



# Investments Supporting Partnerships in Recovery Ecosystems (INSPIRE) Initiative

## Federal Fiscal Year 2026—Notice of Solicitation of Applications

### (1) NOSA Basic Information

This notice of solicitation of applications (NOSA) provides a program overview and explains the requirements for eligible applicants to apply for grant funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission’s (ARC) INSPIRE Initiative (Assistance Listing Number 23.002). This INSPIRE NOSA is new for fiscal year (FY) 2026.

<b>NOSA release date</b>	<b>April 21, 2026</b>
<b>Pre-application webinar recording</b>	<b>April 23, 2026</b> Available on <a href="https://arc.gov/sud">arc.gov/sud</a>
<b>NOSA Q&amp;A session</b>	<b>April 29, 2026 at 10 a.m. ET</b> <a href="#">Register for Q&amp;A session.</a>
<b>Register in Pathways</b>	No later than <b>May 5, 2026</b> <a href="#">Register here.</a>
<b>Letter of intent (LOI) due</b>	<b>May 12, 2026 by 5 p.m. ET</b> Submit in Pathways Must have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) from SAM.gov
<b>Grant applications due</b>	<b>June 15, 2026 by 5 p.m. ET</b> Submit in Pathways Must have a UEI and an active <a href="https://sam.gov">SAM.gov</a> registration
<b>Awards announced</b>	<b>Fall 2026</b>

[Learn more about INSPIRE](#) on ARC.gov.  
Email [SUD@arc.gov](mailto:SUD@arc.gov) if you have questions related to this NOSA or INSPIRE.

### Executive Summary

ARC's INSPIRE Initiative offers federal grant funding for projects that address workforce gaps and economic challenges due to the impact of substance use disorder (SUD) in Appalachia. The FY26 INSPIRE NOSA makes available up to \$15 million in federal funding to build or expand community support systems (also known as [recovery ecosystems](#)) that help Appalachians in SUD recovery obtain or maintain employment. Applicants can request up to \$500,000 for [implementation projects](#) or \$100,000 for [planning projects](#).

All project proposals must align with at least one or more INSPIRE priorities, ARC’s strategic goal to develop Appalachia’s workforce (i.e., Goal 2), as well as the ARC development plans and strategy statements of the state(s) impacted by the proposal.

For more details about INSPIRE’s history, review [Appendix 8](#) and the [INSPIRE website](#).

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## Appalachian Regional Commission Overview

Established through the [Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965](#), ARC is an economic development entity representing a [partnership of federal, state, and local governments](#). ARC's footprint spans [423 counties](#) across [13 states](#). This 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. [Learn more about ARC.](#)

## ARC Strategic Investment Goals

All INSPIRE projects must address one or more of ARC's five strategic investment goals. Learn more about [ARC's Investment Goals](#) and our [strategic plan](#).

## (2) Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants for ARC's INSPIRE Initiative are the following:

- [Local development districts \(LDDs\)](#)
- Indian tribes or a consortium of Indian tribes
- States, counties, cities, or other political subdivisions of a state, including a special purpose unit of a state or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions
- Institutions of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education
- Public or private nonprofit organizations or associations, including but not limited to faith-based organizations

Eligible applicants may submit only one application per organization. However;

- ARC may accept more than one application from **large organizations** (such as universities) when the applications are led by separate units/division/departments of the organization, and each proposes a unique project concept.
- Organizations that operate as **affiliates of another entity** are considered separate entities.
- Organizations may act as a **fiscal agent** on more than one application.
- Applications will be accepted that include **named partners** in more than one application, however, ARC encourages named partners to be intentional in their partnership approach and ensure they have the capacity to fulfill the scope of work of multiple projects. This should be addressed in Project Team/Organizational Capacity section of the application.

## Ineligibility

ARC does not award INSPIRE grants to the following:

- Individuals
- For-profit entities
- Projects serving only Appalachian counties designated as attainment counties ([learn more here](#))
- Projects with substantial construction components (see below under "Funding Restrictions")
- Proposed projects outside of the Appalachian Region
- Current or past INSPIRE grantees proposing to expand or continue the scope of work of their funded INSPIRE project. For example, ARC will not award an INSPIRE grant to a proposal that merely changes the geographic reach or expands the target population of a previously funded INSPIRE project.

## Eligible Project Geography

Projects must serve and benefit a portion of the Appalachian Region as defined by the Appalachian Regional Development Act (ARDA) of 1965, as amended (40 USC 14102(a)(1)). If projects extend beyond the Appalachian Region, only the portion that falls within the region is eligible for ARC funding. [View a list of Appalachian counties served by ARC.](#)

## Eligibility Specifications for Current ARC Grantees

Grantees with open ARC projects, including but not limited to POWER, INSPIRE, ARISE, READY Appalachia, WORC and Area Development, can apply for INSPIRE FY 2026 funds. However, the applicant must ensure the following to be eligible:

- The proposed scope of work must be new and must not fully or partially duplicate or overlap with a current open ARC grant.
- With the exception of INSPIRE grantees, current grantees with projects scheduled to be completed before October 1, 2026, must include the following in new applications for FY 2026 funding:
  - 1.) an expansion of geography;
  - 2.) increased scope of work with an existing concept; or
  - 3.) a proposal with a new concept.

**Please note:** Current and past INSPIRE grantees **must** propose a project with a new concept that does not overlap with their former or current INSPIRE project. Current and past INSPIRE grantees proposing to expand or continue the scope of work of a funded INSPIRE project will not be accepted. Current and past INSPIRE grantees submitting an application to implement a current or previously funded **planning project** will be accepted and considered for funding.

- ARC grantees must provide a status update on their existing project(s) in the LOI. They must also demonstrate sufficient organizational capacity to manage multiple awards simultaneously in the application.

## Alignment with Policy Priorities

To be eligible for INSPIRE funding, projects must align with ARC's policy priorities, as well as relevant local, state, and federal priorities, including but not limited to those set forth in [ARC's strategic plan](#), state development plans and strategy statements, and the [Executive Orders of the President of the United States](#). These and any other applicable state member and presidential priorities will be considered when determining a project's eligibility, and projects out of alignment with any of these policy priorities may be deemed by ARC, in its sole discretion, to be ineligible for an INSPIRE grant.

## Funding Restrictions

### Treatment Restrictions

Treatment services must be for behavioral health services—including post-SUD treatment wraparound services—to help those in recovery maintain their recovery as they enter or reenter the workforce.

