Pennsylvania

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Advocacy Toolkit

A resource provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations

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**Introduction**

We have now entered our third year of the COVID pandemic. Some nonprofits have received support from:

* The CARES Act
* Local funders
* Some shifts in state regulations
* County-distributed funds

However, billions of Pennsylvania’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars remain unspent and under state control. The Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO) is asking state and local officials to allocate ARPA funding to nonprofits throughout the Commonwealth. It will make our advocacy work most effective if nonprofits in every community throughout Pennsylvania communicate this same message to their state and local elected officials. **Legislators want to know the impact on their own communities, and you are the best advocates to report on that impact.**

The **“American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)” Advocacy Toolkit** provides sample language to aid in your outreach efforts.

**PANO’s American Rescue Plan Act Advocacy (ARPA) goal is two-fold:**

* To use our collective voice to drive funding and support to Pennsylvania nonprofits. If we all speak, we are 807,000 people strong!
* To underscore that collective voice with local stories that will drive our message home.

This toolkit supplies participating organizations with sample language for telling your own stories to support the broad campaign message:

**Nonprofits need ARPA funding – NOW.**

Every nonprofit in Pennsylvania has stories that demonstrate local need. This kit provides organizations and communities with editable language to best tell your unique story across multiple platforms. As a grassroots effort, this campaign will only be as effective as your efforts and your ability to leverage your network, and the networks of those in your network.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT!**

The federal government sent ARPA money to the Commonwealth and larger municipalities to meet the immediate needs of Pennsylvania residents. With each new variant discovered, it is evident that the pandemic is not over. Pennsylvanians continue to be affected, and the state has trusted local government to meet their needs.

Nonprofits have not received the same recognition or funding as the business community, and it is taking longer for them to recover. If nonprofits do not recover, those in need will turn to state and local government for support – a proposition that will be less efficient and more expensive.

Pennsylvania’s nonprofit community must receive designated dollars to ensure their vital services continue to be delivered to those that need those services NOW.

**Case for ARPA Support**

* Nonprofit organizations are social and economic drivers in Pennsylvania. Pre-pandemic, nonprofits had a workforce of over807K employees (15% of Pennsylvania’s workforce). This compares to 297K in Business and Financial Operations (5% of Pennsylvania’s workforce) and 536K in Manufacturing (10% of Pennsylvania’s workforce). Pennsylvania nonprofits generate $116.7 billion in annual revenue and serve millions of Pennsylvania residents.
* 87% of nonprofits in Pennsylvania have experienced negative financial impact resulting from COVID.
* Pennsylvania’s nonprofits need targeted support to continue supporting the 4 million Pennsylvanians we serve every day. Nonprofits partner with government to meet mandated, basic needs for our most vulnerable residents.
* And yet, neither state nor local government officials have designated funding or other relief exclusively to their nonprofit partners. Local officials often tell nonprofits to make their ARPA requests to the state; state officials tell nonprofits to make ARPA requests to local government. Ultimately, nonprofits will miss out – again – unless we insist on having a seat at the table. ARPA funds are currently available at the local government level in most communities.

**How ARPA Dollars Have Been Allocated in Pennsylvania**

* Pennsylvania has received $7.29 billion in ARPA funding.
* In addition, Pennsylvania counties, cities, and municipalities received $6.15 billion. Some of these dollars went directly to cities and local governments; the Commonwealth disbursed dollars to the remaining counties/municipalities/townships.
* The Commonwealth and many local governments continue to hold billions of ARPA dollars in reserves for the *next* “rainy day,” and to collect interest on those funds. Some have attempted to use these dollars that do not align with ARPA-specified uses (e.g., to build a new prison).
* If local ARPA dollars aren’t being spent in your community, *you* can make the case the need is there and should be met. If local ARPA dollars are being spent in your community, you can put your organization in position to participate in those funds.

