



READY Grants to Grow Initiative (READY G2G)

Federal Fiscal Year 2024

Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) for Project Grants

This notice of solicitation of applications (NOSA) for project grants provides a general overview of the READY Grants to Grow Initiative (READY G2G), as well as the specific requirements needed to complete a grant application.

The deadline for applications under this announcement is February 14, 2025. ARC must receive final applications no later than 5 PM Eastern Time (ET).

Further guidance on submission can be found at <https://www.arc.gov/ready/grants-to-grow/>.

Questions can be emailed to READY@arc.gov.

Appalachian Regional Commission Overview

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 1965 through the Appalachian Regional Development Act (ARDA), 40 U.S. Code §§ 14101–14704, ARC is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a federal co-chairperson, who is appointed by the president of the United States. Local participation is also provided through multi-county local development districts (LDDs). ARC serves a 206,000-square-mile region of 26.4 million people that includes all of West Virginia and parts of twelve other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

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Basic Information

Federal Agency Name:	Appalachian Regional Commission
Funding Opportunity Title	READY Grants to Grow
Announcement Type:	Initial
Funding Details:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of \$9M total funding • Planning grants, \$100,000 maximum per award • Implementation grants, \$100,000–\$500,000 per award
Agency Contact Information:	Megan Robinson Program Manager Ready@arc.gov

Key Dates	
NOSA release date	September 25, 2024
Virtual pre-application webinar	October 10, 2024 Register for webinar here .
Letter of intent (LOI) due	November 1, 2024, by 5 PM ET Complete the LOI here .
Invited applicants will receive access to the application portal via email	December 4, 2024
Grant application due	February 14, 2025, by 5 PM ET
Awards announced	Rolling announcements, which will begin September 2025.

Executive Summary

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC, the Commission) is publishing the READY Grants to Grow (READY G2G) notice of solicitation of applications (NOSA) to receive grant proposals under this announcement. In Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), ARC is making available a minimum of \$9 million to help Appalachian communities and regions complete capacity-building projects. This initiative aims to expand the capacity of local leaders, organizations, and communities to address local challenges. This funding opportunity provides support to access resources, engage partners, identify strategies and tactics, and conduct effective planning and project execution. READY G2G attempts to address long-standing capacity limitations among Appalachian organizations to drive economic development in the Appalachian Region (the Region), as well as the timelier objective of ensuring that historic levels of federal funding reach underserved or economically distressed communities in Appalachia.

The achievement of economic development goals in Appalachia is dependent upon local ability to prioritize challenges and implement solutions. Many areas, especially rural and economically distressed areas, lack capacity at the individual, organizational, or community level to effectively plan and execute economic development strategies, capitalize on funding opportunities, and steer investments toward successful outcomes.

In addition to the requirements described in this NOSA, all applications must also meet the criteria for ARC funding, including alignment with ARC's investment priorities, and be consistent with ARC's updated strategic plan, [Appalachia Envisioned: A New Era of Opportunity—ARC's Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia's Opportunities Fiscal Years 2022–2026](#). The READY G2G Initiative focuses primarily on Goal 5.

Goal 5: Building Community Leaders and Capacity - Invest in the capacity of local leaders, organizations, and communities to address local challenges by providing technical assistance and support to access resources, engage partners, identify strategies and tactics, and conduct effective planning and project execution.

The READY G2G Initiative actualizes ARC's vision of ensuring the Region achieves socioeconomic parity with the nation. READY G2G aims to invest in strategies that **grow the region's capacity through sustainable and outcome-driven projects related to ARC's other investment priorities: building Appalachia's businesses, workforce ecosystem, infrastructure, and regional culture and tourism.**

Goal 1: Building Appalachian Businesses - Strengthen and diversify the region's economy through inclusive economic development strategies and investments in entrepreneurship and business development.

Goal 2: Building Appalachia's Workforce Ecosystem - Expand and strengthen community systems (education, healthcare, housing, childcare, and others) that help Appalachians obtain a job, stay on the job, and advance along a financially sustaining career pathway.

Goal 3: Building Appalachia's Infrastructure - Ensure that the residents and businesses of Appalachia have access to reliable, affordable, resilient, and energy-efficient utilities and infrastructure in order to successfully live and work in the region.

Goal 4: Building Regional Culture and Tourism - Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the region's local cultural heritage and natural assets.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants for ARC's READY G2G Initiative grants include the following:

- Local development districts (LDDs)
- Indian tribes or a consortium of Indian tribes
- States, counties, cities, or other political subdivisions of a state, including a special purpose unit of a state or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions
- Institutions of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education
- Public or private nonprofit organizations or associations, including labor unions

ARC does not award grants to individuals or for-profit entities.

Current/Past Grantees: Please note that current and past ARC grantees, including current READY Appalachia participants and grantees, are eligible to apply for READY G2G only if the applicant's scope of work is new and does not overlap with an open ARC grant. For current grantees with awards scheduled to be completed before October 1, 2025, new applications should include an expansion of geography, increased scope of work with an existing concept, or a proposal with a new concept. In their application, current or previous grantees must provide a thorough status update on their existing project(s) as well as demonstrate sufficient organizational capacity to administer multiple awards.

