

# READY

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

### Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) 2024 Training Program PROGRAM GUIDELINES

#### Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	2
2.0	General Program Information .....	2
2.1	Appalachian Regional Commission Overview.....	2
2.2	Program Description.....	3
2.3	Program Eligibility   Who Can Apply.....	3
2.4	Target Groups.....	4
2.5	Program Participation   Requirements.....	4
3.0	Course Curriculum   Overview.....	5
3.1	Number of Courses .....	5
3.2	Program Curriculum .....	5
3.3	Cohorts.....	6
3.4	Go Get That Grant!.....	7
3.5	Post-Course Follow-up .....	7
3.6	Grant Program Parameters.....	7
3.7	Course Evaluations.....	8
4.0	Preparing and Submitting the Application.....	8
4.1	How to Apply—Webinar .....	8
4.2	Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) Portal .....	8
4.3	Timeline   Schedule.....	8
4.4	How to Apply.....	9
5.0	Review and Selection Process.....	9
5.1	Assessment Criteria .....	9
5.2	Review and Selection Process .....	9
5.3	Award Notices.....	9
6.0	Support Center.....	9
6.1	Computer Requirements.....	9
6.2	Troubleshooting   Contact Us:.....	10

## 1.0 Introduction

The ***READY Appalachia - Local Governments*** training program is designed to help local governments in the Appalachian Region better apply for, manage, leverage, and implement federally funded projects to invest in infrastructure, business and workforce development, and other long-term solutions to improve the lives of residents. Participants will engage in nine (9) weeks of virtual cohort-based learning and skill development related to federal grants. The end goal of the training is to increase local government capacity to solve pressing issues and create positive economic change. Special emphasis will be placed on serving Appalachia's most underrepresented communities, including [economically distressed areas](#), [counties targeted by the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities](#), [Rural Partners Network Community Networks](#), and marginalized populations. This program will provide live web-based instruction that will teach participants critical pre- and post-award federal grant skills, as well as the skills of planning and community engagement related to economic development, infrastructure, business and workforce development, and other long-term solutions to improve the lives of residents in the Appalachian Region. Upon successful completion of this training program, eligible participants can apply for a grant of up to \$50,000 per local government, with optional match commitment, provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

## 2.0 General Program Information

### 2.1 Appalachian Regional Commission Overview

The **Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC or the Commission)** is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal and state governments 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 state's co-chair. ARC serves a 206,000-square-mile region of 26 million people that 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.

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; 2. Building Appalachia's Workforce Ecosystem; 3. Building Appalachia's Infrastructure; 4. Building Regional Culture and Tourism; and 5. Building Community Leaders and Capacity.

Annually, ARC provides funding for approximately 700 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](http://www.arc.gov).

“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, local development districts (LDDs), nonprofit organizations, and community foundations.

## 2.2 Program Description

The [READY Appalachia - Local Governments](#) program is made up of two parts:

- **Part 1:** The first part is a training program wherein participants learn and improve their skills in all matters related to the full life cycle of federal financial assistance (pre- and post-award federal grant skills). The training also provides instruction in the critical skills of planning and community engagement related to economic development projects. The training element of the program thus focuses on providing high-quality, actionable skill development for local government staff and elected officials.
- **Part 2:** The second part is an ARC grant program in which participants will apply lessons learned in Part 1 by going through the complete life cycle of a grant award made by ARC. This grant award, up to \$50,000 for each local government whose representatives successfully complete Part 1, will be a capacity-building grant for the local government itself with optional match commitment, which can focus on a need identified during the training component. A separate application process will be published for the grant portion of the program for training program alumni. Only local governments whose representatives successfully complete the training program are eligible to apply for the grant program.

## 2.3 Program Eligibility | Who Can Apply

Before beginning the application process for the training program, make sure your local government is eligible.

**Eligible Participants:** An eligible “local government” for the purposes of this program means a borough, city, county, municipality, parish, town, township, or federally recognized Indian tribe in the [423-county Appalachian region](#).

