




Conor Baldwin
Chief Financial Officer

Brendan Flynn
ARPA Finance Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 

FROM: Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer

CC: Brendan Flynn, ARPA Finance Manager

DATE: January 17, 2023

SUBJECT: **MOTION RESPONSE** – 11/01/2022 - **C. Robinson** - Req. City Mgr. Provide Schedule of Upcoming Community Information Sessions Regarding Accessing ARPA Funding.

MOTION RESPONSE – 1/03/2023 - **W. Jenness** - Req. City Mgr. Provide Report on Timeline and Process for Organizations Looking to Apply for ARPA Funding

Background: The position of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Finance Manager was filled in February 2022, and had made a presentation to the Finance Subcommittee in March for an outline of an ARPA plan. Registered speakers in attendance demonstrated that the public was not entirely supportive of this initial plan, and requested the City to engage in a renewed level of public dialog, in order to get fresh input on how best utilize ARPA funding. In response, during the months of May and June the city hosted several public input sessions, meetings with neighborhood groups, and the Non-Profit Alliance of Lowell. A revised online survey was also posted to the City's website. The result of this effort was a collection of new ideas, and areas of focus, from nearly 400 people. A summary of this public input was provided to the City Council in September, with the formal ARPA plan being presented to the City Council in October.

Of the many initiatives that are part of the ARPA plan, there are roughly 10 to 15 programs which are intended to provide ARPA funds directly to area residents, non-profits, and/or small businesses. Each of these direct-funding programs are somewhat unique, and address different aspects of the ARPA legislation, and in some cases—have different requirements for eligibility. Given this disparity, the ARPA Finance Team is crafting guidelines that are specific to each direct funding opportunity, ensuring proper eligibility requirements are managed in accordance with the ARPA legislation.

As an example, some funding opportunities may come in the form of one-time, direct reimbursements for eligible expenses that applicants may have already incurred, where other programs will be grants to help local small businesses and area non-profits continue to recover from the pandemic. Alternatively, other funding opportunities will be multi-year, construction projects which will require the assistance of subcontractors and consultants, as well as additional community input, in order to complete the project .



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The city plans to announce the first release of these funding opportunities in February 2023, with others to become available over the next several months thereafter. As programs become available, they will be announced on the City’s website, and broadcast through other appropriate channels as well. All applications will be available to be completed on-line, through the city’s website. Efforts will be made to provide all ARPA funding applications in multiple languages (i.e. Spanish, Khmer, and Portuguese).

One of the first priorities of the Administration is the release of funding under the City Council priority area of “social impact funding” from the revised budget presented to the Council in October. As funding opportunities are announced, so too will be meetings that potential applicants can attend and talk with ARPA team members about the application process and eligibility requirements. ARPA staff will also be available to answer questions and assist any applicant (during regular office hours) over the phone, or in person as well, once applications are announced and open.

In preparation for the release of federal funding, the finance department has been reviewing regulations regarding the disbursement and use of ARPA funds and compiling information regarding grant compliance documentation, procurement specifications, and other necessary paperwork to promote accountability of ARPA funds. ARPA funds are subject to oversight by certain state and federal agencies, including the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General (“OIG”).

Government entities, like Lowell, that have received ARPA funding are able to award grants to third parties under the federal regulations. To facilitate grant management, the finance department has been working to set clear expectations for grant programs in order include this language in grant awards. The ARPA Finance Team is further working to develop evidence-based methods of measuring performance and project goals to make sure that grantees meet those expectations. By regularly monitoring key performance indicators and tying grant payments to measurable standards, the Administration will be able to determine which projects are working well and which require additional attention. Additionally, establishing and maintaining open communication with grantees regarding grant requirements and expectations will help lead to successful project completion.

Please let me know if you have any questions on this matter.