



A County Official's Step-by-Step Guide to Securing ARPA Funds Before the 2024 Deadline

Look Behind-the-Scenes at How Hundreds of County Officials Have Secured Federal ARPA Funding to Preserve, Restore, and Digitize County Records



ALLOCATION

\$871,239,088.00

Maricopa County

ALLOCATION

\$148,933,559

Jefferson County

ALLOCATION

\$244,270

Clark County

ALLOCATION

\$149,670

San Diego County

ALLOCATION

\$43,360,588.00

Baldwin County



In this guide, you'll learn the following:

- The fundamentals of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF)
- The goals of ARPA and SLFRF and why it's not too late to secure funding before the December 31, 2024 deadline
- How the flexibility of ARPA is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for county officials to complete critical projects
- The ARPA-eligible expense categories for document preservation and digitization projects
- The proven process for presenting your story that helps secure ARPA funding for your project
- Real success stories from county officials across the country that have used ARPA funding for preservation and digitization projects
- How preserving documents and modernizing your office enables you to better serve your community
- Resources available to help you request and secure your ARPA funding

What does every county official need to know about ARPA?

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been severe and far-reaching. From office shutdowns and lost revenue to devastated industries and millions of jobs lost, states and counties across the nation experienced severe social and economic disruptions. Hardships would've been far worse without the substantial relief measures taken by the federal government to respond to the pandemic's economic fallout.

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law to aid COVID-19 recovery efforts. Specifically, it includes \$350 billion in direct aid to state and local governments—disbursed through the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). And \$65 billion of that was earmarked for America's cities, counties, parishes, and boroughs to replenish lost revenue and rebuild stronger, more resilient communities.



What are the goals of ARPA funding?

At the height of the pandemic, county governments operated at the forefront of COVID-19 mitigation measures. The increased expenditures and significant declines in revenues severely impacted county budgets and citizen access to public services. One of the reasons the federal government enacted ARPA to help counties recover quickly and fund long-term economic investments that drive growth and opportunity.

ARPA funding designated for local counties and towns aims to support community programs that help:

- Fight the pandemic and support families and businesses struggling with its public health and economic impacts
- Maintain vital public services, even amid declines in revenue resulting from the crisis
- Build a strong, resilient, and equitable recovery by making investments that support long-term growth and opportunity

What are the ARPA funding timelines?

ARPA offers far more generous timelines to allocate and expend funds than past economic relief packages. While counties had to request funding in 2021, they didn't have to list the programs. The deadline for obligating funds is December 31, 2024. And the US Treasury entrusted counties with broad flexibility to use and reallocate their ARPA accounts to best serve the needs of its constituents. That means it's not too late to ask. Even if counties allocated their funds—if they didn't spend them—there's still an opportunity to secure funding for your eligible county projects that have an immense impact on citizens.

Important ARPA funding dates to know:

MAR 3, 2021

Funds must be used for expenditures incurred on or after March 3, 2021

MAY 2021

Funds were disbursed in two tranches: the first half beginning May 2021 and the second half up to 12 months later

DEC 31, 2024

Spending must be obligated by December 31, 2024

DEC 31, 2026

Counties have until December 31, 2026, to fully expend the funds

The bottom line is that counties have until the end of 2024 to allocate funds and the end of 2026 to spend them. So, if you haven't started the process to request funding, you still have nearly two years left.

But don't wait too long. The Treasury's guidance to counties is to spend ARPA accounts quickly on projects that help the most people. At Kofile, we've seen a significant uptick in the volume of preservation and digitization projects using ARPA funds at the end of 2022. And after speaking with hundreds of county officials, most plan to deplete their ARPA accounts by the end of 2023.

ARPA is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fund critical county projects

ARPA is an extraordinary opportunity to fund critical projects and chart a path for long-term economic growth. Like the pandemic itself, it's a once-in-a-generation occurrence. Counties simply had to ask for funding to receive it. And there's no competition between counties or local governments.

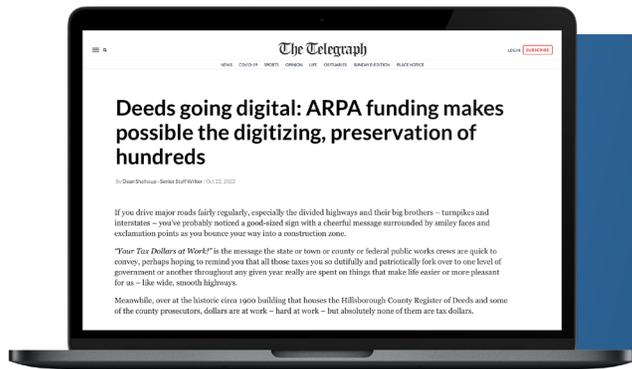
When ARPA guidance was first released, many believed it was intentionally vague. The US Treasury then released "The Final Rule" on January 6, 2022, which went into effect on April 1, 2022. "The Final Rule" provided much-needed clarity and broad flexibility for counties to use the funds for government services or on necessary projects reasonably tied to the COVID-19 pandemic.



