

**Community Update**  
**Progress Report for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**  
**March 22, 2022**

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We are pleased to provide the first report of the Tribe's ARPA funded projects. The Tribe is still working through numerous priorities identified by the membership by coordinating projects between the Grants Department and other tribal institutions. Some projects are long-range and some may be met by other funding sources, such as the Infrastructure Bill recently enacted. Construction of the new Health Center may add costs to the budget and feasibility studies are being conducted to help the decision makers prioritize projects and community needs. Thus, funding allocated to the following projects will change subject to funding availability. Smaller, miscellaneous expenditures were not included within this report.

Projects are organized by the federal expenditure categories of ARPA.

**ARPA Allocations:**

1. Direct Member Support
2. Quarantine Services
3. Tribal Schools
4. Reserve Aging and Disability Service Center (or Elder Center)
5. Emergency Operations Center (Tribal Police Station)
6. Tribal Housing Development/Homelessness
7. Homeowner Assistance Programs
8. Social Determinants of Health
9. Tourism, Travel & Hospitality Industries
10. Water & Sewer Infrastructure
11. Healthy Childhood Environments
12. Program Administration

**1. Direct Member Support**

The Lac Courte Oreilles reservation is a severely distressed, underserved community that suffers from persistent poverty, high levels of unemployment and low-income levels. For families living paycheck to paycheck, the pandemic has affected the reservation disproportionately as families endeavor to support themselves and each other. As resources diminish, the Tribe receives many requests for assistance with housing, education, water, electricity, heating, food, and internet access for school, telework and basic necessities. Thus, the Tribe established funds to support members for the additional pandemic related expenses. \$1,200 stimulus payments were made in June 2021 to all enrolled adult members of the Band. To stimulate tribal businesses, the Tribe distributed coupons payable to the various entities in values of \$100 and \$50 to all members that appeared in person to receive them. In addition, energy/utility assistance resources are not sufficient for the increase in households needing help during the winter season. The Tribe purchased logs to replenish the home firewood program, and an allowance per household will be provided to support utility expenses of families. To support the unemployed and underemployed members of the Band, and meet the need of tribal businesses for qualified employees, funds for job training costs have been set aside to assist participants with tuition, travel and stipend costs.

Activities include:

- Stimulus Payments & LCO Bucks:

- Woodlot Resource for home firewood
- Utility Assistance
- Job Training Assistance

## 2. Public Health, including Quarantine Services and Enforcement

Mindful that Native Americans suffer higher rates of disease and ailments including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer, our community has a higher risk of serious COVID-19 complications. As of January 26, 2022, Sawyer County is in the “red” risk level at 182.9 cases per 100,000 (seven-day average). The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center reports that cumulative COVID-19 diagnosis rates are higher on or near reservations in Wisconsin (25,114 cases per 100,000 people) than on or near reservations in Minnesota (22,169 cases per 100,000) and Michigan (21,519 cases per 100,000).

Quarantine/physical distancing of infected family members is almost impossible at Lac Courte Oreilles where the housing shortage is critical. Households are already doubled & tripled up. It is critical to the well-being of the community that members who test positive for the virus be distanced from others in their household. The Tribe maintains 12 homes for short term quarantine purposes. The units require property maintenance and significant upkeep for frequent tenant turnover.

- Quarantine Unit Management (through December 21, 2024)
- New Fitness Center
- Master Plan for new Health Center
- Tribal Law Codification

## 3. Tribal Schools

Our young people entered the pandemic with pre-existing challenges including reduced economic well-being, personal traumas, educational disparities and social vulnerabilities. Schools serve as protective factors in their lives, providing emotional support, structure, and food security. When schools closed during the pandemic, we learned that educational systems are pillars of the socioeconomic system of Lac Courte Oreilles because many essential workers could not return to work without child care. Schools are also a significant source of employment for members of the community. Completed and scheduled work included the following:

- A. Significant building issues at the LCO School that needed to be addressed. An inspection by the Bureau of Indian Affairs found significant hazards in the school building envelope that, if left untreated, could result in serious injuries or fatalities from falling block or failing structural supports;
- B. LCO Headstart’s playground equipment and surfacing needed to be improved and replaced; and
- C. A school building was constructed for the new Akii Charter School adjacent to the Boys & Girls Club and pow wow grounds.

