Pennsylvania

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Advocacy Toolkit

**A resource provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations**

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**Introduction**

After three years of pandemic response, many nonprofits have received support from, the CARES Act, local funders, shifts in state regulations, county-distributed funds, and Pennsylvania’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars.

However, over $6 billion of Pennsylvania’s ARPA dollars have not yet been spent or obligated, with many of those still under local control. This is *your* opportunity to connect with your local officials to tell them why you, as a nonprofit in your community, remain one of their best partners. You will ensure that locally designated ARPA dollars remain in your community to meet local needs.

**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 to tell your own story for how your use of ARPA dollars can benefit your community.

As a grassroots effort, this campaign as effective as your efforts and your ability to leverage your network, and the networks of those in your network. You must continue to insist on having a seat at the table.

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 ARPA Regulations**](http://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2022-01-27/pdf/2022-00292.pdf) **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 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 local officials who serve the area in which your organization is located** by clicking on the following links:

* [County Commissioners, Mayor, City Council Members](http://munstats.pa.gov/Public/FindMunicipality.aspx)

1. **Research the ARPA allocation that your community received:**
2. Click [here](https://www.nlc.org/resource/local-allocations-in-the-american-rescue-plan/) to find the allocation that came directly to your county/city/municipality.
3. 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 2023 budgets should be available.
4. **Call your local officials (commissioners, mayor, city council members) to see if ARPA dollars are still available.**
5. Additional dollars were allocated to local communities through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These allocations can be found at on the [Department of Community and Economic Development website](https://dced.pa.gov/programs/covid-19-arpa-local-fiscal-recovery-funding/#:~:text=The%20American%20Rescue%20Plan%20Act,systemic%20public%20health%20and%20economic), and the [Department of Human Services website](https://www.dhs.pa.gov/coronavirus/Pages/American-Rescue-Plan-Act-Initiatives.aspx).
6. **Prepare your personalized case for support** by following the steps listed in the next section and using the templates provided on the following pages.
7. Ask your local municipality to hold a/another public forum to hear where your community has **and could best use available 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 10 for a sample alert.
8. **Set up meetings with your local elected officials** (e.g., county commissioners, mayor)

* See next section titled “Building Your Case for ARPA Support” for suggestions on how to prepare for these meetings.
* See page 9 for sample email for you to edit and send to your elected officials.

1. **Remind your elected officials that if services offered by nonprofits are forced to close/end, the need will have to be met by government.**
2. **Ask your board and/or clients to call their elected officials** – to strengthen your organization’s voice.
3. **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 8 for Sample Op-Ed.)
4. **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 10 for sample email for you to edit and send to your clients/consumers to forward to your elected officials).

**Building Your Case for ARPA Support**

**Nonprofits Matter – And Numbers Matter**

Build your case by creating the context for your organization in your local nonprofit landscape. Here are some talking and data points.

1. **Create the Context for Your Request by “Personalizing” the Following Points**

* 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.
  + Nonprofits serve, at minimum, 33% of Pennsylvania’s total population.
* 88% of Pennsylvania nonprofits have budgets of under $500,000; 92% have budgets of under

$1 Million.

* Reimbursement rates for those nonprofits contracting with the state have not increase for 12 -19 years. Looking at just last decade, nonprofit purchasing power has decreased by 24% due to this reason alone.

* Nonprofits partner with local government to meet mandated, basic needs for our most vulnerable residents. Without nonprofits, these services will fall on government to provide.

***Make These Numbers LOCAL by following these steps:***

1. Look up the [**number of nonprofits in your county**](https://pano.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Counties_with_nonprofits.xls)**.**
2. Look up the following numbers **for your county** at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/PA>
   * Total population **for your county.**
   * Total number of individuals employed in the civilian workforce.
3. Then, calculate the estimated number of:

* Individuals served by nonprofits in your county, by multiplying the total population of **your county** by 33% (.33).
* Individuals in the nonprofit workforce in your county, by, multiplying the total number of individuals **in your county’s** civilian labor force by 15% (.15)

1. **Tell Your Nonprofit Story – And Why You Deserve Remaining ARPA Funds**
2. Invite your elected official to your location or to your next event. Let them experience the joy that is you!
3. Talk about the number of individuals *you* serve, number of individuals *you* employ, and the number of volunteers who help you out.
4. If you are an organization with a budget of under $500,000 or $1 Million, talk about how much you do with limited dollars.
5. 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.

1. **Personalize to your own organization and community.**
2. ***What needs are your clients experiencing?*** (Use both qualitative and quantitative data.)
3. ***How are you addressing those needs?*** (Short program/short project descriptions).
4. ***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 fall under the ARPA 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.

