

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) – AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) ALLOCATION CITY OF CHESTER

### General questions:

**1. How much has the City of Chester received in ARPA funds?**

The City of Chester has been awarded \$30,357,628 in ARPA funds.

**2. What are eligible uses of ARPA funds?**

The funding must fit into one of the following categories:<sup>1</sup>

- a. Responding to the public health and negative economic impacts of the pandemic, including
  - i. Assistance to households
  - ii. Small businesses
  - iii. Nonprofits
  - iv. Aid for tourism, travel, and hospitality
- b. Providing premium pay to essential workers
- c. Cover revenue loss incurred as a result of the COVID-19 emergency
- d. Address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to the unequal impact of the pandemic<sup>2</sup>
- e. Making necessary investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure

#### Public health projects

- COVID-19 Vaccination
- COVID-19 Testing
- COVID-19 Contact Tracing
- Prevention in Congregate Settings (Nursing Homes, Prisons/Jails, Dense Work Sites, Schools, etc.)
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Medical Expenses (including Alternative Care Facilities)
- Capital Investments or Physical Plant Changes to Public Facilities that respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency
- Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine)
- Payroll Costs for Public Health, Safety, and Other Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19
- Mental Health Services
- Substance Use Services
- Other Public Health Services

#### Negative economic impact projects

- Household Assistance: Food Programs
- Household Assistance: Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Aid
- Household Assistance: Cash Transfers
- Household Assistance: Internet Access Programs
- Household Assistance: Eviction Prevention

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<sup>1</sup> National League of Cities. ARPA Local Relief Frequently Asked Questions. <https://www.nlc.org/covid-19-pandemic-response/american-rescue-plan-act/arpa-local-relief-frequently-asked-questions/#eligible-uses>

<sup>2</sup> UHY Advisors. *What You Need to Know to Get the Most Out of Your American Rescue Plan Act Funds.*

- Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers
- Job Training Assistance (e.g., Sectoral job-training, Subsidized Employment, Employment Supports or Incentives)
- Contributions to UI Trust Funds
- Small Business Economic Assistance (General)
- Aid to Non-profit Organizations
- Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality
- Aid to Other Impacted Industries
- Other Economic Support
- Rehiring Public Sector Staff

Services to disproportionately impacted communities' projects

- Education Assistance: Early Learning
- Education Assistance: Aid to High-Poverty Districts
- Education Assistance: Academic Services
- Education Assistance: Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Services
- Education Assistance: Other
- Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care
- Healthy Childhood Environments: Home Visiting
- Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involved in Child Welfare System
- Healthy Childhood Environments: Other
- Housing Support: Affordable Housing
- Housing Support: Services for Unhoused Persons
- Housing Support: Other Housing Assistance
- Social Determinants of Health: Other
- Social Determinants of Health: Community Health Workers or Benefits Navigators
- Social Determinants of Health: Lead Remediation
- Social Determinants of Health: Community Violence Interventions

Infrastructure projects

- Clean Water: Centralized Wastewater Treatment
- Clean Water: Centralized Wastewater Collection and Conveyance
- Clean Water: Decentralized Wastewater
- Clean Water: Combined Sewer Overflows
- Clean Water: Other Sewer Infrastructure
- Clean Water: Stormwater
- Clean Water: Energy Conservation
- Clean Water: Water Conservation
- Clean Water: Nonpoint Source
- Drinking Water: Treatment
- Drinking Water: Transmission & Distribution
- Drinking Water: Transmission & Distribution: Lead Remediation
- Drinking Water: Source
- Drinking Water: Storage
- Drinking Water: Other Water Infrastructure
- Broadband: "Last Mile" Projects
- Broadband: Other Projects

**3. What is the timeline for spending ARPA funds?**

All funds must be obligated by recipients within the statutory period between March 3, 2021 and December 31, 2024, and expended to cover such obligations by December 31, 2026.<sup>3</sup>

**4. Where can I find more information about ARPA eligible uses and Treasury Guidance?**

More information on the American Rescue Plan Act and U.S. Treasury Guidance can be found using the below links:

- <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>

**5. Are all of the City's ARPA funds allocated?**

As of May 23, 2023 the City has aligned \$28,078,436 million to specific projects or operational uses in the City's ARPA budget. \$2,279,192 is available to fund additional projects or is set aside as reserves for future needs.

**6. What is the City doing to support transparency?**

The City is committed to ensuring transparency for the use of ARPA funds. To ensure transparency, the City is working to create consistent and accessible mechanisms to report out to the community. This may include:

- Posting updates and reporting documentation on the City's website.
- Continuing to host public meetings to update the community on ARPA progress.
- Creating an ARPA Oversight Committee to provide community transparency for the City's ARPA funded projects and ensure that the ARPA budget is in line with community priorities.