**How ARPA Dollars Can be Spent**

**The examples included below are not limited to those provided. These are just examples. Please see the** [**U.S. Treasury’s Final Rule**](https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Final-Rule.pdf?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=npa-011022&utm_medium=email) **for more detail.**

**Nonprofits can be eligible for ARPA funds both as a recipient of relief as well as a provider of relief for others. In practice this means that nonprofits can request financial assistance for their own costs and can be hired by governments using ARPA funds to provide the assistance to others in the community.**

1. **Public Health** (e.g., increased access to COVID testing, additional personal protective equipment, addressing mental health and substance abuse issues, responding to violent crime, maintaining/increasing social distancing, improved ventilation systems).
2. **Negative Economic Impacts** (e.g., demonstrated loss in revenue either for nonprofit or for those they serve [i.e., unemployed individuals, families experiencing food insecurity]). The Commonwealth may contribute to depleted unemployment trust funds (and reduce the burden on nonprofit and other employers paying unemployment taxes) and nonprofits may use the funds to expand health insurance coverage).
3. **Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities** (e.g., low-income, socially vulnerable communities experiencing disproportionate rates of infection, low-income workers performing essential work, workers with reduced ability to socially distance, any group experiencing more severe impacts as compared to the general public—including a whole section for dollars designated for nonprofits and the challenges we haves experienced.)

***Examples of services that nonprofits can provide:*** *Remediation for lead paint or other lead hazards, rent assistance, mortgage assistance, burial assistance, survivors’ benefits, home repairs, internet connection, weatherization assistance, childcare and early learning—including the construction of childcare and learning facilities, foster care and services for those aging out of foster care, development of affordable housing units, rehabilitation of abandoned or vacant properties, awareness and communication about available assistance, expansion of health insurance coverage for those uninsured or underinsured, job training programs, compensation to returning employees for lost pay and benefits during COVID and/or providing incentives for employee retention).*

1. **Premium Pay for Essential Services:** To be eligible for premium pay, workers must be performing essential work during the COVID emergency. The U.S. Treasury Final Rule defines eligible workers as “those workers needed to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure sectors and additional sectors as each…government may designate as critical to protect the health and wellbeing of [its] residents. Governments may identify other sectors as critical as is necessary to protecting the health and wellbeing of such jurisdiction.”

Many nonprofits fall within this category, and we have collectively experienced the challenges of employee retention within the current competitive environment. If your organization does fall into a essential service category, this may be a pool of dollars to access for the purpose of employee recruitment and retention.

**We include information on page 7 about current challenges around employment. These can be stated in the statement of need. If you can make the case for premium pay and/or salaries for essential employees, include that in your request.**

1. **Infrastructure:** Consider investments in technology, building and transportation upgrades that would prepare your organization in both responding to the current pandemic and/or any future emergency response to community need.
2. **Revenue Replacement:** Any revenue replacement should use the fiscal year prior to the pandemic as the baseline for comparison.
3. **Administrative Costs**: Examples include contract support, overhead costs, data collection and analysis, targeted customer outreach.

**Actions to Take**

1. Identify the state and local officials who serve the district in which your organization is located by clicking on the following links:

* [Members of Pennsylvania’s General Assembly](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/)
* [County Commissioners, Mayor, City Council Members](http://munstats.pa.gov/Public/FindMunicipality.aspx)

1. Sign on to PANO’s letter support this effort—to join the collective nonprofit voice. (See page 8 for language from PANO’s letter and link to platform for you to easily sign and send to your state officials).
2. Prepare your personalized case for support, by following the steps listed on in the next section and using the templates provided on the following pages.
3. Ask your local municipality to hold a public forum to hear where your community could best use the dollars. If you are successful in getting this done, you may want to send out an alert to your supporters and other nonprofits in your community. See page 11 for a sample alert.
4. Set up meetings with your state and local elected officials.

* See next section titled “Personalizing Your Case for ARPA Support” for suggestions on how to prepare for these meetings.
* See page 10 for sample email for you to edit and send to your elected officials.

1. Ask your board and/or clients to call their elected officials – to strengthen your organization’s voice.
2. Write an Op-Ed to inform your community about the important work your organization does and how ARPA funds will allow that work to continue. (See page 9 for Sample Op-Ed.)
3. Remind your elected officials that if services offered by nonprofits are forced to close/end, the need will have to be met by government.
4. When talking with your state legislator, ask them to go with you to meet with your local elected officials. Ask them to be your advocate.
5. Invite your clients to reach out to your elected officials to describe the impact of your work on their lives and support your request for ARPA funding. (See page 11 for sample email for you to edit and send to your clients/consumers to forward to your elected officials).

