

# Shaping Our Appalachian Region

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## YEAR ONE WORKING GROUP PRIORITIES FOR REGIONAL ACTION AND COLLABORATION

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### **Agriculture, Community and Regional Foods, Natural Resources**

- Local Food Systems Development
  1. Implement process to initiate regional and local education, dialogue, and planning for food systems development.
  2. Foster Bon Appetit Appalachia (national tourism program to promote local food, farms, and flavor) participation in eastern Kentucky.
  3. Increase WIC and Senior voucher redemption rates by allowing use at farm stands.
- Asset Mapping
  1. At least 0.10 full-time equivalent staff person (volunteer or paid) should be tasked with compiling information from agriculture, food, and natural resource asset mapping efforts, including parameters of included data.
- Support Exiting Agencies / Encourage Partnerships
  1. At least 0.25 full-time equivalent staff person (volunteer or paid) should be tasked with acting as liaison for SOAR to agencies, organizations, and individuals active in agriculture, food systems, and natural resource management in SOAR counties to support efforts, facilitate synergistic partnerships, and limit duplicative efforts.
- Capital Access
  1. \$2,000.00 to \$5,000.00 loans for small and beginning farmers with low interest rates to be established for the Appalachian region to help start and / or expand current operations.
- Land Access
  1. Tax incentives need to be considered and provided, if feasible to reclaim mine land owners to encourage them to lease the property for agricultural purposes.

### **Broadband**

- The Center's fiber infrastructure should be an open access system that will support government services, education, healthcare, and business development.
- The Center's fiber infrastructure deployment should be a priority project for the SOAR region with additional deployments throughout Kentucky. This additional deployment, by the Commonwealth, should integrate seamlessly with the Center's deployment to create a comprehensive, open statewide fiber infrastructure.

## **Business Incubation**

- **Focus: Identify Traded Sectors and Industry Clusters**
  1. Identify the Regional Economic Watersheds that have emerged around growth communities within the region, based upon statistical metrics (transfer of goods / services, workforce flow, leakage analysis, etcetera).
  2. Identify emerging economic clusters throughout the region for focused development.
  3. Identify existing traded sector companies in the growth-stage, and focus programs of the eastern Kentucky TA Providers Network on this group, via the development of regional business service teams.
- **Resources: Increase Awareness and Improve Access**
  1. Development and promotion of a web portal clearinghouse to better market resources currently available to potential entrepreneurs and existing small business owners.
  2. Facilitate collaborations among existing Technical Assistance providers with chambers of commerce throughout the region and state.
- **Culture: Promote and Celebrate Innovation**
  1. Support the Establishment Social Networks for Entrepreneurs to connect and share ideas.
  2. Begin to craft a multi-faceted campaign to tell the story of innovative entrepreneurship within the region, especially to our youth.

## **Business Recruitment, Retention, and Expansion**

- **Third Party Analysis**
  1. Issue a Request for Proposal for the following studies and execute a contract with a professional consultant:
    - Site Map of existing resources and alignment of resources
    - Properties inventory and recommended improvements (fatal flaws)
    - Workforce inventory and Needs Assessment for training (skills gap)
    - Target industries analysis
- **Creation of New / Existing Regional Capacity for Economic Development**
  1. Create a sub-committee of the Business Recruitment, Retention, and Expansion Committee to develop and coordinate the initiative to fund, locate, and staff regional economic development organizations.
  2. Bring together KCED, KYADD, economic development related organizations, elected officials, workforce, and financial resources that operate in eastern Kentucky with the common goal to identify and support the best locations of regional economic development organizations.
  3. State and Federal Executive Branch and Legislative Branch support to secure sufficient funding for 2 year budget cycle that will sufficiently fund operation of the Regional Economic Development Organizations.
- **Competitive Advantage Unique to Eastern Kentucky**
  1. Tailor a specific state incentive to eastern Kentucky.
  2. Create a cash program to close deals in eastern Kentucky that works in conjunction and above the current Economic Development Bond Program.

3. Work with eastern Kentucky communities and Industrial Development Authorities (IDA) to develop their own incentive programs to reduce costs for new company location.
- **Infrastructure Improvements**
    1. Transportation
    2. Communications: Dark Fiber
    3. Rail / Water
    4. Air
    5. Water / Wastewater and Landfills
    6. Business and Industrial Park properties
  - **Establish Permanent Economic Development Funding**
    1. Create and establish an immediate pool of money to be overseen and administered by the SOAR organization.
    2. Introduce legislation to dedicate 3%-5% of Coal Severance funds toward dedicated funding for economic development, and a percentage of this for marketing the regional industrial sites in the SOAR region.
    3. Create a permanent funding mechanism for the regional industrial parks with minimum funding levels of \$75,000.00 to \$100,000.00 per property per year.
    4. Introduce legislation to dedicate at least 1% of Coal Severance Funds to a regional endowment fund to be overseen and administered by the SOAR organization.
    5. Organize a “meeting of the minds” to be hosted by the Chairs of SOAR, Congressman Rogers, and Governor Beshear, with the heads all of potential funding agencies.

## **Education and Retraining**

- **Equipping Our Workforce with the Skills to Support a Revitalized Region**
  1. Establish an employment and training / retraining mechanism in the SOAR counties of eastern Kentucky that focuses on low-wage workers and unemployed individuals in need of and receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
  2. Develop a model entrepreneurial training program at the community college level that uniquely supports the region’s rich artisan culture, while supporting both current and prospective small business owners.
  3. Build upon existing industry partnerships and / or establish new partnerships within the sectors of Healthcare, Energy Transmission, Telecommunications, and Digital Technology to guide in the creation of both short-term training programs that can be accomplished in weeks to months, and long-term training programs (2 to 4 years) that establish direct pathways to retraining and re-employment in those sectors.
  4. The creation of Computer Coding Communities in the region that deliver training necessary to secure jobs in the emerging portion of the Digital Technology sector driven by computer science skills.
  5. The linking of social enterprise and private business to assist in the retraining and skill development of the workforce.
  6. Establish a scholarship program to help fund training toward ISO 9000 certification for small businesses in the region.