



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

by the Appalachian Regional Commission for

Technical Assistance for Skill Building in Communications and Community Outreach for ARC POWER Grantees Specializing in Economic Development in Appalachia's Coal-Impacted Communities

Open Date: May 19, 2017

Proposal Due Date: June 1, 2017

Proposal Selection Date: June 6, 2017

Project Start Date: June 19, 2017

Project End Date: December 15, 2017

RFP Amount: Up to \$150,000.00

RFP OVERVIEW

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) seeks proposals from a public, private, or nonprofit integrated communications firm, consultancy, or organization to provide technical assistance for skill building in communications and community outreach to ARC's POWER grantees. This technical assistance will:

- Assist participating ARC POWER grantees in strengthening their communications and community outreach skills;
- Expand the communications and community outreach capacity of participating ARC POWER grantees, many of whom have limited staff capacity for these tasks;
- Foster a peer-to-peer communications and community outreach network across participating grantees.

ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION (ARC)

The Appalachian Regional Commission (www.arc.gov) is an economic development agency of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 420 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the Region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation. ARC's operating budget is funded by the U.S. Congress.

ARC'S POWER INITIATIVE

Since August 2016, the Appalachian Regional Commission has invested over \$75.5 million in nearly 90 projects to diversify and strengthen the economy across the Region's coal-impacted communities through the [POWER \(Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization\) Initiative](http://www.arc.gov/power) (www.arc.gov/power). The POWER Initiative is a multi-agency, congressionally funded initiative that targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-

related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production.

The POWER Initiative supports efforts to create a more vibrant economic future for coal-impacted communities by cultivating economic diversity, enhancing job training and re-employment opportunities, creating jobs in existing or new industries, and attracting new sources of investment. ARC anticipates announcing another round of awards before the start date of the scope of work described in this RFP, bringing the total number of grantees to over 100.

These grants, the majority of which are funded at \$500,000 or more, focus on a variety of economic development sectors, including, but not limited to, technology, agriculture, manufacturing, broadband, entrepreneurship, tourism, and other emerging issues. The majority of these projects are partnership based, drawing on resources and expertise from a variety of organizations including community colleges, workforce development agencies, nonprofits, foundations, and other public and private partners. Their common theme is a commitment to economic development in Appalachia's coal-impacted communities.

Many of the organizations leading or participating in these grants have limited staff capacity to engage in effective community outreach and public communications. The skill-building technical assistance developed through this scope of work would be available to ARC's POWER grantees to help them develop the necessary communications and community development skills to further their work and impact. A list of current ARC POWER grantees is available at <https://www.arc.gov/images/grantsandfunding/POWER2017/ARCPOWERAwardSummariesbyState3-28-2017.pdf> and will be updated when new awards are announced.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Appalachian Regional Commission invites proposals from a public, private, or nonprofit integrated communications firm, consultancy, or organization to develop and deliver a communications and community outreach curriculum through a series of training workshops and follow-up technical assistance to help ARC POWER grantees enhance their community outreach, engagement, and strategic communications skills.

The scope of work for this project includes:

- Two offerings of a 90-minute interactive workshop tailored for economic development organizations at the ARC Peer-to-Peer POWER Convening to be held in Huntington, WV, June 28-29, 2017. The workshop should focus on basic elements of a strategic communications and outreach plan.
- Three offerings of a full-day, in-person, training workshop over a three-month period in locations across the Appalachian Region addressing:
 - Effective skill-building techniques for community outreach, engagement, and communications, especially for organizations with limited staff capacity and budget.
 - Strategic community outreach and communications planning, including how to develop, write, and execute a strategic communications and community outreach plan and strategy.

- Best practice guidance on using social media, network building, and media relations to expand community outreach.
- Up to five technical assistance skill-based training sessions for participating ARC POWER grantees. These follow-up technical assistance sessions could be administered via group conference calls, webinars, or through another platform and will focus on specific topics or subjects identified during the workshops, in consultation with the ARC Communications Department and from other feedback from participating POWER grantees.

SCOPE OF WORK

Task 1: 90-Minute Basic Training Workshop (Delivery Date: June 29, 2017)

Vendor will develop and lead a 90-minute skill building flash training workshop on basic communications and strategic outreach planning for ARC POWER grantees attending the ARC Peer-to-Peer POWER Convening June 28-29, 2017, in Huntington, WV. The workshop would be offered twice on Thursday, June 29, 2017, as part of the Convening agenda. Each session would have representatives of between 20-30 POWER grantees (participants will include, but are not limited to, nonprofits, community colleges, economic development agencies, and other partners). The goal of the workshop would be to provide participants with the skills to use a pre-designed template to organize, plan, and execute a basic communications and outreach strategy appropriate to their available staff capacity.

