



St. Lawrence County
Industrial Development Agency

St. Lawrence County American Rescue Plan Act



Economic Development and Tourism Funding Program Allocation Outline

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM PROGRAM ALLOCATION

On August 1, the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators approved accepting the County’s American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) Committee’s recommendation for the portion of American Rescue Plan Act Funds to be administered by the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency.

These recommendations included authorizing funds for Economic Development and Tourism as allowed within the scope of the ARPA Final Rule. The Board of Legislators declared that “economic development and tourism are essential to improving the services and activities available in St. Lawrence County” and allocated \$2,900,000 in ARPA funds to be distributed through the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (“IDA”) to organizations impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. St. Lawrence County and the IDA have an existing economic development services agreement through which the IDA provides economic development services for the County. The allocation of these funds by the IDA is being performed within the scope of this existing economic development services agreement.

This Program Outline provides information on project funding categories, eligibility, and application guidelines for the \$2,900,000 in ARPA funds to be distributed through IDA.

PROJECT FUNDING CATEGORIES

As outlined in the United States Department of the Treasury Coronavirus State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds: Overview of the Final Rule:

“The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds provide resources for governments to meet the public health and economic needs of those impacted by the pandemic in their communities, as well as address longstanding health and economic disparities, which amplified the impact of the pandemic in disproportionately impacted communities, resulting in more severe pandemic impacts. The eligible use category to respond to public health and negative economic impacts is organized around the types of assistance a recipient may provide and includes several sub-categories:

- *public health,*
- *assistance to households,*
- *assistance to small businesses,*
- *assistance to nonprofits,*
- *aid to impacted industries, and*
- *public sector capacity.*

In general, to identify eligible uses of funds in this category, recipients should (1) identify a COVID-19 public health or economic impact on an individual or class (i.e., a group) and (2) design a program that responds to that impact. Responses should be related and reasonably proportional to the harm identified and reasonably designed to benefit those impacted.”

The Overview provides a list of enumerated uses of the ARPA funds while also offering broad flexibility to identify COVID impacts and to create programs, services, and capital expenditures to respond to these impacts. As an example, “Assistance to individuals who want and are available for work, including job training, public jobs programs and fairs, support for childcare and transportation to and from a jobsite or interview, incentives for newly-employed workers, subsidized employment, grants to hire underserved workers, assistance to unemployed individuals to start small businesses & development of job and workforce training centers” is listed as an enumerated eligible use of ARPA funds.”

The final rule also clarifies that recipients may use funds for programs, services, and capital expenditures that respond to the public health and negative economic impacts of the pandemic. Capital expenditures are subject to the same eligibility standard as other eligible uses to respond to the pandemic’s public health and economic impacts; specifically, they must be related and reasonably proportional to the pandemic impact identified and reasonably designed to benefit the impacted population or class.

Additionally, the Overview states: “Small businesses have faced widespread challenges due to the pandemic, including periods of shutdown, declines in revenue, or increased costs. The final rule provides many tools for recipients to respond to the impacts of the pandemic on small businesses, or disproportionate impacts on businesses where pre-existing disparities like lack of access to capital compounded the pandemic’s effects.

Small businesses eligible for assistance are those that experienced negative economic impacts or disproportionate impacts of the pandemic and meet the definition of “small business,” specifically:

1. Have no more than 500 employees, or if applicable, the size standard in number of employees established by the Administrator of the Small Business Administration for the industry in which the business concern or organization operates, and
2. Are a small business concern as defined in section 3 of the Small Business Act (which includes, among other requirements, that the business is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field of operation.”

Aid to Impacted Industries is another highlighted category for eligibility. Specifically listed as an impacted industry, and consistent with the County’s approving resolution, are the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors. In light of this guidance, and other principles outlined in the Overview of the Final Rule, the IDA has designated the following funding categories and amounts for the economic development and tourism allocation to be distributed:

- **Workforce Training and Development \$900,000, including:**
 - New Hire and Existing Worker Training \$600,000
 - Heavy Equipment Operator Training \$150,000
 - Healthcare Skills Development \$125,000
 - Workforce Talent Pipeline Development \$25,000
- **Facility and Infrastructure Improvements \$1,000,000**
- **Small Business and Nonprofit Assistance \$300,000**
- **Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Promotion \$350,000**
- **Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Capacity Building Grants \$350,000**

Funding Category: Workforce Training \$900,000

New Hire and Existing Worker Training \$600,000

The ARPA **New Employee Training Reimbursement Program** will provide financial reimbursement to employers to offset the costs and the decreased productivity associated with training new employees and to assist job seekers in finding jobs with better opportunities for career advancement.*

The program funding and reimbursement will be provided in the following amounts and timeline:

- Training of new employee wages may be reimbursed up to \$5,000 per employee.
- Reimbursement will be provided upon documentation that the employee has been retained for at least six months.
- No reimbursement will be made without a signed agreement between the IDA and the employer identifying the individual hired and confirming the individual's participation in the program.

