



Access in Appalachia Pilot Project Request for Proposal

I. Overview and Purpose

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is now requesting proposals from applicants to fund implementation of the Access in Appalachia Pilot Project. This request for proposal (RFP) is to pilot the use of accessibility metrics as outlined in the research report titled [Access in Appalachia](#). This ARC-commissioned report, released on November 30, 2020, shows how transportation connections and travel options impact economic development and access to services across the Appalachian Region. The report offers specific guidance on how to develop accessibility performance measures and apply them to investment prioritization.

ARC recognizes the importance of balancing traditional transportation performance metrics that emphasize traffic volumes and congestion with less traditional accessibility metrics that emphasize how transportation routes, modal options, and facilities can help people and businesses access jobs, customers, health and education services, and multimodal freight facilities for both domestic and global trade. This is especially true for Appalachia's rural areas. Funding will be provided by ARC to selected applicants to pilot accessibility metrics recommended in the [Access in Appalachia](#) research study. The goal of this pilot is to support statewide efforts to improve and develop new methods to measure accessibility as part of a state's project prioritization decision-making process and, potentially, performance measurement.

II. Background

About Appalachia

As defined in ARC's authorizing legislation, the Appalachian Region (the Region) 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% of the national population.

The Region's economy, once highly dependent on extractive industries, has become more diversified in recent decades and now includes larger shares of manufacturing and professional services, among other industries. Its poverty rate, which was 31% in 1960, fell to 15.8% over the 2014–2018 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 98 over the 2013–2017 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 wastewater systems. The contrasts are not surprising in light of the Region's size and diversity—the Region 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 (ARC)

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC, the Commission) is a regional economic development agency serving 420 counties across the Appalachian Region. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, the Commission is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states, as well as a federal co-chair appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Annually, the group of governors elects one governor to serve as the states' co-chair. To strengthen local participation, ARC works with the Appalachian states to support a network of multicounty planning and development organizations, or Local Development Districts (LDDs), throughout the Region. Seventy-three LDDs cover all 420 counties in the Region. The LDDs help identify the needs of local communities, assist with participation in ARC programs, and at times serve as pass-through entities or fiscal agents to local grantees.

The Commission's current 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. The Commission funds projects that address the five goals identified in its strategic plan:

1. Invest in entrepreneurial and business development strategies that strengthen Appalachia's economy.
2. Increase the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia.
3. Invest in critical infrastructure, especially broadband; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway System; and water/wastewater systems.
4. Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region's natural and cultural heritage assets.
5. 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 job training, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, and transportation. These projects create thousands of new jobs; improve local water and wastewater systems; increase school readiness; train the Region's workforce; assist local communities with strategic planning; and provide entrepreneurial assistance to emerging businesses.

Additional information about the Appalachian Regional Commission can be found at www.arc.gov.

III. Proposal Contents

Proposals must present a description of the work to be conducted, a work plan that includes engagement with ARC, and a schedule for deliverables. The successful applicant will develop

a clear and logical methodology to respond to the overall eligibility criteria, scope of work criteria, and deliverables. The total maximum proposal length is eight pages.

1. Overall Eligibility Criteria

All proposals must document how the applicant will meet the following criteria:

Applicant Eligibility – The lead applicant must be a state department of transportation (DOT) in the Region and be able to assess and affect statewide decision-making and investment for transportation projects. The lead applicant may partner with regional transportation planning agencies.

Cost – Proposals must include the total amount of funding requested. ARC may fund up to three pilot projects and expects to fund each project in the \$50,000 to \$150,000 range. The contract for this pilot will be a firm fixed-price contract with progress payments on a quarterly schedule (or other schedule negotiated between the selected applicant and ARC staff). The budget shall remain firm during the project. Proposals must contain all cost information.

Schedule and Collaboration with ARC – Proposals must include a proposed project schedule and specify opportunities for ARC input and review. At a minimum, ARC expects to review and provide input on the proposed pilot project soon after contractor selection, at the midway of progress, and just prior to the preparation of the draft report. All work must be completed and billed within 12 months of contractor selection.

Contract Requirements – Proposals should contain any special requirements that the contractor wants included in the contract.

2. Scope of Work Criteria

ARC will base its review of proposals on the following scope of work criteria. The weighted score for each of the criterion below is shown as a percentage.

