

Proposals for the Future  
Wyoming's Strategy to Survive, Drive, and Thrive



Presented by the Office of Wyoming  
Governor Mark Gordon  
June 2021

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## Introduction

*Wyoming's Strategy to Survive, Drive, and Thrive*

In the midst of the pandemic, Governor Mark Gordon began planning the state's recovery. The governor understood that there were actions the government needed to take immediately to stop further negative impacts, but he also understood that the state would have an opportunity to tackle problems long-term if it was strategic with its own funds and with funds made available through additional federal relief/stimulus bills.

When President Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act (Rescue Plan or ARPA) into law, the governor was ready to deploy his planning efforts. The governor convened a small group of stakeholders he called the Strike Team<sup>1</sup> to quickly create a strategy to best maximize the COVID-19 related federal funds in the near-term, mid-term, and long-term. The charge given to the Strike Team was to determine what the state needed to do to *survive*, and what could be done to better *drive* to a future where all of Wyoming can *thrive*.

In addition, the governor identified criteria by which he believes the state should evaluate projects eligible for American Rescue Plan Act funding. The governor believes each project should:

- Have a long-term impact or a return on investment;
- Not replenish budget cuts unless the replenishment can be sustained;
- Be sustainable and not add to the state's ongoing financial responsibilities;
- Support stimulus over relief;
- Where possible, leverage the dollars through matching or buy-in programs;
- create capacity for the future; and
- Benefit a wide group of citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> The Strike Team consists of two members from the governor's office (Randall Luthi and Renny MacKay), four members from the governor's cabinet (Department of Family Services Director Korin Schmidt, Department of Workforce Services Director Robin Cooley, Wyoming Business Council CEO Josh Dorrell, and Department of Health Interim Director Stefan Johansson), four members of the Wyoming Legislature (President of the Senate Dan Dockstader, Speaker of the House Eric Barlow, Senate Majority Floor Leader Ogden Driskill, and House Appropriations Chairman Bob Nicholas) and two representatives from local government (President of the Wyoming County Commission Association, Converse County Commissioner Jim Willox and Wyoming Association of Municipalities President, Cody Mayor Matt Hall).

The Strike Team has provided high level guidance and recommendations to the governor on the American Rescue Plan Act and planning efforts, including the leveraging of funding. The cabinet members of the Strike Team have worked with the governor's cabinet and policy team to gather input from agencies and key informants, review input, and provide recommendations to the governor for further action for the *Survive* and *Drive* phases.

The governor has asked the full Strike Team to continue to assist him with the planning and study, as well as the evaluation of solutions, required in the *Drive* and *Thrive* phases.

#### *Timeframe*

From the outset of the planning process, the governor voiced his desire to work with the Wyoming Legislature to best deploy federal funds made available to the state. This mirrored the process for CARES Act funding. Thus, the timeframe of planning efforts largely aligns with the work of the Legislature. The *Survive* phase has been on-going and will continue through the 2022 Legislative Session. The *Drive* phase has begun with the selection of areas that will benefit from further planning and study. Most of the planning and study efforts will culminate with recommendations for funding through the 2022 legislative process. Some areas identified for the *Drive* phase will require even more time and are expected to continue throughout the next year or beyond. The *Thrive* phase encompasses actions with long-term benefit and thus is not expected to be more comprehensively explored for several months.

#### *Planning Considerations*

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 is a \$1.9 trillion relief and stimulus package to support the nation's recovery from the many negative impacts caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Rescue Plan establishes the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund and the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund which provide billions of dollars in aid to states and local governments. The State of Wyoming, through the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund, expects to receive \$1,068,000,000. Wyoming counties and cities, through the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, expect to receive \$182,000,000. In addition to the Fiscal Recovery Funds, the State of Wyoming expects to receive up to \$109,000,000 from the Capital Projects Fund for critical projects tied to connectivity. The Rescue Plan also provides funds for education: \$303,000,000 to K-12 school districts and \$44,000,000 to higher education. Further, the Rescue Plan provides millions of dollars to Wyoming state agencies directly combating the pandemic (the Wyoming Department of Health) and the negative impacts of the pandemic - housing insecurity, child care fragility, food insecurity etc. (Department of Family Services) among others.

