Decoding ARPA's Technology Modernization Opportunities

An IT Executive Guide for Transformational Technology Funding

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Never Miss an Opportunity

In a rapidly changing world, adaptation and iteration are more important than ever. COVID-19 forced organizations to shift to a distributed hybrid work environment practically overnight. Organizations survived by rapidly adopting cloud applications, but struggled with both the IT infrastructure and IT support needed to manage this dramatic digital transformation.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) was introduced as a means to help organizations overcome these challenges. With $1.9 trillion made available to organizations across the country spanning every industry, it provides organizations with funding opportunities needed to help them modernize their technology environments.

This opportunity comes at a critical time for many organizations that are trying to navigate the new normal of back to the office. According to a recent Gartner survey, 84% of company leaders plan to allow employees to work remotely for at least some of their working hours. This holistic consideration ensures these establishments can't just go back to "business as usual." Instead, these organizations should meet the opportunity to improve and meet their unique challenges and opportunities head on.

Worth noting is that though these funds were created to address the COVID crisis, they are also intended to help organizations **create more resilient technology infrastructures** to thrive today and in the future. The only constant in technology is change, and the rapid shift to remote work underscored just how much organizations need to be prepared to adapt and thrive to unforeseen circumstances.

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In short, every group leader should ask themselves what technical tools might be needed to thrive amidst a similar crisis and prepare accordingly. And to do so, they should leverage every tool and opportunity available.

WHY ARPA?

Remote work has radically shifted the composition of many industries. As a result, keeping pace with previous best practices is no longer enough. ARPA funds are designed to help companies catch up to new business realities.

For example, Gartner noted that prior to COVID-19, most customer service and support functions operated almost exclusively in-office, with fewer than 10% of customer service and support employees working from home. Now, 76% of customer service and support functions have 80% to 100% of their staff working remotely.

These changes have disrupted more than just work; traditional security has been impacted, as well. Hewlett Packard's recent report on cyber-security notes a 238% increase in global cyberattack volume during the pandemic, largely empowered by new remote working practices.

Risks and opportunities are both evolving; organizations can't afford to be stagnant with short-term fixes. It's time for organizations to identify long-term solutions that more accurately align to where their needs are to secure today and prepare for tomorrow.

APPLYING FOR FEDERAL FUNDING EXPLAINED

ARPA is a significant opportunity for applicable organizations because it is set up as a high-reward process. Despite the potential benefits and opportunities of ARPA, interested government agencies, education institutions and healthcare organizations still find themselves with tough, time-consuming challenges and considerations including:

- How to **identify** available funds
- How to best **apply** for ARPA funds
- How to best **manage** the funds they are granted
- How they can **spend** their ARPA funds

Decoding ARPA requires verifying your funding allocation totals, eligible use cases and ensuring the appropriate use of guidelines— all of which can be very time consuming and burdensome for even the most experienced organizations. Working with the right, experienced consultants and technology solution providers can help your organization make the most of ARPA.

The primary challenge with these six work vectors is that not every organization is prepared for every step. For example, grant writers aren't always on staff, or you might be unfamiliar with the specific needs and requirements of federally compliant procurement vehicles, which is necessary for any ARPA-related project.

To qualify and apply for your ARPA funding, you must be prepared along six vectors of work:

Research
Identify appropriate Grants. Find and deliver the data to prove out the thesis for your unique and ARPA-compliant technology.

Process Management
Plan, organize and control a functional system that can meet proposal deadlines and requirements.

Grant Writing/ Justification
Create a compelling and clear grant proposal that distinguishes your project and justifies your funding.

Ongoing Budget Operations Clearly and transparently budget grant money to ensure your organization meets ARPA standards.

Technical Compliance
Meet technical compliance requirements across each stage, ensuring security for the project.

Utilizing a Federally Compliant Procurement Vehicle
Meet vetting by a federally-approved procurement sourcing agency, such as the GSA.

Additionally, slotting in a piecemeal solution to this process may not be a solution at all for your company. These six factors should be managed holistically to ensure consistency of the project end-to-end.

SIMPLIFYING FEDERAL FUNDING WITH CONSULTING SERVICES

Decoding ARPA to know exactly what funds are available to you and how you can leverage requires significant time and resources. Rather than managing the entire ARPA application, operations and budgetary process internally, consider partnering with one of the consultancies and technology service providers that are capable of managing the lifecycle of an ARPA-funded project.

When selecting a partner for your ARPA application process, ensure they provide these four things:

- **Experience** with earning both federal and state funding for comparable projects
- **Access** to numerous funding resource SMEs to give you deeper insight

How to Identify the Best ARPA Partner for Your Organization

Selecting a partner for your ARPA application process should not be taken lightly. It requires intentional effort to find the right fit for your organization's needs and culture. Here are some questions to help you identify and select the right partner for your organization based on the four success attributes of an ideal ARPA partner.

