



Appalachian Regional Commission: 2026 MD LDD Training

Project Suitability

How to determine if your project is appropriate for ARC funding:

- ✓ ARC Mission Alignment
- ✓ Geographic Location
- ✓ Goal Alignment
 - ARC's Strategic Goals/Objectives
 - State Strategic Goals/Objectives
 - NOSA Qualifiers/Priorities (for competitive programs only)
- ✓ Project Impact (outputs/outcomes)
- ✓ Other Considerations:
 - Challenging Concepts
 - Administrative Priorities

Generation of Project Ideas

Community Need – Identified challenges, deficits, shortages often translated into community economic development plans or other strategic plans

Opportunity – New funding programs or initiatives, tax incentives, industry trends

Inspiration – Successful projects or approaches in other areas, cross-sector talk and collaboration, internet search "Economic Development Project Ideas"

In what other ways have project ideas been conceived?

What primary goal or objective of ARC's strategic plan does your project advance?

What primary goal or objective of your state's development strategy or plan does your project advance?



Does your project help to build or strengthen:

- Appalachian businesses?
- Workforce system?
- Infrastructure?
- Culture and Tourism?
- Skills and Resources?

Resources

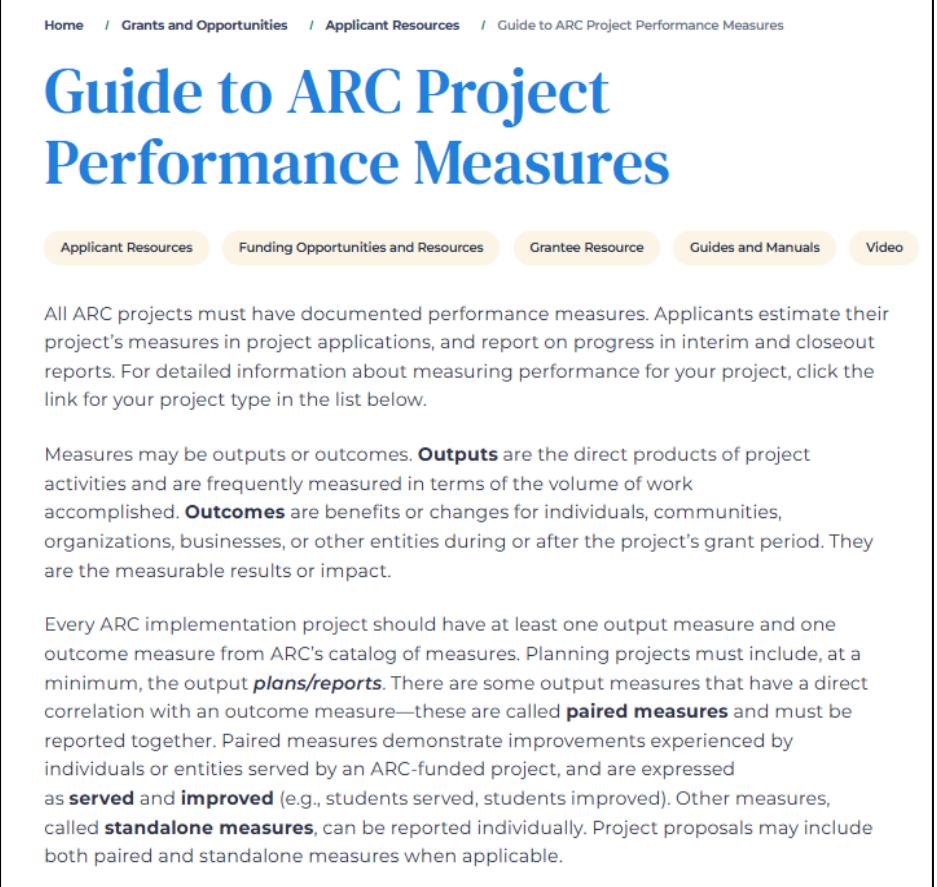
ARC Strategic

Plan: <https://www.arc.gov/strategicplan/>

State Plans and Strategies:

<https://www.arc.gov/state-plans-strategies/>

Suitability Test: Checking Against ARC's Guide to Performance Measures



Home / Grants and Opportunities / Applicant Resources / Guide to ARC Project Performance Measures

Guide to ARC Project Performance Measures

Applicant Resources Funding Opportunities and Resources Grantee Resource Guides and Manuals Video

All ARC projects must have documented performance measures. Applicants estimate their project's measures in project applications, and report on progress in interim and closeout reports. For detailed information about measuring performance for your project, click the link for your project type in the list below.

Measures may be outputs or outcomes. **Outputs** are the direct products of project activities and are frequently measured in terms of the volume of work accomplished. **Outcomes** are benefits or changes for individuals, communities, organizations, businesses, or other entities during or after the project's grant period. They are the measurable results or impact.

Every ARC implementation project should have at least one output measure and one outcome measure from ARC's catalog of measures. Planning projects must include, at a minimum, the output **plans/reports**. There are some output measures that have a direct correlation with an outcome measure—these are called **paired measures** and must be reported together. Paired measures demonstrate improvements experienced by individuals or entities served by an ARC-funded project, and are expressed as **served** and **improved** (e.g., students served, students improved). Other measures, called **standalone measures**, can be reported individually. Project proposals may include both paired and standalone measures when applicable.

Working Backwards....

- Verify that your project's impact can be defined using ARC's performance measures
- Determine what measures might make the most sense and what kind of project they align with
- Allow this information to determine whether to pursue funding and to help guide the development of your application

Laying the Groundwork: What Makes a Strong ARC Proposal

ARC Project Fundamentals

Strategic

Project aligns with the goals of the community and regional plans

Impactful

Project has specific performance targets aimed at helping Appalachia economically prosper

Collaborative

Project engages partnerships to achieve common or aligned goals

Sustainable

Project has a plan for maintaining the program or asset after the grant period has ended

The "Economic Development Lens"

ARC places high-value on projects wherein the correlation with **economic development** is clear and made prominent.

All proposals are considered from the perspective of **economic development** and reviewed using this lens.

Demonstrating Economic Impact

For example, a Theater Project (renovation/expansion):



- Emphasis on the arts, cultural enlightenment, historical significance, entertainment value (economic value is lost)
- Description of how many visitors the theater attracts, how that number stands to increase with the project, and how much revenue the visitors generate for downtown businesses
- "In the 2017-2018 season, a total of **17,315** individuals attended a ticketed performance in the theater generating approximately **\$500,000** in spending by patrons downtown. **With the proposed renovation and expansion, an additional 5,500 individuals...**"

Example #2:

Tourism: Improving or Expanding Campgrounds and Park Areas

- ARC might think: Tourism generates significant income, but how if visitors are camping and when recreational activities (i.e., nature trails, visiting historical landmarks) are available at no cost?
- One idea might be to consider discussing how this project would increase the capacity for day and overnight visitors and how that, in turn, would impact area commerce and tax revenue....

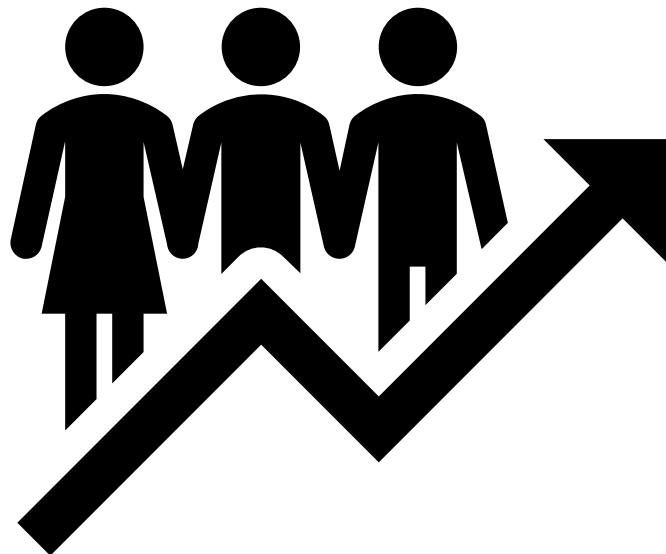
“...An estimated 30,600 new overnight visitors will be able to stay in the County within three years of the project completion and generate approximately \$2,754,000 in new tourism revenue, continuing to drive the development of the County's economy around its largest historic and recreational assets.”