Municipalities serving the following groups and areas are encouraged to apply:

- [Distressed areas and census tracts](#)
- Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities [priority communities](#)
- Rural Partners Network [Community Networks](#)
- Historically underserved and marginalized populations

Please see Target Groups in [Section 2.4](#) for more details.

**Ineligible Participants:** The following entities are **not** eligible to participate in the READY Appalachia—Local Governments program: local public authorities (including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937); special districts; school districts; intrastate districts; councils of governments (such as local development districts), whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under state law; and any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-state, regional, or intra-state government.

The entity types listed in this section have the same meaning as they do for federal grant regulations (called the “Uniform Guidance”). See [2 CFR §200.1 “Local government.”](#)

If you have any questions about your eligibility, please contact the GrantWorks application support center. (See [Section 6.2.](#))

## 2.4 Target Groups

Special consideration will be given to municipalities serving the following communities:

- [Distressed areas and census tracts](#)
- Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities [priority communities](#)
- Rural Partners Network [Community Networks](#)
- Historically underserved and marginalized populations, such as:
  - Black, Latino, Indigenous and other persons of color (BIPOC)
  - Persons with disabilities
  - LGBTQIA persons
  - Low-income persons
  - Economically at-risk persons
  - Persons with low educational attainment
  - Low-capacity government entities within the local government’s jurisdiction
  - Any other historically underserved and marginalized populations and/or places

## 2.5 Program Participation | Requirements

The [READY Appalachia - Local Governments](#) training program is available to two participants from up to 90 local governments, or 180 total participants. One of the two participants must be the highest-ranking political or administrative local government official (e.g., mayor, city council president, city manager, county manager or county executive, and similar individuals). The second participant can be a local government political representative, staff member or other relevant individual, chosen by the applying local government.

**ARC strongly encourages participation of staff and/or political representatives involved in grant application and grant management on behalf of the municipality to derive the most value out of the training program.** Members of federally-recognized tribal governments are also eligible to participate. At least one of the two local government participants must attend at least eight (8) of the nine (9) sessions with the **highest-ranking official participating in at least five (5) of the nine (9) sessions**. Similarly, the highest-ranking official must attend at least half of the one-to-one sessions with the instructor, and at least one municipality representative must attend all of them. **However, ARC strongly encourages both participants to attend all classes and one-to-one sessions to derive the most value out of the program.**

Eligibility for the grant program will depend on both participants’ attendance per these requirements at training program activities. Each of the 90 participating local governments whose representatives successfully complete the 9-week training program and meet the attendance requirements will be eligible to apply for a financial award of up to \$50,000 from ARC for a capacity building project. The local governments will not be competing for the

same grant monies. ARC is, however, not obligated to make grants to any of the 90 local governments selected. ARC reserves the right to fund or not fund the projects of its choosing, and municipalities are not guaranteed approval of any application.

## 3.0 Course Curriculum | Overview

### 3.1 Number of Courses

The program consists of a nine-week course that is entirely virtual and that will train participants to navigate the full federal grant cycle, from project development and application through implementation and closeout. Cohorts (see 3.3) will attend one three-hour training session per week comprised of instruction, interactive courses, cohort interaction, homework, and one-on-one consultations tailored to the specific needs of each participating municipality.

WEEK	TIME COMMITMENT	ACTIVITY
1	3 hours in cohort	Course 1
2	3 hours in cohort 1 hour personalized coaching	Course 2 one-to-one
3	3 hours in cohort	Course 3
4	3 hours in cohort 1 hour personalized coaching	Course 4 one-to-one
5	3 hours in cohort	Course 5
6	3 hours in cohort 1 hour personalized coaching	Course 6 one-to-one
7	3 hours in cohort	Course 7
8	3 hours in cohort 1 hour personalized coaching	Course 8 one-to-one
9	3 hours in cohort	Course 9

There will be three opportunities for weekly course instruction on either Tuesday or Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (EST) or Wednesday from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (EST). Applicants can rank their preferred days and times of these time slots and once confirmed, days and times will remain the same for the duration of the nine-week course. (See application for more details.)

