

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA)

Questions and Answers

1. What exactly is ARPA?

- ❖ American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is federal funding that supplies \$350 billion in added support for state and local governments. The funding is provided through the U.S. Treasury, referred to in the Function as “Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (“CSLFRF”), and is included in Subtitle M, section 9901 of the Act. Apr 2, 2021.
- ❖ Gov. Tony Evers announcement can be found here:
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIGOV/bulletins/2ccaf75>

2. What services can't we do or provide with ARPA funds?

- ❖ ARPA funds are held to the same guidelines as VOCA funds.
- ❖ See the Wisconsin State VOCA Guidelines at:
<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/sites/default/files/ocvs/not-victim/WI-voca-program-guidelines-final-Jan-2022.pdf>
 - No Lobbying
 - No Fundraising
 - No Enhancing Prosecution or Investigation of Criminal Activities
 - Studies and Research
 - Administrative Staff expenses (except as they apply to the administration of the VOCA/ARPA Grant)
 - Activities Exclusive to Crime Prevention
 - Medical Care Not Outlined in Guidelines

3. We can use ARPA funds for Professional Development, correct?

- ❖ Yes, you can use ARPA funds for professional development and training that addresses survivor services related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, APRA funds can be used for the budget items listed below. However, remember that you will have to track ARPA funds separately from all other funding sources.
- ❖ It may be best to use ARPA funds for items like rent, utilities, Osnium (or other) tracking systems, office supplies, program supplies, emergency funds, or other items that do not require OVC PMT reporting. See the list below on allowable ARPA expenses.
- ❖ See question number two for unallowable ARPA expenses. Please contact OCVS if you have questions about allowable ARPA expenses.
 - Personnel – *If possible, you may want to fund entire positions with APRA instead of split funding between ARPA and VOCA. This will reduce confusion with OVC*

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PMT reporting. Also, please use VOCA funds for sexual assault victim advocacy positions.

- Benefits
- Staff Development
- Travel
- Supplies & Operating Expenses
- Indirect Costs
- Other = Emergency funds, Liability Insurance, etc.

4. Is there going to be written guidelines like you have for VOCA?

- ❖ No, as ARPA funds will be held to the same guidelines as current VOCA funding.
- ❖ Please use the WI VOCA Guidelines for your ARPA funds. See WI VOCA Guidelines at: <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/sites/default/files/ocvs/not-victim/WI-voca-program-guidelines-final-Jan-2022.pdf>

5. Would an outreach person for an SV agency be a good fit for ARPA funding?

- ❖ Yes, outreach personnel may be a good fit for a Sexual Violence agency as the staff member is making the community aware of victim services at the agency and there is limited statistical tracking involved for outreach.

6. When audited by VOCA will they audit ARPA funds too?

- ❖ Yes, it is possible that both VOCA and ARPA funds will be audited. Please document all ARPA spending separately.

7. Does receiving these VOCA/ARPA funds make us ineligible to apply for other ARPA funds?

- ❖ No, you may still apply for other ARPA funding administered outside of Wisconsin DOJ, Office of Crime Victim Services.
- ❖ If you received additional ARPA funds administered outside of OCVS, be sure that VOCA/ARPA and other ARPA funds are tracked separately.

8. When is the continuing grant due? Will we have plenty of time to complete?

- ❖ The VOCA/ARPA continuation funding announcement will detail all relevant dates, including the due date. OCVS will do our best to accommodate the needs of our subrecipient agencies.

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9. Do we need to add in specific calculations for budget items in the continuation application?

- ❖ Yes. Calculations must be included for all budget line items, including a breakdown of allocations to the two different funding sources, VOCA and ARPA.

10. You mentioned that ARPA has not given any direction about reporting on services funded with ARPA funds yet. How long would they have to release that? I am concerned about them deciding they want tracking/future reporting right before or during the project.

- ❖ It is possible that the federal government will ask for additional tracking (OVC PMT) in the middle of the grant year.
- ❖ Please track ARPA funds separately, but in the same manner as VOCA funds. If possible, OCVS recommends using ARPA funds for items that do not require additional reporting such as rent, utilities, office supplies, program supplies, Osnium, etc.
- ❖ OCVS will share any and all information about ARPA tracking as it becomes available from the federal government.

11. Can we use ARPA funds for operating expenses and to supply Emergency Funds and items to clients? Do we have to use it for staff?

