

## **American Rescue Plan Act Overview**

Mayor Brandon M. Scott is pleased to extend an opportunity for City agencies, quasi-agencies, and external organizations to apply for funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, through the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, has provided \$670.3 million in one-time funding to the City of Baltimore to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency and its negative economic impacts. These application instructions will provide insight into the funding strategy, a guide to accessing funding, and important notices and guidelines to inform requests.

### **Baltimore City's ARP Strategy**

Funding from the American Rescue Plan will allow the City to continue its robust response to fighting the COVID-19 public health emergency. It will also be a bridge to the local economic recovery and a catalyst for transformational and equitable change. Mayor Scott recognizes this unique opportunity and strives to use this funding to do exactly that, changing outcomes and increasing the quality of life for City residents.

The process for using this one-time ARP funding and making these critical investments is project based. Through projects approved for funding, the City will invest in its processes, equity, infrastructure, public health, and more to combat the COVID-19 public health emergency and move Baltimore forward. Projects have a minimum funding request of \$250,000. Projects less than the minimum threshold will have an opportunity to be funded by grant and other programs facilitated by City agencies, partners, and institutions, such as Baltimore Development Corporation and Baltimore Civic Fund.

Projects will be organized by Mayor Scott's Priority Outcomes:

- Prioritizing Our Youth
- Building Public Safety
- Equitable Neighborhood Development
- Clean and Healthy Communities
- Responsible Stewardship of City Resources

### **Eligibility**

There is an eligibility threshold for projects to meet to be considered. Ineligible projects will be summarily declined. Applicants should seek to answer the following question to self-assess their eligibility, *"How does this project respond to or mitigate the COVID-19 public health emergency or its negative economic impacts?"*

Projects can remedy the COVID-19 public health emergency or its negative economic impacts directly or indirectly. Direct remedies are projects that can be attributed solely to the pandemic such as a mobilizing a large-scale vaccination effort or building improvements for social distancing. The COVID-19 pandemic is the only cause for direct projects. Indirect projects can also address the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency or its negative economic impacts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, increased restrictions on gatherings and other entertainment and leisure activities allowed many to rediscover their local parks. Parks have continued to see increased visitors and some neighborhoods in

the City lack adequate green space or capacity to maintain social distancing. An indirect project would be increasing the amount of green space or parkland in the city for recreation. There are other reasons why the City could expand green space. Indirect projects are linked to the COVID-19 pandemic via direct effects or have more than one cause, of which the COVID-19 pandemic is one.

Please note that eligibility is not a commitment to fund. It is a basic requirement to proceed with the application process.

### **Eligibility by Priority Outcome**

It is the City's expectation that organizations put forth eligible projects that advance the Priority Outcomes and improve quality of life. To that effect, below is a definition of each Priority Outcome and at least two example projects that would be considered eligible.

#### *Prioritizing Our Youth*

Addressing the effect of the pandemic on youth development and welfare.

- Expanding access to free public neighborhood Wi-Fi (Indirect)
- Tutoring programs to address deficiencies in virtual learning (Indirect)

#### *Building Public Safety*

Enhancing and scaling violence prevention and response monitoring and communications efforts.

- Expansion of the CitiWatch program (Indirect)
- Programs to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence more effectively (Indirect)

#### *Equitable Neighborhood Development*

Delivering resources to communities to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and reduce vulnerabilities.

- Grants to small businesses and nonprofits affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Direct)
- Rental relief and homeownership stabilization programs (Indirect)

#### *Clean and Healthy Communities*

Direct response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic, safe reopening of facilities, and implementing preventative public health measures.

