



Appalachian
Regional
Commission

Request for Proposals

Migration and Population Trends in the Appalachian Region

**Proposals due on or before 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time
October 2, 2024**

Attention: Logan Thomas
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Request for Proposals: Migration and Population Trends in the Appalachian Region

Open date:	August 7, 2024
Questions due:	September 4, 2024
Answers posted on ARC website:	September 11, 2024
Proposal due date:	October 2, 2024
Interview period:	October 21, 2024 – November 20, 2024
Selection date:	December 11, 2024
Contract period:	January 1, 2025 – September 30, 2025

I. Overview of Request for Proposals

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC or the Commission) invites proposals from qualified researchers and consultants to examine migration and population change in the Appalachian Region (the Region). The research should incorporate a variety of datasets, tools, and methodologies to answer the following questions:

- What are the migration and population trends throughout the Region? How have these trends changed over time?
- What are the characteristics of places that are gaining/losing population? What are the characteristics of people who are migrating?
- How has migration changed the demographic profiles of communities throughout Appalachia?
- How have these demographic changes impacted the places gaining/losing population? Examples of potential impacts include issues related to workforce needs and the allocation of public services.

Researchers should use the most recent data available to examine trends in the Region. While not all cross-sectional datasets and variables will be available for years past, high-level analysis should date back to at least 1960. In addition to providing a detailed, nuanced overview of recent migration and population trends—with a particular emphasis on changes that have taken place over the past decade—another goal of this research is to provide a clear picture of how the Region’s demographics have changed over a longer time period.

Throughout the report, trends in Appalachia should be compared to those taking place in the United States as a whole, as well as in the “non-Appalachian United States” (all places outside of the Appalachian Region). Variation within the Region should be analyzed in great detail, with data broken down by subregion, state, metro/rural designation, and economic status. Additionally, as is done in [ARC’s annual Chartbook](#), rural Appalachia should be compared to the rest of rural America. Additional aggregations may also be considered for analysis (e.g., groupings of counties with similar industrial make-ups).

While past ARC research on [migration](#) and [population](#) should help inform this current undertaking, the final report should be more visually engaging than the past reports and

should use a large number of graphics and maps to display the data and convey findings. Examples of more visually engaging reports include ARC's work on [food insecurity](#) and [agricultural activity](#), as well as the aforementioned [Chartbook](#).

The Commission's purpose for undertaking this work is to provide its stakeholders with a clear, cohesive view of migration and population change throughout Appalachia and to better understand how current trends compare to those of the past.

Researchers may recommend additional research methods that could enhance our understanding of migration and population change in Appalachia, particularly in relation to the fourth research question noted above: *How have these demographic changes impacted the places gaining/losing population?* For example, presenting case studies of communities facing significant demographic changes can demonstrate the different kinds of impacts migration and population change have had on the Region.

The selected researcher or consultant will work closely with ARC staff in the development of this report. Required deliverables include the following:

- Final report that includes extensive analysis and discussion, as well as compelling visuals (i.e., graphs, tables, maps).
- A standalone executive summary highlighting key findings and takeaways.
- State-specific fact sheets or briefs for each of the Region's thirteen states.
- A presentation to ARC leadership and staff upon completion of the report, which may be conducted virtually. A slide deck should also be provided. Contractor should also be open to additional presentations in order to further disseminate findings and inform stakeholders throughout the Region.
- Edited datasets and results of statistical analyses. The files should be clean and easily navigable, and metadata should accompany each.
- Underlying GIS files for all maps included in the report.

II. Background

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 lives in rural communities, compared with 19% 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 30.9% in 1960, fell to 14.3% over the 2018–2022 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 297 in 1960 to 123 over the 2018–2022 period. Since the 2013–2017 period, the share of Appalachian adults ages 25 and over with a bachelor's degree or higher has risen by three

percentage points, to 26.7%, in 2018–2022. Additionally, the high school completion rate for the Region is now almost equal to that of the country, after decades of lagging behind.

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 Appalachia’s size and diversity—the Region extends more than 1,000 miles from southern New York to northeastern Mississippi and is home to over 26 million people.

