



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) for Communications Support Services

Release Date: May 8, 2024
Proposal Due Date: May 17, 2024
Selection Date: May 30, 2024 or earlier
Contract Period: June 1st – December 31, 2024

I. Overview of Request for Proposals

[Appalachian Community Capital](#) (ACC), a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) serving members across the 13-state footprint of Appalachia, seeks contractual support for specified Communications Services for a new wholly-owned subsidiary, the [Green Bank for Rural America](#).

To accelerate economic restructuring and diversification in underserved rural communities, ACC has established the Green Bank for America, a place-based effort that will be a hub for investment and technical assistance to community lenders, local leaders, and workforce development partners across the United States. The U.S. EPA has selected ACC to receive a \$500 million Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund award to launch the Green Bank for Rural America, which will be used to leverage private capital to finance \$2.25 billion in 2,750 clean energy projects, create 18,000 quality jobs in rural communities, and reduce carbon emissions by 12M tons annually.

The contractor selected to provide Communications Support Services will report to the President and CEO of ACC, or their designate. The requested Scope of Services includes:

- Lead Initial Discovery/Definition of Green Bank for Rural America Target Markets
- Rapid-Start Period, Priority Activities
 - Oversight of existing web page on ACC site
 - Social Media Outreach
 - Media Outreach
 - Branding and message development
 - Presentation preparation (PPT, remarks development), press release development
 - Program Outreach (supporting efforts led by ACC /Steering Committee/ Rapid Start Team)

Please see the detailed Scope of Work attached in Annex below, and incorporated in full by reference in this RFP.

Proposals to provide these services will be evaluated on contractors' qualifications, expertise, track record, proposed Scope of Work, budget/timeline, References and understanding of the target communities.

Scope of Work and Budget Considerations

Appalachian Community Capital (ACC), as the sponsoring entity of the Green Bank for Rural America is seeking support from qualified firms and individuals with expertise and capacity in design, delivery and support of comprehensive and community-based communications for the rapid-start launch period of the Green Bank for Rural America. These services will entail development of a working initial tactical approach for communications, focused on framing assumptions around messaging, brand development and the like, including initial guidance around the following areas:

- A. What does success look like?
- B. Inputs on emerging workplan/roadmap including phase-bound deliverables
- C. Specificity on technical support competencies/roles/staff
- D. Within overall budget envelope of up to \$100,000 through year-end 2024
- E. Focus on first 90-day priorities (June 1st through August 31st, 2024)

ACC / The Green Bank for Rural America may extend this contract to year-end 2024 or beyond, and would request a revised Workplan and Budget to reflect these changes.

I. About Appalachian Community Capital and the Green Bank for Rural America

Appalachian Community Capital (ACC) is a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) serving member CDFIs across the 13-state footprint of Appalachia. ACC was founded in 2013 with a mission to increase small business lending across underserved and underinvested communities in the region. By providing capital, capacity building, and innovative programming to its members, ACC catalyzes entrepreneurship, opportunity, and inclusive growth in diverse and distressed communities, and now has 35 members which manage over \$4 billion in total assets. ACC is led by its President and CEO and a Board of Directors comprised of both ACC members and national leaders in development finance. Investors and supporters of ACC include: the Appalachian Regional Commission, U.S. Treasury CDFI Fund, the Ford Foundation, USDA, Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Truist, US Bank, Wells Fargo, JP Morgan Chase, MasterCard, the Benedum Foundation and others.

ACC was recently selected to receive a \$500 million U.S. EPA [Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund - Clean Communities Investment Accelerator](#) (GGRF – CCIA) award to catalyze green energy investments in low-income rural communities impacted by declines in the fossil fuel industry. This place-based start-up effort will be a hub for investment and technical assistance to community lenders, local leaders, and workforce development partners in coal, energy, underserved rural, and Tribal communities across the United States. The Green Bank for Rural America is a wholly owned, nationally-operating, non-profit subsidiary of ACC, and is overseen by the ACC Board through a Board-appointed Steering Committee, chaired by the ACC President and CEO.

