THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN AT TWO YEARS: HOW LOCAL LEADERS ARE ADVANCING EQUITABLE RECOVERY EFFORTS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Thursday, March 23, 2023

UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT – CHECK AGAINST RECORDING

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LAVEA BRACHMAN: Good morning. And welcome to Brookings Metro's second event this week marking the second anniversary of the American Rescue Plan Act, ARPA for short, which Congress passed two years ago this month. I am Lavea Brachman, visiting fellow at Brookings Metro, and I've been leading the investigation here at Metro into how ARPA dollars are being invested by local officials and equitable, sustainable ways. We're thrilled to present a two part discussion this morning featuring a fireside chat and then a panel of local officials talking about their work and experience implementing ARPA funds. The framing that I will highlight in a moment presents some preliminary findings based on two research initiatives. Brookings Metro's ten month long engagement with three places called our Transforming Cities Lab, which launched last spring to work with localities looking to pilot new equitable investment strategies. And second, in partnership with Accelerator for America and the National Association of Counties. We pursued an analysis with in-depth interviews with local decision makers to understand the nature of specific initiatives and why and how allocation decisions were made. This revealed a core set of new local and regional investments that that that mean long term impact the community transformation. We uncovered some challenges to this transformative, sustainable ARPA spending as well as some great opportunities. We share my screen. We found that an early focus then, after an early focus on providing direct relief and addressing the health consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic, local governments are now finding a balance between cautious fiscal oversight and experimentation with innovative investments in an equitable recovery. Frame by vision for equitable recovery. We really saw this as an opportunity for inclusive economic transformation. And many viewed that with with RPA coming along, that these recovery strategies could be both dealing with immediate emergency, but also establish a foundation for more innovative post-pandemic economy, using ARPA as a catalyst to build sustainable public and nonprofit sector capacity for inclusive growth, aligning diverse stakeholders around the vision and strategy, and possibly scaling up civic infrastructure as an inclusive recovery strategy. When Congress passed ARPA with the $1.9 trillion, it provided 350 billion to state, local and tribal governments through the state and local fiscal recovery funds, which were intended broadly to support families and businesses struggling with public health, as well as invest in a strong, resilient and equitable recovery. Local governments received that cities and consolidated city counties counties received $130 billion share of that. So f. R. F dollars. So how did they utilize these funds and to what extent has the legislation enabled the kinds of large scale investments that we are hoping that could be realistically seen after could realistically alter the economic trajectory of cities and counties? So we see here that in the urgency of the pandemic moment, local governments use their funds for a mix of pandemic responses as well as fiscal management and future looking initiatives. So dedicated significant amounts to critical public health programing, as well as shoring up internal operations. But there was also quite a bit dedicated to government operations as a way to respond to the pressures of the moment, which also allowed for revenue replacement, essentially funds to backfill budget gaps created by the pandemic, but also gave flexibility to spend dollars for a variety of future needs. There were times, though, local governments certainly welcomed the scale and ambition, but that the capacity and politics were were certainly tested, as you can see from this timeline. Our Congress passed ARPA in March and Treasury issued its interim rule in May, but not the final rule until until April 2022. So almost a year later and the Obligating funds deadline is actually December 2024, meaning when contracts need to be completed and then finally spent at the end of 2026. The implications from this rather pressing timeline created has created some pressures. And also there are the uncertainties at the beginning with the regulatory uncertainty also caused some delays, but nevertheless. As you can see, the 2024 obligation and 2026 final revenue spending did create some challenges. So while there were some constraints imposed by ARPA guidelines, such as the compressed spending timeline, there were also some inherent issues and challenges locally, not not surprisingly. So the public sector is traditionally not, not noted to be nimble and particularly are confronted with the challenge of balance, the balancing act of addressing systemic inequities with short term pressing problems and trying to create transformation, particularly after decades of shrinking government. There was a lot of pressure on the public sector. Normal political processes take time. So building coalitions for a new, bold vision can be inconsistent with those spending pressures. We will see that a lot of those pressures were overcome in many cases, But making bold decisions to address long term need is not is not easy. But we will see later the impressive work that's still happening and laying the groundwork for hoped for gains and equitable and widespread spread benefits. There were certainly political challenges that were revealed through our work. Tensions between executive and legislative branches, meaning the mayors and city councils, often were mayors, would set priorities that did not always align with city Council views and in the time pressures of RPA, hard to promote coalition building around new projects while also navigating issue focused stakeholders. Unfortunately, while our PAT did have a lot of flexibility as compared with most federal programs, the lack of incentives for cross sectional collaboration also imposed some political challenges that that could have that perhaps could have been avoided. But many, many still try to work closely together. And the limited nonprofit sector capacity and nonprofit sector certainly were critical partners in generating more capacity with the public sector to execute and carry out these new initiatives. But traditional limited, nonprofit, private, nonprofit sector capacity also posed some constraints. Its tendency was for the public sector to provide grants to the larger established nonprofits with existing capacity over smaller grassroots organizations. So potentially not not grabbing the opportunity to invest in the sort of civic capacity and infrastructure at the level that could be needed and for sustainable and for sustainable implementation. And finally, the sustainability of new new initiatives, while constrained by capacity, also meant public sector and being responsible, didn't want to necessarily create new positions where leaders didn't know where the funding would come from. After after ARPA, funding dried up. Nevertheless, a lot of emerging investments we were seeing are coming forward that could shift county and city strategies and trajectories. So what is the potential for generational legacy impacts and how cities are doing business in more intentional, equitable ways and with more deliberately focused plans and visions that will spur future inclusive prosperity? We found five areas where this is starting to take place. So one, leveraging strategic plans, either existing strategic plans or ones that they were that localities were able to develop based on new priorities and visions that were emerging. So acting on the ARPA moment, we saw plans such as in Ramsey County and Hennepin County. Had it been designed a new strategy, used its strategy around seven domains for economic development and then designed its ARPA funding around that. We've seen some priority setting as a new construct, for instance, in Cleveland. Cleveland's mayor, Numa Bibb, issued his ten point rescue and transformation plan identifying these ten priorities for federal funding. We have seen the bolstering of workforce ecosystems and laying back or we're certainly talk more about that in our panel as well. We've seen business, small business ecosystems be funded, such as Dayton with its first four floor fund, using ARPA dollars to develop and grow small retail businesses, particularly black, brown and women owned businesses on the first floor of buildings in the city's commercial corridors. Targeted capital investments were a very important way to generate long term impact and address past disinvestment. So El Paso County is investing over 20% of its funding to overhaul water and sewer infrastructure in historically underserved and economically disinvested communities along the U.S. and Mexican border. Fourthly, catalyzing place based investments to address the deep population blight, concentrated poverty and racial segregation that we have seen in many middle American cities. Cleveland and Cleveland. City officials are actively considering a proposed transformative projects fund focused on the wholesale waterfront revitalization encompassing both the lakefront and the riverfront. And then finally the IDF strikes strengthening public sector capacity for the longer term. And by implication, the civic infrastructure is something that we are starting to see and we hope will also have legacy impacts. Detroit has been ramping up an inclusive procurement program which involves increasing public sector capacity, streamlining bureaucratic processes and utilizing nonprofit capacity to eight small businesses, particularly minority women, small businesses, and navigating understanding complicated contracting processes so they can be part of the procurement process. We are hopeful that and I think we'll hear more from our fireside chat and panel participants about these emerging investments, shifting strategies for the long term. So now we're going to move to our fireside chat, and I had the pleasure privilege of introducing our colleague Mary Ellen Wiederwohl, while president and CEO of Accelerator for America, our research partner who will be moderating, introduce her fireside chat panelists. That fireside chat will be followed by a panel moderated by my colleague Joe Parilla, with three panelists, local leaders who were interviewed as part of our research and are part of our Transforming Cities lab. Thank you very much.

