**Request for Proposal**
**Technology Consultancy – Grants Management Process Analysis and Optimization**

**Posted**          January 9, 2017

**Responses due**          February 1, 2017

**Overview**

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) seeks proposals from consultants to:

1. Review our "map" of current process (pre-application, application, pre-award review, agreement, approvals, reports, amendments, close-outs) *NOTE: a majority of the ARC grants management process is already documented mapping the current process which is a combination of paper/manual and electronic functions.*
2. Identify efficiencies and new process. Present a new mapped process to optimize our business process and leverage technology where appropriate.
3. Present, and support our evaluation of, technology solutions that will allow us to implement the new business process, gaining process efficiencies (considering both off the shelf and in-house current system, *ARCnet*)

**ARC Background**

Who we are: ARC is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, ARC is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a federal co-chair, who is appointed by the president. Local participation is provided through multi-county local development districts (LDDs).

Mission: ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia.

What we do: Each year ARC provides funding for several hundred investments in the Appalachian Region, in areas such as business development, education and job training, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, and transportation. These projects create thousands of new jobs; improve local water and sewer systems; increase school readiness; expand access to health care; assist local communities with strategic planning; and provide technical and managerial assistance to emerging businesses. ARC invests in activities that address the five goals identified in the organization's strategic plan.

Staff and structure: ARC's structure was designed to ensure an active federal-state partnership. There are 14 Commission members: the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and the federal co-chair. ARC's 57 person staff, all located in one office in Washington, DC, is comprised of both federal (about 5) and non-federal ("Commission") employees. The Commission staff is headed by an executive director, and the majority of these employees serve as program and financial analysts and researchers managing over $100 million in grant deliverables each fiscal year. The staff implements the program and policies determined by the federal-state partners, mandated by Federal regulations.

The Division of Community Investment (DCI) responsibilities include managing the portfolio of ARC-funded projects, including planning and coordination, project and program development, grant application review, and general grants management duties. DCI staff work collaboratively with community and state representatives throughout the life-cycle of project development. In addition, staff provide technical assistance and guidance to the Commission in his or her area of expertise, help formulate ARC strategies, identify best practices, develop alliances or partnerships with other organizations, and serve as an advocate for programs that help implement ARC's Strategic Plan.

Recent History: Over the past year, ARC projects have expanded to include specific funding for economic development in coal impacted communities through the POWER Initiative (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization). The POWER initiative is a multi-agency initiative that targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production. Given these changes in funding ARC seeks to consider an enterprise system to leverage technology to gain efficiencies in our grants management processing. ARC recently concluded an organization effectiveness review for the DCI team. One outcome is to seek a technology consultant to analyze and improve our grants management process and then to present and evaluate technological solutions.

Scope of Project and Deliverables: ARC seeks an experienced consultant to **review our current process**, most of which is well documented. Following review of the "as is" situation, suggest changes to improve efficiencies in the process and **develop a revised map to optimize our business process**. And then **evaluate and recommend technological systems** to capitalize upon the newly refined business process to include integration with ARC's web site.

While the DCI team are primary users of the system, our current process also involves multiple and varied functions within ARC such as:

- Finance (to make the payments, track expenditures, comply with financial audits, and report financial data for outside organizations),
- Legal (prepare grant agreements, contracts, amendments for signature by grantees)),
- Research & Planning (collect, consume and validate data),

- Communications (disseminate information about projects that meet best practice and respond to inquiries from press and media),
- Event Planning (query data for conferences, webinars, workshops, presentations, speakers).

Our grants management process is complicated by a few unique requirements. The needs of 13 region states must be accommodated while still gaining process efficiencies. The grants management system is used not only by ARC employees across all internal functions, and the 13 states, but also by our grantees. All of these users have varying degrees of comfort and experience with database management thus it must be intuitive, user-friendly with a professional appearance that has a layout to well-known applications that external stakeholders would be familiar (i.e. "turbo-tax" for grants management). Lastly, due to the changing nature of our work and funding, we seek a process/system that provides maximum flexibility while still gaining efficiencies. The technology is expected to integrate with ARC's web site. We will consider recommended solutions that are low maintenance to maintain internally in the long-run and consider the trade-offs of internal versus externally maintained technology.

