



*POWER Initiative Evaluation:  
The POWER of Change*

STORIES OF RESULTS FOR INDIVIDUALS, BUSINESSES, AND COMMUNITIES

September 2021 | Year 3 Final Report

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## Executive Summary

Since 2015, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has funded 293 projects<sup>1</sup> under the Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative to empower Appalachian communities to create more vibrant, diverse, and sustainable economies. To understand successes, challenges, and lessons learned through implementation, as well as to examine results of POWER projects, ARC secured Chamberlin/Dunn (C/D) as third-party evaluator beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019.

In this third year of evaluation (FY21), the team collaborated with ARC staff to pilot an evaluation technique new to ARC and to POWER, *Most Significant Change (MSC)*. A form of participatory evaluation and monitoring, MSC enables the articulation of both the values (the relative importance of different types of change) and value (reported change generated) of complex transformational initiatives with multiple types of beneficiaries, a wide variety of predefined indicators of change, and highly participatory interventions.<sup>2</sup>

Overarching evaluation questions for Year 3 included:

- What types of change do project stakeholders report as a result of POWER?
- What changes were “most significant,” as defined by POWER’s stakeholders?
- What early results of closed POWER projects have been reported as of mid-2021?

To answer these questions, evaluators solicited Stories of Change from POWER grantees and partners. POWER stakeholders submitted 72 stories representing 44 unique projects. Submitted stories were funneled through two phases of review by fellow POWER grantees and partners (Phase I) and by ARC staff and state program managers (Phase II), which led to the selection of seven stories that reviewers felt represented the “most significant change” resulting from POWER. The selected stories are featured in this evaluation report, and the content from all stories was analyzed to determine the results that POWER’s stakeholders appear to value most. In addition, evaluators examined the preliminary, at-close results of 131 closed projects. The FY21 evaluation also included two COVID-19 update surveys, the findings of which were summarized in companion reports to ARC.

### Key Findings

**POWER’s stakeholders appear to be working toward economic transformation by striving for change at multiple levels simultaneously: change at the individual, organization/business, and region/community levels.**

When asked to describe the types of change stakeholders expect to occur from the use of POWER funds, ARC staff, state staff, story reviewers, and grantees submitting stories of change described change at each of these levels. Further, when selecting outputs and outcomes by which to measure performance, most closed implementation projects

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<sup>1</sup>As of July 2021. <https://www.arc.gov/arcs-power-initiative>

<sup>2</sup> Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2005). The 'Most Significant Change' technique - A guide to its use. Funded by CARE International, United Kingdom Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, Australia | Learning to Learn, Government of South Australia Oxfam New Zealand | Christian Aid, United Kingdom | Exchange, United Kingdom Ibis, Denmark | Mellemsfolkeligt Samvirke (MS), Denmark Lutheran World Relief, United States of America. Retrieved from <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>

included metrics in at least two of these three levels of change, and many included metrics from all three levels. This simultaneous change appears to be one of POWER's values as well as the framework through which POWER results in value for communities.

**While there is not necessarily consensus on the specific story of change that represents the “most significant” change, clear themes emerged regarding change at each level.**

Related to stories of change about *individuals*, the analysis identified three main themes that resonated with storytellers and reviewers:

- *Providing job and career opportunities*, particularly to allow individuals to obtain viable career paths but also stay in the region
- *Offering individual skill-building*, including hands-on training for workers that may contribute to wage increases and better meeting the needs of employers, as well as real-world skills for students
- *Support for recovery from substance use disorder (SUD)*, by helping individuals with recovery coaching, basic needs, and employment support

Related to stories of change about *businesses and organizations*, the analysis identified themes related to:

- *Helping businesses increase revenue or decrease costs*, thus making the businesses more efficient, competitive, and sustainable
- The organizations' *improved ability to meet the needs of employers* in the community or region
- *Organizational skill-building* to ensure that businesses were effective and resilient, including in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic

Related to stories of change for *communities and regions*, the analysis identified themes associated with:

- *Supporting economic diversification* in the region, including building opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as supporting shifts to industries other than coal, such as tourism
- *Improving quality of place*, which included increasing access to basic needs such as healthcare, food, and infrastructure, as well as enhancing opportunities to make communities more vibrant, such as through better recreation
- *Increased collaboration and regional focus*, which helped to increase economies of scale for projects and better ensure their longer-term sustainability

**Grantees have up to three years after project close to achieve output and outcome targets; however, collectively, grantees with closed projects have already exceeded many cumulative (initiative-level) targets.**

The 12 outputs and outcomes for which collective achievement has exceeded the targets by the greatest degree<sup>3</sup> include the following:

- Participants served (43,259, 625% of target) and improved (16,320, 326%)
- Students served (95,188, 141%) and improved (68,213, 188%)
- Jobs retained (9,127, 206%)
- Businesses created (1,230, 173%) and improved (5,506, 141%)
- Workers/trainees served (17,872, 165%) and improved (10,266, 136%)
- Patients served (28,821, 166%) and improved (28,821, 166%)
- Export sales revenues increased (\$28.03M, 140% of target)

**In line with expectations, the achievement of certain outputs and outcomes may occur after project close. Particular attention should be paid to these metrics in post-close analysis. (This analysis is planned for FY22.)**

Collective, at-close achievement (percent of collective target) was lowest for the following metrics:

- 0 gigabytes and 0 megabits per second, 0% of target
- 1 telecom site, 0% of target (rounded)
- 156 new visitors – overnights, 1% of target
- 53 organizations improved, 20% of target
- 11,536 households served, 26% of target
- 11,414 households improved, 37% of target

In each case, these metrics were used in six or fewer projects, lending additional importance to the post-close follow-up process to determine achievement. See [Appendix C](#) for definitions of outputs and outcomes.

**ARC may need to take additional steps to encourage projects designed to compound change across large regions and/or change resulting from multiple, interconnected POWER projects.**

The evaluators are aware of several methods through which ARC currently encourages such change, including through funding subsequent phases of demonstrably successful projects; funding projects that cross state lines and/or intend to serve large regions; requiring appropriate partnerships, which may (but do not necessarily) include partnerships with other POWER grantees; and holding convenings to build organizational networks across Appalachia and to cross-pollinate ideas and contacts that may lead to future partnerships. Additionally, from prior work conducted under the POWER evaluation, the

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<sup>3</sup> Counts of individuals served and improved may be duplicated, as only aggregated numbers were reported and available (i.e., it is possible the same individual, business, or community benefitted from multiple projects, but data are not collected or reported in a way that would allow for identification of these circumstances nor deduplication of participants across projects).

evaluators are aware of examples of the same individual or business interacting with multiple POWER projects and examples of POWER grantees working from different angles on similar community challenges or priorities.

However, “change resulting from multiple POWER projects,” was one of just four broad domains of change ARC staff and leadership defined to guide the Stories of Change collection process, indicating this type of change is a high priority for ARC. Even so, the evaluators have observed no requirements in the POWER request for proposals nor in the ways POWER projects are formally measured that would compel grantees to deliberately embed this type of change in their project designs. If this type of change is indeed one of the highest priorities for POWER’s desired results, ARC should consider whether additional design or measurement strategies related to compounding change are needed.

### Additional Evaluation Steps

In FY22, the evaluation will examine the extent to which closed projects have achieved intended outputs and outcomes after close, achieved other unintended results, and reached traditionally underserved communities or otherwise advanced equity. The evaluation team will also work with ARC staff to integrate evaluation findings into POWER’s strategy for future years.



# POWER Initiative Evaluation: The POWER of Change

*Stories of Results for Individuals, Businesses, and Communities*

September 2021

## Introduction

## About the POWER Initiative

The Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative “targets resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America’s energy production.”<sup>4</sup> Since 2015, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has awarded 293 projects over \$238 million in POWER funding to help empower communities to create more vibrant, diverse, and sustainable economies. POWER projects have touched 353 coal-impacted counties in 13 states across Appalachia.<sup>5</sup>

POWER’s goal of creating a more vibrant economic future for coal-impacted communities is achieved through five distinct but interdependent investment goals, as outlined in the 2021 POWER Request for Proposal:

1. **Economic Opportunities:** Invest in entrepreneurial and business development strategies that strengthen Appalachia’s economy.
2. **Ready Workforce:** Improve the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia.
3. **Critical Infrastructure:** Invest in critical infrastructure, especially broadband; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway System; and water/wastewater systems.
4. **Natural and Cultural Assets:** Strengthen Appalachia’s community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region’s natural and cultural heritage assets.
5. **Leadership and Community Capacity:** Build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development.

In addition, ARC provides grantee support, training, and networking opportunities in pursuit of stronger project proposals, greater capacity for grant management, and increased likelihood that project results will be achieved.

## About the Evaluation

### Purpose and Objectives

This report is the third annual report in a series of studies designed to help ARC and stakeholders to learn from the experiences of those implementing and benefitting from POWER, gauge results, and provide recommendations for the initiative’s continuous improvement. A Year 1 (Fiscal Year 2019) Report was issued in October 2019 that focused on project strengths, challenges, and lessons learned. The Year 2/FY20 evaluation built on the FY19 evaluation with a focus on high-priority implementation topics, evaluation of new projects and those not previously evaluated, and assessment of the early results of closed POWER projects. The FY20 evaluation also included analysis of the early impacts of COVID-

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.arc.gov/arcs-power-initiative/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

19 on POWER grantees, organizations, and communities. In total, grantees and partners representing about 200 projects were engaged in the first two years of evaluation.

In Year 3/FY21 the evaluation team collaborated with ARC staff to pilot an evaluation technique new to ARC and to POWER, *Most Significant Change (MSC)*. A form of participatory evaluation and monitoring, MSC enables the articulation of both the values (the relative importance of different types of change) and value (reported change generated) of complex transformational initiatives with multiple types of beneficiaries, a wide variety of predefined indicators of change, and highly participatory interventions.<sup>6</sup> (See [Methodology](#) below).

Overarching evaluation questions for Year 3 included:

- What types of change do project stakeholders report as a result of POWER?
- What changes were “most significant,” as defined by POWER’s stakeholders?
- What early results of closed POWER projects have been reported as of mid-2021?

In addition to stories collected, reviewed, and analyzed through the lens of the MSC technique, evaluators examined the preliminary, at-close results of 131 closed projects, defined as past the period of performance and with closeout measures. Evaluators explored the extent to which outputs and outcomes have already been met at close, both collectively at the initiative level and individually at the project level.

FY21 evaluation activities also included two COVID-19 impact surveys to monitor and update the changes POWER grantees made in response to COVID-19; concerns about POWER-funded projects, organizations, and communities; and feedback about the support grantees needed and/or accessed from ARC. These findings were summarized in companion reports to ARC.

## Methodology

### Overview

MSC involves the “collection and systematic analysis of significant changes”<sup>7</sup> resulting from an initiative, as a means of evaluating that initiative. MSC was developed to respond to challenges associated with evaluating complex development programs that employ diverse implementation strategies toward the achievement of a wide variety of outcomes. Rather than focus on predefined indicators, MSC gathers stories of intermediate outcomes and impact to understand the importance of a program to its beneficiaries—primarily participants and communities—as well as its implementers, funders, and other stakeholders.

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<sup>6</sup> Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2005). The ‘Most Significant Change’ technique - A guide to its use, Funded by CARE International, United Kingdom Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, Australia | Learning to Learn, Government of South Australia Oxfam New Zealand | Christian Aid, United Kingdom | Exchange, United Kingdom Ibis, Denmark | Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke (MS), Denmark Lutheran World Relief, United States of America. Retrieved from <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2005).

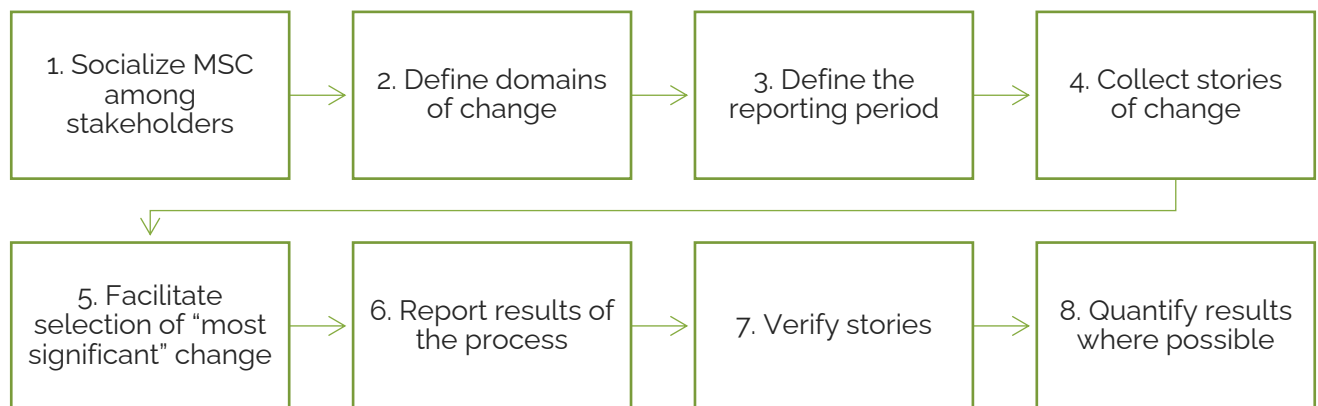
MSC is most appropriate for programs that meet the following criteria:<sup>8</sup>

- Are complex
- Are non-linear
- Focus on social change
- Produce a wide variety of outcomes
- Have outcomes that may be multifaceted
- Have outcomes that may be difficult to predict
- Serve a wide variety of beneficiaries
- Have highly participatory interventions
- Have stakeholders who seek to learn from field-level experiences

Unlike other forms of evaluation, MSC is designed to capture significant change and not necessarily typical change.

### Process

The evaluation team followed the steps outlined by the original developers of the MSC technique, depicted below:



For the POWER evaluation, the MSC technique was adapted to be reflective in nature;<sup>9</sup> grantees were able to voluntarily submit stories of change that had occurred at any point in time, for any project that had been open for at least one year prior to story collection.

The MSC technique also includes steps for secondary analysis and meta-monitoring and for revising the system, which were included through a meta-analysis of the MSC pilot for ARC.

<sup>8</sup>INTRAC (2017). Most significant change. <https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> MSC can also be used for active monitoring of a program's intermediate results as they are achieved, through regular and ongoing story collection and review. See Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2005).

The MSC process resulted in four ARC-defined domains of change under which grantees could submit stories:

1. Beneficiaries: Changes in the quality of life, economic conditions, and/or sense of possibility for people and businesses
2. Organizations: Changes in capacity, opportunity to implement mission, and/or ability to better serve beneficiaries for grantees or their partners
3. Regions: Changes in the broader capacity, economic conditions, or opportunity for a region
4. Lessons learned: Changes or results related to grantee learning and reflection

Grantees whose projects had begun in February 2020 or earlier, including closed projects, could voluntarily submit up to one story per domain. In total, the MSC story collection process yielded 72 stories from 44 projects representing a wide range of funding amounts; Appalachian communities; and project, participant, and organization types.

Stories were reviewed in two phases:

Phase I engaged 30 grantee-volunteers, and evaluators assigned each volunteer to two to three of 13 review sessions with five to six reviewers per session, based on reviewer availability.<sup>10</sup> Evaluators then randomly grouped stories within domains, randomly ordered stories within their groups, and randomly assigned story groups to review sessions.<sup>11</sup> Through 13 review sessions, Phase I reviewers identified 23 “most significant” stories to elevate to Phase II.

Phase II engaged 16 ARC staff and state program managers, divided into two groups, who reviewed and ranked the remaining stories during three review sessions each. Evaluators assessed the results of ranked-voting and each story’s rank-based scores to determine the final mix of stories.

These review phases resulted in seven stories of “most significant change,” as defined by stakeholder-reviewers, which are featured in this report. Evaluators systematically analyzed selected stories, nonselected stories, and transcripts from selection discussions to identify themes related to POWER’s value and values. Based on this analysis, the domains of change were revised from four categories to three levels: individuals, businesses and organizations, and regions and communities. Additionally, evaluators descriptively analyzed the at-close results of the 131 projects to quantitatively define POWER’s value to date.

See [Appendix A](#) for a detailed description of the activities performed, methods employed for each step, and evaluation notes and limitations.

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<sup>10</sup> Initially, each reviewer was assigned to three review sessions, and each session had six to seven volunteers. Due to scheduling conflicts, session participation resulted in five to six reviewers present for each session.

<sup>11</sup> Additional steps were taken to ensure volunteers were not assigned to a review group scheduled to review a story related to their organization, to reduce selection bias. Steps included changing reviewer-session pairings and/or changing story-session pairings, based on alignment with volunteer availability and story domain.

## Changes Resulting from POWER

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*"I love the position that I am in, I love my job, and I love that I have found my path...This program alone has changed the lives and perspective of how change is possible [in our region]. I am living proof of this change."*

Participant of Big Sandy CTC's Eastern KY Coal Transformation project

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## The Value of POWER

The process to define and collect stories of "Most Significant Change" (MSC) began with a definition of four domains of change, which guided story collection: changes in the quality of life, economic conditions, and/or sense of possibility for POWER project beneficiaries; changes in capacity, opportunity to implement mission, and/or ability to better serve beneficiaries for grantees or their partners; changes in the broader capacity, economic conditions, or opportunity for a region; and changes or results related to grantee learning and reflection.

