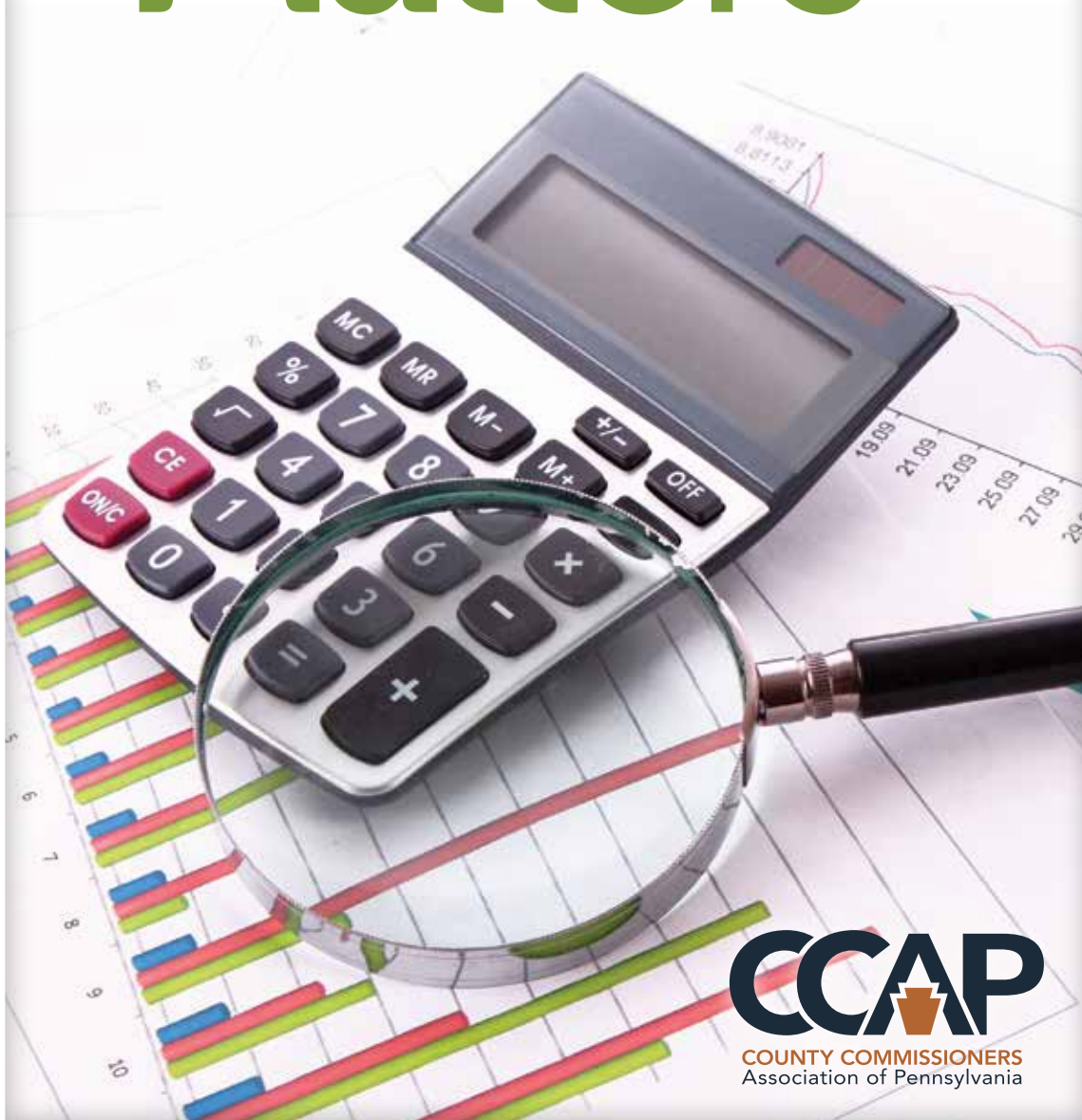


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To acquire an article idea submittal form for CCAP's *Pennsylvania County News* please email Ken Kroski at [kkroski@pacounties.org](mailto:kkroski@pacounties.org).

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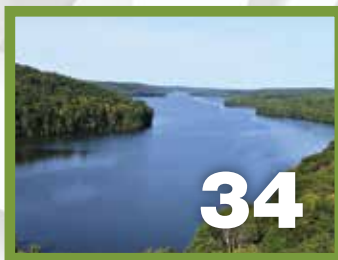
spring  
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# PENNSYLVANIA county news

Money matters when it comes to counties providing services and programs that affect the quality of life for every resident. The pandemic has had significant effects on the economy and revenues as well as implications for the future.

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# executive director's commentary



**LISA SCHAEFER**

Executive Director  
County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

**W**hen I was a senior in high school, our English teacher gave us an assignment to define a word that is generally open to interpretation, such as friendship. I thought about this assignment as I reflected on my first year as executive director, in particular what it means to be an association. The dictionary definition is so dry and unsatisfying - a group of people organized for a joint purpose, or a connection or cooperative link between people. That might explain the what of an association, but it doesn't really get to the how or why of association. It doesn't explain the feeling I have when I think of CCAP, the sense of partnership, the feeling of loyalty to one another.

This bunny trail of thoughts led me to another concept I studied many years after that high school English class, this time during a class on organizational behavior for my MPA. As I was reviewing literature for a paper on grassroots advocacy, I came across the idea of organizational citizenship behavior. Essentially, organizational citizenship behavior is all of those voluntary positive and constructive actions and behaviors a person does within an organization that aren't part of their "job

description" or "contractual tasks." Or, in more layman's terms, it's about all the ways people go above and beyond that make the organization more effective, and ultimately more successful.

For me, this gets to the heart of what it means to be our association. County officials and county staff already have so many things to do at home in their regular jobs. But you also give your valuable time by participating in our membership calls and our policy committees, by engaging in our leadership programs and conferences, and by advocating with your legislative delegation and testifying at hearings. These organizational citizenship behaviors add up until the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

There have been so many things in the past year that could have torn us apart, physically, emotionally and mentally. A global pandemic. A bitterly controversial election. Racial injustice protests. Despite this, we have managed to stay above the negativity. Why? Because we know our strength is in our ability to tackle these issues together, as an association. We listen, we share ideas, we dialogue, we seek common

ground, don't compete against one another, etc. We find a way to put differences aside and stay focused on the greater good of our collective mission. Each of us knows that our actions impact not only ourselves or our individual counties, but all counties, and by extension all residents of all counties, throughout the commonwealth.

We have big goals for the rest of 2021 as we move into the post-pandemic world, including legislative priorities like election reform and practical priorities like helping Pennsylvanians access the COVID-19 vaccine. These won't be easy, and the path to get there will often be frustrating as we work with our state and federal partners. If we can stay focused on our collective goals as an association, if we keep one another motivated to keep making a difference, we can overcome these challenges too, just as we have for the past 135 years.

P.S. If you haven't yet had a chance, check out our 2020 Annual Report at [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org). It's a great reminder of the how and the why of our association and how much we can achieve together. 🍷



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Contact: Fred Bean

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Contact: Kimberly Hall

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**UNDERSTANDING THE  
ECONOMIC AND REVENUE IMPACT  
OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**



**Matthew Knittel**

Director

Independent Fiscal Office

When final data are published, it is likely that calendar year (CY) 2020 will include two of the most volatile economic quarters on record. Due to the rapid and unexpected onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, preliminary data show that real U.S. economic growth contracted by 31.4% in the second quarter of 2020 (annualized basis), and then rebounded by 33.4% in the third quarter. For the full year, the data show the U.S. economy contracted by 3.5%.

Full year data are not yet available for states, but it is likely that Pennsylvania endured a somewhat stronger economic contraction. The immediate recession caused by the pandemic and related mitigation efforts has short- and long-term implications for state and local economies, revenues and finances. This brief article provides a review of what transpired, an assessment of the current state economy, and the potential revenue implications for state and local units from the fundamental changes that have taken place.

## **ONE YEAR AGO: A RAPID JOBS CONTRACTION**

Prior to the implementation of mitigation efforts and certain mandated business closures, the state economy had been performing at a high level. In the fourth quarter of 2019, Pennsylvania real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded by 2.4% from the prior year, the unemployment rate was 4.6% and total wages paid to all workers grew by 4.3%. These growth rates are strong numbers for the state economy. The most pressing issue was whether there would be enough workers to sustain the record-long economic expansion.

Then, on March 6, 2020, the commonwealth identified its first COVID-19 case. On March 23, Governor Wolf mandated the closure of all non-life-sustaining businesses and on April 1, issued stay-at-home orders for all counties to mitigate the spread of the virus. At the time, policymakers had no way to know how long businesses would remain closed to slow the spread of the virus.

The impact of the pandemic and mitigation efforts appeared immediately in state employment data, as payroll jobs (excludes self-employed) fell by 1.06 million in April 2020 from the prior year, most notably in the food service-accommodation (-280,200 jobs) and retail-wholesale trade (-154,800 jobs) sectors. (See table.) The latest data for December show that more than half of lost jobs have been recovered. The data show a contraction of 471,700 jobs from the prior year, concentrated in the food service-accommodation (-139,600), education (-50,400) and retail-wholesale trade (-47,800) sectors. Other data reveal that 241,000 state residents exited the labor force in the fourth quarter. The reasons for these exits are not known and could include early retirements, lack of job prospects, health concerns or need to care for or home school children.

## OTHER ECONOMIC INDICATORS

A highly unusual characteristic of the COVID-19 recession is the glaring disconnect between the labor market and nearly every other economic indicator. For the fourth quarter of 2020, total state-wide wages paid to all workers increased by 0.7% from the prior year, despite 460,000 (-7.5%) fewer jobs for the quarter. This disparity illustrates the nature of jobs lost from the pandemic: part-time, lower-wage jobs that often have a tipped component that is not included with wages (e.g., food servers, hair stylists).

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau show that workers under age 24 lost employment at roughly twice the rate as all other workers. The resiliency of wage growth is an important reason why state General Fund revenues have actually grown despite the historic jobs contraction.

Other economic indicators also reveal strength for homeowners and consumers. For example:

- Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) data show that state home values increased by 10.8% in the fourth quarter relative to the prior year, the highest rate since the first quarter of 2005.
- Various data sources show that Pennsylvania cash income (i.e., all types of income received that can be spent or saved) increased by an estimated 8.3% in CY 2020, the highest rate in at least three decades.
- For the fourth quarter of 2020, total state sales tax revenues increased by 5.4%. At the same

### 2020 PA Payroll Employment: Change from Prior Year

	Number (000s)		Percent	
	Apr	Dec	Apr	Dec
<b>Total Payroll Employment</b>	<b>-1,062</b>	<b>-472</b>	<b>-17.5%</b>	<b>-7.7%</b>
Construction	-104	-5	-40.1	-2.1
Manufacturing	-77	-35	-13.3	-6.0
Retail and Wholesale Trade	-155	-48	-18.9	-5.7
Transportation and Warehousing	-27	4	-9.1	1.3
Financial and Real Estate	-3	-1	-0.9	-0.2
Professional and Technical	-21	-13	-5.8	-3.6
Admin. and Waste Management	-53	-26	-16.8	-8.0
Education	-42	-50	-16.1	-19.9
Healthcare-Social Assistance	-120	-39	-11.4	-3.6
Arts-Entertainment	-58	-27	-60.9	-29.9
Accommodation-Food Service	-280	-140	-58.6	-29.5
Other Services	-86	-38	-32.8	-14.5
All Government	-17	-32	-2.3	-4.4
Federal	2	1	2.5	1.2
State	1	-9	0.6	-5.8
Local	-20	-24	-4.4	-5.2
All Other Sectors	-21	-24	-8.2	-9.3

Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted. December data are preliminary. Excludes self-employed. Education sector includes colleges, universities, private and charter elementary/secondary schools and professional schools. Local public school districts are included with Local Government. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, State and Metro Area Employment.

time, credit card debt fell by 11.6% for all Pennsylvania consumers.

A critical factor that motivated these outcomes was the massive federal stimulus injected into the state economy. For CY 2020, the Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) estimates that state and federal stimulus injected more than \$64 billion of relief to state residents through enhanced unemployment compensation, forgivable loans and economic impact payments. An additional \$13.3 billion was disbursed to state and local governments and other miscellaneous entities. For CY 2021, the IFO estimates individual stimulus of more than \$25 billion, and more than \$6 billion of direct aid to state and local governments and other service providers. These

figures exclude any additional stimulus currently under consideration by the U.S. Senate.

## MANY JOBS WILL NOT BE RECOVERED

A pertinent issue for policymakers and state and local budget staff is the near- and long-term implications of the COVID-19 recession. One important implication is that the current employment contraction is unlikely to be reversed in the near-term. The IFO projects that state payroll employment will not return to its pre-pandemic level until CY 2026. Four reasons motivate that outcome:

- During recessions, labor productivity tends to surge, and U.S. data reveal this trend holds for the COVID-19 recession.



Businesses implemented rapid changes in procurement and operations and increased automation which reduced the demand for labor. These types of productivity gains are permanent and will not be reversed.

- Consumer spending patterns accelerated rapidly towards online sales. Sales and use tax collections data suggest that revenues from online sales roughly doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most consumers are unlikely to revert fully to former shopping habits. This trend is most notable for retail clothing sales, as current employment levels are nearly half the level they were prior to the pandemic.

- Larger firms implemented various cost savings measures such as reduced travel and reduced allowances for meals and entertainment expenses. Remote working also implies less need for office space and firms that provide building maintenance services.
- Employees will continue to work remotely now that infrastructure is in place and employers are comfortable with the concept. The IFO estimates that gasoline purchases will fall by 10% for FY 2020-21 largely due to remote working. The dramatic shift to remote working affects many types of firms such as restaurants, dry cleaners, formal clothing stores and public and private transit entities.

## POTENTIAL REVENUE IMPLICATIONS

To the extent that these changes are not transient, what are the potential implications for state and local budgets? For the state, the massive federal stimulus significantly reduced the anticipated shortfall in General Fund revenues. For FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21, the IFO estimates that General Fund revenues will be roughly \$2.5 billion lower (-3.4%) than they would have been in the absence of the pandemic.

Going forward, the largest downside risk is the degree of dependency on federal stimulus, and the impact once it is removed. As noted, many homeowners and

consumers seem well positioned to emerge from the recession. However, less real-time data are available regarding the status of more vulnerable populations, such as those who rent or were employed in lower-wage jobs.

For local units, the IFO released a report in July 2020 that projected a 3.4% reduction in earned income tax (EIT) collections by municipalities for CY 2020 and a 7.3% reduction for local school districts for school year (SY) 2020-21. However, those projections assumed that total wages paid would decline by 4% and net profits of business entities (sole proprietors, partnerships and independent contractors) would contract by 15%.

The latest data for CY 2020 suggest that statewide wages declined by 1.0 to 1.5% and the reduction in net profits is likely closer to 10%. For net profits, the IFO believes there is potential upside for growth as some former payroll employees became independent contractors (e.g., DoorDash, Grubhub) and firms that implemented the changes noted above should benefit from higher profit margins.

For property taxes, the IFO projected a 1.9% reduction for school districts (SY 2020-21) and a 1.3 to 1.4% reduction for counties and municipalities (CY 2020). In February 2021, the IFO updated its school district property tax forecast, and based on published millage rates, revised the projected decline to 1.7% for SY 2020-21. It should be noted that some local

units extended dates to which the discount, base and penalty periods apply to payments, and the extension of those dates could have a material impact on collections. Moreover, it is not known how the continued extension of rent forbearance programs will affect payments by landlords. Offsetting that potential negative impact is the new round of forgivable Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans that occurred at the start of this year, additional economic impact payments, and the extension of enhanced unemployment compensation benefits into CY 2021.

## JOBS AND WAGES

Professional staff who make forecasts for local units will want to pay particular attention to the attrition of the wage base and the sectors that report job losses. Wages comprise roughly 90% of the statewide EIT base. For more than 20 metro areas, high-level sector employment data are published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, State and Metro Area Employment. Trends in regular remittances also provide a key piece of data. Going forward, EIT growth will be a function of overall jobs growth, the type of jobs added and the growth of wages paid to existing workers. This final factor is by far the most important. Recent data suggest that current workers generally fared well during the recession, and while some endured a temporary pay freeze, most did not.

A lesser factor that could impact state and local wage growth is jobs

churn. It is possible that an unusually large number of high-wage workers near retirement opted to retire, which would dampen annual wage growth. Unfortunately, data are not yet available to determine whether that occurred. To the extent it did occur, and retirements were pulled forward in time a few years, wage growth might be restrained in the current year, but receive a modest boost in future years.

