



## **Priorities for economic development investments and efforts**

**To: Local government policymakers in Monroe County, the City of Bloomington and Town of Ellettsville**

**From: Bloomington Economic Development Corporation (BEDC)**

**Re: Priorities for economic development investments and policy**

**Date: March 14, 2022**

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### **Executive summary**

The Monroe County, City of Bloomington, and Town of Ellettsville governments are currently considering community needs, budgets, and public funding streams ranging from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), to the City of Bloomington's proposal to raise revenue, to other mechanisms.

The Bloomington Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) is pleased to submit the following recommendations on how local governments across Monroe County could focus funding, policies, and other efforts on economic development to advance community prosperity.

Economic development fosters the conditions for community prosperity. These conditions range from quality employment, to education, housing, quality of life, and more. This memo outlines how local governments can have a greater impact in these areas.

#### **Included in this memo are:**

- (1) Guiding principles for identifying economic development needs;
- (2) An outline of potential funding mechanisms; and
- (3) Priorities for economic development investments (funding, programs, or policies).

This memo neither endorses nor opposes proposals to raise revenue, but rather outlines collaborative suggestions on how current and future funding should be used.

**Methodology:** This memo is a collaborative effort between BEDC membership, partners, and community members who responded to a recent BEDC survey. BEDC staff and officers compiled the recommendations in this memo with feedback gathered from 40 BEDC members<sup>1</sup> via survey and conversations from March 2-13, 2022. Additional survey responses came from

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<sup>1</sup> BEDC members are listed in the BEDC's annual report, which is [posted here](#).

11 guest respondents through surveys posted on LinkedIn and shared through members. This memo builds on the [BEDC 2021 ARPA memo](#) recommending areas of investment for funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

**About the BEDC:** The BEDC is a nonprofit dedicated to the retention, development, and attraction of quality jobs in Monroe County, Indiana. The BEDC has close to 100 members representing the private, local government, nonprofit, and educational sectors. The BEDC is funded through memberships and grants from private industry, the City of Bloomington, the Town of Ellettsville, Monroe County, Indiana University, and Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington.

For more information on this memo, contact BEDC President Jennifer Pearl at [jpearl@bloomingtonedc.com](mailto:jpearl@bloomingtonedc.com).

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## Section 1: Guiding principles

The following principles are a set guidelines suggested to policymakers when determining the best areas for economic development investments, policies, and programs.

### 1. Economic development fosters conditions for prosperity in a community

These conditions range from quality employment, to education, housing, quality of life, and more. These conditions are also interrelated. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed to tackle economic development challenges.

### 2. Coordinate economic development investments across the community

Economic development opportunities and challenges cross local government jurisdictions -- whether related to workforce and wages, housing, education and training, child and elder care, transit, or other areas of life. Thus, we recommend that economic development investments and efforts be tackled across local government jurisdictions and across sectors to tackle these challenges in a holistic manner.

**A Coordinating Council can be established to support these investments.** The Council would draw from across local governments and sectors, to advise on strategic investments, define metrics and success, monitor the impact of economic development investments and policies, and identify ongoing funding opportunities. Council members could be selected by each of the local governments. These councils could be public-private partnerships with representation from government, businesses, neighborhoods, social service agencies, philanthropic, public health, and educational institutions.

**Include smaller municipalities and unincorporated areas of Monroe County.** These portions of the community, such as Ellettsville, Stinesville, and Unionville are home to neighbors that could benefit greatly from strategic investments, but may receive fewer resources, especially from certain federal funding opportunities. They can also contribute to community-wide efforts, such as the BEDC's Economic Vitality Project to address economic development challenges across sectors, and broader regional efforts

**Connect efforts to the broader region** whenever possible. The Monroe County community is not only a population and employment hub that affects the region, but the region also affects this community.

### 3. Use data to identify and evaluate needed funding, policies, and programs

Identify when new funding is needed versus where policy and/or program efficiencies and redirection of funds can be utilized. Use data to determine the areas of greatest need, greatest potential impact of investments, and ideal timing of investments.

**Build accountability into the system.** Apply clear and consistent evaluation and reporting to ensure economic development efforts are having the intended effect, and also ensure lessons can be learned and continually applied across future efforts. Staff time and resources for program evaluation should be built into initiatives. It is also important to monitor any investments for unintended consequences, to ensure they have their intended effect over time -- such as positive incentives to upskill, seek work, and advance in earnings and opportunity.

