



# Proposed Economic Recovery Activities

*Economic Development Department*

*Nov. 17, 2022*

# *County Response to Pandemic*

- El Paso County's primary response to economic impact from the pandemic was deploying the Financial Assistance for Safety, Technology and Economic Resiliency (FASTER)
  - FASTER provided more than 830 El Paso County businesses with support through grants, loans and technical assistance.
  - The program's strengths included deploying assistance promptly and support for businesses in unincorporated communities of El Paso County as well as smaller municipalities.
  - FASTER was enabled by synergy with El Paso community partners and with The City of El Paso.

# *FASTER Review*

- **FASTER Direct Services Total - \$9,615,000**
  - Grants (\$3.115 million)
    - El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, El Paso Chamber
  - Loans (\$5.5 million)
    - EPCF, Liftfund, PeopleFund
  - Technical Assistance (\$1 million)
    - Workforce Solutions Borderplex



# *FASTER 2.0 Economic Recovery Projects*

## ■ **FASTER 2.0**

- A new iteration will have a technical assistance focus to help with digital transformation for businesses and other focused training that produces resilience for operators and yields new skillsets for workers.
- All El Paso businesses are eligible for FASTER 2.0 support.
- FASTER provided El Paso County with [epbusinessstrong.org](http://epbusinessstrong.org) that continues to offer resources and information to our business community as well as [buyep.org](http://buyep.org), which helps promote area businesses.

**Recommended ARPA Funding Amount: \$2.5 Million**

# *FASTER 2.0 Proposed Projects and Funding*

Digital Transformation Program for businesses by Workforce Solutions Borderplex

- \$750,000

Technical assistance by the Small Business Development Center

- \$750,000

Project Arriba expansion

- \$300,000

Marketing of business support programs, data research and services by Better Business Bureau

- \$300,000

Digital skillsets for employees and internships by Bitwise

- \$200,000

One Stop Shop by City of El Paso providing business formation and growth services

- \$200,000

# *Digital Transformation for Businesses*

## **Workforce Solutions Borderplex**

- \$750,000

This program provides access to business owners and their employees on various topics via LinkedIn Learning, Microsoft, and other platforms. It also provides financial support for small equipment and technology investments such as websites and point-of-sale systems.

During FASTER, the Digital Transformation Solutions program by WSB helped more than 326 employers develop new capabilities for their operations and employees.

# *Technical Assistance for Small Businesses*

## **Small Business Development Center**

- \$750,000

A variety of needs for small businesses surfaced during the pandemic that ranged from help with accounting to management of an operation to financial planning for expansion or pivoting.

The Small Business Development Center offers training for these and other topics and has the ability to craft specific courses based on industry needs or to meet the demands of a cohort of similar businesses. It also has the capability to offer classes online and at locations other than its hub at the El Paso Community College's Viscount location.

# *Health-related skillsets development*

## **Project Arriba**

- \$300,000

The program has built for our region a pipeline of talent that connects residents to nursing careers that bolsters acute care and other care facilities in El Paso.

The job training program supports students as they gain a degree or certification for occupations that provide families a living wage.

Additional funding from El Paso County could grow the program's cohorts for the next two years during ARPA-eligible funding.

# *Marketing for FASTER 2.0 programs*

## **Better Business Bureau**

- \$300,000

The Paso Del Norte chapter of the Better Business Bureau helped market El Paso County's FASTER support programs, which connected more than 830 businesses to technical assistance, grants and loans.

The BBB's capability for marketing El Paso County's new iteration of business support reaches into some of the hardest to reach businesses and residents that include unincorporated communities and small municipalities. The BBB can also utilize promotoras – or certified healthcare workers – to ensure outreach is effective over the next two years ARPA funding is available.

# *Digital skillsets and internships for workers*

## **Bitwise Industries**

- \$200,000

The Fresno-based group has developed in El Paso a pre-apprenticeship program to increase the number of marginalized people who are trained for tech jobs and find tech or tech-adjacent jobs.

The six-week pre-apprenticeship programs jumpstart beginners and experienced technologists into coding for websites, mobile friendly website development, Javascript, and React web. These foundational classes build a technology skill set while exploring areas where they would like to further invest their time.

Bitwise also hires some from the program for its tech-related services it offers remotely to businesses across the country.

# *One-stop shop for business support services*

## **City of El Paso and community partners**

- \$200,000

The City of El Paso has identified the A.B. Fall Mansion at 1725 Arizona and is programming improvements to the city-owned space to become a one-stop shop for new or growing businesses to receive assistance for permitting as well as services from proposed community partners for micro-lending and other activities.

Support for the space would be programmed for certain staffing needs and other resources that help with business formation costs.