In summary, the key economic concern for policymakers is the long-term implications from the massive 2020 jobs contraction. It is likely that many former workers have already exited, or will exit, the labor force and many potential future workers may not enter the labor force. Couples might also decide they can afford for a spouse to remain at home to school children or provide care for an elderly parent, as there is now a greater reluctance to use nursing homes. (Through December 2020, nursing home and residential care employment was down 13,000 jobs (-6.4%)). These individual choices tend to reduce economic growth, all else equal. When combined with a contracting working age population (age 20 to 64), there will be future challenges to maintain real economic growth. Jobs training programs are beneficial, but only to the extent there is a demand for those jobs. It will likely take several years for the state economy to fully absorb and adjust to the drastic changes implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. ▼

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# Preventing Massive Economic Shock

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Chief Investment Officer  
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Asset Management, LLC

## **It has been a strange year, to say the least.**

In response to an epochal pandemic, the federal government and the Federal Reserve have flooded the economy with money. At the outset of the economic lockdown, the Fed not only dusted off its playbook from the Great Financial Crisis but did so on in a much bigger way. Its aim was to make sure that illiquidity did not cause insolvency.

Large corporations, the banking sector and even municipalities could borrow money from the Fed—even if some of those borrowers were no longer considered investment grade. The Fed's balance sheet ballooned as it bought up huge amounts of mortgage-backed securities and Treasury bonds. Where did those Treasury bonds come from? Directly from the government which put together a massive stimulus package known as the CARES Act in short order and funded it through the issuance of debt.

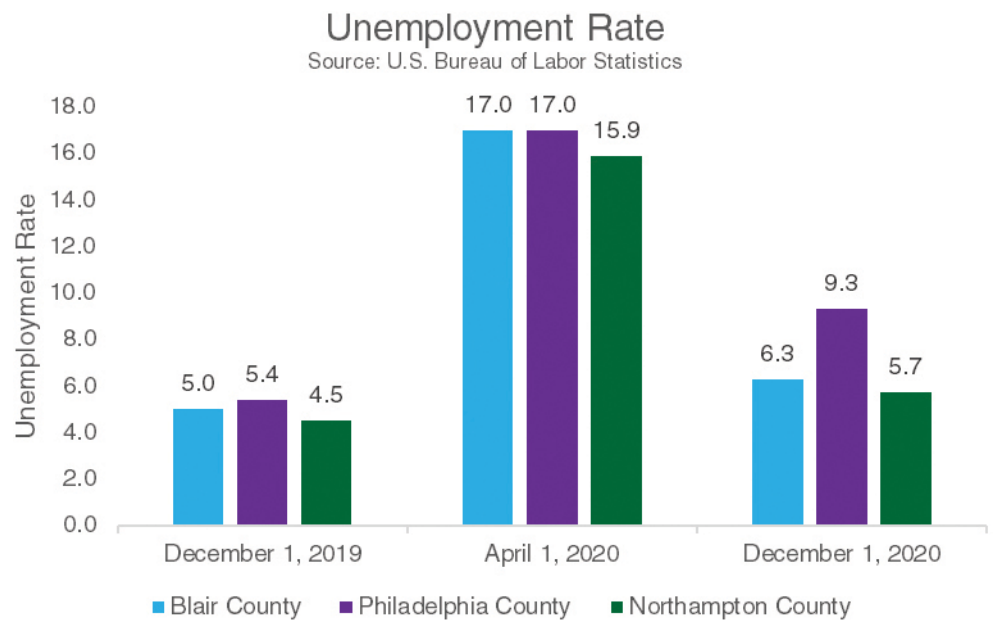
Whereas the Fed is built to interface with large institutions, it does not have the mandate or expertise to work directly with individuals and small companies. The CARES Act was meant to bridge that gap, sending checks directly to people and funding the Payroll Protection Program.

At this point, there are three questions that are appropriate to ask: Did the interventions work? What were the consequences? And are there other things we should be looking at longer term?

## DID IT WORK?

Given Pennsylvania's diverse population and industries, it is often sufficient to gauge the health of the state's economy by looking at national trends. However, there have been some significant winners (i.e. technology) and losers (see restaurants and leisure) over the past year, so we took data from three disparate counties—Blair, Philadelphia and Northampton—to see if there were any underlying tendencies that did not appear at the macro level.

The first metric is unemployment. Going into 2020, the economy was humming along at low unemployment levels. The tightness of the labor market was considered a potential issue as employers were having trouble filling open positions. Then as one would expect, the mandated shutdown caused a swift and severe contraction in the labor market. As of April 1, 2020, all three counties saw unemployment rates jump above 15%. This was before the CARES Act money



hit the economy. With the implementation of the fiscal support, the recent data points to a significant recovery towards pre-pandemic employment levels, although Philadelphia is still lagging in its rebound.

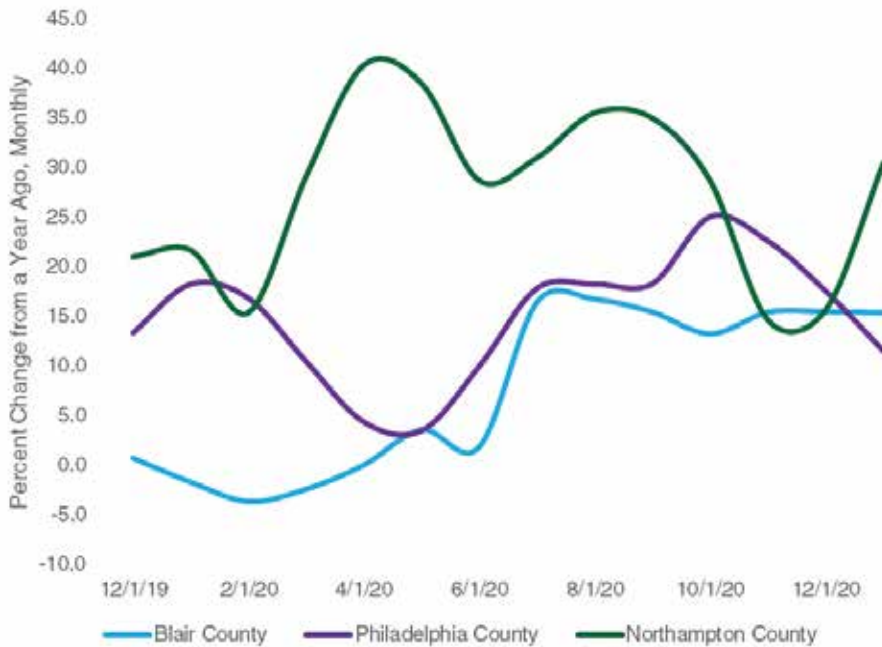
With a full reopening not yet in view, we expect more federal aid for those out of work in an attempt to tide them over until they can resume their employment. Anytime legislation as sweeping as the CARES Act is passed in as short a time as it was, there is bound to be unnecessary pork and other wasteful spending. Unlike the Federal Reserve, which is a small handful of professional economists who can make decisions quickly, it is the nature of government to need compromise to get bills passed. So even though the fiscal interventions were not as efficient as they could have been, we would answer the question of "Did it work?" as yes, so far.

## WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES?

The near immediate positive response of financial markets was one of the most noticeable results of the support packages. The stock market was cratering as the shutdowns began, and the credit markets were frozen. Then the Fed came in with guns blazing, and the markets reversed course and started setting new all-time records by summer. To bring this a little closer to home, let us revisit our three example counties before speaking more to the public markets. It is unusual during a recession for the housing market to boom. Add in the COVID induced flight from cities and one might have expected a dramatic collapse in the Philadelphia housing market. Early in the pandemic it struggled, but the chart below shows that Blair, Northampton and Philadelphia counties all saw their median listing price skyrocket.

## Median Listing Price

source: Realtor.com



What happened in housing? Similar to other financial assets, low interest rates and massive liquidity drove home prices higher. One of the first areas that the Fed ventured into at the beginning of the pandemic was the mortgage market. They have aggressively bought almost the entirety of newly issued mortgage backed securities which has served to keep interest rates low. When interest rates are low, people can afford to pay more for the houses. It is important to keep in mind that these year-over-year changes that topped near 45% in Northampton County were not from some abnormally low base. The housing market in the year prior was robust so there is significance in this price appreciation.

The boom in housing was also evident in other assets. If you had perfect foresight into everything that would happen in 2020 except for the performance of stocks,

would you have predicted that the S&P 500 would post an 18% gain? Like the housing market, the stock market had a banner year in 2019 so the rapid ascent was not coming from a low point. Fixed income securities also enjoyed strong returns. When was the last time that in a year when county budgets were strained with a recession was your pension plan a bright spot?

Is the rebound in asset prices that seems far ahead of the health of the economy a good thing? It depends who you ask. The Federal Reserve has long believed that the "wealth effect" is good for the economy. Consumers who feel richer because their asset values (i.e. houses, 401(k)s, etc.) are growing are more confident spenders. The consumer makes up roughly 70% of our economy, so more spending leads to more growth.

The flip side to this disconnect between the economy and the

market is that it has exacerbated the wealth gap that exists in the country. According to the Pew Research Center's 2020 "Trends in Income and Wealth Inequality" publication, the average American family's net worth was still lower than it was in 2000, but the average upper income family had seen its wealth increase by 33% over the same period. This study was completed before the pandemic which very likely widened that gap. Is this trajectory sustainable? Will the new administration push an agenda focused on redistribution of wealth? We are in the early days of both the administration and the reopening, but if rising tides do not lift all ships, legislative measures to level the playing field may be seen.

One potential indication of whether the reopening is widespread and equitable is whether one of the key goals of these programs is met: that the capital base is bruised but not scarred. The transfer payments by the government were meant to keep families and companies in place during the artificial deep freeze in which the economy was set. Anecdotally, every Main Street across the state and country has empty store fronts right now with businesses closed due to the pandemic. It is yet to be determined how quickly a recovery on that front happens.

## WHAT SHOULD WE BE LOOKING AT LONG-TERM?

The economy will eventually recover. Our nation has a strong work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit. What needs to be considered is

with trillions of new dollars printed—and more on the way—how does the country get back onto a sustainable fiscal path? Basic economic laws of supply and demand state that if there is more money in the economy bidding on the same amount of goods, then the price of money should go down. This phenomenon goes by another name in the real world—inflation. In the immediate future, inflation likely will not be a problem. Right now, consumers are locked down, so much of the printed money is sitting in bank accounts. The Fed is also depressing interest rates meaning that the cost of the debt is not a burden.



While we can likely float this massive debt for some period of time, it is hard to see how the current level of federal debt is sustainable. Perhaps Modern Monetary Theory, which posits that the government can keep borrowing as long as economic growth is greater than interest rates, will play out and all will end well, but a survey of history shows that monetizing debt is rarely a winning long-term strategy. Will there be the fortitude necessary to make the spending and tax changes necessary to rein in the national debt? That answer is to be determined.

For the short term, there is plenty to look forward to as the economy gets back to normal. Perhaps future spending can come in the form of productive investments in infrastructure or elsewhere rather than the lifeline spending of the past year. Current record low interest rates favor borrowers over savers. For the long-term there are as many question marks on the economy as there have been in a long time.

The past year has seen Washington act in previously unimaginable ways. It is hard to find too much fault in the steps taken on the fiscal and monetary fronts in response to the danger that was faced. The consequences are varied and still unfolding. While the steps taken were likely necessary to prevent a massive economic shock, there are going to be hard decisions in the future to pay down current spending. ▾

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# BUDGET FORECASTING:

Preparing for the Unknown



**Meghan A. McCandless**  
Director, Financial Administration  
Westmoreland County

**W**hen you go to the eye doctor, there is sometimes a “puff test” where an object, be it a house or a balloon, slowly becomes clearer before a puff of air bursts into your eye. Budget forecasting in 2020 was like that startling puff and the vision of the object never became clear. There are always uncertainties when developing a budget forecast, but those uncertainties grew exponentially in 2020.

The budget forecast is a fundamental part of the annual budget process and can be used as a tool to evaluate current and future fiscal needs, guide decision making, and influence programmatic decisions. In a typical year revenue and expenditure trends are identified and evaluated for the current and future years. For example, if previous years show a trend of a

6-8% increase in health insurance costs, that will be forecasted as such. However, with doctors’ offices discouraging routine visits and only seeing emergency patients in 2020, we actually saw a decrease of 3% in health insurance costs.

That being said, preventative treatment appointments likely weren’t occurring as frequently in 2020; so, should a larger increase than the usual trend of 6-8% be anticipated for 2021? Another factor related to COVID-19 that could influence health insurance projections is the reduced amount of sick days being taken resulting in less health insurance members visiting costly urgent care facilities. Tech titans such as Google, Microsoft, and Facebook have said that they are likely to continue remote work through 2021 as they’ve seen an average of 2.4 less sick days a year per employee.

The state FY20-21 adopted budget could also have a large impact on budget forecasting depending on any cuts that might be realized for counties to fund mandated services, such as Children and Youth Services or Area Agency on Aging. But these developments are focused on short term forecasting, so let’s discuss what goes into longer-range budget forecasting.

## TRUE COSTS

Long-range forecasting is imperative to help local governments understand the true costs of their obligations, make decisions to deal with gaps between revenue and expenditures, and evaluate fund balance levels. For revenue analysis, particularly in the General Fund, input from departments such as planning and community development can help with population and development projections, affecting

	2017 <u>Actual</u>	2018 <u>Actual</u>	2019 <u>Actual</u>	2020 <u>YEE</u>	2021 <u>Adopted</u>	2022 <u>Projected</u>	2023 <u>Projected</u>	2024 <u>Projected</u>
<b>REVENUES</b>								
Taxes	\$ 82,600,519	\$ 83,324,251	\$ 83,304,614	\$ 84,501,436	\$ 85,099,370	\$ 85,950,364	\$ 85,954,661	\$ 85,958,959
Intergovernmental Revenues	\$ 13,285,788	\$ 14,564,005	\$ 13,001,537	\$ 43,716,860	\$ 15,272,360	\$ 15,425,084	\$ 15,579,334	\$ 15,735,128
Charges for Services	\$ 17,249,760	\$ 17,371,698	\$ 17,316,210	\$ 15,164,232	\$ 16,349,635	\$ 16,513,131	\$ 16,678,263	\$ 16,845,045
Fines & Forfeits	\$ 212,638	\$ 245,138	\$ 199,732	\$ 240,465	\$ 227,030	\$ 229,300	\$ 231,593	\$ 233,909
Licenses & Permits	\$ 461,087	\$ 449,007	\$ 413,483	\$ 389,804	\$ 416,980	\$ 425,320	\$ 433,826	\$ 442,503
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$ 6,351,921	\$ 8,054,776	\$ 7,774,110	\$ 5,250,913	\$ 5,561,047	\$ 5,672,268	\$ 5,785,713	\$ 5,901,428
Other Financial Sources	\$ 2,058,283	\$ 1,796,640	\$ 2,294,223	\$ 4,728,220	\$ 2,381,855	\$ 2,405,674	\$ 2,429,730	\$ 2,454,028
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 122,219,996</b>	<b>\$ 125,805,515</b>	<b>\$ 124,303,909</b>	<b>\$ 153,991,930</b>	<b>\$ 125,308,277</b>	<b>\$ 126,621,140</b>	<b>\$ 127,093,121</b>	<b>\$ 127,570,999</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>								
Personnel Services	\$ 44,946,477	\$ 46,359,462	\$ 47,190,973	\$ 48,879,928	\$ 47,218,190	\$ 47,926,463	\$ 48,645,360	\$ 49,375,040
Fringe Benefits	\$ 23,067,424	\$ 22,498,635	\$ 24,741,950	\$ 23,987,054	\$ 23,535,376	\$ 22,476,791	\$ 23,375,863	\$ 24,310,897
Other Services/Charges	\$ 27,464,662	\$ 28,759,510	\$ 26,713,286	\$ 46,794,916	\$ 29,735,488	\$ 30,032,843	\$ 30,333,171	\$ 30,636,503
Supplies	\$ 1,927,484	\$ 2,316,986	\$ 2,416,024	\$ 3,593,376	\$ 2,716,447	\$ 2,743,611	\$ 2,771,048	\$ 2,798,758
Capital Outlay	\$ 3,712,418	\$ 4,171,413	\$ 5,769,531	\$ 6,500,663	\$ 2,679,725	\$ 2,733,320	\$ 2,787,986	\$ 2,843,746
Other Financial Uses	\$ 14,799,191	\$ 17,791,834	\$ 16,736,562	\$ 18,483,448	\$ 20,386,965	\$ 20,488,900	\$ 20,591,344	\$ 20,694,301
Debt Service	\$ 9,793,683	\$ 9,597,602	\$ 7,996,799	\$ 7,183,123	\$ 4,887,832	\$ 4,636,789	\$ 4,760,106	\$ 4,807,707
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 125,711,339</b>	<b>\$ 131,495,442</b>	<b>\$ 131,565,125</b>	<b>\$ 155,422,508</b>	<b>\$ 131,160,023</b>	<b>\$ 131,038,717</b>	<b>\$ 133,264,878</b>	<b>\$ 135,466,952</b>
<b>Net Revenues (Expenditures)</b>	<b>\$ (3,491,343)</b>	<b>\$ (5,689,927)</b>	<b>\$ (7,261,216)</b>	<b>\$ (1,430,578)</b>	<b>\$ (5,851,746)</b>	<b>\$ (4,417,577)</b>	<b>\$ (6,171,756)</b>	<b>\$ (7,895,953)</b>
Non-Spendable	\$ 638,607	\$ 1,122,854	\$ 982,982	\$ 982,982	\$ 982,982	\$ 982,982	\$ 982,982	\$ 982,982
Restricted	\$ 23,242,481	\$ 23,585,617	\$ 23,585,617	\$ 23,585,617	\$ 23,585,617	\$ 23,585,617	\$ 23,585,617	\$ 23,585,617
Committed	\$ 1,071,242	\$ 1,033,786	\$ 913,964	\$ 913,964	\$ 913,964	\$ 904,824	\$ 895,776	\$ 886,818
Assigned	\$ 11,230,089	\$ 10,440,162	\$ 11,099,856	\$ 11,099,856	\$ 10,248,110	\$ 10,126,970	\$ 10,025,700	\$ 9,925,443
Unassigned	\$ 40,738,142	\$ 35,048,215	\$ 27,386,999	\$ 25,956,421	\$ 20,956,421	\$ 16,669,124	\$ 10,607,686	\$ 2,820,948
Unrestricted Fund Balance	\$ 53,039,473	\$ 46,522,163	\$ 39,400,819	\$ 37,970,241	\$ 32,118,495	\$ 27,700,919	\$ 21,529,163	\$ 13,633,209
<b>Ending Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 76,920,561</b>	<b>\$ 71,230,634</b>	<b>\$ 63,969,418</b>	<b>\$ 62,538,840</b>	<b>\$ 56,687,094</b>	<b>\$ 52,269,518</b>	<b>\$ 46,097,762</b>	<b>\$ 38,201,808</b>
Unrestricted Fund Balance Threshold	\$ 20,497,526	\$ 20,951,890	\$ 21,915,907	\$ 21,927,521	\$ 25,903,751	\$ 21,860,004	\$ 21,839,786	\$ 22,210,813