Challenging Project Concepts

- Parametric equipment including scuba gear.
- Parks and playgrounds/Playground equipment.
- Memorials and public art-work.
- Sidewalks and HVAC systems not part of a comprehensive project.
- County/city road paving or repair.
- Recreational activity venues including skate parks, basketball courts and soccer fields.
- Senior living facilities or senior centers.
- Courthouses or Fire Stations.
- Projects that serve or include golf courses or gated communities.

ARC is looking for partnerships that:

- Demonstrate evidence of strong input and engagement of broader community in planning, project design, and plans for implementation
- Engage multiple stakeholders, work with partners from multiple disciplines
- Leverage program funds from multiple sources (both public and private)

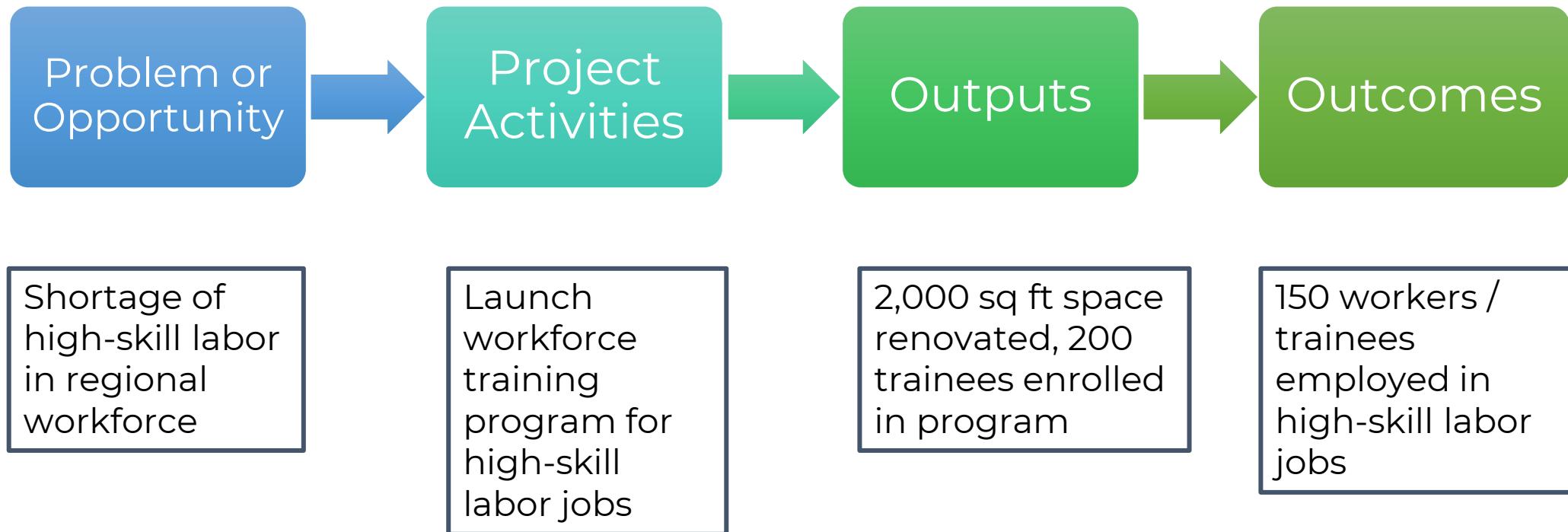


Thinking Long Term = Project Sustainability

- Show commitment of financial resources to continue efforts
- Develop a **sustainability plan** to incrementally build adequate revenue streams for continuation
- Provide assessments of sustainability like feasibility studies or pro forma business plans
- If there is property/equipment involved, identify **who will own and maintain it**