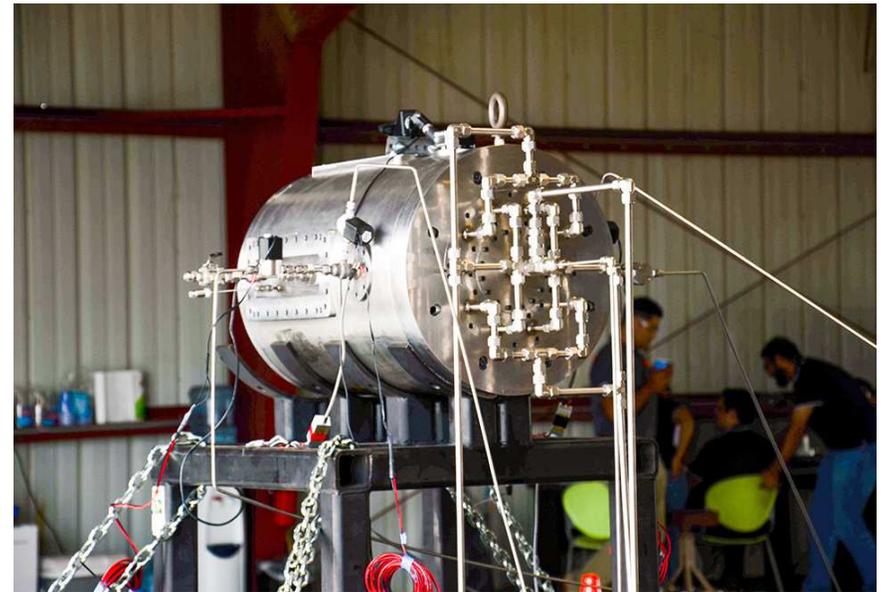
LiftFund is a proposed community partner and the city is looking to create a space similar to the one-stop shop that existed in the 2000s on Lomaland Drive that included the Small Business Administration.

# Industry-Specific Economic Recovery Projects

## ■ Industry-specific Development

- Support for entrepreneurs in the aerospace and advanced manufacturing clusters. Regional manufacturers and their needs are being identified. El Paso County also is setting aside funding for new aerospace companies with a focus on homegrown talent.
- The County is improving its Fabens Airport to become a research park to increase testing capabilities for The University of Texas at El Paso and other aerospace partners.

**Recommended ARPA Funding Amount: \$2 Million**



# *Industry-Specific Economic Recovery Projects*

- UTEP's Aerospace Center has identified several dozen advanced manufacturers that can be part of the defense and aerospace supply chain and needs that range from certification to skills development. This assistance could range up to \$30,000 per operation.
- Separately, the Aerospace Center has identified a need to build a database of such manufacturers that could cost \$35,000 annually to maintain.
- Additionally, startups in the additive manufacturing, aerospace and healthcare sector could bolster our economy with businesses more resilient to market variations. El Paso County could provide assistance for business formation with a particular focus on the cluster of aerospace and engineering startups, which would complement our investments at the Fabens Airport.

# *Economic Recovery Projects*

## **Workforce Solutions Borderplex**

### ■ **Assistance for Childcare Operations**

- One out of 10 childcare businesses in El Paso closed during the pandemic and those still open are operating with fewer employees. Simultaneously, the assistance through Workforce Solutions Borderplex will help with related workforce training as the state criteria for certification of such businesses is increasing.
- El Paso County funding will help subsidize wages for childcare operators as employees typically receive less than the County Median Wage.

**Recommended ARPA Funding: \$1,862,500**

# *Proposed Economic Recovery Activity*

## **Creative Arts Community**

- **County Art Leadership Liaison Position** – This ARPA funded position would work exclusively with the arts community to identify various needs and support opportunities that exist for artists who have been negatively impacted by the pandemic. This position would staff any boards, commissions or other initiatives aimed at increasing successful outcomes for artists.

**Recommended ARPA Funding Amount: \$250,000 for FY 2022-2024**

- **County Creative Placemaking Fellowship** – A six-month fellowship opportunity that would allow 10 local artists who have been negatively impacted by the pandemic to serve as Creative Placemaking Fellows within the County. The fellowship would allow these individuals to develop administrative, financial and leadership skills via first-hand experiences internal to the County.

**Recommended ARPA Funding Amount: \$250,000**

# *Proposed Economic Recovery Activity*

## **Creative Arts Community (continued)**

- Arts Commission or Blue-Ribbon Committee – By establishing an organizational structure, the Court may solicit a collective of perspectives and opinions to help inform future policy considerations on public art investment programs.

**NO FISCAL IMPACT**

- Public Art Project Grants and Small Business Development Course – The Small Business Development Center, hosted at EPCC, offers a leadership and business course for entrepreneurs and business owners. Interest generated within the industry could establish specific programming for artists.

**Recommended ARPA Funding Amount: \$350,000**



# *Questions*