tax revenues. For expense analysis, one area to take into consideration when developing a budget forecast is capital planning.

It's important to look at the county's long term plans and update capital plans annually to assess future capital projects, technology needs, and other capital purchases or improvements. In evaluating the merit of a capital project, determine if that capital plan will improve the operating proficiency, possibly reducing future operating budgets. Evaluating the long-term capital plan and reserve levels can also help prepare for potential borrowing needs in the future.

For budgetary purposes and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), counties should develop an unrestricted fund balance policy to establish the necessary level of reserves to maintain credit worthiness, meet cash flow requirements,

fund unfunded mandates, cover significant revenue loss or expenditure increases, and adequately provide for economic uncertainties, such as the one created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Budget forecasting can suggest what future fund balance/reserve levels are projected and when those reserves will need replenished.

## TWO MONTHS

In this budget forecast chart, the unrestricted fund balance, which is made up of Committed, Assigned, and Unassigned balances, is projected to fall below the county's fund balance policy threshold by 2023. Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) "recommends, at a minimum, that general-purpose governments, regardless of size, maintain unrestricted budgetary fund balance in their general fund of no less than two months of regular general fund operating revenues or regular general fund operating

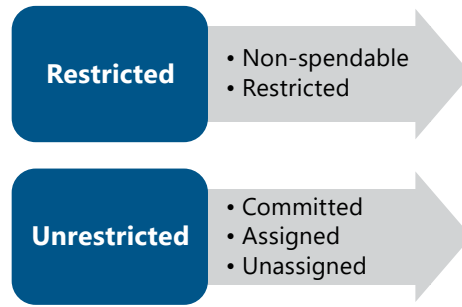
expenditures." This sample also assumes an increase in personnel services of 1.5% when taking into consideration union contracts and averaging the percentage of annual increases across all unions.

Governmental funds report fund balance categories established by Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) 54 as either non-spendable, restricted, committed, assigned, or unassigned. Non-spendable and restricted amounts are considered restricted funds and are not typically included in a fund balance policy. Examples of non-spendable funds are inventories, pre-paid items, and endowments. Examples of restricted funds are items such as outstanding encumbrances, federal and state programs, restricted investments, and bonded indebtedness.

Committed funds are established, modified, or rescinded by formal action of the highest level of

decision-making authority such as the Board of Commissioners. Self-insurance contingencies, capital expenditures, and future liabilities, claims and judgements are all considered to be committed funds. The assigned fund balance is designated for specific purposes, which is often delegated to the Chief Financial Officer or County Administrator. Examples of assigned fund balances would be for worker's compensation, health insurance, or working capital. Unassigned fund balance is the residual classification for the government's general fund and includes all spendable amounts not contained in the other classifications. The unassigned classification should be used only to report a deficit balance resulting from overspending for specific purposes for which

amounts had been restricted, committed, or assigned.<sup>1</sup>



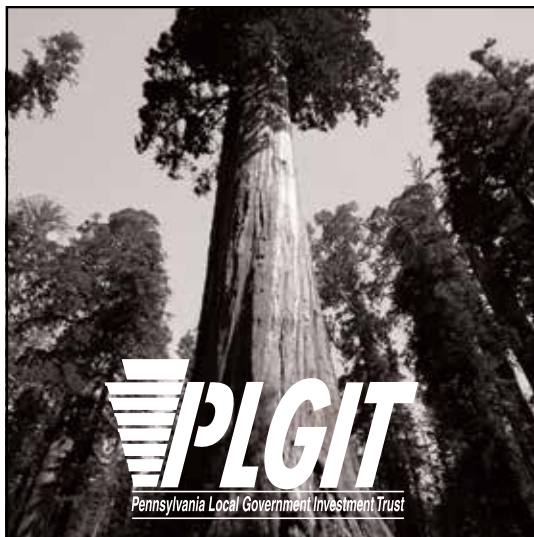
## MONITOR ACTUAL REVENUES

Budget forecasts should be updated regularly and monitor actual revenues against forecasts. A few short-term strategies to augment fund balance include reviewing old accounts payable and contracts to see if they can be cancelled by res-

olution, delaying capital improvements, identifying any expenses that are not essential, comparing fees for services with other similarly sized counties or a hiring freeze.

Local governments across America have built and maintained an unrestricted general fund balance for a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and while this pandemic has clouded forecasts, it's proven the importance of establishing a fund balance policy, creating a budget forecast, and preparing for the unknown. ▼

1. Statement No. 54 of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board



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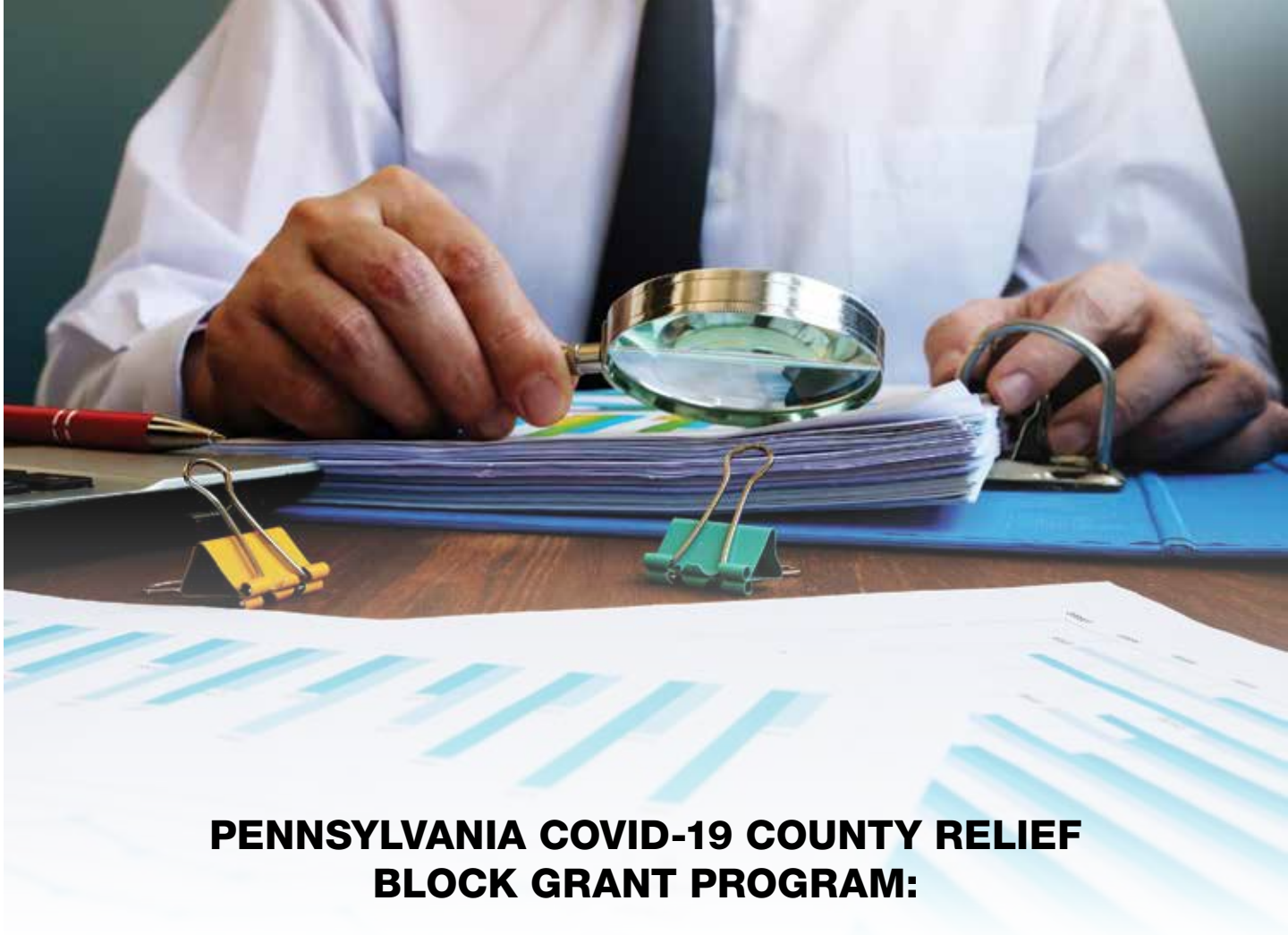


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## **PENNSYLVANIA COVID-19 COUNTY RELIEF BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM:**

# **Key Audit and Compliance Considerations**

**Nicholas Ring, CPA**  
Baker Tilly

**T**he Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020, and with it came the Coronavirus Relief Fund (established by Section 5001 of the CARES Act). Within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Governor Tom Wolf signed Act 24 of 2020, which established

the COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant (CRBG) program. The CRBG program provided CARES Act funding by means of block grants to Pennsylvania counties. Nearly all counties in the commonwealth were eligible to receive CRBG funding, which was distributed to local governments based on population, with a minimum distribution of \$1 million per county.

Many counties have been focused on how they can use these funds under the eligible expenditures, but as we get closer to fiscal year ends, it is important to understand both federal and state compliance implications and be prepared for potential audit variances associated with relief funding.

## FEDERAL COMPLIANCE CONSIDERATIONS

From a federal standpoint, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Compliance Supplement (2 CFR Part 200, Appendix XI) governs the compliance requirements for this program. When evaluating the eligible uses for CRBG funding, it is important to ensure each individual program expenditure (1) is a necessary expenditure incurred due to COVID-19, (2) is not accounted for in the government's most recently approved budget as of March 27, 2020 and (3) was incurred between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020.

Counties leveraging this program are required to maintain documentation sufficient to evidence the appropriate use of funding under these criteria. Furthermore, in cases where this funding was used to provide grants or sub-awards to other organizations, the pass-through entity requirements outlined in sections 200.330 and 200.331, including timely identification of the required data elements to sub-recipients, sub-recipient risk assessment evaluation and oversight requirements apply.

## STATE COMPLIANCE CONSIDERATIONS

While the federal requirements do not explicitly outline eligible expenditures, Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has established specific requirements for counties to follow. For starters, a key requirement established by DCED is the cap on administrative costs. DCED has set a cap of the lesser of 2% of the award allocation or \$200,000 for administrative costs charged to the grant.

Other allowable expenditures under this program include curbing the expenditures associated with direct county response to COVID-19, purchases of personal protective equipment (PPE), small business grant programs (for small businesses with fewer than 100 employees who did not receive CARES funding from another source, such as the payroll protection program [PPP]), tourism businesses adversely affected by the pandemic, behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment services, broadband deployment with priority to unserved or underserved areas, and not-for-profit assistance programs. DCED also requires a monthly Financial Status Report (FSR) to be submitted accompanied by a general ledger detail for all CRBG expenditures that began on or after September 1, 2020.

## ENSURE SUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION

Pennsylvania's CRBG program, like other COVID-19 relief funding programs, is comprised of significant federal financial assistance, and most county governments can expect that their CRBG funds will be audited as a major federal award program in their December 31, 2020 single audits. The depth and clarity of compliance requirements under these programs can be daunting; the most important consideration when preparing for the single audit is to ensure there is sufficient documentation on-hand to support program expenditures. As a best practice, grant agreements should also be readily available, as well as any reports provided to the DCED or the Department of Treasury related to the CRBG program. ▼



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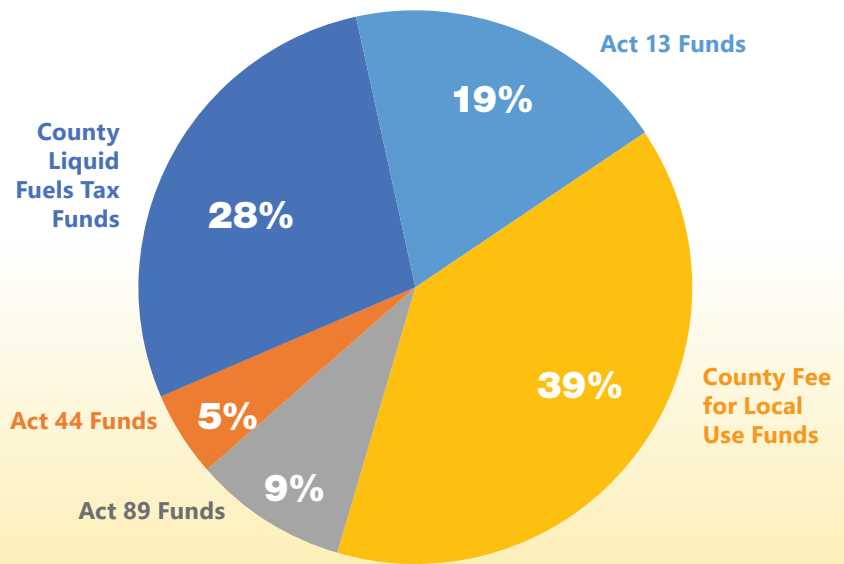
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of Transportation



**Counties throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are responsible for the maintenance and repair of many roads and bridges.**

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) collects the Oil Company Franchise tax on the purchase of gasoline and diesel fuel and allocates a portion of that tax to all counties and municipalities within its borders. With the passage of Act 89 of 2013, the amount of these allocations has increased significantly.

Counties receive multiple allocations from PennDOT throughout the year. These allocations totaled \$94,578,558.94. Each one has been enacted by a different law and therefore the allocation formula and allowed uses are different.



In June and December of each year, County Liquid Fuels Tax Funds are allocated to each county in the commonwealth. These payments were authorized by the Liquid Fuels Tax Act of 1931. Under this act, 4.17% of a millage rate as specified in Act 89 of 2013 is allocated to the counties based on fuel consumption in each county during an historical time period. These funds can be used for expenditures such as the maintenance and repair of roads and bridges, purchase of right-of-way, road or bridge equipment, and the salaries and benefit costs of the county's road/bridge crews. These funds can also be given to the municipalities in that county for their use on the same types of work. During 2020, a total of \$26,119,748.94 of County Liquid Fuels Tax Funds was paid.

PennDOT also allocates funds to the counties specifically to be used on county-owned bridges. Funds paid under Act 44 of 2007 in the

amount of \$5,000,000.00 are paid in December of each year. Funds under Act 89 of 2013 are paid in June and December of each year. Both of these allocations are paid to counties who own bridges based on the deck area owned. Fifty-two counties in Pennsylvania own bridges and receive these allocations. During 2020, counties were paid \$8,872,000.00.