Identifying Project Performance Measures: Best Practices

- Start with ARC's required metrics: identify the right performance measures for your project (tip – create a crosswalk that maps each performance metric to the activity that produces it)
- Base estimates on documented, realistic assumptions (avoid optimistic assumptions). Be prepared to describe how each measure was calculated.
- Apply the SMART Test. Each measure should be:
 - **Specific** – clearly defined
 - **Measurable** – quantifiable or verifiable
 - **Achievable** – realistic within the grant period
 - **Relevant** – tied to economic development goals
 - **Time-bound** – reported at defined intervals
- Assign ownership and integrate tracking into future plans project management



Performance Measures

Requirements:

1. At least one ARC output & outcome, often expressed in pairs as "served" and "improved."
2. Planning projects must include a plan/report output.
3. Explanation for how measures are estimated, collected, and tracked.
4. Select a timeframe (up to 3 years after closeout).

Sample Stand-Alone Measures

OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
New Visitors: Days	Businesses Created
New Visitors: Overnights	Costs Reduced
Plans/Reports	Jobs Created* Δ
Data: Megabits per second	Jobs Retained* Δ
Acreage	Leveraged Private Investment (LPI) Δ
Access Road Miles	Programs Implemented
Linear Feet	Revenues Increased: Export Sales
Square Feet	Revenues Increased: Non-Export Sales

*Jobs Created/Retained refer to permanent, Full-Time jobs as a result of the project activities, not including temporary contracting or construction positions. Part-Time jobs should be converted into the equivalent FTE positions.

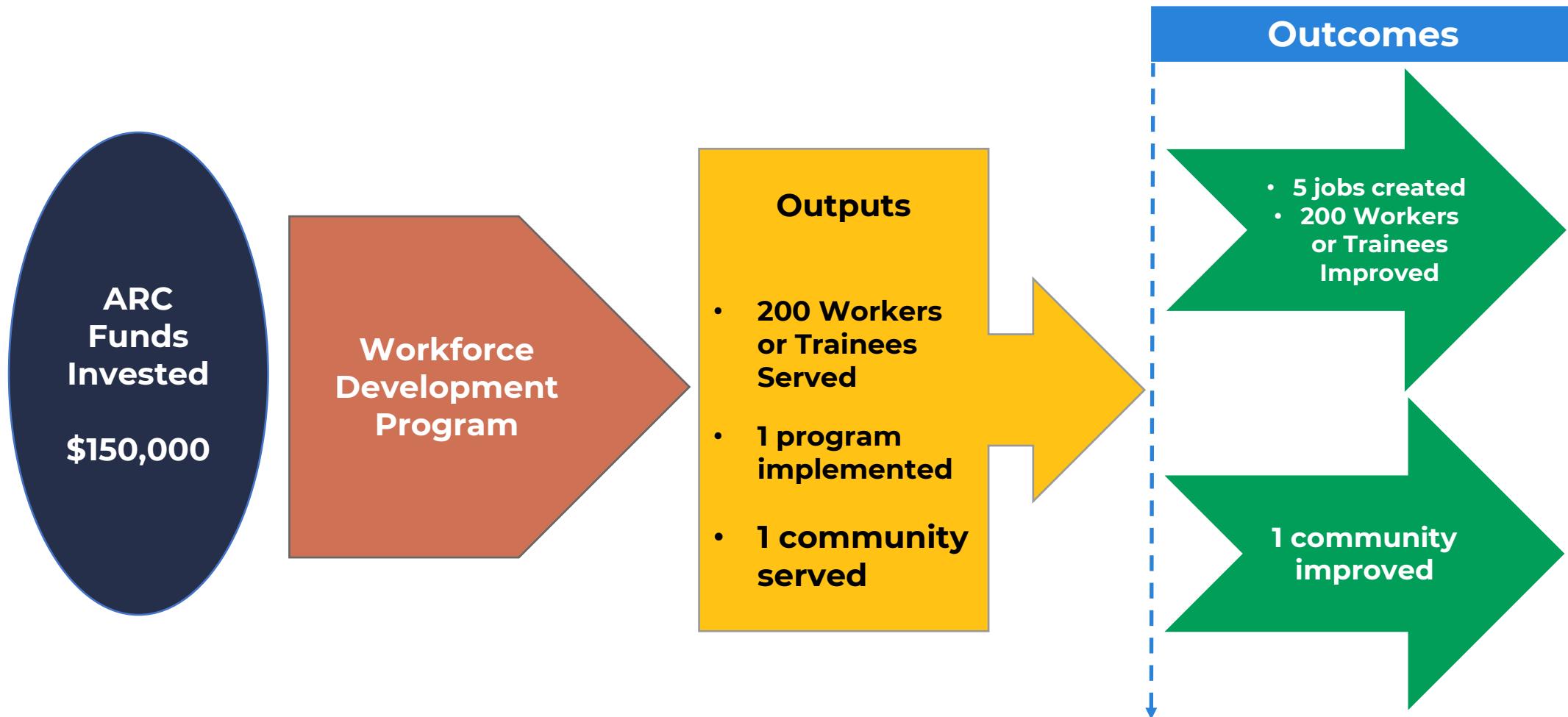
Δ Require additional documentation (letters of commitment)