About the Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is a regional economic development agency serving 423 counties across the Appalachian 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 elects 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. Seventy-four LDDs cover all 423 counties in the Region. The LDDs help identify the 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. ARC funds projects that address the five goals identified in its 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, affordable, resilient, and energy-efficient 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; increase school readiness; expand access to health care; assist local communities with strategic planning; and provide technical and managerial assistance to emerging businesses.

Additional information about the Appalachian Regional Commission can be found at www.arc.gov.

III. Scope of Work

Proposals should present an outline of the research and analysis to be conducted in response to the research questions identified in section I, Overview of Request for Proposals. A work plan and a schedule for reports and deliverables should also be included. The scope of work should be informed by various data sources and a review of current literature; an extensive knowledge and command of the subject area should be evident throughout, particularly in relation to the availability and relevance of datasets to be used in the research. The project will require a team of researchers and consultants with a broad set of skills to execute the work plan, including a graphic designer and line editor.

The primary goal of the report is to examine the migration and population trends throughout Appalachia. A nuanced examination of recent trends should accompany a higher-level, longer-term analysis. The report should provide a clear, cohesive overview of the demographic trends taking place in Appalachia; how they have changed or stayed the same over time; and the ways they have impacted communities throughout the Region.

The final report should be visually engaging and written for a non-technical audience, though appendices and technical documentation should offer a comprehensive overview of the data and methodologies. A standalone executive summary should highlight key findings and takeaways. State-specific fact sheets or briefs should detail the most relevant takeaways for each of the Region's thirteen states. All cleaned datasets and analysis, including underlying GIS files, should be provided upon completion of the report. Additional deliverables or tools may also be recommended.

IV. Methodology

The successful applicant will develop a detailed methodology to analyze the four research questions specified in section I, Overview of Request for Proposals. A variety of datasets, tools, and methodologies will be necessary to respond to these questions, and proposals should clearly outline how each will be used. A high level of detail should be noted, including the following information:

- Datasets to be analyzed, including detailed information on variables, time periods, and geographies. Limitations of each should also be noted. County-level data is generally necessary for Appalachian-specific aggregations, but ARC is open to datasets based on geographies that may provide additional insight (e.g., metropolitan statistical areas) or further granularity (e.g., census tracts).
- Plan for maintaining consistency over time—specifically, in terms of times-series data and related analyses—with all of the geographic aggregations noted in section I, as well as any others recommended in the proposal.
- Analytical techniques and frameworks to be used. Specifically, the different types of migration and population dynamics to be explored should be noted (e.g., births, deaths, interstate migration, international migration). Proposals should also specify the characteristics of migrants (e.g., education and income levels) and communities (e.g., poverty rates and industrial makeup) that may be used to better understand these dynamics.
- Protocols for any additional research methods recommended. If case studies are proposed, details of the selection process and investigation plans should be provided.

- Recent research exploring migration and population change, either in Appalachia or the United States as a whole, that may be used to inform this project.
- Proposed structure of the report, including details on data visualizations (i.e., charts, tables, maps), chapters, and focus areas.

Researchers can offer alternative approaches or changes to those described above. The proposal should make clear why the research method is being included and how it will lead to a better overall final report.

The geographic and socioeconomic variation of the Region—and the challenges this can present to researchers—should be noted, and the proposal should make clear how the methodology will account for this diversity.

Please note that ARC will play an integral role throughout the research process, and all proposals should incorporate ARC’s role into the development of their methodology and timeline.

V. Technical, Management, and Cost Proposal Contents

Technical Proposal

The narrative should not exceed 12 pages, not including the abstract and accompanying resumes and organizational background materials.

Summary Abstract (300 words)

In this section, provide a brief abstract of the proposal by summarizing the background, objectives, proposed methodologies, and expected outputs and results of the research.

Methodology

Describe the step-by-step approach or methods intended to accomplish all the tasks specified in this RFP. The proposal should provide a detailed explanation of the datasets and research methods to be used in all facets of the work. The proposal should identify the points and tasks in this research project that will require participation by ARC staff. Finally, the proposal should identify any difficulties that may be encountered in this project and propose practical and sound solutions to these problems.

