

READY

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



Appalachian
Regional
Commission

THE APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

(ARC) is an economic development partnership entity of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 423 counties across the Appalachian Region. 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's "READY Appalachia: A Community Capacity-Building Initiative" provides direct technical assistance and funding to support four key pillars of economic development in the Region: Appalachian local governments, local development districts (LDDs), nonprofit organizations, and community foundations. The READY Local Governments training program is designed to help local governments in the Appalachian Region better apply for, manage, leverage, and implement federally funded projects to invest in infrastructure, business and workforce development, and other long-term solutions to improve the lives of residents.

The curriculum was created in partnership with GrantWorks and CO.STARTERS to provide a nine week virtual cohort-based training at no-cost to participants. While the content has been developed with local governments in mind, it is relevant to many types of organizations doing important economic development work in grant application development.



COURSE 8

**NEXT STEPS >
GO GET THAT GRANT!**



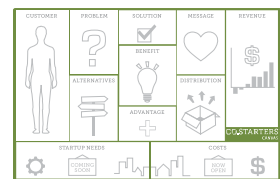
AS YOU ARRIVE...

(10 minutes)

Building on your course and fieldwork from last week, please make note of the following so you are fully prepared for today's session.

1. How did your milestone setting go using the *Project Management Planning* worksheets? What do you feel confident about? Where is there still more work to be done?
2. Based on your research, which project management software do you think will be the best fit for your project and organization?
3. Looking to the next 90 days, what are the biggest things you think you'll need to focus on coming out of the training?
4. Review your completed CO.STARTERS Canvas of your project. Has anything changed in the past week? If so, make updates.

CO.STARTERS Canvas



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

(20 minutes)

Over the last seven sessions, we've walked you through each step of the grant application and administration process. Hopefully by now you can see that by adhering to a few key principles, securing federal grants is completely within reach.

In case you missed it, remember these key themes.

Read what they give you (and do what it says). Whether it is the NOFO or the grant agreement, federal agencies are very clear on their expectations for federal grants. It's on you to understand the guidelines and stipulations you are given, so know them inside and out in order to have a successful grant.

Document everything. The biggest potential issue you'll run into is if you fail to properly document how the funds are used. Set up clear systems from the start and make sure everyone involved uses them properly.

Establish robust systems. Implementing thorough grant management practices will ensure proper stewardship of funds and adherence to grant requirements. Develop a clear plan for project implementation, budget management, and monitoring of progress and outcomes.

Today's session is going to be all about preparing for the next phase—actually securing a grant! We'll take all we've learned and put it together so you can get funding to meet the local needs you've identified.

ACTIVITY: Loose Ends

Take a minute to flip back through your workbook at everything we've covered.

Then, discuss with your cohort: What elements do you still feel unsure about? What needs (for your project) are top of mind right now? How are you hoping this group can help as we move into the next phase?



GRANT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

(15 minutes)

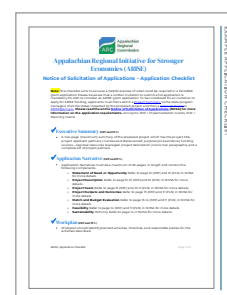
A federal grant application checklist is a comprehensive list of items that need to be completed or included when applying for a grant from a federal agency. As we've discussed, federal grant applications often have strict requirements and guidelines, so it's crucial to follow the checklist closely to ensure that your application meets all necessary criteria.

ACTIVITY: Grant Application Checklist

For the grant opportunity you've identified, download the Application Checklist. If you don't have one, take a look at the *Example Application Checklist*.

Are there any items you can already check off? What do you still need to do before you can submit? Is there anything on the checklist where you don't understand what is required?

Application Checklist



BUILD A 90-DAY PLAN

(45 minutes)

As this training comes to a close, you will no longer have regular deadlines or prompts to help get your grant submitted. How will you stay on track?

For this next section, we'll work together to plan critical next steps.

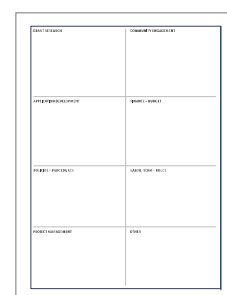
GET IT OUT OF YOUR HEAD

The first step is to get all the information out of your head and onto a place where you can see it.

