Ready Appalachia:
A Community Capacity-Building Initiative

Ready LDDs—Request for Proposals

This request for proposals (RFP) provides an overview of the READY LDDs component of the **READY Appalachia: A Community Capacity-Building Initiative** and provides guidelines for the completion of a funding application.

RFP release date	October 11, 2022
Grant proposals due	Rolling deadline. Notify your ARC State Program Manager before applying.
Awards announced	Rolling basis

Applications will be accepted from October 11, 2022 onwards. Complete applications will be reviewed and awards will be announced on a rolling basis. However, the review of complete applications will be prioritized on a quarterly basis as funds remain available.

Questions can be emailed to Bettina Jones, ARC's Program Analyst for Community Capacity, at ready@arc.gov.

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Appalachian Regional Commission Overview

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC, the 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 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 serves a 206,000-square-mile region of 26 million people that includes all of West Virginia and parts of twelve other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

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. **Building Appalachian Businesses**: Strengthen and diversify the region's economy through inclusive economic development strategies and investments in entrepreneurship and business development.
2. **Building Appalachia's Workforce Ecosystem**: 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. **Building Appalachia's Infrastructure**: Ensure that the residents and businesses of Appalachia have access to reliable, affordable, resilient, and energy-efficient utilities and infrastructure in order to successfully live and work in the region.
4. **Building Regional Culture and Tourism**: Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the Region's local cultural heritage and natural assets.
5. **Building Community Leaders and Capacity**: 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.

READY Appalachia: A Community Capacity-Building Initiative

Over the past two years, unprecedented amounts of federal funding have been, and continue to be, allocated to American communities, including those in Appalachia. Through the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Congress allocated $1 billion over the next five years for ARC investments. Outside of ARC's allocation, the IIJA includes $549 billion in new funds for infrastructure development across the country. This amount is in addition to the American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA SLFRF), where $350 billion is flexible and apportioned to states, territories, and tribal and local governments to support recovery and response related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This federal investment has the potential to be transformative, particularly in Appalachia, which historically has seen less investment in infrastructure, business development, and other areas due to having, on average, lower incomes, less robust markets, and smaller tax bases than many other parts of the country. It is envisioned that these investments will help communities make transformational changes to their economies, helping them to address their longstanding socioeconomic challenges.

ARC first invested in a small pilot program to help Appalachian local governments and local development districts (LDDs) learn and share best practices and information needed to strategically deploy APRA SLFRF funding in ways that spark long-lasting economic change. This program, which concluded in September 2022, consisted of five two-part virtual trainings and created virtual communities of practice for LDDs to share best practices and gain support from experts as they help communities leverage and manage ARPA local fiscal recovery funds. A lesson learned from the pilot program is the persistent need among LDDs and local governments for technical assistance and programs of a similar nature.

In response, ARC allocated $10 million in 2022 to provide Appalachian communities with additional technical assistance and funding that would enable them to take full advantage of IIJA and ARPA funds, as well as other federal funding sources. An additional $605,000 has been added to the program from other sources, including the ARC Federal Co-Chair's fund and the Environmental Protection Agency. This initiative is titled "READY Appalachia: A Community Capacity-Building Initiative."

READY Appalachia: A Community Capacity-Building Initiative provides direct technical assistance and funding to support four key pillars of economic development in the region: Appalachian local governments, LDDs, nonprofit organizations, and community foundations. The program will help these organizations as they apply for and manage federal awards. It will also provide instruction in the critical skills of planning, organizational development, and effective programming. This program is modeled after the highly successful Appalachia Nonprofit Resource Center, developed by ARC in 2020. READY Appalachia is informed directly by needs at the local level, and involves both high-quality, actionable training and flexible funding to be used for needs identified within those trainings. Recognizing the critical role LDDs are playing and will continue to play related to economic development in Appalachian communities, READY Appalachia is launching READY LDDs, the topic of this RFP, which offers direct financial support for LDD staffing and contracting related to helping communities manage ARPA, IIJA, and other federal funds. An additional and equally important purpose of this grant opportunity is to address historic inequities for marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities.