MARY ELLEN WIEDERWOHL: Thank you, Lavea. Good morning, everyone. I'm Mary Ellen Turnbull. I'm the president and CEO of Accelerator for America and I'm really delighted to be here with Brookings Metro and to be collaborating on this research of ARPA two years later. And where are we and where can we go from here? And very honored to be joined by Mayor Tishaura Jones from Saint Louis and Jacob Leibenluft from the Treasury Department for our virtual fireside chat. If you are somewhere where it is still cold, just imagine a nice little warm fire right over here. And if you have achieved spring, congratulations. The rest of us are excited to get there. So, so good to be with you. Because accelerator for America, at our core, we are working with mayors, cities and their senior leaders to find and develop the best solutions out there for economic insecurity and then share scale and replicate those across the country. We've already heard and Livia's rich opening there lots of great ideas of how some cities are tackling problems using ARPA dollars, pairing them with other resources to get after some of these really big long term issues that we have that unfortunately, the pandemic only highlighted. Mayor Jones. Saint Louis has one of the most holistic approaches to using ARPA dollars to tackle some of these difficult community issues. We have been so proud to partner with you on your economic justice action plan. Talk to us about how you got that going. Where did the vision come from? From that and tell us where we are with this economic justice plan and where we're going.

TISHAURA JONES: Well, thank you, Mary Ellen, it's good to see you. And thank you, everyone, for joining us today. For me, this was personal because Saint Louis is one of the most hyper segregated cities in the country. And in the 1950s, my grandparents bought a home and what used to be a white an all white neighborhood where they raised their 13 children. And my mother was the baby. And we call that home the big house. And it was the center of our family's universe. And after my grandparents passed away, my aunts and uncles raised their families, too. And even my parents got married there in the living room. And families, black and white, lived in a community where we felt supported and safe, even if we weren't rich. And now my grandparents home isn't standing there anymore. And it was struck by lightning and in 2010 and burned down. But the neighbors have left and our once thriving neighborhood has fallen on hard times. But this was no accident. Redlining, racist homeowner policies and decades of this intentional disinvestment in black neighborhoods have deepened the racial divide in our city, what we call the downward divide, and made neighborhoods on both sides of Del Mar less province, less prosperous and less safe. And so I took it upon myself to use this as an opportunity to recognize and reverse these historic wrongs. That is not just a moral necessity, but it's a practical one. And when I ran for mayor, I ran to ensure that every neighborhood in Saint Louis can thrive. And we cannot succeed together if over half of our city is left to fail. Between 2010 and 2020, thousands of black St Louis sons left the city in search of better opportunities for their families and addressing racial disparities in real estate, business and employment will lay the foundation for growth in every one of our neighborhoods. Equitable development is necessary to reverse decades of population decline and make Saint Louis a place where families want to live and grow. So our Economic Justice Action Plan is centered around three pillars equitable and inclusive development, which leverages real estate development and business retention, expansion and attraction efforts to catalyze equitable and inclusive economic growth. Neighborhood Transformation. We want to leverage community assets to transform physical, social and economic aspects of historically disinvested and marginalized neighborhoods, to build collective capacity and wealth building opportunities. And lastly, economic empowerment. We want to reduce the rate, the racial wealth gap. We want to invest in an ecosystem that provides opportunities for businesses to launch, grow and sustain their operations and create the workforce of the future through mentorship, training and quality jobs. And hopefully with be investing in these three pillars will be able to strengthen neighborhoods, close the racial wealth gap, improve health and education outcomes, expand the tax base and grow the city's population. We invested almost half of our ARPA allocation. We received $500 million. We invested almost half of our ARPA allocation into our Economic justice action plan. And we're look, we're using that as a down payment to leverage more private and philanthropic investment to hopefully get to $1,000,000,000 investment in marginalized and disinvested communities.

LAVEA BRACHMAN: I love the way you're thinking about this is a down payment and a leverage opportunity. You talked a lot about some of the history and writing these wrongs, and a lot of places are trying to figure out how to use these ARPA dollars most equitably. We also know the pandemic didn't impact everyone equally. It had an inequitable impact on communities. Jacob, what have you been seeing out there across the country with communities? Who's doing a great job with equitably distributing these resources and using ARPA to not only recover from the pandemic in an equitable way, but to take a forward looking position in America to right some of these wrongs of the past.

