

OPPORTUNITY FOR IOWA'S WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES: LOCAL AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS



In 2021, Congress set into motion the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), a multi-faceted economic stimulus package. Within it, \$350 billion was earmarked for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments.

The amount of money a jurisdiction received was based on population. Funds must be obligated by Dec. 31, 2024, and projects completed by Dec. 31, 2026.

Local funds allocated from ARPA present an opportunity to support the efforts of Iowa's Watershed Management Authorities (WMAs). In fact, a handful of WMAs across the state have already secured funding from their local cities and counties. Some have done so to support a watershed coordinator, while others have secured strictly project funding. This resource provides guidance for WMA leaders seeking out local ARPA funding.

What can ARPA funds be used for?

Generally speaking, ARPA funds are flexible in how they can be spent by jurisdictions receiving them. For example, some counties are using money to account for lost revenue, while others are taking on projects, such as addressing negative economic impacts and investing in broadband infrastructure.

With regard to water quality, the U.S. Treasury Department includes the following water and sewer infrastructure projects as eligible:

- Improvements to infrastructure, such as building or upgrading facilities, transmission, distribution, and storage systems.
- Eligible uses aligned to Environmental Protection Agency project categories for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

CWSRF projects related to WMAs include the following:

Nonpoint source

- Assistance to any public, private, or nonprofit entity for the implementation of a state nonpoint source pollution management program, established under the Clean Water Act (CWA), section 319.

Stormwater

- Assistance to any public, private, or nonprofit entity for measures to manage, reduce, treat, or recapture stormwater or subsurface drainage water.

Watershed pilot projects

- Assistance to any public, private, or nonprofit entity for the development and implementation of watershed projects meeting the criteria in the CWA, section 122.

Technical assistance

- Assistance to any qualified nonprofit entity, to provide technical assistance to owners and operators of small and medium sized publicly owned treatment works to plan, develop, and obtain financing for CWSRF eligible projects and to assist each treatment works in achieving compliance with the CWA.

Other CWSRF eligible projects include construction of publicly owned treatment works, energy efficiency, and water reuse. For a full list, visit epa.gov/cwsrf.

Applying for local ARPA funds

Each jurisdiction that received ARPA funding is conducting the application process in its own way, which will influence how a WMA proposal should be put together. Check to see if members of your WMA board have information on their jurisdiction's process. Also consider reaching out to the jurisdiction's administrator, as well as visiting the county or city's website to see if application information is available online.

Before putting together an application or proposal, WMA leaders should consider the following:

- Who will be the WMA's fiscal agent for the project?
- What will be the responsible entity for the project?
- Is the project in question outlined in the WMA's watershed management plan? If so, be sure to include this information.
- Does the project involve partnerships with local individuals, organizations, or entities?
- What is the breakdown of acres and/or population for each jurisdiction within the watershed? Consider requesting ARPA funds on a proportional basis.
- If the project involves hiring a coordinator:
 - What is the total amount of money required to hire a coordinator?
 - Where will the coordinator be stationed or based?
 - Is there a job description and plan for supervision in place for this individual?

Ultimately, this is an opportunity for a jurisdiction to invest in the efforts of your WMA. In the application process, emphasize your proposed project's benefits for the jurisdiction and local community.



Additional resources

Iowa State Association of Counties' ARPA landing page:
iowacounties.org/american-rescue-plan

National Association of Counties' ARPA landing page: naco.org/resources/featured/arpa-fiscal-recovery-fund

National Association of Counties' ARPA "Overview for America's Counties":
naco.org/resources/featured/us-treasury-interim-final-rule-guidance-state-and-local-fiscal

U.S. Department of the Treasury's landing page for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds:
home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds

If you are considering requesting local ARPA funds for your WMA and would like support in the process, reach out to the Center for Rural Affairs at 515-215-1294 or kateh@cfra.org.