**The following national statistics that may support your description of employment challenges. Please note: The National Council of Nonprofits is in the process of calculating the results of their 2023 Workforce Shortage Study. We will be getting Pennsylvania-specific data – and will update this section as soon as that information is available. In the meantime, the following can be used to make an impact statement.**

Preliminary data from the 2023 Nonprofit Workforce Survey show the following for Pennsylvania’s nonprofits:

* + - 33.3% reported vacancy rates between 0 - 9%.
    - 33.3% reported vacancy rates between 10% - 19%.
    - 26.7% reported vacancies between 20 – 29%.
    - 6.7% reported vacancies greater than 30%.

Major contributors included: salary competition (72.8%) and challenges caused by government grants/contracts (20.6%). Since the publication of a 2021 report, according to the National Council of Nonprofits, *governments at all levels have taken some action to alleviate the workforce shortage. However. the crisis continues to grow. Now is the time for public officials to advance policy solutions.*

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**

**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]**

**XYZ COUNTY may lose $XX MILLION IN AVAILABLE ARPA FUNDING: HERE’S ONE WAY to KEEP IT**

Nonprofits, like XYZ Organization, partner with state and local government to ensure that the needs of vulnerable Pennsylvanians are met. The impact of the pandemic and recent inflation continues to drive your friends and neighbors to nonprofits to assist in meeting basic and other needs. The demand for XYZ Organization’s services has increased by X% We have joined the other # nonprofits in [NAME YOUR COUNTY] (Look up the [**number of nonprofits in your county**](https://pano.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Counties_with_nonprofits.xls)).

Nonprofits have stepped up to the plate to meet this increased demand, and at great cost to ourselves. For example, the pandemic and recent inflation has cost XYZ Organization over $XXX,XXX.

Yet [$XX,XXX,XXX] of ARPA funds, designated for our local community have not yet reached local nonprofit organizations . 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. Currently, X nonprofits in [NAME YOUR COUNTY] employ XX,XXX workers, providing services to XXX individuals. 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)

One way to keep locally-designated ARPA dollars in our community is for $XX,XXX to be allocated to [YOUR ORGANIZATION] so we can continue providing critical services to our community.

Join XYZ Organization in contacting our [mayor, county commissioners] to ask that they authorize the disbursement of the billions of unspent ARPA dollars, prioritizing nonprofits as funding recipients. Do so now before the federal government requires the return of unexpended ARPA funds.

###

About [Your Nonprofit]

[Add a description of your organization here]

**Sample Email to Send to 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:** **PLEASE FUND [YOUR ORGANIZATION] w. $XX,XXX in ARPA FUNDS – SO OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY DOESN’T LOSE THIS CRITICAL RESOURCE**

**Message:**

[$XX,XXX,XXX] of ARPA funds, designated for our local community have not yet reached local nonprofit organizations . If services offered by nonprofits are forced to close, our growing community needs will have to be met by government.

One way to keep locally-designated ARPA dollars in our community is for $XX,XXX to be allocated to [YOUR ORGANIZATION] so we can continue providing critical services to our community.

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 are social and economic drivers in Pennsylvania. Currently, X nonprofits in [NAME YOUR COUNTY] employ XX,XXX workers, providing services to XXX individuals. 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.

The staff and board of [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME] 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:** [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME] Needs ($XXX,XXX) in ARPA Relief – And Would Keep These Dollars in Our Local Community

**Message:**

Dear [enter name],

My name is [first name]. [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME] provides me and my family with [services]. My neighbors, friends, family, and community count on [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME]’s services.

I depend on [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME].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. I don’t want these dollars to be given back to the federal government; as a resident of XYZ County, the best use of ARPA dollars would be to fund [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME].

Thank you.

**Sample Alert to Send to Your Supporters and Other Nonprofits in Your Community if you convince your local official to have a/another 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. #ARPA4[XYZ]County

The need for our programs has grown XX% during the pandemic. ARPA funding will ensure we can continue to help our clients. #ARPA4[XYZ]County

$XX,XXX,XXX of ARPA funds have yet to be given out in XYZ County. [YOUR ORGNANIZATION] needs $XXX,XXX in ARPA funding NOW. #ARPA4[XYZ]County

@commissioner OR @mayor Prioritize XYZ County Nonprofits as ARPA recipients. #ARPA4[X]County

@commissioner OR @mayor ARPA funds will help [YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME] serve our community. Make sure we’re prioritized as an ARPA recipient! #ARPA4[XYZ]County

[YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME]and other nonprofits are social and economic drivers. XYZ County nonprofits have a workforce of over XX,XXX employees, and serve XXX,XXX county residents. #ARPA4[XYZ]County

**FACEBOOK**

Did you know that XYZ County still has $XX,XXX,XXX 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

@commissioner OR @mayor, please prioritize [YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME] and XYZ County’s nonprofit community for ARPA funding!

**Additional Resources**

**Where to Find Your Local Elected Officials:**

* [County Commissioners, Mayor, City Council Members](http://munstats.pa.gov/Public/FindMunicipality.aspx)

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

* [**Number of nonprofits in your county**](https://pano.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Counties_with_nonprofits.xls)**.**

**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

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