White County Resilience Plan

Prepared by iParametrics for the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission

Summary

COVID-19 opened the eyes of communities across the country to the pitfalls they can face in an unprecedented natural disaster or pandemic. Communities across the country had pandemic plans written, but no one could have prepared for what COVID-19 brought.

The pandemic prompted communities to think about way to be prepared and resilient toward the next pandemic and any other future natural disasters. This Resiliency Plan is to ensure that the local government is taking what was learned in the pandemic and applying it to future disasters in order to build a more resilient community.

White County had a different COVID-19 experience than most of the United States. The County is the home of Helen which has a high focus on tourism and is the 3rd biggest tourist destination in the state behind Savannah and Atlanta. The pandemic saw an increase in tourism in the area so it was critical for White County to continue operating as normal because all of the businesses in the County rely on tourism. The County had to adapt its operations to ensure things ran smoothly and money kept flowing through the local economy.

The County is working to ensure that we are accounting for all areas of our community in our economic recovery from COVID-19. Within this document, we have outlined the steps we are taking to ensure our community is ready for the next global pandemic.
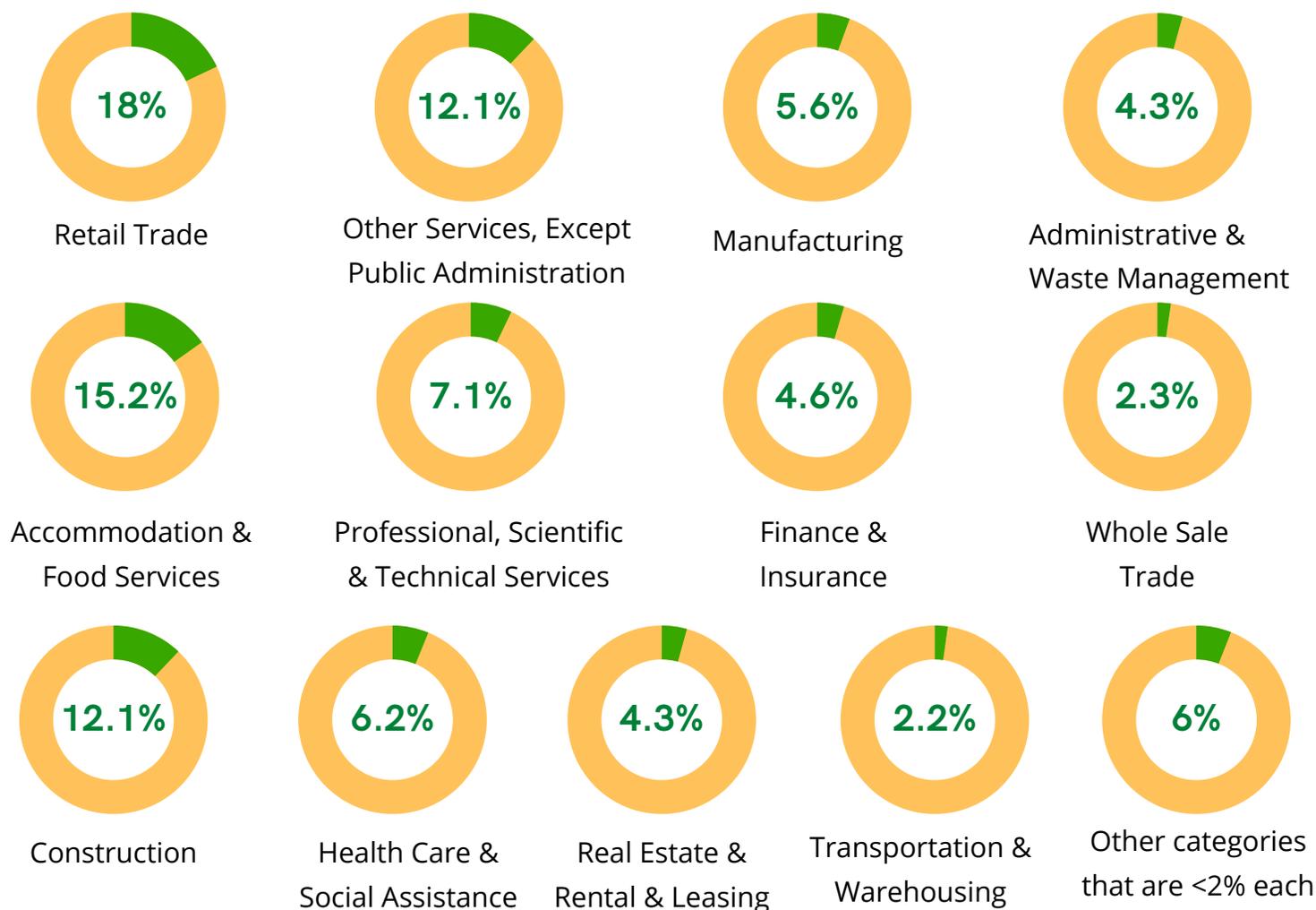
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White County Jobs at a Glance

White County is a thriving community with a variety of job opportunities that are available to those in the area. When analyzing the economy of the county there are a variety of different industries.

Retail trade is the largest in the County and it accounts for almost a fifth of the businesses in the area. The second largest industry is what is deemed as Accommodation & Food Services. Construction and "Other Services, Except for Public Administration" are tied for third. "Other Services, Except for Public Administration" is what the Bureau of Labor Statistics defined as those industries that provide services that are not classified anywhere else within their system.[1] Businesses in this category include equipment repair, religious services, death and pet care services among others.[1] A full list of the industries within the county can be found in Figure 1.[2]

White County has several businesses opening in the coming months. Aldi, a new grocery store chain, and a Popeyes restaurant will be opening at the end of the summer. These two businesses will add to the jobs in the County.

