

COVID TREASURY FUNDING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(6-13-21, Lisa Kraft)

What is ARPA money? ARPA stands for the American Rescue Plan Act. ARPA established the U.S. Department of Treasury's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) which is the large sums of money coming to tribes. This Q&A discusses just the Treasury money of ARPA.

Is ARPA a huge deal for the future of our tribe?

With millions and billions flowing into Indian Country, all tribes are thinking BIG!!!

Tribes have a \$20 billion dollar set aside under the Coronavirus State & Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) program. States and local governments throughout America received \$350 billion. For tribal government planning, there are four GOALS to spending this money:

- GOAL #1. Continue to support activities that decrease the spread of COVID and bring the pandemic under control;
- GOAL #2. Replace lost tribal revenue (lost during and because of COVID) to strengthen jobs that provide public services as well as retain employees;
- GOAL #3. Support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses; and
- GOAL #4. Address systemic public health and economic challenges of Indian Country.

Granted, these are large GOALS; this is once in a lifetime opportunity for Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Afterall, this pot of money fell from the sky and was unexpected in our lifetimes. According to our CPN Constitution, our leadership must:

- #1 – exercise self governance
- #2 – provide and take advantage of economic independence
- #3 – provide social advancement (of Citizen Potawatomi people)

What are your plans to assess the needs of tribal citizens to decide where you would spend ARPA funding?

The federal government states Tribes have considerable flexibility to use these funds to address the diverse needs of their communities. What this means to day dreamers and professional planners like me, is that the sky is the limit to what we can achieve these next three years in prioritizing, budgeting, planning, and spending this money!

Of course, this is “We the People” money, and we should be in the driving seat planning for its spending. This is no different than our members coming together to decide the fate of our shared lands and negotiating treaty terms hundreds of years ago.

We need to begin rolling out a **CPN Census of Needs and Talents** survey to justify the needs and sending priorities. We must also find members who can help roll out services and programs and work to spend this money in all 50 states and beyond. We need our CPN business professionals to hire our own citizens and let us pay for on-the-job training.

When our citizens see how this money can be spent, what lands we have to develop on, and how each project fits into a master plan, we can get on the same page to champion and lend our talents to bettering our Nation.

CPN Census of Needs and Talents (Attach)

CPN land development areas - Tribal Complex and Grand Resort (Attach)

Should tribal members know when the ARPA funds hit the bank account (General Fund) and the total lump sum amounts?

Yes, our citizens deserve to know when each ARPA windfall hits our bank account, the total deposit, what it can be used for, and how it is being spent. We the People should be planning, budgeting, and prioritizing its spending.

Tribes have a \$20 billion set aside of ARPA-SLFRF money and a separate \$350 billion is for states, territories, and local governments. There is so much opportunity or local community partnering.

There was an initial payment made to all federally eligible tribal governments. Exactly \$1.7 million was sent to 588 tribal nations in May 2021.

The next payment was calculated as sixty-five percent (65%) of the \$19 billion. It was distributed to tribes based on tribal (self-certified) enrollment as submitted by tribal governments in April-May 2021. **Of this \$12.35 billion, our Nation received \$175,000,000 (reported by CPN Public Information on 6-10-21).**

On average, tribes have been receiving these funds on their populations at an average of \$5500 per member. This means the population count used by the CPN, when they provided their data to be used in the formula, was only 31,818 members. We are up to 37,000. My first question to our Executive Branch is why is the first payment low? That is a discrepancy of \$28,500,000. To be sure of the actual amount deposited, I would like to see the award letter with the dollar amount and exact population count used by our Nation.

The last payment tribes will receive comes at the end of this month (June 2021) and is thirty-five percent (35%) of the \$19 billion (\$6.65 billion) which will be given to tribes based on number of employees.

Our leadership has stated in their recent columns that there are 2,000 employees. To be 100% confident in the amount, I would have to see the number of employees the CPN reported. I cannot ballpark this average as not enough tribes have received their second payment and/or reported their amounts.

What can't this money be used for?

#1 - Deposits into Pension Funds

This does not include routine payroll contributions to pensions of employees whose wages and salaries are an eligible use.

#2 - Other Restrictions on Use

No paying off existing debt, legal settlements, or judgments!

No stockpiling, hoarding, or caching this money in a rainy day fund or reserve!

How important is this set of funds for our Tribe?

