Cobb County

American Rescue Plan Act

Project Submission

Application FAQs

June 6, 2022

Public Project Submission Application FAQs

What is ARPA and why is the County involved with it?

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The $1.9 trillion economic relief package delivers aid to American states, counties, and cities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts "on the economy, public health, State and local governments, individuals, and businesses."

Cobb County is receiving $147.6M in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in two installments. The first installment was received in May 2021, and the second installment is anticipated mid-2022. Funding must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026.

For more information on ARPA please see: https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds.

What can Cobb County's ARPA funding be used for?

Cobb County selected specific priorities that align with ARPA guidelines. Projects must align with at least one of the five priority areas and at least one subtopic associated with the chosen priority area. Please see the tables below for a description of Cobb County's priority areas and subtopics.

Please note, some subtopics are open only to County Government applicants. These subtopics are indicated in the chart below with asterisks.

For more information about eligible uses of ARPA funds according to the Department of Treasury please see: https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds.

Priority Area 1: Community Health
To enhance mental, physical, and behavioral healthcare services.

Subtopic	Purpose	Funding Allocation (USD)
1.1 Mental Health	Funding that addresses mental health and the provision of mental health services for the public, including services for seniors and youth	$12,072,000
1.2 Public Health Disparities	Funding that addresses public health particularly for underserved communities	$7,564,000
1.3 Substance Abuse	Funding that addresses substance abuse prevention, rehabilitation, and/or community education	$3,637,000
1.4 Healthcare Capacity	Funding that addresses access and availability of healthcare	$2,128,000
1.5 COVID-19 Mitigation	Funding for ongoing efforts to reduce transmission of COVID-19	$310,000
	Total:	**$25,711,000**

Priority Area 2: Support Services
To enhance programming and services for vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community

Subtopic	Purpose	Funding Allocation (USD)

2.1 Affordable Housing	Funding that addresses the supply and availability of affordable housing in Cobb County	$13,787,000
2.2 Homelessness	Funding that addresses services for the homeless population and underlying factors contributing to housing insecurity	$4,604,000
2.3 Rental and Mortgage Assistance	Funding to address either targeted rental or mortgage assistance	$2,683,000
2.4 Food Security	Funding to provide food options for vulnerable residents	$2,225,000
	Total:	**$23,299,000**

Priority Area 3: Economic Development		
To aid economic recovery through the business sector and workforce opportunities		
Subtopic	**Purpose**	**Funding Allocation (USD)**
3.1 Workforce Development	Funding will address training, skills development, placement, and other measures to increase labor participation	$12,343,000
3.2 Small and Minority-Owned Business	Funding to address the negative economic impacts to small and minority-owned businesses that have been hardest hit by the pandemic	$5,765,000
3.3 Employee Retention	Funding to address talent and retention for businesses and organizations	$2,786,000
3.4 Hospitality & Tourism	Funding to address the negative economic impacts to the hotel and tourism businesses impacted by the pandemic	$1,548,000
	Total:	**$22,442,000**

Priority Area 4: County Infrastructure		
To enhance physical and/or structural County capacity to meet operational responsibilities		
Subtopic	**Purpose**	**Funding Allocation (USD)**
4.1 County Facilities*	Funding to keep Cobb County facilities functional and safe for residents and County employees in light of the pandemic	$7,332,000
4.2 Stormwater*	Funding to address stormwater infrastructure maintenance and upgrades	$7,081,000
4.3 Broadband & Digital Equity	Funding to address the accessibility, affordability, and quality of broadband services, particular for residents who are experiencing a digital divide in access or services	$4,933,000
	Total:	**$19,346,000**

Priority Area 5: Public Safety		
To address areas of need to keep Cobb County residents safe		
Subtopic	**Purpose**	**Funding Allocation (USD)**
5.1 Mental Health Response*	Funding to address mental health-oriented emergency response capabilities, e.g., increased scope of services for Cobb Partnership for Assistance, Treatment, and Health (PATH) team or other mental health response unit	$8,158,000
5.2 Court Backlog*	Funding to address the backlog in the County courts resulting from the pandemic, in order to enable them to handle cases safely and in a timely manner	$3,656,000
5.3 Public Safety Hiring, Retention & Staffing*	Funding to address the current and future pipeline of Cobb County's public safety workers	$3,366,000
5.4 First Response*	Funding to address the increased demands of first responders to meet Cobb County's emergency response due to the pandemic	$2,051,000
	Total:	**$17,231,000**

*Indicates subtopics which are open only to County Government applicants

How can I access the application?
The application can be accessed online at www.cobbcounty.org/ARPA. Paper applications are also available from the Cobb County Deputy County Manager's Office at 100 Cherokee St, Ste 310 Marietta, GA 30090.