Program Purpose

The purpose of READY Appalachia: A Community Capacity-Building Initiative is to assist Appalachian communities—particularly those that are underserved—identify, plan, and implement transformational and long-needed projects utilizing the wide range of newly available federal funding sources. It also aims to make the key community pillars, upon which ARC relies to implement its vision, more sustainable and effective over time.

One pillar is the Region's LDDs. They are the primary organizations working in regional economic development in rural communities. The purpose of the READY LDDs portion of READY Appalachia is to strengthen the ability of Appalachia's LDDs to help constituent communities design and implement truly impactful projects utilizing federal and other types of funds.

Program Objectives

1. To offer targeted financial support to LDDs as they manage an unprecedented amount of project workload, thereby increasing LDD resilience and impact over time. This will enable the provision of higher quality services to communities, thus making both the projects and the increased federal funding more impactful in the long run.
2. To help LDDs assist communities identify federal opportunities, and then to plan, implement, and leverage federally-funded projects for community transformation.
3. To provide financial support specifically to LDDs serving distressed areas; Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities priority communities; smaller, under-resourced, and difficult to reach populations and organizations; and historically marginalized populations.

Program Components

Awards

ARC is making available $2 million to Appalachian LDDs for awards of up to $100,000 per selected LDD for this round of the program, which begins in 2022. The Commission will accept applications on a rolling basis. However, the review of complete applications will be prioritized on a quarterly basis as funds remain available. The grant application reviews will be prioritized based on the following submittal schedule: first round, second round, and so on until all the funds are allocated. The first cycle will close on December 31, 2022; the second cycle will close on March 31, 2023; the third cycle will close on June 30, 2023, and so on until all the funds are allocated. An LDD that is not selected during one cycle may reapply in a following cycle. ARC envisions funding at least 20 LDDs in the Appalachian Region. The awards must be expended within 24 months (two years) of the beginning of the grant period. This federal financial assistance is subject to the cost principles and grant management elements of Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200 (2 CFR §200), "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards."

Eligible Uses

The funds must be utilized for either personnel or contracting costs directly related to helping constituent communities develop projects for, and implement funds from, the American Rescue Plan Act, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or other federal funding streams. In general, these dollars are intended to be used for personnel and contractor costs. An LDD should consult ARC staff prior to applying if it wishes to use funds for a purpose other than personnel and contractors. Use for construction is not allowed.

Eligible Recipients

This program is specifically for LDDs. Special consideration will be given to LDDs serving [distressed areas](); Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities [priority communities](); smaller, under-resourced, and difficult to reach populations and organizations; and historically marginalized populations.

Application Selection

Applications will be reviewed and approved by an internal ARC panel on a rolling basis until all funds are expended. There is no deadline for application, but applications will be reviewed and funds will be allocated as applications come in on a quarterly basis until the funds are allocated. The first cycle will close on December 31, 2022; the second cycle will close on March 31, 2023; the third cycle will close on June 30, 2023, and so on until all the funds are allocated. An LDD that is not selected during one cycle may reapply in a following cycle. Therefore, although the deadline is rolling, interested LDDs should apply expeditiously. The total funding for the first year of the program is $2 million. ARC will attempt to achieve geographic diversity across the selected LDDs. Special consideration will be given to LDDs serving [distressed areas](); Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities [priority communities](); smaller, under-resourced, and difficult to reach populations and organizations; and historically marginalized populations.

READY LDD grant awards will be allocated at ARC's sole discretion, which takes into account funding availability and policy priorities.

Application Instructions

Interested LDDs should email one PDF document to Bettina Jones, READY Program Analyst, at **READY@arc.gov**. The PDF should respond to each of the questions or requests for documentation contained in the application checklist. **The checklist is found at the end of this document in the section titled "Application Instructions—Checklist."** A complete application, including the narrative, required forms, and attachments, should not exceed 28 pages. The Narrative section (section II of the Checklist) should not exceed 20 pages. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis throughout the remainder of 2022 and into 2023 on a quarterly basis until all funds are expended, as mentioned above.