Experience

A valuable partner will have experience earning both federal and state funding for comparable projects. Look for an organization that has worked with federal and state organizations. Consider asking questions like:

- Do they have experience working with the federal government?
- Do they have a defined process in place?
- Are they experts in our technical field?
- Have they helped similar projects meet funding requirements?

Access

A valuable partner will have access to a deep bench of knowledgeable staff who can offer insights into both the legal and technical aspects of applying for an ARPA grant. Consider asking questions like:

- Who can advise me on the grant writing process?
- Who can help me navigate ARPA requirements to ensure I'm gathering the right information?
- Who else can they bring to support our application?

Solutions

A valuable partner will not only have knowledge about the solutions available to you, but will also understand necessary compliance regulations and other federal mandates that could impact the success of your ARPA grant application. Consider asking questions like:

- Does this organization have the tools needed to supplement my project?
- Do they understand what my project needs?
- Can they provide value from solutions at every stage in the process?

Integration

A valuable partner will know how to seamlessly integrate into your organization's ways of working, providing valuable insight and support vs. disruption. Consider asking questions like:

- How do you structure your partnerships?
- Is their technical approach compatible with ours?
- How can we ensure we create and maintain a productive working relationship?

- **Solutions** that meet both your needs and federal regulation requirements
- **Integration** with your company, projects, and ways of working.
- These four points are at the core of any successful relationship. To best manage ARPA's processes and regulations, you need a full-scale partner that can help you navigate every step.

TRUSTING A RELIABLE PARTNER

NWN Carousel is well positioned to help you navigate the opportunities ARPA presents to help you secure funding to support your IT projects.

NWN Carousel is a proven and experienced partner in empowering organizations to meet their desired end goals to improve the digital experience. Not only has NWN Carousel successfully supported multiple public and private organizations through the workforce transformations spurred by the pandemic, but it has also helped those same organizations thrive.

As part of the ARPA Bundle offering from NWN Carousel, organizations gain:

- Research / Justification
- Process / Project Management
- Consultant Support
- Proposal/Grant Writing
- Ongoing Grant Support (budget out over X years)
- Dedicated resources to support ARPA lifecycle

This full-scale integration is designed to ensure you have a full range of support for each step of the ARPA application and process. By leveraging experts from NWN Carousel's Public Sector Strategy Teams, NWN Carousel's OEM Partners, our SLED Consultants, Field Sales Teams and Customer Success Organization, partnered organizations gain the expert guidance they need to successfully access, apply and manage ARPA funds.

And, to better position your company to meet these goals, NWN Carousel also offers solutions in the following areas:

- **Broadband, Cloud Infrastructure & Cybersecurity**: Leverage NWN Carousel's EMP for intelligent infrastructure and security across wireless and wireline connectivity, PSTN, Public/Private/Hybrid Cloud, VPN, SOC, NOC and patch management.

- **Cloud Communications & Collaboration**: NWN Carousel provides tools needed for greater management of business communications applications, both internal and external.

- **Secure Devices & Print**: NWN Carousel helps you manage integrated secure devices in a work-from-anywhere environment. Devices include mobile, laptops, desktops, smart-boards, intelligent offices, and printers to cover all your endpoints.

With experience and full-stack capabilities, NWN Carousel helps turn ARPA proposals into projects that are compliant, validated and tracked to completion. Unsure where to begin or how to reach your ARPA-funding opportunities? NWN Carousel is here to take you through the process.

ABOUT NWN CAROUSEL

NWN Carousel delivers industry-leading offerings to accelerate our customers' innovation adoption and drive better business outcomes. To achieve this, our business and technical teams work closely with select strategic partners to leverage the latest proven technologies in the market. By combining our deep expertise and unique intellectual property with best-of-breed technologies, we continuously deepen our offering capability and provide additional resources for our customers to tap into.

Our areas of expertise:

- **ARPA Support** – NWN Carousel leverages our team and partners to help companies successfully access ARPA funds. And once the funds are secured, we ensure they have a team of technical experts ready to spin up the service quickly and efficiently.

- **Customer Success** – Our solutions engineers design and deliver professional services engagements around our Solution-as-a-Service approach.

- **Innovation Adoption** – NWN Carousel's integrated solutions portfolio maximizes the value of your technology investments, while simultaneously eliminating excessive costs and complexities by offering a subscription-based model.

- **Frictionless Managed Services** – Our technology command center is your always on resource, staffed with engineers who have the technical expertise to troubleshoot and resolve critical issues quickly and efficiently.

- **Superior Support Experience** – The NWN Carousel Experience Management Platform (EMP) provides all the support you need with an omnichannel approach to customer support that lets you initiate a request, log a ticket, and access self-help / self-service to ensure your needs are met.

- **Aligned Professional Services** – NWN Carousel's professional services team applies end-to-end expertise and experience to keep your business running at full speed.

With more than 60 years of combined experience, our NWN Carousel team is committed to addressing your unique needs by improving operational efficiency and productivity.

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