JACOB LEIBENLUFT: Well, thank you so much, Mary Ellen. And just before I answer your question, I just want to thank Lavea and Brookings for having me here today. And it's also just such a pleasure to be here with Mayor Jones, who has been a really inspiring leader and how she's using American Rescue Plan dollars to transform St Louis. You know, I think when we think about equity and how it's just shaped our approach at Treasury in implementing the American Rescue plan, I think it's important to start with with the context. And Mary Ellen, you you pointed to this. We know the impact of this pandemic was not equitable. We see it when we look at some of the starkest statistics around life expectancy or the economic impact that the disruption of 2020 had. You know, black and brown communities, black and brown households experienced greater pain than white households. And so that was the context in which we were working. And the other context was that, you know, from day one, we were charged at Treasury with equity as an administration priority. You know, Executive Order 13893 that President Biden signed on his very first day was the first time a president had affirmatively directed a whole of government approach to prioritizing equitable access. And at Treasury, I know earlier this week, Brookings heard from Janis Bowdler, who we brought in as our counselor for racial equity leading Treasury's equity hub. So institutionally, we knew that to get implementation right, equity had to be at the core. And so we focused on two primary tools that I think shape what you're seeing in communities across the country. The first was we structured our rules with equity in mind. So if you look at, for example, the State and local fiscal Recovery fund final rule, we allowed for, you know, a greater level of eligible uses in disproportionately impacted communities. It was a direct and explicit recognition that the pandemic's impacts were inextricably linked to pre-pandemic inequities. And so we wanted to make sure that communities understood that they could make more expansive investments in those communities. The second thing we did was across our programs, not just in the state local fiscal recovery fund, but looking at other programs like the Emergency Rental Assistance program. We looked in and tried to identify, okay, what are some of the barriers in federal programs that may traditionally result in those who are in the greatest need actually being left out? So in a program like rental assistance, I tried to make sure that there were flexibilities in place so that the neediest families got relief even as we maintained program integrity. But we knew that the rules we had were not enough. It was also important to communicate how central equity was in our priorities around implementation and lifting up best practices around it. And I think what that made clear was that equitable implementation was not only permitted but encouraged, and it offered models that recipients can follow. I think one of the things that we found is that, you know, we have no more valuable tool than other cities looking at what a Saint Louis might be doing and saying, I can do that as well. And so we really focused on trying to both ourselves and with outside partners, lifting up best practices, because I think we recognize that when we talk about new approaches to implementation, it's much easier to do when your peers are doing it as well. And so, you know, the last thing I would just mention here is that if you look at the work that cities like Saint Louis are doing, in many cases, you know, we recognize that there was already this desire to approach. Things in a different way to approach things in a way that centered equity. A lot of what we were trying to do is make sure that folks understood they had permission to do that. The encouragement to do that, and I think for that we were in many ways, I think moving with the stream, but trying to help that stream go along and ensure that some of the lessons around this were maintained well beyond our implementation.

LAVEA BRACHMAN: So we've talked a lot about the big ideas and the big strategy and how we want to use this to make fundamental change in our cities and in our country. But Mayor Jones, you and I both know that you show up to work every day in a city and there's a whole bunch of stuff on your doorstep that just has to get done. And so cities were balancing when they first came out between the immediate needs of the pandemic revenue, replacement, emergency assistance, and this long term planning and vision we're talking about. How did you balance those things? And frankly, on an ongoing basis, how are you balancing that. The immediate need and this beautiful long term vision?

TISHAURA JONES: Well, that, my dear, is how the sausage is made.

LAVEA BRACHMAN: So they say.

TISHAURA JONES: We have we have appropriated all but maybe 200,000 of our ARPA funds. So, Jacob, I heard you when you were in January when we were at UCM and you said, please appropriate all of your funds. And we have. And, you know, it is a balancing act. But I will say, luckily we had enough money to be able to balance that effectively. We were able to put investments in in infrastructure, in traffic safety, in roads and bridges and some infrastructure projects. But we were also able to put some aside for direct assistance to to people. So we did a direct cash assistance program last winter that provided $500 direct payments to about 9300 families. And we're doing it again this this spring, hopefully this spring or summer, with a guaranteed basic income pilot that's going to provide about $500 a month for 18 months for a little over 450 families. So we've been able to balance, you know, our immediate needs as well as long term, because I feel like we had enough money to do so.

LAVEA BRACHMAN: Now, the big appropriation that this was for most cities really did help create that opportunity instead of having to really pick and choose in an unfortunate way as there was so much that needed to get done, particularly in the first year of this. Speaking of sausage making, I'm sure working at the U.S. Treasury is pretty interesting right now. No matter what your title is, you guys got a lot going on. So let's talk about your macroeconomics for a moment. You know, Barbara was obviously a big part about shoring up cities. It was a rescue literally for cities and created a nice fiscal stability for cities who are, of course, the foundation of our economy. Most of the business and economic output comes from cities. What have you seen from your perspective? And was there any uneven effect of that? And then looking a little bit forward, how are you thinking about how this is going to appear in the next year or two as these funds get through the system and spend?

JACOB LEIBENLUFT: Yeah, And I think, you know. It's no secret that at Treasury and I think within the Biden-Harris administration more broadly, we thought about state and local fiscal aid in the context of the experience of the Great Recession. Many of us, myself included, had been at Treasury and at the White House in the last recovery, and we saw just how the long tail of the recession, in the absence of sufficient and lasting federal aid, meant that the macroeconomic and human consequences of state and local budget cuts, you know, really in the case of the Great Recession, lasted essentially a full decade. And so, you know, what Mayor Jones spoke to in your last question, this idea that it wasn't necessarily a choice between managing the near-term risks of the pandemic's economic consequences or investing in the future, that was really important. And I think, you know, in 2021, you know, prior to ARP, we saw survey data showing that 90% of cities were experiencing revenue declines and many cities and states were imposing or considering hiring freezes, furloughing workers, cutting salaries or other staff cuts. And what we saw with ARP Funds was that not only could, you know, cuts that might have been made in 2020 be reversed, but there was a sense of certainty that came from having funds in place. It was no longer a question of do I have to, you know, if something turns in the wrong direction, am I going to have to make further cuts instead? Said it was it was about, you know, responding to the immediate economic and public health needs and then making communities stronger. And so when we look forward, what we see is that communities, I think, already have underway a set of investments that put us in a much stronger economic position than we would be otherwise. So to give two examples and two places where we've really been focused, we know that there is a real lack of affordable housing in this country that that, you know, is a big reason why costs are too high for so many working families. And so we worked hard with cities and states and counties who said they wanted to invest in affordable housing to make sure that we were really providing appropriate flexibility and clarity to make investments in new supply of affordable housing. And across housing, we've now seen nearly $16 billion in fiscal recovery funds invested. Similarly, on workforce investments, we see many communities who want to bring more people into the labor force, particularly as they're implementing other pieces of legislation like the bipartisan infrastructure law or the CHIPS Act or the Inflation Reduction Act. And we've seen nearly $11 billion in state and local funds invested in workforce. So those are places where, you know, recipients started working on that in 2021. And because of those programs, take time to stand up. I'm very hopeful that in 2023 and 2024 and beyond, we'll see the support to the broader economy that comes from having a stronger labor force, bringing in more people to the labor force and matching that labor force to the skills that are needed for some of the economic challenges that.