Possible approaches to program evaluation are to:

- Use data to guide policy and investment decisions
- Identify a list of critical measures for outcomes
- Develop an evaluation methodology
- Develop the backend structure for data collection
- Provide a set of dashboards and story maps that show the baseline (where we began) and progress over time (months, quarters, years).
- Report back regularly on progress to the community

Possible resources: [Indiana Business Research Center](#) and [IU Public Policy Institute](#)

For any investments, ensure funding and resources are available to support the local government staff and partner organizations that will implement related initiatives. Effective deployment of funds will require properly resourced teams to ensure their full impact.

### 4. Increase efficiencies and leverage existing funding streams wherever possible

**Streamline and apply innovations.** Determine where innovations or existing revenue can be applied to update outdated systems, to increase government efficiency, and to reduce waste. Ensure unused funding is applied for intended uses where there is still need. When possible, leverage existing funding streams for these investments. Streamline economic development efforts, to ensure efforts are complementary and not duplicative.

**Focus investments.** Investments can also be made in key thematic areas to avoid spreading the funds too thinly across many areas. This is especially important for one-time funds like the American Rescue Plan Act (APRA), making it important to invest with an eye for impact and financial sustainability.

**Allocate resources to secure competitive funds for key priorities, to grow local revenue.**

This could include funds to hire or retain, as needed, a community grant writing specialist to secure critical funds for economic development initiatives as outlined in this document.

**5. Clearly articulate the case for any additional needed funds**

If local governments determine additional funds are needed, a business case should first be provided outlining:

- Specific needs, intended outcomes, and funding streams;
- Why there is not enough existing funding;
- How raising taxes will impact residents, workforce, and employers; and
- What innovations have been applied to reduce waste and re-allocate funding that was not being used effectively. This would include evaluating and redirecting existing tax revenue to high priority initiatives to ensure targeted, best use of current funds.

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**Section 2: Funding sources**

There is an array of funding tools and competitive and noncompetitive funding streams, which are available for economic development-related needs.

To make the most of opportunities, we recommend:

1. Creating an inventory of existing resources
2. Tracking expiration of existing funding streams with an eye toward building financial sustainability with investments, and
3. Coordinating local applications for funds.

Categories of funding and examples include but are not limited to the following. A detailed, though not exhaustive, list is included in the appendix.

<b>Types of funding</b>	<b>Examples include but are not limited to:</b>
Federal funding bills	American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) - funds allocated in 2021 Build Back Better - under consideration, passed the House in Congress
Federal infrastructure and/or transportation funds (competitive)	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Safe Streets and Roads for All Rural Surface Transportation Grant National Infrastructure Project Assistance (aka "Megaprojects" or MEGA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program Flood Mitigation Assistance
Federal economic development funds (competitive)	US Economic Development Administration economic adjustment assistance funding

Federal grants (competitive)	A full catalog of competitive federal grants is at Grants.gov
State	Next Level Connections for Broadband Next Level Jobs
Local	TIF bonds
Local (tax)	Local Income Tax (economic development) Local Income Tax (corrections and rehabilitation) Food & Beverage Tax
Additional funding strategies	Creative financing strategies via programs like CDFI Friendly Bloomington

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### Section 3: Economic development priorities

Economic development fosters conditions for prosperity in a community. The following subsections outline many of these conditions, which are often interrelated and require a combination of policies, programs, and funding to address them:

1. Housing
2. Workforce development
3. Infrastructure
4. Employment
5. Access to opportunity and quality of life
6. Public safety
7. Public health
8. Telling our community’s story

These recommendations were identified by employers and other community leaders through a BEDC survey and conversations conducted March 2-13, 2022. Respondents were asked to select what they saw as the top priorities within each category, while also recommending additional priorities.

#### 1. Housing

*Key priorities:*

- *Streamline the development process through local policies, practices, and regulations*
- *Coordinate between the Monroe County, City of Bloomington, Town of Ellettsville governments to develop the urbanized fringe*
- *Focus on creating missing types of housing on most developable sites*

**Background:** Housing costs and availability of homes for purchase continue to be a challenge for workers, as documented in the [ROI Indiana Uplands](#) and [City of Bloomington](#) housing studies. According to Bloomington market data from the Bloomington Board of Realtors on March 9, 2022:

- The median home listing price in February 2022 was \$279,900, which eased 1.8% compared to February 2021.
- Listings dropped to 1.3 months of inventory in February 2022 compared to 1.9 months of inventory available in February 2021. A healthy market should have 5-7 months of inventory – meaning, if no homes were put on the market moving forward, it would take that long to sell everything on the market.

