



Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA)

2024-25 *READY* Community Foundations Training Program

This notice of solicitation of applications (NOSA) gives an overview of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) *READY* Community Foundations training program.

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| NOSA release date | May 30, 2024 |
| Application portal opens | May 30, 2024 View here |
| Pre-application Webinar | June 13, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. ET Register here |
| Applications due | July 5, 2024 (5:00 p.m. ET) |
| Applicants notified of selection status | Week of August 19, 2024 |

Detailed information about the *READY* Community Foundations training program and further guidance on submission is available below. Official application submission will take place [in this portal](#).

Questions can be emailed to READY@purposepossible.com.

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1.0 Introduction

READY Appalachia provides direct technical assistance and capacity-building to support four key pillars of economic and community development in the region: Appalachian local governments, local development districts (LDDs), nonprofit organizations, and community foundations.

The purpose of *READY Community Foundations* is to train local community foundation executives, as well as their staffs and board members, in effective operations, fundraising, and programming specific to community foundations. Participants will engage in six weeks of virtual cohort-based learning and skill development.

ARC recognizes that in many areas of Appalachia, community foundations represent the only philanthropic option in their communities, by providing funding to local non-profits, tax-advantaged accounts for donors, and partnership to organizations providing critical services to the community. Through this initiative, ARC aims to support the community foundations sector to develop organizational capacity and leverage other resources to improve quality of life and foster economic and community development in their communities. *READY Community Foundations* will train leaders in effective operations, fundraising, and programming specific to community foundations. Such skills will enable them to better serve the underserved communities of Appalachia and maintain themselves organizationally over time, building out the community/place-based philanthropy sector more generally across Appalachia.

ARC recognizes that providing assistance specific to community foundations represents long-term investment into underserved Appalachian nonprofit organizations and governments. Through this initiative, ARC also seeks to address historic inequities for marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities, who will be given preference in the selection process. Special emphasis will be placed on serving Appalachia’s most underrepresented communities, including [economically distressed counties and census tracts](#), [counties targeted by the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities](#), [Rural Partners Network Community Networks](#), and historically underserved and marginalized populations (please see [FAQ](#) for more information).

Upon successful completion of the training component, eligible participants may apply the lessons learned during the training program by going through the complete lifecycle of a grant awarded by ARC. This grant award, of up to \$25,000 for each entity with an optional match commitment, will allow the community foundation to implement an internal capacity-building project, which can focus on a need identified during the training component. The instructor and consultants for the training program will not participate in the grant making and selection process for the ARC grant portion of the program.

2.0 General Program Information

2.1 Appalachian Regional Commission Overview

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal and state governments serving 423 counties across the Appalachian Region. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, ARC is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states, as well as a Federal Co-Chair appointed by the president of the United States and confirmed by the Senate. Annually, the group of governors elects one governor to serve as the State's Co-Chair. ARC serves a 206,000-square-mile region of 26 million people that 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.

ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation. ARC funds projects that address the five investment priorities identified in its strategic plan:

1. Building Appalachian Businesses
2. Building Appalachia's Workforce Ecosystem
3. Building Appalachia's Infrastructure
4. Building Regional Culture and Tourism
5. Building Community Leaders and Capacity

Annually, ARC provides funding for approximately 700 projects in the Appalachian Region that support business development, education and job training, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, and transportation. These projects create thousands of new jobs, improve local water and wastewater systems, train the region's workforce, assist local communities with strategic planning, and provide entrepreneurial assistance to emerging businesses. Additional information about ARC can be found at www.arc.gov.

2.2 Program Description

READY Community Foundations comprises two components:

2.2.a Training Program: The first component is a training program through which participants learn and improve their skills in all matters related to effective operations, fundraising, and programming specific to community foundations.

This training program will include six weeks of cohort-based virtual classes with small group discussions, and three one-to-one consultations with the instructor. The course materials and homework assignments will be actionable, tool-based, and grounded in real-life situations faced by community foundations rather than based on theory. The courses are designed in

an interactive format that allows participants to use the tools and materials in their work immediately following the course. Three months following the completion of the course, each community foundation will have one optional follow-up consultation to discuss their experience with the program and to discuss existing or anticipated stumbling blocks, plans for the future, and plans to pursue an ARC grant.