**Personalizing Your Case for ARPA Support**

1. Click [here](https://www.nlc.org/resource/local-allocations-in-the-american-rescue-plan/) to find the allocation that came to your county/city/municipality.
2. Visit your local government’s website to see if and how these dollars have been allocated. Local/municipal budgets are passed for calendar years (rather than fiscal years), so 2022 budgets should be available now.
3. Prepare talking points regarding how you believe the dollars should be spent.
4. Don’t be shy about asking for funds for *your* work. When you do so, **be clear about how much you need and what the dollars will be used for.** 
   * Consider making an ask for dollars that will assist you for your ongoing response to the pandemic and/or for future emergencies like the pandemic.
   * Talk about how your agency pivoted to continue to provide services; consider making an ask that would position your agency to pivot again, if necessary.
5. **Personalize to your own organization and community.**
6. ***What needs are your clients experiencing?*** (Use both qualitative and quantitative data.)
7. ***How are you addressing those needs?*** (Short program/short project descriptions).
8. ***What challenges are you facing organizationally?***

If appropriate, highlight the staffing issues you may be encountering as one way of demonstrating the challenges you are facing. **If your employees are fall under the ARP definition of essential workers and/or you can make the case for offering incentives for employee retention/recruitment, include this in your case for support.**

If you can *legitimately* hire a contracted worker on a short-term basis to meet pandemic-related needs, ARPA dollars will cover that cost. There are legal requirements related to hiring a contractor vs. a regular employee. Please make sure that you follow them when making this decision.

**Following are some national statistics that may support your description of employment challenges.**

According to a study from Forbes Business Council, even before the pandemic, the

average nonprofit turnover rate was 19% annually. The pandemic has heightened

nonprofit turnover. The National Council of Nonprofits reports that as of October

2021, “[The Nonprofit community is] down more than 500,000 nonprofit employees

from the beginning of the pandemic.” That same month, The Council circulated a

Survey on Nonprofit Workforce Shortage:

* + - Vacancy rates between zero and 9%: Almost one in four (24%) respondents.
    - Vacancy rates between 10% and 19%: About one in three (34%) respondents.
    - Vacancy rates between 20% and 29%: About 26% respondents.

According to the same survey, salary competition was cited as at least one factor in 80% of reported job vacancies. With nonprofits often unable to offer competitive salaries due to insufficient funding from private and government funders, they are at a disadvantage when battling.

1. ***How much is this costing you?*** (Use a specific dollar amount.)

* Target specific needs with specific dollars needed
* How to better prepare ourselves for future emergency response.

1. Make sure your proposed project is time-limited in scope, and ties into COVID’s impact on your organization and the communities your organization serves.

**Link to Letter on PANO’s Advocacy Platform**

[**Follow this link**](https://pano.salsalabs.org/arpa) to easily sign on to PANO’s letter to state elected officials**.**

**Please note that this platform is not linked for outreach to county and municipal officials. Thus, this is only one tool for you to use. Personal emails and outreach will be most effective for your county and municipal outreach. See links to county commissioners and municipal officials listed on page 6.**

**Following is a copy of the letter on our platform for your convenience:**

**Subject:** PA Nonprofits Need Relief NOW – Authorize Disbursement of the Billions of Unspent ARPA Dollars

**Message:**

Nonprofits need funding support to recover from COVID’s impact. Please authorize the disbursement of the billions of still unspent ARPA dollars, prioritizing nonprofits as funding recipients. As you know, nonprofits partner with state government to ensure that the needs of vulnerable Pennsylvanians are met. And those demands for service have increased by nearly 20% since March 2020. Nonprofits have stepped up to the plate to meet this increased demand, and at great cost to themselves. 87% of Pennsylvania nonprofits experienced negative financial impact due to COVID.

Yet, billions of the Commonwealth’s ARPA funds have yet to be designated to nonprofit organizations that are working to support those in need in *your* community. If services offered by nonprofits are forced to close, the growing community needs will have to be met by government.

Furthermore, nonprofit organizations are social and economic drivers in Pennsylvania. Pre-pandemic, nonprofits had a workforce of over807K employees (15% of Pennsylvania’s workforce), compared to 297K in Business and Financial Operations (5% of Pennsylvania’s workforce) and 536K in Manufacturing (10% of Pennsylvania’s workforce). Pennsylvania nonprofits generate $116.7 billion in annual revenue and serve millions of Pennsylvania residents. If forced to close, these jobs will be lost with the unemployed nonprofit professionals joining the lines of those in need.

