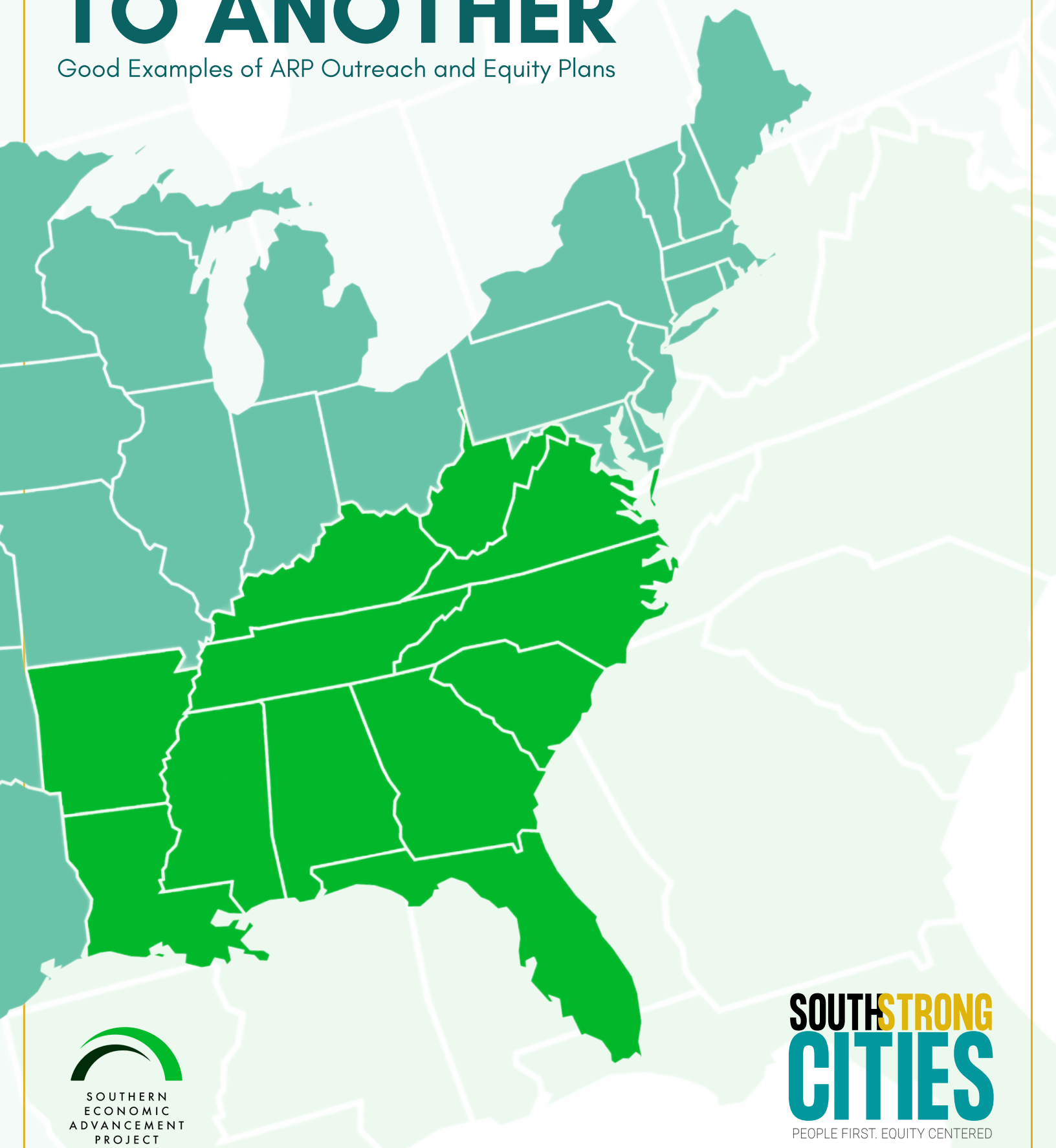


FROM ONE CITY TO ANOTHER

Good Examples of ARP Outreach and Equity Plans



The State and Local Recovery Fund program (SLRF) is a centerpiece of the American Rescue Plan (ARP), providing \$130 billion in funding to 19,000 cities and counties. Over the summer, local governments received their initial allocations. From there, many began planning efforts on how to best use these one-time funds and engage residents on spending proposals.

