

## Request for Proposals

### Contracted Project Manager / Consultant

### Appalachian Business Builders: Expanding Capital Access for Rural Entrepreneurs in Western Maryland

#### Issued by:

Allegany College of Maryland  
12401 Willowbrook Road, SE  
Cumberland, MD 21502

**RFP Issue Date:** 05/15/2026

**Proposal Due Date:** 06/02/2026 @ 2:00 p.m.

**Project Period:** July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

#### 1. Overview

Allegany College of Maryland (ACM) is seeking proposals from qualified individuals or firms to serve as the **Contracted Project Manager / Consultant** for the **Appalachian Business Builders: Expanding Capital Access for Rural Entrepreneurs in Western Maryland** initiative.

This ARC-funded initiative is a 12-month regional planning project focused on developing the framework for a sustainable, community-rooted **Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)** to serve **Allegany, Garrett, and Washington Counties**. The selected contractor will provide planning leadership, stakeholder coordination, ecosystem analysis, facilitation, and final deliverable development to help position the region for a future implementation phase.

#### 2. Project Background

Western Maryland entrepreneurs face ongoing barriers to accessing capital, particularly in rural and underserved communities. This project is intended to address those barriers by designing the governance, sustainability, and business planning framework for a new regional CDFI.

The project will align with the goals of the Appalachian Regional Commission and Maryland's broader capital access strategy, including coordination with the Maryland Community Investment Corporation and regional partners. Key activities include ecosystem mapping, financing gap analysis, listening sessions, roundtables, governance planning, and development of a final CDFI business plan and implementation proposal.

#### 3. Scope of Work

The selected contractor will work closely with Allegany College of Maryland and project partners to lead and support the following activities:

#### **A. Project Planning and Coordination**

- Lead the 12-month regional planning process for the Appalachian Business Builders initiative.
- Develop and maintain a detailed project workplan and timeline.
- Coordinate regularly with ACM staff and identified project partners.
- Support meeting scheduling, workgroup management, and documentation.

#### **B. Ecosystem Mapping and Financing Gap Analysis**

- Conduct research and analysis of the current entrepreneurial finance ecosystem in Allegany, Garrett, and Washington Counties.
- Identify financing barriers, capital gaps, service gaps, and opportunities for alignment.
- Review relevant public and regional data sources to assess business lending needs and rural capital access conditions.
- Produce a written needs assessment and financing gap analysis.

#### **C. Stakeholder and Community Engagement**

- Organize and facilitate county listening sessions, stakeholder interviews, and regional roundtables.
- Engage entrepreneurs, small businesses, lenders, chambers, economic development organizations, workforce partners, and other stakeholders.
- Document community input and incorporate findings into final recommendations and planning documents.

#### **D. Governance and Sustainability Planning**

- Develop a governance framework for the proposed regional CDFI.
- Recommend board structure, advisory participation, operational approach, and partnership roles.
- Develop a sustainability and capitalization roadmap identifying potential revenue streams, investment opportunities, and leverage strategies.

#### **E. Business Plan and Implementation Proposal Development**

- Prepare a final CDFI business plan for the proposed regional model.
- Support preparation of a future ARC implementation-phase proposal, including measurable outcomes, partner commitments, and leverage strategy.
- Incorporate findings from engagement, analysis, and partner consultations into final deliverables.

#### **F. Reporting and Documentation**

- Provide regular progress updates to Allegany College of Maryland.
- Submit draft and final deliverables in accordance with the agreed-upon project timeline.
- Maintain documentation necessary for grant compliance and project reporting.

These responsibilities reflect the approved contractual use of funds for a professional service provider who will lead planning, engagement, analysis, and final deliverable development for the project.