LAVEA BRACHMAN: Those are two really great highlights of spending opportunities that have a here and now impact on the local and national economy, and that will have a lasting positive impact as well. We've been focused on those areas that accelerator and wish we had a lot more for housing. That is, I think, our biggest policy gap as a country for all of these billions and trillions that have been flowing. It's really localities that are picking up the mantle on affordable housing because we don't we don't have other new funding sources. I know the administration is trying, so we'll all keep rallying around that. Mayor Jones, I want to go back to you kind of looking down the road a little bit here. The next couple of years will be deep into implementing the action plan, leveraging it up with our private resources and bringing new dollars. But then we've got kind of a fiscal cliff out there in the future for cities when when this money runs out. And of course, the economy kind of teetering a little bit. We're in a better spot than some people predicted we were going to be in here in 2023. How are you preparing for that in St Louis?

TISHAURA JONES: Well, we looked at these ARPA funds as things that we could invest like just for one time spending. We tried our best not to invest in programs or things that would go beyond the 2026 cliff. And also, while we're looking at that cliff, we're trying to find other parts of recurring revenue in our existing budget that, you know, maybe that we can shift towards new programs that we started. For example, we used our 5.5 million to fund community violence intervention programs. Now we know that there are also programs from the Department of Justice that fund that. So we'll be applying for those funds as well. And then looking at this as a public safety initiative. So maybe trying to fold that into the public safety budget going forward, but also about trying to develop that stream now or develop what that budget will look like now before we hit 2026. And I try to explain that to people all the time as I'm in community meetings and I say, why don't we use ARPA funds to just give people raises? And I said, Well, you know, that money expires in 2026 and what are we going to do, you know, when that money runs out? So we need to look at, you know, one time expenditures, things that maybe we had been delaying maintenance on to in order to use these funds for those purposes. So we try to do a good job at educating the community on what specifically these funds should be used for and will be used for.

LAVEA BRACHMAN: Those you may not know, Mayor Jones was the city treasurer before she was mayor. Nobody knows that budget better than Mayor Jones. And I got some good tips for other people as well. Jacob, turn it over to you on on the same point, what is your best advice for looking at fiscal sustainability coming out of ARPA dollars?

JACOB LEIBENLUFT: Yeah, it's a really interesting question for us at Treasury because if you think technically what our responsibility is from Congress is for these fiscal recovery funds during the period of performance, we're accountable for ensuring that the funds are spent responsibly and effectively and formally. From that sense, that's where our responsibility at Treasury ends. But of course, you know, we think a lot about what the impact of these programs will be after the obligation deadline at the end of 2024 and after the expenditure deadline at the end of 2026. You know, I think from my perspective, if states and localities and tribes aren't in a stronger position, then even once they're no longer spending funds that Treasury is administering, we haven't done our job. So I think this is central to our thinking, and it's partially why we were so focused in writing our rules and in our engagement in ensuring that these funds were not only allowing governments to weather the COVID storm, but really build back into something stronger. And so I think for us, you know, the tools we have for that are in a few places. One, I think it does go back to helping to develop and share best practices. I think we're seeing a place where new resources have allowed governments to identify what works to show its value, including frankly, to residents of their own communities, and to build models that have been sustained. And I think the second is, you know, really a focus on building capacity, as we saw when the pandemic hit, some of the greatest challenges that we face, both on the federal level and on the local and state level, was that, you know, the plumbing, so to speak, wasn't there. When you think about small business assistance or rental assistance or income assistance or support for the unemployed, you know, what the crisis revealed was what we needed to get help to people. We didn't actually always have the systems in place that worked. And one of the things that's so exciting to me about how communities have used state local funds is in many cases they built the plumbing that then they can sustain, even if it may not be at the exact same level as they might have had in the pandemic. I mean, if we take the example of emergency rental assistance, we had relatively few eviction diversion programs across the country pre-pandemic. We have, by our count, at least 180 jurisdictions that have used E-Rate funds to build some form of eviction diversion programs. And we're seeing many find ways to sustain those even after rental assistance funds run out. And so I think, you know, the challenge that Mayor Jones is pointing to is exactly right. There are certain things that just are not sustainable in the absence of ARP funds. But I do think what we have built is really a demonstration of a set of projects that can be sustained through a combination of local, state and federal funds. And my hope is that that's what we'll see even after 2026.

LAVEA BRACHMAN: I love the message of building capacity and the image of better pipes. In some communities that is literal and figurative. Mayor Jones, I want to come to you for the last word here. We are two years into this, which is kind of amazing. Let's go two years into the future. 2025. We're sitting here together. What do you want to be celebrating two years from now?

TISHAURA JONES: Two years from now. I'd love to be celebrating the fact that, you know, the ARPA funds that we have allocated for certain programs are working, especially in our economic justice Action plan footprint. We're going to be building more housing use, doing that for commercial development, helping our kids that are connected to churches to build capacity in their neighborhoods, that the families that we helped through our basic income program are now thriving. That I wrote, some of our roads and bridges and infrastructure programs are also completed. I think I would love to see well, we'd love to report that know when we come back two years later that the money worked and that is working and community in that we have instituted changes that people can see and feel in their neighborhoods.

LAVEA BRACHMAN: Very well said. I know that's why we all do this work. Mayor Jones, Jacob, great to be with you this morning. Thanks for everything that you are doing in your roles and being leaders for all of us. Appreciate your time and accelerator for America. Looks forward to continuing to walk with you to implement all these great ideas and improve our communities. With that, I am pleased to turn the virtual mic over to our friends back at Brookings Metro and Joe Parilla, long time friend who's been working with cities and helping to improve our lives of our residents, is here to take us into the next portion of our agenda. Thank you all. Joe, good morning.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Good morning. Thanks, Mary Ellen. That was fantastic. I want to welcome our three panelists to the screen, Ling Becker, who's the director of Workforce Solutions at Ramsey County in Minnesota. Christian Elkin, the chief budget officer at Multnomah County in Oregon, and Jose Landeros, the director of strategic Development at El Paso County in Texas. So these three leaders, they they have different titles, but a shared responsibility. They were tasked with designing and delivering economic recovery strategies, using the ARPA funds we've been discussing this morning. And so I'll be asking them a couple of questions, but I'd like to remind our viewers that they can submit their own questions for the panel via Twitter using hashtag AARP at two years, hashtag AARP at two years, or by emailing questions to events at Brookings Dot edu. So to start, let's let's go back to 2021. Tell us about the state of your county's in the spring of 2021 when you receive these funds and how those conditions influenced your approach, I'd imagine there was no shortage of needs and ideas of how to address those needs. So how did your strategies strike this balance between stabilizing government operations and residents during what was still an emergency situation while also considering investments in longer standing priorities that that predated the pandemic? So we're going to work west to east. So Christian, I'll I'll start with you on that question.

