



# ARC *READY Nonprofits* Training Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

Federal Fiscal Year 2025

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### Eligibility

- Q** What entities are eligible to apply for the READY Nonprofits Training Program?
- A** An eligible entity must be 1) a public or private nonprofit organization or association, including labor unions; and 2) must serve communities in Appalachia. To be eligible, a nonprofit must meet both criteria. A map of the Appalachian Region is available [online](#).
- Q** If our organization is located in a county that is outside the region, does that mean we are not eligible to apply?
- A** To be eligible for the program, organizations must serve communities within the Appalachian Region. This means that an organization located outside the region, whose service area includes communities inside the region, would be eligible to apply. The application will ask organizations to identify all states and counties within the region they serve.

**Q Major hospital systems are ineligible for this program. How can I determine if my nonprofit organization is a major hospital system?**

**A** If you are unsure whether your nonprofit organization is considered a major hospital system, please email our team at [READY@yourstrategicconsultant.com](mailto:READY@yourstrategicconsultant.com).

**Q Local development districts (LDDs), local governments, and community foundations are not eligible to apply for *READY Nonprofits*. How does ARC define local development districts (LDDs), local governments, and community foundations?**

**A** *Local development districts (LDDs)* are multi-county planning organizations that facilitate community-based, regionally driven, economic development in the Appalachian Region.

*Local governments* refer to a borough, city, county, municipality, parish, town, township, or federally recognized Indian tribe.

*Community foundations* are nonprofit, tax-exempt, public charitable grantmaking organizations that pool funds from individuals, families, and businesses to support a geographical area or region.

**Q Can nonprofit foundations apply for this opportunity?**

**A** If the foundation does not meet the above definition of a community foundation, which would have made them eligible for our *READY Community Foundations* program, they may apply for this opportunity. However, organizations meeting the definition of a community foundation would not be eligible to apply for *READY Nonprofits*.

**Q When you say organizations serving distressed counties are encouraged to apply, does that mean only those organizations are eligible to apply or can organizations serving at-risk, transitional and competitive counties also apply?**

**A** The application is open to organizations serving distressed, at-risk, transitional or competitive counties; However, a priority focus will be on organizations serving one or more distressed counties.

**Q Can organizations that previously applied for or received funding from other ARC grant programs, or previously participated in *READY Nonprofits*, apply for this round of *READY Nonprofits*?**

**A** Yes. Applying for or having received funding from another ARC grant program, to include *READY Nonprofits*, does not preclude an organization from applying for this round of *READY Nonprofits*. Additionally, applying for *READY Nonprofits* will not impact an organization's grant application for another ARC grant program.

**Q Are new nonprofit organizations a good fit for this program?**

**A** Yes. This program's content will be a great fit for newer nonprofit organizations. However, older organizations with capacity challenges will also be a good fit for *READY Nonprofits*.

**Q Our organization is new and its federal tax ID and/or nonprofit status is pending. Can we still apply?**

**A** Yes; however, your organization must have received its federal tax ID by the start of the course. If your organization has a federal tax ID, but its status as a nonprofit is pending with the IRS, you may apply and potentially take part in the training program but will not be eligible to receive an ARC grant until you receive the nonprofit status. If the IRS determines that your organization is not a nonprofit, you would be unable to continue on to the grant program.

**Q Would a 25-year-old organization qualify? Or does this need to be a newer nonprofit?**

**A** While age of the organization is one factor used to determine an organization's level of capacity, there are many other factors of capacity being scored. Organizations of any age may apply for this program and could benefit from the training program.

**Q Can a nonprofit entity within a public for-profit organization with a separate EIN participate in this program?**

**A** Yes. However, for the subsequent grant program, the nonprofit organization will need to have their own active SAM.gov registration and be the recipient of the grant funds. ARC does not directly provide grant funds to for-profit entities.

**Q Are only 501(c)(3) nonprofits eligible?**

**A** All nonprofit types are eligible to apply; however, please review the ineligibility criteria to ensure your organization does not fall into a category that is not eligible to apply.

**Q Are separate nonprofit organizations attached to institutions of higher education eligible to apply?**

**A** Yes.

## **Training Program Participants**

**Q Who is an appropriate participant for the READY Nonprofits Training Program?**

**A** The first participant should be the entity's executive director or equivalent. The second participant could be a staff, board, or committee member. The second participant is left to the discretion of the organization depending on their goals in participating in the program.

**Q What is meant by "or equivalent" for the primary participant? Who can participate in place of the executive director?**

**A** The executive director should be the primary participant on behalf of the organization unless the organization does not have an executive director role/position. If no executive director role/position exists, the organization's equivalent, or highest-ranking member, would be expected to participate on behalf of the organization (e.g. CEO, President, Executive Board Chair, etc.). Ultimately, the primary participant should always be the highest-ranking member of the applying organization.

