

# ARPA Questions and Answers

If you have additional questions, please send them by email to the Mayor's Office at [mayor@northamptonma.gov](mailto:mayor@northamptonma.gov). Check back periodically as this document will be updated to include new questions and answers.

Please see our new Technical Support section at the bottom of this document.

## 1. Questions regarding program details and structure

### 1.1

**Q: What is the total amount of funds available for applicants to apply for?**

A: The total amount of the ARPA Community Recovery Projects fund is \$4 million. All funding for projects will come out of this total amount and successful applicants will receive a portion of these funds based on the needs of their project.

### 1.2

**Q: I saw in the RFP that reimbursement is based upon proof of payment. When will the check come? What is the reimbursement schedule?**

A: Applicants who are chosen for funding will be required to submit proof of payment documents including invoices, receipts, etc. to the city on a quarterly basis. Upon receiving this information, the city will reimburse the amount from that quarter.

### 1.3

**Q: Our project will include large upfront costs. Is there the possibility of receiving funds upfront rather than on a reimbursement basis?**

A: The City can discuss a modified payment schedule with applicants who are chosen for funding in cases where the project could not proceed on the quarterly reimbursement schedule. Applicants who need an adjusted payment schedule should indicate this in their application and provide the reasons for that need.

### 1.4

**Q: What is the length of time for projects? How many years can the project go for?**

A: The projects period begins in January of 2023 and will last until June 30, 2026. During this time, projects which are chosen for funding will receive ARPA funds. Projects cannot receive any additional ARPA funding after the projects period ends on June 30, 2026. Projects must either be completed OR be entirely supported by funding other than ARPA funds by June 30, 2026. Projects do not have to last the entire projects period. Projects may wrap up at any time during the projects period.

### 1.5

**Q: I saw in the guidance that detailed budgets are required. My idea for a project is still in the development stage. Will a budget be required with my application?**

A: Yes, a budget narrative and a line-item budget in as much detail as possible is a requirement for applications. This information is needed in order for the Commission to review the proposed project and determine eligibility by looking at how funds will be spent. Applicants are reminded that there are two budget templates - one is for projects up to \$10,000 and the other is for projects requesting more than \$10,000 of ARPA funding. Please use the template which corresponds to the amount of funding you are requesting.

1.6

**Q: The program guidelines say that quotes are required from multiple vendors for expenses over \$1,000. Is that a requirement for every applicant?**

A: The requirement to submit multiple quotes applies to projects which are chosen for funding. It is part of the program guidance which tells applicants how the program will be structured after funds have been awarded. Applicants do not need to include this information in their applications. It will not be required until after projects have been selected for funding and the projects period has begun. Applicants who are selected for funding will submit this information with their quarterly spending reports. The City will require documentation of quotes from at least three vendors who typically provide the goods or service being procured for purchases of \$10,000 or more. Documenting multiple quotes for purchases over \$1,000 is strongly recommended for applicants to avoid potential delays in reimbursement.

1.7

**Q: Do you have a list of prior successful applications that you can share to help guide us in making a valid grant application?**

A: Since the funds that the City received from the federal government are one-time COVID recovery funds, this is a brand new program. As this is the first time the city has offered a program like this, the city does not have any prior applications to share. Applicants are advised to attend one of the information sessions regarding these funds. The schedule can be found under the Information Sessions section at:

<https://www.northamptonma.gov/ARPA>

Questions and answers from each session will also be posted in this document for applicants to review. Additional questions may be asked at the information sessions or sent by email to [mayor@northamptonma.gov](mailto:mayor@northamptonma.gov).

1.8

**Q: The ARPA grant is open to nonprofits, but it says that small businesses with revenues over \$1 million are not eligible. Does this also apply to nonprofits?**

A: Nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for this funding regardless of their revenues. Businesses, however, must be categorized as a small business in order to be considered for funding under this program. This program defines a small business as having fewer than 100 employees in all locations and branches combined AND earning

yearly revenues less than \$1 million.

1.9

**Q: Does my organization need 501c3 status to be considered a nonprofit under this program?**

A: Yes, since these are federal funds, your organization needs 501(c) status in order to be considered a nonprofit under this program and to be eligible to apply as a nonprofit organization. Small businesses and individuals are also eligible to apply for these funds.