In line with MSC technique guidance from its developers, evaluators revisited these domains in the context of the 72 stories actually submitted and reviewer discussions that took place during 19 story review sessions. This content analysis resulted in revised definitions of POWER's *value* (products, results, and accomplishments) and *values* (the principles or standards by which stakeholders assess those results) in the form of three levels of change to promote economic transformation:

- Changes for **individuals**—serving and improving participants, students, workers/trainees, and patients
- Changes for **businesses and organizations**—serving and improving businesses and organizations, including through increased sales, as well as leveraging private investment to achieve progress
- Changes brought about for **communities and regions**—serving and improving households and communities; creating and retaining new jobs and businesses; establishing new programs; and producing tangible results such as new programs, developed acreage, new linear feet of broadband, and new visitors<sup>12</sup>

This striving for multilevel change is apparent in the formal definitions of POWER's predefined outputs and outcomes: approximately eight metrics relate to individuals, seven relate to businesses and organizations, and 17 relate to communities.

It is also apparent in the combinations of these metrics by which grantees choose, via POWER proposals, to measure their results. The POWER RFPs have directed grantees to propose outputs and outcomes and accompanying targets, aligned to their specific project design and objectives; however, the RFPs allow grantees to self-select which (or what combination of) metrics are most applicable to their proposed projects. Of the 75

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<sup>12</sup> Through thematic analysis, evaluators determined that the content of stories and review sessions related to Lessons Learned were substantially related to these other levels of change, and stories were regrouped accordingly.



implementation (non-planning) projects with closeout metrics by July 2021, more than three-quarters (n=58) chose to be measured through a combination of individual, business/organization, and community/region metrics, rather than by metrics in just one level of change. This indicates that grantees design most projects to achieve economic transformation through change at multiple levels, simultaneously.

The contents of submitted stories of change and the content of stakeholder discussions while reviewing those stories, too, reflect this concept of multilevel change, with greater specificity regarding the types of change stakeholders appear to value most.

Related to stories of change about **individuals**, the analysis identified three main themes that resonated with storytellers and reviewers:

- **Providing job and career opportunities**, particularly to allow individuals to obtain viable career paths but also stay in the region
- Offering **individual skill-building**, including hands-on training for workers that may contribute to wage increases and better meeting the needs of employers, as well as real-world skills for students
- Support for **recovery from substance use disorder (SUD)**, by helping individuals with recovery coaching, basic needs, and employment support

Related to stories of change about **businesses and organizations**, including grantees and their partners as well as other businesses and organizations benefiting from POWER, the analysis identified themes related to:

- Helping businesses **increase revenue or decrease costs**, thus making the businesses more efficient, competitive, and sustainable
- The organizations' improved ability to **meet the needs of employers** in the community or region
- **Organizational skill-building** to ensure that businesses were effective and resilient, including while operating during the COVID-19 pandemic

Related to stories of change for **communities and regions**, the analysis identified themes associated with:

- Supporting **economic diversification** in the region, including building opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as supporting shifts to industries other than coal, such as tourism
- **Improving quality of place**, which included increasing access to basic needs such as healthcare, food, and infrastructure, as well as enhancing opportunities to make communities more vibrant, such as through better recreation
- **Increased collaboration and regional focus**, which helped to increase economies of scale for projects and better ensure their longer-term sustainability.

This section examines the content of 72 submitted Stories of Change to discuss themes related to POWER's qualitative results; presents the seven elevated stories of "Most Significant Change" as identified by POWER stakeholders serving as volunteer reviewers; and reviews the results of 131 closed projects that were past the period of performance and had closeout metrics as of June 2021.

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*"This job could set me on a whole new direction.*

*It's the biggest thing that's ever happened to me."*

Participant of Rural Action's Asset-Based Entrepreneurship:  
Trails, Towns, and Tourism in the Appalachian Ohio Economy

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## Changes for Individuals in Appalachia

Broad themes of individual-level changes identified through the Most Significant Change (MSC) process included skill-building, new or enhanced career opportunities in the region, and support for recovery from substance use disorder (SUD). These themes relate to outputs and outcomes including participants, patients, students, and workers/trainees served and improved.

### Early Results of Closed Projects

The at-close outputs and outcomes<sup>13</sup> reported for 131 projects closed as of the time of this report indicate that projects collectively have served nearly **185,000 individuals** and have improved nearly **125,000**.<sup>14</sup> This includes:

- 43,259 participants served / 16,320 improved
- 28,821 patients served / 28,821 improved
- 95,188 students served / 68,213 improved
- 17,872 workers/trainees served / 10,266 improved

Collectively, the grantees that reported metrics related to individuals have exceeded all planned outputs and outcomes at close, including serving 625% more participants; 166% more patients; 165% more workers; and 141% more students than planned. Over half of projects that set individual-related outputs have met planned targets at close for students served, patients served, and participants served (with 90% meeting the latter).

At close, grantees reported having improved 326% more participants, 188% more students, 166% more patients, and 136% more workers/trainees than planned. More than half of projects have met outcome targets for patients and participants improved. (Post-close analysis through the FY22 evaluation will identify the extent to which additional outputs and outcomes have been achieved). See Table 1.

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<sup>13</sup> The outputs and outcomes reported in this section represent numbers at grant closeout. For many outputs and outcomes, grantees have up to three years after the project has closed to achieve them. As such, the numbers reported in this section should be considered preliminary, at-close numbers only.

<sup>14</sup> Counts of individuals served and improved may be duplicated, as only aggregated numbers were reported and available. Counts include only those projects that reported both planned and at-close numbers for an individual metric.

Table 1: Individual-Level Outputs/Outcomes

| Type           | Description (# reporting)        | Planned | At Close | % of Metric at Close | #/% Grantees Meeting <sup>15</sup> at Close |
|----------------|----------------------------------|---------|----------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Output</b>  | Participants served (n=21)       | 6,917   | 43,259   | 625.4%               | 19/90%                                      |
|                | Patients served (n=3)            | 17,360  | 28,821   | 166.0%               | 2/67%                                       |
|                | Students served (n=17)           | 67,490  | 95,188   | 141.0%               | 10/59%                                      |
|                | Workers/trainees served (n=16)   | 10,851  | 17,872   | 164.7%               | 7/44%                                       |
| <b>Outcome</b> | Participants improved (n=20)     | 5,009   | 16,320   | 325.8%               | 18/90%                                      |
|                | Patients improved (n=3)          | 17,360  | 28,821   | 166.0%               | 2/67%                                       |
|                | Students improved (n=15)         | 36,310  | 68,213   | 187.9%               | 7/47%                                       |
|                | Workers/trainees improved (n=16) | 7,540   | 10,266   | 136.2%               | 6/38%                                       |

## Results Described in Submitted Stories of Change

Grantees that submitted stories of change about individuals described change in the following three main ways:

- **Career opportunities in the region:** Supporting or creating in-demand, often higher-wage, and in some cases, remote or technology-based career opportunities for individuals that allow for economic prosperity and the ability to stay in the region.
- **Individual knowledge and skill-building:** Building skills and knowledge needed for successfully changing or entering new careers, as well as enhancing business-related knowledge for entrepreneurs, such as designing strong business plans, utilizing effective marketing strategies, and growing small businesses.
- **Support for recovery from SUD:** Assisting individuals in addressing behaviors that led to substance use disorder, as well as building self-sustainability and resiliency.

### Career opportunities in the region

Part of POWER's overall goal in creating a more vibrant future for coal-impacted communities is ensuring that individuals in the region have access to new or enhanced, viable career pathways. Grantees that submitted stories of change provided evidence of success in that area. A participant in The Center for Rural Development's Community Oriented Access to Learning (COAL) program who had been working low-paying fast-food jobs was able to graduate as a certified recovery coach and is now employed as a recovery coach specialist at a local hospital. She stated, "This experience has helped me literally turn my life around... I can pay my bills, buy my kids things that I never could before. I don't have to struggle. I am working a job with benefits. How amazing is that?"

<sup>15</sup> "Meeting" is defined as meeting at 95% or higher at project close and includes grantees who exceeded their targets.

### **Individual knowledge and skill-building**

To ensure that individuals are prepared for career opportunities (both with existing and new businesses), participants must have the general and specific knowledge and skills to succeed in those careers. Grantees submitting stories described individuals who had increased general employability skills as well as skills specific to a trade or career, in addition to individuals obtaining degrees or credentials. To illustrate, one participant in Big Sandy Career & Technical College's Eastern Kentucky Coal Transformation project noted, "With my time here at [the program], I have learned and observed many skills that I will forever be able to use wherever I am." Entrepreneurs and small-business owners discussed the impact of training and coaching not only to keep their businesses viable, but also to expand them. One participant of Advantage Valley's FASTER WV – Fostering Advantages for Startups & Entrepreneurial Resurgence in WV credited the support he received with making adaptive changes that helped grow his business, noting, "[T]his program has been the best thing we've ever participated in. It's a literal one-stop shop for small business." A participant with SEDA – Council of Governments' Central PA Asset-Based Economy: Adaptive Reuse of Coal-Impacted Recreation as an Economic Engine, which provided guidance to small business owners in things like creating business plans, making financial projections, and effectively marketing, reported that the "professional and patient support of the [project staff] has been vital, and that their doors, hearts, and minds were always open."

### **Support for recovery from substance use disorder**

The opioid crisis has had a profound and disproportionate impact on Appalachia – to illustrate, the 2018 overdose mortality rate for individuals ages 25-54 was 43% higher than in the

### **The Significance of Selected Stories of Change about Individuals**

Through **Alabama STRONG**, an incumbent worker with limited upward mobility pursued individual knowledge and skill building to find new career opportunities in the region. The training he received allowed him to make a "life-changing career move" and, according to the grantee and the participant, inspired others to enroll in the same training and make similarly meaningful transitions. Reviewers valued the "cascading" impact and saw the project as scalable and applicable to other parts of Appalachia.

The **TechHire Eastern Kentucky (TEKY) Initiative** "seeded a new way of viewing the digital economy in Eastern Kentucky," building knowledge and skills and creating career opportunities that reportedly allowed residents to stay in the region. Reviewers commented on the large number of individuals impacted and on the value of the (technology) skills participants gained through TEK Y.

rest of the United States.<sup>16</sup> Substance Use Disorder (SUD) affects individuals' ability to work and support themselves and their families, as well as to contribute to the broader health and well-being of the community. Some grantees submitting stories of change described successes associated with supporting individuals in their sustained recovery from SUD. One participant in Morgantown Sober Living's Reintegrate Appalachia project, which provided coaching, basic needs, and employment support for individuals in recovery noted, "...for me to get this break, it is just unbelievable. I go to work every day... The things I felt I needed in addiction – those things don't appeal to me anymore. I just want a little normalcy in my life, and that's what I'm gaining in this program." A participant in the Housing Development Alliance's Hope Building project credited having a job, which the project helped him gain, as well as the support of program staff, in assisting with his sustained recovery. "If you don't have a job, you get discouraged...Having that stability helps you stay on top of your goals...When you have people that are willing to give you that second chance, you're happy to work; you're happy to get out there and do something different with your life."

The themes of career opportunities in the region and individual knowledge and skill-building featured prominently in the two volunteer-selected stories of change that were primarily about change for individuals. (SUD was a strong theme in many submitted stories and several of the stories elevated from Phase I review to Phase II but was not a focus of the stories that volunteers ultimately ranked as *most significant*.)

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<sup>16</sup> ARC: Addressing substance abuse in Appalachia. <https://www.arc.gov/addressing-substance-abuse-in-appalachia/>

# SELECTED STORY OF CHANGE

## Middle-aged Husband and Wife Change Careers and Change Their Lives

### Alabama STRONG: Skills Training to Support Real Opportunities for New Job Growth

### Alabama Community College System Montgomery, AL

*This ARC POWER Story of Change involves a forty-five-year-old man. To protect his anonymity, we will call him Mr. A.D. Robbs. Mr. Robbs worked for eighteen years with an asphalt company, making a good salary; but with all his obligations, even with overtime it did not meet the financial needs of his family. Mr. Robbs is married, has six children (two in college), and has a mortgage. He is also helping with the expenses and care of his aging mother.*

*While he enjoyed working for the asphalt company, the compensation was not sufficient to meet the needs of his family. He would often take on additional part-time jobs, which he said helped to raise the family's income, but still did not totally cover all expenses. He learned of the Ready to Work program at Shelton State Community College from a friend and decided to enroll in the program. Mr. Robbs said the Ready to Work (RTW) program not only allowed him the opportunity to earn two certifications (Alabama Certified Workers Certificate and National Career Readiness Certificate), but the program taught him new skills and enhanced old skills. He was very impressed with all the RTW modules, but the modules he enjoyed most were Communications, Technology Basics and FDIC (Personal Finance).*

*Mr. Robbs said the Communications module refreshed some verbal and written communication skills. The Technology Basics module gave him a better understanding of how to navigate the internet, gave him exposure to Excel and taught him how to develop PowerPoint Presentations.*

*This is Mr. Robbs' testimony: "The Ready to Work program allowed me to freshen up my reading and*

**Purpose:** Increase awareness about the current and future job opportunities in the advanced manufacturing industry and place both students and workers into good jobs in principally high-wage and high-demand careers available in Alabama's advanced manufacturing industry, and to upskill incumbent workers so that they and their employers remain competitive.

#### **Outputs (Projected)**

- 2,614 workers/trainees served
- 49 workers/trainees receive technical training
- 1,624 students served
- 77 businesses served
- 5,490 participants from short-term workshops and outreach

#### **Outcomes (Projected)**

- 2,101 workers/trainees obtain new or enhanced positions
- 976 students obtain new or enhanced positions
- 1,132 jobs retained
- 7 jobs created
- 6 programs implemented
- 77 participating businesses (100%) improved through a more skilled workforce
- 5,490 participants benefit

*math skills, as well as opened avenues for new employment opportunities. Now, I have a new career working in a manufacturing setting with much better benefits and more than twice the salary. After my wife saw how the RTW program helped elevate me to a better paying job, she decided to enroll in the program too. After she completed the program, she was able to secure a job working in manufacturing with a much higher pay [rate] and much better benefits. This program has also inspired me to go back to school and finish my degree in Business Administration. I thank God [for] the Ready to Work program; it is a game-changer and has made a major difference in our lives."*

*Mr. Robbs has received a fulltime position at Phifer, Inc., which is a manufacturing company in Tuscaloosa, AL. He has recommended several people to the RTW program at Shelton State Community College*

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# SELECTED STORY OF CHANGE

## Positioning Appalachia as a Hub of Tech Activity and Remote Employment Opportunities

### TechHire Eastern Kentucky (TEKY) Initiative: Developing a Technology- Driven Workforce to Transform Rural Appalachia

### Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc., Hazard, KY

*The POWER Initiative and this grant brought reality to a long-held vision of Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP), which was—and is—to position Appalachia as a hub of tech activity and remote employment opportunities. We are no longer merely discussing ways to combat the downturn of the coal industry; we are taking action as a region to revive our economy with new and exciting opportunities that will give our best and brightest citizens an opportunity to live and work in the region they love. We take pride in knowing that, as a region, we proved that Appalachia can, indeed, be a hub where a remote, tech-based, digital-economy workforce can grow and thrive.*

*Throughout our TechHire Eastern Kentucky initiative, EKCEP developed a unified effort of tech and tech-related employers that worked closely together with workforce development, higher education, economic and regional development to secure, guide, and deliver accelerated training, work-based volunteer internship activity, on-the-job training placements, and ultimately employment opportunities for Eastern Kentuckians.*

*The shared effort expended, and risk accepted among so many organizations, citizens, and businesses in attempting first-time tech endeavors in a region that continues to reel from the precipitous decline of the coal industry is to be commended.*

*Our activity has been a powerful catalyst for change, particularly at the postsecondary education level in Eastern Kentucky, toward accelerated, industry-led IT training. The partnerships created between the colleges and training providers featured in this grant created new activities and programs that spring-boarded from IT-related training and internship efforts introduced through our POWER-funded programs. Interest remains high among these institutions in*

**Purpose:** To provide in-demand technology workforce skills to unemployed and underemployed residents of eastern Kentucky.

#### **Outputs (At close)**

- 38 businesses served of 20 projected
- 5 organizations served of 3 projected
- 984 workers/trainees served of 200 projected

#### **Outcomes (At close)**

- 45 businesses served of 10 projected
- 5 organizations improved of 3 projected
- 392 jobs created of 160 projected
- 406 workers/trainees improved of 160 projected



*continuing our work and building new programs into their catalogs that could potentially carry credit and potentially be eligible for some measure of traditional financial aid.*

*One example of this ongoing collaboration and furthered vision centers around Hazard Community and Technical College partnering with Central App Technologies under the KCTCS Digital Careers Now initiative to design and launch a training program modeled after the training conducted by EKCEP in Hazard, Ky. under the TechHire Eastern Kentucky POWER grant. This program prepared students to earn three globally esteemed Salesforce certifications – Admin Specialist, App Builder, and Developer I. The training features three phases of instruction to be completed within 40 weeks. Throughout the training, participants have access to online resources to supplement instruction as well as access to a success coach to address barriers along the way. As part of the program, Central App committed to providing each certified graduate an opportunity to work within their Talent Exchanged and be mentored by one of Central App's staff to build their knowledge and experience within the industry, upon successfully completing the training program and earning the certifications. This level of activity between a community college and private-sector employer to create an apprenticeship-like model that could fill the demand for Central App gig-economy workers is vastly transformational for our region on many fronts.*

*EKCEP also presented its private-sector cybersecurity partner 418 Intelligence Corporation to leadership of Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKCTC). That college—in partnership with Big Sandy Community and Technical College and Hazard Community and Technical College under the Digital Careers Now POWER initiative—is carrying on the mission we started to train and intern Eastern Kentuckians in advanced cybersecurity skills that can lead to remote employment with companies outside the region, and potentially even with municipalities and businesses within the region who are now seeing the importance of a robust cybersecurity threat-detection mindset. Though not leading the project now, EKCEP continues to serve its participants—in a more traditional workforce development capacity—by utilizing its federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) resources to cover trainees' weekly stipends necessary for them to participate in a novel internship concept in an immersive work-based learning environment with regional municipalities and businesses.*

*Additionally, when we look at our Teleworks USA program, which has helped thousands of jobseekers find remote employment in tech support and customer service positions with global and national companies since 2015, we also envision a network of training programs led by higher education institutions across our region that are working to meet the needs of higher-skilled, tech-related businesses either in the region or across the globe.*

*Due in large part to this POWER grant, collective change in viewing the digital economy as a solution for economic revitalization has trickled down to private-sector businesses and local government throughout Eastern Kentucky.*

*With regard to Teleworks USA, an executive employee from a private-sector internet service provider based in Pikeville, Ky. said, "There is a hope our local leaders understand the economic impact this program has in our region. (It is) the 'unsung' economic support engine." This is paired with perhaps our favorite remark made by a judge-executive in Lee County, KY in response to our Teleworks USA 2020 Impact Report: "And we have only just begun".*

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*"POWER funds enabled us to change a [business] culture  
that will have lasting effects on our region."*

Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission,  
The Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

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## Changes for Appalachian Businesses/Organizations

Broad themes of business or organization-level changes identified through the Most Significant Change (MSC) process included increasing revenue or decreasing costs for businesses; improved ability to meet employer needs in the community or region; and building organization-level skills to promote continued sustainability and growth. These themes relate to outputs and outcomes at grant closeout including businesses and organizations served and improved; leveraged private investment; and revenues increased (export sales and non-export).