- Permanently transitioning to non-congregate sheltering of the unhoused (Direct)
- Implementing recommendations from the Green Network Plan (Indirect)

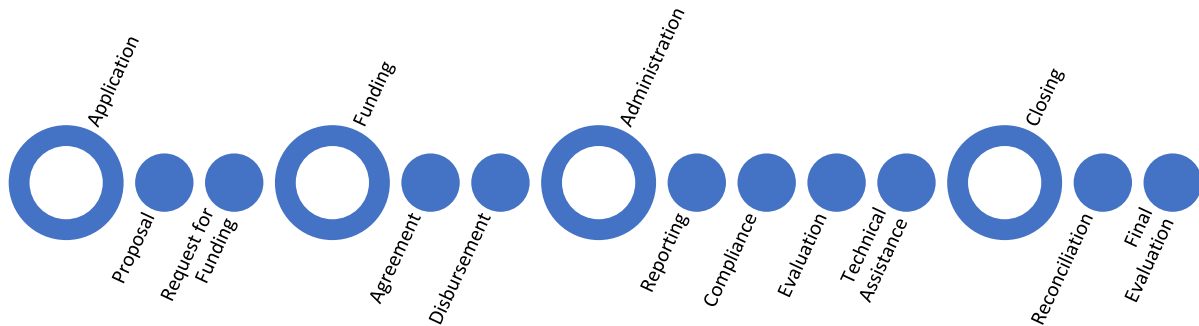
#### *Responsible Stewardship of City Resources*

Investments in City operations and assets affected by the pandemic to improve future outcomes.

- Digitizing paper processes and implementing imaging systems (Direct)
- Improvements to public buildings for social distancing and improved ventilation (Direct)

## Project Lifecycle

The implementation of ARP projects is a phased process. There are four phases: Application, Funding, Administration, and Closing. Each phase has concurrent or consecutive requirements that must be met to move on to the next phase. This section will provide a brief overview of the requirements for each section.



### Application

The application phase contains two consecutive requirements: proposal and request for funding.

#### *Proposal*

This is the first step in the application process. A proposal is a concise overview of your proposed project. It identifies the project managers, provides a description of the project, identifies potential performance measures, and offers a high-level overview of the budget and potential cost impacts. Most importantly, the information provided in the proposal will determine if the proposed project qualifies for American Rescue Plan Act funding.

The first review of proposals is a review of the project summary provided by the applicant. The proposal form contains a space for a brief summary which will be judged for its appropriateness to proceed based on the selected Priority Outcome for the project. A Deputy Mayor or equivalent will conduct this review on a weekly basis. It is a binary decision. Applicants will be notified if their proposal is rejected at this phase.

In the second review, proposals will be scored against a pre-determined 100-point criteria by a 7-person Proposal Review Team. There is a team for internal applicants and a team for external applicants. The Proposal Review Teams are composed of representatives from the following agencies:

#### Internal Proposal Review Team

- Office of the Mayor
- Office of Civil Rights and Equity
- Mayor's Office of Performance and Innovation
- Department of Finance, Bureau of the Budget and Management Research
- Department of Law
- Department of Planning

#### External Proposal Review Team

- Office of the Mayor
- Office of Civil Rights and Equity
- Mayor's Office of Performance and Innovation
- Department of Finance, Bureau of the Budget and Management Research
- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Department of Planning

In addition to agency representatives, the Internal Proposal Review Team will contain 1 member from the Private Sector/Industry and the External Proposal Review Team will contain 1 Community Representative, both appointed by the Mayor.

Proposals will be scored against a pre-determined 100-point criteria. The criteria are contained in Appendix B. Below are the evaluation decisions:

- Proposals receiving a score of 50 points or less by any member of the panel or an average of score of 50 points or less will be summarily declined.
- Proposals receiving an average score greater than 50 and up to 67 points will be asked to resubmit with revisions up to 2 times.
- Proposals receiving an average score 67 points and above will move on to the next step in the process.

Incomplete proposals and proposals that do not meet eligibility criteria will not be accepted. A successful proposal is not a commitment to fund a project. Internal applicants will have to certify that the proposal is being submitted with the approval of the agency head and fiscal officer.

The Proposal Review Team is expected to convene bi-weekly to score and discuss proposals. Applicants can expect to be notified shortly after.