### Construction Restrictions

ARC will not award INSPIRE grants to projects with substantial construction components (e.g., building renovations, demolition, site preparation). However, ARC *may* consider funding projects involving minor repairs or facility enhancements (e.g., new painting, electricity modifications or accessories, building recovery beds) but only if they are part of a larger project addressing INSPIRE funding priorities listed on [page 6](#). Applicants should describe proposed minor cosmetic activities in their letter of intent (LOI). Applicants with questions regarding whether a construction activity is restricted under this NOSA may email ARC at [sud@arc.gov](mailto:sud@arc.gov).

## Wraparound Services

ARC will support costs related to wraparound services; however, these activities should not be the primary focus of the project. For example, ARC will not fund projects with the sole objective of providing childcare services to clients. Wraparound services must be connected to the recovery-to-work ecosystem and will assist those recovering from SUD to enter or re-enter the workforce. Please review additional details on allowable uses of wraparound services on [page 8](#).

## Matching Requirement

Applicants must demonstrate a cost share (or a “match”) from non-ARC sources:

- Matching funds can be **federal or non-federal contributions, or a combination of both**. They can be cash or in-kind.
- Matching funds **must be allowable under federal grant regulations, 2 CFR § 200.306(b)**. They must help you meet the goals of your proposed INSPIRE project.
- Matching funds **must meet the minimum required match amount**, which is determined by the ARC classification of the county or counties served by the proposed activity (distressed – 20%; at-risk – 30%; transitional – 50%; competitive – 70%; and attainment – ineligible).
  - [Access a table](#) summarizing ARC’s five economic designations and the match requirement for each Appalachian county.
  - [Use ARC’s match rate calculator](#) to help you determine the required match.
- Matching funds **must be confirmed and accessible by September 2, 2026**. Applications with a match that is not confirmed and accessible by September 2, 2026, are subject to disqualification. ARC reserves the right to disqualify applications for which timely and adequate assurance of the available matching funds are not provided in a form and substance satisfactory to ARC.
  - See the “Budget” section in the scoring matrices for [implementation](#) and [planning](#) projects for more information.

## (3) Program Description

INSPIRE Initiative funding is made available through the Appalachian Regional Development Act (40 U.S.C. 14703). In alignment with the Executive Order “Addressing Addiction through the Great American Recovery Initiative,”<sup>1</sup> INSPIRE funding supports projects that create or expand support services and partnerships at the community, state, or regional level to help Appalachians in SUD recovery get a job or stay on the job.

### INSPIRE Project Examples & Ideas

ARC encourages INSPIRE project proposals that support individuals in SUD recovery, from the time they leave treatment to when they secure and maintain employment; this is often referred to as a [recovery ecosystem](#). INSPIRE projects that support a recovery ecosystem may include the following:

- Projects that leverage expertise in SUD recovery services and employment training to increase workforce participation and self-sufficiency.
- Investments in workforce development and recovery-to-work networks and partnerships that support SUD recovery. This can also include behavioral health professionals and employers.
- Evaluation of programs and practices that address workforce participation challenges in relation to the SUD recovery ecosystem and/or the [Recovery-Ready Workplace \(RRW\) model](#). Evaluation projects must be framed as a planning grant with the

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<sup>1</sup> EO 14379

intention of helping a specific community gather insights into workforce challenges and developing an appropriate project/solution to address those challenges.

Learn more about the activities ARC has funded through INSPIRE:

- [Read previous INSPIRE Award Summaries by State.](#)
- Review ARC's INSPIRE [Investments in Action case studies/articles.](#)
  - For a catalog of ideas on how to support Appalachians in SUD recovery, see [this list](#) generated by the ARC SUD Advisory Council (2019), as well as the [Recovery-to-Work Ecosystem Builders Guide.](#)

## INSPIRE Funding Priorities

Applicants must describe how their project will address one or more of the following INSPIRE priorities, and how, to the extent possible, the project is evidence-based or based on emerging research.

### Job Training and Skill Building

This funding priority refers to specialized programs that provide training and skill development (including prevention activities) to help individuals in recovery acquire employment within in-demand industry sectors. These programs are tailored to address the unique challenges faced by those in recovery, such as upskilling, reskilling, and the need for ongoing support to maintain sobriety while meeting employer needs. Examples may include:

- *Job Training Programs*
  - Develop or expand vocational training programs specifically tailored for individuals in recovery to ensure individuals have the necessary skills to acquire employment.
- *Skill Building & Recovery Support*
  - Incorporate evidence-based practices in job skills training alongside recovery support to improve employment outcomes and maintain recovery to increase workforce participation and decrease employment attrition rates.
- *Peer Recovery Support Services*
  - Introduce programs such as peer recovery support services in a job training or skill-building project (e.g., certified peer recovery specialists available 24/7) to promote sustained recovery and prevent relapse. [Learn more](#) about emerging and evidence-based practices to build peer support networks.

### Workforce Partnerships

This refers to creating and enhancing collaborations among various stakeholders to support individuals in recovery by addressing workforce challenges and fostering long-term employment opportunities. These partnerships aim to integrate workforce development with SUD recovery services, providing a holistic ecosystem that promotes recovery, economic stability and prosperity. Examples may include:

- *Collaborating with Industry Partners*
  - Establish partnerships with industry stakeholders to address workforce challenges associated with SUD.
- *Building Workforce Entry Networks*
  - Strengthen connections between workforce development organizations, training providers, recovery services, businesses, court systems (e.g., drug courts), mental health providers, and faith-based organizations.

- Facilitate sustained recovery by integrating these networks to support individuals entering or reentering the workforce.
- *Expanding Recovery Support Collaborations*
  - Develop strategic partnerships with health centers, nonprofits, state and local health departments, and criminal justice networks (e.g. local court systems, departments of corrections) to enhance the availability of recovery supports and improve outcomes.
- *Strengthening Coalitions*
  - Expand and formalize partnerships with local, state and regional organizations to address the complex challenges associated with prevention, treatment, and recovery from SUD. These partnerships leverage resources, expertise, and community engagement to create a comprehensive, multi-layered approach to tackling Appalachia’s SUD crisis to address specific economic development challenges to workforce participation (e.g., the creation of supportive training pipelines with industry associations, regional workforce partners, etc.).
- *Aligning Recovery with Broader Strategies*
  - Integrate SUD recovery initiatives into broader health and economic development plans at the state and community levels.