ACTIVITY: Brainstorming

Using the *Brainstorm Worksheet*, brainstorm all the things you need to do to get your grant submitted. Be sure to think about what you need to do for each category. It's okay if this list is not exhaustive; put down anything top of mind.

Brainstorm Worksheet



SET PRIORITIES

If your list is long, writing it down may initially add to your stress. But being able to see everything in one place can help you categorize and prioritize.

The truth is, you can't do everything. At least not at the same time. You have to figure out what is most important.

Look at your list. What are the one or two most important things that, if left unfinished, keep your project from moving forward? What needs to be done first before other items can be completed?

Brainstorm Worksheet

		PROBLEMS
PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS	
		SOLUTIONS
PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS	

ACTIVITY: Prioritize

Looking at the lists you just made, do you see themes emerging? Are groups of tasks related to accomplishing the same thing?

Which of these are the most critical to moving you along? Why is this most important to do first? Put a star by the 1–3 that others are dependent on or that are top priority.

IDENTIFY MILESTONES

A common mistake people make is trying to do too many things at once. The more items you tackle at the same time, the less focused you'll be. You only have so much time and energy. Identifying what is most critical, strategic, or important to do at the moment—and focusing on that—will get you further faster.

Just as we set project milestones, think in terms of milestones for the next 90 days. Remember, a milestone is a significant development or marker on a journey. It typically marks a turning point or an accomplishment. Once you pass it, you don't circle back again.

Which milestones must you reach to move your grant forward? Focus on the big items, not the details. And only a few at a time.

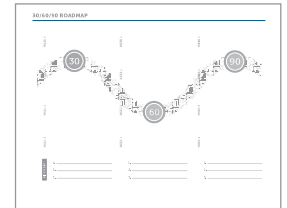


ACTIVITY: Milestones

Using the *30/60/90 Roadmap*, list one to three of the most important things you'd like to have accomplished (grant related) as your 90-day milestones.

Then, list out which milestones you need to have done by 60-days and 30-days to keep you on track. Milestones should be big enough that they cannot be completed through one task.

30/60/90 Roadmap



GET SMART ABOUT TASKS

You'll know it's a milestone because it can't be completed in one sprint; you have to finish smaller projects to be able to reach it. These smaller to-dos are your **tasks**.

For example, if your milestone is to craft a budget for your planning grant application, tasks might include meeting with stakeholders to discuss project scope, doing market research on cost estimates, and checking for compliance with all relevant regulations, policies, and guidelines. All of these items are tasks that help you accomplish the bigger milestone.

Make sure each task is SMART: Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timely.

S: Specific. Tasks that are specific are well defined, easy to understand, and simple. To help you be specific, make sure each one answers the “w” questions:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- Why is it important?
- Who is involved or responsible?
- Where will it be done?

M: Measurable. Measurable tasks help you track progress and stay motivated by letting you know how close you are to achieving it. It answers the “how” questions of:

- How many?
- How much?
- How will you know you've accomplished it?

A: Actionable. Tasks are actionable when it is immediately clear what needs to be done. Make sure your tasks contain verbs outlining actions you will take and things you will do.

R: Realistic. Realistic tasks can be accomplished with the time, resources, and expertise you already have available.

T: Timely. Tasks that are timely specify by when they will be achieved with a deadline for completion.

When a task is SMART, it's easy to know whether or not you've completed it. For example, the task "tour potential spaces" can be made SMART by adding some details: "meet with 3 stakeholders to review project scope by May 15."

ACTIVITY: SMART Tasks

Take one of your milestones and create 3 SMART tasks for accomplishing it.

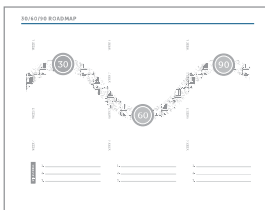
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Then, share with your cohort when prompted. Do they see ways it could be improved? Do those tasks make sense for the milestone?

PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Identifying what needs to be done is one thing. You'll maximize the chance of staying on track if you also identify when you will do it and make a plan for it.

