



Maine Municipal Association

Summary of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Priorities Survey

Maine Municipal Association

State and Federal Relations

August 2021

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About the Survey

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds are a once in a generation injection of capital into all levels of government. In an effort to align local, regional, and state spending priorities, Maine Municipal Association administered a survey to gauge current sentiment among municipal and county officials. The survey was conducted from July 1 to August 15, 2021, via SurveyMonkey.

The ARPA Priorities Survey assessed priorities on a macro and micro level. Participants were asked to rank high-level categories of issues from most important to least important, and subsequently, to offer interest in sub-level priorities within each category. In order to capture the wants and needs of a wide range of municipal officials, numerous priorities were provided as options in the survey even though they may not be eligible ARPA expenditures.

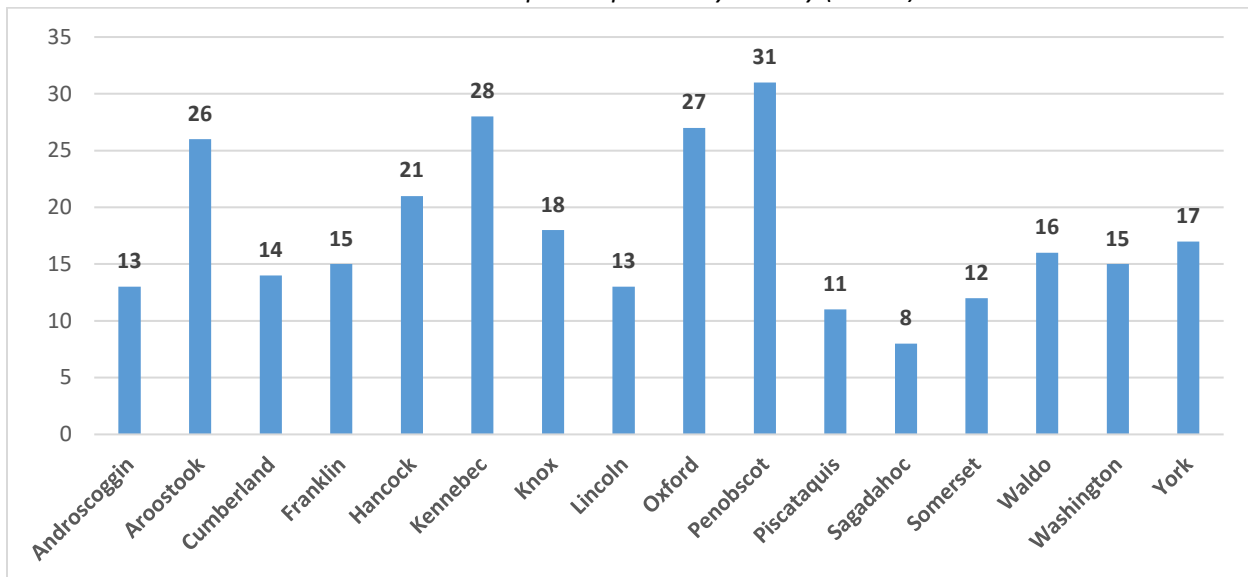
The priorities assayed were primarily generated from three sources: (1) eligible uses of ARPA funds as described in the U.S. Treasury’s Interim Final Rule, (2) expected policies from Governor Janet Mills’ bill, LD 1733, *An Act to Provide Allocations for the Distribution of State Fiscal Recovery Funds*, sponsored by Sen. Cathy Breen of Cumberland County, and (3) general municipal priorities as identified by municipal and county officials and MMA staff.

Data

Sample Size: The survey generated 330 complete responses. The majority of responses, 285, were submitted by municipal officials. County officials submitted 14 responses and partner organizations or agencies tallied 31 responses.

Municipal Responses: About half of all municipalities (233) were represented in this survey. A list of municipalities represented is provided in Appendix A. Of the 285 municipal officials that responded, 48% (137) were elected while 52% (148) were non-elected officials. *Chart 1* below displays the breakdown of municipal responses by county.

Chart 1: Municipal Responses by County (n=285)



County Responses: The survey generated 14 responses from county officials representing eleven counties. Of those that responded, eight were county administrators or managers, three were county commissioners, and the remaining held various county-level positions.

