



# ARC APPLICATION GUIDANCE

## Community Capacity Building Projects

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For general guidance on how to develop a complete and competitive application for ARC project funding, all applicants should refer to the application framework and instructions detailed in the [Checklist for ARC Non-Construction Project Applications form](#) or the [Checklist for ARC Construction Project Applications form](#), as appropriate, available at [www.arc.gov/forms](http://www.arc.gov/forms). Applicants should also consult their state's Appalachian Development Plan and Annual Strategy Statement for additional information.

This document provides more specific guidance for applicants whose proposed projects are in the area of **community capacity building** or include **community capacity building activities**. As projects may incorporate a range of types of development activities or investments, ARC encourages applicants to consider all of the elements of a project's proposed scope of work and refer to any specific guidance for each type of activity included.

*All application guidance is grounded in the goals and principles of ARC's [2016–2020 Strategic Plan](#), which emphasize strategic focus, collaboration, sustainability, and measurable impact in ARC investments.*

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ARC investment in community capacity building helps Appalachian communities generate positive economic impacts and foster increased community resilience. These investments build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations enabling them to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development. Supported projects typically focus on short-term outcomes including, but not limited to, increased opportunities for current and next-generation community leaders to build skills and gain knowledge; improved inter-organizational collaboration and networking; enhanced community engagement in local and regional visioning and planning efforts. Generally, ARC categorizes community capacity building activities under [Goal 5](#) of its strategic plan; however, other goals may be relevant.

### **Examples of eligible community capacity building projects include, but are not limited to:**

- Assessing a community or region's assets, developing a strategic plan for community and economic development, and determining solutions to address identified challenges or opportunities, including those that build local and regional economic resilience
- Providing technical assistance to establish a community leadership program and increase local and next-generation engagement
- Increasing community involvement by engaging a diverse coalition of residents, generating common purpose, developing skills and knowledge for leading positive change and improved interaction across lines of race, class, age, and other social barriers
- Expanding a community philanthropy effort by investing in organizational development, collaboration, and networking strategies
- Establishing or strengthening an organization, community foundation, program, or association

### **Key Principles of ARC Community Capacity Building Investments**

As outlined in ARC's strategic plan, activities should be strategic, collaborative, sustainable and impactful.

#### ***Strategic:***

- Applicants should consider how the project fits within a larger, strategic regional vision.
- Applicants should detail how the local community was engaged in the project's development.

- Applicants should describe how the project reflects an awareness of the community’s capacity and its economic development opportunities.

**Collaborative:**

- Cross-sector partnerships are considered an important community asset that influence the success and sustainability of community capacity building. The roles and level of commitment of strategic partners should be defined and agreed upon by all parties.

**Sustainable:**

- Project activity should ensure lasting value and impact. Implementation of community-driven strategies should be implemented in a manner that leave assets in place upon project completion.
- Applicants should identify the plan for programmatic sustainability, leadership sustainability, program expansion or modification. If the project requires financial support to continue, specific strategies for maintaining service after ARC funds are no longer available should be detailed.

**Impactful:**

- Applicants should detail what will be changed as a result of this project and how it will be measured and verified. Discussion should include how the proposed project will enhance the capacity of individual community members, organizations, or the overall community; or how economic or social conditions might improve as a direct result of planned project activities.
- Applicants should refer to the Guide for ARC Project Performance Measures for information on determining appropriate project measures. Typical outcomes for community capacity building projects include: number of participants or leaders improved (with a description of how the improvement will be determined and how it will benefit the community); number of programs implemented; and/or number of organizations improved. The timeframe for outcomes to be measured is within one year of project completion.

**Other Considerations**

- Building community capacity often requires a set of interconnected strategies and initiatives. Community capacity and local leadership are intertwined and equally important to community change efforts, particularly in rural communities. It is essential to have long-term involvement from local leaders who make meaningful, sustained contributions to community capacity building efforts.
- Consider using small ARC investments in short-term community capacity building projects to mobilize local resources, gain leadership experience, and strengthen community institutions and networks.
- ARC funds are not well-suited for routine community planning processes such as comprehensive plans or the development of local ordinances and regulations.

**Helpful Resources**

- *Asset-Based Economic Development: Building Sustainable Small and Rural Communities*. ICMA Center for Sustainable Communities (2012).
- *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets*. (Asset-Based Community Development). Kretzmann, John P. and McKnight, John L. (1993).
- *Community Resilience*. RAND Corporation.
- *Creative Place Making*. Markusen, A. and Gadwa, A. (2010).
- *Measuring Community Capacity Building: A Workbook in Progress for Rural Communities*. Aspen Institute. (1996).
- *Spiraling Up: Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework*. Journal of the Community Development Society. Emery, M. and Flora, C. (April 2006).
- *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations: A Guide for Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*. Fourth Edition. Bryson, John M. (2011).
- *Wicked Problems: Problems Worth Solving*. Austin Center for Design. Kolbo, J. (2012).