Sample Paired Measures

OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Businesses Served	Businesses Improved
Communities Served	Communities Improved
Households Served	Households Improved
Organizations Served	Organizations Improved
Participants Served	Participants Improved
Patients Served	Patients Improved
Students Served	Students Improved
Workers / Trainees Served	Workers / Trainees Improved

Requirement: The number "improved" (outcome) is always equal to or a subset of the number "served" (output)

• How is Economic Impact Translated into Outcomes?



Performance Measures: Key Takeaways

- Prioritize quality over quantity and avoid duplication.
- Table included in the application must be accompanied by a **written narrative** to explain methodology.
- Describe how outcomes will be **tracked/measured**.
- Include a **timeframe** (i.e., achieved at project completion, or up to three years after grant closeout).
 - Collect data throughout the duration of your Performance Measurement timeframe (at project closeout or 3 years after)
- Define what is meant by **“served”** and **“improved”** for paired measures.
- Include letters of **documentation when required**.

ARC's Guide to Performance Measures



Appalachian
Regional
Commission

**Guide to ARC Project Performance Measures –
Broadband Projects**

Standalone Measures

Data—Gigabytes (GB) Output

Definition	The fixed data storage capacity of a server room or data center, in gigabytes
Example grant activities	Data center construction
How might this be measured?	Gigabyte (GB) of storage. This measure may be expressed in decimals.
Typical timeframe	By grant closeout
Additional guidance	Do not use this measure for data transfer rate (Mbps). For data transfer rate, use Data—Megabits Per Second (Mbps).

Data—Megabits Per Second (Mbps) Download Output

Definition	The maximum download speed offered/advertised post-investment
Example grant activities	Fiber deployment, wireless broadband deployment, downtown Wi-Fi
How might this be measured?	New maximum download data transfer rate, expressed in megabits per second (Mbps)
Typical timeframe	By grant closeout
Additional guidance	Provide the maximum download speed delivered at this location as confirmed by speed tests at the location, conducted upon completion of the construction and initiation of operations. Speed tests should be conducted in a manner consistent with industry best practices to account for the actual speeds delivered during peak use times in the given area.
More details regarding the required approach for gathering maximum download speed delivered can be found in the Connect America Fund, W.C. Docket No. 10-90, Order, 33 FCC Rcd 6509 (WCB/WTB/OET-2018) (Performance Measures Order) .	