#### **4. Deliverables**

At minimum, the selected contractor will be expected to produce the following:

1. **Detailed Project Workplan and Timeline**
2. **Regional Ecosystem Mapping and Financing Gap Analysis – Needs Assessment**
3. **Documentation of Listening Sessions, Roundtables, and Stakeholder Engagement**
4. **Draft Governance and Sustainability Roadmap**
5. **Capitalization and Partnership Strategy Recommendations**
6. **Final Regional CDFI Business Plan**
7. **Draft ARC Implementation-Phase Proposal Support Materials**
8. **Regular Progress Reports and Final Project Summary**

The project narrative anticipates key deliverables including a **needs assessment report**, **draft governance plan**, and **final business plan** over the course of the four project quarters.

#### **5. Proposed Timeline**

The anticipated project period is **June 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027**. The selected contractor should be prepared to align work with the following general schedule:

- **Q1**: project start-up, workplan development, partner coordination, advisory workgroup support
- **Q2** : ecosystem mapping, financing gap analysis, county listening sessions
- **Q3** : governance and sustainability roadmap development, capitalization planning
- **Q4** : final business plan and implementation proposal development

## **6. Qualifications**

Proposals should demonstrate experience in as many of the following areas as possible:

- Community development finance and/or CDFI planning
- Rural economic development
- Small business lending ecosystems
- Strategic planning and business plan development
- Stakeholder engagement and facilitation
- Public-sector, nonprofit, or federally funded project management
- Data analysis, needs assessment, and report writing
- Experience working with multi-county or regional partnerships

Preference may be given to proposers with demonstrated knowledge of Western Maryland, Appalachian communities, entrepreneurship systems, or access-to-capital initiatives.

## **7. Contract Amount**

The total budget available for this contractual service is **not to exceed \$180,000**, inclusive of all professional fees, travel, meeting facilitation, research, writing, and related project expenses, unless otherwise negotiated by ACM. The project budget identifies **\$180,000 in ARC funds** for contractual professional services for this role.

ACM reserves the right to negotiate final scope, budget, and payment schedule with the selected proposer.

## **8. Proposal Requirements**

Interested individuals or firms should submit a proposal that includes:

### **A. Cover Letter**

A brief letter introducing the proposer and summarizing interest and qualifications.

### **B. Technical Proposal**

Please include:

- Understanding of the project
- Proposed approach and methodology
- Proposed workplan and timeline
- Description of stakeholder engagement strategy
- Description of relevant experience
- Identification of key personnel, if applicable

### **C. Qualifications and Experience**

- Resume or organizational background
- Description of similar projects completed
- At least 3 relevant references

### **D. Cost Proposal**

- Total proposed cost
- Budget narrative and/or fee structure
- Proposed billing schedule and payment milestones

### **E. Optional Attachments**

- Sample reports, plans, or facilitation materials
- Any additional supporting materials

## **9. Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals may be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Understanding of the project and quality of proposed approach – **30%**
- Relevant experience and qualifications – **30%**
- Capacity to complete the work on schedule – **20%**
- Cost and value – **20%**

ACM may also consider familiarity with CDFI development, regional partnership work, and rural entrepreneurship systems.

## **10. Submission Instructions**

Proposals must be submitted electronically no later than June 02, 2026 @ 2:00 p.m. to:

**Sherry Buffenmyer**

DIRECTOR OF FISCAL AFFAIRS

Allegany College of Maryland

sbuffenmyer@allegany.edu

Subject line: **Proposal – Appalachian Business Builders Project Manager/Consultant**

**The above listed Proposal name must be included in subject line to be considered. Late submissions may not be considered.**

## **11. Terms and Conditions**

- Allegany College of Maryland reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.
- ACM reserves the right to request additional information or conduct interviews with finalists.
- Issuance of this RFP does not obligate ACM to award a contract.
- The selected contractor will be required to enter into a formal agreement with ACM.
- The contractor must comply with all applicable federal, state, and institutional requirements related to the use of ARC funds and project documentation. ARC project conditions and federal assurances are part of the project record.

## **12. Questions**

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by May 29, 2026 @ 2:00 to:

**Courtney McKay**

[cjensen2@allegany.edu](mailto:cjensen2@allegany.edu)

Responses to substantive questions may be shared with all known interested proposers.