



Leave
No One
Behind

State of Maryland

**2024 Annual Strategy Statement
Appalachian Regional Commission**

**Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor**



STATE OF MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Wes Moore

August 11, 2023

Mr. Brandon McBride
Executive Director
The Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20009-1068

Subject: Appalachian Maryland 2024 Strategy Statement

Dear Mr. McBride,

On behalf of the State of Maryland, I am pleased to submit the 2024 Annual Strategy Statement (Strategy Statement) for Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) review. Maryland's Strategy Statement identifies targeted priorities and is focused on the implementation of Maryland's 2024- 2028 Appalachian Development Plan in the upcoming fiscal year.

If you require any further information or have any questions, please contact me or my State Alternate, Rebecca Flora at 410-767-3219.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wes Moore', written over a white background.

Wes Moore
Governor

cc: Rebecca Flora, Governor's ARC Alternate
David V. Cotton, ARC Program Manager

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Introduction

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a regional economic development agency. Established by the U.S. Congress in 1965, it is a unique partnership comprised of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a federal co-chair appointed by the President of the United States. Grassroots participation is provided through local development districts, which are multicounty organizations with boards made up of elected officials, business leaders, and other local leaders. Each year, Congress appropriates funds, which ARC allocates among the 13 member states.

The governor of each Appalachian state submits a State Appalachian Development Plan within 10 months of taking office. In addition, each year the governor submits a Strategy Statement describing the State's program for achieving the goals and objectives contained in their respective State Appalachian Development Plan.

In accordance with Section 5.4 of the ARC Code, this document will serve as the State of Maryland's Annual Strategic Statement.

Appalachian Maryland

The Maryland Appalachian region consists of three counties – Garrett, Allegany, and Washington, with 24 municipalities that span 1,529 square miles. The ARC has designated Garrett, Allegany, and Washington counties as transitional for FY22. Transitional counties are those transitioning between strong and weak economies and rank economically between the lowest 25% and the highest 25% of the nation's counties.

Manufacturing is still a major part of the region's workforce, but large companies today employ approximately 300-400 people instead of 1,500. Spring 2019 brought the closing of the Verso Corporation paper mill in Luke, Allegany County, which employed over 650 employees in the region and on the heels of that closure in 2023 Hunter Douglas Window Coverings, who at one time employed over 800 employees in the region, announced layoffs and final shuttering by the end of 2023. We continue to work to overcome the effects on the region by developing a highly competent and well educated workforce for all job seekers including a new generation of workers through education and apprenticeship.

Economic development efforts have shifted to attracting information technology, advanced manufacturing, and asset-based development, including cybersecurity, advanced technology and research, biotech, and tourism-related businesses. Improving access and infrastructure for local businesses to regional and national markets is an essential component of the region's economic development strategy. Therefore, the completion of the Appalachian Development Highway System and critical links with local access roads is an important part of this effort.

We are particularly focused on new approaches to remove barriers for all Maryland Appalachians, leverage partnerships, and expand critical infrastructure to meet the needs of the 21st century for economic growth and job creation. During a time of unique challenges, we are utilizing partnerships and innovation to change the narrative and make a difference.

In July 2023 Governor Wes Moore launched the Maryland ActNow campaign in partnership with EducationSuperHighway, reaffirming the Moore-Miller administration's commitment to closing the digital divide by extending broadband internet access to all Marylanders and making it more affordable. Governor Moore launched ActNow as an answer to his June 2023

announcement that the state will deploy more than \$267 million in federal funding to bring high-speed internet access to every Marylander. As part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration will assist in closing the remaining gaps in high-speed internet service in the state and expanding digital equity initiatives for Marylanders.

The three counties of Appalachian Maryland continue to suffer more from underemployment than unemployment. Governor Moore remains focused on well being of Marylanders by ensuring world-class health and recovery systems exist for all and advancing infrastructure to connect all Marylanders to new and existing opportunities. Leadership continues to focus on educational and workforce training opportunities as a means to ending child poverty in Maryland. Higher paying jobs, population growth, and ultimately the building of a sustainable tax base will ensure that all of those that want to live in Maryland can do so.

In July 2023, Governor Moore announced that nine Maryland nursing programs will receive \$5.8 million to help address the state's nursing shortage. The FY24 Competitive Institutional Grant funding includes one-year resource grants, multi-year implementation grants, and planning grants to get more students out of the classroom and into the workforce. Frostburg State University will not only benefit through increases in enrollment within their established nursing program, but will create new programs that will educate geographically underserved nursing students in Appalachian Maryland.

We remain focused on supporting the \$50 Million Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund. \$10 million from this fund goes directly to the Western Maryland Tri-County Council to help address key issues like infrastructure, broadband, and workforce in rural areas.

The state previously provided funding to Frostburg State University (FSU), the only state university located in Appalachian Maryland, for an Office of Regional Development and Engagement. The new office integrates university resources with regional partners in Appalachian Maryland to help communities and companies be competitive and meet the challenges of economic and community development.

FSU and the region's three community colleges are playing a key role in addressing the education and labor force training needs of the region. They are incredibly flexible in responding to the needs of the private sector and quick to establish special programs and training. The University of Maryland System operates a satellite campus in downtown Hagerstown that complements FSU's efforts. Within each of the three counties, our community colleges are sharing infrastructure with K-12 schools to create greater opportunities for advanced learning with active learning labs and STEM and robotics programming.

