On June 2, Cheryl Harrison-Lee, Executive Director for the Kansas Recovery Office, introduced a three-phased approach to effectively and efficiently disseminate the $1.034 billion Kansas received from the U.S. Treasury as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As you are well aware by now, Phase One allocates $400 million to local county governments. And the money IS coming!

Make no mistake this is a lot of money – with a lot of strings. So as county leaders and employees, it is our job to fully understand what this funding program looks like and how we can fully spend and invest this money to do the most good for our communities.

Essentially, CARES Act money is to be used to cover and recover necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) incurred during the period of March 1, 2020 through December 30, 2020. These expenditures cannot be accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act) for the State or county government. As of right now, all unspent funds on December 30, 2020 must be returned.

We had 466 attendees on the June 26 Zoom meeting with the Recovery Office staff as they rolled out the Phase One spending process. I encourage you to review the Tool Kit and other various pieces of information that were shared during the meeting. We have links to all of the information on the KAC website home page at www.kansascounties.org.

Specifically, I would like to take a moment to focus on one particular slide of importance. Slide 28 on the Municipality Tool Kit PowerPoint discusses the State’s top priorities and helps give us some direction, or at least a place to begin, when it comes to investing these valuable dollars.

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Our spending priorities should be Health, Connectivity, Economic Development, and Education. Since the pandemic hit our state, the challenges have been our citizens are sick, our communities are feeling disconnected, and our businesses, livelihoods, and schools have been disrupted. As leaders, our response should be to address medical and public health needs first. Begin by making our public institutions whole. This means getting reimbursements for COVID-19 related expenses for all public entities. Protect the health of Kansans and ensure they have access to supplies and infrastructure needed to mitigate disease spread. Next, revitalize local businesses. Ensure that businesses and nonprofits can reopen safely and rebound from COVID-19. Help to build resilient communities by supporting workforce, housing, childcare, social services, and other investments critical for long-term and community growth. Keep in mind however, Phase One funding is to help make counties, cities and other public organizations whole again. Phases Two and Three will focus more on Main Street and other business and nonprofit sectors across the state.

As a side note, be on the look out for a series of Friday Zoom meetings hosted by KAC that includes staff from the Recovery Office as they provide technical assistance, answer questions, and feature examples of projects or programs that are a beneficial use of recovery dollars.

Do not be mistaken, a substantial federal audit of all CARES Act spending is almost guaranteed. It is imperative that the State and counties ensure that all expenditures meet federal requirements and guidelines – any ineligible or fraudulent spending will be subject to federal recuperation. As stated in the resolution that each county must adopt before receiving their funds, the State, counties, and all other entities receiving CARES Act funding should uphold the highest standards of accountability and transparency. With this in mind, I strongly urge you to consider contracting with an outside source or agency that can aid in the accounting portion of this process. There is no cap on the amount of money that can be used to pay for such services, as long as the amount can be justified. In the long run, it will be worth it. Good luck and I am excited to see what creative uses you find for your county’s dollars.
The year is already half over and in comes July, bringing three major events to the forefront of local county government.

The first challenge: all counties are working to wrap up the 2021 budget by the end of July/early August. This is an annual process, however, this year it comes with a lot of unknowns as we try to work through the effects the pandemic will have on finances for the next few years.

The second challenge is to support one of the main economic drivers of the state and one that is in full force right now in counties - the Kansas wheat harvest. In the southern portion of the state it is nearly over, while up north, it is several days yet before the harvest begins. Hopefully, statewide it will be a great success and an economic boost for your local area.

The third challenge will start shortly; the distribution of SPARK funds. The KAC staff is working diligently with the Governor’s Office of Recovery to make this process as easy as possible for Kansas counties. KAC Executive Director Bruce Chladny and KAC Legal Counsel Jay Hall have been in direct contact with the SPARK Taskforce staff. KAC’s goal is to be in a position to help counties properly receive and distribute your funds, complete your obligations within the interim timelines and by the final deadline of December 30, 2020 set by the state, along with answering all of the county’s questions throughout the entire process.