Figure 1: Industries within White County[2]

18%	**12.1%**	**5.6%**	**4.3%**
Retail Trade	Other Services, Except Public Administration	Manufacturing	Administrative & Waste Management
15.2%	**7.1%**	**4.6%**	**2.3%**
Accommodation & Food Services	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	Finance & Insurance	Whole Sale Trade

12.1%	**6.2%**	**4.3%**	**2.2%**	**6%**
Construction	Health Care & Social Assistance	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	Transportation & Warehousing	Other categories that are <2% each

COVID-19 Impacts on Businesses

In order to determine what kind of impacts industries saw during the COVID-19 pandemic, we turned to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. They conducted a nationwide survey of businesses impacted during the pandemic.[3] They collected data on what impacts businesses across the U.S. saw in their their operations and employment since the onset of coronavirus pandemic through September 2020 and highlighted seven negative impacts.[3] The seven impacts were: Decrease in Demand for Products or Services, Pausing or Termination of Employment, Shortage of Supplies or Inputs, Reduction of Employees' Hours, Government-Mandated Closure, Difficulty Moving or Shipping Goods, and Reduction of Employees' Salaries or Wages.[3]

The businesses which were classified using the North American Industry Classification saw the various impacts at different severity levels.[3] When analyzing the impacts of COVID-19 within the industries, it is important to understand what industries may have been more impacted than others by the pandemic.

Data was taken from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' survey to determine which industries reported what types of impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic. An analysis called "k-means clustering" which grouped the industries into three groups based on similarities in survey responses from nationwide businesses was conducted. The three groups are called "High Impacted Businesses," "Medium Impacted Businesses," and "Low Impacted Businesses." The groupings of these industries can be seen on the following page in Figure 2.

After receiving the output of the three groups, it is important to understand how these industries became grouped together. The first group which is designated as the "High Impacted Businesses" or simply labeled "High" in the above figure had a higher percentage of businesses within the various industries report larger number of impacts than those in the other two categories. The businesses in the other two categories reported similar issues but at a decreased rate. Figure 3 on the following page, outlines these impacts and at what rate they were reported within the survey.

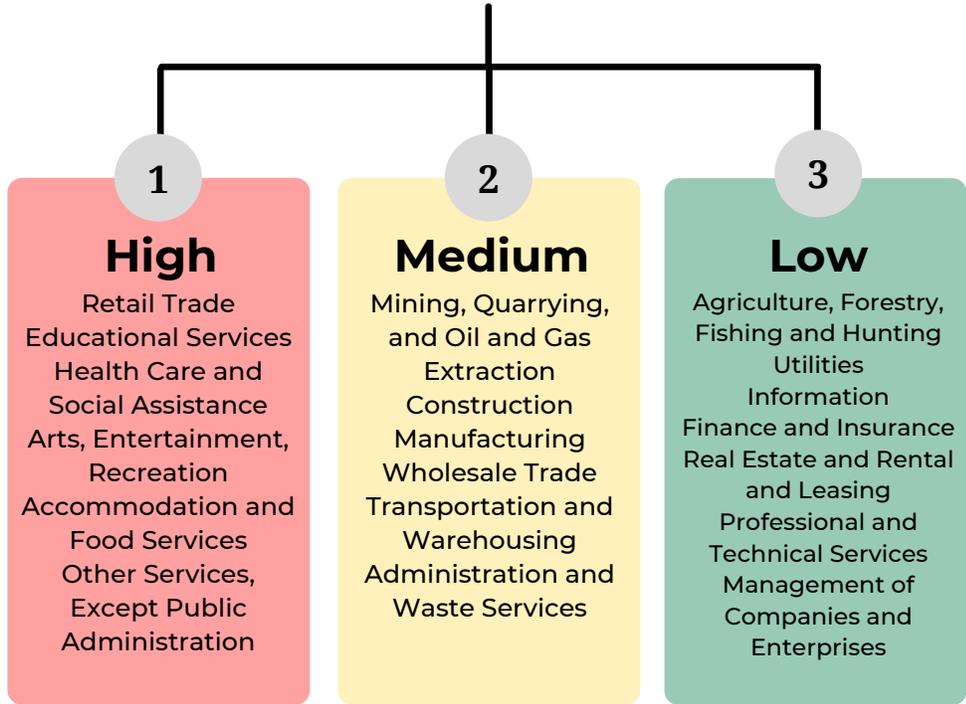## Grouping of Industries Based on Reported COVID-19 Impacts

1

High
Retail Trade
Educational Services
Health Care and
Social Assistance
Arts, Entertainment,
Recreation
Accommodation and
Food Services
Other Services,
Except Public
Administration

2

Medium
Mining, Quarrying,
and Oil and Gas
Extraction
Construction
Manufacturing
Wholesale Trade
Transportation and
Warehousing
Administration and
Waste Services

3

Low
Agriculture, Forestry,
Fishing and Hunting
Utilities
Information
Finance and Insurance
Real Estate and Rental
and Leasing
Professional and
Technical Services
Management of
Companies and
Enterprises

Figure 2: Industry Grouping Based on COVID-19 Impacts

Pandemic Effects on Businesses

Effects on High Impacted Businesses

High Reports
- Decrease in Demand for Products or Services
- Pausing or Termination of Employment
- Shortage of Supplies or Inputs
- Reduction of Employees' Hours
- Government-Mandated Closure

Medium-High Reports
-

Medium Reports
- Difficulty Moving or Shipping Goods
- Reduction or Employees' Salaries or Wages

Effects on Medium Impacted Businesses

High Reports
- Decrease in Demand for Products or Services
- Pausing or Termination of Employment

Medium-High Reports
- Shortage of Supplies or Inputs
- Difficulty Moving or Shipping Goods
- Reduction of Employees' Hours

Medium Reports
- Government-Mandated Closure
- Reduction of Employees' Salaries or Wages

Effects on Low Impacted Businesses

High Reports
- Decrease in Demand for Products or Services
- Pausing or Termination of Employment

Medium-High Reports
- Shortage of Supplies or Inputs

Medium Reports
- Difficulty Moving or Shipping Goods
- Reduction or Employees' Salaries or Wages
- Reduction of Employees' Salaries or Wages
- Government-Mandated Closure

Figure 3: Reported Pandemic Effects on Businesses

COVID-19 Impacts on Businesses

When it comes to the "Medium Impacted Businesses" or "Medium" in the above figure, these businesses saw higher reports of decrease in demand for products or services as well as pausing or termination of employment. The difference between this group and the "Low Impacted Businesses" or "Low" was these industries reported larger number of businesses having difficulty moving or shipping goods and reduction of employees' hours. While the "Low Impacted Businesses" reported these impacts as well, it was at a lower rate.