Project Geography

Projects must serve and benefit a portion of the Appalachian Region as defined by the Appalachian Regional Development Act (ARDA) of 1965, as amended. The Appalachian Region includes certain counties in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi,

New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and all of West Virginia. If projects extend beyond the Appalachian Region as defined by the ARDA of 1965, only the portion that is within the Region is eligible for ARC funding. A map of the Appalachian Region is available [online](#).

Cost Sharing or Matching

ARC's standard match requirements will apply; however, eligible local development districts, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and community foundations may request a match waiver for their projects **if the majority of all Appalachian counties served in the project proposal are designated as "distressed."**¹ In alignment with ARC's commitment to strengthen the four key pillars of economic development in the Region, which play a foundational role for local investment, match waivers will be considered only for entities that meet one of the following criteria:

- **Local development districts (LDDs)**, which are multi-county planning organizations that facilitate community-based, regionally driven, economic development in the Appalachian Region.
- **Nonprofit organizations** with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status that operate exclusively for charitable purposes.
- **Local governments**, which refer to a borough, city, county, municipality, parish, town, township, or federally recognized Indian tribe. The following entities are **not** considered local governments for purposes of match waiver eligibility: local public authorities, special districts, school districts, intrastate districts, councils of governments (other than LDDs), and any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-state, regional, or intra-state government.
- **Community foundations** that are nonprofit, tax-exempt, public charitable grantmaking organizations that pool funds from individuals, families, and businesses to support a geographical area or region.

Under this NOSA, applicants not requesting a match waiver for an ARC READY G2G grant must demonstrate a matching share from non-ARC sources that is identified as available and applicable to the project. Matching sources may be non-federal, other federal, or a combination of sources, including in-kind sources. The maximum share of ARC assistance is determined by the ARC classification of the county or counties served by the proposed activity ([distressed, at-risk, transitional, competitive, and attainment](#)). Applicants may request up to 80% of the total project cost when the county, or all counties, served by a project are designated as economically "distressed" according to ARC's FY25 classification. A table summarizing ARC's five economic designations and the maximum ARC share for each Appalachian county can be found [on the ARC website](#). For additional tips on how to calculate your match, [see this video](#) (video applies to both POWER and READY match funding requirements).

To determine the match rate for an ARC multi-county project, special matching rules apply:

1. If there is a "distressed" county in the project and:
 - a. at least half of the counties are "distressed," the project may be funded at up to 80% of project costs.
 - b. at least half of the counties are some combination of "distressed" and "at-risk," ARC assistance can be the higher of 70% of project costs or the average percentage applicable to the various counties in the project.
 - c. fewer than half the counties are "distressed," ARC assistance can be the higher of 50% of project costs or the average percentage applicable to the various counties in the project.
2. If there is no "competitive" county or "attainment" county in a project, and at least half the counties are "at-risk," the project may be funded at up to 70% of project costs.

¹ Instructions on how eligible entities can request a match waiver are provided in the READY G2G application.

3. All other multi-county projects shall be funded at the average percentage applicable to the various counties in the project (i.e., 80%, 70%, 50%, 30%, or 0%); except that the portion of a project that is attributable to an “attainment” county in a project that does not include a “distressed” county shall be considered **ineligible** for ARC assistance and may not be considered for matching purposes.

Program Description

The READY G2G Initiative aims to assist organizations in their efforts to operate more effectively while adapting to the demands in their communities. The intent is not to sustain organizational operations or support organizations with healthy operating budgets. Rather, the READY G2G Initiative will ultimately make organizations stronger, with increased capacity for serving their clients and communities. Additionally, organizations applying for funding under the READY G2G Initiative should have a clear track record of serving their communities and making a positive economic impact.

The READY Appalachia model was originally developed to provide direct technical assistance and funding to support four key pillars of economic development in the Region: Appalachian local governments, local development districts (LDDs), nonprofit organizations, and community foundations. Through this NOSA, ARC is expanding the original scope of the READY Appalachia program to allow a more diverse range of applicants to apply for funding (in addition to the original four pillars) and invites applicants to propose project ideas that address specific needs for capacity-building support, which may include training tailored to the unique needs of the applicant, as well as other organizational and systemic needs that will improve the capacity of Appalachian organizations and communities.

Capacity-Building Program Priorities

Projects must address one or more of the following capacity-building program priorities:

- **Individual capacity building (e.g., staff employed by an organization):** Strengthening the skills, resources, and abilities of the entity’s staff and leaders to grow and thrive; thereby furthering their capacity to develop their organizations. Increased capacity can bolster economic development of their community and/or region as a whole. This can include but is not limited to the following:
 - Training, mentorship and skills development of staff or relevant individuals (e.g., board members, elected officials).
 - Skills development could focus on the ability to apply for and/or manage grants, improve skills related to effective program and service provision, or contribute to the overarching organizational health of the entity.
 - Projects targeting local leaders.
- **Organizational capacity building:** Developing plans and implementing strategies in preparation for an entity to expand, create, or improve existing programs or services. This can include but is not limited to the following:
 - Investment in new systems, enhanced technology, platforms, and services to improve organizational efficiency.
 - Recruiting staff with relevant expertise and experience.
 - Strategic planning processes to advance an entity’s mission and goals.
 - Evaluation efforts to demonstrate the impact and validity of a program or service, thereby enabling the organization to sustain and build capacity for growth.

