

# Evaluation of the Appalachian Regional Commission's Leadership and Community Capacity Projects FY 2008–FY 2015

## Final Report

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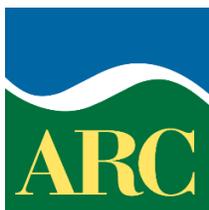
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## Executive Summary

Since its establishment in 1965, the Appalachian Regional Commission (the Commission) has promoted economic and social development in the Appalachian Region. Among the Commission's objectives is the support of leadership development and community capacity building in Appalachian communities. In 2016, the Commission contracted with Westat to carry out an evaluation of 152 leadership and community capacity projects it supported between fiscal years (FY) 2008 and 2015. During this period, the Commission awarded \$14,414,855 in grants to nonprofit organizations; city/township, state, and county governments; institutions of higher education; and local development districts. Grant recipients are required to supplement Commission funding with funding from other sources, and grantees reported receiving a total of \$10,516,548 in non-Commission funds. Collectively, Commission and non-Commission funding used to implement leadership and community capacity projects between FY 2008 and FY 2015 totaled \$24,931,403.

This report presents findings from Westat's evaluation, which was designed to address the following questions:

- What problems and challenges were the projects designed to address?
- What approaches did the projects use to ameliorate these problems and challenges?
- What specific outcomes were projects designed to achieve and did they meet their performance targets?
- What are the characteristics of communities, individuals, and organizations that benefited from the projects?
- To what extent were project-related gains sustained beyond the period covered by the Commission grant?
- What factors influenced a project's success and implementation?
- Have grantees applied lessons learned to their ensuing efforts to serve target communities?
- What strategic, actionable recommendations can be made for both the Commission and local communities undertaking these types of projects?

To answer the research questions, Westat conducted four major activities:

1. A review of current literature on leadership and community capacity, and best practices for implementation of these types of projects
2. A review of key project documentation (i.e., data from the internal grants management database system and other project documentation) for 152 projects
3. A Web-based survey that was completed for 117 of the 152 projects
4. Telephone interviews with project leaders from a sample of 15 projects, and onsite interviews with project staff and other key stakeholders from an additional 10 projects

## Summary of Findings

The 152 projects were led by a diverse array of organizations located in 13 states and the District of Columbia.<sup>1</sup> Most projects (76 percent) were led by nonprofit organizations or government entities at the state, county, or city level. The level of Commission support varied widely across the projects (from \$5,000 to over \$650,000 for single-year grants), with a median award amount of \$50,000 and \$14,414,855 awarded in total. Some grantees were funded over multiple years to continue activities within the same scope as the original grant or to implement new activities.

The leadership and community capacity-building projects served a variety of communities, including individual cities and towns, single counties, and multiple counties both within and across state boundaries. Grant recipients implemented projects related to seven broad categories:<sup>2</sup>

- Leadership and civic capacity (49 percent of projects)
- Civic entrepreneurship (30 percent of projects)
- Business development (11 percent of projects)
- Community development (8 percent of projects)

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<sup>1</sup> The grantee was located in Washington, D.C. but conducted regional workshops in Appalachian regions of three states (Georgia, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania).

<sup>2</sup> The categories are based on the Commission's classification system at the time the projects included in the evaluation were funded. During this time frame, the category "civic entrepreneurship" was renamed "leadership and civic capacity." Together these two categories account for over three-quarters of the projects in the evaluation.

- Asset-based development (1 percent of projects)
- Education and workforce development (1 percent of projects)
- Environment and natural resources (1 percent of projects)

Project representatives reported that the communities they serve face a number of important challenges, most notably a lack of resources. Findings from the survey and interviews also revealed that projects benefited from a number of key strengths or assets in the communities they served, including strong partnerships, effective community organizations, and energized citizens. Within this context, the projects carried out activities designed to enhance the capacity and leadership of their target communities, including activities related to fostering vision and direction in the community, involving and engaging community members, and enhancing community members' skills and knowledge. Project teams both directly carried out these types of activities themselves and enabled others to do so through the distribution of mini-grants designed to support small-scale community projects.

Through their activities, the projects aimed to achieve a range of outcomes for individuals, organizations, and entire communities. They included increasing individuals' capacity through improved awareness, skills, and empowerment; increasing organizational collaboration and effectiveness; and increasing the pride, self-reliance, and civic participation within a community. Evaluation results suggested that most projects successfully achieved their aims. Survey responses and Commission project performance data indicated that project teams met or exceeded expected project outcomes for the following measures:

- Number of communities improved (91 percent of project teams using this measure reported meeting or exceeding expected outcomes)
- Number of organizations improved (89 percent of project teams using this measure reported meeting or exceeding expected outcomes)
- Number of programs implemented (82 percent of project teams using this measure reported meeting or exceeding expected outcomes)
- Number of participants improved (78 percent of project teams using this measure reported meeting or exceeding expected outcomes)

Survey findings indicate that many of the community capacity and leadership development projects have continued to operate beyond the Commission-supported grant period, and for nearly half of projects for which a survey was completed, respondents reported expanding their efforts. Project staff and community stakeholders who

participated in interviews identified a range of factors that allowed them to continue implementing project activities after the end of Commission funding, including positive shifts in community attitudes toward capacity building, commitment of leaders, and increased organizational capacity. Interview respondents also noted barriers or challenges to ongoing capacity and leadership development work, including limited resources, changes in community priorities, and shifts in economic or political environments. Finally, interview respondents shared a number of lessons learned that can inform similar work in the future. They included a strong focus on identifying and developing effective leadership, building inclusive collaboration throughout a community, planning for success in the context of limited time and resources, and taking steps to encourage community ownership of the change effort.

## Implications and Conclusions

Evaluation findings show that most leadership and community capacity grantees were successful in implementing project activities and achieving their stated goals. Analyses of quantitative and qualitative data collected through this evaluation enabled the evaluation team to make recommendations for additional metrics that would help the Commission determine the impact of its leadership and community capacity projects. In the Commission's most recent strategic plan, published after funding had ceased for the projects included in the current evaluation, the Commission identified two new performance measures for the Leadership and Community Capacity strategic investment goal: number of leaders strengthened and number of communities with enhanced capacity.

Community capacity and local leadership are intertwined and equally important to community change efforts, particularly in rural communities. It is critical to have long-term involvement from local leaders who make *meaningful* contributions to community capacity-building efforts. Local collaborative groups should identify and support local leaders, and identify opportunities to help leaders develop and expand relevant knowledge and skills. Additional performance measures could help the Commission gauge progress toward strengthening local leadership. Measures that may help predict success in increasing the number of leaders strengthened include the following:

- Percentage of planned leadership development activities that were implemented
- Percentage of community leaders who formally agreed (e.g., through Memorandums of Agreement or Understanding [MOAs or MOUs]) to participate in community-building activities when the grant was awarded and remain actively involved in the activities over time

- Percentage of community leaders who were invited to participate in skill- or knowledge-building activities and participated

Challenges that are prevalent in rural communities include limited resources, depopulation, and poor economic conditions. These and other project-specific challenges could limit grantees' ability to enhance their community's capacity. Although respondents from most projects described steps for surmounting local challenges, it may be beneficial to study which levels of community capacity were (and continue to be) critical to *successful* community-building efforts. Possible performance measures include the following:

- Percentage of partnerships with key stakeholders that were formed or formalized (e.g., through MOAs or MOUs) when the grant was awarded and are maintained over time
- Completion of or updates to a strategic plan for the community the grant was funded to improve
- Local economic conditions (e.g., median income)

The evaluation showed that the leadership and community capacity projects funded between FY 2008 and FY 2015 engaged multiple levels of community capacity, as project stakeholders worked to improve their community's economic and social conditions.

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# 1. Introduction

Established in 1965, the Appalachian Regional Commission (the Commission) is a federal-state partnership that functions as a catalyst for economic and social development by drawing upon the resources of the federal government, the 13 states in the Appalachian Region, and local resources. Since its inception, the Commission has invested nearly \$4 billion and made more than 25,000 investments in regional projects, resulting in decreased poverty rates, increased employment, increased high school graduation rates, increased number of homes with plumbing, and decreased infant mortality rates (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2015). Despite these regional achievements, many of its communities continue to lag behind the nation in areas that include employment, postsecondary educational attainment, physical health, and poverty.

This section provides an overview of the portfolio of projects the Commission chose for the current evaluation and a description of the evaluation that Westat conducted.

## **The Commission's Leadership and Community Capacity-Building Projects**

Over the years, interest in increasing the capacity of local communities to improve their own development has intensified (Simpson, Wood, & Daws, 2003). The Commission has contributed to this movement through investment in projects that cultivate community self-sufficiency and promote community pride. Leadership and Community Capacity is one of the Commission's five strategic investment goals, as outlined in its 2016–2020 Strategic Plan. The goal has five action objectives:

- Develop and support robust inclusive leadership that can champion and mobilize forward-thinking community improvement
- Empower and support next-generation leaders and encourage authentic engagement in local and regional economic and community development
- Strengthen the capacity of community organizations and institutions to articulate and implement a vision for sustainable, transformative community change
- Support visioning, strategic planning and implementation, and resident-engagement approaches to foster increased community resilience and generate positive economic impacts

- Develop and support networks, partnerships, and other models of collaboration that catalyze public, private, and nonprofit action for community impact (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2015, p. 36)

As the action objectives imply, the Commission prioritizes investments in projects that seek to improve the Appalachian Region's economy and local communities by strengthening community collaboration, increasing civic engagement, and fostering the emergence of local leaders who can champion community-building efforts. Through its state partnerships, the Commission funds eligible entities to plan and implement projects aligned with these investment goals and the needs of their local community, and it supports grant recipients (grantees) in implementing project activities, such as developing comprehensive community plans, building or enhancing local collaboratives, and providing leadership training. The number and percentage of leadership and community capacity grants in each state (based on service area, not grantee location) awarded from FY 2008 through FY 2015 are provided in Table 1. Several projects that served multi-state service areas are listed in the table as "Regional". A full list of funded projects included in the evaluation is provided in Appendix D on page 109.

**Table 1. Number and percentage of grants awarded, by service area (n=152)**

State	Number	Percentage
Kentucky	35	23%
Alabama	20	13%
Maryland	16	11%
Regional	16	11%
Mississippi	15	10%
West Virginia	10	7%
Pennsylvania	8	5%
North Carolina	7	5%
Virginia	7	5%
New York	6	4%
Georgia	4	3%
Tennessee	4	3%
Ohio	3	2%
South Carolina	1	<1%

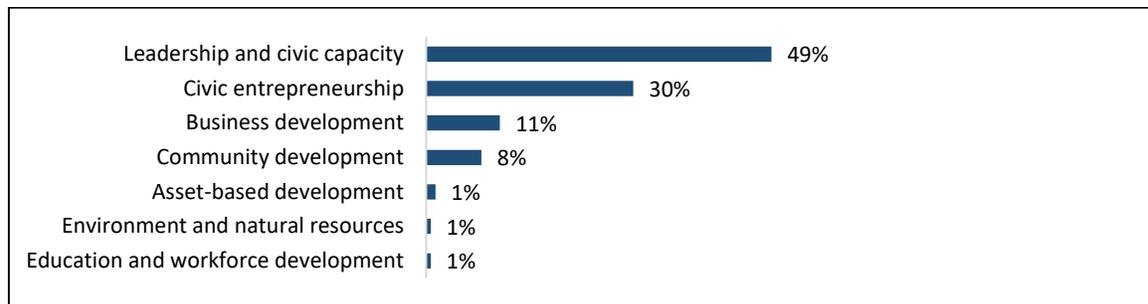
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.  
Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

The Commission strives to improve conditions throughout the Appalachian Region, particularly in distressed communities, which are designated as such based on a county's economic conditions (e.g., having higher unemployment, higher poverty, and lower income than national rates). Nearly three-quarters of projects in the portfolio funded between FY 2008 and FY 2015 were intended to benefit distressed communities primarily (47 percent) or substantially (24 percent). Some grant recipients also allocated mini-grants or Flex-E-Grants, through which the Commission grantee awards subgrants to local entities that implement small-scale and short-term economic development projects.

The Commission labels each grant with a category and type based on the Commission classification system in use at the time the grant is funded. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the projects by category, and Figure 2 shows the breakdown by type. It should be

noted that the classification system changed during the FY 2008 to FY 2015 time frame of these projects, resulting in some overlap of categories and types listed in the figures. Most notably, “civic entrepreneurship” was renamed “leadership and civic capacity.” Together, these two categories account for over three-quarters of the projects in this evaluation. In addition, all projects in the “leadership and community capacity” category are now divided into one of three new types: individual capacity, organizational capacity, or community capacity. Organizational capacity is not listed in Figure 2 because fewer than ten projects were classified as this type. Other project types with fewer than ten projects each include career education, dropout prevention, youth leadership, and community infrastructure. Specific examples of activities conducted through projects that were included in the current evaluation are provided in the Summary of Research Findings and Results (section 4).

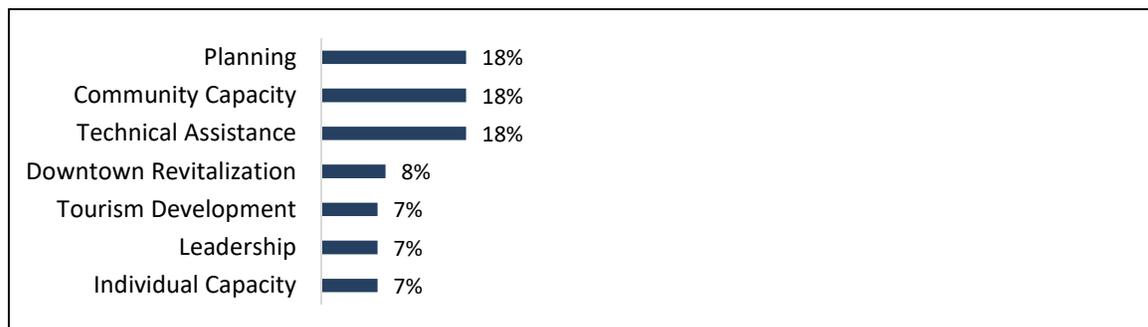
**Figure 1. Categories of projects implemented, by funded grantees (n=152)**



Notes: “Civic entrepreneurship” was renamed “leadership and civic capacity,” so combined, these make up a single category accounting for over three-quarters of the projects. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

**Figure 2. Types of projects implemented, by funded grantees (n=152)**

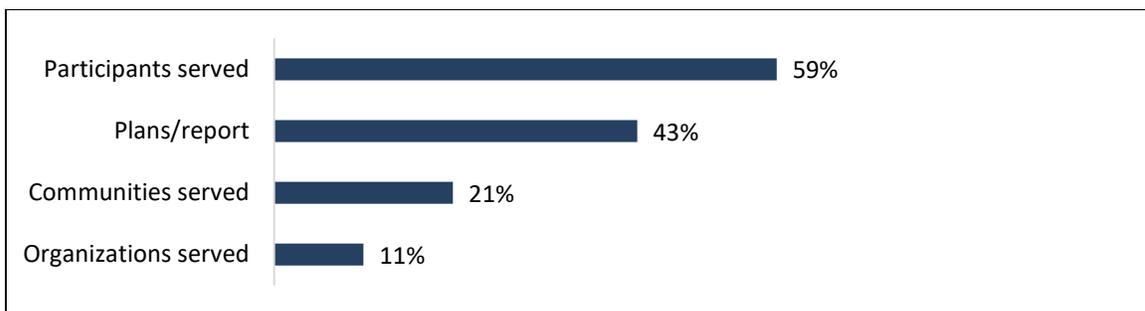


Note: All projects in the “leadership and community capacity” category are now divided into one of three new types: individual capacity, organizational capacity, or community capacity (with planning, leadership, and others identified as sub-types), so there may be some overlap of types in this figure.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Project teams used a variety of measures to define project objectives and determine progress toward attaining them. These included output measures, such as the number of program participants or other indicators of immediate project results. Among the core output measures for leadership and community capacity projects, the number of participants served was the most common output measure (reported by 59 percent of projects; Figure 3), followed by the number of plans or reports developed (reported by 43 percent of projects).

**Figure 3. Percentage of grantees using core output measures (n=152)**

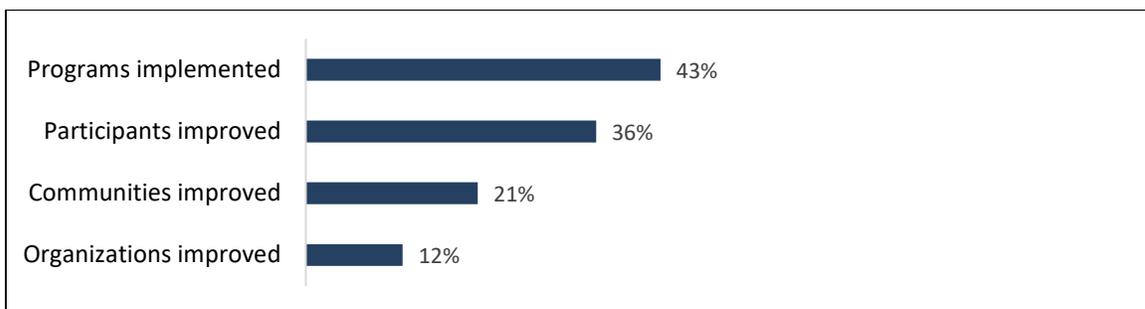


Note: Grantees could select multiple measures. Grantees updated data reported to the Commission in the evaluation survey, if necessary.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Project representatives also reported using a range of measures to assess project outcomes or the longer-term results of their work. These included the number of programs implemented, which was cited as an outcome measure for 43 percent of the projects (Figure 4). Among core outcome measures, the number of participants improved was an outcome measure for roughly one-third of projects in the portfolio. The Summary of Research Findings and Results (section 4) discusses the extent to which project representatives reported attaining the output and outcome goals they set for their projects.

**Figure 4. Percentage of grantees using core outcome measures (n=152)**



Notes: Grantees could select multiple measures. Grantees updated data reported to the Commission in the evaluation survey, if necessary.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

A similar evaluation of the Commission's capacity-building projects was conducted in 2004, findings from which indicated that many grant recipients were successful in building the capacity of individuals, organizations, and communities (Kleiner, Raue, Silverstein, Bell, & Wells, 2004). Since the prior evaluation, the Commission has maintained emphasis on identifying and supporting the pathways through which Appalachian communities build leaders and improve their own capacity to prosper.

## **Logic Model for the Commission's Leadership and Community Capacity Projects**

One of the Commission's strategic investment goals is to support local projects in their efforts to "build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development" (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2015, p. 35). Entities that receive Commission grants are expected to implement projects that address their local needs while being aligned with the Commission's objectives. A logic model is a tool that helps visualize and succinctly articulate an initiative's processes and anticipated goals. Logic models provide a visual depiction of an initiative's theory of change, or the theoretical assumptions underlying the progression of activities toward the initiative's goals (Alter & Murty, 1997; Bickman, 1987; Frechtling, 2007; McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999).

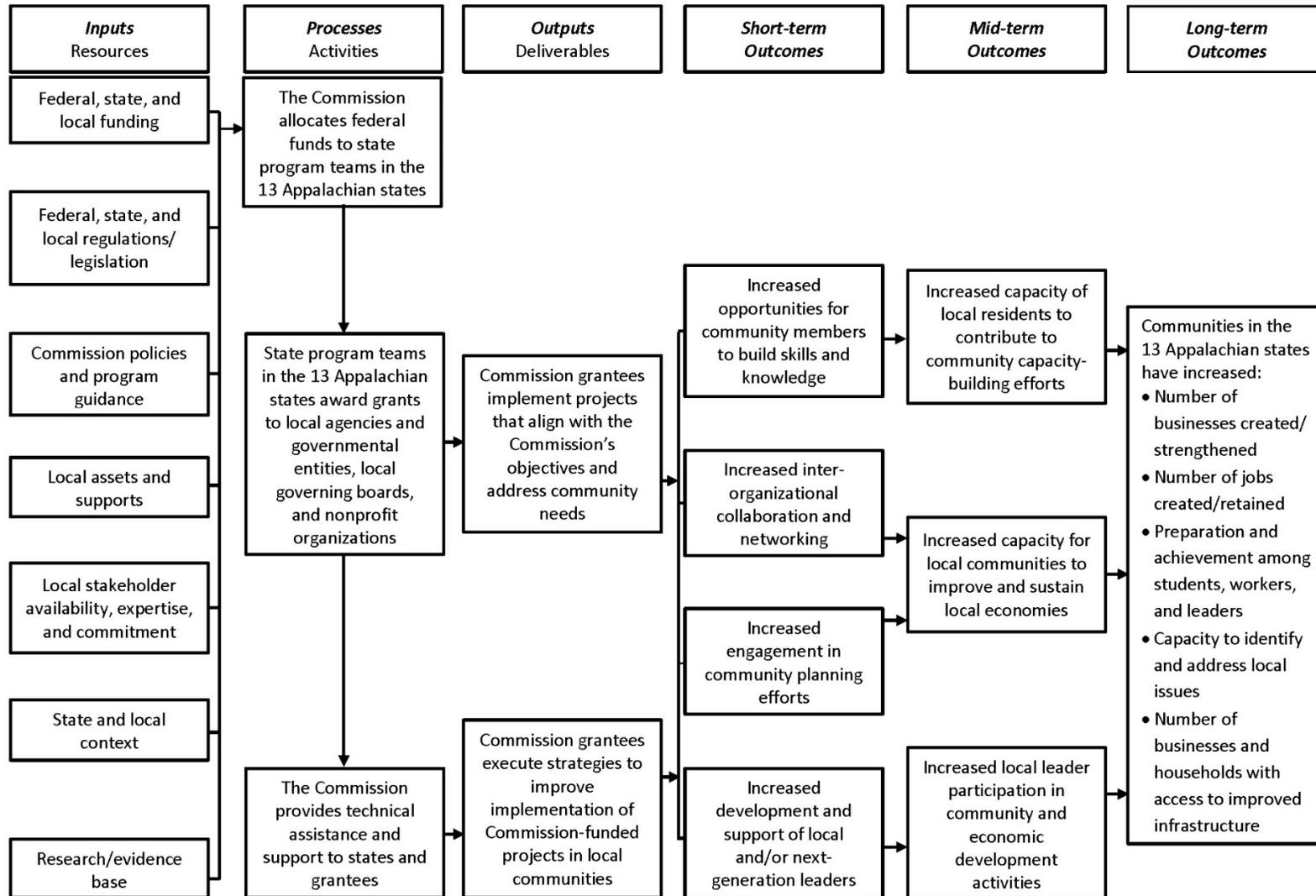
The evaluation team developed a logic model to graphically display the theory of change for the Commission's leadership and community capacity projects, which is shown in Figure 5. A logic model was also developed for the previous evaluation of the Commission's community capacity-building projects (Kleiner et al., 2004). Although logic models for the current and previous evaluations are similar in depicting the role of communities in achieving local and regional goals, the models differ in several ways. For example, the overall theory of change for the current evaluation's logic model reflects the purposes, processes, and objectives for the Commission's recently established strategic investment goal (Leadership and Community Capacity).

As illustrated in the current evaluation's logic model, the Commission and its grant recipients rely on resources, such as local assets and stakeholder expertise, to support implementation of local projects that address community needs. Execution of these projects is expected to lead to achievement of short-term (e.g., increased development and support of local leaders), midterm (e.g., increased local leader participation in community and economic development activities), and long-term (e.g., increased preparation and achievement among students, workers, and leaders) outcomes. The types

of projects implemented and the extent to which outcomes were achieved are outlined in detail in the Summary of Research Findings and Results (section 4).

**Figure 5. Logic model for the Appalachian Regional Commission's (the Commission) Leadership and Community Capacity Projects**

Theory of change: Through Commission-funded grants awarded by Appalachian states to local communities, grantees implement projects to develop and support local leaders, and increase the community's capacity to improve the local economy and infrastructure.



## 2. Evaluation Overview and Methodology

In FY 2016, the Commission sought support in evaluating leadership and community capacity projects that the agency funded between FY 2008 and FY 2015. Westat's evaluation examined project implementation processes and accomplishments, and progress toward achieving project objectives, across all projects in the leadership and community capacity portfolio that the Commission funded during the seven-year window. A total of 152 projects met the aforementioned criteria for inclusion in the evaluation. The Commission awarded a total of \$14,414,855 in grants for implementation of the projects. Grant recipients are required to supplement Commission funding with funding from other sources, and grantees reported receiving a total of \$10,516,548 in non-Commission funds. Collectively, Commission and non-Commission funding used to implement leadership and community capacity projects between FY 2008 and FY 2015 totaled \$24,931,403. The pool of projects included grantees in distressed communities, as well as grantees that allocate mini-grants or Flex-E-Grants. Through the mini-grants, the Commission grantee awards subgrants to local entities that implement small-scale and short-term economic development projects.

As shown in Exhibit 1, the evaluation was designed to address eight broad research questions that focused on the strategies and outcomes associated with the Commission's 152 leadership and community capacity projects funded between FY 2008 and FY 2015. Westat conducted four primary activities to address these questions:

1. A review of current literature on leadership and community capacity, and best practices for implementation of these types of projects
2. A review of key project documentation (i.e., data from the internal grants management database system and other project documentation) for all 152 projects
3. A Web-based survey that was completed for 117 of the 152 projects
4. Telephone interviews with project stakeholders from a sample of 15 projects, and onsite interviews with project staff and other key stakeholders from an additional 10 projects

**Exhibit 1. Crosswalk of research questions and data collection methods**

Research question	Data source			
	Literature review	Commission database and project documents	Web-based survey	Stakeholder interviews
What problems and challenges were the projects designed to address?		X	X	X
What approaches did the projects use to ameliorate these problems and challenges?		X	X	X
What specific outcomes were projects designed to achieve and did they meet their performance targets?		X	X	X
What are the characteristics of communities, individuals, and organizations that benefited from the projects?		X	X	
To what extent were project-related gains sustained beyond the period covered by the ARC grant?			X	X
What factors influenced a project's success and implementation?				X
Have grantees applied lessons learned to their ensuing efforts to serve target communities?				X
What strategic, actionable recommendations can be made for both ARC and the local communities undertaking these types of projects?	X			X

## Literature Review

Westat conducted a literature review that provided a foundation from which the evaluation team developed an analysis plan and study instruments. The evaluation team reviewed recent (published within the past ten years) literature on current work in the field to increase knowledge of what *community capacity* means and how to build it, the role of local leaders in capacity-building efforts, and inherent challenges encountered when undertaking leadership and civic capacity projects in rural, often disenfranchised, communities. These issues are discussed in greater detail in the Literature Review (section 3).

