



American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

General Grant Funding Overview
&
Application Instructions

ARPA Grant Funding Overview

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Thomas A. Golden, Jr.

City Manager

Introduction and Message from the City Manager

Signed into law on March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) created Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to deliver \$350 billion to state, territories, municipalities, counties, and tribal governments much needed aid. Dwarfing the funds previously made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), over \$75 million in funds, has been made available to the City of Lowell to assist us with the ongoing pandemic recovery effort.

Since being announced, the city's administration has been hard at work laying the groundwork in an unprecedented effort to deliver these funds to the community. The effort and amount of work that my team has invested in preparation for this undertaking has been substantial. Understanding the federal rules and guidelines tied to the funds, creating and placing mechanisms in place to mitigate risk to the city while ensuring compliance, reviewing ways to ensure transparency, identifying who will manage the funds and how, assessing the community's needs, establishing priorities for the funding, creating an application/ assessment/ award /reporting process, and finalizing how the funds will actually be delivered, has taken significant time and resources.

In welcoming this once in a generation opportunity for transformative investments throughout the city, we have focused on incorporating public feedback from the community while identifying how to jumpstart solutions to long-term challenges. We have also focused on cross-departmental ideas that address equity, jobs, and health throughout the city, while assessing ways to leverage additional public and private resources to prioritize financial sustainability beyond ARPA.

With the ongoing support of the City Council, my administration and I are committed to working together with our community stakeholders and members as we attempt to pave the road to recovery by focusing on the well-being of families, improving neighborhoods, and creating an environment that fosters prosperity and growth in our business community, while inspiring new investment in our future.

Thank you for your ongoing support and patience as we continue our pandemic recovery efforts throughout the City of Lowell.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Golden Jr.

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About the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) created the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program to deliver \$350 billion to state, territories, municipalities, counties, and tribal governments much needed aid to assist with meeting the following key objectives:

- To support the urgent COVID-19 response efforts to continue to decrease the spread of the virus and bring the pandemic under control.
- To replace lost revenue for eligible recipients to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs.
- To support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses.
- To address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic on certain populations.

Per the U. S. Treasury, eligible expenses must (1) be incurred between March 3, 2021 and December 31, 2026 (with certain costs under specific circumstances are eligible back to March, 2020), and (2) must fall into one of the following categories:

- *Support the Public Health Response to the Pandemic*
Fund COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff.
- *Address the Negative Economic Impacts from the Pandemic*
Respond to economic harms to workers, families, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector.
- *Improve Water and Sewer Infrastructure*
Make necessary investments to improve access to clean drinking water and invest in wastewater and storm water infrastructure.
- *Provide Premium Pay for Essential Workers*
Offer additional support to those who have and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors.
- *Invest in Broadband Infrastructure*
Make necessary investments to provide unserved or underserved locations with new or expanded broadband access.
- *Replace Public Sector Revenue Losses*
Use funds to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the pandemic.

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About the City of Lowell's Recovery Plan

The City of Lowell was awarded over \$75 million in SLRFR funds to assist the city with its recovery plan. The City of Lowell's ARPA team, functioning through the City Manager's Finance Department is responsible for managing ARPA funding for the city, and has been focused on ascertaining the eligible uses of ARPA funds and gathering data on community needs and potential projects in an effort to help guide the City Manager and the City Council through their deliberations.

The City of Lowell's recovery plan includes a commitment to ensuring a transparent and accountable process in our efforts to fund eligible and impactful projects using our allocated ARPA funds. At this time, the following key areas within the community have been identified, into which these funds will be invested:

- **Social Impact Programs.** Through ARPA, the City will invest in various social impact programs to make commitments and investments into key areas; specifically, education/training; public health; social/economic equity; and growing generational wealth.
- **Lowell Fire Department Apparatus Replacement Plan.** The Lowell Fire Department maintains a fleet of 43 vehicles. This includes a large array of equipment used for everything from fire response to training and staff functions. With an average age of 15-16 years, the current fleet situation is problematic. The ARPA funding will allow the City to make a nearly complete replacement of the oldest pieces of apparatus.
- **Lowell Neighborhood Improvement Plan.** The ARPA neighborhood improvement plan will include directed funding for eligible parks projects, water & sewer infrastructure projects, and neighborhood business district improvements across Lowell's neighborhoods, with a focus on Qualified Census Tracts (QCT).
- **Municipal Building Improvements.** Targeted towards funding in School facilities, as well as other municipal buildings for eligible improvements (e.g., HVAC and ADA improvements, etc.).
- **Water & Sewer Infrastructure Improvements.** The City will accelerate its efforts to complete sewer separation projects in the Humphrey's Brook / Billing Brook subarea, Tilden Street subarea, and other identified locations to reduce CSOs. Investments will also be made in water infrastructure and to purchase heavy machinery to better maintain the water & sewer systems.
- **Non-Profit Support.** Working in partnership with Lowell's vibrant network of non-profit agencies; the City will make investments in sustainable programs to aid in the recovery of Lowell's underserved populations.

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- **Economic Development & Recovery.** These ARPA investments will support small businesses, helping them to address financial challenges caused by the pandemic and to make investments in COVID-19 prevention and mitigation tactics, as well as to provide technical assistance. The City will employ a broad array of grant, in-kind assistance, and counseling programs to enable small businesses to rebound from the downturn. A priority will be placed on speeding the recovery of the tourism, travel, and hospitality sectors, supporting industries that were particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 emergency and are just now beginning to mend.
- **Public Health Efforts, Premium Pay, & Compliance.** The City will continue to address COVID-19 and any other public health issues, as well as mitigate its impact and administer all program funding areas utilizing the balance of the federal allocation. Premium pay will be paid to eligible municipal employees who worked in public-facing positions during the pandemic.

Types of ARPA Grants Available through the City of Lowell

ARPA funding will be made available through targeted grants focused on delivering results related to the objectives, categories, and key areas discussed in the preceding pages. As recovery initiatives continue to evolve, there will be various grant funding opportunities to address various priorities. Each grant funding opportunity will be announced as a Request for Proposal (RFP), during which applications will be available to help address a specific need. Each RFP will have a defined application period, during which applications may be submitted for review, assessment, and possible award. As funding availability evolves, and based on priorities, the city may choose to revisit and expand on previously issued RFP opportunities, or change the order of their availability.

PLEASE NOTE: All ARPA grant awards will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis (unless identified otherwise). Expenses must first be incurred by the grant recipient, invoiced appropriately, and once approved, will be reimbursed by the City of Lowell.

The City will work diligently to keep the community aware of these RFP opportunities, via the City's ARPA website <https://www.lowellma.gov/1574/American-Rescue-Plan-Act>.

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Overview of the ARPA Grant Funding Process

General Information about the process

1. ARPA funding has been designated to address specific needs within the community.
2. As recovery initiatives continue to evolve, there will be a variety of grant funding opportunities available.
3. Information about RFPs, ARPA Grant Funding Applications, and any schedule changes or updates can be found on the City of Lowell's ARPA Program website; <https://www.lowellma.gov/1574/American-Rescue-Plan-Act>.
4. An eligible entity may apply for multiple RFPs.
5. While an eligible entity may submit multiple ARPA Grant Funding Applications for consideration within a single RFP, please **do not combine projects** onto one application.

Eligibility – Who can apply for funding?

1. Most ARPA reimbursement grants will be focused on non-profit organizations, and small businesses. However, there may also be programs established for residents as well.
2. Please make sure to carefully review the details of the RFP you are interested in before applying, as each RFP will have its own eligibility requirements.

Timing – When will ARPA Grant Funding Applications be accepted?

1. Each grant funding opportunity will be announced as a Request for Proposal (RFP).
2. Each RFP will have a separate ARPA Grant Funding Application associated with it.
3. Each RFP will have its own Release (Start) Date and Due (End) Date, which will be listed at the top of the RFP.
 - ARPA Grant Funding Applications will only be accepted between these dates.
 - ARPA Grant Funding Applications submitted once an RFP application period has closed/ended (Due Date) will not be accepted or considered.

Preparation – How do I prepare to apply?

