



# Request for Proposals:

## *READY Appalachia – FY 2026 Local Governments*

## Training Program Delivery & Administration

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

#### Contents

<b>Training Program Content &amp; Structure</b> .....	1
<b>Structure of Past Program</b> .....	5
<b>Results of Past Program</b> .....	6
<b>Available Materials &amp; Information</b> .....	6
<b>Use of Products from the Training Program</b> .....	7
<b>Evaluation of the Training Program</b> .....	9
<b>Virtual Platforms</b> .....	9
<b>Subcontracting</b> .....	11
<b>Proposal Instructions &amp; Content</b> .....	12
<b>Other</b> .....	13

#### Training Program Content & Structure

- 1. Please define what is meant by “several months” post training program? (e.g., 3 months post training?)**

If this is referring to the requirement for a follow-up consultation, ARC will ask for the suggestion of the contractor to determine what would be

an appropriate amount of time to conduct a follow-up to an intensive training program. Three (3) months post-program has been used in prior *READY* iterations, but is not a requirement for this training program.

**2. What is the minimum number of hours required for the training program?**

If this is referring to the number of hours required of participants in training, Offerors should propose a course schedule that includes a length and frequency sufficient to adequately cover all the skills covered in Section F of the RFP and the requirement to include cohort-based learning, individual consultations, and homework assignments.

**3. The number of weekly sessions (not post program) would vary depending on the length of the program recommended. Is there a minimum number of one-to-one consultations required within the training program?**

There is no minimum number of one-to-one consultations required during the training program, but Offerors should propose a schedule that includes multiple one-on-one touchpoints between local governments and their instructor to allow for the more in-depth technical assistance, which is the hallmark of the *READY Appalachia* program.

**4. Did the prior program also include slides? If not, is the expectation to include both slides and handouts/workbook?**

Offerors should propose instructional methods they believe will work best for participating local governments, given the subject matter of the course. ARC does not require the use of slides, handouts, or workbooks. The only requirements are those listed specifically in the RFP.

- 5. Does ARC have an expectation for the number of one-to-one consultation sessions - per government entity - that are to be conducted between the instructor and government entity?**

Please see Question 3.

- 6. Does ARC have historical guidance or thresholds related to attendance enforcement that we should align with when proposing attendance policies tied to grant eligibility?**

The selected contractor can develop a training program attendance policy for ARC's consideration; however, ARC does not have any set thresholds related to attendance. ARC will ask the contractor to suggest a threshold for ARC approval at which an organization will have successfully completed the course. For past programs, thresholds have been quite high.

- 7. Is there a preferred balance between pre-award and post-award content across the 7-9 courses, or should we propose that balance based on observed participant need?**

Offerors should propose the balance between pre- and post-award focused courses based on their understanding of the needs of the target group. Courses 7-9 should address all the topics outlined in this RFP and any additional topics the contractor deems suitable.

- 8. For topics such as 2 CFR Part 200, BABA, and federal audits, does ARC envision high-level orientation or applied, process-level training that supports real-world implementation through templates, workflows, and documented policies, procedures, and accountability checks?**

Offerors should propose an appropriate level for ARC's target group. However, the class should be challenging, interactive, and focused on real-world application, rather than merely informing applicants of general guidelines. Offerors should propose a balance between "high-

level orientation" and "applied, process-level training" that will be truly impactful for the target group.

**9. Are there expectations regarding the minimum or maximum duration of one-to-one consultations per entity, or should we propose a differentiated model based on factors such as community capacity, risk, and need?**

Each participating local government entity should receive the same number of consultations and the same length of time in the consultations.

**10. In addition to distressed counties and those with whom ARC has not worked before, are there any specific targets (e.g., geographic distribution) that we should explicitly account for in outreach strategies?**

While distressed counties and organizations new to ARC will be central to our outreach, ARC welcomes Offerors to recommend additional target populations that could benefit from the training program.

**11. Would ARC be interested in having a firm conduct in-person recruitment for hard-to-reach counties?**

Offerors are welcome to propose various methods for identifying hard-to-reach participants in their proposals, and ARC appreciates understanding of the target audience and creativity in these approaches.

**12. Are there existing coordination protocols between *READY* Local Governments and Local Development Districts that we should integrate into training design to avoid duplication and reinforce complementary roles?**

During the curriculum design phase, ARC will guide the selected contractor in avoiding duplication between the critical role of the LDDs and the training program. For the purpose of proposal design, the

*READY Local Governments* course is meant to be an intensive training in grant application and compliance/management covering all the subjects mentioned in the RFP.

**13. Task 3 of the Scope of Work indicates that the Offeror will propose additional content to the FY 2024 *READY Local Governments* curriculum. May Offerors include the use of AI technology as part of the additional content they propose?**

Offerors are welcome to include the use of AI technology as part of the curriculum they propose. ARC favorably views the inclusion of information on AI, as a relevant and helpful tool for grant applicants within this target audience.

### **Structure of Past Program**

**14. Who is the previous contractor/incumbent? Is the incumbent eligible to bid on this project?**

The previous contractor for this activity was GrantWorks. The previous contractor is eligible to present a proposal in response to this RFP.