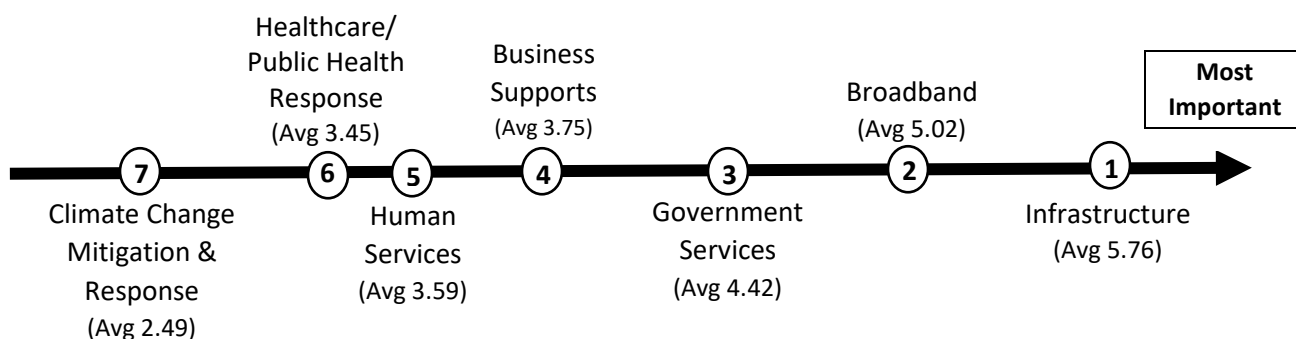
Partner Responses: The survey generated 23 qualified responses from state, regional, and local partners. Partner organizations included 15 non-profits, 6 state agencies, 2 council of governments or regional planning commissions, 1 business chamber and 1 education or research institute.

Municipal Results

High-Level Priorities

Municipal officials were asked to rank seven high-level priorities from most important to least important, with 1 being most important. The weighted averages showed strong sentiment at the extremes. Across hundreds of municipal officials, infrastructure, particularly transportation and utilities, was the top priority by a sizable margin. Broadband related policies were second most important among all municipal responses. One explanation for the notable gap between the top two priorities is that infrastructure needs exist in every municipality while broadband needs are met in some communities.

Compared to all ranked issues, survey respondents demonstrated a strong disinterest in climate change mitigation and response. According to the results, climate change measures are last in municipal priority. A possible justification for this strong sentiment is survey respondents might presently be more concerned about fiscal and public health recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than focused on the hard to enumerate policies of climate change mitigation and response.



Government services, ranked third, displayed some separation from the other issues, but did not receive the overall approval of infrastructure or broadband. There are two ways to view this outcome. First, broadband and infrastructure needs have existed for long-periods of time and are essentially universal priorities within all communities while government services have been, to some degree, stable and consistent during the pandemic.

Alternatively, the relative high ranking of government services could indicate there are significant needs within local governments.

Generally speaking, the three interior ranking issues showed little variance in importance to municipal officials. Business supports, human services, and healthcare/ public health response were clustered together in ranks 4 through 6.

Through the remainder of this ARPA Priorities Survey report, the high-level rankings described above should be recalled as the responses to sub-level priorities are examined. This is due to the nature of the survey design and analysis. Under each high-level issue are numerous sub-priorities, yet the rankings of those sub-priorities cannot be directly compared. Take infrastructure and climate change as an illustration. If two sub-priorities, one from infrastructure and one from climate change, receive the same weighted average, it should be assumed that in reality municipal officials place higher importance on the infrastructure sub-priority.

Sub-Level Priorities with County Comparisons

Under each high-level issue, numerous sub-priorities were examined. As an addendum to the survey, county-level sub-priorities were assessed separate from the high-level ranking discussed earlier.

A few notes to the reader: the weighted averages range from 0 to 3, where 3 indicates the highest interest in the sub-priority and 0 indicates no interest. A key for the results is provided below.

Key to rankings:

- Below 1 indicates no or little interest.
- Between 1 and 2 indicates low to moderate interest.
- Above 2 indicates high interest.

The presence of an asterisk (*) denotes that the associated sub-priority may not be an eligible use of ARPA funds.

The two rightmost columns in the charts below juxtapose the ranking and average of municipal officials with the sentiment of county officials. To make effective comparisons, make sure to consider both ranking and average. For instance, within infrastructure priorities, “*Culvert and storm water infrastructure” is ranked first by municipal and county officials, but comparison of the averages show there is a notable margin in the level of interest the priority elicits from municipal and county officials.

Finally, a complete list of all sub-priorities ranked is provided at the end of this report. Refer to Appendix B for more information.

