

THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN TOOLKIT

ARP IN ACTION FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY



The federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARP or ARPA) includes billions of dollars in direct funding for local governments. Cities and counties are using these funds in various ways, including services and projects focused on disabled people. Cities and counties have until December 2024 to budget the dollars and December 2026 to spend the funds. In this resource are some projects across the South focused on the disability community.



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HOUSING

SARASOTA COUNTY, FL | \$5M BUDGET AND \$1.5M BUDGET

Funding of \$5 million to the Loveland Center, Inc. will support the affordable housing project development of "The Villas at Loveland Village," which includes the development of 7.5 acres of land to include (50) to (80) residential units. Project beneficiaries include Intellectual and Development Disabled (I/DD) individuals and senior citizens, at 65% AMI and below.

Funding of \$1.5 million to the Atlantic Housing Foundation will support the affordable housing project development of "The Waters at North Port," which includes the development of (288) units of affordable rental housing. Project beneficiaries include low-income persons, families, families with children, the elderly and physically or mentally disabled persons to lessen neighborhood tensions, eliminate prejudice and combat community deterioration at 80% AMI or less.

HORRY COUNTY, SC | \$1.9M BUDGET

Horry County called for proposals regarding services to disproportionately impacted communities and infrastructure in Public Services, Affordable Housing, and Water and Sewer. As a result, funding supports a project proposed by SOS Health Care, Inc. to develop affordable housing for adults with disabilities at Oak Tree Farm in Conway, SC.

Equity Goal: Integrated housing models. Local leaders should prioritize funds on integrated projects that ensure people with disabilities live in communities with nondisabled people rather than be segregated on their own. For example, [The Kelsey](#) is an integrated housing development coming to Birmingham, AL, offering an approach other Southern communities could replicate.



EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITIONS

MEMPHIS, TN | \$605,000 BUDGET

Funds will assist youth who have disabilities and assist with creating post-secondary plans, which include developing hard and soft skills for gainful employment.

Equity Goal: Livable and equal wages. Certain programs and employment opportunities for disabled people pay sub-minimum wages. Local leaders should set equity goals that direct funds to opportunities that provide gainful employment to disabled people.

RECREATION & FACILITIES

HARRISON COUNTY, MS | \$4M BUDGET

This project's funding would provide a new building for the Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Services program.

JACKSONVILLE, AL | \$95,000 BUDGET

The project will establish a playground with features for kids with disabilities in low-income neighborhoods.

AVENTURA, FL | \$480,000 BUDGET

Project will install ADA-compliant restrooms at Peace Park and Waterways Dog Park.



RECREATION & FACILITIES

CAMPBELL COUNTY, KY | \$200,000 BUDGET

Funding will support the design, construction and installation of a new playground at AJ Jolly Park, which will include majority ADA accessible and inclusive play features, including sensory features to provide an area where all children, regardless of disability status, can play and interact safely with each other.

RECTOR, AR | \$70,000 BUDGET

The outdated and unsafe playground equipment, barriers, and mulch will be replaced with new equipment to provide families with safe outdoor recreational opportunities. This will also include new access ways and play equipment for disabled people.

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA | \$39,000 BUDGET

Programs include staffing a Marcus Alert Coordinator to develop and implement provisions for behavioral health responses to mental health emergencies and TREK Mobile. This therapeutic recreation program will bring programming to adult individuals with developmental disabilities during daytime hours in their residences.

MARENGO COUNTY, AL | \$5,600 BUDGET

This project will install ADA compliant wheelchair ramp at the Hwy 43 Linden voting location.

Equity Goal: Consider accessibility at the front end of project design and prioritize integration. Features for kids with disabilities or accessible recreational additions should be part of the entire playground and not a separate installation that further marginalizes disabled youth.



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INFRASTRUCTURE

CUTLER BAY, FL | \$800,000 BUDGET

The project is for the construction of sidewalk repairs, replacements, and the installation of ADA-accessible ramps identified in the Town's Sidewalk & Roadway Assessment Report. The Town's sidewalks are over 50 years old. Prior to the transfer to the Town, the sidewalks had no ADA-accessible ramps and were not properly maintained, resulting in numerous trip hazards, root damage, and many cracked or broken sections.

LEGAL SERVICES

FORSYTH COUNTY, NC | \$840,000 BUDGET

The Children's Law Center (CLC) of Central North Carolina will use funds to expand and continue its legal advocacy for children and work to build healthy families in Forsyth County involved in civil domestic violence cases, high conflict custody cases and matters addressing the education of children with disabilities, facing disciplinary issues and dealing with mental health issues that affect school performance. Children range in age from birth to age 18 and come from all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds.



Want to advocate for ARP funds in your community? Check out the [Local Funds Tracker](#) to see how much money is still on the table in your city and county. Next, download the [ARP Activist Guide](#) for talking points, sample letters, and organizing strategies.



BROADBAND IS AN IMPORTANT INVESTMENT BY STATES



While this policy brief focuses on local governments, each state also has its own pool of ARP dollars. Several states have prioritized broadband with ARP funds. A major contributor to the digital divide in disabled homes is the lack of affordability of broadband internet access, which is true even when they live in areas where broadband access is available. During the Covid-19 pandemic, federal funds assisted disabled people with affordable broadband internet access through the Emergency Broadband Benefit. That has now been adapted into a more long-term plan, Affordable Connectivity Plan. States like Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, and Virginia have allocated tens of millions, in some states, hundreds of millions in ARP funds to expand broadband internet access. It is obvious that states want to invest in broadband infrastructure. However, we need to ensure equitable access to that broadband service, which can only be true if it is affordable. States can implement similar relief programs for disabled constituents.