CHRISTIAN ELKIN: Good morning. So, hi, everyone. Christian Elkin, I use her pronouns? So Multnomah County was pretty fortunate in the spring of 2021 that we knew our two largest property tax and business income taxes were coming in pretty unaffected by the pandemic. But we knew our community was being tremendously impacted by the pandemic. So the direct assistance and the business assistance that was coming in was also helping avert some of that disaster that we were facing. We had just passed two new voter initiatives, right as COVID was hitting in 2020, a supportive housing measure and a preschool for all measure that we were ramping up at the same time. So we were able to kind of collaborate and integrate those funding sources and redesign some of that infrastructure to help mitigate the the pandemic. But Multnomah County also has a pretty unique role in Oregon, where we are both simultaneously the local mental health authority, the public health authority, and we are the largest provider of safety net services in the state of Oregon. And on top of that, we are the largest government funded effort, UHC in Oregon as well. So we knew that that broadly we need to really think about how we were going to invest this funding, funding to to address the crisis. So one of the things we did was we set up five guiding principles to help ground the work that we were doing. These included inclusively leading with race using an equity and racial justice approach because we knew there's tremendous value in grounding the work we do in the culture to the traditions of our diverse community. And we knew our our black and brown community was hurting at a much greater rate than the rest of our community. We wanted to provide excellent service. We wanted to make sure that the public health approach was grounding all of our priorities as we thought about this work. And then we needed to deepen and strengthen our partnerships with community based organizations because we knew we couldn't do this work alone. So using those principles, we really, really focused on kind of that community crisis intervention. So the rent assistance. Mayor Jones was speaking my language when she was talking about their interventions in Saint Louis. We needed to address the rise of visible street homelessness and emergency homelessness. We're also seeing to see that same rise of gun violence. So we knew that we needed to design some prevention strategies of are we kind of treated the AARP like a two year approach. So we invested in the first year $87 million. Over 80% of that or 72 million went directly to direct community response or to the public health approach. So I'm going to stop there because I know our panelists have lots of good things to tell everyone as well.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Right. So I think you're pointing to the unique role of counties in overseeing those systems, but also that wrapping arms around the pandemic and stabilizing the public health situation was a first order condition to any sort of economic recovery. The economy couldn't reopen without addressing the pandemic, so that really public health and economic recovery are kind of intertwined in that way. Jose, I'll turn to you. What was the situation like in El Paso and what was your response?

JOSE M. LANDEROS: Good morning, everyone. So in early 2021, the county was coming off of finally starting to see some of our COVID numbers come down right in the fall of 1220. Going back a little bit further, further up, Paso was the center for the epidemic, for the pandemic in the country. And we had an incredible strain on our local resources. The county, in addition to, you know, all of the services that we provide, also manages the county hospital district, which is a safety net, general hospital that serves not just El Paso, but really southern New Mexico and far west Texas, where the regional hub was the only level one trauma that can provide services. And as a result, a lot of the ICU beds that were in such high demand here and then the county on the flip side and not just providing care, also is in charge of that. Our medical examiner's office, which because of the surge in cases and ultimately in deaths, our our system was just overwhelmed. And at some points we were in the national news for that because our medical examiner's office was so overwhelmed and we didn't have enough space for the decedents. And we're desperate to try and find resources to make that happen. And so all of the funding that we had received prior to ARPA Under CARES had been repurposed and reshaped into that public health response. And as we're coming into early 21, the county actually dipped into its emergency reserves as part of a budget, our budget process to provide economic recovery assistance to local businesses because what we had set up to use under CARES wasn't really going to come to fruition because of the heavy investment in public health. So we were structuring economic relief program and then the federal dollars came in and we worked to. Figure out how we could repurpose that the county received $263 million under the under the ARP allocation. And we worked pretty diligently to then organize the existing need across the county and then start structuring a portfolio together to really start implementing it. Part of that process actually involved creating a new office. I know there's a lot of consideration with that that ARPA cliff that, that the mayor and the and the fireside chat discussed a little bit but our office is intended to kind of bridge the gap between the financial aspects of the program, ensuring that we're, you know, working with our budget office and our auditor's office on compliance and that we're meeting all the necessary rules, regulations and deadlines, but then also bridging that gap with the implementing departments. A lot of these projects are really going to be focused on, you know, first time infrastructure, as was mentioned earlier. So working with the project managers in public works and then also working with other departments that don't necessarily have the capacity to or resources or really experience in project management. And so our salaries and our positions were created or funded out of ARPA as part of that response to just ensure that we can keep our projects on track. And then going beyond that, that we ensure that we have a process in place that promotes equity is in alignment with other rules that U.S. Treasury has issued. You know, Paso is a predominantly Hispanic community on a as a percentage basis is the largest Hispanic community in the United States. And we have a number of challenges that that comes with. And as as the population in the country continues to shift demographically. A lot of the issues that we faced here with regard to health and and socioeconomic mobility really are what the country can expect to see without investments like this, you know, trying to help. Of course. Correct a lot of the issues that we have. So we've structured the money and are working very diligently to just bend that down. And it's a pretty daunting task because I'll just end with the fact that we joked around at some point about money falling out of the sky and then it just seems that money keeps falling out of the sky with a lot of these federal programs and legislation coming out of that out of the Capitol. And, you know, we're ready for it. But at the same time, without the structures and the controls in place can be a bit overwhelming and a bit daunting to take that task on. But ultimately, we can help equalize quality of life for some of the most vulnerable residents in our community. That's where our focus is going to be. Yeah, And at your point about ARPA being able to use to build capacity people, systems and processes within the county just to absorb the funding, get it out, ensure that it's monitored, translate into impact for your residents and businesses. I mean, that that was a huge part of how the funds were structured. It allowed that capacity to surge. And it sounds like as is evolved, government operations in some significant ways as well battling. I'll I'll turn to you last on this question and for your perspective.