Act 89 also allows counties to impose a \$5 fee for local use on non-exempt vehicles registered to an address located in the county. These funds can be used for construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and repair of and safety on public highways and bridges and the related costs and expenses. Counties may also allocate the funds to the political subdivisions in the county for the same uses. The law allowed approval of the fee beginning January 1, 2015, with collection allowed to begin on April 1, 2015.

Previously, vehicle owners that opted for a two-year registration paid only \$5, as opposed to owners that opted for an annual registration, which required them to pay \$10 over the same two-year period. However, on October 24, 2018, Governor Wolf signed Act 91 of 2018. This act specified that the fee is an annual fee, regardless of whether the registration itself is single or multi-year. Since 2015, 26 counties have passed resolutions to allow PennDOT to collect the fee on their behalf, with one county later repealing the collection. During 2020, counties were paid \$36,390,085.00 after the collection of these fees, while a total of \$141,154,438.96 has been paid out since the start of the program.

In 2012, Act 13 was passed, which requires owners of certain natural gas wells to pay a fee based on the average annual price of natural gas during that calendar year. Once these fees have been collected,

set amounts have been earmarked to be provided to various agencies and municipalities for specific purposes. Once these distributions have been made, a portion of the remaining monies deposited into the Marcellus Legacy Fund are to be allocated to the Highway Bridge Improvement Restricted Account in the Motor License Fund. This allocation is to be distributed to counties to fund the cost of the replacement or repair of locally owned at-risk deteriorated bridges.

The Financial and Contract Services Division has been charged with the calculation of the allocation and the distribution of this account. The distribution to the counties is to be made based on each county's population when compared to the total population of Pennsylvania. Act 13 defines population as being the most recently released Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Counties of Pennsylvania as compiled and released by the United States Census Bureau. However, it is also specified that each county shall receive a minimum distribution of \$40,000 each as long as there are available funds. Counties received \$18,196,725.00 of these funds during 2020.

In order for counties to receive their County Liquid Fuels Tax Fund, Act 44 Fund, Act 89 Fund, and County Fee for Local Use Fund allocations, there are certain requirements that counties must complete. A report must be completed for each of these funding sources annually by January 31. The report contains the receipts into the account and the expenditures paid from the account. The county must also ensure that all reimbursements required as a result of audits performed by the Auditor General or monitoring reviews performed by PennDOT's Financial Consultants have been made to the appropriate fund and that appropriate documentation is submitted to PennDOT.

PennDOT provides many resources to assist counties with the proper usage and reporting of these funds. There are Municipal Services Representatives at each PennDOT Engineering District. These people are your technical support and can provide assistance with things such as estimating road repair costs, bid packages, project approval, county aid to municipalities, and encumbrances. Contact information for the Municipal Services Representatives can be found at <https://www.penndot.gov/Doing-Business/LocalGovernment/MunicipalServicesRepresentatives/Pages/default.aspx>.

In addition to the Municipal Services Representatives, PennDOT also has financial consultants available to assist counties with the reporting and auditing requirements. The county financial consultant can also be contacted to discuss eligible expenditures and other accounting needs. Contact information for the financial consultants can be found at <https://www.penndot.gov/Doing-Business/LocalGovernment/LiquidFuels/Pages/Financial-Consultants.aspx>.

PennDOT contact information for questions and assistance can be found at <https://www.penndot.gov/Doing-Business/LocalGovernment/LiquidFuels/Pages/County-Liquid-Fuels-Program.aspx>. ▀





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# FOCUS ON **Butler** *County*

Butler County Pennsylvania was created on March 12, 1800, and named in honor of General Richard Butler, a hero of the American Revolution. It was in Butler County that John Roebling invented his revolutionary wire rope and became a pioneer in the design of suspension bridges such as the Brooklyn Bridge. In 1859, Edwin Drake drilled the first commercial oil well in the United States in Butler County, attracting the first great wave of investment in oil drilling, refining and marketing. In addition, in 1940, Butler County's own American Bantam Car Company created the BRC, the prototype of what would become the Army's Jeep.

Butler County sits just 20 minutes north of Pittsburgh, and is easily accessed by the Pennsylvania Turnpike, I-79, I-80 and State Routes 422, 19 and 8. With its prime location, Butler County is experiencing rapid growth ranging from high tech, energy, agricultural and manufacturing. As a result, new businesses, tech companies, and healthcare facilities are planting roots in the county.

## **EDUCATION**

Butler County claims two renowned institutions of higher education. Nationally accredited Butler County Community College continues to be recognized as the number one community college in Pennsylvania for the fifth consecutive year. Slippery Rock University enjoys an outstanding reputation for high-quality undergraduate and graduate academic programs, offering more than 150 majors and minors, all designed to adapt to today's workforce needs. Slippery Rock University has been recognized as a National College of Distinction, a Pennsylvania College of Distinction, and a Public College of Distinction.

Trade Unions play an active role in the county by providing quality alternatives to traditional post-secondary education. One example is the Steamfitters Local 449 Technology Center, which is a state-of-the-art training center in historic Harmony Borough. This facility provides training opportunities for apprentices and journey workers in the piping industry across all



*Lake Arthur at Moraine State Park.*

of Western Pennsylvania, along with continuing education, certification and associate degree programs.

Supporting this robust higher education environment are seven quality public schools, six of which ranked in the top 200 of 501 school districts in Pennsylvania. Two of those same districts are in the top 60 school districts statewide. In addition, there are a variety of top performing parochial and private schools available throughout the county. The Butler County Vocational Technical School is available to all seven school districts and provides 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students the opportunity to earn certificate programs in 15 different programs of study. These programs of study are designed to meet the needs of students as well as occupational requirements in the labor market.

## **HEALTH CARE**

Butler Health System (BHS), based in Butler County, consists of two hospitals and 72 outpatient locations

across eight counties. BHS has remained an independent community health system for over a century and continues to grow. They are the largest employer in Butler County with more than 3,000 employees and over 270 providers. Butler Health System is nationally recognized for quality care in cardiology, palliative care and maternity, as well as a broad range of surgical, medical, emergency and psychiatric services.

Also, within the county is local access to a new Allegheny Health Network Cancer Institute and an existing UPMC Cancer Center – the latter through a partnership with Butler Health System.

Butler County boasts the UPMC Lemieux Sports Complex, a first-of-its-kind facility in the Pittsburgh region. This facility represents a true partnership between two world-class organizations and features 185,000 square feet of total space dedicated to treating, training and inspiring athletes at every level.

## MANUFACTURING, INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH

The world headquarters of Westinghouse Electric Corp., MSA Safety Inc., II-VI Inc., and others are located in Butler County. These companies are making advancements locally, regionally and around the world. AK Steel, a Cleveland-Cliffs Company, operates an integrated steel facility in Butler County that is the only remaining producer of grain-oriented electrical steel laminations and cores in all of North America.

Many other businesses with far reaching interests were founded and remain based in Butler County. These include Butler Technologies Inc., AGR International Inc. (American Glass Research), and Penn United Technologies Inc. Although Oberg Industries LLC was founded in Tarentum, Pa. in 1948, by 1950 it had relocated to a more spacious location within Butler County. Global Industries such as FedEx, UPS, and Aldi have built distribution centers in the county, and Bayer US and PPG Industries have long utilized research and manufacturing facilities there.

Butler County has more manufacturers than any other county in Pennsylvania, many still family-owned businesses. The county offers infrastructure and includes extensive interstate highway access, state and local highways, Class I and Short Line railroad access, an inland port, regional airports, extensive broadband and local radio, newspaper and cable supporting industries.

## BIRTHPLACE OF THE JEEP

In 1940, the U.S. Army asked more than 100 tractor and auto manufacturers to design a four-wheel drive, 40-horsepower, 1,200-pound reconnaissance car that could haul soldiers as well as heavy artillery and requested a working prototype within 49 days. With only two companies responding to the request, the American Bantam Car Company created the Jeep prototype that was responsible for making American forces mobile during WWII.

The Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival that takes place in June each year was created to commemorate the history and birthplace of the Jeep. This is one of the county's largest and most attended events, draw-



*Jeep parade.*

ing in tens of thousands of people worldwide. The Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival helps local businesses generate additional revenue and brings a sense of community pride to Butler County. Pennsylvania's Keystone Society has also recognized the festival as the "Event of the Year" for Tourism.

## TOP ATTRACTION

Moraine State Park is the county's biggest attraction and sees close to two million visitors a year. It consists of 16,725 acres of pure beauty intertwined with an abundance of outdoor activities, making it the most visited attraction in the county at any time of the year. Moraine State Park is the third largest park in Pennsylvania and offers a variety of activities for year-round enjoyment like hiking, biking, boating, disc golf, cross-country skiing, cabin rental and more.

The main feature of Moraine State Park is Lake Arthur, spanning over 3,200 acres and offering 42 miles of shoreline. Moraine has 28 miles of hiking trails, which include The North Country National Scenic Trail that stretches from North Dakota to Vermont. The park also hosts numerous events throughout the year, providing something for every outdoor enthusiast.

Moraine State Park is referenced as a "National Hidden Gem", by Rand McNally's Pocket Guide for American Express, and previously was named "Number one Park in the State of Pennsylvania."



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## SMALL TOWNS

Visitors to Butler County enjoy its many small towns. Revitalization is all around and many of these small towns are beautifying streetscapes, encouraging new businesses and partnerships, creating signature events, and making their towns a true destination for visitors, while keeping their charming heritage and historic architecture intact.

The historic town of Butler is the county seat and has much to offer to residents and visitors alike. Previously named "Seventh Best Small Town in America" by Smithsonian Magazine; it continues to evolve with multiple new businesses and developments on Main Street, including two locally owned breweries. Trendy shops and restaurants mix with cozy B&B's and coffee shops, while the art scene along Main Street makes for a unique experience in downtown. Butler's own Maridon Museum is the only museum in the Western Pennsylvania region with a specific focus on Chinese and Japanese art and culture.

Charming small towns like Saxonburg, Zelienople and Harmony all share a vibrant German heritage with museums, boutiques, unique dining options and bakeshops. Saxonburg also offers a park and museum that pays homage to John Roebling, founder of the town, creator of wire rope and designer of the Brooklyn Bridge. The quaint streets of Zelienople are lined with locally owned businesses, beautiful historic buildings and a thriving art scene. Harmony is a National Historic Landmark District and captivates

visitors with old brick and log buildings. Another interesting town is Mars, where visitors get an opportunity to take a selfie with a spaceship.

## AGRICULTURE

Maintaining and promoting community diversity is a primary goal of local leaders. Butler County retains an active Agricultural Land Preservation Board charged with preserving the best agricultural land in the county through willing landowners. This nine-member board, working through Pennsylvania's Agricultural Land Preservation Program and the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, has preserved 64 farms in Butler County totaling 6,709 acres since the program's inception in 1996. Recent program modifications now permit municipalities to raise their own funds for municipal programs that will operate through the county. Clinton Township, in the southeast portion of the county, has developed a Transfer of Development Rights Program, raising funds through development fees to preserve farms within their own border. This is the first program of its type in Western Pennsylvania.

## MAJOR EVENTS

Butler County hosts several major events, festivals and tournaments, drawing large crowds from all over the world. These events include the Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival, Moraine State Park Regatta, Big Butler Fair, German Christmas Market and the many regional and national hockey tournaments that take place at the UPMC Lemieux Sports Complex.

Cooper's Lake, with its rolling hills and open layout, has become a recurring destination for Pittsburgh's Tough Mudder. This two-day event brings 11,000 visitors to the county and generates more than four million dollars annually with overnight stays, shopping and dining.

Butler County also features a variety of championship disc golf courses located at Moraine State Park, Slippery Rock University and a brand new course in Cranberry Township, which is one of the world's longest and most challenging disc golf courses. The county has hosted several national tournaments and an international disc golf tournament, resulting in an economic impact of over \$645,000.

## TOURISM

Tourism is a top industry in Butler County. Several attributes make the county unique, like its beautiful parks, rich automotive history, agricultural impact, versatile sporting venues and more. The county features more than 21 hotels, nine B&Bs and eight campgrounds.

Butler County's landscape is very diverse. Cranberry Township is one of the fastest growing communities in Pennsylvania and in the country. While the busy hub of Cranberry features a wide variety of restaurants, hotels and modern-day conveniences, other areas of the county consist of small, charming towns, rolling farmlands and offbeat attractions.

The Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau has multiple self-navigated trails in place like the Butler County Beer Circuit, and the Sweet Tooth Trail; which encourage visitors to go to various businesses, fill up their "passports" and return it to the Tourism Bureau to claim a commemorative prize.

Butler County is home to beautiful parks, versatile sporting venues, multi-functional event facilities, and so much more, providing countless recreational activities. As a result of continued economic growth and development, Butler County residents benefit from the area's excellent quality of life, making it a great place to live, work and play. 🍷

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# FOCUS ON Clinton County



All photos courtesy of the Clinton County Economic Partnership.

The serenity of cool crisp forests and the majestic charm of lush mountains and streams are the backdrop for Clinton County's 39,000 residents. The essence of rural life infuses itself throughout the county along with the small-town charm offered by communities like Lock Haven, Mill Hall, Renovo, Avis, Loganton and Beech Creek.

If you love the outdoors, you will love Clinton County's wide-open spaces. And the county's small communities can best be described as places where people are proud of an honest day's work, and where a welcoming hand is offered to residents and visitors alike.

## HISTORY

Formed from portions of Centre and Lycoming Counties and named after Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York, the county was incorporated on June 21, 1839. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Clinton County's timber was harvested to supply lumber for shipbuilding, coal mine props and construction. The county's early growth transitioned to include mining, paper and silk industries.

Woolrich Woolen Mills began operation in 1830 and became one of the oldest Pennsylvania industries. Piper Aviation made Clinton County home in 1937 and while the industry has since left, a museum and annual fly-in events remain a favorite draw for residents and aviation enthusiasts. Lock Haven University, which was established first as the State Normal School and transitioned to the State Teacher's College, has become a cornerstone to the county's growth and development. Today, First Quality Products, Inc., First Quality Tissue LLC, Keystone Central School District and UPMC are among the county's top employers.

The West Branch of the Susquehanna River flows through the county offering a historic water trail that is part of the Lumber Heritage Region. Today, the river is a recreation dream offering a beautiful water trail for paddling kayaks and canoes, flowing through a scenic northern hardwood forest of oak, cherry, maple and remnants of the great white pine and hemlock forests of early settlers' times.

The City of Lock Haven is the county seat and home to a population of nearly 10,000 residents. Clinton



County has 29 municipalities including one third class city, 21 townships and seven boroughs. There are five Pennsylvania State Parks in Clinton County including Bucktail State Natural Park, Hyner Run State Park, Hyner View State Park, Kettle Creek State Park and Ravensburg State Park.

## COMMISSIONERS' FOCUS

Commissioners Miles Kessinger, Jeff Snyder and Angela Harding are truly dedicated to making Clinton County a better place to live, work and recreate.

Even before she became commissioner, Angela Harding could see the direction and focus she wanted for the county. Having been involved in the school district and local government for years, Harding expressed her vision, "We need to keep our youth involved and invite them to contribute their skills, hopes and dreams to make our community their home and their future."

Commissioners Kessinger agrees "We have so much to offer. Clinton County is an easy drive from most

points in the northeast United States, and there are plenty of choices for great food and a comfortable place to stay. We're a gateway to the Pennsylvania Wilds region. Whether you're coming for a weekend, or planning an extended stay, you'll find plenty to see and do for the whole family."

"In today's economy," states Commissioner Snyder, "communities in Clinton County offer that perfect mix of beautiful surroundings, affordable homes and great family life for the remote worker or entrepreneur. When COVID-19 became a harsh reality for residents, we saw many of our cabins and vacation homes start to fill up. Residents and second-home owners came back to the county for a prettier work environment."

The post COVID work at home scenarios aren't going away and that new normal plays well into Harding's focus on keeping and attracting residents to the county. "We have just what families and young adult professionals are seeking - a beautiful place to live with opportunities for outdoor recreation and challenging fitness arenas."



## RECREATION IN CLINTON COUNTY

Enjoy camping, hiking and biking, fishing, boating and hunting. Hit the ATV trails, go bird and wildlife watching, bicycling, or dual sport riding. Drive along scenic by-ways or watch hang gliders soar from one of the most beautiful overlooks in the state at Hyner View State Park. Take in a concert on the river, the aviation museum, a renovated train station turned art gallery, or professional summer theatre in the barn.