## Commission Database and Project Documents

Westat reviewed project documentation contained in the Commission's internal grants management database and hard-copy files stored in the Commission's office. For each of the 152 projects, Westat extracted key information from grant applications, approval memorandums, closeout memorandums, and final reports. The evaluation team reviewed the documents and created a database to compile, organize, and analyze project data.

## Web-Based Survey

Westat created a Web-based survey to update project-specific data contained in the Commission's grants management database and obtain information used to document and quantify the effects of each project on the populations served. Westat invited one project representative from each of the 152 projects to complete a survey.

Some of the organizations that received Commission leadership and community capacity grants between FY 2008 and FY 2015 administered two or more projects during the target period. Representatives of organizations that received multiple awards in support of distinct projects were asked to complete separate surveys for each grant. However, organization representatives that received multiple Commission awards to fund the same work over multiple years were asked to complete a single survey that covered all work performed across these grants.<sup>3</sup> In such instances, responses to survey items on resources that supported the project, characteristics of the community served, project context, strategies and challenges, and current project status were applied to all years of the project in the survey database. An exception was annual performance measure data (e.g., a project's outputs and outcomes), which can vary from year to year. Unique annual data on performance were captured for all projects (both single and multi-year) between FY 2008 and FY 2015.

Using the approach described above, survey data were ultimately obtained for 77 percent (117) of the 152 Commission projects funded between FY 2008 and FY 2015.<sup>4</sup> Of these 117 projects, 45 were stand-alone projects and 72 were projects that received multiple years of funding (each year of funding is counted as a separate project in the count).

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<sup>3</sup> For example, a grantee received Commission grants in 2010 and 2011, and used the funds awarded in 2011 to continue implementing activities that were initiated through the grant that was awarded in 2010. This grantee would have completed one survey covering both funding years.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that seven partially completed surveys were included in the calculation of the response rate.

Although the evaluation team expected to achieve a higher response rate, the response rate for the survey was not surprising considering that most projects that were targeted for the evaluation were no longer receiving Commission funding. Some project contacts responded to the invitation by stating they could not participate for several reasons, including project contacts no longer work for the funded entity (and were unable to identify alternate respondents who could answer survey questions accurately; n=12), uncertainty about who has enough knowledge of the project to complete the survey (n=1), and health issues of the appropriate contact (n=1). The evaluation team examined characteristics of survey respondents and nonrespondents, and projects in the two groups were similar in characteristics that included average amount of the Commission grant and grantee type (e.g., county government, institution of higher education). Nonresponding projects were most likely to be operated by nonprofit organizations (40 percent of nonrespondents) or city or township governments (31 percent of nonrespondents). That said, the evaluation team has no way of knowing whether project representatives who chose not to respond (or could not be located) were less successful (e.g., were unable to implement their approach or achieve their goals) or less likely to sustain the project than project representatives who did complete a survey.

Project representatives responded to a range of survey questions (see Appendix B on page 83) about the Commission-funded projects, including the following:

- Contributions that various organizations or individuals made to the project
- Characteristics of the community the project served
- Project context (e.g., community assets and liabilities)
- Implementation strategies and challenges
- Project outcomes
- Current status of the project

## Stakeholder Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with project leaders from 15 Commission-funded projects; site visits were conducted with project leaders, project staff, community leaders, and community members from an additional 10 Commission-funded projects. The evaluation team selected projects that best represented the breadth of this portfolio. Specifically, the evaluation team established selection criteria to ensure the 25 projects selected had the following attributes:

- Represented all states in the Appalachian Region, where possible
- Were diverse relative to various project characteristics (e.g., amount of funding awarded, type of organization funded, type of project implemented)
- Had distinct conceptions of “community,” as reported on the project survey (e.g., people or organizations within specific geographic areas, social systems or connections among people)
- Varied in current operating status (e.g., the project has expanded since the Commission funding period ended; the project is no longer in operation)

Telephone and in-person interviews enabled the evaluation team to obtain detailed information about the Commission-funded projects and gather in-depth information on the activities conducted and outcomes achieved (see Appendix C on page 103). Topics covered during interviews included the following:

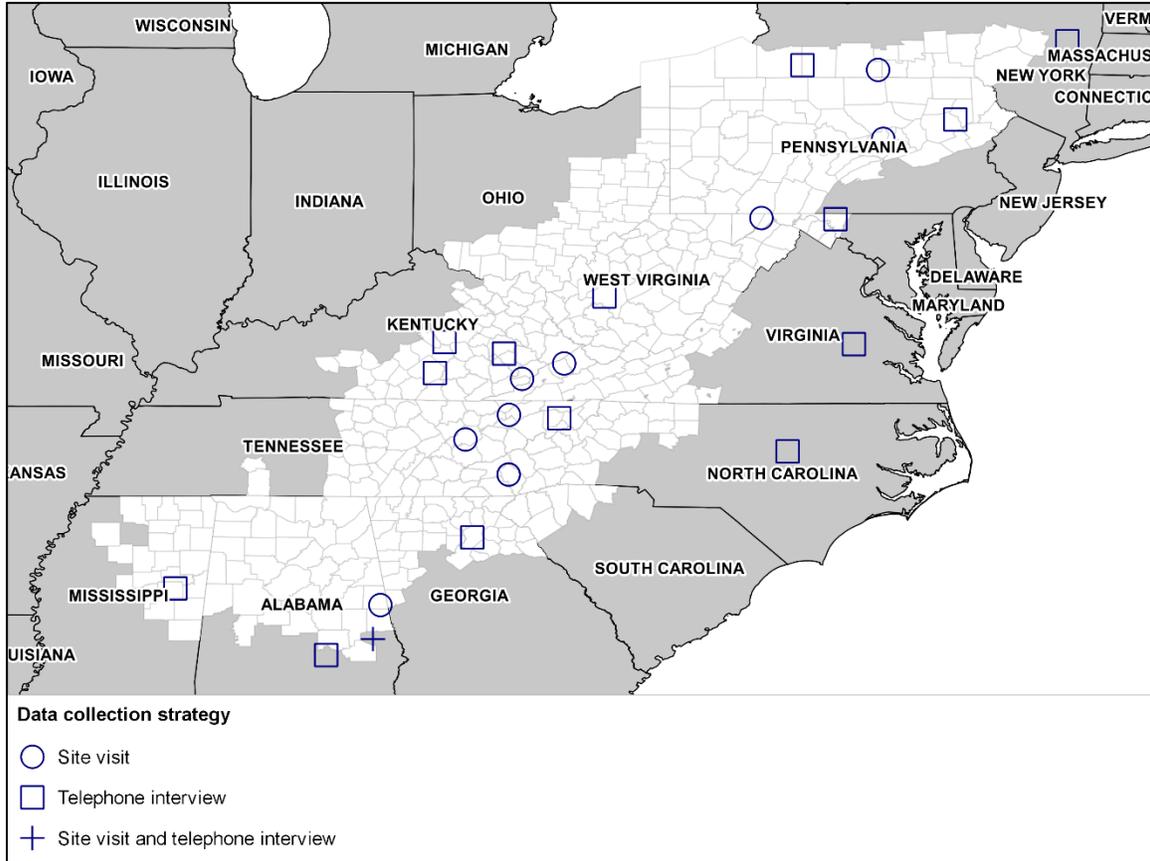
- Contextual information (e.g., background about the entity that received Commission funds, community characteristics)
- Project design and implementation
- Project outcomes
- Project sustainability
- Lessons learned

A map showing the locations of the grantees for the 25 projects included in this component of the evaluation is provided in Figure 6.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Some grantees are based outside the Appalachian region but conduct work in Appalachian communities. The figure displays the location of the grantees, not the service area of the projects.

**Figure 6. Locations of project grantees selected for telephone interviews and site visits**



Note: The location of some of the grantees was outside of the Region, but all project service areas were within the Region.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Tables 2 and 3 provide characteristics of the projects for which representatives of the grant team participated in site visits and telephone interviews.

**Table 2. Characteristics of grants and grant recipients, by data collection method**

Characteristic	Number of projects, by data collection method	
	Site visits (n=10)	Telephone Interviews (n=15)
<b>Grant type</b>		
Single-year	9	6
Multi-year	1	9
<b>Grant recipient category</b>		
City or township government	2	2
State government	0	2
Local development district	3	0
Nonprofit organization	3	6
Public/state controlled institution of higher education	2	5

Note: The evaluation team conducted 14 telephone interviews with representatives of 15 projects.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

**Table 3. Project categories and types, by data collection method**

Characteristic	Number of projects, by data collection method	
	Site visits (n=10)	Telephone Interviews (n=15)
<b>Project category</b>		
Business development	1	0
Civic entrepreneurship	3	8
Community development	3	1
Leadership and civic capacity	3	5
Education and workforce development	0	1
<b>Project type</b>		
Community capacity	0	7
Community revitalization	0	1
Downtown revitalization	2	0
Individual capacity	2	1
Leadership	0	0
Organizational capacity	1	0
Planning	4	2
Technical assistance	0	3
Tourism development	1	0
Educational achievement/attainment	0	1

Notes: The category “civic entrepreneurship” was renamed “leadership and civic capacity” during the time frame of these projects. Project types were also reorganized during this time frame and there may be some overlap between types. For multi-year projects, the category and type of the most recent year of funding were used. The evaluation team conducted 14 telephone interviews with representatives of 15 projects.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

The sections that follow provide a summary of relevant literature and a framework for the evaluation (section 3, page 15), a summary of research findings and results (section 4, page 25), policy implications and program recommendations (section 5, page 59), and summary and conclusions (section 6, page 65).

### 3. Literature Review on Leadership and Community Capacity

Literature published over the past several decades has indicated that community capacity is a multi-faceted concept that is difficult to define. The concept of capacity building emerged in the literature in the early 1990s (Chaskin, 1999; Craig, 2005), but the term “community capacity building” specifically is fairly new, entering the lexicon of policymaking only within the past decade (Craig, 2005). Early references to capacity building primarily concerned building the strengths and capacities of organizations. There exists now, though, the more specific notion of communities building their own capacity (Craig, 2005). Over time, interest in capacity building has increased as more communities, policy makers, and philanthropists begin to recognize the value of community capacity building (Craig, 2005; Flaspohler, Duffy, Wandersman, Stillman, & Maras, 2008; Hargreaves et al., 2016). As a result, it has become commonplace for federal agencies and philanthropic organizations to direct funds to capacity-building efforts that improve the health and well-being of communities and their residents (Craig, 2005; Flaspohler et al., 2008; Hargreaves et al., 2016).

There are various purposes for increasing community capacity, such as economic development; increased community involvement and citizen participation (e.g., in urban renewal, regeneration); greater community-based empowerment (e.g., more vocal community members) and local leadership; increased skills, knowledge, and confidence of community members; improved social connections and relationships; improved development and mobilization of resources; stronger links between local entities (e.g., politics, organizations, environment); and accessibility to effective services (Aspen Institute, 2009; Verity, 2007). Ultimately, though, community capacity building is intended to improve communities and community members’ quality of life and well-being.

#### Key Terms

**Defining Community.** The term *community* can take on various meanings (Craig, 2005; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Verity, 2007). For example, it might refer to a physical place or geographical location (e.g., neighborhood, rural town), characterize a group of people (e.g., by religion, ethnicity, sexuality), or represent an interest-based group (i.e., a group focused on a particular issue). Some of the literature also defines community as a

social system, or connections, bonds, and interactions between people (Verity, 2007) and describes community as a quality, as in “sense of community” (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

**Defining Community Capacity.** What it means for a community to have or exhibit “capacity” fluctuates across the literature, with some definitions varying widely and some overlapping. Some of the literature (e.g., Aspen, 2009; Meyer, 1994, as cited in Chaskin, 1999, p. 3) defines community capacity as the commitment, skill, and resources of a community to address community problems and opportunities. Other literature (e.g., Gittell et al., 1995, as cited in Chaskin, 1999, p. 3; Marre & Weber, 2007; Verity, 2007) describes community capacity building as an ongoing, dynamic process of relationship building, skill strengthening, community planning, decision making, and action. This conceptualization emphasizes the *journey* of capacity building. Yet other literature classifies community capacity as the set of assets or attributes (Easterling, 1998, as cited in Simpson, Wood, & Daws, 2003, p. 278; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) that community residents individually and collectively possess to develop solutions to problems within the community and to improve community and individual well-being (Kemmis & Knotz, 2012). Then there is some literature that conceptualizes community capacity in terms of the resources within a community (Flaspohler et al., 2008; Marre & Weber, 2007) and/or the connections within communities, both at the individual level and at the organizational level (Flaspohler et al., 2008; Verity, 2007). The latter often emphasizes the link between social capital and community capacity building. Some literature anchors the capacity-building process within a specific purpose (Verity, 2007) or focuses on specific factors such as leadership development and community participation (Flaspohler et al., 2008).

Porter, Martin, and Anda (2016, p. 11) cite Morgan’s (2015) more general definition of community capacity, stating that “community capacity refers to the ability of a group of people to come together, build authentic relationships and reflect honestly about things that matter, share democratic leadership, and take collective actions that assure social and health equity for all residents.” Other scholars (Chaskin, 1999; Verity, 2007) also make reference to more general conceptualizations of community capacity.

There does not appear to be a single universally accepted definition of community capacity, but Chaskin provided a widely accepted definition that encompasses many of the existing conceptualizations:

Community capacity is the interaction of human, organizational, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of

a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized efforts by individuals, organizations, and the networks of associations among them and between them and the broader systems of which the community is a part (Chaskin, 1999, p. 4).

**Levels of Engagement.** Typically, scholars posit that community capacity actions and efforts occur at three levels: individual, organizational, and broader system or community (Chaskin, 1999; Flaspohler et al., 2008; Verity, 2007). Individual-level engagement concerns the ways in which residents contribute to community capacity through individual skills, knowledge, abilities, attributes, etc. More simply, this level of engagement relates to human capital. The organizational level of engagement underlines organized entities' (e.g., community-based organizations, departments, institutions, programs, and organized groups) impact on community capacity. Finally, broader system- or community-level engagement emphasizes social capital, or networks of relationships among individuals and organized entities, as contributors to community capacity. Though the levels of engagement can be delineated into three parts, these levels of capacity are usually closely interrelated (Flaspohler et al., 2008).

## Rural Context

Marre and Weber (2007) note that most attempts to define, assess, and build community capacity have been undertaken in urban neighborhoods. For example, one of the most seminal and oft-cited analyses of community capacity (Chaskin, 1999) focuses specifically on urban neighborhoods. However, as Marre and Weber explain (p. 2), "There are distinctive characteristics and dynamics of rural communities that introduce unique challenges to the assessment and building of community capacity." Specifically, many rural communities are classified as distressed communities, where poverty, joblessness, and an ongoing recession abound, often due to plant closings or mass layoffs associated with declines in a specific industry or business (Economic Innovation Group [EIG], 2016; Greenstone & Looney, 2011). Within Appalachia, 84 counties were classified by the Commission as economically distressed in FY 2017, while 114 were classified as at risk of becoming economically distressed. Together, these counties had an estimated 2015 population of 5.3 million (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2016). As a result, many rural communities face population dispersion, depopulation, economic decline, inaccessibility to services, environmental degradation, and several other challenges (Craig, 2005; EIG, 2016; Emery & Flora, 2006; Fey, Bregendahl, & Flora, 2006; Greenstone & Looney, 2010). Accordingly, rural communities can often have unique needs and thus have to approach capacity building differently from urban communities.

Capacity building in rural communities is also of special interest because of the notion that these communities risk being left behind in the new global economy as the United States continues to grow and develop (EIG, 2016; Simpson et al., 2003). Consequently, multiple researchers (e.g., Emery & Flora, 2006; Fey et al., 2006; Kemmis & Knotz, 2012; Lott & Chazdon, 2009; Marre & Weber, 2007; Simpson et al., 2003) have studied and analyzed community capacity-building efforts in rural communities to provide insight and identify ways to conceptualize capacity building in rural communities (as cited below).

While rural communities share some similarities with each other, The Aspen Institute (2009) explains that rural communities attempting to engage in change efforts all start from a different place, with different challenges and opportunities (or assets). Aspen identifies four types of rural communities: full-tilt communities, gridlock communities, Trojan horse communities, and ghost town communities. According to Aspen, full-tilt communities are clear on their needs but not necessarily on how to meet those needs, while gridlock communities are those that are not able to make decisions due to divisiveness about what to do to make changes. Trojan horse communities are threatened by too much change too quickly or characterized by no change at all, and ghost town communities have given up trying to make any changes because too many jobs and people have left. Thus, community capacity-building efforts and processes vary from community to community, and the levels of success rural communities have in building capacity also varies.

Based on an analysis of a community development effort in Nebraska, Emery and Flora (2006) argue that “critical investments in social capital [are an] entry point for community change” (p. 20) in rural communities, and warn that the usual strategy of infusing financial capital and built capital into these communities has less of a cumulative effect than does a focus on social capital. Three not-for-profit organization leaders learned this lesson and joined forces to reverse population and per capita income decline in their rural Nebraskan community. First, the organization leaders invested their own social capital by collaborating, or “binding social capital,” to mobilize their respective organizations’ area of strength; i.e., leadership development, entrepreneurship development, and community foundation. They then worked with community leaders to establish strategies to increase philanthropy, retain youth in the community, increase leadership capacity, and strengthen local economies. Once the community identified strategies, the collaborative partners facilitated opportunities for community members to work together in teams, all of which included a youth initiative, and they used their connections to pull in technical assistance and resources outside the community to implement the strategies, thereby “bridging social capital.” Emery and Flora found that

such increases in the stocks (assets) and flow (investments) of social capital produced a “spiraling up” effect in the community that increased stocks in other community capitals, including human capital, financial capital, cultural capital, and political capital (four of seven capitals in the Community Capitals Framework, which is discussed in the next section).

## Community Capacity Frameworks

Just as definitions of community capacity vary in the literature, so too do the ways in which to characterize, identify, and/or measure (community) capacity building. However, various scholars have attempted to establish domains, dimensions, and frameworks to define and assess community capacity (e.g., Chaskin, 1999; Goodman et al., 1998; Hargreaves et al., 2016; Laverack & Labonte, 2001, as cited in Verity, 2007, pp. 21-22; Smith et al., 2003 as cited in Liu, 2010, p. 30). To describe and assess community capacity, scholars most often selected domains/dimensions that examined a community’s or organization’s leadership activities, social networks, processes to assess and solve problems, transferal of knowledge and skills, and the overall “sense of community.” Other common domains included community engagement and participation in capacity-building efforts, level of access to and mobilization of resources (e.g., economic, human, political), and partnerships, among others.

Additionally, the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, located at Michigan State University, established the Community Capitals Framework (Emery & Flora, 2006; Fey et al., 2006) to analyze community and economic development from a holistic systems perspective. It measures seven kinds of capital investments that affect a community’s capacity: (1) natural capital, or natural resources that are specific to a particular location (e.g., landscape, weather, green spaces, etc.); (2) cultural capital, which reflects “the way people know the world” (Emery & Flora, 2006, p. 21), including the values and symbols reflected in clothing, art, language, and customs (cited in Fey et al., 2006, p. 5); (3) human capital, or the skills and abilities that people within the community possess; (4) social capital, or connections among people and organizations that influence action and change; (5) political capital, or access to power and organizations, connections to resources, and residents’ ability to have a voice and engage in matters that affect the well-being of their community; (6) financial capital, or simply the financial resources to invest in community capacity building; and (7) built capital, or infrastructure. Verity (2007) identifies a similar set of domains, i.e., physical (infrastructure), institutional (policy), economic (resources), social (networks, trust), and human (abilities, skills, motivation), for community capacity building.

Asset-based community development (ABCD) (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2004, 2015, n.d.a., n.d.b.; Boyd, Hayes, Wilson, & Bearsley-Smith, 2008; Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation, n.d.; Kerka, 2003; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003), an approach to community capacity building that Kretzmann and McKnight of Northwestern University developed, is an alternative to the needs-based approach often used to “intervene” on behalf of communities to address problems (Boyd et al., 2008; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). The approach initially focused on problem solving in urban neighborhoods, but it has since been used in rural communities as a community capacity-building strategy (Appalachian Regional Commission, n.d.b.). The ABCD approach rejects viewing communities as deficient and instead focuses on the assets (e.g., skills, talents, and capacities of individuals, associations, and organizations) or resources that are inherent to a community in order to mobilize and effect change in the community. For example, natural resources (e.g., forests, rivers), culture, art, and history may be assets of Appalachian and rural communities. ABCD emphasizes the assets inherent in social relationships, both formal and informal. As such, key community assets include its residents, who possess individual skills and gifts; associations, or small informal groups of people (e.g., clubs); institutions (e.g., government agencies, private businesses, schools) that can help communities obtain resources; and connections, or exchanges between people (i.e., relationship building). Physical assets (e.g., land, building, funds, etc.) are also vital to ABCD (Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation, n.d.).

More recently, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation introduced the Self-Healing Communities Model (Porter et al., 2016) as a method to “build the capacity of communities to define and solve problems most relevant to them and [generate] new cultural norms that mirror the values and aspirations that community members have for their children” (p. 2). The model calls for communities to establish partnerships (e.g., with funders and subject matter experts) and encompasses four phases of community engagement to reduce adversity—i.e., leadership expansion; shared understanding of values, ways of thinking, and cultural patterns among community members; iterative cycles of learning; and results (e.g., outcome research, data, and evaluation).

A team of researchers described several other approaches to community capacity building resulting from a study conducted in five communities in the state of Washington. The researchers identified five different community capacity-building models, all of which conceptualize community capacity building differently (Hargreaves et al., 2016). The researchers labeled these approaches to community capacity-building:

- *Prevention coalitions*, or alliances of organizations that make use of practices, programs, and processes within a community to prevent and alleviate social or health problems
- *Community collaborations*, which focus on the development of social relationships to achieve desired goals
- *Comprehensive community initiatives*, which typically address the needs of poor communities and use intermediary organizations to engage residents, integrate community development and human service, strengthen networks, and concentrate resources to transform distressed neighborhoods
- *Community capacity development*, which includes four elements of community capacity—shared focus, community leadership, learning, and results
- *Collective impact*, which highlights five conditions for effective community change—common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing strategies, continuous and open communication, and backbone support

## Leadership Development

Local leadership is critically important to community capacity-building efforts (Flora, Flora, Bastion, & Manion, 2003; Kemmis & Knotz, 2012; Lott & Chazdon, 2009; Porter et al., 2016). For example, Lott and Chazdon (2009) assessed the long-term effects of three separate leadership development programs administered by the University of Minnesota U-Lead Program. Community members who participated in the leadership programs transferred skills and knowledge to make positive changes, experienced an increase in self-confidence and a change in their personal vision for leadership, set more ambitious goals and aspirations, better coped with life challenges, willingly took more risks (e.g., voiced their opinion) and overcame fears of failure, and became more involved in leadership activities. Also, as a result of program participation, community members established professional and personal connections; shared the knowledge they gained from the programs with others in the community (e.g., in informal settings with family and friends and/or more formally through presentations); became more involved in policy- and decision-making activities, sometimes even running for political office; and took a lead in other cultural activities (e.g., events and festivals) in the community (Lott & Chazdon, 2009).

Kemmis and Knotz (2012), who sought to understand the role of philanthropy in building community capacity, completed case studies of three programs that were implemented to improve community and individual well-being in rural communities. Grants from

philanthropic foundations funded each program, and two of the programs focused specifically on leadership training to increase community capacity. Each of the three programs has been successful at building capacity at the local level. Additionally, one of the major lessons learned from the study was that community capacity requires leadership to meet local challenges and seize opportunities. Shared leadership among community members was associated with more positive results (Kemmis & Knotz, 2012).

A lack of leadership is often an obstacle to community development, particularly in declining rural communities and decaying inner-city neighborhoods (Flora et al., 2003). However, leadership development is critical in building and maintaining a community's capacity to respond to and anticipate changes that affect the local community. Flora and colleagues' analysis of community-based leadership development programs revealed that such programs engender interaction among community members and impart skills and support to continue those interactions and achieve collectively defined goals. However, the leadership must be participatory, transparent, accountable, and effective if the community is to remain sustainable (Flora et al., 2003).

Though leadership development has proven to be an effective strategy for building community capacity, O'Doherty, Smith, Spangler, Williams, and Richards-Schuster (2015) assert that youth leadership development should be strengthened, particularly in Central Appalachia (i.e., West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina). Interviews with youth and adults in the community indicated that several organizations in the region provided programs to and for youth, but few engaged youth as leaders or promoted the value of youth leadership. Lack of engagement may not be intentional, but instead may be due to limited opportunities and spaces for youth to connect, a lack of funding to support youth leadership, and the various other challenges that the region and population endure (e.g., lack of transportation, money, etc.).

Additionally, adults in the region may be barriers to youth leadership development. Interview respondents suggested that adults in the region sometimes do not value the opinions and contributions of youth; adults are not always willing to pass the torch to the next generation; and youth do not always feel empowered to speak up or take the lead (possibly due to the culture of deference for adults/elders). To address this challenge, O'Doherty et al. suggest increasing the capabilities of adults in Central Appalachia to work with youth, as well as a need for intergenerational partnerships and connections between youth and adults. This was a strategy the Nebraska-based collaborative implemented (discussed earlier). The collaborative partners and community leaders included youth on each of the strategy-level teams (i.e., leadership, entrepreneurship, and community foundations) and established a separate youth team to organize youth

activities and a youth initiative to affect overall community change (Emery & Flora, 2006). According to O’Doherty et al., strengthened youth leadership and participation helps the region respond to challenges and address social issues and might keep youth from leaving their communities, which is a major concern in rural communities (Emery & Flora, 2006; Fey et al., 2006; Greenstone & Looney, 2011; O’Doherty et al., 2015).

## Implications for the Current Evaluation

The variability in the literature suggests that the ways in which community capacity and leadership development are defined and operationalized by individual Commission grantees may vary as well. To capture this variability, the evaluation team took a holistic approach to operationalizing community capacity and leadership in the data collection instruments, rather than relying on a particular definition or framework. For example, it was important to assess how project stakeholders defined “community”; this information was requested from all respondents who completed a survey, and the concept was explored in depth during site visits and telephone interviews. Additionally, through the site visits and telephone interviews, the evaluation team examined the formal and informal roles of both individuals and organizations in carrying out the work of each project team, including how partnerships were formed among individuals and organizations, how partnerships are defined, and whether these were sustained.

The literature suggests a number of important contextual factors that could influence the success and sustainability of Commission grantees’ work. These include facilitators or barriers to community decision making; the role played by economic, cultural, and natural resources; and successes and challenges in identifying leaders to champion the work. The survey enabled the systematic assessment of the extent to which the contextual factors described in the literature influenced project implementation and correlated with the outcomes for projects. The interviews allowed for a deeper look into more specific details about these factors, how they played a part in the successes and challenges of the grants, how grantees responded to these factors, and why grantees responded the way they did.