The businesses that are in the high impacted categories are those businesses that require a large amount of face to face contact with clients and coworkers. These are the businesses with higher amounts of foot traffic into and out of the buildings. The businesses that tend to have been impacted slightly less are those that do not have a large amount of person to person contact or those businesses where the contact can be decreased through various mitigation measures. The lowest impacted businesses are those that require little to no person to person contact and if there is contact then it can be mitigated against with various pandemic protocols.

Like many across the United States, businesses within White County had to adapt during the pandemic. The White Chamber of Commerce worked with the Department of Economic Development to have all the businesses except Retail and Food Services within the County deemed as essential so they could remain open and functioning as normal. Retail and Food Service businesses came up with creative way to remain open and keeping money coming in. Retail stores in the County set up online sales. Those who would like to purchase items would work with the store owners online to ensure they had the size and customers would pick up directly from the store.

When it comes to food services, restaurants in the area worked hard to ensure that they could keep things operational. Restaurants started to do pick up and delivery services. There was a huge campaign in the County to ensure people knew they couldn't go into the restaurants but pick up services were available. Restaurants also started to do grocery delivery. They would order from their food distributors and people throughout the County would order food directly from the restaurants for their groceries. Servers would also double as delivery drivers for the grocery services. Because of these changes, there were less layoffs then there could have been.

COVID-19 Impacts on Businesses

Hotels in the County also changed their business operations during the pandemic. The Chamber of Commerce encouraged hotels in the area to do improvements and cleaning during the pandemic. The hotels shifted their staff to doing these improvements instead of their normal jobs. This allowed most of the staff to keep working.

Businesses became creative and stepped up to help others during the pandemic as well. Because there wasn't a need for promotional t-shirts, A t-shirt and promotional company called Jason Hogan Design shifted its business to making free banner for local businesses to ensure that people knew they were open and accepting customers even though from the vacant parking lots people may have thought they were closed. Because of these banners, businesses continued to have customers and these businesses ordered other products from Jason Hogan Design.

Because White County is a small community, they didn't have access to hand sanitizer, masks, and other items to keep everyone safe, but the businesses found ways to keep things going. The local quilt shop passed out materials people in the County for them to make masks for the local assisted living facilities.

The agriculture community helped the construction community maintain operations as well. The agricultural businesses like poultry farmers provided hand sanitizers and other products to construction companies in order for them to keep working.

Businesses within the County were able to get federal funding as well. The payroll protection program was a help for many businesses in the area. This federal program is funded through the Small Business Association and it gave small businesses two to three months of funding for payroll as a loan to ensure they would have enough money to pay their staff.

The other issue that has come of the pandemic is the increase in the population and its impact on the local economy. This increase in population has caused the availability for housing to decrease which is causing problems for people who are working in the County to find housing. Housing options will need to be increased in the area to deal with these issues.

The steps the local business and the White County Chamber of Commerce took to ensure that businesses were successful worked. Overall any businesses that could pivot to working from home did and those that couldn't make that transition adapted in other ways to ensure that money was still coming in. Through the entire pandemic only one business closed and it was a restaurant whose owner wanted to retire and it was not due to a pandemic related concern.

Looking Ahead to the Next Pandemic

When we look to the future, it is important to take the lessons we learned from COVID-19 and apply them to future pandemics and possibly other natural disasters. For County officials, it is important to understand what businesses were impacted and how they were impacted to determine how to direct assistance during the next pandemic. Figure 4 shows the businesses within the County and what level of impact they saw during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

All businesses will need some assistance from the local government. In the previous pandemic, the assistance came in the form of equipment like masks, hand sanitizer and guidance to remain open as well as money to support operations when businesses had to close or to off-set pandemic related expenses. It is important for the County to understand what various businesses will need and what businesses will need the most assistance in the future pandemic. Prioritizing which businesses need the most help will also allow financial support to make the most impacts county-wide. Figure 5 on the following page shows steps County officials can take to distribute resources.

COUNTY INDUSTRIES COVID IMPACTS

White County
Georgia

Highly Impacted: Very Sensitive to Pandemic Impacts, needed the most assistance

- Retail Trade
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Food Service
- Other Services, Except Public Administration

Medium Impacted: Tend to remain open with government restrictions, and needed moderate assistance.

- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Wholesale Trade
- Administrative & Waste Management
- Transportation & Warehousing

Low Impact: Tend to see some impacts, but can function with restrictions, needed some assistance.