(1) INFRASTRUCUTRE; TRANSPORTATION & UTILITIES

Ranking	Sub-Priority	Weighted Average	County Ranking	County Average
1	*Culvert and storm water infrastructure	2.29	1	1.69
2	*Clean energy and energy efficiency grants	1.84	4	1.62
3	*Bridges or dams construction and repair	1.82	7	1.46
4	*Clean energy infrastructure	1.72	5	1.54

5	*Infrastructure resiliency adaption improvements	1.62	4	1.62
6	Drinking water infrastructure	1.20	7	1.46
7	*Electric vehicle charging infrastructure	1.17	8	1.15
8	*Multimodal or public transportation grants	1.12	4	1.62

(2) BROADBAND

Ranking	Sub-Priority	Weighted Average	County Ranking	County Average
1	Physical network build-out	2.23	1	2.38
2	*Expanding education and student leaning capacity	2.18	6	1.92
3	*Public WiFi expansion	2.08	2	2.33
4	*Expanding telehealth capacity	1.92	4	2.23
5	Planning or consulting costs	1.81	4	2.23
6	Subscription rate assistance	1.77	7	1.75
7	Speed testing or mapping	1.68	5	2.15
8	*Installation in government buildings	1.66	8	1.54

(3) GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ranking	Sub-Priority	Weighted Average	County Ranking	County Average
1	*Road construction or repair	2.63	4	1.62
2	*Government building improvements or construction	2.12	1	1.85
3	*Expanding online services	1.76	4	1.62
4	Regionalized EMS	1.71	6	1.46
5	Filling budget shortfalls	1.67	8	1.38
6	Short-term property tax relief	1.66	9	1.25
7	Municipal workforce development	1.65	2	1.69
8	*Municipal utilities	1.57	8	1.38
9	*Modernizing licensing and permitting processes with state agencies	1.55	10	1.00
10	Rehire staff and build public sector capacity	1.11	5	1.50

(4) BUSINESS SUPPORTS

Ranking	Sub-Priority	Weighted Average	County Ranking	County Average
1	Support local farms and food production	2.98	7	1.69
2	*Promotion of Maine products and businesses	2.88	3	1.92
4	New businesses and entrepreneurs support	2.71	5	1.77
4	Talent/workforce attraction and retention system *Youth career development and pre-apprenticeship programs	2.71	1	2.31
5		2.68	7	1.69
6	Technology assistance to businesses	2.67	11	1.54
7	Economic recovery grants for businesses	2.66	3	1.92
8	*Remote workforce development	2.60	12	1.46
10	*Small business health insurance relief	2.48	13	0.92
10	*Career and technical (CTE) grants	2.48	10	1.62
11	Loan or loan guarantees for businesses	2.47	10	1.62
13	*Targeted sector workforce development (i.e. clean energy, healthcare)	2.34	10	1.62
13	Entrepreneurial training for underrepresented populations	2.24	4	1.85

(5) HUMAN SERVICES; HOUSING & CHILDCARE

Ranking	Sub-Priority	Weighted Average	County Ranking	County Average
1	Home weatherization and efficiency upgrades	1.96	9	1.62
2	Development/renovation of senior housing	1.88	5	1.92
3	Development/renovation of affordable housing	1.85	2	2.15
4	*Childcare assistance and expansion	1.66	1	2.23
5	Premium pay to essential workers	1.61	8	1.69
7	Aid to households	1.55	10	1.54
7	Development/renovation of workforce housing	1.55	3	2.00
8	Payroll and covered benefits for frontline workers Help underserved populations with basic needs and employment	1.54	8	1.69
9		1.51	6	1.77
10	Benefits to families of COVID-19 victims	1.21	12	1.15
11	Homelessness programs and resources	1.18	5	1.92

(6) HEALTHCARE/PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

Ranking	Sub-Priority	Weighted Average	County Ranking	County Average
2	Contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19	2.78	3	1.92
2	General mental health or behavioral services	2.78	1	2.54
3	Addiction treatment	2.70	2	2.46
4	COVID-19 mental health services	2.49	4	1.85
5	*Offering telehealth services to public sector employees	2.45	5	1.54
6	*Nursing home and hospital healthcare recruitment	2.44	6	1.31

(7) CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION & RESPONSE

Ranking	Sub-Priority	Weighted Average	County Ranking	County Average
1	*Government building energy efficiency improvement	1.98	4	1.69
2	Recycling programs	1.96	7	1.46
3	*Infrastructure resiliency adaptations	1.69	2	1.77
4	*Clean or renewable energy generation projects	1.62	5	1.62
5	*Promoting redevelopment	1.53	8	1.42
6	*Creating green spaces	1.38	11	1.23
7	Equity considerations for most vulnerable populations	1.33	1	1.92
8	Planning or expert consultation	1.32	4	1.69
9	*Public transportation or ride sharing programs	1.21	9	1.38
10	*Investment or fundraising activities	1.16	6	1.54
11	*Air-quality studies	1.05	11	1.23
13	*Electrification of municipal vehicle fleets	0.91	13	0.85
13	Sea-level rise preparations	0.91	12	1.15