The Rescue Plan also provides millions of dollars to Wyoming citizens, businesses, and other entities outside of government through federal relief and stimulus programs, direct payments, tax credits, and benefits/services.

As the state begins to evaluate projects eligible for funding through the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund, it must consider whether the projects could be funded with other available funds or whether there is access to other available funds. This will allow the state to maximize the benefits it receives from each different funding source.

*Report*

This report is separated into three sections based on the phases of possible action: Phase I - *Survive*; Phase II - *Drive*; and Phase III - *Thrive*. The goal of the *Survive* phase is to identify immediate or urgent needs caused by or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section of the report, several immediate and urgent problems identified as part of the planning process are listed. Also in this section, the governor’s near-term plans for American Rescue Plan Act, Coronavirus State Fiscal Relief funds are stated.

The *Drive* phase is meant to further define key problem areas impacting Wyoming’s resilience and vitality and impeding Wyoming’s growth in the future. In the *Drive* section of this report, several areas are selected for further planning and study efforts.

Finally, the *Thrive* phase is meant to encompass the solutions to problems identified in the previous phases or already known to the state. This is the phase for big ideas with long-term impacts. The *Thrive* phase is yet to start, as the *Drive* phase has just begun.

**Phase I | Survive**

The goal of the *Survive* phase is to identify immediate or urgent needs caused by or exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and to fund solutions to halt further negative impacts.

*Identified Survive Needs*

The following “needs” were prioritized through the *Survive* planning phase (thus far) due to the urgency or immediacy of the need and the potential eligibility for CARES funds or availability of other federal funding.

<b>Survive Phase Needs 2021</b>			
<i>Approved and moving forward</i>			
<b>Need</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Ongoing COVID-19 Response Plan	The Department of Health will continue its COVID-19 response plan throughout 2021 and into 2022. A separate document detailing that plan is included as an appendix to this report.	~220 million	Received through direct federal funding

Services to Address Learning Loss at All Levels of Education	It is expected that some students were delayed in learning because of the cumulative impacts of COVID. These are being addressed by the Wyoming Department of Education, the school districts, community colleges and the university with funds those entities received directly from the Rescue Plan and other federal acts.		Received/ARPA and other federal funding
Increase Employment in Oil and Gas Industry	One-time funding for the Energy Rebound Program version 2 to put more people in Wyoming to work.	\$12,000,000	Allocated/CARES
Stimulate Tourism Economy	One-time funding to support preparation and marketing for a safe and robust tourism season by providing funding to local marketing organizations.	\$5,000,000	Allocated/CARES
Lack of Access to Meat Processing in Wyoming	Shore up the food supply chain with in-state capacity.	\$2,000,000	Allocated/CARES
Expand State Parks Camping to Deal with COVID Caused Overcrowding	One-time funding to increase capacity and opportunities at state parks and to hire additional seasonal workers for this summer.	\$6,524,135	Allocated/CARES
Housing Instability	Being addressed through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Includes assistance with utilities.	\$200 million	Received/multiple federal sources
Mortgage Delinquencies Causing Evictions	Being addressed by DFS through initial pilot project for Home Owners Assistance Fund. If need is proven, can be further addressed through a federally approved Home Owners Assistance Fund program.	\$5,000,000 for pilot project. Can request up to \$45,000,000 for full program	Received/ARPA
Child Care System Fragility	Being addressed by DFS with federal funds through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG).	\$6,748,000	Received/CCDBG