**7. What is the structure of the City's ARPA Oversight Committee?**

The ARPA Oversight Committee will be made up of seven members:

- Three (3) from the community
- Three (3) from City's staff
- One (1) member from the City receiver team

Committee members will be expected to participate in regular committee meetings and calls. Once the Committee is formed, the Committee members will develop their ongoing focus areas facilitated by the Office of Accounts & Finance.

**8. How do I volunteer to serve on the ARPA Oversight Committee?**

If you are interested in serving on the ARPA Oversight Committee you must complete the online form linked here. In order to serve on the Committee, you must be a City of Chester resident or business owner. You must also be able to pass a Volunteer Record Check through the State's PATCH website.

**9. Is ARPA public information?**

Yes, the budget will become public once adopted and the quarterly reports will be public record.

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<sup>3</sup> Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) Final Rule: Frequently Asked Questions.  
<https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRPFAQ.pdf>

**Other suggestions, questions and answers:**

**10. How can a homeowner apply for ARPA funds to help with weatherization of a residence?**

Homeowners and landlords will be able to apply for a City grant to use for residential improvements, which the applicant must show were not possible due to lost income and increased cost of materials. Specific weatherization assistance is also available for low income individuals and households through the Pennsylvania [Weatherization Assistance Program \(WAP\)](#).

**11. Can ARPA be used to pay down debt?**

No, the final rule of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) maintains that debt service payments are ineligible uses of ARPA funds. This includes interest and principal payments on any debt instrument, as well as any fees or issuance costs.

**12. Can ARPA funds be to pave roads and invest in infrastructure?**

While roads and general infrastructure projects are eligible ARPA expenses under category 6.1 for revenue replacement, the City has allocated all funds in that category to cover City operating costs.

**13. What portion of funds are being set aside to prevent civil asset forfeiture?**

While efforts to prevent or address civil asset forfeiture is not directly funded by ARPA, the City is actively looking into programs to help people maintain their assets. ARPA funds are being leveraged to fund a program for residents to maintain homeownership.

**14. Will Chester be applying for the Department of Commerce Broadband grant?**

Yes, the City is exploring a number of federal grant opportunities and evaluating the City's eligibility and ability to respond.

**15. Did Chester benefit from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law? If not, what needs to be done in order for Chester to benefit from it?**

Funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, becomes available at the federal government level, after which states apply for formula grants (which means that the grants are predetermined and not competitive, but still require an application). Pennsylvania expects to receive, for example, \$67 million in its Energy Programs Office (EPO), which can be given out again to local governments in the form of block grants.

**16. Is the City monitoring the amount of radiation coming from lights and from placed cameras? Will there be radiation oversight?**

No. To my knowledge there are no municipal government entities that measure light radiation. With that said, the LED Lights that were recently installed, replaced High Pressure Sodium or Metal Halide Bulbs. LED Lighting is considered a better alternative from other light sources due to its longevity and efficiency. The longevity of the fixtures reduce long term costs and lower wattages reduce the City's carbon footprint.

**17. How many cameras are deployed and in what areas?**

In total, 25 cameras have been placed in blighted areas and known areas of illegal dumping.

**18. Will the City use ARPA funds to help community members with stipends to address any pandemic-related issues?**

The City is not planning to use ARPA funds to provide direct stipends for general pandemic-related uses. The City is planning to use ARPA funds to create grant programs that benefits residents and community members for business assistance and residential property improvements. More information on both programs and how these grant funds may be used will be provided at a later date.

**19. Who is the point of contact for small businesses and nonprofits to apply for grants and loans?**

The City will release more information on the business assistance grants and how to apply on the ARPA website at a later date.

**20. How are we supporting the elderly people in the City and who is responsible for this?**

Seniors and elderly people are an important part of the City. This group along with all of the City's residents will benefit from ARPA funded improvements to parks and public spaces. This City's elderly may also benefit from grants to make property improvements. In addition to ARPA funded initiatives, Chester Housing Authority (CHA) focuses on providing housing for seniors in the City.

**21. Is there a legal requirement for City residents to have input in the ARPA budgeting process?**

There is no legal requirement for the City to have input in the ARPA budgeting process. According to the Final Rule dated May 17, 2021, entities with over 250,000 residents are mandated by ARPA to create an annual Recovery Plan Performance Report to Treasury. Since the City does not have over 250,000 residents, such community engagement noted above is not required according to the Final Rule.

Even though the final rule recognizes the reporting burden on smaller local governments such as the City and reduces the extensive community engagement reporting requirements, the City has undertaken many of the community engagement strategies required of much larger localities, including the following:

- Feedback through community meetings
- Steering committees, such as the proposed ARPA steering committee
- Public budget hearings
- One on one meetings by elected officials with constituents

As a result, these strategies, though not required, represent best practices implemented by the City over community engagement noted in the Final Rule.

