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## **As Federal Government Prepares Historic COVID Relief Investment in Counties, National Association of Counties and National Academy of Public Administration Issue Report on Impact of Previous Coronavirus Relief**

*Report Outlines Seven Recommendations for Improved Future Program Effectiveness and Examines Innovative County Strategies for Pandemic Responses*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As America’s counties prepare for a historic federal investment to help mitigate the virus and aid the nation’s economic recovery through the American Rescue Plan, the National Association of Counties today issued a report on the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) – part of the previous COVID relief package – and the effectiveness of federal funding in meeting the needs of counties. The report also highlights innovative county strategies to address the pandemic, focusing on initiatives that further social equity. The independent assessment was authored by the National Academy of Public Administration.

CRF funding – part of the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020* – provided direct assistance to state, local and tribal governments, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories to help cover the costs of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CRF was intended to support frontline pandemic responses such as public health, emergency management, social services, and public safety that are under critical strain from increased demand.

“Faced with an unprecedented public health and economic crisis, America’s counties quickly focused on solutions with our state and federal partners to serve our residents,” said National Association of Counties Executive Director Matthew Chase. “This report examines the lessons learned over the past year, not only to celebrate our successes, but also to implement improvements as we embark on the largest federal investment in counties in our nation’s history through the State and Local Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Funds.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on county governments,” said Terry Gerton, president and CEO of the Academy. “This report helps us see where program improvements can be made in the future, and it highlights best practices at the county level.

As the report notes, future pandemic response legislation should support continued effective and innovative county COVID-19 programs and leadership. We also were pleased to see some significant programmatic success stories emerge from this crisis, especially where strengthening social equity is concerned.”

The report identified seven key areas in which policy changes could improve program effectiveness for both current and future federal-to-local programs:

- Improved intergovernmental collaboration and coordination is needed for a program with the complexity and urgency of direct allocation funding, requiring knowledge of local level issues at all levels
- Federal agencies responsible for implementing a program such as CRF need legislative funding to establish a program office and hire personnel with the skills and expertise needed to design the program, develop effective guidance, and anticipate and respond to questions and issues that will arise, especially during early days
- Comprehensive guidance for program operations must be available when or soon after a program is initiated
- State and local governments should be allowed to make expenditures with longer-term payoffs, and with greater flexibility in allowable uses of funds
- Program design should allow coverage of operational expenses and revenue replacement in addition to coverage of new COVID-related costs
- Legislation should ensure that the population of a county is credited as including city residents, as they are also residents of a county and may receive county services
- Federal relief legislation should require formal evaluation of program impact during and at the end of the program.

NACo also worked with the Academy to identify and document innovative strategies counties applied in deploying CRF dollars, with special attention to programs focusing on inclusive economic recovery and on assisting vulnerable and underserved populations. The counties profiled include Cook County, Ill.; Franklin County, Ohio; Hennepin County, Minn.; Lee County, Fla.; New Castle County, Del. and Pierce County, Wash. Each profile illustrates creative solutions that are driving revitalization focused on those residents most in need.

To learn more about the recommendations and best practices, read the full report [here](#).

### **About the National Academy of Public Administration**

Chartered by Congress to provide non-partisan expert advice, the Academy is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan organization established in 1967 to assist government leaders in building more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. Learn more at [www.napawash.org](http://www.napawash.org)

### **About the National Association of Counties**

The National Association of Counties (NACo) strengthens America's counties, including nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to advocate for county government priorities in federal policymaking; promote exemplary county policies and practices; nurture leadership skills and expand knowledge networks; optimize county and taxpayer resources and cost savings; and enrich the public's understanding of county government. Learn more at [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)

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