30/60/90 Roadmap



ACTIVITY: 30/60/90 Roadmap

On your *30/60/90 Roadmap*, write the tasks you must do each week to stay on track for each milestone (Hint: Use your sticky notes!). Try not to do too much; three to five tasks a week is manageable.

Repeat the process for the 60-day and 90-day milestones. If you don't have time to finish, you can work on it this week as part of your fieldwork.



ONGOING SUPPORT

(30 minutes)

Even with all you've learned through this training, there may be times when you want to tap into external support to help you in your grant efforts. The good news is that there are lots of people and resources with grant expertise willing to help.

FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORTS

Federal agencies may offer workshops or training sessions to provide guidance on navigating the grant application process. These sessions can cover topics such as understanding grant guidelines, developing project budgets, and crafting strong proposals. They also may have additional resources on their website, so do your research to get the help you need.

GRANT PROFESSIONALS

Did you know that there are organizations that will help you identify, apply for, and administer federal grants? Grant professionals (often housed at agencies) can play a crucial role in the federal grant writing and administration process for a local government by providing expertise, guidance, and support at various stages of the grant lifecycle. If you don't feel like you have the internal capacity to properly secure and execute a federal grant, tapping into this sort of support might be the way forward.

PROFESSIONAL EVALUATORS

One of the key elements of any federal grant is evaluating its success and impact. Professional evaluators often bring specialized knowledge and experience in evaluation methodologies. They can design robust evaluation frameworks, choose appropriate metrics, and analyze data effectively, enhancing the quality of the evaluation. They also bring fresh perspectives and insights, helping project stakeholders learn from both successes and challenges. Their recommendations can inform future decision-making and improve program effectiveness.

NETWORKS

Professional networks for local governments can provide valuable resources, support, and collaboration opportunities for navigating federal grants. For example, some of the following networks provide various supports:

National League of Cities (NLC): NLC is an organization that advocates for cities and provides resources, training, and networking opportunities for local government officials. Through their grant assistance programs and training sessions, they can help municipalities identify federal grant opportunities, navigate the application process, and develop competitive grant proposals.

National Association of Counties (NACo): NACo is an organization representing the interests of counties and county officials nationwide. It offers resources, advocacy, and networking opportunities for county governments.

International City/County Management Association (ICMA): ICMA offers professional development programs, publications, and networking opportunities for local government managers and administrators. Their trainings cover many topics relevant to municipalities seeking federal funding.

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA): GFOA offers resources and training for finance professionals in local government. They can assist with training on the financial management aspects of federal grants, including budgeting, accounting, and compliance requirements. GFOA also provides guidance on best practices for grant administration and reporting.

Regional Councils and Associations: Many regions have councils or associations that bring together local government officials to address common challenges and opportunities. These organizations often provide forums for sharing information about federal grant opportunities, collaborating on grant applications, and leveraging resources through regional partnerships.

STATE AGENCIES

Building a strong relationship with state agencies can help local governments in their federal grant endeavors. State agencies often advocate on behalf of local governments to ensure that their needs and priorities are represented in federal grant programs. This can involve lobbying for increased funding, advocating for policy changes, and communicating the impact of federal grants on local communities.

Moreover, they often administer pass-through grants. **Pass-through grants** are federal funds given to state governments to distribute to local governments or nonprofits for specific purposes. States manage and allocate these funds based on federal guidelines, ensuring that they're used properly. Local recipients apply to the state for funding, and states oversee their use of the money. This system allows federal funds to reach local communities while giving states control over how they're used.

TIP:

Make sure you tap into your local development district. A development district is a designated geographic area within a region or municipality that is targeted for specific types of development or redevelopment initiatives. These districts are often created by local governments or authorities to stimulate economic growth, revitalize neighborhoods, attract investment, and improve infrastructure within the designated area.

ACTIVITY: Ongoing Supports

In your cohorts, discuss:

How can you best leverage some of these grant supports? Which do you think will be the most helpful and why?



HOW TO “PITCH” YOUR PROJECT

(60 minutes)

For some federal grants, there may be an opportunity to present your project in person (virtually), such as during review panels or interviews, where you can further pitch and defend your proposal to the agency’s representatives.

