



COUNTY OF ALBANY, NEW YORK

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT - EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY APPLICATION

For the past three years, Albany County has been leading our community through COVID-19 response, monitoring, and recovery. The infusion of \$1.9 trillion in flexible funds provided through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) allows local governments, like ours, the opportunity to invest in technology to support long-term recovery efforts while delivering better services to our constituents now and in the future.

To take advantage of this opportunity, the County is soliciting Departmental proposals for up to \$100,000 in ARPA funds for projects that will improve service delivery through investments in data analysis, program evaluation, process improvement, community engagement, and public accessibility to programs and services.

Applicants are encouraged to identify non-ARPA funding sources to complement their ARPA funding requests. Applications for projects with total budgets exceeding \$100,000 must identify all other funding sources that have been secured to support their project. While applicants are strongly encouraged to adhere to the \$100,000 funding cap, projects in need of more than \$100,000 in ARPA funds may be considered by the County Projects Subcommittee on a case-by-case basis if they are deemed to be high-impact and will be fully funded after receiving ARPA funds.

As you develop an application consider strategic technology investments your Department can make to ensure the required digital infrastructure is in place to provide stability for citizen-facing and backend services. Projects should target needs identified during the COVID-19 pandemic and should further improve your Department's ability to maintain successful continuity of operations while also supporting future needs.

Completed applications form should be emailed to: tvouzakis@capmark.org by November 3rd, 2023

Applicants are encouraged to include backup materials with their submissions that justify the project need, impact, and budget

<i>Project Name</i>	Vendor Payments by ACH Feasibility Study and Implementation
<i>Department</i>	Albany County Department of Audit and Control
<i>Project Manager</i>	Richard Oakley, Associate Operations Supervisor
<i>Select ARPA Expenditure Category</i>	3: Public Health-Negative Economic Impact: Public Sector Capacity Public Sector Capacity: Effective Service Delivery

1. Project Eligibility

Please identify which of the following categories best describes your project:

- 1) Program evaluation
- 2) Data analysis: resources to gather, assess, share, and use data
- 3) Technology infrastructure to improve access to/user experience of government IT systems and/or increase public access to services
- 4) Community outreach and engagement activities
- 5) Capacity building resources to support using data and evidence to improve service delivery
- 6) Equipment purchase to improve service delivery

(3) "Technology infrastructure to improve access to/user experience of government IT systems and/or public access to services"

2. Project Overview

Summarize your proposed project including a description of how it will improve the way your department delivers services

Albany County has utilized paper checks throughout its history to reimburse vendors for good and services provided to the county. Automated Clearing House (ACH) payments are an alternative payment method. If feasible, implementation of payment by ACH may; reduce costs for check stock and ink, improve relationships with vendors as more efficient and timely payments are issued to them, reduce the risk of fraud and associated costs to detect and prevent fraud, and improve efficiency of reconciliation processes. Challenges to implementation exist. Albany County has over its fifty year history developed processes across multiple departments centered around paper check processing. Additionally, obtaining complete acceptance of ACH payments by vendors has proven challenging to other organizations. The feasibility study would utilize the experience and expertise of a consultant to determine whether conversion to ACH payments for vendors

3. Project Need

Please describe how your project responds to a need that was caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the pandemic a large portion of county employees worked from home for at least some percentage of the regular work week. Accordingly, an automated payment process would be highly beneficial to Albany County if another set of circumstances limited the ability of county employees to report to their offices daily. Additionally, employees in the labor market may demand in coming years for greater work flexibility, inclusive of greater opportunities to work from home. Albany County developing the infrastructure to respond to national crises and/or changes in the labor market will prove beneficial to the county.



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4. Project Implementation

Describe the major steps in your project implementation including coordination with any internal and external partners, especially coordination with the Division of Information Services.

