



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PROGRAM SPONSORS



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (“RFP”) FOR OPPORTUNITY APPALACHIA PROJECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Project Sponsor: New Roots Community Farm, Fayetteville, WV

Project Name: New River Gorge Ag and Culinary Center (Project Summary provided in Attachment B.)

Release Date:	August 2, 2022
Proposal Due Date:	August 30, 2022
Selection Date:	September 9, 2022
Contract Period:	September 9, 2022 – February 28, 2023 (or later)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Technical Assistance for Opportunity Appalachia Projects

I. Overview of Request for Proposals

Appalachian Community Capital (ACC) seeks contractual support for specified Technical Assistance for real estate project development.

The Technical Assistance contractor will report to the Program Manager of Opportunity Appalachia. The requested Scope of Services is noted in Attachment A, and may involve:

- Architectural and engineering,
- Market research/demand assessment,
- Development of investment prospectus, preparation of pro forma financial projections, structuring of projecting financing,
- Feasibility assessment,
- Identification of project developers and/or business operators,
- Investor outreach for project finance/investment,
- And other types of support.

Entities interested in providing Technical Assistance must complete the Request for Qualifications RFQ, as noted on the [Opportunity Appalachia](#) webpage and found [here](#). Proposals will be evaluated on contractors' qualifications (per the RFQ), expertise, track record, Scope of Work, budget/timeline, and other project requests.

II. About Opportunity Appalachia

[Opportunity Appalachia](#) will provide technical assistance to develop and structure investable transactions, and it will create investment prospectuses and pitch decks that will be used to bring investment to rural and downtown communities. Investment priorities include projects focusing on downtown development, manufacturing, IT, healthcare, education, food systems, clean energy, heritage tourism, and recreation.

The program recently announced selection of 34 projects to participate in the program to bring jobs, business support, and investment to Central Appalachia. The selected projects propose to create over 1,600 permanent and 190 construction jobs and attract over \$177M in financing to develop textile manufacturing facilities; downtown development; community centers; health, wellness, and childcare centers; food and agricultural facilities; hotels; and retail enterprises in downtown and rural areas across Central Appalachia.

These proposed projects are signals of the growing investment potential in our rural and downtown communities in Central Appalachia. Opportunity Appalachia will work closely with private investors, banks, Community Development Financial Institutions, New Markets Tax Credits investors, Historic Tax Credit Investors, and Federal agencies to highlight participating communities and access financing for transactions.

Once project technical assistance is completed, a highly visible Investor Convening event will be held in early 2023 that will target both local and pre-vetted national investors, as well as federal and state funders. A curated web-based platform hosting prospectus / pitch decks will also be made available to facilitate investor due diligence.

The program is supported by the Appalachian Regional Commission, the US Department of Treasury CDFI Fund, Truist, Goldman Sachs, and the Dogwood Health Trust.

III. About the Appalachian Region

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.

The Appalachian Region's economy, which was once highly dependent on extractive industries, has become more diversified in recent times and now includes larger shares of manufacturing and professional services, among other industries. Appalachia has made significant progress over the past five decades: its poverty rate, which was 31 percent in 1960, had fallen to 16.3 percent over the 2013– 2017 period. The number of high-poverty counties in the Region (those with poverty rates more than 1.5 times the U.S. average) declined from 295 in 1960 to 98 over the 2013–2017 period.

These gains have transformed the Region from one of widespread poverty to one of economic contrasts: some communities have successfully diversified their economies, while others still require basic infrastructure such as roads, clinics, and water and wastewater systems. The contrasts are not surprising considering the Region's size and diversity—the Region extends more than 1,000 miles from southern New York to northeastern Mississippi, and it is home to more than 25 million people.

Target geography

Central Appalachia – North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia



IV. Project Timeline

It is anticipated that the contractor will be selected by September 9, 2022 for an estimated contract start date of September 9, 2022 through February 28, 2023.

V. Instructions to Submit a Proposal

Contractors seeking to provide the full suite of TA services should submit the items listed below. It is expected that one proposal should include all requested services, which may mean that multiple entities are providing services, with one identified lead contractor.

- Scope of Work (max 3 pages) describing proposed activities to be undertaken as requested in Attachment A, with identified staffing (lead and support) for each work element.
- Budget that defines deliverables, rates and proposed payment schedule including indirect costs. A Not to Exceed cost for the full engagement must be provided; costs not to exceed \$75,000. Payment Schedule to be based on deliverables / outcome milestones.
- Timeline for Scope of Work, with deliverable milestones.
- Biography/resume for all staff noted in proposal (or provided in RFQ response).
- References from current or prior clients, including name, title, organization, contact information, and a brief description of the relevant work performed (or provided in RFQ response).

Please submit responses via email in one pdf attachment by Proposal Due Date to Kathryn Coulter Rhodes oa@acc1.org.