TYPICAL FORMATS

Interviews and review panels are common forms of “pitches” during the grant application process for certain federal grant programs.

Interviews: The purpose of the interview is to allow applicants to provide additional context, clarification, or elaboration on their proposal, as well as to demonstrate their knowledge, expertise, and enthusiasm for the project. Interviews may be conducted in person, via video conference, or over the phone, depending on the preferences of the granting agency.

Review Panels: In addition to or instead of interviews, some grant programs use review panels to evaluate and score applications. Review panels typically consist of a group of experts with relevant expertise who assess the quality, feasibility, and significance of each proposal based on predefined evaluation criteria.

Overall, interviews and review panels provide opportunities for grant applicants to further explain and advocate for their projects, as well as for expert reviewers to evaluate and provide feedback on the proposals. These processes help ensure that funding is allocated to projects with the greatest potential to advance knowledge and address important societal challenges.

Since time is usually limited, it’s important that you be able to effectively and efficiently communicate regarding your grant initiative.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD “PITCH”

As humans, we crave story. We are wired to engage with and through story in a way that facts and figures can’t compete. However, when people typically stand up to present or “pitch,” the element of story is often completely forgotten.

Story paints a picture in our minds and helps the listener experience what you’ve experienced—they see things from your perspective. Story creates connection. When the listener connects to the characters in your story, it humanizes it and makes abstract ideas real and concrete.

ACTIVITY: Elements of a Good “Pitch”

Think about presentations you’ve heard in the past. They don’t have to be formal “pitches.” Think also about sermons, lectures, podcasts, and webinars. In your cohort, discuss:

When you weren’t all that engaged, what did the presenter do? Why weren’t you engaged?

When you were really engaged, what did the presenter do? Why do you think you were engaged?

USING THE CO.STARTERS CANVAS TO “PITCH”

Imagine you’re in an elevator in a fifteen-story office building, getting ready to go down. Just as the door is about to close, you hear someone yell “Wait!” A woman steps on the elevator and you immediately recognize her as that influential person with whom you’ve been trying to get a meeting. You know she’s the perfect person to help you get your initiative off the ground, and now she’s trapped with you on an elevator! The problem is you’ve got less than a minute to get her attention.

While a literal elevator situation is unlikely, the ability to capture someone’s interest and concisely communicate what your project offers is crucial. People often don’t have the patience to listen to a 30-minute presentation (or a 5-minute one!) unless you can get them as excited about your project as you are. To do that, you only have a few seconds, and you need to say the most important things in under a minute. This short attention-grabber is your “elevator pitch.”

It might feel a bit overwhelming at first, but the good news is that you’ve already done most of the work. Your CO.STARTERS Canvas holds the key to a great elevator pitch, starting with the first six boxes.



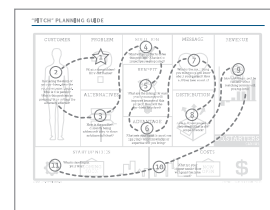
Your pitch should clearly tell the story of the problem your community is facing, how alternatives are insufficient, how your project provides the best solution and benefits, and why your initiative will succeed.

ACTIVITY: Using the Canvas to Pitch

Use the *“Pitch” Planning Guide* to help you craft your story, focusing on the first six boxes: Customer, Problem, Alternatives, Solution, Benefit, Advantage.

Spend a few minutes planning and then you will have 90 seconds to share your pitch with your cohort. Use a timer to stay on track.

“Pitch” Planning Guide



AVOID USING JARGON

You’ve probably been in a meeting where the presenter uses grand, verbose, important-sounding words. People, not wanting to look stupid, nod in agreement to what he says, adopt his words to explain it to others, and leave the meeting with no true understanding of the task at hand.

Jargon often gets in the way of effective communication. **Jargon** refers to specialized terminology or language that is specific to a particular field, profession, or group of people. It often consists of technical terms, acronyms, abbreviations, or phrases that are not commonly understood outside of that specific context. While jargon serves as a shorthand for communication within a particular community of experts or enthusiasts, it can be a barrier to effective communication for individuals who are not familiar with the terminology.