Covid disrupted everything and spotlighted systemic problems in Indian Country. The ARPA money is to be budgeted and spent to address:

- A. Public Health
- B. Economic Hardship
- C. Essential Workers
- D. Tribal Government Revenues
- E. Infrastructure (Water, Sewer, & Broadband)

This money can be spent on so many things:

1- Public Health

- COVID mitigation and containment
- Medical Expenses (care and services, prevention and long term care)
- Behavioral Health (new or enhanced tribal services to meet mental health, substance abuse, and behavioral health)
- Public Health & Safety (staffing health, and all economic impacts relating to human resources)

2 - Addressing Negative Economic Impacts

Workers and Families

- Assistance to the unemployed
- Job training
- Food, housing, cash, and other household needs
- Survivor benefits of family members of COVID-19 victims

Small Business

- Loans and grants to mitigate financial hardship
- Loans and grants and in-kind assistance to implement COVID preventative tactics
- Technical assistance

Rehiring Staff

- Rehiring public sector staff up to the pre-pandemic staffing level

Impacted Industries

- Tourism, travel, and hospitality
- Tribal development areas

3 - Provide Equity-Focused Services

Address health disparities

- Community violence programs
- Remediation of lead paint and other hazards
- Community health workers and public benefits coordinators

Investing in Housing and Neighborhoods

- Services to support individuals experiencing homelessness
- Affordable housing development
- Housing vouchers, residential counseling, navigating housing

Addressing Educational Disparities

- New or expanded early learning services
- Expanded resources for high poverty school districts
- Educational services like tutoring and afterschool programs
- Programs for educational support of social, emotional, and mental health needs

Promoting Healthy Childhood Environments

- New or expanded high quality childcare
- Home visiting programs for families with young children
- Services for child welfare-involved families and foster youth

4 - Replace Tribal Government Revenue Loss

- Filling budget shortfalls
- Tribal governments must calculate the loss of revenue caused by COVID and have wide latitude to use them for governmental services (tribal scholarships)
- Governments may calculate the revenue loss of their tribal enterprises in their total revenue loss.

5 - Premium Pay for Essential Employees

- Essential work involves regular in person interaction or physical handling of items that were also handled by others
- Premium pay should prioritize low to moderate income workers who face the greatest mismatch between employment related health risks and compensation

Tribes can designate additional sectors:

- Staff at nursing homes, hospitals, home health
- Workers at farms, food production, facilities, grocery stores and restaurants
- Janitors and maintenance

- Truck drivers, transit staff, warehouse workers
- Public health and safety workers
- Childcare workers, educators, school staff
- Social service and human services staff

6 - Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure

- Building and improvements of water and sewer infrastructure, buildings, systems, storage, transmission, and distribution
- Bring services to households and businesses without a wireline capable of delivering 25Mbps download/3 Mbps upload
- Install new projects that deliver reliable minimum 100 Mbps download and uploads

What is your "first draft" plan for ARPA funds?:

I have met with auditors and accountants and other tribal leaders to get a better sense of what we can and can't spend this money on. I have laid out a Census of Needs and Talents with my ideas for spending it by category.

I have also attached my ballpark budget of how I would like to see it lined out by projects and proposed budgets. I have attached two maps of our development concentrations so our citizens can visualize progress. There is a lot we can do to make these locations more successful in service delivery, diversification, and making more money for program expansion.

One important strategy is to develop where the most tourists/travelers drive by every day. Five thousand cars, on average, drive by our tribal complex, but 50,000 drive by the Grand Resort each day.

I also want to offer every citizen 18 and older, that was enrolled by June of 2021, an annual check for the next three years of \$1,000 a year for a total of \$3,000. If a member self certifies they need help with the cost of food for the next year, we can cut them a check with no further application or proof of expenses.

My budget goes over the \$175 million amount, but I expect us to get another payment this month to continue planning. Once the total amount is known, I will rework my proposed budget.

Plus, it is just my concept. I can't wait to see what the survey results say. We all deserve a voice in budgeting and prioritizing the spending of this mountain of money.

Should there be transparency in the way the money is spent?

The first interim report to Treasury of spending ARPA money is from date it is deposited through July 31, 2021. The federal report (SF425) is due August 31, 2021. Some tribes are already getting money out to members and creating new programs because leadership created a plan after CARES money and because they value the importance of being better prepared for the next outbreak. To say we have no plan and must hire an administrator to help Mr. Barrett plan for this money, outside of the CPN citizenry and lawmaking branch, **is stonewalling**.

These monies will also be reported on each quarter to the federal government --- so why not to our membership? We are still waiting to learn how the Barrett administration spent the CARES money up by December 11, 2020, yet managed to purchase a property for \$1.1 million while denying food and shelter to our citizens.