The US Treasury SLRF guidance encourages local governments to use recovery funds to improve equity outcomes and engage in community outreach as part of the decision-making process. For larger jurisdictions (populations over 250,000), the Treasury requires reporting on equity and engagement as part of the SLRF administration. For smaller communities, these concepts are equally valid, but there is no mandatory reporting requirement.

To help accelerate good SLRF spending practices in communities of all sizes, the Southern Economic Advancement Project (SEAP) identifies leading examples of community engagement approaches and equity outcomes prioritizations. This report highlights a selection of cities that local leaders can look to for real-time examples. In addition, the [SEAP ARP Toolkit](#) webpage provides an interactive inventory of similar actions in more than 100 communities. This report and the online toolkit help local leaders implement strategies for equitable SLRF investments and consider new mechanisms to bring community voices into spending decisions.

Additional Resources:

- This [PolicyLink Report](#) suggests municipal strategies for deploying ARP funds equitably, efficiently and strategically.
- The [Unum Fund Guide](#) for policymakers highlights tools and strategies that support accountability in the deployment of ARP funds and an equitable approach to budget decisions.
- This [Community Catalyst Toolkit](#) highlights ARP organizing opportunities, with examples to illustrate how to leverage ARP funds to spur transformative change and address the unique needs of communities.
- This [Vera Institute of Justice Report](#) encourages the pursuit of equitable outcomes by prioritizing ARP spending on community violence interventions, behavioral health support and diversion programs, and pretrial release and post-incarceration reentry programs.

TABLE 1

Southeast | Pop. < 250k

- East Point, GA
- Jackson, MS
- Morgantown, WV
- Charleston, WV
- Gainesville, FL
- Alexandria, VA
- Mobile, AL

TABLE 2

Southeast | Pop. > 250k

- St. Petersburg, FL
- Durham, NC
- Greensboro, NC
- Lexington, KY
- New Orleans, LA
- Louisville, KY

TABLE 3

Other Regions | Pop. < 250k

- Youngstown, OH
- Flint, MI
- Yolo County, CA

TABLE 4

Other Regions | Pop. > 250k

- Buffalo, NY
- Cleveland, OH
- Milwaukee, WI
- Denver, CO
- Austin, TX
- Los Angeles County, CA

East Point, GA



Pop: 35,000

\$13M SLRF

In August, East Point City Council adopted a proclamation patterned after [SEAP's ARP Model Resolution](#). Through this resolution, the city commits to incorporating community outreach into ARP funding and investment decisions to help foster more equitable recovery efforts.

Morgantown, WV



Pop: 31,000

\$11M SLRF

Morgantown created a survey for residents, businesses and community organizations to identify critical investment areas and opportunities. An in-person meeting will follow the survey, where residents can present ideas. Additionally, [the city's website](#) displays a timeline for decision-making and the allocation approval process. Morgantown's ARP engagement strategy demonstrates how a small city can maximize outreach through in-person and online resources.

Charleston, WV



Pop: 48,000

\$38M SLRF

Charleston created an ARP Advisory Committee to keep residents informed about planning efforts and ARP fund usage. In the Spring, the city conducted [public outreach](#) to gather community feedback on funding allocation prioritizations. This outreach included in-person meetings and a [survey](#), which residents could complete in-person or online. Additionally, community organizations were able to propose project ideas and [apply for funding](#) for project development.

Mobile, AL



Pop: 190,000

\$8M SLRF

Mobile created the [People First Plan](#) to ensure equitable ARP funds usage by addressing the pandemic's negative economic impacts, providing premium pay for essential workers, expanding broadband infrastructure and enhancing equity-focused services.