**15. How many weeks was the last iteration of the program?**

It was 9 weeks long.

**16. How many group training sessions were offered within the 9 weeks of training?**

The previous contractor held weekly group training sessions. One topic was covered each week.

## Results of Past Program

**17. What worked well with the last iteration of the training program? What were some of the deficits that ARC hopes to address or build upon in this iteration?**

Generally, what has worked well in the past is the peer-to-peer learning element, the hands-on nature of the assignments and subject matter, the consultations between the organization and its instructor (where technical assistance can be provided custom to each organization), and the virtual format of the courses to allow for flexibility. ARC hopes to build upon this successful model and provide more content on compliance, grant administration resources, project management skills, etc. (i.e., the items mentioned in Section F of the RFP).

**18. Will the prior iteration of the program evaluation lessons learned be shared to allow for enhancements to the training program design?**

Please see Question 17.

**19. Is there existing evaluation data or participant feedback from previous *READY* programming that will be shared with the awardee?**

Please see Question 17.

## Available Materials & Information

**20. Will contractors have full access to the curriculum developed and utilized in the last iteration of the program for use in FY26 to include PPTs, templates, resources etc. beyond the self-paced content posted on ARC's website?**

The self-paced curriculum linked within the RFP is the full content that ARC is making available to the successful contractor for revision. ARC expects the selected contractor to develop any additional course materials (e.g., PowerPoints, templates, supplemental materials, etc.)

deemed necessary in delivering an engaging and effective course, and facilitating the comprehension of the course's key learning concepts.

**21. Will prior applications be available to the contractor to use as a baseline for FY26 application?**

No, the contractor will need to develop an application without the use of prior applications.

**22. Can slides from the prior program be made available as an addendum to the RFP?**

No.

**23. For the previous 2024 *READY Appalachia* Initiative that ultimately resulted in 15 cohorts across 90 local governments, can ARC provide 1) the number of local governments that were targeted for outreach and the number of local governments where outreach occurred and 2) the number of local governments who applied to be part of the program?**

ARC targeted a wide variety and number of local governments throughout the Appalachian region, focusing on those from economically distressed counties and areas and those with whom ARC had not worked before, for potential participation in the training program. ARC received 117 eligible applications from the previous round of *READY Local Governments*.

## **Use of Products from the Training Program**

**24. Is the expectation for the recording for internal ARC use (references material for future trainers) or will the recording be made publicly available as part of the self-paced, standalone course package?**

The expectation is that the recording will only be available to participants of the course (by request) should they miss the course, and to relevant ARC staff. The recordings will not be shared publicly or with

anyone outside of these groups to ensure the privacy of the participants is protected, as participants may share sensitive information within the training sessions.

**25. Would post-course editing be required by the contractor or would the sessions be raw footage of the course?**

The recorded sessions can be raw footage of the course.

**26. Beyond ownership of newly created materials, does the ARC anticipate adapting or modularizing the FY 2024 curriculum for self-paced learning or future cohorts? Should proposed updates be designed with those uses in mind?**

Presently, ARC plans to post the self-paced curriculum developed by the selected contractor (the deliverable mentioned in E.3.8) on its website as a public resource. No other uses are planned at present.

**27. Will *READY Local Governments* scale in future years, and would the recommendations in this contract for sustaining or expanding the program using the finalized curriculum and delivery model be welcomed?**

Offerors should center their proposals around the RFP and the current training program that is sought to be delivered.

**28. Do you envision content delivery that can also be packaged and delivered asynchronously or as standalone modules?**

For Deliverables E.3.1 and E.3.2, the main training program deliverable, the intent is for the courses to be delivered in a live, synchronous format. Following the course, for Deliverable E.3.8, the intent is for the contractor to modify the course content they developed so that it can either be studied as one complete course (pre- and post-award), as a pre-award course and a post-award course, or as individual modules (e.g., grant application development; Uniform Guidance compliance). Each module

should be able to stand alone and will eventually be made available to the general public.

## **Evaluation of the Training Program**

**29. In addition to “organizations served” and “organizations improved,” are there specific operational or compliance indicators ARC is particularly interested in tracking as evidence of improvement?**

In their proposals, Offerors may recommend tracking operational and compliance indicators related to federal grants. Once selected, contractors will detail these indicators further in their evaluation plans.

**30. How does ARC intend to use the post-course consultation summaries? Are there specific data points or themes ARC would like consistently captured across all participants?**

ARC desires to know whether its investment in training is resulting in increased organizational capacity/efficiencies related to federal grants or if it is generating additional work processes, collaborations, or growth. Additionally, ARC desires to know what capacity gaps still exist and organizations' thought processes related to grants, the potential uses for grants, the relationship between their experience in the course and the use for grants.

## **Virtual Platforms**

**31. Can you provide more information on the use and configuration of the virtual platform provided by ARC for the application?**

**a. How will application data be captured and processed? From-driven to Excel or a database?**

It is Microsoft Excel-based data. It has capability for attachments as well.