The local valleys in the northern portions of Clinton County are narrow, with the mountains converging down sharply to the Susquehanna River. The tiny communities along the River give way to more remote territory. Sproul State Forest, Pennsylvania's largest state forest, makes up much of the upper half of the county and offers great hunting, fishing, hiking and four-wheeling opportunities. The valleys broaden out as you come down river, providing fertile ground for farming in the Bald Eagle, Nittany and Sugar valleys.

Situated in north-central Pennsylvania's beautiful PA Wilds region, our topography is diverse. Northern Clinton County is mountainous, heavily forested and sparsely populated.

Searching for a good spot to hunt? Public lands make up the bulk of our land area, and we offer some of the most remote cabin sites in the state. Each year, Clinton County is in the top tier of counties for bear harvests, either by count or by size. Local forests are abundant with turkey, whitetail deer, coyote and small game.

There are more than 1,500 privately-owned camps. In addition, the state leases some 500 camps and cabins.

Hear the sounds of a bull elk bugling near Kettle Creek State Park. Wild elk are expanding their range into the northern portions of Clinton County. Reintroduced to Pennsylvania in 1913, the elk herd now numbers well over 1,000 animals, attracting tourists to catch a glimpse of these majestic animals.

Hyner View State Park is a small park with enormous vistas, just east of Renovo. The overlook reveals an incredible sweep of the Susquehanna River nearly 1,300 feet below and is a popular launching point for hang gliding enthusiasts. The park is surrounded by more than 300,000 acres of Sproul State Forest – unspoiled land where anglers enjoy clear streams, home to native brook trout. There are four additional state parks to explore in the County – Bucktail, Hyner Run, Kettle Creek, and Ravensburg – with plenty of recreational opportunities for everyone.

Clinton County boasts Class A freshwater trout stream at Fishing Creek where people from all over the world come to cast their lines.

Summers in Clinton County are special, filled with woodland hikes, kayaking on the river, camping along a cool mountain stream, bike rides on back country roads, and toasting the setting sun as its last light slips over the horizon.

Studies show that across the country Americans are leaving bigger cities in response to changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. More adults are looking to live in a small town or rural area and the remote working scenario driving some of that change opens up possibilities for Clinton County.

To this end, the continued development of recreation opportunities for hiking trails, ATV trails, biking, fishing and hunting - that have always been a priority for county leaders - dovetail perfectly for the outdoor enthusiast looking to call Clinton County home.

## PARTNERSHIPS

County Commissioners collectively serve on a multitude of boards and authorities. Their involvement in county government can be challenging but well-worth the effort explains Snyder. He noted, "We are committed to working with local leaders to support and develop county resources. We work closely with the Clinton County Economic Partnership as they continue the Chamber tradition by providing mean-

ingful and informative programs and networking opportunities to business members. They are a key to connecting businesses and the community through leadership, advocacy, and education."

Participating in projects such as the development of the City of Lock Haven's comprehensive plan and revitalization of the downtown Main Street program are a priority as well. "In a very short time, over the past six months, the Lock Haven downtown area witnessed six new small businesses opening, it was a huge shot in the arm for our community," explains Harding who serves as Board President for Downtown Lock Haven Inc. "It is important that we partner with our schools, municipalities and community organizations to develop a clear plan for our county's success. The diversity of businesses, along with the solid cornerstone establishments, allows the chance for increased growth. Together with community groups and businesses we can capitalize on what we have to strengthen our downtown."

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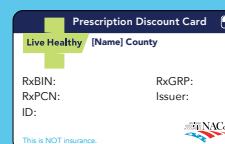
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## DEVELOPMENT OF ATV TRAILS

The rugged terrain of Clinton County attracts national attention among extreme trail challenge lovers, four-wheeling and motorcycle enthusiasts. Thousands of trail runners make the county an annual destination for trail races. The Hyner Trail Challenge and Boulder Beast Trail Race combined host a over a thousand trail runners from all over the United States to endure some of the toughest terrain with the most beautiful views.

The county's ATV trails are some of the best in the state; and dual sport and moto-trial motorcyclists from beginners to professionals test their skills on hundreds of miles of what they call "bad road".

The Central Mountains ATV Association, with 1,300 members, has been working to connect all the ATV trails in north central Pennsylvania up to the New York State border.

"There's no doubt about it, motorized recreation has a tremendous economic impact," states Commissioner Miles Kessinger. "The number of trucks, trailers

and ATVs (on those trails on a holiday weekend) is phenomenal."

The Central Mountains ATV Association recently received a \$78,000 grant from the state's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to complete the design of an approximate one-mile connector trail on private property in the Brewery Run area of Renovo.

The plan is to then get funding to support actual construction of that trail. This specific connector is one of several links that need to be made in order to complete the full trail connecting the Whiskey Springs and Bloody Skillet ATV trails. The trail link has been in the works for at least five years as the Central Mountains ATV group, Clinton County government and the Clinton County Tourist Promotion Agency continue their initiative to expand on the growing interest in ATV use of the state forest trails in the county.

Nearly 60% of Clinton County is state-owned land (about a quarter of a million acres), offering plenty of opportunity to develop trails.

In 2020, Harding also spearheaded the creation of a Community Coalition that brought city and county leaders together. He noted, "While we began by discussing our county's pandemic response, we as community leaders have found that we need to continue the conversations we have had to find unique ways to do business, solve problems and unify our efforts."

## STEADY PROGRESS

Clinton County's steady progress is truly a team effort with business owners, merchants, community volunteers and elected officials all working together to promote and preserve the economic viability as well as the historic value of the county.

The City of Lock Haven, as the county seat, has truly stepped up to the plate, offering incentives aimed at encouraging new business to move into downtown Lock Haven. Some of the programs include the Historic Preservation Tax Credit, a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program for qualifying commercial and industrial projects, and a revolving loan fund to benefit local business development. The Pennsylvania Small Business Development Center at Lock Haven University is another resource for local businesses, providing free professional consulting services for new business owners. These initiatives and others have helped the city to attract a variety of services, such as retail and dining establishments which foster community pride and create the perfect environment for people of all ages to experience.

The City of Lock Haven offers a number of projects and events for residents including a summer concert series, a pedestrian walkway along portions of Main and Grove Streets on Fridays and Saturdays.

The arts play an integral part in community pride and a progressive art program establishes a 'sense of place' for residents while stimulating the overall economy. Organizations such as the Clinton County Arts Council partner with Downtown Lock Haven

Inc. and Millbrook Playhouse, to bring many popular events including the popular LH JAMS (Lock Haven Jazz & Art on Main Street) and a free Summer Concert Series, offered on Fridays at Triangle Park and on Sundays at the J Doyle Corman Amphitheater and Floating Stage on the Susquehanna River, which is part of the community's Riverwalk.

## ALL IN ONE PLACE

On the banks of the Susquehanna, there are other ideas and plans taking shape: a Susquehanna Greenway River Town, city boat access, creating a path for safe access to Riverview Park (across the West Branch Susquehanna River from Lock Haven) and development of the nearby Bald Eagle Valley Trail, a rail trail which county planners are working to connect to the southern terminus of the renowned Pine Creek Rail Trail.

And just as the West Branch of the Susquehanna River gave birth to Lock Haven's early economic growth spurt with the lumber industry, today it stands to become one of the PA Wilds biggest tourist attractions.

With the picturesque Susquehanna as a backdrop, and with its welcoming and walkable business district and small-town charm, the county's small communities along the river are becoming a place where people can come together to find family fun as well as educational and business opportunities.

The county is also one of the gateway communities to the Pennsylvania Wilds, which includes Sproul and Tiadaghton State Forests. "From the PA Wilds to Downtown Lock Haven's work, the Economic Partnership, the Arts Council, our community theater at Millbrook Playhouse and the county rail trail initiative and so much more, we have an amazing opportunity to continue this growth and establish a foothold for years to come" states Kessinger. "Clinton County has the best that Pennsylvania offers – all in one place."



## BALD EAGLE VALLEY RAIL TRAIL

The Bald Eagle Valley Trail is named for the ridge-and-valley Appalachian Mountain area that the trail passes through. The trail, when finished, will traverse a former railroad bed, abandoned township roads and active farm and township roads.

In March of 2019, Phase II of the Bald Eagle Valley Trail opened to the public. The Phase II section opening represented a 3.4-mile segment of the trail between Castanea and McElhattan. The planned 11.5-mile walking/hiking/bicycling trail will ultimately connect to the Jersey Shore Trailhead of the Pine Creek Valley Rail Trail.

In 2020 the county obtained \$250,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Because of that and the \$100,000 allocated from the Clinton County Act 13 Bridge Fund, PennDOT

awarded an additional \$621,259, providing the entire \$2,058,456 needed for the river crossing project. The iron bridge, which crosses the Susquehanna River into Pine Creek Township, is phase 5 of the six-phase project.

Parking is currently available near the trailhead at the Clinton Central Model Railroad Club and along Caroline Alley. Eventually there will be seven accessible parking lots along the trail.

The Bald Eagle Valley Trail is a project of Clinton County government, in partnership with Castanea, Wayne and Pine Creek townships, the Clinton County Solid Waste Authority and the Clinton County Visitors Bureau. Brochures are available through the Clinton County Planning Office and the Clinton County Economic Partnership offices. 🍷

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# Human Services Funding

Complex and Effective in Meeting Consumer/County Needs

**Pennsylvania Association of County Human Services Administrators Board of Directors**

Pennsylvania's 67 counties are charged by the state to assist in the delivery of human services and it is important to understand what that truly means. Human Services are those services designed to assist people who are facing difficult life situations. Our various human services disciplines, or categorical, help individuals and families (consumers) navigate through both crises and chronic life situations by providing support and guidance so these citizens can return to their greatest level of self-sufficiency and independence.

## TAILORED PROGRAMS

Counties are able to tailor their human services programs to meet the needs of individual constituents. All counties provide child welfare, mental health, and intellectual disabilities services. Drug and alcohol and aging services may be provided directly by the county or by a provider agency acting on behalf of the county. At times counties join together for the provision of some types of services across a wider geographic area.

Some counties have county run nursing homes; others do not. While counties have some discretion in the arrangement of services, what is not negotiable are the various means of funding the

services. State and federal governments provide, through various departments, funding streams and allocations. Each of these allocations come with very different sets of rules and regulations that outline allowable services and use. There are funding specific rules as to what services can be covered and in what fashion, along with eligibility requirements of those individuals being served.

The specificity of our various funding streams creates difficulty in serving the complex issues that we encounter. For example, we may have a troubled child in need with parents facing mental health and addiction issues. A flexible funding method would allow for assistance,

but that is not the reality that we face. Child welfare funding is used for serving a child in need, but mental health and drug and alcohol funds need to be brought in for other services. When each of these are administered by different agencies with differing rules, this complicates our ability to serve. Factoring in other needs that may be overseen by those outside the county human services, such as other departments or even outside non-profits, further creates an untenable situation to navigate.

## REALITIES

In human services fields across the commonwealth, counties face a myriad of issues and challenges in order to assist our citizens. People present to our service offices with multiple complex concerns and as our staff work to help others, we must always keep the realities of our funding in mind. Funding for our varied programs is awarded through many sources, and each contributing source requires a different set of regulations and stipulations for use. Funding is typically capped at a set amount by county, so counties work within that reality, and each funding stream has usage requirements, often including parameters for client eligibility. This requires counties to develop systems to address the holistic needs of citizens while following the requirements of our fractured, or siloed, funding.

One avenue to address the complex needs within funding is to have a county centralized information and referral office (I&R) to provide a “no wrong door” approach for consumers. County human services agen-

cies can assign, and properly fund, workers to staff such a unit. These units are invaluable as they provide people requesting assistance the ability to call one number and a county worker takes beginning information and helps to assign consumers to the appropriate office or offices where they can receive assistance. The individual county workers can assist consumers with connections, both within and outside county offices. For counties that assign many services to providers, these workers can make that connection quickly. They can also provide general information to citizens to stabilize situations quickly. A centralized I&R is an effective way that counties can combine, or braid, funding.

Counties can also braid funds to form an integrated services unit. Staff assigned to such a unit are funded by contributing offices and a unit working in this fashion serves to pull together all stakeholders in complex cases. These stakeholders are family members, including concerned friends of an individual, providers working with the situation, county staff, school personnel if applicable, medical, probation, and any entity or individual involved and invested in the concerns of the individual. Integrated Units pull together and facilitate these stakeholder meetings, and work to endure afterward that all actions decided by the group are in place.

## COMPLEXITIES AND LEADERSHIP

An additional complexity includes waiver funding within specific categories such as serving older

adults or individuals with an intellectual disability. Although counties may conduct assessments and assist individuals and families to access waiver funding, the period of time waiting for waiver services and supports to begin, often falls to the county. At times, developmental program base funds or area agencies on aging (AAA) funds must be used to support an individual for a substantial amount of time until services can be located through the state waiver system. This is a great burden on the local human services agencies who continue to dedicate funding and staff time to bridge the gap.

## INVESTED IN COOPERATION

Of paramount importance is for a county to have human services leadership, both program and fiscal, invested in the cooperation needed to help citizens. Counties are able to assign staff to work with other county offices and outside groups to assist. Staff work with courts, corrections, probation, veterans, municipal police, and many others in order to bring about the most effective result in order to meet needs.

The separate siloed funding streams present issues and increase complexity for counties as they provide human services. Counties have, over the years, developed their individual methods for moving past these complexities while abiding by regulations. Networking and coordination across counties allow for these home-grown methods to seed and take root across the commonwealth to help those in need. ▀

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# How to Protect County Roofing Assets and Maximize ROI

Even During  
a Budget Crisis



**P**ublic agencies face unique facility management and building construction challenges, even under the best of circumstances. In today's challenging environment, how can you address failing roofs, while also protecting and extending the life of your roofing assets, without stressing already constricted budgets?

An often overlooked consideration is the fact that not every failing roof needs to be replaced. With today's advanced diagnostics and restoration technologies, old and failing roofs can often be saved if they meet certain construction and condition criteria. Diagnostics are key. Here we'll examine eight questions to help determine if your roof is indeed a good candidate for restoration—which can result in significant savings over roof replacement. Equipping yourself to make informed decisions on roof restoration versus replacement is a great first step toward creating a realistic roadmap for getting maximum performance and ROI from your roofing inventory.

### **WHAT IS YOUR EXISTING ROOF MADE OF?**

Visual inspections can tell you only so much. By taking a core sample, and working with a roofing expert partner, you can determine what roofing system components you are dealing with, including deck type, existence of a vapor retarder, insulation type and thickness, and roof membrane type. This in-depth look at general system construc-

tion is necessary to determine what restoration approaches and product options are possible. Certain types of roof systems make better restoration candidates than others. Under the right circumstances, single ply, MB, BUR and metal roofs can be excellent contenders for restoration.

### **IS YOUR OLD ROOF STRONG ENOUGH TO RESTORE?**

A roof is not engineered to be a static entity; changes in temperature, wind force, the weight of rain and snow and other factors require it to expand and contract, which over time can weaken your roof. Through laboratory testing of the core sample(s) mentioned above, you can determine the following: tensile strength—the current roof's ability to resist loads without degradation of the membrane and other elements; and elasticity—the ability to be stretched and return to its original shape. Adhesion peel tests on membrane roofs are also used to determine the strength remaining in the membrane itself by examining how firmly the original layers remain bonded to each other. With today's advanced restoration technologies not every failing roof needs to be replaced.

### **WHAT SHAPE IS THE DECK IN?**

Decks are the structural foundation of a roof. They may be metal, concrete, gypsum or even wood. To determine the roof deck's condition, it must be inspected from in-

side the building. It is imperative to know if the existing deck is strong enough to support the existing structure along with any layers that may be added during restoration. Best practice is to have a structural analysis performed before deciding how to proceed. Moisture trapped in insulation can begin to damage the roof deck itself, creating the potential for significant structural failures. All successful restorations rely on a solid deck ready to support the roof for decades to come.

### **DO I ALREADY HAVE TWO ROOFS ON TOP OF EACH OTHER?**

If a second roofing system was already installed on top of the first, building codes may limit your restoration options. Core testing data—and advice from a roofing expert—can help you identify your restoration possibilities. When a second roofing system is present, weight and construction quality are considered. Did incorrect installation or incompatible roofing materials create leaks or other issues? A structural analysis must be performed before proceeding.

### **IS THE INSULATION WET?**

No restoration system or product should ever be applied over wet insulation, even when the roof membrane is functioning. To identify areas of wet insulation we use tools such as moisture meter testing, infrared scanning and nuclear analysis. Thermograms, or the color images produced by

an infrared roof moisture survey, show the location of moisture, and indicate the location of small holes in the membrane. This testing is performed at night. Infrared drones gather data for both roof and wall surfaces over vast areas, making them a good choice for large buildings and structures that are difficult to access. Nuclear roof moisture testing can be performed during the day and uses a nuclear gauge to identify where water is located. Density readings with this tool record as deep as 8" into the roof system, providing incredibly valuable information. These testing tools enable one to pinpoint and then remove any areas of damaged, wet insulation.