<i>Prioritized for CARES funding</i>			
<b>Need</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Tax Relief for Businesses	Businesses will receive some relief to offset impacts of pandemic-related tax increases.	\$60,000,000	Needed/CARES
Identify Underserved and Unserved Areas of Wyoming for Broadband Connectivity to Expand Virtual Work, Health Care and Learning Opportunities	One-time funding for continued planning. The Business Council and the Office of the Governor will continue intensive problem identification (mapping and surveying) to more accurately deploy resources to expand access to broadband.	\$200,000	Needed/CARES
Availability of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Resources	In addition to funding sources already being leveraged to support the availability of mental health and substance abuse treatment, the state will continue to investigate other needs in the public and private mental health service delivery systems.	TBD	Needed/CARES
DOC Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program Backlog	Use one-time funding to create Substance Use Disorder programming at the Wyoming Honor Conservation Camp.	\$1,200,000	Needed/CARES
Youth Crisis Service Demand	One-time funding to reimburse crisis centers for costs of COVID-related services.	\$1,000,000	Needed/CARES

<i>Possible if CARES funding available</i>			
<b>Need</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Higher Education Internet Connectivity and Access for Remote Learning	One-time funds to the community colleges and the university to alleviate connectivity issues at the colleges and at the university's research and development centers to improve virtual and distance education.	TBD	Needed/CARES
Prevent the Loss of Commercial Air Service to Wyoming	One-time funding to maintain air services in 5 Wyoming communities by funding the state and local governments' commercial air service revenue guarantee.	TBD	Needed/CARES

### *Survive | Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds, American Rescue Plan Act*

The governor will continue to spend other federal funds as appropriate before spending funds provided by the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds of the American Rescue Plan Act (Recovery Funds). Any spending from the Recovery Funds would be due to the urgency of the need and a restriction on using CARES Act funds for the necessity.

The governor is setting aside a modest amount of Recovery Funds to be used in 2021 according to his authority. These funds could be spent on the needs of the Executive Branch, Judicial Branch, and/or Legislative Branch.

Additionally, the governor will spend Recovery Funds on administration, planning, monitoring, and reporting. The spending for these efforts is expected to be under \$1 million in 2021.

### **Phase II | Drive**

The *Drive* phase is meant to further define key problem areas impacting Wyoming's resilience and vitality and impeding Wyoming's growth in the future. During this phase, the state needs to answer the question, "What do we need to do now in order for Wyoming to thrive?" This phase is meant to focus limited resources (time, personnel, money) on Wyoming's big problems, true needs, and significant opportunities so that solutions can be fleshed out to enable Wyoming to surpass where it was when the pandemic began and to thrive in the future. If the intention is to invest wisely, the state has to spend time fully defining the problems it wants to solve.

Many ideas for solutions were submitted in response to the initial requests for input. However, it is necessary to spend more time understanding the problems and opportunities, so solutions are not offered in this document. Solutions identified during the *Drive* phase could recommend use of American Rescue Plan Act funds/Recovery Funds, other federal funds, other funds, or state general funds. In 2021, some Recovery Funds funds may be expended to facilitate planning and study.

### *Drive | Areas for further planning and study*

The areas selected for further study and planning during the *Drive* phase are listed in the following table.

**Drive Phase areas for further planning and study**

Goal: Retain and attract working families and young adults to permanently live and raise families in Wyoming with focused efforts to improve availability of: appropriate/desired jobs and careers; appropriate training/education; stable, quality child care; housing; necessary services; and desired recreation and leisure activities.

Goal: Strengthen Wyoming's economy and revenue streams by 1) activating new economic sectors and creating new jobs; 2) identifying ways to add value to Wyoming's current businesses and core industries, including expanding the energy, agriculture, and tourism sectors with new growth in carbon capture, hydrogen, rare earth minerals, agriculture technology, tourism-driven manufacturing, technology, and workforce recruitment; and 3) designing and deploying targeted programs, services and/or investment tools to empower businesses to thrive through rapidly shifting economic and market conditions.