Project Work Plan and Milestones

The proposal should describe the phases into which the proposed work can be logically divided and performed. A schedule of milestones and deadlines should be specified for the completion of various work elements. Regular check-in meetings with ARC staff are also required. Please note that it is the responsibility of the contractor to provide line editing of the final report/deliverable. Contractors should budget accordingly.

Key Personnel

All personnel taking part in the research must be described in this section. Brief resumes should include the professional classifications (e.g., project director, economist, analyst, consultant, graphic designer, line editor, etc.), education, and relevant experience of key personnel. The selected contractor 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.

Management Proposal

Resources and capacities related to the planning and management of the research project will be considered as part of the proposal selection process.

Business Management Organization and Personnel

Furnish a brief narrative description of the organization, including the division or branch planned to perform the proposed effort, and the authority responsible for controlling these resources and personnel.

Staffing Plan

A staffing plan is required that describes the contractor's proposed staff distribution to accomplish this work. The staffing plan should present a chart that assigns the full time equivalent (FTE) commitment of each staff member to the project's tasks and schedule. In addition, the proposal should include a detailed description of activities for key project-related personnel and anticipated deliverables. Finally, the proposal should identify the relationship of key project personnel to the contracting organization, including consultants and subcontractors.

Relevant Prior Experience

The proposal must describe the qualifications and experience of the organization and the personnel to be assigned to the project. Information provided should include examples of past experience with the specific subject matter and data sources. Please provide examples (links and/or attachments) of the three most similar research reports undertaken by the applicant's organization. If appropriate, provide organization names and addresses, names of contact persons, and telephone numbers for reference.

Contract Agreement Requirements

In this section of the proposal, the contractor should identify any special requirements they want to include in the contract.

Cost Proposal

ARC estimates this effort to cost \$150,000 to \$200,000. However, contractors should estimate their own costs for their analysis. The final contract awarded for this project will be a [firm-fixed-price contract](#). Payments shall be made on a monthly or quarterly schedule (depending on contractor preference). 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 contain all cost information, including: direct labor costs (consistent with the staffing plan); labor overhead costs; travel; estimated cost of any subcontracts; other direct costs (such as those for datasets); total direct cost and overhead; and total cost, including fee or profit.

Proposals should include a plan for a kickoff meeting, regular check-in meetings, and a final presentation of key findings and recommendations to all staff. We anticipate these meetings to be conducted virtually. However, proposals should include travel costs, if applicable, for any potential in-person activities such as site visits.

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. ARC will honor indirect rates as suggested by the contractor. However, be aware that a lower indirect rate may be more competitive in the selection process.

VI. Copyrights

The federal government, through the Appalachian Regional Commission, reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use, and to authorize others to use, for federal government purposes, any work developed under a contract, grant, subgrant, or contract under a grant or subgrant, and to use, and authorize others to use for federal government purposes, any copyrights which a grantee, a subgrantee, or a contractor purchases with grant support or contract funds. Such license to use includes but is not limited to the publication of such work on an ARC website and social media. Use of such works for purposes related to Appalachia and the development of Appalachia is generally authorized by ARC to state and local governments in the Appalachian Region and to other public and private not-for-profit organizations serving Appalachia, including the Appalachian local development districts (LDDs).

VII. Proposal Submission

- Proposals are due on or before 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on October 2, 2024. Please send proposals as one PDF to Logan Thomas, economist, at lthomas@arc.gov.

Additionally:

- Submissions must be sent via email.
- Responses or unsolicited amendments will not be accepted after the closing date and time.
- Requests for time extensions past any deadlines will not be considered.
- Questions may be submitted to Logan Thomas (lthomas@arc.gov) by September 4, 2024. Answers will be posted on the [Contract Opportunities](#) section of the ARC website on September 11, 2024.

VIII. Evaluation of Proposals

All proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- A complete, clearly articulated, and logical study design that responds to each element of this RFP.
- Technically competent and comprehensive methodology.
- Qualifications and prior research experience.
- A credible management proposal for staffing, and the capability to carry out and support the project in a timely fashion.
- Cost effectiveness of the proposal.
- All else being equal, preference will be given to firms and organizations located in or near the Appalachian Region.

It is anticipated that the contractor will be selected by December 11, 2024, for an estimated contract start date of January 1, 2025, and completion date of September 30, 2025.