**Priority recommendations:** Focus efforts on addressing housing supply challenges by leveraging the findings and recommendations of the [ROI Indiana Uplands](#) and [City of Bloomington](#) housing studies. While housing is needed at all levels, workforce housing has a particular impact on local employers and employees alike. ARPA investments can be leveraged and combined with the following steps to help increase workforce housing supply:

**a. Streamline the development process**

Identify and streamline local policies, practices, and regulations that adversely impede the development of affordable and workforce housing. Streamlining will smooth the way for more needed housing supply. Expedite permitting processes to lower costs. Transparent and predictable regulations are a key way to ensuring that needed housing can be built; unpredictable processes add cost.

**b. Coordinate between the Monroe County and City of Bloomington governments to develop the urbanized fringe**

A county-city agreement around infrastructure or cost sharing can increase resources to aid development. Develop collaboration further through a collaborative residential TIF. Now is an optimal time to begin such conversations as the county develops the CDO.

**c. Focus on developing missing types of housing on the most developable sites**

Sources for this information include the Bloomington and regional housing studies, the Hospital Reuse Project, and Bloomington Board of Realtors. Identify barriers to development on these sites. Ensure build-ready lots are prepared.

**Additional recommendations:**

- d. **Quantify financing gaps.** Work with developers to review pro forma statements, detail where financing falls short, and quantify what resources are needed to develop new housing. The [ULI housing simulator](#) provides an example of how to understand the numbers. This analysis should include an examination of the following costs: (a) Infrastructure costs and their impact on the overall cost of housing (b) How current planning and zoning processes and policies impact the overall cost of projects.

- e. **Provide infrastructure support and institute gap financing** by leveraging ARPA funds to fill in the aforementioned financing gaps for eligible infrastructure (water, sewer, and broadband), based on the above analysis. Housing developments require sewer, roads, water, sidewalks, and other utilities. Leverage ARPA funds and public-private partnerships to develop such infrastructure to pave the way (literally) for housing growth. Infrastructure projects also provide economic activity and job creation.

## 2. Workforce development

### *Key Priorities:*

- *Expand pathways to success for workers through upskilling, through organizations such as Ivy Tech/Achieve Your Degree, Goodwill Excel, Broadview Learning Center, etc.*
- *Connect local students and youth with work opportunities through paid apprenticeships, internships, scholarships, and outreach programs*
- *Support talent attraction and retention programs*

### **Background:**

Available workforce is a top concern for employers. Monroe County is a regional employment hub, with over 17,000 individuals commuting into the county for work, as of the latest available data from 2019 ([StatsIndiana](#)).

Available workforce was already a pre-pandemic concern for employers, and this challenge intensified over the last two years. Between March 2020 and July 2021, the Bloomington MSA (Monroe and Owen County) labor force had decreased by approximately 5,000 workers. By late 2021, that number was halved as workers returned to the labor force full-time and many students returned to part-time jobs. In September 2021, the full labor force stood at just under 79,000. Notably, the area's labor force peaked at more than 82,000 (based on annual averages) in 2009, just after the Great Recession ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). The overall population for the Bloomington MSA stood at 169,000 as of 2020, with projected growth to 184,000 by 2030 ([StatsIndiana](#)).

**Wages:** As competition for workers intensifies, wages in the region have continued to climb, which has benefited workers. The private industry average hourly wage increased by 12% from October 2017 to October 2021, when it stood at \$22.81 an hour for the Bloomington MSA ([IBRC using US Bureau of Labor Statistics data](#)). Support to help employers increase wages and compete in this changing marketplace could be helpful.

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and workforce:** DEI was noted as an important priority by a number of respondents, with some noting that diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts should be applied across the recommendations. Talent acquisition professionals and young professionals both highlighted diversity as a challenge for our community in the 2019 [Monroe County Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plan](#), developed by the BEDC and Community

Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County. Various organizations and employers have already developed efforts to recruit, support, and retain a diverse workforce, such as [DEI training](#) from the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce and companies' employee resource groups. However, more can be done community wide to improve in this area.

**Priority recommendations:**

**a. Expand pathways to success for workers through upskilling, while leveraging ways to better identify and connect with those individuals**

Focus on helping workers find a job, a better job, and a career by (1) developing mechanisms to better identify and connect with those individuals and (2) supporting existing programs that enable workers to upskill and connect to available jobs, increase their earning potential, and connect to opportunities for advancement. While Monroe County has the largest public university in the state, it also has nearly 25,000 adults (25 and older) who either do not have a high school diploma or stopped their education at a high school diploma (Source: US Census Bureau, ACS 2019).