Yes…July is going to be a busy month.

I hope you will have time to enjoy the July 4th holiday with family and friends.

KANSAS COUNTS

The future of Kansas, and our counties, depend on our responses to the #2020Census. Each person counted adds to the amount of federal funding available to Kansas for things like emergency preparedness, health tracking, and disease control. If 1% of the Kansas population is uncounted in the 2020 Census, the state of Kansas could miss receiving approximately $603,990,400 in federal funding over a 10-year period. Every one of your county residents help to make a difference. Please be sure they are each counted!

#KansasCounts
2020 KAC Annual Conference Update
At the June KAC Board Meeting, the status of the 2020 Annual Conference scheduled for October 13-15 in Wichita was discussed given the continued concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While Kansas has slowly been reopening on a county-by-county basis, there has been an increase in positive cases. While some of that can be attributed to expanded testing, there is still reason for concern. The KAC Board made the decision to delay the final status of the conference until the July 17 Board Meeting.

KAC will provide updated communication on the annual conference status via email during the week of July 20-25. The COVID-19 pandemic is far reaching, and we continue to monitor the situation to ensure that we make the best decisions to keep our conference exhibitors, sponsors, among others safe and healthy. Stay tuned for updated conference information to come your way soon!

July Education Opportunities
KAC is offering the following three virtual educational classes this month. To register for these classes, please visit KAC’s upcoming event webpage here. Once your registration is completed, you will receive an email with connection information for your virtual class session.

City Government 101
July 23, 2020, Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Instructor: Trey Cocking, League of Kansas Municipalities Deputy Director

This virtual workshop offers front-line employees a practical primer on city government to enhance understanding of what influences and shapes their day-to-day jobs. The workshop will also enhance participants’ skills in educating citizens about government services. Because the information is valuable to anyone serving in local government, persons with other levels and types of responsibilities are welcome to attend.

Ethical Considerations
July 31, 2020, Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Instructor: Jay Hall, KAC Legislative Policy Director & General Counsel

This virtual workshop is intended to raise awareness of the myriad of the ethical considerations which face county leaders. An extensive use of case studies is used to provide real world examples of challenging ethical situations that confront county leaders daily.

August Wednesday Webinar
KAC is offering the following upcoming Wednesday webinar session in August. To register for this August webinar, please contact your local county webinar administrator or email Kimberly Qualls at qualls@kansascounties.org. Once your registration is completed, you will receive a confirmation email with connection information for the webinar.

A Productive Work Environment: Preventing Harassment in the Workplace
August 12, 2020, Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Instructor: Teresa Shulda, Partner, Foulston Siefkin LLP

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This webinar training will focus on how to prevent, stop, and report harassment in the workplace. Studies have shown that ethical workplaces, where employees demonstrate dignity and respect toward one another, result in more job satisfaction, lower turnover, and better performance. Key to these outcomes is ensuring employees steer clear of conduct which could create a hostile work environment. In this training, we will discuss sexual harassment, harassment based on other protected categories (such as race, age, disability, and religion), retaliation, and how you can play a role in contributing to a productive work environment.

**County Membership Updates**

After sharing COVID-19 communication these past few months, it was noticed that a lot of emails were being returned undeliverable. Digging into the issue, we discovered that the KAC County Member database needed some serious updating. In late June, all County Clerks received a list of their county staff listed in the KAC database for review and update. This important project is currently underway. There are still many counties who have not yet returned their updates, so reminders will be sent as we hope to wrap up this project by late July.

Moving forward, we will implement, at the minimum, this process of having counties update their county staff lists on an annual basis. This task is critical to KAC’s goal of timely informative communication as so much of our information is now shared electronically.

Thank you to all Kansas County Clerks for your assistance in providing updated contact information for your county’s KAC members!
**How Can We Make Things Better?**

*By Jay Hall, Legislative Policy Director & General Counsel*

During crisis, our focus is often drawn to the task at hand, and with good reason. Crisis requires attention to what is going on right now. Crisis requires a focused effort to fix the current problems. At times in crisis, you just wish everything would go back to the way it was.

