



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

Tony Evers, Governor
Kathy Blumenfeld, Secretary

VIA EMAIL

February 17, 2023

State Senator Eric Wimberger
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State Representative Robert Wittke
Co-chair, Joint Legislative Audit Committee
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Dear Co-Chairpersons Wimberger and Wittke:

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the Joint Legislative Audit Committee last week on the Legislative Audit Bureau's (LAB) Report 22-23 relating to Supplemental Federal Funds. I appreciate both the LAB and the Committee for your evaluation of the supplemental federal funding administered by the Department of Administration (DOA).

While we are very proud of the work we have done to share with the public how and why Wisconsin allocated the historic influx of supplemental federal funds received in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on our award-winning Badger Bounceback website, LAB's findings provide valuable recommendations to enhance documentation, processes, and transparency in our administration of these funds. I am pleased to share with you DOA's progress in implementing LAB's recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Document how decisions were made to use discretionary funds for particular state programs and report to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee by February 17, 2023, on the status of its efforts to implement this recommendation. (p.24)

DOA RESPONSE:

Complete. In its report, LAB asked the department to provide the following documentation relating to how decisions were made to use discretionary funds regarding:

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- The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program; an explanation of why the funds are needed for the program;
- The amount that will be used for the program;
- Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount;
- The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program;
- The state agency that manages the program; and
- The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent.

Enclosed you will find the requested documentation that concisely provides the requested information for the nine programs evaluated by LAB. We note that much of the requested information was already contained in the information provided to LAB during the audit. We understand LAB's recommendation and JLAC's interest in DOA creating and implementing a formalized process to document how decisions are made to use specific amounts of discretionary funds for particular state programs, including the proposed use of funds. Therefore, we will also document such information for any future discretionary funding opportunities.

I would like to remind the committee that, as affirmed by LAB in its report, federal law provides discretion in how most of the supplemental federal funds provided to DOA may be spent. Moreover, state statutes provide the Governor with the sole authority to decide how to spend discretionary federal funds and there are no requirements to document the decision-making process. As such, DOA had not implemented a documentation process regarding these conversations or deliberations. The critical need for both expediency and responsiveness in deploying these funds so that the state could meet evolving needs both from a public health and economic perspective lent itself to a point-in-time, needs-based decision-making model that took place largely through near-daily conversations with the Governor's Office and relevant agency partners.

During its audit last summer, LAB requested "documentation that helps detail the decision-making process that led to the selection of these specific uses of supplemental funding as well as the allocation amounts selected." In response, DOA explained to LAB that it had not implemented a documentation process regarding these conversations or deliberations. The policy underpinnings and reasoning used by Governor Evers in ultimately directing DOA to allocate funding to certain programs or investments were contained in the Governor's publicly available press releases announcing program allocations, implementing agencies' memorandums of understanding, specific grant agreements, public documents created to both announce the various programs and investments and make them available to recipients, as well as in DOA's ongoing reporting to the U.S. Department of Treasury. Therefore, DOA provided these documents to LAB in an effort to be responsive to this request.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Include additional information on its Badger Bounceback website about supplemental federal funds, including plans for spending the remaining funds and how such plans change over time and report to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee by February 17, 2023, on the status of its efforts to implement these recommendations. (p.26)

DOA RESPONSE:

Complete. As shared during our appearance before JLAC February 7, 2023, DOA has updated its Badger Bounceback Allocations Chart with the information from the most recent quarter and posted the information on the Badger Bounceback website. As requested by LAB, this document presents all the following information in a consolidated format:

- The amount of funds that each federal act provided to DOA in the prior quarter and the total amount provided by each federal act to date;
- The amount of funds that DOA used for each state program during the prior quarter and the total amount that DOA used for each program to date, including programs administered by other state agencies and DOA;
- [Links to relevant websites and] a brief description of each program, including the state agency that administered it;
- The amount of funds spent by each program during the prior quarter and the total amount spent by each program to date;
- Any adjustment in the amount of funds previously used for a particular program, as well as a brief description of why such an adjustment was made;
- The total amounts of remaining funds at the end of a given quarter; and
- A summary of the planned use of funds in the next quarter, as well as a brief description of why the planned use may have changed since the last quarter.