Jackson, MS



Pop: 166,000

\$42M SLRF

Jackson plans to use a significant portion of its recovery funds to address long-standing issues with the city's drinking and stormwater systems. The city's most vulnerable infrastructure is concentrated in the city's poorest neighborhoods. As part of equitable recovery efforts, [city officials propose](#) investing \$15.75 million of ARP funds for these infrastructure projects.

Additionally, the city committed funds toward a guaranteed income pilot program, which will target the city's poorest households. Combined with [Jackson's strategic plan](#), these proposed allocations reflect the city's efforts to use ARP funds to create a more equitable and resilient community.

Gainesville, FL



Pop: 132,000

\$32M SLRF

Gainesville's Office of Equity and Inclusion held a series of [community feedback sessions](#) to gather public input on which projects should be a priority. The city received several dozen [proposals](#) throughout these sessions, covering all of the city's prioritized areas. All proposed projects were evaluated using the Equity Covid Budget Tool to identify their potential to advance equity and alleviate existing disparities in Gainesville.

Alexandria, VA



Pop: 158,000

\$59M SLRF

Alexandria [conducted outreach](#) in early May. Along with multiple public listening sessions, outreach also included an online survey for residents. Survey responses were collected and [published on the city's website](#). Outreach outcomes were then used to create an allocation plan for the first tranche of funding, which passed in early July. This initial round of funding supported [thirty projects](#) ranging from \$20,000 to \$4 million. The [allocation plan](#) includes several equity-focused initiatives such as a guaranteed basic income pilot program, eviction prevention and LGBTQ inclusion.

St. Petersburg, FL



Pop: 261,000

\$45M SLRF

In July, St. Petersburg held [three listening sessions](#) where the city presented an outline of potential projects and investment areas. The presentation is available on the city's website.

Following the presentation, residents were divided into breakout groups to voice questions and concerns to city officials. After breakout sessions, residents completed a survey ranking the areas outlined in the presentation from most important to least. Officials used survey results to develop a spending plan that incorporates expert and public opinions on funding priorities.

Durham, NC



Pop: 270,000

\$51M SLRF

Durham created six internal committees, each with a specific funding area to research. The city also held [two listening sessions](#) to gather community feedback. Each session was recorded and made [available online](#).

Additionally, officials developed a [survey](#) for residents to outline their top investment priorities. The community responded with more than 300 submissions and 80 project proposals. Community outreach is ongoing within Durham's funding allocation process, as the city views outreach as a means of evaluating funding allocation decisions and identifying projects for future funding.

New Orleans, LA



Pop: 391,000

\$375M SLRF

New Orleans created a [task force](#) aiming to leverage a wide range of federal funds to advance an ambitious program for renewing the city's infrastructure. The five aspects of infrastructure the task force focuses on are Case Management, Community Services, Workforce, Economic Recovery Investments and Public Health.

Greensboro, NC



Pop: 291,000

\$59M SLRF

After receiving ARP funds, [Greensboro's City Council](#) created a list of priorities to guide the allocation of the funds. Affordable Housing, Fiscal Sustainability and Economic Development were among these priorities.

Additionally, the city council established three criteria for allocating funds: revenue restoration, recovery aid and transformative spending. Greensboro also developed a [simulator](#) for residents to express which category they would prioritize funding. The interactive simulator offers a more visual and intuitive tool to collect resident feedback over a traditional survey.

Lexington, KY



Pop: 321,000

\$120M SLRF

Lexington created a [framework](#) for ARP spending decisions and a survey for residents to identify investment priorities. The city also developed a tool for residents to suggest specific projects.

Additionally, officials offered the [survey](#) in various languages to guarantee that a language barrier would not prevent residents from voicing ideas and opinions.

Louisville, KY



Pop: 681,000

\$388M SLRF

Louisville is allocating ARP funding based on priorities identified through its [Build Back Better - Together initiative](#), [Advancing Racial Equity Plan](#), and [A Path Forward plan](#). These initiatives were created using community input, and the city has held multiple listening sessions focused on ARP spending. This outreach has taken the form of in-person meetings and an [online survey](#), where residents can identify which areas are most important to them.

