

Survey of Old Lyme Pandemic Outcomes

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Old Lyme American Recovery Plan Committee

American Rescue Plan Act Committee (ARPC) Mission Statement

"The ARPC will develop and recommend a strategy to the Board of Selectmen for the allocation of ARP funds that benefits the Old Lyme community, which has been impacted by the COVID pandemic.

The Committee will strive to operate in a transparent and objective manner and consider input from the community at large. The group's goal is that their recommendation for fund deployment will, when carried out, maximize benefits for those living and working in Old Lyme. The ARPC will provide regular updates to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance with a goal of submitting final recommendations prior to June 30, 2022."

A Community Survey to inform ARPC of Community Concerns, Needs, and Interests

- ▶ December 5, 2021–January 7, 2022
- ▶ Online (Survey Monkey) or hard copy options
- ▶ Publicized through local media, flyers, town website, social media, and postcards to 06371 and 06376 mailboxes/PO Boxes
- ▶ Over 900 respondents
- ▶ 69% Primary Residence
- ▶ 7% Primary + Business Owner/Non-Profit Leader
- ▶ 3% Non-resident Business Leader
- ▶ 18% Other Property Owner (including seasonal)

Resident Survey Section

Those who live in Old Lyme as their primary residence.

Inflation, Job and Business Losses, Other Costs Make Household Financial Positions Concerning

“Inflation is cutting into my real income.”

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“I am a renter in town and concerned that my rent will increase while my salary stays stagnant.”

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“Sewer project will likely cause me to sell and relocate somewhere more affordable.”

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“Plant [where employed] will be closing in 2022 due to loss of business from the pandemic.”

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“We did not lose our jobs, thankfully, but we’ve had to sacrifice hours and pay to accommodate childcare and remote learning needs. We’ve experienced many increased costs and have juggled to keep it together and not sink into substantial debt.”

Isolation from Family, Friends, and One's Support System was a Key Stress Factor during the Pandemic

- ▶ A reduction in family income, remote learning balanced with remote work, and being unable to participate in physical activities previously enjoyed increased household stress.
- ▶ Hiking Trails were accessed more often than pre-pandemic, yet other “Town assets” such as art galleries, religious organizations, restaurants, and other local businesses were utilized less frequently, as might be expected.
- ▶ Most respondents said they did not feel healthier with either reduced food choices or activity at home.

A “Silver Lining” for Respondents was more time with household members and a slowdown of activities and expectations.

Although most respondents did not feel the need to seek out Mental Health Services, some are finding they do not have the available time or financial resources to pursue mental health counseling for themselves or a family member.

“... mental health is so important and needs to be addressed and more accessible to the adults and children in our community. My daughter had struggled tremendously, and I have spent 10 months trying to get her a psychiatrist to help her through this difficult time... her whole world has been turned upside down.”

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“...I work closely with our Old Lyme community ...some may not even express it directly, but the mental health of a lot of my [customer base] has drastically changed...”

Business & Non-Profit Survey Section

Those who lead or own a business or non-profit business in
Old Lyme.

In this section of the survey:

More than half of respondents were sole-proprietors or home business owners.

Roughly a third were businesses employing staff.

Adaptability was Key During the Pandemic

- ▶ 78% of Non-Profits felt they needed to pivot to provide services or assistance to Old Lyme residents in a way they had not prior to the pandemic.
- ▶ About half of business owners had to change how they offered products or services due to the pandemic
- ▶ Roughly a quarter had to add remote work options, while 40% found the nature of their work did not allow for remote workers.
- ▶ At the time of the survey (December 2021) 12% found employees still not willing or able to return to the workplace.
- ▶ At the time of the survey, about 30% were still having staff instability and other staffing issues.

About a *Quarter* have Recovered from a Rough Patch and *20 percent* are not yet Financially Sound.

“I incurred expenses significant to my income; however I did not apply for loans as I was concerned about my ability to repay them.”

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“Redoing my basement to prepare to move our location.”

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“Wish there were much more recognition of the stress of small business owners, many of which lost their life's work. Many employees came out ahead financially, so the sympathy for the minority represented by business owners affected by mandated shutdowns while large stores have not been shut has just not been there.”

...

“As a self-owned small business, we stayed afloat with CT's enhanced Unemployment Benefits in 2021. Those are gone in 2022, our business has not recovered fully.”

About 25% are currently seeking or planning to seek additional help.

Eligible Uses of ARPA Funds

As defined by ARPA Final Rule

1. **Revenue replacement** for the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, relative to revenues collected in the most recent fiscal year prior to the emergency,
2. COVID-19 **expenditures or negative economic impacts** of COVID-19, including assistance to **small businesses, households, and hard-hit industries, and economic recovery (incurred after 03/03/2021)**,
3. **Premium pay** for essential workers,
4. Investments in **water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure**.

Funding must be spent by 12/31/2024

ARPC Goals

- ▶ **Broadly** benefit Old Lyme stakeholders to the extent possible
- ▶ Align application requests with **eligible categories**
- ▶ Evaluate independent consultant's recommendations to approve/deny all **Revenue Loss-specific applications** (pending Town Meeting approval)
- ▶ **Utilize Resident Survey, invited committee presenters, public comment and diversity of committee members to inform all decisions**
- ▶ Make a final recommendation of approved applications to the BOS prior to June 30, 2022

Status/Timeline Updated

- ▶ ARPC has engaged (pending Town Meeting approval) an independent consultant to evaluate and recommend approval/denial of all *Revenue Loss*-specific applications. Consultant will be pro-active in assisting applicants in completing applications and compiling supporting documentation where needed,
- ▶ Old Lyme ARP Applications are being finalized presently,
- ▶ We are targeting a launch of the application the first week of April, assuming there are no delays,
- ▶ Application window projected to be 30 days,
- ▶ ARPC will reviews applications and formalizes BOS recommendation,
- ▶ ARPC submits recommendations to BOS prior to June 30, 2022, assuming there are no delays.