(Addendum) COUNTY-LEVEL PRIORITIES

Ranking	Sub-Priority	Weighted Average	County Ranking	County Average
1	*Increasing rural patrol coverage	3.05	4	2.15
2	*Regional economic development	3.02	2	2.23
3	*Regional EMS services	2.98	6	2.00
4	*Regional code enforcement or assessing services	2.86	4	2.15
5	*Expanding mental health and substances abuse services in county jails	2.58	1	2.69
6	*Addressing backlog in court system	2.56	6	2.00

Elected versus Non-elected Priorities

Of all municipal responses, approximately 48% were from elected officials and 52% were from non-elected officials. MMA staff are interested in whether a difference in prioritization exists between these two groups.

As a whole, no identifiable variance exists. Using a paired t-test, it has been determined there is no statistically significant difference between the overall priorities of elected and non-elected municipal officials.

Individual sub-level priorities however, displayed numerous statistically significant differences.¹ This difference is determined by examining the composition of responses by officials to each sub-level priority. A summary of those sub-level priorities is displayed below.

Difference in opinion at the sub-level is expected yet a few generalizations can be taken from these statistical differences. To begin, elected officials are far more interested in climate change response and mitigation policies. Oppositely, non-elected officials are more predisposed to show interest in prioritizing government services and facilities.

Table 1: Comparison of Elected and Non-elected Priorities

Sub-Priority	Elected Average	Non-elected Average	Difference
*Government building improvements or construction	1.89	2.34	0.45
Development/renovation of workforce housing	1.35	1.73	0.38
*Electrification of municipal vehicle fleets	0.75	1.06	0.31

¹ Significant at the 95% confidence level, p=0.05.

*Government building energy efficiency improvement	1.83	2.13	0.30
*Public transportation or ride sharing programs	1.05	1.36	0.30
*Promoting redevelopment	1.38	1.66	0.28
*Multimodal or public transportation grants	0.98	1.26	0.27
Recycling programs	2.08	1.84	0.25
Loan or loan guarantees for businesses	1.35	1.58	0.23
Short-term property tax relief	1.78	1.55	0.22
*Expanding education and student leaning capacity	2.28	2.08	0.20
Drinking water infrastructure	1.10	1.30	0.19
Talent/workforce attraction and retention system	1.62	1.79	0.17
Aid to households	1.64	1.47	0.17
*Youth career development and pre-apprenticeship programs	1.76	1.60	0.16
*Investment or fundraising activities	1.08	1.23	0.15
*Creating green spaces	1.31	1.45	0.14
Regionalized EMS	1.78	1.64	0.14
Help underserved populations with basic needs and employment	1.57	1.44	0.14
*Small business health insurance relief	1.55	1.42	0.13
*Electric vehicle charging infrastructure	1.11	1.23	0.12
*Clean energy and energy efficiency grants	1.89	1.79	0.10
*Clean energy infrastructure	1.77	1.68	0.10
Homelessness programs and resources	1.15	1.22	0.07
*Promotion of Maine products and businesses	1.91	1.84	0.07
*Targeted sector workforce development	1.38	1.31	0.07
Benefits to families of COVID-19 victims	1.17	1.24	0.06
Premium pay to essential workers	1.59	1.64	0.06
Support for unemployed workers	1.03	1.04	0.01

County by County Comparison

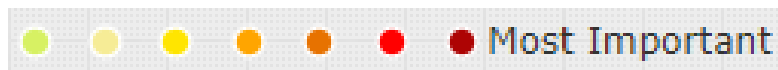
County level examination reveals if regional differences exist within the state. For the purpose of this statewide report, only high-level categories were analyzed and compared. From this high-level analysis, one can determine if a county's indicated priorities align with the state or surrounding counties. Sub-level priorities, which have not been compared county by county, are likely to show dramatic differences that are relatively insignificant because variance is expected when surveying on numerous sub-priorities.

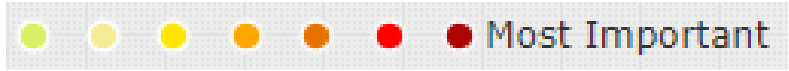
The table below details the high-level priorities of each county compared against the overall statewide priority.

