



Appalachian
Regional
Commission

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Community
Capacity-Building Pilot:
Bank of Credits

Questions regarding this RFP should be sent to ARPAcredits@arc.gov

**Proposals are due on or before 5:00 p.m. EDT
January 14, 2022.**

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- Open Date:** November 18, 2021
- Proposal Due Date:** January 14, 2022, 5 PM ET
- Finalist Interviews:** Week of February 7 (Please remain flexible this week.)
- Selection Date:** Week of February 14
- Contract Period:** February 21, 2022–February 28, 2025

Overview of Request for Proposal

The Appalachian Regional Commission (the Commission, ARC) invites proposals from qualified organizations to provide and oversee the deployment of technical assistance services to local development districts (LDDs) that are supporting communities using American Rescue Plan Act Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars to drive economic transformation. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), enacted March 2021, makes unprecedented funding available to combat the devastating health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The ARC research department's preliminary analysis shows that of the Local Fiscal Recovery Fund county allocation, \$65.1B, Appalachian counties will receive approximately \$5.3B.

The flexibility of these funds provides communities with a significant opportunity to invest capital into activities that extend beyond addressing local government revenue gaps resulting from the pandemic. The Commission believes that this historic infusion of public funding, if leveraged effectively, can have long-lasting economic impact on Appalachian communities, positioning them to attract additional investments and spur revitalization in underserved areas.

It is anticipated that as LDDs conduct ARPA outreach, they will need access to additional expertise (e.g., vendors and/or consultants) to support communities planning and implementing catalytic Local Fiscal Recovery Fund projects. As a result, the Commission seeks to provide a bank of credits that may be redeemed by LDDs to cover the cost of specific services that will help communities strategically deploy Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars. This program, titled "Community Capacity-Building Pilot," consists of two key components:

1. The rollout of a training series for LDDs, local elected officials, and their key staff that provides best practices on identifying and implementing Local Fiscal Recovery Fund-eligible projects that spur economic transformation
2. The development and management of a bank of credits accessible to LDDs working with communities implementing catalytic Local Fiscal Recovery Fund projects.

The first component, trainings, will be executed by another organization through a separate contract. **This RFP's scope of work is the second component: the development and oversight of a bank of credits.**

The main objective of this effort is as follows:

- Provide LDDs with access to a bank of credits that may be redeemed to cover the cost of specific technical assistance services. The bank of credits resource is designed to strengthen LDD capacity to support local governments that are seeking to strategically deploy Local Fiscal Recovery Fund monies. Services may include but are not limited to community visioning/facilitation, pre-engineering consultation, evaluation/monitoring, federal grant management compliance, and accounting. In cases in which LDDs need technical assistance services but do not have a readily identified vendor, the contractor, if capable, should offer the service or provide vendor recommendations to the LDD.
- The awardee of this contract will oversee the development and execution of the full approach for deploying a bank of credits resource, including identifying the appropriate technology/platform to field and vet eligible requests, creating intake form questions, rendering reimbursements, devising associated procedures, tracking credit usage, troubleshooting, evaluating programs, and managing all associated research and logistics required to successfully launch this resource. The awardee shall work in consultation with ARC staff to execute the project scope.

The contract awarded for this project will be a **firm fixed-price contract**, with the potential opportunity for extension depending upon program success and stakeholder demand. Interested parties must submit a reasonable budget based upon the activities and services that will be rendered during the life of the contract. The estimated contract period will be February 21, 2022, through February 28, 2025.

Background

About the Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is a regional economic development agency serving 423 counties across the Appalachian Region (the 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 of the United States and confirmed by the United States Senate. Annually, the group of governors elect 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. The 74 LDDs cover all 423 counties in the Region. The LDDs help identify needs of local communities, assist with participation in ARC programs, and at times serve as pass-through entities or fiscal agents to local grantees.

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. The Commission funds projects that address the five goals identified in [ARC's strategic plan](#):

1. Strengthen and diversify the Region's economy through inclusive economic development strategies and investments in entrepreneurship and business development.

2. 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.
3. Ensure that the residents and businesses of Appalachia have access to reliable and affordable utilities and infrastructure in order to successfully live and work in the Region.
4. Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the Region's local, cultural heritage, and natural assets.
5. 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.

Each year, ARC provides funding for approximately 500 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, 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.