ARC State Program Manager Contact

Applicants must inform their State Program Manager of their intent of apply for this funding opportunity. Applicants must then attest to ARC of having informed their State Program Manager of their intent to apply.

Cost-Sharing and Match

In keeping with the spirit of the overall READY Appalachia program, no match is required for READY LDD grants, although grantees are welcome to provide any match they can to the project and to include this match on Standard Form 424 (SF-424). However, providing cost-sharing will not make an application more competitive for this funding opportunity, nor will not providing it make an organization less competitive. ARC may enter into cooperative agreements with eligible entities in lieu of awarding grants when, at its sole discretion, ARC finds that such mechanism is a better vehicle to advance policy goals and priorities.

Eligible Uses for Funds

The awards are intended to be utilized exclusively for additional staffing or staff hours, fringe benefits, and/or contracting at the LDD to manage their recently increased workloads. The persons hired should spend all their work time on direct costs associated with supporting communities to apply for and manage grants, both from ARC and from other sources. Uses other than personnel, fringe benefits, and contracting must be discussed with Bettina Jones, READY Program Analyst, before the LDD applies for funding.

Ineligible Uses for Funds

These dollars are intended for use for personnel and contractor costs. An LDD should consult with Bettina Jones, READY Program Analyst, prior to applying if it wishes to use funds for a purpose other than personnel and contractors. Use for construction is not allowed.

Indirect Costs

Applicants are encouraged to consider indirect costs in their budget formulation. Indirect costs are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. While indirect costs are allowable under the READY LDDs program, it should be emphasized that the primary budgetary items for projects responding to this RFP should be personnel, fringe benefits, and contracting costs.

Entities with a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) must explain in the grant application how the indirect costs are calculated. Organizations that do not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate as provided in 2 CFR §200 may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10% based on the modified total direct cost. Applicants are encouraged to become familiar with the cost principles set forth in 2 CFR §200, Subpart E, available at https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E?toc=1

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

As required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 and 2 CFR §200, Appendix I, applicants are required to meet the following criteria:

- Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting their application (sam.gov);
- Provide a valid Unique Entity ID (UEI) in their application; and
- Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency.

Funding Restrictions

READY LDDs Fiscal Year 2022 grant awards funded in part or in whole with ARC program funds are subject to the same program funding restrictions of other ARC grants. Additional program information is available at https://www.arc.gov/ready/.

Award Administration

General

Administration of ARC awards is subject to the same regulations, restrictions, and requirements as other federal awards. These include but are not limited to "Uniform

[Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards"](#) [at 2 CFR §200,](#) as currently updated; Freedom of Information Act (FOIA); past performance and non-compliance; restrictions on making awards to corporations convicted of felony criminal violations and unpaid federal tax liabilities; environmental and historic preservation; and national policy requirements, including but not limited to those protecting free speech, religious liberty, public welfare, the environment, and prohibiting discrimination, e.g., Equal Employment Opportunity and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

ARC reserves the right to change the reporting time periods and, depending on the nature of the project, may request additional relevant data. In addition, ARC requires grantees to cooperate with post-award evaluations, which require maintaining records for at least three years after project closeout. All ARC awards are subject to audit.

If your organization has been subject to a federal audit within the past five years, please note within your application the recommendations made and your subsequent responses to those recommendations.

Non-Construction
General management and administration requirements for non-construction projects are contained in the *[ARC Grant Administration Manual for Non-Construction Grant Agreements.](#)*

General Legal Disclosures

READY LDDs awards will be made only to the extent that funds are available. Publication of this RFP does not obligate ARC to award any specific grant or cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds. Applicants intending to contract with a specific individual, consulting group, or organization with ARC funding must have and use a competitive procurement policy that conforms to procurement standards at 2 CFR §200.317–327.