#### **Endorsements**

Successful proposals are eligible to be endorsed by elected officials. An endorsement (or letter of support) is a testimonial in favor of your project. It distinguishes your project's application and provides merit to the organization's capacity to deliver the project and its popular support.

Endorsements can come from the City Council President, the Comptroller, or an individual City Council member. Projects are not required to have an endorsement to proceed. If an endorsement is sought, only one is necessary for the application to receive the benefit. Multiple endorsements are not necessary.

*Request for Funding*

A successful proposal with an average score of 67 points or higher will move on to the next step. A request for funding represents the applicant’s formal application. It is in this phase that applicants will create detailed implementation, evaluation, and financial plans based on their proposals. Requests for funding will be assigned an Application Advisor to help them navigate this process and to ensure compliance with federal guidelines.

For internal applicants, community engagement standards will be assigned at this stage. Below is the range of engagement levels that may be assigned:

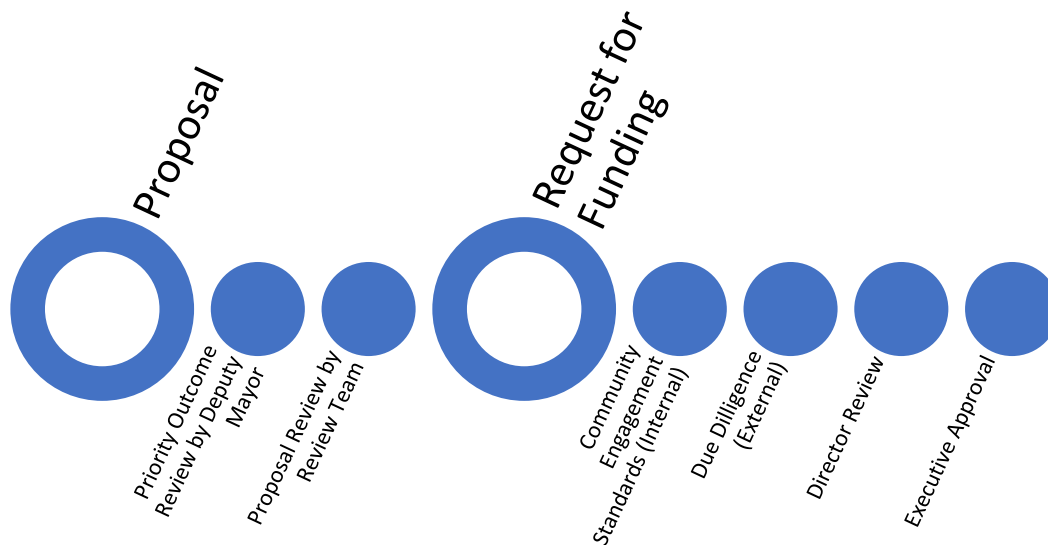
<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
Level I	Public notice providing project information and the agency decision-making process
Level II	Public meeting and comment period no less than a specific number of days
Level III	Letters of support from community organizations and resident testimonials
Level IV	Community charrettes, workshops, open houses, or townhalls for extensive feedback and participatory decision-making

The levels of community engagement are successive, and each level requires the satisfaction of the ones preceding it to be considered complete. The Project Administration Team Funding can provide funding by request to complete this requirement. More detail will be provided on this step when necessary.

For external applicants, the City may require detailed employment and tax data, insurance information, governmental licenses, and organizing documents to conduct due diligence and risk assessments to ensure satisfaction of federal guidelines and regulations.

A completed request for funding is not a commitment to fund a project. It must first undergo a review by the Director of the Project Administration Team or their designee (Director Review). The Mayor, City Administrator, or either of their designees then provides the final executive review and approval for requests for funding. This creates a commitment to lend on behalf of the City and moves the request from the application to the funding phase. These approvals will be provided on a regularly occurring basis and applicants will be notified promptly.

The request for funding will move as fast as the speed at which information can be provided to the Project Administration Team, community engagement standards can be executed, and any discrepancies can be resolved in the due diligence process for external organizations.