About Appalachia

The Appalachian Region, as defined in ARC's authorizing legislation, is a 206,000 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 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 socioeconomic 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 lack 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 26 million people.

About the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), enacted March 2021, makes unprecedented funding available to combat the devastating health and economic impacts of COVID-19. Of the \$1.39T allocated, \$350B in flexible funding is apportioned to states, territories, and tribal and local governments. The Local Fiscal Recovery Fund received \$130.2B: \$65.1B for counties, \$45.6B for cities including some Appalachian metropolitan areas, and \$19.5B for non-entitlement units (NEUs) defined as local governments with populations of less than 50,000. The ARC research department's preliminary analysis shows that of the Local Fiscal Recovery Fund county allocation, \$65.1B, Appalachian counties will receive approximately \$5.3B.

Funding is available and generally distributed in two tranches: spring/summer of 2021 and spring/summer of 2022. Under specific circumstances related to unemployment rates, all funding may be requested in a single transaction. Funding must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and expended by December 31, 2026. States and counties directly request funding from the United States Treasury, while NEUs request funding from their respective state. States must request the NEU allocation from the Treasury and have 30 days to redistribute those funds to NEUs.

American Rescue Plan Act funding adheres to the following guiding principles:

- Respond to the public health emergency presented by COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts.
- Provide premium pay to essential workers.
- Serve as a stopgap for government shortfalls in revenue due to the pandemic.
- Direct investments into water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

For more information regarding ARPA, see the Treasury website:

<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>

Scope of Work

Program Vision

The goal of the "Community Capacity-Building Pilot" is to increase the capacity of local development districts (LDDs) and local governments to support the investment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Local Fiscal Recovery Funds into projects that spark long-lasting economic impact in Appalachian communities.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), through a separate contract, will host a series of virtual trainings during the first half of 2022 targeted towards LDDs and local elected officials and their key staff (e.g., commissioners, mayors, city managers, county superintendents, financial officers, township trustees, or city council presidents) in the Appalachian Region. **These trainings will focus on Local Fiscal Recovery Fund eligible**

uses and projects that will result in economic transformation. The strategies and recommendations showcased in the trainings will be rooted in eligible use guiding principles 1 and 4 as outlined in the interim final rule:

Interim Final Rule Guiding Principles	
#1	Respond to the public health emergency presented by COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts.
#4	Direct investments into water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

Examples of eligible uses and projects that will result in economic transformation include the following:

- Investments in workforce development programs targeting those laid off due to COVID-19 (versus touchless faucets in municipal buildings)
- Support for the opening of qualified/state-licensed childcare provider businesses in a community (versus solely providing direct payments for childcare)
- Programming and resources targeted towards small businesses impacted by COVID-19
- Capacity investments (grants) in long-standing nonprofit entities that drive economic benefits for a community
- Strategic infrastructure investments that enhance an industrial park site; improve access to educational services or hospital services; create jobs or provide workforce development opportunities; or make improvements to water and sewer quality that not only impact residences but also target commercial areas

All community investments are worthwhile; however, ARC is seeking to provide high-impact projects that will lay the foundation for long-term economic improvement for communities. The list above is not exhaustive; however, it demonstrates the types of projects ARC is seeking. During the trainings, the Commission will share these approaches as potential options and inspiration for local governments determining how best to use Local Fiscal Recovery Fund monies. In addition to examples, trainings will provide insight into the following:

1. Identifying projects that best fit a community's needs (planning)
2. Pinpointing project rationale (data) that aligns with funding's eligible uses
3. Practical steps on how to implement projects

As a result of these trainings, it is anticipated that LDDs will receive an influx of Local Fiscal Recovery Fund-related inquiries. LDD capacity, expertise, and staffing levels vary across the Appalachian Region. The bank of credits is designed to provide LDDs with additional resources to support local governments that are strategically deploying Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars. For example, if the LDD lacks staff or the expertise to provide technical assistance to a local government inquiring about strategic deployment of ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars, the LDD may seek the support of a vendor or contractor to help that local government. Through the bank of credits, the LDD may then request full or partial reimbursement for those rendered services.

This program—the training sessions and bank of credits—is titled the “Community Capacity-Building Pilot.” While the work will be implemented by two separate contractors, it will be executed in a cohesive manner that is publicly viewed as a single program.