Goal: Create better alignment among workforce, economic development, and educational opportunities to achieve balance between available workforce and available employment opportunities; and support opportunities to upskill and/or retrain Wyoming workers so they will remain in the state.

Goal: Connect Wyoming for the future by strategically using federal funds for *Connect Wyoming*, a program administered by the Wyoming Business Council to improve access to and meet the increased need for reliable high-speed internet service.

Goal: Encourage the work of the Governor's Health Care Task force in ascertaining the most significant problems Wyoming citizens, especially children, adolescents, and the elderly, face with access to health care, mental health care, and substance abuse treatment services and support the recommendations of the Health Care Task Force with regard to the best solutions.

Goals: Expand outdoor recreation and enhance wildlife populations.

Goal: Promote and enhance Wyoming food supply, distribution, and markets.

Goal: Identify and complete necessary and beneficial infrastructure projects.

Goal: Assist state agencies with recruitment and retention of employees.

Goal: Fund projects necessary for continued efficiency and modernization of state government.

Goal: Identify other opportunities to support cities, counties, and tribal governments as they determine how to *survive, drive, and thrive*.



### *Drive Goals | Approach*

The governor has worked with his cabinet members and policy staff to determine next steps for planning and study of each of the *Drive* goals. The governor has asked the Strike Team to continue to assist him and his policy team in reaching out to key informants and stakeholders and evaluating recommendations made toward the end of the study/planning period. While some public engagement has already occurred, it is expected that stakeholders and key informants will be engaged throughout the remainder of the *Drive* phase. Recommendations to the governor for many of the *Drive* goals are expected in the fall. However, some areas are so complex and robust, the study/planning period may last well into next year.

**Solutions identified through this process may or may not be eligible for funds from the American Rescue Plan Act Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund.<sup>2</sup> When solutions are recommended - at the conclusion of the Drive phase- eligibility for funding will be determined.**

### **Phase III | Thrive**

The *Thrive* phase is meant to encompass the solutions to problems identified in the previous phases or already known to the state. This is the phase for big ideas and future benefits. While there are several ideas for this phase, it is premature to issue specific recommendations at this time.

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<sup>2</sup> Eligible uses of funds include: Support public health expenditures; Address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency; Replace lost public sector revenue using funding to provide government services; Provide premium pay for essential workers; and Invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. See *FACT SHEET: The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Will Deliver \$350 Billion for State, Local, Territorial, and Tribal Governments to Respond to the COVID-19 Emergency and Bring Back Jobs*, United States Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRP-Fact-Sheet-FINAL1-508A.pdf>

# Continued COVID-19 Response (2021-2022)



Wyoming Department of Health  
June 2021

## Purpose

This document outlines a high-level strategy to maintain current COVID-19 pandemic response efforts to further mitigate the spread and impacts of COVID-19 in Wyoming. The intent is to provide recommendations to the Governor on continuing the department's COVID-19 response through 2021 and into 2022, while also providing options for allocating American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and remaining CARES Act funds.

## Summary

The strategy outlined below contains the following five goals:

- 1) Increase COVID-19 vaccine uptake statewide;
- 2) Maintain diagnostic and surveillance testing capabilities throughout 2021 and into 2022;
- 3) Maintain or increase state stockpile and availability of personal protective equipment (PPE);
- 4) Prepare for future COVID-19 surges; and,
- 5) Maintain human resource capacity at WDH.

Table 1, below summarizes the department's previous efforts in the pandemic response that will continue with the four goals outlined in this document. A separate document is provided detailing current data regarding ARPA funding in multiple categories that the department anticipates receiving directly.