Data—Megabits Per Second (Mbps) Upload Output

Definition	The maximum upload speed offered/advertised post-investment
Example grant activities	Fiber deployment, wireless broadband deployment, downtown Wi-Fi
How might this be measured?	New maximum upload data transfer rate, expressed in megabits per second (Mbps)
Typical timeframe	By grant closeout

Guide to ARC Project Performance Measures – Broadband

Page 1 of 5

- Refer to **ARC's Guide to Performance Measures** www.arc.gov/resource/guide-to-arc-project-performance-measures/



Application Challenges and Roadblocks

Application Sections:

- **Budget and Match**
 - Inconsistent numbers, incorrect cost categories, inaccurate computations, unsupported/lack of documentation.
 - *MUST incorporate indirect costs into all applicable budgets. Match MUST be secured prior to approval.
- **Strategic Rationale**
 - Insufficient data that addresses need/opportunity, failure to reference CEDs/local or regional ED plans, failure to cite/leverage connection to other investments, failure to include letters of support/demand.
- **Performance Measures**
 - Not quantified, inconsistent, improperly defined in the context of the project, inadequate tracking systems
 - *MUST quantify. MUST measure.

Most Common Issues:

Additional Considerations

Additional requirements or demonstration standards accompany certain projects.

Please see ARC policies on

- Residential Infrastructure Projects
- Travel and Tourism
- Use of ARC Export Funds for Trade Events

All found within ARC's Project Guidelines:

<https://www.arc.gov/resource/arc-project-guidelines/>

ARC Residential Infrastructure Policy

- Generally, ARC does NOT fund water/sewer projects that only serve **residences**.
- Exceptions for Distressed Counties.
- Exceptions for at-risk or transitional counties ONLY if:
 - A compelling need is shown (i.e., poor water quality, distressed census tract)
 - It is disaster relief
 - It addresses a mandate from EPA

ARC Travel/Tourism Policy

ARC supports tourism activities that fit within a regional or community strategic plan.

Projects should have clear economic benefits.

Examples:

- Planning and research
- Training and technical assistance
- Education and capacity building
- Marketing and promotional efforts

*Grantees are encouraged to apply for an ARC planning grant to confirm the need for an implementation grant if no regional or local plan has been created.

Further Guidance on Travel and Tourism Projects

- Follow this link to find more information on ARC's Travel and Tourism Policy. Within this document, you will find:
 - Components of a Strategic Plans vs. Feasibility / Cost Benefit / Economic Impact Analysis
 - Best Practices for Impact Analyses
 - Economic Impact Data Resources
 - Other considerations



Guidance on Documentation Required by the ARC Policy on Travel and Tourism for Construction Projects

ARC Travel and Tourism Policy:

ARC will support activities as they relate to the travel and tourism industry in the context of an overall development strategy. Grant proposals to use ARC funds for capital improvement or construction related to travel and tourism must meet both of the following criteria:

- A. Be an integral part of a strategic plan for the community and/or region, **and**
- B. Meet the highest standards of a cost-benefit analysis and/or feasibility study as to economic outcomes.

A. Part of a Strategic Plan for the Community

Grant proposals to use ARC funds for capital improvement or construction related to travel and tourism should be an integral part of a strategic plan for the community and/or region. Make sure to do the following in your proposal:

- Outline the goals and objectives for a community's growth or future.
- Describe how tourism is part of the community's economic development strategy.
- Provide a set of actions or projects that advance a larger plan.
- Consider whether the project is competing with similar assets within the region.

B. Feasibility / Cost-Benefit / Economic Impact Analysis

Grant proposals to use ARC funds for capital improvement or construction related to travel and tourism should meet the highest standards of a cost-benefit analysis and/or feasibility study as to economic outcomes. Make sure to do the following in your proposal:

<https://www.arc.gov/resource/guidance-on-documentation-travel-and-tourism-for-construction-projects/>