



### MPPS Policy Brief

## A survey of Michigan local government leaders on American Rescue Plan Act funding and uses

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### Top local spending priorities: capital improvements, infrastructure, and public safety

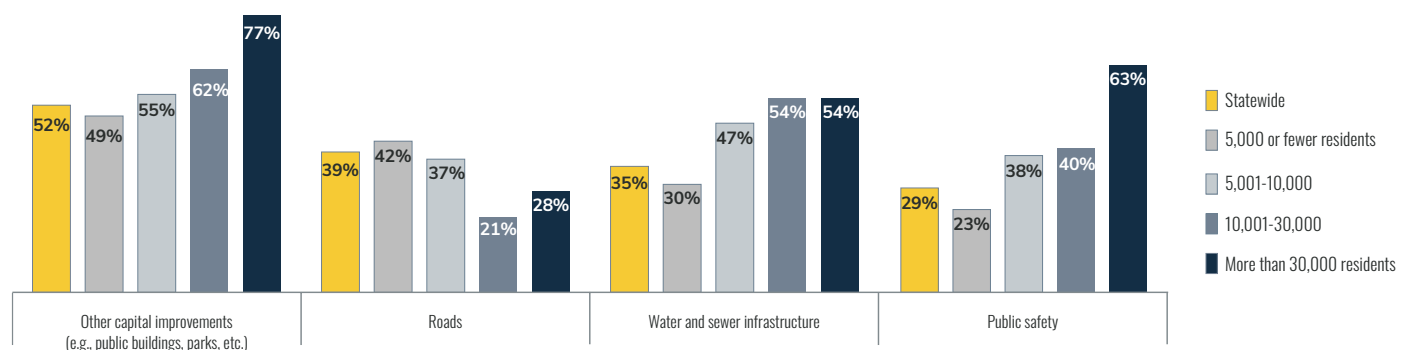
Out of 12 potential project types, capital improvements are the most common planned use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Statewide, 52% of all Michigan local governments currently plan to spend ARPA money on facilities such as public buildings, public parks, etc. (see *Figure 1*). The next most common plans are for roads (39%), water and sewer infrastructure (35%), and public safety (29%).

There are differences in the order of priorities across jurisdictions of various sizes. For example, the second highest priority is road projects in the smallest jurisdictions (those with 5,000 or fewer residents), compared with water and sewer projects in mid-size jurisdictions (with 5,001–30,000 residents), and public safety spending in the largest jurisdictions (those with more than 30,000 residents).

Please see CLOSUP's website for a full list of the twelve project types on the [survey questionnaire](#); also, responses broken down by population size for the types not shown can be found in [downloadable summary tables](#).

**Figure 1**

Percent of jurisdictions planning various types of ARPA funded projects, by population size



Note: Respondents were asked to check all that apply, so categories may sum to more than 100%

## Strategies: collaboration and community engagement

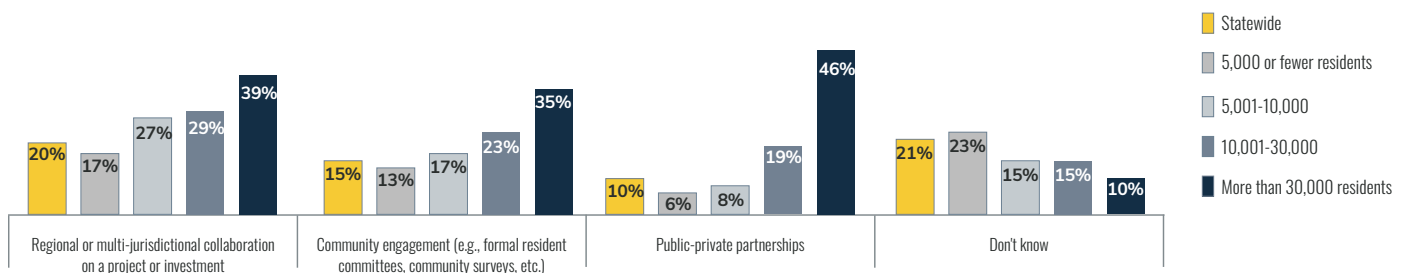
To plan or implement ARPA projects, 15% of Michigan jurisdictions overall report engaging their community members, for example through resident participation in formal committees or community surveys to gauge support for spending options (see *Figure 2*). This is significantly more common in the largest jurisdictions (35%) than the smallest (13%).