Program Objectives

The objective of this work is to strengthen LDDs’ capacity to support the strategic deployment of Local Fiscal Recovery Fund monies into Appalachian communities. This is to be accomplished by providing LDDs with access to a bank of credits that may be redeemed to cover the cost of vendor services used to help communities implement strategic Local Fiscal Recovery Fund-related investments. In cases in which LDDs need technical assistance services but do not have a readily identified vendor, the awardee, if capable, should offer the service or provide vendor recommendations to the LDD. It is important to note that these credits are funded with federal dollars; therefore, per 2 CFR §200, when LDDs (and/or the awardee) redeem credits, they must comply with federal, state, and local procurement regulations as well as conflict-of-interest provisions.

Purpose

The broad range of potential uses for Local Fiscal Recovery Fund monies heightens the need for a long-term, strategic community development vision forged by local governments, nonprofits, and community members. Due to ARC’s economic development mission and the inherently collaborative nature of its governance structure, the Commission is uniquely positioned to support and accelerate these efforts. In accordance with Goal 5, “Building Community Leaders and Capacity,” of ARC’s current strategic plan, the Commission seeks to make a bank of credits available for LDDs working with local governments to strategically deploy Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. **The purpose of this work is to provide LDDs with the resources necessary to help local governments identify and/or implement eligible Local Fiscal Recovery Fund investments that will result in long-term economic impact for their communities.**

Preliminary conversations with multiple stakeholders highlight that the region is in varying stages of planning. While some communities have completed robust multi-sector engagement processes resulting in a clear action plan to leverage ARPA funds strategically, others have yet to engage their constituents. This is in part due to limited capacity (e.g., staff expertise to facilitate meetings, etc.). Additionally, local governments, particularly those serving rural areas, may have limited expertise in federal grant management compliance, which discourages such governments from administering ARPA funds. There is a desire for tangible examples of ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund deployment that go beyond investments in deteriorating infrastructure and pandemic-related budget shortfalls. Local governments recognize that this funding is an opportunity to seed long-term economic change in their communities; however, they want to do so without fear of unintentionally misappropriating funds.

As regional development organizations, local development districts play a critical role in strategically advancing economic development and serve as a bridge between communities and government entities. Currently, the capacity of LDDs to support local governments’ ARPA funding deployment varies across the region. Strengthening LDD capacity to conduct

ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund outreach and provide technical assistance to its local governments will support the strategic deployment of these funds.

Target Audience

The target audience for the bank of credits is LDDs in the Appalachian Region, fielding Local Fiscal Recovery Fund-related inquiries from the local governments they serve. The local governments and communities served by LDDs will be downstream beneficiaries of these resources.

ARC will provide the awardee with a list of LDD contacts that have participated in the ARC-hosted training sessions. **The awardee will be responsible for developing an outreach strategy** (e.g., emails, presentations, or other tactics) that encourages LDDs to use their credit allotment.

The awardee will work in partnership with the ARC staffer and ARC communications department to vet the outreach plan. ARC will be supportive in leveraging existing relationships with national and local organizations to support outreach efforts.

Structure

The bank of credits structure permits an LDD to select its own vendor and have ARC (via the awardee) reimburse for the cost of services rendered. (See [Credit Allotment](#) for details regarding the amount of reimbursement available.) For LDDs experiencing challenges with cashflow, the Commission will consider issuing an advance on a limited case-by-case basis.

For cases in which an LDD does not have a vendor readily identified but seeks access to its credit allotment, the awardee is expected to help identify a viable technical assistance provider. The awardee will be well-networked or have sufficient resources to provide an LDD with suggestions. Suggestions may be from an impartial search, or the awardee may tap into its existing network of technical assistance providers.

Credits are funded with federal dollars; therefore, per 2 CFR §200, LDDs (and/or the awardee) must comply with federal, state, and local procurement regulations as well as conflict-of-interest provisions when redeeming credits.

Technical assistance providers recommended by the awardee should have demonstrated experience in providing the desired service. To the extent possible, the awardee should seek to recommend vendors that have significant experience working with Appalachian and/or rural communities. **In cases in which the awardee is deploying or recommending a technical assistance provider, the awardee must conduct follow-up (i.e., touch base with the LDD or local government) to ensure that high-quality services were rendered.**

The awardee will conduct intake, issue reimbursements, troubleshoot, track credit use, and evaluate the program on behalf of the Commission.