In the analyses of qualitative and quantitative data, the evaluation team leveraged the variability among grantees’ approaches to community capacity building by examining these differences and ascertaining whether any patterns emerged. The team examined the degree of alignment of projects’ definitions of community with the strategies they chose to implement—for example, do projects that define community in purely geographic terms tend to implement strategies to address physical needs such as infrastructure, while

those that define community in terms of social cohesion implement strategies to increase civic participation?

## Summary

Current literature reveals multiple approaches to community capacity building, showing wide variation in how community capacity is defined and developed. Strategies communities implement to build community capacity depend on a number of factors, including the availability of natural and human resources, the complexity or severity of community deficiencies or inefficiencies, community member engagement, and the ability of local leaders to galvanize support. Each community is unique and has a number of strengths, challenges, and features that must be considered when gauging how best to improve its conditions and increase community pride.

## 4. Summary of Research Findings and Results

The theory of change for the Commission's leadership and community capacity projects, as depicted in the logic model (Figure 5), shows how the major activities that Commission-funded grantees implement lead to improved short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes. Grantees use Commission grants to implement projects to develop and support local leaders, and increase the community's capacity to improve the local economy and infrastructure. The subsections that follow provide

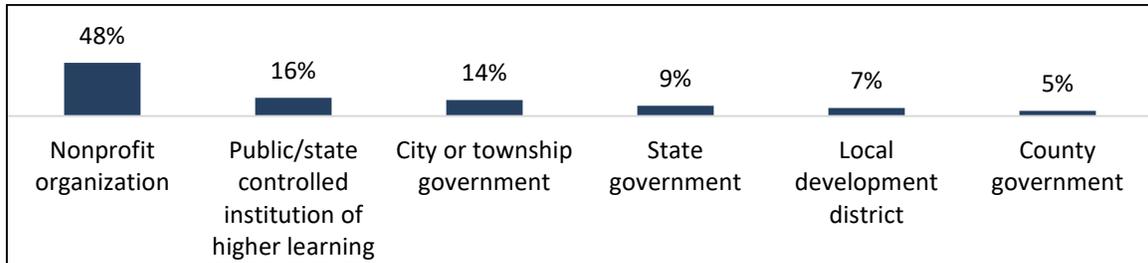
- an introduction to the leadership and community capacity projects the Commission funded between FY 2008 and FY 2015 (below),
- a summation of identified community challenges and strategies used to address these challenges (page 28),
- outcomes the projects achieved (page 40), and
- project sustainability and lessons learned for implementing community capacity-building projects in the Appalachian Region (page 52).

### Project and Community Characteristics

#### Grantee Organizations

Nearly half (48 percent) of the 152 leadership and community capacity-building projects funded by the Commission between FY 2008 and FY 2015 were led by nonprofit organizations (Figure 7). These 73 nonprofit organizations included several community foundations and economic development organizations. Slightly more than a quarter (28 percent) of the projects were led by government organizations, including 22 projects that were led by city or township governments.

**Figure 7. Percentage of projects led by different types of organizations (n=152)**

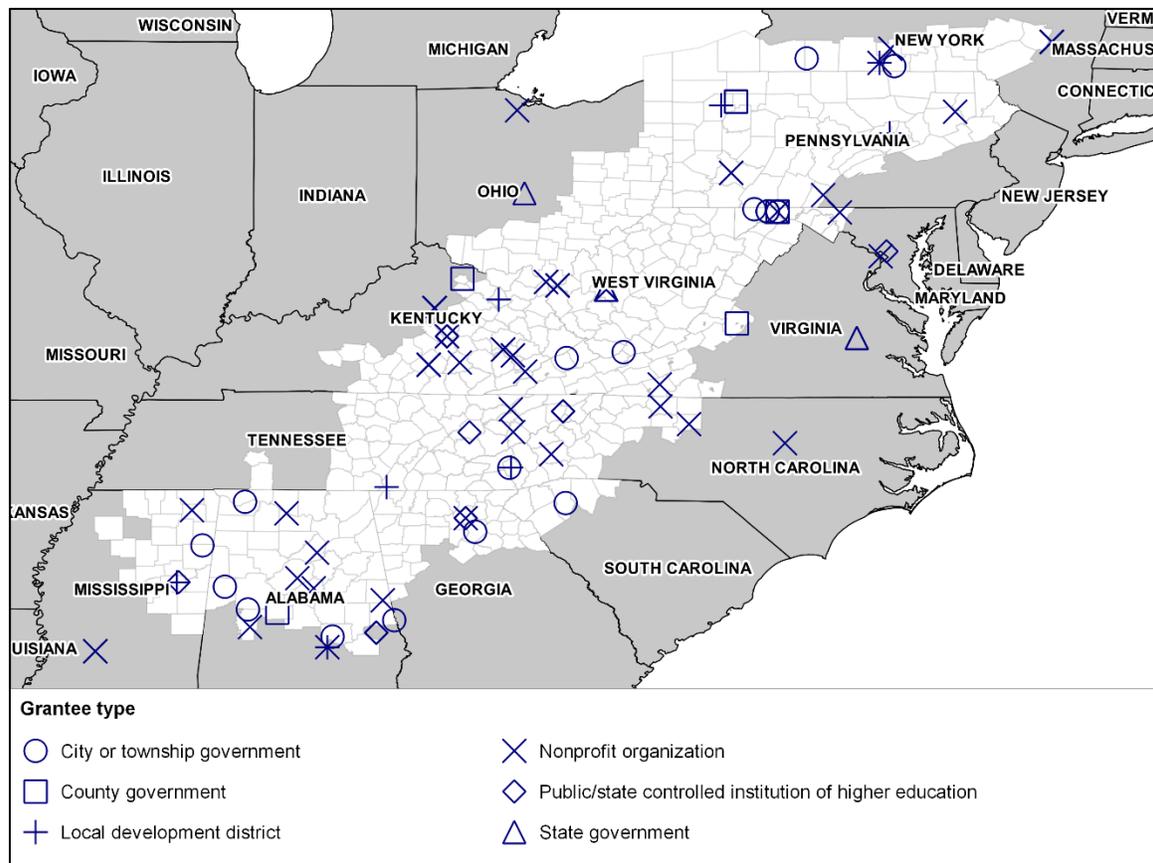


Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Figure 8 shows the locations of project grantees by grantee organization type. The largest percentage of grants were awarded to nonprofit organizations.

**Figure 8. Grantee locations, by organization type**



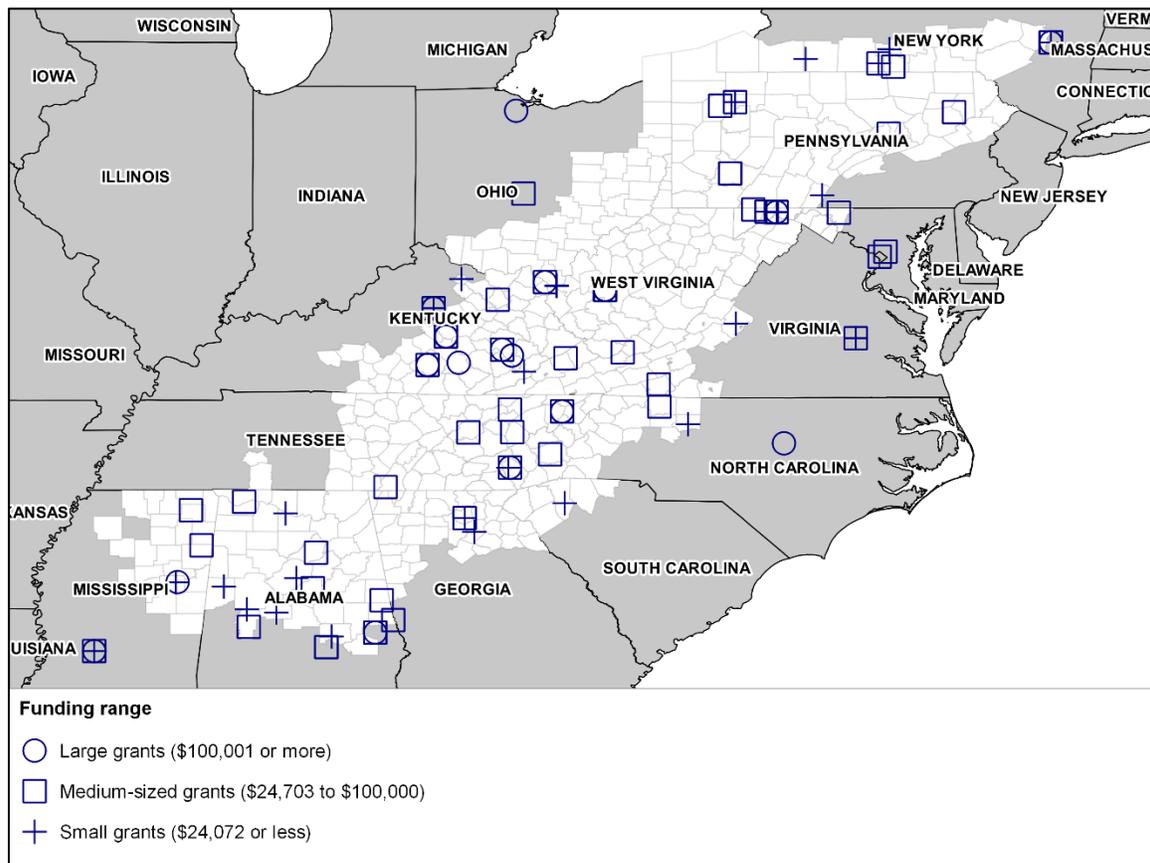
Note: Some grantees are based outside the Appalachian region but conduct work in Appalachian communities. This figure displays the location of the grantees.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

### Amount of Project Funding

The amount of Commission funding awarded to each of the 152 projects ranged from \$5,000 to over \$650,000. The median award was \$50,000. Award amounts of different sizes were distributed to grantees located across 13 states and the District of Columbia (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Grantee locations, by amount of funding awarded**



Notes: Some grantees are based outside the Appalachian region but conduct work in Appalachian communities. This figure displays the location of the grantees. Cutoff values for the funding range were established by calculating quartile ranges for total Commission funding. The second and third quartiles were combined into the “Medium-sized grants” category.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Nearly all the leadership and community capacity-building projects had some additional funding beyond what was provided by the Commission.

The amount of funding awarded by the Commission also varied by type of grantee. Institutions of higher education tended to receive larger grants on average. Awards to

local development districts and city or township governments tended to be smaller on average.

As mentioned in other sections of the report, distressed communities have higher poverty rates and lower income than national rates, and thus have a higher level of need than other types of communities. Commission grants provide an opportunity to improve the local conditions in distressed areas.

In addition to Commission grants, other entities provided grantees with additional funding and/or resources to support implementation of project activities, such as expertise, technical assistance, time, materials, equipment, or staff. Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each source of additional resources made an important contribution to the Commission project. Local community nonprofit organizations, individual community members, and local and state government agencies were cited as the most important sources of additional funding or resources, beyond support received from the Commission. National or regional organizations, private sector companies, and foundations were considered important sources by fewer projects.

These findings imply that local resources were often more important to project implementation than resources outside of the immediate community. This is not surprising given that one of the purposes of the leadership and community capacity grants is to increase community-level buy-in and ownership of efforts to improve local conditions. Although all resources, whether local, regional, or national, are valued, representatives of agencies or organizations who are able to observe and participate in community change efforts (e.g., local organizations, community members) may be more likely to make more meaningful contributions to enhancing the local community. Additional data on important sources of additional funding or resources, by grant size, are provided in Appendix Figure A-1 on page 73.

## **Community Challenges and Project Strategies**

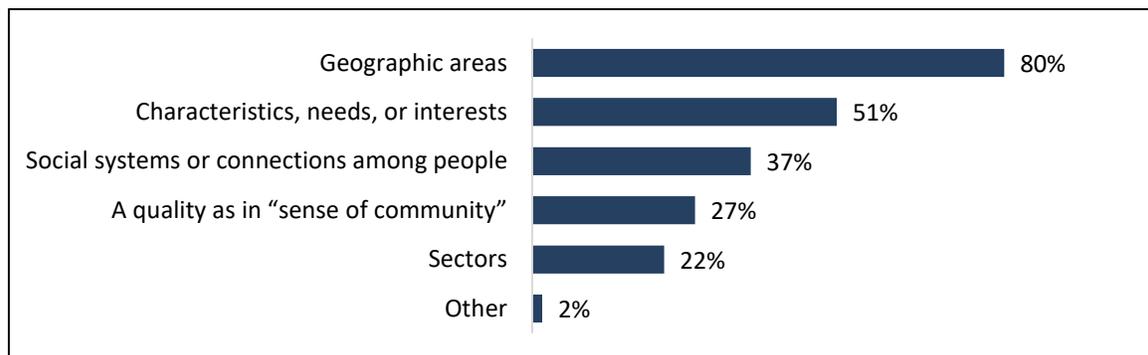
Stakeholders from the leadership and community capacity projects designed and carried out work that incorporated a variety of strategies to address specific challenges or issues present in the communities they served. These included projects aimed at developing a vision or plan for community growth and improvement, initiatives designed to increase the involvement of citizens in the community, and efforts to increase the skills and knowledge of community members. The approaches utilized were often framed by the context of the community served, including how projects defined their community and what community strengths and liabilities had been identified. This section begins with a

discussion of this community context, then highlights the types of strategies used by the projects as they sought to build leadership and community capacity.

### Community Context

Project representatives responding to the survey reported different conceptions of the “communities” they served, although a large majority (80 percent) viewed community as defined by a specific geographic area (Figure 10). For example, “community” could be defined as the county in which the project was implemented, or a specific neighborhood. Slightly over half of project respondents viewed a community as people or organizations with certain characteristics, needs, or interests (e.g., organizations established to promote the rights and safety of the elderly population may be engaged in efforts to support a “community” of aging citizens), while about a third viewed community as represented by social systems or connections among people. For example, some individuals may consider high school teachers for whom trainings will be provided as a “community” of educators.

**Figure 10. Percentage of respondents reporting different definitions of community (n=117)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple community types. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**River Towns Phase II: Discovering Middle  
Susquehanna Valley River Towns  
(PA-15736)**

Through the Discovering River Towns project, collaborative relationships were built within and among the Middle Susquehanna River Towns in Pennsylvania, and a branded regional identity for the Susquehanna Greenway was established. Public perception of the Susquehanna River had been largely negative due to a history of destructive flooding, and the river towns had not embraced a larger regional identity.

Through consistent community engagement and planning, project stakeholders saw a shift in how local leaders and community members saw both the river and their region: “The interesting thing about that is...you have had this symphony of towns all working together and realizing that we complement each other and not compete with each other.” In addition, elected officials began to acknowledge the Susquehanna as an asset, not just a threat.



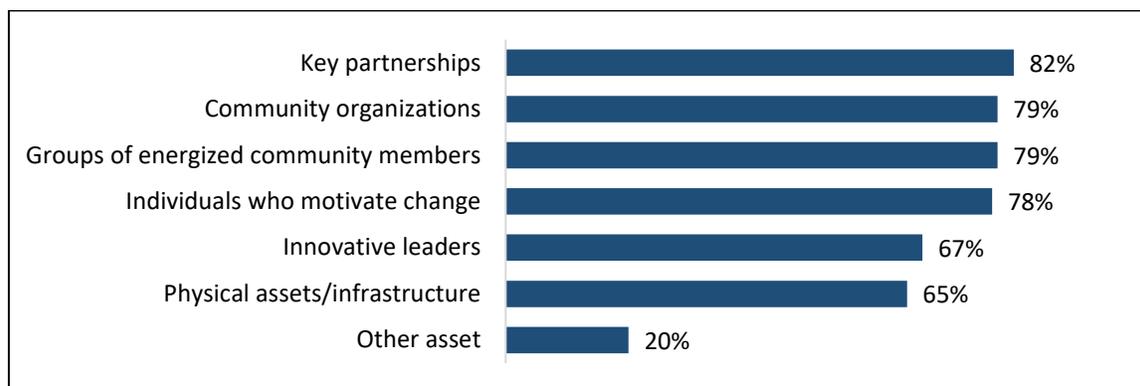
*The Discovering River Towns project helped build a larger community identity among the towns along the Susquehanna River.*

The survey results suggest that projects often see multiple ways of defining the communities they serve. Project representatives who participated in telephone and site visit interviews also viewed the definition of community as complex, particularly when thinking about a community in a larger regional context. For example, several project staff and community stakeholders discussed the benefits of a regional approach to planning and economic development. By working together, they indicated that smaller geographic communities were able to develop a greater capacity for planning and development, and were therefore able to leverage the outside perception of a region to benefit everyone (e.g., tourists think about vacationing in the Great Smoky Mountains, not a particular county or town in the region). However, many small towns or rural areas have a strong sense of community pride and identity that while adding to the character and resiliency of these communities, can also build resistance to a regional development approach. As one participant noted: “Somehow there’s this belief that if you’re building this larger regional relationship you’re being disloyal to your town instead of building a larger possibility.”

Community assets (or strengths) and liabilities were important contextual considerations for the projects. In both the survey and interviews, respondents reported seeing a variety of assets in their communities, including assets that enabled their work to succeed. For example, a close-knit community was viewed as a key area of strength across projects in interviews, including strong partnerships between individuals and community groups. Similarly, 82 percent of survey respondents saw partnerships as an important community asset that influenced their project work (Figure 11). Community organizations, groups of energized community members, and key individuals who motivate change were also reported as important strengths in survey responses. In interviews, project representatives were asked to reflect on aspects of their work that were successful. When considering successful aspects of the work, project representatives focused mainly on activities that brought community members together (outreach, convenings, youth engagement) or had tangible outputs (streetscapes, downtown revitalization, new jobs or businesses). One interview respondent reflected on a program where “we typically could see ideas or initiatives—and it may not have been during the project period—that [community members] could take and do more with. There was more opportunity for tangible impact after [these activities].”

- Community strengths reported in interviews**
- Proud, resilient people
  - Close-knit communities
  - Strong partnerships
  - Community culture and character (“sense of place”)
  - Location conducive to economic growth
  - Natural beauty and resources
  - Local universities
  - Workforce with a strong work ethic

**Figure 11. Percentage of respondents reporting different types of community assets (n=116)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple community assets. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

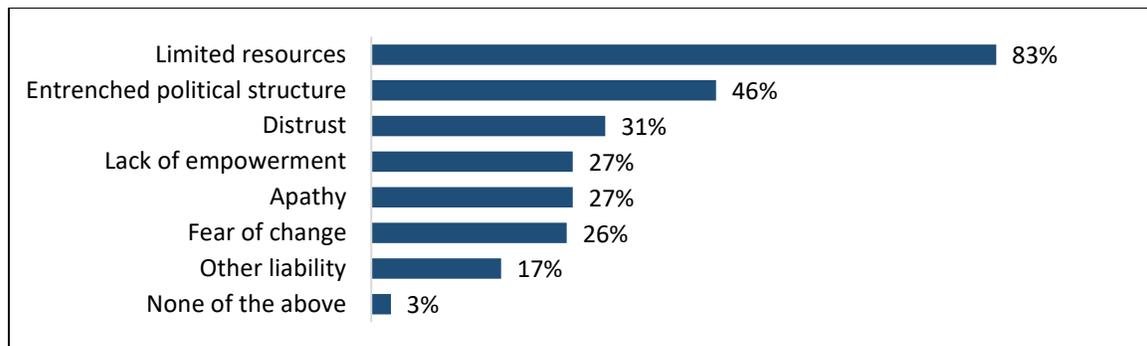
Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

As shown in Figure 12, survey respondents reported a number of community liabilities or challenges that contextualized or affected their work—with limited resources being among the most common challenges (identified by 83 percent of respondents). Similarly, lack of funding and other economic challenges were reported by respondents across the 25 projects that participated in telephone and site visit interviews. For some, such resource shortages tempered the community’s strengths. As one interview respondent stated, “We have a lot of strengths, just not much money.” Nearly half of project representatives responding to the survey also saw an entrenched political structure as a community liability, while slightly less than a third cited community distrust as a liability. Similarly, resistance to or lack of capacity for long-term planning was a common community challenge identified in the interviews—with project staff and community stakeholders noting several specific challenges that were not reported by survey respondents, including population decline (particularly the out-migration of young people), limited access to broadband Internet, limited transportation options, and substance abuse.

*“We have a lot of strengths, just not much money.”*

—Interview respondent

**Figure 12. Percentage of respondents reporting different types of community liabilities (n=116)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple community liabilities. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

### Southwest Steuben County I-86/I-99 Corridor Economic Development Blueprint (NY-15936)

The Blueprint Project team in Southwest Steuben County, New York, used a regional development focus to develop plans for community improvement projects within the individual municipalities in Steuben County. Stakeholders focused on creating plans the community would be able to implement, but the physical infrastructure of the region (e.g., water, sewer systems) presented a challenge. To overcome this challenge, stakeholders have pursued funding through New York State and sought financial support from property developers and owners to improve local infrastructure (e.g., water sewers, road extensions).

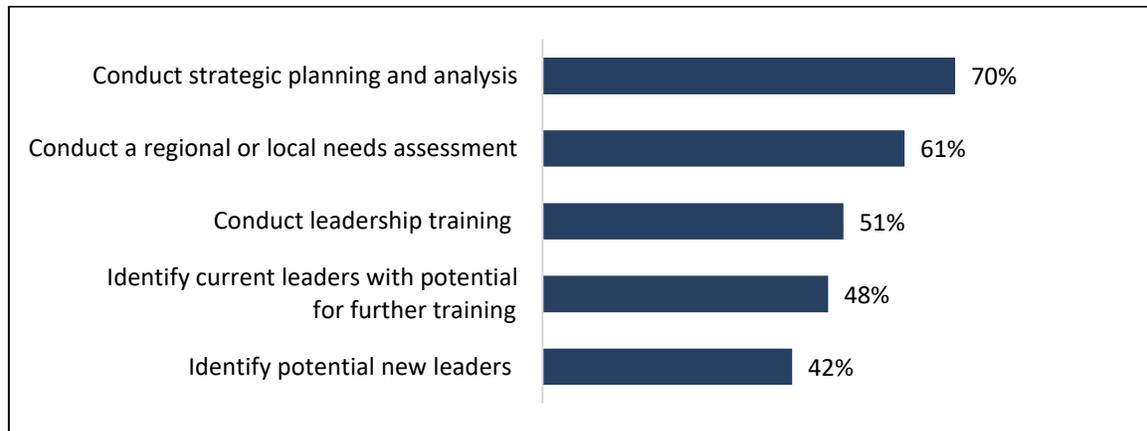
## Project Strategies

Through Commission-funded projects, project teams implemented different strategies to develop capacity and leadership in the communities they served. They included activities related to developing a vision and direction for the community, promoting the involvement of community members, and enhancing the skills and knowledge of community members.

In both surveys and interviews, respondents reported using multiple strategies to address their community challenges. For some of the projects, there appeared to be recognition by interview respondents that building community capacity cannot be achieved through isolated efforts but requires a set of interconnected strategies and initiatives. For example, some respondents noted that leadership development is nearly inextricable from community capacity building. As such, they indicated that leaders need to be skilled, knowledgeable, and committed. However, they stressed that decisions about growth or addressing community needs should also include the whole community—noting that leaders and community members should have a shared vision for the long-term future of the community, and then should engage in concrete planning to create that future. They concluded that planning allows the community to address infrastructure challenges, which can range from broadband access to land use to workforce development.

**Developing a community vision and direction.** Developing vision and direction for the community was a key type of activity for the projects, including assessing needs, conducting strategic planning, and identifying leadership assets in the community. Among project representatives responding to the survey, 70 percent conducted strategic planning and analysis, while 61 percent conducted a regional or local needs assessment (Figure 13). More than half the grantees conducted leadership training, and less than half the grantees identified potential or current leaders for further training. Additional data on implementation of activities related to developing a vision and direction for the community, by grant size, are provided in Appendix Figure A-2 on page 74.

**Figure 13. Percentage of projects that included activities related to developing a vision and direction for the community (n=116)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple activities. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

#### **City of Gainesville Downtown Strategic Planning (GA-17837)**

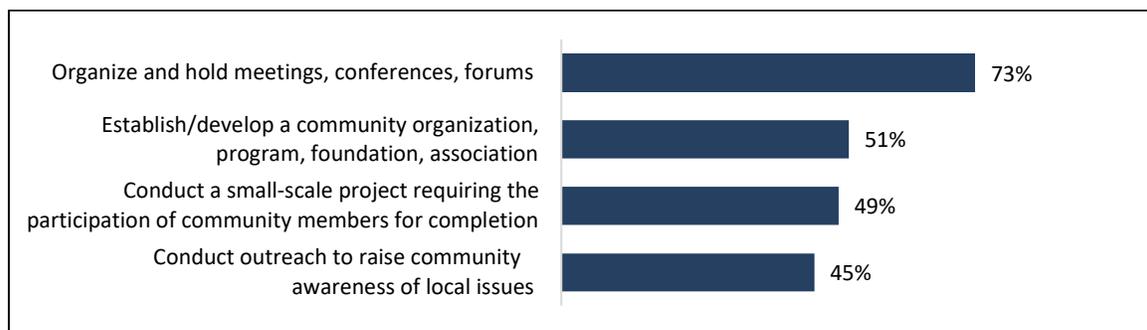
The City of Gainesville, Georgia, developed and implemented a plan to improve their downtown area to increase the economic viability of the city as a whole. The project conducted a detailed focus study on the downtown and midtown areas to identify what the community values about those areas and a vision of what they could become. They focused on engaging what they referred to as the “unusual suspects,” such as retirees and young people in high school and college. “They are taking ownership of this plan...it truly is their plan, not city staff or even our local elected officials. And so it’s a plan that’s going to transcend any change in leadership,” explained a project staff member. “I think that is how it would increase leadership capacities, giving people not normally within those political grounds the opportunity to take and move forward the vision that we’ve captured as a community.”

Among projects focused on developing strategic plans or planning processes, interview respondents reported carrying out a variety of interconnected subactivities that supported this type of work. For example, one multicomunity planning project team led by a university carried out community assessments and provided technical assistance to community leaders on developing a plan and next steps. Another project team, led by a rural county planning commission, conducted a study of the county’s needs and strengths to inform the strategic plan. A third project team, led by a small city government, carried out an assessment and inventory of historic buildings and reviewed land use ordinances in areas targeted for development.

**Involving community members.** Respondents also reported implementing a number of activities related to promoting the involvement of community members. For example, 73 percent of survey respondents reported organizing meetings, conferences, and forums (Figure 14). About half conducted a small-scale project requiring community participation or developed a community organization, program, foundation, or association. Additional data on implementation of activities related to promoting involvement of community members, by grant size, are provided in Appendix Figure A-3 on page 75.