This RFP does not commit ARC to make any specific award. Notwithstanding any other provisions of the RFP, ARC reserves the right to award grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts to LDDs that best meet the requirements of the RFP. ARC solely reserves the right to accept or reject any or all responses received as a result of this request; to negotiate with all qualified sources; or to cancel in part or in its entirety this RFP if it is in the interests of ARC to do so.

Please note that ARC will not reimburse any other costs associated with the preparation of a response to this RFP. Consultants and consultant teams that are legally barred from receiving federal contracts or contract payments will not be considered for work with communities or regions under this RFP.

Application Instructions—Checklist

Please submit one (1) PDF document to Bettina Jones, READY Program Analyst, at READY@arc.gov. The PDF should contain each of the following elements in order. The full PDF document, including forms, should not exceed 28 pages.

Cost/Administrative Section

Please attach the required application forms at the front of the PDF:

1. Federal Standard Form 424: Application for Federal Assistance (include ARC funds and any matching funds [match is not required]);
2. Federal Standard Form 424A: Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs;
3. A budget narrative (meaning an Excel document that provides a line-item detail budget);
4. Federal Standard Form 424B: Assurances for Non-Construction Programs; and
5. An ARC Memorandum of Understanding.

Narrative Section (not to exceed 20 pages)

Please provide answers to each of the following questions. Copy and paste the questions into a new document and supply your answer after each question.

1. Please provide a brief description of your LDD's capacity and experience. Include budget, list of significant funding sources, staff size, experience managing high-dollar federal awards, and process and approach to providing technical assistance to communities. **(4 points)**
2. Please attach resumés of key staff who will provide technical assistance to communities or who will manage the grant and the LDD's executive leadership. (Ensure that personal identifiable information is omitted, for example, phone numbers, email addresses, and physical addresses). For each person, describe their role in the project. If you will use funds for staff or contractors yet to be hired, then provide a job description or set of criteria that you will utilize for procuring the contractor. **(4 points)**
3. Please consult the attached list of Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Coal and Power Plant Communities. Explain how and to what extent you serve these communities. If you do not serve these communities, highlight the level of economic distress in the communities you do serve. Provide data to support your claim of distress if you are not serving IWG-targeted communities. **(9 points)**
4. Please describe the profile of governments and nonprofits you serve, and by extension, the constituents served by them. Highlight any capacity limitations faced by these organizations, poverty of their constituents, and the extent to which populations have been historically underserved. "Underserved" may include, but is not limited to: distressed areas; Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities priority communities; smaller, under-resourced, and difficult to reach populations and organizations; and historically marginalized populations. **(10 points)**
5. Are there communities or populations in your service area with which you have traditionally engaged less? Or are there historically underserved communities or populations that you already work with but would like to enhance or scale that programming? If so, what is that existing programming? How would you utilize this grant to reach these groups you have not yet worked with or with whom you would like to expand your engagement? **(4 points)**

6. Please describe the needs of or challenges faced by the local governments and nonprofit organizations you serve in supporting local economic development, and how your LDD works to address those needs. Then, describe your LDD's support of local governments and nonprofit organizations more recently, related to applying for and managing federal awards. **(5 points)**
7. What is your LDD's specific need related to staffing and/or contractual services related to ARPA, IIJA, and other federal funding, and how will you use your grant to address this/these need(s)? How will you leverage existing or new partnerships and other funding sources with this requested funding? **(8 points)**
8. What are the performance metrics you will utilize to evaluate the impact of the requested funding? All projects must measure the number of additional communities served and improved, provide and utilize the methodology for determining this improvement, and any additional measures you deem appropriate. For example, organizations served and improved, communities served and improved. Please consult ARC's performance measurement guidance to help you answer this question. **(4 points)**
9. Have you notified your state's ARC State Program Manager that you are applying for this opportunity? Please answer Yes or No. **Note: You are required to do this prior to applying. (0 points)**

Total: 48 points