## Evaluation

This refers to the systematic collection, analysis, and application of information to improve understanding, assess outcomes, and develop new approaches to address SUD effectively as applicants build, expand, and improve their ecosystems. This may include leveraging evidence-based practices and innovative strategies to enhance prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts while driving program improvements. **Please note:** with the exception of program evaluation activities that are incorporated as a component of a larger implementation project, evaluation projects should be framed as planning grants. Examples of evaluation projects may include:

- *Community Needs Assessment*
  - Perform a comprehensive needs assessment to identify service gaps in SUD recovery and behavioral health, as well as opportunities to engage employers and strengthen community capacity. [Access guidance on performing a community needs assessment.](#)
- *Evidence Review*
  - Conduct a review of existing evidence-based practices to determine if a particular model could be replicated within your community to enhance prevention, treatment and recovery efforts.
- *Program Evaluation*
  - Evaluate the success of implemented projects, programs, and recovery practices to improve these existing programs or practices in your ecosystem (this may be part of a larger implementation project).

## Employer Support and Recovery-Ready Workplaces (RRW)

This refers to workplace frameworks designed to address SUD, reduce stigma and foster environments where employees can seek help, recover, and thrive. Examples may include:

- *Developing [Recovery-Ready Workplace](#) Programs*
  - Create or enhance workplace policies and initiatives that support employees in recovery and encourage employers to hire individuals in recovery.

- *Employer Support Services*
  - Provide comprehensive services to employers, helping them address workforce needs and integrate recovery-friendly practices into operations.
- *Employer Liaison Roles*
  - Employ dedicated liaisons to educate and engage employers, facilitating the adoption of the RRW model and strengthening collaboration.
- *Stigma Reduction*
  - Implement a training program for those in recovery, including evidence-based approaches and programs to reduce stigma among employers, increasing their willingness to hire and retain individuals in recovery and includes strategies and actions aimed at diminishing the negative attitudes, stereotypes, and discrimination faced by individuals with SUD. [Access evidence-based information and guides on stigma in the workplace.](#)
- [Learn more](#) about RRW emerging practices and resources.

### Wraparound Services

This refers to a holistic, coordinated approach to care that addresses the multiple and interconnected needs of individuals struggling with SUD. These services go beyond clinical treatment for substance use, integrating various supports to help individuals achieve and sustain recovery while improving their overall quality of life and ability to obtain and maintain employment.

Wraparound services must have a clear connection to supporting the recovery-to-work ecosystem and assisting those recovering from SUD to enter or re-enter the workforce. As a component of a comprehensive project design, the intent of these activities is to offer supportive services, such as transportation, stable housing, childcare, legal services, counseling, and access to supplies, technology and uniforms, in order to ensure successful workforce reentry for individuals in recovery. Please note, these services can be an element of the project design— but not the sole focus of the project.

## (4) Application Contents, Format and Scoring Criteria

INSPIRE grant applications must align with the following procedures, policies and deadlines (as detailed in this section).

<b>Letter of intent due</b>	<b>May 12, 2026 by 5 p.m. ET</b> Submit in Pathways
<b>Grant application due</b>	<b>June 15, 2026 by 5 p.m. ET</b> Submit in Pathways
<b>Awards announced</b>	<b>Fall 2026</b>
<b>Grant start date</b>	<b>October 1, 2026</b>

### Letter of Intent

Applicants are required to submit a letter of intent (LOI) electronically via [Pathways](#) by **5 p.m. ET on May 12, 2026**.

Individuals must [register for an account in Pathways](#) (if they do not already have one). The registration form asks questions about the individual's employer including their employer's organization name and address. All individuals, including grant writers and other third-party supporting individuals, should register with their employer's organization, even in cases where

they are applying on behalf of another organization. Both individual and organization profile requests will need to be reviewed and acted on by ARC prior to gaining access to submit an LOI in Pathways.

Applicant organizations must have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) from [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) to submit an LOI.

**ARC strongly recommends requesting your individual and organization profiles by May 5, 2026, to ensure sufficient time to meet the LOI deadline.** [See Appendix 1 \(Pathways How-To Guide for External Users\)](#) for important instructions on registering in the Pathways system.

ARC requires an LOI for both implementation and planning grant applications.

The LOI form requests the following information:

- Contact information
- Brief description of the proposed scope of work
- Key partners
  - Please note: multi-state projects must include partners from each state included in the geographic scope.
- Geographic scope (i.e., the states and [Appalachian counties](#) impacted by the project)
- Funding request amount
- Current or previous ARC grant information

After you submit your LOI, the following will occur:

- You will receive a confirmation message in Pathways and an email notification confirming that your LOI has been successfully submitted. The submitted LOI will also be viewable on the applicant's dashboard in Pathways.
- The [ARC state program managers](#) (in the areas impacted by your proposed project) will review your LOI.
- ARC staff will review the LOI to ensure eligibility for an INSPIRE grant and confirm the proposed project aligns with INSPIRE's funding priorities.
- After review of the LOI, ARC will email selected applicants an invitation to submit a full application and provide access to the application in Pathways. Applicants not invited to submit a full application will also receive notification of their status.

Submitted applications for INSPIRE funding that are deemed by ARC to substantially differ from the information included in the received LOI will be disqualified during the review process.

### **State Program Manager Outreach**

Before submitting the LOI, every applicant is **required** to email the ARC state program manager(s) of the state(s) impacted by the project proposal. Please include the following information in the email:

- Clear and succinct summary of the proposed project, including a summary of the key activities, the amount of funding requested and counties impacted by the project.
- Explanation of how the project aligns with the goals of the strategy statement of the state(s) where your project will be operating. Each state's strategy statement can be found on [arc.gov](https://arc.gov).
- A list of committed and pending partners who will be working on the project.

[Find the name and contact information for your state program manager on ARC.gov.](#)

**Note:** Each state varies in the degree to which they can provide feedback to your email.

See [Appendix 4](#) for information on resources/entities (e.g., State Offices of Rural Health, Rural Health Associations) that can provide grant writing support, partnership development, letters of support, and other forms of technical assistance.

## Competitive Priority Points

ARC will offer up to five (5) priority points for implementation projects and planning projects that meet the following criteria:

- **Projects with a lead applicant that has never received an INSPIRE implementation grant.** An exception will be offered to prior planning grantees, meaning an applicant may have received an INSPIRE planning grant in past years and will still be eligible to receive priority points under this criterion as long as they have not been previously awarded an implementation grant as the primary grantee. Applicants who have partnered as a subrecipient or contractor on an implementation grant may also receive priority points under this criterion, assuming they have not been awarded an implementation grant as the primary grantee in the past. (3 points available for implementation and planning projects)
- **Projects serving census tracts designated as qualifying Opportunity Zones by the U.S. Department of Treasury.** To receive the maximum available points under this criterion, projects must serve at least one Opportunity Zone (designated census tract). The 11-digit census tract FIPS code for all Opportunity Zones served by the project must be listed in the application. Learn more about [Opportunity Zones](#). (2 points available for implementation and planning projects.)