Programs and organizations such as [Ivy Tech/Achieve Your Degree](#), [Goodwill Excel](#), and [Broadview Learning Center](#) provide pathways for workers and employers. Employers can leverage some of these programs as benefits to increase their competitiveness in seeking workers.

Regional Opportunity Initiatives ([ROI](#)) is also working to develop state-recognized pathways and can help deepen these opportunities. Current examples include biotech; product, supply and logistics, and microelectronics.

**b. Connect local students and youth with work opportunities through paid apprenticeships, internships, scholarships, and outreach programs**

A combination of funding, public information campaigns, and increased engagement with employers and residents can help realize this priority. While ARPA and other funding can help workers connect to opportunities for advancement, they can also help local high school and college students get into the workforce and build skills.

Funds might be used to:

- Help companies offer paid apprenticeships and internships to high school and higher education students through existing programs.
- Provide work experience scholarships to local high school and higher education students to fill service / part time / hard to fill jobs. Scholarships could be tied to the number of hours worked, for use in Monroe County higher education institutions. ARPA funds could be used as a pilot for this program, to help local

businesses recover more quickly from the pandemic, as their workforce needs have been well documented.

- Provide grants for internship stipends in targeted industries, to cover costs like transit and enable students to access these experiential learning opportunities.

Existing programs in this arena include but are not limited to:

- [UpSkill](#), a youth apprenticeship model that Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) has been developing. A pilot is launching this spring and connects high school students with employers through work-and-learn models that begin in the junior year and continue at least into their senior year; there is an option for a third year post-high school. This will support pathways that include the trades.
- [READY Schools](#) is a process that has been completed by both of our local school corporations. They have developed curriculum, programs, and facilities to support greater alignment between P12 and the jobs of today/tomorrow. Ongoing support for projects would help advance these efforts.
- [Indiana Work and Learn](#) is a free internship-matching program managed by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce linking employers, students, high schools, colleges and universities.

**c. Support talent attraction and retention programs**

Monroe County has a high quality of life that is attractive to talent. The Bloomington community has remarkable talent resources through Indiana University and Ivy Tech, and regionally through entities like NSWC Crane. These institutions attract students and workers from around the region, state, United States, and world. Yet, these assets have not fully been leveraged to retain students, alumni, and other talent connected to our region.

There are unrealized opportunities to more fully coordinate talent retention and alumni attraction efforts with Indiana University and Ivy Tech, by building talent awareness of local employers over time. Efforts like the following could help bolster talent attraction and retention:

- Programs to grow employer/student relationships from students' first year in postsecondary education, such as IU Welcome Week and the BEDC Opportunity Expo; and
- Regional talent attraction efforts through Indiana READI and local programs.

These efforts would benefit greatly through work to increase workforce housing, which is frequently described as a barrier to employee recruitment.

### 3. Infrastructure

*Key Priorities:*

- *Assess and prioritize needs for infrastructure development and upgrades (roads, bridges, utilities, buildings)*
- *Enable more land to be ready for business growth by making sites ready for development through roads, sewer, utilities, and broadband access*
- *Remodel / expand the Monroe Convention Center to support tourism and convention growth*

**Background:** While Monroe County, Bloomington, and Ellettsville have advanced infrastructure investments in recent years, there are still additional needs. In recent years, the Monroe County community has seen aging local infrastructure, water main breaks, storms like the June 2021 floods, and constraints on the built environment in such areas of housing -- all underscoring the need to update local infrastructure. The community also faces a lack of available properties for growing or new employers, as outlined in the Strategic Site Inventory (SSI) program that the BEDC has been completing with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. Likewise, as the economy rebounds from the pandemic there is increasing demand for meeting spaces. The following priorities can help the community to address these challenges.

**Environmental sustainability:** Environmental sustainability best practices can be applied to infrastructure efforts, while building resilience to challenges like flooding. Tools that can be considered include providing incentives, information, and support for increasing building efficiency and sustainability in development projects. The [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) includes an array of funds for climate, energy, and the environment.

**Priority recommendations:**

**a. Assess and prioritize needs for infrastructure development, maintenance, and upgrades (roads, bridges, utilities, buildings)**

If such information does not already exist, local governments might take a holistic approach by (1) compiling a list of all needed infrastructure updates, (2) prioritizing projects and (3) matching those priorities with funding mechanisms.

There is an array of federal funding available for infrastructure projects, which can simultaneously provide economic support to local contractors.

- [Federal guidelines](#) explicitly indicate that ARPA funds can be used for water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. Local governments may consider leveraging federal infrastructure funding for improvements that are not eligible under ARPA.
- This [guidebook to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) provides a roadmap of available funding under the law, organized under the categories of: transportation; climate, energy, and the environment; broadband; and more.