Credit Redemption

Bank credits are redeemable only for projects that are strategic deployments of Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars as described in the ARC-hosted ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund trainings. The intake form will request information that outlines how the request for services will support the deployment of Local Fiscal Recovery Fund monies in a manner that lays the foundation for economic transformation. The awardee will determine allowable requests. During the first three to six months post-launch, ARC will provide final sign off on all credit redemptions and rejections. This timeframe will be determined by the volume of requests received and the awardee's ability to make accurate determinations. Thereafter, the awardee will make determinations independently, and ARC will only review and approve rejections.

Bank credits are redeemable only for allowable services that have occurred between February 21, 2022, and December 31, 2024 (tentative period). This period coincides with the launch of ARC's ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund trainings and ends when local governments are expected to have obligated ARPA funding. The bank of credits is to be disbursed as reimbursements. Advances will be considered on a case-by-case basis only. LDDs redeeming credits will be advised to maintain all invoice documentation per 2 CFR §200 guidance.

Eligible Services

Credits will be redeemable for specific types of services only. The tentative list of services includes community visioning/facilitation, pre-engineering consultation, evaluation/monitoring, federal grant management compliance, and accounting. ARC has deployed a survey to key stakeholders to rank the most important services. The types of services offered may be reduced in order to ease logistics and provide access to the most critical technical assistance resources. Survey results will be shared with the awardee upon contract execution, and a final determination of eligible reimbursable services will be determined in consultation with the awardee.

Credit Allotment

In total, the bank of credits will have 3,633 available credits equaling \$908,250 in reimbursable payments to LDDs. Each LDD will have access to a specific number of credits per county in their jurisdiction.

Of the Appalachian Region's 423 counties, 84 have been designated as particularly hard hit by the shift to clean energy by the federal Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization. These 84 counties have been prioritized by the IWG as requiring additional resources to support economic recovery and revitalization. Each IWG county will be allocated 15 credits and remaining counties within the region will be allotted 7 credits. Each credit is worth \$250 for a total value of \$3,750 and \$1,750 per IWG and non-IWG county, respectively.

Credit Requests

Requests for credits must be submitted by LDDs to the awardee. To access the bank of credits, the requesting LDD will have to attend the first three trainings (i.e., ARPA 101, ARPA Deep Dive, and Case Studies). If the LDD is not found on the registration roll (and noted as

attending), the LDD will be asked to view the recordings and demonstrate learning through a brief knowledge check (quiz). After contract execution, the **awardee must view or attend all ARC-hosted Local Fiscal Recovery Fund virtual trainings and develop the brief knowledge check**. It is anticipated that between January 2022 through May 2022, four trainings lasting approximately 2 hours each will be offered. (Trainings will be recorded and available on demand.) The fifth training will be hosted in the fall of 2022. Viewing the trainings will provide the awardee with a full understanding of ARC's definition of "catalytic/strategic investments" as well as consistent messaging across contracts.

In addition to developing the knowledge check and attending trainings, **the awardee will be responsible for the following:**

- Identifying a method for gathering LDD requests (e.g., application, email, other)
- Developing the intake form (e.g., what specific information should be collected from LDDs when requesting access to credits)
- Verifying that LDDs are eligible to access the bank of credits (e.g., Have they attended an ARC Local Fiscal Recovery Fund training? Are they an LDD that serves Appalachia? Do they have credits left?)
- Verifying that LDDs have an eligible request (e.g., technical assistance services are on the pre-approved list; services support a catalytic investment that is leveraging Local Fiscal Recovery Fund monies; services occur between February 21, 2022, and December 31, 2024 [tentative period])
- Disbursing reimbursements
- Troubleshooting

The intake form will be subject to ARC approval.

There may be LDDs that do not engage in trainings but serve local governments that are interested in receiving access to its credit allotment. In such cases, ARC will work in partnership with the awardee to contact the LDD to encourage engagement. If efforts to engage an LDD prove fruitless, local government may directly contact the awardee to receive access to its allotted credits. Community members (e.g., engaged residents, advocates, non-government staff, etc.) requesting access to credits from ARC will be asked to work through their LDD (or local government if LDD is disengaged). In cases where the LDD is not participating, local governments will be asked to view the first three trainings to be eligible for credits.