An application and training agreement will be required for participation in the program (Attachment A).

The ARPA **Existing Worker Training Reimbursement Program** provides financial reimbursement to employers to help offset the costs associated with upgrading the skills within the employer's existing workforce. Funding may be used for the following areas (this is not an all-inclusive list):

- General upgrade of worker skills for the training of new technologies (equipment, software, etc.)
- Training in productivity, processes, and efficiency upgrades
- Maintenance and skilled trades upgrades
- Forklift Driver and other Material Handling Equipment Driver Training
- OSHA/Other similar safety training
- Training that assists workers in moving to jobs with better economic opportunities*

Each Existing Worker Training Reimbursement Program engagement would specify a set training program, including the number of employees trained, the cost of training, and the topics to be covered. Each company selected would be eligible for up to \$7,500 in training reimbursement funds. The potential for multiple training engagements with a single employer will be allowed pending the availability of remaining funds. The IDA will determine the amount of funding, how the funding will be distributed, and what documentation is required prior to the distribution of the funds. A number of factors will determine the actual funding level, including the amount of funding proposed, the number of people being trained, the amount of other funds leveraged, and the overall economic impact of the proposed training program.

As with the New Worker Training Program, an application and training agreement will be required for participation in the program (see Attachment B).

** From the Department of Treasury Final Rule: In addition, recognizing that the pandemic has generated broad workforce disruption, in the final rule, Treasury is making clear that recipients may provide job training or other enumerated types of assistance to individuals that are currently employed but are seeking to move to a job that provides better opportunities for economic advancement, such as higher wages or more opportunities for career advancement.*

Heavy Equipment Operator Training \$150,000

Based on the CDL-A Training model undertaken with the CREST Center at SUNY Canton, this program will augment and extend the Heavy Equipment Operator training currently offered through the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES. This training is currently offered to high school students through the Career and Technical program at BOCES. In addition to this program for high school students, BOCES proposes to provide an 8-week heavy equipment operator program to be offered multiple times per year through its Adult Education Department. Tentatively 3 sessions/year are being planned over a three-year time period.

The program will be available to employed individuals as well as job seekers and will emphasize safe and proper operation of heavy equipment. Through simulation as well as on and off-site projects, students will learn and hone entry-level operation skills on backhoes, bulldozers, forklifts, mini excavators, skid steers and graders from a variety of manufacturers and will be exposed to dump truck operation. Instruction will include specialized attachments as well as laser level technology. Equipment maintenance includes pre-shift checks, equipment mechanics and welding. Completion of the program offers employment opportunities in a wide variety of careers, such as road construction/highway maintenance, agriculture, logging and timber industries, residential and commercial construction, municipalities, and entrepreneurial opportunities for individuals to start their own businesses.

Healthcare Skills Development \$125,000

As one of the largest industry sectors in St. Lawrence County, and one certainly impacted by the Covid pandemic, the healthcare industry offers significant opportunities for employment and career advancement within the local workforce. As the local healthcare industry continues to evolve, significant staffing shortages persist within the sector. It is imperative that skill development programs that lead to jobs or enable workers to advance within career paths are prioritized. Funding will be utilized to support the healthcare industry efforts to develop candidates to fill vacant and emerging positions.

A current initiative proposed with the St. Lawrence Health System is the development of a career ladder program for Clinical and Administrative Medical Assistants (MA). The program would focus on providing SLHS staff advancement opportunities into these positions. SLHS has indicated that both Administrative and Clinical Medical Assistants are a significant need now and in the future. An additional (value added) aspect of the program would be the development of experienced SLHS staff to fill teaching positions.

The Medical Assistant Training consists of the following coursework: EKG Technician (\$1495), Administrative Medical Assistant (\$2815), Phlebotomy Technician (\$1850), Clinical Skills for the Medical Assistant (\$2444), and Medical Terminology (\$660). Total Instructional Hours is 473. Total Tuition for all components is: \$9264/student. Individual course tuitions are listed for students not looking to complete the career pathway to Medical Assistant. This program would provide matching support for 25 individuals in completion of program components. The program could also be a model for other healthcare related employers and workers with funding provided through the **Existing Worker Training Reimbursement Program** described above.