- ❖ Yes, you can use ARPA funds for operating expenses and emergency funds for victims.
- ❖ Please see question number two and question number three.

12. In our application for ARPA funds, are we just going to be using the expected specific percentage loss in VOCA funding and then applying for that amount? What is that exact ARPA ask amount?

- ❖ The ARPA amount for each agency will be linked in the VOCA/ARPA funding announcement and can also be found here: [funding table](#)
- ❖ As a reminder, the total ARPA award will be different for each subrecipient and based on your VOCA award. Below is an example of how VOCA reductions and ARPA funds were calculated:
 - **2022-2023 VOCA Continuation Application Example:** If you receive a \$100,000 VOCA award take $\$100,000 \times .15 = \$15,000$ – **\$15,000** will be the ARPA amount and the remaining **\$85,000** is VOCA. **For the 2022-2023 Application = \$15,000 ARPA Funds and \$85,000 VOCA Funds.**

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- **2023-2024 VOCA Continuation Application Example:** Take the new total VOCA award amount $\$85,000 \times .15 = \$12,750$. Add **\$15,000 ARPA** from the previous award + **\$12,750 = \$27,750**. **\$27,750** will be the ARPA amount and the remaining **\$72,250** is VOCA. For the 2023-2024 Application = **\$27,750 ARPA Funds and \$72,250 VOCA Funds.**

13. Are we going to be able to do modifications in ARPA?

- ❖ Yes, budget modifications for ARPA funds are allowable.
- ❖ To avoid unneeded modifications, please consider using ARPA funds for items like rent and utilities or other budget items that are consistent for your agency.
- ❖ Remember that ARPA is held to the same guidelines as VOCA funds. See the WI VOCA Guidelines for information about Budget Modifications at:
<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/sites/default/files/ocvs/not-victim/WI-voca-program-guidelines-final-Jan-2022.pdf>

14. Will the continuation grant be released to write and send after we have learned our fate with DCF?

- ❖ Unfortunately, this may not be a possibility as the DCF grant begins January 1, 2023, and the VOCA/ARPA award begins October 1, 2022.
- ❖ At this time, we do not know DCF's exact timeframe, however, we encourage all subrecipients to contact their DCF grant manager for additional information.

15. Can OCVS clarify – is child sexual abuse/ physical abuse different than the SA?

- ❖ Child Sexual Assault does not fall under the Sexual Assault (SA) victimization. There is a distinction between Child SA and Adult SA.
- ❖ There are also different victimizations for children and teens, which is divided into three victimization categories.
 - 1) Child Sexual Abuse/Assault
 - 2) Child Physical Abuse or Neglect
 - 3) Child Pornography.
- ❖ See the **OVC PMT Dictionary** resource below for questions about OVC PMT Victimization.

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- ❖ Please see page 10 for Adult SA and pages 11 and 12 to learn the differences between the three child/teen victimization categories:
https://ovcpmt.ojp.gov/documents/OVC_Performance_Measure_Dictionary_and_Terminology_Resource_Winter_2020_508c.pdf

16. What does reporting look like?

- ❖ ARPA reporting in fiscal reports will be similar to VOCA reporting. ARPA funds must be tracked and documented separately.

17. Is ARPA filling up gaps due to the VOCA decrease?

- ❖ Yes, ARPA is filling the gap for the two 15% VOCA reductions over the next two grant years. ARPA will fill in for the 15% VOCA cut in the 2022-2023 grant year and an added 15% VOCA reduction in the 2023-2024 grant year.
- ❖ See question number 11 for more information.

18. ARPA is not an increase of funds just the same amount, correct?

- ❖ Correct. ARPA funds are not an increase to your VOCA award. Your VOCA award is the same for all five years of this current VOCA continuation from the 2019 Competitive VOCA grant process, which ends in 2024. ARPA funds will supplement your VOCA award to ensure your agency receives the total planned continuation funding amount. See question number 11 and number 17 for more information.

19. How to figure out how to adjust people's time and allocations to meet VOCA SA guidelines.

- ❖ If possible, please fund entire positions, and the corresponding Benefits for those positions, instead of split funding positions. Also, please fund Sexual Assault (SA) victim service positions with VOCA funds instead of ARPA funds. We ask this because OCVS is required to have a minimum of 10% Sexual Assault numbers for our federal VOCA reporting to be in compliance with federal VOCA rules.