- Restructuring business models and accounting practices to increase financial stability, diversify revenues, promote compliance, and build sustainability.
- **Community capacity building:** Identifying strategies that can be replicated in communities that will ultimately galvanize the region towards greater capacity to further economic development. This can include but is not limited to the following:
 - Coalition building, stakeholder engagement, and partnership management.
 - Collaborating with other organizations to improve services, improve efficiencies, and eliminate duplication.
 - Delivering and sharing tools, resources, and training developed by technical assistance providers and subject matter experts.
 - Expansion of best practices and leveraging successful models and strategies for community and economic development.

READY G2G Beneficiaries

End-user beneficiaries of the READY G2G initiative are entities that 1) demonstrate low capacity, 2) deliver services that support underserved groups/areas, and 3) are engaged in economic development activities that are aligned to [ARC's investment priorities](#).

1) Demonstrating low capacity

Low capacity may be defined as having few resources such as staff, budget, resources, or necessary skills relative to the entity's scope of work in the community or region. Low capacity may be exacerbated by the severity of the economic development-related issues the entity is working to address in their region or community.

2) Delivering services that support underserved groups/areas

Underserved groups/areas are defined as one or more of the following:

- Historically marginalized and/or low-income populations, such as the following:
 - Black, Latino, Indigenous, and other persons of color (BIPOC)
 - Persons with disabilities
 - LGBTQIA+ persons
 - Low-income persons
 - Economically at-risk persons
 - Persons with low educational attainment
 - [Distressed areas and census tracts](#)
 - [Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities](#)
 - [Community Networks identified by the Rural Partners Network](#)
 - Any other historically underserved and marginalized places and groups

3) Engaging economic development

Beneficiaries of READY G2G must also demonstrate their role in driving strategic economic and community development and clearly articulate how enhancing their capacity or providing them with funds to conduct capacity-building work in the region will contribute to economic development. Their work is directly aligned with one or more of [ARC's five investment priorities](#).

Projects Led by Beneficiaries

A project may be led by an entity that is focused on developing its own internal capacity needs. A project may be led by a partnership or coalition of beneficiaries as long as the project is focused on a succinct goal that is aligned to at least one of [ARC's five investment priorities](#).

Projects Led by Intermediaries

Alternatively, a project may be led by an intermediary that is providing technical assistance, subject-matter expertise, sub-granting to, or other services for, entities with capacity needs (the beneficiaries of the project). This approach invites applicants with relevant subject-matter expertise to build capacity of entities external to themselves and their partners. If the project is intermediary-led, projects can be (but are not required to be) regional in scale. **These projects must either a) include a sub-granting component for capacity-building grants for beneficiaries; or b) involve an entity or entities that [matches all three components of a beneficiary](#) as a key stakeholder with a clear, thoughtful role in the project.** If the applicant elects to include a sub-granting component, the sub-grants must be focused on building capacity of the subgrantee, versus delivering programs or providing services. The project activities must directly tie to enhancing entities' abilities to advance economic development in their community or region **and** fit within one or more of the [READY G2G's capacity-building program priorities](#).

Projects led by intermediaries will address capacity-building needs for a beneficiary(ies) of the project and may enlist training tools and resources developed by technical assistance providers and subject matter experts.

In summary, several project design options are available to applicants:

1. **The applicant may be a beneficiary** with demonstrated capacity needs. In this scenario, the project will respond to the applicant's capacity needs.
2. **The applicant may be an intermediary** and will support the capacity needs of a beneficiary(ies). In this scenario, the project will focus on conducting an external capacity-building project with low-capacity entities as the beneficiary(ies).
3. **The applicant is both a beneficiary and an intermediary.** In this scenario, the applicant has demonstrated capacity needs and the project includes objectives that align to the applicant's capacity needs as a beneficiary. Additionally, the applicant is serving as an intermediary and meeting the capacity challenges of another low-capacity entity(ies) that is a beneficiary(ies) of the project.

Intermediaries that are also named beneficiaries should examine if activities and costs in the project work plan/budget are related to actual capacity-building needs that will be sustained when the project concludes. Activities that are solely focused on enabling the applicant to deliver and execute the project are not considered capacity building for purposes of this NOSA.

Project Examples

Eligible examples of project activities for READY G2G include the following:

Individual Capacity-Building Project Examples

- Training staff or others (e.g., elected officials or board members) in skills, such as grant writing, accounting, project identification/development, grant management, etc., allowing them to become more effective drivers and implementers of projects in their areas.
- Developing staff skills related to organizational management, change management, and leadership/professional development, thereby enabling Appalachian organizations and the programs they deliver to be catalytic, leading to transformative outcomes.

Organizational Capacity-Building Project Examples

- Purchasing goods or services, including but not limited to IT equipment or software subscriptions, accounting software or services, etc., that will enhance or improve

the entity's operation and contribute to driving economic development.

- Hiring staff for roles that advance the entity's ability to provide quality programming, support more community members and those of diverse backgrounds, and advance regional economic development.²
- Developing internal plans/evaluations/assessments (e.g., preparing for financial audits, developing employee manuals, designing processes and procedures, etc.).
- Providing access to resources, planning, training, evaluating, or another activity that enhances an entity's ability to provide quality services to its clients or constituents and/or advance regional economic development.
- Providing financial planning and forecasting to enable entities to sustain and grow over time.

