

Evaluation of ARC’s Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Projects – RFP Questions and Answers

<p>Were there any challenges with data consistency or completeness/missing data for the quantitative performance measures in the grant portfolio?</p>	<p>ARC has not done a full analysis of the performance measures in the dataset, but we find that with every portfolio of grants, there may be a few cases of missing or difficult-to-interpret data. In addition, our current database has some quirks, such as zeroes that could indicate a true zero or a blank. One other consideration is that ARC has updated (post-closeout) measures for about a quarter of the included grants, but not for the rest, and one goal of this evaluation is to collect those remaining updated measures.</p>
<p>Are there any contextual factors about the implementation of these grants the ARC team thinks are important to know as we design an evaluation approach? We imagine the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected implementation, but are also curious if there is anything else that feels relevant.</p>	<p>Other than the pandemic, we are not aware of external factors that would have had an unusual impact on this set of grants.</p> <p>The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) became law in 2021 and has had an impact on ARC’s more recent tourism and outdoor recreation grants, but the grants in the portfolio to be evaluated pre-date IIJA.</p>
<p>Can organizational background materials include examples of similar products?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Are other types of appendices permissible besides resumes and organizational background materials?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Should the technical and cost proposals be combined into one document?</p>	<p>Yes, we request one Word file or PDF.</p>
<p>Is there a page limit for the cost proposal?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>In the Cost Proposal Section on page 8, it states “The contract awarded for this project will be a FIRM FIXED-PRICE CONTRACT, with a total budget not to exceed \$250,000....Proposals must contain all cost information, including direct labor costs (consistent with the staffing plan), labor overhead costs, travel, estimated cost of any subcontracts, other direct costs, total direct cost and overhead, and total cost and fee or profit.”</p> <p>Should the Cost Proposal indicate only the firm fixed price or should it break out all cost information (including direct labor costs (consistent with the staffing plan), labor overhead costs, travel, estimated cost of any subcontracts, other direct costs, total direct</p>	<p>The cost proposal should include all cost information, not just firm fixed price costs. Even though the contract award is a firm fixed-price contract, this information helps ARC reviewers assess cost effectiveness of proposals.</p>

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cost and overhead, and total cost and fee or profit)?	
How is cost effectiveness defined as it relates to proposal scoring and review?	We review the detailed cost proposal to ensure that costs appear to be reasonable for the proposed scope of work and the likelihood of maximizing the results.
Will all in-person meetings take place in Washington, DC?	We do not anticipate or require in-person meetings with ARC staff for this evaluation, but this would be an option. If in-person meetings occur with ARC staff, they would take place in Washington, DC. If the proposal includes site visits, those would occur at grantee sites throughout Appalachia.
Does the grant agreement establish an expectation of cooperation with post-grant evaluation activities such as responding to a survey or participating in a phone interview or phone round-table discussion?	ARC’s project guidelines note that the ARC Code “requires grantees and subgrantees to cooperate during post- award evaluations of grant outcomes and investment impacts, which may occur several years after project closeout.”
Do any of 170 grants in the portfolio have formal reporting requirements they still must meet?	Most grants included in this portfolio did not have formal reporting requirements once their grants closed, other than the expectation of cooperation with evaluations stated above. Starting in 2022, ARC sends an annual survey to former grantees whose grants closed three years prior, to request updated performance measures. Roughly 15 grants in the portfolio responded to the 2022 or 2023 survey.
Is there an expectation to review or verify past outcomes reported by grantees?	It is the grantee’s responsibility to report accurate numbers, and they may be asked for evidence during an audit process. We do not have the expectation that this evaluation will serve a similar audit purpose.
Is the list of grantees public, and if so, where can we see it?	The list of grantees is not publicly available.
Has this evaluation been performed before, and if so, when and by whom? Was ARC satisfied with the evaluation and can we view the prior report?	ARC routinely publishes evaluations of its own program portfolios, found on ARC’s website HERE . ARC last published an evaluation of its tourism portfolio

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Has a similar review of other ARC grant programs occurred? If so, what were those programs? What were the outcomes?	conducted by Regional Technology Strategies (RTS) in 2010 and ARC was satisfied with that effort, found HERE .
Has ARC previously gathered data post-reporting period? If so, what was the response rate?	Recently completed evaluations with a similar scope have achieved response rates between 50-70%.
What is the expectation for in-person participation and site visits?	This is not a requirement, but most recent evaluations have included in-person site visits. If your proposal includes in-person site visits, be sure to specify this in the management and cost proposals.
In addition to the information listed on page 6 (Data Provided) will also the metrics listed on page 4 (acreage, linear feet, square feet, businesses served and improved, communities served and improved, jobs created, leveraged private investment, new day and overnight visitors, participants served and improved, plans/reports) be provided in an electronic format?	Yes.
In the RFP under the section "Construction Projects" (on page 3), it states: "Many ARC tourism and outdoor recreation grants are administered by other federal or state agencies. This is because ARC does not administer any construction projects. Does this indicate that construction projects are not included and this is why or to say they are included but are administered differently than non-construction tourism and outdoor grants?	The latter – construction grants are included but are administered differently than non-construction tourism and outdoor grants.
Does ARC have specific statistical analyses you are seeking or is that up to proposers?	ARC does not have specific statistical analyses we are seeking. We recommend contractors to develop sound methodologies in order to accomplish its scope of work.
Do the data include demographic information about grantees?	ARC does not collect demographic information on its grantees or grantee beneficiaries, although it's possible some grantees will have this information in their records.
Can you provide more details about the capacity of ARC staff that will participate in this project, or details about the types of tasks it would be appropriate to ask for support on?	ARC evaluation and program staff typically provide input on evaluation design, data collection tools, and deliverables throughout the project lifecycle. We also assist with outreach to grantees about the evaluation, particularly for any data

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	collection processes. Proposals should specify how you envision ARC staff involvement.
Is the underlying methodology of IMPLAN considered to be valid by the Appalachian Regional Commission in assessing the economic impacts of its funding awards?	The underlying methodology of IMPLAN is considered valid by the ARC.
It appears from the RFP that any type of entity could submit a proposal whether that is a private company, non-profit, agency, or university. Am I reading that correctly?	That is correct.