

(1) Cover Page (2 page maximum)

Applicant Name	Eastern Panhandle Regional Planning and Development Council (Region 9)
Applicant Mailing Address	226 Pilot Way, Suite E Martinsburg, WV 25405
Applicant UEI	M2KRJNKLZ7S5
Applicant Primary Contact Name and Job Title	Rachel Miller, Executive Director
Primary Contact Email	rmiller@region9wv.com
Primary Contact Phone	304-263-1743
Project Title	Economic Promise on the Potomac – Strengthening Canal and Trail Town Economies in Western Maryland and West Virginia’s Eastern Panhandle
Project Length	18 Months (September 1, 2026 - March 1, 2028)
ARC Funding Request	\$500,000
Geographic scope – states and counties	Maryland – Allegany West Virginia – Morgan
ARC Strategic Investment Goal	Goal #4 – Building Regional Culture and Tourism
State Investment Goal	<p>Maryland: ARC Investment Goal 4 - Building Regional Culture and Tourism – Strengthen Appalachia’s community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the region’s local, cultural heritage, and natural assets. State Objective 4.2: Support and enhance the outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors and support sustainable economic growth. State Strategy 4.2.1: Support the expansion of responsible outdoor recreation opportunities that will fuel the region’s tourism economy and increase employment opportunities.</p> <p>West Virginia: ARC Investment Goal 4: Building Regional Culture and Tourism. Strengthen Appalachia’s community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the Region’s local, cultural heritage, and natural assets. ARC Objective 4.3: Preserve and expand Appalachia’s natural resources to increase outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors and support sustainable economic growth. State Strategy 4.3.2: Support planning, assessment, and implementation activities that improve and expand upon the state’s natural, historical, and cultural assets for economic development and growth.</p>
List of primary project partners	Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT); West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT); National Park Service (NPS); Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO); Allegany County, Maryland; Morgan County, West Virginia; Town of Paw Paw, West Virginia
Purpose	Along with its project partners, the Eastern Panhandle Regional Planning and Development Council (Region 9) seeks to strengthen the economies of canal and trail towns in Western Maryland and West Virginia’s Eastern Panhandle by

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	<p>planning for enhancements to visitor amenities, including a popular campground, trail system, railroad bridge, and numerous historic structures, natural features, and recreational opportunities.</p>
<p>Is the applicant a fiscal agent or principal partner on an open ARC grant(s)?</p>	<p>Yes. Below are the ARC grants that are currently open and awarded to Region 9.</p> <p>(1.) ARC LDD Admin Grant – WV-2281-C52-25 (2.) ARC Ready LDD – CC-21161-LDD-23</p>
<p>Was your Project Summary submitted to and, at minimum, acknowledged by all states' program managers?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>James Bush (West Virginia): Provided Project Summary Feedback on November 10, 2025 Dave Cotton (Maryland): Provided Project Summary Feedback on November 6, 2025</p>

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(2) Budget and Match (2 page maximum)

Cost Category	ARC Request	Match	Total (ARC + Match)
Personnel			
• N/A			
Fringe			
• N/A			
Travel			
• N/A			
Equipment			
• N/A			
Supplies			
• N/A			
Contractual			
• Feasibility Assessment/Bridge Inspection	\$180,000	\$220,000	\$400,000
• Preliminary Design and NEPA Analysis	\$250,000	\$115,000	\$365,000
• Economic Impact Analysis	\$30,000		\$30,000
Other			
• Community Engagement		\$30,000	\$30,000
• Project Management/Grant Administration	\$40,000		\$40,000
Total Direct Charge Sum all direct charges.	\$500,000	\$365,000	\$865,000
Total Indirect Charge			
• N/A			
Total Project Costs	\$500,000	\$365,000	\$865,000

Match Rate: 40%

Use **ARC's Match Rate Calculator** using **Fiscal Year 2026 County Economic Status** to determine your project's match rate.