Task 2: Extended Skill-Building Community Outreach and Communications Training (Delivery Date: August–October 2017)

Vendor will develop curriculum for, and lead, three expanded skill building workshops focused on community outreach and communications training for grantees participating in ARC's POWER Initiative whose work focuses on economic development in Appalachia's coal-impacted communities. The workshop will be one day in duration and repeated at three different locations within the service area of ARC POWER grantees (map of service area is available at www.arc.gov/power). Each workshop will be attended by representatives of up to 20-25 POWER grantees or partners, each with limited communications and community outreach staff and capacity. By attending this training, participants would learn best practices and achieve basic skill literacy in:

- Employing strategies for audience identification for effective community outreach and communications;
- Identifying and using appropriate communications and community outreach tools or templates for, but not limited to, social media, press outreach, network building, and partnership development;
- Developing appropriate messaging to reach key audiences;
- Using key partners to strengthen and amplify community outreach and communications;
- Tips for effective public storytelling;
- Tools for effective communications calendaring;
- Familiarity with basic communications and community outreach metric evaluation tools.

Task 3: Follow Up Technical Assistance (Delivery Date: October-December 2017)

Vender will lead up to five group-based follow-on technical assistance sessions of one hour each with participating grantees. Each follow-on technical assistance session will focus on a specific skill, issue, or communications topic identified in consultation with the ARC Communications Department, as a result of the workshops, and from other feedback from workshop participants. These follow up technical assistance sessions would be available to all POWER grantees and can be administered via group conference calls, webinars, or other accessible platforms appropriate for trainings involving remote participants.

All workshops, training, curriculum, and activities related to this scope of work will be developed in cooperation and consultation with ARC's Communications Department. Consultations can be done via a combination of regularly scheduled conference calls, in person meetings, and/or other appropriate vehicles.

VENDOR QUALIFICATIONS

The ideal vendor will have the following qualifications:

- Integrated public, private, or nonprofit integrated communications firm, consultancy, or organization with demonstrable expertise in skill-building training in communications and community outreach for organizations with limited communications staff, capacity, and resources. Preference is given to such organizations based in the ARC region.
- Experience in offering basic training in communications and community outreach planning, social media use, media outreach, storytelling and other communications skills.
- Previous experience in developing and executing workshops with ARC grantees and their partners.
- Expertise in developing communications and community outreach training protocols, templates, and curriculum, specifically for organizations with limited communications and outreach capacities.
- Understanding of relevant economic, socio-cultural, and regional issues specific to Appalachia, specifically in the Region's coal-impacted communities.
- Ability to travel within the Appalachian Region.
- Familiarity with ARC's mission and vision.

At the conclusion of the scope of work, vendor will provide ARC with a final report outlining key findings, deliverables, observations and, if applicable, recommendations for further technical assistance needed to continue developing communications and community outreach skills for ARC's POWER grantees.

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

The contents of the proposal should include a statement of work, a list of key personnel, a schedule for regular consultations with ARC's Communications Department, a working outline of the 90-minute training, working outline of the extended workshop, a description of related prior experience, and any other relevant materials. Proposal should also include proposed timeline of payments due in relation to deliverables.

PROJECT BUDGET

ARC is offering up to \$150,000.00 for the activities described in this RFP. Any vendor travel, staff costs, materials (including materials needed to run the workshops plus any materials to be distributed at the workshops) or other vendor-incurred costs are included within the scope of this RFP. All other expenses related to the hosting of the workshops, including renting facilities, food, or other expenses in relation to the logistics of the workshop, will be covered by ARC outside of this RFP. Participants will cover their own expenses to attend trainings and workshops.

ARC SUPPORT

Once a contract is awarded, ARC will provide the following:

- A contact list of POWER grantees.
- Background materials on participating POWER grantees, including location, project description, project mission, and relevant partners.
- Onsite support for flash training at the ARC Peer-to-Peer POWER Convening in Huntington, WV, on June 29, 2017, including site confirmation, logistical support, participating recruitment, and staff support.
- Logistical and financial support for regional workshop training, including securing reasonable site selection and facility, onsite refreshments, and other logistic support.
- Support to recruit attendees at the regional workshops.
- Partnership expertise from the ARC Communications Department.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals will be evaluated based on contractors' qualifications, expertise, track record, workshop proposal, and cost effectiveness. Selected vendor must be registered with SAM.gov at time of contracting.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Under the contract, the entire scope of work will be completed on or before December 15, 2017. ARC expects the contracted consultant to have the capacity to provide services within various locations within the ARC region and readily available for consultation or meetings as needed.

ARC is committed to ensuring that equal opportunity is provided to minority enterprises, and that its contractors have active diversity programs in their workforces and are sensitive to issues of race and gender. No person shall be subjected to discrimination on account of any services or activities resulting from this RFP, on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, national origin, age (except under minimum age and retirement provisions), marital or veteran status, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical handicap, or any other protected class. Any violation of a material provision of this procurement shall be grounds for termination or suspension in whole or in part of any related agreement by ARC. Respondents shall at all times in the proposal and contract process comply with all applicable state and federal anti-discrimination laws, rules, regulations, and requirements.

RIGHT TO REJECT

ARC reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals submitted.
- Request additional information from any or all respondents.
- Conduct discussions with respondents to assure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, the solicitation requirements.
- Negotiate modifications to a respondent's proposal prior to final award for the purpose of obtaining best and final offers.
- Approve or reject any subcontractors proposed or used in carrying out the work.

TIMELINE

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CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SUBMISSION

Submissions for this RFP and/or any questions related to this proposal should be directed to:

Wendy Wasserman

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Appalachian Regional Commission

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