**Related: Mitigate future flood risks through infrastructure upgrades**

A number of survey respondents indicated this as a key priority, which relates to the above recommendations to inventory and address infrastructure concerns. ARPA funds could be especially impactful in improving flood-prone areas, as demonstrated in the June 2021 floods that hit certain local businesses hard.

**b. Enable more properties to be ready for business and employment growth by making sites ready for development**

A continuing constraint on quality business and employment growth is available buildings and land. Roads, sewer, utilities, and broadband access are key pieces of infrastructure required for this to happen. By following the Monroe County urbanizing area plan, zoning the property appropriately, and providing infrastructure to those properties, the community can increase the supply of business property (as well as housing property). This enables the private market to more effectively partner with the private sector to achieve these goals.

**c. Remodel and expand the Monroe Convention Center**

Monroe County requested permission from the legislature to collect a food and beverage tax in order to fund an expansion of the Monroe Convention Center. The tax was then enabled locally with the intent to do that project. Expansion was appropriately put on hold due to the pandemic. Now in early 2022, group demand for the Convention Center is returning, the tourism industry is recovering and the pandemic grows more stable. It is an appropriate time to start the expansion project again.

## 4. Employment

*Key Priorities:*

- *Update business permitting processes and local incentives to support employer growth*
- *Support our growing tech sector via ongoing development of the Trades District Technology Center, Trades District, and other initiatives*
- *Support employment in the trades by investing in educational outreach and programs through workforce partners*

**Background:** The Monroe County area economy has evolved over time, from furniture making in the 1920s to manufacturing in the mid-20th century, to life sciences in the latter 20th century and early millennium. Higher education, life sciences, and manufacturing continue to be leading industries that drive employment in the local economy. However, the pandemic exacerbated and highlighted the need for filling key roles within these and supporting industries. It also underlined the need to aid long term economic recovery and resilience through support for job creation and private investment in the emerging, future-focused cluster of technology.

**Support for key industries:** The following recommendations implicitly apply to key industries for our local and regional economy, including life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and even defense. However, they can also more broadly affect other employment in the region.

**Priority recommendations:**

**a. Support strategic employment growth via updates to business permitting processes and local incentives**

The concept of inclusive growth has been growing in the field of economic development, defined as “economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all” (OECD). Communities can leverage updates to permitting processes and local incentives to stimulate quality employment growth, especially in targeted industries or geographical areas.

Examine ways that ARPA investments can be combined with updated local incentives for quality employment growth. Consider and apply a broad range of incentives offered by the state and local entities: job creation tax credits, investment or R&D credits, property tax abatements, as well as customized services for individual businesses such as job training, manufacturing extension services, or entrepreneur support. Energy credits, such as Duke Energy’s Rider 58 program, are also applicable for new and expanding companies.

Ensure local business processes are clear, predictable, quantifiable, and transparent -- whether related to zoning, taxes, permitting, or other procedures. This is key for growing private investment in the community and ensuring employers can grow.

Further research is available on how these tools can be leveraged for quality, inclusive growth. Brookings published this article on [How tax incentives can power more equitable, inclusive growth \(brookings.edu\)](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-tax-incentives-can-power-more-equitable-inclusive-growth/). The International Economic Development Council produced earlier work on [21st Century Incentives](https://www.iedc.org/21st-century-incentives/).

**b. Support our growing tech sector via ongoing development of the Trades District Technology Center, Trades District, and other initiatives**

The tech sector has been identified as an emerging industry for the Monroe County community with high potential for quality job growth. This is based on various studies, including a feasibility study completed by the IU Public Policy Institute in fall 2020.

The US Economic Development Administration awarded [\\$3.5 million in CARES Act funding to construct the Trades District Technology Center](#), following the successful application from the City of Bloomington and BEDC. The Tech Center will house local tech companies and be operated by a nonprofit that provides resources to grow local employment and attract private investment. This investment bolsters Bloomington’s

Certified Tech Park and leverages the Opportunity Zone, which overlaps with this district. Over 10 years, the Center is projected to help create 866 jobs, including 530 direct jobs and 336 indirect and induced jobs, and generate \$51 million in private investment in the region. This is based on an independent assessment from the IU Public Policy Institute.

Funds are needed to provide startup operational support for the new Trades District Technology Center, which will serve Monroe County and the region by supporting the growth of post-startup tech companies.

Ongoing investment in and development of the Trades District, plus other tech initiatives across the community, will help advance these objectives.

