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Turning Opportunity into Actions

The \$350 billion in funds made available to state, local, and Tribal governments through the American Rescue Plan Act are being called a “once in a generation opportunity.” As discussed above and in previous editions, governments at all levels are pursuing diverse agendas and addressing unique priorities with their allotted funds. Unless nonprofits act now, the opportunities presented by the ARPA funds will pass them by. Numerous state associations of nonprofits are committed to making sure nonprofits in their communities know about the funding opportunities, act on them, and secure the funding needed to advance their missions. Here is a sampling of ways state associations of nonprofits are promoting advocacy in action.

In **New York**, the [Coalition to Advance Nonprofits](#) has developed [Recommendations for New York State’s Use of American Rescue Plan State and Local Relief Funding](#).

The document calls on “the state to prioritize the nonprofit sector, focus on sustainability, and include nonprofit partners for substantive roles when planning task forces for the use of ARPA funds.” It also urges “state and city leaders to spend their respective portions of the ARPA funds in a way that ensures the greatest impact for the public good and with an explicit and demonstrable focus on creating equity.” Key recommendations include centering racial equity from the outset, reform nonprofit contracts, provide premium pay for essential workers, including employees of nonprofits, and expressly including nonprofits in relief to education and senior care. The coalition is a sector-wide group of over 100 nonprofits

coordinated by [Nonprofit New York](#).

Washington Nonprofits starts with the basics, explaining [What Nonprofits Want Government Partners to Know](#) and how nonprofits are vital to the state's economic and social recovery. To illustrate how "the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) offers [Washingtonians] a unique opportunity to invest in activities that strengthen our people, our communities, and our economy," the state association of nonprofits showcases several recent [successful partnership stories between government and nonprofits](#). One [case study](#) involved Cheryl Smith with the Washington State Department of Commerce, who came to realize in getting CARES Act funding out to communities in need that the state had "a history of under-inclusion in funding nonprofits." The state then recognized that, "going forward, they needed to include nonprofits in the conversation because it's these organizations who are adept at understanding the needs of the communities they serve." The result of this government-nonprofit partnership there? "I loved it, absolutely loved it," said Smith.

Similarly, the [West Virginia Nonprofit Association](#) states the challenge at the outset of its web resources: "The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is an opportunity for West Virginia to put the wellbeing of communities first. Our communities need help and nonprofits have been the bedrock of connecting with and uplifting West Virginia Communities, especially during times of crisis and recovery." The state association of nonprofits goes farther and, in a recent call to action, urged nonprofits to "help state and local leaders in setting priorities and designing fund distribution processes that will ensure that those federal funds do the most good in the communities you serve." To provide support to frontline nonprofits, the association has posted a [template letter](#) and a [list of contacts](#) for local government officials in West Virginia. And there's more. The state association of nonprofits also put together [ARPA Topline Messages](#) and [10 Funding Principles for ARPA](#) to help nonprofits make the case for investment in their missions.

The work continues. The [North Carolina Center for Nonprofits](#) is convening a webinar in early September to identify ways nonprofits can partner with state and local governments to make the best use of ARPA funds. The state's Pandemic Recovery Office will offer an overview of ARPA funding in North Carolina, including the amount of funding available, permissible uses of funds, the process for distribution of funds, and the timing for allocation of funds by local governments. Then, the North Carolina Center *for* Nonprofits will provide an update on the NC General Assembly's allocation of state ARPA funds. Finally, the Center will give insights into trends in nonprofits'

needs and ways that nonprofits can engage with their local governments to advocate for meaningful and equitable allocation of local ARPA funds.