1.10

**Q: This program says funds are project-based. Can you explain what constitutes a project?**

A: The Treasury defines a project as including “only activities related to a common purpose”. Applicants should identify the purpose and goals of their project and structure their project accordingly. All projects must respond to a negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Projects should also align with the program goals of supporting recovery, reconnecting community, or building resilience.

1.11

**Q: My tenant is a nonprofit organization looking to make improvements to their space in my building. Who should apply for these funds? Should I apply as the landlord or should my tenants apply as a nonprofit?**

A: The applicant should be the entity which will be managing the funds. In this case, both would be eligible to apply and can decide to designate one as the applicant and the other as a partner. If a tenant is looking to make improvements to a rental space, they MUST have approval from the landlord and should include a signed letter of approval with their application.

1.12

**Q: The requirements to be considered an eligible small business under this program state that total revenues must be less than \$1 million per year. Is that measured before the pandemic or after? Some businesses have faced significant losses because of the pandemic.**

A: For this program, please use your most recent financial information.

1.13

**Q: When do you expect awards to be announced? What is the timeline?**

A: As this is a brand new program and there is no way of knowing how many applications will be received, we cannot state an exact timeline. The current expected timeline is as follows: Applications are due October 14th. The ARPA Commission will then review proposals and send recommendations to the Mayor in December. The Mayor will then review the recommended projects and will announce awards by the end of the year. At this point, successful applicants will be notified. The projects period will begin in early 2023. Any significant delays in the timeline will be posted on the ARPA

webpage. If there are no updates, please assume the process is following the expected timeline.

**1.14**

**Q: I am looking to hire a general contractor for this project. Do I need to submit three quotes with my application?**

A: In order to reduce the burden of applying for funds, applicants may base their project budget on one quote or estimate received by a contractor that is qualified to perform the work. That should provide enough information to create a reasonable project budget. After the application period, if funds are awarded to the project, the applicant would then be required to seek quotes from at least two other qualified contractors to ensure costs are reasonable. The award amount will be based on the lowest cost estimate received.

**1.15**

**Q: How often will reimbursements be awarded?**

A: Reimbursements will be on a quarterly basis. If applicants need an altered payment schedule because the project cannot proceed otherwise, the applicant should indicate this in their application.

**1.16**

**Q: Where should applicants indicate they will need an altered payment schedule?**

A: The budget section would be a good place to include this information.

**1.17**

**Q: If two people are applying for one program, should they apply together or separately?**

A: Since this program is project-based, both individuals should apply together and submit one application for the project. One person should be designated as the main applicant and the other should be mentioned as a partner in the application. Please keep in mind the main applicant should be the one who will be responsible for managing project funds.

**1.18**

**Q: If a project receives funding, can funds be reallocated within the project budget after submission and before the contract is finalized?**

A: Yes, if necessary, funds can be moved around within the project as long as the amount doesn't exceed the total award amount and as long as it doesn't impair the ability to implement the project or reach the project's goals. In this case, awardees may be asked to submit a revised budget.

**1.19**

**Q: Our project will be requesting \$10,000. Should we use the large or small application?**

A: Any applicant requesting up to \$10,000 in funding may use the small project application. However, if an applicant would prefer to use the large project application in order to offer more detailed information about their project, they may do so. Any projects over \$10,000 (\$10,001 and above) must use the large project application.

1.20

**Q: Can we apply for both a large project and a small project?**

A: There is currently no restriction on the number of applications an applicant may submit. However, please keep in mind there may be a lot of competition for these funds.

1.21

**Q: In the document about the ARPA program, it mentions three bids for purchases over \$10,000. Are these bids needed only after the grant has been awarded? Or is it part of the application process?**

A: The city will not need this until AFTER awards are announced and the projects period has started. For purchases of goods or services over \$10,000, documentation of at least three written quotes will be required with submission of payment documentation.

1.22

**Q: Can we purchase used equipment for our project?**

A: Yes, if equipment is necessary for your project, it may be purchased used. Awardees should ensure the equipment is in good working condition and the price is reasonable for the condition of the equipment.

