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How Should Cities Spend Billions in Aid? Ask People Who Live There.

Some state and local governments are turning to Zoom and Survey Monkey polls to ask residents how to use their federal Covid relief aid.

As America's states and cities decide how to spend their share of the \$350 billion in Covid relief funds they're getting from the federal government, some are asking residents for ideas. Richmond, Virginia, turned to Survey Monkey.

Through a web page using the popular survey tool that can be accessed via a QR code, Richmond has found plenty of ideas to choose from, with about 750 people responding in its first two days online. The results aren't public yet. "This should be an exciting question to answer," said Sam Schwartzkopf of the city's Office of Public Information and Engagement. "People really seem to be taking interest in it."

Government officials across the U.S. have set out to gather ideas from citizens on how to spend the money that's part of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan. The ideas, both big and small, speak to the unusual position that cities and states find themselves in after the federal government provided them with an unprecedented amount of cash. The funds will help local governments take an active role in the recovery and avoid the municipal budget cuts that weighed on the economy after the 2008 recession.

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