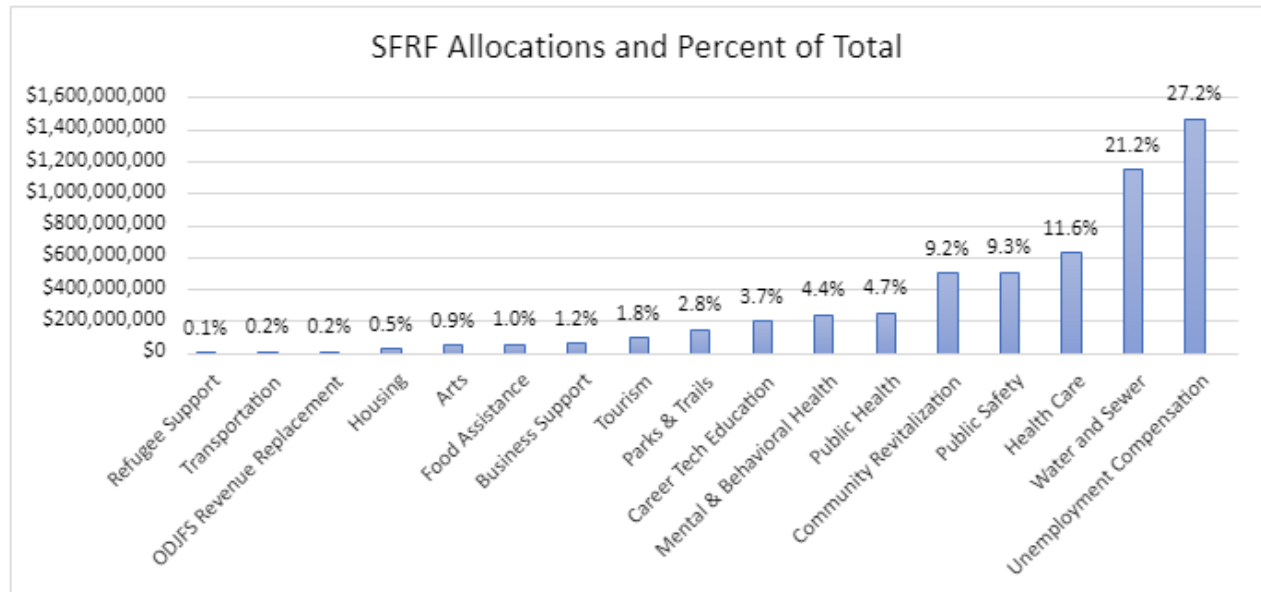
ARPA SFRF in the State Budget

Through a combination of state legislation and actions by the Controlling Board, Ohio has appropriated the entirety of SFRF. The final \$445 million was appropriated in House Bill 33—Ohio's two-year state budget—signed by Governor Mike DeWine on July 3, 2023. These allocations included additional dollars for water and sewer projects and pediatric behavioral health care, and an investment in career technical facility expansions.

House Bill 33 ARPA Appropriations	FY2024 Amount
Healthy Aging Grants to Counties	\$40,000,000
Water and Sewer Quality Program	\$124,000,000
Career-Technical Construction Program	\$200,000,000
Greater Cleveland Foodbank	\$10,000,000
Public Health Laboratory	\$6,000,000
Behavioral Health Monitoring and Treatment	\$5,000,000
Pediatric Behavioral Health	\$50,000,000
County and Independent Fairs Grant	\$10,000,000
TOTAL	\$445,000,000

How the \$5.4 Billion State Fiscal Recovery Fund Was Divvied Up

One of the first and largest allocations was made to the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund. Announced in September 2021, Ohio used \$1.5 billion—more than 25 percent of the fund—for this loan repayment. More than 20 percent of the SFRF is earmarked for water and sewer improvement grants. Other large investments supported the health care workforce and created the Appalachian Community Grant program.



Appropriated State Fiscal Recovery Funds continue to be gradually dispersed to their respective uses. As of August 2023, just half of the allocated funds have been granted, distributed, or spent.

Category	Allocated	Spent	Percent Spent
Refugee Support	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	100%
Transportation	\$10,000,000	\$0	0%
ODJFS Revenue Replacement	\$13,000,000	\$13,000,000	100%
Housing	\$25,000,000	\$0	0%
Arts	\$50,000,000	\$42,421,614	85%
Food Assistance	\$55,000,000	\$40,326,291	73%
Business Support	\$63,000,000	\$33,630,376	53%
Tourism	\$95,000,000	\$34,999,189	37%
Parks & Trails	\$152,000,000	\$4,605,998	3%
Career Tech Education	\$200,000,000	\$0	0%
Mental & Behavioral Health	\$238,000,000	\$9,548,043	4%
Public Health	\$252,730,000	\$26,687,511	11%
Community Revitalization	\$500,000,000	\$9,913,827	2%
Public Safety	\$505,145,000	\$269,600,397	53%

Health Care	\$629,000,000	\$514,546,039	82%
Water and Sewer	\$1,150,200,000	\$154,095,770	13%
Unemployment Compensation	\$1,471,765,771	\$1,471,765,771	100%
TOTALS	\$5,414,840,771	\$2,630,140,827	49%

Although the appropriation process commanded the most attention from advocates, Ohioans, and the media, the spending process is equally important. While December 2026 is the deadline to spend SFRF, the deadline to appropriate funds—December 2024—is fast approaching. The General Assembly will be able to re-appropriate funds that are not fully spent or are lapsing to other needs before that deadline.

Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Counties, municipalities, and townships who received Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (LFRF) have the same deadlines to appropriate and spend the money. The [ARPA tracker](#) details how counties and cities for eight of Ohio’s major metropolitan areas have spent their money. Many have allocated or adopted plans to allocate most of the recovery funds.

Advocates for Ohio’s Future and Ohio Poverty Law Center will continue tracking the spending of Ohio’s American Rescue Plan dollars, and details can be found at www.OhioARPATracker.org.



The Ohio Poverty Law Center’s mission is to reduce poverty and increase justice by protecting and expanding the legal rights of

Ohioans living, working, and raising their families in poverty. We partner with Ohio’s legal aid offices which provide free civil legal services to low-income Ohioans.

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Advocates for Ohio’s Future is a coalition of health and human service organizations seeking to protect Ohio’s most vulnerable citizens through a responsible state budget that adequately funds vital services.

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