**Overview of Chester ARPA Uses:**

Public works, parks and recreation projects

**1. Maintenance and cleaning of sidewalks and streets**

The City is investing in city beautification, tree planting and gardens through the Chester Clean Ways program. This program will provide homeless people the opportunity to gain employment and learn how to create landscaping, remove trash, and keep the City clean in other ways. Meanwhile, the City will partner with local shelters that allows these employees to get back on track and provide housing as they go through the program.

**2. Parks improvement and rehabilitation**

The City is investing more than \$500,000 in public parks upgrades. This includes upgrades to the Chester City Pool in Memorial Park, including the sanitary facilities. The Chester Park Barn will be rehabilitated, also including the restroom area. The trail system will be improved with stormwater updates that include bio-retention basins and rain gardens to mitigate increases in stormwater runoff.

**3. Playground equipment updates and maintenance**

The City is investing more than \$200,000 in updates to playground equipment and safety enhancements.

**4. Right of way investments for water and stormwater**

The ARPA budget includes City street projects aimed at improved social distancing and beautification. The addition of sidewalks on Reaney Street will improve pedestrian safety and social distancing capability. It also includes a controlled crossing on Reaney Street and stormwater improvements (inlets and piping to convey overflow stormwater into the system).

Community driven projects

**1. Neighborhood investments for “quality of life” improvements**

Street signage will be replaced or added where needed to increase safety. City property will receive façade improvements and much needed structural rehabilitation, such as reparation of the roof at City Hall, which needs repair because of water damage.

**2. Reduce blight and unsafe structures in the City**

The City is investing in a citywide blight assessment of vacant parcels and abandoned buildings to both quantify the extent of the underperforming properties throughout the community, but also to map them, and most importantly qualify the problematic parcels on a scale from eminent public safety threats that need to be abated to opportunities for development.

**3. Business and homeowner property assistance**

In addition to the façade and structural improvement opportunities as explained in #1 above, The ARPA funds will also go towards grant assistance to homeowners and/or landlords to improve their residential properties. Small businesses can apply for an ARPA funded grant to make building or infrastructure improvements, among other business-related projects that are eligible.

**4. Business technical assistance for startups and microenterprises**

The City will be issuing \$250,000 in grants to organizations to help them establish a stable foundation or enhance the current foundation of their business so the community can benefit from the service or goods that are provided by these organizations.

**Overview of Public suggestions funded via community partnerships:**

**1. City beautification**

The City participates in Delaware County’s Blighted Property Demolition program which demos vacant blighted properties. The Chester Redevelopment Authority (CRA) also focuses on community and economic development, including blight.

**2. Job creation for youth and adults**

The City works with local employers and local workforce development organizations like the Chester Education Foundation to get people paid internships. The school district also received ARPA dollars, which they may invest in a youth job program.

3. **Improve senior housing opportunities or housing vouchers**  
The Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provide housing assistance, and the City is working to identify additional projects with the Chester Housing Authority (CHA).
4. **Mental health, primary and mobile care clinics**  
Local programs, run by Keystone First's Urgent Care, for instance, provide programming and walk-in locations for health and overall wellbeing.
5. **Investments in schools and internet**  
Delaware County is currently collecting survey results as part of a large broadband project. The City is also planning a broadband needs assessment with the school district.
6. **Animal control and animal shelters**  
Related programs are provided by outside entities like Brandywine SPCA and Providence Animal Shelter.
7. **Assistance to local food banks**  
The City is targeting local business assistance to provide additional supplies and assistance to local food banks. The City and partners provided over \$100K since 2020 providing cash grants to five local food banks.

#### **Public suggestions funded via other sources:**

##### Public works and parks projects

1. **City street lighting enhancements**  
The City partnered with the County to redo a total of 3,000 streetlights with new LED lighting. As of July 2022, about 40 percent of the work had been completed.
2. **Repair roads and bridges**  
The City is awaiting the results of the infrastructure bill. Infrastructure projects like roads and bridges are not eligible under ARPA.

##### Public safety projects

1. **Cameras in residential and illegal dumping areas**  
The City has received a grant through the State Representative's Office to deploy 25 cameras throughout the city in blighted areas. Some of them are illegal dumping cameras. Some of the cameras also function as mobile hotspots.
2. **Neighborhood watch collaboration**  
While this priority has not been considered for specific ARPA funding, the City is collaborating with the Riverfront Alliance and other organizations that will allow the City to provide ring cameras to residents.
3. **Policy body and dashboard cameras**  
The City has allocated over \$770,000 to police body cameras, dashboard cameras, radio upgrades, GPS, training and software for their usage.