### Early Results of Closed Projects

The at-close outputs and outcomes<sup>17</sup> reported for 131 projects closed as of the time of this report indicate that at the organization level, grantees collectively have served over **8,500 businesses** and improved over **5,500**. They have served over **200 organizations** and improved **53**. In addition, grantees collectively have leveraged over **\$504 million in private investment**, increased **export sales** by over **\$28 million**, and increased **non-export sales** by over **\$21 million**.

Collectively, grantees have exceeded planned targets at grant close for one output and three outcomes, serving 110% more businesses than planned, as well as improving 141% more businesses and increasing revenues by 140% more than planned. Half or more projects have reported meeting both planned outputs at close, and half or more projects have reported meeting four of the five outcomes at close. See Table 2.

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<sup>17</sup> Outputs and outcomes reported represent numbers at grant close. For many metrics, grantees have up to three years after the project has closed to achieve them. As such, the numbers reported in this section should be considered preliminary, at close numbers only. Only two grantees of the 131 had verified, post-close numbers reported at the time of this report.

Table 2: Organization-Level Outputs/Outcomes

| Type           | Description (# reporting)               | Planned   | At Close  | % of Metric at Close | #/% Grantees Meeting <sup>18</sup> at Close |
|----------------|---|-----------|-----------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Output</b>  | Businesses served (n=45)                | 7,830     | 8,580     | 109.6%               | 33/73%                                      |
|                | Organizations served (n=6)              | 265       | 213       | 80.4%                | 3/50%                                       |
| <b>Outcome</b> | Businesses improved (n=45)              | 3,906     | 5,506     | 141.0%               | 32/71%                                      |
|                | Leveraged private investment (n=36)     | \$534.38M | \$504.47M | 94.4%                | 25/69%                                      |
|                | Organizations improved (n=6)            | 262       | 53        | 20.2%                | 4/67%                                       |
|                | Revenues increased (export sales) (n=1) | \$20M     | \$28.03M  | 140.2%               | 1/100%                                      |
|                | Revenues increased (non-export) (n=5)   | \$20.93M  | \$21.15M  | 101.0%               | 2/40%                                       |

### Results Described in Submitted Stories of Change

Grantees that submitted stories of change about organizations or businesses broadly described change in three main ways:

- **Increased revenue/decreased costs:** Assisting businesses to enter into new markets or grow business areas, resulting in increased revenue, as well as helping businesses find efficiencies and improve processes to decrease cost, thus driving larger profits and smoother operations.
- **Improved ability to meet employer needs in the community:** Utilizing training opportunities, collaboration, and partnerships to provide more skilled workers and targeted programming to address skill and hiring gaps and meet market demand.
- **Organizational skill-building:** Leveraging coaching and learning opportunities to collectively build the skills of business owners and their employees, resulting in a more effective and sustainable organization.

#### Increased revenue/decreased costs

POWER projects focused on business and community development recognize the importance of supporting businesses to be not only viable in the short-term, but also high-functioning and sustainable in the longer-term. This may include assisting businesses to review processes and identify and correct inefficiencies; providing resources and support for entrepreneurial businesses to access and grow capital and increase their markets; and helping with succession planning. Catalyst Connection reported that through their PA MAKES project, a company they served was able to improve its pricing strategies and cost structures to make their selling prices more competitive, resulting in \$21,000 in new sales, \$10,000 in retained sales, and \$93,000 of investments. WV Food & Farm Coalition's Geographic Food and Agriculture Systems Development project supported the creation of a centralized cold storage space for farmers that allowed a farm collective and other distribution groups to transfer local products for use in restaurants, schools, and other markets, while also picking up produce from local growers. This has resulted in one farm

<sup>18</sup> "Meeting" is defined as meeting at 95% or higher at project close and includes grantees who exceeded their targets.

doubling sales while at the same time reducing overhead costs and travel time. Some POWER grantees were even able to help businesses grow despite the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Virginia Community Capital's New Economy Loan Fund project offered a loan which helped a Virginia-based small business limit the impact of the pandemic and continue to grow. As the grantee reported, "The rarity of small businesses being able to sustain growth during the...pandemic is exceptionally commendable...This stability not only benefits the company, but also the community..."

### **Improved ability to meet employer needs in the community**

Economic revitalization relies in part on the ability of organizations that train and supply workers to ensure that they are meeting the demands of the market. This includes aligning education and training with current skills gaps, as well as collaborating with employers to proactively identify and address market shifts. Coalfield Development's SEED-LIFT project worked to "establish...partnerships with employers to understand their pinch points and concerns when it comes to hiring untrained or displaced workers, and workers in recovery and/or re-entering the workforce after incarceration. We are developing [our program] to best match employers' needs, including our own social enterprises, and [we are] intentionally finding ways to bring employers and potential employees together." An employer partner of Hazard Community & Technical College noted about Hazard's Intergenerational Training Center, "We are fortunate to have a community college so committed to helping train the workers we need. We expect to be hiring for many years to come, and we are grateful we have a partner [in] HCTC to help us find the right employees."

### **Organizational skill-building**

Grantees that submitted stories of change reported the effectiveness of building the collective skills of employees at the organization, helping to

## **The Significance of Selected Stories of Change about Organizations and Businesses**

The **Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem** focused on organizational skill-building both for the grantee organization and for the businesses it served. Reviewers commented on the culture change described, as economic developers in the region embraced entrepreneurship as an economic development strategy, leading to what reviewers estimated will be sustainable strategies and ongoing investment.

The **R3 Appalachia Initiative** increased revenue and supported business retention in Southeast Kentucky. Originally a story about a "lesson learned," the grantee described adapting the R3 design in response to business challenges during the first part of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Downtown Revitalization in the Promise Zone** features Why Whitley, a new organization whose volunteers built skills in community development, funding, and community revitalization to grow the community in a "sustainable, professional, and monumental way" and to "become a place that residents and visitors alike can celebrate."

contribute to organizational stability and build opportunities for career growth. This skill-building often benefitted employees at multiple levels, including leadership or business owners. A steel manufacturing company that sent multiple employees to participate in training offered through the Alabama Community College System's Alabama S.T.R.O.N.G. project felt that the programming provided valuable skills refreshers, as well as new information to help its employees enhance their job roles and responsibilities. According to the company president, "the blueprint class was just priceless." The training and support provided by the Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED)'s Supplier Education Economic Development (SEED) Program Expansion project have, according to SKED's executive director, "enabled SKED to capture the resources the small manufacturers in our part of the Appalachian region so desperately need to compete with others across the country and world and win contracts they once never thought possible." SEED's training has contributed to nine new contracts awarded and an investment of \$17.7 million back into the region.

The themes of increased revenue/decreased costs, improved ability to meet employer needs in the community, and organizational skill-building were illustrated in the three stories of change about organizations and businesses that volunteers identified as representing the *most significant* change.

# SELECTED STORY OF CHANGE

## POWER Up Economic Development with an Embedded Entrepreneur Coach

The Alleghenies  
Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Southern Alleghenies Planning  
& Development Commission  
Blair County, PA

*Entrepreneurship is a proven driver of economic growth and job creation. Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) are frequently the first stop for entrepreneurs who are considering launching or expanding their business. But entrepreneurs face numerous challenges to success. Many begin their journey without a complete understanding of the depth of analysis, planning and preparation needed to take their big idea to market. As a result, creativity and motivation vanish under a frustrating deluge of confusing legal and financial paperwork. Often, they are holding down "day jobs," while they try to navigate the right path for their business. Since there is no single pathway to success, mentoring an entrepreneur through this process requires a specific type of experience and a significant time commitment.*

*Nurturing existing businesses and helping entrepreneurs get off to a successful start is a critical role for EDOs. But like many other nonprofits, the leadership and staff at traditional EDOs also have a wide portfolio of other responsibilities that require significant staff time and focus. This is particularly true of EDOs working to revitalize regions rebounding from the decline of the coal industry. After speaking with entrepreneurs and EDOs across the Alleghenies, Startup Alleghenies (SUA) realized that a win-win for both EDOs and entrepreneurs was the creation of a new position -- a dedicated entrepreneur coach. The coach would be embedded in each EDO, and focus on supporting entrepreneurs, while heightening the focus on entrepreneurship within each organization. Not only would this position be transformative for the EDO, it also would be a catalyst to achieving SUA's overarching goal of seeding and supporting regional entrepreneurship.*

**Purpose:** To assist entrepreneurs in their quest to start new ventures through a diversified program of business technical assistance

### Outputs (Projected)

- 90 clients and tenants of entrepreneur spaces receive direct assistance
- 400 individuals participate in training and networking events

### Outcomes (Projected)

- 30 new businesses created
- 20 existing businesses improved
- \$2 million in leveraged private investment
- 150 new jobs created

*SUA piloted and financed the first coaching positions with funding from its POWER grant. The first three coaches mentored entrepreneurs in Blair, Cambria, and Somerset Counties. They were immediately embraced (almost overwhelmed, in some cases) by entrepreneurs as a critical factor to their success. EDOs also reported an immediate impact on their organization's ability to encourage and support new business development. As a result, when more funding became available to expand the SUA movement, three more coaches were added to serve Bedford, Huntingdon, and Fulton Counties.*

*Entrepreneur Coaches work one-on-one with startups and small emerging businesses—whether the business idea is only on paper or already in the works. They are the doorway to the vast network of partner resources available within the SUA ecosystem, ensuring they receive exactly what help they need, when they need it.*

*During the past five years, SUA Coaches have heard “their” entrepreneurs value having someone to encourage them through ideas, engage with them through the process of starting or emerging their business, or just being there for them on good and bad days.*

*Perhaps the greatest proof of the value and impact of an SUA Entrepreneur Coach surfaced when pilot funding for the first coach salaries expired. Today, three of five of SUA's first EDO partners are continuing their coaching position even after salary support ended two years ago.*

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# SELECTED STORY OF CHANGE

## Southeast Kentucky Downtown Businesses Stimulus Fund: Saving Jobs and Small Businesses During COVID

The ReVitalize, ReInvest and ReDevelop (R3)  
Appalachia Initiative

Foundation for  
Appalachian Kentucky  
Hazard, KY

*Within two weeks of the shutdown of Kentucky's economy, the Appalachian Impact Fund at the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky brought together partners to launch an effective COVID response to help save small businesses throughout the region in support of downtown revitalization efforts.*

*In partnership with the Community Economic Development Initiative for Kentucky (CEDIK) and Invest 606, the Appalachian Impact Fund created the Southeast Kentucky Downtown Business Stimulus Fund with part of that funding provided by our POWER grant with the Appalachian Regional Commission. To date, the Stimulus Fund has provided 153 grants, ranging from \$600 to \$3000, totaling \$385,400 to business owners in 23 counties. These businesses represent a mix of restaurants, unique retail, amusement, personal services, and others active in the broader downtown and tourism ecosystems. The 153 businesses that received grant funds represent \$26,938,141.00 in gross sales. They also represent 347 full time jobs, 282 part time jobs, and 88 seasonal jobs.*

*Over 60% of businesses funded are women-owned, and the selection committee took steps to ensure priority was given to women, people of color, and immigrant owned businesses. The Fund also released \$66,000 in 0% interest loans to 8 businesses from the Appalachian Impact Fund's revolving loan fund in partnership with Invest 606 as part of our R3 POWER grant to help stabilize those vital downtown businesses helping to revitalize our Main Streets.*

*We designed the Southeast Kentucky Healthy Downtowns Initiative grant program and implemented*

**Purpose:** This grant helps finance a revolving loan fund and technical assistance program that supports downtown revitalization efforts and entrepreneurial ecosystems across 10 counties in Southeastern Kentucky

### Outputs (Planned)

- 10 communities served
- 200 businesses served
- 100 Youth Engagement Leadership Program (YELP) participants served
- 10 downtown investment and revitalization plans produced

### Outcomes (Planned)

- 10 communities improved
- 100 businesses improved
- 90 YELP participants improved
- 60 jobs created
- 20 jobs retained
- \$7.6 million in leveraged private investment



*it with our partners at CEDIK and Invest 606. Funding came from the Phase II raise for the Downtown Stimulus Fund. The program provided support to nonprofit organizations, local businesses, and public partners focused on downtown revitalization, community economic development, engagement, and public health during the COVID pandemic and Kentucky's reopening. We funded a total of 6 downtown collaboratives that include a mix of downtown businesses and organizations focused on creating new ways for people to interact safely with public spaces and commerce. We seek to ensure our downtown businesses and communities have the resources they need to keep public health and safety a priority as businesses reopen to the public after COVID and face an uncertain future that could include re-closures.*

*Eight Eastern Kentucky downtowns were invited to apply and six received \$30,000 implementation grants including: Harlan, Irvine, Pikeville, Prestonsburg, Williamsburg, and Whitesburg. We have just received final reports from those projects that are being compiled, but the completed activities included: branded PPE and hand sanitizer stations for downtown businesses in Prestonsburg, an outdoor pop-up movie theater in Pikeville, COVID safe Downtown Shop Hops in Harlan and Cumberland, a new e-commerce site for downtown businesses in Irvine, repurposing a previously abandoned property in Whitesburg to provide river-side public dining in support of downtown restaurants, implementation of new public space design and outdoor public dining spaces in Williamsburg, and several of the programs included direct mini-grants to struggling downtown businesses.*

*From the organizers of the Harlan County COVID safe Shop Hops:*

*"Small projects like this have a huge, meaningful impact for small business owners. The feedback we have received from downtown businesses in Harlan and Cumberland has been overwhelmingly positive. The promotion of the event online and via WYMT increased traffic in our downtowns, but not to the point where it felt unsafe. One business in downtown Harlan reported more than 500 visitors the day of the event and sales that exceeded their Black Friday sales in 2019. Several other business owners shared with us that it was well worth their time staying open for extended hours. With the success of this event in mind we have discussed hosting some type of quarterly downtown shopping event in the future to continue highlighting our locally owned businesses."*

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# SELECTED STORY OF CHANGE

## Why Whitley Organizational Impacts

### Downtown Revitalization in the Promise Zone

CEDIK -  
University of Kentucky  
Williamsburg, KY

*In 2018 in Whitley County, Kentucky, a group of passionate citizens held a dinner and conversation to discuss ways to change the narrative surrounding the community. There were so many things to be proud of within the county, but it seemed like news coverage consistently revolved around the same, tired stereotype of Southeastern Kentucky. These volunteers wanted to identify ways to spark community pride, encourage community engagement, and spur community and economic development. The group agreed to form a non-profit entity called Why Whitley, to highlight reasons why Whitley County is special, significant, and valued to residents and visitors alike.*

*In the same timeframe, Why Whitley volunteers learned about CEDIK and ARC's Downtown Revitalization in the Promise Zone project and coordinated with CEDIK to learn about opportunities for community development, funding, and revitalization. Through Why Whitley's relationship with CEDIK staff, Why Whitley was able to formalize their structure, focus their efforts on specific areas of downtown, and secure funding to create meaningful change in the community.*

*Over the past 3 years, Why Whitley has used CEDIK services to conduct several studies and community design plans for their downtown and successfully rescued an abandoned lot at the entrance of Downtown Williamsburg. Through grant funding made available through the Downtown Revitalization in the Promise Zone sub-grants, Why Whitley transformed the abandoned lot into an active, vibrant greenspace and hosted the River Fog Festival—the first festival in downtown Williamsburg, KY focused*

**Purpose:** To deploy a comprehensive suite of community and business development services in the eight-county Kentucky Promise Zone, strengthening the physical and economic landscape of the region's downtowns.