- Q Is an organization required to have a secondary participant, or can they just have a primary participant?**
- A** Two participants from each organization are required for participation in the program. However, the second participant can be any other relevant individual to your organization (e.g. an active member of the community) if you lack the additional staff/volunteers to participate. Both participants must be identified in the application as well as their organizational titles and contact information.
- Q Can participants who are involved in multiple eligible nonprofit organizations act as a participant on behalf of these various nonprofit organizations, or are they limited to participating for just one organization?**
- A** No. Participants for the training should be focused on the selected organization they are participating on behalf of. One participant cannot participate on behalf of two or more different organizations.
- Q Do participants for a nonprofit in this program need to be salaried employees of the nonprofit organization, or can unpaid volunteers participate?**
- A** Participation is open to both paid staff and unpaid volunteers.
- Q Can the secondary participant be changed after finding out what course we are selected to participate in?**
- A** If an organization is selected to participate in the program, they will be informed of which course option they were selected to participate in and asked to complete a participation confirmation survey. Within the survey, they will be asked to confirm both participants for the course on behalf of the selected nonprofit organization. At this time, the organization may change the secondary participant's information from what was included in the application for the purposes of better alignment with the assigned course option. However, once the confirmation survey is submitted, it is expected that those two participants will be the same participants throughout the duration of the course.
- Q If my executive director is unable to participate, can another staff/board member be the lead instead?**
- A** It is a requirement of the program that the executive director be the primary participant in the training. Only if an executive director position does not exist within the organization may an equivalent person participate. This equivalent person must be the highest-ranking member of the organization.

## **Attendance, Participation, Time Commitments**

- Q What is the estimated start date of the training?**
- A** The estimated start date of the training program is the week of June 23, 2025. The training schedules will be finalized once applicants are selected, participant course priorities are determined, and instructor schedules are aligned. The training window of June 23, 2025, to September 23, 2025, accounts for offering two full back-to-back course offerings at seven

consecutive weeks each. Start dates could be staggered based upon course topics selected and instructor availability.

**Q What is the estimated total time commitment for a participant in this training program?**

**A** About 20 hours. This includes course time within the live Zoom sessions, one-to-one consultations, follow-up consultations and the weekly assignments.

**Q Will the course training dates/times be decided at the beginning via consensus of the cohort, or just assigned by the consultants?**

**A** The training schedules will be finalized once applicants are selected, participant course priorities are determined, and instructor schedules are aligned. At the time of application participants are asked to provide all the days and times that they are available, and that information is used to determine the schedule along with instructor availability.

**Q The training dates are June 23 – September 23, 2025, but the courses are 7-weeks long. Does this mean that sessions take place every other week?**

**A** The training program is seven consecutive weeks with sessions or one-to-one consultations occurring weekly. The training dates allow for two full courses to be provided over a 14-week period if needed based upon the demand for specific courses offered.

**Q Will there be flexibility in the attendance requirements in the case of some kind of major extenuating circumstance (e.g., a natural disaster causes a 2nd absence)?**

**A** ARC understands that there can be external factors that impact a participant or organization's ability to fully participate. If such an event occurs, you will be encouraged to communicate your situation with your course instructor. ARC will work with the instructor and the participating organization to review the situation and determine a potential solution on a case-by-case basis.

## **Training Program Structure and Format**

**Q Will the training be virtual?**

**A** Yes. All training sessions and one-to-one consultations are delivered virtually via Zoom.

**Q How long are the training sessions?**

**A** There are five training sessions and two one-to-one consultations. The five training sessions will last one and a half to two hours each. The two one-to-one consultations will last one hour each.

**Q Will the sessions be delivered in real-time or are they pre-recorded?**

**A** The sessions will occur in real-time, and participants must join the session at the scheduled day and time. Every participant is expected to actively participate. It is imperative that primary and secondary participants join the sessions with the cohort they are assigned. There is no asynchronous training in this program.