**b. Will the platform be customized based on application and rubric drafted by the contractor? If so, will ARC or the contractor be responsible for any configuration within the platform?**

The contractor will be responsible for inputting the application and scoring rubric into ARC's application platform (provided by an outside vendor). The vendor provides customized application services and ARC has routinely used this vendor.

**c. Will scoring be automated in any way?**

The application system automatically averages the total scores provided to each application by all of its assigned scorers.

**d. Will ARC manage the opening/closing of the submission period within the platform? OR will the contractor have access to turn off the platform's ability to receive applications?**

The application platform has settings the contractor will need to configure related to when applications start and cease being received.

**e. Will training be provided to the contractor on ARC's virtual platform?**

ARC's vendor provides routine free webinars and customer service to help clients carry out their application processes.

**32. Will the contractor be responsible for hosting any content or will all outreach, application, and course communications be managed on ARC platforms?**

The contractor will be responsible for hosting the pre-application webinar, the course content, as well as the evaluation content. The contractor will not have access to ARC's owned communications vehicles/platforms. ARC's Communications Division will lead promotion

related to soliciting applications via its owned outreach platforms (e.g., arc.gov website, newsletter, social media). The contractor will be responsible for targeted outreach to government entities to solicit applications. The contractor will also be responsible for course-related communications with applicants and selected participants. ARC will host outreach and the application platform.

**33. Does ARC have a preference for virtual course delivery platform (e.g., Teams, Zoom, etc.)?**

ARC does not have a preference for the virtual course delivery platform.

**34. In addition to Zoom, what virtual platforms does ARC typically utilize? Does ARC have preferences regarding technology platforms for online training, webinars, etc.?**

With the exception of the application platform, ARC does not have any preference regarding platforms for online training, webinars, etc. ARC will ask the contractor to suggest the most appropriate platforms to utilize to engage with the target group to facilitate the training.

## **Subcontracting**

**35. For organizations with relevant subject-matter or regional expertise that do not intend to submit as the prime respondent, is there an opportunity to participate as a subcontractor or supporting partner on this project? If so, is there a preferred way for such entities to make their availability and expertise known to potential prime respondents during the proposal development process?**

ARC does not utilize a process like this one for its contract opportunities. Lead contractors may include subcontractors in their proposal.

**36. Do you have a preference for contracting with a single firm versus a group of firms partnering to submit a joint application?**

ARC does not have a preference for a single firm versus multiple firms partnering to submit a response to the RFP. If multiple firms partner together, there must be one firm identified as the lead applicant. ARC will assess the ability of Offerors to effectively carry out the required activities.

## **Proposal Instructions & Content**

**37. The RFP specifies that the Technical and management proposals must not exceed 30 pages. Is this single or double-spaced?**

Proposals may be single spaced.

**38. Are there font type or font size requirements?**

There are no specific font requirements, but Offerors should choose a font that is readable and not distracting.

**39. Is the Project Work Plan counted in the 30-page limit?**

The project work plan is not part of the 30-page limit.

**40. Is the cost proposal counted in the 30-page limit?**

The cost proposal is not part of the 30-page limit.

**41. Are 'summaries' of work samples or letters of support included in the proposal page limit?**

No, these are not included in the stated page limit.

**42. Do you require sample course outlines to be included in the proposal with a recommended structure for the 7-9 courses?**

A summary of course content is required. See RFP Section IV., L., Technical Approach and Methodology.

**Other**

**43. To what degree of involvement, review, and approval would ARC like to have in the contractor's execution of Task 2? Does ARC intend to be an active partner, or prefer a contractor that can independently design and implement this task? Specifically, tasks E.2.1 – E.2.6.**

Generally, ARC is an active partner. The ARC team will review, edit, and approve the drafts of the application, scoring rubric, pre-application webinar, and certain types of communications with applicants (e.g. those that relate to the grant program).

**44. Are there any privacy concerns for the participants in recording the sessions? Would participants need to sign an agreement inclusive of being recorded?**

During the participant confirmation process, participants will be asked to consent to being recorded, along with an explanation of who will be able to view the recordings.

**45. If a local government that participates in the *READY Local Governments 2026* program as a trainee later seeks professional grant development services from the selected contractor, is the selected contractor permitted to engage in that work if compensation is provided entirely from non-ARC funds?**

The selected contractor may not enter into business relationships with local government participants for the duration of the contract with ARC, regardless of the source of compensation. The selected contractor also may not solicit business from participants during the training program. After the training program, if a participant seeks a business relationship

with the selected contractor, the selected contractor may participate in the work if it is not funded by the ARC *READY Local Governments* grant program (occurring subsequent to this training program).

**46. Does participation under this RFP restrict the selected contractor from providing any grant writing or application development services for ARC programs (including POWER, Area Development, ARISE, or similar programs) to clients, whether local governments or non-local government entities, when those services are compensated with non-ARC funds?**

The selected contractor is restricted from providing these services for the *READY Local Governments* 2026 grant program, regardless of the source of funds. Additionally, the selected contractor cannot solicit business relationships with participants during the training program. They are not restricted from providing grant writing or application development services for other ARC grant programs when compensated with non-ARC funds.