LING BECKER: Yeah, Thanks, Joe. Good morning, everyone. Certainly a lot of the same themes, but we did have some unique experiences as we went through the pandemic here in in Saint Paul in Ramsey County, Minnesota. You know, obviously, many of you are well aware of the tragic incident of the murder of George Floyd, and that was still a very big part of our lives here, even in the spring of 2021. And those ARPA dollars were released. And in many ways, our community continues to experience multiple traumas and then situations. Public health, racism, being almost a public health crisis in our community is something very real. It was just a year ago actually there was still a federal trial of the officers happening in our building, and we had to do some relocations. So you can imagine as the folks providing those social services to a very diverse, the most diverse county in the state of Minnesota, having all of that happening around you as a lot of stress, not only on the residents, but also even on our on our staff. I will just say that similar to what other folks said, I mean, I think capacity is the name of the game. I do think there's kind of two sides of a coin from counties that receive CARES Act funding. We probably strengthened some muscles and realized how we could get a little bit better with our budget and we maybe muddle through with the speed and trajectory of cares. But on the other hand, having gone through the CARES Act experience, I know all of us were exhausted and internally that capacity was pretty burned down, you know. But I think the other part I want to talk about, I think, was they talked a lot about the internal. I want to acknowledge a little bit what Lavea was saying around our community organizations, and I think we did do a few pretty strategic things with our CARES Act funding to provide some nonprofit resiliency grants, and that really bode well for our workforce ecosystem because there is no way that we could do this work without our community partners. And really this is an excellent opportunity. And I think there's one things maybe we'll talk about a little later, but how we could sort of build new and better relationships with the community through these dollars. And so I want to kind of lean on that a little bit. You know, as part of CARES, we also did a lot of community engagement, and I would say that's the first place we went. Once ARPA became available was right back to that spot, which I was really grateful. We put up some equity action circles which where community groups around specific areas and really allowed them to sort of inform our work, give us ideas. And I think having that foundation after that kind of as part of that cares process meant we weren't starting from scratch with the community and that was really good. The other thing that was really kind of a, you know, maybe just timing wise, it was in our favor. Our county was very involved in what was called the Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion plan process during the pandemic, kind of right before the pandemic. And so we kind of finished it out. We had a great partners, including the Center for Economic Inclusion, and what that created was a road map and a framework that this organization could all get behind policymakers, you know, direct directors and departments. We didn't have very much lack of clarity about what our objectives and what we were trying to do. So as someone who's actually trying to make programs and push them out the door in partnership with the community, it really helps to sort of take that policy piece of policymakers knowing exactly what they're committed to. Having that as surety is really helpful. The last thing I'll just say is we kind of had five years of work that we were kind of thinking through, one being the most immediate needs and then and then the last one taking some big swings around. Things like affordable housing that take longer. But really, that immediate need, like that first summer, we immediately started workforce programs for 1824 year olds. You know, 200 of them into work experiences in our community. And I'm just so grateful for that public private partnership where businesses in the midst of recovering from a pandemic stepped up and provided those work experiences as well for young people. So I think we'll talk a lot more, but that's kind of a little bit of, you know, the the pillars of kind of how we sort of thought about our work, both the tiers and also community engagement.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Fantastic. Thanks, Ling. I want to ask now about impact on two two time horizon. So first, I'm curious to to learn about what you're already seeing that's been happening in your community as a result of ARPA funded projects, particularly those that were trying to result in more equitable economic development. And then second, and this is a bit more speculative, but I want you to think about maybe 5 to 10 years in the future. And, you know, if you could point to one or two things that you think will be the most lasting impacts of ARPA in your county meeting in a decade. Where do you think you'll see something that was seeded here that will still be yielding dividends for your residents and businesses? So, Christian, I'll start with you.

CHRISTIAN ELKIN: Great. Thank you, Joe. So some of those short term impacts I think we're seeing is one in our community. We really partnered very closely with both the city and the state to really create a very, very robust rent assistance program, emergency rent assistance program. I think in the last year we've established over $100 million for that pool in Multnomah County to serve our residents. And within that, we're also doing a lot about eviction prevention and diversion and legal services. As we're thinking about how we're going to incorporate those. Last fiscal year, we started to move some of those core services into our general funds to ensure that they were kind of enshrined in the work that we were doing with that collaboration and that kind of partnership, jurisdiction and partnership. And we also established within our community based organizations, case managers, to help push that rent assistance out, because those applications can be very daunting, they can be really challenging. We had to make sure they were converted in as many languages as possible and that we also were able to meet the needs of the state as they set up their process. So it was more streamlined than I think, you know, someone who had to walk. We had to kind of a no wrong door policy to walk through to access that funding. That has been huge. But as everyone has also eliminated that, the housing crisis and affordability is going to continue to stretch and strain those dollars. So figuring out ways as we move through to to kind of refocus our last implementation of AARP, to really continue to strengthen that work. We're also doing some kind of piloting work around what we call the Montgomery Mothers Trust, where we gave unconditional cash transfers to 100 black female head headed households with children of $500 a month. And then we're also doing kind of the data and evaluation of those households to see what that could bring forward as we think about economic justice projects in the community and how we might want to reinvest some of our core general funds and those types of projects. We're always hoping that the federal government, you know, like they did with prepaying the child tax credit, that those kinds of will stimulate because we know that at a local level we won't be able to address all of those harms. We started an information and crisis line because while we had a kind of a211 access information, we knew that we needed something more robust for the public health approach. And this included, you know, finding access to vaccines, understanding isolation, understanding we had pretty clear public health directives in Oregon, which we were able to then reduce our fatalities and also reduce the strain on our hospital system. But that isolation and quarantine in that work also came with the impacts of maybe older people didn't have access to grocery stores or they couldn't get groceries. And so we really created this kind of very, very robust and supportive call center, one that did these warm handoffs to ensure that people had access to services and not just a here's another phone number to call to get more services type of response. And then finally we started an emergency communications and logistics operation so that we could warehouse vaccines when they needed to be at a certain temperature. PPE. We both for our frontline workers because we we were still running our emergency shelters and our correctional facilities. And we needed to make sure that also our community based organizations could distribute PPE. So we kind of set up that infrastructure for them to access because we know that would have been a very big lift for them. We've been able to use that infrastructure for our severe weather events. So it's actually proving to be incredibly fruitful as we think about our shift in climate change and what that's doing to our community.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Yeah, as I'm listening to use this tremendous stress test on county government, like forced a bunch of reinforcements that the money was used for and innovations, it sounds like that then can be embedded going forward and strengthen those operations for the inevitable next round of crises. You mentioned climate that will will be unfortunately, you know, in our future at some point. So I'll go to Jose next. Curious to hear your perspective impact on short run. Long run.