In 2021, FSU received the state of Maryland's first ever ARC POWER implementation grant. The Phase 1, \$1,480,979, award helped to continue the development of the Advanced Technology Center (ATC) at FSU's Innovation Park, which works to strengthen western Maryland's economy by creating new job opportunities. The ATC, a public-private partnership, creates new opportunities for employment, workforce training and economic development. Phase 2 development supports the growth of industries important to the future of the region's economy, with an estimated 126 jobs created in industries including information technology, renewable and resilient energy, green construction materials manufacturing, environmental hazard removal, and biotech laboratory testing and analysis.

Targeted Investment Priorities

Economic Development

Maryland is committed to leveraging capital of all kinds and rebuilding to meet the needs of our residents. We remain focused on creating greater economic opportunity in every part of the state and connecting Marylanders to jobs. We understand the unique challenges in increasing Maryland's economic competitiveness through economic development and job creation in Appalachian Maryland. We are preparing for economic development over the next century and this includes support for asset-based development around outdoor recreation, attracting new businesses to the region, prioritizing investments in entrepreneurship and business expansion, and continuing to prioritize projects that reinvest in existing communities.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure provides the foundation for a healthy economy. We are focused on the long-term health of our economy by continuing to invest in rebuilding our infrastructure across the entire state with an appreciation of the particular needs and challenges of Appalachian Maryland. We are focused on leveraging resources and collaborating with partners to improve infrastructure throughout the rural region. We prioritize projects to develop and support basic infrastructure for community and economic development. We also prioritize projects that promote a balanced transportation system, which will enhance economic growth and investment potential in the region.

Recovery Ecosystem

Maryland remains focused on the heroin and opioid crisis. We have brought together state and local partners to support prevention, treatment, and workforce re-entry efforts to fight the heroin and opioid crisis across the state. We understand that clinical care, access to employment during and post treatment, housing, and transportation are essential to empower those struggling with a substance misuse disorder. We prioritize projects that fill the gaps in the recovery ecosystem.

Education and Workforce development

We are setting Maryland's students up for success by developing a highly competent and well-educated workforce with the skills desired by existing, new, and relocating businesses. Maryland has a blueprint for the development of an effective and efficient workforce system across the state providing opportunity for all job seekers, including a new generation of workers through education and apprenticeships. We prioritize projects that prepare students for jobs in the 21st century, expand partnerships among schools, colleges, and businesses to support workforce development and improve workforce readiness for all job seekers.

Additional Priorities

We remain focused on our long term economic development goals for the region. We have expanded our outreach and technical assistance to local governments. With the influx of additional state funding and federal funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we are working closely with stakeholders and local governments to address the unique challenges of the region, to identify funding and assistance for priorities and to ensure completion of infrastructure and other projects that assist in long term sustainable economic development, leaving no one behind.

A portion of annual funds is reserved each year to support economic development and other critical needs submitted on an as-needed basis.

Projects that address other goals and objectives as outlined in Maryland's 2024-2028 Appalachian Development Plan will be considered based on the overall impact of the project to the program. We are focused on self-sustaining economic development and job growth while maximizing return on investment and meeting the local needs and priorities across the Appalachian region.

Maryland ARC Operations

The ARC program in Maryland is directed through the Office of the Governor and coordinated and managed by the Secretary for the Maryland Department of Planning who serves as the Governor's Alternate to the ARC. The Governor's Alternate works with the Program Manager and staff in the western Maryland Planning office. The State of Maryland submits projects to the ARC on behalf of Appalachian Maryland's local governments, nonprofits, and regional institutions.

The Program Manager works closely with the Tri-County Council for Western Maryland, Inc. (Tri-County Council), Maryland's Local Development District (LDD).

The Program Manager and LDD meet regularly with potential applicants to provide information to ensure complete applications, confirm eligibility under ARC code, and ensure projects are consistent with ARC and state goals and strategies.

County and local governments, nonprofits, and educational institutions are invited to submit ARC applications in February of each year. Counties develop and rank preliminary project descriptions and submit these to the LDD in the third quarter of the federal fiscal year. The LDD and the Program Manager review and evaluate the projects submitted by each county and develop a priority list for the Appalachian region.

Projects are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Consistency with state and federal objectives
- Project scope and cost effectiveness
- Project readiness
- Potential for job growth
- Equitable funding among counties

The ARC has designated Garrett, Allegany, and Washington counties as transitional for FY24. The required match for Area Development Projects in transitional counties is 50 percent. The LDD and Program Manager review the availability/commitment of matching funds for each project.

The Governor's Alternate and Program Manager review the priority list, and also evaluate the projects and confirm consistency with state and federal objectives, project scope and cost effectiveness, project readiness, potential for job growth, and equitable funding among counties. The review also includes confirmation of matching funds. Recommendations are presented to the LDD board in June for final approval.

In late August eligible projects are invited to apply for funding. All projects that are in a position to accept funding should have applications submitted to the program manager no later than November 15 each year. Approved ARC projects are monitored by the Program Manager and LDD to assess progress, and to identify and resolve any potential problems.