Meanwhile, 20% statewide plan to, or are, collaborating with other jurisdictions, and 10% report using public-private partnerships for ARPA funded projects. In the largest jurisdictions, 39% are using regional or multi-jurisdictional collaboration, and 46% are using public-private partnership approaches.

However, statewide, 41% indicate they are currently planning to engage in none of the five potential strategies asked about on the survey, and another 21% statewide report they don't know what strategies are being considered or used for ARPA spending. Uncertainty is highest in the smallest jurisdictions (23%).

**Figure 2**

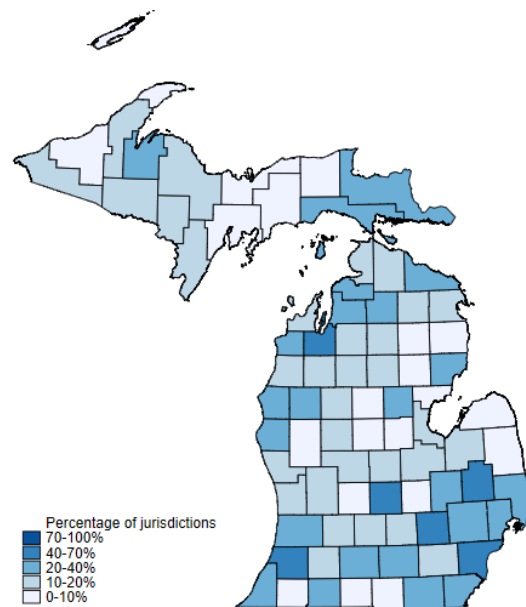
Percent of jurisdictions considering or using strategies for planning and implementing projects using ARPA funds, by population category



Note: responses for "bond financing," "special assessment districts," "other" and "none of these" not shown. Figure 2 also excludes those who say they did not apply for or accept ARPA funding, or are completely unfamiliar with the program.

**Figure 3**

Percent of jurisdictions within a particular county considering or using regional or multi-jurisdictional collaboration for planning and implementing projects using ARPA funds, by county

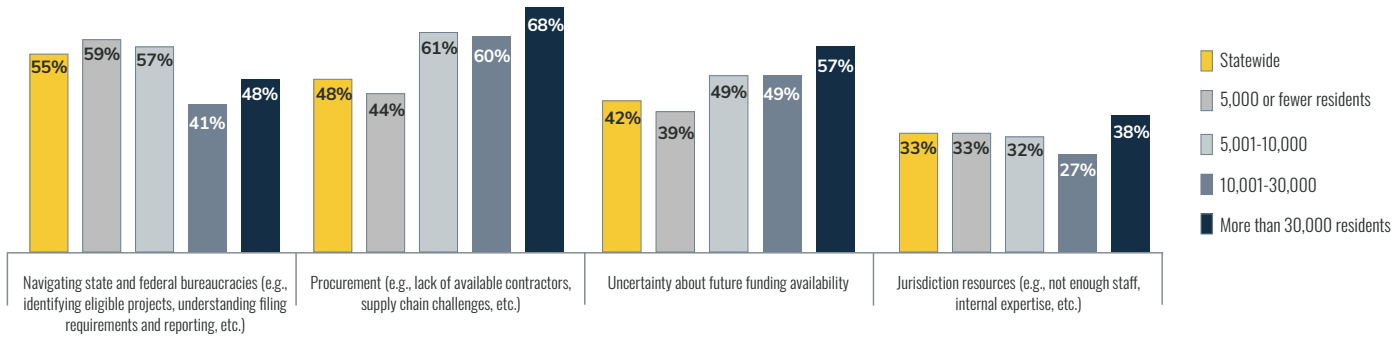


# Problems: small jurisdictions in particular face challenges navigating state and federal bureaucracies

Out of eight types of problems jurisdictions may currently face regarding ARPA funds, the most cited are navigating state and federal bureaucracies (reported by 55% of jurisdictions receiving ARPA funds) and procurement challenges (48%). Meanwhile, 42% say uncertainty about future funding is at least somewhat of a problem (see *Figure 4*).