READY Community Foundations offers three course curriculum options to participants. Please see the [course options](#) to learn when each of these courses will be offered. [Each course curriculum](#) consists of two introductory classes followed by four advanced classes. Each participating community foundation will choose one of three course options to complete throughout the program. Participants should select their preferred course based on their community foundation's needs.

2.2.b Grant Program: Upon completion of the training, the second component of *READY Community Foundations* includes an opportunity for participants to apply for an ARC grant, using the lessons learned from the training in the grant's lifecycle. This grant award, up to \$25,000 for each community foundation, will be a capacity-building financial assistance award for the community foundation itself with optional match commitment, which can focus on a need identified during the training component (note: construction and funding endowments for grantmaking activities for the community foundations will not be allowable). A separate application process will be published for the grant portion of the program. Only community foundations whose participants successfully complete the training program are eligible to apply for the grant award.

2.3 Program Eligibility | Who Can Apply

Before beginning the application process for the training program, please ensure that your community foundation is eligible.

2.3.a Eligible Community Foundations: Eligible community foundations must be considered grantmaking public charities that are dedicated to improving the lives of people in a defined local geographic area. They bring together the financial resources of individuals, families, and businesses to support effective nonprofits in their communities¹. Additional criteria of an eligible community foundation include:

- Designation as a tax-exempt public charity organization, as evidenced by a letter from the IRS recognizing the organization as a tax-exempt public charity under the IRS rules and regulations. Community foundations will be asked to upload a copy of their tax-exempt status to the application portal.
- Serving [communities in Appalachia](#).

2.3.b Eligible Participants: Each community foundation must have two participants.

- Primary participant
 - Community foundation executive director (or equivalent)
- Secondary participant
 - Community foundation staff member (e.g., Development Director, Operations Manager, Program Director, Finance Director, HR Director, etc.), or
 - Community foundation board member, or

¹ Citation: <https://cof.org/foundation-type/community-foundations>

- o An active community member/donor, or
- o Another relevant individual.

The training program has space for two participants from up to 30 community foundations, or 60 total participants. The primary participant must be the Executive Director, or equivalent, of the community foundation, and the secondary participant may be determined at the discretion of the community foundation, depending on their goals in participating in the program. For example, the secondary participant could be a fellow staff member (e.g., Development Director, Operations Manager, Program Director, Finance Director, HR Director, etc.), a board member, an active community member/donor, or another relevant individual. This method allows for flexibility when it comes to the priorities or focus areas of the community foundation. In addition, having two participants from each community foundation ensures permeation of the effects of the training through the whole organization and sustainability of the impact over time.

If you have any questions about your eligibility, please contact the Purpose Possible application [support center](#).

2.4 Priority Communities and Populations

Special consideration will be given to community foundations serving:

- [Distressed counties and census tracts](#).
- Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities-[designated communities](#).
- Communities served by the [Rural Partners Network](#).
- Historically underserved and marginalized populations (please see [FAQ](#) for more information).

Additionally, lower-capacity community foundations, those in remote areas of the region, and those which ARC has not worked with before are encouraged to apply.

2.5 Program Participation | Requirements

READY Community Foundations training program requires two participants from up to 30 community foundation organizations, or 60 total participants. One of the two participants must be the executive director (or equivalent) of the community foundation. The second participant can be a fellow staff member, board member, active community member/donor, or other relevant individual, chosen by the applying community foundation. Both participants are expected to participate fully in the training program.

Attending virtual classes and one-to-one consultations is critical to the program's success and is required to be considered for [ARC's grant award](#). Both [participants](#) must attend at least five of the six classes and all three one-to-one consultations. In addition, participants will complete required weekly homework assignments outside of virtual classes. **ARC strongly encourages both participants to attend all virtual training classes and one-to-one consultations and complete all assignments promptly to derive the most value out of the program.** In total, participants will dedicate about 21-27 hours of time over a two-month period to the completion of the training program. Applicants should discern their availability to commit to these expectations before applying.