JOSE M. LANDEROS: Sure. You know, I think there's about $70 million worth in our investments, which are about half of our portfolio that I think are going to really be the big swings that that we've taken. Part of that was stabilizing the county hospital districts, you know, $34 million or single largest investments. It's a little over 34. And that really helped to ensure that residents will bear the brunt of some of the cost of the districts incurred in responding to the pandemic through, you know, increased taxation and revenue loss for them. But then. Beyond that, you know, we've set aside three or $4 million for water and sewer investments. And I think that's really going to be one of the things that we think about resilient communities. You know, I mentioned earlier that the county tries to as a as the regional government here, focus on equalizing quality of life, because we have a lot of outlying areas that are referred to as colonias. These neighborhoods along the US-Mexico border were land speculators in the fifties and sixties, as a lot of Americans were pursuing. You know that post-World War two suburban American dream. The version of that here was to really take advantage of financially literate members of the community, sell them lots on contracts that were rent to own, and if you missed a payment, you would lose all the funding that you'd put into it. And these these communities were developed, these dense communities were developed with no infrastructure, no water, no store roads, sidewalks. And it's been a 30 year journey that the state and county have worked to try and rectify. And we've had some wins, and there's funding from the federal and state governments that make some of those investments. But the fact that we continue to have individuals that live in the United States without access to affordable drinking water and sewer service when they're in an urban community is mind blowing to us. About 90,000 of our of our almost 800 and 100,000 residents in the county. I live in Colonia. And so this $34 million investment really helps to provide some of the most foundational issues and service lines that residents are going to need to not only have, you know, I think we all take for granted the ability to, you know, brush their teeth. And if you inadvertently swallow some of the water when you're rinsing, it's not a big deal. But if you don't have potable water and taking that and you can't take that risk, you can't cook with that water. And it's just a very sad reality. And so our investments in water and then reliable source systems, as opposed to the septic tanks that our communities have here, will be a huge investment for public health. And it's through partnerships with El Paso Water, which is actually the city's the city owned water utility they've extended their service area was traditionally bounded by those municipalities by their by the city limits of El Paso, which is our largest municipality. But as we've, you know, seen population shifts. They've become a very important partner and their leadership has been very open to working with us to help make some of these investments. And so they are at the table. The Lower Valley Water District is another municipal utility district that serves some of these schools and is in these outlying areas as well. And they are coming to the table with some of their resources to actually help expand the original project scope and actually work to serve more people through some of their own funding. And all of this internally is led by this. You know, we have one staff person who has dedicated six years of his life to the county to helping thousands, literally thousands of residents. And so I'd be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to thank Munzer al-Sarraj, our our senior strategic capital program manager for all of the work that he's done to help these residents. And it's in that line with with this resilient infrastructure that we're also focusing a million on broadband infrastructure, because as we saw during the pandemic, without that, it's really become the fourth utility. And we need to ensure that these same areas outside that don't have the services I was just describing, they need broadband. And it goes beyond education. You know, it goes to workforce development, it goes to access to telehealth services in a lot of areas. It's more efficient to make these investments that to connect these residents to all of these, you know, online services than it is to try and get them to wherever those need to go. And so I think once ARPA is done and we're looking five, ten years from now, I think the county wants to be able to ensure that we look back and that we helped connects so many of these residents, residences and individuals with some of the services they need to really have a high quality of life. And then the dignity that I think we really want to ensure that they have.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Thanks Jose, and just both of those being one time capital investments that will reap benefits for four years. Is is consistent with I think how you know the money would be best spent and isn't obviously addressing you know, a history that is unique to El Paso County as well. So it's a little bit about the flexibility of the funds and allowing each county to address their particular history and their particular set of challenges. Ling I'll conclude with you before we open it up for the audience Q&A.

LING BECKER: Yeah, thanks, Joe. So just for context, I'm I'm the county's workforce director and we're in joint powers of relationship with the city of Saint Paul. So we operate one workforce development area. And I think these dollars have allowed us to kind of think about workforce development in a completely different way and really as a tool of seeing our residents as a as an investment of our future, right, as part of an economic development strategy. And so some of the money is really trying to do some new things. I would say other monies we are trying to use to braid with existing programs and I hope there's a lot of people studying some of that in the future to say even maybe hopefully before 2026 is over as we look at other programs that are very prescriptive, how did braiding some innovative dollars really make a different empathic give an example of the kind of program we're currently using some of the ARPA to help TANF participants be able to move a little bit faster forward, you know, on their training programs and their work outcomes. So and then the last piece, which I really spent a lot of energy with Libya through the Transforming Cities Lab on is really building this idea of a coordinated and aligned system around workforce development. And what money allows you to do is get people to the table to connect with you and to sort of want to be tethered to you. And we have a very complex and rich ecosystem of workforce development in our community for youth and young adults. We know from the pandemic that it was young people less educated, our diverse populations that were most most impacted by COVID 19. What we're trying to do is not to have another generation of the school disruptions, the work disruptions. This idea of scarring is such a huge deal for young people that even though a slight thing like losing your job might seem like something most people can rebound from, you know, even if it was a short term layoff, it is very difficult for young people as other things start to like fall out of place because of that job loss. Right. And so there's even studies of like how this can affect for four years there their economic potential. So we really have put money down in terms of like trying to get all the different programs in the community to work together so that young people can find a front door. And then we sort of built up some pillars of things we wanted to invest in. So some of those include learning earned models. We've really benefited from the working with lots of the work that Brookings has been doing in that space. Certainly employer engagement is another thing. You think about all these nonprofits and different groups wanting to get employer opportunities for job seekers, and it taps everybody's capacity to have the same conversation with the same employer. What are the things that the county and the city can be doing to sort of leverage these dollars and sort of like clear out more capacity for everybody and say, hey, come through this door with us and now you have more ability to do other things. And I think that's actually very sustainable. And the last thing we are one example I want to give you is driver's licenses. In Minnesota back in the seventies, 95% of driver's license was something you got in high schools. Now only 15% of teens get driver's licenses in high school. Certainly in our inner city in Saint Paul, you would not think about getting a driver's license. It's very expensive. You know, it's difficult to have car ownership, all those things. We're watching the labor market information rise of all the jobs that are requiring a driver's license. And so by providing a driver's license academy for all our workforce providers to lean into, we've sort of like taken a big barrier off of everybody else and have the county and the city lead in a space. So that would be one example. And then I know in terms of future, I just think I am very optimistic that all these dollars are going to be super impactful because I'm investing in people. No one gets to take that away from them if I'm giving them education, competence, a mentor, a fresh look at, you know, an opportunity that that no one can ever take that away from them. And so I am so grateful to have these dollars to be able to give back glimmer of hope to so many folks that, you know, didn't really see a path forward even before the pandemic. And so we're I think we're going to see a lot of fruit borne out and certainly be able to leverage that investment in people with the additional dollars from things like the infrastructure bill and the, you know, the Reduction Act and all of that, too. So.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Thanks, Ling. I. I have a a great audience question here about. How you've seen. You know, engagement with state governments and specifically maybe just characterize the nature of county state interaction overall on the use of American rescue plan, flexible dollars, as well as where you've seen opportunities for collaboration, where there particular issue areas or investments that allowed for alignment. So any that's a jump ball. Anybody can take that one.