## **DO I HAVE ASBESTOS IN THE OLD ROOF?**

Oftentimes older built-up roofs contain asbestos since asbestos was at one time routinely used in flashing plies, roofing plies and flashing mastics. If you have asbestos and the roof is restorable, you'll avoid the significant expense of asbestos removal and disposal because restoration encapsulates the asbestos, which is an accredited treatment practice versus removal and disposal. Core sample testing is typically used to confirm the presence of asbestos. These tests must be performed by an accredited inspector and reviewed in an accredited lab.

## **IS MY MASONRY AN ISSUE?**

It is important to examine the surrounding masonry before restoring or replacing any roof. Can

you imagine restoring the roof and still having water leaking into your building due to masonry defects? Masonry elements that often exhibit water infiltration issues include parapet walls, chimney stacks, elevator shafts and roof access doorways. RILEM tube water testing can be used to ensure that any existing leaks along walls are not the result of porous brick, block or mortar. Color thermograms from an infrared roof moisture survey can be helpful here as well. On large buildings with difficult to access areas, a drone system can be used to remotely capture vast amounts of wall area in infrared images that pinpoint where water is infiltrating. Identifying, examining, and addressing any masonry issues is an essential aspect of any restoration project.

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ROOF RESTORATION VERSUS REPLACEMENT?**

Every roof is different, so there's no one-size-fits-all solution to 'fixing' failing roofs. However, there's a good chance your roofing systems can be restored if you get to them quickly enough with the correct technical solutions. At Tremco we like to say we help our customers "keep good roofs good." This means having plans in place to stop leaks quickly and affordably, with quality materials that last, and identifying problem roof areas before they become bigger problems. Mother Nature is tough on even the best-cared for roofs. However, when the time comes, roof replacement can be a great option to extend roof life and avoid tear-off and replacement.

Roof replacement can save you as much as 50% compared to typical replacement costs. Installation is typically faster and easier, requiring less labor and is much less disruptive to building occupants than total roof replacement. Today's leading restoration solutions include low-odor and no-odor systems, which make it an ideal solution for even the most sensitive environments, such as schools, hospitals or really any occupied buildings. By choosing to restore versus replace a roof, you also avoid a complete tear-off which reduces landfill waste, a much more sustainably minded option. And often maintenance budgets can fund restoration, versus capital expenditures typically required for replacement.

## **GET THE FACTS FIRST**

So before deciding the fate of an existing, failing roofing system, test it. Confirm construction type and all relevant conditions so you know what's possible before specifications are written. The upfront diagnostics investment—typically 5¢ to 10¢ per square foot—is well worth the cost relative to the ultimate cost savings.

Of course, the whole idea is to extend roof performance for as long as possible through planned repair and maintenance to avoid replacement. When the time comes, give some thought to restoration. Proactive maintenance, coupled with roof restoration, can provide the foundation for a long-term roofing strategy that delivers maximum performance and ROI. 🍷

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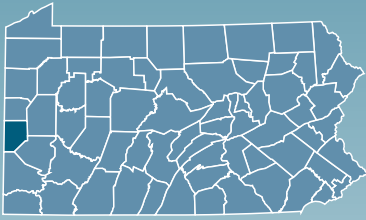
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COUNTY HIGHLIGHT:  
**BEAVER**

**Danielle Rombach**  
MH Program Specialist  
Beaver County Behavioral Health

The commitment to strengthening the relationship between behavioral health, first responders and the criminal justice system continues to grow as first responders are becoming trainers for behavioral health related trainings. By having both first responders and behavioral health professionals co-facilitate trainings demonstrates how each discipline complements the other as a unified team.

# Building County

## PARTNERSHIPS

**B**eaver County took a huge step in establishing a more formalized collaboration between first responders and behavioral health approximately two years ago, with a simple impromptu meeting. Emergency Services Unit (ESU) Commander Patrick Young, and County Detective Gene St. Clair, lead negotiator and chief of Freedom Police Department, and Danielle Rombach, a representative from Beaver County Behavioral Health (BCBH), met to discuss how behavioral health could be incorporated into the county's ESU. The outcome was the addition of three staff members from BCBH becoming team members of the crisis negotiation component of the ESU. At the time, none of them had a strong concept of what that would look like or how many other doors would be opened as they moved forward.

### INSIGHT AND EDUCATION

Blindly committed, the three BCBH staff attended the first negotiator training on a Tuesday to meet new teammates. Two days later they had their first call out. There has been a behavioral health member at each response ever since. As behavioral health staff, they are able to coach other team members to identify risk and protective factors of the subject. In addition, they can provide insight and education into how an individual may respond based on presenting symptoms and behavior or historical information, in order for the team to avoid tactical interventions that could potentially escalate the situation. When appropriate, we also have the ability to provide resources, support and guidance for individuals in need of treatment. The model emphasizes the use of the least force necessary to safely resolve the situation.



Pat and Gene quickly went from being unsure of what a behavioral health role would look like on the team to asking each other, “Why didn’t we do this years ago?” After seeing the added benefit of incorporating behavioral health into the team, ESU team leaders have happily shared their experience with their colleagues, locally and nationally, encouraging them to do the same. There was also a sense of pride, value and acceptance when the behavioral health staff attended Basic and Advanced Crisis Negotiation Training, the law enforcement participants wanted to have a member of behavioral health on each team during practice activities.

## COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

This collaboration hasn’t come without its challenges. The biggest one probably being communication ... they speak different languages. Each profession comes with its own terms and acronyms of alphabet soup. Team leaders have adopted the philosophy of educate and integrate to overcome this obstacle. Finding ways to work through the challenges is a small price to pay in comparison to the benefits that are resulting from this relationship.

By entering into a partnership, they were able to begin educating law enforcement and first responders by providing Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) to the ESU

The behavioral health staff on each call can provide insight and education into how an individual may respond based on presenting symptoms and behavior or historical information, in order for the team to avoid tactical interventions that could potentially escalate the situation.

**The model emphasizes the use of the least force necessary to safely resolve the situation.**

team. The team includes representation from almost every police department in the county (including the County Detective’s Office and the Sheriff’s Department), local ambulance services, the Coroner’s Office, Beaver County Jail and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

With the support of The Police Academy at the Community College of Beaver County (CCBC), especially William Petures and Patrick Young, they have also been able to provide MHFA training to the cadets at the Police Academy. The first training took place in the spring of 2020. In the fall of 2020, they were able to

provide MHFA training again, along with the addition of Trauma Informed Care and Naloxone (Narcan®) training and distribution. By providing the cadets with these tools and resources at the academy, they will be better equipped to enter the workforce with a foundation of how to interact with behavioral health consumers in the community.

## JUST THE START

The commitment to strengthening the relationship between behavioral health, first responders and the criminal justice system continues to grow as first responders are becoming trainers for behavioral health related trainings. By having both first responders and behavioral health professionals co-facilitate trainings demonstrates how each discipline complements the other as a unified team. Having trainers who believe in the importance of educating law enforcement along with the community about developing skills to engage with children, youth and adults experiencing behavioral health symptoms in a supportive and non-threaten-

ing manner as well as modeling these techniques on a daily basis not just as a professional, but also as a person, is invaluable. This is also supported by the fact that they have additional first responders who have volunteered to become facilitators for trainings currently being offered and ones planning to be offered. Hopefully, increasing the number of trainers will allow them to expand our audience and have a greater impact on the community.

Sergeant and School Resource Officer (SRO) Jason Woods, from the Economy Borough Police Department, is the first person in the county's first responder community to become a certified trainer for both Youth and Adult MHFA. With his diverse background and having the respect of his peers, teachers and students, Jason is a wonderful addition to the collaboration team. Gene St. Clair has become a certified facilitator for Trauma Informed Care in the Criminal Justice System. This training teaches about the various types of trauma and how taking trauma into consideration during each encounter can improve outcomes of a situation. Both MHFA and Trauma Informed Care include a component about the importance of self-care, which cannot be stressed enough.

This is far from where the story ends. The reality is—this is just the start of the journey. By walking through one door, they found themselves surrounded by many other doors. Each with its own opportunities and challenges waiting on the other side. Beaver County looks forward to continuing to develop and expand collaborative efforts. ▾



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# Communicating Your Message Effectively **USING DATA**

**Kristine Creavey, PhD  
and Erin Arthur, MSc**  
University of Pittsburgh,  
School of Social Work,  
The Pennsylvania Child Welfare  
Resource Center

In your professional life, you will have likely received and created messages in the form of memos, reports, emails, PowerPoints, staff meetings, and conferences. The effectiveness of these messages may have varied depending on several factors.

Regardless of the message, if you want to be effective, you need to get your message across clearly. Data can provide context, clarity, specificity, and accuracy in a message. Including data can support your bottom line and lend credibil-

ity to your communication. However, people often shy away from using data in their messages due to their uncertainty of what data to include and how it should be incorporated.

By considering the three components of composing a message, what, who, and how, you will have more confidence in what data to include and how to incorporate it into your messages.



## WHAT

To determine the “What,” or the content of your message, it is first necessary to define the goal of your message. What are you hoping to achieve with your message? For instance, you might hope to make a case for a new policy to be created or seek to support operational decisions at your agency. It is also possible that you are communicating a message to your audience so that they can provide input or simply be informed about the matter. Regardless, once you have your goal in mind, you can determine the content of your message and the data that will support your message.



## WHO

It is critical to establish the “Who” of your message. Who are the individuals that make up the audience for your message? Different people have different motivations, interests, and skill sets; therefore, messaging language and data should be adjusted appropriately. For instance, imagine you are a child welfare administrator advocating for a new policy to be implemented at your agency. If your audience is your local board of commis-

sioners and you are seeking funds from them, they will likely be most interested in hearing a message supported by highly specific financial data and want to know the return on their investment. Alternatively, if your audience is the caseworker and supervisory staff at your agency, you may be informing them of the new policy. In this case, they will likely want to know about any anticipated changes in their day-to-day tasks and responsibilities and the data that supports the changes. Thus, the data you include in your message should vary depending on your audience and specific goal in communicating to that audience.



## HOW

Finally, the “How” should always be considered when using data to support a message. A message can be written, verbal, or visual, and the format possibilities within each of those categories are almost endless! Written messages can be delivered as summary reports or briefs, as well as full reports or emails. Verbal messages can be delivered as formal presentations, staff meeting updates, phone calls, or press releases. Visual messages can take the form of tables, charts, infographics, and much more. Careful consideration should be given to the format that would best communicate your message, along with the data that are most appropriately conveyed in that format.

While weighing the three components of composing a message will enhance your confidence of messaging with data, there are also five ways to immediately improve the clarity and accuracy of your message when using data.

**Choose your words wisely.** Words might mean something different when used in a data context compared to everyday language. Consider the following message as an example:

*“Workplace turnover has decreased significantly since the implementation of an agency wellness program.”*

While the term “significantly” can be used generically in everyday language, in a data context, it is used to communicate the outcome of a statistical test. Additionally, the phrase “workplace turnover” is nonspecific and will likely leave the consumer with several questions as to its meaning. By utilizing data, a clearer and more accurate message can be communicated:

*“Workplace turnover, defined as the percentage of all agency employees who voluntarily left the agency, has decreased from 9% to 4% since the institution of an agency wellness program.”*

**Beware of unfounded judgments in your message.** Consider the following example:

*“During the 5-year period reviewed, 2015 was the best year for entries into foster care.”*

In this example, only the communicator knows what is meant by “best.” Without additional specificity, it is left up to the audience to

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decide for themselves what “best” means. It is wisest to avoid using words that individuals operationalize for themselves (i.e., each person would have a different idea of what is “best,” “OK,” and “worst” in any given scenario), and instead, use words that more clearly represent verifiable data.

*“During the 5-year period reviewed, the total number of entries into foster care was lowest in 2015.”*

**Present data as it stands.** It is not uncommon to want to avoid reporting uncomfortable findings or even attempt to hide those findings in between other more welcomed findings. This can lead to confusion, however, and should be avoided. Consider the following message:

*“Although the proportion of re-entries into foster care increased last year, the median length of time in foster care decreased over the previous five years.”*

While an increase in re-entries may be undesirable and uncomfortable to communicate, distracting the audience with more welcomed but extraneous statements will make your message less clear and impactful.

Consider instead: *“From 2017 to 2018, the proportion of re-entries increased from X to Y.”*

Presenting the data as it stands allows for an accurate understanding and will thus support decision-making moving forward. Regardless of the action needed, a message should always be accurate and clear,

and data should always simply be communicated as it stands.

**Stick to your findings – do not speculate or overextend.** When communicating a message using data, it is crucial not to overextend the application of your data. For instance, consider the following statement:

*“We’ve noticed that parental substance use has been the leading reason for removal from the child’s home for the past three years due to the opioid epidemic.”*

While the above statement is possible, drawing such a conclusion would require a series of sophisticated statistical analyses. Without these analyses, the statement should instead be left as the following:



Taking steps to prevent labor and employment issues is a far better strategy than trying to mitigate them after the fact. We partner with municipalities in every corner of the Commonwealth, helping them address potential risks and create work environments where people and public service can thrive. We'd like to do the same for you.

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*“Parental substance use has been the leading reason for removal from the child’s home for the past three years.”*

This statement is easily verifiable by data, as the data stands. It does not lead the consumer down a decision-making path that would have serious implications. The recommendation to “stick to your findings” is not meant to discourage scientific investigation; it is meant as a reminder not to overextend the application of the data or speculate beyond the data in your message.

**Use data visualizations appropriately.** There are many options when selecting a method to visually convey data to support a message; however, these options are not interchangeable! Each is meant to support specific types of data. For instance, line charts are intended to convey patterns over time, while pie charts are intended to convey portions of the whole. Consider the following line graph compared to the pie chart using the same data:

Representing the data in a line graph is not the best option since a trend over time is not being reported. Instead, the data are communicating portions of the whole, and a pie chart would be more accurate.

Ultimately, visual representations of data should not distract from your message; they should support it. Do not include a visual representation of the data just for the sake of including something visually appealing. Instead, consider the purpose of the visual and determine if it enhances the communication of your message or distracts from it.

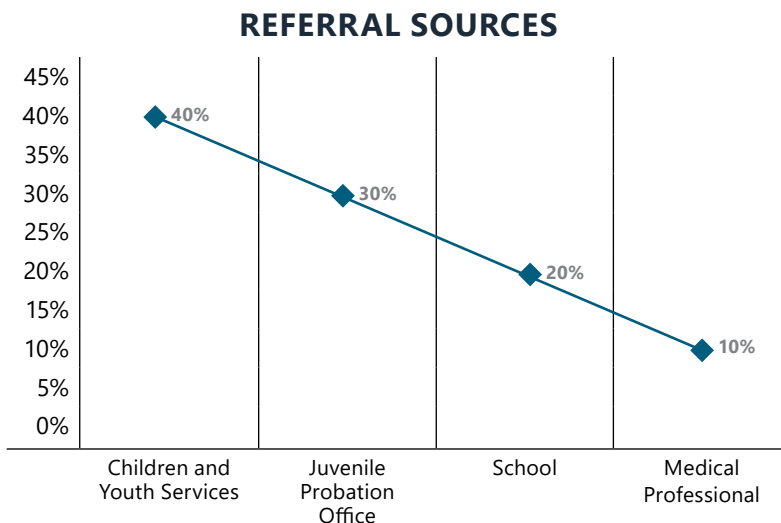
Messaging effectively can be challenging, especially if you are uncertain how and when to incorporate data into that messaging. When considering the What, Who, and How of a message intended for various stakeholders with different needs and interests, “one size fits all” does not apply. Changing the language, format, and data of your message for different audiences is not only ac-

ceptable, but also recommended in order to deliver the clearest and most accurate message. 📌

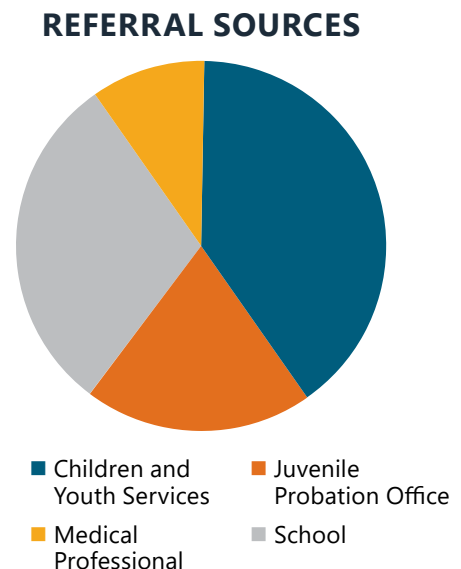
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The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center is a collaborative effort of the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators. The Resource Center provides a continuum of services designed to facilitate and sustain positive change in the child welfare system. Services include training, transfer of learning, technical assistance, research and evaluation, project management, and organizational development. This work is made possible through grant funds from the Department of Human Services to the University of Pittsburgh.

