

American Rescue Plan Act RFP Frequently Asked Questions

(Updated November 30, 2021)

Q. What is the minimum/maximum amount for a grant award under the City's ARPA RFP program?

A. According to guidance provided by the United States Treasury Department, the amount of American Rescue Plan Act funds provided by the City to an applicant should be proportionate to the amount of harm suffered by the applicant through negative economic and/or health impacts as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, the amount of grant funding the City is able to provide is dependent on the size of the negative impacts incurred from the pandemic. Proposals should focus on linking the amount being sought with the use of the funds to directly counteract the negative impacts cited.

Q. I represent a nonprofit organization, and due to our structure, I am not able to provide responses to some of the ownership, demographic, and income information being sought in the RFP. How should my proposal address pieces of information that don't appear to apply to my organization?

A. The nonprofit ownership/demographic information sought in the RFP can include the CEO of the organization, the President, or the composition of the Board of Directors, where applicable. Many types of nonprofit organizations are involved in the ARPA process, so some fields of information within the RFP documents will not apply to your organization. If there are sections within the application/cover sheet/tax or income certification forms that do not apply to your organization (e.g. the personal funds field, household income field, residential address, etc.) please include an "N/A" or "Not Applicable" for those items.

Q. When is the deadline for submissions?

A. The ARPA RFP program is anticipated to run from November 1, 2021 until November 1, 2024. As such, the deadline for proposals to be submitted in response to an RFP under the program is currently November 1, 2024, or until the City's ARPA funds have been exhausted.

Q. I am the owner of a small business that has been in operation for less than two years, and due to the length of time that my business has been open, I do not have all of the financial forms required. Can I still submit a proposal?

A. Yes. Depending on the length of time that a small business has been in operation, some financial forms may not be available (e.g. two years of tax returns or profit/loss statements for

a business that has been in operation for 15 months). In the event that your business is not able to provide a financial document that is required by the RFP, please include a statement of non-applicability, with information explaining why your business is not able to produce the document(s).

Q. What can the funding be used for?

A. The funding can be used for counteracting the negative health and/or economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on households, businesses, seniors, nonprofit/civic/religious organizations, and on economic development in Springfield, so there are a variety of potential uses within each of those categories. The proposed use of the funds should relate to negative impact being claimed, and the amount should be proportionate to the harm suffered. Additional details about eligible uses of ARPA funds are available within the U.S. Treasury Department's Interim Final Rule (a link to the Rule is included on the City's webpage for the Department of Recovery and Business Continuity).

Q. Which RFP should I respond to?

A. Some applicants will be uncertain about which RFP they should submit a proposal for, due to the status of their entity (or their individual status), their proposed use of the funds, and/or other factors. In such a case, participants are strongly encouraged review the guidance posted to the City's webpage, and to seek additional information by contacting the Department of Recovery and Business Continuity directly at drbc@springfieldcityhall.com.

Q. Can I submit multiple proposals in response to an RFP, and can I respond to more than one RFP?

A. Yes. The City's ARPA RFP process is designed to be an open enrollment process wherein parties are allowed to submit multiple proposals (either at once or over a period of years), in order to counteract the negative economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, entities are allowed to submit proposals for more than one RFP if they meet eligibility requirements.

Q. Can proposals be submitted in Spanish?

A. Yes. The City is accepting RFP responses in Spanish, and all RFP documents are available in both English and Spanish.

Q. I am having difficulty with the RFP application; where can I go for technical assistance with my proposal?

A. The City's Department of Technical Assistance and Compliance is available to provide information, technical support, and to directly connect applicants with outside resources that can give the wrap around support services necessary. This Department has a focus on providing assistance to minority, women, low income, and LGBTQ+ owned businesses, in accordance with the goals and priorities of the American Rescue Plan Act. For technical support, please contact Director Patrice "Chae" Swan at pswan@springfieldcityhall.com.

Q. Can proposals be submitted online or in digital form?

A. No. The City is currently only accepting hardcopy submissions at 70 Tapley Street, in accordance with the instructions set forth in the RFP documents. Said documents are available to download online at the City's website for the Department of Recovery and Business Continuity, and are also available in hardcopy form at the City's 70 Tapley Street office.

Q. I am the owner of a new business and have not been able to assemble the financial paperwork required in the RFP, can I still apply?

A. The New Business Assistance RFP is designed to include start-up businesses that have not yet opened to the public, as well as businesses that have been / were in operation for less than a year. Although the paperwork required is limited, some financial information will need to be developed within the proposal's business plan which is part of the response to the RFP that the City uses to evaluate the requests. In other words, proposals for new businesses should include a business plan that has comprehensive information about the proposed budget, as well as business operations. It is understood that some of the paperwork being sought may not be available to some new businesses (Profit/loss statements, tax returns, etc.), and that some of the financial information will be based on projections, however, all new business proposals should include a business plan with as much detail as possible, and one of the key components to any business plan is the anticipated financials showing how the business will be viable. New business proposals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If you are a new business that does not have profit and loss statements, tax returns, etc. yet, you will still have to provide information about the forms (i.e. explain why they are not available for your business).

Q. Are the RFP documents subject to change or are they 'set in stone'?

A. The RFP documents represent an ongoing process that the City of Springfield has undertaken to best provide assistance to its residents. The form of the RFP documents, and the requirements contained therein are subject to change, based on input received from the public,

as well as the results of the initial grant award process. It is the intention of the City to revise its RFP documents within the first six months of 2022, in order to evolve and refine the process, so as to make it as effective and efficient as possible in achieving the goals and priorities of ARPA.

Q. How are proposals being evaluated and how long does the process take after I submit my proposal?

A. The RFP documents contain all of the evaluation criteria that the City will be using to rate submissions, and also sets forth the process wherein a three (3) person Evaluation Committee will make the initial determinations of eligibility, and will forward qualifying proposals to a five (5) member Advisory Committee, who will then make recommendations for awards to the Mayor. Proposals need to obtain two Highly Advantageous (“HA”) ratings out of the four RFP evaluation categories from each of the three (3) evaluation committee reviewers in order to achieve the composite “HA” rating needed for advancement to the Advisory Committee and obtaining a grant award. In order to be eligible for an award, a proposal must receive a composite rating of “HA”, and in order to receive a composite rating of “HA”, proposals must receive at least two individual “HA” ratings from each of the reviewers (and zero “NA” ratings). Depending on the size of the proposal, the process of evaluation will take approximately four (4) weeks.

Q. Where can I go if I have additional questions about the RFP documents or the process?

A. The City has an email address specifically to receive feedback and answer questions about all things ARPA in Springfield (drbc@springfieldcityhall.com). Written questions are also being accepted via traditional mailing at “70 Tapley Street, Springfield, MA 01104, c/o Director of Recovery and Business Continuity – ARPA”.