## Design Your INSPIRE Project with Outcomes in Mind

Applicants for **implementation grants** must include the following outputs and outcomes:

- Businesses served (output) and improved (outcome).
- Workers/trainees served (output) and improved (outcome) or students served (output) and improved (outcome).
- Additionally, other performance measures for this grant type may be identified.

Applicants for **planning grants** must include the following output:

- Plans/reports including but not limited to the following:
  - Asset mapping
  - Strategic plans/master plans/concept plans
  - Plans for ecosystem improvements or new programs
  - Evaluation reports
  - Feasibility studies
  - Development of curriculum

Review [Appendix 6](#) to better understand how ARC defines these measures, and their application to INSPIRE projects.

## Implementation Grants

### Funding Amount and Period of Performance

- **Funding: Up to \$500,000.**
- **Period of performance:** Up to three years (36 months), if necessary, per the size and scope of the project.
- Applicants must address all components noted in the section titled [Criteria for Implementation Grants](#).

## Eligible Activities for Implementation Grants

INSPIRE implementation grants launch, expand, or replicate evidence-based programs that help Appalachians who are in recovery from SUD to enter or reenter the workforce. Applicants must have existing partnerships that support a [recovery ecosystem](#). Applicants need to explain how these partnerships will help individuals in recovery get back into the workforce, build an SUD recovery ecosystem, or develop programs and/or workforce policies that support the [Recovery-Ready Workplace \(RRW\) model](#). Refer to the [INSPIRE Funding Priorities](#) section of the NOSA for more information on eligible project activities.

## Criteria for Implementation Grants

### Scoring Applications

INSPIRE implementation grant applications will be scored based on the criteria in the scoring matrix below. Keep the following questions in mind:

- In the "Statement of Need" section, did the applicant include data on overdose rates, SUD cases, employer needs, or workforce demands that demonstrate a need for the proposed activities?
- In the budget, are the financials appropriate and reasonable for the scope of work?
- Did the applicant give enough detail for each budget item? See ARC's [budget narrative template](#) for an example of the quantity and quality of information needed.

ARC will also assess if the applicant effectively uses data and evidence-based practices to create a strong proposal showing plans to build, enhance, or expand their SUD recovery ecosystem or the RRW model. For resources on data and evidence-based practices, see [Appendix 4](#).

Scoring Matrix for INSPIRE Implementation Projects	
<b>A. Executive Summary</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the required INSPIRE fiscal year 2026 "Executive Summary" section in the "Project Info" tab of Pathways to provide information on project purpose, key activities, partnerships and applicant information.</li> </ul>	Required
<b>B. Competitive Priority Points</b>	Up to 5 pts
<b>INSPIRE Implementation Grantee Status</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has not previously received an INSPIRE implementation grant as the prime grantee.</li> </ul>	3
<b>Opportunity Zone Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed project serves at least one Opportunity Zone (designated census tract).</li> </ul>	2
<b>C. Statement of Need</b>	Up to 25 pts
<b>Target Population</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the service area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Required as an Attachment:</b> Include a map of the project service area</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide a rationale for how the selected counties were identified to benefit from the project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>Note:</b> Projects must serve and benefit a portion of the Appalachian Region as defined by the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, as amended. If projects extend</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	5

<p>beyond the Appalachian Region, only that portion within the region is eligible for ARC funding. <a href="#">View a list of Appalachian counties served by ARC.</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using evidence and data, describe your SUD population and how you plan to recruit this population. <u>Multi-state projects should include data for each participating state and explain how recruitment efforts of participants will be coordinated across states.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Note:</b> An applicant’s proposal must target populations ages 15 and above to reduce future and/or current use, economic impacts of SUD, and associated harms within the region, with the ultimate goal of assisting individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce.</li> <li>Whether your project targets adults and/or youth, the overall program design must be tied back to the <a href="#">INSPIRE priorities.</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recovery Ecosystem Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the community needs as they pertain to the expansion, creation, or improvement of a recovery ecosystem.</li> <li>Identify the gap(s) in behavioral health services, training, and provision of support services. This may include wraparound services and the community’s capacity to create a recovery ecosystem as it ties back to the priorities of the INSPIRE Initiative.</li> <li>To measure the strength of your county’s ecosystem, refer to the <a href="#">Recovery Ecosystem Index Map.</a></li> <li><b>Note:</b> Applicants must provide third-party economic and demographic statistics, including the age-adjusted mortality rate related to opioid and other drug overdose deaths and other relevant information, in order to document the extent to which the local economy has negatively impacted the community or region. Applicants may use data available on the <a href="#">INSPIRE website</a>, from <a href="#">Appendix 4</a> of this NOSA, or from other sources to reveal impacts of substance use in their region.</li> </ul>	10
<p><b>Workforce Development Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the business needs, including but not limited to: an overview of open jobs across in-demand industry sectors; employment status and education level of the residents residing in the project’s service area; and gaps in skill sets and training.</li> <li>Describe and assess the availability of existing job training services and programs specifically targeting the recovery population.</li> <li>Identify the economic and workforce-related challenges to workforce participation in the proposed service area.</li> <li><b>Note:</b> Applicants must provide third-party economic and demographic statistics, including rate data about persistent poverty and unemployment in the applicable community or region (e.g., census tract or county), in order to document the extent to which the local economy has been negatively impacted by the SUD crisis. If data for this section is non-existent or hard to obtain for your project territory, news articles from pertinent websites are acceptable.</li> </ul>	10
<p><b>D. Project Narrative</b></p>	Up to 27 pts
<p><b>Project Description</b></p>	5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a description of the applicant’s organizational mission and work.</li> <li>• Describe the project’s primary purpose, activities, projected outcomes, and how, as appropriate, evidence-based practices will be deployed in the project’s scope of work. Clarify which activities will be new or enhanced as opposed to normal operating procedures (e.g. hiring new staff, creation of an advisory committee).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>INSPIRE Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the INSPIRE funding priority(ies) the project addresses and how the project’s primary activities align to those priorities.</li> <li>• How does the mission of the organization align with the priorities of the INSPIRE Initiative. (See <a href="#">Program Description</a> for the list of priorities.)</li> </ul>	4
<p><b>Target Population Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline how your project provides an appropriate approach to address the target population needs. (See <a href="#">Program Description</a> for the list of priorities).</li> </ul>	5
<p><b>Recovery Ecosystem Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline how your project provides an appropriate approach to address the recovery ecosystem needs and how it expands or creates linkages between workforce development organization(s), training providers, and organizations that provide wraparound services for individuals in recovery.</li> </ul>	5
<p><b>Workforce Development Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how the project activities will help employers meet their workforce and business needs.</li> <li>• Describe how the project will train the target population in relevant skills that will lead to job placement in appropriate and in-demand industries.</li> <li>• <b>Required as attachments</b>, provide documentation of evidence for local demand (i.e., letters of demand) from local businesses or business groups expressing a need, or provide labor market analyses conducted by federal or state sources.</li> </ul>	5
<p><b>Workplan/Timeline</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Required as an attachment– <a href="#">Appendix 3: Workplan and Timeline.</a></b> Include a detailed project workplan and timeline using the provided template.</li> </ul>	3
<p><b>E. Project Team</b></p>	Up to 13 pts
<p><b>Organizational Capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the project team’s qualifications to undertake/accomplish the proposed scope of work, including but not limited to all of the following: the project team’s expertise and experience managing sizeable grants and federal awards; familiarity with federal grant regulations; and the organization’s establishment of written policies and procedures for the management of federal</li> </ul>	5