Thank you again for LAB's review and the opportunity to update you on how we have implemented the recommendations from Report 22-23 to improve documentation processes and transparency in our administration of supplemental federal funds.

Sincerely,



Kathy Blumenfeld
Secretary-designee

Enclosure



Supplemental Federal Funding Decisions

February 17, 2023

As requested by the Legislative Audit Bureau in Report 22-23 relating to Supplemental Federal Funds, please find below documentation related to how certain decisions were made to use discretionary funds for the following 9 state programs:

| | |
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| ROUTES TO RECOVERY | 2 |
| NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTMENT FUND GRANT | 3 |
| WORKFORCE INNOVATION GRANT | 4 |
| CHILD CARE COUNTS..... | 5 |
| WISCONSIN FARM SUPPORT..... | 7 |
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Routes to Recovery

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New program - Assisted local leaders in addressing their most urgent and unique COVID-19 recovery needs by reimbursing necessary, unbudgeted expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Limited expenses to those related to the following categories:

- Emergency operations activities, including those related to public health, emergency services, and public safety response;
- Purchases of personal protective equipment;
- Cleaning/sanitizing supplies and services, including those related to elections administration;
- Temporary isolation housing for infected or at-risk individuals;
- Testing and contact tracing costs above those covered by existing State programs;
- FMLA and sick leave for public health and safety employees to take COVID-19 precautions; and
- Meeting local match requirements for expenses submitted for reimbursement by FEMA, to the extent allowed by federal law.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: Wisconsin's local governments were on the frontlines of supporting their communities through the COVID-19 health crisis; however, most did not have adequate funds available to cover the expenses necessary to reduce and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

The amount that will be used for the program: Actual: \$201,340,491.83

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: Governor Evers directed DOA to make \$200 million of flexible funding available to local governments to respond to coronavirus response events, with \$10 million allocated to Wisconsin tribal nations and the remainder distributed to every county, city, village, and town in the state. In an effort to fairly and efficiently distribute available funds based on proportional needs of every community, DOA developed a formula to allocate available funds based on the jurisdiction's population, while also ensuring that every unit of local government had available no less than \$5,000, regardless of its population. Gov. Evers later determined that, in the interest of fairness, \$1 million would be provided to each of Wisconsin's 11 tribal nations, increasing the tribal allocation to \$11 million. An additional \$314,642 was also provided to ensure all local governments received the minimum allocation of \$5,000.

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: Local governments were intended to help fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus by addressing the unique needs of their community.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Administration

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent: Local governments drew down their allocations and received funds by reporting their eligible expenditures for reimbursement through the program's online expense reporter during four specific reporting periods. Local governments were notified that any unused balances remaining after the final November 7, 2020 reporting period would be reallocated by the state for the benefit of other local governments having eligible expenditures in excess of their allocation amount.

Neighborhood Investment Fund Grant

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New program – Provided grants to local and Tribal governments to help fund significant and sustainable investments that would help communities recover from the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and offer long-term economic benefits. The program was particularly focused on addressing the needs of residents living in communities that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: While the entire state was impacted by the pandemic, certain communities faced additional barriers that would prevent them and their residents from being able to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as quickly as others. Targeted investments were needed to help address inequities across the state and build long-term, sustainable economic wellbeing across the state.

The amount that will be used for the program: Budgeted: \$231,782,338.41

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: Governor Evers directed DOA to use \$200 million to establish the Neighborhood Investment Fund to allow communities across Wisconsin an opportunity to fund projects that would fuel the pandemic recovery. Based on average costs of large, sustainable capital investments across the state, DOA anticipated making specific awards between \$1,000,000 and \$15,000,000 to each eligible applicant, while reserving the right to negotiate, limit or amend awards according to the program's objectives and available funding. After receiving a larger number of qualified applications than anticipated, Governor Evers expanded the amount of funding available to \$231,782,338.41. (The program received 209 proposals requesting \$899,783,081.47 prior to the application deadline.)

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: Communities would be able to more quickly and equitably recover from the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Administration

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent: Per the terms of their agreements, grantees must submit regular reporting to DOA summarize the use of their funds and program impacts.

