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MTF in Brief

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Immediate Opportunities for Fiscal Recovery Funds

MTF's new Bulletin highlights existing programs that can use FRF resources right now to advance four vital recovery priorities. In addition, the Bulletin provides a template for how immediate investment can be paired with a timely process to develop more transformative uses of federal funds.

Opportunities for immediate investment: Each of the programs listed below is organized by primary priority area and meets the criteria for inclusion: the program already exists, can accommodate a temporary increase in funds and either has a track record of success or can be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

- ***Pandemic recovery:***
 - Assistance grants for local boards of public health; and
 - Subsidization of the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund.
- ***Barriers to prosperity:***
 - Additional funding for the Commonwealth Builders Program;
 - Expansion of MassHousing and municipal down-payment as well as other homeownership assistance programs;
 - Increased rental production subsidies;
 - Support for Early College programs that can serve up to 45,000 students;
 - Recapitalization of the state's Food Security Infrastructure Grants; and
 - Financial incentives for child and adolescent mental health professionals to work in community health centers.
- ***Workforce:***
 - Expansion of the English for Advancement program, which provides language acquisition and professional skills to jobseekers with limited English proficiency;
 - Multi-year increased funding for:
 - Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund support for Donnelly Grants that connect workers with training and placements;
 - Learn To Earn, which helps potential workers manage cliff-effects associated with ongoing employment;

- Career Technical Institutes and Rapid Reemployment Grants which use existing vocational school facilities and other programs to provide technical skills necessary for fast-growing fields;
 - Additional capacity to provide career navigator services to thousands of unemployed workers.
- ***Infrastructure:***
 - Improvements to water infrastructure, especially projects in Gateway Cities, through increased funding for the Clean Water Trust State Revolving Fund;
 - Expansion of three climate-related capital programs:
 - Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program;
 - Dam and Seawall Repair or Removal Program;
 - Coastal Resilience Program;
 - Temporary state subsidy of the School Building Authority's Accelerated Repair Program.

The MTF Bulletin provides an illustrative, not exhaustive, list of programs that can use FRF resources now to make a difference. MTF notes, however, that these types of investments are not sufficient to make the most out of federal funding and spur a recovery that assists those most affected by the pandemic. Massachusetts must also quickly develop and implement new, bold ideas to tackle tough problems. To do this, MTF recommends that the next ARPA bill:

- Appropriate significant resources for agreed-upon priority areas like pandemic recovery, workforce, infrastructure and identified barriers to prosperity;
- Dedicate funding within those appropriations for immediate use in programs like those highlighted in this Bulletin;
- Set aside a portion of each appropriation for the development of new ideas; and
- Create a near-term structure to help develop those ideas. Each priority area could have a dedicated advisory group that draws upon the cross-field expertise in government, academia, business and the advocacy communities to make specific recommendations over the next several months.