**c. Support employment in the trades by investing in educational outreach and programs through workforce partners**

Local trades organizations continue to report labor shortages, despite offering good paying jobs averaging anywhere from [\\$38,000 to \\$91,000 per year](#). According to Build Your Future, [Indiana has high demand for craft labor](#). These positions were deemed essential during the pandemic and labor shortages continue to create challenges for post-pandemic recovery. Labor shortages have a domino effect on building costs, which in turn makes it more expensive to buy and renovate homes or build commercial property.

ARPA and other funds can support employment in the trades by providing marketing and other funds for trades education, offered through partners like the [Hoosier Hills Career Center](#), which serves school corporations throughout the region, as well as Ivy Tech and WorkOne.

## **5. Access to opportunity and quality of life**

*Key Priorities:*

- *Support rural broadband and digital inclusion*
- *Support community collaboration addressing issues of homelessness*
- *Address early learning and childcare needs*

**Background:** As noted earlier, inclusive growth creates opportunities for all. Some of our neighbors face barriers to accessing these opportunities, which in turn affect area employers. The following recommendations are just some of the efforts that can be undertaken to address these challenges.

**Priority recommendations:**

**a. Support rural broadband and digital inclusion**

Continue work with local service providers to extend rural broadband service. Consider funding recommendations from the [City of Bloomington Digital Equity Strategic Plan](#) and [County Digital Inclusion Plan](#).

Local investments can be combined with resources from sources like the State’s Next Level Connections program. The legislature provided \$250 million for the program for two years, so there is a significant opportunity to fund broadband projects.

**b. Support community collaboration addressing issues of homelessness**

Advance and support programs and activities prioritized by the Monroe County Housing Insecurity Task Force, which included local service providers and elected officials, to address needs of those experiencing homelessness in the community and region.

**c. Address early learning and childcare needs**

**Build upon existing work:** [Monroe Smart Start](#), a leadership initiative of the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County, is working on a range of efforts to increase high-quality early education, support programs that want to grow capacity, provide professional development and advocacy, and more.

**Address workforce and cost challenges:** The top challenge in early learning is workforce related. Monroe Smart Start is working on workforce related solutions in addition to other needs. Childcare costs are also often cited as a barrier to employment for individuals at various income levels, but families at certain income brackets face additional challenges. While low-income families qualify for FSSA vouchers from the State, it is an income-based model. Lower-middle income families are constrained by the cost of childcare, which can range \$315-350/week for infants. This puts some families in the position of determining whether a caregiver should quit work due to childcare.

Identify what quartile of families is not covered by childcare and consider providing support for childcare on a sliding income scale, paired with efforts to adjust policies at the state level. Consider partnering with early learning centers that are available through the local school system.

**d. Additional ideas: transit, elder care, and support for the arts.**

While the aforementioned recommendations ranked higher in the BEDC survey, a number of respondents also highlighted needs for public transit and elder care as they can create additional barriers to employment for the local workforce. Support for the arts is also important, as it adds to quality of life for the community.

## 6. Public safety

### *Key Priorities:*

- *Support local police and firefighter recruitment and retention through competitive pay raises and benefits*
- *Supplement the work of uniformed officers through support for social workers or other outreach liaisons who work alongside police forces*
- *Assess how Monroe County justice center efforts will impact the local economy and coordinate as needed*

**Background:** Public safety helps communities remain vibrant and welcoming. Recent stories have highlighted local challenges in attracting and retaining quality public safety personnel to maintain a safe and healthy environment. This has an impact on residents and employers alike.

### **Priority recommendations:**

- a. Support local police and firefighter recruitment and retention through competitive pay raises and benefits**
- b. Supplement the work of uniformed officers through support for social workers or other outreach liaisons who work alongside police forces**
- c. Assess how Monroe County justice center efforts will impact the local economy and coordinate as needed**

As Monroe County determines how to address issues with the local justice center, it is important to assess how any changes will impact the local economy. If the facility and its employees move from downtown Bloomington, this will impact local businesses and vacate downtown property. The community also has limited land that can be used for employment and commercial purposes, so moving the facility to another location could reduce available space. Therefore, it will be important to assess the impact of any decisions for the justice center and coordinate any moves to mitigate negative impacts on local businesses and employment.

## 7. Public health

### *Key Priorities:*

- *Support training for future healthcare providers, especially in fields experiencing professional shortages*
- *Support existing mental health and substance abuse prevention providers*
- *Strengthen and expand community and public health infrastructure within Monroe County, through support for community health programs and providers*

**Background:** Public health and economic development are interrelated, as described in the [2021 Bloomington Business Outlook](#). The pandemic intensified and underscored community health and mental health needs, in addition to the need for healthcare workers.