VI. Proposal Evaluation

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

- Qualifications (per those provided in the RFQ), expertise, track record, and staff bios.
- Scope of Work and Timeline
- Budget
- Requests from project sponsors

Attachment A

Requested Scope of Services

Project Sponsor: New Roots Community Farm

Project Name: New River Gorge Ag and Culinary Center

Project Summary provided in Attachment B.

TA Requested

- Architectural drawings, floor plan design, and cost estimates for the culinary ag facility, to include cold storage, a retail sales location, a commercial kitchen suited to host group trainings, and large meeting space.
- Engineering design and cost estimates of infrastructural systems including wastewater, water line, and parking lot.
- Financial structuring support for both financing and grants.

Attachment B

Summary Information

Lead Contact: Susanna Wheeler

Applicant Organization: New Roots Community Farm

Address: 167 Wolf Creek Road, Fayetteville, WV 25840

Phone: (304) 550-8830

Email: susanna@newrootscommunityfarm.com

Community Information

1. Communities targeted by this application (municipality(ies), county(ies), and census tract(s):
Note: See Appendix I for a list of eligible counties.

This project will foster sustainable economic opportunity in Southern West Virginia by growing the agricultural and hospitality sectors in Gateway counties and communities of the New River Gorge region including, but not limited to Hinton, Beckley, Summersville, and Fayetteville.

2. Service area of applicant (note if different than above, or note same): Located just outside the municipal boundary of the Gateway community of Fayetteville, New Roots Community Farm (NRCF) provides support to agricultural entrepreneurs operating in the coal-impacted New River Gorge region counties of Fayette, Nicholas, Summers, and Raleigh.
3. Community Development Strategy(ies): Our focus on local food systems development aligns with a study compiled for the Fayette County Commission in 2017. Guided by local stakeholders with support from the Benedum Foundation, the study analyzed the feasibility of developing a project that builds on local assets, helps to support and sustain the agricultural community, and provides a catalyst for economic development in the region. The natural beauty and outdoor recreation of the New River Gorge drives local tourism and economic activity bringing visitors looking for quality outdoor recreation and hospitality. “A 2015 study by Dean Runyan Associates indicates that direct spending in tourism in Fayette County in 2014 was over \$74 million dollars.” Informed by this study, local stakeholders established New Roots Community Farm. Since 2019, the ag-business incubator has worked with diverse partners to facilitate the growth of the region’s agricultural economy. As a satellite aggregation and distribution location in the Turnrow Appalachian Farm Collective, NRCF connects New River Gorge producers to broad markets in which to sell their farm goods. In CY 2021, the NRCF location of Turnrow facilitated the sale of \$85,903.26 worth of New River Gorge grown food. Serving Raleigh and Summers, among other coal-impacted counties, the Region 1 Planning and Development Council’s (PDC) 2019-2023 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) specifies that “Both agriculture resources and farm land are abundant in the eastern half of the region... Climate and soil are adequate to assist in area self-sufficiency, thereby facilitating growth potential... agriculture, though small-scale by necessity, has validity as an economic base.” Representing Fayette and Nicholas, among other counties, Region 4 PDC’s 2020 CEDS articulates the goal of “Work toward a strong, diversified economy with a mixture of industrial, tourism and commercial goods and services supported by a well-trained labor force”, with an emphasis on developing infrastructure to “increase the potential for local agricultural growth” and “promote local food growers providing products to local residents and other entities”. The proposed project aims to facilitate the development of an agricultural and culinary tourism training center that will capitalize on the designation of the New River Gorge National Park and the momentum of NRCF to intentionally link and grow the local food economy with the hospitality sector of the region’s gateway communities.

Project Information

4. Proposed Projects (list up to 3):

- I. **Name of Project, address:** New River Gorge Ag and Culinary Center, 167 Wolf Creek Road Fayetteville, WV 25840

- **Size in Sq Ft.:** 6,000
- **Total anticipated financing need \$:** 1,700,000
- **Financing identified/anticipated, list source and dollar amount or note 'None':** none
- **Project description (include url link if available):**

Collaborative efforts sustained over the past five years have positioned NRCF to lead food system development projects in the region. A multi-use facility that can provide NRCF and project partners with a space that can be used to enhance current food system development programs, expand placemaking through agri-tourism opportunities, and connect the region's ag and hospitality industries with an expanding tourism economy.

The proposed project will provide architectural and engineering design assistance to compile an investment prospectus for the build out and operation of a 6,000 ft² ag and culinary facility on a repurposed two-acre farmhouse site at the eighty-two-acre NRCF. Located approximately three miles south of Fayetteville along Route 16, the proposed site is highly visible to vehicular traffic. The two-acre parcel currently includes an abandoned farmhouse and an approximately one half-acre grove of deciduous trees. The site has 3-5% slope; has gas, electric, and water service on-site; and is suitable to facilitate the proposed building and parking lot.

In May of 2021, NRCF worked with the Fayette County Commission and Downstream Strategies to conduct a phase one environmental site assessment on the two-acre farmhouse site. The Phase I ESA did not identify any RECs, but it did recognize the possibility of asbestos-containing building materials and lead-based paint in the buildings surveyed. An asbestos survey and lead-based paint inspection by West Virginia-licensed inspectors is recommended prior to demolition or reuse of the farmhouse. The site is served by public water supply, but no sewer facilities are available, which necessitates the need for another management system. The three wastewater management options are public service extension, non-significant wastewater treatment system, and a Class V septic system.