## 4. Reserve Aging and Disability Service Center (or Elder Center):

The present building used by the Reserve Center is owned by the Housing Authority. Constructed in the late 70’s, the building isn’t handicapped accessible and cannot support the growth in service needs of their client population. The Indian Health Service conducted an Environmental Health Survey In 2020 and identified six (6) PRIORITY/CRITICAL findings that posed a more serious threat

to health and safety. One finding was related to food safety in the kitchen but all others were related to facility maintenance and building safety. A new Center will be constructed where the old Firehall was located through a grant submitted by the Tribe's Grants Department and will allow more square feet for programming and a garage for food delivery vehicles.

## 5. Emergency Operations Center (Tribal Police Station)

Law enforcements agencies serve to ensure enforcement of CDC/tribal restrictions, mask requirements, quarantine restrictions and related mandates. Essential Tribal Law Enforcement agencies include the Tribal Police and Conservation Wardens who enforce ordinances and public health mandates of the Tribe. All are responsible for working with government and public health officials to contain the spread, serve the local community, and maintain public order.

The Reservation community has experienced incredible personal and institutional stress with lock downs, home schooling, infection of family members, social distancing and quarantine responsibilities. There was and continues to be an increase in violence associated with the pandemic. The first line of defense, intervention and diversion is our law enforcement personnel. The facility used by Tribal Police was donated from the Chippewa Valley Bank and moved to its present location. It was never intended to be permanent and is not adequate for its purpose. There are problems with electrical, lighting, heating and cooling; the basement is used to store evidence and has experienced flooding at times. Security is a major concern as there should be controlled access with locked and secured entry doors. Construction of the new Emergency Operations Center will begin this summer at the four corners, within the pine plantation adjacent to the new Fire Hall.

## 6. Homelessness and Affordable Housing Development

As of November, 2021, there were 205 people on the Housing Authority's waiting list. We know the housing shortage and homelessness is critical but the problem cannot be quantified because Reservation homelessness doesn't look like inner city homelessness. The Lac Courte Oreilles Housing Survey of 2018 found that the reservation homeless are "couch surfers" who frequently move from place to place by hitching rides. This situation is prime for spread of COVID-19, and efforts have been taken to mitigate the situation. Homelessness is addressed on a short-term basis with operation of two shelters and provision of hotel rooms. On a long-term basis, the Tribe is working with Indian Health Service Engineers, contracted surveyors, BIA Roads Engineers, LCO Development, Tribal Realty, Public Works, Jump River Electric and WE Energies to create communities and fund water, sewer, roads, and utility infrastructure. Mandaamin, located at the four corners on Froemel Road, will be the first housing community developed and is slated for 31 residential lots. The two- and three-bedroom homes are planned to be homeownership units. Two HUD grants have been written to fund 29 homes; if successful, eligible homeowners will be selected by an independent lottery process conducted jointly between the Tribal Government and Housing Authority. Ownership will be gained through a Lease-to-Own homeownership contract and, per HUD requirements, will include a 20-year affordability provision. Additional communities in planning process include the 25 acres west of and adjacent to Mandaamin, and a lot for construction of apartment building(s) on a site yet to be identified.

Development activities include:

- Coleman Engineering  
Road Design/Elevation
- Water & Sewer, Mandaamin
- BIA Road Construction
- Jump River Electrical

- Construction of 9 units
- Construction of 20 units
- New Apartments
- New Apartments Infrastructure
- Services for Unhoused persons
- Women's Homeless Shelter  
(through 12/31/2024)

The Mandaamin project is on hold because site work cannot take place before any grants are awarded and environmental assessments are completed. HUD Notification for the 9 units is expected by early April.

## 7. Homeowner Assistance Programs

The Tribe submitted a plan to the U.S. Treasury for the Housing Assistance Fund program for LCO's allocation. The Tribe set aside ARPA funds so that each homeowner on the Reservation could receive assistance up to the maximum benefit amount. The HAF program assistance includes mortgage delinquency, tax delinquency and home repairs, which includes modifications that allow elders to age in place. Most applicants have elected to utilize home repairs.