Workforce Innovation Grant

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New program – Grant program that provided up to \$10 million to regional workforce development partners to design and implement innovative plans to tackle their identified region’s most pressing workforce challenge caused by or exacerbated by the pandemic.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: The COVID-19 pandemic impacted all Wisconsin workers and employers. However, the type and extent of that impact varied based on many factors, including, but not limited to, a region’s driving industries, demographics, and other pre-pandemic economic conditions. Targeted investments that reflect local needs and conditions were necessary to combat the negative impacts of the pandemic and prepare all of Wisconsin’s workforce for a successful economic recovery.

The amount that will be used for the program: Up to \$128,747,169

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: Governor Evers directed DWD, WEDC, and DOA to establish the Workforce Innovation Fund and award grants to regional workforce development partners to fund innovative plans to deal with the workforce challenges created and exacerbated by the pandemic. Based on their experience funding other economic and workforce development programs, DWD, WEDC, and DOA anticipated making grants from between \$250,000 up to \$10 million over two rounds of funding. After receiving a larger number of qualified applications than anticipated, Governor Evers expanded the original \$100 million in funding available under the announcement to over \$128 million. (The program received 358 applications requesting about \$1.2 billion in funding.)

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: More Wisconsin workers and employers would recover faster from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers would have access to better, higher-quality, and more family-sustaining careers and employers would have access to more and better-skilled workers. All communities, regardless of whether they were awarded a grant, would benefit from having interested members come together to discuss and identify their regional challenges and develop coalitions to implement long-term, sustainable workforce development solutions.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent: Per the terms of their agreements, grantees must submit regular reporting to DWD summarizing the use of funds and program impacts.

Child Care Counts

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New program – Funding to help counter the troubling trends affecting child care providers related to the public health emergency. The three rounds of the Emergency Payment Program offered funding to Care for Essential Workforce Families, Incentive Pay for child care providers and individual educators, and support for temporarily closed programs. The Supplementary Payment Program and Response and Relief Program provided funding for Safe, Healthy, High-Quality Child Care Opportunities and staff recruitment and retention efforts. The Stabilization Program funded increased access to high-quality child care and workforce recruitment and retention.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: In 2020, without additional investment, many child care providers were likely to close permanently, dramatically exacerbating gaps in access to quality, affordable care and hindering the state's economic recovery as parents return to work. Child care providers are vital contributors to fully reopening Wisconsin's economy. In order to ensure parents were able to return to work, Wisconsin needed child care programs to be open, fully staffed, and able to care for children, ages 0-13.

The amount that will be used for the program: Up to \$707 million

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: Governor Evers directed DCF to improve access to child care during the pandemic and to use provider data and geolocation (mapping) to work with child care providers and essential industries like health care to prioritize child care for essential workers during the pandemic. Over 3.5 years, \$627 million of federal relief funds were invested in Child Care Counts (CCC) via bipartisan, unanimous Joint Finance Committee (JFC) actions. An additional \$80 was allocated to CCC by DOA via an MOU after JFC approved the program.

- May 15, 2020 – JFC approved \$51.6 million (CARES Act) for CCC.
- September 2020 – DOA enters into an MOU with DCF to allocate \$80m of Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF, via CARES Act) for CCC.
- April 1, 2021 – JFC approved \$139 million from COVID Response and Relief Supplement Appropriations Act (CRRSA) in SFY21, of which \$106 million was budgeted for CCC
- September 10, 2021 – JFC approved \$15 million from CRRSA in SFY 22 to fund programs (not related to CCC) and authorized the department to direct any underspent and recouped funding into CCC.
- November 2, 2021 – JFC approved \$357 million from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Stabilization funding for CCC.
- February 9, 2022 – JFC approved (via 13.10) \$112 million from ARPA-CCDBG Discretionary Supplemental funding to CCC in SFY 22 and SFY 23, and authorized DCF to direct any related underspending from other programs to CCC.

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: Stabilize and supplement a critical industry and support essential workers by helping providers stay open, providing support and stability to the families they serve, support the recruitment and retention of qualified staff, and provide care for children statewide.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Children and Families

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent: CCC is scheduled to continue through January 2024 using federal COVID relief funds. Given the demand, there is no significant anticipated underspend in this program.

Wisconsin Farm Support

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New program – Assist Wisconsin farmers respond to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through direct financial aid payments.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: Farmers are the foundation of our food system and serve as the backbone of many of Wisconsin's local rural economies. Wisconsin's food supply chain was significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Farmers suffered losses due to supply chain issues, in part resulting from the decrease in restaurant demand for food products (e.g., dairy products, cranberries, meat, potatoes, etc.), as well as increase in the price of feed and other inputs.