The credits available through the bank are limited. Requests from LDDs that have used all available credits but would like to pay for additional services leveraging vendors recommended by the awardee will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis. It is anticipated that such requests will be honored as long as it does not prevent other communities that have yet to redeem their credits from being able to access technical assistance.

The awardee will be tasked with reporting to ARC the types of services being requested by geography, requesting organization, impacted county, etc. **To the extent possible, the awardee will improve credit usage rates among LDDs that are not submitting requests and/or communities that are not being impacted by bank of credit resources.**

General Inquiries

The awardee will be expected to field all inquiries (i.e., provide customer service) related to the bank of credits resource. ARC will provide the awardee with access to an ARC email alias that may be used to field such requests. When necessary, the awardee may follow up with a phone call to discuss more complex inquiries or issues.

Outreach and Additional Technical Assistance

The **awardee will be expected to host two virtual meetings** for LDDs to describe the bank of credit resource, credit allocation, eligible uses, and how to access credits. Content will be the same across both meetings. Meetings will be recorded and posted on a dedicated page on the ARC website. Both meetings are anticipated to last up to one hour and should be able to accommodate up to 250 participants.

If demand for the bank of credits is low, it is expected that the awardee will troubleshoot and conduct outreach to encourage credit redemption among LDDs.

It is possible that LDDs may request credits for projects that do not spur economic revitalization, which would be deemed an ineligible use. If there is a persistent pattern of such requests, the **awardee must be prepared to host up to two additional one-hour virtual meetings**, outlining eligible uses for the bank of credits. These meetings would also be recorded and posted on a dedicated page on the ARC website.

Presentations will be subject to ARC approval.

This pilot seeks to build the capacity of LDDs and local governments in order to transform Appalachian communities economically through catalytic investments of ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund monies. Ideally, ARC seeks a contractor that will be more than a fiscal agent (setting up the bank of credits resource and disbursing reimbursements) and vendor matchmaker (identifying vendor recommendations when LDDs do not have a consultant/vendor selected). An exemplary candidate would also be a trusted, knowledgeable advisor for LDDs (and ultimately, their respective communities). Through deep knowledge of rural economic development, the ideal awardee would be able to support low-resourced communities (via LDDs) to effectively and strategically deploy Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars. **Specifically, the ideal awardee would be able to provide best practices and support to LDDs that are seeking strategic advice in addition to access to their credits. A contractor that can provide such services and/or support would have a notable competitive advantage over other applicants.**

Federal Agency Partnership

ARC is currently in discussions with another federal agency to partner on the development and execution of the bank of credits resource. The scope of work outlined here has been

vetted with said entity. This partnership does not have a material impact on the overall objectives of this contract.

Evaluation and Performance Measurement

A crucial responsibility of the awardee will be the development of a plan to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the bank of credits. The awardee will develop a plan to identify appropriate ARC-approved performance measures and additional indicators that capture the outputs and outcomes resulting from the work.

The following ARC-approved performance measures must be included:

- Organizations served
- Organizations improved
- Communities served
- Communities improved

Organizations will be defined as local development districts; communities will be defined as counties. An organization served is an LDD that uses at least a portion of its credit allotment. A community served is a county that has benefitted from the LDDs use of its credit allotment. The awardee must develop definitions that capture improvement.

The awardee is tasked with designing and deploying survey instruments to gather appropriate information to evaluate the trainings' effectiveness. The awardee may collect data before and after the use of credits by an LDD. Impact measures to be considered can be qualitative or quantitative and may include LDD and local government feedback, implemented processes, and/or other metrics used in similar programs. The awardee should also exercise sensitivity throughout the evaluation process to ensure that program beneficiaries are not overly burdened with data tracking and survey requests.

As outlined earlier in this document, the awardee will be expected to report on credit usage by geography, requesting organization, type of services requested, impacted county, etc. In addition, for cases in which the awardee has provided a vendor recommendation or deployed its own technical assistance providers, the awardee is expected to follow up with LDDs (and/or the local governments served) with a satisfaction form (or other method) to ensure that high-quality services were rendered.

The awardee is not obligated to collect evaluation data after the contract ends.

