The Appalachian Regional Commission
Request for Proposals

Proposals due on or before the close of business
September 6, 2019

Questions concerning this RFP must be received by email to Emela Halilovic at no later than 12:00 p.m. ET on August 23, 2019. ARC reserves the right to not answer questions received after that time.

Attention: Emela Halilovic
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: OVERVIEW
SECTION II: RATIONALE
SECTION III: BACKGROUND
SECTION IV: SCOPE OF WORK
SECTION V: ROLES OF THE ORGANIZATION & APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION
SECTION VI: SUBMISSION PROCEDURES
SECTION VII: RFP TERMS AND CONDITIONS
APPENDIX A: PROGRAM TIMELINE
Section I: Overview of Request for Proposals

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) invites proposals from eligible organizations (“Organizations”) to partner with ARC on the implementation of a new high-school entrepreneurship program. The purpose is to provide comprehensive entrepreneurial training and supportive services to selected high school students who will be in their senior year of high school during the 2020-2021 academic year.

The main objectives of the program will be to:

- Expose high school juniors to the entrepreneurial mind-set through a structured and unstructured, hands on approach, to experiential learning.

- Provide foundational and advanced-level skills training in entrepreneurship, as deemed appropriate for the target audience.

- Provide supportive and mentorship services to students, enabling them to successfully utilize all stages of the design process, from innovation, to development, to actualization.

Selected partners will work closely with ARC on this effort from 8/15/19 to 8/6/2021; this date range includes the planning phase, program implementation, and technical assistance activities. The final program is envisioned to be a four-week immersive, entrepreneurship summer camp program held between July 13, 2020 through August 7, 2020 in the metropolitan area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The class will be comprised of twenty-six (26) high school students who will be in their senior year of high school during the 2020-2021 academic year. All students accepted into the program must attend a public high school in the ARC Region. Students will be engaged in a hands-on, experiential learning environment coupled with classroom time and a paid internship component. At the conclusion of the 4-week experience, the goal is for each student to have created a product and/or service. In addition, for a period of 12 months after the conclusion of the summer camp, technical assistance will be provided to those students who participate in the program. The additional technical assistance, including mentoring and coaching, conducted in-person and virtually, will enable students to further the development of their respective product and/or service.
In order to successfully deploy the program, an expansive and diversified array of partners, both public and private, should be identified in the response to the RFP. ARC is interested in leveraging existing, available to the public, free of charge entrepreneurship curricula to meet program deliverables. In addition to leveraging existing resources, ARC encourages applicants to commit other resources (e.g. in-kind donation of classroom space or other in-kind services) to help support program activities. The proposals must embed monitoring and evaluation elements within the scope of work, as described in Section IV, to assess the success of the overall program and students’ outcomes. Applicants must submit a narrative which describes the approach for monitoring and evaluation of the program.

ARC is soliciting competitive proposals because it has determined that this process best serves the needs and interest of ARC and the public. As such, all Organizations will be afforded full opportunity to submit proposals in response to the RFP, and no Organization or person shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, citizenship status, national origin, age or any other factor protected by law in consideration for an award issued pursuant to this RFP. ARC is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and the elimination of all vestiges of discriminatory practices that might exist.

**The deadline for submissions in response to this RFP is 5:00 p.m. ET, Friday, September 6, 2019.**

**Section II: Rationale**

Investments by ARC and its partners aim to connect education, workforce, and business interests in a seamless system that prepares the Region’s young people to succeed in existing and emerging sectors, and creates new opportunities for workers transitioning to new employment. These efforts must begin with strong educational programming and institutions, and ensure that all students have the basic skills, as well as the soft skills, needed for productive employment or entrepreneurship, as described in the 2016-2020 ARC Strategic Plan (ARC 2016-2020 Strategic Plan).

To strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem for future generations of the Appalachian Region, access to entrepreneurial training is a first step to developing a pool of shakers, movers, and innovators of tomorrow — young entrepreneurs — who embrace the entrepreneurial spirit. The Region needs young entrepreneurs who are interested in testing an innovative idea, maybe failing the first go-around, trying again, and, ultimately, bringing their idea to market, with the end goal of generating capital and jobs for the Region. For additional information on entrepreneurial ecosystems in Appalachia, please visit this link: https://www.arc.gov/research/researchreportdetails.asp?REPORT_ID=147

Over the past decade, the Region has seen an emergence of entrepreneurship education embedded in classroom lessons and curricula across the K-12 system, community colleges, and four-year higher educational institutions. Entrepreneurship education, for many youth in the Region, is not considered an in-demand training pathway where access to entrepreneurial knowledge and skills training is readily available, especially in those
areas designated by ARC as distressed counties and “distressed areas” \((\text{County Economic Status and Distressed Areas})\). Educators and institutions may not have the necessary training, tools, or funding to implement a comprehensive training program to prepare youth for a future in entrepreneurship. For others, socioeconomic or cultural barriers are common factors which impede youth from engaging in entrepreneurial activities.

In Appalachia, geographical isolation and inadequate human and capital resources, further compounds the challenges educators and leaders face when fostering and instilling an entrepreneurial mindset in their communities. ARC, with its mission to strength economic growth within the Region, is strategically positioned to invest in entrepreneurship education in order to further expand the entrepreneurial ecosystem for future generations across Appalachia.

**Section III: Background**

**About Appalachia**

The Appalachian Region, as defined in ARC's authorizing legislation, is a 205,000-square-mile region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Forty-two percent of the Region's population is rural, compared with 20 percent of the national population.

The Appalachian Region's economy, which was once highly dependent on extractive industries, has become more diversified and now includes larger shares of manufacturing and professional services, among other industries. Appalachia has made significant progress over the past five decades: its poverty rate, which was 31 percent in 1960, had fallen to 16.7 percent over the 2012-2016 period. The number of high-poverty counties in the Region (those with poverty rates more than 1.5 times the U.S. average) declined from 295 in 1960 to 93 over the 2012-2016 period. These gains have transformed the Region from one of widespread poverty to one of economic contrasts: some communities have successfully diversified their economies, while others still require basic infrastructure such as roads, clinics, and water and sewer systems. The contrasts are not surprising in light of the Region's size and diversity—the Region includes 420 counties in 13 states, extends more than 1,000 miles from southern New York to northeastern Mississippi, and is home to more than 25 million people.

**About the Appalachian Regional Commission**

In the mid-1960s, at the urging of two U.S. presidents, Congress enacted legislation to address the persistent poverty and growing economic despair of the Appalachian Region. The Appalachian Regional Commission is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, ARC is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states, as well as a federal co-chair appointed by the President and is subject to Senate
confirmation. Local participation is provided through multi-county local development districts.

ARC’s mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia. ARC funds projects that address the five goals identified in the Commission's Investment Strategy:

1. Economic Opportunities: Invest in entrepreneurial and business development strategies that strengthen Appalachia’s economy.

2. Ready Workforce: Increase the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia.

3. Critical Infrastructure: Invest in critical infrastructure—especially broadband; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway System; and water/wastewater systems.

4. Natural and Cultural Assets: Strengthen Appalachia’s community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region’s natural and cultural heritage assets.

5. Leadership and Community Capacity: Build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development.

Each year, ARC provides funding for several hundred projects in the Appalachian Region in areas such as business development, education and workforce preparedness, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, health, and transportation. These projects create thousands of new jobs; improve local water and sewer systems; increase school readiness; expand access to health care; assist local communities with strategic planning; and provide technical and managerial assistance to emerging businesses.

Additional information about Appalachia and the Appalachian Regional Commission can be found at [www.arc.gov](http://www.arc.gov).

**Section IV: Scope of Work**

**Submission requirements**

Applicant organizations must submit a work plan, and a schedule for reports and deliverables. The scope of work requires a team with a broad set of skills to execute the project. Proposals must include the program components listed in this section. Applicants should expand on the program framework — innovative approaches to program implementation are highly encouraged. Applicants should submit proposals in the range of $250,000 to $350,000.
Program Framework

Students will have the opportunity to participate in a four-week immersive, entrepreneurship summer camp program held between July 13, 2020, through August 7, 2020, in the metropolitan area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The class will be comprised of twenty-six (26) who will be in their senior year of high school during the 2020-2021 academic year. The thirteen (13) ARC states (https://www.arc.gov/about/StateProgramManagers.asp) will nominate fifty-two (52) high school juniors. Each state will nominate four (4) students, two (2) of whom will be nominated to participate in the program, and two (2) nominees will be designated by each state as “alternates” and placed on a waiting list, in case a participant drops out before the program starts.

