



STATE OF ARKANSAS
**Department of Finance
and Administration**

OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER
1509 West Seventh Street, 2nd Floor
Post Office Box 3278
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-3278
Phone: (501) 682-1675
Fax: (501) 683-0823
www.dfa.arkansas.gov

February 23, 2022

Ms. Nicki Hilliard, PharmD
Ark Pharmacists Association
P.O. Box 3798
Little Rock, AR 72203

RE: Arkansas Pharmacists Public Health Response to Fight COVID-19

Dear Ms. Hilliard,

Thank you for submitting the Arkansas Pharmacists Public Health Response to Fight COVID-19 proposal for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF). DFA has completed its review of your proposal.

The proposal you submitted for consideration has been reviewed and is deemed likely ELIGIBLE. We are not currently disbursing funding due to the remaining fund balance being held for the future potential outbreaks of COVID-19. The first allocation was not enough to cover all eligible proposals. The second allocation of funding is expected to be available on or about the first of August 2022. Even though your proposal has been deemed eligible, proposal eligibility does not guarantee funding will be awarded.

If your request for funding is scheduled to be heard by the ARPA Steering Committee, you will be contacted with instructions on how to proceed. If you have any questions or concerns please submit them to the ARPA Steering Committee inbox (ARPA_SteeringCommittee@dfa.arkansas.gov), so that we may respond in a timely manner

Sincerely,

Paul S. Louthian, CPA
State Comptroller

American Rescue Plan Funding Proposed Criteria and Management Plan

submitted by the Arkansas Pharmacists Association (APA)

Introduction

The pharmacists of Arkansas have worked diligently and tirelessly during this pandemic to protect patient and public health. The resurgence of variants underscores the importance of their vaccination and therapy efforts. The work of pharmacists has greatly increased with first doses, third doses, booster doses, pediatric doses, monoclonal antibodies, and anti-viral therapy in addition to their existing medication therapy responsibilities. This funding is also an investment in the infrastructure to continue the public access to the expanded services of pharmacist provided care.

The biggest issue facing these frontline heroes has been staffing. The increased workload has taken a huge toll and most pharmacies have been working short staffed for too long. Many pharmacies have taken on additional personnel in a time when pharmacy reimbursement models are insufficient to sustain profitability.

All 650 pharmacies providing vaccines have made an investment of time and resources to carry out this mission. Additional personnel time, storage equipment, PPE, leased space, off-site vaccination clinics, homebound vaccines, biohazard waste costs have been a burden on time and resources. However, many of the corporate pharmacies have declined to participate in this grant request because they have been compensated in other ways through federal partnerships. For that reason, we have decreased our request for assistance to primarily 350 independent pharmacies and limited the scope of funding. We would like to reserve the opportunity to seek additional funds for important programs such as mental health and substance abuse disorders as originally outlined in our grant request if funding is available at a future date.

Distribution of funds for vaccine and treatment services will be allocated according to a simple funding plan based on the scope of services provided. This is an equitable plan without being an administrative burden.

Formula for Funding Allocations:

Staffing	Allocation/site	Funding
350 vaccine providing pharmacies	\$20,000	\$7,000,000
Personnel Protective Equipment		
350 vaccine/MAB providing pharmacies	\$5,000	\$1,750,000
Provision of Monoclonal Antibody Therapy		
120 community pharmacy sites	\$25,000	\$3,000,000
Provision of COVID-19 Testing		
100 community pharmacies	\$10,000	\$1,000,000
Public Outreach		\$1,120,000
TOTAL		\$13,870,000

Distribution of Funds

There are two options to facilitate the ARP fund distribution. The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) could disperse funds via the funding formula directly to the pharmacies. The APA can provide a list of pharmacies with CLIA waivers for COVID-19 testing and those enrolled with the Arkansas Department of Health for the provision of vaccines and antibodies. An alternate would be for the Arkansas Pharmacists Association to work as the plan administrator and provide funding requests and reports to DHS to comply with grant requirements.

Public Health Outreach

As outlined in our full proposal, increased public awareness of locally provided services is needed. Pharmacists are one of the most trusted professions and if they are also known in their community it can make a difference in increasing vaccine confidence as a “trusted advisor”. Building and modeling off a successful program in Alabama, the APA will work with a consulting firm to implement surveys, research, targeting marketing and advertising to improve vaccine confidence.

Thank you for your recognition of the astounding work that pharmacies have made to serve patient and public health during this pandemic.



The Honorable Asa Hutchison
Office of the Governor
500 Woodlane Street, Suite 250
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Governor Hutchison,

We are writing to encourage American Rescue Plan funding to support the critical COVID-19 response provided by our state's pharmacies. Arkansas community pharmacists and pharmacy staff have been frontline heroes in the COVID-19 response, providing over 3 million of the vaccinations in the state. This represents over 75% of all the COVID-19 vaccine provided to Arkansas patients, and when you include the vaccine management in hospitals the number increases to 85% of COVID-19 vaccines have been managed and administered by pharmacies and their team members.

These same pharmacists in health systems and community-based practices managed or administered the majority of monoclonal antibody therapeutics that reduce the chance of death or hospitalization by 70 to 85% for high-risk patients infected or exposed to COVID-19. Over 2500 patients a week were treated in September, with nearly 20% of these being treated in small rural pharmacies. In this ever changing pandemic landscape, pharmacists are now spending additional time making sure patients receive appropriate antiviral therapy and vaccinating the children of the state.

This effort has not been without financial, mental, and physical stress on an already taxed system of patient care. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund request of \$13.7 million to over 350 pharmacies and programs across Arkansas would provide a great relief and secure the infrastructure to continue to address the COVID-19 response and support the pharmacies in providing patient care services in the state.

We support their request for COVID Relief Funding and believe it should be made a priority in providing assistance across the state for their important work in this healthcare crisis.

Sincerely,

Members of the Arkansas State Legislature



Representative Fred Allen
Representative Mark Berry
Representative Stan Berry
Senator Cecile Bledsoe
Representative Ken Bragg
Representative Harlan Breaux
Representative Keith Brooks
Representative Karilyn Brown
Senator Ron Caldwell
Senator Linda Chesterfield
Senator Alan Clark
Representative Joe Cloud
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