



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy

Questions concerning this RFP must be received by email to academies@arc.gov no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on August 27, 2021. ARC reserves the right to not answer questions received after that time.

**Proposals are due on or before 5:00 p.m. ET
September 3, 2021**

academies@arc.gov

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: SUMMARY

SECTION II: BACKGROUND

SECTION III: ROLES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS & COMMISSION

SECTION IV: THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SECTION V: SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

SECTION VI: THE REVIEW AND EVALUATION PROCESS

SECTION VII: RFP TERMS AND CONDITIONS

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE

Section I: Summary

This Request for Proposals (“RFP”) solicits proposals from eligible organizations, including non-profits, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders, (“Organizations”) to work in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission (“ARC”) to create an entrepreneurship focused summer camp for approximately 26 high school students from across Appalachia.

The Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy (“AEA”) will be a residential summer camp experience that should include, but not be limited to:

- Exposure to the entrepreneurial mind-set through both structured and unstructured, hands-on experiential learning.
- Foundational and advanced-level skills training in entrepreneurship, as deemed appropriate for the target audience and length of program.
- Supportive and mentorship services to students, enabling them to successfully understand and utilize all stages of the design process, from innovation, to development, to actualization.

The purpose of this RFP is to assist in the development of programming, curriculum, and execution for AEA. The focus of AEA is on the development of entrepreneurship skills in high school students in the Appalachian Region. The focus can range on all entrepreneurial ways of thinking including small business, social enterprise, and startups.

ARC will require the Organization to secure a host location, as well as plan the curriculum, staffing, and activities for the program. The two-week residential program will take place on a college campus in the Appalachian Region. Upon the completion of the program, the students should possess an understanding of entrepreneurship and how they can use the knowledge and skills not only in their future endeavors, but also to make an impact on the future of Appalachia.

ARC encourages responders to bring forth innovative ideas that will train high school students through exercises, learning modules, and experiences that empower them to see how entrepreneurship can improve their communities and the Region.

ARC is soliciting competitive proposals because it has determined that this process best serves the needs and interests 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, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, 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.

Section II: 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 in recent times 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% in 1960, fell to 15.2% over the 2015–2019 period. The number of high-poverty counties in the Region (those with poverty rates greater than 1.5 times the U.S. average) declined from 295 in 1960 to 110 over the 2015–2019 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 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, broadband, critical infrastructure, community development, 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.

About Entrepreneurship in Appalachia

Entrepreneurship and business development are cornerstones of strengthening the Appalachian economy. Creating opportunity across a variety of existing and emerging industries and sectors helps communities increase their resilience during periods of economic transition. Over the last five years, ARC has invested approximately \$89.3 million in projects and partners who strengthen local entrepreneurial ecosystems through capital access, business incubation, and technical assistance.

For additional information about ARC’s work in Entrepreneurship, see <https://www.arc.gov/appalachianentrepreneurship>.

The Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy

The Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy will focus on the development of entrepreneurship skills in 26 high school students in the Appalachian Region to prepare the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders and thinkers. Key objectives include, but are not limited to:

- Developing an understanding of the entrepreneurial mind-set and toolbox of entrepreneurship skills;
- Building awareness of the variety of forms entrepreneurship can take, including but not limited to small businesses, social enterprises, and startups;
- Instilling in students the importance of entrepreneurship for the future of the Appalachian Region;

- Developing soft skills needed for success in both entrepreneurship and life (e.g. public speaking, teamwork, etc.);
- Ensuring that those participating in AEA leave with a body of knowledge and skills that can be applied in their future endeavors.

Section III: Roles of the Organizations & Appalachian Regional Commission

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

- Collaborate with ARC to guide the work of the AEA;
- Use the resources of entrepreneurs in the host community and across the Appalachian Region by bringing them in as partners to provide mentoring and real-life examples of the life of an entrepreneur;
- Assist in promotion of the program in the Appalachian Region using ARC developed materials, as approved by ARC;
- Serve as the main point of contact for program participants and their parents/guardians;
- Develop and deliver curriculum, subject to approval by ARC;
- Secure speakers for the program or judges for the final pitch day, if applicable;
- Manage logistics, including but not limited to the following:
 - Lodging (e.g. dorm on campus)
 - Meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, etc.)
 - Extracurricular activities (e.g., team-building field trips, visits to museums, football games, hiking trips, etc.)
 - Transportation, including but not limited to:
 - Flight arrangements and airport shuttle (roundtrip from participants home to location of camp)
 - Extracurricular and other activities through the program
 - Laundry
 - Program staff including adult chaperones to monitor the students (24 hours a day)
 - Background checks for all program staff, including subcontractors, volunteers, site staff, chaperones, and any other staff who will have direct contact with students
 - Travel arrangements for program staff, entrepreneurs, and other speakers who will facilitate the program-related activities
 - Liability Insurance for the residential program
 - Development and coordination of all codes of conduct, permission forms, emergency contact information, health care release form in case of emergency, etc.
 - Compliance with any local, state, or federal guidance on public health regulations and/or precautions
- 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 entrepreneurship development 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 audits and 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:

- Provide and fund an ARC staff member as a program manager whose job duties will include, but not be limited to:
 - Assist with scheduling to ensure that session dates align with the ARC calendar;
 - Develop marketing materials, program website, and other collateral needed to promote the program to students;
 - Develop and manage the student application and selection process for AEA;
 - Assist with the management of the program;
 - Review and approve all program activities and content developed by the Organization;
 - Attend the program to oversee progress and assist with implementation of the program.
- Assist in securing speakers, if needed;
- Build and maintain the website for AEA;
- Provide feedback and guidance on program design, implementation, and related issues; and
- Provide ongoing funding support, subject to satisfactory performance, under any contract resulting from this RFP.

Section IV: The Request for Proposals

Submission Requirements

The proposal narrative should provide the following information:

Program Strategy

The proposal should describe the Organization's strategy for the development of entrepreneurship skills in high school students in the Appalachian Region, to include, but not be limited to, the following major components under the AEA umbrella:

- A residential program aimed at approximately 26 high school students from across Appalachia;
- Curriculum and activities focused on development of entrepreneurship skills including small business, social enterprise, start up and as well as soft skills training;
- Extracurricular activities that highlight the Appalachian Region and build cohort camaraderie.

The narrative should include discussion of content strategies, instructional methods, and linkages between the various program components. Innovative approaches are expected and will be required.

Future Considerations: While the contract will be offered for a term of one year, it is the intent to continue the contract on an ongoing basis. With that in mind, ARC would also like to see proposals that incorporate a long-term strategy of incorporating teachers and/or middle school students in future years as the program grows.

Experience and Expertise

The proposal should describe the Organization's previous experience in designing and delivering entrepreneurship programming for high school students, including examples of outcomes and successes. The qualifications of staff/faculty that will be involved in program design and delivery shall also be provided. Letters of recommendation from similar programs should be included.

Facilities

The proposal should describe the facilities that will be used to host AEA, including lodging and meeting facilities.

Budget/Funding

The proposal should present a budget for each major component of the initiative, including a breakdown of costs for program management, logistics, instructional personnel, and materials.

Given the mission of the program to reach rural and economically distressed communities, Organizations are encouraged to include additional funding as part of their budget, which can include commitments for contributions from the Organization or outside sources.

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 20 typewritten pages tabbed by category. Font must be Times New Roman and can be no smaller than 10 typeset. Sections should be organized as follows:
 - Program Strategy & Curriculum
 - Experience and Expertise
 - Facilities & Logistics
 - Budget/Funding
- Supplemental information or background material, if any, must be restricted to appendices following the narrative placed in chapters. Up to additional twenty (20) pages per chapter of supplemental material may be submitted, including curriculum vitae of key personnel and materials from prior entrepreneurship education programs.
- 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 (“Appalachian Entrepreneurship Academy”) followed by a submittal letter signed by an officer of the responding Organization.

Section V: Submission Procedures

The deadline for submissions in response to this RFP is 5:00 p.m. ET, September 3, 2021.

Please submit a PDF copy of your response to academies@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:

- Submissions **MUST** be sent via email as one PDF document;
- 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.

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 AEA;
- Involvement and accessibility of the Organization's staff to be assigned to these services;
- The Organization's commitment to the Appalachian Region;
- The host location within the ARC thirteen-state region; and
- The Organization's answers to the information requests outlined in "submission requirements" above.

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, as determined by the Committee, to answer questions, 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, including non-profits, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders, qualified to design and deliver an entrepreneurship program for high school students, 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 board 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;
- Describes its proposed measures of quality control for itself and its joint-venture partners and/or its sub-contractors sufficiently to satisfy the Commission;
- Clearly defines the role of the partner or sub-contractor; and
- Outlines the qualifications of the partner or sub-contractor.

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 Jessica Mosley, 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. At all times, the Organization will serve at the will and pleasure of the Commission.

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. All costs and expenses incurred by the proposers in connection with these proposals submitted shall be the sole responsibility of the proposers.

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 is required to 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 3, 2021– RFP Period Closes

Week of October 4, 2021 – Finalist Interviews

November 1, 2021 – Contract Start Date

December 17, 2021 – Finalize Program Dates & Design

January 12, 2022 – Marketing Starts & Applications Open

Summer 2022 – Two Week Residential Program

August 31, 2022 – Contract End Date