Jargon can obscure meaning and make it difficult for your audience (the federal agency) to understand your message. Using clear, straightforward language ensures that everyone can follow along and grasp the key points of your pitch.

Moreover, eliminating jargon forces you to focus on the substance of your message rather than relying on buzzwords or technical terms. This can lead to a more compelling and persuasive pitch that highlights the value of your project more effectively.

ACTIVITY: Eliminate Jargon

Imagine you're presenting your project to an alien or a small child who has no clue or context for what you are sharing.

In your cohort, share your "pitch" with the group using simple words so that the "alien" understands. Each local government has 2 minutes to share. Use a timer to stay on track.

As you are listening to others present, take note of any jargon they use or what you found confusing. Drop it in the chat for them when they are done.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL GRANT "PITCH"

With all this in mind, a few more tips can lead to a successful grant interview or review.

TIP:

Anticipate what questions you might be asked, as well as how you'll answer them.

Know how you'll be scored and focus your limited time on the things that count.

Be prepared. Research the grant program thoroughly, including its objectives, requirements, and evaluation criteria. Familiarize yourself with the agency's mission, priorities, and any recent developments related to the grant program. Practice your presentation with your team.

Understand your proposal and project. Be intimately familiar with the proposal you submitted. Know the details, goals, methodologies, timelines, and expected outcomes inside and out. This demonstrates your commitment and competence.

Speak with clarity and conciseness. Practice articulating your project in a clear and concise manner. As we discussed, avoid using jargon or technical language that might confuse the interviewer. Be prepared to explain complex concepts in simple terms.

Demonstrate alignment with agency goals. Emphasize how your project aligns with the mission and priorities of the funding agency. Clearly communicate how your work addresses the specific objectives outlined in the grant program.

Showcase your expertise. Highlight your expertise and qualifications—any relevant experience, skills, or accomplishments that make you well-suited to execute the proposed work successfully. Have relevant teammates join the interview to speak directly to agency representatives.

Provide evidence of impact and feasibility. Provide evidence of the potential impact and feasibility of your project. Use data, research findings, case studies, or pilot projects to support your claims and demonstrate the likelihood of success. Make sure any data used tells a story.



Highlight collaborations and partnerships. If applicable, discuss any collaborations or partnerships you've established or plan to establish to enhance the project's effectiveness. Highlight how these collaborations strengthen your proposal and increase its potential for success.

Justify your budget. Be prepared to discuss the budget details of your proposal, including how the funds will be allocated and justified. Know what went into determining the numbers so that you can clearly explain it.

Listen carefully. Demonstrate strong communication skills throughout the interview. Be attentive, responsive, and articulate in your responses. Listen carefully to the interviewer's questions and provide thoughtful answers.

Interview them, as well. Prepare thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer about the grant program, evaluation process, or any other relevant topics. This demonstrates your interest and engagement in the opportunity.

Follow-up. After the interview, send a thank-you email expressing appreciation for the opportunity and reiterating your enthusiasm for the project. You can also use this opportunity to address any additional points or questions that may have arisen during the interview.

FIELDWORK

- Complete your *30/60/90 Roadmap* to help build momentum over the next three months. Compare notes with your local teammate and be ready to share your plan with your cohort in the next session.
- Do research into some of the ongoing supports we discussed in this session. Who/what can help you with federal grant opportunities moving forward?
- Craft a 5 minute pitch of your project to share with your cohort next session, using the information we covered today to help you prepare.

NOTES:



Appalachian Regional Initiative for Stronger Economies (ARISE)

Notice of Solicitation of Applications – Application Checklist

Note: This checklist aims to serve as a helpful preview of what could be required in a full ARISE grant application. Please be aware that a written invitation to submit a full application is mandatory for ARC to consider an ARISE grant application. To be considered for an invitation to apply for ARISE funding, applicants must first submit a [Project Summary](#) to the state program managers of all the states impacted by the proposed project and then a [Concept Paper](#) to ARISE@arc.gov. **Please read the entire [Notice of Solicitation of Applications \(NOSA\)](#) for more information on the application requirements.** *Acronyms:* IMP = Implementation Grants; PLN = Planning Grants.