**Table 1: Highlights of WDH COVID-19 response funding, 2020-2021, in millions**

Goal	Purpose	Apprx Spent (2020-21)	WDH Direct Funding (2021) <sup>1</sup>	CARES Needs	State ARPA Needs
Goal #1	Increase COVID-19 vaccine uptake	-	\$38.9	-	-
Goal #2	COVID-19 Testing	\$72.6	TBD	\$0.0	\$0.0
	Wastewater monitoring	\$3.5	TBD	\$0.0	\$0.0
	Public Health Laboratory - supplies and equipment	\$16.1	TBD	\$0.0	\$0.0
Goal #3	Maintain PPE capacity	\$3.0	TBD	\$0.0	\$0.0
Goal #4	Hospital Association Contract	\$20.0		\$3.0	TBD
	Media campaigns	\$1.5	TBD	\$0.0	\$0.0
	County contracts	\$13.5	TBD	\$0.0	\$0.0
	Provider grants (e.g., mental health)	\$3.2	TBD	\$0.0	\$0.0
	Miscellaneous (VSS, Medicaid, etc.)	\$1.2	TBD	\$0.0	\$0.0
Goal #5	Maintain WDH staff capacity	-	-	-	-
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$134.6*</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>\$3.0</b>	<b>TBD</b>

*\*Note that these totals do not include all CARES Act spending or obligations, only those that directly relate to the 2021-2022 plan outlined in this document. Additional ARPA funding directly to the WDH is in process; analysis provided separately.*

## Strategy

The department's overall strategy aims to achieve the following goals:

<sup>1</sup> Funding sources coming directly to the department in 2021 include ELC and 'direct' ARPA funding. Award notices and federal guidance will continue to be received over the second and third quarters of calendar year 2021. See attachment.

**Goal #1: Increase COVID-19 vaccine uptake statewide.**

- Continue to increase the number of providers offering vaccine in Wyoming. Provide technical assistance and education on vaccines and increased options for smaller orders, storage and use of vaccines.
- Develop long-term partnerships with key stakeholder groups to encourage vaccine uptake in vulnerable populations.
- Offer vaccination options to those with a ‘wait and see’ approach to the vaccine. Encourage providers to offer walk-in, evening, and weekend hours.
- Conduct outreach and mobile operations to reach areas with low vaccination rates and high vulnerability.
- Increase behavior change messaging to help present the information Wyomingites need to make the choice to be vaccinated.
- Enlist trusted messengers to encourage vaccination.

**Goal #2: Maintain diagnostic and surveillance testing capabilities throughout 2021 and into 2022.**

- The department must maintain the availability of COVID-19 testing statewide, through capacity at the Wyoming Public Health Laboratory and through various contracts that provide COVID-19 testing to healthcare providers, congregate care facilities, businesses and organizations, and the general public. Table 1, below, provides a summary of the COVID-19 testing capacity that will be maintained.

**Table 2: COVID-19 testing, 2021-2022**

Program/Effort	Purpose	Funding Source	Funding Needed?
National Jewish	-Long-term care facilities	-CARES -ELC -WDH ARPA	No
Curative/Gothams	-State facilities -Tribes -Counties	-CARES -ELC -WDH ARPA	No
Vault	-Employers/organizations -General public	-CARES	No
Saliva Direct (WPHL)	-Healthcare providers -Tribes -General public	-CARES -ELC -WDH ARPA	No
Various rapid platforms	-Rapid result testing (Binax NOW, etc.) for healthcare providers, school districts, counties, etc.	-CARES -ELC -WDH ARPA	No

WPHL Supplies	-WPHL will continue to require supplies for the COVID-19 response in 2021 and into 2022	-CARES -ELC -WDH ARPA	No
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In addition, the department will maintain its statewide COVID-19 wastewater monitoring program through the end of the 2021 calendar year. There are currently 29 entities (cities, towns, facilities, etc.) participating in collecting samples on a regular basis to send to WPHL for analysis.