#### **Outputs (At close, total project)**

- 193 businesses served of 160 projected
- 8 communities served of 8 projected
- 600 linear feet of 600 projected
- 440 participants served of 440 projected
- 8 plans/reports created of 8 projected

#### **Outcomes (At close, total project)**

- 29 businesses created of 24 projected
- 169 businesses improved of 160 projected
- 8 communities improved of 8 projected
- 24 jobs created of 72 projected
- 16 jobs retained of 16 projected
- \$800,000 in leveraged private investment of \$800,000 projected
- 396 participants improved of 396 projected

*on community pride, vibrant space, and local food, drink, and music. The festival had over 1,000 attendees and generated over \$6,000 in sales from participating vendors. This festival was an integral part of generating momentum and excitement for residents around socializing in downtown Williamsburg.*

*Why Whitley also created a web-based video highlighting the efforts of former Williamsburg mayor, Marcella Mountjoy, and her emphasis on community design, community pride, and vibrancy. The video received over 10,000 views within the first 3 days and is still shared widely within the community as a way to spark the passion and love for the community that Ms. Marcella held.*

*Since partnering with CEDIK, individuals of Why Whitley have increased their leadership capacity within the community by becoming actively engaged on city and county boards such as the Housing and Urban Development board and the Corbin Tourism Board. Additionally, two members decided to run for city council to encourage broader community change through leadership opportunities.*

*Why Whitley would not have been able to grow, develop, and navigate topics such as community economic development, community design, and grant writing if they did not have the support of CEDIK staff through the ARC Downtown Revitalization in the Promise Zone grant. Through this partnership, Why Whitley members believe that downtown Williamsburg has grown and developed in a sustainable, professional, and monumental way and has become a place that residents and visitors alike can celebrate.*

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*"Without the POWER initiative grants to fund innovative optometric equipment, KYCO could not have taken root... Access to quality vision care in underserved areas would continue to decrease, and the local job market would lack diversity to overcome the declining coal industry."*  
University of Pikeville, Kentucky College of Optometry

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## Changes for Appalachian Communities/Regions

Broad themes of community or region-level changes identified through the Most Significant Change (MSC) process included increasing economic diversification; improved quality of place; and increased collaboration and regional focus.

### Early Results of Closed Projects

The at-close outputs and outcomes<sup>19</sup> reported for 131 projects closed as of the time of this report indicate that at the community/region-level, grantees have served over **450 communities** and over **11,500 households** and improved over **380 communities** and over **11,400 households**. Projects resulted in over **1,200 businesses created**, over **6,300 jobs created**, and over **9,100 jobs retained**. Projects also generated over **4,400 new daytime visitors** and **17 new programs**.

At grant close, more than two-thirds of projects have met outputs in acreage, communities served, linear feet, new visitors – days, and plans/reports. Half or more projects have met outcomes at grant close in businesses created, communities improved, households improved, jobs created, jobs retained, and programs implemented. See Table 3.

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<sup>19</sup> The outputs and outcomes reported in this section represent numbers at grant close. For many outputs and outcomes, grantees have up to three years after the project has closed to achieve them. As such, the numbers reported in this section should be considered preliminary, at close numbers only.

Table 3: Community/Region-Level Outputs/Outcomes

| Type           | Description (# reporting)         | Planned | At Close | % of Metric at Close | #/% Grantees Meeting <sup>20</sup> at Close |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|----------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Output</b>  | Acreage (n=1)                     | 250     | 246      | 98.4%                | 1/100%                                      |
|                | Communities served (n=50)         | 486     | 468      | 96.3%                | 41/82%                                      |
|                | Data – Gigabytes per second (n=1) | 100     | 0        | 0.0%                 | 0/0%  |
|                | Data – Megabits per second (n=1)  | 100     | 0        | 0.0%                 | 0/0%  |
|                | Households served (n=3)           | 44,514  | 11,536   | 25.9%                | 0/0%  |
|                | Linear feet (n=3)                 | 191,150 | 192,263  | 100.6%               | 2/67%                                       |
|                | New visitors – Days (n=3)         | 6,250   | 4,425    | 70.8%                | 2/67%                                       |
|                | New visitors – Overnights (n=3)   | 10,940  | 156      | 1.4%                 | 1/33%                                       |
|                | Plans/reports (n=70)              | 356     | 311      | 87.4%                | 62/89%                                      |
|                | Square feet (n=5)                 | 338,615 | 243,288  | 71.8%                | 1/20%                                       |
| <b>Outcome</b> | Businesses created (n=32)         | 710     | 1,230    | 173.2%               | 21/66%                                      |
|                | Communities improved (n=50)       | 363     | 387      | 106.6%               | 39/78%                                      |
|                | Households improved (n=2)         | 30,699  | 11,414   | 37.2%                | 1/50%                                       |
|                | Jobs created (n=45)               | 5,548   | 6,382    | 115.0%               | 26/58%                                      |
|                | Jobs retained (n=24)              | 4,428   | 9,127    | 206.1%               | 17/71%                                      |
|                | Programs implemented (n=7)        | 18      | 17       | 94.4%                | 4/57%                                       |
|                | Telecom sites (n=4)               | 17,778  | 1        | 0.01%                | 1/25%                                       |

## Results Described in Submitted Stories of Change

Grantees that submitted stories of change about communities or regions broadly described change in three main ways:

- **Economic diversification:** leveraging skills training to bring in new and diverse industries, such as tourism, manufacturing, and renewable energy, as well as building entrepreneurial ecosystems to support small and start-up businesses.
- **Improved quality of place:** increasing the ability to retain and attract people and businesses through enhanced access to broadband and other infrastructure; healthcare and healthy food; and recreation.
- **Increased collaboration/regional focus:** building community-level and regional collaborations to increase leadership capacity and the ability to implement larger-scale projects with broad impacts.

### Economic diversification

Creating a more vibrant economic future requires the ability for communities to identify diverse ways to support themselves and the ability to respond to shifts in the economy. Grantees who submitted stories of change reported success in economic diversification within their communities, including leveraging education and workforce development

<sup>20</sup> "Meeting" is defined as meeting at 95% or higher at project close and includes grantees who exceeded their targets.

programs to produce skilled workers for jobs in information technology, renewable energy, manufacturing, and other areas, as well as capitalizing on natural assets to build revenue through tourism. For example, Mountain BizWorks' project, Growing Outdoors, has "resulted in hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in new investment...[M]oreover, it is helping communities across western North Carolina and the Appalachian region invest in transforming themselves around their greatest asset – the Appalachian Mountains, [which] make them what they are [and] offer some of the greatest outdoor adventures in the world."

In addition, grantees have worked to build entrepreneurial ecosystems that provide support (financial and resources) for small and start-up businesses in the region. To illustrate, Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission reports that through its Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem project, "[We] have made great progress toward [the] goal by creating a renewed sense of optimism among entrepreneurs and recruiting a vast network of champions to support small and emerging businesses and startups."

### **Improved quality of place**

Grantees submitting stories of change reported ways their work was helping to transform economic conditions in their communities and regions, as well as creating lively and healthy places to work and recreate. One aspect of improved quality of place was increasing access to healthy food and addressing food deserts. Sprouting Farms Corp., through its Integrating Agri-Development Centers in Central Appalachia, reported a story of an entrepreneur working collaboratively with organizations in the community to develop a farmers' market, as well as a training farm, which will result in "immediate outlets for food produced at the training farm as

## **The Significance of Selected Stories of Change about Communities and Regions**

Through **Growing Outdoors**, outdoor gear manufacturing is bringing high-quality, high-skilled textile jobs back to Old Fort, North Carolina. The grantee described how the location and expansion of new businesses has meant that "local food and craft brewing scenes are growing fast, and a strong collaborative spirit is powering deep work on equitable development, multi-generational engagement, and outdoor access." Reviewers valued the story's descriptions of collaboration and community building.

**TEAMing Up to Build Pathways to Jobs** is a collaboration of 49 partners across a large, multistate region of eastern Ohio, southwestern Pennsylvania, and northern West Virginia. Partners worked to maintain the momentum from a previous US Department of Labor Grant to build clear and accessible education and career pathways in selected occupations. Story reviewers focused on the scale of impact described, including the formal agreement among nine colleges across three states to adopt common curricula and maximize transfer credits, the shared website that received more than 6.5 million views, and the thousands of students and workers served.

well as by surrounding farmers to feed their community – a food desert.”

Additionally, access to broadband is vital in attracting and maintaining jobs and businesses, as well as keeping people connected. One grantee, Virginia Coalfield Coalition, Inc., described the value of its planning grant in analyzing the broadband landscape of Southwest Virginia, which “provided necessary information regarding unserved and underserved communities that would support future funding requests for broadband expansion.” The findings of the planning grant, in addition to other opportunities, helped support a large Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) request by the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission (CPPDC), which required that a telecommunications plan serve as the basis for its application. The telecommunications assessment funded by the POWER planning grant was cited to fulfill that requirement. In early 2021, CPPDC was awarded over \$16M which will allow for completion of efforts to deploy over 1,300 miles of fiber to make high-speed internet available to over 13,000 households. According to Virginia Coalfield Coalition, “The fiber broadband development made possible through these initiatives will transform the Cumberland Plateau counties into a showcase region for modern connectivity in a rural setting.”

### **Increased collaboration/regional focus**

Throughout the evaluation of POWER, many grantees have reported on the importance of collaboration to achieve project objectives and effect transformative change. Grantees reported that changes supporting economic diversification and improving quality of place would, in many cases, not have happened without collaboration, and certainly would not be sustainable. The University of Kentucky Research Foundation described such collaborative efforts in its Downtown Revitalization in the Promise Zone project: “Throughout the project, an intentional effort was made to coordinate quarterly convenings to provide a dedicated space and time for downtown stakeholders to come together to share, collaborate, and inspire each other...These networking opportunities led some communities to adapt similar programs and policies they heard others share. Stakeholders noted they were empowered to learn about the mutual challenges faced, while affirming new commitments to regionalism and collaboration within their counties and in the larger region.”

The EdVenture Group also noted the importance of partnerships to building a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem and pathway for budding entrepreneurs. Through its project, Simulated Workforce Entrepreneurship Education Pathway (SWEEP), the organization learned that “entrepreneurship education cannot be carried out in isolation of the local ecosystem. For the pathway to seamlessly integrate with the state’s larger ecosystem, it needed to engage key partnerships in its development.” SWEEP worked with both Marshall University and University of West Virginia to “ensure the pathway would support students at scale as it expands to other schools throughout the state...These partners...are active partners in the WV Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, which provides essential connections and business incubation services to support the growth of students beyond the K-12 environment.” The EdVenture group felt these partnerships would help “create a

sustainable pathway to prosperity for WV's emerging entrepreneurs and local communities."

Of the two stories identified by reviewers as representing *most significant* change, TEAMing Up includes aspects of meeting the needs of employers in the region, but reviewers focused on its key theme of community collaboration and successful implementation of a regional approach. Growing Outdoors covers all three themes under this level of change: quality of place, economic diversification, and increasing collaboration.



# SELECTED STORY OF CHANGE

## Old Fort, North Carolina's Equitable Outdoor Transformation

### Growing Outdoors: Expanding the Outdoor Gear Manufacturing Sector

### Mountain BizWorks McDowell County, NC

*Old Fort, NC, is a town on its way up. Outdoor gear manufacturing is bringing high-quality, high-skilled textile jobs back to this long-time mill town, the local food and craft brewing scenes are growing fast, and a strong collaborative spirit is powering deep work on equitable development, multi-generational engagement, and outdoor access.*

*Visiting Old Fort in 2018, you would have never guessed what it would look like in 2021, unless you were one of the people working hard behind the scenes to make its transformation happen. The town had long struggled with attracting new investments or amenities; just a couple of years ago, getting a Cracker Barrel seemed all but impossible. In June 2019, Ethan Allen stopped making furniture there, shedding 325 jobs as it transformed its 550,000ft<sup>2</sup> factory into a distribution center that employs 50.*

*Local residents said, "It's like there's been a death," as people mourned the loss of a long-time employer and community hub. Yet, even amidst all the challenges, positive change was coming.*

*In fall 2019, high-end outdoor clothing manufacturer Kitsbow opened its doors, bringing 53 new high-end sewing jobs back into an old hosiery mill, and continues to expand. When COVID-19 struck just a couple of months after Kitsbow's grand opening, the company collaborated alongside numerous local manufacturing partners to rapidly scale production of crucial [personal protective equipment] PPE for first responders and bring even more jobs to Old Fort.*

*In fall 2020, Triple Aught Designs announced its own relocation to Old Fort, bringing 70 more manufacturing jobs and \$1M in investment into the*

**Purpose:** To fund the deployment of five (5) business strategies designed to grow the outdoor recreation gear manufacturing sector in Western North Carolina.

#### Outputs (Planned)

- 350 businesses served
- 125 students served
- 275 workers/trainees served
- 15 loans closed
- \$1.25 million in loans closed

#### Outcomes (Planned)

- 100 businesses improved
- 50 students improved
- 45 workers/trainees improved
- \$4 million in leveraged private investment
- 35 new businesses created
- 150 new jobs created
- 65 jobs obtained
- \$6 million in new revenue by participating firms

*community. Both companies cite the town's proximity to recreational resources and strong legacy of quality manufacturing as key elements behind their decision to move there, as well as the supportive community they found both locally and region wide. The new craft brewery and restaurant that recently opened next door doesn't hurt either! 42 miles of trails are queued up for development by the US Forest Service in the Pisgah National Forest, accessible right from downtown via the Fonta Flora State Trail, itself a transformational project. This new Forest Service trail development is in part made possible because McDowell Technical Community College is investing in a new Trail Building & Sustainability program, starting in May 2021 with a base out of Old Fort.*

*Moreover, equity is advancing as well. Old Fort's sizeable but long-underrepresented Black community has a strong voice in the development efforts both downtown and in the National Forest, working with other long-time locals and new faces alike to ensure that this new wave of energy and prosperity is shared by all the residents and communities of this place.*

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# SELECTED STORY OF CHANGE

## TEAMing Up, a Regional Partnership Story

### TEAMing Up to Build Pathways to Jobs

Community College of  
Beaver County  
Beaver County, PA

*In 2017, a group of visionaries gathered to strategize on how to build on the success of ShaleNET, an expired [Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant] TACCCT-supported training program that had put over 3,400 people to work. There was economic growth expected across the region of eastern Ohio, southwestern Pennsylvania, and northern West Virginia as the result of oil and gas industry investments, including a \$6 billion Shell petrochemical plant. With seed funding from the Benedum Foundation, the Tristate Energy and Advanced Manufacturing (TEAM) Consortium was launched.*

*The TEAM Consortium began with forty-nine (49) public and private partners, all rallied around improving the outcomes of students and workers in a region deeply impacted by job and population losses.*

*With support from the Benedum Foundation and Consortium co-chairs Chevron and the Community College of Beaver County, the "TEAMing Up to Build Pathways to Jobs" project garnered 2018 Appalachian Regional Commission POWER funding. The project set out to create clear and accessible education and career pathways through better alignment of training programs and by providing a new public portal with information about and referrals to those programs. The project also instituted efforts to raise awareness about and change perceptions of targeted occupations.*

*Within two years, the committed partners in the TEAM Consortium had achieved more than what they had set out to do in the "Pathways" project. To align education systems, nine community colleges across*

**Purpose:** Foster development of the energy and advanced manufacturing workforce in the three-state region (Eastern Ohio, Southwestern Pennsylvania, Northern West Virginia).

#### Outputs (Projected)

- 120 businesses served
- 49 organizations served
- 792 workers served
- 1,608 students served
- Strategic plan for the establishment of a collaborative partnership for an industry-responsive curriculum leading to nationally-credentialed standards for workers in the manufacturing sector downstream from the shale gas sector

#### Outcomes (Projected)

- 120 participating businesses improved
- 600 jobs created
- 402 students employed
- 752 workers with higher skills
- All served organizations improved
- 8 new programs implemented

*the three-state footprint agreed to common curricula for a wide array of courses and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to maximize the transfer of credits for those courses. A project-funded curriculum coordinator developed thirteen detailed graphic 'pyramids', clearly illustrating how to move along targeted career paths. TEAM also launched a new website – [www.connect2team.org](http://www.connect2team.org) - with information about occupations and training programs, formatted so the public can explore on their own and connect to TEAM partners. A joint digital marketing campaign among partner colleges yielded over 6.5 million views, over 24,000 click-throughs on the ads, and almost 2,000 direct inquiries to participating colleges.*

*To date the project has served over 3,100 students and over 8,200 worker trainees.*

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## Conclusions

**POWER's stakeholders appear to be working toward economic transformation by striving for change at multiple levels simultaneously—change at the individual, organization/business, and region/community levels.**

When asked to describe the types of change stakeholders expect to occur from the use of POWER funds, ARC staff, state staff, story reviewers, and grantees submitting stories of change describe change at each of these levels. Further, when selecting outputs and outcomes by which to measure performance, most closed implementation projects included metrics in at least two of these three levels of change, and many included metrics from all three levels.