- Finance & Insurance
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
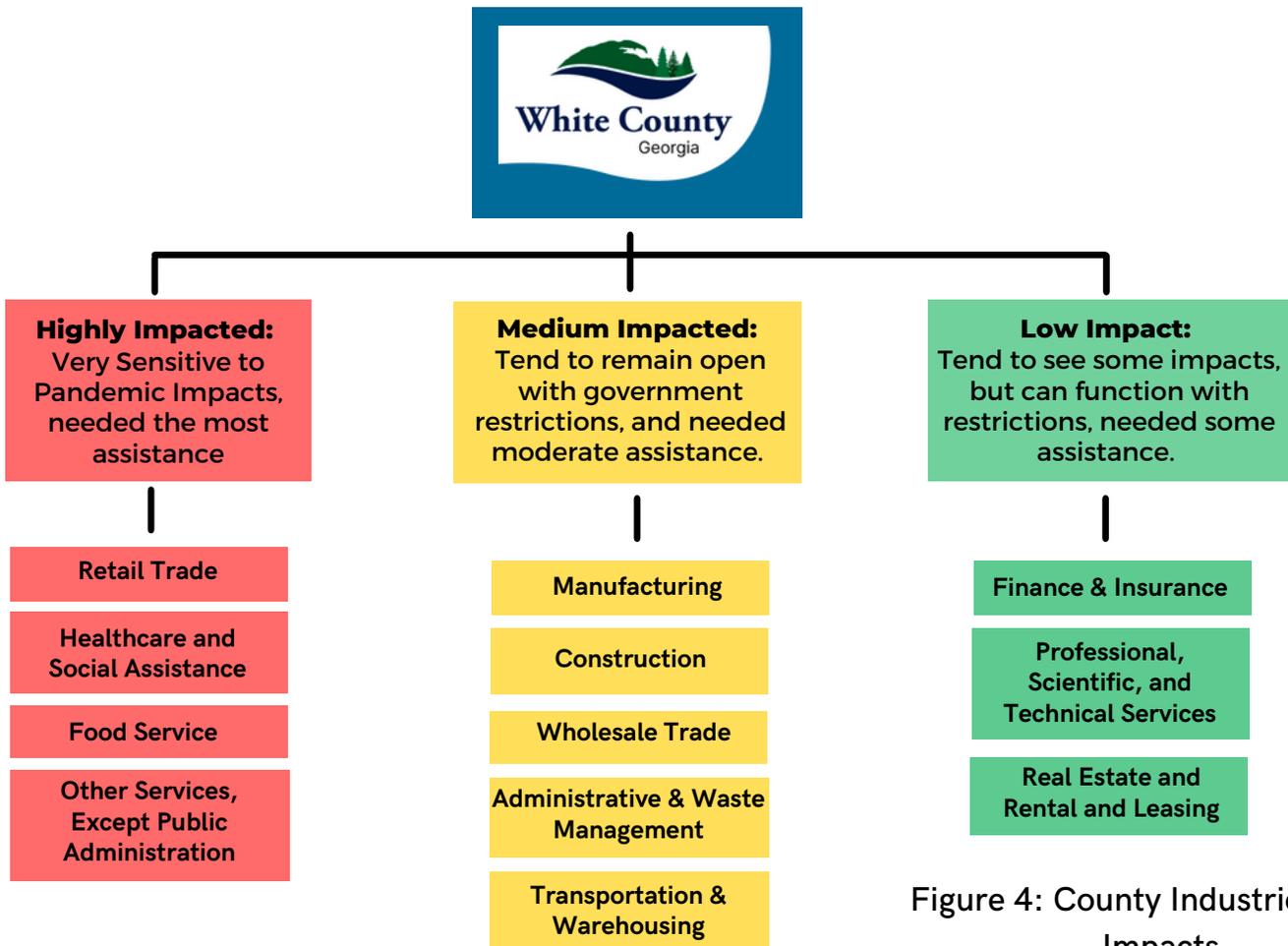- Real Estate and Rental and Leasing

Figure 4: County Industries Covid Impacts

Looking Ahead to the Next Pandemic

For future pandemics the high impacted industries will need more assistance than the other businesses. Government officials should plan to make sure these businesses have all the necessary equipment and funding to survive through the pandemic. If funding is available, these businesses should be higher on the list to receive financial support from the government as they will require the most support in order to keep their doors open during and after the pandemic. Making sure businesses know how to get in contact with the appropriate government official is important for several reasons This connection allows for businesses to be aware of any governmental guidance that becomes available. It also helps the County to know what businesses may have to close temporarily or permanently due to pandemic impacts.

The medium impacted businesses will also need some assistance from the local government. They, like all businesses, will need the local government to provide guidance and potentially equipment to stay open. This equipment could be appropriate Personal Protective Equipment like masks and hand sanitizer. They will also need a point of contact to ensure they are following all local mandates when it comes to staying open for business.

The least impacted businesses will see some negative impacts, but may still need some governmental assistance. These businesses tend to not require a lot of in person interaction to conduct business, and may have to modify how they conduct their business. For example, they may have their workers work from home and may need assistance in how to conduct their businesses remotely. This may require guidance or financial support from the local government.

Creating partnerships between the County and the local businesses are critical for future pandemics. We will discuss how to create these partnerships in the coming pages.
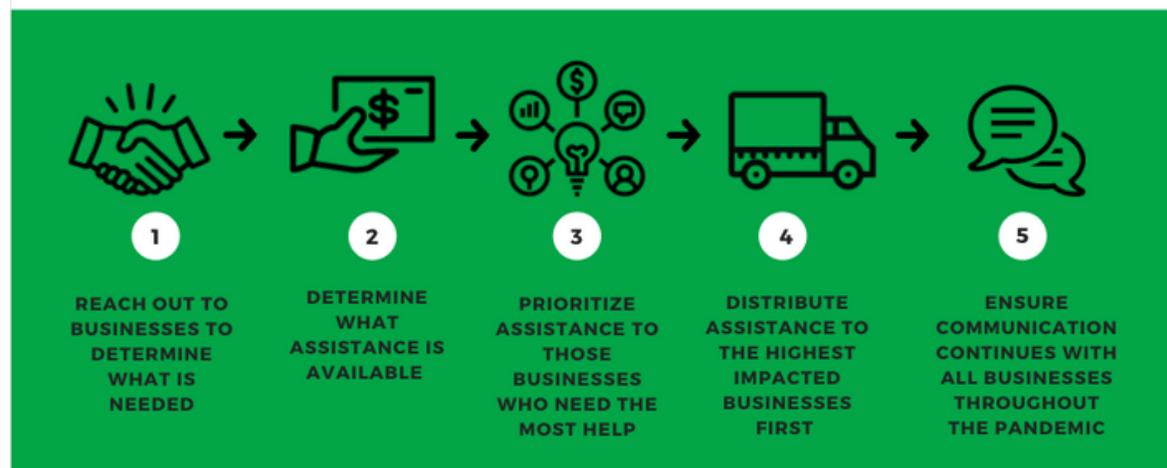

Figure 5: Pandemic Funding Flow Chart

In the previous section, we outlined the industries that support jobs within the County. In order to have a successful resilient community, it is important to use those types of industries as a base for creating these partnerships.