Community Capacity-Building Project Examples

- Creating and expanding partnerships and networks that leverage available resources, eliminate duplication, build upon promising practices, and establish community-based approaches to better serve Appalachians.
- Contracting out a service, such as for the development and/or implementation of an economic development plan.
 - Planning for and/or implementing economic/community development projects that directly engage community members (e.g., community-led planning process, community-led downtown revitalization projects, etc.).
- Crafting regional approaches to respond to shared challenges, including coalition building that allows partners to share resources and plan joint initiatives in response to economic development challenges.
- Training organizations how to access and apply for federal or other types of grant funding to support project-based work that ultimately drives economic development.

Grant Types and Amounts

Implementation Grants

The Appalachian Regional Commission has made available approximately \$9 million in FY24 funding for this program and will award implementation grants ranging from \$100,000–\$500,000 for projects within the congressionally-defined Appalachian Region. The funding is provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act). ARC encourages low-capacity organizations to request funding, as well as joint applications from a collaborative of partnering organizations³. Additionally, organizations that may serve in an intermediary role and contribute to broad-scale capacity development of other entities may apply.

The period of performance for an implementation grant under this funding announcement may be up to three years (36 months) if warranted by the size and scope of the project. Applicants should determine the time period necessary to meet the objectives of their projects.

Applicants will need to address all components noted in this document's section titled [Scoring Criteria for Implementation Grants](#).

² Projects that involve hiring permanent employees will be required to provide a sustainability plan for the persons to be hired that details how they will be retained after the grant is expended.

³ For projects involving a collaborative of partners, only one organization should be noted as the lead and primary recipient of the ARC grant award.

Implementation Grants: Eligible Activities

The intent of the READY G2G Initiative is to build the capacity of organizations so they may better serve their clients and communities and contribute to the local economy. Implementation projects should be based upon strategic and informed guidance outlining how capacity needs were identified (e.g., surveys of potential beneficiaries, organizational assessment, customer feedback, board recommendations) and a strong rationale for how the proposed project will respond directly to those identified capacity needs and will lead to greater capacity. Funding requests should be limited to addressing beneficiaries' internal capacity challenges, versus delivering services and launching programs to the community. Additionally, construction and renovation costs will not be funded under this NOSA.

Eligible activities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Securing a financial accounting system and hiring skilled staff in response to weaknesses flagged by an internal audit.
- Sharing proven best practices in effective leadership and organizational health strategies with a cohort of organizations via mentorship and coaching programs.
- Launching a rebranding and awareness campaign to promote findings of a program evaluation in order to generate sustainability and increased program participation.
- Hiring a volunteer recruitment and training coordinator with the goal of building capacity to serve more clients.

Planning Grants

In addition to implementation grants, planning grants in amounts up to \$100,000 each are available to assist communities and regions in the Appalachian Region to develop plans and strategies for capacity building. The period of performance for planning grants may be up to 18 months if warranted by the scope of the project.

Applicants must address all components noted in this document's section titled [Scoring Criteria for Planning Grants](#) when designing a planning project. The focus of these grants is to help entities plan for projects that will be implemented in the near future (or after the planning grant ends); hence, a planning grant must not include activities such as providing training or hiring staff. Applicants must address how a planning project will eventually lead to improved capacity of an organization's staff, the organization itself, or the broader system in which the organization operates. Planning grant applicants should not assume that ARC funding will be available for future implementation of the plans and strategies developed.

Planning Grants: Eligible Activities

Planning grants will provide support to grantees to explore activities that could be implemented within their organization or community and to develop a plan to execute a capacity-building strategy. Activities may include but are not limited to the following:

- Developing a strategic plan for strengthening partnerships/coalitions/consortia with the overarching goal of building capacity to serve more community members and leverage existing resources.
- Conducting an organizational needs assessment to identify the current gaps and challenges within an organization, community, or region.
- Conducting an evaluation of a program's outcomes to demonstrate impact in the community and sustainability with future funders.
- Developing a volunteer recruitment, retention, and training program.

Submission Requirements and Deadlines

Application Timeline

Grant applications follow ARC's standard application policies and procedures.

Letter of intent due	November 1, 2024
Grant application due	February 14, 2025
Awards announced	Rolling approval and announcement timeline; initial announcements anticipated September 2025
Grant start date	No earlier than September 1, 2025

Letter of Intent

Applicants are required to submit a letter of intent (LOI) to apply for funding under the READY G2G grant Initiative. The LOI must be submitted via [an online form](#) by 5 PM Eastern Time on November 1, 2024. The LOI will collect the applicant's contact information, a brief description of the proposed project, match waiver status if applicable, geographic scope, and funding request amount. Once receipt of the LOI is confirmed, it will be forwarded to the respective state program manager to notify the state of the applicant's intent to apply.

ARC will review LOIs for significant issues, such as an applicant being ineligible for a READY grant. If there are significant issues, ARC will attempt to contact the applicant. Once an LOI has been submitted, the applicant is deemed eligible to apply, and the respective state has completed its review, ARC will email the applicant a link to access the READY G2G application portal. Eligible applicants can anticipate receiving a link to the portal on December 4, 2024. Submitted applications for READY G2G funding that substantially differ from the information included in the received LOI will be disqualified during the review process.

Grant Application Content and Format

Grant applications are limited to 50 pages; this total includes both the narrative and the uploaded attachments. Applicants must provide a comprehensive narrative that addresses all the criteria and priorities noted in this NOSA. The narrative must be limited to 15 pages, single spaced, in 12-point font.

Applicants must use the application narrative templates located in [Appendix 6](#) of this NOSA to write their final grant application.