Match Source	Amount	Cash or In-Kind?	Status
Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)	\$75,000	Cash	Confirmed
West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT)	\$75,000	Cash	Confirmed
National Park Service (NPS)	\$215,000	In-Kind	Confirmed

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(3) Narrative (6 page maximum)

Statement of Need or Opportunity	<p><i>For decades, the economies of Allegany County, Maryland and Morgan County, West Virginia have suffered from the impacts of deindustrialization. As a result, both counties are seeking to leverage growing industry sectors and increasing tourism visitor counts at the Western Maryland Rail Trail (WMRT) and the C&O Canal National Historic Park and its trail system to strengthen the economies of canal and trail towns along the Potomac River.</i></p> <p><i>According to 3-digit NAICS data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI), the number of manufacturing sector jobs in Allegany County, MD declined from a 30-year peak of 4,743 jobs in 1997 to 1,250 jobs in 2024 – a staggering 73.6% decrease. Likewise, in Morgan County, WV, the number of manufacturing sector jobs declined from a 30-year peak of 380 jobs in 1999 to 256 jobs in 2024 – a significant 32.6% decrease. Located deep in the Appalachian Mountains, both counties have found it difficult to replace jobs in legacy manufacturing sectors, which is corroborated by ARC’s FY2026 County Economic Status showing seven (7) distressed areas in Allegany County and one (1) distressed area in Morgan County. To combat these economic trends, both counties are seeking to leverage existing natural and cultural resources to enhance the regional economy.</i></p> <p><i>The Paw Paw Campground, owned and managed by the National Park Service (NPS), serves as a central hub for visitors in the region that traverse the WMRT and C&O Canal Towpath. Together, the trails weave along the banks of the Potomac River and attract hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Users of this interconnected trail system can reach Pittsburgh, PA to the west (via the Great Allegheny Passage) and Washington D.C., to the east. The Paw Paw Tunnel, located at C&O Canal milepost 155.2 in Allegany County, MD, is a major attraction within this interconnected trail system that attracts between 20,000 and 40,000 visitors annually. The Paw Paw Tunnel Campground, which is constrained due to its size and lack of parking, greets 7,000 visitors annually.</i></p> <p><i>Nearby communities, such as Paw Paw, WV, Magnolia, WV, Oldtown, MD, Little Orleans, MD, and Hancock, MD, have experienced immense increases in tourism spending due to the growing popularity of the WMRT, C&O Canal Towpath, Paw Paw Tunnel, and the Paw Paw Campground. According to 3-digit NAICS data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI), between 2000 and 2024, the number of Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation jobs in Allegany County, MD increased from 170 jobs to 248 jobs – a 45.8% increase. During the same period, the number of Accommodation and Food Services jobs increased from 2,446 jobs to 3,249 jobs – a 32.8% increase. Between 2000 and 2024, Morgan County, WV experienced a substantial increase in the number of Retail Trade jobs, increasing from 384 jobs in 2000 to 456 jobs in 2024 – an 18.6% increase.</i></p> <p><i>The burgeoning tourism industry in the region has brought newfound economic success to canal and trail town communities. Local educational institutions, such as the Blue Ridge Community and Technical College, have recognized the</i></p>
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importance of tourism and recreation-related visitor spending in the local economy. Blue Ridge Community and Technical College currently offers career advancement courses and certificates specifically for the field of Tourism and Hospitality. In addition, according to the National Park Service's 2023 Visitor Spending Report, "4.5 million visitors to the C&O Canal National Historical Park (NHP) spent an estimated \$96 million in local communities and regions surrounding the Park. These expenditures supported a total of 1,240 jobs, \$54.7 million in labor income, \$90.3 million in value added, and \$148 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding the C&O Canal NHP".

The growth of these industries through enhanced tourism spending has also been identified in local and regional planning documents, which demonstrates the Project's Strategic Alignment with regional economic development goals. The Tri-County Council for Western Maryland's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2023-2027 notes that "Manufacturing is still a major part of the workforce today, but large companies today employ 300-400 people instead of 1,500, and a plant closing does not devastate the region as it once did. Other major industries of the past such as mining and agriculture are being supplemented with new and emerging tourism efforts" (p. 2). The Tri-County Council's Priority Areas are defined by three categories, with Economic Development Being the first. The document notes that it is a goal of the Tri-County Council to "Acknowledge and Embrace Tourism and Recreation" (p. 16). The document notes that "Tourism was identified in the community survey as the number one opportunity in the region for productive economic development. An increase in tourism means additional revenue into the community from outside the area" (p. 16). Likewise, Region 9's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Update 2025 notes that it is an objective (Objective 3.B.) to "identify and promote recreation and leisure opportunities" by implementing a strategy (Strategy 3.B.1) to "Identify funding to support efforts which promote and markets the region's tourism industry" (p. 15). The Project proposed for consideration through ARC ARISE funding seeks to leverage tourism and recreation infrastructure in a way that promotes sustainable economic development and results in new employment, increased business revenues, and the upstart of new businesses.