**Priority recommendations:**

**a. Support training for future healthcare providers, especially in fields experiencing professional shortages**

In collaboration with Indiana University, Ivy Tech, other institutions of higher learning, community schools, and local health care providers, encourage individuals to consider health care careers and provide resources that increase awareness and access to healthcare training, education and clinical programs at all levels. This could be accomplished by increasing class sizes, adding satellite programs, and marketing efforts aimed at increasing the number of healthcare providers available to serve in Monroe County.

**b. Support existing mental health and substance abuse prevention providers**

Seek avenues for increased services, as well as provide awareness and connectivity to existing resources that address the emotional and mental health needs of the community.

**c. Strengthen and expand community and public health infrastructure within Monroe County, through support for community health programs and providers**

Expand existing programs and develop additional resources as needed, to fund and support community health programs and providers to address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other health issues on vulnerable populations. This may include funding of additional community health workers, nurse navigators, violence prevention programs, as well as other services as deemed appropriate.

## **8. Promote our community inside and out**

*Key Priorities:*

- *Fund efforts to better publicize resource inside the community for employers and workers*
- *Support efforts to tell our story outside the region through business*

**Background:** Some of our community’s achievements and assets seem like best-kept secrets -- both in and outside of our region. Anecdotally, the BEDC team has met neighbors, students, and alumni who are unaware of top employers, resources, and opportunities in the community. The more we can promote the story of Bloomington, Ellettsville, Monroe County, and the broader region, the better we can connect our neighbors to opportunity and help advance our community as a place with a high quality of life for residents to work, live, and play. The BEDC would be interested in partnering to execute this initiative.

**Priority recommendations:**

- a. Fund efforts to better publicize resources inside the community for employers and workers**
- b. Support efforts to tell our story outside the region through business**

The BEDC is building efforts to promote the Monroe County community both inside and outside of our boundaries, most recently through the launch of the “[Why Monroe County?](#)” video series. However, there are unrealized opportunities to reach the following audiences:

- Residents within Monroe County and especially under resourced populations, to help them understand what employment opportunities and resources are available to them, to help our neighbors move from jobs, to better jobs, to careers; and
- Talent and employers outside of the region, to help them understand the opportunities that are available to them in Monroe County.

More resources are needed to support these efforts, as there are numerous costs associated with branding and marketing the Monroe County, City of Bloomington, Town of Ellettsville and area community. Tools and costs may include website, work with branding specialists, promotional videos, social media advertising and engagement, software, and other supplies.

## Appendix: Funding opportunities

The following is a list of funding opportunities that may be applicable to the aforementioned priorities. These are examples of what is available; it is not a comprehensive list.

<b>Comprehensive funding bills</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Funding Total</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Source</b>
<a href="#">American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)</a> (aka State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF))	<a href="#">Allocations</a> : Monroe County received \$28.8 million; City of Bloomington received \$22.3 million; Ellettsville received \$1.41M	Funds allocated summer 2021	Federal
Funds may be used to: (1) To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality; (2) To respond to workers performing essential work during the pandemic by providing premium pay to eligible workers; (3) For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; (4) To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.			
<a href="#">Build Back Better</a>			Federal
This bill provides funding, establishes programs, and otherwise modifies provisions relating to a broad array of areas, including education, labor, child care, health care, taxes, immigration, and the environment. (The bill is commonly referred to as the Build Back Better Act.) Legislation has passed the House, to be considered by the Senate (as of 3/8/22)			

<b>Infrastructure Grants</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Funding Total</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Source</b>
<a href="#">Bipartisan Infrastructure Law</a>	Significant	Signed into law November 2021	Federal
This comprehensive legislation provides significant infrastructure funding through various federal agencies to support transportation; climate, energy, and environment; broadband; and other programs.			
<a href="#">Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program</a>	\$1 Billion	Opens September 2022	Federal - FEMA
FEMA will support communities undertaking hazard mitigation projects to reduce risks they face from disasters and other natural hazards. Communities will apply as sub-applicants under their states. The BRIC program guiding principles are supporting communities through capability- and capacity-building; encouraging and enabling innovation; enabling large projects; and providing consistency.			
<a href="#">Community Crossings Matching</a>	N/A	Opens July 2022	State - INDOT