## **Funding**

Once a request for funding has successfully completed Director Review and Executive Approval, it is eligible to be funded. The funding phase has two consecutive requirements: agreement and disbursement.

### *Agreement*

Each project must have a funding agreement. For internal applicants, this will typically take the form of a Letter of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. For external applicants, this will be in the form of a Grant Agreement or contract. The agreement will describe the terms and conditions of the funding, including, but not limited to purpose, term, eligible uses, scope, reporting requirements, process to modify or terminate the agreement, audit requirements, and any other City requirements. Each project will also be provided an award letter.

Completing the agreement is expected to take 1-2 weeks.

### *Disbursement*

The agreement will contain the terms of the disbursement of funds. However, actual disbursement of funds will be subject to existing City policies. An account number for the project will be assigned by the Project Administration Team and communicated to the awardee. For internal awardees, the project manager and respective fiscal officer will work in close coordination with the Project Administration Team and Bureau of Procurement to conduct all purchasing and execution of related contracts. External awardees will be provided documentation required by the Department of Finance to receive disbursements.

## **Administration**

The application phase contains four parallel requirements: reporting, compliance, evaluation, and technical assistance.

Reporting and compliance requirements will be defined in the funding agreement. The administration phase is implementation of those requirements. Evaluation will be defined in the application and will also be reported in this phase as the project is implemented.

The organization is responsible for the implementation of the project as defined by the application and funding agreement. Technical assistance and project management support will be available throughout the process through an assigned liaison on the Project Administration Team.

The City of Baltimore holds compliance with federal guidelines with the utmost importance. Failure to execute a project as planned or comply with the funding agreement may result in corrective action, disqualification from submitting future applications, recovery of funds, termination of the agreement, and/or other civil or criminal proceedings as required by Law.

## **Project Closing**

Projects will be closed once they have fulfilled the terms of their agreements. All funds will have been reconciled and unused funding returned. Final reports will have been filed and the organization will have a policy to retain those reports for future audits. All outstanding issues will have been resolved.

## **Completing the Proposal**

A project proposal is the first step in the application process. It is meant to be a concise overview of your project while identifying critical information to verify eligibility, feasibility, and overall quality. The Review Teams are expecting a significant volume of proposals, so the form has multiple points where character count is limited to ensure brevity. Applicants will have the opportunity to expand upon their proposals in the request for funding stage.

The full list of proposal questions can be found in Appendix A for review in advance. Proposals will only be accepted via the online portal. The link to the online application portal is located at [arp.baltimorecity.gov](http://arp.baltimorecity.gov). This section will provide guidance on completing the proposal.

### **Title**

Project titles should be brief description of what is being proposed. If applicable, please include a location. Agency or organization names should not be included in titles. There will be specific place to indicate that information. Titles may be edited at the discretion of the Project Administration Team.

### **Eligibility**

There is an eligibility threshold for projects to meet to be considered. The City of Baltimore holds compliance with federal guidelines with the utmost importance and ineligible projects will be summarily declined. Applicants are encouraged to draw clear links to the COVID-19 public health emergency with the fewest degrees of separation with when describing your project's eligibility.

Direct projects can be attributed solely to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indirect projects are linked to the COVID-19 pandemic via direct effects or have more than one cause, of which the COVID-19 pandemic is one. More information and examples on this topic are available in the overview section.

### **Choosing a Priority Outcome**

Applicants must select one of the five Priority Outcomes to categorize their project. If an applicant believes that their project could be categorized as two or more of the outcomes, chose the one in which a plurality of the funds will be spent. More information and examples on this topic are available in the overview section.

### **Implementation Plan**

In this section of the proposal, you will find questions about resources needed, timelines, risks, and equity. This is a qualitative section where you can describe what is needed or what is intended to take place to implement the project. Please do not include financial information in this section when discussing resources needed. A separate Financial Information section exists for this. It is also suggested that timelines be described in terms of days, weeks, and months instead of specific dates.