Through the collection of qualitative data, the awardee will be expected to produce "success story" narratives (1–2 pages in length) that highlight local development districts (and/or local governments ultimately served) that have redeemed credits. Final format and content to be determined in partnership with the awardee. Success stories are to serve as evidence that the program achieved its overall goals and provide additional examples that communities may use to guide the deployment of Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars. It is anticipated that up to five success stories will be identified and showcased.

Program Timeline

The following timeline for deliverables and program components should be considered a general guide, as it will be amended to accommodate input from the awardee as well as decisions and changes made throughout the program’s creation and execution.

2022	
January–May	FYI: ARC-hosted Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Virtual Trainings #1–4 (executed through separate contract)
January 14	Proposal due date.
Week of February 14	Awardee notified.
Week of February 21	Contract begins.
Week of February 21	Awardee hosts kick-off call.
Week of March 7	Draft the workflow process for fielding, managing, and vetting LDD requests.
Week of March 21	Draft the workflow process for deploying credits when LDD appears to be disengaged.
Week of April 4	Draft the workflow process for troubleshooting issues raised by LDDs.
Week of May 16	All workflow processes finalized.
Mid May–June	Test the intake workflow (iron out any technological glitches and/or workflow oversights).
Week of May 30	Develop intake form questions (draft).
<i>Spring/summer</i>	<i>FYI: Second tranche of ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund monies released.</i>
Week of June 13	Finalize intake form questions.
Week of June 27	Draft the presentation outlining purpose of bank of credits, eligibility, how to access credits.
Week of July 4	Launch bank of credits. Host webinar 1. (If needed, may launch bank of credits week of August 1).
Week of July 11	Host webinar 2.
July–December	Awardee fields bank of credits requests. Hold for up to two additional presentations if receiving high number of ineligible requests.
Fall	FYI: ARC-hosted Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Virtual Training #5 (executed through separate contract)
2023	

January–December 31	Awardee fields bank of credits requests.
January–March	Additional outreach to LDDs not using credits.
2024	
January–December 31	Awardee fields bank of credits requests.
January–March	Additional outreach to LDDs not using credits.
2025	
January	Host a presentation highlighting successes, challenges, and impact of the bank of credits.
February	Final evaluation report submitted.
February 28, 2025	Contract ends.

Eligibility and Past Performance

The awardee should be a nonprofit entity, a for-profit entity, or a consortium of entities that offer assistance and consultation to organizations.

The Appalachian Regional Commission is particularly seeking organizations with previous experience in engaging local governments or regional economic development associations; simplifying legislation; and providing administrative support and technical assistance.

The awardee should be diligent, a good communicator, possess excellent management skills, have sufficient capacity, and be committed to supporting rural communities. The awardee should also be resourceful, tech-savvy, and possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

While being physically located within the region is not a requirement, the awardee will have deep experience in working with Appalachia and Appalachian local governments. Connection with and knowledge of Appalachia will be considered critical in the proposal evaluation process.

Communication Expectations

During the initial phase of the work, the awardee will deliver a status briefing to the ARC staffer on a weekly basis to ensure ARC is up to date on deadlines, expectations, decisions, and progress (February 2022–July 2022). Thereafter, the awardee may provide updates every two weeks (August 2022–January 2023). Seven months after the public launch of the bank of credits resource, the awardee and ARC staffer will have a monthly status update until the end of the contract (February 28, 2025).

Dates	Briefing Frequency
February 21, 2022–July 2022	Weekly
August 2022–January 2023	Every two weeks

These status briefings may take the form of virtual meetings and/or digital reports as deemed necessary. Dates listed in the table above are to serve as a general guide and may change as the project is implemented.

The ARC staffer will also receive and review any components of the program designated as subject to ARC approval, and ARC will ensure that review and approval take place in a timely manner.

At the conclusion of the contract, the awardee will provide ARC with a final report and presentation concerning the outcomes of the program. This report will include but is not limited to narrative discussion about the program development process, program impact measures, and quantitative/qualitative outcomes.