The amount that will be used for the program: Actual \$100,035,487.85 (Coronavirus Relief Funds)

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: In response to requests from farmers and agriculture stakeholders, Governor Evers directed the Department of Revenue (DOR) to develop a fair, accessible distribution system to deliver \$50 million in aid payments to agricultural producers in 2020. The Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) engaged in discussions with agricultural stakeholders and advised DOR to offer payments ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,500 targeted to Wisconsin farmers with gross incomes between \$35,000 and \$5,000,000 in 2019. Due to ongoing unexpected challenges in agricultural markets and needs assessments shared by DOR and DATCP, Gov. Evers directed DOR to deliver another \$50 million of aid in 2021.

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: Help revitalize local rural economies and jump-start Wisconsin's agriculture industry by mitigating the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Revenue

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent: The first round of the Farm Support Program ran from June 15-29, 2020 and nearly 12,000 farmers received a total of \$41.6 million in direct payments. The second round of the Wisconsin Farm Support Program distributed \$8.4 million and closed on August 24, 2020. The third round of the Farm Support Program closed on November 29, 2021 and distributed \$50 million to more than 20,000 farmers. All eligible distributions have been made.

Beyond the Classroom

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New program – Assist non-profit organizations that serve school-age kids both virtually and in-person outside of school hours and during the summer months in order to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic on these organizations and support increased enrollment capacity, additional learning opportunities, and increased mental health support for school-age children.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: Non-profit organizations that provide educational, programming, and mental health supports for Wisconsin children outside traditional classroom hours offered a connection and a sense of normalcy for many families throughout the pandemic, played a critical role in supporting the educational and emotional well-being of Wisconsin kids, and allowed working parents to maintain their hours of employment. These organizations required additional resources to be able to continue offering their critical services safely throughout the pandemic.

The amount that will be used for the program: \$50 million

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: Governor Evers directed DOA to establish the Beyond the Classroom Program through \$50 million to support programming that helped meet the needs of both kids and parents during the summer of 2021, the 2021-2022 school year, and the summer of 2022. Based on its understanding of traditional program costs and its estimates related to increased demand and expenses related to the public health emergency, DOA anticipated making grant awards of not more than \$1.5 million for summer 2021 programs nor more than \$1.5 million for 2021-2022 school year and summer 2022 programs, limiting total awards between the programs to no more than \$3 million or 25% of the applicant's 2019 fiscal year operating expenses, whichever was less.

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: Mitigate the financial hardship on nonprofit organizations related to the COVID-19 pandemic and support increased enrollment capacity, additional learning opportunities, and increased mental health support for school-age children during the summer months of 2021, the 2021-22 school year, and the summer months of 2022.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Administration

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent: There were 114 eligible applications received. The program adjusted proposals that made requests in excess of the amounts identified in the grant announcement to the lesser of \$3 million or 25% of the organization's 2019 operating revenue. Finally, the Program adjusted grant requests that included ineligible costs as identified in an applicant's proposal. All eligible reimbursements have been made.

Healthcare Infrastructure Capital Investment Grant

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New program - Assist local and Tribal governments, nonprofit healthcare organizations, and Federally Qualified Health Centers in making significant investments in healthcare infrastructure necessary to reduce disparities in healthcare services provided to individuals living in Qualified Census Tracts or to other populations disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: The pandemic exposed the disparate access to health care across the state. Targeted capital investments were needed to ensure that the state has capacity to more equitably meet the healthcare needs of its residents and to ensure it is prepared to respond to any future pandemic needs.

The amount that will be used for the program: \$100,457,878.44

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: Governor Evers directed DOA to establish a \$50 million Healthcare Infrastructure Capital Grant Program to fund projects that would help increase healthcare capacity and reduce disparities. Governor Evers expanded the funding available for the program to \$100,457,878 due to the large number of qualified applications for the Healthcare Infrastructure Capital grant program (69 proposals requesting \$341,742,080) and the large number of healthcare-related submissions that were not able to be funded under the Neighborhood Investment Fund Grant program (eight proposals totaling \$93,994,502).

