

# Coronavirus Relief Fund

## Frequently Asked Questions

***Are budgeted public safety, public health, health care, and human services payroll costs eligible expenses under CARES Act? Will the State of Montana reimburse counties for sworn deputy costs?***

Yes. [Treasury issued guidance on May 28<sup>th</sup>](#) that created a special category of presumptively eligible payroll expenses and the State of Montana has agreed to pay for your sworn law enforcement and public health personnel from March through December 2020. HOWEVER, if you receive other federal funds for the same costs you are not allowed to receive double compensation. From the Treasury Guidance:

The Fund is designed to provide ready funding to address unforeseen financial needs and risks created by the COVID-19 public health emergency. For this reason, and as a matter of administrative convenience in light of the emergency nature of this program, a State, territorial, local, or Tribal government may presume that payroll costs for public health and public safety employees are payments for services substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency, unless the chief executive (or equivalent) of the relevant government determines that specific circumstances indicate otherwise.

***Can we receive reimbursement for the costs of positions that have been repurposed to respond to COVID-19?***

Yes. Treasury issued guidance on May 28<sup>th</sup> that clarified positions repurposed to respond to COVID-19 would be eligible for reimbursement if the position duties were substantially different than the traditional role. The State of Montana has issued guidance that “substantially different” means that 2/3 of the time was dedicated to COVID-19. For example, a receptionist in the Commission office was repurposed to the Health Department to handle phone calls and general inquiries. The personnel costs for that position are eligible for reimbursement if the position spend 2/3 or more time performing work attributable to COVID-19 and outside the traditional role.

***Counties have been told that they will receive 45% of the CARES Act Funding. When will we be getting a check for our share?***

Montana has created a reimbursement program with the CARES Act funding (\$1.25 Billion) received by the State. No direct allocations to local governments are forthcoming. You can submit for reimbursement of eligible costs and expect payment within 30 days of submission, but **YOU WILL NOT BE GETTING A DIRECT ALLOCATION.**

***Can CARES Act Funds be used to create a property tax assistance program for owners impacted by the COVID-19 shut-down?***

No. Treasury has clarified that “Fund payments may not be used for government revenue replacement, including the provision of assistance to meet tax obligations.”

***Can CARES Act Funds be used for capital improvement projects?***

No. If capital improvement projects are not necessary expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, then Fund payments may not be used for such projects.

***Are States allowed to place further restrictions on local government use of funds?***

Yes, but only in reference to compliance with audit requirements. Other restrictions are not permissible. Treasury and the CARES Act bill are clear that the financial responsibility for proper use of the funds remains with the primary receiver. The State of Montana will be accountable for all use of the funds, including distributions or reimbursement to local governments.

***Can Counties further distribute to political subdivisions or can a county make a CARES Act Reimbursement Request on behalf of another entity (Fire District)?***

Yes, and we encourage you to work with any applicable special district or political subdivision in your county for reimbursement. Primarily your fire district(s) and emergency medical service providers not otherwise eligible for payment of eligible expenses. Please note that schools have a separate process to receive CARES Act Funds, and cities and towns are eligible for the same reimbursement program as counties so you only need to consider special districts that incur COVID-19 related eligible expenses.

***May funds be used to create hazard pay programs or retroactively compensate employees for work during the public health emergency?***

No. The program is a reimbursement program and as such you will only be eligible for incurred costs. No retroactive payments will be considered eligible expenses for this program.

***May funds be used to cover facility rentals used to plan for public health purposes during the pandemic?***

Yes. Facility rentals for social distancing, emergency operations, public health, testing, treating, quarantining, or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency are reimbursable expenses. The State of Montana will determine the reasonableness of any such request.

***When can we make requests for reimbursement?***

The State of Montana, through Department of Administration, created submission deadlines:

Cycle 1

- End Date (thru): 5/31/2020
- Due Date: 6/26/2020
- Completion Date (goal): 7/31/2020
- Time period: 3 months

Cycle 2

- End Date (thru): 6/30/2020
- Due Date: 7/24/2020

- Completion Date (goal): 8/31/2020
- Time period: 2 months (4 cumulative)

#### Cycle 3

- End Date (thru): 8/31/2020
- Due Date: 9/25/2020
- Completion Date (goal): 10/30/2020
- Time period: 2 months (6 cumulative)

#### Cycle 4

- End Date (thru): 10/31/2020
- Due Date: 11/20/2020
- Completion Date (goal): 12/31/2020
- Time period: 2 months (8 cumulative)

#### Cycle 5

- End Date (thru): 12/30/2020
- Due Date: 1/31/2021
- Completion Date (goal): 2/28/2021
- Time period: 2 months (10 cumulative)

These deadlines are to ensure timely processing of applications and distribution of eligible payments to local governments. You are eligible to claim any cost from March 12 through December at any of the submission windows. The application requires adequate documentation and use of the application portal; a link to the portal can be found here: <https://www.mtcounties.org/news/county-news/local-government-reimbursement-program-now-open/>