**Pennsylvania’s nonprofits need targeted ARPA support to continue supporting the 4+ million Pennsylvanians we serve every day.**

**Sample Op-Ed/Press Release**

*Use this sample Op-Ed to share why it is important for nonprofits like you to survive in your community. Fill in the highlighted areas with your organization’s information.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT:**

**[DATE] [Name, Title]**

**[Phone | Email]**

**[YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME] Needs ($XXX,XXX) IN ARPA Funding Now**

Nonprofits, like XYZ Organization, partner with state and local government to ensure that the needs of vulnerable Pennsylvanians are met. And those demands for service have increased by nearly 20% since March 2020. The demand XYZ Organization’s services has increased by X% We have joined the other # nonprofits (Look up the number via [Tax Exempt World](https://www.taxexemptworld.com/search.asp?type=ot)) in [NAME YOUR COUNTY]. Nonprofits have stepped up to the plate to meet this increased demand, and at great cost to ourselves. 87% of Pennsylvania nonprofits experienced negative financial impact due to COVID. For example, the pandemic has cost XYZ Organization over $XXX,XXX.

Yet, billions of the Commonwealth’s ARPA funds, received by both the state and local government have yet to be designated to nonprofit organizations that are working to support those in need in our county. If services offered by nonprofits are forced to close, our growing community needs will have to be met by government.

Furthermore, nonprofit organizations are social and economic drivers in Pennsylvania. Pre-pandemic, nonprofits had a workforce of over807K employees (15% of Pennsylvania’s workforce), compared to 536K in Manufacturing (10% of Pennsylvania’s workforce). Pennsylvania nonprofits collectively generate $116.7 billion in annual revenue and serve millions of Pennsylvania residents. If forced to close, these jobs will be lost, and the burden of service will be picked up by government, at increased costs to taxpayers.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME]serves [XYZ POPULATION]which is necessary service because(name the community need that your organization meets)**.**

1. ***What needs are your clients experiencing?*** (Use both qualitative and quantitative data.)
2. ***How are you addressing those needs?*** (Short program/short project descriptions).
3. ***What challenges are you facing organizationally?*** (If appropriate, include employment challenges).
4. ***What is this costing you?*** (Give a specific number)

Join XYZ Organization in contacting state and local elected officials to ask that they authorize the disbursement of the billions of unspent ARPA dollars, prioritizing nonprofits as funding recipients.

###

About [Your Nonprofit]

[Add a description of your organization here]

**Sample Email to Send to State/Local Officials**

*Use this sample email to send to your state legislators, county commissioners, and/or municipal officials. See links on page 5 to find state, local, and municipal leaders.*

**Subject:** (XYZ ORGANIZATION) Needs ($XXX,XXX) in ARPA Relief-NOW

**Message:**

Nonprofits need funding support to recover from COVID’s impact. Please authorize the disbursement of the billions of unspent ARPA dollars, prioritizing [XYZ ORGANIZATION] as a funding recipient. As you know, (XYZ ORGANIZATION) partners with you to ensure that the needs of (NAME YOUR CLIENTS [e.g., persons with intellectual disabilities]) are met. Yet billions of the Commonwealth’s ARPA funds have yet to be designated to nonprofit organizations that are working to support those in need in their communities.

The need for our program(s) has/have grown XX% during the pandemic. (Enter the answers to the following questions generated by your work in personalizing your case for support:

1. ***What needs are your clients experiencing?*** (Use both qualitative and quantitative data.)
2. ***How are you addressing those needs?*** (Short program/short project descriptions).
3. ***What challenges are you facing organizationally?*** (If appropriate, include employment challenges).
4. ***What is this costing you?*** (Give a specific number)

Funding from ARPA will help fund our ABC Time-Limited Project, ensuring that we can meet the expanded need and continue to provide for those who use our services.

We are requesting ($XXX,XXX) to fund (name your specific time-limited project), meeting the ARPA following goal of supporting (choose one or more of the following).

* Public Health
* Negative Economic Impacts
* Services to Disproportionately Impacted Communities
* Premium Pay for Essential Services
* Infrastructure
* Revenue Replacement
* Administrative

ARPA funding will also enable free up other organizational dollars to regain/maintain the # staff required to help us accomplish our work.

Finally, as a reminder, nonprofit organizations, including XYZ Organization, collectively employ 15% of Pennsylvania’s workforce compared to the 10% employed by Manufacturing or the 5% employed by Business and Financial Operations. Collectively, Pennsylvania nonprofits generate $116.7 billion in annual revenue and serve millions of Pennsylvania residents.

The staff and board of (XYZ ORGANIZATION) appreciate your support of our efforts. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss this project further. You can reach me directly at (Your Phone #) or at (Your Email Address).

