



Healthcare Access Projects

This document provides specific guidance for **healthcare access projects**. Applications may involve multiple activities as part of a single project; ARC encourages applicants to review the specific guidance for each type of activity included in an application.

All application guidance is grounded in the goals and principles of ARC's current strategic plan, which emphasize strategic focus, collaboration, sustainability, and measurable impact in ARC investments.

ARC investment in healthcare access projects helps Appalachian communities improve the availability of affordable, high-quality healthcare services to residents, particularly those in Health Professional Shortage Areas and areas with significant health disparities.

ARC-supported projects typically focus on developing the physical infrastructure, workforce, and organizational capacity needed to establish sustainable healthcare enterprises. ARC generally categorizes these activities under Goal 2 of its strategic plan; however, other goals may be relevant.

Examples of eligible healthcare access projects include, but are not limited to:

- Constructing or renovating clinic facilities, including procuring high-tech equipment for medical and dental screenings and services, and for education and training purposes
- Establishing rural medical residency training sites
- Performing recruiting and retention efforts aimed at nurses, dentists, counselors, or community health workers
- Implementing telehealth technology to provide mental healthcare services
- Providing business technical assistance for healthcare enterprises
- Conducting training for professionals and paraprofessionals working in the prevention and treatment of opioid (and other substances) use disorders

Basic Agencies (for Construction Projects Only)

ARC does not administer any construction projects, including those related to healthcare access projects. ARC operates in partnership with federal and state agencies under an MOU to manage federal construction grants throughout the region.

It is the applicant's responsibility to secure a letter from the appropriate federal or state agency, known as a basic agency letter, indicating their willingness to administer ARC funds for any proposed infrastructure project. A list of eligible basic agencies can be found at <https://www.arc.gov/basic-agency-partners/>.

Once an ARC construction grant is approved, grantees are encouraged to reach out directly to their basic agency to develop an implementation plan and schedule.

Key Principles of ARC Healthcare Access Investments

As outlined in ARC's strategic plan, activities should be strategic, collaborative, sustainable, and impactful.

Strategic:

- Applicants should consider how proposed projects align with local and regional healthcare plans, such as community health needs assessments.
- Project proposals should indicate a strong familiarity with data on local health factors and health outcomes and offer a prioritized response to the community's most urgent health needs.
- Project design should reflect awareness of the links between community health and economic development opportunity. For example, projects could locate new

More Information

For general guidance on how to develop a complete and competitive application for ARC project funding, all applicants should refer to the application framework and instructions detailed in the [Checklist for ARC Non-Construction Project Applications](#) form or the [Checklist for ARC Construction Project Applications](#) form, as appropriate, available in the applicant resources section of our website.

Applicants should also consult their ARC State Program Manager*, their state's Appalachian Development Plan* and Annual Strategy Statement* for additional information.

*This information can be found [HERE](#) by navigating to the page and clicking on the appropriate state link.

healthcare enterprises in walkable downtown areas or propose ways to link healthcare services to schools or farmers markets.

Collaborative:

- Applicants should assess how existing programs (public, private, or nonprofit) are responding to high-priority health issues identified in the proposal and describe how the proposed project fills a gap. They should also consider mutually beneficial ways to work with these potential partners without duplicating services.

Sustainable:

- Projects should be designed to become self-sustaining after the ARC grant period has closed. Applicants need to consider how the project would continue to deliver services after ARC funds are used and address other factors that could affect sustainability.
- Applicants should assess whether ARC investment in the project could effectively leverage more substantial resources from state or federal programs, private foundations, or public and private health insurance payers.

Impactful:

- All project proposals should include substantial performance targets. When considering targets, applicants should also consider the impacts that proposed healthcare access activities can have in terms of employability, job creation, capacity building, and business enterprise.
- Applicants should refer to the Guide to ARC's Performance Measures for information on determining appropriate project measures. Typical outcome measures for healthcare access projects include workers/trainees with improvements (e.g., certifications); students with improvements (e.g., academic degrees or job placements); patients with improvements; jobs created or retained; and leveraged private investment.
- For measurement purposes, individuals served (project output) and individuals improved (project outcome) by a clinical provider of some kind (doctor, dentist, therapist, nurse, PA, etc.) should be counted as "patients." For projects that do not provide clinical services (such as health promotion events), the measure "participants served" (project output) and "participants improved" (project outcome) should be used. And for projects that include education or workforce training related to healthcare access, the measure "workers/trainees served" (project output) and "workers/trainees improved" (project outcome) should be used. Some projects may include more than one of these measures.
- As an economic development organization, ARC does not require grantees to track clinical measures; however, these measures can be powerful indicators of program impact, and grantees who are able to include them in the performance measurement framework are encouraged to do so.

Other Considerations

- ARC will consider funding workforce support services as part of any healthcare access project that focuses on workforce development. Proposals to provide services of this type, however, will be scrutinized as to how the project supports ARC's economic development mission, and on performance targeting strength and program sustainability.
- Projects focused on healthcare workforce development in academic settings (such as universities or community colleges) should also consider ARC performance measurement guidance for education and workforce training programs.

Helpful Resources

- ARC's Current Strategic Plan <https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Appalachia-Envisioned-ARC-Strategic-Plan-FY-2022-2026.pdf>
- ARC Applicant Resources <https://www.arc.gov/applicant-resources/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website: [Data and Statistics](#) (county-level data on health conditions)
- Rural Health Information Hub (RHInfo) Website: www.ruralhealthinfo.org (includes data and toolkits useful in the development and implementation of programs and services in rural communities)