



**City of Springfield, Massachusetts**

**AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT  
CORONAVIRUS STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS**

**Request for Proposals for New Business Assistance**

**CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR NEW BUSINESS ASSISTANCE DUE TO THE NEGATIVE HEALTH AND**  
**ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19**

**Introduction**

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (herein “ARPA” or “Act”) was signed into law by President Joseph Biden on March 11, 2021, establishing the Coronavirus-19 State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (herein “SLFRF”), with the goal of providing vital support to state and local governments as they address the negative health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on their communities.

The United States Department of Treasury has issued guidance stating that monies allocated under SLFRF must be used in one of the four eligible use categories specified in the Act. An Interim Final Rule has been implemented, which states that the funds can be used for “respond[ing] to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality.”

Further, the Interim Rule places an emphasis on combating the disproportionate negative economic and health impacts of COVID-19 on minority and low income populations, to mitigate the pandemic’s “longer-term impact in compounding the systemic public health and economic challenges of disproportionately impacted populations,” and encourages uses “that foster a strong, inclusive, and equitable recovery, especially uses with long-term benefits for health and economic outcomes.” In accordance with the Treasury Department’s Interim Final Rule, this RFP places an emphasis on providing assistance to minority, women, veteran and/or low income owned businesses, due to the disproportionate impact from the COVID-19 pandemic suffered by those businesses, which exacerbated pre-existing economic and health disparities within certain populations.

New Businesses in the City of Springfield (herein “City”) have been significantly and negatively impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic, and ARPA funds have been allocated to provide assistance to those businesses. The City has initiated a rolling Request for Proposal process (herein “RFP”) which seeks proposals from New Business owners requesting COVID-19 related assistance in the form of a grant from the City. For the purposes of this RFP, the City is defining a ‘New Business’ as one with less than 25 employees that has been in operation less than one (1) year, or new/start-up businesses that have yet to begin operations. It is the express intention of this RFP to provide assistance primarily to locally-owned, locally operated, so called ‘mom and pop’ new businesses. Proposals should provide as much information as possible detailing the negative economic impacts that COVID-19 has had on your new business or your ability to start a new business, and how ARPA grant funds would be used to counter those impacts.

**Submission and Review of Proposals**

The City will be accepting proposals in response to this solicitation until November 1, 2024, or until such time as this RFP is suspended or terminated by the City. All proposals shall be submitted directly to the City’s Department of Recovery and Business Continuity (c/o New Business RFP Evaluation Committee),

at 70 Tapley Street, Springfield, Massachusetts 01104. Proposals in response to this RFP will be accepted for submission starting on November 1, 2021.

An Evaluation Committee of three (3) members shall review and evaluate all applications received in response to this RFP, in accordance with the criteria set forth herein; said committee shall be comprised of a representative from the Department of Recovery and Business Continuity (as designated by the Director of DRBC), a representative from the Office of Planning & Economic Development (as designated by the Chief Development Officer), and a representative from the Finance Department (as designated by the Chief Administrative and Financial Officer). The Evaluation Committee shall submit the results of its evaluations to the RFP Advisory Committee, who shall then make written recommendations for awards under this RFP to the Mayor.

The RFP Advisory Committee shall be comprised of five (5) members, as follows: a representative of the Springfield City Council (the Council President, or designee), the City Clerk, the Chief Development Officer, the Chief Administrative and Financial Officer, and the Director of Technical Assistance and Compliance. Said committee shall be responsible for reviewing the Evaluation Committees findings, ensuring compliance with ARPA requirements, and issuing recommendations for award to the Mayor. The RFP Advisory Committee may, in its sole and absolute discretion, reject any and all, or parts of any and all proposals. Further, the RFP Advisory Committee shall have the right to postpone, suspend, or cancel this RFP process at any time; to change, adjust, or modify the anticipated schedule of events; to waive any minor informalities pertaining to any proposals received; and/or to recommend an award amount less than the requested amount.