The Program prioritized funding projects in certain categories based on the program's objectives. Applicants in certain categories that received the highest scores and were determined to best fit the program objectives were funded. The Program funded 27 applicants that received the highest scores in the eligible application categories of Dental Services (2), Outpatient Services (16), Inpatient Critical Access Hospitals (5), and Public Safety (4), as well as one Outpatient Services project from the Neighborhood Investment Fund Grant Program.

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: New and upgraded facility spaces that offer increased access to healthcare for low income, uninsured, and underserved communities and improved ability to respond to future pandemic response needs.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Administration

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent: Per the terms of their agreements, grantees must submit regular reporting to DOA summarizing the use of funds and program impacts.

Equitable Recovery

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New program - Support community-based organizations providing services or programming aimed at increasing equity and eliminating disparities in health, early childhood development, education, economic support, housing, and environmental justice in Qualified Census Tracts or communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: The pandemic did not affect all communities in the same way, and disparities persisted in COVID-19 health outcomes and economic impacts. Targeted investments were needed to help reduce disparities in the state's key economic recovery indicators related to economic, educational, health, housing, and environmental initiatives, as identified by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's Wisconsin Tomorrow 2021 report.

The amount that will be used for the program: \$88,894,190.91

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: Governor Evers directed DOA to coordinate an Equitable Recovery grant program that offered up to \$50 million to community partners working to eliminate disparities and promote equity in designated areas. Governor Evers expanded the funding available for the program to nearly \$89 million due to the large number of qualified applications. The program received 396 proposals prior to the application deadline.

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: Increased equity and reduced disparities in health, early childhood development, education, economic support, housing, and environmental justice in qualified census tracts or communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Administration

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds are spent: Per the terms of their agreements, grantees must submit regular reporting to DOA summarizing the use of funds and program impacts.

Safer Communities and Violence Prevention

The proposed use of the funds, including whether the funds will support a new or an existing program:

New and Existing Programs – Support violence prevention efforts and victim services in Wisconsin. Specifically, allocate \$6.6 million to the Medical College of Wisconsin’s (MCW) Violence Prevention Project, housed in its Comprehensive Injury Center, to help fund their existing and ongoing research, data collection, education, and community engagement efforts around violence prevention as a public health issue, as well as \$10.4 million for MCW to administer a new competitive grant process to support violence project efforts statewide. Allocate another \$8.4 million to the City of Milwaukee’s Office of Violence Prevention, which is dedicated to reducing violence in Milwaukee through partnerships with government, non-profit, neighborhood, and faith organizations, to respond to the pandemic-related uptick in violence and trauma.

Support victim services in Wisconsin by directing \$20 million to victim service programs across the state through a grant administered by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), \$100,000 of which would be dedicated to the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA), which is the only statewide membership, training, and technical assistance agency for sexual assault service providers in Wisconsin.

An explanation of why the funds are needed for the program: During the pandemic, there was an uptick in violence and trauma. The COVID-19 pandemic caused an increase in non-firearm, as well as firearm violence, attributed to a rise in gun sales, psychological distress related to the pandemic, as well as the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on under-resourced communities, both urban and rural. Funds were needed to help bolster both statewide research initiatives and community-based solutions that took a public health approach to help prevent pandemic-related violence.

Relatedly, victim service programs reported increased demand for their services due to the pandemic, but at the same time, federal funding for these services under the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) had been declining. Additional funding for victim services were needed to support providers in meeting the increase in demand for their services while ensuring culturally specific programming remained available.

The amount that will be used for the program: \$45 million

Relevant information and data that were used to arrive at the funding decision and amount: Governor Evers directed the Department of Administration to allocate funding to the City of Milwaukee, the Medical College of Wisconsin, and the Department of Justice to fund violence prevention efforts and victim support services based on reported increases in violence and the demands on victim services, while federal funding declined.

The anticipated benefits of using the funds to support the program: Reduction of pandemic-related violence and increased, culturally responsive support services available to victims of crimes.

The state agency that manages the program: Department of Administration and Department of Justice

The anticipated date the funding decision will be reassessed and the factors that will be used to reassess it, such as the extent to which the funds: Per the terms of their agreements, grantees must submit regular reporting to DOA summarizing the use of funds and program impacts. DOJ is also required to regularly report to DOA on the status of its spending and performance for its allocation.