Workforce Talent Pipeline Development \$25,000

To strengthen our local workforce, it is essential that we create, build and initiate training program pipelines (talent pipelines) that work to alleviate the short- and long-term talent shortages that are present in our county. An established talent pipeline would provide employers and new businesses with a ready pool of qualified and prepared candidates to fill vacant positions. A talent pipeline functions as a sequence of jobs (trainings) that leads to higher level jobs. For example, a maintenance pipeline could provide the necessary training steps to move an individual from production worker to machine setter to machinists to millwright to maintenance supervisor. Funding will be utilized to identify and to fill in training gaps.

Our employers have job openings that require the skills that our educational partners already offer, and those jobs have sustainable living wages and benefits but the people that could fill those jobs and help invigorate our economy are not properly trained to fill those positions. We have the training capabilities, the job openings and a number of potential employees who are not in the job market. The Workforce Talent Pipeline would assist in aligning the job needs with the training available and connect those looking for work with the skills training necessary to fill the jobs our employers are anxious to fill.

Funding Category: Facility and Infrastructure Improvements \$1,000,000

An application (Attachment C) will be created to assist with Facility and Infrastructure Improvements for businesses and facilities throughout the County which will require applicants to propose projects for support from the fund. The Application will require a summary of the project including the facility/infrastructure improvements to be undertaken with an explanation and budget for how these improvements respond to the public health and negative economic impacts of the pandemic. Qualifying investments include but are not limited to:

- Workspace layout and efficiency improvements
- Ventilation improvements including air flow and related infrastructure
- COVID-19 prevention and treatment equipment
- Improvements to vacant and abandoned properties in disproportionately impacted communities, including rehabilitation or maintenance, renovation, removal and remediation of environmental contaminants, demolition or deconstruction, greening/vacant lot cleanup & conversion to affordable housing within qualified disproportionately impacted communities
- Other facility or capital expenditures that are identified by applicants and approved by the IDA as meeting the ARPA Final Rule framework for eligible uses beyond those enumerated in the rule**

***From the Final Rule: As with all uses, recipients that undertake capital expenditures beyond those enumerated as eligible by Treasury must meet the two-part framework under Standards: Designating a Public Health Impact and Standards: Designating a Negative Economic Impact under General Provisions: Structure and Standards, including the requirement that responses are related and reasonably proportional to the harm or impact identified.*

Approved projects will be funded up to \$50,000 with a minimum 25% match required by the applicant, with preference being given to projects with higher matching funds and greater economic/public health impacts. These impacts, and any potential exceptions to the cap levels and matching requirements, will be approved by the IDA.

Funding Category: Small Business and Nonprofit Assistance \$300,000

From the Department of Treasury Final Rule regarding Small Businesses:

As discussed in the section Designating a Negative Economic Impact, in the final rule, recipients must identify an economic harm caused or exacerbated by the pandemic on a small business or class of small businesses to provide services that respond. As discussed above, programs or services in this category must respond to a harm experienced by a small business or class of small businesses as a result of the public health emergency. To identify impacted small businesses and necessary response measures, recipients may consider impacts such as lost revenue or increased costs, challenges covering payroll, rent or mortgage, or other operating costs, the capacity of a small business to weather financial hardships, and general financial insecurity resulting from the public health emergency.

From the Department of Treasury Final Rule regarding Small Businesses:

Eligible Assistance to Impacted and Disproportionately Impacted Nonprofits: The interim final rule provided for, and the final rule maintains, the ability for recipients to provide direct assistance to nonprofits that experienced public health or negative economic impacts of the pandemic. Specifically, recipients may provide direct assistance to nonprofits if the nonprofit has experienced a public health or negative economic impact as a result of the pandemic. For example, if a nonprofit organization experienced impacts like decreased revenues or increased costs (e.g., through reduced contributions or uncompensated increases in service need), and a recipient provides funds to address that impact, then it is providing direct assistance to the nonprofit as a beneficiary under Subsection (c)(1) of Sections 602 and 603. Direct assistance may take the form of loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance, or other services that respond to the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Assistance to be provided to small businesses and nonprofits that experienced negative economic impacts will include the following:

- Loans or grants to mitigate financial hardship, such as by supporting payroll and benefits, costs to retain employees, and mortgage, rent, utility, and other operating costs
- Technical assistance, counseling, or other services to support business planning

An application (see Attachment D) will be required and there will be a call for proposals for assistance from this fund as well. Applicants will be required to identify, describe, and document the harm experienced by their business or nonprofit operation as well as the requested response to the harm experienced. Funding provided in an amount of up to \$10,000 per business or nonprofit organization.