Note: Applicant organizations will be required to work in concert with ARC on the design of the application forms, selection criteria, and application process for the selection of students into the program. This process will be guided by an ARC advisory council, comprised of subject matter experts and ARC states’ representatives, and, ultimately, the council will review and approve the students who are nominated to participate in the program and those students designated as alternates.

The activities included as part of the program design will allow students to engage in a hands-on, experiential learning environment coupled with classroom time and a paid internship component. Each student will be matched with an entrepreneur (i.e. mentor) who operates a business located in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. Three days out of a given week, students will engage in structured, hands-on activities which will allow them to develop a product and/or service – a business. In addition, students will spend two days out of the week, 6-hour days, at an internship site, learning from an entrepreneur about the basics of operating a business. During the weekends, students will allocate additional time to perfecting their business idea and engaging in recreational activities.

Note: Applicant organizations are encouraged to utilize entrepreneurship education curricula which is already available, either free-of-charge or at a cost, as part of the program design and implementation. If development of curricula is included in the proposal, applicants must submit a justification as to why existing curricula does not address the scope of work outlined in this RFP.

Before the program starts, students will be asked about their areas of interest (i.e. industry sector) which will help staff match the student with an entrepreneur who operates a business within that specific industry. Students are paid a stipend of $200 per week, total of $1200 for duration of the program ($31,200 for 26 students).

Note: Proposal budgets must include a matching cost-share in the amount of $31,200 for the internship stipends. ARC encourages applicant organizations to partner with foundations, higher educational institutions, businesses, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders on sustaining the matching cost-share associated with the stipends. The applicant organizations can either commit
funding from their organization or submit letters of commitment from a partner who will provide funds to support the cost of the internship stipends.

The program will culminate with a Shark Tank-style presentation and graduation ceremony where students showcase their work to a panel of local entrepreneurs, then they vote for the best product and/or service. The winner receives seed funding, up to $1000 total, to bring their business idea to fruition. ARC will match the entrepreneurs’ investments – dollar for dollar – up to $1,000.

Note: Proposals must include the opportunity for students to earn an industry-certified credential/certificate in entrepreneurship.

While in the 4-week program, students will be matched with a representative from a small business center and/or an entrepreneur located in their state/community, who can assist them with further development of their business plan after they graduate from the program. The representatives and/or entrepreneurs will be invited to meet with the participants during the last week of the program. This period will allow for those representatives to develop a tool-kit for each student, which will include resources that can be modified and personalized to meet individual needs.

After graduation, students will receive additional guidance and support via webinar and conference calls (technical assistance) for 12 months; this will include an evaluation component to gauge students’ success and obtain feedback about their experience. A small subset of students will be invited to participate for one week in the 2021 program; possible roles for them include, but are not limited to, presentation of their business (“Where Are They Now?”) at Shark-Tank component, additional support/guidance for the 2021 cohort, and presenters/panel speakers.

Note: Proposal must include a detailed narrative of the 12-month technical assistance (post four-week summer camp experience) provided to students. Applicant organizations are encouraged to use creative ways to engage students during this phase of the program. Additionally, proposals must include a strategy on the development of an alumni network, which will enable students to remain in contact with each other, in-person and virtually, after graduating from the program.

Section V: Roles of the Organization & Appalachian Regional Commission

Key roles and responsibilities of responding Organization will include, but not be limited to:

- Collaborate with ARC to guide the work of the Organization;
- When available during the program, use the resources of universities and colleges in the area by bringing them in as a partner;
- Assist with developing outreach and marketing materials to promote the program;
☐ Publicly promote the program in the Appalachian Region

☐ Develop, if needed, and deliver curricula;

☐ Assist with developing the application form and portal for the program, which will be integrated into www.arc.gov;

☐ Assist with developing the criteria for selecting students for the program;

☐ Assist with scheduling to ensure that session dates align with the ARC calendar;

☐ Assist with managing the application and selection process for program;

☐ Act as the main POC for all program participants;

☐ Assist with any Washington, DC or in the Region meetings, including arrangement of sessions with partners and others, as needed; and

☐ Build or maintain an existing application portal, which will be used by ARC and prospective applicants, for the program;