3.0 Course Curriculum | Overview

3.1 Course Components

The training program consists of completing a virtual six-week cohort-based course. During the course, participants will learn in virtual classes, complete homework and engage in one-to-one consultations.

3.1.a Virtual Classes

Throughout the six (6) week course, cohorts will meet each week for a two-hour virtual class consisting of instruction, interactive dialogue, and peer-to-peer learning. Classes will offer ample opportunity for group sharing among the cohorts in the *Popular Education model*, which acknowledges that teachers and learners aren't two distinct groups. Everyone teaches, and everyone learns.

3.1.b Pre-work and Homework

Prior to the first virtual class, participants will be asked to complete a brief online survey to collect baseline participant data. There will additionally be one homework assignment, not to exceed one hour, to be completed before the first virtual class. Once classes begin, participants will engage in one to two hours per week of homework in the form of suggested readings, thought exercises, and drafting sample plans following instructor-provided practical models.

3.1.c One-to-one Consultations

Participants will complete three one-to-one consultations with the instructor. Every other week, participants will engage in an hour-long one-to-one consultation tailored to the specific goals of each participating community foundation. The purpose of the one-to-one consultations is to apply and implement the learnings from the virtual classes to create or advance specific initiatives at your community foundation.

3.2 Program Curriculum

The program curriculum will address effective operations, fundraising, and programming specific to community foundations impacting Appalachia residents. The curriculum will align with the central theme of *Centering the Community*, particularly by embracing the philosophy of community-centered fundraising (CCF). One of the core principles central to the CCF movement is that "Individual organizational missions are not as important as the collective community." Each community foundation is as unique as the community it serves, and its efforts should always center its community's welfare above all else when making decisions.

3.2.a Course Options

Participants will complete training in one of the following three course options. Each of the three course options are offered at a different time throughout the program.

Course Option 1 (September – October 2024): Community-Centric Fundraising - Engaging Donors of All Types

Course Option 1 will open with two introductory classes to set the groundwork for what managing a community foundation requires. Topics will include:

- Foundation-specific financial management systems.
- Endowment investing.
- Endowment accounting.
- Hiring and human resources.
- Affiliate Models for community foundations.

Building upon the introductory classes, this course will explore how community members can support your mission in various ways, from donations to lending time, talent, testimony, and ties. Topics will include:

- How to engage donors of all sizes: Moving beyond Giving Tuesday and state-run giving days.
- How to identify and approach planned giving prospects.
- How to secure corporate support.
- The role of a community foundation board, and how to identify the type of board you want/need.
- How to find board members.
- How to involve board members in fundraising.

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Course Option 1: One to two hours of pre-work, including a pre-course survey and homework

Course Option 1: Once weekly two-hour class AND one to two hours of homework and one-to-one consultation* with instructor

*One-to-one consultations will occur every other week. Homework will be assigned each week.

Course Option 2 (October – December 2024): Community-Centric Grantmaking Programs

Course Option 2 will open with two introductory classes to set the groundwork for what managing a community foundation requires. Topics will include:

- Foundation-specific financial management systems.
- Endowment investing.
- Endowment accounting.
- Hiring and human resources.
- Affiliate Models for community foundations.

Building upon the introductory classes, this course will explore how to center community in your grantmaking processes. We will investigate simple techniques to make your process approachable, alternative grantmaking models, and offerings beyond grants. Topics will include:

- General operating vs. project support: What are you funding and why?
- More than grants: Alternative funding opportunities.
 - o Bridge loans
 - o Scholarships
- How to streamline your applications to get the information you need.
- Participatory grantmaking: Bringing in the community.
- Reporting requirements: How you can capture lightning in a bottle?

| October 2024 | | | | | | |
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Course Option 2: One to two hours of pre-work, including a pre-course survey and homework

Course Option 2: Once weekly two-hour class AND one to two hours of homework and one-to-one consultation* with instructor

**One-to-one consultations will occur every other week. Homework will be assigned each week.*

Course Option 3 (January – February 2025): Establishing a Community Impact Agenda

Course Option 3 will open with two introductory classes to set the groundwork for what managing a community foundation requires. Topics will include:

- Foundation-specific financial management systems.
- Endowment investing.
- Endowment accounting.
- Hiring and human resources.
- Affiliate models for community foundations.