20. ARPA is like how you would use it like with VOCA. Nothing has changed but giving organizations more work.

- ❖ OCVS staff and partners requested ARPA funding to help fill the funding gap caused by the reduction in VOCA funds. Without ARPA, VOCA subrecipients would receive two 15% decreases over two years.

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- ❖ If your agency is unable to utilize ARPA funding to mitigate the planned VOCA reductions, please contact your OCVS Grants Specialist and OCVS will reallocate those ARPA dollars for other victim services.

21. Should we have just specific staff under ARPA.

- ❖ Yes, OCVS suggests having specified personnel funded under ARPA, along with their corresponding benefits. See question number 19 for more information.

22. Will reporting be difficult?

- ❖ Reporting will be more complicated due to the required separate tracking of ARPA and VOCA funds. Due to this, it may be best to use ARPA funds for items like rent, utilities, Osinium (or other) tracking systems, office supplies, program supplies, emergency funds, or other items that do not require OVC PMT reporting.
- ❖ If you choose to fund personnel with ARPA funds, please do not split fund those positions to reduce tracking errors. Please contact OCVS if you have questions about allowable ARPA expenses.

23. Staff and time allocation can be challenging.

- ❖ Staff and time reporting may be challenging due to the required separate tracking of ARPA and VOCA funds. Please keep it simple and do what works best for your agency.
- ❖ It may be best to use ARPA funds for items like rent, utilities, Osinium (or other) tracking systems, office supplies, program supplies, emergency funds, or other items that do not require OVC PMT reporting. If you choose to fund personnel with ARPA funds, please do not split fund those positions to reduce tracking errors.
- ❖ Please contact OCVS if you have questions about allowable ARPA expenses.

24. What does sustainability look like? Long term after this period of ARPA filling the gaps.

- ❖ OCVS administers victim services funds with a goal of sustainability and victim services stability. However, OCVS does not have influence on funding deposits into the Crime Victims Funds or congressional allocations and therefore cannot predict funding levels.
- ❖ VOCA funding received by OCVS is based on a formula, which is pre-determined for all 50 states and applicable territories. OCVS does not have discretion on the amount of VOCA funds available for Wisconsin.

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- ❖ The next VOCA competitive is planned for Summer 2024, with a start date of October 1, 2024. OCVS recommends that Agencies should use the next two years to explore other funding sources and options.

25. What happens in 2 years when ARPA ends.

- ❖ Please see question 24. OCVS will continue to be transparent about funding levels for victim services across the state and provide updates as soon as they are available.

26. Can we do ARPA one way, then switch it up the next year?

- ❖ Yes, OCVS expects adjustments over the next year as we navigate this new funding source.

27. This will involve retraining some staff who are used to doing things for VOCA and OVC PMT, and now have to switch to separate tracking . . . and that it will be a challenge again in 2 years when it changes again.

- ❖ This is true. OCVS recognizes the challenges of ARPA as a new funding stream. Unfortunately, the alternative is moving forward without ARPA and therefore facing two 15% reductions in VOCA awards over the next two years.
- ❖ It may be best to use ARPA funds for items like rent, utilities, Osnium (or other) tracking systems, office supplies, program supplies, emergency funds, or other items that do not require OVC PMT reporting. If you choose to fund personnel with ARPA funds, please do not split fund those positions to reduce tracking errors. This will reduce the need to re-train staff.

28. It was pointed out that this is increasing the administrative work of the grants and how is that supposed to be taken care of?

- ❖ It is allowable to add administrative staff time into the budget to administer ARPA funds. Please allocate administrative staff time into the budget for ARPA fund administration.

29. This can add stress to personnel funded staff under these grants and cause them to feel uncertainty about their stability and jobs.

- ❖ OCVS recognizes the uncertainty that accompanies grant funding and relevant positions.

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- ❖ OCVS and our partners made significant effort to secure ARPA funding to help alleviate some of this stress. Unfortunately, many other states were not able to secure ARPA funding for their subgrantees. Due to this, other states across the country are experiencing significant VOCA funding cuts.
- ❖ OCVS recognizes the challenge of administering VOCA/ARPA funds so, as much as possible, please keep your budget simple. And if possible, use ARPA funds for non-personnel budget line items.