At least initially, this is a feasibility study only. However, the success of this study in determining whether conversion to ACH payments would be beneficial to the county is highly dependent upon the participation and cooperation of multiple county departments, including the Division of Information Services, the Division of Finance, and the Department of Audit and Control. The study would have a dual focus, first on the technological capacity of the county and whether technological conversion is feasible. We believe this part of the study should be straightforward. Then a focus on the existing business practices and protocols of Albany County is necessary, as this study will need to dedicate more of its time to the business practices of the county, and how to efficiently convert the vendors of Albany County to acceptance of ACH payments. Further, smaller vendor may insist on receiving traditional paper checks, and this study will need to determine the efficacy of a

For IT-related project, have you consulted with the Division of Information Services?

☒ YES

☐ NO

5. Project Timeline

All ARPA funds must be expended by December 31, 2026. Please provide the estimated date that requested funds will be fully expended and highlight key project milestones

The feasibility study would be completed by 6/30/2024. Phase I of the feasibility study would be a focus on technological conversion, inclusive of banking arrangements. This part of the study is anticipated to be complete by 3/31/2024. Phase II would focus on the current business practices of Albany County, and whether it would be feasible to adapt these business practices to achieve conversion to ACH payments. It is anticipated that this phase would be complete by 6/30/2024. Then a final report detailing study findings would be deliverable to the County by 9/30/2024. Based on these findings, and if implementation were advisable, implementation would be achieved by 6/30/2025.

6. Project Impact

Please describe in detail how this investment in your Department will allow you to address the project need identified above and more effectively deliver services to the public. Describe whether the project directly or indirectly benefits County residents Use quantifiable metrics where possible and discuss how project impact will be measured

Albany County utilizes vendors to provide certain goods and services. A feasibility study first, and ultimately an implementation of ACH payments to vendors, would save significant public funds. The Association of Financial Professionals estimates that this savings may exceed \$1.50 per check issued. In short, there is a clear benefit to Albany County taxpayers. Additionally, Albany County needs to build resiliency to the next set of conditions that may prevent employees from reporting to work. Nationwide metrics from the banking industry demonstrate that fraud attempts continue and have had a surge of growth over recent years. Converting to ACH would limit the county's exposure to such attempts. Finally, monthly reconciliation processes would be streamlined if ACH payments for vendors were implemented.

7. Project Budget

Please Identify:

1) ARPA Funding Requested	\$100,000
2) Total Project Budget	\$160,000
3) Non-ARPA Funding Sources and Amounts	2025 Budget Appropriation of \$60,000
4) Recurring Costs	Implementation of ACH for vendor payments would represent a recurring cost savings to Albany County of approximately \$1.50 per check issued.

8. Project Sustainability

Will the project be sustained after ARPA funds are expended? ☒ YES ☐ NO

If yes, describe how your Department will address any ongoing project costs

Conversion to ACH payments for vendors would represent an opportunity for significant cost-savings to Albany County. The Association of Financial Professionals estimates the cost of issuing a paper check as between \$2.01 and \$4.00, while the cost of an ACH payment is estimated to be between \$0.26 and \$0.50. This savings of at least \$1.50 per check issued would be recurring for Albany County, and enough to offset any ongoing costs associated with implementation.