**While there is not necessarily consensus on the specific story of change that represents the “most significant” change, clear themes emerged regarding change at each level.**

Related to stories of change about *individuals*, the analysis identified three main themes that resonated with storytellers and reviewers:

- *Providing job and career opportunities*, particularly to allow individuals to obtain viable career paths but also stay in the region
- *Offering individual skill-building*, including hands-on training for workers that may contribute to wage increases and better meeting the needs of employers, as well as real-world skills for students
- *Support for recovery from substance use disorder (SUD)*, by helping individuals with recovery coaching, basic needs, and employment support

Related to stories of change about *businesses and organizations*, the analysis identified themes related to:

- *Helping businesses increase revenue or decrease costs*, thus making the businesses more efficient, competitive, and sustainable
- The organizations' *improved ability to meet the needs of employers* in the community or region
- *Organizational skill-building* to ensure that businesses were effective and resilient, including in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic

Related to stories of change for *communities and regions*, the analysis identified themes associated with:

- *Supporting economic diversification* in the region, including building opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as supporting shifts to industries other than coal, such as tourism
- *Improving quality of place*, which included increasing access to basic needs such as healthcare, food, and infrastructure, as well as enhancing opportunities to make communities more vibrant, such as through better recreation
- *Increased collaboration and regional focus*, which helped to increase economies of scale for projects and better ensure their longer-term sustainability

**Grantees have up to three years after project close to achieve outputs and outcomes targets; however, collectively, grantees with closed projects have already exceeded many cumulative (initiative-level) targets.**

The 12 outputs and outcomes for which collective achievement has exceeded the targets by the greatest degree<sup>21</sup> include the following:

- Participants served (43,259, 625% of target) and improved (16,320, 326%)
- Students served (95,188, 141%) and improved (68,213, 188%)
- Jobs retained (9,127, 206%)
- Businesses created (1,230, 173%) and improved (5,506, 141%)
- Workers/trainees served (17,872, 165%) and improved (10,266, 136%)
- Patients served (28,821, 166%) and improved (28,821, 166%)
- Export sales revenues increased (\$28.03M, 140% of target)

**In line with expectations, the achievement of certain outputs and outcomes may occur after project close. Particular attention should be paid to these metrics in post-close analysis. (This analysis is planned for FY22.)**

Collective, at-close achievement (percent of collective target) was lowest for the following metrics:

- 0 gigabytes and 0 megabits per second, 0% of target
- 1 telecom site, 0% of target (rounded)
- 156 new visitors – overnights, 1% of target
- 53 organizations improved, 20% of target
- 11,536 households served, 26% of target
- 11,414 households improved, 37% of target

In each case, these metrics were used in six or fewer projects, lending additional importance to the post-close follow-up process to determine achievement. See [Appendix C](#) for definitions of outputs and outcomes.

**ARC may need to take additional steps to encourage projects designed to compound change across large regions and/or change resulting from multiple, interconnected POWER projects.**

The evaluators are aware of a few methods through which ARC currently encourages such change, including through funding subsequent phases of demonstrably successful projects; funding projects that cross state lines and/or intend to serve large regions; requiring appropriate partnerships, which may include partnerships with other POWER grantees; and holding convenings to build organizational networks across Appalachia and to cross-pollinate ideas and contacts that may lead to future partnership. Additionally, from prior work conducted under the POWER evaluation, the evaluators are aware of examples of the same individual or business interacting with multiple POWER projects and examples of

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<sup>21</sup> Counts of individuals served and improved may be duplicated, as only aggregated numbers were reported and available

POWER grantees working from different angles on similar community challenges or priorities.

However, “change resulting from multiple POWER projects,” was one of just four broad domains of change ARC staff and leadership defined to guide the Stories of Change collection process, indicating this type of change is a high priority for ARC. Even so, the evaluators have observed no requirements in the POWER request for proposals nor in the ways POWER projects are formally measured that would encourage grantees to deliberately embed this type of change in their project designs. If this type of change is indeed one of the highest priorities for POWER’s desired results, ARC should consider whether additional design or measurement strategies, related to compounding change, are needed.



## Appendix

- A. Methodology and Limitations
- B. Other Elevated Stories of Change
- C. ARC Definitions of POWER Outputs and Outcomes

## Appendix A

# Methodology and Limitations

### Methodology

The application of the Most Significant Change technique for POWER drew heavily from the original guide by Davies and Dart (2005). It included the following eight steps between October 2020 and July 2021:

1. Socialize MSC among stakeholders
2. Define domains of change
3. Define the reporting period
4. Collect stories of change
5. Facilitate selection of “most significant” change
6. Report results of the process
7. Verify stories
8. Quantify results where possible

The main modification made for the purposes of POWER is that stories were collected at a single point in time from closed projects and from any project that had been open for approximately one year or more as of January 2021. The guide from Davies and Dart (2005) suggests stories be collected and reviewed on a regular basis; however, this approach was determined to be infeasible, and the joint decision was made between the POWER third-party evaluation team and ARC to instead pilot the MSC technique as a single-phase collection and two-phase review process in FY21. The technique was then meta-evaluated for suitability for incorporation into more regular monitoring and evaluation processes.

To begin, the evaluation team **socialized MSC among ARC stakeholders**, particularly the decision-makers among ARC staff. The benefits and limitations of MSC were discussed, and a process outline was created that balanced quality data collection with burden on grantees and beneficiaries.

In step 2, the evaluation team facilitated a meeting with ARC leadership to **define domains of change**. Evaluators reintroduced and reinforced the concepts and processes of MSC, explained the purpose of defining domains of change (i.e., to provide a broad framework within which to collect stories from grantees), and provided guiding discussion questions related to the types of categories of change ARC staff and leadership expect to see from POWER and their definition of “change.” From this discussion, four domains of change were identified, vetted, and finalized:

1. Beneficiaries: Changes in the quality of life, economic conditions, and/or sense of possibility for people and businesses
2. Organizations: Changes in capacity, opportunity to implement mission, and/or ability to better serve beneficiaries
3. Regions: Changes in the broader capacity, economic conditions, or opportunity for a region
4. Lessons learned: Changes or results related to grantee learning and reflection

In collaboration with ARC staff, it was determined that grantees would submit stories during the **defined reporting period** of January through February 2021. Grantees were given the option to submit up to one story per domain, four stories total, for each project that met the inclusion criteria.

The evaluation team established an online form to **collect stories of change**. A total of 202 contacts representing 241 POWER-funded projects were notified by an ARC staff member (their POWER coordinator or a substitute) that data collection would occur in January. A member of the Chamberlin/Dunn evaluation team then emailed each contact with a link to an online story collection form, a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document, a list of story elements that would be needed for story submission, and a video recording that reiterated the content from the FAQ and story elements documents. The evaluation team provided collection-related technical assistance to grantees throughout the submission period and sent email reminders to increase the number of stories collected. At the end of the collection period, the evaluation team reviewed story data and contacted grantees to complete any missing data points. In the case of duplicate story submissions, stories were deduplicated. In the case of multiple story submissions within a single domain, the evaluation team worked with grantees to determine whether an extra story (or partial story) was submitted in error or as a partial submission or was submitted under the wrong domain. Data were modified accordingly. (Evaluators did not otherwise modify the domain under which a story was submitted, regardless of the story's subject or content.) In addition to story details, evaluators asked grantees to indicate whether they had received consent from any individual or organization featured by name in their story, with special care given to stories that featured medical- or education-related details. In all cases but one, grantees had either anonymized stories or indicated they had received consent to use subjects' names. Evaluators anonymized one story where the story submitter indicated they had not received consent. Stories were also lightly edited for typos.

After deduplication and cleaning, the story collection process yielded 72 stories: 35 stories about changes in a participant or beneficiary, 15 stories about changes in an organization, 12 stories about changes in a region, and 10 stories about lessons learned.

Toward the end of the story collection period, the evaluation team initiated the pre-review steps necessary for two phases of story review to **facilitate selection of the "most significant" change**. In the MSC technique, stories are first reviewed by "community-level" stakeholders—in the case of POWER, grantee and partner staff and leadership—and then by initiative-level stakeholders—in this case, ARC and state staff.<sup>22</sup>

For review Phase I, a member of the evaluation team distributed a volunteer recruitment email to all current and former POWER grantees, which explained the story review process, asked for participation in review panels, and invited grantees to forward the volunteer invitation to their POWER partners or stakeholders. In total, 30 project-level POWER stakeholders—grantees and partners—volunteered to participate in the Phase I review. Each

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<sup>22</sup> INTRAC (2017).

volunteer provided their name, role, organization, and list of all POWER projects to which their organization was connected as a grantee, subrecipient, or partner.

Based on reviewer availability, evaluators assigned each volunteer to three of 13 review sessions, with six to seven reviewers per session. (Volunteers were assigned to sessions individually, which meant review groups contained some of the same volunteers and some different volunteers, with no intentional pattern applied). To assign stories to review sessions, evaluators employed two forms of randomization using sorting by random number generation. First, stories were randomized into groups within each domain, such that each review session included stories from only one domain. Depending on the number of stories submitted for each domain, each story group comprised five to six stories. Then, story groups were randomly assigned to one of the 13 story-review sessions. In a final step designed to reduce reviewer bias, evaluators cross-referenced the list of projects represented by each story with the list of each reviewer's associated POWER projects. In cases when a story had been randomly assigned to a review session that included a reviewer connected to that story's project, either the reviewer or the story was exchanged with a non-conflicted reviewer or a story from another session. Reviewer scheduling conflicts prevented some reviewers from attending some sessions. In 12 of 13 sessions, at least five reviewers were present, and one session had four reviewers.

At least one week prior to a session, evaluators distributed the packet of stories to be reviewed in that session. Volunteers could read and reflect on stories in advance but were not required to do so. Sessions were conducted virtually through videoconference software. During the session, reviewers and evaluators introduced themselves. The evaluation team reviewed the purpose and objectives of the MSC technique and the review session itself, and reviewers were given the opportunity to ask technical questions. Two members of the evaluation team then alternated the reading of each story aloud to the group. Evaluators then prompted discussion with the question, "Which of these stories felt most significant to you, and why?" Reviewers spent 20 to 30 minutes discussing elements of significance and reasons a story felt significant (or not) to them. Evaluators prompted discussion participation from each reviewer. At the end of the session, evaluators used live electronic polling to have each reviewer pick the one story—and one story only—from the group of stories reviewed in that session that they felt represented the "most significant" change from POWER.

Following the conclusion of the 13 Phase I review sessions, evaluators reviewed and analyzed story votes. In three cases, story votes were split such that no story received more than two votes, and in three other cases, one story received three votes and another story in that session received two votes. Because story votes were close in about half of the sessions, the decision was made to elevate all stories that had received at least two votes, to be part of the Phase II review. Thus, 23 stories moved to Phase II, and the **results were reported** to ARC.

Phase II included two groups of initiative-level volunteers: one group of nine ARC staff and a second group of seven ARC state program managers recruited through communication

from ARC staff. The 23 elevated stories were reviewed during three sessions, repeated for each group, for a total of six sessions. Session 1 included an overview of MSC, the Phase I selection process, and the objectives of the review session. The evaluators repeated the protocol from Phase I and read out loud the four elevated stories under the “Changes in a Region” domain. Reviewers discussed their response to the prompt question used in Phase I. At the end of the session, reviewers accessed an online form to rank the elevated stories in that domain. This process was repeated for Session 2 with the four “Lessons Learned” and five “Changes in an Organization” stories, with reviewers ranking each set of stories separately. Session 3 included the 10 elevated stories about “Changes in a Beneficiary or Participant” in two sets of five stories. Because the number of stories in this domain was approximately double that of the other three domains, reviewers followed a two-step ranking process where they first selected the top five stories that they felt represented the most significant change and then ranked those five stories in order of perceived significance. Rankings for both groups of reviewers were combined under each domain, with a total of 14 to 15 reviewers across the two groups providing story-rank responses.

Evaluators analyzed the relative weighted ranks of stories within each domain. For the, “Lessons Learned” domain, one story was clearly favored among reviewers. (This story was later recoded as a story describing change at the organization/business level.) For the other three domains, two stories had similar weighted ranks (and, for Beneficiary/Participant, the story with the #2 score had more #1-rank votes). Therefore, the decision was made to include one story from the “Lessons Learned” domain and two stories each from the other three domains.

For purposes of **story verification**, evaluators contacted the grantees who submitted each of the selected stories to gather additional verification and story details, which included: confirmation of the project description; virtual connection to the individuals featured in the story, if applicable; media coverage or other materials that may provide independent verification of story details; and project-related photos, if desired. Evaluators followed up via phone and email to verify story details with story subjects, except in the case of EKCEP; in this case, evaluators had already completed a site visit and conducted interviews with the relevant regional partners in the Y1/FY19 evaluation.

To **quantify results where possible**, ARC provided the evaluation team with an updated and comprehensive data pull of at-close output and outcome numbers for all projects for which at-close results were available as of June 30, 2021. (Some of these grantees had participated in the MSC process and others had not.) The evaluation team conducted a thematic analysis of the content of both the story selection conversations for all 19 review sessions and the 72 submitted stories themselves. Evaluators combined this analysis with a thematic analysis of the *definitions* of outputs and outcomes, to connect output and outcome categories to domains of change. Based on the evaluation team's systematic interpretation of these data, three final POWER domains of change emerged: (1) Changes for Individuals in Appalachia, (2) Changes for Appalachian Businesses/Organizations, and (3)

Changes for Appalachian Communities/Regions. Quantifiable results for all available at-close outputs and outcomes were analyzed within these domains.

## Limitations

As with all studies, this evaluation has several limitations that should be considered when reading and applying this Year 3 final report.

### **Partial and biased findings**

The Most Significant Change technique, by design, draws out stories of significance, and these stories tend to be positive in nature. They tend to provide the details that convey “significance” and are thus partial in nature. To attempt to balance stories received, one domain of change was dedicated to lessons learned, defined as changes made in response to projects deviating from original plans or otherwise encountering challenges. Additionally, prior monitoring and evaluation activities included semi-structured interview questions on the topics of challenges and lessons learned and triangulated findings with other data sources (e.g., quarterly reports, additional interviews), and through post-interview discussions with ARC staff.

### **Selection bias**

Selection bias is common in any form of design that does not involve random sampling or random assignment. All grantees whose POWER project had been open for at least a year were invited to participate, but were not required to do so, and so the 44 unique projects about which stories were submitted do not necessarily represent typical POWER projects. Additionally, grantee-level reviewers served on a voluntary basis, and so the opinions expressed during story review sessions, and subsequently analyzed, do not necessarily represent the typical POWER stakeholder. Selection bias was mitigated within the review process by randomization and by intentionally separating reviewers from stories to which they or their organization were connected as a grantee or partner.

### **Researcher extrapolation bias**

Analysis conducted within an interpretative analytical framework is threatened by the fact that researcher interpretation is personal and may go beyond what is present in and supported by actual data. Indeed, the evaluation team employed its own interpretations of data collected through multiple methods, including using POWER-specific findings coupled with findings and experiences of evaluations previously conducted by the team. To mitigate researcher extrapolation limitations, the evaluation team individually reviewed and analyzed raw data collected through stories and review sessions; identified themes were collaboratively discussed and refined as a team; and evaluators introduced and discussed any contradictory evidence for themes as it arose. However, findings and conclusions identified through this evaluation may not be suitable for all POWER grantees.

## Appendix B

### Other Elevated Stories of Change

The following stories were selected by Phase I reviewers as those that represented the “most significant change,” of the submitted stories. Note these stories were not included in independent validation steps. Stories have been lightly edited for clarity. Stories are presented in alphabetical order by title.

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#### Blueprint Reading Class

##### **Alabama STRONG | Alabama Community College System**

Hornsby Steel, Inc<sup>23</sup> is a small company in Cleveland, Alabama that manufactures applications of cured steel. They pride themselves on having a family-like environment while generating fabricated structured steel applications to use around the world.

When Alabama Technology Network (ATN) presented the opportunity for the company to have an 8-hour training class at no cost through the ARC Power STRONG grant, they signed up for the blueprint reading class. In the class, the participants identified types of drawings and learned what is included in different types of drawings; learned the standards for types of lines used in drawings; identified dimensions in drawings; and created drawings based on a solid object. The class was set up to have a minimum of 15 participants.

Hornsby Steel registered 16 employees for the blueprint reading class on August 23, 2019. This meant that over half the plant was in the training class. No production for the day. This training was so important that Hornsby Steel invested almost \$2,000 plus a day's production. This showed the importance of the training to Hornsby Steel. Two ATN project engineers provided the training for Hornsby Steel. And they shared their stories to make the information more relatable. Although the Hornsby Steel employees may not have much formal education, they are dedicated and hard-working. With this class, some learned new information. Some received a refresher on the body of knowledge of reading blueprints, and others gained a totally new perspective to enhance their roles and responsibilities on the job. The class provided a means of many retaining their current positions, and some will receive additional responsibilities within the company.

For a total impact estimated at \$4,400 for the small manufacturer in Cleveland, Alabama, the president/owner David Hornsby said it best, “The blueprint reading class was just priceless.”

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<sup>23</sup> In all cases where names have been used, either grantees indicated they received consent to use names or names have been changed to protect anonymity.

## Building Momentum in Clean Energy One County at a Time

### Economic Transition for Eastern Kentucky (ETEK) Initiative Grant | Mountain Association

In the past two years, the Mountain Association has helped with a series of solar projects in Letcher County, which is deep in the coalfields of far southeastern Kentucky. What started with a goal to add solar to three non-profits has since led to a total of eight projects in the county within a one-year period.

The Mountain Association has worked with communities across Eastern Kentucky to install solar on businesses and organizations, including the Kentucky Coal Museum, the Campton Baptist Church, and the city governments of Lynch, Livingston, and Mt. Vernon. But the work in Letcher County is a more coordinated demonstration of the possibilities of broad community support for solar.

The County is home to a number of non-profits and groups who have been creating new opportunities in the region for decades. Several community organizers started the Letcher County Culture Hub in recent years, to be a county-wide network of grassroots groups committed to economic development through collaboration, cooperation, and cultural celebration. Among its 18 members are the Hemphill Community Center, located in a former coal camp, which operates a wood-fired bakery to supplement its income, provide jobs, and bolster its community programming; Appalshop, a 50-year-old media, arts, and cultural center; and, HOMES Inc., which builds quality energy efficient affordable housing, and contributes to tourism by building scenic overlooks and improving the walkability of downtowns. There are more than a dozen additional members including other community centers, business associations, artist and artisan organizations, volunteer fire departments (some of which go beyond the firefighting mission to address issues such as the opioid epidemic), public and educational institutions, and for- and non-profit corporations in the agriculture, tech, media, housing, and health sectors.

When member organizations of the Hub found themselves at risk of shutting their doors because of rising energy costs and new demand-charge rates from Kentucky Power, they turned to the Mountain Association for support. Solar looked an achievable way to reduce energy costs, support a growing regional industry, and generate long-term employment opportunities as the local economy continues to diversify. Three Hub members were chosen to pilot solar at their buildings to test how it worked for them: Hemphill Community Center, HOMES, Inc., and Appalshop.