- Q Will training sessions be recorded and will the watching of these recorded sessions count toward attendance?**
- A** Sessions may be recorded for auditing and participant accommodation purposes (e.g. to watch back to better absorb/retain the information); However, the recordings will not take the place of live participation in the sessions or attendance.
- Q If selected, will my nonprofit participate in all eight course options?**
- A** No. Each nonprofit organization selected (both participants) will participate in one course option.
- Q Will my nonprofit get our first choice for course options?**
- A** We will do our best to place you in your first-choice option, however, we ask for your second choice in case we cannot provide all participants with their first choices.
- Q Do both participants have to submit a training application?**
- A** No, only one application per organization is needed (you will identify both participants from your organization on this application).
- Q Do both participants from the nonprofit need to be in the same course/cohort?**
- A** Yes. Course selection and cohorts will be determined at the nonprofit level, not at the individual participant level. It is important for both participants to be in the same course and cohort to work together on their goals and activities.
- Q Do the one-to-one consultations include both participants attending together or are they truly one on one with the consultant?**
- A** Both participants of the organization will attend the one-to-one together. The intention of these consultations is to allow time for one-to-one time between the one organization and their instructor to focus on challenges specific to the organization.
- Q Will the Grant Writing and Management course option focus solely on federal grants, or also on state, community, and foundation grants?**
- A** The Grant Writing and Management course will focus solely on federal grants as they are the most comprehensive including most aspects that would be addressed in state, community, and foundation grants. This course will help prepare participants for phase II of the READY Nonprofit Grant Program.

## Application Questions

- Q What type of financial information is required to complete the application? Do I need to submit any financial forms or documentation?**
- A** The application requires information about the entity's annual operating budget and funding sources. Having access to the organization's financial reports is sufficient to answer the questions. There is no need to upload or submit financial documents.

**Q What exactly constitutes a board being "functional" and what would be an example of a "functional" board?**

**A** A functional board can be defined as a board that meets regularly, with members equipped with the skills, knowledge and experience needed to help the organization meet its strategic goals. A functional board is active in the governance of the organization, fiduciary oversight, sets strategic direction, and provides leadership and management of the senior management.

## **How to Apply & Application Troubleshooting**

**Q How can entities prepare to complete the application?**

**A** A [PDF of the application questions](#) is available for review prior to starting the electronic application. Entities should be prepared to answer questions about their nonprofit organization around the following categories: organizational information, mission impact, organizational needs, and participant contact information. Having access to organizational information is necessary to complete the application in its entirety. You will be able to save your work and come back to your application prior to submitting it.

**Q How long should it take to fill out the application online?**

**A** This process will be different for each nonprofit but the expected time to complete the application is estimated to be approximately one hour.

**Q Will technical assistance be available for potential applicants before the submission date?**

**A** The program administrators hosted a pre-application webinar on the Zoom platform, on February 11, 2025, at 10:00 AM. Watch the full pre-application webinar, at <http://www.arc.gov/ready/nonprofits>.

**Q Who should complete the application for my nonprofit organization?**

**A** The application must be completed by an authorized representative of the nonprofit. To complete the submission process, whoever fills out the application will be asked to verify that all information provided is accurate.

**Q Do we need to create a user account to access and submit the application?**

**A** No, the application portal does not require a user account to be created. The user must have a valid email address to save the application. An email will be sent to the user with a link to access the saved application.

**Q Can users save their progress in the application and return to complete it at a later time?**

**A** Yes, the application can be saved within the application portal. The user must enter a valid email address to receive a link to return to and access the pending application.

**Q How long is the link to the application active?**

**A** The link to the in-progress application is active for up to 45 days from the time it is created.

- Q Can users change or update the application contents once the application has been submitted?**
- A** No, once the application has been submitted no further changes or edits can be made.
- Q Are hardcopy applications available to complete for the READY Nonprofits Training Program?**
- A** No, the application can only be completed electronically via the application portal.
- Q We submitted our application and did not receive a confirmation email. How can I check to make sure our application was received?**
- A** Please reach out by email to [READY@yourstrategicconsultant.com](mailto:READY@yourstrategicconsultant.com) to confirm receipt of your application.

## Assessment & Selection

- Q When will I know if I have been selected to participate?**
- A** All applicants will be notified about selection by email during the week of April 28, 2025. Please monitor the inbox and spam folder of the email address you used to submit the application during this time.
- Q How many nonprofit organizations will be selected to participate in the training program?**
- A** The training program is available to two participants from up to 75 nonprofits, or 150 total participants.
- Q What constitutes a “low capacity” nonprofit.**
- A** There is no one way to identify low capacity. The application asks a multitude of questions related to various aspects of capacity in nonprofit organizations; to include size of the organization, budget, diversification of revenue, geographic factors, organizational capacity challenges unique to the organization, staffing levels, reporting and planning efforts, and more.
- Q Do distressed census tracts count towards points awarded for serving distressed counties?**
- A** No, scoring is based on the county’s overall economic designation, not individual census tracts or areas within a county.
- Q If our organization would likely be considered high capacity in some areas but low capacity in others, could we still be competitive for this opportunity?**
- A** Yes. Demonstration of low capacity in general or even in specific areas of the application could make your organization competitive for this opportunity.
- Q If we are in a county impacted by major Hurricane Helene damage, does this change our distressed status temporarily?**
- A** ARC’s county designations are made in advance of each federal fiscal year based on an index of economic indicators (the three-year unemployment rate, per capita market income and poverty rate). Please visit ARC’s FY25 [County Economic Status](#) webpage to view the current county designations for this fiscal year.