SELECT FROM DROPDOWN

1: Public Health COVID-19 Testing^
1: Public Health COVID-19 Contact Tracing^
1: Public Health Prevention in Congregate Settings (Nursing Homes, Prisons/Jails, Dense Work Sites, Schools)
1: Public Health Personal Protective Equipment^
1: Public Health Medical Expenses (including Alternative Care Facilities)^
1: Public Health Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation)
1: Public Health COVID-19 Assistance to Small Businesses^
1: Public Health COVID 19 Assistance to Non-Profits^
1: Public Health COVID-19 Aid to Impacted Industries^
1: Public Health Community Violence Interventions*^
1: Public Health Mental Health Services*^
1: Public Health Substance Use Services*^
1: Public Health Other Public Health Services^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Food Programs*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Aid*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Cash Transfers*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Internet Access Programs*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Paid Sick and Medical Leave^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Health Insurance*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Services for Un/Unbanked*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Household Assistance: Survivor's Benefits^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Assistance to Unemployed or Underemployed Workers (e.g. job training, job placement)
2: Negative Economic Impacts Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Healthy Childhood Environments: Home Visiting*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Healthy Childhood Environments: Services to Foster Youth or Families Involvement
2: Negative Economic Impacts Healthy Childhood Environments: Early Learning*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Long-term Housing Security: Affordable Housing*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Long-term Housing Security: Services for Unhoused Persons*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Housing Support: Housing Vouchers and Relocation Assistance for Disproportionately Impacted Communities
2: Negative Economic Impacts Housing Support: Other Housing Assistance*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Social Determinants of Health: Community Health Workers or Benefits Navigation
2: Negative Economic Impacts Social Determinants of Health: Lead Remediation*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Medical Facilities for Disproportionately Impacted Communities^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Strong Healthy Communities: Neighborhood Features that Promote Health and Safety^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Strong Healthy Communities: Demolition and Rehabilitation of Properties^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Addressing Educational Disparities: Aid to High-Poverty Districts^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Addressing Educational Disparities: Academic, Social, and Emotional Services*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Addressing Educational Disparities: Mental Health Services*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Addressing Impacts of Lost Instructional Time^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Contributions to UI Trust Funds^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Loans or Grants to Mitigate Financial Hardship^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Technical Assistance, Counseling, or Business Planning*^

2: Negative Economic Impacts Rehabilitation of Commercial Properties or Other Improvements^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Business Incubators and Start-Up or Expansion Assistance*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Enhanced Support to Microbusinesses*^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Assistance to Impacted Nonprofit Organizations (Impacted or Disproportionately Impacted)^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Aid to Tourism, Travel, or Hospitality^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Aid to Other Impacted Industries^
2: Negative Economic Impacts Economic Impact Assistance: Other*^
3: Public Health-Negative Economic Impact: Public Sector Capacity Public Sector Workforce: Payroll and Benefits for Public Health, Public Safety, or Human Services Workers
3: Public Health-Negative Economic Impact: Public Sector Capacity Public Sector Workforce: Remaining Public Sector Staff
3: Public Health-Negative Economic Impact: Public Sector Capacity Public Sector Workforce: Other
3: Public Health-Negative Economic Impact: Public Sector Capacity Public Sector Capacity: Effective Service Delivery
3: Public Health-Negative Economic Impact: Public Sector Capacity Public Sector Capacity: Administrative Needs
4: Premium Pay Public Sector Employees
4: Premium Pay Private Sector: Grants to Other Employers
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Centralized Wastewater Treatment
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Centralized Wastewater Collection and Conveyance
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Decentralized Wastewater
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Combined Sewer Overflows
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Other Sewer Infrastructure
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Stormwater
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Energy Conservation
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Water Conservation
5: Infrastructure Clean Water: Nonpoint Source
5: Infrastructure Drinking water: Treatment
5: Infrastructure Drinking water: Transmission & Distribution
5: Infrastructure Drinking water: Lead Remediation, including in Schools and Daycares
5: Infrastructure Drinking water: Source
5: Infrastructure Drinking water: Storage
5: Infrastructure Drinking water: Other water infrastructure
5: Infrastructure Water and Sewer: Private Wells
5: Infrastructure Water and Sewer: IIJA Bureau of Reclamation Match
5: Infrastructure Water and Sewer: Other
5: Infrastructure Broadband: "Last Mile" projects
5: Infrastructure Broadband: IIJA Match
5: Infrastructure Broadband: Other projects
6: Revenue Replacement Provision of Government Services
6: Revenue Replacement Non-federal Match for Other Federal Programs
7: Administrative Administrative Expenses
7: Administrative Transfers to Other Units of Government

	Priority	
	1 - High	Yes
	2 - Medium	No
chools, Child care facilities, etc	3 - Low	Unknown

ation/Quarantine)^

subsidized employment, employment supports or incentives)^

involved in Child Welfare System)^

proportionately Impacted Communities)^

navigators)^