Building upon the introductory classes, this course will focus on determining your mission and how to communicate it to various audiences effectively. Topics will include:

- How to understand your community’s needs.
 - Community engagement techniques and environmental scans.
- Establishing your mission, vision and values.
- Who are your audiences, and what do each of them need to know from you?
- Ethical storytelling practices.
- Methods for lifting up your nonprofit partners.
- Methods for lifting up community issues.

| December 2024 | | | | | | |
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| February 2025 | | | | | | |
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Course Option 3: One to two hours of pre-work, including a pre-course survey and homework

Course Option 3: Once weekly two-hour class AND one to two hours of homework and one-to-one consultation* with instructor

**One-to-one consultations will occur every other week. Homework will be assigned each week.*

3.2.b Course Preference and Virtual Class Scheduling

Participants will be selected to participate in one of three available six-week course options described in [3.2.a](#). When submitting an application, applicants will indicate their preference for the course that best fits their organization’s short-term and long-term goals. Participants will complete the course with other community foundations in [small cohorts](#).

Once selected for the program, participants will be asked to provide their availability for attending the virtual classes, allowing the instructor to set a consistent day/time that works best for each cohort. Once confirmed, days and times will remain the same for the duration of the six-week course. For more information on the schedule, please see the [FAQ](#).

3.3 Program Format | Cohorts and Instructor

The 30 community foundations selected will be organized into small groups (cohorts) to take each course, with no more than five community foundations per cohort. Participants will remain in their cohort throughout the course, enabling networking, fostering relationships, and thought-sharing partnerships.

Community foundations will be assigned to a cohort first based on course preference. In the application process, community foundations will rank the course selections to indicate their preference. If a course is particularly popular, it may require multiple cohorts. In this case, community foundations will be organized into cohorts based on staff size and then by similar issues or opportunities they hope to address in their communities.

Virtual classes will be conducted by an experienced instructor with guest subject matter experts to address specific subjects and topics. The instructor will guide learning and discussion. Participants are expected to lead one-to-one consultations, with the instructor providing customized technical assistance, answering questions, and ensuring the application of the learnings.

3.4 Post-Course Follow-up Consultation

The training program will also provide an optional one-hour follow-up consultation with each participating community foundation approximately 90 days after course completion. Follow-up consultations may be scheduled with each foundation to discuss their program experience and discuss any current stumbling blocks and plans for the future, particularly if they are pursuing an ARC grant award. Additionally, participants can discuss any questions about implementation and clarifications of technical concepts and tools learned during the training course.

3.5 Course Evaluations

A pre-course survey will be used to analyze skills, knowledge, governance, and long-term planning at the start of the course. A post-course evaluation survey will be conducted one week after course completion to analyze skills, knowledge, governance, and long-term planning changes. A second post-course evaluation will be held six months after course completion. Post-course evaluations will be confidential and serve the sole purpose of improving the *READY Community Foundations* process. Participant answers to surveys will not impact a participant's current or future relations with ARC.

4.0 Preparing and Submitting the Application

4.1 Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) Portal

The [Notice of Solicitation of Applications \(NOSA\) portal](#) will open on **May 30, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. ET and close on July 5, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. ET.**

4.2 Timeline | Schedule

| TIMELINE | DATE(s) |
|---|---|
| NOSA portal opens | May 30, 2024 at 9 a.m. ET |
| Pre-application Webinar | June 13, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. ET |
| NOSA portal closes | July 5, 2024 at 5 p.m. ET |
| Applicants will be notified of selection | Week of August 19, 2024 |
| READY Appalachia Community Foundations Training Program** | Courses will run for six weeks from September 16, 2024 through February 14, 2025 Refer to Section 3.2.a for the specific training course |
| One-to-one consultations with participants | One-to-one consultations will occur every other week during the six week courses which run from September 16, 2024 through February 14, 2025 Refer to Section 3.2.a for the specific training course |
| Optional follow-up consultation with participants | Consultations will occur from January 2025 through May 2025 |

**Please note that courses will not run concurrently.

4.3 How to Apply

- Provide all information requested in the [application](#).
- Address all eligibility criteria and provide complete responses to all questions.
- **Submit your application to ARC via the online portal no later than 5:00 p.m. ET on July 5, 2024.**

4.4 Pre-application Webinar

An informational, pre-application webinar will take place via Zoom on **Thursday, June 13, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. ET**. [Register here](#).

