



# Request for Proposals for:

PROGRAM EVALUATION OF ACC'S BUSINESS ASSISTANCE RESPONSE PROGRAM

**Release Date:** October 5, 2020

**RFP Submission Deadline:** November 2, 2020

**Selection Date:** December 1, 2020

**Contract Period:** December 7, 2020 through April 30, 2021

**Contact:** Kathryn Coulter Rhodes, Rural Support Partners

[Kathryn@ruralsupportpartners.com](mailto:Kathryn@ruralsupportpartners.com) | 828-273-3839



## I. Project Overview and General Scope of Work:

Appalachian Community Capital (ACC) invites proposals from qualified researchers and consultants to conduct a program evaluation of the emergency Business Assistance Response (BAR) program grants, awarded in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and other mission-driven development finance lenders. With support from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) the BAR program's overall intent is to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Appalachia by helping to cover operational costs and offset some of the income that designated community-based lenders are losing during the pandemic. Eligible uses of funding consist of operational support for grantees and direct technical assistance to Appalachian small business and non-profit borrowers. The evaluation will encompass grants to 31 CDFIs and development lenders intended to stabilize these lenders and extend lending capacity to Appalachia's small businesses and nonprofits impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Determine the extent to which the program has succeeded in achieving ACC's goals;
- Highlight any exemplary successes among the program's operations or grantee results.
- Identify ways to have better served CDFIs and other mission-driven community finance lenders in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

## II. Background

The Appalachian Region, as defined in ARC's authorizing legislation, is a 205,000 square mile region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It 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. Forty-two percent of the Region's population is rural, compared with 20 percent of the national population.

Appalachian Community Capital is a CDFI lending intermediary created to raise capital for its 22 member CDFIs, which in turn, can fund small businesses and entrepreneurs in underserved areas in Appalachia. The members, many of whom have been operating for more than 20 years, and their affiliates manage over \$1 billion in assets supporting economic development in Appalachia.

CDFIs and other mission-driven development lenders serve as a critical source of capital for the region's small businesses, which are often underserved by traditional commercial banks. Organizations that were eligible for the BAR Program's funds included the 22 ACC members and ARC POWER grantees that are currently engaged in lending to small businesses and nonprofits. Thirty-one of these lenders applied for and were awarded funds totaling \$3.56 million.

Rural Support Partners (RSP) was contracted to manage the grant application and reporting process. RSP is based in Asheville, NC and works to expand the impact of community economic development and philanthropy across Central Appalachia while innovating the field of rural development globally.

ACC seeks proposals to evaluate the performance and implementation of the BAR program and expects the following upon completion of the project:



### Outputs

- An evaluation report that addresses:
  - Whether the program successfully targeted the funds toward stabilizing the capacity of community-based lenders
  - Whether the program quickly and efficiently deployed the emergency funds
  - What impact the program had on communities/businesses served

### Outcomes

- Detailed analysis of the level of success the program had in addressing the problem it set out to address.
- Recommendations that will inform future rapid response programs to ensure optimal performance and implementation of such grants.

## III. Timeline

It is anticipated that the Contractor will be selected by December 1, 2020 for an estimated contract start date of December 7, 2020 through April 30, 2021.

## IV. Scope of Work

- A. Assessment of the program's success in stabilizing the capacity of the grantees
  - a. The contractor will gather relevant information from grantees and progress reports to present the direct impact made on the grant recipients and the timeliness of the funds distribution.
- B. Assessment of the impact this program had on the Region's entrepreneurial ecosystem
  - a. The contractor will collect a series of brief success stories that highlight the impact that the operational funds had on Appalachian communities.
  - b. The contractor will analyze the lists of businesses served to produce a snapshot of sectors served, locations, etc.

## V. Proposal Submission Instructions

Contractors seeking to conduct the program evaluation should submit the following by November 2, end of day:

- Scope of work (max two pages) describing the proposed methods for completing the evaluation
- Timeline for completing the scope of work, with activity milestones
- Budget that defines rates and proposed payment schedule. **NOTE: Costs not to exceed \$15,000**
- Qualifications for evaluating the program
- References from current or prior clients, including name, title, organization, contact information, and a brief description of the relevant work performed

## VI. Proposal Evaluation

ACC will select contractors through a competitive process based on the following criteria:

- Qualifications, expertise, and track record
- Scope of work and timeline
- Budget

# APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY CAPITAL

## **ACC's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

ACC is deeply committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion through its products, services, and operations to the benefit of ACC's customers, clients, staff, and communities. ACC promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion in many ways including, but not limited to:

- Loan product design and delivery
- Financial development service design and delivery
- Operational policy design
- Hiring
- Contracting
- Investments
- Procurements
- Organizational culture

We will regularly measure our progress in these areas so that we can hold ourselves accountable and improve our efforts to meet the mission and vision of a CDFI and the goals of the people and communities we serve.