For more information on how this money can be spent, visit www.treasury.gov/SLFRPTribal or [call 202-622-2960](tel:202-622-2960) or email at SLFRP@treasury.gov. I also have downloads on Material Resources at www.CPNchairman.com.

What is your biggest worry/fear with a Barrett Administration controlling how the ARPA funds are spent?

Mr. Barrett denied “We the People” a voice in spending the 2020 CARES money (\$62.5 million) at one of, if not the most scariest times in modern world history. Why then would we allow him single handedly to prioritize, budget and spend \$175 million dollars in new and unexpected money.

To date, the CPN citizens have not seen the audited reconciliation of how the 2020 money was spent. Many members were denied, had to endure complicated application processes, and some families received 5 computers in one household (\$5,000) while elders went without food assistance.

It isn't just Treasury money that is dumping into our accounts due to COVID, all federal programs are getting more money!

Please also know that our Child Care has received \$2.6 in original CARES money, \$7.1 in additional CARES money in December 2020, \$17.9 in stabilization and \$11.2 in stimulus in 2021. Why is this not being mentioned to our citizens? That is over \$39 million dollars in CARES and ARPA money that we should be planning to expand childcare services to members everywhere. We could be planning to build new childcare centers to do away with 3 to 4 year local waitlists. Actually, the CPN's Fiscal Year 2021 operating budget shows that our childcare program was already carrying over \$18 million in unspent federal program dollars before COVID hit.

Indian Health Service gave us \$7 million in additional CARES money last year and we expected to make another \$4 million in third-party revenue off it. This money (\$11 million), on top of the clinic carrying over \$34 million in unspent money from the previous year, shows a lack of transparency and accountability in our healthcare system and a blatant lack of serious planning for the expansion of our services. Granted, you want to hold operating revenue in case of federal continuing resolutions, but come on. Stockpiling federal dollars and denying our citizens services are counter to the intent of the federal financial assistance---it is to deliver social and health services.

Would you wait on an "administrator" to start working with leadership to decide how to spend ARPA funds or wait to roll out the administration's plan on how they think we should budget this money or wait to spend for another three months from now?

I can work with our members right now to learn what their needs are and budget those priorities and percentages. I knocked my research out, formulated a survey document to determine needs and priorities, and created a budget---all on one week.

Having an excuse for not being accountable is what we have grown to accept from a Barrett Administration.

Should legislators be trying to make contact with the members they represent to ask what their needs are to report those back to other leaders?

Yes. Why haven't CPN lawmakers surveyed their constituents through their columns, direct mailings, phone or email? Our CPN lawmakers could read the cries for help from hundreds of members on social media throughout COVID. All CPN lawmakers heard from the Executive Branch is crickets.

Why have our elected leaders not demanded transparency for us in the accounting of the 2020 spending of CARES money? We equal citizens of the same Nation, we deserve to know. It has been reported to the federal Treasury, why not lawmakers and citizens? I bet every lawmaker has a plan if their family has to weather another outbreak or shelter in place for months, why then, do they not plan for another emergency our Nation will have to prepare for?

From the COVID shutdown, lawmakers saw what businesses took a beating and which ones flourished---our golf course and grocery stores are two examples. Both had record years. If Mr. Barrett and our lawmakers are still waiting around, that's just called stonewalling, poor management and a lack of governance skills.

Do you think that members should have the ability to have a townhall about these funds and get questions answered and “Think Tank” about our needs?

Absolutely, members should have been informed about this money as our administration learned of it and certainly shortly after we received it in our bank. That is why it is very important for me to post this information to you as often as I can and let you have up-to-date information as our Nation receives it. Social media is a perfect platform for information and news. It is also a great way to survey or gauge the urgency of needs among our members.

Our Nation, like so many other tribes, have literally had the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow handed to us to spend over the next three years. I strongly believe we all need to be thinking big.

We can provide money to our citizens, each year, for three years. We can grow programs to bring services to all members. We can build and operate new businesses. We can put members to work all over the country. We can have a housing explosion. And, we can think strategically about economic development and directing state tourism directly to Shawnee and all of our businesses.

Just like our citizens came together to discuss treaty negotiations resulting in the loss of lands and revenue, our membership is at the same position in modern times. We MUST come together to envision a new future for our Nation, and it begins with \$175,000,000 that we never expected.

To talk more about this exciting time in our history, join us on June 18. We plan to have a lively discussion in person and zoom from 6-9 PM at Primrose Retirement Center, Shawnee, Oklahoma.