The Mountain Association worked with them to lower overall energy use through efficiency measures first. For instance, HOMES invested in new energy-efficient water heaters and Wi-Fi thermostats with guidance from our team. With these investments alone, HOMES will save about \$1,900 per year (paying for the new thermostats in two years, and the water heaters in five). In Summer 2019, all three organizations added rooftop solar to their buildings. With interest rates at 4% over 20 years, the Mountain Association's solar loans were a main reason the non-profits were able to go solar.



HOMES Director Seth Long said most commercial loans he's seen are 10-15 year contracts.

"That wouldn't have cash-flowed for us, and it wouldn't have been as likely for us to move forward with it because we wouldn't have been cash positive," he said. "Having the Mountain Association to provide financing that would cash flow was a real benefit to us."

In addition to low-interest financing, Mountain Association provided technical assistance, facilitating system design support, review of bids from potential installers, final installations, and more to the three organizations. They also provided several Eastern Kentuckians with training in renewable energy design and installation during the process through our New Energy Intern program and through the support of our installer partners. Working with Wilderness Trace Solar for guidance, HOMES completed most of their installation and the installation at Hemphill using their own crew. This provided an opportunity for their employees to gain solar installation skills. HOMES electrician Fuzz Johnson is now working through Mountain Association's intern program to gain a Solar Energy International Solar Professional certification and take the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners Photovoltaic (PV) exam. This will allow HOMES to generate revenue by providing solar services.

Overall, the Letcher County projects reflect more than \$500,000 of long-term investment by Mountain Association in critical community institutions. These installations help offset rising utility rates, allowing the organizations to stay focused on providing critical resources for the individuals, communities, and region they serve.

"We hope through our projects in Letcher County that we can be an example in the mountains and in our communities of what other organizations and businesses can do," Seth Long said.

And, indeed, they did. After these projects were completed, it sparked great interest in solar in the greater Letcher County area. The Mountain Association has since facilitated solar installations for five businesses in the county, including Annie's Frugal Finery and SouthDown Farm in 2019, and Mountain Truck Parts, Breeding's Plumbing & Electric, and Isom IGA in 2020.

Appalshop's system will generate more than any other renewable system in the region. Their panels are producing 60-70% of their monthly energy usage – and in some months, over 100%, saving them an average of \$7,000 per year.

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## The Butterfly Effect: Gilson Snow's Story of Change

### **Appalachian Investors Alliance | EPIC Mission, Inc.**

It began with a question that kept Nick Gilson up at night: What if it was possible to create a unique snowboard that used multiple scientific methods to change the world -- and have a fun time doing it?

Nick Gilson, Founder and CEO of Gilson Snow, left his native Rhode Island to attend Johns Hopkins University. After graduating in 2011, Nick journeyed to Nashville and began teaching science to a diverse group of middle school students. That is when the trip back to

his roots — and ahead to his company's future — began to take shape. "What started as a middle school science project ultimately grew into this company," Nick said. "It stemmed from a desire to have real, hands-on learning so that every student in the classroom — regardless of background, access to technology at home, finances, and other constraints — would all have access to the same mindset and learning that we were developing."

After developing multiple prototype snowboards that proved to be failures, Nick wanted to quit. As he presented the quantitative and qualitative data from board prototypes to his students, he told them he was going to end the project right then and there. One of his students told him, "If you can quit, so can we." That moment of truth hit home: Nick knew he couldn't give in to initial failure.

"This company was not going to exist because it was just not going to happen," Nick said. "This company was not the 'build it and they will come' model. This is a company that needed to be willed into existence by incredible and persevering founders."

During its first 18 months, Gilson Snow products were rejected by 3,000 retailers. After going "back to the drawing board" in frustration, the Gilson team began outreach directly to prospective customers using business-to-consumer tactics versus traditional channel partner selling. Within a short time, Gilson Snow started to grow, remaining focused on offering higher-performance, American-made products, manufactured entirely in Gilson's Appalachian Pennsylvania shop.

By 2020, demand for the company's products was growing faster than the business could support from its own resources, which brought Nick to a decision point: scale back operations that threatened to overwhelm existing capacity or seek outside investments to continue to grow the business at what was becoming an exponential pace. "We were in a constant state of not being able to afford next week from this week's business," Nick recalled. "Because next week could be so much bigger than this week. As a result, we had to make a choice."

"We got laser-focused as to who the right partners would be," Nick said. "A lot of young founders want to raise as much money as they can possibly get, but we didn't do that. We wanted to raise money from people who, if they were in town, we would grab dinner and drinks with them. People who can bring muscle memory and talent to the team and are just great people to work with. It's no question that we found that with AAF's Justin Mandel and AIA's Jim Hart. What a truly phenomenal group of people." Ultimately, Gilson Snow closed on a "six-figure" funding deal put forth by Alleghenies' investors.

"A lot of times, investors are looking to mathematically drive the largest return as possible," Nick observed. "You don't end up with the Appalachian Investors Alliance and the Alleghenies Angel Fund that way. It's more than just a mathematically winning formula for making money. They bring aligned interests and values in developing a region and jobs that matter for young entrepreneurs like me and the people we employ. It's like the butterfly effect. You make these changes now and you will have ripple effects in the future." For

Gilson Snow, the investment from the Alleghenies Angel Fund stimulated more than a 200% growth in business.

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## The Center for Rural Development Provides Essential Skills Training for More Than 150 Unemployed and Underemployed Individuals in Coal-Impacted KY Counties

### Community Oriented Access to Learning (COAL) | The Center for Rural Development

The Center for Rural Development's mission is to provide leadership that stimulates innovative and sustainable economic development solutions and a better way of life for the citizens we serve in Southern and Eastern Kentucky.

Through the POWER grant, Community Oriented Access to Learning (COAL), The Center for Rural Development's Business & Community Training Center has delivered essential skills training to more than 150 unemployed and underemployed individuals in 14 coal-impacted Kentucky counties within the grant service area.

Essential skills training opportunities available through the COAL program include Becoming Your Best in the Workplace, Front Desk/Help Desk, and Microsoft Office training. These trainings are offered at no cost to qualified applicants to help individuals become more employable in the local job market. Our Becoming Your Best in the Workplace essential skills workshops provide basic workforce skills to enrich, empower, and encourage participants to be their personal best on the job and in life.

The training is available to unemployed and underemployed individuals who have been directly or indirectly impacted by the decline of coal in one of the 14 Kentucky counties eligible for the COAL program.

"I believe in Becoming Your Best in the Workplace, hosted by The Center for Rural Development, because the essential skills that are covered in this training not only apply at work, but also in life," said instructor Jeremy A. Taylor. "Each person who attends this training, whether in-person or virtual, has the opportunity to work through practical content that can truly help them to grow." Becoming Your Best in the Workplace teaches participants how to communicate effectively; prepare for a job interview; be a team player and valuable employee; solve problems that arise on the job; act professionally in the workplace; and other essential skills.

"Encouraging and employing people to take ownership of their attitude and effort at work and in life is really what this training is all about," Taylor said. "It's about helping people understand that they are valuable and that they can add value to the world, especially when they work on developing a skill set that allows them to be employable."

Several residents of SKYHope Recovery program, a nonprofit organization based in Somerset, KY, for homeless women suffering from alcoholism and drug addiction, have participated in various essential skills trainings provided through the COAL program.

"I would really like to thank you for the business class opportunity. It was amazing and I really enjoyed it," said a resident of SKYHope.

Becoming Your Best in the Workplace, Front Desk/Help Desk, and other essential skills classes are presented by The Center for Rural Development and funded by a POWER grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission. The training is available to unemployed and underemployed individuals in Bell, Clay, Floyd, Harlan, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Leslie, Letcher, McCreary, Perry, Pulaski, and Whitley counties.

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## The FCCAA Food Bank and RFEC Will Continue to Create Expanded Partnerships Between Farmers and The Charitable Emergency Food Network

### Republic Foods Enterprise Center | Fayette County Community Action Agency Inc.

Republic Food Enterprise Center (RFEC) works every day to bridge the gap between farm and table. Our goal is to help local farmers find ways to source their products while providing our communities with fresh, locally grown foods. We value investing in our community and try to incorporate it into everything we do.

Fayette County Community Action Agency (FCCAA) relocated its Food Bank operation to the Republic Food Enterprise Center site in late 2019. This created a synergy between RFEC and the Food Bank, which opened up collaborative opportunities such as the ability to share resources, transportation, and storage.

The relationship between the FCCAA Food Bank and RFEC will continue to create expanded partnerships between farmers and the charitable emergency food network. This year, we all have faced many challenges and had to find ways to adjust. Many people were affected by this pandemic and Republic Food Enterprise Center wanted to use our resources to help others.

The pandemic did create a challenge for our farmers with a surplus of products, so we were able to get fresh foods donated to the Food Bank. RFEC worked closely with farmers who donated 8,900 pounds of produce, 846 pounds of hamburger meat, 300 pounds of ground pork, and 2,000 gallons of milk that were distributed to individuals through the Food Bank's programs. RFEC also donated sauerkraut, pork, and an assorted variety of jellies and jams to the FCCAA Food Bank.

We were proud to have the resources to be able to donate these foods, but we were even more proud that we were able to donate 48 hours of our time as well. RFEC was able to assist with extra manpower to help pack and sort food at the FCCAA Food Bank. We also lent our vehicles to the Food Bank for deliveries and mass food distributions.

This pandemic has been a trying time for many people and if we could lend a hand to those who might need the extra help right now, we are happy to.

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## Dallas Taylor

### Asset-based Entrepreneurship: Trails, Towns and Tourism in the Appalachian Ohio Economy | Rural Action, Inc.

For a 19-year-old Glouster resident, Rural Action's high school internship program has been life-changing.

"This job could set me on a whole new direction," Dallas Taylor says of his internship with the Baileys Trail System. "It's the biggest thing that's ever happened to me."

Dallas is a graduate of Tri-County Career Center in Athens County, OH, and began his first high school internship in October 2020 with the Baileys Trail System.

The paid internship program is one component of Rural Action's POWER funding—it helps high school students in low-income communities access job opportunities and social networks. Other students have completed internships at Ohio University, a local fire department, the Wayne National Forest, an outdoor tourism guiding company, and a local farm.

The first half of Taylor's internship focused on basic video production and storytelling through a vlog-style format. He then moved into creating more polished promotional videos under the mentorship of Evan Shaw, a local Emmy-winning filmmaker.

"Anyone who's seen a video produced by Dallas can immediately recognize what a unique and fun perspective he has. His dry enthusiasm is infectious," Shaw said. "It's vital that the next generation of Southeast Ohioans has a platform to share how they experience our region. This is a wonderful opportunity for Dallas to explore his creativity and the stories of our area."

Though Dallas is hoping to purchase a car with his internship stipend, for now he often rides his bike 20 miles roundtrip from his home in Glouster to the trailhead in Chauncey.

"It's changed my life," he mused. "I love it. I love riding to work in Chauncey. I love every second of it."

Taylor is no stranger to the unique rewards and challenges of growing up in rural Southeast Ohio.

"I graduated in May and a lot of people didn't think that was going to happen. But I did it and I proved a lot of people wrong. This is the first time I've ever done anything like this. It's my first professional job. I'm lucky. A lot of people don't get these opportunities."

After completing his first internship, Dallas did two additional follow-on internships with Rural Action to complete video marketing projects for the Baileys and other outdoor recreation attractions in Southeast Ohio. This month (February 2021), he started a job with Baileys Basecamp—a new business owned by Ross Kuhns building lodging right off the Chauncey trailhead of the Baileys Trail System. Dallas Taylor represents an excellent example of how young people can develop careers in the outdoor recreation sector and thrive in rural southeast Ohio.

## Developing a Workforce Trained in Clean Energy

### Economic Transition for Eastern Kentucky (ETEK) Initiative Grant | Mountain Association

The outright collapse of the coal industry, on top of decades of economic distress, has created an unprecedented crisis. Eastern Kentucky has lost more than 10,000 coal jobs since 2011, resulting in even larger job losses to supporting industries. Many former coal or related industry workers have left the region for work, and much of that work was in low-skill, low-wage jobs, so they could provide for their families.

This was happening at the same time that the Mountain Association was ramping up its energy work to audit homes, businesses, organizations and public agencies in Eastern Kentucky to help them save money. Time after time, they experienced limited contractor capacity to complete the recommended upgrades. Often, it would take six months or more to get an upgrade or start a solar project. So, with the help of funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Mountain Association created a workforce development program to build the clean energy economy capacity needed to advance this work.

The New Energy Internship offers former coal industry or other out-of-work Eastern Kentuckians six-month internships to train on assessing buildings and homes for energy efficiency issues, implementing energy efficiency upgrades, and renewable energy systems. Training includes coordinating retrofits with contractors, and installing smaller retrofits, particularly in lighting and duct sealing.

The Mountain Association has graduated seven unique individuals since 2018. Each internship was customized according to each individual's skillsets or goals. Two former interns are now working at local non-profits to advance energy efficiency and clean energy, and four others started their own energy services contracting businesses. The latter group received more training about communications, sales and marketing, and small business startup skills. This included a six-week immersive business course through which they developed a business plan, and business support for accounting and building a website, and creating their own marketing materials.

Clean energy and entrepreneurship have allowed former interns to connect to their communities and provide for their neighbors in meaningful ways. One intern, John Craft, said his work is now more interesting, more satisfying, and involves more innovative technology. Another intern, Zac Ebersole, said his work is allowing some people to remain in Eastern Kentucky because they can now afford to stay in their homes or make rent for their business by saving on their bills.

The Mountain Association is currently working with HOMES, Inc. and Red Bird Mission, two nonprofits in the region, to train their employees through New Energy internships.

HOMES electrician Fuzz Johnson will gain a Solar Energy International Solar Professional certification and take the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners Photovoltaic exam, eventually allowing HOMES to generate revenue by providing solar

services. Red Bird Mission employee Cecil Hall will be trained on HVAC systems, lighting, sealing, crawl space encapsulation, and more. After completing the program, he'll be able to train other Red Bird employees and volunteers to complete their improvements without hiring outside labor. Red Bird may incorporate this into their adult programming, where Cecil can train outside community members in these skills.

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## Eastern Kentucky Optometry Student Receives Quality Training Close to Home

### **Kentucky College of Optometry: Equipment | University of Pikeville, Inc.**

In August 2016, the University of Pikeville (UPIKE), a private liberal arts institution in rural Pikeville, Ky., was fortunate to receive grants through the POWER Initiative. UPIKE utilized the transformational funding to purchase state-of-the-art optometric equipment to launch the University of Pikeville-Kentucky College of Optometry (KYCO) – the only optometry college in Kentucky. The POWER Initiative grants made KYCO possible, thereby creating new jobs in a downturned economy as well as providing prospective optometry students the opportunity to train close to home and increase access to vision care in rural communities.

KYCO's service area includes what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designates as the diabetes belt. It is estimated that one-third of Appalachians suffer from diabetes, putting this population at a higher risk for blindness than people without diabetes. In fact, the blindest county in America – Owsley County, Ky. – is just 120 miles from KYCO. Students at KYCO are positioned to serve the underserved.

Maddie Smith, a first-year KYCO student, is achieving her dream of obtaining optometric education in Eastern Kentucky, where she plans to practice upon earning her Degree of Optometry in 2024. Born and raised 30 minutes east of UPIKE in Belfry, Ky., Maddie has a deep love and passion for her community. She knew at a young age that whatever profession she pursued, she wanted to live and work in Eastern Kentucky.

While attending Belfry High School, Maddie began considering science-related careers. Optometry piqued her interest at age 16, so she began talking with local optometrists and quickly fell in love with the profession. Her spark was almost extinguished, however, when she came to a devastating realization that the nearest optometry college was an eight-hour drive from her home.

"It threw me for a loop because I wanted to train and practice in the region in which I live," Maddie states. "I wanted to work and start a family here." She began considering other professions, but none excited her like optometry. "So, I prayed a desperate prayer," Maddie recalls, "asking God to tell me what He needed me to do."

Two weeks later, an announcement of KYCO's construction came across her social media feed.

"I kept up with KYCO, and during my senior year of high school, UPIKE created an early admittance program for UPIKE undergraduate students to attend KYCO," Maddie explains. "I

applied to UPIKE immediately, and it has absolutely been the best coincidence of my entire life. I could not be happier than I am right now."

Maddie began attending KYCO immediately after earning a Bachelor of Science degree from UPIKE. Her life changed by having the opportunity to study optometry in her community and care for underserved individuals. This opportunity did not exist until KYCO's recent inception. At KYCO, she receives exceptional instruction and hands-on training with the latest optometric equipment.

"The technology at KYCO is an incredible resource," Maddie says. "KYCO is a unique place that allows future optometrists to practice with the newest optometric innovations. Our education is the perfect combination of traditional and modern, which is an excellent way of preparing us for taking care of patients in the near future."

Maddie concludes, "Wherever KYCO graduates choose to practice, I am confident they will excel in any environment they find themselves entering. In large part, this confidence is due to the resources with which we have been provided while training."

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## The Flexibility of Region Food System Infrastructure and Partnerships

### Seed-to-Sale: Strengthening the Central Appalachian Food Corridor | Appalachian Sustainable Development

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began to impact our region, Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) has been seeking new ways to get healthy food to those in need while also ensuring that farmers can earn income and stay on family farms.