Deliverables

The awardee will have the responsibility to design and implement all necessary aspects of the bank of credits component of the “Community Capacity-Building Pilot,” including those not specifically outlined within this document, subject to ARC review. Deliverables expected of the awardee include the following:

1. Regularly communicating with ARC staff.
2. Writing interim reports.
3. Developing brief knowledge check (quiz) based on content of the first three ARC-hosted ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund trainings.
4. Identifying a method for gathering LDD requests (e.g., application, email, other), setting it up and developing the intake form (e.g., what specific information should be collected from LDDs when requesting access to credits)
5. Creating workflow process for fielding, vetting, and managing bank of credits requests and related troubleshooting.
6. Disbursing reimbursements for eligible requests (including verification of eligibility) and providing all related customer service for the bank of credits resource.
7. Deploying technical assistance providers from its own network or researching vendor recommendations when LDDs do not have a desired vendor selected at the time of credit redemption.
8. Developing general outreach plan and publicizing availability of the resource.
9. Developing and deploying two presentations to educate LDDs on the availability of the bank of credits resource, eligible uses, and how to access their credit allotment.
10. Designing and executing a monitoring and evaluation plan.
11. Reporting on credit usage by geography, requesting organization, type of services requested, impacted county, etc.
12. Conducting follow-up (satisfaction form) when recommending or deploying a specific

technical assistance provider to ensure that high-quality services were rendered.

13. Improving credit usage rates among LDDs that are not submitting requests and/or communities that are not being impacted by bank of credit resources.
14. Potentially developing and deploying up to two additional presentations if receiving a high volume of ineligible requests for the bank of credits.
15. Producing a final report and presentation at the close of contract that summarizes the project's impact.

Responsibilities

The awardee will operate as head of project management under the review of an ARC staffer. Specific roles for the awardee may include the following:

1. Project management
2. Program design
3. Content development
4. Expertise identification
5. Subcontracting
6. Program evaluation
7. Communication with ARC staff
8. Other responsibilities as needed

ARC will approve decisions and recommendations from the awardee and will submit recommendations on behalf of its stakeholders to the awardee. ARC will designate an ARC staffer to oversee the Commission's responsibilities in the program and to serve as a point of contact for the awardee. Specific roles for ARC may include the following:

1. Design input and content review and approval
2. Publicity and dissemination of the overall program
3. Dissemination of companion resources to regional and national stakeholders
4. Feedback and requests on implementation
5. Communication with ARC stakeholders
6. Other assistance as needed

Proposal Formatting and Submission

Proposal Format

The proposal narrative ("Narrative Section" and "Management Section") should not exceed 15 pages, **not** including the work plan, staff plan, and resumes. Clearly label all application attachments.

A. Narrative Section

This section should inform ARC of how the applicant intends to approach the scope of work. Please provide responses to the following questions:

1. Describe how you will gather, fulfill, and manage LDD requests related to accessing the bank of credits. Please be specific, including describing workflow from start to finish, processes, and/or technology that will be used to ensure requests are responded to in a timely manner. (See the section titled [Scope of Work](#) for guidance.) What expectations will you set regarding turnaround time to review and issue payment once a request has been submitted?
2. Please describe the key pieces of information that should be collected through the intake form and why.
3. How will your organization support LDDs that are seeking to access their credit allotment but do not have a vendor already selected? (See the section titled [Structure](#) for additional guidance.)
4. Please describe your overall outreach strategy for the bank of credits resource, and what tactics will be employed to improve usage rates among disengaged LDDs.
5. Beyond the administrative support of setting up the bank of credits and disbursing reimbursements, what additional value (e.g., specific resources, services, or activities) can your organization provide to help Appalachian counties (via LDDs) effectively use Local Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars to economically transform their communities? (See the section titled [Outreach and Additional Technical Assistance](#) for additional information.)
6. How would your organization handle a complaint from the field regarding services rendered by a technical assistance provider that your organization recommended?
7. How do you plan on monitoring and evaluating the program's success? What pre- and/or post-program data collection methods will you use? What measures will be tracked? In addition to your selected indicators, please also incorporate a few applicable measures from ARC's Performance Measure guidance: <https://www.arc.gov/resource/guide-to-arc-project-performance-measures/> (See the section titled [Evaluation and Performance Measurement](#) for guidance.)
8. Please prepare and submit a work plan for the proposed scope of work, including briefings, key deliverables (including preliminary drafts for review), interim and final reports, and program evaluation against an anticipated timeline.

B. Management Section

This section should inform ARC about the organization's capacity to carry out the program. Components should include the following:

1. Brief description of organization(s) and any proposed subcontractor(s).
2. Relevant experience in the Appalachian Region, particularly providing technical assistance and administrative support, working with local governments, working with local development districts, and/or managing technical assistance.