Application Criteria

Applications must meet the following criteria:

1. Applicant must meet eligibility requirements.
2. Applicant must submit all required documentation and templates for submission. See scoring matrices for requirements.
3. Eligible applicants may not submit more than one application.
4. Application must meet the ARC cost-share matching requirement for the proposed service area or have completed the match waiver in the application.
5. A letter of intent (LOI) must be submitted to ARC. Submission instructions:

- Complete the [online LOI form](#) by November 1, 2024, at 5 PM Eastern Time (ET).
 - Once receipt of LOI is confirmed, it will be forwarded to the respective state program managers. After reviewing the LOI, ARC will email eligible applicants a link to access the READY G2G application portal.
6. **Applications must be uploaded via an application portal no later than 5 PM ET on February 14, 2025;** the portal will not be made available after this time. The applicant is required to submit **two separate PDF files as part of the application** :
- PDF 1: The [Executive Summary](#)
 - PDF 2: All other application materials, including the [Final Application Narrative Template](#) and required forms, combined into one PDF
7. Further guidance on submission can be found on the [ARC READY Initiative webpage](#).

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applicants are required to comply with the following:

- Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) at SAM.gov before any federal funds are awarded to the applicant;
- Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number in their application;
- Ensure any first-tier subrecipients (direct subrecipients of grantees) have a UEI number, and
- Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active federal award or an application or a plan is under consideration by ARC.

Applicants must register for a UEI at SAM.gov. Before making an award, ARC will review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (see 41 U.S.C. 2313).

An applicant may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.

ARC will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR § 200.206.

Submission Dates, Times and Instructions

Applications are due on the ARC application portal by February 14, 2025, at 5 PM Eastern Time. **Faxed, mailed, or emailed applications will not be accepted.**

Application Review Information

After an application is submitted, it undergoes a validation process during which the application may be accepted or rejected for failing to meet application/program requirements. Grounds for disqualification may include application errors, incomplete information, ineligible applicant, and/or an ineligible service area. Be advised that it may take several days for the validation process to be completed and the process may not begin until after the application deadline.

Applications will first be reviewed by the ARC alternates/state program managers of the states in which the project's activities and impacts are located. This initial review will

ensure that the project's scope of work is strategic and compatible with the state's existing economic development priorities. Upon completion of the initial review, ARC will engage a joint team of experts to review and score applications based on the criteria set out in this document.

ARC reserves the right to negotiate the budget costs with applicants that have been selected to receive awards, which may include requesting that the applicant remove or adjust certain proposed costs.

Additionally, ARC may request that the applicant modify objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information pertaining to any aspect of the application. ARC also reserves the right to reject an application if information is uncovered that is inconsistent with representations made in the application or that raises a reasonable doubt as to the applicant's ability to successfully fulfill the objectives and requirements of the grant award.

ARC, in its complete and sole discretion, may select for an award some, all, or none of the applications received under this competitive solicitation. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the ARC Federal Co-Chair and the respective state ARC official(s). The award decision of the ARC Federal Co-Chair and the respective state ARC official(s) is final.

Scoring Criteria for Implementation Grants

Applications must meet the minimum criteria in the table below and will receive a score of up to 100 points. In scoring the applications, ARC will consider how well the applicant provided detailed information for each section. Examples include the following:

- In the Project Description section, did the applicant include a clear strategy and aligned activities on how they plan to address the capacity challenges of the project's beneficiary(ies)?
- In the Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) and budget narrative, do the numbers across columns and line items add up correctly and align with the project's scope of work?
- Did the applicant provide sufficient information for each requested line item in the budget narrative?

Additionally, ARC is looking to see if the applicant successfully used storytelling and data to craft a compelling implementation grant proposal that demonstrates how they plan to improve capacity, leverage assets, and respond to the beneficiary(ies)'s barriers and challenges.

Scoring Matrix for Implementation Projects		
A. Executive Summary	Section 1	Required
Complete the required Executive Summary Template , providing project goals and strategies, the project's purpose, key activities, and applicant information.		
B. Project Description	Section 2	Up to 30 pts
Describe the applicant's mission and work. Provide quantitative and qualitative data on the effectiveness of the beneficiary's/beneficiaries' programs and services provided in the community.		Up to 10
Intermediary-led projects: If the applicant is serving as an		

intermediary, include a description of its relationship and past history with the intended beneficiaries of the project, if applicable.		
<p>Explain the scope of work, planned activities, ARC counties served by the project, and intended results of the project.</p> <p><u>Intermediary-led projects:</u> If the applicant is serving as an intermediary, clearly identify the beneficiary(ies) of the project, the intermediary's role in the project, the intent of subgrants if applicable, and how subgrants will be administered.</p> <p><u>Beneficiary-led projects:</u> If the applicant is the beneficiary of the project, include a description of project partners if applicable, their roles, and if these partners will receive subgrants. Additionally, identify work to be completed by external contractors.</p>		Up to 10
<p>Explain how the beneficiaries of the project identify as 'low capacity,' support underserved groups/areas, and engage in work that advances the economic vitality in their communities.</p> <p>Applicants should define/describe underserved groups/areas and the rationale for how the beneficiary provides support to these groups/areas.</p> <p>In describing how the beneficiaries advance economic vitality, the applicant should reference ARC investment priorities.</p>		Up to 10
C. Capacity-Building Plan	Section 3	Up to 25 pts
Describe the needs the project addresses, including the specific capacity challenges of the project's beneficiary(ies) and the needs of the project area. Identify the capacity-building priorities the proposed project will address (individual, organizational, community).		Up to 8
Describe how the capacity needs were identified (e.g., organizational assessment, customer feedback, board recommendations, survey of potential beneficiaries). Include a rationale for why the capacity-building support is needed at this time.		Up to 3
Explain how the project will position the beneficiary organization(s) to achieve greater capacity and impact within its community and advance the economic development of the community/region. Applicants should convey how the project will build capacity and enhance or improve operations. Projects should not be a request to sustain organizational operations or existing activities.		Up to 6
Describe how the applicant will sustain the project past ARC investment. If the project involves hiring, please provide a specific plan for retaining the hired persons after grant funds are expended.		Up to 5