✓ **Executive Summary** (IMP and PLN)

- A two-page (maximum) summary of the proposed project which has the project title, project applicant partners, counties and states served, purpose (one sentence), funding sources—regional resources leveraged, project description (one to two paragraphs), and a complete list of project partners.

✓ **Application Narrative** (IMP and PLN)

- Application Narratives must be a maximum of 20-pages in length and contain the following components.
 - **Statement of Need or Opportunity** Refer to page 12 (IMP) and 10 (PLN) in NOSA for more details.
 - **Project Description** Refer to page 12-13 (IMP) and 10 (PLN) in NOSA for more details.
 - **Project Team** Refer to page 13 (IMP) and 10-11 (PLN) in NOSA for more details.
 - **Project Outputs and Outcomes** Refer to page 13 (IMP) and 11 (PLN) in NOSA for more details.
 - **Match and Budget Evaluation** Refer to page 13-14 (IMP) and 11 (PLN) in NOSA for more details.
 - **Feasibility** Refer to page 14 (IMP) and 11 (PLN) in NOSA for more details.
 - **Sustainability** IMP only. Refer to page 14 in NOSA for more details.

✓ **Workplan** (IMP and PLN)

- Workplan should identify planned activities, timelines, and responsible parties for the activities described.

✓ Memorandum of Understanding between Project Partners (IMP projects ONLY)

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between project partners must at minimum include the following information:
 - Partner's names
 - Partnership roles and responsibilities
 - Expected contribution and funding allocations
 - Communication expectations
 - Agreed-upon outcomes of project

✓ Basic Agency Letter Committing to Administer ARC Funds (IMP projects with construction components ONLY)

- This letter must be addressed to the Executive Director of the Appalachian Regional Commission.
- The letter must state:
 - The [Basic Agency](#)'s willingness to administer the project if approved by ARC.
 - The ARC grant amount; the total matching funds amount; the total project cost.
 - And the name and email of the primary basic agency contact person(s) for project management and financial management of the grant.
- For projects that will be administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program or CDBG Entitlement program, the HUD certification form is the basic agency commitment letter.

✓ Engineering or Architectural Budget (IMP projects with construction components ONLY)

- Provide an engineering or architectural budget detailing line-item project costs. The project total from the engineering or architectural budget should match the total on Standard Form 424. (Note that for construction projects only, ARC does not require a breakdown of expenditures by funding source.)
- Include a line item for administrative costs in the budget. This amount should cover the costs of providing project administration tasks including environmental review, Davis-Bacon Act compliance, procurement management, etc.
 - Administration costs associated with the lead organization should not be combined with Basic Agency administration costs. Basic Agency administrative fees (e.g. NEPA reviews, Davis Bacon costs) are handled independently between ARC and the Basic Agency and should not be included in the project budget.
- If the ARC project is part of a larger, multi-phase project, provide only the detailed budget information that corresponds to the total budget for the ARC and matching funds. Example: a proposed ARC project includes \$500,000 of ARC funds and \$1.5 million of matching funds. This \$2 million project is part of a \$10million multi-phase project. Applicant will provide detailed budget information only for the scope of the \$2 million ARC project and will describe the rest of the larger \$10 million project in the Project Narrative section.
- If the budget includes acquisition (or donation) of land or buildings as a project activity or as match source, provide a MAI appraisal or comparable appraisal.

✓ Required Forms (IMP and PLN)

- Submit the following required forms:
 - [ARC Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#)
 - [SF-424: Application for Federal Assistance](#)
 - Includes ARC funds and matching funds.
 - [SF-424A: Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs](#)
 - [SF-424B: Non-Construction Assurances](#)
 - [SF-424C: Budget Information for Construction Programs](#) (IMP project with construction components ONLY)
 - [SF-424D: Construction Assurances](#) (IMP projects with construction components ONLY)

GRANT RESEARCH	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT	FINANCE + BUDGET
POLICIES + PROCEDURES	LABOR, TEAM + ROLES
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	OTHER