County officials like Mary Ann Crowell, Hillsborough, NH County Register of Deeds, secured millions in ARPA funding to preserve and digitally catalog property deeds and other legal county documents. Her perseverance and strong desire to serve her constituents was crucial to the project's success, and after winning her second term in office she will have the opportunity to see the final results of her efforts.



So, if you've been on the fence about requesting funding for projects like document preservation or digitization, it's time to jump over. For many counties, ARPA could fund a project in one year that may have taken five years of budget cycle approvals to complete. As proven by hundreds of county officials across the country, preservation and digitization projects are an eligible expense with far-reaching impact, and we'll show you how to navigate the ARPA process in this guide.



Read more about Mary Ann Crowell's commitment to the people of Hillsborough, NH.

[READ THE STORY](#)

Permanent record preservation and digitization projects are eligible for ARPA funding

After hundreds of hours researching ARPA and helping county officials successfully request funding, Kofile has extensive expertise on what has worked for other county officials. We've aggregated that knowledge to help you navigate your ARPA funding requests.

Like county officials across the country, you've likely been putting off digitizing and preserving your vital, historical, court, land, and property records due to a lack of funding. Or, you plan to work on it in phases over the next decade.

ARPA is an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate these projects that affect hundreds of thousands or millions of people in your county. And your projects align perfectly with the fundamental goals of ARPA. Maintaining constituent and business access to county records is a vital government service disrupted during the pandemic. **Would your office be ready to maintain business continuity if another pandemic were to happen? Would citizens have access to public records stored in your office?** If the answer is no, your project fits into the Treasury's goal of maintaining vital public services despite revenue declines due to the pandemic.

ARPA also aims to address public health and safety. Digitizing and preserving county documents to be universally accessible online to constituents and businesses reduces foot traffic to the office, maintains social distancing, and keeps your staff and citizens safe—all critical goals for ARPA.

ARPA-eligible expense categories for your county's preservation and digitization project

While there's broad flexibility allotted to counties, ARPA projects must satisfy one of the eligible expense categories or expenditure codes. Preservation and digitization projects typically fall under these three categories:

- Revenue loss from general government services due to the pandemic (\$10 million standard allowance or calculate actual revenue loss)
- Expenses related to supporting program evaluation, data, and outreach
 - Data analysis resources to gather, assess, share, and use data
 - Technology Infrastructure to improve access to and the user experience of Government IT systems as well as technology improvements to increase public access and delivery of government programs and services
 - Capacity building resources to support using data and evidence, including hiring staff, consultants, or technical assistance support
- Projects used to address administrative needs caused or exacerbated by the pandemic, including addressing backlogs caused by shutdowns, increased repair or maintenance needs, and technology infrastructure to adapt government operations to the pandemic (e.g., video conferencing software, data and case management systems)

In Kofile's study of the legislation and outcomes of county leaders we've helped, the revenue loss category tends to be the easiest mechanism avoiding various calculations and often covering some counties entire allocation. The Treasury offered a standard allowance of \$10 million per county—which many counties elected for rather than calculating actual revenue loss. For smaller counties, the revenue loss category may be their entire allocation. It offers the most flexibility for your county to spend on projects like document preservation and digitization. If funds are still available from the revenue loss category, it's your best opportunity to get your project approved.

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It's important to explain how your office lost revenue during the pandemic due to county offices being closed and how your project improves access to an important public service like access to county records.

County Clerk Office

Kings County, California

For the second expense category, preservation and digitization of vitals, court records, land, and property documents are eligible as a technology improvement that provides greater access to government services. To qualify under this expense category, you'll need to explain how the pandemic impaired the public's access to critical county records and how your project will improve access in the future.

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We emphasized the criticality of using ARPA funds to provide equal access to records and vital information when our citizens and businesses need and want it.

County Clerk Office

Ohio

The third expense category concerns upgrading technology infrastructure to adapt government operations to the pandemic. By digitizing county documents so they're available to constituents and businesses, you'll reduce foot traffic to your office and promote social distancing. For your project to qualify under this expense category, you'll need to explain how preserving and digitizing county records improves public health measures like social distancing.

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The key is being able to show and bring to life the direct impact of your work on your constituents and businesses.

County Recorder Office

Lyon County, Nevada

Remember, even if your county allocated their funds, you could still request and receive ARPA dollars for your project. Counties have until the end of 2024 to obligate funds, and there's a lot of flexibility to reallocate toward more impactful projects like yours. Furthermore, approved projects often don't spend the total amount allocated or get completed for various reasons, leaving opportunities for funding other projects.