## LINE GRAPH



## PIE CHART



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# County Action on Ticks and Tick-borne Diseases is Critical to Public Health

**Julia Wagner, MBA**  
President  
PA Lyme Resource Network



## 84 A DAY.

That's how many children fall ill with Lyme disease every day in Pennsylvania. Out of the 476,000 Americans diagnosed with Lyme disease each year (CDC)<sup>1,2</sup> more than 100,000 are Pennsylvanians.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health identified the top 10 counties by total case numbers as Chester, Westmoreland, Butler, Bucks, Montgomery, York, Allegheny, Centre, Lancaster and Berks. Although other counties have the highest incidence (cases per 100,000): Venango, Clarion, Forest, Jefferson, Cameron, Potter, Wayne, Clearfield, Elk, and Bedford. Lyme is found in every Pennsylvania county.

### **PENNSYLVANIANS ARE SUFFERING**

The Pennsylvania Lyme Resource Network ([www.palyme.org](http://www.palyme.org)) received thousands of personal impact stories from every county

in the state. Listen to your constituents and the devastation these diseases are causing.

#### **Peggy, Montgomery County**

My son who died on 10/08/2017 was a victim of tick-borne diseases for over 10 years when he died. I know so many other victims of tick borne disease ... including a neighbor in his 30s, who has also suffered from Lyme disease for over 10 years.

#### **Cherine, Huntingdon County**

Both my granddaughter and I have been diagnosed with Lyme and co-infections, Babesia and Bartonella in 2015 and 2016. My granddaughter's ... treatment ... had to be discontinued because of the costs of the treatment ...

#### **Vickie, Blair County**

My son and I have been treated several times for Lyme. ... It is March and I just pulled a fully engorged tick off my cat ... ticks are here even in the winter. I am afraid to let my one year-old granddaughter play outside because of the chance that she could be infected.

### **INFECTING THE BRAIN**

More than half of all ticks carry more than one disease, known as a co-infection (such as Babesiosis, Bartonellosis, Ehrlichiosis and more), which increases the severity of the illness. Symptoms of tick-borne illness can be quite severe.

## EARLY SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

3 to 30 Days After Tick Bite



Fever and Chills



Headache



Fatigue



Muscle and Joint Aches



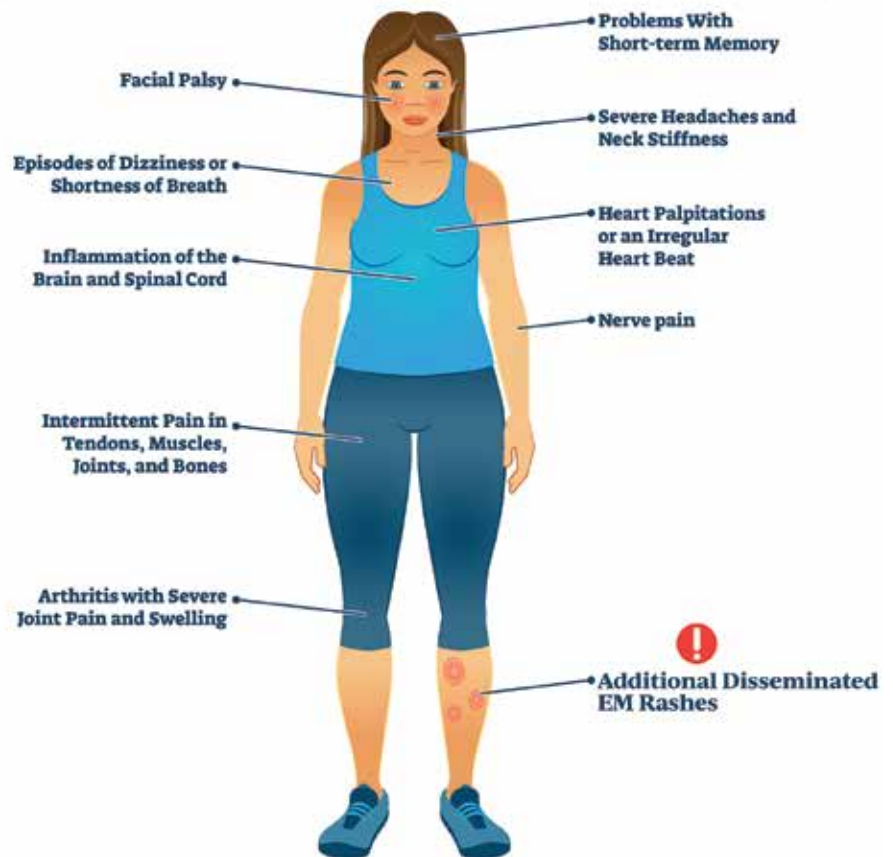
Swollen Lymph nodes



Erythema Migrans (EM) RASH

## LATER SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Days to Months After Tick Bite



Source: Dare to Know, PA Lyme

When Lyme disease and its co-infections go untreated or under-treated, they can progress and infect the brain. Neuroborreliosis (infection of the brain and nervous system) affects cognitive function, psychiatric health, and even the personality. According to Robert B. Bransfield, MD, a fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and an expert in tick-borne diseases (<https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/lyme-disease-comorbid-tick-borne-diseases-and-neuropsychiatric-disorders>), the most disabling neuropsychiatric symptoms include sleep disorders, fatigue, cognitive impairments, depression, anxiety, pain and headaches. Impaired sleep and chronic stress

compromise immune functioning and contribute to worsening fatigue and cognitive impairment—and can make them more vulnerable to other infections, including COVID-19.

PA Lyme sees many adults, youth, and young adults through our support groups who developed mental health symptoms, which were reversed with proper diagnosis and treatment of tick-borne diseases. Many children are mis-diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, learning disabilities, behavioral issues or psychiatric diagnoses such as oppositional-defiant disorder, anxiety, depression and even Autistic Spectrum-like disorders. Early diagnosis and ap-

propriate treatment can help mitigate more serious illness, including mental health manifestations.

## IMPLEMENT A CAMPAIGN

May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month and the perfect storm. With the COVID pandemic, and activity restrictions, more and more Pennsylvanians are heading outdoors. A restless winter spent inside and now warmer weather—everyone wants to get outside. Unfortunately, this isn't a risk-free activity. In the early spring ticks start coming out and in May nymphs, the smallest of all ticks, come out in full-force.

County leaders can implement a Lyme disease awareness campaign to reduce the risk of tick-borne diseases in your counties:

- ensure tick warning signs are posted in parks (order tick warning signs at [palyme.org](http://palyme.org))
- ensure that county websites convey accurate prevention information and resources – check out the Dare 2B Tick Aware program and post links to the US Federal Working Group Latest Recommendations <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/advisory-committees/tick-borndisease/index.html>
- ensure staff is properly trained to prevent disease and to educate the public
- establish prevention measures and access to care as critical for your county

- prioritize your support of Lyme legislation to address gaps in access to treatment, proper education, and school actions to prevent tick bites/illness (contact [info@palyme.org](mailto:info@palyme.org) for information about Lyme legislation)

The time is now. Tick-borne diseases continue to increase in our state, and the call for action is coming not only from the constituents of Pennsylvania, but now from the state and federal levels as well. Lyme disease is a public health imperative. County-level actions—in prevention—and in supporting key legislative efforts—are critical now. 🍷



<sup>1</sup>Schwartz AM, Kugeler KJ, Nelson CA, et al. Evaluation of commercial insurance claims as an annual data source for Lyme disease diagnoses. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2021;27(2).

<sup>2</sup>Kugeler KJ, Schwartz AM, Delorey M, et al. Estimating the frequency of Lyme disease diagnoses —United States, 2010–2018. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2021;27(2).

# TOGETHER

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# **The Leader's Role in Creating a Safe and Respectful Workplace**

**Christina M. Fatzinger, MS**

University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work  
Child Welfare Resource Center

Social pressures for a fair and equitable work environment have been building over the last few decades with focuses on pay equity, anti-sexual harassment, and racial equity and inclusion. The demand for employers to create and enforce a safe and respectful workplace has grown stronger over time, with many in today's workforce prioritizing fairness and social responsibility as the most important employer attributes. By establishing a culture of safety, respect, inclusion, and positivity employers attract talented individuals and foster productivity, engagement, and retention.

## **AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT**

A safe and respectful workplace is one where all employees are valued, recognized, treated fairly, and have clear expectations. It is an inclusive environment where differences are acknowledged, communication is open, conflicts are addressed quickly and resolved, and where there is a shared responsibility for achieving the organization's vision, mission, and values (Courtney, K 2020). This type of culture is often fostered by leaders who are coaching-oriented, supportive and are not defensive in the face of questions and challenges. It relies on the presence of psychological safety for all employees through a consistent growth mindset and culture where employees believe that they can ask for help or make a mistake without

fear of punishment. Having an environment that condones mistakes because they are viewed as growth and learning opportunities will empower employees to think outside the box, challenge existing norms, and perform at optimal levels.

Another equally important aspect of a safe and respectful workplace involves ensuring that no harassment or bullying occurs and that if it does occur, it is handled swiftly and appropriately. If ignored, not only could the organization be faced with legal action, but they will eliminate the ability to have a safe and respectful culture. Before identifying how to create a safe and respectful workplace, it is important to have a common understanding of the definitions, characteristics and actions of harassment and bullying.

## **OFFENSIVE CONDUCT**

According to the U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, harassment is a form of employment discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). It is unwelcome conduct, such as offensive jokes, slurs, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, and interference with work performance, that is based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information. Harassment

that violates the law occurs when enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.

Bullying is defined as unwelcome behavior that occurs over a period of time and is meant to harm someone who feels powerless to respond. Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could psychologically or 'mentally' hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behavior that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade, or humiliate a particular person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression (Nagele-Piazza, L. 2018).

Creating a safe and respectful workplace begins at the top. Leaders must define, communicate, and model the types of behaviors that their organization embraces, as well as articulate those it will not tolerate. A leader must be relentless in the pursuit of this change and consistently reinforce how you want employees to act. Shifting the current culture and behaviors of a workforce is not something that will happen overnight, therefore, you must have a clear strategy in place to build a safe, respectful, harassment-free culture (Courtney, K 2020).

## DELIBERATE AND SYSTEMATIC

Leaders should use a deliberate and systematic approach to transform their organizational culture. Much like the Organizational Effectiveness work facilitated by staff at the Child Welfare Resource Center, here is a process you can use to build and/or strengthen a safe and respectful culture in your workplace:

- Identify the organizational culture you expect by establishing a core set of values, behavioral indicators of those values, and engagement levels of all employees. This is your true north by which you evaluate your progress.
- Engage your employees in building the culture by involving them in the change process. Engaged employees will feel a greater sense of ownership and commitment to its success.
- Evaluate the current climate of your organization to determine the areas of strength that support the culture you want and the gaps that must be addressed to achieve your desired culture. It is often necessary to prioritize the gaps and dig deeper into the reasons those gaps exist before finding potential solutions. Otherwise, the plan developed may not truly address the issue and therefore stand less of a chance of rectifying it. Possible ways to evaluate include sending out a climate survey or holding focus groups with employees to gather a wider array of information.
- Establish a clear, actionable plan to transform your culture. The

plan must include specific goals, strategies, actions, persons responsible, timelines, benchmarks, and evidence of successful implementation. In this case, some examples might include developing policies and procedures, training for all staff and specific training for individuals in a leadership role, establishing a clear reporting process, and building a "Speak-up Culture."

- As you implement your plan, always lead by example. Leaders set the tone within the organization through what they say, but more importantly through how they act. It is important that employees see their top management team holds themselves accountable to the same values and behavioral standards that they expect from the entire staff.
- Assess progress by keeping a pulse on the behaviors, perceptions, and concerns of your staff to ensure that your organization is maintaining a safe and respectful culture.

## PERSEVERANCE

Transforming an organizational culture takes time, effort, commitment, and perseverance. Choosing to use this process, can provide leaders with the opportunity to build a safe and respectful workplace which is critical to the productivity, morale, engagement, and retention of their workforce.

Creating and maintaining this culture provides the foundation to challenge your organization to take the next step beyond safe to brave which expands psychological safety to further encourage

diversity and inclusion for employees to speak up, express alternative viewpoints, and challenge the status quo, ultimately building a workplace that operates on the cutting edge of its industry. ▾

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The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center is a collaborative effort of the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators. The Resource Center provides a continuum of services designed to facilitate and sustain positive change in the child welfare system. Services include training, transfer of learning, technical assistance, research and evaluation, project management, and organizational development. This work is made possible through grant funds from the Department of Human Services to the University of Pittsburgh.

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# Screen Shots



CCAP headquarters was turned into a makeshift production studio.



Kevin Boozel, CCAP president and Butler County commissioner, conducts the 2021 Virtual Spring Conference.



Luke McGowan, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs senior advisor, addresses county leaders.



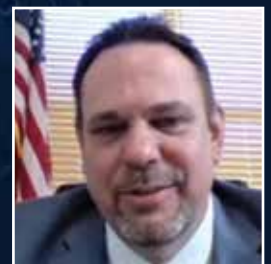
Governor Tom Wolf, Allison Beam, acting secretary of the Department of Health, and Randy Padfield, PEMA director, describe the effects of the pandemic.



Matt Knittel, director of the state's Independent Fiscal Office, and Jen Swails, state budget secretary, discuss state finances.



John Gordner, Senate Republican whip, Joanna McClinton, House Democratic leader, and Michael Schwoyer, deputy chief of staff and special counsel, discuss all things legislative.



Veronica Degraffenreid, then acting secretary of the commonwealth, and Jonathan Marks, deputy secretary for elections and commissions, speak about elections issues.



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# 2021

**2021**

# COUNTY BUDGET SURVEY

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA HAS RELEASED ITS SURVEY OF COUNTY BUDGET AND TAXATION RATES FOR 2021.

THE BUDGET CHART ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES LISTS THE 2021 BUDGET FIGURES FOR EACH COUNTY (GENERAL, SPECIAL AND OTHER FUNDS) AND COMPARES THIS YEAR'S DATA TO 2020.

THE TAXATION CHART LOOKS AT MILLAGE RATES, PREDETERMINED RATIOS AND THE LATEST ASSESSMENT CHANGES.