When looking at the current list of industries within the community, you need to ensure that these businesses have partnerships in place to be successful before, during, and after a disaster. The biggest industry in the County is retail trade. As a county, it is important to make sure that all the businesses within the retail trade sector are connected with the local County Chamber of Commerce. By making this connection, the County is ensuring that there are connections being made and businesses have a quicker recovery.

Figure 6 outlines the various industries in the County and the types of partners that are important. This list is meant to be a guide and other entities may be out there that are not included in the list.

There are currently numerous partnerships that we have created within our resiliency framework. These partnerships have ensured that the private sector and the public sector are all on the same page when it comes to being more resilient.

Business Partnership Strategy

Industry	Partner
Retail Trade	Chamber of Commerce
Other Services	Chamber of Commerce
Health Care & Social Assistance	Dept. Of Health & United Way
Manufacturing	Chamber of Commerce
Construction	Forestry, USDA, Development Authority
Finance & Insurance	Department of Banking & Finance
Accommodation & Food Services	Public Health Department
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	Forestry, USDA, & Extension
Wholesale Trade	Chamber of Commerce
Administrative & Waste Management	Environmental Protection Division
Transportation & Warehousing	Department of Transportation

Figure 6: Potential Partnerships in White County

Current Partners and Opportunities

In White County, there is an Emergency Response Task Force. The Task Force is run by the Director of Public Safety, David Murphy. Members include various members of governmental and private organizations including newspapers, radio, County departments, White County Chamber of Commerce, and members from each of the municipalities within the County. During disasters, this Task Force meets and asks for specific members depending on the disasters. For example, because of the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chamber of Commerce was asked to attend meetings on the pandemic in order to reach local businesses.

This Task Force has allowed the County to better handle disaster responses. By bringing the right partners to the table and being disaster specific, it means that the right partners come together to help the community. For example, during the pandemic, the White County Chamber of Commerce was able to communicate the needs of local businesses to County Departments and other entities in the County. This flow of information may not have existed in this critical time if it had not been for the Task Force.

Public Private Partnerships are an important part of creating a resilient community. They help to create a foundation for the recovery process. By creating these partnerships, we have created an avenue for businesses to reopen faster and citizens to get back to a sense of normalcy after a disaster.

WHITE COUNTY

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

1 — WHITE COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL DEPARTMENTS

2 — NEWSPAPERS, RADIO, TV

3 — MUNCIPALITIES IN THE COUNTY

4 — WHITE COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

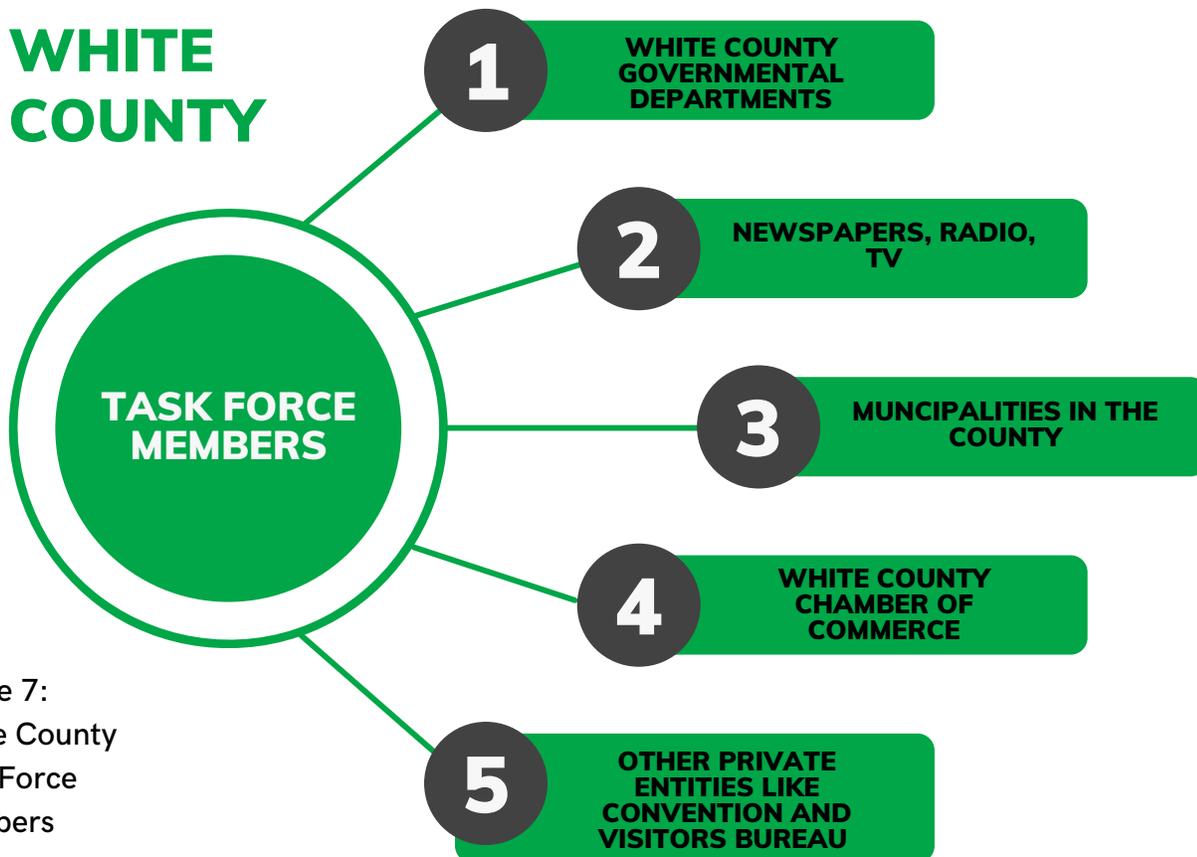5 — OTHER PRIVATE ENTITIES LIKE CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

