

Guilford County Launches ARPA Program in One Week

SimpliGov Helps Deliver \$58 Million in Critical Pandemic Recovery Programs

For Guilford County, NC, the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided an infusion of funding to aid COVID-19 pandemic recovery. The legislation armed the county with \$104 million to spend on healthcare, education, infrastructure, and small businesses programs to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

CHALLENGE

The comprehensive ARPA federal, state, and county guidelines made it impossible to manage applications on paper; each application required a lengthy 15-page form submission.

Further, Guilford County's process for reviewing submissions consisted of eight steps involving more than a dozen people across multiple departments. Furthermore, extensive correspondence—internally and with applicants—was required to process each submission.

"With so many moving parts, it would have been challenging for our three-person department to keep track of every application in a manual, paper-based process of this magnitude," explained Tiffany Oliva, Program and Fiscal Recovery Manager, Guilford County. **"We were eager to deliver impactful services to our residents, but we needed the right tool to ensure that we were doing it in an expedient, efficient, and more user-friendly way with minimal errors."**

SOLUTION

"ARPA delivered the biggest infusion of government dollars we had ever seen at the local government level. It gave us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not just deliver more and better services, but also innovate on service delivery," said Oliva. **"We wanted to be sure that funded initiatives resulted in equitable outcomes intended by the legislation, address our most acute problems, and can be sustained in both the short and long term."**

Guilford turned to [SimpliGov's](#) digital form and workflow solution for its extensive customization and rapid time to implementation. Guilford began by delineating ARPA's 30 spending categories into a user-friendly form. Rather than presenting all fields, SimpliGov would progressively display new ones depending on answers to previous questions. This significantly improved the user experience by streamlining the way information was captured.

Upon initial submission of any proposed recovery program, the county's pandemic recovery team kicked off the review process by verifying that each proposal satisfied basic ARPA prerequisites.

From there, an application traveled through a preliminary risk assessment of the candidate organization's finances and history of accomplishments. After the legal team reviewed for compliance, the county manager would then recommend submissions to the county's board of commissioners.

Once the board selected the ARPA fund recipients, the pandemic recovery team, finance, and legal would prepare final agreements. At any point, Guilford stakeholders might need to correspond with each other and with applicants to request more details to validate that the organizations and their proposed programs aligned with the county's priorities and met compliance requirements. All subsequent information was captured within SimpliGov.

After programs were up and running, Guilford used SimpliGov's agenda and onsite assessment templates to schedule and conduct periodic review meetings intended to help fine-tune operations.

"SimpliGov helped us organize our workflow and keep in touch with stakeholders at each stage. All correspondence and supporting information is archived, where we can access the status of a proposal at any given moment," added Oliva.

RESULTS

- ARPA form and workflow **built in one week**.
- An easy, intuitive way for the community to capture and evaluate proposals that helped the county through a difficult period.
- **Over 250 submissions were evaluated** in the one-month window allocated to apply for ARPA funds.
- Speed of processing submissions resulted in approval and **allocation of \$58 million** for a variety of programs.
- Full visibility into all points of the process including an unbreakable audit trail for demonstrating compliance.
- ARPA workflow template can be easily modified for additional program applications, whether in response to an emergency, or for standard county operations.

"With the help of SimpliGov, we created and implemented services that helped us recover from a global crisis the likes of which we had never seen before—and laid the groundwork for a more efficient and expedient modern digital government moving forward."

Tiffany Oliva
Program and Fiscal Recovery
Manager, Guilford County