Crisis can be painful. There are fits and starts along the way. When you sail in uncharted waters, you encounter challenges that you would not have previously dreamed of. The road is hard. Some things will work. Other ideas will not.

But crisis is also about opportunity. Crisis gives us a chance to look at the status quo, and potentially reimagine how things are done, or are going to be done in the future. Crisis shines light on things that were previously unseen, giving way to new possibilities. Crisis is a chance for leaders to step from the sidelines and into the fray to meet the challenge head on. A crisis is always an opportunity to make things better. We have been shown a problem, and now we must address the situation in a way that not only solves the current crisis, but, if we do our jobs well, also makes things better in the future.

For most of this year, COVID-19 has rolled across the country, causing lives to be upended in ways that we never anticipated. The very functions of county government had to change. How we delivered regular services to county residents had to be restructured on the fly. There were hiccups along the way, but counties across Kansas met this challenge head on, and have come out the other side.

We learned from those changes. We adapted along the way to fix things that were not quite working, or completely realigned them when the situation called for it.

Last summer, I wrote about making data driven decisions (August 2019 County Comment). During this recent crisis, we have gotten lots of data about how county functions are carried out. We have discovered some gaps in our service delivery. We have worked from home, with varying results in efficiency. It is time now to take that data – the experiences, successes, struggles and everything in-between – and use it to make your county better. Some questions to ponder:

- What worked? Can that be duplicated in other areas of the county?
- What did not work? Did you discover a better way to carry out that task along the way?
- What provided more service to residents? Can you keep that even as we move towards opening up our courthouses and county buildings?
- What did people complain about? Were you able to address it? If so, how? If not, what resources or changes need to be made in order to address those complaints in the future?
- What areas could you be better prepared in?
- Did you discover flaws in systems that prevented you from serving the community in the best possible way? What policies and procedures need to be changed so that you do not repeat the mistakes of this crisis in the future?

It has been said that “those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it.” If we can take the lessons learned from this crisis and apply them in the future to make things better in our communities, we will not only survive the current crisis, but we will come out on the other side having made things better for ourselves, our residents and our communities overall.

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* Savings may vary by drug and by pharmacy. The Prescription Discount Card is operated by CVS/caremark®. The Discount Medical Organization for NACo Health and Dental Discounts is Alliance HealthCard of Florida, Inc. All rights reserved. ©2015 CVS/caremark. 106-35891b 100515
Economic Development Director – Coffey County

Coffey County, Kansas is seeking a proven economic development director. We are home to Wolf Creek Nuclear Generating Station, the only nuclear power plant in Kansas. The director will be responsible for retention and expansion of our existing businesses, attracting new businesses that complement existing businesses, along with furthering development of infrastructure, tourism and leadership. The director reports to the Board of County Commissioners. A bachelor’s degree in economic development, public or business administration, marketing, or finance is preferred. Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) is desired. For more information, contact Ronda Truelove at 620-364-8780. Job description and applications are available at: www.coffeycountyks.org/county-services/employment-opportunities. Send applications and resumes to rtruelove@coffeycountyks.org. Applications accepted until position is filled. Coffey County is an EOE.

NATIONWIDE RETIREMENT SOLUTIONS (NRS)

Contact: Don Regan, Program Director
Address: 535 16th St., Suite 320
Denver, CO, 80202
Phone: 309-660-2917
Fax: 855-282-7912
Email: regand2@nationwide.com

Nationwide Retirement Solutions (NRS) administers the NACo 457 Deferred Compensation Program for county employees across the U.S. NRS provides education, investments and recordkeeping functions for these plans. Along with the 457 Plan, NRS also administers a 401a Match Plan and the Post Employment Health Plan (PEHP), a plan that provides retiree health care reimbursements, tax free.

EMPLEYMENT OPPORTUNITIES