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Nonprofits, Foundations, and Governments Addressing Community Needs Together

Readers by now know that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) expressly authorizes state, local, Tribal, and territorial governments to invest their allocations of the \$350 billion in funds in charitable nonprofits. Yet, while nonprofits are **eligible** for that funding, they are not **entitled** to receive these funds until a government says so – which is why nonprofits must make a case for funding. But nonprofits don't have to make their case alone. [State associations of nonprofits](#), of course, are fully engaged in driving ARPA dollars toward the missions of charitable organizations. Likewise, philanthropic organizations have a significant role to play in bringing nonprofits and decision makers together and identifying community challenges that ARPA funds can help alleviate.

In April, the National Council of Nonprofits published a new section of its ARPA report, [Roles for Philanthropy](#), that highlights what multiple foundations have been doing to help their grantees and communities approach and leverage ARPA funding. The report identifies three broad categories of assistance. First, philanthropic organizations have been using their own resources in creative ways, ranging from direct financial support, such as matching funds to expand public-private initiatives,

to indirect support in the form of capacity building grants to help nonprofits assess and effectively manage use of the federal funds – which is a powerful way to advance equity. Second, foundations have been providing their grantmaking expertise to help distribute and administer the ARPA funds in their communities. Third, foundations have convened groups – governments, nonprofits, foundations, and the public – to disseminate and collect information about ARPA opportunities, community needs, and how best to use the funds to address local challenges.



Recently, the **New York Council of Nonprofits**, in conjunction with the Hudson Valley Funders Network, convened a webinar for nonprofits titled, “[Are American Rescue Plan Dollars in Your Nonprofit Wallet?](#)” The express purpose of the event was to identify ways in which foundations can help nonprofits secure ARPA funds and build a greater partnership. In addition to hearing from experts about the opportunities presented by the American Rescue Plan Act, the event gave nonprofits the chance to suggest things foundations can do to help them secure ARPA funds. Ideas ranged from promoting ARPA grant programs run through community foundations, to capacity building support, and taking advantage of philanthropy’s convening power to get the attention of policymakers. Most notably, the program helped build a greater sense of partnership among nonprofits and local funders. [View video of the ARPA webinar.](#)

This week, the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy, in partnership with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, is holding a similar event to discuss how municipal leaders can partner with philanthropy and nonprofits to make more efficient and effective use of scarce resources, including local ARPA funding. The [Serving Our Communities](#) event will feature two panel discussions. The first, **ARPA Best Practices for Municipal and Philanthropic Leaders**, will highlight proven practices exhibited in several communities that have thoughtfully engaged residents. The second panel, **Using Resources to Address Community Challenges**, plans to expand the conversation to feature municipal, philanthropic, and nonprofit leaders who will discuss opportunities to more efficiently, effectively, and collaboratively use their resources to respond to the challenges facing their communities. Organizers

anticipate these challenges will include issues such as mental health, basic human needs, concerns about youth crime, and wanting to find ways to positively engage youth.

As these examples show, nonprofits can leverage the engagement of their funders to build partnerships and help get government officials on the same page as they identify best ways to spend their American Rescue Plan Act allocations. In some cases, foundations already have relationships with government officials that can facilitate open discussions. In others, foundation partners may simply need to be asked for help. Either way, nonprofits should look to their funders as fellow problem solvers and invite them to join in their ARPA advocacy efforts.