

SOUTHSTRONG CITIES

PEOPLE FIRST. EQUITY CENTERED

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provides \$130 billion in federal funding directly to local governments. This unprecedented level of aid will help communities across the US shape their recovery from the COVID-19 recession. Local leaders should view the arrival of ARP funds as a critical opportunity to make investments that both encourage recovery and accelerate progress towards long-term goals. In the Southeast, the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 exacerbated structural inequalities. Our region's local governments should direct their ARP funds towards strategic and sustainable recovery initiatives that benefit all community members.

South Strong Cities can begin by adopting a resolution that commits several key principles for using local ARP funds. SEAP has drafted a model resolution for cities, towns, and counties that:

- Prioritizes the use of ARP funds for initiatives that drive sustainable and equitable recovery.
- Commits to community engagement as part of the decision-making for ARP funds, emphasizing obtaining input from disadvantaged groups.
- Commits to a high degree of accountability and transparency in reporting on the use of ARP funds.
- Commits to developing measures that allow the community to assess outcomes and results from ARP funds usage.

SEAP's new ARP toolkit for South Strong Cities will include a range of resources to help local governments meet these goals:

- Recovery Options. A menu of local initiatives already working in communities across the country. South Strong Cities can draw from these real-time examples to build their own local recovery programs and initiatives.
- Community Participation. Information to guide South Strong Cities on incorporating community voice and public engagement into ARP spending decisions.
- Accountability. Guidelines and checklists to help South Strong Cities meet their commitment to providing accountability and transparency in reporting on ARP funds.
- Measuring Results. Guidance on how South Strong Cities can assess community outcomes and impacts from the use of ARP funds.

SEAP is also committed to building a knowledge exchange so that South Strong Cities can share strategies, challenges, and success stories. Working together, SEAP can help leading-edge communities leverage their capacity and accelerate local recovery initiatives.

For more information about the SEAP ARP Toolkit or how your community can become a South Strong City, please contact Tyler Bellstrom or Morgan Smith at southstrong@rooseveltinstitute.org.