Figure 7: White County Task Force Members

White County Pandemic Task Force Survey

In the aftermath of the Pandemic, in order to understand the effectiveness of the County's response protocols, the County conducted a Pandemic Task Force survey that asked a variety of questions about the effectiveness of the County's effort to communicate information to its various departments. Below are some of the results of[4] the survey conducted among the departments:[4]

Figure 8: White County Task Force Survey Response[4]

When department members were asked if the pandemic response plan met the needs of the community, 95% of the respondents agreed.[4]

Ultimately, the survey showed a significant amount of support on the effectiveness of the Pandemic Task Force.[4]

- Approximately 60% strongly agreed that community messaging was effective[4]
- Respondents were split regarding the frequency of updates being too frequent versus infrequent[4]
- Approximately 25% replied that the updates needed more detail[4]
- All respondents agreed that updates were delivered in a timely manner[4]
- Results found that two-way information flow helped enhance the continuity of various departments[4] operations.

SWOT Analysis for White County

When working toward creating a resilient community, it is important to analyze all the aspects of the County. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis is critical to create effective changes to processes and procedures. Stephens County has done one of these analysis in recent years.

White County has not yet completed a SWOT analysis. It will be important for the County to Identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats the County faces not only during a disaster, but before as well. This analysis will help County officials to make sound decisions when it comes to making White County more resilient.

If the County has not done a SWOT Analysis, it is important to conduct one. In order to do this, you need to analyze the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities in terms of threats. Figure 5 breaks down what questions the County should be answering in the analysis. The SWOT analysis done by the County is a critical step in determining what needs can and should be addressed by the County when it comes to emergency response and recovery. The results outlined in this analysis give a good place to begin. It is important to address all the concerns in this analysis in order to create a resilient community.
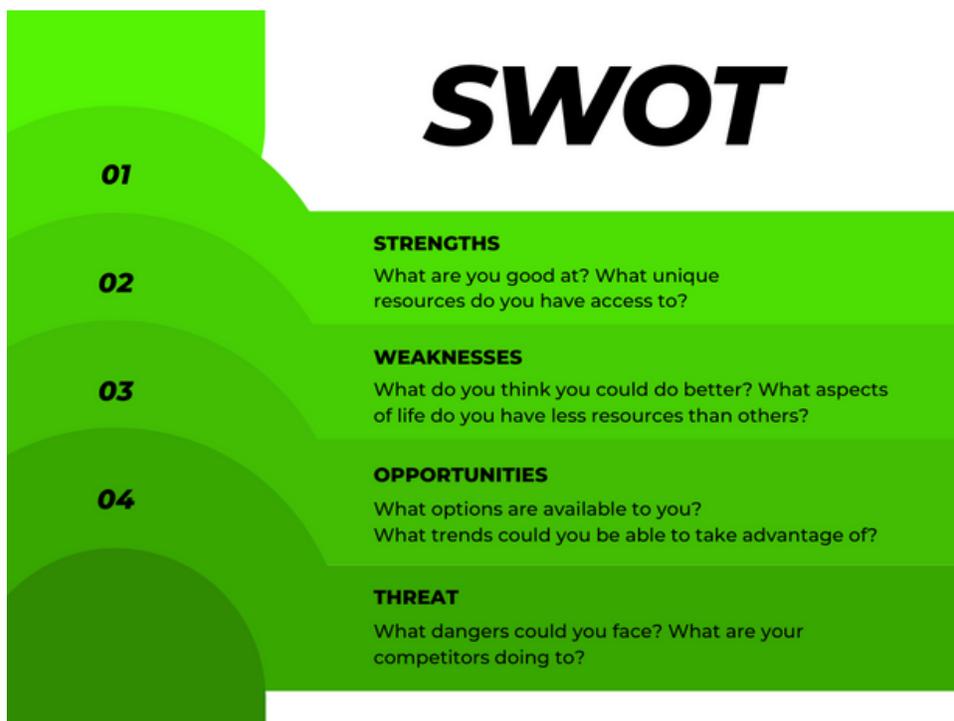

Figure 9: SWOT Analysis

White County Community Resilience Goals

One aspect of being resilient is having a robust Hazard Mitigation Plan. The White County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) is created on the results of a detailed Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA).[5] The HMP helps identify hazards the County faces, as well as descriptions, profiles, assets exposed, potential losses, land/development trends, and multi-jurisdictional concerns.[5]

Figure 8 lists the current weather events that are identified as hazards. White County has encountered these in the past, and likely to experience in the future.[3] Thunderstorms were determined to be the most significant hazard the county may face, with a high risk for tornadoes and winter storms, and a moderate concern for flooding and wildfires.[5]

> **White County's 3 Community Goals:**
> 1. Maximize the use of resources through coordination between private and public partners [5]
> 2. "Harden communities against the impact of disasters through the development of new mitigation strategies" [5]
> 3. Attempt to reduce or eliminate repetitive damage and loss of life and property from disasters. [5]

Hazard Type	White County	Cleveland	Helen
THUNDERSTORMS		[3]	
Frequency	EX	EX	EX
Severity	EX	EX	EX
Probability	EX	EX	EX
WINTERSTORMS			
Frequency	H	H	H
Severity	H	H	H
Probability	H	H	H
FLOODING			
Frequency	M	M	M
Severity	[3] M	M	EX
Probability	M	M	M
TORNADO			
Frequency	H	H	H
Severity	H	EX	EX
Probability	H	H	H
DROUGHT			
Frequency	M	VL	VL
Severity	M	L	L
Probability	VL	VL	VL
WILDFIRE			
Frequency	M	VL	VL
Severity	M	M	H
Probability	M	VL	M
TROPICAL CYCLONE			
Frequency	VL	VL	VL
Severity	M	M	H
Probability	VL	VL	VL

Figure 10: White County Hazards from HMP[5]

Key for Figure 8 [5]

EX: Extensive risk/probability/impact; extremely likely to occur numerous times per year.