In March 2020, ASD began purchasing bins of produce, bringing them to Appalachian Harvest, ASD's food hub in Duffield, VA, and working with local food pantries to pack and distribute boxes to those in need. In April 2020, the USDA launched the Farmers Feeding Families Food Box program which aimed to buy \$3B in food boxes that would contain meat, fruits and vegetables, dairy, or a combination. When the contracts were announced, families in need in southwest VA and northeastern WV were not on any contractor's list to serve.

In June 2020, ASD was finally able to convince one of the awarded contractors to allocate a tractor trailer load of food boxes for southwest VA. The catch was that they were in Pennsylvania, and they required that ASD come and get them – which we did, using one of Appalachian Harvest's tractor trailers. By October, ASD's VA-based partner was awarded a contract from the USDA and that one tractor trailer load increased to 4 tractor trailer loads per week. Between buying regional produce and the USDA program, ASD donated over 2.2MM pounds of food between March and December 2020.

What ASD learned from this effort is the value of the logistics expertise, partnerships, and infrastructure that have been built for over 20 years, as what was created to help farmers access markets was flexible enough to be used to get millions of pounds of food to those in need.



For example, ASD purchased a refrigerated box truck to move smaller amounts of produce when a tractor-trailer was impractical/inefficient. This truck made it possible to work with Preston County Workshop (PCW) in WV to sell them fresh produce from ASD farmers in the growing season. (PCW received a sub-grant from ASD's previous POWER grant to install a cooler that is also being used for this effort.) During the winter months, that same truck was used to transport staple goods from one of ASD's partners that were then transported to PCW and purchased by and distributed through United Way of Monongolia and Preston Counties.

The lesson learned from this rewarding work is that we can and should look for creative ways to utilize the systems, infrastructure, and partnerships we have developed to respond to new challenges and opportunities that arise. What we recognized (and truly valued) was how dozens of partners came together to get food the last mile. Without our bringing food to the region that would not have happened. Without our partners' commitment to their communities, the food would have gotten to only a fraction of the communities served. And without supporters like the Appalachian Regional Commission which enables ASD and our partners to build infrastructure and capacity, none of this would have happened.

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## How to Invent Your Way Out of a Tight Box: Entrepreneurship During a Pandemic

### The Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem | Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission

Jeff Bezos said, "The only way to get out of a tight box is to invent your way out." That is exactly what Startup Alleghenies (SUA) entrepreneurs, Coaches and partners did in 2020. I learned some valuable lessons along the way.

Four years ago, I was part of a group that gathered to discuss what could be done to reverse the negative economic impact the decline of the coal industry inflicted on the region. That conversation, combined with an ARC POWER grant, launched a movement (SUA). The goal was to create an ecosystem to help entrepreneurs in the Alleghenies start their businesses, while creating a regional culture that encourages entrepreneurial growth and good jobs. SUA grew even more quickly than we anticipated. Then the pandemic hit. Here are five lessons I will carry into 2021:

- 1) Who in their right mind would start a business in uncertain times? Entrepreneurs. It is in their DNA. Entrepreneurs are flexible, creative, and thrive on solving problems. Their grit is unparalleled in the business world. Even a pandemic cannot stop them. But they want and need our help.
- 2) Pivot should be the 2020 word of the year for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are fearless and nimble. They assessed the impact of COVID-19, and with help from SUA coaches and partners, adjusted quickly to stabilize their businesses and safely serve their customers.

3) You can find financing even during a pandemic. SUA expanded funding to include loan and micro loan programs, and a new Alleghenies Angel Fund. Rather than put funding on hiatus, Angel Fund members aggressively sought out great investments. SUA will develop additional training to help entrepreneurs get even smarter about pitching investors in 2021.

4) The network you build is paramount, but nothing beats a personal Coach. It is increasingly evident that one entity will not have all the knowledge and resources entrepreneurs need. SUA is grateful for our vast network of partners, but we have learned from our entrepreneurs that our SUA Coaches are most critical to their success. Serving as both mentors and doorways to our resources, they work directly with entrepreneurs. Many businesses were struggling to navigate government programs and secure funding. Our Coaches helped countless entrepreneurs successfully navigate the daunting application process.

5) Failure can be a good thing. In fact, it is just part of the process. There is no roadmap to success that fits all situations. Entrepreneurship is messy. Entrepreneurs fall, get back up and charge forward. There are valuable lessons in those falls. Our ecosystem must keep up with them. There is no place for ego or competition in a successful ecosystem. Everyone must be 100% on board with the mission, and ready to help entrepreneurs get what they need, when they need it. I am grateful for our committed and collaborative ecosystem. In 2021, SUA is here for entrepreneurs, even better than before, because of lessons learned this year.

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## Mr. A Brings ESTEAM to Life for Eastern Kentucky Students

### Fostering Self ESTEAM in Appalachia's Emerging Workforce | The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education

Mr. A is a business educator and counselor at [a partner high school] in Johnson County, Kentucky. Through the POWER funded Fostering Self ESTEAM in Appalachia's Emerging Workforce project, EntreEd provides Mr. A the tools, funding, and network needed to bring his vision for student entrepreneurship and STEAM opportunities to life. He has dedicated himself to making a difference in his students by preparing them for their future careers and teaching them valuable skills beyond what can be found in a textbook.

To build this real-world experience, Mr. A currently teaches Entrepreneurship and School Innovation Store at [the high school]. The school store is a fully functional store utilized for classes where students use STEAM to design and create clothing items entirely hands-on while also learning fundamental entrepreneurship processes. Students are involved in every aspect of the store, from designing and creating products to selling and financial reporting.

With support from EntreEd's POWER project, Mr. A purchased a purchase order system, heat press, sublimation machine, and updated parts for an embroidery machine. The additions of the new equipment have provided numerous project-based learning experiences for his students. Mr. A had all of his students enroll in EntreEd Academy's online student-facing course, Learn2Launch and uses it weekly to support his classroom objectives.

"Kids learn best when they can learn doing the project and creating with their hands. The ESTEAM project offered the opportunity to make it happen," he said. "The students now have the ability to design more items and think more creatively. Before this program, we would design things online, and the students submitted on paper for feedback. Now that we have equipment, I can actually have kids design real products, do pitch contests, and sell their ideas. The kids are one hundred times more excited to come to class. They now discuss their ideas with each other and are excited to create. It really makes a difference."

Mr. A said that the ESTEAM project has also given students confidence and a new outlook.

"Instead of thinking 'What if I design this?' or 'What if I create this?', they're thinking: I can. As an educator, this project gives you the opportunity to have tools in your classroom, the network and funding you need, and it helps you build confidence in your students. The POWER ESTEAM project has started a movement, and it's just the beginning. Everything I do is a passion, so any success with this project means I know I'm making a change. Success means change in this project. We're able to help kids move forward and change the way we deliver content to students in the classroom. We can tell students you could do this, why not tell them just to do it. We've got to think outside the box. That's what it's all about, bringing entrepreneurship and STEAM to life. I am grateful that this project allowed me to do that."

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## One Last Second Chance: Terrell's Story, How HDA's Hope Building Builds Homes and Lives

### Hope Building | Housing Development Alliance, Inc.

Terrell Ethel knew no one was coming to save him this time. If he was ever going to get home to his two little boys and be the father he wanted to be, he had to do it.

Describing himself as "on fire to change," Terrell made a list of small goals and big goals and watched those lists shrink over time, but as he sat on the grounds of Hickory Hill Recovery Center, an addiction recovery center for men in remote Knott County, Ky., he watched a group of men building a new house nearby and longed to be a part of the crew.

The men, many of whom were friends of his at Hickory Hill, had joined Hope Building, a new program at the Housing Development Alliance (HDA) offering paid, on-the-job training in construction for men and women in recovery.

Concerned that details of his past would prevent him from being accepted into the program, Terrell was overjoyed when he learned he'd been hired and was immediately sent out to work sites with HDA carpenters and lead Hope Building trainers Matthew Pratt and Lonnie Walker.

"Before we started building a house, I looked at the empty property there and thought this is how my life felt – like nothing," Terrell said. "Someone can show you the blueprint of a house, but it's still hard to imagine how it's all going to turn out. As the walls are going up and you're jumping from spot to spot putting in each nail, you have to keep faith that it's all going to come together. And sure enough, it does."

Over the course of the three-year POWER grant cycle, Hope Building will produce 15 new homes for middle-income families in East Kentucky. The program's second crew of six trainees, of which Terrell was a member, built two houses, including the program's first two-story house between June and November 2020. The home sold to a middle-income family, who was excited to start 2021 in their new home.

For Terrell, his journey in recovery has been sustained by having a job. His training in Hope Building led to a full-time job at a steel factory in his hometown of Ashland, Ky., which has allowed him to make a home for his children and to create the life for himself that he once thought would never be possible.

"If you don't have a job, you get discouraged or depressed," Terrell said. "Having that stability helps you stay on top of your goals and helps you keep doing the things you're supposed to do, like paying your bills. If that job can keep you in that frame of mind, then it really helps you feel that things will be okay. When you have people that are willing to give you a second chance, you're happy to work, you're happy to get out there and do something different with your life."

Hope Building gave Terrell an opportunity to build the life he wanted, to show an often-skeptical community his determination and talents and has even revealed to him what he believes is his new life's purpose: to give back by helping others on their own recovery journeys.

"You have to believe in yourself, and you have to put in the work," Terrell said. "Building houses is like recovery: for this house to be built, I have to keep doing these little things that I do. And if you miss one, if you miss a nail or a wall, guess what's going to happen? It's going to crumble and fall. I hope I'm proof to people that it can be done. Your life can change."

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## Pivoting Support Programs to Better Serve Businesses and Organizations During COVID-19

### Economic Transition for Eastern Kentucky (ETEK) Initiative Grant | Mountain Association

A Town Built to Carry On: That's the motto of Rainelle, a small town of around 1,500 people in Greenbrier County, West Virginia.

One social enterprise in Rainelle is taking this motto to heart.

West Virginian Tammy Jordan grew up in Raleigh County and moved to Greenbrier County after College. For many years, she offered wedding catering, cake decorating, and floral design through her farm, Fruits of Labor, in addition to working a full-time job with the US Department of Agriculture. Over the years, Tammy saw the area face waves of opioid and substance abuse. She began to get interested in how she could help those in recovery and those who had been incarcerated build a meaningful life. After a visit to Alderson Prison in 2009, Tammy got to work on an idea to offer culinary training and certificates for youth and adults in recovery or at risk for addiction. In 2013, the first participants graduated.

As a Nationally Certified American Culinary Federation Farm-to-Table Culinary & Agricultural Quality Program, Fruits of Labor's "Seeds of Recovery" and "Seeds of Hope" trains at risk youth and women in recovery in both culinary arts and agriculture. Participants gain national certificates and a wide range of skills from how to efficiently prepare dishes, handle unique produce items, decorate pastries, and bake breads, to planning a market garden and other farm skills. Their training café, bakery, and catering services generate revenue that goes back into providing sustainability for the education/training/employment style programming. Of the individuals who start the program, 85% graduate with their certificate and 90% go on to graduate from their Drug Court Program. In 2018, they had a 100% graduation rate for the first time and 100% placement rate into employment.

By offering a place for the community to come enjoy a nice meal and support their participants, Fruits of Labor also counters stigmas around addiction and provides further job training opportunities in customer service, inventory management, and more. Through partnerships with local and statewide drug courts and recovery homes, these programs are offered to participants free of charge.

"Many of our students have broken relationships they want to mend. They can go back home and prepare a meal for their family—especially if they've never cooked for their family before, or if it's been years—it does wonders for rebuilding relationships and creating new fellowship," Tammy said.

Over the past several months, Tammy has been working with a Mountain Association consultant on expansion plans and business coaching for Fruits of Labor. Tammy said the coaching has proven critical to helping her lead Fruits of Labor through the COVID-19 crisis.

With COVID-19, Fruits of Labor lost all of their catering events and 80% of their cafe and bakery business. They also had to cancel the launch of their new Wholesale Bakery scheduled for April 2020. However, with a fast and thoughtful response, they retained all employees and swiftly pivoted to generate revenue from new sources, like online orderings, weekly community drop-off spots, senior meals, and more.

"As you can imagine with COVID 19, I had to make some choices on how to move forward. These in-depth coaching classes prepared me to react and survey the immediate without losing sight of the next expansions that are still in the works for the organization," Tammy said. "The coaching has shown me how impactful and transformative a data approach is to the business during normal operation, and I have held myself to that standard during this crisis"

In addition to her previous coaching sessions, Tammy also took advantage of working with a Mountain Association coach to further develop their immediate and long-term plan to respond to COVID-19. When COVID-19 first began taking its toll, the Mountain Association's Business Support program quickly assembled this team of coaches to help businesses and organizations plan for an uncertain future. This coaching support proved key to many of the organization's clients being able to weather 2020 and beyond.

Fruits of Labor, even in the middle of this crisis, still remains forward focused on upcoming expansion to continue to transform individuals in recovery from addiction and to build a new economy in the region.

“There are times that it is very challenging to stay focused on what is coming, because of what is happening in the moment, but each day we press forward. The coaching sessions have been so helpful to have all of the needed structure in place to continue without hesitation into the future.” Some of the successes Tammy reported after working with the consultant included launching their bakery and culinary products into nine new communities across the region, securing a new food service contract, as well as approval to start a training program in Alderson Federal Prison for women — many in recovery — with a focus on re-entry. She also is happy to report they have new funding for both equipment and personnel for the wholesale mass production kitchen, and for a new educational program for those in recovery in Lewisburg, West Virginia. Fruits of Labor also operates a Retreat Center that sits on 218 acres, offering renewal retreats, women’s retreats, and other special interests.

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## Plant a Seed and Grow a Career

### The Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem | Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission

SEADS Garden Center, founded by Vince Lovenduski in Johnstown, Pa., is a nonprofit nursery and retail garden center with a mission that dovetails with the goals of ARC’s POWER Initiative to create a more vibrant economic future for coal-impacted communities, enhance job training, and create jobs in existing or new industries. The company name stands for Sustainable Employment for Adults with Disabilities. SEADS grows and sells a wide variety of seasonal plants and garden merchandise and hosts numerous community events.

As the father of a son with special needs, Lovenduski knew that 79% of persons with special needs are not included in the workforce. He wanted to be a catalyst to change that daunting statistic but understood he would need help to make this dream a reality. So, Lovenduski approached Startup Alleghenies (SUA) with the idea of opening a garden center that employs adults with special needs to create job opportunities for those who do not have a chance to enjoy meaningful employment. He also wanted to demonstrate with his own hiring practices that individuals like his son can make great employees.

SEADS opened in March of 2020, right at the beginning of the pandemic. The timing created its own set of challenges above and beyond those of launching a business and hiring and training special needs employees. But as 2020 closed, SEADS had recruited eight special needs employees, ranging in age from seventeen to sixty-years-old. Because of his success in just one year, Lovenduski has been able to attract additional funding, and plans to add two new greenhouses to the garden center and hire up to seven more special needs employees.

He credits the support and guidance he received from his SUA entrepreneur coach with helping him reach this level of success in just one year. His coach opened the door to the vast network of SUA ecosystem partners so that Lovenduski was able to fully develop his idea, and to create a business plan with solid financial projections. As a result, he received funding, not only from SUA, but also from 1889 Foundation, the Community Foundation of the Alleghenies, Lee Initiatives and JARI, as well as numerous corporations in the region. In addition, he enjoyed exceptional support from people in his community.

But Lovenduski's success extends beyond business acumen. His special needs employees can finally enjoy enriching employment, a sense of inclusion and belonging, valuable skills training, and the personal satisfaction and reward of earning their first paychecks. Despite the pandemic, this year has proven to be an excellent learning experience for SEADS staff and management. Based on his year's accomplishments, the future for the company looks even brighter.

Startup Alleghenies, launched with a POWER grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and support from the PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED), is a free program connecting existing and potential entrepreneurs with experienced Coaches to help them navigate a vast network of partners at economic development groups, private organizations, colleges and universities.

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## Transformation of Emily

### Recovery Opportunities and Pathways to Employment Success (ROPES) | SWVAWDB

Emily, like so many individuals in recovery, grew up in a household where substance misuse was prevalent. Access and environmental pressure led Emily to start abusing substances at the age of 12. In addition to the substance misuse, there was also a significant amount of domestic abuse in the household which provided an opportunity for Emily to turn to a wide variety of drugs to cope; meth, alcohol, cocaine, opiates, benzodiazepines, etc. Emily spent many years suffering from substance misuse disorder and was in and out of treatment several times without long-term success.

Emily was eventually arrested in 2016 for possession of a controlled substance and served some jail time. She had additional jail time post-release for probation violations. Incarceration consumed most of her life from 2016-2019.

After her last release, she was remanded to a SECOR halfway house and obtained employment at a local diner. It is then that she became very involved in her faith and the local recovery network which provided the support that she needed to maintain her abstinence. Her employment was also a pivotal transition point in her recovery.

Pat's Diner in Lebanon has a reputation for providing a recovery friendly work environment and supporting the recovery network. The owner of Pat's strongly encourages her employees to be actively involved in their recovery, tries to accommodate meetings, and provides referrals to local resources which is how ROPES met Emily.

Emily was enrolled with ROPES in March 2020. Since working with ROPES, Emily has been actively involved in the workshops and personal therapy, obtained a restricted driver's license, registered and repaired her vehicle, and moved into and supported her own apartment.

She has been so devoted to her recovery and her interest in helping others in recovery that ROPES and Ballard Health partnered for Emily to complete her Peer Recovery Specialist (PRS) training in October 2020. Emily has completed her certification as a PRS and has recently interviewed for a position with Ballard Health as a PRS and is likely to be offered that position.

Emily's most significant accomplishment has been reuniting with her children. This was Emily's main goal when she enrolled with ROPES; she wanted to put her life together so that her visitation with her children would be more frequent and she could start rebuilding their relationship. Emily has spent quite a lot of time in therapy working through her trauma and learning how to rebuild relationships. As a result of her hard work, one of her sons now lives with her part-time. I cannot think of a better success for her.

