



EL PASO COUNTY

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

NONPROFIT ASSISTANCE FUNDS

*BENCHMARK FINDINGS
FEBRUARY 2022*

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Introduction & Summary

El Paso County's (County) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds distribution structure is designed to meet the County's needs and comply with federal regulations. As a result, the County set aside \$9.7 million of these funds to support the County's non-profit organizations. Before making funding decisions, the County contracted the Paso del Norte Community Foundation (PdNCF) to research, review, and advise the County on best practices and funding recommendations.

An essential component in making these recommendations is understanding how other government entities managed their ARPA funding. The findings in this summary are intended to complement findings from community listening sessions and input from the County Commissioners Court to make recommendations for the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) structure.

Methods

Between February 7 and March 17, a search was conducted for processes used by other government entities. The search criteria were:

- The entity had to be a city, county, or state government (minimum of one each);
- The funds needed to come from ARPA or Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act;
- The entity was required to have set forth a similar funding opportunity specifically for non-profits;
- It needed to provide a website with a formal NOFO or application guidelines documents;
- Search terms included but were not limited to "ARPA," "CARES," "SLFRF," "non-profit," and "NOFO."

While there were no explicit exclusion criteria, the entities needed to align with the above precisely. The County expressed interest in seeing entities outside of New Mexico and Texas, so the search included entities across the country. A summary profile was created for each organization, including qualifications, funding breakdown, and application process.

Of the 100s of potential entities that came up, most were immediately excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria above. Many were also disqualified as they designed the funds under a specific area (e.g., homelessness) only. A total of 15 NOFOs were vetted, but six were disqualified for one or a mix of the following reasons: 1) only had a 'preference' for non-profit applicants in the evaluation process (i.e., allowed for-profits), 2) vague eligibility criteria, 3)

eligibility criteria too broad, and/or 4) required a registration process. Please refer to the links in the *Results* section for further details.

Results

While many organizations met these criteria, **nine** organizations were most closely aligned. They were:

1. City of Elk Grove, CA (EGCA)
 - a. American Rescue Plan Act Nonprofit Grant
 - b. **\$2.5 million** total funds available
2. City of Ft Worth, TX (FWTX)
 - a. Preserve the Fort program – CARES Act funding
 - b. \$54.9 million awarded, with 3% awarded to non-profits (~ **\$1.6 million**)
3. City of Kokomo, IN (KIN)
 - a. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Nonprofit Funding
 - b. **\$500,000** total funds available
4. Clark County, NV (CNV)
 - a. Clark County Fiscal Recovery Funds
 - b. Total funds available not stated
5. El Paso County, CO (EPCO)
 - a. Community Impact Grant
 - b. **\$8,954,635** disbursed (average of \$175,581/applicant)
6. Fort Bend County, TX (FBTX)
 - a. Non-Profit Partnership Grant Program
 - b. **\$22 million allotted and \$11 million disbursed**
7. Seminole County, FL (SFL)
 - a. Small Business and Non-Profit Assistance
 - b. **\$400,000** total funds available
8. Benton County, OR (BRO)
 - a. American Rescue Plan Act Notice of Funding Opportunity
 - b. **\$2.4 million** total funds available
9. State of Alaska (AK)
 - a. ARPA Nonprofit Recovery Fund
 - b. **\$20 million** total funds available

The following funding criteria were found most prominently:

1. Funding ranges
 - a. The maximum funding was \$1.2 million from EPCO
 - b. The minimum funding was \$5,000 from EGCA & FBTX
 - c. Of reported min/max, the average was between \$10,500 to \$350,000
 - d. FWTX, KIN, and BRO provided no minimum, and SFL provided specific amounts
 - e. CNV did not specify amounts but required more documentation with higher granted amounts

2. Types of funded and disqualified organizations
 - a. All organizations established that organizations needed to be a “non-profit”
 - b. Six organizations specified the 501(c)3 designation as the only option or as one of the eligible entities
 - c. FWTX was the only organization limiting the number of employees (≤ 500)
 - d. Four organizations mentioned faith-based organizations; KIN, AK, and EGCA stipulated that they cannot directly fund religious activities, while CNV considers them as eligible organizations
 - e. Four organizations specified disqualified organizations, with AK & EGCA setting individuals and for-profits as ineligible
 - f. Local government agencies were included as eligible organizations for AK & BOR

3. Focus areas and disqualified costs
 - a. ALL organizations explicitly mentioned a requirement of some connection to COVID, with most stating so at the beginning of their NOFO
 - b. All funded organizations needed to be within and servicing the designated area
 - c. Five organizations mentioned “house,” “household,” “home,” or “homeless” services in some capacity.
 - d. Four organizations mentioned “health” in some manner as a priority, including public, mental, and medical health
 - e. Three organizations mentioned “job training,” “hire personnel,” and “employment” as a focus area
 - f. “Disproportionately impacted” commonly came up, but no specifics as to what this entailed
 - g. While few organizations had a disqualified costs section, most mentioned excluding discriminatory activities, and several mentioned excluding lobbying and religious activities

For more details, please refer to this [LINK](#) for a more detailed table and this [LINK](#) for the individual files for each organization.

Recommendations

Based on this benchmarking process only, current recommendations for discussion are:

1. A funding range between ~\$10,000 and ~\$500,000 per organization.
2. Define eligible applicants, potentially including:
 - a. Organizations identified as 501(c)3 and perhaps other 501(c) designations as allowed by ARPA guidelines
 - b. Faith-based organizations, but specify that services must be non-religious
 - c. While rarely noted (at least expressly) in NOFOs, you may consider including local government entities as eligible to apply
3. Identify disqualified applicants, including:
 - a. Individuals
 - b. State, tribal, or federal government agencies
 - c. For-profit organizations or businesses
 - d. Private non-profit organizations, such as 509(a)(1), 509(a)(2), or 509(a)(3) organizations
4. Emphasize preferred funding areas:
 - a. COVID-19 pandemic related, funding must be linked clearly to COVID
 - b. Prioritize findings from the community listening sessions
5. Specify disqualified use of funds, such as:
 - a. Discriminatory activities
 - b. Lobbying
 - c. Religious activities
 - d. Activities outside of El Paso County
6. Consider collecting the following documents as part of the application:
 - a. Basic organization background
 - b. A summary of need and how it's related to the COVID pandemic
 - c. A description of the proposed project to address the said need
 - d. Project budget (providing a template may be helpful) and budget narrative
 - e. Board of Directors list
 - f. Most recent audit or financial documents
7. To a lesser extent, consider giving these funds a unique name. Most organizations created a name that made these funds sound "special":
 - a. A descriptive name, such as: "El Paso County ARPA Non-profit Recovery Fund" or
 - b. A more creative name could be originated
 - i. Keywords: Partnership, Recovery, Community, and Assistance

These recommendations are only from benchmarking and will need to be considered in the light of community listening sessions, input from the Court, and the context of El Paso County's specific needs and capabilities.