<p>grants that may be applied to the INSPIRE grant, if awarded (<a href="#">Appendix 5</a>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <b>Required as Attachment:</b> Include resumes or qualification documents for key personnel.</li> <li>• <b>Note:</b> Project teams that include partners named in more than one INSPIRE application should address their partner’s capacity to fulfill the scope of work of multiple projects, if successfully awarded.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Partnerships/Roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the names of your partners in this project. <u>Multi-state projects must list partners for each participating state.</u></li> <li>• Identify whether the partner is a subrecipient, procured contractor, or another supporting partner.</li> <li>• Explain how these partners are strategically positioned to support the services and activities in your project’s scope of work, and how they will help to expand or create a recovery ecosystem.</li> </ul>	5
<p><b>Letters of Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Required as attachments, submit at least three letters of engagement from partners.</b></li> <li>• Applicants are required to establish partnerships with a diverse range of collaborators to develop a comprehensive recovery ecosystem. This may include partners who aren't eligible for ARC funding but are crucial to the project's success.</li> <li>• Where possible, involve existing community coalitions focused on substance use disorders.</li> <li>• Applications should show the involvement of state or local agencies responsible for behavioral health and workforce development or should have a clear plan to engage them.</li> <li>• Ensure that letters of engagement speak specifically to the sentiments of the contributing organization or individual. The submission of generic form letters may result in a deduction of points.</li> <li>• Applicants submitting multi-state proposals are encouraged to submit a letter of engagement from a partner(s) located in each participating state.</li> </ul> <p>Project teams may include, but are not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic development organizations</li> <li>• Local governments</li> <li>• Planning organizations and local development districts (LDDs)</li> <li>• Labor unions and apprenticeship programs</li> <li>• State and local workforce agencies</li> <li>• Higher education institutions (e.g., community colleges, job training, adult education providers)</li> <li>• Nonprofit and community-based organizations (e.g., community action agencies, human services providers)</li> <li>• Chambers of commerce, trade associations, business owners, and other private sector representatives</li> <li>• Behavioral health providers, coalitions, champions</li> <li>• Public safety</li> <li>• Individuals with lived experience</li> <li>• Faith-based entities</li> </ul>	3

<b>F. Projected Outputs and Outcomes</b>	Up to 8 pts
<p><b>ARC Performance Measures</b> (see <a href="#">Appendix 6: Performance Measures</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short- and medium-term results should include both outputs (e.g., delivered products, services, training, or participants served) and outcomes (e.g., workforce/employer/participant accomplishments, changes, or improvements) anticipated as a result of the project. See <a href="#">Appendix 6</a> for a description of ARC performance measures and examples of outputs and outcomes for a SUD project.</li> <li>Outputs and outcomes to be achieved by the end of the grant period must include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses served (output) and improved (outcome).</li> <li>Workers/trainees served (output) and improved (outcome) <b>or</b> students served (output) and improved (outcome).</li> <li>Additionally, other performance measures for this grant type may be identified.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	3
<p><b>Methodology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the methodology and reasoning used to determine the estimated outputs and outcomes, providing evidence, if relevant, to support the proposed estimates.</li> </ul>	5
<b>G. ARC and State Strategic Plan Alignment</b>	Up to 6 pts
<p><b>ARC Strategic Plan Alignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how your project aligns with <b>at least one of the five goals within <a href="#">ARC's Strategic Plan</a></b>. At a minimum, all project proposals must align with Goal 2 of ARC's strategic plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Goal 2: Workforce Development</b> - <i>Expand and strengthen systems that help Appalachians obtain a job, stay on the job, and advance along a financially sustaining career pathway.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	3
<p><b>State Strategic Plan Alignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how your project aligns with <b>the goals of the strategy statements of the state(s)</b> where your project will be operating.</li> </ul>	3
<b>H. Budget</b>	Up to 8 pts
<p>See <a href="#">Appendix 7: Tips for Completing Your Budget</a></p> <p><b>Detailed Budget:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a detailed budget that lists the uses of ARC funds and all non-ARC matching funds and includes a detailed explanation of expenditures. Applicants should include cost category, the associated line-item name, a brief description and calculation of cost, and the breakdown between ARC and match funding sources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All items in the detailed budget must reflect the level of detail requested in the proposal.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include cents.</li> <li><b>If including equipment and supplies</b>, attach a separate list that breaks down per unit costs and quantity.</li> <li>If the budget includes key personnel, estimate the number of hours/days and hourly rate (or portion of FTE and salary) for the time that is expected to be spent on the proposed project. This includes</li> </ul>	8

<p>consultants and subrecipients. (After a grant is awarded, all time should be tracked by actual hours worked individually).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include all costs associated with a contractor's scope of work in the "contractual" line item (i.e., estimates for key deliverables, wages, travel, etc.).</li> <li>• <b>If you use a NICRA for indirect costs</b>, submit your NICRA as an attachment.</li> <li>• <b>Note:</b> Applicants may use ARC's budget narrative template as a resource to develop their detailed budget which aligns to the budget narrative in the application (located in Appendix 7). This may be used as a resource but should not be submitted with your application in Pathways.</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify all project funding sources by contributor and contributor type (e.g., ARC, other federal, state, other).</li> <li>• Identify funding type as either cash or in-kind (ARC will always be cash), total funding amount for each source, and the status of that funding (proposed, pending, or committed). <b>Resources listed as match must be confirmed and accessible by September 2, 2026.</b></li> <li>• <b>Required as attachments: Include a match commitment letter from each funding source</b> that specifies the amount of funds committed and the type of funds committed (e.g., grant, loan, cash, in-kind, etc.).</li> <li>• Provide descriptions of in-kind resources, including the methods used to determine their value. These can be included as funding notes and/or incorporated into match commitment letters.</li> </ul>	
<b>I. Long-Term Impact</b>	Up to 3 pts
<p><b>Long-term Impact to the Community/Region</b></p> <p>Applicants must clearly detail the anticipated long-term benefits to the participants, employers, and communities served by the grant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how the activities and investments made under the grant are anticipated to continue benefiting the workforce and the economy after the project has ended.</li> <li>• Include examples of how you will financially sustain the project after ARC funding has ended.</li> </ul>	3
<b>J. Feasibility</b>	Up to 5 pts
<p><b>Feasibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how the project will be successfully achieved, according to the timeline, budget, workplan, project activities, and key personnel described in the application. If there are potential challenges that may hinder the project's success or feasibility, explain how the project team will navigate and explore solutions.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