Who can submit project applications? Who can apply for Cobb County ARPA funding?
There are no restrictions on who can submit project applications. Organizations capable of implementing their proposed ideas will be prioritized. If an applicant is unable to execute on their idea, the applicant will not receive ARPA funding directly; however, strong project ideas may be considered for a process to identify entities capable of executing the project.

What are the minimum requirements for project submissions?
- Projects must serve Cobb County and its residents
- Projects submitted must align with at least one of the five priority areas and at least one subtopic associated with the chosen priority area.
- Public submissions from organizations outside of the Cobb County government will only be considered for Economic Development, Support Services, Community Health, or Broadband & Digital Equity funding
- Projects must support communities impacted or disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, please see question 3.3.
- Projects should seek to foster equity in their project plans by addressing underserved populations as defined by ARPA. Projects that address populations that do not fall into the

defined underserved populations categories should explain why the target population was chosen.

How were the priority areas chosen?
To determine how best to spend its ARPA allocation, the County designed a process to gather diverse perspectives from the community on County needs and solutions. This included surveys, interviews, and workshops with community members, small business owners, non-profit organizations, the private sector, and government representatives. These inputs were analyzed to identify topics and subtopics, resulting in the five priority areas and coinciding subtopics referenced in the application.

Why are organizations outside of the County government only allowed to submit proposals for certain subtopics?
Because County Infrastructure and Public Safety are managed primarily by County government organizations, Cobb County leadership has decided to limit project applications for some of the subtopics under those two priority areas.

Members of the public are encouraged to submit applications for all of the listed subtopics **except:**
- 4.1 County Facilities*
- 4.2 Stormwater*
- 5.1 Mental Health Response*
- 5.2 Court Backlog*
- 5.3 Public Safety Hiring, Retention & Staffing*
- 5.4 First Response*

Applicants representing Cobb County government organizations may submit applications for any subtopic or priority area.

What criteria must a project meet to be eligible for ARPA funding according to the U.S. Department of the Treasury?
The U.S. Department of the Treasury has outlined guidance around eligibility in the ARPA Final Rule. Eligible projects must fall into one of the following four categories:

- Public Health and Negative Economic Impacts: In addition to programs and services, the final rule clarifies that recipients may use funds for capital expenditures that support an eligible COVID–19 public health or economic response. For example, recipients may build certain affordable housing, childcare facilities, schools, hospitals, and other projects consistent with the requirements in this final rule and the Supplementary Information. In addition, the final rule presumes that an expanded set of households and communities are ''impacted'' or ''disproportionately impacted'' by the pandemic, thereby allowing recipients to provide responses to a broad set of households and entities without requiring additional analysis. Further, the final rule provides a broader set of enumerated eligible uses available for these communities as part of COVID–19 public health and economic response, including making affordable housing, childcare, and early learning services eligible in all impacted communities and making certain community development and neighborhood revitalization activities eligible for disproportionately impacted communities. Further, the final rule allows for a broader set of uses to restore and support government employment, including hiring

above a recipient's pre-pandemic baseline, providing funds to employees that experienced pay cuts or furloughs, avoiding layoffs, and providing retention incentives.

- Premium Pay: The final rule offers more streamlined options to provide premium pay, by broadening the share of essential workers who can receive premium pay without a written justification while maintaining a focus on lower-income and frontline essential workers.

- Revenue Loss: The final rule offers a standard allowance for revenue loss of up to $10 million, not to exceed a recipient's SLFRF award amount, allowing recipients to select between a standard amount of revenue loss or complete a full revenue loss calculation. Recipients that select the standard allowance may use that amount for government services.

- Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure: The final rule significantly broadens eligible broadband infrastructure investments to address challenges with broadband access, affordability, and reliability, and adds additional eligible water and sewer infrastructure investments, including a broad range of lead remediation and stormwater management projects.

For more information, please see the overview of the final rule here: https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Final-Rule-Overview.pdf.

What are some examples of eligible application ideas?
Some examples of eligible projects that organizations could carry out to assist households include, but are not limited to:
- Food Assistance
- Rent, Mortgage, or Utility Assistance
- Counseling and Legal Aid to prevent eviction or homelessness
- Cash Assistance
- Emergency Assistance for burials, home repairs, weatherization, or other needs
- Internet access or digital literacy assistance
- Job training to address negative economic or public health impacts experienced due to a worker's occupation or level of training.

Some examples of eligible assistance to small business and non-profits include, but are not limited to:
- Loans or grants to mitigate financial hardship such as declines in revenues or impacts of periods of business closure (ex. supporting payroll and benefits costs, costs to retain employees, mortgage, rent, or utilities costs, and other operating costs)
- Loans, grants, or in-kind assistance to implement COVID-19 prevention or mitigation tactics, such as physical plant changes to enable social distancing, enhanced cleaning efforts, barriers or partitions, or COVID-19 vaccination, testing, or contact tracing programs
- Technical assistance, counseling, or other services to assist with business planning needs

What are examples of ineligible application ideas?
Examples of ineligible projects include, but are not limited to:
- Funding for projects not related to impacts of COVID-19
- Funding for a single individual household

- Funding for a single individual business

How will applications be scored and selected?
Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis as they are received and evaluated using the criteria in the table below.