Interview respondents from several projects reported that these types of community engagement activities were used as a way to lay the groundwork for strategic planning initiatives. For example, two local government grant recipients reported that convening community members to discuss issues relevant to the community's future (e.g., proposed land use regulation changes) was an initial step in their community planning process. A representative from a nonprofit organization working with local governments across a large region reported that convening community officials and stakeholders to lay the groundwork for strategic planning and effective partnerships was a key activity.

**Figure 14. Percentage of projects that included activities related to involvement of community members (n=116)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple activities. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

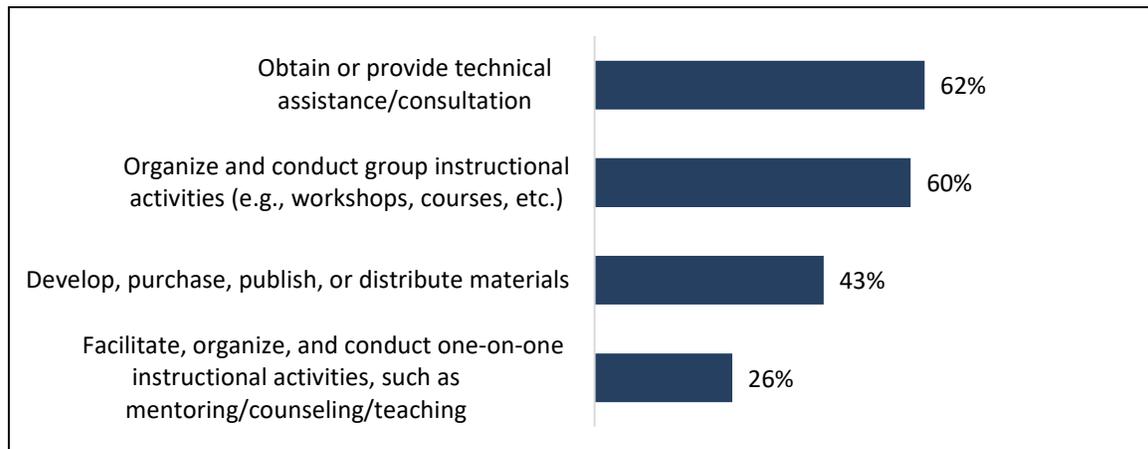
Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

#### **New Generation West Initiative (NC-17387)**

The North Carolina Rural Center developed the New Generation Initiative to counteract the alarming “out-migration” of young people from rural North Carolina communities. As part of the Initiative, the New Generation Leaders program brought together groups of young adults to form community action teams in several communities. Each action team spent a year learning about their community's history, economy, and infrastructure, and engaging with community members to develop a community improvement project. At the end of the project, some of the community action teams began raising their own funds so they could continue work in their communities.

**Enhancing skills or knowledge of community members.** Respondents also reported implementing activities related to enhancing the skills or knowledge of community members. Group training and technical assistance activities were especially common for the projects. In survey responses, 62 percent of project representatives reported activities related to technical assistance, while 60 percent organized or conducted group instructional activities such as workshops (Figure 15). One-on-one training opportunities were reported by only about a quarter of survey respondents, making these among the least common types of activities reported on the survey. Additional data on implementation of activities related to enhancing the skills and knowledge of community members, by grant size, are provided in Appendix Figure A-4 on page 75.

**Figure 15. Percentage of projects that included activities related to enhancing the skills and knowledge of community members (n=116)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple activities. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

Project representatives participating in interviews indicated that activities related to enhancing skills and knowledge were typically designed with specific community goals in mind. For example, through one project, training was provided to local advisory boards and there were facilitated peer learning opportunities that related to economic development topics. Through another, mini-grants were provided to teams of community members for community projects, and leadership training was offered to team members to support project implementation. Through a third project, the project team organized community trainings on how to engage youth and involve youth in community life, with the objective of improving youth leadership development in the community.

**Mississippi Community Action Program  
(MS-17112)**

The Mississippi Community Action Program (MCAP) team worked to build the skills and knowledge of local leaders and community members so that they could more ably identify and address local community challenges. The project educated leaders and community members through a number of different strategies, such as the YourTown Mississippi (YTM) Workshops, which taught participants basic design and planning principles for community development, and the Selected to Serve (S2S) retreats, which provided training on leadership and community goal setting for mayors and board members.

**Northeastern Pennsylvania Grantmakers  
(PA-16664)**

The Regional Association of Grantmakers (RAG) brought together foundation leaders and grantmakers in Northeastern Pennsylvania to build leadership capacity and collaboration for more efficient, responsive, and effective grantmaking in the region. By regularly convening and educating local philanthropic leaders, the RAG has become a “hotbed for best practices,” according to one interviewee. The number of grantmaking collaborations and partnerships in the region has increased, including the creation of two new community foundations.

**Distribution of mini-grants.** Another key strategy identified among representatives of community capacity building and leadership projects is the use of mini-grants. The typical mini-grant program is administered by a nonprofit organization, educational institution, or state government agency working across a specific region. The mini-grant administrators interviewed for this evaluation reported awarding grants to support a range of small community initiatives, including efforts to boost economic development, develop strategic plans, engage youth, and develop new leaders.

For example, representatives of one community received a series of mini-grants over several funding cycles to plan and implement a downtown revitalization project, which has helped stakeholders engage university students in revitalization activities, train partners in leadership skills, and complete a comprehensive economic development assessment. So far, the community has seen the opening of five new businesses and the expansion of some existing businesses.

Other mini-grant projects have included a mobile health clinic, scholarships for leadership development training, street sign installation and street improvements, invasive species control and other environmental planning, development of landslide susceptibility maps, a pedestrian connectivity study, and grant-writing workshops, among many others. Representatives of grant-making agencies reported that in addition to the capacity development intended through the projects, the administration of the mini-grants also increased the capacity of staff in many of the smaller community nonprofit

organizations by increasing their grant-writing skills and capacity for grant management and reporting.

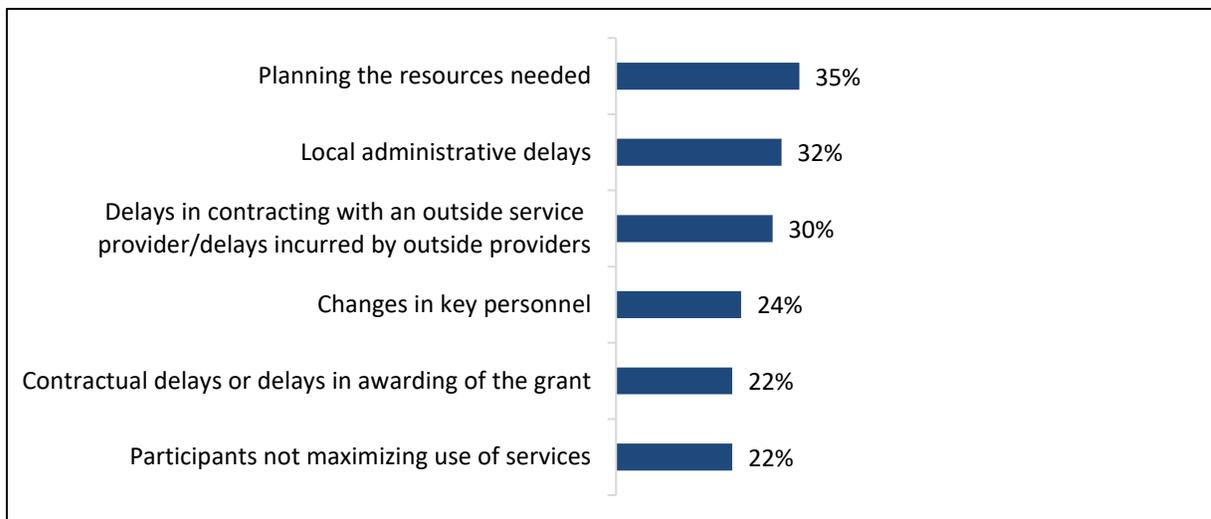
#### Southwestern Commission Toolbox Implementation Fund (NC-16688)

The Adding Value to Livestock mini-grant project focused on helping western North Carolina farmers achieve their national Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) qualifications, which boosted income from cattle by approximately 15 percent per head. Farmers have used the additional income to continue expanding their operations, and the number of farmers achieving BQA qualifications has nearly tripled since the initial small grant due to increased demand and the ability to leverage further grant money through the initial success.

#### Project Challenges

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they faced challenges in carrying out their project. Figure 16 shows the most commonly reported types of challenges. The most common challenge encountered was in planning the resources needed (35 percent of project representatives reported this challenge), followed by local administrative delays, delays in contracting with an outside service provider, and changes in key personnel. Contractual delays or delays in awarding of the grant and participants not maximizing use of services were tied for the fifth most common type of challenge, with 22 percent of respondents reporting each. Additional data on specific challenges are provided in Appendix Figures A-5 through A-9 on pages 76–78.

Figure 16. Percentage of respondents reporting different types of project challenges (n=116)



Notes: Respondents could select multiple challenges. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Town of Section Economic Development Strategy (AL-16578)**

Lack of a public sewer system protected the town of Section, Alabama, from uncontrolled growth and development, but also limited any economic growth in the town. When construction began on a new sewer system, project representatives in the town set out to develop a participatory planning process and regulatory framework to promote economic development and protect environmental, scenic, and cultural resources. It was too expensive to hire a building inspector, but enacting zoning ordinances required one. To overcome this hurdle, stakeholders proposed that the police chief could also serve as the building inspector. The town attorney approved the proposal, and the zoning ordinances were passed.



*Stakeholders in the town of Section, AL, implemented planning and regulation activities to promote economic vitality while still protecting the town's natural beauty and resources.*

During the interviews, project representatives also reported a number of specific challenges that arose in their work. Major challenges included communication and collaboration, capacity challenges, political turnover, and time constraints. Nearly all respondents interviewed felt they had overcome challenges over the course of their projects. For example, one of the major activities conducted through the Macon County Youth: Civic Entrepreneurs & Problem Solvers project was to facilitate mentoring by college students for local high school students, and provide opportunities for networking and civic participation. Due to transportation limitations and the distance between high school students' locations and event locations, it was difficult to maintain participation. To surmount this challenge, the project team increased the number of activities or events offered at various locations (e.g., mentors offered services at the students' school in addition to an off-site location). In addition, college student mentors sometimes traveled to locations convenient for the high school students, to maintain engagement. Exhibit 2 summarizes some of the key challenges faced across projects and provides examples of how project teams attempted to overcome them.

**Exhibit 2. Leadership and capacity-building project challenges identified during the interviews**

- **Communication and Collaboration.** Even in small communities, many organizations and stakeholders work in silos with little communication and different opinions and priorities. Getting—and keeping—everyone engaged and on the same page was a challenge for more than half the respondents. “One of the early lessons that we learned was that there was a lack of interface and communication from all of these important sectors,” one respondent explained, and continued, “but, they would also begin to have insights about how they could work together, about how they could build on each other’s successes and assets, how they could coordinate, how they could complement [each other].”
- **Capacity Limitations.** Many of the communities involved in grant projects are small towns or rural communities and have limited capacity for implementing new programs. Local leaders often hold multiple positions or even full-time jobs in addition to their government duties. Lack of funding, staffing, and technology also posed challenges. As one respondent noted, “We all manage to work with it, but having the resources stabilizes the communities and ensures that a lot of the ideas get implemented. Without it, some things get tossed or forgotten.” In addition, some grantees also faced their own capacity challenges, mostly regarding staffing and transportation.
- **Political Turnover.** In several communities, elections or other staff turnover in local government presented challenges to the work. New officials need to be briefed on the project and sometimes convinced that the project is a good use of community resources, which can cause delays. “You’re taking a few steps forward and then you have to back up and bring everyone back up to speed,” one respondent noted.
- **Time Frames.** Often as a result of the previous challenges mentioned, project teams took longer to complete work than anticipated on their original grant timelines. This caused contract difficulties for some grantees and made sustaining energy and interest among partners and participants more challenging. Noted a respondent, “Capacity building projects need more than a year to ferment, to nurture... You really need a minimum of a two-year horizon for something like this.”

## Outcomes Achieved

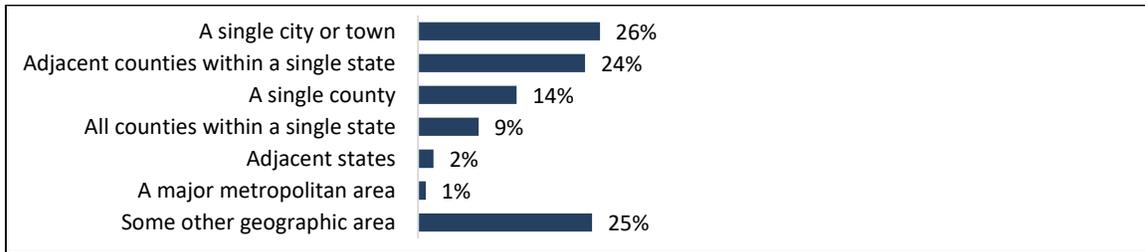
Entities funded to implement community capacity and leadership development projects aimed to achieve a variety of outcomes at the individual, organizational, and community levels. This section presents a summary of the types of stakeholders who were expected to benefit from project work and a discussion of the types of outcomes project teams expected to achieve. This is followed by survey and interview findings on the extent to which the project representatives felt they achieved project outcomes.

### Intended Beneficiaries of Project Work

Most (80 percent) survey respondents intended to target a specific geographic area. Just over one-fourth (26 percent) of these 93 projects reported that a single city or town was intended to be the beneficiary of their work (Figure 17). Similarly, about a quarter of

projects that targeted geographic areas said that adjacent counties within a state were expected to benefit from project work. Another quarter of projects indicated that other types of geographic areas were the intended project beneficiaries. These included multiple cities located in various counties, multiple counties within a specific region, and adjacent municipalities.

**Figure 17. Percentage of projects targeting different geographic areas (n=93)**

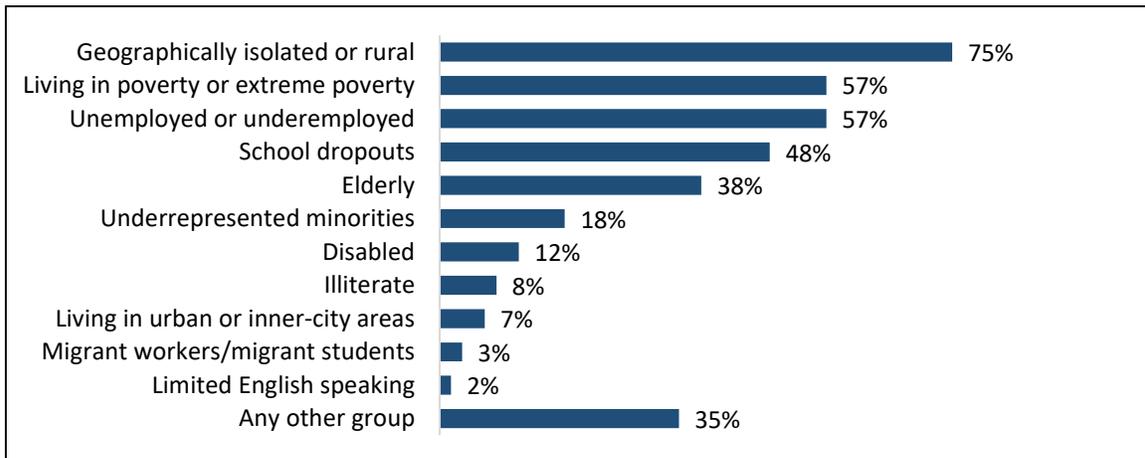


Notes: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

Respondents from 60 of the 117 projects for which a survey was completed indicated that specific community segments were expected to benefit from their work. Of these, 75 percent reported that people or organizations that were geographically isolated or rural were intended beneficiaries (Figure 18). Over half reported that people who live in poverty or are unemployed or underemployed were intended targets. Over a third reported that other types of groups were intended to benefit, including community leadership, downtown residents, entrepreneurs, local environmental groups, and farmers.

**Figure 18. Percentage of projects targeting specific community segments (n=60)**

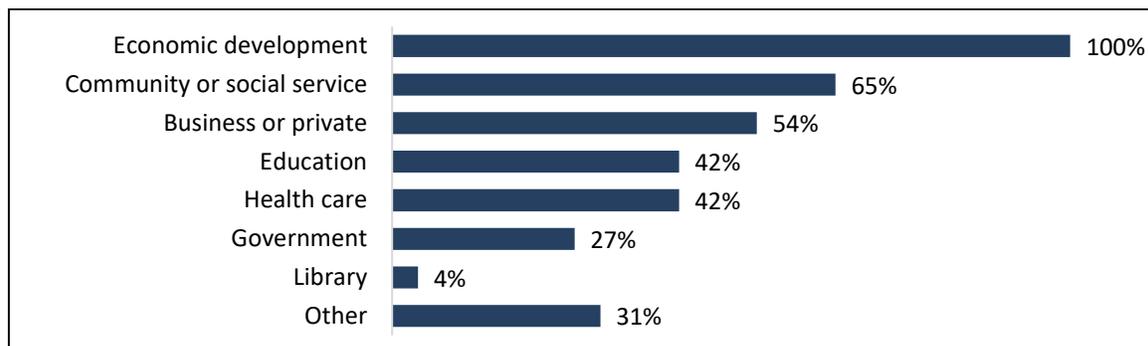


Notes: Respondents could select multiple community segments. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

Respondents from 26 of the projects reported on the survey that specific sectors were intended to benefit from their work. All of these project representatives reported that economic development sectors were a focus for their work (Figure 19). Two-thirds reported that community or social service sectors were targeted, while about half reported that the business or private sector was a focus. Fewer than half of these projects reported a focus on education, health care, government, or library sectors.

**Figure 19. Percentage of projects targeting specific sectors (n=26)**



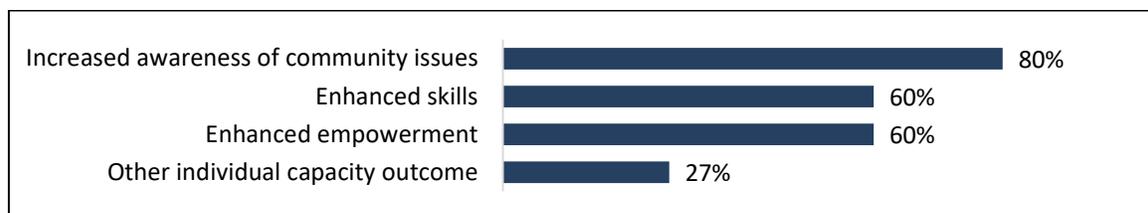
Notes: Respondents could select multiple sectors. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

### Anticipated Outcomes

Respondents from the projects reported that they expected to achieve outcomes at the individual, organizational, and community levels. Expected outcomes for individuals included increased awareness of community issues, which was cited as a project outcome by 80 percent of project representatives responding to the survey (Figure 20). Enhanced skills and empowerment were also commonly reported as individual-level outcomes. Other types of individual-level anticipated outcomes reported for projects included increased awareness of the community's assets and potential, enhanced leadership, and increased understanding and awareness of philanthropic opportunities.

**Figure 20. Percentage of projects expected to achieve individual-level outcomes (n=116)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple outcomes. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

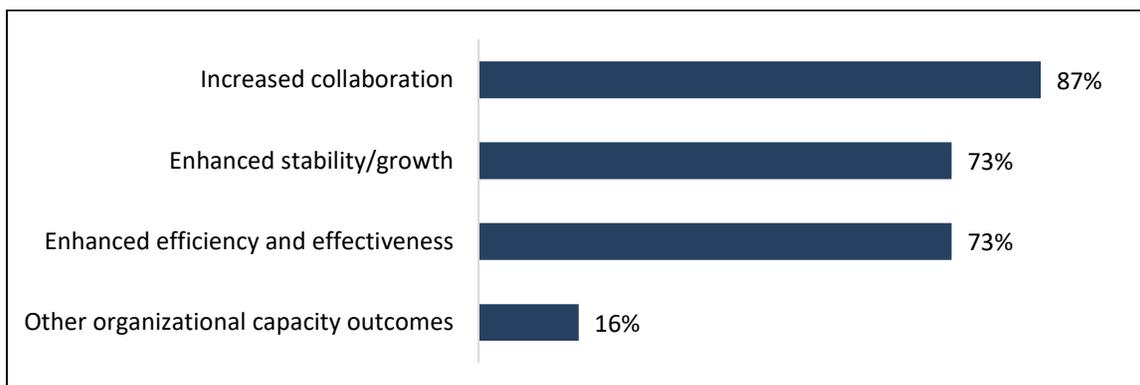
Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program (VA-14248)**

Funded by a Flex-E-Grant, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) partnered with the Southwest Regional Adult Education Program to conduct the PlugGEDIn VA program. The six-month program helps prepare students for employment by getting their GED, career-specific technical training, and other workforce skills training. DHCD staff considered PlugGEDIn a particular success “because that was meaningful economic development. Those students now work in health care, or they work in technology. They work in the music industry; they work in education. [They have] good paying jobs with just an associate’s degree.”

Project representatives also reported anticipated outcomes at the organization level on the survey. The most common was increased collaboration, cited for 87 percent of projects (Figure 21). Enhanced organizational stability or growth and enhanced efficiency or effectiveness were also common, with each being reported by 73 percent of project representatives.

**Figure 21. Percentage of projects expected to achieve organization-level outcomes (n=116)**

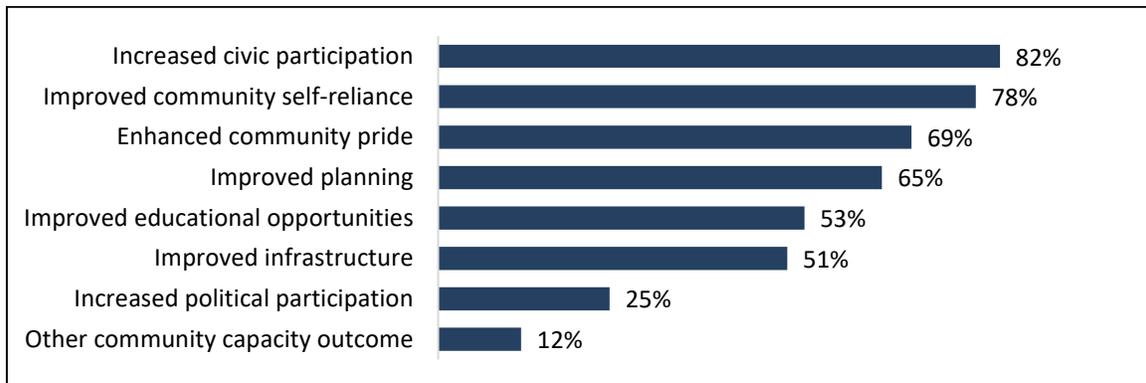


Notes: Respondents could select multiple outcomes. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

Several community-level outcomes were reported as goals by project representatives who completed the survey. These included increased civic participation, which was the most frequently reported at 82 percent (Figure 22). Other commonly reported community-level outcomes included improved community self-reliance (78 percent), enhanced community pride (69 percent), and improved planning (65 percent).

**Figure 22. Percentage of projects expected to achieve community-level outcomes (n=116)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple outcomes. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

### Southwestern Commission Toolbox Implementation Fund (NC-16688)

Stakeholders from the town of Sylva, North Carolina, developed a comprehensive streetscape plan for Main Street in downtown Sylva to improve traffic flow, pedestrian access, landscaping, parking, and access to businesses. The complementary Sylva Wayfaring project added informational and directional signs at key points around Sylva to direct travelers and tourists to commerce and points of interest in Sylva.



*A Sylva Streetscape project goal was to make Main Street more attractive and accessible.*

## Outputs and Outcomes Achieved

As noted previously, community capacity building and leadership project representatives specified a variety of performance targets for their work, including project outputs and outcomes. Through their performance reporting to the Commission, project representatives reported both their *anticipated* outputs and outcomes and any *actual* outputs and outcomes achieved by the time of project closeout. For example, a project representative might have specified that the project team aimed to enroll 20 people in a training (anticipated project output) and that 15 people had participated (actual project output). Similarly, project representatives set goals for anticipated outcomes (e.g., number of participants who show improvement following a training) and reported on what outcomes had actually been achieved. Data were reported on more than one output

and more than one outcome for most projects, and grantees could have had mixed success achieving multiple goals (e.g., Project A met its anticipated outcome for Goals 1 and 2, and did not meet its anticipated outcome for Goal 3). Project representatives responding to the evaluation survey were given the opportunity to review their reported outputs and outcomes and provide updated data, if available.

### Output Measures

Looking across projects, reported actual outputs were similar to, or higher than, anticipated outputs for most measures. For example, project teams that used the number of plans or reports developed as an output measure reported an actual output of 253 plans or reports, compared to an anticipated count of 211. Similarly, project teams that used the number of communities served as an output reported an actual count of 366 communities served, compared to a projected count of 306 communities. Table 4 shows the anticipated and actual counts for the core output measures across all projects in this portfolio. Secondary outputs for the leadership and community capacity projects are the number of students served (nine projects used this measure) and number of business served (five projects used this measure).

**Table 4. Anticipated and actual project outputs**

Measure	Grantees using measure		Output counts (all projects)		
	Number	Percentage	Projected	Actual	Results
Participants served	90	59%	12,562	24,255	Exceeded target by 93%*
Plans/reports developed	66	43%	211	253	Exceeded target by 20%
Communities served	32	21%	306	366	Exceeded target by 20%
Organizations served	17	11%	227	299	Exceeded target by 32%

\*Output counts exclude one outlier (Commission grant number CO-16450; the grantee reported actually serving 43,000 participants compared to 2,000 projected).

Note: Grantees could use multiple measures.

Sources: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission and survey of Commission grantees.

Among the core output measures, over 90 percent of project teams that used the number of communities served as a project outcome met their projected target in this area (Figure 23). Project teams that used the number of organizations served, number of participants served, or number of plans or reports developed as output measures were also successful, with over 80 percent of project teams meeting their targets in each of these areas.

**Figure 23. Percentage of projects for which projected outputs were met or exceeded, by measure type**



Note: Respondents could select multiple measures.

Sources: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission and survey of Commission grantees.

### Outcome Measures

Across projects, reported actual outcomes were also generally similar to anticipated outcomes, although the reported actual values tended to be slightly higher than anticipated values. For example, among project teams that used the number of programs implemented as an outcome measure, 308 programs were reported as actually implemented, compared to a projected count of 237 programs. Table 5 shows the anticipated and actual counts for the core outcome measures across all projects in this portfolio. Secondary outcomes for the leadership and community capacity projects are number of businesses created (10 projects), number of students showing measurable improvements as a result of the project (7 projects), number of jobs created (6 projects), number of jobs retained (2 projects), and leveraged private investment (2 projects).

