**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**FROM:** Larra Clark, Deputy Director

**RE:** Overview of new Federal opportunities

**DATE:** March 22, 2021

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:** Information

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** N/A

**DRAFT OF MOTION:** N/A

**Background**

Public libraries are eligible for billions of dollars in recovery funding as part of the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act ([ARPA](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/american-rescue-plan-library-relief)) of 2021 passed by Congress on March 10, 2021. Some of this funding is specifically allocated for libraries, such as new IMLS funding, and some of it will require public libraries to apply for new funding through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) or through new funding available at the state and local level.

The ALA Public Policy & Advocacy Office lobbied extensively for all of these provisions and is developing resources to assist and guide libraries in accessing new funding. What follows is a brief recap of key provisions that can aid public libraries. Additionally, work continues to increase awareness and support for public library capital funding through the [Build America’s Libraries Act](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/buildlibraries), as a bill focused on infrastructure improvements and economic recovery is anticipated shortly.

**New IMLS funding**

ARPA includes $200 million for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the largest single increase in the agency’s 25-year history. The bulk of this funding ($178 million) is allocated for state library administrative agencies on a population-based formula (i.e., Grants to States), with a $2 million state minimum. IMLS is working now with state library agencies to confirm state allotments and allowable uses for the funding.

State libraries will distribute ARPA funding to local libraries according to state priorities, to maintain and enhance library operations and services, including:

* offering greater access to technology, including through expanding digital networks and connectivity, purchasing hotspots, computers and digital content;
* establishing mobile digital labs;
* enhancing workforce development and jobseeker programing; and
* ensuring training and technical support for libraries, including to assist with the safe handling of materials.

Funding must be used by September 30, 2022.

Updates will be shared by ALA at <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/american-rescue-plan-library-relief>, by

IMLS at <https://www.imls.gov/coronavirus-covid-19-updates>, and through individual state library agencies as more information is available.

**Emergency Connectivity Fund**

Public libraries will be eligible to apply for the new $7.17 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) through the FCC’s E-rate program. While funds will be distributed through the E-rate program, the rules will not be exactly the same as the regular program. Participating libraries, for instance, will receive ***100% reimbursement*** through the fund, rather than the usual discount matrix, and some costs incurred during the pandemic in 2020 might be eligible for reimbursement. Devices like hotspots, laptops and tablets also are likely to be eligible for funding. The FCC is required to promulgate the rules for this new program within 60 days, so has issued a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-21-317A1.pdf) with public comments due by April 23. ALA will file comments with the FCC in this proceeding building on previous comments supporting a petition to use E-rate funding to close the “homework gap.” [www.ala.org/advocacy/erate](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/erate).

Research also is underway to outline diverse and innovative library approaches to improving broadband access and use to provide a menu of options that could be adopted and/or scaled by public libraries through the ECF. Public libraries generally receive between 5% and 10% of E-rate funding, which would equal $350-$700 million for public libraries if they apply at a similar rate.

It is anticipated that there will be a 30-day application window, likely before June 30, 2021.

**State and Local Funding**

ARPA includes a massive influx – more than $360 billion – of emergency assistance to state, local and tribal community governments. This influx is intended to offset potential cuts to public health, safety, education, and library programs. For states facing less dire economic conditions, ARPA funds present an opportunity for innovative new programs and resources. Approximately 60 percent of the $360 billion will go to states, with 40 percent going to local and tribal governments.

Many public libraries received funding last year through CARES Act funding distributed at the state and local level (as well as through the IMLS CARES Act funding), and this will almost certainly be true with ARPA funding, as well.

Local government associations are sharing information about this emergency assistance, including the [National League of Cities](https://www.nlc.org/article/2021/03/12/everything-you-need-to-know-about-covid-relief/,) and the [National Association of Counties](https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/NACo%20Legislative%20Analysis%20for%20Counties_American%20Rescue%20Plan%20Act%20of%202021_Final.pdf). ALA also hopes to offer information and resources to assist state library chapters and local libraries in advocating for these funds.

**Other funding**

Additional program funding is available through the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities (including direct grants eligible to libraries), through Head Start, and for state-level afterschool and summer programs.

A summary of all ARPA funding opportunities for libraries is available [here](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/libfunding/fed/American%20Rescue%20Plan%20Act%20of%202021%20ALA%20Summary.pdf).