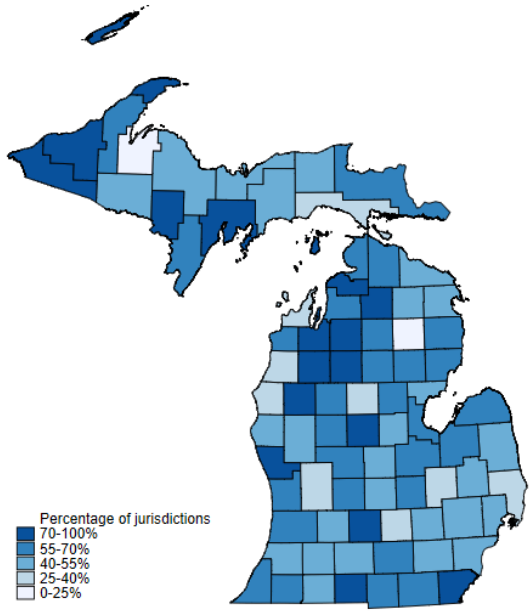
Problems navigating bureaucracies are most commonly reported by smaller jurisdictions. Among the smallest, 59% say it is somewhat of a problem (39%) or a significant (20%) problem. Meanwhile, concerns about procurement and future funding availability are most commonly reported in larger jurisdictions. Among the largest, 68% report procurement problems, and 57% say uncertainty about future funding is a problem.

**Figure 4**  
Percent of jurisdictions reporting problems managing and allocating ARPA funds, by population size



Note: responses for "not much of a problem," "not a problem at all," and "don't know" not shown. *Figure 3* also excludes those who say they did not apply for or accept ARPA funding, or are completely unfamiliar with the program.

**Figure 5**  
Percent of jurisdictions within a particular county reporting problems with navigating state and federal bureaucracies for ARPA funds, by county

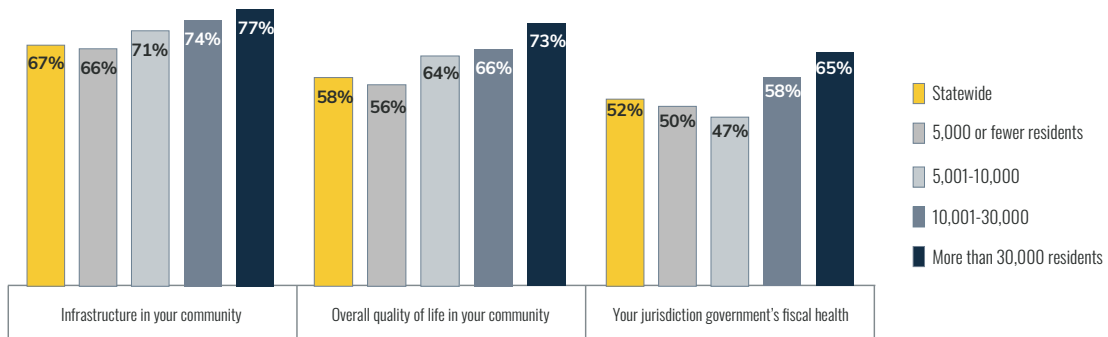


## Benefits: most expect ARPA funding to improve fiscal health, infrastructure, and quality of life

Two-thirds (67%) of local leaders statewide expect ARPA funds will somewhat or significantly improve infrastructure in their community (see *Figure 6*). More than half think it will improve their community’s quality of life (58%) and fiscal health (52%). However, few expect *significant* improvements in these areas, including just 15% for infrastructure and less than 10% for fiscal health and quality of life.

The largest jurisdictions are more likely to say ARPA funds will improve fiscal health, infrastructure, and overall quality of life compared to smaller jurisdictions, and are more likely to expect *significant* improvements in these three areas.

**Figure 6**  
Percent of jurisdictions expecting ARPA funds will improve their community in various ways, by population category



Note: responses for "not improve much," "not improve at all," and "don't know" not shown. *Figure 4* also excludes those who say they did not apply for or accept ARPA funding, or are completely unfamiliar with the program.

## Survey Background and Methodology

The Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) is an ongoing census survey of all 1,856 general purpose local governments in Michigan conducted since 2009 by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) at the University of Michigan’s Gerald R Ford School of Public Policy. The program is a partnership with Michigan’s local government associations. The Spring 2022 wave was conducted April 4 – June 6, 2022. Respondents include county administrators, board chairs, and clerks; city mayors, managers, and clerks; village presidents, managers, and clerks; and township supervisors, managers, and clerks from 1,327 jurisdictions across the state, resulting in a 71% response rate by unit. More information is available at <https://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/mpps-2022-spring>

Detailed tables of the data in this report and county-level maps of other question responses will be available at: <http://mpps.umich.edu>.

*The survey responses presented here are those of local Michigan officials, while further analysis represents the views of the authors. Neither necessarily reflects the views of the University of Michigan, or of other partners in the MPPS.*