# Planning Grants

## Funding Amount and Period of Performance

- **Funding: Up to \$100,000.**
- **Period of performance:** Up to 18 months, if necessary, per the size and scope of the project.
- Applicants must address all components noted in the section titled [Criteria for Planning Grants](#).

## Eligible Activities for Planning Grants

INSPIRE planning grants are designed to help eligible organizations develop evidence-based plans for [SUD recovery ecosystem](#) programs, which may be implemented in the future. Applicants should explain how their planning project will help them prepare to expand, create, or improve a recovery ecosystem. **Planning grant applicants should not assume that ARC funding will be available for future implementation of the plans and strategies developed.**

Planning activities may include but are not limited to creating strategies to strengthen partnerships or coalitions, conducting community needs assessments and gap analysis, and developing training and employment readiness plans for certifications in high demand jobs.

## Criteria for Planning Grants

### Scoring Applications

INSPIRE planning grant applications will be scored based on the criteria in the scoring matrix below. Keep the following questions in mind:

- In the "Project Narrative" section, does the applicant outline a clear strategy for researching and analyzing the SUD recovery ecosystem and workforce entry or reentry for individuals affected by SUD?
- In the budget, are the financials appropriate and reasonable for the scope of work?

ARC will also assess whether the applicant effectively uses data and evidence-based practices to create a strong proposal. The proposal should demonstrate plans to research local, state, or regional assets, barriers, and activities related to SUD and workforce development, aiming to build a recovery ecosystem or [Recovery-Ready Workplace \(RRW\)](#) model.

Scoring Matrix for INSPIRE Planning Projects	
<b>A. Executive Summary</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete the required INSPIRE fiscal year 2026 "Executive Summary" section in the "Project Info" tab of Pathways to provide information on project purpose, key activities, partnerships and applicant information.</li></ul>	Required
<b>B. Competitive Priority Points</b>	Up to 5 pts
<b>INSPIRE Implementation Grantee Status</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The applicant has not previously received an INSPIRE implementation grant as the prime grantee.</li></ul>	3
<b>Opportunity Zone Impact</b>	2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed project serves at least one Opportunity Zone (designated census tract).</li> </ul>	
<b>C. Project Narrative</b>	Up to 40 pts
<b>Project Description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a description of the applicant’s organizational mission and work, including target populations and <a href="#">Appalachian counties served by ARC</a>.</li> <li>Describe the project’s primary purpose, geographic scope, primary activities, and projected outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Required as an Attachment:</b> Include a map of the project service area</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	10
<b>INSPIRE Priorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the INSPIRE funding priority(ies) the project addresses and how the project’s primary activities align to those priorities.</li> <li>How does the mission of the organization align with the priorities of the INSPIRE Initiative. (See <a href="#">Program Description</a> for the list of priorities.)</li> </ul>	5
<b>Leveraging of Existing Community Efforts and Evidence-Based Practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide an explanation of how the project leverages or contributes to existing efforts in your community to assess or plan for workforce entry and reentry for individuals affected by SUD. If no efforts exist, explain how this project will address those gaps.</li> <li><b>Required as an Attachment:</b> Evidence for Local Demand (e.g. Letters of demand from community stakeholders discussing the need for the project, documented gaps or efforts noted in a Chamber of Commerce report or local economic development plan, etc.)</li> <li>Describe how your plan will incorporate or analyze existing evidence-based practices about effective strategies to help individuals affected by SUD enter or re-enter the workforce.</li> </ul>	10
<b>Transition to Implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify how data and/or information will be collected and used to implement a project in the future or build on the evidence base related to Recovery-Ready Workplace (RRW) model and the SUD recovery ecosystem.</li> <li>Explain how the outputs and outcomes of this project may be used to implement a project in the future or build on the evidence base around RRW and the SUD ecosystem.</li> <li>Applicants should also discuss potential funding sources to facilitate the project beyond the ARC INSPIRE Initiative.</li> </ul>	10
<b>Workplan/Timeline</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Required as an attachment–</b> <a href="#">Appendix 3: Workplan and Timeline</a>. Include a detailed project workplan and timeline using the provided template.</li> </ul>	5
<b>D. Project Team</b>	Up to 12 pts

<p><b>Organizational Capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate the project team’s qualifications to undertake/accomplish the proposed scope of work, including but not limited to all of the following: the project team’s expertise and experience managing sizeable grants and federal awards; familiarity with federal grant regulations; and the organization’s establishment of written policies and procedures for the management of federal grants that may be applied to the INSPIRE grant, if awarded (<a href="#">Appendix 5</a>). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Required as Attachment:</b> Include resumes or qualification documents for key personnel.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Note:</b> Project teams that include partners named in more than one INSPIRE application should address their partner’s capacity to fulfill the scope of work of multiple projects, if successfully awarded.</li> </ul>	7
<p><b>Partnerships/Roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include the names of your partners in this project. <u>Multi-state projects must list partners for each participating state.</u></li> <li>Identify whether the partner is a subrecipient, procured contractor, or another supporting partner.</li> <li>Explain how these partners are strategically positioned to support the activities in your project’s scope of work, and how they will help to analyze, expand, or create the <a href="#">RRW model</a> and <a href="#">SUD recovery ecosystem</a>.</li> <li>Explain how project staff and partners are engaged with the community that would benefit from the proposed project.</li> <li>If applicable, explain how this project will help your organization grow and establish new partnerships.</li> </ul>	5
<p><b>E. Projected Outputs</b></p>	Up to 5 pts
<p><b>ARC Performance Measures</b> (see <a href="#">Appendix 6: Performance Measures</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Required performance measures for planning grants</b> include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of <b>plans/reports</b>: This could include asset mapping, strategic or master plans, program concepts, ecosystem improvement or evaluation plans, feasibility studies, or curriculum development.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	5
<p><b>F. ARC and State Strategic Plan Alignment</b></p>	Up to 12 pts
<p><b>ARC Strategic Plan Alignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how your project aligns with <b>at least one of the five goals within <a href="#">ARC’s Strategic Plan</a></b>. At a minimum, all project proposals must align with Goal 2 of ARC’s strategic plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Goal 2: Workforce Development</b> - <i>Expand and strengthen systems that help Appalachians obtain a job, stay on the job, and advance along a financially sustaining career pathway.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	6
<p><b>State Strategic Plan Alignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how your project aligns with <b>the goals of the strategy statements of the state(s)</b> where your project will be operating.</li> </ul>	6
<p><b>G. Budget</b></p>	Up to 12 pts