Table 2: County Comparison of High-Level Priorities

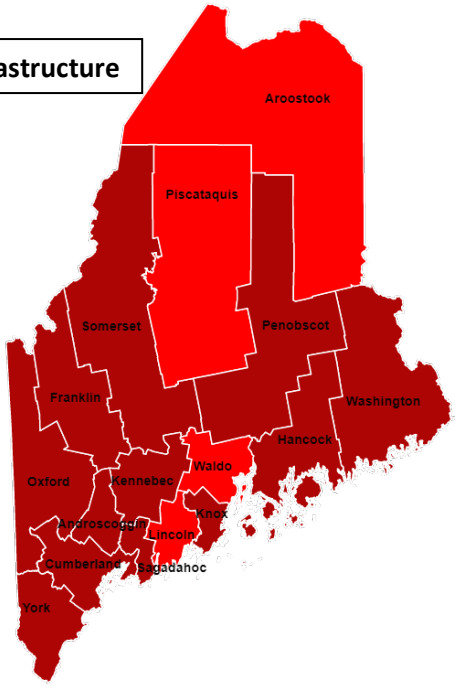
	Infrastructure	Broadband	Government Services	Business Supports	Human Services	Healthcare/ Public Health	Climate Change
STATE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Androscoggin	1	2	3	4	7	5	6
Aroostook	2	1	3	4	6	5	7
Cumberland	1	4	2	6	3	7	5
Franklin	1	4	2	6	5	3	7
Hancock	1	2	3	4	6	5	7
Kennebec	1	2	4	3	6	5	7
Knox	1	2	3	7	4	6	5
Lincoln	2	1	5	7	4	3	6
Oxford	1	2	3	5	4	6	7
Penobscot	1	2	3	4	6	5	7
Piscataquis	2	1	4	3	6	5	7
Sagadahoc	1	2	4	6	7	5	3
Somerset	1	3	4	2	5	6	7
Waldo	2	1	5	3	6	4	7
Washington	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
York	1	5	2	4	3	6	7

On the following pages are heatmaps to demonstrate the variance and relationship between counties in regard to each high-level priority. The heatmaps are a graphical representation of the data from *Table 2* using color-coding to represent different values. Darker (red) colors indicate higher priority and lighter (green) colors indicate lower priority.

