Improving Cybersecurity

Eligible Ways to Use ARPA Funds

Cyber-based attacks on municipalities are increasing in frequency and sophistication. **Tightening your municipality's cyber armor is an acceptable use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, so _now_ is the ideal time to make relatively costly improvements** to the security of your organization's computer systems.

Why Use ARPA Funds for Cybersecurity Improvements?

Save time, money, and your reputation. Cyber attacks are extremely disruptive and expensive. (For an example, read this WCAX News article). They often result in money being stolen, personal information being exposed, and expensive equipment becoming inoperable – as well as damaging the reputation of the municipality and the trust of voters.

Because Vermont municipalities are definitely targets. Some have been hit already with small ransom demands and social engineering scams, including the examples noted in this _VLCT News_ article.

Although costly, cyber improvements are crucial and absolutely worth it. Now is the time to identify your system weaknesses and make investments in your information technology (IT) infrastructure while these one-time funds are available to you.

Make investments now to address known deficiencies. This may qualify your town for insurance coverage and allow you to have the proper protection in case you are the subject of a cyber or ransomware attack. You do not want your municipality to bear the entire cost of a cyber event because you were not covered!

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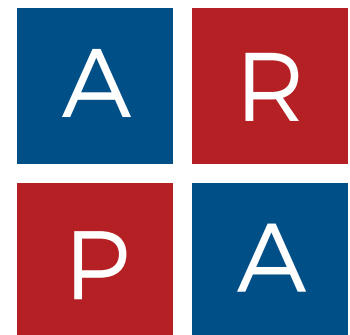
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT
2021

The Social Security Act, Section 603(c)(1)(C), allows for use of funds "for the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to COVID-19." The IFR states this "provides recipients broad latitude to use the Fiscal Recovery Funds for the provision of government services…[that] can include but are not limited to… **modernization of cybersecurity – such as hardware, software, and protection of critical infrastructure**" – among many other things.

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Seven Ideas for Using ARPA Funds to Improve Your Municipality's Cyber Hardware, Software, and Infrastructure

1 **IT consulting services** to identify current system/network weaknesses and implement any software and hardware improvements that the assessment recommends.

2 Implementation of **data encryption on all portable devices and media,** including laptops.

3 Transition to **operating systems and other applications that are fully supported by the software** provider.

4 Implementation of **multi-factor authentication for all internet-connected use of municipal devices and systems.**

5 Compliance with **Payment Card Industry (PCI) Security Standards in cases where credit cards are accepted** for payment – if the municipality does not currently comply with these standards.

6 Implementation of **end-point detection and response software.**

7 **Improvements to disaster recovery,** such as moving to the cloud for network applications.

▶ How to start

- Discuss your needs and draft a clear scope of work.

- Select an IT consultant and have them (1) thoroughly assess your current system and identify all cyber security vulnerabilities and (2) develop comprehensive recommendations on how to correct those vulnerabilities. (Visit VLCT's list of IT providers and other resources to assist with vendor selection.)

When the work is complete, enjoy the peace of mind, insurance protection, and state-of-the-art hardware, software, and infrastructure which will protect and serve your municipality and citizenry for years to come.

FIND VLCT'S ARPA RESOURCES AT

VLCT.ORG/ARPA ➡

HAVE AN ARPA RELATED QUESTION? EMAIL ARPA@VLCT.ORG

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