Workforce Development Projects

This document provides specific guidance for **workforce development projects,** per ARC's Strategic Plan Goal 2.2 and 2.3. Applications may involve multiple activities as part of a single project; ARC encourages applicants to review the specific guidance for each type of activity included in an application.

All application guidance is grounded in the goals and principles of ARC's current strategic plan, which emphasize strategic focus, collaboration, sustainability, and measurable impact in ARC investments.

ARC investment in **workforce development** prepares individuals for specific jobs or career areas or for advancement within an occupation. Training programs can range from a one-hour, one-time seminar to a multi-year program resulting in an advanced degree. The intent of these investments is to establish a new or expand an existing program, not to maintain ongoing operations. Supported projects typically focus on programming that enables trainees to obtain new or enhanced employment (e.g., higher pay, better position) in a specific in-demand job or career area after completing the proposed program.

Generally, ARC categorizes workforce training under Goal 2 of its strategic plan; however, components of workforce development projects may fall under other goals.

Examples of eligible workforce development projects include, but are not limited to:

- Training program that leads to a specified credential, such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) or Computer Numerical Control (CNC) programmer, or an OSHA safety certification course that would lead to increased job opportunities in that field
- Partnership program with local employers to assist with job search, provide employment supports, interview training and other soft skills targeting underemployed, unemployed, or those in recovery
- Construction or renovation of facilities that would house workforce development hubs or programs; procuring the equipment needed for education and training purposes
- Creation or support of career pathways such as on-the-job skills training and apprenticeship programs for emerging industries and in-demand occupational fields
- Research and related planning efforts, e.g., feasibility studies to assess the likelihood of a workforce project's success as well as associated costs or other resources and market analyses to evaluate the need or demand for a specific workforce development project

Key Principles of ARC Workforce Training Investments

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

Strategic:

- Workforce training projects should target workforce gaps in local economic sectors which are defined in economic development plans for the targeted geography.
- It is imperative that applicants cite data and other research that demonstrates evidence of need for a proposed project and include this information in a strategic rationale. See "Additional Resources" section at the end of this document for links that may be helpful.

- Local and regional employers should closely guide training program development.
- Applications should include letters of commitment from employers stating activities they will engage in to support the project.

Sustainable:

- Ideally, proposed projects should have a funding strategy that does not rely solely on grants to maintain operations after the ARC grant period has ended. The funding strategy could include tuition or fees for service, support from local industry, and/or funding from an institution's annual budget.
- Applicants may be asked to submit a business plan that outlines a post-ARC project operations strategy.

Collaborative:

- Workforce training projects should align with existing resources within the provider's organization and across organizations, complementing and/or enhancing ongoing efforts.
- Partnerships should be demonstrated through letters of commitment that specify each individual/organization's role(s) and responsibilities and membership/participation on relevant steering and curriculum development committees, if applicable.

Impactful:

- As detailed in ARC's Guidance on Performance Measures, https://www.arc.gov/resource/guide-to-arc-project-performance-measures/, projected outcomes should be an absolute number, not a range or percentage. An example of suitable measures include the number of training recipients that obtain new certification or enhance their current employment.
- In many cases, training recipients will obtain or advance their employment status after the completion of the ARC project. Applicants should estimate the total number of trainees that will meet the project's targets within three years of the project's end date and include the projections as part of the application.
- For projects with longer-term outcomes, a meaningful intermediate projection should be developed. Examples of intermediate goals include the number of individuals still enrolled and working towards completion of a degree or certificate at the end of the project period, or the number of individuals that have received specific certifications or completed certain portions of the training program.

Other Considerations

- Proposed workforce training applications should include projections of the local and/or regional need for workers with the targeted skills, certifications, or degrees. This information is often documented through letters from local and regional employers stating that they project hiring "X" individuals per year with the target skills, certifications, or degrees over the following "Y" years. Note that this is not a guarantee to hire anyone and does not represent a commitment by the employer. It is simply their projection of need. (This information should be included as part of your project rationale, a section found within the Project Narrative portion of a complete application package).
- Applicants should demonstrate that they are filling a particular niche or complementing and not competing with other training programs serving the same geography. Letters of support stating how the training organizations serving the same area/population will work together and support each other greatly strengthens applications.
- Any key partners or project administrators who are lending support during or even after grant closeout should be indicated or identified in an applicant's detailed workplan. Persons identified include those involved in operations, relationship management, sustainability, etc.

Basic Agency Requirements (For Construction Projects Only)

ARC does not administer any construction projects, including those involving workforce development. ARC operates in partnership with federal and state agencies under an MOU to manage federal construction grants throughout the region.

It is the applicant's responsibility to secure a letter from the appropriate federal or state agency, known as a basic agency letter, confirming their willingness to administer ARC funds for any proposed infrastructure project. A list of eligible basic agencies can be found at https://www.arc.gov/basic-agency-partners/.

Grantees are encouraged to reach out directly to their basic agency to ensure the proposed implementation scope and schedule is acceptable to the basic agency prior to submitting the construction grant application.

Additional Resources

- ARC State Program Managers https://www.arc.gov/state_partner_role/state-program-manager/
- ARC State Strategy Statements https://www.arc.gov/state-plans-strategies/
- ARC's Workforce Development Investment Priority https://www.arc.gov/investment-priority/building-appalachias-workforce-ecosystem/
- Local and regional workforce and business/industry groups such as state and local workforce investment boards https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/WorkforceDevelopment/find-workforce-development-boards.aspx, the American Job Center https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/AmericanJobCenters/find-american-job-centers.aspx, chambers of commerce, labor unions, and industry associations
- Academic and professional associations such as:
  - The Community Colleges of Appalachia https://www.ccofapp.org/
  - The American Association of Community Colleges https://www.aacc.nche.edu/
  - Skills USA https://www.skillsusa.org/
- Research Report: Private Sector Support in Appalachia https://www.arc.gov/report/private-sector-employment-in-appalachia/
- Specific to Service Area of a Project: Search social service providers and non-profit organizations serving the targeted communities and/or populations (i.e., https://www.unitedway.org/find-your-united-way/)
- Harvard Workforce Almanac, which includes maps of workforce training providers across all organizations https://workforcealmanac.com/