To build upon this success, Region 9 and its assembled project partners seek to further develop tourism and recreation-related infrastructure to accommodate and attract additional visitors, thereby increasing visitor spending at businesses located in canal and trail towns in the region. WMRT Bridge #6 crosses the Potomac River and connects the shores of Allegany County, MD with Morgan County, WV. As part of the ARC ARISE project scope, a feasibility analysis and structural assessment of Bridge #6 will be performed to assess the viability of transforming the historic WMRT Bridge #6 into a scenic overlook and gateway to future trail connections, including a connection between MD Route 51, C&O Canal Towpath Trail, and WMRT Bridge #6. The proposed ARC ARISE scope will also include preliminary design and NEPA analysis to enhance visitor experiences in the area, including upgrades to the Paw Paw Campground, boat ramp, recreational infrastructure, and historic features. Cumulatively, these improvements will accommodate and attract more visitors, thereby increasing tourism-related spending in nearby rural communities, including Paw Paw, WV, Magnolia, WV, Oldtown, MD, Little Orleans, MD, and Hancock, MD.

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	<p>ARC ARISE planning funds are necessary to lay the groundwork for these proposed tourism and recreation amenity improvements. Currently, there is only limited documentation related to the structural stability of WMRT Bridge #6. To ensure that it is safe for visitors, a feasibility assessment bridge inspection will be performed to provide a basis for further implementation efforts. Likewise, design/engineering and NEPA analysis must be performed at the Paw Paw Campground to inform the size, placement, and type of visitor amenities to be created or enhanced, such as chlorinated water facilities and vault toilets. Region 9 has been proactive in working to advance implementation projects that enhance connectivity in the general area (separate from the ARC ARISE scope), including recent TAP/FLAP awards for a design/engineering study to connect the Town of Paw Paw with the C&O Canal Towpath Trail and application for FLAP funds to construct this connection. ARC ARISE planning funds will lay the groundwork for actionable and implementable construction activities in the future.</p>
<p>Project Description</p>	<p>As part of the proposed ARC ARISE scope, Region 9 and its project partners will undertake the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMRT Bridge #6 Feasibility Assessment and Bridge Inspection: This item entails preparation of a feasibility assessment and conducting a bridge inspection to assess the viability of transforming the historic WMRT Bridge #6 into a scenic overlook over the Potomac River. This item will also entail assessment of trail infrastructure connections to WMRT Bridge #6, including a physically accessible connections to MD Route 51 and the C&O Canal Towpath. WMRT Bridge #6 connects the banks of Allegany County, MD to Morgan County, WV. • Preliminary Design and NEPA Analysis for Improvements to the Paw Paw Campground: The Paw Paw Campground, owned and managed by the National Park Service, is a well-used local amenity (between 7,000 and 10,000 visitors annually) that is undersized for growing demand. The Paw Paw Campground, and accompanying parking lot, are used as a primary gateway point to the nearby Paw Paw Tunnel, which received 30,000 visitors in 2024 according to the C&O Canal Trust. ARC ARISE funds will be used to prepare design/engineering plans and NEPA analysis for improvements to the site, including upgrading the existing primitive camp sites, adding additional camp sites, widening the entrance to the facility, installation of an operable, chlorinated well system, replacing porta potties with vault toilets, installation of a non-motorized boat launch, stabilization of the historic Section House, addressing safety concerns associated with falling debris from two rail bridges, creation of an accessible entry onto the C&O Canal Towpath Trail, and expansion of the existing parking lot. • Community Engagement: NPS will lead community engagement efforts to ensure that any assessment of feasibility and design reflects the insight of regional stakeholders, residents, business owners, and other parties. • Project Management: Region 9 will serve as the lead grant administration and project management entity on behalf of all project partners. <p>The Project's primary geographic focus areas are Allegany County, MD and Morgan County, WV. The Paw Paw Campsite and WMRT Bridge #6 are two essential pieces of current and future tourism infrastructure that attract tourists to both Allegany County, MD and Morgan County, WV. By improving both locations,</p>