# 2021 COUNTY BUDGET SURVEY

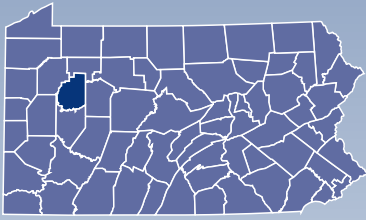
County	2021 BUDGET				PERCENT BUDGET INCREASE/DECREASE FROM 2020			
	General	Special	Other	Total	General	Special	Other	Aggregate
Adams	54,805,676	14,478,541	2,063,694	71,347,911	-1.15	1.27	82.63 [1]	0.67
Allegheny	838,248,568		104,276,177	942,524,745	0.94		-19.40	-1.80
Armstrong	23,330,503	34,830,683		58,161,186	-4.63	-4.54		-4.58
Beaver*				0				
Bedford	20,852,559	820,000	12,900,000	34,572,559	7.35	3.93	3.61	5.84
Berks	235,896,919	330,770,994		566,667,913	-8.31	2.59		-2.25
Blair	57,489,653	18,771,680	13,608,289	89,869,622	1.25	-9.04	37.02	2.88
Bradford	78,011,611			78,011,611	-15.13			-15.13
Bucks	290,678,800	344,223,800	101,898,000	736,800,600	10.17	-0.07	-19.27	0.31
Butler	69,684,193	119,407,673		189,091,866	2.30	14.01		9.39
Cambria	58,213,177	120,404,749	18,425,849	197,043,775	-1.19	14.87	-3.01	7.83
Cameron	5,637,749	5,063,936	5,063,936	10,701,685	2.80		-10.41	-3.90
Carbon	27,360,395	24,607,701	10,232,053	62,200,149	2.04	4.35	-29.76	-4.25
Centre	39,278,939	32,085,640	10,255,204	81,619,783	-3.55	2.99	-17.65	-3.22
Chester	183,539,460	252,664,939	168,485,868	604,690,267	2.84	8.11	11.38	7.32
Clarion	18,923,464	10,067,509	1,411,390	30,402,363	-5.67	31.33	-23.27	2.83
Clearfield	22,160,185	15,373,828	30,000	37,564,013	0.00	0.00	29,999,900	0.08
Clinton	23,603,845	17,729,387	0	41,333,232	2.29	16.80		5.81
Columbia	32,027,204	1,095,000	3,149,792	36,271,996	8.76	1.50	191.97	11.43
Crawford	56,858,455	3,804,311	12,690,969	73,353,735	-1.25	9.79	-1.24	-0.73
Cumberland	99,610,594	74,705,413	84,105,615	258,421,622	-18.82 [3]	-6.62 [2]	-0.84	-10.12
Dauphin	187,742,301	174,366,901		362,109,202	0.59	10.31		5.05
Delaware	285,358,557	286,791,300	69,799,656	641,949,513	0.54	-12.20	-6.01	-6.24
Elk	14,410,407	25,862,587	5,085,835	45,358,829	4.57	15.94	-39.78	1.85
Erie	114,849,030	281,431,684	34,798,458	431,079,172	2.50	12.24	-62.53	-5.39
Fayette	42,069,270	45,896,220	3,175,860	91,141,350	2.45	-37.74 [3]	-55.96 [3]	-25.29
Forest	3,884,499		819,154	4,703,653	12.38		-4.66	8.99
Franklin	55,352,964	22,688,500	76,042,435	154,083,899	2.40	-40.53 [4]	-19.38 [3]	-17.40
Fulton	7,202,824	3,919,116		11,121,940	-12.44	-31.09 [5]		-20.06
Greene	18,956,724	16,317,604	5,793,250	41,067,578	-5.03	2.85	-18.67 [2]	-4.38
Huntingdon	22,258,802	576,059	243,489	23,078,350	4.66	17.80	53.07	5.30
Indiana	45,229,466	638,000		45,867,466	-1.57	3.70		-1.50
Jefferson	16,336,763	12,772,657	1,646,807	30,756,227	7.03 [6]	-13.44	-2.88	-3.02
Juniata	12,712,721		3,966,900	16,679,621	2.20		0.00	1.67
Lackawanna	138,065,313	61,763,992	20,503,513	220,332,818	3.58	-2.24	-0.69	1.48
Lancaster	165,873,168		111,482,792	277,355,960	0.34		2.32	1.12
Lawrence	37,744,645	454,511	37,926,296	76,125,452	7.27	-0.51	13.99	10.46
Lebanon	50,658,191	1,152,408	34,557,644	86,368,243	-2.15	-47.35	5.19	-0.51
Lehigh	130,109,285	302,304,609	24,820,103	457,233,997	2.98	5.35	-75.45	-11.11
Luzerne	154,667,584	183,999,242		338,666,826	1.52	-3.40		-1.21
Lycoming	72,860,570	29,036,267	18,293,621	120,190,458	-1.55	62.51	-6.56	7.84
McKean	18,095,800		24,486,182	42,581,982	-3.25		0.65	-1.05
Mercer	34,067,010		2,780,000	36,847,010	0.63		-2.63	0.38
Mifflin	32,490,443	3,757,928		36,248,371	10.95	0.00		9.70
Monroe	61,552,722	37,560,357	15,186,785	114,299,864	-6.12	6.14	14.47	0.07
Montgomery	461,635,125	191,993,202	214,112,733	867,741,060	7.74	8.33	28.48	12.35
Montour	9,171,109			9,171,109	3.48			3.48
Northampton	128,483,500	304,878,400	11,642,600	445,004,500	-19.28 [3]	-5.94 [3]	-53.14 [3]	-12.43
Northumberland	27,790,677	52,891,136	2,245,528	82,927,341	2.97	4.30	23.45	4.28
Perry	19,134,501			19,134,501	-2.70			-2.70
Philadelphia	4,804,851,000	4,604,130,000	1,277,804,000	10,686,785,000	-4.39	24.54	-4.69	6.20
Pike	39,200,995	3,076,453		42,277,448	-4.53	19.37		-3.12
Potter	11,113,614			11,113,614	2.36			2.36
Schuylkill	66,683,513	106,213,733	4,235,331	177,132,577	0.57	35.55 [4]	-52.78	15.30
Snyder	22,532,105		39,713,581	62,245,686	12.91		28.12	22.16
Somerset	55,595,660			55,595,660	5.15			5.15
Sullivan	5,148,311			5,148,311	-10.17			-10.17
Susquehanna	25,779,001	10,145,475		35,924,476	21.53	-59.30		-22.14
Tioga	18,449,296	17,711,658		36,160,954	-11.58	8.46		-2.78
Union	20,137,411			20,137,411	3.99 [7]			3.99
Venango	44,998,466	11,990,951	1,612,232	58,601,649	3.66	-14.71	6.57	-0.65
Warren	19,274,958			19,274,958	1.39			-7.49
Washington	104,077,015	26,086,531	25,461,000	155,624,546	5.42	-0.14	-0.90	3.38
Wayne	35,553,008	3,100,000	15,700,000	54,353,008	-5.79 [8]	1.14	0.64	-3.63
Westmoreland	131,589,923	88,229,789	119,919,355	339,739,067	-1.13	8.14	-5.14	-0.40
Wyoming	15,014,423	2,842,000	1,016,853	18,873,276	4.00	3.23	0.31	3.68
York	236,332,313	323,762,226	67,261,580	627,356,119	-3.51	18.33	9.90	8.22
AVERAGE	155,474,347	173,083,667	60,015,541	324,421,204	0.42	1.82	652,171.24	-0.15
TOTAL				21,736,220,685				

**Footnotes:**

- [1] Includes Hotel Tax Fund
  - [2] Increase/Decrease due to liquid fuels and Act 13
  - [3] Increase/Decrease due to CARES Act funds
  - [4] Increase/Decrease due to Capital Projects
  - [5] Increase/Decrease due to 911
  - [6] Increase/Decrease due to C&Y funding
  - [7] Increase/Decrease due to bridge replacement projects
  - [8] Increase/Decrease due to revenue/expense reimbursement net reporting
- \*no data submitted

# 2021 COUNTY TAXATION SURVEY

	MILLAGE RATE				MILLS INCREASE/DECREASE FROM 2020				LAST ASSESSMENT CHANGES		
	General	Special	Debt	Total	General	Special	Debt	Total	Assess- ment Ratio	Full Reass- essment	Ratio Change
Adams	4.19			4.19	0.00			0.00	100%	2010	
Allegheny	4.04		0.69	4.73	0.18		-0.18	0.00	100%	2021	2000
Armstrong	14.80		4.20	19.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1997	1985
Beaver	25.00		1.00	26.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1982	1982
Bedford	3.12		0.61	3.73	0.15		0.00	0.15	100%	2012	
Berks	7.67			7.67	0.00			0.00	56%	1994	2020
Blair	3.68	0.03	0.39	4.10	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.02	100%	2017	
Bradford	10.43			10.43	0.00			0.00	50%	1999	1992
Bucks	20.00		5.45	25.45	-0.10		0.10	0.00	100%	1972	2004
Butler	21.62	2.94	3.07	27.63	0.12	0.00	-0.12	0.00	100%	1969	
Cambria	27.50	2.00	4.00	33.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	1972	2004
Cameron	20.50	1.50	5.00	27.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50%	1986	
Carbon	11.40	0.00	0.85	12.25	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	2001	
Centre	6.65		1.19	7.84	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1995	
Chester	3.20	0.26	1.09	4.55	0.09	0.02	0.07	0.18	100%	1998	
Clarion	20.50		1.50	22.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	100%	1975	2008
Clearfield	25.00			25.00	0.00			0.00	25%	1989	
Clinton	6.20			6.20	0.00			0.00	100%	2009	2009
Columbia	12.14		1.00	13.14	0.79		0.00	0.79	50%	1992	
Crawford	20.25	0.70	0.90	21.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	75%	1971	1985
Cumberland	2.20	0.17		2.36	0.00	0.00		0.00	100%	2010	
Dauphin	6.88	0.35		7.23	0.00	0.00		0.00	100%	2002	2002
Delaware	2.49		0.51	3.00	-2.05		-0.41	-2.46	100%	2020	
Elk	15.40		0.75	16.15	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1986	2006
Erie	5.96			5.96	0.25			0.25	100%	2013	2003
Fayette	6.11		0.65	6.76	0.75		-0.75	0.00	100%	2003	
Forest	18.91			18.91	0.00			0.00	100%	1974	2017
Franklin	25.00	1.30	4.10	30.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	1961	2001
Fulton	12.40			12.40	0.00			0.00	100%	1990	2002
Greene	8.54	0.08	0.41	9.04	1.77	0.01	-0.29	1.50	100%	2003	2003
Huntingdon	20.00	0.97	0.41	21.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	80%	1978	2013
Indiana	4.13	0.00	0.78	4.91	0.49		-0.03	0.46	100%	2016	2016
Jefferson	12.50			12.50	0.00	[7]		0.00	100%	1972	2004
Juniata	25.00			25.00	2.25			2.25	100%	1974	
Lackawanna	46.90	3.82	13.20	63.92	-0.70	0.00	0.70	0.00	100%		1986
Lancaster	2.91			2.91	0.00			0.00	100%	2018	
Lawrence	7.53	0.14	0.65	8.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	2003	
Lebanon	3.29			3.29	0.00			0.00	100%	2012	2005
Lehigh	3.78			3.78	0.00			0.00	100%	2013	2013
Luzerne	6.17			6.17	0.00			0.00	100%	2009	2009
Lycoming	6.50			6.50	0.00			0.00	100%	2005	2005
McKean	12.25			12.25	0.00			0.00	100%	1998	2005
Mercer	22.25		1.40	23.65	0.00		0.00	0.00	100%	1974	2002
Mifflin	15.77			15.77	0.00			0.00	50%	1999	
Monroe	2.75	0.17	0.48	3.40	-0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00	100%	2020	2019
Montgomery	3.62	0.39		4.01	0.16	0.00		0.16	100%	1998	1998
Montour	4.00			4.00	0.22			0.22	100%	2004	
Northampton	11.80			11.80	0.00			0.00	50%	1995	1972
Northumberland	25.00		5.89	30.89	0.00		0.00	0.00	100%	1972	2005
Perry	4.56			4.56	1.25			1.25	100%	2010	
Philadelphia	14.00			14.00	0.00			0.00	100%	2019	
Pike	20.47	0.68	0.09	21.24	1.65	0.58	-2.23	0.00	25%	1981	1996
Potter	18.50		0.70	19.20	0.00		0.00	0.00	100%	1977	2002
Schuylkill	15.38		0.60	15.98	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1996	
Snyder	21.63	0.19		21.82	0.00	0.00		0.00	100%	1973	2007
Somerset	11.26		2.10	13.36	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1998	1998
Sullivan	4.30			4.30	0.00			0.00	100%	2004	
Susquehanna	10.50	0.33		10.83	0.00	0.00		0.00	50%	1993	1993
Tioga	6.75			6.75	0.00			0.00	100%	2002	
Union	4.56	0.16	0.84	5.56	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	2005	2006
Venango	6.00			6.00	0.00			0.00	100%	2000	2004
Warren	21.75			21.75	0.25			0.25	50%	1989	
Washington	2.43			2.43	0.00			0.00	100%	2017	2017
Wayne	4.61		0.38	4.99	0.00		0.00	0.00	100%	2005	2005
Westmoreland	21.49			21.49	0.00			0.00	100%	1972	
Wyoming	23.87		1.98	25.85	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1988	1996
York	5.71	0.19		5.90	-0.19	0.10		-0.09	100%	2006	
AVERAGE	12.32	0.74	1.97	13.57	0.11	0.04	-0.09	0.07	85%		



COUNTY HIGHLIGHT:  
**CLARION**

**Jillian M. Fischer**  
County Administrator/Chief Clerk  
Clarion County

# Implementing **COVID-19** **Vaccinations** for Clarion County's Citizens

**A** few weeks after the COVID 19 vaccine first arrived for distribution at the Clarion Hospital, County Commissioner Ted Tharan, started to receive many phone calls from the citizens of Clarion County as to how and when they could get vaccinated. At that time, category 1A only included healthcare workers and first responders.

By mid-January Commissioner Tharan started to think, "How we are ever going to get all the people in Clarion County vaccinated when in the first month less than 1000 people, mainly first responders and healthcare workers, have been vaccinated?" He then reached out to the president of the hospital and organized a meeting with him to discuss how we could vaccinate the citizens of Clarion County.

The hospital president, Steven Davis, indicated that they were only able to vaccinate approximately 125 people per day due to restrictive space. Looking at the numbers—if the hospital was only able to vaccinate 125 people a day, 2 or 3 days a week, and being that the fourth week, they would have to start second rounds of doses—it could possibly take up to four years to vaccinate all the citizens in Clarion County. The commissioners thought that this was unacceptable.

## WHATEVER IT TOOK

All three commissioners met and, in the discussion, Commissioner Tharan made the statement that if the commissioners are not willing to spend whatever it takes to vaccinate their county citizens then they are a pathetic excuse for commissioners. They unanimously agreed to do whatever it took to get the vaccine to the citizens of Clarion County. Clarion County and Clarion Hospital have been closely working together since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic in February of 2020.

Step one was to find a facility/ location that was big enough to accommodate social distancing and a large number of people at

the same time. The county identified a location within one day and worked closely with Clarion Hospital leadership on the required logistics for successful deployment and vaccine administration, including paying rent for the facility space.

Step two was to work with the hospital to provide enough county staff to greet individuals at the door, help the hospital with the registration table, and ensure that appropriate cleaning was done throughout the day for an organized, community approach. In the partnership with the hospital, the hospital provided the pharmacists, all the nurses, as well as the scheduling of the second doses.

## OPERATIONS AND HOTLINES

On January 26, 2021, the vaccination clinic was open and started to administer shots. On the first day the clinic had approximately 300 vaccinations distributed. Two days later, another 300 vaccines were distributed, and each week after that the clinic increased its days of operation from two to three days a week to five to six days a week. The distribution of vaccines increased from 300 per day to 800 per day.

Two weeks after the clinic opened at the new location, Commissioner Tharan identified that a hotline number needed to be created for the citizens that did not have access to either a computer and/or



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the internet (as it is required from the hospital system). In one day, the county's Management Information System (MIS) department set up a hotline number and a voice messaging service designed to assist eligible community members in the county in getting scheduled for the vaccine when available.

Despite updating the scheduling program on the website to provide a better customer experience, the hospital continues to hear from community members, particularly in the current eligible group, who either have limited or no access to the internet or are otherwise unable to navigate the website to get scheduled for vaccination. The county then agreed to set up and manage this phone number designed specifically for community members requiring assistance in getting scheduled. The phone line was not intended to answer general questions about the vaccine or to confirm appointments scheduled through the website. Leslie Walters, Clarion Hospital CNO and vaccine clinic organizer noted, "We continue to point people to the website for the latest eligibility, specific vaccine FAQ's and scheduling information and to contact their primary care doctor with any other questions.

As of March 11th, the county had received 2,539 voicemail/calls. County employees have returned 2,539 calls and have been able to assist 1,600 people with scheduling a COVID-19 vaccination. Neither the hospital nor the county could have done the clinic without each other this is a perfect example of how public/private partnerships can be successful. On February 19,



2021 Glenn Thompson, U. S. Representative and Scott Hutchinson, State Senate, were able to come and tour the vaccination site along with the county commissioners.

## COLLABORATING WITH FOREST COUNTY

In mid-February, the Clarion County joined with Forest County because they did not have a site or a hospital to vaccinate people. The commissioners wanted to help their neighboring county. In return Forest County commissioners had several volunteers help at the clinic by covering some of the five-hour shifts.

To date, approximately 25,000 vaccinations have been administered at the Clarion County clinic. This was a team effort and could not have done without the help of our county employees who have stepped forward and have worked five hour shifts at the clinic, to ensure that there was coverage. Clar-

ion County Commissioners would like to extend a huge thank you to Jillian Fischer, county administrator, and Mindy Frampton, deputy chief clerk, for coordinating the scheduling, returning the phone calls, and organization of the clinic; John Stiglitz, maintenance director, and his maintenance crew who ensure the safety and cleaning of the clinic; Jeff Smathers, public safety director, and his crew for being greeters at the door to help our citizens; Chad Johnston, MIS director, for taking care of all the IT concerns on the back end; and county staff from Mental Health/Developmental Disability, Children and Youth Services, County Jail, Human Resources, Central Accounting and Sheriff's departments.

Clarion County commissioners would also like to thank Leslie Walters, chief nursing office, Steve Davis, Clarion Hospital president and the entire Clarion Hospital and ambulance staff for this strong partnership. 🍷



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