Our homeowners have long suffered from scant resources to assist with critical repairs of their homes. Like other households across the nation, families having low or no income choose between basic necessities or home repairs for a long period of time. Several homeowners did not have running water, a number are without functioning furnaces and some roofs are leaking. Staff are working through the 245 applications received to date, prioritizing the needs of the most senior elders and urgent/hazardous situations. All work is performed by native contractors and local vendors and include the following resources/activities:

- ARPA HAF
- HAF Funds US Treasury
- HAF Funds, 10% Allocation
- Elder Roof Repairs  
(ICDBG Leverage)

## 8. Social Determinants of Health

The Tribal Government increased its capacity for pandemic response and preparedness by creating new services and hiring additional staff to develop plans, identify resources and distribute benefits. However, adequate space is the Tribe's biggest barrier to expanded services. Since 2020, significant pressure was placed upon tribal government employees to respond to the basic needs of children and families for economic support, food, clothing, shelter, and child wellbeing. Space is sorely needed to accommodate the increased services to respond to the effects of the pandemic on families and individuals at Lac Courte Oreilles. The pandemic highlighted food insecurities and the importance of local access to food and other necessities. A gas station/convenience store is planned to serve our eastern-most villages of New Post/Six Mile. The location has yet to be determined and will depend upon the results of an independent feasibility study.

The following are essential tribal projects:

- Trading Post renovation for offices
- Gaming Commission Renovation for Offices
- CDC Building Renovation for Offices
- Sand/Salt Storage Facility for Tribal

- Roads
- Fence at Oakwood Haven
- Gas Station/Convenience Store for New Post/Six Mile

## 9. Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Contrary to popular belief, the Indian Health Service doesn't fund all infrastructure needs at Lac Courte Oreilles. If there are funds within their budget, and if our needs are included as a priority within their Sanitation Deficiency System list, they will fund a percentage or fixed dollar amount per project cost depending upon the number of homes served. The Tribe funds the remaining cost. The Tribe is responsible for the entire cost if the system serves only businesses or institutions. Pending & preliminary projects include the following:

- Reserve Lagoon Improvements
- Sewer & Curb Stop Repairs
- Giiwedini Water tower Improvements
- Highway K & B Water Loop from Tall Pines
- Trepania Road W & S to LCO IGA
- Mandaamin Housing Communities

Not included within the above is the Signor Water project. The Indian Health Service has completed a water study and their preliminary engineering report is in development. The report will compare the cost of an independent system for the community vs. individual treatment systems.

## 10. Tourism, Travel & Hospitality Industries

The only economic development projects eligible under ARPA are those related to gaming, tourism and hospitality because those industries were the most impacted by pandemic closures.

The Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation and surrounding Sawyer County depend on tourism-related industries to sustain the regional economy. Prior to the COVID pandemic, \$92.0M was generated annually, primarily from the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (\$56.8M) and Accommodation and Food Services (\$17.4M) Industries (NWRPC, 2020); Sevenwinds and Grindstone Creek Casinos are the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> largest employers in Sawyer County.

Projects include:

- Pow wow grounds improvements
- Pipestone Creek Road Repair
- Trails, Parks & Site Improvements
- Trail Maintenance Supplies & Equipment
- The Landing Resort
- Big Fish Golf Club
- Grant to LCO Country Store for Improvements
- Kinnamon Visitor Center Improvements

## 11. Healthy Childhood Environments

Tribal budget priorities always consider the needs of our young people. ARPA funding is allocated to enable, to the greatest extent possible, physical distancing through outdoor activities and play

spaces for young people of Lac Courte Oreilles. Because healthy childhood environments depend upon renovation of blighted properties and illegal dump sites, funds have been set aside for annual Spring Clean Up campaigns of the Tribe.

Projects include:

- Community Clean Up Campaigns
- Youth Services
- Parks & Playgrounds

## **12: Program Administration**

Administration of the SLFRF program through December 31, 2024 includes costs of staff and consultants to support effective management and oversight, and ensure compliance with legal, regulatory, reporting and other requirements.