



July 26, 2021

Community Update on ARPA Planning and Implementation

Dear Tribal Members,

As we wrap up the summer months, we want to provide updates on the progress of the implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) planning being undertaken by the Sokaogon Chippewa Community Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The initiatives being implemented through the ARPA process are the result of information collected through surveys, meetings, and interviews with the community. With that information, the Tribal Council has been able to make informed decisions for the Tribe.

ARPA provided \$20 billion to be disbursed to all tribes based on the number of members and tribal economies, with no consideration given to whether the tribe was urban or rural. The lowest amount a tribe received was \$1 million and the highest was \$900 million. Our Tribe received \$13.6 million; based on our tribe's needs, however, these monies do not go far enough.

From the time of disbursement, our tribe has been given 36 months to allocate or return this money. Some tribes have not allocated or spent any money because they cannot agree on how to best use the money. Other tribes spent it all within the first month of receiving the funds. Our Tribal Council has been thoughtful as to the use of your ARPA funds. Our Tribal Council has set aside 20% of the ARPA funding received, to use as seed money to plan for "shovel-ready" projects in an effort to "go after" substantially larger funding. To date, our Tribe is working on plans to get your share of almost \$18 billion dollars in competitive grants. This \$18 billion in funding includes the following:

Infrastructure Bill \$15 Billion	HUD Tribal & Native Hawaiian housing \$1.2 Billion	Native Families \$1+ Billion
Critical economic and infrastructure \$600 Million	Bureau of Indian Affairs programs \$900 Million	Native health systems \$6+ Billion
Education programs \$1.1 Billion	Impact of COVID-19 on Native Languages \$20 Million	Combat domestic violence \$19 Million



These funds are in addition to block grants the federal government has allocated to states to make available for tribes. When thinking of all the funds available, there are four funding buckets.



ARPA

*Limited restrictions
on funding
requirements
(36 months to
allocate)*



Non-ARPA

*All non-ARPA and
non-Infrastructure
Bill Funds
(Allocation and usage
time limits vary)*



Infrastructure

*Shovel-ready projects
are given priority
(60 months to spend)*



State

*Allocated to states
for distribution
to Tribes
(Allocation and usage
time limits vary)*

Although they may look the same, these buckets are very different in that the amounts of money in each bucket is different and the requirement to get the money is different. The ARPA money was not competitive; it was just given to each tribe. The non-ARPA, Infrastructure, and State monies, however, are awarded on a competitive basis, with priority given to “shovel-ready” projects; that is to say, tribes must present their plans in written proposals and compete with the proposals of other tribes for funding. We are actively pursuing funding from all four buckets. There are currently 90 funding opportunities available.

Another element that makes this process different is the capacity it will take to win and administer these competitive grants. In the past, our tribe may have written and administered 10 to 15 grants per year. With all the funding available, we are now looking at writing and administering 25 to 40 grants per year. Department Needs Assessments show that our Tribe does not currently have the capacity to do this; therefore, additional staffing is also being written into grant proposals. This means, we, as a Tribe, also have to build our capacity to apply for and administer these grants. We are working on compensation rates, reviewing the current compensation and 401k packages, and training through workforce development that will lead to a leaner, more retainable workforce.

Goals and Priority Projects

Based on community input, your Tribal Council identified 24 goals, in 7 key focus areas outlined below:

Housing

1. Develop/update housing plan
2. Build new homes based on housing plan identified needs and phased development approach
3. Build homes for those over income limits to meet unmet needs

Public Health

1. Move forward in making health clinic a self-sustaining profit center
2. Build rehab center



3. Establish a home-based healthcare system for Tribal elders

Culture and Language

1. Develop a cultural department
2. Preserve our environment, land, health, wellness and safety
3. Develop a communications plan to inform/educate key stakeholders

Economic Development

1. Economic diversification plan
2. Attract new businesses: basic infrastructure and tax strategy
3. Land acquisition to expand land base
4. Develop comprehensive land use plan
5. Action plan to upgrade and enhance the Tribe's existing businesses

Infrastructure

1. Expand elder center
2. Rehab existing buildings (VOCA)
3. Update/build dump and garbage facility to meet waste disposal needs
4. Improve water quality/treatment to secure clean water

Education

1. Develop a comprehensive education plan
2. Create workforce development plan
3. Advocate lifelong learning for Tribal Members by providing a group/person to promote higher education/vocational training opportunities

Community Development

1. Make things better for all departments
2. Create a community development fund
3. Expand family services

Housing Strategic Plan

In addition to the 27 goals outlined above, your Tribal Council authorized the development of a Housing Strategic Plan. The resulting Sokaogon Housing Strategic Plan identified the following 6 housing goals:

Goal 1 — Fill gaps in affordable housing supply for low- and moderate-income households	Goal 2 — Support and encourage homeownership	Goal 3 — Develop housing for “non-LMI” households
Goal 4 — Maintain and modernize the current housing stock	Goal 5 — Improve accessibility of homes for elderly and disabled occupants	Goal 6 — Expand the Band's capacity to develop new housing

Economic Development



As a part of the development of the economic development plan, the area's economics were studied and the three following recommendations were made for further development:

- **Convenience / grocery store** - The study revealed there is need for an additional convenience / grocery store to be built in the area. This would have dual purposes – to generate revenue and provide workforce opportunities for our Tribe, as well as providing grocery items for the community.
- **Healthcare as a business** is seen as an economic driver for our Tribe by increasing the size and services of the current clinic and opening it up to the general public. Through collaboration with our Tribe's youth services and workforce development program, the clinic can become a major employer for the community.
- **HVAC construction and maintenance** – The study revealed a major shortage of HVAC service providers in the area. This is further confirmed through community members who report weeks- to months-long waits for HVAC services. HVAC businesses average a 26% return on the investment. In addition to installing new systems, this business is attractive because there will be a continual revenue stream from system maintenance.

Our Tribe also has plans to increase certain taxes for **non-tribal members** for purchases and services on the reservation; **these tax increases will not be charged to Tribal members**. In addition, our Tribe has taken an assertive position in negotiating a fuel tax compact with the state of Wisconsin. Other tribes have taken notice and have joined in the process; in addition, the Chippewa Federation is being supportive. Although many other tribes are supportive, our Tribe has taken the lead. As a result, the state has been receptive. If approved, the fuel tax compact could result in an additional \$250,000 to as much as \$900,000 per year.

Community and Staff Involvement

As this process has continued to move forward, our Tribal program directors and their staff have been engaged with programmatic planning in an effort to seek additional funding for tribal programs. In addition, your Tribal Council has gathered feedback from the community and has organized a series of meetings for community updates. During these community meetings, Tribal members have been given updates on the ARPA process and have been given to opportunity to share their input. Your Tribal Council looks forward to continuing to working with the Sokaogon community in this process.

Sokaogon Community Funding Update

The Tribe received roughly \$13.6 million in ARPA funding. To date, out of the \$13.6 million, Tribal members and the casino were paid a stimulus that totaled \$2.686 million, Blue Stone Strategy Partners has been paid about \$522,000 for their services, and other miscellaneous ARPA-related planning expenses were paid. That leaves a balance of about \$10.2 million.

Your continued input is very important to ensuring your Tribal Council has various community viewpoints. If you have any additional comments please contact the Interim Director of Human Resources, Kimberlee Soldier, at 715-622-0191.