

City of New Bedford launches website, survey for public input on ARPA funding

Mayor Jon Mitchell announced on Friday, July 23, 2021, that the City of New Bedford has launched a website, along with a public survey, to solicit input from city residents and organizations about the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funds awarded to the City.

On March 11, 2021, President Joe Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This law provides resources through the new Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund to local governments to respond to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19. This fund is administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The U.S. Treasury Department announced that New Bedford will receive \$64,729,754 in federal funding as part of ARPA.

The U.S. Treasury released the Interim Final Rule (IFR) for the program that sets forth eligible uses for funding, which includes responding to acute pandemic-response needs, filling revenue shortfalls, and supporting the communities and populations hardest-hit by COVID-19.

ARPA funding is intended to be used for four main purposes:

Address Negative Economic Impacts

Respond to economic harms to workers, families, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector.

Support Public Health Response

Fund COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff.

Replace Public Sector Revenue Loss

Use funds to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced during the pandemic.

Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure

Make necessary investments to improve access to clean drinking water, invest in wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and expand broadband access.

Through a convenient survey on the City website, accessible at www.newbedford-ma.gov/arpa, residents, business owners and nonprofit organizations in the city can weigh in with their priorities on the best way ARPA funds can be used to benefit New Bedford. The City will also announce various further options for public input to ensure all voices are heard. As additional opportunities are scheduled, they will be posted on the City's ARPA website.

"ARPA has created a unique, generational opportunity for New Bedford. In the 1960s and 1970s direct federal investment through urban renewal programs transformed much of the downtown into a historic district that became the foundation for the tourism and cultural scene we enjoy today. Likewise, urban renewal reconstructed the waterfront and put our commercial fishing industry on the path to being the most profitable in the nation. ARPA may differ from the federal programs that produced these successes, but the lesson is the same: We need to ensure that this one-time infusion of funds has lasting impacts on the families and businesses of New Bedford," said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

He added, "That is why it is so important that we hear from as many people as possible about new opportunities to invest in our city. We need everyone's help in making sure the sacrifices and difficulties of the pandemic are redeemed as positive initiatives that deliver long-term benefits for our residents."