

Assessing the Economic Effects of ARC's Investments in Appalachia

RFP Questions & Answers

May 20, 2026

Q: Are you accepting proposals from individuals or from firms/companies only?

A: Yes, we will accept proposals from individuals. Please note that individuals are subject to all the same proposal requirements as are listed in the RFP.

Q: Is the difference-in-differences research comparing Appalachian and non-Appalachian counties, similar to what was done in the 2015 report, the minimum research required for this RFP? If not, what else is required?

A: The quasi-experimental comparison of Appalachian and non-Appalachian counties over time, similar to what was done in the 2015 report, is the minimum research required for this RFP. However, offerors are encouraged to include methodological enhancements and additional analyses that may strengthen the overall research design. Input-output analysis is one example, but offerors are encouraged to suggest any quantitative and/or qualitative methods they believe are best-suited at achieving the primary objectives of the RFP.

Q: Is qualitative research permitted as an optional part of this research?

A: Yes, qualitative research is permitted.

Q: While the RFP's scope is primarily quantitative, we would like to confirm whether ARC anticipates any qualitative components, such as case studies or stakeholder perspectives. If so, have key stakeholders already been identified, and does ARC have a preferred stakeholder engagement framework in mind?

A: Qualitative research may be included but is not required. Key stakeholders have not been identified. Any proposal that includes a qualitative research element should include a thorough plan for engaging stakeholders, including a clear description of ARC's involvement in any outreach.

Q: Are data on ARC assistance for geographic areas below the county level (e.g., for municipalities, unincorporated areas, or census tracts) available from ARC for use in an optional part of this research?

A: Most data on ARC grants includes the state and counties in each project's area but no further geographic information. As a result, sub-county analysis using ARC grants data is generally not feasible.

Q: Could ARC clarify the grant data's time coverage (i.e., earliest and latest available year), frequency and recipient/project details such as sector identifiers?

A: ARC maintains grants data dating back to 1966. These records generally include geographic information on the project area, fiscal year of award, grantee type, a broad category classifying the type of grant, title of the project, and, in more recent years, a project description. Funding amounts are also included, as well as a breakdown by the type of funds in each project (ARC funds, local funds, state funds, and other federal funds). Please note that data availability varies over the time, with earlier records generally containing less information than more recent grants.

Q: The RFP notes that ARC will provide data on all grants, including funding amounts, program areas and counties served. Beyond this internal grant data, does ARC have access to any additional regional or local datasets that could support this analysis?

A: ARC will not be providing any additional proprietary datasets. ARC generally relies on publicly available data for its research and economic status classifications. These datasets are available through the appropriate government agencies; compiled, Appalachian-specific versions are also frequently available on ARC's website.

Q: Beyond the outcomes used in the 2015 study, are there specific additional outcomes ARC would like prioritized (e.g., healthcare access or coverage, housing affordability, crime)?

A: There are no specific additional outcomes ARC would like prioritized. ARC is open to including additional or alternative outcomes than those used in the 2015 report, provided they are grounded in existing literature or economic theory.

Q: To what extent is ARC able to assist with the data collection process, such as facilitating introductions to Local Development Districts (LDDs) or state agencies?

A: ARC is able to assist with introductions to LDDs and state agencies, if required.

Q: Understanding the primary audience will help shape how we structure the final report and executive summary. Is this study intended primarily as an internal policy and planning tool, a broader public communications piece, or somewhere in between?

A: Like with all of ARC's research efforts, the final deliverables should appeal to a wide range of stakeholders. The executive summary should be designed for a wide audience whereas the final report may include more technical language.

Q: How does ARC envision using the findings operationally or strategically after completion of the study other than reporting to Congress and the states? At present, the RFP emphasizes estimating impact and comparing Appalachian counties to matched non-Appalachian counties, but it is much less clear on whether ARC wants actionable recommendations regarding future investment targeting, program structure, sector focus, or regional strategy.

A: ARC regularly undertakes evaluations of its programs and, as mandated by its code, undergoes a strategic planning process in which input is gathered from a wide range of stakeholders from across the region. Both of these activities inform ARC's strategies, from individual grant performance and program structure to broader regional strategy and targeting of investments.

With this current research, ARC's goal was stated in the RFP: "The Commission's purpose for undertaking this work is to estimate ARC's economic impact and examine the economic performance of counties receiving ARC investments compared to similar counties that have not received those investments. While ARC collects extensive data on its grants and regularly evaluates performance, this research aims to assess ARC's broader influence."

If an offeror is able to provide meaningful suggestions and actionable recommendations based on the core research activities of the RFP, they are welcome to do so. But this is not a requirement.