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Presenting your story to request and secure ARPA funding

Kofile has assisted hundreds of county department officials to ask for and secure ARPA funding from their county ARPA funds for document preservation and digitization projects. We've compiled everything we've learned to provide a step-by-step roadmap for requesting and obtaining funding that preserves your county's history and increases accessibility for future generations.

1. Identify the county official, committee, or governing body responsible for ARPA funding and the process for requesting funds

Every county has a different process for obligating ARPA received funds. Some have created committees or hired external consultants. Others have a county commissioner or board of supervisors that oversees and approves funding requests. Identify the county official or governing body responsible to allocate the County's ARPA funds and find out how they're soliciting projects for use of those funds. You may need to do a presentation, speak at a public forum, send a letter, or make a formal request for funding for your project in some way.

2. Inquire if your county allocated AND spent their ARPA funds

ARPA funding has been available since early 2021, but counties have nearly two more years to decide how to use the funds. And even if they have allocated the budget, the Treasury allows counties to add or remove projects. Inquire if your county issued and spent their ARPA funds. If unspent, it's not too late. Also, inquire if your county depleted the revenue loss expense category, as that is the most efficient opportunity to get approval.



3. Document your story to request funding

The most crucial step is to tell your story in a manner highlighting the positive community impact preserving and digitizing your records will have. There will be competing projects, so telling a compelling story that speaks to how document preservation and digitization impacts the county and aligns directly with the intentions of ARPA which will go a long way in the outcome of your request.

We've gathered some tips that county officials have used to successfully craft their stories:



Consider how your project impacts your community

County population determines ARPA's funding allocation. So, that means officials will be looking for projects that impact the most constituents and businesses. The preservation of historical, court, vital, land, and property records touches every constituent across generations and every business in your county. Ensuring these documents remain safe and accessible for future generations is a compelling narrative and beneficial to everyone in the county.



Align your project to one of the eligible expense categories

While there's significant flexibility in how counties spend ARPA funds, it still needs to fit into one of the Treasury's eligible expense categories or expenditure codes. As mentioned above, your best opportunity is to apply under the revenue loss category if your county hasn't already spent all those funds.



Position your project based on the expense category you've selected

Now that you've selected an eligible expense category, you'll need to position how your project fits into it. For example, if you choose the revenue loss category, explain the disruption to public access to county records during the pandemic. Most county offices were closed during the pandemic, which prevented county clerks from generating recording fee revenue. If your documents are digitized and available online, you'd be able to maintain that government service and even replace that revenue from online subscriptions when offices are closed.



Use wording similar to those used in ARPA's goals

The federal government intended ARPA funds to be used by counties to fight the pandemic, promote public safety measures, and build more resilient communities. When presenting your project, it's essential to reiterate how document preservation and digitization contribute to those outcomes. Words such as "public safety," "social distancing," and "prepare for the next pandemic" help to associate your project's goals with those of ARPA.



Consider how much funding you're requesting

From our experience partnering with county clerks, preservation and digitization projects typically get approved for 2-10% of the county's total ARPA allotment. The sweet spot is between 4-5%. If you're unsure how much to request, allocations by county are publicly available on this [website](#). Apply our benchmark to your county's allotment for a reasonable estimate.

4. Be confident in your project's eligibility and impact on the community

Hundreds of county officials across the country have secured ARPA funding for document preservation and digitization projects. Be confident you will receive funding and spend the time sharing your story. Your office provides a critical public service, and ARPA funding is for you to maintain and preserve that service for future generations.

Follow these steps and be one of the many success stories of county officials that have unlocked their county's history and enabled constituent accessibility through ARPA funding.



Citizen Access Anywhere, Anytime

Public Safety Measures

Preservation
and Digitization

Social Distancing

Digital Access
for Public Safety



Success stories from clerks that secured ARPA funding for records preservation and digitization

There are countless success stories across the nation from county officials that have secured ARPA funding to preserve county records and provide universal access to citizens. Here are a few of those stories.

Chambers County, TX, recently received over \$500K in ARPA funding for county document preservation and digitization. That represents nearly 6% of the county's allocation.

Digitized and codified historical documents for public access and timely public retrieval are critical. This access was disrupted during government closures due to COVID-19. Digitized documents will allow for expeditious document distribution and ensure social distancing as well as reduce human contact.

Horry County, SC, secured over \$1,000,000 to digitize and index older historical records. That represents nearly 2% of Horry County's ARPA allocation.

The Horry County Register of Deeds (ROD) is responsible for recording of documents concerning land transfers and other miscellaneous instruments of record. Historically, the ROD office has experienced a high volume of foot traffic from external entities performing title searches, as well as searches for other legal documents. During COVID-19, accommodations needed to be made within the ROD's office to accommodate this influx of personnel while also maintaining social distancing. In October 2021, the Horry County Council approved ARPA funding in the amount of \$1,000,000 to digitize and index older records. The goal of this project is to enable a comprehensive online search of County records, thereby reducing the need for face-to-face contact while also increasing service to individuals and firms which frequently use the ROD's services.