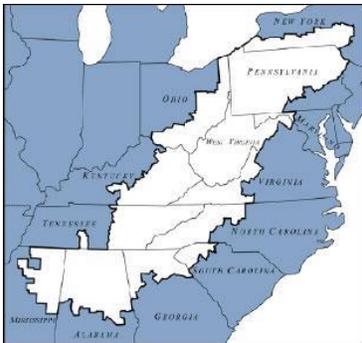
ACC anticipates the \$500 million EPA GGRF - CCIA award will be used to leverage private capital to finance \$2.25 billion in 2,750 clean energy projects, create 18,000 quality jobs in rural communities, reduce energy generation from carbon-based sources by 1.4M MWh annually, and reduce carbon emissions by 12M tons annually.

II. About the Appalachian Region and Target Rural Communities

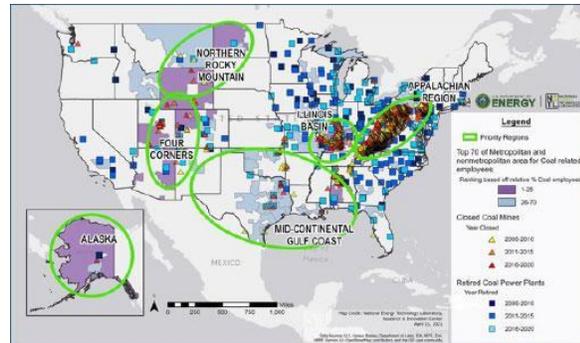
Energy communities have powered the economic growth of our nation – from coal, to oil, to natural gas – yet the decline of legacy energy industries has resulted in some of the most economically distressed regions of the country. This economic hardship and lack of opportunity will be exacerbated by future coal and power plant closures.

The Green Bank for Rural America has structured a robust national program that prioritizes 582 counties in Appalachia, energy and underserved rural, and Native communities – 30% of all US persistent poverty counties – with financing and technical assistance activities being available in all eligible underserved rural communities nationally.

The Green Bank for Rural America will target the 13-state region of Appalachia, Coal and Power Plant Communities nationally, and other underserved rural areas such as Persistent Poverty Counties, NMTC Low Income Communities, federal Opportunity Zones and other areas.



Appalachia –
Appalachian Regional Commission



Coal Communities and Power Plant Closures –
White House Interagency Working Group

III. Project Timeline

It is anticipated that the contractor will be selected by the end of May 2024 and work will begin soon thereafter, but no later than June 15th, 2024. Respondents should provide detail on workplan process through year-end 2024, but with specific focus on the first 90 days, specifically through August 31st, 2024.

Project activities may be extended beyond the contract end date to include support for on-going communications activities.

IV. Instructions to Submit a Proposal

Contractors seeking to provide the requested services should submit the items listed below.

- Scope of Work describing proposed activities to be undertaken, with identified staffing (lead and support) for each work element.
- Budget that defines deliverables and proposed payment schedule, including indirect costs. A ‘Not to Exceed’ cost for the full engagement must be provided. Payment Schedule to be based on deliverables / outcome milestones.
- Timeline for Scope of Work, with deliverable milestones.
- Biography/resume for staff noted in proposal.
- Client References including name, title, organization, contact information, and a brief description of the relevant work performed.

Please submit responses via email in one pdf attachment by Proposal Due Date to Jesse Fripp, Strategy and Comms Lead for the Rapid Start Team, Green Bank for Rural America/Appalachian Community Capital - jfripp@acc1.org.