Criteria	Description
Equity	The extent to which a proposed project cultivates the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment
Financial Continuity	The extent to which a proposed project avoids imposing operating/maintenance costs on Cobb County, beyond ARPA grant funding.
Impact	The extent of the benefits the proposed project will demonstrate to Cobb County residents and the community
Leverage	The extent to which a proposed project can demonstrate accessing other sources of funding to maximize benefits of County ARPA dollars
Risk Mitigation	The extent to which a proposed project anticipates project risk(s) and outlines plans to address risk(s)
Project Budget	The extent to which there is a clear and realistic financial plan for completing the proposed project
Project Plan	The extent to which schedule, feasibility, quality, and scope of the project are clearly described in the project proposal
Key Performance Indicators	The extent to which proposed project success will be measured and reported

Submitted applications will go through an initial review to ensure that the application is complete and meets ARPA eligibility requirements. Reviewed applications will then be evaluated to assess the quality of the application. Finally, applications will be considered by the Cobb County Board of Commissioners. Applicant organizations will also be assessed for general fitness and capability of execution.

The Board will make project funding decisions. Once final approval is received, applicants will be notified and formal agreement processes will be initiated.

Is there a minimum or maximum amount of funding that can be requested?
There is not currently a minimum grant amount. However, applications are limited to the amount of funding available per subtopic (see above), based on the Investment Guidance that the Board of Commissioners approved on April 12, 2022.

How will I be notified once funding decisions have been made and programs have been established?
Applicants will be notified using the contact information provided in the application form. Applications without contact information will not be considered.

Question 1.3 says: "Are you or the organization you represent applying with the intention and ability to execute the activities proposed in this application?" Can you further explain what this means?

Because there are no restrictions on who can submit projects applications, individuals with project ideas who do not have the ability to carry out those ideas are able to apply. Those individuals should answer "no" to question 1.3.
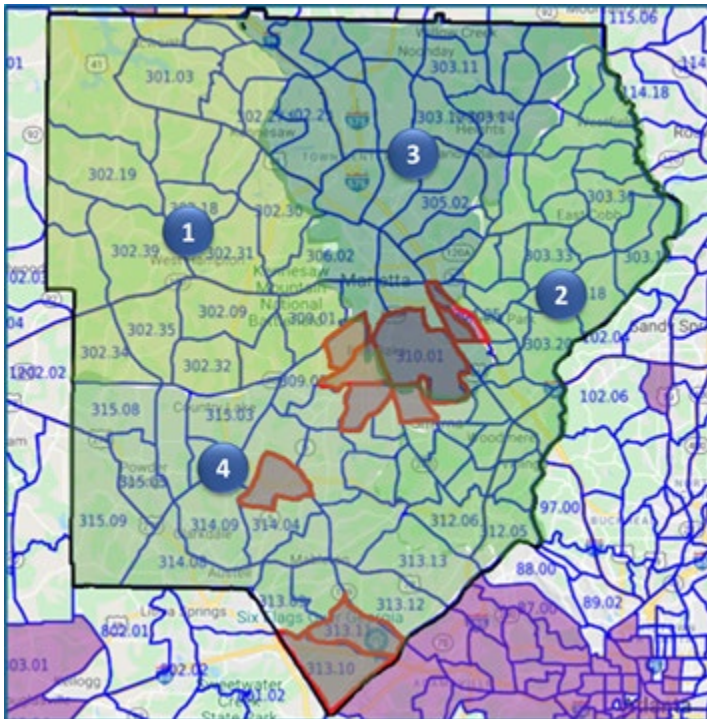
If an applicant is unable to execute on their idea, the applicant will not receive ARPA funding directly. However, if the application is strong enough, it may be considered for a process to identify entities capable of execution.

Applicants representing organizations that can execute on their proposed projects should answer "yes" to question 1.3.

What is a Qualified Census Tract (QCT)?

A census tract is a statistical subdivision of counties that may include a few neighborhoods in a city or, in rural areas, may include several towns. The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines Qualified Census Tracts or QCTs as those which demonstrate a poverty rate of at least 25 percent. Alternatively, 50 percent or more of its households must have incomes below 60 percent of the area's median household income.

Qualified Census Tracts can serve as indicators of areas with increased need.

QCTs in Cobb County can be seen outlined in red in the map above. To see all Qualified Census Tract locations, follow the link found here: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sadda/sadda_qct.html

Once you arrive to the homepage:
1. Select Georgia from the State drop down list.