H: High risk; significant risk/major damage potential ; Significant probability within the jurisdiction; likely to occur multiple times per year.

M: Medium risk; moderate damage potential; Moderate probability within the jurisdiction; May occur annually or more often.

VL: Very low risk/occurrence; Very low probability within the jurisdiction in any given year.

L: Low risk; little damage potential; Low probability of occurrence within the jurisdiction of an event on an annual basis.

Existing County Response Operations

As previously outlined, the County sees a variety of natural disasters including Tropical Cyclonic Events, Earthquakes, Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Inland Flooding, Severe Winter Storms, Drought, and Wildfires.[5] Within the County HMP, we discuss the need to ensure that our responders have everything necessary to respond to and recover from a disaster.[5] Rebuilding from any disaster is truly a group effort and requires both public and private entities to be involved in the recovery process. When it comes to the our community, there are County officials that play certain roles in the response and recovery process.

When it comes to Response Operations, White County works hard to ensure that entities within the County are ready for any disaster. They have several plans including pandemic related plans they train and conduct exercises on to ensure everyone is ready. They conduct After Action Reports on these exercises as well. Some of the things that have been noted in previous after actions include educating staff on various topics including data entry and use of equipment. Making sure everyone is trained and prepared will be critical in serving the needs of White County residents.

The businesses in the County also play an important role in the recovery process after a natural disaster. Businesses re-opening offer a sense of normalcy to those in a time of crisis. If businesses are open, then people can begin to stock rebuild their homes and cook their own food instead of reaching out to the government for support.

White County has dozens of businesses within the region. It is important to ensure that these businesses have the proper information in order to re-open post-disaster. White County's Task Force helps to ensure the Government and private businesses in the area know what is happening with these businesses after a disaster. It will be critical to have businesses in the area up and running to allow citizens in the County to return to a sense of normalcy after a disaster.

Photos from a Hazmat Event in White County   15

Current Recovery Concerns

When looking at how the County recovers after a natural disaster, it is important to figure out what is the weakest area in this process. Are there departments that are currently overworked? Is there a need for different businesses to come in and enhance the current economic structure that is in place? These weak links in the response and recovery web are important to discuss and figure out how the County can better enhance these structures for future disasters.

To help White County recover more efficiently from disasters, the County should aim to train and exercise the recovery process with its personal more in depth. Department managers need to train to help gather the information for post-recovery in order to help receive federal and state aid. The County also needs to review and implements measure for Continuity of Operations. Each local government should develop a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and exercise the abilities to continue critical functions with 50% of their work force.

The County's Communication with the public is in good order, but there is a need to educate the public as to where to find the information the county is providing. The County is constantly identifying ways for recovery to flow smoothly and provide the needs of our community. Much of this recovery process is governed by state and federal law.

These weak points could cost the County money, time and effort during the next disaster response. The areas in both the public and private sector can always be improved upon. Making sure the County knows what the weakest spots in the web are is critical to making changes.

Creating a More Resilient County

Now that we have addressed what needs to be fixed within the current framework, it is important to understand how we will change it for future disasters. The County needs to fix the identified problems to make sure they are not issues going forward.

It will be important for White County to improve its current framework before the next disaster. More training for new and existing employees on disaster response and recovery will be needed. This will help to make sure everyone is ready for the next time a disaster hits the County. It will also be important for the County to continue the Task Force and maintain relationships with members. This Task Force has been beneficial in previous disasters and ensuring it continues when people retire and leave their positions will be important for future disasters. It will also be important for the County to maintain partnerships with Hospitals in the region due to the lack of a hospital. Region B Healthcare Coalition helps to facilitate training and exercising with local healthcare professionals. Each local government within White County should create a COOP as well as exercise on the abilities to continue critical functions with 50% of their work force.

It is also important to create a rainy day resilience fund. This fund can be created through a variety of avenues within the County Budget. When disaster funds become available, if you have a robust list of Capital Improvement projects you can quickly adapt a Capital Improvement project to meet the criteria of a disaster funding opportunity. By using outside funding sources to fund projects that are already in the budget, the County can reallocate the money into a new "rainy day" resilience fund. Once this fund is established, it can be grown through similar reallotments and used as an emergency fund for future unexpected events or rolled into other Capital Improvement projects further down the priority list.

Strengthening the already existing infrastructure will help the County to be better prepared for the next disaster. In order to make these changes, outside funding sources need to be sought out from various avenues.

Emergency Management Needs **VS** **Addressing Needs**

- More Training and Exercises to prepare County Staff and other responders
- Continuing the White County Task Force Communications after People Leave Positions

- Conducting Specific Training to address AAR needs
- Ensuring there is a Plan in Place for when People Change and Leave Positions within the Task Force

Figure 11: White County Emergency Management Needs

Capital Improvement Projects to Consider

There are several projects that the County is considering in order to become more resilient with natural disasters. The following projects illustrate how we hope to ensure that we are building a more resilient framework for the next response.

Currently, the County is in need of broadband and cellular expansion. This would help facilitate effective response and recovery in the area. The County is also looking to build a facility for emergency sheltering and a point of dispensing that can be used during non-emergencies as recreational complex. This project current awaiting funding through federal grants. Community resiliency equipment and supplies are always needed and some of which expire over time.

The County has several major infrastructure projects that can be done but money is always an issue. The following projects are important for the County to consider when thinking about infrastructure investments:
- Enhancing the Current Broadband Network
- Hardening Current Power Lines
- Hardening Various County Facilities
- Adding Generators to Necessary Facilities

These kinds of investments take millions of dollars. The County should come up with a plan for how they are going to pay for these kinds of projects.The following are various sources that can be used to fund these major projects:
- White County SPLOST
- Yearly Funding Opportunities
  - Federal: Emergency Preparedness Grants, Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities
  - State: Community Development Block Grant Program
- Post Disaster Federal Fundings Opportunities
  - Federal: Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Public Assistance

In the following pages, we discuss the various funding opportunities available to the County and what projects they can be used for to create a more resilient community.