<a href="#">Grant Program</a>			
<p>Community Crossings is a partnership between INDOT and Hoosier communities, both urban and rural, to invest in infrastructure projects that catalyze economic development, create jobs, and strengthen local transportation networks. Projects that are eligible for funding through Community Crossings include road and bridge preservation projects with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance in connection with these projects. Material costs for chip sealing and crack filing operations are also eligible for funding.</p>			
<a href="#">Flood Mitigation Assistance</a>	\$3.5 Billion	Opens September 2022	Federal - FEMA
<p>The Flood Mitigation Assistance Program is a competitive grant program that provides funding to states and local communities. Funds can be used for projects that reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings insured by the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA chooses recipients based on the applicant's ranking of the project and the eligibility and cost-effectiveness of the project.</p>			
<a href="#">National Infrastructure Project Assistance</a>	\$5 Billion	Selection criteria posted	Federal - DOT
<p>Supports multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects of regional or national significance. Communities are eligible to apply for funding to complete critical large projects that would otherwise be unachievable without assistance.</p>			
<a href="#">Public Works &amp; Economic Adjustment Grants</a>	\$500 Million; awards of \$100k-\$10M	Due by March 31, 2022	Federal - EDA
<p>EDA's ARPA EAA NOFO is designed to provide a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions as they respond to, and recover from, the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, including long-term recovery and resilience to future economic disasters.</p>			
<a href="#">RAISE Grant Program</a>	\$7.5 Billion; awards of \$1M-\$25M	Due by April 14, 2022	Federal - DOT
<p>Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants are for capital investments in surface transportation that will have a significant local or regional impact. Per the BIL, in addition to capital awards, DOT will award at least \$75 million for eligible planning, preparation or design of projects eligible for RAISE Grants that do not result in construction with FY2022 RAISE funding. In addition, DOT will award at least \$15 million for projects located in areas of persistent poverty or historically disadvantaged communities.</p>			
<a href="#">Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program</a>	\$1 Billion; awards of \$5M+	NOFO Q2 2022	Federal - DOT, FHA
<p>Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program will restore community connectivity by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, including to mobility, access, or economic development.</p>			
<a href="#">Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program</a>	\$2 Billion	Opens Q1 2022	Federal - DOT
<p>This competitive grant will improve and expand surface transportation infrastructure in rural areas, increasing connectivity, improving safety and reliability of the movement of people and freight, and generate regional economic growth. Specific set asides include: small projects (\$200 million), rural roadway lane departure improvements (\$300 million).</p>			
<a href="#">Safe Streets and Roads for All</a>	\$5 Billion	Opens May 2022	Federal - DOT

## Public Safety Grant Opportunities

Name	Funding Total	Timeline	Sponsor
<a href="#">COPS Hiring Program</a>	\$140 Million	Due June 2022	Federal - DOJ

The COPS Hiring Program (CHP) is a competitive grant program designed to provide funding directly to law enforcement agencies to hire and/or rehire additional career law enforcement officers in an effort to increase their community policing capacity and crime prevention efforts. All local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies that have primary law enforcement authority are eligible to apply.

<a href="#">LEMHWA Program Grant</a>	\$8 Million, awards of multiple \$125k	Due June 2022	Federal - DOJ
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Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) Program funds are used to improve the delivery of and access to mental health and wellness services for law enforcement through the implementation of peer support, training, family resources, suicide prevention, and other promising practices for wellness programs.

## Public Health Grant Opportunities

Name	Funding Total	Timeline	Sponsor
<a href="#">Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Educatin (AWARE)</a>	\$5.4 Million; awards of <\$1.8M	Due by May 2, 2022	Federal - SAMHSA

The purpose of Project AWARE is to develop a sustainable infrastructure for school-based mental health programs and services. It is expected that the recipient will build a collaborative partnership that includes the State Education Agency (SEA), the Local Education Agency (LEA), the State Mental Health Agency (SMHA), community-based providers of behavioral health care services, school personnel, community organizations, families, and school-aged youth.

<a href="#">Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Expansion Grants</a>	\$150 Million; awards of <\$2M	Opens December 2022	Federal - SAMHSA
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The purpose of this program is to increase access to, and improve the quality of community mental and substance use disorder treatment services through the expansion of CCBHCs. CCBHCs provide person- and family-centered integrated services. The CCBHC Expansion grant program must provide access to services including 24/7 crisis intervention services for individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) or substance use disorders (SUD),

<a href="#">The Ackerman Foundation Grants</a>	N/A	Due by May 15, 2022	Ackerman Foundation
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The foundation was organized to receive gifts and grants of money and property of every kind. As an Indianapolis based organization, grants are made predominately to central Indiana organizations as well as a few national medical research institutions. Specifically, the foundation focuses on Indiana cultural institutions and organizations benefiting health and human services, community development, and education.