These success stories follow a similar pattern to the steps outlined in the previous section. Explain how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your office and how document preservation and digitization can improve public access while keeping constituents safe. Combine that with your project's opportunity to reach nearly every person in the county across generations. If you can establish that narrative with the ARPA governing body in your county, you'll have a very high chance of securing funding for your project.

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We've found that how you frame and present the impact of a preservation or digitization project is the difference between successful and unsuccessful clerks. County commissioners or decision boards are looking for projects affecting the most people in their community. Those land and vital records county clerks preserve touch every person or business across generations and every piece of land in the county. There are no other competing projects with the same impact. And, that's what the Board needs to hear.



Chris Marotti
VP of Brand at Kofile

Schedule a consultation with a Kofile expert who can help you craft the right story to secure your ARPA funding.

[CONTACT US](#)

Better serve your constituents through ARPA-funded projects

As the custodian of historical records, your work touches every part of your county. By preserving documents dating back to sovereignty, digitizing and indexing them for online access, you're better able to serve your constituents now, in the future, and in the event of another pandemic.

Counties across the country continue to prioritize this critical work that leaves their mark on history for future generations and successors.

Polk County, FL, is an example. Polk County, FL's county clerk recently unveiled online access to all their records dating back to 1957 to make them universally available to citizens. While a big undertaking, it helps her better serve constituents seeking access to these critical documents.

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One of my top priorities has been to enhance public access and make records easily accessible online. This has been a big undertaking and one we've been working on for a few decades now. We began digitizing deeds back in 1998. We have been working on this project in phases, and currently, all deeds from 1957 to the present day are available online as well as all marriage licenses ever recorded in Polk County. With the completion of this project, all deeds ever recorded in Polk County will be viewable online.



Stacy Butterfield

Polk County Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller

Source: [Polk County News Flash](#), September 2022

Preserving and digitizing irreplaceable county documents protects its history and increases citizen engagement by removing barriers to access. During the pandemic, county offices were closed, preventing citizens from accessing public records. Through preservation and digitization, constituents and businesses will always have access to county documents. And you're protecting the health and safety of your staff and constituents by reducing foot traffic to the office and promoting social distancing.



Lancaster, NE, is a standout example of a county that fully digitized its records due to COVID-19 to provide constituents with 24/7 access to records online while maximizing social distancing and keeping staff and the public safe.

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COVID 19 has brought challenges to us as individuals, as a community, and as a public office. You may notice that we have modified our business practices to limit personal contact and maximize social distance to keep our customers and staff safe during this pandemic. As the statutory responsibilities for the Assessor/Register of Deeds have remained, so has our goal to provide an exceptional level of service. We encourage you to use the features of our website to conduct online business with our office 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Rob Ogden

Assessor/Register of Deeds, Lancaster, NE

Source: [Lancaster, NE Website](#), December 2022

Furthermore, increasing access through digitization is an opportunity to create an additional revenue stream for your office. Pickens County, GA, generated revenue through online access to county records—making them even more valuable—and reinvesting those funds into infrastructure and other projects to better serve the community.

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During the pandemic, we were able to generate well over \$300,000 in revenue by making our records available online and enabling citizens and businesses to eFile while our office was shut down.



Jennifer Jordan

Clerk of Superior and Juvenile Courts from Pickens, GA.

If you've put off the important work of preserving and digitizing your county's records, now is the time to use the federal funding available to you to accelerate this critical project, so it's done forever for the constituents and businesses of your county.



Learn more about how Pickens County, GA, preserved and indexed its county documents to make them more valuable.

[READ THE STORY](#)

Connect with Kofile's expert team for ARPA resources

At Kofile, we've partnered with hundreds of county clerks and officials nationwide to scope projects and craft stories that receive ARPA funding. If you're ready to better serve your community and leave your mark on history, we're ready to help.



Speak with a trusted Kofile expert and get a jumpstart on your ARPA funding request.

Sheryl Cherry
Sheryl.Cherry@Kofile.com
(818) 917-4927

The information provided in this document does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice and is provided for general informational purposes only. Kofile makes no representation or warranties with respect to any county department's entitlement to ARPA funds for any specific project.



Kofile provides trusted, comprehensive preservation, restoration, imaging, and indexing solutions to ensure local, county, and state officials can accurately and efficiently preserve vital, property, and historical records. Working with more than 3,000 government agencies, Kofile's patented, proven process enables officials to be custodians of history providing their citizens easy access to information to create thriving communities.

Kofile

Do it once. Do it right.

kofile.com
6300 Cedar Springs RD
Dallas, TX 75235
(833) 563-4533