☐ Work in concert with ARC on the creation and design of a program name and logo;

☐ Manage lodging selection and logistics, including but not limited to the following activities:
  
  o Lodging (e.g., hotel, dorm on a campus, etc.)
  
  o Meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, etc.)
  
  o Extracurricular activities (e.g., team-building field trips, visits to museums, football games, hiking trips, etc.)
  
  o Laundry for all 26 students
  
  o Background checks for all program staff, including any contractor awarded to implement this program, any subcontractors, volunteers, and internship site staff who will have direct contact with minors (i.e. high school students)
  
  o Staffing of at least 4 adult chaperones to monitor (24 hours a day) the students during the 4-week summer camp component of the program.
  
  o Tracking and documentation for the internship program, including but not limited to, time-sheets, payments, and intern evaluations
  
  o Transportation, including but not limited to, flight arrangements (roundtrip, from participants’ home to location of camp), extracurricular activities, and any transportation needed to travel to location of activities related to this program

  o Travel arrangements for entrepreneurs and program staff who will facilitate program-related activities
Seek and incorporate program feedback from participants as well as ARC;

Provide briefings to the ARC staff, and other interested parties, as requested;

Notify ARC concerning any organizational changes, including significant personnel providing the programming for ARC;

Provide quarterly reports for each year of the program until it is closed out; and

Provide adequate support and accommodate ARC staff members during management assistance visits, and coordinate visits to the Organization’s premises.

Key roles and responsibilities of the ARC will include, but not be limited to:

Assist with the application and selection process for program;

Attend program to oversee progress and assist, if needed, with the management of the overall program;

Review and approve all program activities and content developed by the Organization;

Provide feedback and guidance on program implementation and related issues; and

Provide ongoing funding support, subject to satisfactory performance, under any contract resulting from this RFP.

Section VI: Submission Procedures

The deadline for submissions in response to this RFP is 5:00 p.m. ET, Friday, September 6, 2019.

Please submit a PDF copy of your response to HSEntrepreneurship@arc.gov.

Each Organization must submit a complete response (answer every information request) to this RFP, as failure to do so will result in immediate disqualification, and cause the response to not be scored. Further, the response must be signed by an officer of the responding Organization, and the response must include a statement as to the period for which the response remains valid, which must be at least 90 days from the date responses to the RFP are due.
Additionally:

- Telephone or fax responses will not be accepted for this RFP;
- Submissions MUST be sent via email;
- Responses or unsolicited amendments will not be accepted after the closing date and time;
- Requests for time extensions past any deadlines will not be considered.

ARC desires to minimize submission of superfluous RFP material. Therefore, responding Organizations are instructed to organize their responses according to the following format:

- The proposal narrative should not exceed 12 typewritten pages tabbed by category. Font must be Times New Roman and can be no smaller than 10 typeset. Two to Three (5-6) pages per section as follows:
  - Program Strategy
  - Experience and Expertise
  - Facilities
  - Budget/Funding

- Supplemental information or background material, if any, must be restricted to appendices following the narrative placed in chapters. Up to additional ten (10) pages per chapter of supplemental material may be submitted, including curriculum vitae of key personnel.

- Pages should be numbered consecutively and identify the Organization on each. Each proposal should be accompanied by a title page specifying the name of the RFP being responded to (“High School Entrepreneurship Program”) followed by a submittal letter signed by an officer of the responding Organization.

Eligible ARC applicants are:

- Local Development Districts;
- Indian Tribes or a consortium of Indian Tribes;
- States, counties, cities, or other political subdivision 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 non-profit organizations or associations.

Section VI: The Review and Evaluation Process

The Commission’s selection committee (“the Committee”) will review and evaluate only the responses that meet the following threshold items:

- The Organization’s willingness to explicitly follow the Commission’s guidelines in this RFP;
- The experience and qualifications of both the Organization and its staff to be assigned to provide these services, in regard to its described ability to successfully manage The Institute;
- Involvement and accessibility of the Organization’s staff to be assigned to these services;
- The Organization’s commitment to the Appalachian Region; and
- The Organization’s answers to the information requests outlined in all sections of this RFP.

Subsequent to the Committee’s evaluation, and at the sole discretion of the Committee, certain Organizations may be selected for interviews. Those Organizations selected will be given not less than seven business days’ notice, along with the date, time, and place for these presentations.