**Table 5. Anticipated and actual project outcomes**

Measure	Grantees using measure		Outcome counts (all projects)		
	Number	Percentage	Projected	Actual	Results
Programs implemented	66	43%	237	308	Exceeded target by 30%
Participants improved	54	36%	5,051	6,770	Exceeded target by 34%*
Communities improved	32	21%	283	354	Exceeded target by 25%
Organizations improved	18	12%	214	284	Exceeded target by 33%

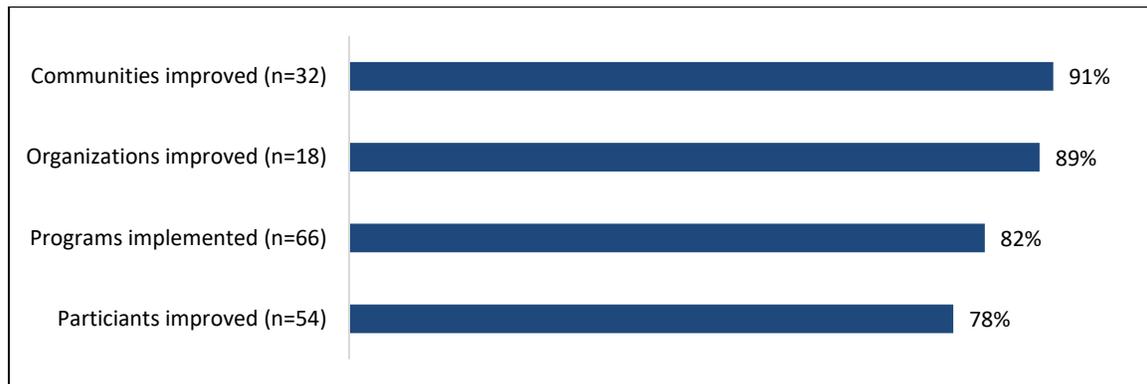
\*Outcome counts exclude one outlier (Commission grant number CO-16450; the grantee reported an actual outcome of 43,000 participants improved compared to 2,000 projected).

Note: Grantees could use multiple measures.

Sources: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission and survey of Commission grantees.

Among the core outcome measures, project teams that used community improvement as an outcome measure were the most successful in meeting their projected target relative to others, with 91 percent meeting or exceeding the projected number of communities improved (Figure 24). Nearly 90 percent of project teams that used the number of organizations improved met or exceeded their anticipated target.

**Figure 24. Percentage of projects for which projected outcomes were met or exceeded, by measure type**



Note: Respondents could select multiple measures.

Sources: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission and survey of Commission grantees.

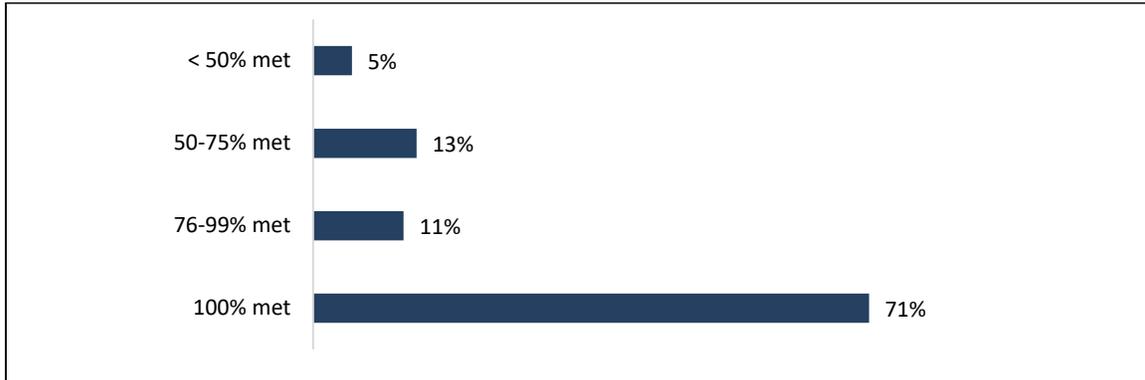
### Supplemental Outcomes

Project representatives responding to the survey were also asked about supplemental outcomes or targets they had set for themselves but were not included in the formal numeric outcome reporting. These included more descriptive objectives, such as “the project will provide local leaders with a network of contacts within the region” or “the project will provide local leaders with a plan for building their community capacity.” Between one and nine supplemental targets were identified for each project; survey results showed that the mean number of supplemental targets identified per project was five. Almost 60 percent of the supplemental outcomes represented enhanced community capacities or tangible community-wide outcomes expected to occur as result of the Commission grant. Twenty-three percent of the supplemental outcomes were focused on enhancing individual capacities, while only 12 percent of these outcomes were focused on organizational capacities.

In general, survey respondents indicated they had a very high level of success in meeting these outcomes. Among survey respondents who reported on the status of supplemental outcomes, results indicated that 71 percent of projects met all proposed supplemental

outcomes, while only five percent of projects met fewer than half of supplemental outcomes (Figure 25).<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 25. Percentage of projects meeting supplemental targets (n=61)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple outcomes. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

As shown in Table 6, 73 percent of the 469 supplemental outcomes were considered to be very important to project success, and 45 percent were reported as having been met more often than expected. Further, over half (59 percent) of supplemental outcomes associated with individual capacity were viewed as being very important to project success *and* were met more often than expected. Additional data on supplemental targets, including descriptive information about the number and types of supplemental targets reported, are provided in Appendix Tables A-1 through A-5 on pages 79–81.

<sup>6</sup> Figure 25 shows information for only the most recently awarded grant of multi-year projects, since only one year was captured on the survey. Counting only the most recent year of multi-year projects and single-year projects results in a total of 95 projects. Thirty-four projects did not report on the status of supplemental outcomes on the survey, leaving 61 projects.

**Table 6. Extent to which supplemental outcomes were met and were considered important to project success (n=469 outcomes)**

Supplemental outcome type	Number of supplemental outcomes	Supplemental outcome was very important to project success	Supplemental outcome was met more often than expected	Supplemental outcome was very important to project success <i>AND</i> was met more often than expected
Individual capacity	106	87%	64%	59%
Organizational capacity	58	74%	48%	45%
Community capacity	176	72%	30%	23%
Community-wide outcomes	104	64%	50%	49%
Other	25	56%	36%	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>40%</b>

Notes: Projects could have more than one supplemental outcome in a given type. The table only includes supplemental outcomes for which respondents provided a response to a survey item on the importance of each outcome and the extent to which a given outcome was met as planned. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

Project representatives participating in interviews were asked to discuss which outcomes they considered particularly successful and which they found particularly challenging. Representatives for nearly all of these projects discussed successful outcomes, and most discussed challenges to achieving their outcomes.

The most commonly discussed successes centered on planning and building relationships, representing the most tangible and intangible outcomes. Many relationships formed between community organizations that did not exist prior to the capacity-building project. Some participants mentioned that other projects have developed out of these new partnerships; others discussed an overall shift in community culture toward greater collaboration.

Participants felt this built the capacity both of individual organizations, which now have access to more resources, and the community as a whole, which is “building an objective group of leaders who are all getting together on the same page to help things move more quickly.”

**Successful outcome areas identified in interviews**

- Relationships
- Strategic planning
- Economic development
- Youth development
- Leadership development

#### Mountain Landscape Initiative: A Tool Box (NC-15971)

The Southwestern North Carolina Planning and Economic Development Commission developed a toolkit of best practices and tools for growth management based on the values and needs of the communities in western North Carolina. The project team conducted interviews and focus groups with a diverse range of community members, which resulted in a video documentary ([Seeking Balance in the Mountains](#)) that was shared and discussed in community forums. These discussions helped identify the key issues to address while developing the toolkit in a multi-day charrette, for which a video was produced that is available online ([MLI: What's a Charrette?](#)). The charrette brought together over 20 experts in various fields (hydrology, economics, rural farming, etc.) in a public working session. Throughout the charrette, public officials and community members could join the session at any time to discuss their issues and needs.

Successful strategic planning led communities to solid plans for future development that can help them prepare for economic growth while retaining their character and values. One participant cautioned that planning outcomes can be difficult to measure: “What really matters is: what did that strategic plan over the life of that community produce? And that’s often not reported at the end of six months. So the life of the grant lives on well beyond the administrative cycle.” Another participant reflected: “Generally speaking these grants, like planning grants, they run for a year or so—they don’t run for 10 years. And so some of the things that are planned within them take quite a while to accomplish. And I think in time nearly everything that’s in the plan will be addressed. They’re all good ideas.”

However, some of those communities have already begun implementing their plans (through Commission grants, mini-grants, or other leveraged funding), and respondents mentioned these tangible community improvements as particularly successful outcomes both in their own right and for the momentum they are building. For example:

- Respondents affiliated with the City of Gainesville Downtown Strategic Planning project stated that stakeholders from the local town have begun **requesting proposals from developers for how to develop city-owned downtown lots**. “And because we had this plan, this visual concept of before and after that was accepted by the community, we are going to be getting a product, an end development that is going to be in line with those goals and objectives,” a respondent for the grantee explained. “And it’s going to be done in a way that also, while new, will embrace the value that the community has for its historic architectural feel and sense of place.”
- In a phone interview with representatives from the Center for Rural Development and Brushy Fork Institute regarding their mini-grant programs, the interviewees stated that through a series of mini-grants, **a five-year strategic plan for revitalizing their downtown area** was developed and implemented. The grantee

respondent reported that the downtown area is now thriving with new businesses and public spaces. This success has also generated a “culture of community development” in the town. “I think it’s the communities that had layered investment over time...they could figure out not only their direction but how to strategically use these funds to build things that would continue to provide for the community where we see the most dramatic change.”

- Other communities have also begun **implementing planned development activities**, such as streetscape projects, greenway development, pedestrian connectivity plans, and street sign (or “wayfaring”) installation. One participant reflected that one small project can have a cumulative impact over time: “There are a number of businesses that have started that probably never would have started if the Opera House restoration project had not been done. I think there’s at least five buildings that have been purchased. I think that’s at least a dozen people who are employed whose job didn’t exist before. We’ve attracted other businesses from California. They just opened up a business downtown. So there are things that are going on, and I think that this planning document had a pretty good impact and it continues.”

Other areas where grantees felt they had success included youth development activities, mini-grants, and leadership training. One participant felt the project’s greatest success had been providing training opportunities for community residents: “Getting as many people from small communities into training situations where they’re exposed to broader sense of their possibilities and the fact that there’s a lot of skills and information and resources available to them. You’re providing them that input that they don’t normally get...In most of these small communities they have no budget for it, so being able to support them so that they’re expanding their knowledge and applying it locally is a direct benefit.”

Challenges to achieving outcomes included funding, communication barriers, low community engagement, fear of change, gaps in community infrastructure, capacity of local government or community organizations, differing opinions within a community, changes in local leadership or political climate, and other community-specific challenges. One example came from a respondent associated with a project in which stakeholders finished a planning effort just as a major recession hit their region: “One of the ways I feel like the recession has negatively influenced the progress is we’ve kind of had this backlash into rolling out the

**Barriers to achieving outcomes,  
as identified by interview  
respondents**

- Limited resources/capacity
- Communication barriers
- Low engagement
- Fear of change
- Lack of consensus
- Leadership changes

red carpet for any business to come into town...everybody's bottom line needs improving, so we went from all this thoughtfulness around doing it right to businesses popping up all along the 4-lane highway, and driveway cuts, and new stop signs.”

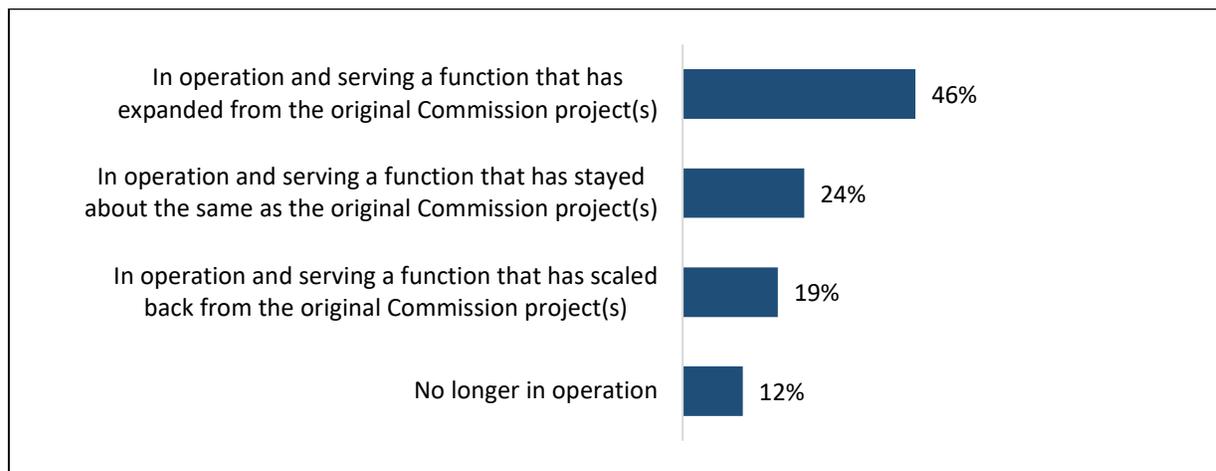
## Sustainability and Lessons Learned

Evaluation respondents were asked to report on their project's current operational status, factors that supported or limited project sustainability beyond the grant period, and any key lessons learned that could inform community capacity and leadership projects supported by the Commission in the future.

### Project Sustainability

Among survey respondents, 46 percent reported that their Commission-funded project was still in operation and serving in a function that had expanded since the grant period ended (Figure 26). About a quarter of respondents reported that their work is ongoing at about the same level as during the grant period. Nineteen percent operate a scaled-back version of their original project and 12 percent indicated that their project was no longer in operation.

**Figure 26. Percentage of projects, by current operation status (n=101)**

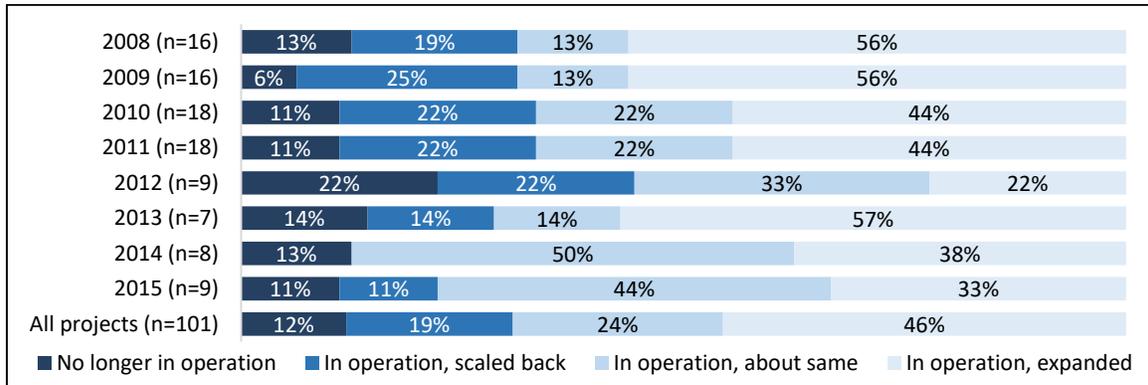


Notes: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

Although the percentages of projects that were still in operation and had expanded at the time the evaluation survey was completed were slightly higher among projects funded in 2011 or earlier than among projects funded in 2012 and later, the operational statuses of projects were fairly similar across grant years (Figure 27).

**Figure 27. Percentage of projects operating in each status type, by grant year**

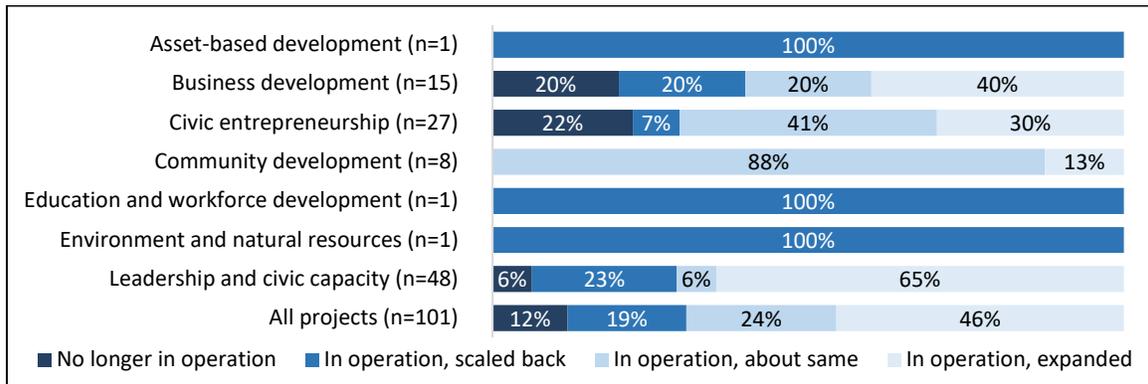


Notes: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

Most of the projects implemented were related to leadership and civic capacity (n=48), civic entrepreneurship (n=27), and business development (n=15).<sup>7</sup> Of these three categories, 65 percent of leadership and civic capacity projects were still in operation and had expanded, followed by business development (40 percent) and civic entrepreneurship (30 percent). Respondents from less than one-quarter of each category reported that they were no longer in operation (Figure 28).

**Figure 28. Percentage of projects operating in each status type, by project category<sup>7</sup>**



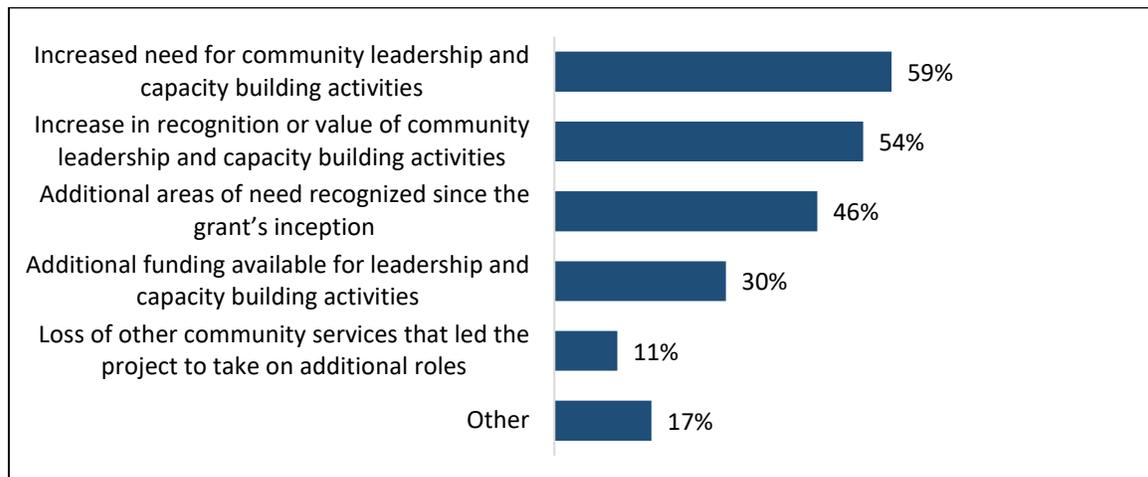
Notes: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

<sup>7</sup> The categories are based on the Commission's classification of projects at the time the projects included in the evaluation were funded. During this time frame, the category called "civic entrepreneurship" was renamed "leadership and civic capacity."

Survey respondents who reported that their work had expanded were asked what factors had facilitated this expansion. Nearly 60 percent reported that an increased need for leadership and capacity-building activities in the community was a factor in their expansion, while 54 percent cited increased recognition of the value of these types of activities (Figure 29). Some interview respondents also cited community attitudes regarding the importance of capacity building as a reason they had been able to continue their work. In one such community, an interview participant explained that “there is a cultural shift, and that shift of paradigm, to me, is far more permanent than physical structures.” Other key factors that interview respondents identified as supporting sustainability were increased capacity of the community or lead organization, additional funding, and commitment of leadership.

**Figure 29. Percentage of projects that expanded due to various factors (n=46)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple factors. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

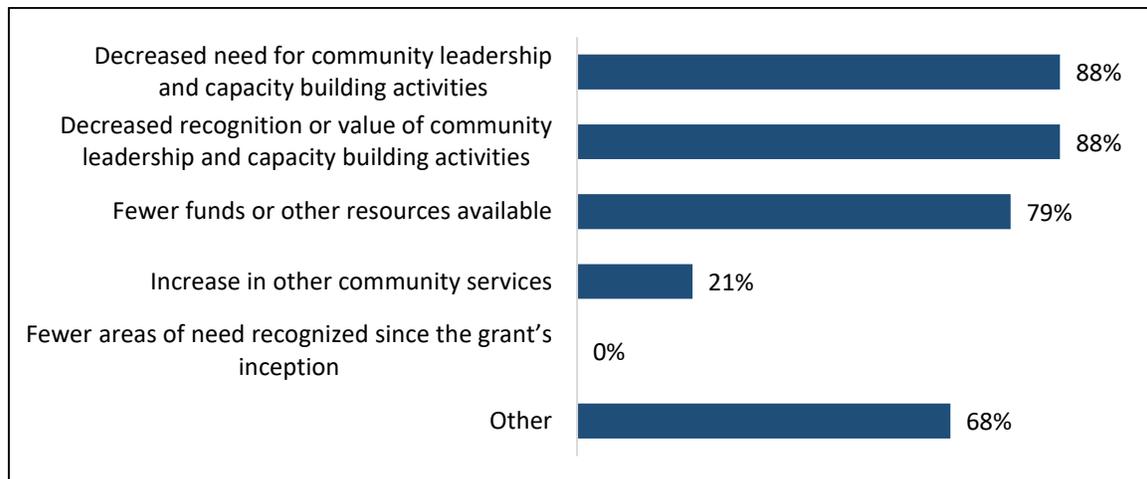
Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative: Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky (KY-17101)**

Representatives from the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky (FAKY), through the Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI), sought to leverage local sources of philanthropy funding to allow rural Kentucky communities to determine and address their own needs. Between 2008 and 2015, 18 community endowments were established. From the start, FAKY established a capital investment plan and worked with a financial consultant to develop a sustainability plan. Ultimately, FAKY respondents feel that the project continues to exist because “it’s a vital piece of the infrastructure of southeastern Kentucky as we transition our economy away from coal...we are a part of the infrastructure that has been missing for a long time in most rural places and most definitely in southeastern Kentucky, and that’s why we still exist and will continue to exist.”

Among survey respondents who reported that their projects had scaled back activities, key factors that led to the scale-back included a decreased need for leadership and capacity-building activities and decreased recognition of the value of these activities (Figure 30). Lack of funding or resources was also commonly reported, with 79 percent of respondents reporting that this was a factor that led to their current status. Other factors that led to scaled-back project activities included changes in priorities and changes in leadership. Similarly, interview respondents reported that shifts in community priorities, resource shortages, and changes in the economic or political climate were among the key challenges for sustainability. Some individuals participating in interviews reported that projects suffered leadership turnover or staffing loss that made it difficult to take on more work or apply for further funding. In other communities, shifting economic conditions hindered further work. “Right after this [project], the bottom fell out of the economy. So some of those things that looked just terrific never happened,” one interview participant explained, further noting, “I’ve been involved with all of these planning efforts, and honestly, they’re all sitting on a shelf somewhere. And to me, that’s very unfortunate. I think there’s incredible material in there that nobody’s really looking at right now.”

**Figure 30. Percentage of projects that scaled back due to various factors (n=19)**



Notes: Respondents could select multiple factors. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

## Lessons Learned

Respondents participating in interviews shared various lessons learned from their work, including what is necessary for successful community capacity and leadership development, and what projects might have done differently if given the chance. Several

common recommendations were identified, related to topics including leadership, collaboration, resources, and local ownership of the effort.

- **Focus on identifying and developing effective leaders.** Respondents who participated in interviews noted that community capacity building requires strong and skilled leadership to succeed, elevating the importance of identifying capable leaders to guide the work. One respondent stated that this was not about identifying “the smartest guy at the table” but rather finding the “person who knows the most about [the] situation and can help make an effective change take place.” Another respondent, however, noted that identifying effective leaders can sometimes be challenging in small communities where there are “only one or two key leaders. If one of them goes away it presents a big problem.” Respondents from other projects noted the importance of developing leadership, which can give people (especially unlikely candidates) a chance to step out front. In fact, one respondent argued that rural communities offer a unique opportunity for new leaders to develop, saying “It’s a short, quick path to leadership in a rural area, so if you give people the right tools, you can get things done.” Another respondent said that new leaders can emerge from unexpected places, highlighting the importance of broad community engagement as a means to identify new leaders.
- **Collaborate, cooperate, and communicate—with everyone.** Respondents who participated in the interviews reported that success relies heavily on partnerships and leveraging relationships within the community. To this end, an inclusive approach to community engagement was described across projects as essential. As one participant said, “I think the key lesson is [to] think outside the box when it comes to who you ask to participate in your steering committee, your focus groups, and what not. Think outside the box and go after the unusual voices that you haven’t heard from before so that you get a full spectrum of what your community is truly all about.” Other participants agreed that casting a wide net was important, but also noted that projects should be strategic in how community members are engaged. For example, it was noted that project teams must make an effort to understand different personalities and how to make different personalities work together to achieve the common goal. One respondent said that careful attention to “barriers to open thought and communication” is a good way to create and maintain dialogue in a community. Another successful approach is clearly informing the community about the logic behind or the process of implementing improvement plans.
- **Carefully consider the time, funding, and other resources needed for success.** Interview respondents pointed out the resource-intensive nature of community capacity building, indicating that it is important for those pursuing these types of efforts to carefully plan for what resources will be needed. For example, it was noted in several projects that community capacity building is inherently time consuming, particularly when a project is trying to change attitudes or culture

within a community. As one participant said, “The work is very labor intensive. You can’t just spend 40 hours in the community, walk away and expect them to be self-sufficient.” As noted above, people are an essential resource for community capacity-building efforts, and some interview respondents said it was important to plan for sustained engagement of leaders and other stakeholders, but also to be careful to not over-involve people and thus avoid burnout. Funding to support the work is also required for success, but interview respondents said the amount of funding does not necessarily have to be large. For example, a respondent from a project that provided mini-grants argued, “Just enabling folks to fund these little chunks [mini-grants] and keep that momentum going creates a space in which leadership emerges.” It was also noted that in distressed rural communities, small improvements or increases can mean a huge impact for community members—for example, increasing a farming family’s income by \$100 a month by helping them build a greenhouse means a lot when they are raising a family of four on less than \$20,000 per year.