2. Select Cobb County from the County drop down list. (To qualify for consideration, proposed projects must serve Cobb County, Georgia USA and its residents)
3. Click "Go"

What is considered a low-income or moderate-income household?
ARPA guidelines define a "**low-income household**" as a household with income **at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines** for the size of its household based on the poverty guidelines published most recently by the Department of Health and Human Services; or income **at or below 40 percent of the Area Median Income** for its county and size of household based on data published most recently by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A "**moderate-income household**" is a household with income **at or below 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines** for the size of its household based on poverty guidelines published most recently by the Department of Health and Human Services; or income **at or below 65 percent of the Area Median Income** for its county and size of household based on data published most recently by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The table below lists the upper thresholds for both low- and middle-income households in Cobb County as defined by ARPA.

Cobb County, Georgia Income Thresholds by Household Size (USD)		
Household Size	Low Income Threshold	Middle Income Threshold
1	$24,160	$39,260
2	$32,227	$52,260
3	$40,626	$65,880
4	$49,025	$79,500
5	$57,424	$93,120
6	$65,823	$106,740
7	$74,222	$120,360
8	$82,621	$133,980

What is "scope"?
A scope, often outlined in a Scope of Work (SOW), is a detailed description of the proposed project and all its activities. This includes the project's purpose and objective, what activities will be carried out to achieve them, and a project timeline.

The purpose of the scope is to clearly define what a project will encompass and what it will not. The scope should provide detail on *how* the project will get to the objectives.

What is "equity"?
Treasury encourages counties to use projects to advance shared interests and

promote equitable delivery of government benefits and opportunities to underserved communities, as outlined in Executive Order 13985, On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.

The executive order defines equity as the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

The term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of "equity."

For example:
- *Target population*: Are the populations that you intend to serve through your project part of impacted and/or historically underserved, marginalized, or adversely affected groups?
- *Awareness*: How equal and practical is it for residents/households/businesses to become aware of the services funded by your project?
- *Access and Distribution*: Are there differences in levels of access to the benefits or services of your project across different groups? For example, are there administrative requirements that may result in disparities in the ability for groups to access the benefits or services of your project?
- *Outputs and Outcomes*: Are the intended outcomes of your project focused on closing economic or public health gaps caused by the pandemic or historical circumstances? Do your outputs and outcomes aim to disaggregate progress by equity dimensions (such as race, ethnicity, or income) where relevant?

Incorporating equity into project plans means considering the dimensions above and **prioritizing support for communities with the highest need**.

To learn more about the Biden Administration's definition of equity, please see: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/?msclkid=c92e1121bc1311ec9f6ebe22215e80be.

What are "key performance indicators"?
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), sometimes called "outputs," are data points to measure project impact. They indicate the state of a project's performance. KPIs provide an opportunity for applicants to measure and evaluate their project both during and after the project ends.

For example, measuring and tracking the KPI "600 students enrolled in an early learning program" can provide valuable information about the impact of a project. By defining the KPI with a clear target number ("600 students") and benefit/service ("enrolled in an early learning program"), project evaluators can compare current or actual data to the original KPI and assess how a project is tracking to its goals.

What are "outcomes"?
Outcomes are the intended or desired changes expected to result from a project. Outcomes build off KPIs by explaining the deeper value or change they are intended to bring.

For example, for the KPI "600 students enrolled in an early learning program," the intended outcome may be to measure if the students enrolled in the early learning program improved their reading comprehension test scores. Outcomes may be challenging to measure during the timeline of the project.

What are direct and indirect costs?
Direct costs are expenses that are specifically attributed to the ARPA State Local Fiscal Recovery Funds project implementation. Indirect costs can be general overhead costs and/or administrative expenses indirectly related to project implementation. Indirect costs are usually captured through a percentage of total project costs also known as an indirect rate.

If the applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with Treasury, an organization may use a default indirect rate of 10 percent of the project's modified total direct costs (MTDC). MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward, regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award.

Please note, administrative costs are permitted to be charged as both direct and indirect costs as long as they are accorded consistent treatment per 2 CFR 200.412.

For more information on cost principles, please see: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200#page-top.

What is the deadline for applications?
To be eligible for consideration, applications must be submitted by September 9, 2022.

How do I submit my application?

Applications can be accessed and submitted at www.cobbcounty.org/ARPA

Paper copies may be submitted to the following mailing address:

Cobb County Deputy County Manager's Office
100 Cherokee St, Ste 310
Marietta, GA 30090-7000

Who can I contact with comments or additional questions?
Please send questions about the application process to the county's ARPA mailbox ARPA@cobbcounty.org with the subject line "Project Application Submission Question."

There will also be informational webinars hosted about the application process on June 16, 2022, at 4:30pm EDT and June 27, 2022, at 6:00pm EDT.