<p>Submit at least three letters of support. Letters of support could be from community members and leaders, economic development stakeholders, and/or partners to further demonstrate the value and impact of the organization and the proposed project in the community.</p> <p>If the applicant intends to subgrant funds to partnering organizations or partner with a beneficiary organization, subgrantees/partners should be noted in the application and letters of support should be provided by the subgrantees/partners that includes a description of intended roles and responsibilities.</p>		Up to 3
Scoring Matrix		
C. Strategic Alignment	Section 4	Up to 10 pts
<p>Explain how the project meets one or more of ARC's investment priorities and explain its potential role in driving strategic economic and community development in the Appalachian Region.</p> <p>See Appalachia Envisioned: A New Era of Opportunity—ARC's Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia's Opportunities 2022–2026</p>		Up to 5
<p>Explain how the project aligns with the goals of the ARC strategy statements of the state(s) in which the project will be operating.</p> <p>To find information on all 13 ARC state strategy statements, visit the ARC website. If a project includes ARC counties from more than one state, applicants need to demonstrate how the proposed project aligns with each ARC state plan.</p>		Up to 5
D. Project Outputs and Outcomes	Section 5	Up to 6 pts
<p>Identify the proposed project outputs and outcomes that are aligned with the scope of work. Measures should be relevant, realistic, and achievable.</p> <p>Performance measures to be achieved by the end of the grant period must include at least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers/trainees served (output) and improved (outcome) • Organizations served (output) and improved (outcome) • Communities served (output) and improved (outcome) <p>Please see ARC's approved performance measures for a list of measures suitable for use.</p>		Up to 3
<p>Identify how data and/or information will be collected and used to demonstrate improved capacity of the beneficiary(ies)</p>		Up to 3
E. Work Plan and Timeline	Section 6	Up to 8 pts

<p>Required – Appendix 4: Workplan and Timeline</p> <p>Using the provided template, provide a detailed work plan and timeline of the project. Implementation projects may include a timeline of up to three years (36 months)</p>		Up to 8
<p>F. Budget and Budget Narrative</p>	Section 7	Up to 8 pts
<p>Required – SF-424, 424A, 424B Required – Appendix 1: Budget Narrative See Appendix 8: Video Tutorial for Completing 424 Forms</p> <p>All items included in the budget and budget narrative must be correctly totaled and must align with the applicant's description of the project. The budget and budget narrative must list the sources and uses of ARC funds and all non-ARC matching funds, as well as the status of match funds (confirmed, pending, etc.), if applicable. Resources listed as match must be confirmed or accessible by June 30, 2025.</p> <p>Submit a required budget Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) that lists the sources and uses of ARC funds and all non-ARC matching funds. All items in the budget narrative must reflect the level of detail requested in the proposal. A PDF of this form is located on the ARC website. Form instructions may be downloaded from Grants.gov. See Appendix 8 for guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF-424A.</p> <p>Provide a budget narrative that includes a detailed explanation of expenditures by the line items listed on the SF-424A. For example, include purpose of travel and supply/equipment lists. Describe expenses in the 'Other' line item, if applicable. A template for the narrative is located here.</p> <p>If the budget includes personnel or contractual expenses (cash or in-kind resources), estimate the number of hours/days and hourly rate (or portion of FTE and salary) for the time that is expected to be spent on the proposed project by key personnel, contractors, or consultants. (After a grant is awarded, all time should be tracked by actual hours worked for each individual).</p> <p>Letters of commitment from applicant and/or partners must include a detailed explanation of match sources and amounts contributed for the implementation of project.</p>		Up to 8
<p>G. Organizational Capacity</p>	Section 8	Up to 5 pts
<p>Demonstrate the project team's qualifications to undertake/accomplish the proposed scope of work.</p> <p><u>Intermediary-led projects</u>: Intermediary-led projects should include a description of the applicant's experience managing federal awards, familiarity with federal grant regulations, and established organizational policies, procedures, and systems. Additionally,</p>		Up to 5

<p>intermediary applicants should include subgranting qualifications and experience if relevant.</p> <p><u>Beneficiary-led projects:</u> Beneficiary-led projects should include a description of the applicant's experience managing federal awards, as well as a description of oversight practices to ensure the project is properly administered. For example, this could include additional board responsibilities, participation in communities of practice, internal audits, etc. Additionally, beneficiary-led projects that include subgranting should describe relevant qualifications and experience or propose measures to ensure effective subgranting practices and address any foreseen limitations.</p>		
H. Feasibility	Section 9	Up to 8 pts
<p>Ensure there is consistency between the project activities and the proposed budget.</p> <p>Ensure that the work plan, timeline, budget, and personnel resources align to the project description and expected outputs of the project.</p>		Up to 5
<p>Ensure the application is complete, provides a clear response to each question, and includes relevant details to accurately score the application.</p>		Up to 3
I. Additional Required Forms	Section 10	Required
ARC MOU		
Total		100