The decision as to whether or not an award shall be made as a result of this RFP shall be in the sole and absolute discretion of the City.

This RFP document is the result of the City's public outreach process, including not limited to holding meetings with members of the community through its various neighborhood councils, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, and business associations. The RFP documents for the use of ARPA funds were created and revised using information directly derived from the public outreach process.

The City is available to answer questions about this RFP through its Department of Recovery and Business Continuity at any time prior to the submission of a proposal. After submission (during the evaluation period), the City will only be able to provide limited information in response to inquiries. Please be advised that the City is not able to provide proposers with assistance in assembling proposals in response to this RFP. In the event that a proposal is eligible for use of ARPA funds under this RFP, but is not ultimately awarded a grant, the proposer shall be provided with a statement of reasons detailing the evaluation committees' findings, and providing clarification to assist with potential re-submission.

To maintain a fair and impartial process, as of the issuance date of this RFP, the City will only answer questions submitted to the Department of Recovery and Business Continuity in writing. All questions received and all answers provided shall be public record, subject to disclosure in compliance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. Additionally, please avoid private communication with any RFP Evaluation Committee Member if you have a proposal pending, or are considering submitting a proposal

in the future. Proposers who initiate private communication with Evaluation Committee Members or attempt to violate the process outlined herein may be disqualified.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Only eligible uses of funds under ARPA will be considered for evaluation under this RFP. Eligible proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the Comparative Criteria set forth in this RFP. Proposals should focus on providing as much specific evidence on the following subject matter:

- The severity of the negative economic and/or health impacts from COVID-19 on your new business.
- Your plan for use of ARPA funds to counteract the negative economic and/or health impacts on your new business.

### **Submission Requirements**

Responses must contain three basic components to be considered for evaluation, as follows:

1. Executed forms (all included with this RFP):
  - a. New Business RFP Cover Sheet (including proposal specific information)
  - b. Tax Certification Affidavit (notarized)
  - c. Income Certification Form
2. A cover letter stating a.) if Proposer, its principals, and/or personnel has filed for U.S. Bankruptcy Court protection during the past seven (7) years (if so, describe the circumstances and disposition of the case), b.) whether the Proposer is a joint venture (if so, provide the joint venture agreement and a statement that all joint venture partners will be jointly and severally liable), c.) whether within the past ten (10) years there have been or whether there currently are pending or any past civil or criminal investigations and/or convictions of or actions against your firm or individual employees of your firm by a federal or state regulatory agency or taxing authority in connection with any work with which your firm has been associated which have led to convictions, and d.) whether the Proposer or its principals owe any payments to the City of Springfield.

### **Reporting Requirements**

ARPA Funds may be used to cover costs from March 3, 2021, through December 31, 2024; however, funds may be used to assist households, nonprofits and businesses for economic *harms* experienced prior to March 3, 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please note that all ARPA funds must be fully obligated by December 31, 2024, and fully expended by December 31, 2026.

Financial records and supporting documents related to an award under this RFP must be retained for a period of six (6) years after all funds have been expended or returned to Treasury, whichever is later. This includes records which demonstrate that the award funds were used for eligible purposes in accordance with ARPA, Treasury's regulations and guidance on eligible uses of funds.

Recipients of awards under this RFP should maintain records to support their assessment of how they were affected by the negative economic and/or health impacts of the pandemic and how the aid provided through the grant responds to these impacts. The City's Department of Technical Compliance and Assistance shall provide assistance to recipients of awards under this RFP, relative to reporting.

Recipients should take note of the following relative to reporting obligations:

- a. You will be required to submit quarterly "Project and Expenditure Reports" until the funded project/business plan is complete.
- b. The first report will be due Jan 31, 2022.
- c. The reports will be done through a reporting template, based on the latest US Treasury guidelines; said template will be available for recipients at the City's Department of Recovery and Business Continuity.
- d. Failure to submit reports on time or submission of incomplete reports shall be a material breach of the terms of the grant agreement between the City and the recipient, and shall result in the recipient paying the City back the amount of grant funds awarded.