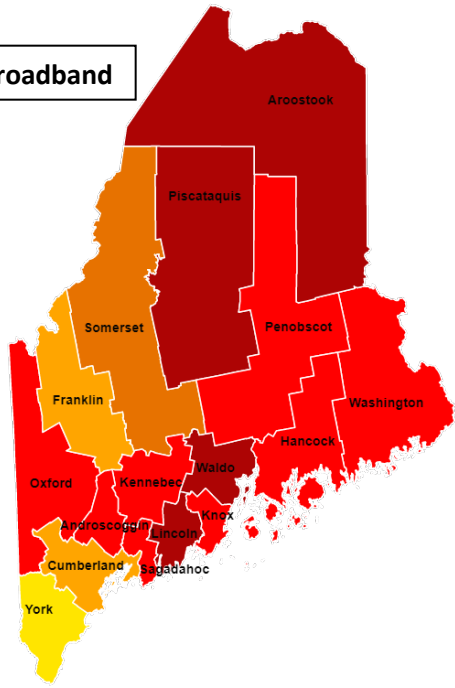




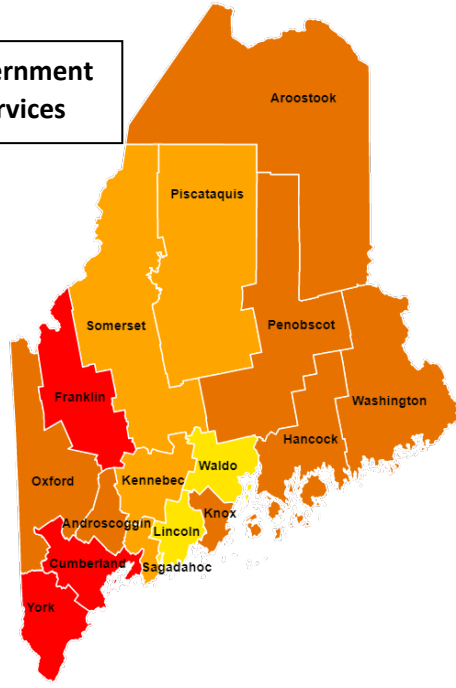
Infrastructure



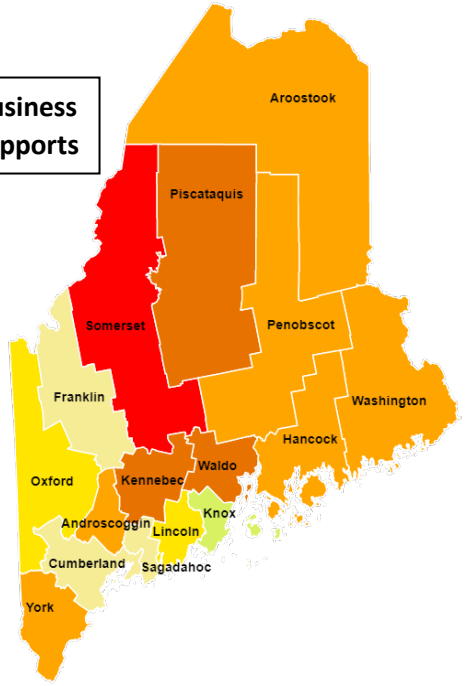
Broadband



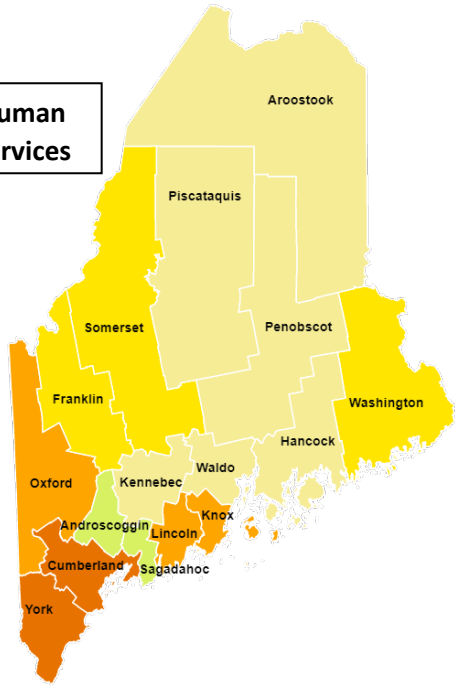
Government Services



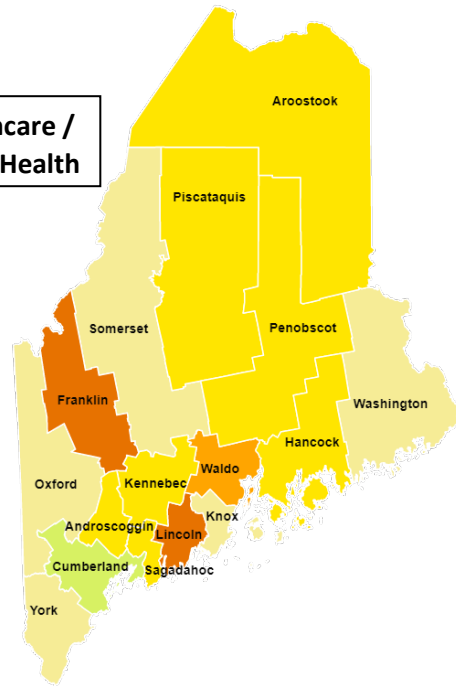
Business Supports

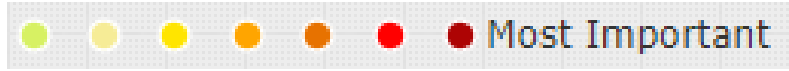


Human Services

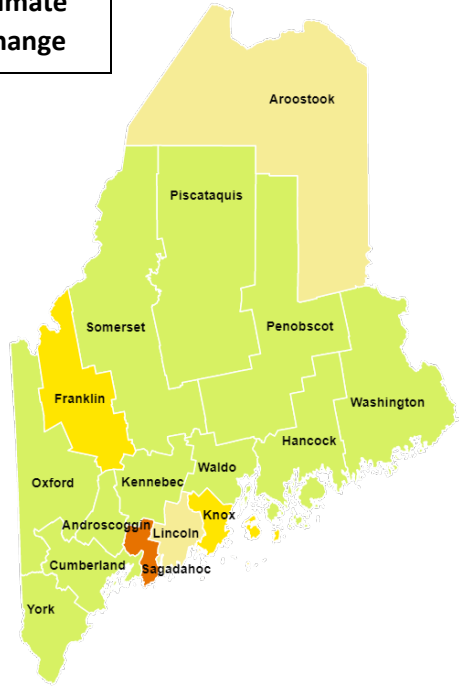


Healthcare / Public Health





Climate Change



Appendix A: Survey Participants

<u>Municipalities Represented (n=233)</u>				
Albion	Chesterville	Harpwell	Newcastle	Solon
Alexander	China	Hiram	Newport	Somerville
Alton	Clinton	Holden	Newry	Sorrento
Appleton	Columbia	Hollis	Nobleboro	Southwest Harbor
Arrowsic	Corinna	Hope	North Haven	St. George
Arundel	Corinth	Houlton	Northport	Stacyville
Ashland	Cyr Plantation	Howland	Norway	Steuben
Auburn	Dallas Plantation	Hudson	Oakland	Stoneham
Augusta	Damariscotta	Island Falls	Old Orchard Beach	Stonington
Baldwin	Deer Isle	Islesboro	Old Town	Sullivan
Bar Harbor	Denmark	Jackman	Orono	Surry
Bath	Dennysville	Jay	Orrington	Sweden
Beals	Detroit	Jonesport	Otisfield	Temple
Belfast	Dexter	Kennebunkport	Owls Head	Thomaston
Belgrade	Dover Foxcroft	Kingfield	Palermo	Topsham
Berwick	Dresden	Kittery	Paris	Tremont
Bethel	Eagle Lake	Knox	Parkman	Trenton
Biddeford	East Millinocket	Lake View Plantation	Pembroke	Union
Blue Hill	Easton	Lamoine	Penobscot	Unity
Boothbay Harbor	Eastport	Lebanon	Perry	Vassalboro
Bowdoinham	Eddington	Leeds	Phillips	Vinalhaven
Bradford	Ellsworth	Lewiston	Pittston	Waldoboro
Bradley	Embden	Liberty	Poland	Wales
Bremen	Enfield	Limestone	Portage Lake	Warren
Bridgewater	Eustis	lincoln	Porter	Washington