1.23

**Q: Do projects have to continue until 2026 or can they end before the deadline?**

A: The ARPA projects period ends June 30, 2026. Projects may conclude at any time before that date. It is encouraged that all projects wrap up or become self-sustaining before that date as ARPA funds will not be distributed after June 30, 2026.

1.24

**Q: What is the largest amount of funding we can ask for? Is there a cap on project awards?**

A: There is no cap on the amount of funding that can be requested. However, applicants should keep in mind that the total amount of funding available for this program is \$4 million when they are considering the needs of their project.

1.25

**Q: Can we apply for two grants?**

A: There is no restriction on the number of applications that each applicant can submit.

1.26

**Q: Is there any possibility of an extension to the submission deadline?**

A: We are not able to extend the deadline for project submissions as that would delay the review process. The Mayor's goal is to announce awards by the end of the year or early 2023 at the latest.

**1.27**

**Q: If we're requesting funding for multiple years, do you want to see a separate budget for each year or the total multi-year project budget?**

A: For the project budget, we would suggest providing as much information as you can at this time to aid in the review process and avoid potential delays resulting from the city needing to reach out for more information. The budget template asks for total project costs broken down by item and by source for the entire length of the project (all years combined). For projects that span multiple years, please also include budgets broken down by year. The budget narrative section would be an ideal place to include this information.

**1.28**

**Q: Can you please clarify what financial documents are required for the ARPA grant? Am I correct in that they want me to submit all of the information mentioned in the "optional" budget even though it is not referenced in the narrative?**

A: Project submissions should submit a project budget broken down by item and funding source (please refer to the templates available on the website to see what information is required) as well as a brief budget narrative. The budget narrative is an opportunity to explain in words how the funds will be used and any other relevant information about the financial aspects of your project. Our office suggests including all information requested in the budget templates in order to make sure the Commission has the information needed to consider the project proposal. Providing information up front will greatly limit potential delays in the review process that may result from requesting additional information about the submitting organization and will make it easier to review each submission. The purpose of the budget template is to guide applicants towards providing the information that is necessary for this submission. The template is designed to take the guess work out of the budget section for those who may be less familiar with applying for funding. The reason it is optional is because some organizations may choose to create their own budget documents or may have them on hand already, but we expect that they will provide the same information whether they use our format or their own.

**1.29**

**Q: Our organization will be using a fiscal sponsor. We will include a letter of endorsement and tax determination. Do you need anything else at this time?**

A: Those two documents should be sufficient for the application review period. Our goal is to make sure you have the support of the fiscal sponsor. We will reach out if we need additional information after the initial review. However, if you have additional relevant documents or information available, it is encouraged that you provide it with your submission. As with any partner organization, landlord, or other entity collaborating with you on your project, if you will be working with a fiscal sponsor, please clearly define their role in your submission.

## **2. Questions regarding eligibility**

### **2.1**

**Q: Can this grant be used for PPE to protect older adults, their family members and caregivers?**

A: Yes, PPE and other measures which prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community are eligible expenses under this program. This program is intended to help our community recover from the negative health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **2.2**

**Q: Which would be a more successful application: purchasing equipment to improve virtual access to arts and performances, improving physical spaces to expand access, or funds to support new arts programming?**

A: All of the above could be eligible under this program. Applicants are reminded that competitive applications will be ones that help the community recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Applicants may structure their project as they see fit to best serve the community.

### **2.3**

**Q: Can this grant be used to fund an Assistant Director position?**

A: Yes, staffing is an eligible expense, however, please keep in mind that these are one-time funds and cannot support costs after the projects period ends on June 30, 2026. If the project or expenses will last beyond the projects period, applicants should indicate in their application how they intend to sustain their project after ARPA funding is no longer available.

### **2.4**

**Q: Will the City help older adults, caregivers, and family members acquire test kits now that they are not available from the government?**

A: COVID testing and measures for preventing the spread of COVID are eligible under this program. However, questions regarding services provided by the City may be better directed towards Northampton's Health and Human Services Department who can advise community members of the options available for accessing COVID testing. We have confirmed that both the Northampton Health and Human Services Department and the Northampton Senior Services Department have test kits available (as of September 15, 2022) for free distribution to the public.