Alignment with the *Access in Appalachia* report (35%) – Proposals must demonstrate how the concepts and methodologies of the *Access in Appalachia* report will be implemented. To the extent possible, proposals should document previous relevant experience with access metrics that are consistent with the report and/or how they would refine them to match the *Access in Appalachia* recommendations.

Proposals must clearly identify the kinds of accessibility metrics from the *Access in Appalachia* report to be used in the pilot on a statewide basis. For example, see Table 19 from the *Access in Appalachia* full report. It is important to note that the user groups and destinations in Table 19 can also be differentiated to develop a set of metrics for various transportation modes. For example, in households with no cars or too few cars, people rely on transit where available and other transportation options (i.e., accessibility to transit can be a relevant and critical metric in many areas). Proposals should briefly discuss the rationale for choosing metrics to apply in your state.

Table 19 Set of Accessibility Metrics, by User Group (Not Showing Subsets of User Groups)

Businesses–Access to ...	
B1. Labor	
B2. Supply chain	
B3. Delivery	Consumers
B4. Intermodal connectivity	a) Rail facility
	b) Port
	c) Airport
People–Access to ...	
P1. Job	
P2. Education	College
P3. Health care	a) Primary care
	b) Trauma center
	c) Addiction treatment center
P4. Town centers	
P5. Tourist destination	
Technology–Access to ...	
T1. Mobile Broadband (i.e., Cell Phones)	
T2. Fixed Broadband (i.e., at home)	

Ability to Apply Accessibility Metrics in the Statewide Decision-Making Process (35%) – The proposal should demonstrate how the pilot will advance the use of accessibility metrics in statewide decision-making and investment processes and, potentially, performance measurement. Proposals should clearly show the connection of the metrics to the statewide decision-making process.

Description and Capacity of Staff (20%) – Proposals must include the name of applicant's offices and staff conducting the pilot. Only a brief description of relevant expertise of staff is necessary. Proposals must identify if applicant plans to use consultants for any portion of the pilot and, if so, identify what consultant team will be working on this and briefly describe their role in supporting the state DOT.

Leveraging Funds (10%) – Proposals that include non-ARC sources of funding are encouraged and will help expand the capacity to pilot this accessibility work. Other sources may include federal, state, regional, local, or private sector funding.

3. Deliverables

Draft Report: A draft report shall be submitted to ARC by the contractor selected to conduct a pilot. The draft report shall include an executive summary (not to exceed two pages) that integrates, summarizes, and interprets key findings of the pilot. The draft report shall include a discussion of the accessibility metrics that were studied and a discussion on the impact of the metrics included in the prioritization or decision-making process. The draft report, as well as the executive summary, shall be written for a non-technical audience and may include descriptive statistics, analyses, graphs, maps, and tables, where appropriate.

The contractor shall submit two electronic versions of the draft report: a Microsoft Word file and an Adobe PDF file.

ARC will review the draft report and provide comments within two weeks of receipt.

Final Report: A final report shall be submitted to ARC within two weeks after receipt of ARC comments. A brief resolution shall be provided for all ARC comments.

The selected contractor shall submit two electronic versions of the final report: a Microsoft Word file and an Adobe PDF file.

Progress Reports: The contractor must provide updates to ARC on progress toward completing the scope of work with each request for a progress payment. The progress report should be concise (not to exceed two pages) and must contain sufficient detail to support the progress payment request. In addition, the contractor must immediately inform ARC of any delays or challenges in meeting the agreed-upon scope of work or schedule.

Post-Pilot Knowledge Sharing – The proposal must indicate that the contractor will participate in one ARC-led post-pilot workshop with other pilot contractors and will allow ARC to share the final report with a regional or national audience.

IV. Proposal Submission

Proposals are due on or before 5:00 p.m. Eastern time on June 15, 2021 and must be sent by email to Jim Sinnette at JSinnette@arc.gov. Questions about this proposal should be directed to Jim Sinnette at JSinnette@arc.gov or 202-884-7729.

ARC will select contractor(s) through a competitive process based on evaluations of how proposals respond to the overall eligibility and scope of work criteria. During its review of proposals, ARC may ask applicants to participate in a brief interview to discuss their proposal in greater detail.

It is anticipated that the contractor(s) will be selected by July 1, 2021, for an estimated start date of July 15, 2021, and completion date before July 31, 2022.