Each project will have risks. The Proposal Review Team will be looking for thoughtful responses and consideration of such risks when scoring projects. Applicants are not expected to eliminate risk. However, applicants are encouraged to describe at least 3 risks and a plan for mitigation to receive the maximum number of points.

Equity, as prescribed in Article 1 39-1 in the Baltimore City Code, means closing the gaps in policy, practice, and allocation of resources so that race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and income do not predict one's success, while also improving outcomes for all. Equity is at the core of the vision for the use of American Rescue Plan Act and is the scoring criterion with the highest point value. It is the expectation of the City that projects strive to be implemented equitably.

### **Evaluation**

Projects will be subject to multiple evaluation criteria over their lifetime. The information contained in the proposals are just the beginning of project evaluation criteria. Proposals are seeking a thoughtful consideration of measurement and evaluation that have valid, accessible, well-sourced data. Most importantly, evaluation measures proposed should link to outcomes. Outcomes are observable and measurable over time, may contain multiple goals, and can be tracked with performance measures.

### **Financial Information**

The expected budget for project should be well planned, but is not expected to be exhaustive or granular. Review Team members will be looking for itemized costs that consider all necessary resources to complete a project. Furthermore, organizations should give additional thought as to whether the project they are proposing will have an impact on future operating budgets, revenue or expenditures. Projects that focus on one-time investments will score higher than those that generate long-term costs.

There is a minimum project funding amount of \$250,000. Projects less than the minimum will not be accepted.



## Other Information

### Responsibilities

The instructions contained in this document have highlighted multiple responsibilities for applicants and the Project Administration Team. In addition, there are several additional policies and expectations of the City that may impact your organization's decision or ability to apply for project funding.

Applicants are expected to:

- Self-assess project eligibility before making a submission
- Seek prior approval of all relevant parties before making a submission
- Provide accurate, honest, and timely information
- Comply with all laws, contractual requirements, guidelines, and agreements
- Actively seek an understanding of the project lifecycle
- Make the project a priority of the organization
- Complete projects in accordance with the approved scope of work and agreed upon timeline
- Read and continually refer to the application instructions and other future guidance and FAQs from the program administrators
- Be in good standing with the State of Maryland and City of Baltimore

The Project Administration Team is expected to:

- Ensure applicants are aware of eligibility requirements
- Notify applicants and awardees of status changes
- Accept and answer questions from applicants in a timely fashion
- Issue and update guidance and Frequently Asked Questions as necessary
- Provide excellent customer service throughout the project lifecycle
- Complete agreements and make payments in a timely fashion
- Provide awardees with the information and tools to meet compliance requirements

### Contact Information

For additional information, please email [budget@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:budget@baltimorecity.gov).

## Appendix A: Proposal Questions

Please describe your project here. Include any key benefits you expect for your agency, citizens, and the City of Baltimore.

How does this project respond to or mitigate the public health emergency with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic or its negative economic impacts?

Which Mayoral Priority Outcome does the project fall under?

Does the project remedy a direct or indirect effect of the public health emergency?

- Please describe the evidence (print article, peer-reviewed research, internal data, etc.) linking this indirect remedy to the public health emergency.

If this project is funded, does the organization have the capacity to implement the project with existing resources? Would the organization require additional staff, technology or other physical, social, or organizational resources for this project to succeed? Please describe.

Describe the project timeline including key dates. Please also include whether or not this project will be phased out at the conclusion of the public health emergency.

Describe the risks or challenges for the successful implementation of this project.

How will this project incorporate and advance equity?

Describe what success means in the context of this project. How will outcomes change over time due to its implementation? (e.g. "reduce the amount of invoices paid late")

Define 3-5 potential performance measures for this project. Each performance measure should include the source of your data and ability to access and report on that data.

List all expenses associated with the project (salaries, contracts, materials, equipment, grants, etc.). Provide a brief description of the expense and indicate if it is one-time or recurring. Enter each expense on a new line starting with the dollar value.

Describe the impact this project will have on the operating budget - revenue and expenditures. If there is no impact, explain why.