<p>See <a href="#">Appendix 7: Tips for Completing Your Budget</a></p> <p><b>Detailed Budget:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a detailed budget that lists the uses of ARC funds and all non-ARC matching funds and includes a detailed explanation of expenditures. Applicants should include cost category, the associated line-item name, a brief description and calculation of cost, and the breakdown between ARC and match funding sources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ All items in the detailed budget must reflect the level of detail requested in the proposal.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Round to the nearest dollar. Do not include cents.</li> <li>• <b>If including equipment and supplies</b>, attach a separate list that breaks down per unit costs and quantity.</li> <li>• If the budget includes key personnel, estimate the number of hours/days and hourly rate (or portion of FTE and salary) for the time that is expected to be spent on the proposed project. This includes consultants and subrecipients. (After a grant is awarded, all time should be tracked by actual hours worked individually)</li> <li>• Include all costs associated with a contractor’s scope of work in the “contractual” line item (i.e., estimates for key deliverables, wages, travel, etc.).</li> <li>• <b>If you use a NICRA for indirect costs</b>, submit your NICRA as an attachment.</li> <li>• <b>Note:</b> Applicants may use ARC’s budget narrative template as a resource to develop their detailed budget which aligns to the budget narrative in the application (located in Appendix 7). This may be used as a resource but should not be submitted with your application in Pathways.</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify all project funding sources by contributor and contributor type (e.g., ARC, other federal, state, other).</li> <li>• Identify funding type as either cash or in-kind (ARC will always be cash), total funding amount for each source, and the status of that funding (proposed, pending, or committed). <b>Resources listed as match must be confirmed and accessible by September 2, 2026.</b></li> <li>• <b>Required as attachments: Include a match commitment letter from each funding source</b> that specifies the amount of funds committed and the type of funds committed (e.g., grant, loan, cash, in-kind, etc.).</li> <li>• Provide descriptions of in-kind resources, including the methods used to determine their value. These can be included as funding notes and/or incorporated into match commitment letters.</li> </ul>	12
<b>H. Long-Term Impact</b>	Up to 6 pts
<p><b>Long-term Impact to the Community/Region</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe how stakeholders believe the project will contribute to long-term community and economic development in the region.</li> </ul>	6
<b>I. Feasibility</b>	Up to 8 pts
<b>Feasibility</b>	8

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how the project will be successfully achieved, according to the timeline, budget, workplan, project activities, and key personnel described in the application. If there are potential challenges that may hinder the project's success or feasibility, explain how the project team will navigate and explore solutions.</li> </ul>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

### Proprietary Information

ARC records of its doings and transactions are made available for public inspection pursuant to the [Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965](#), as amended, 40 USC 14308, and ARC's Open Records Policy ([ARC Code](#) Section 4.5). Applicants must identify and mark all confidential and/or proprietary documents they deem appropriate to submit with their application.

## (5) Application Submission Criteria & Requirements

Once invited to submit a full application, applicants must complete the provided application within [Pathways](#). The scoring matrices for both implementation and planning grants may be used as checklists to assist applicants in completing their final grant application.

- Applicants must adhere to the word count limits noted in various sections of the application. Additionally, attachments should be uploaded as PDF documents and are limited to a total of 50 pages of uploaded documents.
- Applicants must provide comprehensive project narrative responses that address all the criteria and priorities noted in this NOSA.
- To apply, applicants must have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) and an active SAM.gov registration.**

### Remember:

- ✓ Applicant must meet [eligibility requirements](#) ([see page 3](#)).
- ✓ Applicant must complete and submit the full application in Pathways and attach all required documentation. See scoring matrices for implementation and planning grant application requirements (pages 11–21).
- ✓ ARC recommends applicants [register in Pathways](#) by May 5, 2026 to ensure a user profile is successfully created ahead of the deadline.
- ✓ Eligible lead applicants may not submit more than one application.
- ✓ Application must meet the [ARC matching requirement](#) for the proposed service area (see page 5).
- ✓ Applicants must submit a letter of intent (LOI) to ARC no later than May 12, 2026 at 5 p.m. ET. See [page 8](#) to review submission instructions.
- ✓ Applicants must contact their state program manager before submitting the LOI.

## Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)

### Applicants are required to do the following:

- ✓ Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) ([SAM.gov](#)) before submitting an application.
- ✓ Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number in their application.
- ✓ 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.

## Application

**Applications must be electronically submitted using Pathways no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on June 15, 2026.**

- Applicants are required to complete the application in full within Pathways, including any required attachments.

For more information about accessing Pathways and submitting an INSPIRE application, review the [Pathways How-To Guide for External Users](#).

- ! **ARC cannot accept** emailed, faxed or mailed applications.
- ! **ARC cannot accept late applications.** If you encounter technical problems in Pathways, please contact [pathways-support@arc.gov](mailto:pathways-support@arc.gov). **Note:** Applicants who are having issues in the final hours of submission on June 15, 2026, may not get their issues resolved; thus, ARC encourages applicants to submit early to avoid any technical problems.

### Application Validation

ARC will check the application to make sure it is complete, accurate, and meets all eligibility requirements. **ARC will reject applications that are missing required information, contain critical errors, deviate significantly from the LOI and/or fail to demonstrate eligibility.**

## (6) Application Review Information

Your INSPIRE application will be reviewed by state and federal partners. It will also be reviewed by external subject matter experts focused on SUD recovery and economic development. Learn more about [ARC's federal-state-local partnership structure](#).

### Indirect Costs

Applicants may use one of the following indirect cost rates:

- If you have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), provide an explanation of how the indirect costs are calculated in the Match and Budget Evaluation section of the application narrative. This explanation should include which portion of each line item, along with the associated costs, are included in your cost allocation base. Also, provide a current version of the NICRA.
- An organization that does not currently have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 15% based on modified total direct costs, as defined in [2 CFR § 200.1](#) and below. No documentation is required to justify the 15% de minimis indirect cost rate, which may be used indefinitely. See [2 CFR § 200.414\(f\)](#) for more information on use of the de minimis rate.