CHRISTIAN ELKIN: So one of the things that we really experienced with the CARES Act was that counties didn't get direct allocations with cares, right? And so but yet we were we held this very, very important responsibility around public health. And so immediately when the CARES Act came out, our county chair was on the phone with the mayor and then on the phone with the governor to really figure out how we were going to get funding to the county to do all because they recognized the importance. And so for us, that kind of partnership carried over into and which we tried to still hold our silos of things that we were responsible for, but also recognize, like with the instance of the emergency rent assistance, that how vital and crucial that was to all of our other systems. And so for us, I think we've had just this tremendous benefit from those partnerships. And in Oregon.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Thanks. Christian. Ling has anything to add on the local state interactions?

LING BECKER: Yeah, I mean, I would say we did get a direct allocation of cares because we had more than half a million residents, and so that was a little bit different because while the state was trying to deal with the smaller counties, we were already like six, nine months ahead. Right. While they were sort of sorting it out at the legislature, I would say where I'm most excited and anticipating working with our state government is really around the infrastructure that Isobel. I mean, we've been talking the Commerce Department of Transportation, you know, our Metropolitan Council, which is kind of a regional government. I think that's where we're going to need so much collaboration in order for those dollars to really not only build things right that this country needs, but that they build wealth and that they build opportunities and jobs for people who've been historically left out. And that's what counties and cities have more connection to, I feel, is the people versus like the flowing of the dollars dollar.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Yeah. Yeah. And the the we've used pipes as a metaphor for a bunch of different times and I feel like the, the Egypt pipes in some ways are the most important because that money is most, that money is going to the states. And yet so many of the workforce development angles are, are regional because that's the scale of labor markets and where so many of these intermediaries reside. And so it's great that you're you're having those conversations. Jose I saw you come off me for a second. Did you want to jump in?

JOSE M. LANDEROS: Yeah, I was just say based on the issues that and challenges that some communities face are the priorities in the federal government when they passed on to the state just as ensuring that the state kind of, you know, allocate the funds in a way that's in alignment with some of the federal priorities. And so sometimes that can be a challenge for us. You know, historically we've seen we've seen that with Medicaid, Medicare reimbursement rates, The formula that the federal government used to allocate funding to states wasn't consistent with what we saw in Austin. And so it hurt border communities like El Paso. But I think on our end, what we have to do is just kind of be the squeaky wheel, right? I mean, El Paso is a little unique. It's closer to two other state capitals than it is our own. Um, and so there's a lot of resilience in that in kind of being a bit of a city state in a lot of ways and relying on a regional approach. But, you know, we need to make sure that our presence is, is very active in, in our state capital just to overcome some of that. And, and we've made a lot of headway in some very critical areas. And so I'm optimistic that we can continue to do so. As you know, these federal programs are administered. We just identify the right partners at the state level.

JOSEPH PARILLA: And as you can correct me if I'm wrong, was childcare was one of the issues where it seemed like there was some alignment between the county in the state. Do I have that right?

JOSE M. LANDEROS: That's right. So the the Texas Workforce Commission has local workforce boards and ours covers, you know, all of West Texas, including Big Bend Region and that's the Workforce Solutions Board. And so we're actually teeing up an agreement with them to increase the the job training capacity of existing childcare facilities. That's one of those, you know, sustained investments that if we can take daycares and turn them into early childhood education centers, that investment's going to be huge. And it also helps to address a lot of the childcare deserts that exist in our desert. Right. Sorry, those funny you talk about deserts when you're in an actual desert. Yeah, I like our military, so you know that that's that's one of those partnerships where there's a local presence here and we can use that kind of to, you know, capitalize on some of the resources that have been allocated at the state level and, you know, you know, leverage that funding and that expertise and then, you know, eventually help and help ensure that kids have a place to go. Parents feel safe and knowing that their kids are in a good place and don't have to be, that's not a limiting factor, especially for a lot of families, a lot of mothers who just don't go to work as a result of not being ready to re enter the workforce after the pandemic. But it's just about childcare. So it's going to be a long standing investment for us as well.

JOSEPH PARILLA: Yeah, it's it's almost a triple bottom line. You're investing in early childhood education, which is great for the future workforce. You're helping parents get back into the labor force by having a place to get child care and you're investing in the childcare workforce itself to improve the productivity of those workers and the quality of care. So it's it's great that you're finding alignment with the state on that. We have come to the end of our event. So I want to thank our three panelists, Ling, Christian and Jose, Mayor Jones, Jacob, Lavea, Mary Ellen and my colleague Karen Slachetka, who has helped organize this event, as she does with all of our Brookings Metro events. So we'll be coming out with future work in the coming months on the American Rescue Plan. And we continue to update how cities and counties are spending the money through our local government ARPA tracker, which is a collaboration between the National

League of Cities and the National Association of Counties. So I encourage folks watching that to check out that research as it comes out. But for now, thank you to everyone and have a great rest of the day.