Bristol	Fairfield	Lincoln Plantation	Presque Isle	Waterboro
Brooklin	Farmington	Lisbon	Princeton	Waterville
Brooks	Fayette	Littleton	Randolph	Wayne
Brownville	Fort Fairfield	Livernore	Rangeley	Weld
Brunswick	Fort Kent	Lowell	Raymond	Wellington
Buckfield	Franklin	Machiasport	Readfield	West Bath
Burlington	Freedom	Madawaska	Robbinston	West Gardiner
Calais	Frenchville	Madison	Rockland	West Paris
Cambridge	Fryeburg	Manchester	Rumford	Westbrook
Camden	Gardiner	Mapleton	Sabattus	Westmanland
Canaan	Garland	Mechanic Falls	Saco	Weston
Cape Elizabeth	Georgetown	Milbridge	Sandy River Plantation	Windham
Caribou	Gouldsboro	Milo	Sanford	Winslow
Carrabassett Valley	Grand Isle	Minot	Scarborough	Winterport
Carthage	Grand Lake Stream	Monmouth	Searsmont	Winterville Plantation
Casco	Gray	Monson	Searsport	Winthrop
Castle Hill	Great Pond	Montville	Sebago	Wiscasset
Chapman	Greene	Morrill	Sebec	Woodland
Charleston	Greenville	Mount Vernon	Sedgwick	Woodstock
Chebeague Island	Greenwood	New Portland	Shapleigh	Woolwich
Chelsea	Guilford	New Vineyard	Skowhegan	
Chester	Hampden	Newburgh	Smithfield	

Appendix B: All Sub-priorities with Relative Grade

Below is the complete list of all sub-priorities with a relative grade. The grading system is based on the assumption that the weighted averages are normally distributed, meaning the average sub-priority earns a grade of C.

Key to Category Abbreviations

BB - Broadband	GOV – Government services
BUSI – Business supports	HEALTH – Healthcare/public health response
CC – Climate change response & mitigation	HHS – Human services; housing & childcare
COUNT – County-level	INFRA – Infrastructure; transportation & utilities