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	<p>Region 9 and its project partners are establishing a hub of tourism activity at the center of many rural canal and trail towns in the region, including Paw Paw, WV, Magnolia, WV, Oldtown, MD, Little Orleans, MD, and Hancock, MD.</p> <p>Region 9 anticipates that the proposed ARC ARISE planning activities will take approximately 18 months (September 1, 2026 - March 1, 2028). This timeline is reflective of the need to incorporate public engagement into the process for stakeholder community insights, anticipated effort of bridge inspection activities, and a need to accommodate a thoughtful design/engineering process.</p>
<p>Partnerships</p>	<p>The Project will entail the participation of the following partners (collectively known as the Project Team):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern Panhandle Regional Planning and Development Council (Region 9): Project management and grant administration. • Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT): Cash match contributor; technical assistance for the WMRT Bridge #6 feasibility assessment and bridge inspection. • West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT): Cash match contributor; technical assistance related to the WMRT Bridge #6 feasibility assessment and bridge inspection. • National Park Service (NPS): In-kind contributor of matching funds, including bridge inspection services, site design, and preparation of a NEPA assessment; community engagement partner; owner of the Paw Paw Campground; owner of the WMRT Bridge #6. • Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO): Technical assistance and oversight of WMRT Bridge #6 feasibility assessment and bridge inspection; oversight of feasibility assessment relating to trail connections between the C&O Canal Towpath Trail and WMRT Bridge #6. • Allegany County, Maryland: Community engagement partner. • Morgan County, West Virginia: Community engagement partner. • Town of Paw Paw, West Virginia: Community engagement partner. <p>Additional indirect supporters of the project include the Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area, Allegany County Tourism, Mountain Maryland Trails, and the Western Maryland Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc..</p> <p>The assembled Project Team possesses the expertise, financial resources, institutional knowledge, and community connections to transition the ARC ARISE planning efforts to future implementation efforts. Upon completion of the ARC ARISE scope activities, Region 9, MDOT, WVDOT, NPS, and HEPMPO will leverage available funding sources to begin implementation efforts. Throughout the length of the ARC ARISE scope, Region 9 will conduct monthly status meetings with all project partners to discuss project activity timelines, key milestones, review of completed tasks during the prior month, and anticipated tasks for the next month. Region 9, as a designated Local Development District (LDD), has the expertise and staffing resources to administer and manage an ARC ARISE grant.</p> <p>Currently, Region 9 is currently administering three (3) ARC and three (3) EDA grants. These grants include:</p>

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	<p>(1.) ARC LDD Admin Grant – WV-2281-C52-25 (2.) ARC Ready LDD – CC-21161-LDD-23 (3.) ARC Area Development – Morgan County Commission, Cacapon Ridge Recreation Trail Planning Project – WV-22537-302-25 (4.) EDA Partnership Planning (Annual to Region 9) - ED25PHI0G0292 (5.) EDA Economic Adjustment – US522 Water/Sewer Extension, 01-79-15347 (6.) EDA Economic Adjustment – Cacapon Bike Trails, 01-79-15230</p> <p><i>Together, members of the Project Team have the expertise, financial resources, institutional knowledge, and community connections to be effective stewards of ARC ARISE resources and advance the Project toward an implementation phase.</i></p>
<p>Outputs and Outcomes of Planning Grant</p>	<p>By advancing the Project, the Project Team seeks to lay the planning groundwork for enhancement of recreational and cultural amenities in Allegany County, Maryland and Morgan County, West Virginia. Project Performance Measures that the Project Team will track include the following:</p> <p>Output: Plans/Reports – Three (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility Assessment/Bridge Inspection Report for Rehabilitation of WMRT Bridge #6 and Accompanying Trail Connections • Preliminary Design Plan for National Park Service Paw Paw Campground Facility Enhancements • Economic Impact Analysis Quantifying Anticipated Visitor Spending and Potential Business Growth <p>Output: Communities Served – Two (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegany County, Maryland • Morgan County, West Virginia <p>Outcome: Communities Improved – Two (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegany County, Maryland • Morgan County, West Virginia
<p>Financial Sustainability</p>	<p>The assembled Project Team has the expertise and financial resources necessary to advance the Project beyond the life of the ARC ARISE award and secure funding for implementation. MDOT and WVDOT are the recipients of federal and state funding resources that can be utilized for the build-out and enhancement of non-motorized transportation, recreation, and overlook infrastructure. These funding resources include, but are not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Department of Transportation Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TAP) • U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Recreational Trails Program (RTP) • U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) • U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) <p>Beyond the implementation funding resources listed above, the NPS may be able to provide in-kind funding resources to enhance recreational opportunities and natural and cultural features. ARC Area Development or ARC POWER funding resources could also be leveraged for implementation efforts.</p>

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	<p>If implementation funding is not immediately secured after completion of the Project, the Project Team would be left with an actionable feasibility assessment/bridge inspection report, design/engineering plan, and economic impact analysis that could be utilized at some point in the future. These documents will also help to inform long-term maintenance responsibilities, resource stewardship, and measurement of economic outcomes (such as visitor increases, number of businesses experiencing increased revenue, number of new business starts, etc.). However, it is the Project Team's intent to immediately begin securing implementation funding upon completion of the ARC ARISE scope of work.</p>
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