

Leveraging ARPA Funds for Massachusetts Communities

THE OPPORTUNITY

A powerful opportunity for community-led equity.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is pouring billions in federal COVID recovery aid into Massachusetts municipalities over the next four years. It's an unprecedented chance for town officials and residents to guide their own transformation in partnership and from a position of trust and accountability, **improving systemic equity for marginalized groups.**

THE EQUITY IMPERATIVE

Lived experience. Lasting insight.

Equitable processes create the conditions for more **equitable outcomes**. By engaging the residents who have true insight into the pandemic's impact on their communities, and drawing on their history of innovation and collaboration, ARPA should center the **firsthand experience** of those most often left behind.

THE URGENCY

Today's act is tomorrow's impact.

Systemic change doesn't happen overnight, which is why ARPA allows until 2024 to allocate funds and 2026 to implement projects. While municipalities should engage residents at all points in the process, **now is the time to invest in building relationships**, particularly in historically underserved and marginalized communities.

THE FLEXIBILITY

Flexible funds. Endless ARPAtunties.

There are just a few limits on spending – to make sure funds have **direct impact on those that need it the most** –

and there's no minimum dollar amount for projects. ARPA regulations were designed to be flexible, so that **municipalities can get creative** about addressing the needs that exist within their own communities.

THE REALITY

Real change. Right now.

ARPA isn't an unattainable dream for marginalized communities – it's here, and it's happening across the Commonwealth. We offer both direct consulting services and self-guided resources and tools.

Municipalities across the Commonwealth are implementing community-engaged decision-making processes in innovative and unique ways:

- In **Chelsea**, a 20-member resident committee created an allocation plan that prioritized six areas and \$15 million in funding.
- The **City of Lynn** is rethinking ways to make community ARPA proposals more accessible. Not only were ARPA project suggestions opened to nonprofit and governmental groups, but the city also encouraged individual residents (including young people) to submit proposal suggestions via an easy-to-complete, one-page form.
- In **Worcester**, the city – in partnership with local coalition members – launched a resident advisory committee to provide feedback on the city's request for proposal process. Participation was open to all residents through an application process, with the advisory committee making recommendations for the allocation of \$50 million.
- In Western Massachusetts, the city of **Holyoke** identified a gap in engaging local and small businesses. The city developed a comprehensive survey and did door-to-door outreach to more than 100 local businesses to better understand how ARPA dollars can be leveraged to help the local economy.
- Leaders in the **Berkshires** are coming together to develop a clearinghouse to enhance the ability of nonprofits, municipalities, schools, and businesses to leverage and coordinate ARPA funding. The clearinghouse will facilitate training, technical assistance, grant-writing resources, and resources that directly connect potential applicants to grant opportunities available in the region.

And **many municipalities have committed to more equitable and accessible processes**, such as ensuring that meetings and documents are offered in multiple languages and working with community-based organizations to provide support and guidance to organizations applying for funding. HRiA has already supported Massachusetts towns and cities in implementing millions of dollars for ARPA-funded programs, from infrastructure needs to individual aid.

These are just a few examples of how many communities are engaging residents in innovative ways at different points throughout ARPA fund distribution processes.

Visit us at hria.org/ARPA or contact **Ben Wood** or **Erika Gaitan** at ARPA@hria.org.