<u>Category</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Grade</u>
GOV	*Road construction or repair	A+
INFRA	*Culvert and storm water infrastructure	A
BB	Physical network build-out	A
BB	*Expanding education and student leaning capacity	A-
GOV	*Government building improvements or construction	A-
BB	*Public WiFi expansion	B+
COUNT	*Increasing rural patrol coverage	B+
COUNT	*Regional economic development	B+
CC	*Government building energy efficiency improvement	B
COUNT	*Regional EMS services	B
BUSI	Support local farms and food production	B
HHS	Home weatherization and efficiency upgrades	B-
CC	Recycling programs	B-
BB	*Expanding telehealth capacity	B-
HHS	Development/renovation of senior housing	C+
BUSI	*Promotion of Maine products and businesses	C+
COUNT	*Regional code enforcement or assessing services	C+
HHS	Development/renovation of affordable housing	C+
INFRA	*Clean energy and energy efficiency grants	C+
INFRA	*Bridges or dams construction and repair	C+
BB	Planning or consulting costs	C+
HEALTH	Contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19	C
HEALTH	General mental health or behavioral services	C
BB	Subscription rate assistance	C
GOV	*Expanding online services	C
INFRA	*Clean energy infrastructure	C
BUSI	New businesses and entrepreneurs support	C
GOV	Regionalized EMS	C

BUSI	Talent/workforce attraction and retention system	C
HEALTH	Addiction treatment	C
CC	*Infrastructure resiliency adaptations	C
BB	Speed testing or mapping	C
BUSI	*Youth career development and pre-apprenticeship programs	C
GOV	Filling budget shortfalls	C
BUSI	Technology assistance to businesses	C
GOV	Short-term property tax relief	C
HHS	*Childcare assistance and expansion	C
BUSI	Economic recovery grants for businesses	C
BB	*Installation in government buildings	C
GOV	Municipal workforce development	C
INFRA	*Infrastructure resiliency adaption improvements	C
CC	*Clean or renewable energy generation projects	C
HHS	Premium pay to essential workers	C
BUSI	*Remote workforce development	C
	*Expanding mental health and substances abuse services in county	
COUNT	jails	C-
GOV	*Municipal utilities	C-
COUNT	*Addressing backlog in court system	C-
	*Modernizing licensing and permitting processes with state	
GOV	agencies	C-
HHS	Aid to households	C-
HHS	Development/renovation of workforce housing	C-
HHS	Payroll and covered benefits for frontline workers	C-
CC	*Promoting redevelopment	C-
HHS	Help underserved populations with basic needs and employment	C-
HEALTH	COVID-19 mental health services	D+
BUSI	*Small business health insurance relief	D+
BUSI	*Career and technical (CTE) grants	D+
BUSI	Loan or loan guarantees for businesses	D+
HEALTH	*Offering telehealth services to public sector employees	D+
HEALTH	*Nursing home and hospital healthcare recruitment	D+
CC	*Creating green spaces	D+
	*Targeted sector workforce development (i.e. clean energy,	
BUSI	healthcare)	D
CC	Equity considerations for most vulnerable populations	D
CC	Planning or expert consultation	D
BUSI	Entrepreneurial training for underrepresented populations	D-
HHS	Benefits to families of COVID-19 victims	D-
CC	*Public transportation or ride sharing programs	D-
INFRA	Drinking water infrastructure	D-

HHS	Homelessness programs and resources	D-
INFRA	*Electric vehicle charging infrastructure	D-
CC	*Investment or fundraising activities	D-
INFRA	*Multimodal or public transportation grants	D-
GOV	Rehire staff and build public sector capacity	D-
CC	*Air-quality studies	F
HHS	Support for unemployed workers	F
CC	*Electrification of municipal vehicle fleets	F
CC	Sea-level rise preparations	F

Appendix C: Open-Ended Responses

Below is a summary of open-ended responses to the question, “In what other ways would your community like to allocate ARPA funds?” (n=158).

- 21 - Road or bridge repair
- 19 - Fire, EMS, or public safety
- 13 - Broadband
- 11 - Economic development; business supports, sidewalks, business promotion
- 10 - Sewer, septic, or drinking water
- 10 - Government buildings
- 8 - Tax relief
- 7 - Government services
- 7 - Climate change mitigation, environmental action
- 7 - Arts & Recreation
- 6 - School or education
- 4 - Infrastructure resiliency adaptations, storm water management
- 4 - Housing
- 3 - Advisory, consulting or legal costs
- 3 - Miscellaneous capital improvements
- 2 - Emergency preparedness
- 2 - Municipal or community solar
- 2 - Fishing industry supports
- 2 - Childcare
- 1 - Transportation
- 1 - Harbor investments
- 1 - Municipal capacity to use technology
- 1 - Bicycle infrastructure
- 1 - Senior citizen transportation
- 1 - Redevelop workforce for remote positions
- 1 - Social workers assigned to EMS calls
- 1 - Regional animal control services
- 1 - Reduce county activities and budget
- 1 - Comprehensive plan