SPARK Taskforce Executive Committee approves proposal of $400 million to local governments for COVID-19 expenses

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Today, Governor Laura Kelly's Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Taskforce Executive Committee reviewed and approved a proposal to distribute $400 million to local governments to help address the health and economic challenges inflicted by COVID-19.

"Over the last few months Kansans have faced unprecedented challenges because of COVID-19," Governor Kelly said. "Through it all, they have shown resiliency and compassion that has served as a strong reminder that we are all in this together.

"Every region of our State has been impacted by the health and economic crisis of this pandemic. We need to provide local governments with all the resources we can to mitigate the virus and revitalize our economy. We want to make these funds available, so communities can address current challenges and jumpstart our economic recovery," Kelly said.

This is the first action of the SPARK Taskforce, which is charged with distributing over a billion dollars in federal funds Kansas received under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

"This fair, impactful and timely distribution of funds to county governments will strengthen our health, speed the reopening of our economy and help our state remain open for business," Cheryl Harrison-Lee, Executive Director of the Recovery Office, said. "I'm grateful to the Executive Committee members for the swift action they took today and look forward to collaborating with them and the Steering Committee to put the remaining funds to work."

Harrison-Lee proposed a three-phased approach to allocating the funds. The first round will focus on providing relief to county governments which had not already received funding under the CARES Act. Johnson and Sedgwick Counties have already received funds because they have populations over 500,000.

Under the SPARK proposal, each county would receive funds based on the following formula:

- **Population**: All counties are guaranteed to receive at least $194 per person. This is the same amount awarded to Johnson and Sedgwick residents previously.
- **Impact Fund:** Counties will receive additional dollars based on their COVID-19 case rates and unemployment rates. The purpose of the Impact Fund is to provide additional dollars to those counties hit hardest by the virus. Johnson and Sedgwick counties will receive funds through this fund as well.

Fifty percent of each county's share will be for reimbursement of COVID-19 related expenses and the remaining 50 percent will be direct aid for eligible expenditures under the CARES Act.

To receive funds, counties will be required to pass a resolution affirming they will allocate the funding consistent with the CARES Act and to share and allocate funds to educational and municipal entities within their counties.

Under this proposal, there will be two additional funding rounds later this year. Public and private entities will be eligible for funding in the later

rounds, which will focus on strategic investments and revitalizing the State's economy.

"While our initial focus is on strengthening health, the second round will target short-term and long-term opportunities to generate economic growth for all Kansans," Lyle Butler, SPARK Executive Committee Chair, said. "I'm so pleased at the talent we've assembled both on our Executive and Steering Committees – we're going to need it to make sound, inclusive investments that serve rural and urban Kansas now and in the future."

To find the full presentation, please find it here: https://governor.kansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SPARK-Process_6.2_FINAL_Presentation.pdf

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