When included in a project budget, indirect costs are a component of the project concept that is evaluated in the scoring process. ARC will consider more favorably grant applications that will yield greater return on the direct activities of the grant award. Grant applicants are encouraged to consider this policy when determining how to make their application more competitive.

### Risk Review

Before awarding a grant, ARC will assess the risk of all INSPIRE Initiative applicants. ARC will check to see if the project will be properly managed, operated, and maintained, in accordance

with ARC and federal requirements. See 40 U.S.C. 14322(b), ARC's [Project Guidelines Section 4](#), and [2 CFR § 200.206\(b\)](#).

As part of the risk assessment, ARC may review information about the applicant in the System for Award Management (SAM) to evaluate the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and performance history with federal grants (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). Applicants can review and comment on their own information in SAM, which ARC will consider when performing this evaluation.

ARC can reject an application if the risk assessment raises concerns about the applicant's ability to meet the grant's objectives and requirements.

## (7) Award Notices

**If your INSPIRE application is not being considered for funding**—ARC will notify you no later than 120 days after the application submission deadline of June 15, 2026.

**If your INSPIRE application is being considered for funding**—After your application has been reviewed, ARC will inform you that your project is being considered for funding. You will also receive an automated email from ARC's grants management system confirming that ARC staff members are reviewing your application. In this email, you will also receive a project number that ARC has assigned to the application.

- ! **IMPORTANT NOTE: Receiving communication/emails/notifications from ARC does not mean your INSPIRE project has officially been approved for funding.** There are multiple steps, reviews, and approvals required before final funding approval. Additionally, ARC does not provide pre-award funds, and if an applicant begins project activities before the approved grant start date and/or without a fully executed grant agreement, they do so at their own risk.

ARC reserves the right to negotiate the budget costs with applicants selected to receive awards. As such, ARC may request that you remove or adjust certain proposed costs. ARC may also ask you to adjust objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information related to any aspect of the application.

**Funding approval**—The ARC Federal Co-Chair and respective state official provide final approval of INSPIRE project funding. An electronic grant agreement must be officially signed before INSPIRE funding is valid.

## (8) Post-Award Administration

**Please familiarize yourself with ARC's grant administration and management requirements here:** [ARC Grant Administration Manual for Non-Construction Grants](#).

**Regulations, restrictions, and requirements.** ARC awards are subject to the requirements of the [Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, as amended \(40 U.S.C. §§ 14101–14704\)](#), and the [ARC Code](#) (see Chapter 8). They are also subject to many of the same regulations, restrictions, and requirements as other federal grants. These include but are not limited to 2 CFR 200; 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).

**Reporting.** Recipients of non-construction grants must adhere to ARC reporting requirements, which are detailed in the [ARC Grant Administration Manual for Non-](#)

[Construction Grants](#). However, ARC reserves the right to change the reporting time periods and, depending on the nature of the project, may request additional data related to project progress and milestones.

**Project Modifications.** Applicants must have strong confidence in their ability to complete their proposed scope of work and achieve projected impacts with the project budget as submitted. ARC's ability to approve any post-award project revisions will be limited. As these applications were competitively scored, modifications that would have likely affected that score will not be considered.

## General Disclosures

ARC INSPIRE Initiative awards will be made only to the extent that funds are available. Publication of this NOSA does not obligate ARC to award any specific grant or cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds. Notwithstanding any other provision of this NOSA, ARC reserves the right to award grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts to organizations that best meet the requirements of the NOSA. ARC solely reserves the right to accept or reject any or all responses received from this NOSA; to negotiate with all qualified sources; or to cancel in part or in its entirety this NOSA if it is in the interests of ARC to do so.

**Note:** ARC will not reimburse any costs associated with preparing a response to this NOSA. 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 NOSA.

Grants awarded under the INSPIRE program are subject to the provisions of the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, as amended, 40 USC Sec. 14101 *et seq.*, the Appalachian Regional Commission Code, and other terms and conditions set forth in the grant agreement.

ARC may terminate all or a part of your award as described under 2 CFR 200.340 through 200.343 pursuant to the terms and conditions of your award, including, to the extent authorized by law:

- if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities; or
- in the case of a partial termination, if ARC determines that the remaining portion of the award will not accomplish the purposes for which the ARC award was made.

ARC may also impose specific conditions on your award or take other remedies as described by 2 CFR 200.339 through 200.343, if you do not comply with your award terms and conditions.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Pathways How-To Guide for External Users

Review the [Pathways How-To Guide for External Users](#) for guidance on the following (and more):

- **Registering Your Organization**
- **If You Were Invited to Collaborate**
- **Inviting Collaborators**
- **Managing Multiple Roles in Pathways**

## Appendix 2: Subrecipient vs. Contractor Determinations and Subrecipient Monitoring

- If necessary for your proposal, see subsequent guidance identifying subrecipients vs. contractors: [Code of Federal Regulations—Subrecipient and Contractor Determinations](#)
- This link provides an explanation of requirements for entities that make subawards: [Code of Federal Regulations – Requirements for Pass-Through Entities](#)

## Appendix 3: Workplan and Timeline Template

- [Workplan and timeline template](#) (required for applicant use).

## Appendix 4: Application and Program Development Resources

- [Resource guide](#)

## Appendix 5: Grant Compliance Resources

- [Grant Compliance Guide](#)
- [Policies and Procedures Checklist](#)

## Appendix 6: INSPIRE Performance Measures

- [INSPIRE performance measures](#)

## Appendix 7: Tips for Completing your Budget

- Access the [budget narrative template](#) on arc.gov. Please note there is a separate sheet in this worksheet for INSPIRE applicants.
  - Applicants are encouraged to use ARC's budget narrative template to develop their detailed budget, but it should not be uploaded into Pathways.
- ARC's website contains more information on [ARC Match Requirements](#), including a [tool applicants can use to calculate their cost share](#). ARC's [Understanding Match](#) video is another helpful resource.
- Applicants may choose to use a 15% de minimis indirect cost rate or a different indirect cost rate that has been approved by another federal agency. The rate may be applied against the Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) base (see [2 CFR § 200.1 "Modified Total Direct Cost \(MTDC\)](#)). Please review [2 CFR § 200.414](#) and the budget narrative (above) to determine the appropriate rate and calculation of your indirect costs.

## Appendix 8: Background on the INSPIRE Initiative

- [INSPIRE Initiative background](#)