Funding Category: Tourism, Travel, and Hospitality Promotion \$350,000

Out of Area Destination Marketing Campaign \$150,000 - administered by SLC Chamber of Commerce

The destination marketing campaign for St. Lawrence County Tourism, Travel and Hospitality will be focused on attracting visitors to return for leisure travel over three years. The primary market will be Ontario and Quebec provinces in Canada, within a 4-hour (400 km) drive of the St. Lawrence County international border, informing and encouraging visitation after a long period of border closure during the pandemic. The campaigns will be designed to promote multiple areas throughout the County, utilizing seasonal and thematic campaigns. Driving traffic to the area will increase opportunities for a broad range of businesses, from retail to restaurant, lodging to transportation, services and the secondary businesses who support increased demand for these sectors.

The ARPA funds through St. Lawrence County will be leveraged by Empire State Development and other funding sources to create the most comprehensive and improved marketing efforts for the businesses and visitor economy in St. Lawrence County.

Over the course of a three-year period:

- **\$50,000** of the budget will be utilized to design, create, and distribute seasonal and thematic rack cards throughout the Canadian market.
- **\$50,000** of the budget will be used for geotargeted digital marketing to complement the seasonal and thematic campaign promoted on the rack cards.
- **\$50,000** of the budget will be used to develop professional photography and videos to be used for ongoing promotion of events, outdoor attractions (and recreation) and seasonal themes (shopping, outdoor recreation, live music, theatre, ATV, snowmobiling, fishing, etc).

Business/Partner Marketing Opportunities: Total: \$200,000

Lodging, restaurant, retail, recreation, and attractions will be eligible to apply for both cooperative and independent marketing opportunities to leverage their marketing reach and provide professional branding and marketing assets for ongoing promotion of their business, community, or organization.

Over the course of a three-year period:

- \$150,000 of the budget will be available to Tourism, Travel and Hospitality partners, once approved. Marketing receipts for print, radio, digital placements, trade show booth fees, website development, email marketing, professional photography, videography, and branding are eligible for reimbursement (or direct payment). Outreach will be made to assist small businesses and those that have not been able to afford to previously undertake marketing efforts.
- \$50,000 of this budget will be allocated to promote airports in St. Lawrence County.

Funding Category: Tourism, Travel, and Hospitality Capacity Building Grants \$350,000

Destination Development Regrant Program – Administered by the SLC Chamber in partnership with the IDA

\$350,000 will fund a grant program eligible to for-profit businesses, non-profit organizations, and communities in St. Lawrence County. The grants will focus on developing tourism amenities, enhancing visitor experience, and increasing recreation, art, culture, and heritage opportunities for visitors.

Funds are eligible for projects that enhance existing assets and/or create unique opportunities. Grants will be made up to \$50,000 per project per year. The IDA and Chamber will assist applicants with opportunities for existing low-interest loan programs and other economic development resources in order to help make larger projects successful.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY AND GUIDELINES

When reviewing ARPA funding requests, the IDA will consider multiple factors, including the following as outlined in the Overview of the Final Rule:

Step	1. Identify COVID-19 public health or economic impact	2. Design a response that addresses or responds to the impact
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can identify impact to a specific household, business or nonprofit or to a class of households, businesses, or nonprofits (i.e., group)• Can also identify disproportionate impacts, or more severe impacts, to a specific beneficiary or to a class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Types of responses can include a program, service, or capital expenditure• Response should be related and reasonably proportional to the harm• Response should also be reasonably designed to benefit impacted individual or class
Simplifying Presumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Rule presumes certain populations and classes are impacted and disproportionately impacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Rule provides non-exhaustive list of enumerated eligible uses that respond to pandemic impacts and disproportionate impacts

Each funding category and potential applicant will have a separate application and program delivery process and the funds will be delivered either in the eligible use categories as defined by the Overview guidelines or as identified by the IDA as is allowed by the guidelines.

Funds will be allocated both within the scope of the Overview guidelines and with emphasis on requests that also leverage other funding and support goals, objectives, initiatives, or action steps as identified in the 2022 St. Lawrence County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The IDA retains the discretion to make exceptions to the maximum amount provided per applicant and/or per project in each of the Funding Categories described in this Program Allocation Outline if it determines that the circumstances so warrant and meet ARPA Final Rule guidelines.

APPLYING FOR FUNDS

The applicant must submit a completed project application for each category of funding as identified per the following applications:

- New Worker Training
- Existing Worker Training
- Facility and Infrastructure Improvements Fund
- Small Business and Nonprofit Assistance Program
- Tourism Business/Partner Marketing Assistance
- Tourism Capacity Building Grant

As described above, the Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Promotion and Capacity Building Grant programs will be delivered in partnership with the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce and will have separate funding processes. The Heavy Equipment Operator and Healthcare Skills Development training programs will be delivered in partnership with the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES and will also have a separate funding process managed by the IDA

Please contact the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency at 315-379-9806 or info@slcida.com for additional information.