MORE PROJECTS... OUTSIDE OF THE SOUTH



PORTLAND, OR | \$3.5M BUDGET

The Digital Divide Response Tech Kit Expansion project, a collective effort led by the Digital Divide Work Group and Digital Inclusion Network community, will address digital in-equities to generate economic and social benefits for Black, Indigenous, and residents of color; people with disabilities; and seniors in our city. Bridging the digital divide is our vision and contribution for a shared and sustained economic recovery. In a recent survey of frontline-service community organization leaders, we were told very clearly that devices, internet service, and culturally specific digital literacy training are essential for their communities to recover and thrive. With ARPA funding, we will build upon the success of CARES Act funding for the Digital Divide Tech Kit project (\$5 million) to benefit both immediate and mid-term needs.

TULARE, CA | \$1M BUDGET

Downtown Facade, Revitalization, and Accessibility Grant Program is designed to encourage revitalization using private investment through renovations and quality improvements in the visual appearance of building facades and to improve accessibility on the interior and exterior of commercial structures within the Downtown District. The Program also strives to leverage private improvements while making revitalization efforts affordable, creative, and community-based.

DOUGLAS COUNTY, CO | \$350,000 BUDGET

Funds will expand internships, scholarships, and student support for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and those with traumatic brain injury through Arapahoe Community College.

KANSAS CITY, KS | \$91,000 BUDGET

Support for caregivers of human services/developmental disabilities clients in crisis.

WESTFORD, MA | \$50,000 BUDGET

The Abbot Elementary School had a wheelchair user planning to attend the school. The Facilities Director identified that the student would not have access to the gym/cafeteria stage, so this request was to make the area ADA accessible by constructing a ramp.



MORE PROJECTS... OUTSIDE OF THE SOUTH

TULSA, OK | \$50,000 BUDGET

New Leaf, Inc. will provide the city of Tulsa individuals with Developmental Disabilities (DD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with skills to enable them to work independently.

CASS COUNTY, NE | \$33,000 BUDGET

New County webpage that is 100% ADA compliant (American Disabilities Act).

TUCSON, AZ | \$30,000 BUDGET

Grant funds will be used to obtain donated wheelchairs that will be repaired and redistributed to individuals; provide repair workshops for individuals; build partnerships with other disability service agencies; and provide free or low-cost adaptive sports and recreation opportunities for people with disabilities.

YORK COUNTY, PA | \$25,000 BUDGET

CIL Opportunities continue our services to people with disabilities and older adults in the low-income brackets and assist them with applying for housing, employment, LIHEAP, rental assistance, and transportation tickets to work.

BATTLE CREEK, MI | (AMOUNT NOT INCLUDED)

Financial assistance to the ARC of Calhoun County, a non-profit organization whose mission is to enrich the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and their communities through advocacy in education, policy, and human rights.

JOHNSON COUNTY, IA | (AMOUNT NOT INCLUDED)

Johnson County SEATS Department provides rides to senior citizens, people with disabilities, and others lacking transportation. Existing services exclude hundreds of County residents. Johnson County SEATS will purchase a 176" wheelbase electric bus to meet this need. Working closely with Johnson County Social Service's Mobility Coordinator, this funding will help Johnson County residents with same-day service requests; residents waiting to become eligible to ride paratransit; residents unfamiliar with local transportation options; residents who need temporary transportation to medical care; and residents who cannot afford transportation alternatives.

ENGAGEMENT TIPS FOR LOCAL LEADERS

A key feature of ARP State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds is engagement! Local leaders should seek public input to prioritize the funds. Here are some ways leaders can better engage the disabled community:

ONE

Establish your community engagement goals. For any project or issue, the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#) can help local leaders select the level of participation that defines the public's role in a public participation process. Local leaders will likely seek "involvement" or "collaboration" with local community members to identify ARP spending priorities. These engagement goals can set up metrics for reaching target populations for input, including the disability community. [Columbia, MO](#) held a focus group with disabled people to gather input into spending priorities. [Barre City, VT](#) included disability status as a question in their ARP survey to measure engagement.

TWO

Develop and launch engagement plans and outreach activities. Once a public participation plan is developed, cities should publicize their process by providing a roadmap for engagement efforts, including a timeline for key milestones. Many online tools can also offer a dashboard or other public-facing resource to easily share process updates, resident feedback, survey results and additional information. These steps can help to expand community engagement into an ongoing dialogue between local government and residents,

- Write in [plain language](#).
- Make sure [graphs and charts are accessible](#)
- Be wary of "accessibility" website [overlays](#).

THREE

Identify existing and potential partners. For some local governments, engagement is already part of their standard practice. For others, ARP decisions present a key opportunity to take up a more proactive, inclusive dialogue about community needs and goals. To be successful, this engagement should include partner individuals and organizations who can contribute a "trusted voice" to accelerate and expand the community dialogue. [Douglas County, CO](#), for example, made IDD services one of the seven core investment priorities and created a task force of IDD service providers to provide input.

FOUR

Identify tools and processes. Online tools can help local governments connect to hard-to-reach audiences. Many cities may partner with [existing vendors](#) to provide accessible, easy-to-use platforms for surveys and feedback. These tools can solicit new ideas and assess support for ARP spending on existing programs and new proposals. Plain language and accessible graphs and charts are key features here as well.



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