



ARAPAHOE COUNTY
COLORADO'S FIRST

Board Summary Report

Date: July 23, 2020

To: Board of County Commissioners

From: Michelle Halstead, director of communication and administrative services
Nathan Fogg, manager of the office of emergency management

Subject: CARES Act Fund Agreements for Sewage Data Testing

Request and Recommendation

Staff is seeking approval of a resolution authorizing the Sheriff's Office to sign a service agreement on behalf of Arapahoe County with GT Molecular to complete sewage data testing, subject to approval as to the form of the agreements by the County Attorney's Office, and allocating up to \$30,000 of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to the program.

Background

The \$2.2 trillion CARES Act of 2020 provided \$150 billion for state and local government relief. The State of Colorado received \$2.23 billion, with the state retaining 55% of the funds, while eligible local governments received 45% of the funds. Arapahoe County received a direct allocation of \$114,569,891.70 and allocated 45% of its funds – more than \$51 million – to the county's 13 municipalities.

The Board of County Commissioners adopted the following objectives to coordinate Arapahoe County's response and recovery efforts, including how to use CARES Act funding:

- Support the economic recovery of our residents and businesses across the county.
- Protect the health and well-being of county and municipal employees.
- Increase access to effective and efficient testing methods.
- Support the most vulnerable residents across the county.
- Educate regarding personal responsibility, situational awareness, and preventive actions including continued social distancing, avoidance of large gatherings, and supports for high risk populations to remain in safe environments.
- Establish data-driven decision-making model to assess public health, hospital surge and capacity, and economic success.
- Fund direct COVID-19 costs in a manner that minimizes county liability, recognizing multiple grant streams and funding opportunities.

Arapahoe County retained approximately \$63 million to fund programs that align with the objectives above, consistent with requirements of the legislation and implementation guidance established by the U.S. Treasury. Supporting our local economy is a key objective of the

county's recovery efforts. Staff is recommending allocating CARES funds to the GT Molecular to help achieve that objective.

Sewage testing is a leading indicator of how the virus is spreading within Arapahoe County, because humans shed the novel coronavirus in fecal material within a day or two of being infected — well before symptoms usually appear at five to 14 days.

Arapahoe County's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has been receiving this type of data from the South Platte Water Renewal Partners wastewater treatment plant via their [testing program](#) by Biobot Analytics based out of Massachusetts.

This data has been part of the county's early warning system to monitor the spread of COVID-19. Most recently, this data provided OEM several days advance notice that the county was seeing a spike in cases vs. the lagging indicator of community testing data. The data helped OEM recognize the County was outside of the State-approved variances, allowing Arapahoe County to self-report this incident to the Colorado Department of Health and Environment and begin developing mitigation strategies – days before the State formally directed us and 14 other counties to do so.

This proactive behavior demonstrates Arapahoe County's commitment to disease suppression and economic growth. Currently, only one wastewater facility is participating in testing effluent. Contracting with GT Molecular (a referral from Colorado State University as they are at capacity) will enable OEM to expand this testing with local partners:

- South Platte Water Renewal Partners
- Arapahoe County Water & Wastewater Authority
- Aurora Water
- East Cherry Creek Valley

This testing strategy helps supports our business community remain open and functioning at a less restrictive level than current public health orders. Additionally, testing costs with GT Molecular are more attractive than BioBot (\$295/test vs. \$1900/text) and the turn around will be greatly improved.

Staff recommends support of the resolution to secure lab space and lock in pricing as this testing tool becomes more in demand, allowing us to conduct weekly testing prior to Dec. 30, 2020.

Fiscal Impact

These programs would draw down \$30,000 in appropriated CARES funding.

Reviewed By

Ron Carl, County Attorney