We recognize that this is the first step of an enterprise solution; the second stage consists of implementation (install, test, and roll-out) of the application(s). We anticipate soliciting for additional services to lead the technology install, ideally late spring 2017 for a live date of December 31, 2017. We may consider the consultant selected for this project to aid in the evaluation of RFPs for the implementation process.

Proposal Requirements:
Submitted proposals must include the following:
1. A brief description of the consultant/organization, including an outline of the organization's structure and number of years in operation. Consultants with grants management/making experience (i.e. foundations, agencies giving out money, Federal grants), end-to-end systems (application through close-out), and multi-tier stakeholder systems are preferred.
2. A description of the applicant's general approach to the consultation and support, including methodology, perspective, or philosophy that guides your work.
3. Detailed plan, scope of services, timeline, and list of project deliverables to be created
4. A detailed budget that breaks out all expenses, including personnel, travel, lodging, meals, supplies, materials, overhead, and other expenses.
5. Credentials and qualifications of key personnel who will take responsibility for working directly on this project. Please provide curriculum vitae for the lead organizational staff who will be working on this project.
6. A minimum of three references from relevant organizations with whom the consultant has worked on similar projects within the past three years, including contact information.
7. If subcontractors will be used, please include resume and qualifications of the subcontractor.

Proposal Submission Process:

Proposals should be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word or PDF format to Allison Thiriez at athiriez@arc.gov . Hard copy proposals will not be accepted. Applications are encouraged as soon as possible. The deadline for submission is end of day on Wednesday, February 1, 2017. ARC is open to having a brief informational call to help clarify or further explain anything related to this RFP. Please email Allison at athiriez@arc.gov to schedule a day/time.

Proposal Review Procedure and Scoring Criteria:

In awarding a contract for consulting services for this project, ARC will examine a number of factors and criteria will include:

• Demonstrated ability and expertise in content areas identified in this document
• Qualifications and experience of consultant(s) in providing support for key functions
• The extent to which the proposal addresses the goals of this proposal and clearly describes the scope of work
• Specific plans to be used to perform the services
• Availability for work to be conducted during proposed project timeframe
• Proposed project cost

Timeline:

RFP Issue date:                      January 9, 2017
Submission Deadline:                 February 1, 2017
Anticipated Selection date:          February 9, 2017
Anticipated Contract start date:     February 16, 2017
Anticipated Completion date:         April 15, 2017

General Requirements:

The contract award is anticipated to cover work that is expected to be completed within a period of two months or less. ARC expects the contracted consultant to have the capacity to provide services in Washington, DC and readily available for consultation or meetings as needed. ARC recognizes that some tasks may potentially require use of subcontractors. If the consultant subcontracts any part of the proposed activities, the subcontractor(s) and agreements with such subcontractors are subject to review and acceptance by ARC prior to award of a subcontract. Prior to engagement, the selected consultant will enter into a contractual arrangement with ARC that will include, but not be limited to, the following requirements:

• Complete IRS Tax Form W-9 and file any tax reports and tax returns required by any federal, state or local government
• Warrant that the services provided do not infringe any copyright, trademark, patent or other intellectual property right of any third party
• Agree that all deliverables constitute "works made for hire" and that such works constitute and contain proprietary assets and confidential work product

- Commit to completing the consulting engagement for an amount not to exceed the agreed upon compensation

ARC is committed to ensuring that equal opportunity is provided to minority enterprises, and that its contractors have active diversity programs in their workforces and are sensitive to issues of race and gender. No person shall be subjected to discrimination on account of any services or activities resulting from this RFP, on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, national origin, age (except under minimum age and retirement provisions), marital or veteran status, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical handicap or any other protected class. Any violation of a material provision of this procurement shall be grounds for termination or suspension in whole or in part of any related agreement by ARC. Respondents shall at all times in the proposal and contract process comply with all applicable state and federal anti-discrimination laws, rules, regulations and requirements.

Right to Reject:
ARC reserves the right to:
- Reject any or all proposals submitted
- Request additional information from any or all respondents
- Conduct discussions with respondents to assure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, the solicitation requirements
- Negotiate modifications to a respondent's proposal prior to final award for the purpose of obtaining best and final offers
- Approve or reject any subcontractors proposed or used in carrying out the work

Contact Information:
Questions related to this proposal should be submitted to Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to:

Allison Thiriez
athiriez@arc.gov
202.884.7712