Thank you for your consideration,

Your Name

Your Title

Your Organization

Your Phone Number

**Sample Email to Send to Clients/Constituents to Send to Elected Officials**

*Use this sample email for your clients and constituents to contact your legislators. Please fill in the highlighted areas with your organization’s information.*

**Don’t forget to provide the email information for the specific legislator you want your clients/constituents to contact. Please explain that you’d like your clients to fill out the letter and e-mail it from their home e-mail to their state legislators.**

**Subject:** (XYZ ORGANIZATION) Needs ($XXX,XXX) in ARPA Relief-NOW

**Message:**

Dear **[enter name]**,

My name is **[first name]**. **[XYZ Organization]** provides me and my family with **[services]**. My neighbors, friends, family, and community count on **[XYZ Organization]**’s services.

I depend on **[XYZ Organization]** for **[name specific service]**. This is how my life will be impacted if **[XYZ Organization]** receives funding through the ARPA program. I will receive/obtain/access ABC support.

Please prioritize XYZ Organization as an ARPA funding recipient.

Thank you.

**Sample Alert to Send to Your Supporters and Other Nonprofits in Your Community if you convince your local official to have a public hearing about ARPA funding**

On **[DATE],** the **[NAME OF YOUR LOCAL MUNICIPAL/COUNTY BOARD]** will be allocating the remaining ARPA dollars made available for our **municipality/county**. Do you want a say in how this money is spent?

Please write to your **[commissioner/mayor/etc.]** Tell them about the needs of **[township/county]** residents who have been adversely affected by COVID. Then, show up at this upcoming meeting, so they know there is community interest.

**[INSERT meeting day/time/place/etc.]**

**Sample Social Media Posts**

**TWITTER**

PA nonprofits and those we serve continue to be negatively impacted by COVID-19. Without ARPA relief, **[YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME]** will be unable to sufficiently serve our XXX clients. We need ARPA funding NOW. #Relief4PAnonprofits

The need for our programs has grown XX% during the pandemic. ARPA funding will ensure we can continue to help our clients. #Relief4PAnonprofits

Billions of ARPA funds have yet to be given out**. [YOUR ORGNANIZATION]** needs ARPA funding NOW. #Relief4PAnonprofits

[@legislator](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/index.cfm) Prioritize PA’s Nonprofits as ARPA recipients **[YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME]**! #Relief4PAnonprofits

[@legislator](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/index.cfm) ARPA funds will help **[YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME]** serve our community. Make sure we’re prioritized as an ARPA recipient! #Relief4PAnonprofits

**[YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME]** and other nonprofits are social and economic drivers in PA. Nonprofits have a workforce of over 807,000 employees, generate $116.7 billion in annual revenue, and serve millions of PA residents. #Relief4PAnonprofits

**FACEBOOK**

Did you know that PA still has Billions of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that have yet to be designated? During the pandemic, XYZ ORGANIZATION has seen the demand for our services increase/decrease by X%. What this means for our community is: [1-3 bullet points about COVID-19’s impact on your clients and community].

* + Bullet Point #1
  + Bullet Point #2
  + Bullet Point #3

[@legislator](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/), please prioritize XYZ ORGANIZATION and PA’s nonprofit community for ARPA funding!

**Additional Resources**

**Where to Find Your Elected Officials:**

* [Members of Pennsylvania’s General Assembly](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/)
* [County Commissioners, Mayor, City Council Members](http://munstats.pa.gov/Public/FindMunicipality.aspx)

**Where to Find the Number of Nonprofits in Your County:**

* [Tax Exempt World](https://www.taxexemptworld.com/search.asp?type=ot)
* [COVID-19 Impact on Nonprofits](https://pittsburghfoundation.org/sites/default/files/COVID%20Impact%20on%20Pa%20Nonprofits%20Report.pdf)
* [COVID-19 Impact on Nonprofits by County](https://pittsburghfoundation.org/COVID-PaNonprofits)
* [Needs of Pennsylvania Residence by Referral Request](https://pa.211counts.org/)

**Where to Find Information on Service Needs in Your County:**

* Pennsylvania’s [2-1-1 Counts](https://pa.211counts.org/) website provides service data requested, with the ability to filter by county, district, and needs categories.
* The United Way of Pennsylvania’s [ALICE Project](https://www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/pennsylvania) – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – initiative provides reports on the needs of 39% of PA households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level, yet less than what’s needed to afford basic essentials. Additional ALICE reports can be found [here](https://www.uwp.org/alice/reports/).

Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations

[www.pano.org](http://www.pano.org)

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