Scoring Criteria for Planning Grants

Applications must meet the minimum criteria in the table below and will receive a score of up to 50 points. In scoring the applications, ARC will consider how well the applicant provided detailed information for each section. Examples include the following:

- In the Project Description section, did the applicant include a strategy on how they plan to research, assess, and/or respond to the capacity challenges of the project's beneficiary(ies)?
- In the SF-424A and budget narrative, do the numbers across columns and line items add up correctly?
- Did the applicant provide sufficient information for each requested line item in the budget narrative?

Additionally, ARC is looking to see if the applicant successfully used storytelling and data to craft a compelling planning grant proposal that demonstrates how they plan to assess and identify assets, barriers, and activities to address the [capacity-building priorities](#) of the project's beneficiary(ies).

Scoring Matrix for Planning Projects		
A. Executive Summary	Section 1	Required
Complete the required Executive Summary template , providing project goals and strategies, the project's purpose, key activities, and applicant information.		
B. Project Description	Section 2	Up to 12 pts
Describe the applicant's mission and work. <u>Intermediary-led projects:</u> If the applicant is serving as an intermediary, include a description of its relationship with the intended beneficiaries of the project, if applicable.		Up to 4
Explain the scope of work, ARC counties served by the project, and intended results of the project. <u>Intermediary-led projects:</u> If the applicant is serving as an intermediary, identify the intended beneficiary(ies) of the project and the intermediary's role in the project. <u>Beneficiary-led projects:</u> If the applicant is the beneficiary of the project, identify work to be completed by external contractors, if applicable.		Up to 4
Explain how the beneficiaries of the project identify as 'low capacity,' support underserved groups/areas, and engage in work that advances the economic vitality in their communities. If beneficiaries have not yet been determined, explain how the applicant will ensure the beneficiaries fit the criteria above.		Up to 4

C. Capacity-Building Plan	Section 3	Up to 15 pts
Describe the needs the project addresses, including the specific capacity challenges of the project's beneficiary(ies) and the needs of the project area. Identify the capacity-building priorities the proposed project will address (individual, organizational, community).		Up to 5
Explain how the project will position the beneficiary(ies) to achieve greater capacity and impact within its community and advance the economic development of the community/region. Applicants should convey how the project will build capacity and enhance or improve the operations. Projects should not be a request to sustain organizational operations or existing activities.		Up to 5
Explain how the outcomes of this project will be used to transition to project implementation, including potential funding sources to support implementation efforts.		Up to 5
Scoring Matrix		
C. Strategic Alignment	Section 4	Up to 4 pts
Explain how the project meets one or more of ARC's investment priorities and the potential role in driving strategic economic and community development in the Appalachian Region. See Appalachia Envisioned: A New Era of Opportunity—ARC's Five-Year Strategic Plan for Capitalizing on Appalachia's Opportunities 2022–2026		Up to 2
Explain how the project aligns with the goals of the ARC strategy statements of the state(s) in which the project will be operating. To find information on all 13 ARC state strategy statements, visit the ARC website . If a project includes ARC counties from more than one state, applicants need to demonstrate how the proposed project aligns with each ARC state plan.		Up to 2
D. Project Outputs and Outcomes	Section 5	Up to 2 pts
Identify the proposed project outputs and outcomes that are aligned with the scope of work. Measures should be relevant, realistic, and achievable. Performance measures to be achieved by the end of the grant period must include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans/reports developed as a result of the ARC project (output) Please see ARC's approved performance measures for a list of measures suitable for use.		Up to 2

E. Work Plan and Timeline	Section 6	Up to 6 pts
<p>Required – Appendix 4: Workplan and Timeline</p> <p>Using the provided template, provide a detailed work plan and timeline of the project. Planning projects may include a timeline of up to 18 months.</p>		Up to 6
F. Budget and Budget Narrative	Section 7	Up to 4 pts
<p>Required – SF-424, 424A, 424B Required – Appendix 1: Budget Narrative See Appendix 8: Video Tutorial for Complete 424 Forms</p> <p>All items included in the budget and budget narrative must be correctly totaled and must align with the applicant's description of the project. The budget and budget narrative must list the sources and uses of ARC funds and all non-ARC matching funds, as well as the status of match funds (confirmed, pending, etc.) if applicable. Resources listed as match should be confirmed or accessible by June 30, 2025.</p> <p>Submit a required budget Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) that lists the sources and uses of ARC funds and all non-ARC matching funds. All items in the budget narrative must reflect the level of detail requested in the proposal. A PDF of this form is located on the ARC website. Form instructions may be downloaded from Grants.gov. See Appendix 8 for guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF-424A.</p> <p>Provide a budget narrative that includes a detailed explanation of expenditures by the line items listed on the SF-424A. For example, include purpose of travel and supply/equipment lists. Describe expenses in the 'Other' line item, if applicable.</p> <p>If the budget includes personnel or contractual expenses (cash or in-kind resources), estimate the number of hours/days and hourly rate (or portion of FTE and salary) for the time that is expected to be spent on the proposed project by key personnel, contractors, or consultants. (After a grant is awarded, all time should be tracked by actual hours worked for each individual).</p> <p>Letters of commitment from applicant and/or partners must include a detailed explanation of match sources and amounts contributed for the implementation of project.</p>		Up to 4
G. Organizational Capacity	Section 8	Up to 3 pts
<p>Demonstrate the project team's qualifications to undertake/accomplish the proposed scope of work.</p> <p><u>Intermediary-led projects</u>: Intermediary-led projects should include a description of the applicant's experience managing federal awards, familiarity with federal grant regulations, and established</p>		Up to 3