V. Proposal Evaluation

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

- Qualifications, expertise, track record, and staff bios – including experience in / working with rural communities.
- Scope of Work and Timeline
- Budget
- References

Annex A – Detailed Scope of Work

Green Bank for Rural America Communications

Rapid-Start Scope of Work

POC Coordination with Green Bank for Rural America Rapid-Start Team (RST):

Jesse Fripp, Green Bank for Rural America RST Strategy Lead
jfripp@acc1.org, jfripp@shiningrockventures.com and 828.707.0201

Summary: Appalachian Community Capital (ACC), as the sponsoring entity of the Green Bank for Appalachia, Energy Communities, and Underserved Rural America (Green Bank for Rural America or Green Bank for Rural America henceforth) is seeking support from qualified firms and individuals with expertise and capacity in design, delivery and support of comprehensive and community-based communications for the rapid-start launch period of the Green Bank for Rural America. These services will entail development of a working initial tactical approach for communications, focused on framing assumptions around messaging, brand development and the like, including initial guidance around the following areas:

- What does success look like?
- Inputs on emerging workplan/roadmap including phase-bound deliverables
- Specificity on technical support competencies/roles/staff
- Within overall budget envelope of up to \$100k through year-end 2024
- Focus on first quarter RST priorities (June 1st through August 31st, 2024)

Lead Initial Discovery/Definition of Green Bank for Rural America Target Markets, including but not limited to:

- Community Lenders (CDFIs, Revolving Loan Funds)
- Community projects / local leaders (CDCs, community leaders/elected officials, private businesses, educational institutions, medical facilities, Councils of Government)
- Technical Assistance providers / partners - community colleges, workforce programs, CPAs, green building orgs, climate finance and resilience orgs, etc
- Investors - financial institutions, philanthropy, impact, climate venture
- Media - print, video, radio/podcast, other
- Political - Hill (national), regional, state and local

Rapid-Start Period, Priority Activities

Manage existing web page on ACC site -

- Url redirects
- SEO
- Information request database
- Adding of project examples

Social Media Outreach

- LinkedIn
- FB/Instagram/Meta

- Short videos/storytelling
- Blogs

Media Outreach

- Wire services/syndicators
- Major national news outlets (print, tv/cable, radio, other)
- Key regional/local outlets in priority markets
- Targeted/special interest (features, talkshow appearances, podcasts, other)
- In-house site for retention of media stories - shared and populated by Steering Committee
- Develop interview scripts, talking points, key information objectives for media prep, crisis communications protocol
- Weekly listing of media hits / database of articles

Branding and message development

- Message clarity - storyboarding process
- Logo development
- Byline creation. Some ideas below.
- Branding and marketing guideline development
- All Steering Committee members and partners brand as Green Bank for Rural America
- All financed projects branded as Green Bank for Rural America (prospective)

Program Outreach (supporting efforts led by ACC /Steerco/ RST)

- Host virtual communications center for period post-announcement and to/through official launch of Green Bank for Rural America, support hand-off to Green Bank for Rural America in-house comms team
- To Community Lenders, participating communities, workforce partners, technical assistance partners
 - Cut Sheet development (update) - 2 pager
 - Green Bank for Rural America powerpoint decks tailored to key audiences (Community Lenders, Investors, Community Partners, Political)
 - Webinars - June (general info - launch), September (program to open in Q4), November (open - launch).
 - Possibility of an in-person launch event/reception with invited media in July?
- Organizational outreach: Appalachian Funders Network, partners (USDA, ARC, NREL, Central Appalachian Network, Just Transition Fund, NADO, Aspen Institute, others)
- Investor Outreach: Financial Institutions, foundations, others
- Congressional Liaison

Workplan and Timeline

- Priority on next 3-9 months to support Green Bank for Rural America start-up
- Weekly coordination meetings with Rapid Start Team Comms POC, regular meetings with ACC CEO and full RST
- Weekly media and comms outreach, coordination, and maintenance
- Public Webinars/events (virtual and in-person), planning, coordination and management on a quarterly basis

Anticipated Level of Effort, and staffing configuration

- FTE levels
- Staff allocations