2.5

**Q: Would these funds be applicable to create a makerspace for low-income or houseless individuals to gain access to creative spaces and vocational instruction?**

A: Assistance for and creating programs to benefit houseless, low-income and certain other populations who experienced negative impacts of the pandemic is an eligible expense under this program.

2.6

**Q: A downtown business owner asked about using these funds for downtown economic development and to encourage and support entrepreneurial activities such as rent subsidies, business assistance, incentives to open businesses downtown, etc.**

A: The individual was referred to the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Northampton Association to discuss ongoing efforts and whether a concrete project could be developed out of these ideas. The Commission cannot provide conceptual guidance or specific design input for potential projects in order to remain impartial evaluators of all projects.

2.7

**Q: Can these funds be used for small businesses to cover payroll costs, rent costs, or other bills they are struggling to meet because of the pandemic?**

A: Assistance to small businesses is eligible under this program, however, this program is intended to support forward-looking projects which benefit the Northampton community as a whole. Competitive projects will support recovery, reconnect community, and build resilience for the future. Applicants should consider how to structure their project's goals and initiatives to align with one or more of these program goals. While economic losses continue to be an impact of the pandemic, competitive proposals will address recovery and propose new ideas to build resilience in case of losses in the future.

2.8

**Q: Could these funds be used for outdoor improvements such as murals or art installations and/or the creation of a pocket park?**

A: Projects must be related to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Activities such as this could potentially be eligible to the extent that they are designed to address a negative health or economic impact caused by the pandemic.

## 2.9

### **Q: Is there a restriction on these funds for construction and building costs?**

A: There is no restriction for construction costs as long as the project meets the program goals and the requirement of responding to a negative health or economic impact of the pandemic. The federal guidelines state, “recipients can use funds for capital expenditures that support an eligible COVID-19 public health or economic response”.

## 2.10

### **Q: Could you please elaborate on the eligibility requirements?**

A: The purpose of ARPA Community Recovery funds are to help the Northampton community recover from the negative health impacts of COVID and the negative economic impacts resulting from the pandemic. The way this program is framed, there are three goals applicants should use to consider their project - support recovery, reconnect community, and build resilience. This program encourages applicants to design projects which align with these goals. The eligibility criteria focuses on the intended impact that the project itself will have on our community as we try to assist in recovering from all aspects of the COVID health emergency.

## 2.11

### **Q: What does “recovery” and “resilience” mean to the Commission?**

A: The goal of “recovery” is to help people recover from the damaging impacts of the pandemic as quickly as possible. Recognizing that the negative impacts of the pandemic continue and may last for some time, building “resilience” is intended to capture projects which are aimed at helping our community become more resistant to negative impacts of COVID, or other similar events in the future, and be able to recover faster.

## 2.12

### **Q: Can we propose small renovations and/or HVAC system upgrades to improve facilities? Do these proposed projects meet the eligibility requirements?**

A: The only eligibility criteria for this funding opportunity is that the project must respond to a negative health impact of COVID or a negative economic impact of COVID. HVAC improvements could be considered a response to the negative health impacts of COVID. The goals of this program are to support recovery, reconnect community, and build resilience. Please consider these goals as you prepare your project submission.

## Technical Support

1.

**Q: Can you upload the application as a PDF to allow applicants to download the questions in advance or to share the questions with collaborators?**

A: Our office requires that all applicants submit their applications via the form on the website and not as a PDF or other document. We would suggest groups who are working collaboratively either copy/paste the questions into a word or google doc to share with their collaborators or save the form as a PDF. It is possible to save the form as a PDF by choosing "print" from the browser options while in the form and choose "save as PDF" under printer destination from the print screen. If additional support is needed with the form, please call our office at 587-1249 or send us an email and we will do our best to help.

2.

**Q: The online form did not save my progress.**

A: In order to save progress in the online submission form, applicants must first be logged in to their account (if you do not have an account, please go to the sign-in page and choose "create account"). Once you are logged in, you may choose the "save progress" button to save your work at any time. Make sure to save your progress before exiting the page or stepping away from your computer. In order to resume work at a later time, please make sure you are logged in before entering the form. However, our office strongly recommends working from a separate document and saving any progress you have made to your personal computer (such as in a word or google doc) before entering your responses into the form. That will greatly reduce the risk of losing your progress.