The New River Gorge Ag and Culinary Center will be a multi-use space featuring cold storage, a retail sales location, a commercial kitchen suited to host group trainings, and meeting space in which hosts large events and gatherings. With its location near the dining destination of Fayetteville, this training center will be positioned to support the ag and hospitality entrepreneurs and workers that will anchor the development of those industries to deepen the impact of the outdoor economy that is poised to grow with the designation of America's 63 National Park.

- **Community Impact (quantify / provide estimates):**

In its second full year since redesignation, the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve has seen a 30% increase in visitation. Moreover, figures from the National Park Service show that the Canyon Rim Visitor's Center, located on the North side of the New River Gorge Bridge opposite the Town of Fayetteville, saw sales grow by over 62% from 2019 to 2021. This influx of visitors provides a huge opportunity to grow the region's economy, however, local stakeholders have work to do to assure that the region's hospitality industry can meet the demands of increased visitation to capitalize on the fleeting excitement of Southern West Virginia's new National Park.

Appalachia has a strong tradition of small-scale farming, seed saving, and rich agrobiodiversity

upon which to continue building local food systems. The diversity of farming enterprises, varieties of apples and beans is mirrored in the incredible biodiversity of the area.

The proposed project will lay the groundwork for the development of a facility that will strengthen opportunities to experience the identity of the region through its food and agricultural landscape by providing space for locals and tourists to learn about and support the unique offerings of the region.

With intentional planning, investment in local food systems can provide abundant benefits by creating a skilled workforce that, in turn, boosts the community's wealth, capacity, and leadership to foster a more just and resilient food system within the New River Gorge region.

The proposed New River Gorge Ag and Culinary Center at NRCF will position food system development partners to assist ag and hospitality entrepreneurs to capture more dollars through direct to consumer markets and business to business sales opportunities as niche wholesale buyers procure local foods to highlight the connectivity of place to tourism.

- **Name(s) of project sponsors, developer, and/or business owner, if identified:**

New Roots Community Farm is the project sponsor and business owner. They will lead the efforts to raise investment capital for the build out and efforts to manage all capital improvement projects.

- **Technical Assistance Needed:**

NRCF is seeking technical assistance for architectural and engineering design and reports. A&E technical assistance will constitute the majority of assistance being sought. The conclusion of this assistance will determine the cost estimates for build out and initiate the second phase of technical assistance, development of an investment prospectus. These two providers will set NRCF to seek funding from various philanthropic organizations and individuals as well as lenders and private investors.

- **Describe the connection to other proposed projects listed on this form (if applicable):** N/A

5. **Clean Energy Focus:** A new build out offers the opportunity to seamlessly include solar energy generation, energy efficiency, and local sustainably sourced materials into the design of the New River Gorge Ag and Culinary Center. Including these elements are of high priority for NRCF to show solidarity for economic diversification, sustainable management of resources, and showcasing appropriate technologies and design for sustainable development. With \$27,000 from the Agrarian Trust and in partnership with the Solar Finance Fund, NRCF is currently planning its first solar installation, scheduled for Fall of 2022. This array will be installed on the farm's 2,000 ft² barn which houses 275 ft² cold storage allowing NRCF to serve as a location for aggregation and distribution of local farm goods. Incorporation of local power generation into our ag-entrepreneur support efforts helps demonstrate best practices for lower operating costs, but also, for demonstrating a commitment to supporting resilient economic diversification in the coal impacted New River Gorge region. Investing in renewable energy, forest and farm products also positions NRCF's as a leader in advancing economic transition in the region.
6. **Applicant Capacity:** What is the relationship of the applicant to the community? How has the community demonstrated its support of the project(s)? Describe the applicant's role and capacity for completing or overseeing project activities: NRCF has a deep relationship and connection to the community. The project was initiated by the Fayette County Farmland Protection Board, Fayette County Urban Renewal Authority and Fayette County Commission in 2016. Between 2016 and 2018 community and public meetings were held to obtain community and stakeholder feedback needed to guide the vision for the project. In 2020,

NRCF in partnership with the WV Agrarian Commons, launched a capital campaign to purchase the farm from the farmland protection board in order to place it in an entity that would ensure its continued use for agricultural purposes. The fundraiser secured just over \$261,000 in 11 months. A significant portion of contributions came from small individual donors in the state and region wishing to see the land and project secured for community benefit. Susanna Wheeler, NRCF Executive Director was the first person hired to develop the project in 2018 and has led the efforts to transition the land and operation into new entities. During her tenure as Director she has managed over \$290,000 in local excise tax revenues as well as over 780,000 in federal, state, and foundation grants. In addition to management of funds she has led all infrastructure projects at the farm to date through direct design and labor as well as oversight of more than 20 different contractors and consultants.