## Grant Program

**Q What are the eligibility requirements to apply for the up to \$25,000 grant opportunity?**

**A** Successful completion of the training and its requirements, including the attendance requirements. Please refer to the [NOSA](#), including the Training Program Attendance and Grant Eligibility section for more information.

**Q Will I need to submit a separate application for grant funding?**

**A** Yes. Information will be released at a later date to include grant information and application documents. Grant opportunity information will only be shared with participants who successfully complete the *READY Nonprofits* training program.

**Q How competitive is the grant application process for the organizations that complete the training? What percentage of organizations receive the grant funds?**

**A** There are grant funds available for up to 75 organizations, or all eligible organizations who successfully complete the training program. It is considered a non-competitive grant program at this point as the competitive process took place for acceptance into the training program. However, eligible organizations will still need to submit a separate grant application for review and approval, and the organization is not guaranteed funding just because they complete the training program requirements. ARC reserves the right to determine eligibility for grant funding on a case-by-case basis.

**Q Will organizations serving competitive counties have to provide 70% match for the grant?**

**A** While match is encouraged, it is not required for the *READY Nonprofits* grant program. ARC's standard match requirements are waived for this program.

**Q What can the grant funds be used for?**

**A** For questions related to specific uses for grant funds, please reach out to the ARC READY team at [READY@arc.gov](mailto:READY@arc.gov). Please see our [guidance document for capacity building projects](#) (organizational capacity building section) for more information about eligible projects for the subsequent grant opportunity.

**Q If one were to receive funding after the training process, would we need to use those funds for projects that we did the specific training for?**

**A** No. While an organization could use the funding to support a capacity building project related to the topic of their training course, they could opt to apply for funding for a capacity building project unrelated to their course topic.

**Q What restrictions, if any, are placed on the grant funding?**

**A** Specifics surrounding eligible and ineligible uses of funding will be provided in a separate application process for the grant opportunity. However, projects are limited to focusing on the organizational capacity building of the selected nonprofit itself. Construction activities and subawards are not allowable.

**Q Is there a Letter of Intent requirement for this grant program?**  
**A** No, there is not a letter of intent requirement for this grant program.

**Q Are there any audit requirements for receiving this grant funding?**  
**A** Standard federal requirements for audits will apply to this grant program. (See [2 CFR § 200.501](#) and the [ARC Grant Compliance Guide, Section 16](#))

## Technology Requirements

**Q What are the technology requirements for successful participation in the program?**  
**A** Participants will need access to an electronic device with a working camera that they can easily view the course materials on with stable access to the internet using the latest web browser (Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox, or Safari) version recommended. Participants will be asked to turn on their camera, type in responses to the Zoom chat, and participate orally in exercises, breakouts and reflection activities.

**Q Is phone Zoom participation acceptable if for some reason internet fails?**  
**A** Zoom via a phone could be used on an exception basis if internet fails as the course and sessions are interactive and designed so that participants can view each other as they engage, reflect, and participate in activities. Participants must be able to type, turn on the camera, mute and unmute, and react in real time with course participants.

## ARC and READY Appalachia

**Q By applying for the READY Nonprofits program, am I applying for enrollment in a training program or to receive a grant?**  
**A** The READY Nonprofits program is designed to train nonprofit executives, as well as their staff and board members, in effective operations, fundraising and programming specific to nonprofits. Participants will engage in seven weeks of virtual cohort-based learning and skill development. The goal of the currently open READY application is to identify 75 nonprofits to participate in the training. Upon successful completion of this training, eligible participants can apply for a grant of up to \$25,000 per nonprofit provided by ARC. There will be a separate application process for the grant opportunity, which will only be available to participants who successfully complete the training.

**Q How can our organization be informed about future trainings?**  
**A** To stay up to date on the latest ARC news, including the release of new opportunities and resources, [sign up for our weekly email newsletter](#), *In the Region*.

**Q Is this an annual program that is offered each year? Will there be another round at a later date?**  
**A** There is not another round of READY Nonprofits planned at this time. However, there's more to come under the READY initiative, including READY Grants to Grow (G2G) that we plan to release again later this year! Stay tuned for updates on [our website](#) and [sign up for our weekly email newsletter](#), *In the Region*.