- **Change has to be owned locally.** Interview respondents found that the success of their work depended on attaining meaningful community buy-in. Project representatives said that achieving this often means working from the bottom up, rather than the top down. Community members must be met “where they are” and projects should avoid entering a community “with the mindset that you’re going to save them,” said one respondent. Another respondent argued that “[community members] have the answers, you just have to help them bring those answers to the fore and let them know you’re here to help facilitate the process, that you’re not there to do it for them.” Making meaningful links to local culture can be one way to encourage community acceptance and buy-in and can bring communities together in a powerful way. As one respondent stated, such efforts to celebrate local culture are sometimes overlooked in capacity-building work: “Ironically, we’ve been cutting wood, mining coal, and drilling for oil and gas, but one resource that we have not tapped is our culture and our people.... From a [capacity] building standpoint, this is the direction we need to take. We need to tap into our people and our culture.”

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## 5. Policy Implications and Program Recommendations

Evaluation findings demonstrate that Commission-funded leadership and community capacity projects were successful in implementing economic development activities and achieving most local goals. Quantitative data provide evidence of the achievement of project goals, while the qualitative data offer supportive supplemental information on project stakeholder perceptions of *how* project goals were achieved and project activities were sustained. The evaluation team selected projects for telephone interviews and site visits that best represented the breadth of Commission-funded projects in this portfolio. Exploration of the quantitative data supplemented by the qualitative data enabled the critical examination of project processes, outcomes, and lessons learned, as well as the identification of potential additional performance measures. Interview respondents also provided recommendations for the Commission. This section describes the evaluation team's recommendations in detail. They are *suggestions* for the Commission's consideration based on the team's experience with performance measurement and knowledge of projects in this portfolio.

### Policy Context

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 (and the subsequent GPRA Modernization Act of 2010), enacted to increase federal accountability and show progress toward achieving agency goals, requires federal agencies to submit data on program results to Congress annually. Performance measures should be meaningful and enable the federal agency to observe, track, and quantify program performance and progress toward achieving program results (Scheafer, Harps, Moore, & Lammert, 2018). To meet this requirement, grant recipients report project-level data to the federal agency that awarded the grant, which the federal agency aggregates to report on program-level performance. Commission grantees may also report data on supplemental measures that enable them to track progress toward achieving results specific to the individual project. The degree to which performance measures are useful depends on the quality of the data reported, alignment of program or project goals with measures, and the extent to which the measures are clear and measurable.

## Recommendations for Performance Measurement for Leadership and Community Capacity Projects

The logic model developed through the evaluation of the Commission's leadership and community capacity projects (see Figure 5, page 6) shows the following short- and medium-term outcomes for projects in the portfolio:

- Community member opportunities to build knowledge and skills, and increase capacity to contribute to community-building efforts
- Interorganizational collaboration/networking and engagement in community planning activities leading to increased capacity for local communities to improve and sustain local economies
- Local leader development and participation in community and economic development

These short- and medium-term outcomes are expected to lead to increases in the following long-term outcomes:

- Number of businesses created or strengthened
- Number of jobs created and retained
- Preparation and achievement among students, workers, and leaders
- Capacity to identify and address local issues
- Number of businesses and households with access to improved infrastructure

In addition to outcomes addressed in the logic model and in the recommendations below, it is important to note that two core measures were established for the Commission's Leadership and Community Capacity strategic investment goal in the Commission's most recent strategic plan (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2015). These measures were established after funding had ceased for the projects included in the current evaluation.

The two core performance measures are as follows:

1. The number of leaders strengthened
2. The number of communities with enhanced capacity

### Capacity-Building Need: Capable and Committed Local Leaders

Evaluation findings and current literature show that community capacity and local leadership are intertwined and equally important to community change efforts, particularly in rural communities. Interview respondents and the literature also emphasized the importance of communities having local leaders who make *meaningful* contributions to community capacity-building efforts and remain engaged in the efforts over time. This requires local collaborative groups to strategize about how to identify and support local leaders, and identify opportunities to help potential and existing leaders develop and expand relevant knowledge and skills.

**Recommendation:** In addition to the current performance measure, *the number of leaders strengthened*, the evaluation team recommends that the Commission consider employing other performance measures for its leadership and community capacity projects to help the Commission gauge progress toward strengthening local leadership as a step toward enhancing community capacity. For example, the Commission could consider developing measures that may help predict success in increasing the number of leaders strengthened, such as the following:

- Percentage of planned leadership development activities that were implemented
- Percentage of community leaders who formally agreed (e.g., through Memorandums of Agreement or Understanding [MOAs or MOUs]) to participate in community-building activities when the grant was awarded and remain actively involved in the activities over time
- Percentage of community leaders who were invited to participate in skill- or knowledge-building activities and participated

For each measure, the Commission could establish annual percentage goals that are targeted for achievement. Also, grantees would report the numerator, denominator, and resulting percentage for each measure. For example, for the third measure grantees would report the number of leaders who participated in skill- or knowledge-building activities (numerator), the number of leaders who were invited to participate in the activities (denominator), and resulting percentage. The nature of improvement will vary based on the measure. For example, knowledge of the percentage of leaders who were *invited* to participate in skill- or knowledge-building activities and who *actually participated* in the activities (the third suggested measure) will enable the Commission to determine the extent to which grantees had success in efforts to engage local leaders. If the percentage of invited leaders who participated in skill- or knowledge-building activities is lower than the target percentage (or if the percentage decreases over time), it may indicate that

grantees need more support in improving local leader engagement (e.g., support in identifying appropriate recruitment strategies or refining leader engagement plans).

### **Capacity-Building Need: Efficient Community Collaborations that Galvanize Community Support**

The other existing performance measure for the Commission's leadership and community capacity projects is *the number of communities with enhanced capacity*. Interviews with project representatives and the current literature highlight the challenges that are prevalent in rural communities, including limited resources, depopulation, and poor economic conditions. These challenges, coupled with unique grantee-specific challenges, could limit the extent to which grantees enhance their respective community's capacity. However, interview respondents from most projects identified successful strategies for surmounting the challenges.

**Recommendation:** The Commission should consider exploring community collaborative processes that are critical to community-building efforts by more closely examining the multiple layers of community capacity. To do this, the evaluation team recommends developing performance measures that could provide insight on critical community-building processes, such as the following:

- Percentage of partnerships with key stakeholders that were formed or formalized (e.g., through MOAs or MOUs) when the grant was awarded and are maintained over time
- Completion or updates to a strategic plan for the community the grant was funded to improve (e.g., grantees would report whether they have a strategic plan that was completed or updated during the funding period)

The first suggested measure would enable the Commission to examine the extent to which grantees are able to establish or maintain partnerships that may be critical to achieving project success. Grantees would report the numerator (e.g., number of partners who were members of the community collaborative when the grant was awarded and continued to actively participate in the collaborative at the end of the grant year), denominator (e.g., number of partners who were members of the collaborative when the grant was awarded), and the resulting percentage.

For the second suggested measure, grantees would answer “yes” or “no” to a question about whether they completed or updated a strategic plan for the community the grant was funded to improve. The Commission would calculate the percentage of grantees that

have a strategic plan by using the total number of leadership and community capacity grantees as the denominator and the number of grantees who completed or updated a strategic plan as the numerator (grantees that answered “yes” to the question). The Commission may also want to consider requesting that grantees provide descriptive information to support the quantitative response. For example, grantees could identify the types of partners on the collaborative (e.g., local government officers) and when each partner joined the collaborative. When examined in combination with other data, this information could provide insight on which partners may be essential to the development or refinement of comprehensive strategic plans for rural communities.

### **Capacity-Building Need: Continuous Awareness of Local Economic Conditions**

The potential for success in achieving community capacity-building goals may vary across projects, depending on the characteristics of the community in which project activities will be implemented. However, a project that was carefully planned and executed to address the community’s identified needs has the potential to improve economic conditions for residents in the community. Improvements in an individual’s or family’s circumstances lead to subsequent improvements in the economic profile of the community. Tracking how and when community change efforts move the economic needle will aid in the identification of strategies for building on successful solutions and in making adjustments to address ineffective change efforts.

***Recommendation:*** The evaluation team recommends that grantees track and report changes in local economic conditions. The Commission tracks socioeconomic conditions of the Region, so more extensive county-level data would enable the Commission to conduct a more in-depth examination of how project activities affect local, and subsequently regional, conditions. Grantees could examine data from measures such as the following:

- Median income
- Percentage of families in poverty
- Percentage of children that qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program
- Employment rate

## Recommendations for Leadership and Community Capacity Grants

As mentioned throughout this report, community capacity is a multidimensional concept that local communities in the Appalachian Region tackle in a multitude of ways. The evaluation team offers the recommendations below for the Commission to address the multidimensionality of community capacity.

- Offer short- or long-term grants designed to support grant recipients in implementing projects that will address specific facets of community capacity (e.g., increase interorganizational capacity, including building an efficient and stable collaborative partnership), and conduct a rigorous evaluation of processes and outcomes.
- Offer multiyear grants designed to support grant recipients in implementing projects that will address one community capacity component per year. This will enable project teams to prioritize their community's capacity-building needs and strengthen one capacity-building process at a time.
- Consider all characteristics of grant communities during the review process for leadership and community capacity grant proposals. Funding reserved for rural, distressed counties may be out of reach if a county looks too prosperous on paper. For example, some Appalachian areas attract retirees with higher incomes from outside the Region, driving up the median income level. Outside those communities there is still enormous poverty and need. That disparity can make the county as a whole look more prosperous, even though the distressed areas still have as high a level of need as other counties whose distress is more statistically obvious.
- Establish more rigorous requirements for grantee performance reporting and provide detailed program-specific performance reporting guidelines, including expectations for required program-level measures. This will help grantees to report more complete, high-quality data the Commission can use to assess grantee- and program-level performance.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

### Summary of Major Findings

The evaluation sought to answer eight research questions about leadership and community capacity projects the Commission funded between fiscal years 2008 and 2015 (specified in Exhibit 1 on page 8). A summary of findings related to the research questions is provided below; more detailed information can be found in the Summary of Research Findings and Results (section 4) of this report.

Commission-funded grantees implemented projects to improve local conditions and support local residents. Among survey respondents, the most commonly cited geographic area targeted was a single city or town, the most commonly cited community segment targeted was people or organizations that were geographically isolated, and the most commonly cited sector targeted was economic development sectors. When asked about community challenges or liabilities, project representatives who completed an evaluation survey most commonly cited limited resources and an entrenched political structure. All project representatives who participated in site visits and telephone interviews described limited funding and other economic challenges, underscoring the importance of Commission funding. Respondents described approaches for surmounting these challenges, including implementation of interconnected strategies and initiatives, and increasing multi-level community member involvement in local activities.

Grantees reported data on a range of *anticipated* and *actual* outputs and outcomes. The outcome measure used most frequently among projects was the number of programs implemented, and 82 percent of those that used this measure met or exceeded their anticipated target. Most grantees exceeded target goals for all other core outcome measures as well (i.e., the number of participants improved, communities improved, and organizations improved). Many grantees also reported using supplemental outcomes or targets they had set for themselves that were not included in the formal numeric outcome reporting. Project representatives reporting use of supplemental measures had from one to nine of these measures. Data from project surveys indicated that 71 percent of projects with supplemental measures met all proposed supplemental outcomes.

For local initiatives, it is critically important to sustain project activities after funding ends. Projects included in this evaluation were funded by the Commission between fiscal years 2008 and 2015. Eighty-nine percent of projects that responded to the survey were

still in operation. Of those, some maintained the same level of functioning (24 percent), some had expanded their scope (46 percent), and some had scaled back (19 percent). It is important to reiterate that the response rate for the survey was 77 percent of all projects, so there is uncertainty about whether project representatives that did not respond to the survey would have reported similar success with sustainability. Among project teams that expanded activities since the grant ended, the most commonly cited reason for the expansion was the increased need for community leadership and capacity-building activities, followed by increased recognition of the value of these types of activities. Likewise, respondents reporting scaled-back functioning since the grant ended cited decreased need for, and/or recognition of the value of, leadership and capacity-building activities as the main reasons for scaling back.

Over 80 percent of survey respondents reported that key partnerships contributed to project success. Most respondents also reported that community organizations, energized community members, and individuals who motivate change contributed to project success. Project representatives interviewed described strategies they applied to project implementation, learned through their work on the Commission-funded project and similar initiatives. For example, some representatives reported that it is essential for community stakeholders to communicate with each other and collaborate with community members. Similarly, some project representatives reported during interviews that one area in which they experienced great success was in building relationships, and the most commonly reported organization-level outcome to be achieved was to increase collaboration. Collectively, the evaluation findings indicate that community stakeholders recognize the importance of collaboration and service coordination. Change efforts are more effective when individuals and organizations work collaboratively rather than in silos to address identified needs. Through collaboration and coordination, community partners capitalize on each other's strengths and pool needed resources.

As illustrated throughout this report, Commission-funded project teams worked to improve the ability of individuals, organizations, and community institutions to understand the challenges they face, identify assets that can be leveraged to surmount the challenges, and design and implement plans to become more successful and resilient.

Community capacity building requires substantial time and effort from individuals and organizations in the community. Project success often depends on shifts in deep-seated attitudes and behaviors, which can take time to change. However, as mentioned in the previous section of this report, there are steps that can be taken to help future grantees achieve their goals. For example, it is important to develop a set of performance measures that will help grantees and the Commission isolate areas of success in capacity-building

processes that have the potential to be replicated and strengthened, and strategize to address areas of need.

## Conclusion

The challenges Appalachian communities face are complex. The evaluation showed that the leadership and community capacity project teams worked to address these complex challenges by designing initiatives that take into account the multifaceted nature of community capacity. The project teams worked to improve the ability of individuals, organizations, and community institutions to understand the challenges they face, identify assets that can be leveraged in addressing those challenges, and design and implement plans to become more successful and resilient. The project teams themselves experienced success in this work as well, with many able to achieve a high proportion of the goals they set for themselves and continuing to pursue their work well after the funding provided by the Commission had ended. Even with these successes, project representatives acknowledged that there are few if any quick-fix solutions to carrying out community capacity building, as success often depends on shifts in deep-seated attitudes and behaviors that can take time to change. This indicates that the Commission's ongoing work to support community capacity building and leadership development in Appalachian communities is well directed and important to the Region's long-term economic and social prosperity.

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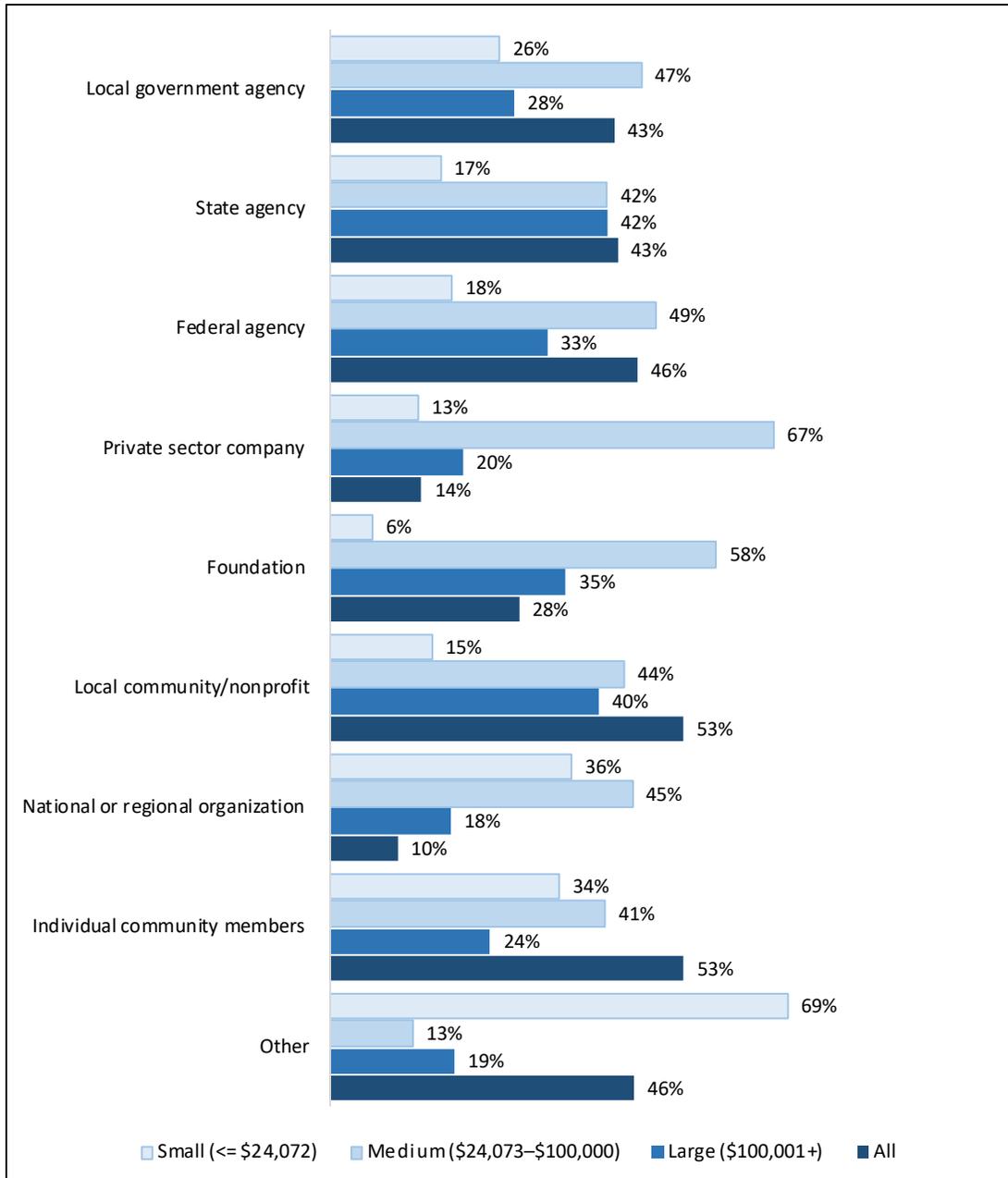
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## Appendix A: Supplemental Data

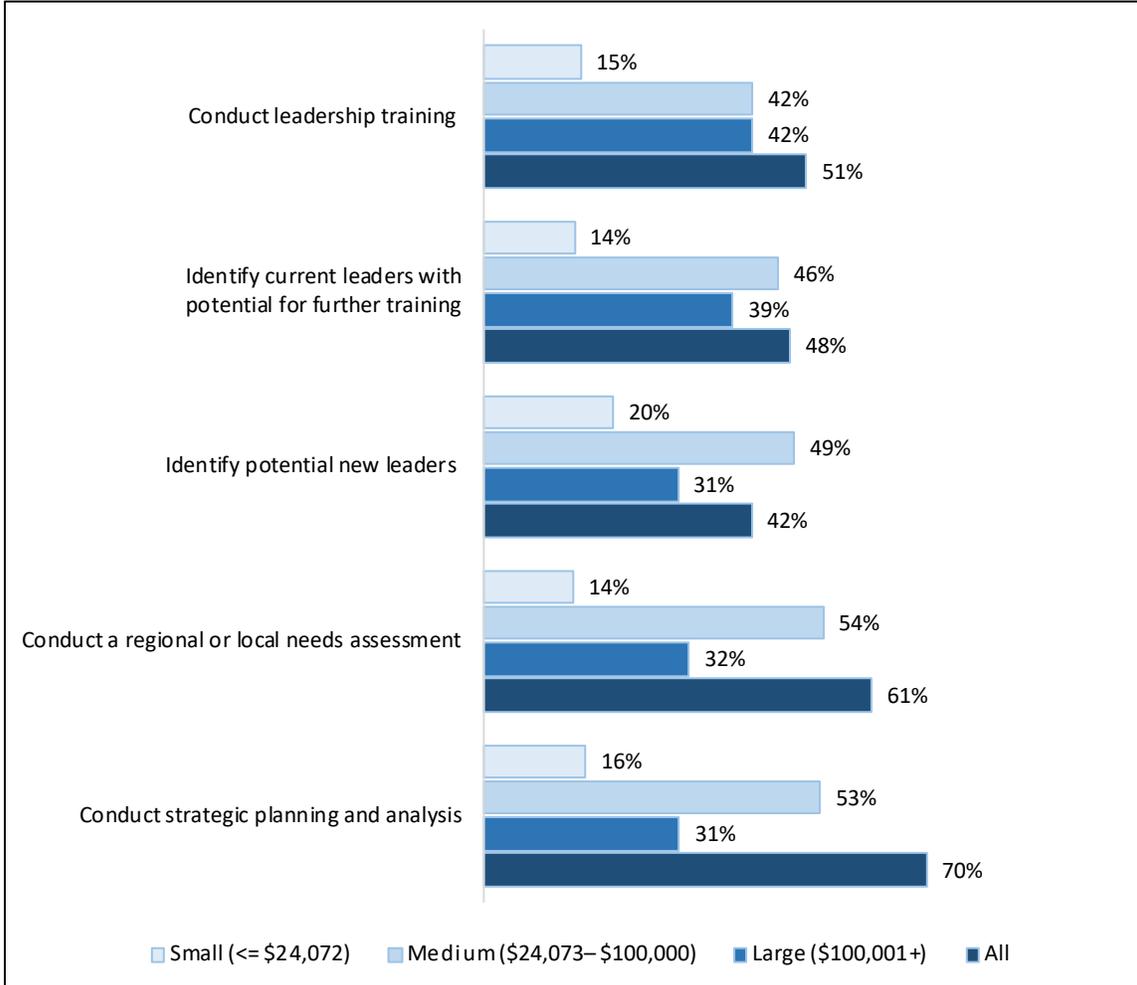
**Figure A-1. Percentage of projects in which resources were identified as providing *important* contributions, by grant size in dollars (n=100)**



Notes: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

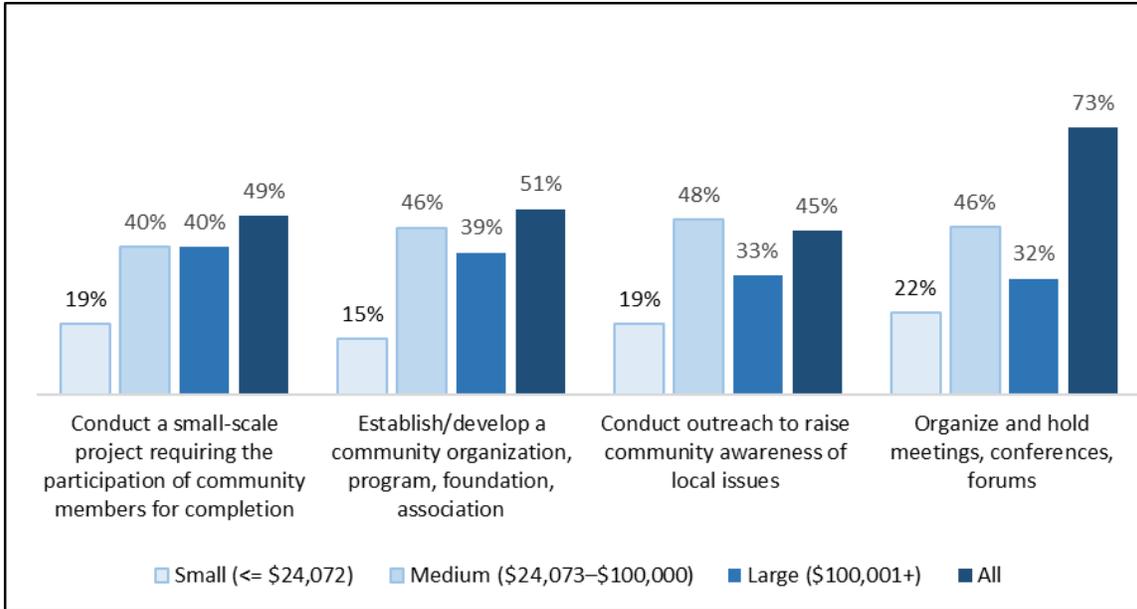
**Figure A-2. Percentage of projects in which activities related to developing a vision and direction for the community were implemented, by grant size in dollars (n=105)**



Notes: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

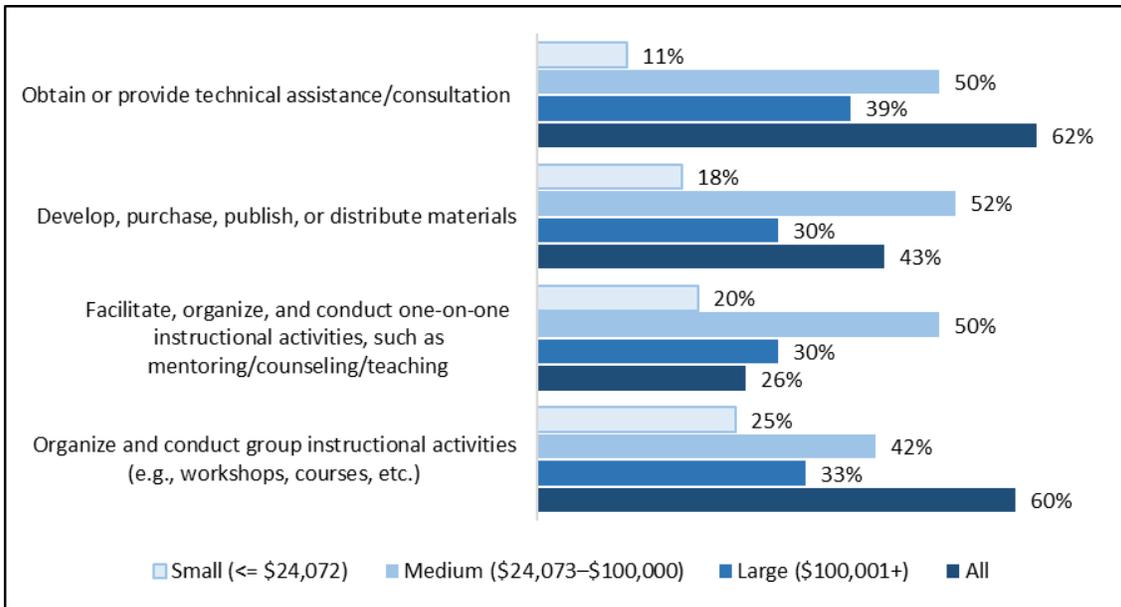
**Figure A-3. Percentage of projects in which activities related to promoting the involvement of community members were implemented, by grant size in dollars (n=105)**