3. Brief description of the qualifications of the personnel performing the work, including professional classifications (e.g., project director, meeting facilitator, analyst, business consultant, writer, etc.). The proposal should identify the relationship of key project personnel to the applicant, including consultants and subcontractors. Please attach brief resumes of the education and relevant experience of key personnel. The awardee will be required to furnish the services of those identified in the proposal as key personnel. Any change in key personnel is subject to approval by ARC.
4. A staffing plan that describes proposed staff distribution to accomplish this work, including a time commitment and proposed activities of each professional staff member to the project's tasks and schedule.
5. A brief description and references relating to the three most similar projects undertaken by the applicant (and subcontractor if applicable), including names and contact information for reference.
6. Any unique requirements that your organization would like included in the contract.

C. Cost Section

The contract awarded for this project will be a **firm fixed-price contract**, with the potential opportunity for extension depending upon program success and stakeholder demand. ARC is requesting that interested parties submit a reasonable budget that captures costs necessary to successfully execute the requested scope of work during the contract period. The budget should include the \$908,250 in reimbursable payments that will be made to LDDs. Payments shall be made at a frequency to be determined in partnership with the awardee at the time of contract execution. (It is estimated that payments will be disbursed either every month or every two months.) The contract terms shall remain firm during the project and shall include all charges that may be incurred in fulfilling the terms of the contract.

Proposals must include a budget narrative. The budget narrative details an estimate for all work in the proposal, as well as hourly and daily rates of all relevant staff members. See the section titled Scope of Work to ensure that all appropriate expenses are included in the cost proposal.

Note that ARC policy on allowable indirect overhead costs for university-based contracts is to permit universities to charge the same rates charged to their own state agencies.

The budget narrative should be presented in a table and itemized costs organized by the following categories: personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, and other. The budget narrative should reflect the following:

- The activity/expense (e.g., project manager),
- How the cost was calculated (e.g., x hours at \$x/hour), and

- Total cost for that line item (e.g., \$xxx).

Budget Narrative Excerpted Example

BANK OF CREDITS		
Personnel		\$XXX (subtotal of personnel costs)
Project Manager	Oversee development of bank of credit resource X hours at \$X/hour (or FTE)	\$XXX
Senior Analyst	Develop knowledge check, presentation content, and bank of credit workflow processes), X hours at \$XX/hours (or FTE)	\$XXX
Supplies		\$XXX (subtotal of supplies costs)
Software	Virtual meeting platform – 3-year subscription @ \$X per year. Application to accept bank of credit requests	\$XXX
.....
Total		\$XXX (total cost of scope of work)

D. Required Forms

Please complete and submit the standard forms (SF) for non-construction applications (SF 424, SF 424A, and SF 424B) with your proposal as well as the ARC Memorandum of Understanding. These forms are found on arc.gov at <https://www.arc.gov/resource/standard-forms-for-non-construction-applications/> and <https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ARCMOU.pdf>.

Please ensure that budget information reported on the SF 424A matches numbers reported on the budget narrative referenced in “C. Cost Section.”

Submission Process

Proposals are due on or before 5 PM EDT, January 14, 2022. Please send proposals as one Word or PDF file to ARPACredits@arc.gov.

Additional requirements for submission:

- 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.
- Requests for time extensions past any deadlines will **not** be considered.

It is anticipated that the awardee will be notified by **February 16, 2022**, for an estimated contract start date of **February 21, 2022**, and completion date of **February 28, 2025**.

Applicants are asked to remain flexible during the **week of February 7, 2022**, for a potential interview. The selected contractor should be poised to complete all necessary forms the **week of February 14, 2022**, to ensure timely execution of the contractual agreement.

Proposal Evaluation

ARC will select a contractor through a competitive process based on the following criteria, in no particular order:

- Strength and thoroughness of suggested approach for setting up and managing the bank of credits resource
- Additional value that can be provided beyond the administrative support of setting up the bank of credits resource, disbursing reimbursements, and (when needed) providing vendor recommendations
- A credible management proposal for staffing, detailed workplan, and the organizational capacity to launch and execute the program on a fast-paced timeline
- Relevant experience with managing similar technical assistance or support programs
- Relevant experience in the Appalachian Region, particularly assisting local governments and working with local development districts to accomplish economic development-related goals
- Program evaluation approach
- Cost effectiveness of the proposal