



Appalachian
Ohio

Appalachian Ohio

Destination Assessment and Strategic Planning Services

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated 2/23/26

Frequently Asked Questions - Destination Assessment & Strategic Planning Services RFP

1. Administrative & Procurement

- **What is the anticipated award decision timeline?**

Appalachian Ohio expects to make a selection decision by Friday, March 6, 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter.

- **Will there be a bidder's conference?**

No. There will not be a bidder's conference for this RFP.

- **Will responses to submitted questions be shared with all prospective consultants?**

Yes. All questions and answers are consolidated into this FAQ document and made publicly available via our website to ensure transparency and open competition.

- **May additional questions be submitted up to the proposal deadline?**

Yes. Questions may be submitted via email up to the proposal due date.

- **Who will serve as the steering committee?**

The Appalachian Ohio Board of Directors will serve as the core steering committee. Additional industry stakeholders may be invited to participate. Final composition is still being determined.

- **Will the consultant administer the ARC grant?**

No. Appalachian Ohio will administer the ARC READY grant. The consultant is expected to provide documentation necessary to support grant reporting and compliance.

2. Timeline & Grant Period

- **What is the project completion deadline?**

The ARC READY Grants to Grow planning award closes on March 31, 2027, barring any approved extension. The project must be completed within that timeframe.

- **When is the anticipated project start date?**

The project is expected to begin by April 1, 2026, or as soon as possible after contract execution.

- **Are there specific phase deadlines?**

The overall boundary condition is the March 31, 2027 closeout date. Proposers may structure milestone timelines within that framework.

- **What timeframe should the Strategic Plan cover?**

A three-to-five-year horizon is expected, though longer horizons may be proposed depending on demonstrated need and capacity.

3. Scope & Phases

- **If Phases 3 and 4 cannot be fully included within the \$100,000 budget, how should they be proposed?**

Planning Phases 1 and 2 must be completed within the \$100,000 ARC planning award. If budget capacity allows, Phases 3 and/or 4 may be incorporated within that amount. If not, separate pricing may be submitted for future consideration should additional funding become available.

- **If only one optional phase can be prioritized, which is more important?**

Phase 3 (Visitor Economy Stewardship) may be foundational to Phase 4 (Marketing & Advocacy). However, final prioritization may depend on findings from Phases 1 and 2.

- **What is the intent of Phase 3 (Visitor Economy Stewardship)?**

Phase 3 should focus on long-term sustainability of tourism growth and its impact on residents and communities. This includes ensuring tourism growth supports housing stability, community wellbeing, and mitigation of unintended negative impacts.

Reference examples include destination stewardship planning models such as [Colorado's Destination Stewardship Strategic Plan](#).

4. Methodology & Geography

- **Does the Visitor Experience Audit need to include all 32 counties?**

No. A representative sampling of key “hub” and “spoke” destinations is acceptable given the size of the region.

- **Is there a target number of stakeholders that must be interviewed?**

There is no fixed number. The goal is representative geographic and industry coverage. Appalachian Ohio will provide a list of priority stakeholders.

- **Who handles logistics for site visits and interviews?**

Appalachian Ohio will assist with scheduling and logistics coordination.

- **How many site visits are expected?**

This will vary. Destination immersion should ideally span multiple seasons and align with major events, membership meetings, or tourism highlights.

- **What is the goal of the “unhosted” visitor experience audit?**

To allow the consultant to experience the region without prior framing or guidance, enabling an unbiased initial assessment.

- **Should immersion findings be included in the final report?**

Yes. The Destination Assessment should provide a clear snapshot of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and unrecognized potential.

5. Data & Existing Resources

- **What tourism and economic data currently exists?**

Every two years, the State of Ohio produces Tourism Economic Impact Reports for each county and the Appalachian Ohio region. Updated reports reflecting 2025 data will be available in 2026.

Regional and local tourism plans also exist, including [OVRDC's Ohio's Wilderness Tourism Strategy](#).

- **Does Appalachian Ohio subscribe to proprietary tourism data services?**

No. Some member destinations may subscribe individually, but Appalachian Ohio does not maintain subscriptions.

- **Are there existing regional plans to align with?**

There are regional branding and collaborative initiatives (e.g., [Ohio Foothills – Wander Freely](#), [ORCA](#), [Ohio's Winding Road](#), [Appalachian Front](#)), but no previous 32-county strategic plan led directly by Appalachian Ohio.

- **Is the published membership list current?**

Membership renewals are ongoing for 2026, but the website list is largely accurate.

6. Organizational Context

- **How many paid staff currently work for Appalachian Ohio?**

There are currently no paid staff. The organization is governed by a 10-member volunteer board.

- **What is the current operating structure?**

Appalachian Ohio operates as a 501(c)(6) membership organization.

- **Is the governance structure expected to change?**

The organization currently intends to remain a 501(c)(6), though the strategic plan may explore mechanisms to best serve the region.

7. Financial Sustainability

- **Should the sustainability analysis include capital strategy, reserve planning, and scenario modeling?**

Yes. A financial sustainability model including capital strategy and multi-year projections would be valuable.

8. Deliverables & ARC Compliance

- **Are engineering-level feasibility studies required?**

No. This is strictly a planning and organizational capacity-building grant. The required deliverables are:

- Destination Assessment Report
- Organizational Strategic Plan

- **What ARC compliance documentation is required?**

Appalachian Ohio will manage ARC reporting requirements. Consultants must provide documentation sufficient to support:

- Quarterly progress updates
- Financial documentation (invoices, receipts, task summaries)
- Documented work products and final deliverables

- **Where can ARC investment priorities be reviewed?**

- [ARC Investment Priorities for Appalachia](#)
- [Building Regional Culture and Tourism – Appalachian Regional Commission](#)

Closing Note

This FAQ document serves as the official response to all submitted questions. No individual responses supersede the RFP or this consolidated FAQ. Appalachian Ohio reserves the right to issue additional clarifications if necessary.