Yearly Funding Opportunities

The County has a local source of funding in the SPLOST program. SPLOST is the main source of funding for capital projects. A project list is submitted to the Board of Commissioners, and priorities are placed based on need, cash flow and importance to all other projects within the program. When a SPLOST is approved by the voters, it is required by law to stay within those boundaries of the referendum.

There are several grant related opportunities available to make the County response and recovery plan stronger. These include the following:

Federal Emergency Management Agency - Emergency Preparedness Grants (EMPG)[6]
Each year the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) releases funds to help communities across the country prepare for natural disasters.[6] This funding opportunity is available yearly to state and local communities.[6] These funds can be used for a variety of different emergency preparedness activities and each year the use of these funds is dependent upon what the Notice of Funding Opportunity states and the priorities that need to be met.[6] Previous projects have included:[6]

- Exercises and training
- Planning
- Emergency Management Equipment
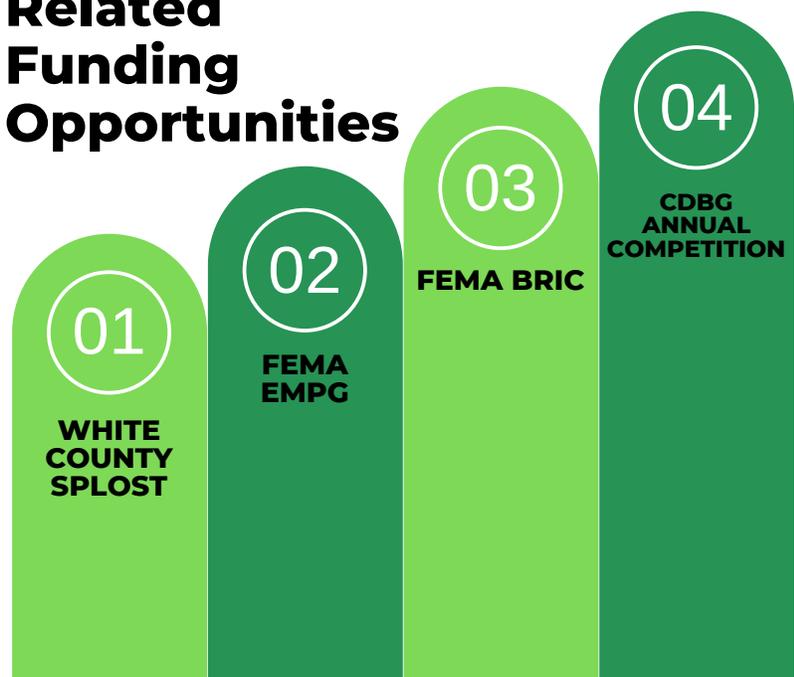
The amount of money designated for this grant varies from year to year and there is a match requirement for this funding source.

Figure 12: Funding Opportunities

Non-Disaster Related Funding Opportunities

01 WHITE COUNTY SPLOST

02 FEMA EMPG

03 FEMA BRIC

04 CDBG ANNUAL COMPETITION

Yearly Funding Opportunities

FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)

This funding opportunity is a relatively new funding opportunity from FEMA. This opportunity is funded by a 6% set-aside from federal post-disaster grant funding.[7] A variety of activities can be funded using BRIC including:[8]

- Capability- and Capacity-Building Activities [8]
    - building codes
    - partnerships
    - project scoping
    - mitigation planning and planning-related activities.
- Mitigation Projects [8]
- Management Costs [8]

These funds can help to identify and amplify current partnerships within the community. It can also assist with bridging the gaps identified in the scarcity framework pages of this document. The funds can be used by individual counties or counties can come together to create projects that benefit all parties.

Examples of BRIC funded projects include:[8]

- Construction of a microgrid
- Communication infrastructure upgrades
- Relocation of flood prone structures

A full list of examples can be found in the   FEMA Mitigation Action Portfolio.

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) Annual Competition

This funding source is run through the state of Georgia's Department of Community Affairs.[10] This annual funding source allows for an applicant to apply for up to $1M for single-activity and $1.25 M for Multi Activity during regular competition.[10] There is also funding available for Regional Cooperation projects. With this annual competition there is a local match requirement depending on the amount of money requested.[10]

Several different types of projects can be funding through this grant funding, including:[10]

- Public Facilities and Improvements
- Acquisition of Real Property
- Economic Development

The funds must be used to projects that benefit a certain percentage of Low- and Moderate-Income Persons depending on the type of project.[10]

These funding sources are available yearly and can be accessed even without a disaster declarations.

Disaster Driven Funding Opportunities

It is important to know what funding opportunities are available post-disaster as well. These funds can help to offset costs during a disaster. By ensuring that the county receives all the reimbursement money it can in the wake of a disaster, the county can save county dollars for other projects. The following is a list of funds that the county can request after a federally declared disaster.

<u>FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)</u>

Funding from the HMGP are meant for mitigation projects. These funds can be used for specific projects that strengthen structures post-disasters.[11] Some examples of projects include:[11]

- Planning
- Generators for buildings
- Elevating Structures
- Retrofitting structures

A full list of project examples and more information on the use of these funds can be found <u>here</u>. It is important for Stephens County to keep a list of potential HMGP eligible projects for when this funding opportunity becomes available.

<u>FEMA Public Assistance</u>

Public Assistance or PA funding is used for response costs and recovery costs.[12] There are different categories of costs that can be requested by a federally declared county. As listed on FEMA's website, they are:

Emergency Work: This must be completed within 6 months after a disaster.[12]

- Debris removal
- Emergency Protective Measures

Permanent Work: This much be completed within 18 months after a disaster.[12]

- Road and Bridges
- Water Control Facilities
- Public Buildings and their contents
- Public Utilities
- Park, Recreational, and Other Facilities

It is important for White County to request as much of this funding as possible post-disaster. Any funds that the county can save during and after the disaster can be used for other important resilient projects by putting the money into a rainy day fund.

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