As Emily comes up on her 1-year anniversary with ROPES it is easy to see the amount of work and accomplishment she has achieved. Her life is nearly unrecognizable in just 12 short months. This is just one example of how lives can change if opportunities and partners in recovery work together. Emily is going to provide a wonderful example for others in recovery and for her family. ROPES is so pleased to have provided the foothold that she needed to rebuild her life and look forward to her continued success.

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## Turning Wood into Music Saves a Man's Life

### **Troublesome Creek Stringed Instrument Co. | Appalachian Artisan Center, Inc.**

Earl Moore remembers the day his father walked out. He was 12 years old and hundreds of miles away at his grandparents' house in Florida when his father broke the news over the phone. When young Moore returned home, his mother was inconsolable.

"I felt like I was unlovable. I really felt small," the 44-year-old said. "I wanted to do all I could to make the house better, to feel better at home. And I didn't know how to do it."

Moore discovered the power of opioids to take that pain away while attending college at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. After a series of minor surgeries for ingrown toenails, Moore ended up with more than 400 pain pills in his medicine cabinet.

"My friend came over and showed me that I could use these pills then to feel better, to study longer, to just have increased performance and it was great in the beginning."

Moore's addiction lasted more than 15 years -- before he finally found the help he needed. It was a nightmare odyssey that led him to steal his grandmother's cancer pain medication and his police officer brother's ATM card to pay for pills.



He says he tried to kill himself twice and spent nine months in jail where he was beaten in a prison riot. Moore went through five different drug treatment facilities but always ended up using again.

Not until Moore says he found a 12-step program and a mentor who showed him the art of building stringed instruments -- did he find the self-love and confidence that turned his life around for good. Moore was trying to get clean yet again in 2012 when he heard a master luthier -- an expert stringed-instrument maker -- was coming to his hometown of Hindman, a tiny hamlet nestled in the lush mountains of Eastern Kentucky.

Moore had been doing carpentry, building cabinets and had a love for guitars. The desperate young man made a point of showing up to see a band one night where the luthier, Doug Naselroad, was performing.

"He said, 'I need to come to work in your studio -- I need you to teach me how to make guitars,'" recalled Naselroad. "I said, 'Well, that's no problem. That's what we do.' And he said, 'No, you don't understand I need to come and do this.'"

Moore admitted he had a felony on his record and thought that might be an obstacle to apprenticing under Naselroad. At the time he was going through a 12-step program to fight his addictions.

"There was some discussion about the wisdom of bringing people in addiction into our studios," said Naselroad. In the end, Naselroad and his employer, the Appalachian Artisan Center, said yes.

"I was probably headed for death that time. How many more chances do you get in life?" Moore found himself in Naselroad's wood shop nearly every day learning how to craft guitars from Appalachian native hardwoods in a town where the mountain dulcimer was first made in the late 1800s.

"Music has always been a part of this community ever since pioneer days," said Naselroad.

What started out as a one-year apprenticeship became a six-year journey that brought Moore back to life. "(Naselroad) would bring in what people would throw away and he could see through the rough grain and see that there was beautiful wood laying underneath," said Moore. "To be able to do that and see beauty through dark places, is a gift he has and was able to show it to me."

Moore says he began to see the beauty in himself peering through those dark places and his confidence grew as he built a new skill.

"You don't realize what you're capable of until you're able to produce something in an artistic form. Art releases something deep inside you don't know you have."

Since he began, Moore has made more than 70 instruments. He's sold many of them and kept others. And while building instruments at night, during the day he earned a master's degree in network security administration.

Eight years later, Moore is still sober and works as the director of information technology at a residential treatment center where a large percentage of the employees are recovering addicts themselves. Moore's success inspired the creation of the "Culture of Recovery" arts program at The Appalachian Artisan Center.

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## Appendix C

### ARC Definitions of POWER Outputs and Outcomes<sup>24</sup>

#### Outputs

| Metric Name                            | Definition   |
|--|--|
| Access Road Miles                      | The length of the access roads constructed as part of the project, in miles or decimals of miles.  |
| Acreage                                | The number of acres impacted by an ARC site development or reclamation project, such as the number of acres graded and prepared for development at an emerging industrial park, the number of acres open to future development, or the number of acres remediated in a reclamation project.  |
| Businesses Served                      | The number of businesses served by an ARC project. For infrastructure projects, this includes either the number of non-residential entities <i>with access to</i> new service (e.g., water, sewer, gas line, or telecommunications) or improved service (e.g., improvements in health or safety, compliance with environmental quality, improved water pressure). For business development projects, this includes businesses receiving technical assistance or participating in training, entrepreneurship, export, or other business development and improvement programs. |
| Communities Served                     | The number of communities served or impacted by an ARC project, including projects that address planning, civic participation, infrastructure, educational opportunities, and community capacity. For consolidated technical assistance grants, the number of communities served is the number of projects submitted by state ARC program offices.   |
| Data—Megabits per Second (Mbps)        | The data transfer capacity of a telecommunications/broadband network, in megabits per second. This includes the data transfer capacity of a new network, or the increase in data transfer capacity of an existing network due to renovation, new equipment, or other improvements. This measure may be expressed in decimals.  |
| Data—Terabytes (TB)                    | The fixed data storage capacity of a server room or data center, in terabytes. This measure may be expressed in decimals.  |
| Gas—Million Cubic Feet (MMCF)          | The fixed storage capacity of a gas pipeline or gas system, in millions of cubic feet. This measure may be expressed in decimals.  |
| Gas—Million Cubic Feet per Day (MMCFD) | The flow capacity of a gas pipeline or gas system, in millions of cubic feet per day. This includes the flow capacity of a new gas pipeline or system, or the increase in flow capacity of an existing gas pipeline or system due to renovation, new equipment, or other improvements. This measure may be expressed in decimals.  |
| Heat—Million BTU (MMBTU)               | The fixed heating capacity of an energy system, including a gas system, in millions of British Thermal Units (BTUs). This measure may be expressed in decimals.  |

<sup>24</sup> See [www.arc.gov/resource/guide-to-arc-project-performance-measures/](http://www.arc.gov/resource/guide-to-arc-project-performance-measures/).

| Metric Name                       | Definition  |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Heat—Million BTU per Day (MMBTUD) | The capacity of heat flow generated, transmitted, consumed, or conserved by an energy system, including a gas system, in millions of British Thermal Units (BTUs) per day. This includes the heat flow capacity of a new combined heating and power (CHP) system. It also includes the increase in heat flow capacity of an existing HVAC system or the reduction in heat consumption by a facility due to renovation, new equipment, energy efficiency measures, or other improvements. This measure may be expressed in decimals. |
| Households Served                 | The number of households served by an ARC infrastructure project. This includes either the number of households <i>with access to</i> new service (e.g., water, sewer, gas line, or telecommunications), or improved service (e.g., improvements in health or safety, compliance with environmental quality, improved water pressure).  |
| Linear Feet                       | The number of linear feet of pipe, wire, cable, trails, etc. to be constructed or installed.  |
| Million Gallons (MG)              | The fixed storage capacity of a water tank or sewage lagoon, in millions of gallons. This measure may be expressed in decimals.   |
| Million Gallons per Day (MGD)     | The flow capacity of a water or sewer system, in millions of gallons per day. This includes the flow capacity of a new water or sewage treatment plant, or the increase in flow capacity of an existing plant due to renovation, new equipment, or other improvements. This measure may be expressed in decimals.   |
| New Visitors – Days               | The number of new daytime visitors to a tourism destination times the number of days they visit, within one year of project implementation.   |
| New Visitors – Overnights         | The number of new overnight visitors to a tourism destination times the number of their overnight stays, within one year of project implementation.   |
| Organizations Served              | The number of organizations served by an ARC project, including hospitals, schools, churches, non-profits, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies (use when number of businesses or households does not apply).  |
| Participants Served               | The number of individual participants served or targeted by an ARC project (use when patients, students, or worker/trainee measures do not apply). This can include the number of attendees at a meeting, workshop, or conference. For example, the number of individuals participating in a planning process; participating in a leadership program; or the number of individuals attending health promotion activities.   |
| Patients Served                   | The number of unique patients receiving clinical services one or more times as a result of an ARC health project. For equipment projects, report the number of unique patients served by that equipment during the project period and one year after the equipment is deployed. For health projects that do not provide clinical services (such as health promotion activities), use the measure “participants served.”   |

| Metric Name                                      | Definition  |
|--|---|
| Plans/Reports                                    | The number of plans or reports developed as a result of an ARC project. This could include strategic plans, master plans, concept plans, or plans for infrastructure improvements or new programs, as well as research reports, feasibility studies, etc. This measure is often paired with the outcome "Programs Implemented," since a program or specific activity is often implemented as a result of a planning process.  |
| Power—Kilowatt-Hours (kW/h) Per Year             | The capacity of power flow generated, transmitted, distributed, consumed, or conserved by an energy system; in kilowatt-hours per year. This includes the flow capacity of a new power plant or new power line. It also includes the increase in power flow capacity of an electric grid or the reduction in power consumption by a facility due to renovation, new equipment, energy efficiency measures, or other improvements. This measure may be expressed in decimals.  |
| Power—Kilowatts (kW)                             | The fixed power generating capacity of an energy system, including a renewable energy system, in kilowatts. This measure may be expressed in decimals.  |
| Square Feet                                      | The number of square feet constructed or improved by an ARC project, such as the square footage of a renovated community center, a newly constructed parking lot, a reconfigured interior space, etc.   |
| Students Served                                  | The number of students served by an ARC education project, measured during the project period, when possible (e.g., the number of students served by a science and technology program in a given semester or year). For projects that are not fully operational during the project period, the measurement time period may be extended up to three years after the project end date. Projects that expand existing programs count only the additional number of students served.  |
| Waste—Tons per Day Reduced/Reused/Recycled (TPD) | The flow capacity of waste reduced, reused, or recycled by a waste processing facility. This includes the flow capacity of a new waste-to-energy plant, or the increase in flow capacity of an existing landfill or recycling center due to renovation, new equipment, or other improvements. This measure may be expressed in decimals.  |
| Waste—Tons Reduced/Reused/Recycled               | The number of tons of waste reduced, reused, or recycled at a landfill, brownfield site or recycling center; within one year of project implementation.   |
| Workers/Trainees Served                          | The number of worker/trainees served by an ARC training project, measured during the project period when possible. For example, the number of worker/trainees the project will be able to enroll in a new workforce education program. For projects that are not fully operational during the project period, the measurement time period may be extended up to three years after the project end date. Projects that expand existing programs count only the additional number of workers/trainees that the project will be able to serve. |

## Outcomes

| Metric Name                        | Definition  |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Businesses Created                 | The number of new businesses created as a result of an ARC project. This measure is used for business development projects such as entrepreneurship training, value-added agriculture, access to capital, and business incubation programs (including seed accelerators). This measure should only be used to measure new business creation, not the number of existing businesses recruited or otherwise relocated from other areas. The grant applicant should estimate how many new businesses will be created within three years of the project end date.   |
| Businesses Improved                | The number of businesses with a measurable improvement as a result of an ARC project. For new service infrastructure projects, the output (served) is the number of non-residential entities with access to the infrastructure service while the outcome (improved) is the number of non-residential customers that are connected to the infrastructure service. For improved service projects (e.g., improvements in health or safety, compliance with environmental quality, improved water pressure), all non-residential customers served are also considered improved. For business development projects, the grant applicant and ARC project manager must agree on what constitutes "measurable improvement" and a method for measuring the degree of improvement must be provided. For each project this number is always a subset of, or the same as, the "businesses served" output measure. |
| Communities Improved               | The number of communities with a measurable improvement as a result of an ARC project, including projects that address planning, civic participation, infrastructure, educational opportunities, and community capacity. For community capacity projects, this is the number of communities with enhanced capacity. This measure should also be used for consolidated technical assistance grants. The grant applicant and ARC project manager must agree on what constitutes "measurable improvement" and a method for measuring the degree of improvement must be provided. For each project, this number is always a subset of, or the same as, the "communities served" output measure.   |
| Costs Reduced                      | The amount of costs reduced as a result of project activities, within one year of project implementation. For example, small business technical assistance may help a business streamline and cut costs, or an energy-efficiency program may help to reduce energy costs, through a renegotiated flat fee for energy use or through a reduction in kilowatt hours used. See the output measure "energy capacity."   |
| Households Improved                | The number of households with measurable improvement as a result of an ARC project. For new service infrastructure projects, the output (served) is the number of households with access to the infrastructure service while the outcome (improved) is the number of residential customers that are connected to the infrastructure service. For improved service projects (e.g., improvements in health or safety, compliance with environmental quality, improved water pressure), all residential customers served are also considered improved. For each project, this number is always a subset of, or the same as, the "households served" output measure.  |
| Housing Units Constructed/Rehabbed | The number of housing units constructed or rehabilitated as a part of an ARC housing or community development project.  |

| Metric Name                        | Definition  |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Jobs Created                       | The number of jobs created (direct hires, excluding construction jobs) as a result of an ARC project, measured during the project period and up to three years after the project end date. Part-time and seasonal jobs should be converted to full-time equivalents and rounded up to whole numbers. Note: for infrastructure projects, employers must provide letters stating their intention to create a specific number of new jobs; for non-infrastructure jobs, grant applicants should estimate the number of jobs that will be created by the organizations expected to benefit from the project.  |
| Jobs Retained                      | The number of jobs retained as a result of an ARC project. These are existing jobs that would be lost or relocated if the ARC project were not undertaken. Note: for infrastructure projects, employers must provide letters explicitly stating the number of jobs at risk, due to relocation or loss of competitiveness, without the project. Existing jobs benefitting from an infrastructure upgrade cannot be counted as jobs retained. For non-infrastructure projects, grant applicants should estimate the number of existing jobs that would be at risk, due to relocation or loss of competitiveness, without the ARC-funded project.  |
| Leveraged Private Investment (LPI) | The dollar amount of private-sector financial commitments, outside of project costs that result from an ARC project, measured during the project period and up to three years after the project end date. Note: for infrastructure projects, businesses must provide letters stating their intention to make a specific level of investment if the project is funded; for non-infrastructure projects, grant applicants should estimate the dollar value of investments that will be made by the company or companies that will benefit from the project.   |
| Organizations Improved             | The number of organizations with a measurable improvement as a result of an ARC project, including hospitals, schools, churches, non-profits, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies (use when number of businesses or households does not apply). The grant applicant and ARC project manager must agree on what constitutes "measurable improvement" and a method for measuring the degree of improvement must be provided. For each project, this number is always a subset of, or the same as, the "organizations served" output measure.  |
| Participants Improved              | The number of participants with a measurable improvement as a result of an ARC project (use when patients, students, or worker/trainee measures do not apply, as with a leadership program or planning process). If outcomes are not achieved or cannot be measured within three years after the project is completed, the number of participants that complete or attend all or a required number of components of the project activity may be substituted. For example, the number of participants that attend at least four out of the five community workshops offered. The grant applicant and ARC project manager must agree on what constitutes "measurable improvement" and a method for measuring the degree of improvement must be provided. For each project, this number is always a subset of, or the same as, the "participants served" output measure. |

| Metric Name                          | Definition  |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Patients Improved                    | The number of unique patients expected to benefit from an ARC health project. Because it is usually assumed that all patients served by a health project receive some benefit from it, the numbers for "patients served" and "patients improved" are usually the same. However, if the grant applicant can perform clinical measurement of health outcomes, the outcome number may be lower than the output number. For example, if 30 obese patients participate in an exercise program and 25 are expected to lower their BMI by a certain percentage, the output could be recorded as 30 patients served and the outcome as 25 patients improved.  |
| Programs Implemented                 | The number of new programs, or the number of ongoing activities related to a defined goal, which are implemented as a result of an ARC project. If possible, use with other measures that indicate the results of the project, such as students, workers, participants, etc.  |
| Revenues Increased: Export Sales     | The increase in revenue in export sales realized by a business as a result of an ARC project, within three years of the project end date.   |
| Revenues Increased: Non-Export Sales | The increase in revenue in domestic (non-export) sales realized by a business as a result of an ARC project, within three years of the project end date.  |
| Students Improved                    | The number of students who obtain a job in the field for which they were specifically trained; the number that receive a diploma, certificate, or other career credential; or the number of students who successfully complete a course or unit of study and/or graduate to the next grade or level necessary to continue their education. When outcomes occur after the project period, the number of students improved may be counted up to three years beyond the project end date. For programs where final outcomes are achieved after three or more years, the number of students improved may be counted by an alternative benchmark, such as the number of students completing a skill, grade, or level, or continued enrollment for the project period. For each project, this number is always a subset of, or the same as, the "students served" output measure. |
| Telecom Sites                        | The number of new telecom services installed as a result of an ARC project. This diverse measure includes, but is not limited to, new telemedicine sites, new wi-fi hotspots, a new wireless router or computer lab at a high school, new fiber run to an industrial site, a new antenna used to provide broadband service, etc.  |
| Workers/Trainees Improved            | The number of workers/trainees with improved skills that enable them to obtain employment or to enhance their current employment. For example, the number of workers or trainees obtaining a new job; getting higher pay or a better position; or receiving a certification, measured during the project period when possible. When outcomes occur after the project period, the number of workers or trainees improved may be counted up to three years beyond the project end date. For programs where outcomes are achieved after three or more years, the number of students improved may be counted by an alternative benchmark, such as completion of a skill, level/course, or continued enrollment for the project period. For each project, this number is always a subset of, or the same as, the "workers/trainees served" output measure.                       |



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