30/60/90 ROADMAP

MILESTONES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

WEEK 4

WEEK 3

WEEK 2

WEEK 1



WEEK 4

WEEK 3

WEEK 2

WEEK 1



WEEK 4

WEEK 3

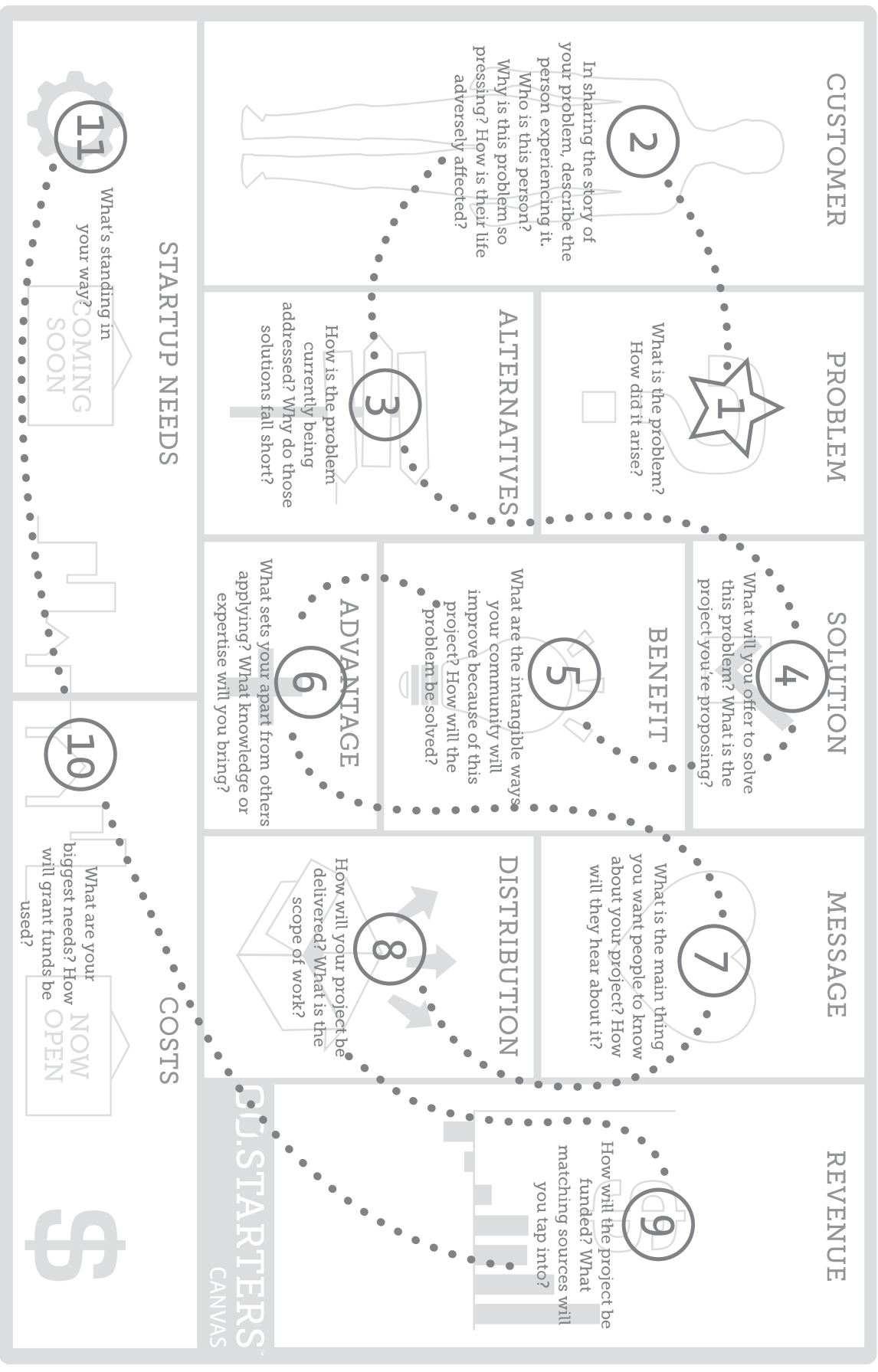
WEEK 2

WEEK 1



"PITCH" PLANNING GUIDE

ARC READY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



© Copyright 2017 GS-STARTERS | gsstarters.co

Adapted from the Business Model Canvas (BusinessModelGeneration.com)