**Table 3: COVID-19 wastewater monitoring, through December, 2021**

Program/Effort	Purpose	Funding Source	Funding Needed?
WPHL Wastewater Surveillance	-Early detection for Wyoming communities and certain congregate facilities and settings -Supplemental analysis of COVID-19 variants	-CARES -ELC	No

**Goal #3: Maintain or increase state stockpile and availability of personal protective equipment (PPE).**

- The department will continue to monitor and maintain its PPE stockpile, intended to supply public health departments, first responders, and front-line public health workers during an emergency. The department will continue to work with state and local partners to ensure adequate storage facilities and distribution logistics are readily available. In addition, the department will continue to work with its county partners to make available and distribute PPE to community partners in need.

**Table 4: WDH PPE Stockpile and Supply, 2021-2022**

Program/Effort	Purpose	Funding Source	Funding Needed?
WDH PPE stockpile	-Supply partners with PPE during emergencies -Liaise with community partners on needed PPE resources	-CARES -ELC -WDH ARPA -WDH PHEP	No

**Goal #4: Prepare for future COVID-19 surges by protecting Wyoming’s healthcare system, providing appropriate messaging and communications, and supporting the local public health workforce.**

- **Healthcare System Protection.** The department will continue its partnership with the Wyoming Hospital Association (WHA) to provide necessary support to hospitals and long-term care facilities. The department currently has a \$20 million contract with WHA that provided needed staffing support to hospitals and long-term care facilities throughout Wyoming in 2020 and 2021.

This contract has been spent. Additional funding should be set aside to support hospitals and long-term care facilities in the near future, in preparation for seasonal surges in COVID-19 transmission, hospitalizations, and volatility in long-term care facilities.

- **Mass Media and Public Information.** The department has implemented several COVID-19 mass media campaigns over 2020 and 2021:
  - COVID-19 prevention ads (social distancing, face coverings, testing, etc.); and,
  - COVID-19 vaccine promotion.

The department will continue its current COVID-19 vaccine promotion campaign in its current state through June of 2021. Additional messaging is being produced to continue beyond June of 2021.

The department recommends setting aside additional resources for mass media and public information in anticipation of a seasonal surge in COVID-19 transmission (e.g., potential launch in early Fall of 2021 during the beginning of respiratory illness season, and return to school and other indoor activities).

- **County and Tribal contracts.** The department has supported county public health offices and tribes for contact tracing, testing, and COVID control efforts such as isolation and quarantine through direct contract funding in 2020 and 2021. Funding for these efforts will continue at least through the end of calendar year 2021. Continued funding is available through CDC grants to the Immunization Unit to fund county and tribal contracts for vaccination efforts through June 30, 2024. Additionally, funding is available through CDC to the Preparedness and Response Unit to fund county preparedness activities for future emergencies, current and future response activities, and additional workforce support under the current response.

Table 5, below, outlines the elements of Goal #3.

**Table 5: Preparation for 2021-2022 COVID-19 seasonal surges**

Program/Effort	Purpose	Funding Source	Funding Needed?
Hospital Association Contract	-Support Wyoming hospitals and long-term care facilities with staffing and other resources	-CARES	\$3 million (from CARES or ARPA)*
COVID-19 media campaign	-COVID-19 prevention -COVID-19 vaccine promotion	-CARES -WDH ARPA	No
County and Tribal contracts	-Support county and tribal public health agencies with staffing, supplies, and other response needs	-CARES -ELC -WDH ARPA -Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act -WDH PHEP	No

*\*Note this amount is a placeholder. The department is working with stakeholders to prepare for a potential increase in healthcare system needs in 2021 due to COVID-19.*

**Goal #4: Maintain human resource capacity at WDH**

- The department dramatically increased personnel and human capital in various units during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staffing needs increased significantly at the WPHL, in the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Unit, Immunization Unit, and in our county public health offices during 2020 and into 2021.

**Table 6: WDH staffing and human resource needs**

Program/Effort	Purpose	Funding Source	Funding Needed?
Maintaining staff capacity	-WDH is working with A&I to maintain staffing capacity by leveraging federal funding, converting needed positions from temporary to contract status, and to provide appropriate hazard pay and relief on an as-needed basis.	-CARES -ELC -WDH ARPA	No