### 3.2 Program Curriculum

Course 1 - Project Identification and Selection

- Grants 101
- Building a compelling project

Course 2 - Project Development and Connecting to Funding

- Research funding opportunities
- Understanding federal agencies
- Identifying appropriate matching sources
- Eligibility determination
- Framing a project

#### Course 3 - Grant Application Development

- The basics of a grant application package
- Framing the grant application narrative
- Basic grant-writing principles

#### Course 4 - Effective Community Engagement

- Community engagement
- Getting community buy-in
- Communications plans
- Ongoing strategies

#### Course 5 - Grant Management

- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 2, Part 200 (2 CFR §200)
- Federal grant management and audit requirements

#### Course 6 - Financial Management

- Managing and reporting on the funding
- Audit requirements
- Reimbursement of funds

#### Course 7 - Project Management and Implementation

- Project management tools and software
- What is project management?
- Evaluations/performance measures

#### Course 8 - Getting Ready for Phase 2 – *Go Get That Grant!*

Participants will apply their knowledge to a real project/grant opportunity, which may be the ARC capacity-building grant opportunity or a different project.

- Next steps: Build a 90-day plan
- Grant application preparation and checklists
- Additional and ongoing support
- Tips for pitching your project

#### Course 9 – Pitch Practice and Working Session

- Practice your “pitch”
- Review your 90-day plan
- Get your final questions answered

### **3.3 Cohorts**

Local governments will be organized into approximately 15 cohorts (small groups) of 10–12 training participants, and participants will remain in that cohort throughout the program. This will enable them to grow together throughout the program, fostering relationships and capacity building among the participants. Each local government cohort will attend one three-hour training session per week for nine weeks. Each cohort will be assigned a course facilitator and a grant professional who will support them through the training program. The course facilitator will guide participants through discussion, activities, fieldwork, and one-on-one training. The grant professional will answer specific technical grant questions and share

lessons learned so participants can avoid common missteps in the grant process, and relay best practices and insights into federal agencies and federal grant programs. Participants may also be connected to grant subject matter experts (SMEs) on a by-request basis by the municipality. Grant SMEs have broad expertise and an area of specialization such as application development, grant reporting, financial management, 2 CFR §200 compliance, procurement and economic development, and more.

### **3.4 Go Get That Grant!**

In the second part of the READY Local Governments Program, participants will implement their learning from the training course by going through the complete life cycle of a grant award made by ARC. The grant award of up to \$50,000 for each entity will be a capacity-building grant with optional match commitment in which participants can focus on a capacity-related need identified during the training course. Please note the grant award is not guaranteed and will require a separate application process.

### **3.5 Post-Course Follow-up**

The program will also provide optional follow-up consultations occurring approximately 90 days following completion of the course, focusing on each local government's project concept for the ARC funding opportunity, and any trouble or success applying the concepts learned during the training course.

### **3.6 Grant Program Parameters**

The READY Local Governments Grant Program includes the following parameters:

1. Only local governments that successfully complete the READY Local Government Training Program (per the attendance requirements) are eligible to apply.
2. The grant amounts are up to \$50,000, with optional match commitment. ARC will encourage local governments to offer match if they are able to. The local governments are not all competing for the same grant monies. However, ARC is not obligated to make grants to any of these 90 entities. ARC reserves the right to fund or not fund the projects of its choosing, and organizations are not guaranteed approval of any application.
3. The purpose of the grant is to advance the local government entity's internal capacity, rather than a traditional external grant activity. A non-exhaustive list of examples of eligible projects is below:
  - Hiring full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary, or contracted employees (can include fringe benefits). Projects involving hiring will be required to provide a sustainability plan for after grant funds are expended
  - Contracting out a service, such as creation of a strategic plan, project management, consulting services, or grant writing
  - Purchasing IT infrastructure or equipment, such as computers
  - Purchasing a subscription for project management software, accounting software, or customer relationship management software
  - Providing relevant formal training (for example, grant writing, project accounting, community engagement) for staff or elected officials
  - A combination of any of the uses such as the above
  - Indirect costs will also be eligible per standard ARC regulations regarding the same.
4. Ineligible uses for the grant include construction and projects that do not serve to advance the local government's capacity or ability to better serve citizens.