Youngstown, OH



Pop: 60,000

\$83M SLRF

Youngstown held listening sessions throughout July and August to identify priority areas and gather community opinions on proposed projects.

This outreach was accompanied by a survey available at in-person meetings and the [city's website](#). The website also includes a [survey](#) where residents and organizations can [propose project](#) ideas. Survey responses have been used to inform city officials about which areas residents believe should receive funding priority .

Flint, MI



Pop: 97,000

\$95M SLRF

In the spring, Flint officials [conducted outreach](#) for their allocations. Through this, they identified five areas: Public Safety, Blight Elimination, Job Creation, Infrastructure, and Owner-occupied Home rehab and repairs. Officials conducted outreach through an online survey webpage or email, where residents ranked pre-identified areas in order of importance.

Yolo County, CA



Pop: 221,000

\$43M SLRF

In July, Yolo county officials held four workshops to gain community input on the most effective method of receiving funds. Three of these meetings were in person and one via zoom. Additionally, the county created a [webpage](#) with information regarding ARP allocations, how residents can submit proposals and a timeline outlining the decision-making process.

Buffalo, NY



Pop: 256,000

\$331M SLRF

Buffalo used a combination of targeted community outreach and an online survey to gather community input on ARP funding decisions. The targeted outreach was aimed at including community advocates who are knowledgeable in areas negatively impacted by the pandemic. This outreach, combined with research from subject matter experts, resulted in [Buffalo's Initial Spending plan](#), which outlines 28 projects over six of the federally designated spending categories.

Cleveland, OH



Pop: 385,000

\$512M SLRF

Cleveland created a form for residents to submit ideas for ARP funds as part of its [Restart CLE program](#). The city outlined three main objectives for ARP implementation: minimizing suffering and burden on the people and businesses impacted by COVID, better positioning all people and businesses to take advantage of the recovery process and ensuring residents are better off as a result of recovery efforts, thereby shaping Cleveland into a more equitable community.

Milwaukee, WI



Pop: 595,000

\$394M SLRF

Upon passage of the ARP, Milwaukee created an [ARP Leadership Team](#) with set objectives and transparency goals. The city identified members of the team and their responsibilities, initial areas of priority, the decision-making criteria for projects, and [community engagement opportunities](#). By announcing goals and criteria for projects funded by ARP, Milwaukee conducted public outreach focused on the prioritized areas while being transparent about the process.

Denver, CO



Pop: 706,000

\$308M SLRF

Denver used various [engagement tools](#) to ensure comprehensive outreach, including tele-townhalls and direct calls to individuals in high-risk areas. Denver is pursuing a faster, more equitable recovery with a combination of ARP funds and a potential bond package. The city has developed a [spending plan](#) for the first tranche of recovery funding. Denver's ARP spending is integrated with the [RISE Denver](#) program, aiming to rebuild Denver as an inclusive and sustainable economy.

Austin, TX



Pop: 951,000

\$196M SLRF

Throughout the ARP allocation planning process, Austin directed the [City Manager](#) to identify priority areas where funding would create opportunities normally unavailable to that specific area.

Priority areas identified by the city council include homelessness and related housing, mental health and substance use issues, early childhood care and education, career development and work programs and food insecurity. Austin identified areas for ARP funding investment by using the listed priorities in combination with conversations with community partners.

Los Angeles County, CA



Pop: 10,000,000

\$1.9B SLRF

Los Angeles County seeks to build on lessons learned from the CARES fund implementation to maximize the impact of equity-based and economic recovery programs. They have developed an equity-focused formula to help designate their share of funds. They are also [allocating funds](#) to residents who are most impacted by COVID or poverty. These efforts aim to guarantee that the ARP funds provide equitable access to opportunities and protections, while ensuring the funds' positive impact provides lasting change within the county.