1. Download and review the RFP Summary you are applying for along with the associated ARPA Grant Application, and any additional documents (e.g., IRS Form W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification, City of Lowell Eligible 2020 Census Tracts).
 - The RFP will clearly indicate any additional forms necessary; all of them should be available in the same area as the RFP

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2. Make sure to review the RFP section titled "Application Certification" for important information necessary to apply, in order to avoid any processing delays.
3. Businesses and Non-Profits: Verify that you have applied for and received a SAM Unique Entity ID (UEI#)¹.
 - **No grant awards will be made to these entities without a SAM#**
 - The Federal government has established the System for Award Management (SAM) as a centralized national repository for all vendors conducting business with the Federal government, including contract awards and grant recipients. SAM registration is free and can be found via <http://sam.gov>
4. Questions or assistance regarding the application should be directed to the ARPA Team at 978-674-4043

Applying - Complete and submit the ARPA Grant Funding Application for review²

1. The ARPA Grant Application (and any additional forms) are intended to be downloaded for completion on a computer, or printed out and completed manually.
2. Fill out and complete the ARPA Grant Application.
3. Fill out and complete any additional forms as described/required in the RFP.
4. Submit everything either in person or via US Postal Service mail to: City of Lowell ARPA Team, City Hall - 375 Merrimack St - Room 34, Lowell, MA 01852.

Processing - How will the City review your ARPA Grant Funding Application?

1. Once we have received your ARPA Grant Application, your application review process begins.
2. While assessment criteria may differ by RFP, it is important that the proposal addresses some of the objectives, categories, and key areas which ARPA was designed for.
3. The city's goal is to arrive at application funding decisions within 30 business days of either the application end date, or (for open ended applications), within 30 days of application receipt.
 - Because the review process depends on a variety of factors, more complex RFPs or applications may require additional time.
 - When these situations come up, we will communicate this to applicants as best we can.

¹ The SAM UEI# replaces the previously used DUNS number requirement by the Federal government for grant awards. SAM registration is free, requires annual renewal, and offers assistance through the Federal Service Desk at 866-606-8220.

² Incomplete documentation may delay the review process of your application.

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Awarding - How will the City fund awarded requests?

1. Once a funding decision is agreed upon, the City will
 - Approve your project/initiative as associated with the specific RFP
 - Assign you an ARPA Award Contract Project Number
 - Mail you a copy of the ARPA Award Contract
- 2. Return your signed copy of the ARPA Award Contract to indicate your acceptance of the ARPA Award along with any requirements associated with it.**
3. Once the ARPA Award Contract has been returned, the City will
 - Process and assign you a Vendor Number
 - Process and issue you a Purchase Order (PO) in the amount of the award
 - Post your project initiative onto the City's ARPA website(s)

Funding - How will the City fund the award?

1. **All ARPA Funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis, (unless otherwise specified). Expenses must first be incurred by the grant recipient, and once approved, will be reimbursed by the City of Lowell.**
2. The Vendor Number and PO number will be necessary for all invoicing or funding related matters.
3. The ARPA Award Contract Project Number will be necessary for all project updates.
4. You or your organization must issue the City of Lowell an invoice for the grant funds to be disbursed.
5. Your invoice must include
 - Your City issued PO Number
 - Your City issued Vendor Number
 - Your City issued ARPA Contract Project Number
 - An Invoice Number
 - An Invoice Date
 - A description of the goods/services being invoiced
 - A dollar value for the invoice
6. The City will review the invoice, request additional information as necessary.
7. If approved, it will be submitted for processing and payment.
8. In most cases, a City check will be mailed within 10 business days of the approval date.
 - All funds are issued by printed check, and are sent to the address as listed on the IRS W-9 Form; the City **will not** perform any wire transfer of funds.

Where can I find additional information?

Please refer to the **City of Lowell's ARPA Program website** for detailed information about Requests for Proposals (RFPs), ARPA Grant Funding Applications, and any schedule changes or updates. Additional details regarding the American Recovery Plan Act are available here: <https://www.lowellma.gov/1574/American-Rescue-Plan-Act>