Notes: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

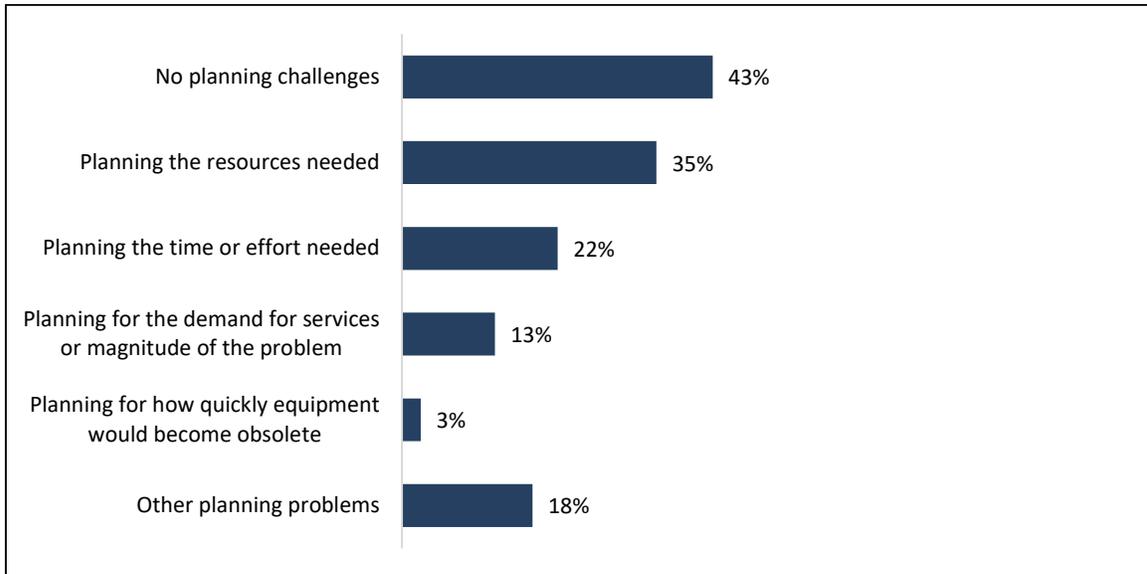
**Figure A-4. Percentage of projects in which activities related to enhancing the skills and knowledge of community members were implemented, by grant size in dollars (n=105)**



Note: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

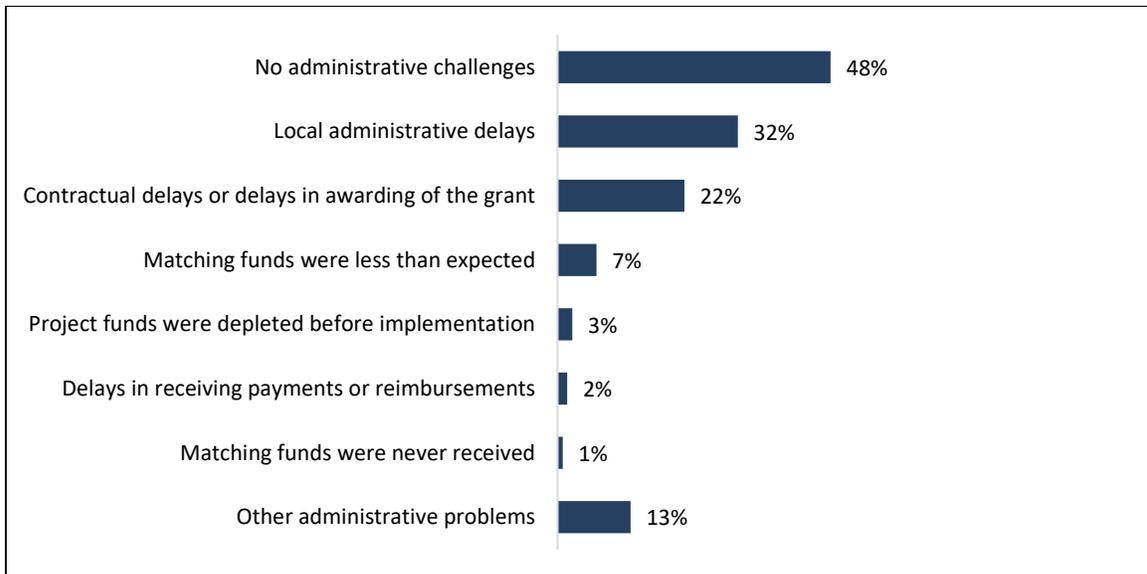
**Figure A-5. Planning challenges (n=116)**



Note: Survey respondents could select more than one challenge. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

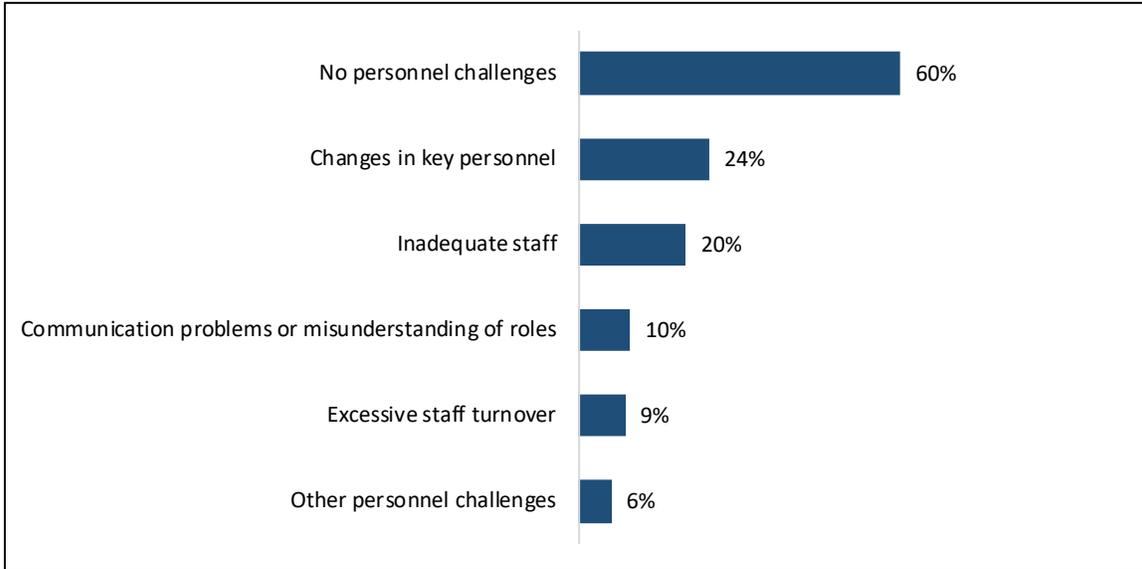
**Figure A-6. Administrative challenges (n=116)**



Note: Survey respondents could select more than one challenge. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

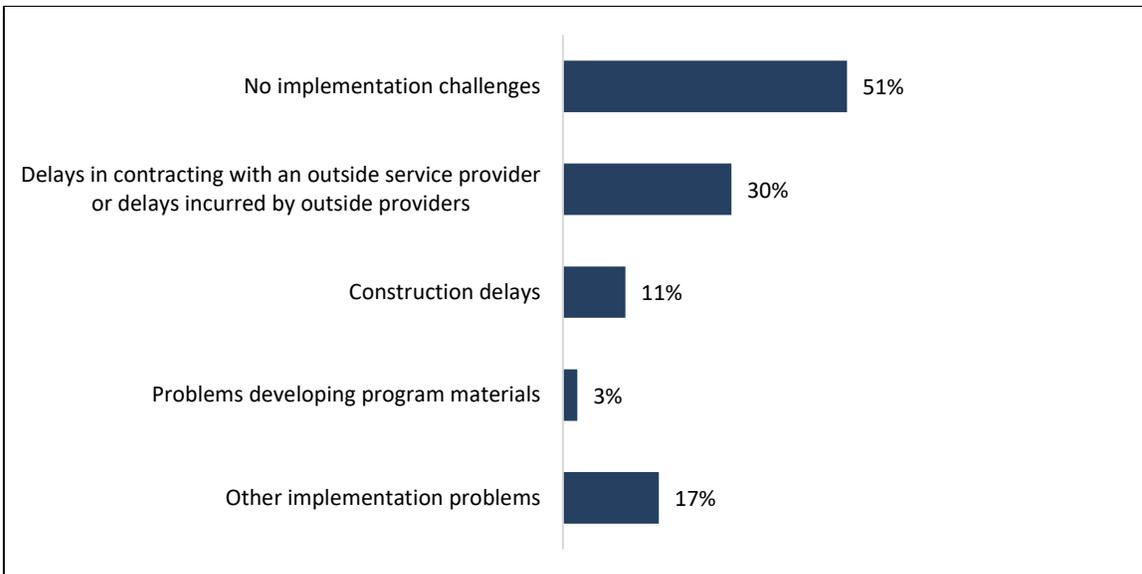
**Figure A-7. Personnel challenges (n=116)**



Note: Survey respondents could select more than one challenge. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

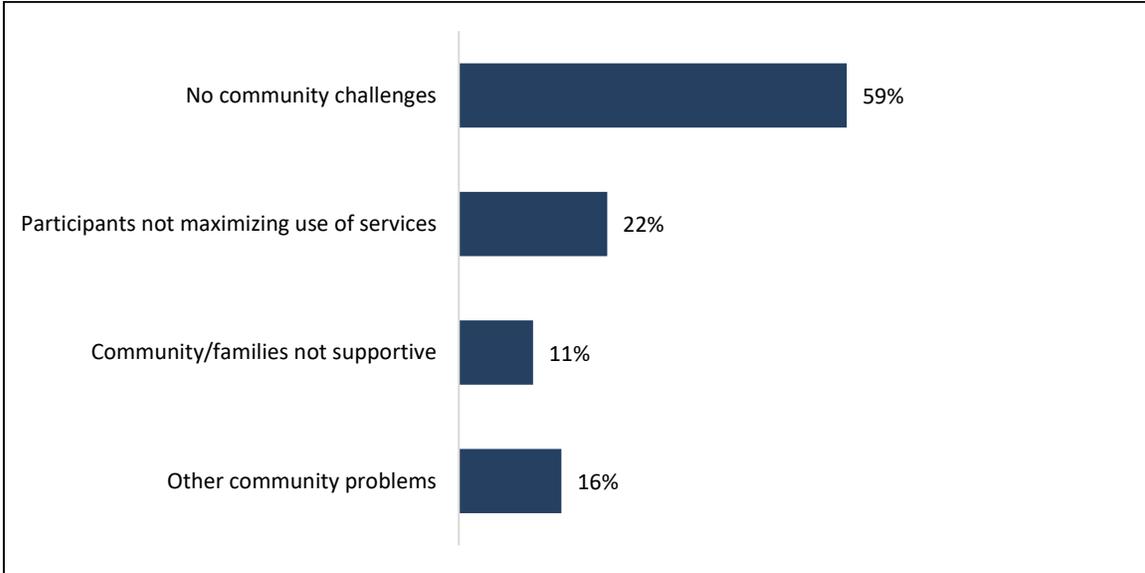
**Figure A-8. Implementation challenges (n=116)**



Note: Survey respondents could select more than one challenge. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Figure A-9. Community challenges (n=116)**



Note: Survey respondents could select more than one challenge. A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Table A-1. Distribution of supplemental outcomes identified through the document review (n=469 outcomes)**

Outcome type	Number of outcomes	Percentage
Individual capacity	106	23
Organizational capacity	58	12
Community capacity	176	38
Community-wide outcomes	104	22
Other	25	5
Total	469	100

Notes: The lack of clarity for many of the supplemental outcomes made it difficult to systematically code these statements. As such, the distribution in this table should be viewed as exploratory. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

**Table A-2. Status of supplemental outcomes at the time the survey was administered (n=468 outcomes)**

Outcome type	Number of outcomes	Current status of the outcome ( <i>as of spring 2017</i> )			
		No progress—efforts shifted to other goals	No progress—remains an important goal	Further progress—but not building on project work	Further progress that builds on project work
Individual capacity	106	8%	28%	5%	59%
Organizational capacity	57	5%	11%	5%	79%
Community capacity	176	2%	33%	10%	55%
Community-wide outcomes	104	0%	14%	10%	77%
Other	25	12%	48%	32%	8%
Total	468	4%	26%	9%	61%

Notes: The table only includes outcomes for which respondents provided a response to a survey item about the current status of each measure reported measure. Response options were (1) Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project; (2) Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project; (3) No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal; and (4) No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Additionally, a respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Table A-3. Extent to which projects met a given supplemental outcome (n=469 outcomes)**

Outcome type	Number of outcomes	Extent met		
		Less than expected	Same as expected	More than expected
Individual capacity	106	5%	31%	64%
Organizational capacity	58	7%	45%	48%
Community capacity	176	11%	59%	30%
Community-wide outcomes	104	3%	47%	50%
Other	25	4%	60%	36%
Total	469	7%	48%	45%

Notes: Only includes outcomes for which respondents provided a response to a survey item on how project performance on each measure compared to what project leaders expected. Additionally, a respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Table A-4. Extent to which a given supplemental outcome was important to project success (n=469 outcomes)**

Outcome type	Number of outcomes	Level of importance		
		Not very important	Somewhat important	Very important
Individual capacity	106	3%	10%	87%
Organizational capacity	58	10%	16%	74%
Community capacity	176	2%	26%	72%
Community-wide outcomes	104	0%	37%	64%
Other	25	4%	40%	56%
Total	469	3%	24%	73%

Notes: Only includes outcomes for which respondents provided a response to a survey item on the importance of each outcome to the success of the project. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Additionally, a respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Table A-5. Distribution of all supplemental outcomes, by level of importance and level of attainment (n=469 outcomes)**

Level of importance	Level of attainment		
	Less than expected	Same as expected	More than expected
Not very important	10	2	2
Somewhat important	8	86	19
Very important	14	139	189

Note: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Table A-5a. Distribution of individual capacity outcomes, by level of importance and level of attainment (n=106 outcomes)**

Level of importance	Level of attainment		
	Less than expected	Same as expected	More than expected
Not very important	3	0	0
Somewhat important	0	6	5
Very important	2	27	63

Note: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Table A-5b. Distribution of organizational capacity outcomes, by level of importance and level of attainment (n=58 outcomes)**

Level of importance	Level of attainment		
	Less than expected	Same as expected	More than expected
Not very important	4	1	1
Somewhat important	0	8	1
Very important	0	17	26

Note: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Table A-5c. Distribution of community capacity outcomes, by level of importance and level of attainment (n=176 outcomes)**

Level of importance	Level of attainment		
	Less than expected	Same as expected	More than expected
Not very important	3	0	1
Somewhat important	5	28	12
Very important	11	76	40

Note: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

**Table A-5d. Distribution of community-wide capacity outcomes, by level of importance and level of attainment (n=104 outcomes)**

Level of importance	Level of attainment		
	Less than expected	Same as expected	More than expected
Not very important	0	0	0
Somewhat important	3	34	1
Very important	0	15	51

Note: A respondent from one project completed a survey but did not fully implement the Commission-funded project.

Source: Survey of Commission grantees.

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## **Appendix B: Survey Administered to Commission Grantees**

**Appalachian Regional Commission**



**APPALACHIAN  
REGIONAL  
COMMISSION**

**Survey of ARC Leadership and Community Capacity Projects**

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has contracted with Westat to conduct an evaluation of its leadership and community capacity projects. By completing this survey, you will help the evaluation team develop a better understanding of project implementation, accomplishments, and the extent to which ARC-funded projects made progress toward achieving their goals.

**SECTION 1: ABOUT THE ARC GRANT**

**This section asks for information about the grantee organization and other sources that supported the project(s):**

1. Which types of organizations or sources provided additional funding and/or resources that helped you implement activities related to the goals of your ARC project(s)? Resources can include funding, ideas, expertise and technical assistance, time, materials, technology and equipment, staff, or other resources. Indicate the extent to which each source made an important contribution to your ARC project(s):

Source	Did not make important contributions	Made moderately important contributions	Made important contributions
Local government (county/township) agency			
State agency			
Federal agency			
Private sector company			
Foundation			
Local community/nonprofit organization			
National or regional organization			
Individual community members			
Other, please specify: _____			

2. Of the sources you identified in #1 as contributing major resources, which was the most important? Select one:

- Local government (county/township) agency
- State agency
- Federal agency
- Private sector company
- Foundation
- Local community/nonprofit organization
- National or regional organization
- Individual community members
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY SERVED BY THE ARC-FUNDED PROJECT**

**This section asks about the intended beneficiaries of the project.**

3. The “communities” that ARC and similar projects intend to benefit can be defined in various ways. Which definition(s) of “community” match your project(s)? Choose all that apply:

- People or organizations within specific geographic areas
- People or organizations within specific sectors (e.g., education, government, health care)
- People or organizations with certain characteristics, needs or interests
- Social systems or connections among people
- A quality as in “sense of community”
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which one of the following best describes the **geographic distribution** of the people expected to benefit from the project(s)? Choose one:

- A single city or town
- A single county
- A major metropolitan area (i.e., a central city and its adjacent counties)
- Two or more adjacent counties within a single state
- All counties within a single state
- Two or more adjacent states
- Two or more nonadjacent states
- Some other geographic area, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What **sectors** did the project(s) target? Choose all that apply:

- Education
- Government
- Health care
- Business or private
- Economic development
- Library
- Community or social service
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which of the following **community segments** were intended to use project-related services or resources or to otherwise benefit from the project(s)? Choose all that apply:

- Living in poverty or extreme poverty
- Illiterate
- Limited English speaking
- Disabled
- Elderly
- Geographically isolated or rural
- Living in urban or inner-city areas
- Unemployed or underemployed
- Underrepresented minorities
- Migrant workers/migrant students
- School dropouts
- Any other group, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. PROJECT CONTEXT

**This section asks about the context of the project(s), specifically the assets and liabilities in the community. Please take a moment to reflect on the community assets and liabilities that played a part in the successes or challenges your project(s) experienced.**

7. Community *assets* help to facilitate change and can enhance a community's ability to implement its approach and achieve its outcomes. Community assets are unique to each community but they might include community organizations, innovative leaders, individuals who motivate change, groups of energized community members, and key partnerships.

Which of the community assets listed below played a part in the ARC project(s)? Choose all that apply:

- Community organizations
- Innovative leaders
- Individuals who motivate change
- Groups of energized community members
- Key partnerships
- Physical assets/infrastructure (e.g., land, buildings)
- Other asset, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above (community assets played no part in any of the ARC projects)

8. Community *liabilities* can inhibit community change and a project's ability to implement activities and/or achieve desired outcomes. Every community has limitations or obstacles that they must overcome as they embark on community development. Examples of community liabilities might include an entrenched political structure, a lack of empowerment, a fear of change, apathy, distrust, or limited resources.

Which of the community liabilities listed below played a part in the ARC project(s)? Choose all that apply:

- Entrenched political structure
- Lack of empowerment
- Fear of change
- Apathy
- Distrust
- Limited resources
- Other liability, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above (community liabilities played no part in any of the ARC projects)

#### 4. STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

This section asks about the specific activities attempted by your project(s), and the types of challenges you may have encountered in implementing them.

9. Community capacity building projects may implement a variety of activities. Which of the following activities did your ARC project(s) implement? Please include any activities regardless of whether or not ARC funding was used for them. Choose all that apply:
- Conduct strategic planning and analysis
  - Conduct a regional or local needs assessment
  - Identify potential new leaders
  - Identify current leaders with potential for further training
  - Conduct leadership training
  - Conduct a small scale project requiring the participation of community members for completion
  - Establish/develop a community organization, program, foundation, association
  - Conduct outreach to raise community awareness of local issues
  - Organize and hold meetings, conferences, forums
  - Organize and conduct group instructional activities (e.g., workshops, courses, etc.)
  - Facilitate, organize, and conduct one on one instructional activities, such as mentoring/counseling/teaching
  - Develop, purchase, publish, or distribute materials
  - Obtain or provide technical assistance/consultation
  - Other strategies to develop vision and direction for the community, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other strategies to develop local leaders, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other strategies to promote involvement of community members, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other strategies to enhance the skills and knowledge of community members, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other strategies to obtain technical support for the community, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other strategies, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Please indicate whether any of the following obstacles or impediments prevented you from carrying out the activities of the ARC project(s) as well as you might otherwise have done. Choose all that apply.

##### Planning challenges

- Planning the resources needed
- Planning the time or effort needed
- Planning for the demand for services or magnitude of the problem
- Planning for how quickly equipment would become obsolete
- Other planning problems, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No planning challenges

Administrative challenges

- Local administrative delays
- Contractual delays or delays in awarding of the grant
- Delays in receiving payments or reimbursements
- Project funds were depleted before implementation
- Matching funds were less than expected
- Matching funds were never received
- Other administrative problems, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No administrative challenges

Personnel challenges

- Inadequate staff
- Changes in key personnel
- Excessive staff turnover
- Communication problems or misunderstanding of roles
- Other personnel problems, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No personnel challenges

Implementation challenges

- Delays in contracting with an outside service provider or delays incurred by outside providers
- Construction delays
- Problems installing equipment
- Problems developing program materials
- Other implementation problems, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No implementation challenges

Community challenges

- Community/families not supportive
- Participants not maximizing use of services
- Other community problems, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No community challenges

Other challenges

- Other challenges that hindered the project's success, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other challenges that hindered the project's success, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No other challenges

## 5. OUTCOMES

This section focuses on the outcomes of your community capacity project(s).

11. Which of the following outcomes did your project(s) intend to achieve? Choose all that apply:

### Individual capacity

- Enhance skills
- Enhance empowerment
- Increase awareness of community issues
- Other individual capacity outcome, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No individual capacity outcomes

### Organizational capacity

- Increase collaboration
- Enhance efficiency and effectiveness
- Enhance stability/growth
- Other organizational capacity outcome, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No organizational capacity outcomes

### Community capacity

- Improve planning
- Improve community self-reliance
- Increase civic participation
- Increase political participation
- Enhance community pride
- Improve infrastructure
- Improve educational opportunities
- Other community capacity outcome, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No community capacity outcomes

Other outcome, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Please enter the projected and actual outputs and outcomes for each of your project’s performance measures.

Measure	Projected Output	Projected Outcome	Actual Output	Actual Outcome

12. Please provide information about up to nine of your project’s intended goals, as requested in the items below.

**Outcome measure 1 (Example: The project will provide local leaders with a network of contacts within the region and at the state level that can continue to provide guidance and technical assistance.):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

**Outcome measure 2 (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

**Outcome measure 3 (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected?

Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

**Outcome measure 4 (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected?

Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

**Outcome measure 5 (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

**Outcome measure 6 (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

**Outcome measure 7 (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

**Outcome measure 8 (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected?  
Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

**Outcome measure 9 (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected?  
Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

13. Please address the following questions if you identified an “other” **individual capacity** outcome in Question #11 (skip to Question #14 if you did not identify an “other” **individual capacity** outcome):

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

14. Please address the following questions if you identified an “other” **organizational capacity** outcome in Question #11 (skip to Question #15 if you did not identify an “other” **organizational capacity** outcome):

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

15. Please address the following questions if you identified an “other” **community capacity** outcome in Question #11 (skip to Question #16 if you did not identify an “other” **community capacity** outcome):

a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

- c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:
- Very important; this was a key objective
  - Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
  - Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

- d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:
- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
  - Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
  - No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
  - No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

16. Please address the following questions if you identified an “other” outcome in Question #11 (skip to Question #17 if you did not identify an “other” outcome):

- a) How did project performance on this measure compare to what project leaders expected? Choose one:

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

b) On what evidence (e.g., personal observation, counts of participants, surveys, interviews, assessments) is your response based?

- c) How important was this outcome to the success of your project? Choose one:

- Very important; this was a key objective
- Somewhat important; it was a contributor to our overall success
- Not very important; the project still would have been a success even if this outcome were not met

- d) What is the current status of this measure? Choose one:

- Further progress on this measure has been made that builds on the work of this ARC project
- Further progress on this measure has been made, but not building on the work of this ARC project
- No further progress on this measure has been made, but it remains an important goal
- No further progress on this measure has been made; efforts have shifted to different goals

17. What were the most important outcomes, anticipated or not, to result from the ARC grant?

## 7. CURRENT STATUS

**Your organization may continue to be involved in the leadership and capacity building efforts that were funded by these ARC grants (regardless of whether or not this work continues to be supported by ARC funds). This section asks about the current status of these efforts.**

18. Which statement best describes the current status of your leadership and capacity building efforts? Choose one:
- a. In operation and serving a function that has stayed about the same as the original ARC project(s)
  - b. In operation and serving a function that has expanded from the original ARC project(s)
  - c. In operation and serving a function that has scaled back from the original ARC project(s)
  - d. No longer in operation
19. If you selected “b” for Question #18, please describe how your leadership and capacity building efforts have expanded.
20. If you selected “c” for Question #18, please describe how your leadership and capacity building efforts have scaled back.
21. If you selected “b” for Question #18, which, if any, of the following factors have facilitated expansion of your leadership and capacity building efforts? Choose all that apply:
- Increased need for leadership and capacity building activities in the community
  - Increase in recognition or value of leadership and capacity building activities in the community
  - Additional funding available for additional or continued leadership and capacity building activities
  - Loss of other services in the community that led the project to take on additional roles
  - Additional areas of need recognized since the grant’s inception (broadening leadership and capacity building scope)
  - Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

22. If you selected “c” for Question #18, which, if any, of the following factors have necessitated scaling back your leadership and capacity building efforts? Choose all that apply:

- Decreased need for leadership and capacity building activities in the community
- Decreased recognition or value of leadership and capacity building activities in the community
- Fewer funds or other resources available for leadership and capacity building activities
- Increase in other services in the community that make our leadership and capacity building efforts less necessary
- Fewer areas of need recognized since the grant’s inception (constricting leadership and capacity building scope)
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

23. Please provide your name, telephone number, and e-mail address as the primary contact for this project. Please indicate the preferred method of contact. We will use this information only if we need to contact you regarding this evaluation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred method of contact (choose one):

- Telephone
- E-mail

**Thank you for your participation.**

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## Appendix C: Interview Protocol<sup>8</sup>

### Respondent and project background

1. Are you familiar with the [ARC PROJECT TITLE] project?
  - a. How did you learn about the project?
2. With which aspects of the project's work are you familiar?
  - a. In which project activities have you been involved?
3. Can you please give me a brief overview of the project [ARC PROJECT TITLE]?
4. What role did [ARC PROJECT TITLE] play in carrying out your project? (Flex-E-Grant subgrantees only)
  - a. Did you collaborate with the [ARC PROJECT TITLE] team in carrying out your project?
5. What is your connection to the community or communities that were served by this ARC project?

*Probe:*

  - a. Do you live in the community? For how long if so?
6. What is the name of the organization or agency for which you currently work?
  - a. What type of agency or organization is this?
7. What is your current job title or position?

*Probe:*

  - a. How long have you served in this position?
8. What was (or is) your primary role in this project?

*Probe:*

  - a. When did you begin serving in this role for the project?
9. Can you tell me a little about the mission of [LEAD PROJECT ORG]?

*Probe:*

  - a. What is this organization's role in this project?
  - b. Why did this organization choose to take on this project, to your knowledge?
  - c. Had this organization undertaken similar efforts in the past?
10. What other organizations were involved in the project, if any?