### **Comparative Evaluation Criteria**

Ratings of Highly Advantageous ("HA"), Advantageous ("A"), or Not Advantageous ("NA"), will be given for each of the following criteria, for each eligible proposal, by each Evaluation Committee member. A composite rating of each Committee member evaluation will then be produced for the proposal. A composite rating of "Highly Advantageous" shall be assigned to proposals receiving at least two "HA" ratings and zero "NA" ratings from the four criteria below. Only proposals receiving composite ratings of "Highly Advantageous" from all three Evaluation Committee members shall be recommended to the RFP Advisory Committee for a grant award under this RFP.

#### **A. Severity of COVID-19 Impact on Business**

- HA The Proposer has demonstrated significant negative economic and/health impacts on its new business or the Proposer's ability to start a business due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Proposer is able to provide substantial evidence showing said negative impacts, and the specific effect they had on the business or the Proposer's ability to start a business.
- A The Proposer has demonstrated negative economic and/health impacts on its new business due or the Proposer's ability to start a business due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Proposer is able to provide evidence showing said negative impacts, and the specific effect they had on the business or the Proposer's ability to start a business.

NA The Proposer has demonstrated little-to-no negative economic and/health impacts on its business or the Proposer's ability to start a business due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Proposer is able to provide little-to no evidence showing said negative impacts, and the effect they had on the business or the Proposer's ability to start a business.

**B. Strength of Business Plan for use of ARPA Funds**

HA The Proposer has provided a viable business plan for the use of ARPA funds to counteract the negative economic and/or health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes a thorough explanation of the business's structure and operations, as well as specific information directly linking the negative impacts cited to its proposed use of the funds, and breaking down the use of the funds individually by amount and category. Said plan also includes detailed information on how the use of the funds will benefit disadvantaged and disproportionately impacted minority and/or low income communities in Springfield.

A The Proposer has provided a viable business plan for the use of ARPA funds to counteract the negative economic and/or health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes information linking the negative impacts cited to its proposed use of the funds, and breaking down the use of the funds by amount and category. Said plan includes information on how the use of the funds will benefit disadvantaged and disproportionately impacted minority and/or low income communities in Springfield.

NA The Proposer has not provided a viable business plan for the use of ARPA funds to counteract the negative economic and/or health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Said business plan includes little-to-no information linking the negative impacts cited to its proposed use of the funds, and/or does not break down the use of the funds by amount and category.

**C. Experience and Stability of Business**

HA The Proposer has demonstrated previous business experience in a related field, and has provided a comprehensive business plan for their new business. The Proposer's business is financially sound and in good standing with the Massachusetts Secretary of State, or the Proposer is able to provide strong evidence demonstrating that it has sufficient resources to operate a business successfully, and that its start-up business concept is financially viable.

A The Proposer has demonstrated limited previous business experience and has provided a business plan for their new business. The Proposer's business is financially sound and in good standing with the Massachusetts Secretary of State, or the Proposer is able to provide evidence demonstrating that it has resources to operate a business successfully and that its start-up business concept is financially viable.

NA The Proposer has demonstrated little-to-no previous business experience and has provided a business plan that does not demonstrate that it possesses the resources necessary for successful operation of the business, or that the start-up business concept is financially viable.

**D. Minority, Women, Veteran, Low-Income owned**

- HA The Proposer is a Minority (American Indian, African American/Black, Cape Verdean, Western Hemisphere Hispanic, Aleut, Eskimo, or Asian), Women, Veteran, or Low-Income owned new business (or start-up); or the Proposer is a new business (or start-up) that is/will be located in a minority (American Indian, African American/Black, Cape Verdean, Western Hemisphere Hispanic, Aleut, Eskimo, or Asian) and/or low-income community.
  
- A The Proposer is a new business (or start-up) that primarily serves a Minority (American Indian, African American/Black, Cape Verdean, Western Hemisphere Hispanic, Aleut, Eskimo, or Asian), Veteran, and/or Low-income community.