Total Amount Requested

I certify that the information provided in this proposal is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I am authorized by both agency head and fiscal officer to submit this proposal. I understand that the submission of this proposal does not constitute a formal application or a commitment to fund.

## Appendix B: Scoring Criteria

Criteria	Not Demonstrated	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<b>Describes project intentions clearly and resulting benefits</b>	No clear intention for use of funds	Intent unclear or uses excessive jargon	Intent clear and presents project benefits	Intent clear, presents benefits, and advances Mayoral agenda
	0 points	5 points	10 points	15 points
<b>Presents business case for the public good</b>	No business case and would result in large-scale revenue loss or recurring costs without a solution	Presents business case for the public good and may result in increased recurring costs	Presents business case and is expected to generate cost savings or revenue	Presents business case and intends to supply both cost savings and revenue
	0 points	5 points	10 points	15 points
<b>Identifies and analyzes project risks</b>	No presentation of risks or adverse results	One risk or adverse result is given	Two or more risks given and at least one mitigating factor	Three or more risks given and a plan for mitigation
	0 points	5 points	10 points	15 points
<b>Describes success and provides valid performance measures</b>	Success not adequately described or goal-based	Success described, performance measures not supported or do not tie to an outcome	Success is goal-based, performance measures are valid	Success is outcome-oriented, performance measures identified, sourced, accessible, and linked to outcome
	0 points	5 points	10 points	15 points
<b>Explains how project impacts equity</b>	No evidence of (or adverse) impact in the project	Equity influences the proposal	Equity is operationalized in the proposal	Equity is a central tenet of the project
	0 points	7 points	12 points	20 points
<b>Outlines financial resources to achieve project goals</b>	No evidence of financial plan or itemized costs	Itemized costs are non-specific; evidence of financial planning	Itemized costs are specific; financial plan is clearly outlined	Itemized costs and financial plan are supported with descriptions
	0 points	5 points	10 points	15 points
<b>Leverages City resources with partnerships</b>	No evidence of partnerships	Partnership identified within the City <i>or</i> an external partner	Partnership and external funding (or enhancement of existing funding) identified	Multiple collaborators and external funding (or enhancement of existing funding) identified
	0 points	1 point	3 points	5 points

## **Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Can I save my project proposal and come back to it later?**

Yes, the online application portal (Formstack) allows you to save your proposal while working on it. Just choose “Save and Resume Later” and the system will provide a link that you can copy to resume your work later. The link can also be emailed to any address you choose. The link and your work will expire after 30 days.

### **How long will I have to complete a proposal?**

Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis. Currently, there is no established end date. Proposals can be completed at any time through the online portal.

### **How long is the entire process expected to take?**

The process is estimated to take between 6-12 weeks. Proposals will be scored on a bi-weekly basis. However, it could be shorter or longer depending on how it takes to flesh out a proposal into a fully formed request for funding. For internal applicants, community engagement standards will have to be assigned and met. For external applicants, the City will have to complete a risk assessment and any other due diligence required to fulfill compliance with the applicable federal, state, or local law.

### **What if my project is not related to the pandemic?**

A project unrelated or not linked to the pandemic in any way does not meet eligibility requirements and cannot be funded with American Rescue Plan Act funds.

### **What if I need help with financial information or identifying costs?**

Internal applicants who need assistance with budgeting should contact their BBMR analyst. External organizations should contact [budget@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:budget@baltimorecity.gov).

### **Will my agency be penalized if I propose a project that has an operating budget impact?**

No, projects will not be penalized for operating budget impacts. However, projects with adverse operating impacts will not be awarded the highest number of points based on the Scoring Criteria.

### **How can I seek a project endorsement?**

Applicants can seek an endorsement by contacting and discussing their proposal with an individual who can provide an endorsement. The City Council President, Comptroller, and members of the Baltimore City Council can endorse projects.

### **Is there a limit on how much can be requested for a project?**

No.

### **Will a requesting funding amount over a certain amount affect my score?**

No.