*Probe:*

  - a. What role did these organizations play? What was their primary contribution?
  - b. Had this organization worked to address similar problems in the past?
  - c. Had your organization worked with this organization beforehand? In what capacity? And if not, how was this organization identified/selected?

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<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the evaluation team asked the questions of project directors, other project staff, community leaders, community members, and Flex-E-Grant subgrantee representatives, or subsets of these respondent types as applicable.

- d. What was the project able to accomplish with this organization that might not otherwise have been possible?
  - e. Would you describe the project as a partnership? Why or why not?
11. What role, if any, did funding sources other than ARC play in supporting this project?  
*Probe:*
- a. What were the other sources?
  - b. Did these other sources support specific aspects of the project? Which ones if so?
12. In your view, what was the principal problem or issue this project was meant to address?  
*Probe:*
- a. How was this problem or issue identified?
  - b. When did this problem or issue arise in the target community?
  - c. To your knowledge, was there any work before this ARC-funded project that aimed to address this problem or issue in the community? What was it if so (and what was the funding source)?
13. What are some other important problems or issues the project was meant to address?  
*Probe:*
- a. How were these identified?
  - b. When did these problems/issues arise in this community?
  - c. To your knowledge, was there any work before this ARC-funded project that aimed to address these problems or issues in the community? What was it if so (and what was the funding source)?
14. In your view, how did this project intend to affect community capacity?  
*Probe:*
- a. How do you define community capacity for this project?
15. In your view, how did this project intend to affect leadership development?  
*Probe:*
- a. How do you define leadership development for this project?
16. Are there other kinds of activities this project could have offered that would have been useful to you or the community? If so, what are these?
17. Have any changes occurred for you personally as a result of this project?
- a. What kind of changes? Are these positive or negative?
18. Have any changes occurred for your community as a result of this project?
- a. What kind of changes? Are these positive or negative?

**About the community**

19. What do you think are some of the community's biggest strengths?  
*Probe:*
- a. Why do you think this is a strength for this community?

20. What do you think are some of the community's biggest challenges?

*Probe:*

- a. How did these challenges develop? Are these recent or long-standing challenges?

### **Project design and implementation**

21. What were the most important activities or strategies this project used to carry out its work?

*Probe:*

- a. Can you tell me a little about your approach to developing these activities or strategies?
- b. What resources—within and outside of your community—did you utilize in developing your project approach?
- c. Which of these activities were in place at the beginning of the project? Which were added later?
- d. How were these activities or strategies intended to help the project achieve its objectives?
- e. Which of these activities (if any) required the involvement of other organizations?

22. In your view, in which strategies or activities did the project have the greatest success?

*Probe:*

- a. What factors were important in the project's success in these areas?
- b. On your survey response, you reported that some of the community's assets were [SURVEY ITEM 7 RESPONSES]. Did these assets play a role in facilitating the areas of success?
- c. Did the project have any takeaways or lessons learned from these successes? Were these applied to other areas of project work if so?

23. On your survey response, you noted a few areas where the project experienced challenges in putting the planned strategies and activities into place. I'd like to learn a bit more about these.

IF NOT A SURVEY RESPONDENT: What were some of the areas in which the project experienced challenges?

*Probe:*

- a. How did these challenges impact the project? Were there things these challenges prevented you from undertaking or accomplishing?
- b. On your survey response, you reported that some liabilities of this community including [SURVEY ITEM 8 RESPONSES]. Did these liabilities present challenges to the project?
- c. Had you anticipated any of these challenges?
- d. What steps did you take to overcome these challenges? Were these effective?

## Project outcomes

24. Are any important project outcomes missing from the list of outcomes you reported on the survey? What do you see as the key outcomes this project aimed to achieve?

IF NOT A SURVEY RESPONDENT: What were the intended outcomes of this project?

*Probe:*

- a. What was the project's process for identifying outcomes? Who was involved in this process?
- b. Were some outcomes identified during the course of the project work? What were these if so?
- c. Did the project decide to abandon pursuit of any outcomes? What were these if so, and why were they not pursued?

25. Which outcomes would you highlight as most successful?

*Probe:*

- a. What factors enabled the project to be successful?

26. Which outcomes were more challenging for the project to accomplish?

*Probe:*

- a. What factors led to these challenges?

## Project sustainability

27. When the project began, were there a plan or vision in place to continue the work after the ARC grant ended?

*Probe:*

- a. IF YES: Can you tell me more? What steps did the project intend to take to enable it to continue?
- b. IF NO: Why not? Was the project expected to continue after the ARC grant ended? Were plans for continuation developed later?

28. On your survey response, you reported that the project [did not change/expanded/contracted/ended].

IF NOT A SURVEY RESPONDENT: What is the current operating status of the project?

*Probe:*

- a. What do you think is the main reason the project [did not change/expanded/contracted/ended]?
- b. Was this something the project anticipated?

29. What activities supported by the ARC grant are still in place?

*Probe:*

- a. Have any new activities been added since the grant ended? What are these?
- b. Have any activities supported by the ARC grant been modified? How if so?
- c. How have these activities been supported financially?

30. To your knowledge, what activities of the ARC-funded project have ended?

31. What do you see as the next steps for the project?

*Probe:*

- a. What do you think the project will look like in five years? What will be needed to achieve this vision?

### **Lessons learned**

32. Based on your experience with this project, what would say are the key lessons you have learned about building community capacity?

33. What about lessons learned with regard to leadership development?

34. What other important lessons have you taken away from your work on this project?

35. If you were undertaking a similar project today, what if anything would you do differently?

*Probe:*

- a. How, if at all, have you applied the lessons learned from the ARC-funded project to other work you are involved in?

36. Based on the lessons you have learned, what advice would you give to the ARC for supporting future work related to community capacity building and leadership development?

*Probe:*

- a. Are there specific supports, such as technical assistance, that would be useful?

37. Is there anything else you would like to discuss about this project that we didn't cover?

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## Appendix D: Commission Projects Included in the Evaluation

Site visit conducted

Telephone interview conducted

Survey completed

\*Survey completed as well as a site visit or telephone interview

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
AL-14638-C5*	Small Town and Rural Counties Design Initiative and Planning	Auburn University	2008	69,640.00	87,050.00	AL
AL-14638-C6*	Small Town and Rural Counties Design Initiative & Planning	Auburn University	2009	93,238.00	116,548.00	AL
AL-14638-C7*	Small Town and Rural Counties Design Initiative & Planning	Auburn University	2010	43,046.00	53,808.00	AL
AL-15859-I	Langdale Mill Revitalization of Old Steam Plant Area	City of Valley	2008	28,000.00	56,000.00	AL
AL-15873-I	West Florence Community Development Plan	City of Florence	2008	25,000.00	50,000.00	AL
AL-16200-I	Bibb County Leadership Development	Bibb County Commission	2009	13,600.00	19,450.00	AL
AL-16431-I	Tuskegee Comprehensive Plan Update	South Central Alabama Development Commission	2009	48,000.00	60,000.00	AL
AL-16554-I	Building Hale: Youth Build Program	Hale Empowerment & Revitalization Organization	2010	81,795.00	119,235.00	AL
AL-16555-I	Strengthening Capacity to Build Communities of Excellence	Alabama Communities of Excellence, Inc. (ACE)	2010	100,000.00	222,225.00	AL

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
AL-16578-I*	Town of Section Economic Development Strategy	Auburn University	2010	50,000.00	100,000.00	AL
AL-16869-I	Decatur Downtown Economic Development Plan	Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority	2011	10,000.00	20,000.00	AL
AL-16920-C1*	Macon County Youth: Civic Entrepreneurs & Problem Solvers	Auburn University	2012	37,926.00	47,435.00	AL
AL-16920-I*	Macon County Youth: Civic Entrepreneurs & Problem Solvers	Auburn University	2011	130,000.00	172,966.00	AL
AL-16933-I	Celebrating Appalachian Communities	PACERS, Incorporated	2011	50,000.00	100,000.00	AL
AL-16967-I	Wetumpka Tourism Development Plan	City of Wetumpka	2011	20,000.00	40,000.00	AL
AL-17173-I	Moundville Comprehensive Plan	Town of Moundville	2011	17,600.00	22,000.00	AL
AL-17211-I	Web-based Technical Assistance to Enhance Asset-Based Planning in Disaster-Impacted Communities	Your Town Alabama, Inc.	2012	18,150.00	36,300.00	AL
AL-18016-I	Blount County Economic Development Council Operations Support	Blount County Economic Development Council Inc.	2015	50,000.00	101,000.00	AL
AL-18073-I*	Randolph County Youth Development Initiative	Randolph County Industrial Development Council	2015	52,400.00	65,500.00	AL
AL-18084-I	Reform Comprehensive Community Master Plan	Town of Reform	2015	22,400.00	28,000.00	AL
CO-12600-C10-F*	East TN State University Consortium of Appalachian Centers & Institutes	East Tennessee State University	2012	100,000.00	124,000.00	Regional
CO-12600-C11-F*	East TN State University Consortium of Appalachian Centers & Institutes	East Tennessee State University	2013	98,442.00	122,442.00	Regional

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
CO-12600-C12-F*	East TN State University Consortium of Appalachian Centers & Institutes	East Tennessee State University	2014	116,725.00	141,552.00	Regional
CO-12600-C13-F*	East TN State University Consortium of Appalachian Centers & Institutes	East Tennessee State University	2015	125,000.00	150,079.00	Regional
CO-14137-C10	Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference 2012	Appalachian Studies Association	2012	10,000.00	12,500.00	Regional
CO-14137-C11	Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference 2013	Appalachian Studies Association	2013	10,000.00	12,500.00	Regional
CO-14137-C12	Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference 2014	Appalachian Studies Association	2014	10,000.00	12,500.00	Regional
CO-14137-C13	Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference	Appalachian Studies Association	2015	10,000.00	12,500.00	Regional
CO-14137-C6	Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference 2008	Appalachian Studies Association	2008	5,000.00	10,000.00	Regional
CO-14137-C7	Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference 2009	Appalachian Studies Association	2009	5,000.00	6,250.00	Regional
CO-14137-C8	Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference 2010	Appalachian Studies Association	2010	10,000.00	12,500.00	Regional
CO-14137-C9	Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference 2011	Appalachian Studies Association	2011	10,000.00	12,500.00	Regional
CO-16069-I*	Harlan Leadership Development, Phase II	Southeast Education Foundation	2008	15,000.00	126,500.00	KY
CO-16108-I	East TN Crossing Waterways Project	Cocke County Partnership	2008	39,350.00	49,550.00	TN
CO-16158-I	Mini Grants for Community Environmental Action	Bluegrass PRIDE	2009	651,837.00	1,083,357.00	KY
CO-16158-I-R1	Mini Grants for Community Environmental Action, Revision	Bluegrass PRIDE	2013	12,283.00	20,471.00	KY
CO-16215-I	Bluegrass PRIDE Strategic Planning	Bluegrass PRIDE	2009	74,310.00	74,310.00	KY
CO-16447-I	Geo-Guides Along Blue Ridge Parkway	Surry County	2009	40,000.00	50,500.00	NC

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
CO-16448-I	Virginia & North Carolina Gateway Interactive Kiosk	Carroll County Office of Tourism	2009	38,000.00	47,500.00	VA
CO-16449-I	Appalachian Grown: Creating Food & Farm Gateways to the Blue Ridge Parkway	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project	2009	30,000.00	37,500.00	NC
CO-16450-I	TRACKing for Community Health	Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation	2009	10,000.00	15,501.00	NC
CO-16451-I	Foothills Geocache Trail	Rockbridge County	2009	14,000.00	17,500.00	VA
CO-16452-I	Appalachian Women's Museum: Preserving the Past, Educating the Future	Dillsboro, City	2009	17,500.00	21,875.00	NC
CO-17212-C1	Appalachian Funders Network (AFN)	Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation	2014	30,000.00	135,450.00	Regional
CO-17212-C2	Appalachian Funders Network (AFN)	Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation	2015	30,000.00	148,932.00	Regional
CO-17212-I	Appalachian Funders Network (AFN)	Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation	2012	30,000.00	118,000.00	Regional
CO-17241-I	Capacity Building for Sustainable Regions & Communities in Appalachia	National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation (NADO)	2012	25,000.00	25,000.00	Regional
GA-14773-C3	GA Appalachian Studies Center Developing Community Partnerships	North Georgia College & State University	2008	69,520.00	158,000.00	GA
GA-14773-C4	Sustaining the GA Appalachian Studies Center	North Georgia College & State University	2009	59,000.00	153,000.00	GA
GA-14773-C5	Sustaining the GA Appalachian Studies Center	North Georgia College & State University	2011	77,000.00	154,000.00	GA
GA-17837-I	City of Gainesville Downtown Strategic Planning	City of Gainesville	2014	20,000.00	40,000.00	GA

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
KY-15813-C1*	Developing and Implementing Community Strategies Program, Phase II	The Center for Rural Development	2009	200,000.00	250,000.00	KY
KY-15813-C2*	Developing and Implementing Community Strategies Program, Phases IV/V	The Center for Rural Development	2010	200,000.00	250,000.00	KY
KY-15813-C2-R1*	Developing and Implementing Community Strategies Program, Phase V	The Center for Rural Development	2011	200,000.00	250,000.00	KY
KY-15813-C3*	Developing and Implementing Community Strategies Program, Phase VI	The Center for Rural Development	2013	150,000.00	187,500.00	KY
KY-15813-C3-R1*	Developing and Implementing Community Strategies Program	The Center for Rural Development	2014	100,000.00	125,000.00	KY
KY-16080-C1*	Brushy Fork Institute Training and Flex-E-Grant Mini-Grant Program	Brushy Fork Institute	2009	529,000.00	666,600.00	KY
KY-16080-C2*	Brushy Fork Institute Training and Flex-E-Grant Mini-Grant Program	Brushy Fork Institute	2010	529,000.00	666,600.00	KY
KY-16080-C3*	Brushy Fork Institute Training and Flex-E-Grant Mini-Grant Program	Brushy Fork Institute	2011	529,000.00	666,600.00	KY
KY-16080-C4*	Brushy Fork Institute Training and Flex-E-Grant Mini-Grant Program	Brushy Fork Institute	2012	571,350.00	752,075.00	KY
KY-16080-C5*	Brushy Fork Institute Training and Flex-E-Grant Mini-Grant Program	Brushy Fork Institute	2013	396,410.00	523,335.00	KY
KY-16080-C5-R1*	Brushy Fork Institute Training and Flex-E-Grant Mini-Grant Program	Brushy Fork Institute	2014	100,000.00	130,750.00	KY
KY-16080-I*	Brushy Fork Institute Training and Flex-E-Grant Mini-Grant Program	Brushy Fork Institute	2008	400,000.00	501,250.00	KY
KY-16408-I	New Opportunity School for Women Residential Sessions and Regional Outreach Program	New Opportunity School for Women, Inc.	2009	75,000.00	242,060.00	KY

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
KY-16416-I	Robertson County Comprehensive Plan & Commission Training	Robertson County Fiscal Court	2009	22,500.00	30,000.00	KY
KY-16768-C1	Community Foundation Establishment Support for Hazard and Perry County	Community Foundation of Hazard & Perry County, Inc.	2011	75,000.00	201,200.00	KY
KY-16768-C2	Community Foundation Establishment Support for Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky (FAKY)	Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky	2012	75,000.00	151,200.00	KY
KY-16768-I	Community Foundation Establishment Support for Hazard and Perry County	Community Foundation of Hazard & Perry County, Inc.	2010	75,000.00	166,020.00	KY
KY-17058-I	Menifee County Community Sustainability Planning Initiative	Gateway Area Development District	2011	44,000.00	59,320.00	KY
KY-17099-I	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI): Center for Rural Development	The Center for Rural Development	2011	582,150.00	727,690.00	KY
KY-17100-C1	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI): Brushy Fork Institute	Brushy Fork Institute	2015	25,000.00	31,600.00	KY
KY-17100-I	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI): Brushy Fork Institute	Brushy Fork Institute	2011	171,750.00	214,910.00	KY
KY-17101-C1	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI): Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky	Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky Inc.	2015	25,000.00	75,000.00	KY
KY-17101-I	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI): Community Foundation of Hazard and Perry County	Community Foundation of Hazard & Perry County, Inc.	2011	116,500.00	147,500.00	KY

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
KY-17102-C1	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI ): Foundation for the Tri-State Community, Inc.	Foundation for the Tri-State Community, Inc.	2015	25,000.00	31,250.00	KY
KY-17102-I	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI)	Foundation for the Tri-State Community, Inc.	2011	133,600.00	167,000.00	KY
KY-17413-I	New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW) Residential Sessions and Regional Outreach Program and Post-Arson Rebuilding Efforts	New Opportunity School for Women, Inc.	2012	125,000.00	287,688.00	KY
KY-17536-C1	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI): Blue Grass Community Foundation	Blue Grass Community Foundation (BGCF), Inc.	2015	25,000.00	41,760.00	KY
KY-17536-I	Appalachian Rural Development Philanthropy Initiative (ARDPI) Support: Blue Grass Community Foundation	Blue Grass Community Foundation (BGCF), Inc.	2013	122,000.00	152,500.00	KY
KY-17758-I	Kentucky Highlands Promise Zone Start-Up & Implementation Project	Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation	2014	250,000.00	312,500.00	KY
KY-17920-C1	Appalachian Innovations Collaborative (AIC)	Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC)	2015	160,000.00	200,000.00	KY
KY-17920-I	Appalachian Innovations Collaborative (AIC)	Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC)	2014	160,000.00	200,000.00	KY
MD-15735-C1	Virginia Avenue Corridor Revitalization Initiative	City of Cumberland	2010	20,000.00	40,000.00	MD
MD-15735-C2	Virginia Avenue Corridor Revitalization Initiative	City of Cumberland	2011	30,000.00	60,000.00	MD

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
MD-15877-I	Allegany County Leadership Skills for High School Students	Board of Education of Allegany County	2008	10,000.00	20,000.00	MD
MD-16055-C1	Maryland Trail Town Program	The Progress Fund	2011	100,000.00	200,000.00	MD
MD-16055-I	Great Allegany Passage Economic Development Program	The Progress Fund	2008	100,000.00	200,000.00	MD
MD-16160-C1*	Frostburg Sustainable Community Initiatives (SCI) Planning, Phase II	City of Frostburg	2010	45,000.00	90,000.00	MD
MD-16160-I*	Frostburg Sustainable Community Initiatives (SCI) Planning	City of Frostburg	2009	28,000.00	66,000.00	MD
MD-16243-I	Georges Creek Regional Comprehensive Plan	Board of Allegany County Commissioners	2009	116,000.00	232,000.00	MD
MD-16517-I	Community Trust Foundation Equipment	The Community Trust Foundation, Inc.	2010	10,000.00	20,000.00	MD
MD-16770-I	FrostburgFirst: A Maryland Main Street Community	Historic Frostburg	2010	20,000.00	40,000.00	MD
MD-16981-I	Canal Place Heritage Area Management Plan Update	City of Cumberland	2011	40,000.00	220,042.00	MD
MD-17113-I	Sustainable Transformation of the Appalachian Region (STAR)	University of Maryland	2011	30,000.00	63,616.00	MD
MD-17235-I*	Washington County Strategic Economic Development Plan	Hagerstown-Washington County Industrial Foundation, Inc.	2012	50,000.00	100,000.00	MD
MD-17741-C1	Cumberland Economic Feasibility Analysis and Implementation Plan for Strategic Opportunity Areas	City of Cumberland	2015	30,000.00	65,000.00	MD
MD-17741-I	Cumberland Economic Development Strategic Plan	City of Cumberland	2014	25,000.00	100,000.00	MD
MD-18134-I	Grantsville Revitalization Plan and Agricultural Village Study	Town of Grantsville	2015	25,000.00	50,000.00	MD

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
MS-15861-C1	MS Main Street Economic Development Charrette & Technical Assistance Program	Mississippi Main Street Association	2009	128,000.00	168,000.00	MS
MS-15861-I	Mississippi Main Street Economic Development Charrette & Technical Assistance Program	Mississippi Main Street Association	2008	142,000.00	182,000.00	MS
MS-15861-I-R1	MS Main Street Economic Development Charrette, Revision	Mississippi Main Street Association	2009	10,000.00	12,500.00	MS
MS-16061-C1*	Mississippi Appalachian Community Learning Project (ACLP)	The Rensselaerville Institute	2010	76,800.00	108,800.00	MS
MS-16061-C1-R1*	Mississippi Appalachian Community Learning Project (ACLP)	The Rensselaerville Institute	2012	8,664.00	13,291.00	MS
MS-16061-C2*	Mississippi Appalachian Community Learning Project (ACLP)	The Rensselaerville Institute	2011	87,580.00	125,114.00	MS
MS-16061-C2-R1*	Mississippi Appalachian Community Learning Project (ACLP)	The Rensselaerville Institute	2012	24,144.00	34,492.00	MS
MS-16061-C3*	Mississippi Appalachian Community Learning Project: Transitioning to Local Ownership	The Rensselaerville Institute	2013	259,000.00	369,000.00	MS
MS-16061-C3-R1*	Mississippi Appalachian Community Learning Project: Transitioning to Local Ownership	The Rensselaerville Institute	2014	14,000.00	20,000.00	MS
MS-16061-I*	Mississippi Appalachian Community Learning Project (ACLP)	The Rensselaerville Institute	2008	228,000.00	285,000.00	MS
MS-16515-I	Strategic Planning and Coaching Technical Assistance for Artesia and Crawford, Mississippi	Golden Triangle Planning & Development District	2010	20,000.00	28,570.00	MS
MS-16651-I	TAP Alliance Regional Economic Development Strategy	TAP Alliance	2010	37,300.00	53,350.00	MS
MS-16800-I	Starkville Main Street Economic Development Charrette	Mississippi Main Street Association	2010	25,000.00	35,715.00	MS

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
MS-17112-I*	Mississippi Community Action Program (MCAP)	Mississippi State University of Agriculture & Applied Sciences	2011	136,524.00	199,500.00	MS
MS-17127-I	Smithville Comprehensive Plan	Town of Smithville	2011	56,000.00	56,000.00	MS
NC-15971-I*	Mountain Landscape Initiative: A Tool Box	Southwestern North Carolina Planning & Economic Development Commission	2008	52,000.00	255,000.00	NC
NC-16688-I*	Southwestern Commission Toolbox Implementation Fund	Southwestern North Carolina Planning & Economic Development Commission	2010	300,000.00	550,000.00	NC
NC-17387-I	New Generation West Initiative	North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center	2012	200,000.00	400,000.00	NC
NY-15934-I*	Cuba Comprehensive Economic Development Planning	Village of Cuba	2008	20,000.00	40,500.00	NY
NY-15936-I	Southeast Steuben County I-86/I-99 Corridor Economic Development Blueprint	Three Rivers Development Foundation, Inc.	2008	40,000.00	80,000.00	NY
NY-16267-I	Watkins Glen Lakefront Management & Commercial Development Strategy	Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development	2009	15,000.00	30,000.00	NY
NY-16591-I	Burdett/Odessa Commercial District Improvement Strategy	Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development	2010	15,000.00	30,000.00	NY

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
NY-16666-I	Chemung County Human Services Efficiencies Planning	Southern Tier Central Regional Planning Development Board	2010	10,000.00	20,000.00	NY
NY-17531-I	Southport Economic Development Strategy	Town of Southport	2013	25,000.00	50,000.00	NY
OH-15682-R1	Appalachian Community Learning Program (ACLP)Phase II	The Rensselaerville Institute	2008	86,100.00	107,625.00	OH
OH-16473-I	OH Flex-E-Grant Community Facility Improvements	Ohio Development Services Agency	2009	100,000.00	600,000.00	OH
OH-17185-I	Appalachian Leadership in Utility Management Initiative	WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc.	2011	105,000.00	150,000.00	OH
PA-15736-C1*	River Towns Phase II: Discovering Middle Susquehanna Valley River Towns	SEDA-Council of Governments	2010	69,000.00	150,000.00	PA
PA-15829-I	Foxburg Revitalization Master Plan	Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission	2008	25,000.00	50,000.00	PA
PA-16465-I	Northwest PA Community Revitalization Assistance Project	Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission	2009	34,527.00	69,054.00	PA
PA-16621-I	Fulton County Industrial Development Capacity Project	Fulton Industrial Development Association	2010	24,000.00	48,000.00	PA
PA-16664-I*	Northeastern Pennsylvania Grantmakers	Northeastern Pennsylvania Nonprofit & Community	2010	80,000.00	160,000.00	PA

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
		Assistance Center (NCAC)				
PA-16697-I	Forest County Industrial Development Corporation Assistance	Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission	2010	47,000.00	58,750.00	PA
PA-16699-I	Forest County Comprehensive Plan	Forest County Board of Commissioners	2010	80,000.00	80,000.00	PA
PA-16949-I	Forest County Leadership Training & Capacity Development	Forest County Board of Commissioners	2011	8,125.00	12,565.00	PA
SC-16987-I	Mauldin Downtown Development Plan	City of Mauldin	2011	10,000.00	50,000.00	SC
TN-17156-I	Southeast Tennessee Sustainable Communities Planning Initiative	Southeast Tennessee Development District	2011	100,000.00	2,200,000.00	TN
TN-17888-I*	Tennessee Certified Economic Developers Program	University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service	2014	50,000.00	100,000.00	TN
TN-17906-I*	Mooresburg Community Association "Reaching Out"	Mooresburg Community Association	2014	43,397.00	72,250.00	TN
VA-14248-C4*	Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development	2008	17,000.00	21,250.00	VA
VA-14248-C5*	Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development	2009	51,096.78	63,870.98	VA
VA-14248-C6*	Virginia Flex-E-Grant Program	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development	2010	19,118.79	23,898.79	VA
VA-17035-I*	Haysi Downtown Revitalization Planning-Related Studies	Town of Haysi	2011	75,000.00	93,750.00	VA

Project number	Project title	Grantee name	Grant year	Funds from the Commission	Funds from all sources	Location of service area
VA-17053-I	Pocahontas Asset Inventory and Company Store Master Plan	Town of Pocahontas	2011	50,000.00	100,000.00	VA
WV-14334-C10*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2012	100,000.00	203,500.00	WV
WV-14334-C11*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2013	100,000.00	203,500.00	WV
WV-14334-C12*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2014	115,000.00	233,500.00	WV
WV-14334-C13*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2015	100,000.00	192,300.00	WV
WV-14334-C6*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2008	344,815.00	546,569.00	WV
WV-14334-C6-R1*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2009	84,771.00	121,000.00	WV
WV-14334-C7*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2009	316,727.00	458,727.00	WV
WV-14334-C7-R1*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2010	95,886.00	152,200.00	WV
WV-14334-C8*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2010	328,257.00	521,409.00	WV
WV-14334-C9*	West Virginia Flex-E-Grant	West Virginia Development Office	2011	200,000.00	341,500.00	WV