Each Organization selected for an interview will be allotted 30 minutes for its presentation, and additional time may be allotted to answer any questions it may pose, to ensure the Organizations are evaluated on the basis of the criteria set forth in this RFP.

ARC may then select the Organization based on the demonstrated competence, experience, knowledge, and qualifications of the Organization, as evaluated and proffered by the committee.

ARC fully reserves the right to make this decision and the Commission’s decision on this matter is final.

Section VII: RFP Terms and Conditions

This RFP is for the purpose of soliciting responses from organizations within and outside the Appalachian Region, including non-profits, institutions of higher education, and other
stakeholders, qualified to design and deliver a leadership initiative, on a region wide basis, for the Commission.

No claim for adjustment of any provision of the RFP shall be honored after the proposal has been submitted on the grounds that the proposer was not fully informed as the existing conditions or circumstances or any other related matter. However, by this RFP, the Commission has not committed itself to employ an Organization for these services for any or all of the herein-described matters and the Commission reserves the right to decide such after receipt, review and evaluation of all responses.

Additionally, the Commission reserves the right to:

- Waive or amend any portion of this RFP by written notice to all Organizations;
- Negotiate all elements that comprise the information with the Organization(s) to ensure that the best possible considerations are afforded to all concerned;
- To waive any irregularities;
- Reject any and all responses to this RFP;
- Select Organization(s) for specific purposes or for any combination of specific purposes; and
- Defer the selection of any Organization(s) to a time of the Commission’s choosing.

Additionally, ARC will allow and review responses utilizing joint ventures of any two or more Organizations, or sub-contractors by a single Organization, as long as the response clearly:

- Identifies the lead principal who will bear the responsibility for the contract for services with the Commission; and
- Describes its proposed measures of quality control for itself and its joint-venture partners and/or its sub-contractors sufficiently to satisfy the Commission.

**Commission, Board and Staff Communication**

Organizations intending to respond to this RFP are prohibited from contacting any member of the Commission or ARC staff with the purpose of influencing the RFP selection process. All RFP related communication should be directed to Emela Halilovic, the contact person, during this process. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in disqualification.
Period of Contract

While the contract will be offered for a term of one year, with a renewal option for two one-year terms subject to ARC approval, it is the intent to continue the contract on an ongoing basis, contingent upon, among other things, availability of funds, continued need, and satisfactory performance of services.

Cost of Developing and Submitting Response

ARC shall not, under any circumstances, be liable or responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by any Organization in preparing and/or submitting a response associated with proposals including, but not limited to, research, investigation, development, preparation, transmittal, or presentation of proposals or any related information, data documentation, and material.

Acceptance of RFP Content

Some of the contents of this RFP and the response submitted may be incorporated by reference in any final contract resulting from this RFP.

Assignment and Delegation

Any contract issued pursuant to this RFP is not assignable, nor may be delegated, except with the prior written approval of the Commission.

Property

All responses become the property of the ARC upon receipt. The ARC has the right to use any and all ideas or adaptations of the ideas contained in any response received in this RFP. Selection or rejection of the response will not affect this right.

Proprietary Information

If an Organization does not desire certain proprietary information in its response disclosed, the Organization should identify all proprietary information in the response, which identification shall be submitted concurrently with the response. If the Organization fails to identify proprietary information, it agrees by submission of its response that all parts of all responses shall be deemed non-proprietary and will become public documents upon completion of the RFP process.
APPENDIX A

Program Timeline

September 6, 2019 – RFP period closes

September 20, 2019 – Select contractor/award bid

October 31, 2019 – Finalize program criteria and application forms

November 30, 2019 – Develop program website, including an online application portal.

December 9, 2019 – Marketing of program begins

January 10, 2020 – Open application portal

April 3, 2020 – Deadline for students to submit their applications, application portal closes

April 13, 2020 – Deadline for ARC states to nominate students

April 20, 2020 – Select and notify students

May 30, 2020 – Contractor identifies businesses/entrepreneurs for program

July 13, 2020 – Summer camp starts

August 7, 2020 – Summer camp ends

August 7, 2020 – Technical assistance begins for 2020 student cohort

August 6, 2021 – Technical assistance ends for 2020 student cohort