<p>organizational policies, procedures, and systems. Additionally, intermediary applicants should include subgranting qualifications and experience if relevant.</p> <p><u>Beneficiary-led projects:</u> Beneficiary-led projects should include a description of the applicant's experience managing federal awards, as well as a description of oversight practices to ensure the project is properly administered. For example, this could include additional board responsibilities, participation in communities of practice, internal audits, etc. Additionally, beneficiary-led projects that include subgranting should describe relevant qualifications and experience or propose measures to ensure effective subgranting practices and address any foreseen limitations.</p>		
H. Feasibility	Section 9	Up to 4 pts
<p>Ensure there is consistency between the project activities and the proposed budget.</p> <p>Ensure that the work plan, timeline, budget, and personnel resources align to the project description and expected outputs of the project.</p>		Up to 2
<p>Ensure the application is complete, provides a clear response to each question, and includes relevant details to accurately score the application</p>		Up to 2
I. Additional Required Forms	Section 10	Required
<p>ARC MOU</p>		
Total		50

Post Award Requirements and Administration

General management and administration requirements for non-construction projects are contained in the [ARC Grant Administration Manual for Non-Construction Grants](#). Requirements applicable to ARC grant awards are also found in other laws, regulations and policies that include, but are not limited to ARDA, the ARC Code, the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR § 200 (the version revised in the [final rule](#) published 4/22/24); ARC's Open Records Policy; past performance and non-compliance; and national policy requirements, including but not limited to those protecting free speech, religious liberty, public welfare, the environment, and prohibiting discrimination, e.g., Equal Employment Opportunity and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Grant requirements will also be provided in the grant award agreement.

Reporting

Recipients of non-construction grants must adhere to ARC reporting requirements as identified in the [ARC Grant Administration Manual for Non-Construction Grants](#) and the grant award agreement. However, ARC reserves the right to change the reporting time periods and, depending on the nature of the project, may request additional relevant data.

General Disclosures

READY Initiative awards will be made only to the extent that funds are available. ARC reserves the right to provide additional funding for this program, as it becomes available, to meet programmatic goals.

Publication of this NOSA does not obligate ARC to award any specific grant or cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds. This NOSA does not commit ARC to make any specific award. Notwithstanding any other provisions of the NOSA, ARC reserves the right to award grants. The Commission solely reserves the right to accept or reject any or all responses received as a result of this request; to negotiate with all qualified sources; or to cancel in part or in its entirety this NOSA if it is in the interests of ARC to do so.

Note: The Appalachian Regional Commission will not reimburse any other costs associated with the preparation of a response to this NOSA. Consultants and consultant teams that are legally barred from receiving federal contracts or contract payments will not be considered for work with communities or regions under this NOSA.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Required Budget Narrative

Visit the ARC website for a [budget narrative template](#).

Appendix 2: Indirect Cost Rates

For more information about indirect cost rates, see 2 CFR §§ 200.1 "Indirect cost" and 200.414.

Applicants must use one of the following indirect cost rates:

1. If you have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), provide an explanation of how the indirect costs are calculated in the Budget Narrative section of the application narrative. Also, provide a current version of the NICRA.
2. Pursuant to grant regulations at 2 CFR § 200.414(f), an organization that does not currently have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 15% based on modified total direct costs, as defined in 2 CFR § 200.

No documentation is required to justify the 15% de minimis indirect cost rate, which may be used indefinitely. However, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs and may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If you choose this option, this methodology must be used consistently for all federal awards until such time as you choose to negotiate for an indirect cost rate, for which you may apply at any time. (See 2 CFR §200.414(f) for more information on use of the de minimis rate.)

Modified Total Direct Cost Rate Definition

Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) refers to all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$50,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award).

MTDC **excludes** equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$50,000.

Appendix 3: Subrecipient vs Contractor Determinations and Subrecipient Monitoring

- If necessary for your proposal, see subsequent guidance identifying subrecipients vs. contractors: [Code of Federal Regulations—Subrecipient and Contractor Determinations](#)
- This link provides an explanation of requirements for entities that make subawards: [Code of Federal Regulations – Requirements for Pass-Through Entities](#)

Appendix 4: Workplan and Timeline Template

- [Workplan and Timeline template](#)

Appendix 5: Sample Capacity Building Projects

- [Capacity-Building Projects](#)

Appendix 6: Final Application Narrative Template

- [6\(A\): Implementation template](#) (required for Implementation applicant use).
- [6\(B\): Planning template](#) (required for Planning applicant use).

Appendix 7: ARC Guide to Performance Measures

- [Guide to ARC Project Performance Measures](#)

Appendix 8: Video Tutorial for Completing 424 Forms

- [Video: How to Complete the Standard Forms for Non-Construction Projects](#)