5. The grant projects do not have to be “new” projects; they can be extensions of or additions to existing work (for example, paying an existing staff member’s salary); however, federal procurement regulations must be followed and a rationale for how the project furthers the government’s capacity must be provided.
6. The grant projects must be conducted in compliance with all federal regulations as provided in the [Code of Federal Regulations](#).
7. Grant funds must be expended within 24 months (two years) of the project start date.

### 3.7 Course Evaluations

A baseline survey will be used to gauge skills and knowledge change from the beginning of the course to course completion. A post-course evaluation survey will be conducted immediately following course completion. A second post-course evaluation will be held six months after course completion. All evaluations will be anonymous and serve the sole purpose of process improvement of the READY Local Governments Training Program. Participant answers to surveys will have no bearing on grant approval nor any other aspect of ARC’s current or future relations with participants.

## 4.0 Preparing and Submitting the Application

### 4.1 How to Apply—Webinar

A pre-application webinar will walk applicants through the application portal process and answer frequently asked questions (FAQs). If you are unable to attend, the webinar will be recorded and posted on the ARC READY website. Please register for the webinar as it will be disseminated to all registrants for later viewing.

**Date of webinar: February 8, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. EST.**

Webinar Link: <https://www.airmeet.com/e/d74562c0-944f-11ee-9e2c-8b534e4dd302>

### 4.2 Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) Portal

The Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) portal will open on **January 18, 2024, and close on February 29, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. EST.** [Register here](#) to receive an email with an application portal link.

### 4.3 Timeline | Schedule

TIMELINE	DATE(s)
NOSA portal opens 9 a.m. EST	Jan. 18, 2024
NOSA portal closes 5 p.m. EST	Feb. 29, 2024
Applicants will be notified of selection	April 2024
READY Appalachia Training Program	Apr. 29, 2024, through June 28, 2024
Baseline survey	Week of Apr. 29, 2024
One-on-one sessions with participants	Apr. 29, 2024, through June 28, 2024
Post-course program evaluation	Week of July 1, 2024



Optional follow-up consultation with participants (3–4 months after completion of course)	October/November 2024
Post-program evaluation (5–6 months after completion of course)	Dec. 14, 2024, through Jan. 15, 2025

#### 4.4 How to Apply

- [Register here](#) to receive an email with a link to the application portal.
- Provide all information requested in the application.
- Address all eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.
- **Submit your application to ARC via the online portal no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on February 29, 2024.**

## 5.0 Review and Selection Process

### 5.1 Assessment Criteria

Acceptance into this training program is awarded through a competitive application assessment process. Specific assessment criteria, weightings for each criterion, and discretionary or qualitative factors will be utilized in the evaluation of applications.

Criteria includes the following:

- The municipality's experience with federal grant application and management
- The extent to which the municipality serves underserved groups and historically marginalized populations (see Section 2.4)
- The municipality's alignment with [ARC's five Investment Priorities](#)
- The municipality's level of economic distress and its identification as a priority area for investment by the federal government (as determined by Rural Partners Network and Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities designations)
- [Distressed areas and census tracts](#)

Thorough and complete answers to all questions on the application will help to maximize applicants' potential score on this assessment. Applicants should answer each question as honestly and completely as possible.

### 5.2 Review and Selection Process

An ARC Review Panel will review and select participants based upon eligibility and the assessment criteria above.

### 5.3 Award Notices

Applicants will be notified of selection by email in April 2024.

## 6.0 Support Center

### 6.1 Computer Requirements

The Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) Portal is supported on the following browsers:

- Google Chrome ([download latest version](#))
- Mozilla Firefox ([download latest version](#))

- Safari (get the latest version through the Software Update command, available through the Apple menu on macOS)

No matter what browser you use, in order to ensure full compatibility, you should do the following:

- Enable JavaScript;
- Enable cookies;
- Refer to your browser's help for information about enabling cookies (many modern browsers enable them by default); and
- Use a browser that supports the TLS 1.2 or above encryption protocol automatically.

## **6.2 Troubleshooting | Contact Us:**

[ARCReady@grantworks.net](mailto:ARCReady@grantworks.net) for additional assistance.