The webinar will walk applicants through the application portal process and answer frequently asked questions (FAQs). If you are unable to attend, the webinar will be recorded and posted on the ARC READY Appalachia website and disseminated to all registrants. In order to receive a link to the recorded webinar for later viewing, participants must register first.

5.0 Review and Selection Process

5.1 Assessment Criteria

Participants selected for this training program will be assessed through a competitive application process. Specific assessment criteria, weightings for each criterion, and discretionary or qualitative factors will be utilized in evaluating applications.

Considerations for selection include the following:

- Community foundations that serve priority communities and populations noted in [Section 2.4](#).
- The foundation's staff capacity and leadership experience. Priority will be given to foundations with limited capacity.
- The foundation's board capacity and governance practices.
- The foundation's alignment with [ARC's established Investment Priorities](#).
- Clear vision for organizational stabilization or growth and readiness for the training program.
- Commitment to implementing recommendations and strategies learned during training program including community-centric practices.

Thorough and complete responses to all application questions will be necessary to assess the readiness and alignment of the community foundation for this training program.

5.2 Review and Selection Process

An ARC review panel will review and select participants based upon eligibility and the assessment criteria above.

5.3 Award Notices

Applicants will be notified of selection by email in the week of August 19, 2024.

6.0 Support Center

6.1 Computer Requirements

The Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) portal supports the following browsers:

- Google Chrome (latest version recommended)
- Mozilla Firefox (latest version recommended)
- Safari (latest version recommended)

Virtual classes will be viewed best on a tablet or computer rather than a smartphone. Virtual classes will be offered using the Zoom application. Participants will be asked to join with video and audio, and a camera is required. It is recommended that participants take the necessary steps to have full access to the suite of functions and features of the application. Homework assignments may include reviewing digital articles, podcasts, videos and surveys. No homework will require a special subscription nor will it be pay-to-access content.

6.2 Troubleshooting | Contact Us

Please email READY@purposepossible.com for additional assistance.

7.0 General Disclosures

Publication of this NOSA does not obligate ARC to provide any specific training or award any grant or cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds for the *READY Appalachia* initiative. Training and grants in the *READY Appalachia* initiative will be made only to the extent that funds are available and at the sole discretion of ARC. Applicants intending to contract with a specific individual, consulting group, or organization with ARC funding must have and use a competitive procurement policy that conforms to procurement standards at 2 CFR 200.317-327.

This NOSA does not commit ARC to make any specific award. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this NOSA, ARC reserves the right to select entities for training, award grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts to communities or regions that best meet the requirements of the NOSA. ARC solely reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received as a result of this request; to negotiate with selected applicants; or to cancel in part or in its entirety this NOSA if it is in the interest of ARC to do so.

ARC will not reimburse any costs associated with the preparation or submittal of an application in 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 *READY Appalachia* initiative are subject to the provisions of the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965 as amended, 40 USC 14101 et. seq. (ARDA), the Appalachian Regional Commission Code, and other terms and conditions set forth in the grant agreement.

ARC records of its doings and transactions are made available for public inspection pursuant to ARDA and its Open Records Policy. Applicants must identify and mark all confidential and/or proprietary documents they deem appropriate to submit with their application.

Reference to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by ARC, its employees, members, officers, agents, successors in interest, or contractors. Applicants and participants use of any product, good, web platform or application, process, or service in connection with the *READY Appalachia Initiative* will be at their sole discretion. ARC assumes no legal liability or responsibility whatsoever for applicants, participants, or contractors use of the any product, good, web platform or application, process, or service in connection with the *READY Appalachia Initiative*.