

# Section

# III

## Appalachia: Poised for Potential

ARC has invested the past 40 years in building the region's foundation for growth and prosperity. This infrastructure now provides a platform for residents to link these essential elements with existing natural, cultural and structural assets to build a strong economic future. Many communities have jumpstarted growth through redevelopment, entrepreneur initiatives and diversified industries. Focusing on local natural, cultural and structural assets makes Appalachia competitive and poised for advancement.

Nationally, a paradigm shift is occurring as technology permits numerous professions to be accessible from anywhere. Technology has enabled many opportunities that were closed off to rural areas as recently as a decade ago. People don't have to move to urban areas to have access to the world. Conversely, as urban centers become less safe and more crowded, migration increases to smaller communities and places offering scenic beauty. Moving to a desirable place is a major lifestyle decision for many professionals today. Highly rated schools, diverse cultural activities, retail amenities and medical services are often important factors for companies and individuals exploring relocation options. "Quality of life" indicators become a key for attracting the new "wealth" market, creative economy and entrepreneur.

### Not a Panacea

Asset-based economic development is not a quick fix nor is it a panacea for Appalachia. As with any development strategy, a strong foundation must exist before focusing on asset enhancements. Some places in Appalachia must first build and strengthen their physical, human and financial infrastructure before developing assets. Others may not have enough assets to establish a development strategy independently, yet can partner with neighbors or other regional interests to provide the critical mass (of leaders, funding and infrastructure) required to sustain and grow an economic strategy.

External forces can also work against success or impede growth. Tourism is a prime example of an industry that depends on positive external drivers. People must be willing to explore and seek out new experiences for tourism to grow. Visitation is also impacted by weather, economic prosperity and safety concerns.

The departure of traditional industries has left many Appalachian communities struggling to replace jobs and tax revenues. However, focusing on a short-term fix can ultimately end up perpetuating the cycle of decline rather than alleviating it. Asset-based economic development should be considered as a long-term strategy that provides incremental growth with appropriate, non-invasive management practices. Asset-based economic development is not the complete

answer for all communities, but it can be a part of the solution for sustaining the region's economic vitality.

### Getting Started

As demonstrated by the examples in this booklet, asset-based economic development begins with a resource and an idea. Communities and companies can begin determining their potential for asset-based economic growth by conducting an inventory of human, financial and physical resources. Appalachia has leaders poised to direct asset-based economic development – they just need to be identified and cultivated. Technical assistance and entrepreneurship development programs, available through ARC, community colleges and other educational institutions across the region, can help build the human capacity and skilled workforce necessary to transition into these new economies.

Major universities and national organizations aid in recognizing trends and audience potential by providing

"The key to ... regeneration, then, is to locate all the available local assets, to begin connecting them with one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness, and to begin harnessing those local institutions that are not yet available for local development purposes."

-- Kretzmann and McKnight,  
quoted in the Westat  
Study for ARC, 2004.

market research. Venture capital and other private financing are available through regional and national foundations. To help individuals and communities move forward and investigate opportunities in asset-based economic development, a list of resources and recommended reading follows.

## Resources

Several regional, national and federal entities provide fiscal resources and technical assistance for individuals, communities and companies to launch and manage asset-based economic development programs.

### Government Agencies

#### **National Endowment for the Arts**

Nancy Hanks Center,  
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20506  
Tel: (202) 682-5400  
Internet: [www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov)

Goals are artistic creativity and preservation, learning in the arts, access to the arts and partnership for the arts.

#### **US Forest Service,**

#### **Department of Agriculture**

Sidney R. Yates Federal Building,  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250-0003  
Tel: (202) 205-8333  
Internet: [www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)

National programs include ecosystem management; forest management; minerals and geology management; recreation, heritage and wilderness resources; watershed and air management; wildlife, fish and rare plants.

### National Organizations

#### **ABCD Institute**

IPR, Northwestern University  
2040 Sheridan Road  
Evanston, IL 60208-4100  
Tel: (847) 491-8711  
Internet: [www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html)

Provides technical assistance and resources materials including mapping tools, networks, faculty training and publications.

#### **American Hiking Society**

1422 Fenwick Lane  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Tel: (301) 565-6704

Internet: [www.americanhiking.org](http://www.americanhiking.org)  
National voice for America's hikers provides information on funding sources for trail managers, national trails directory, listing of volunteer vacations and other reference materials.

#### **Americans for the Arts**

1000 Vermont Avenue NW, Sixth Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Tel: (202) 371-2830

Internet: [www.americansforthearts.org](http://www.americansforthearts.org)  
Nation's leading non-profit organization for advancing arts in America. Provides research and information, conducts visibility campaigns, leadership development, annual awards and events.

#### **Conservation Fund**

100 North Kent Street, Suite 1120  
Arlington, VA 22209-2156

Tel: (703) 525-6300

Internet: [www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org)  
Forges partners to preserve our nation's outdoors heritage – America's legacy of wildlife habitat, working landscapes and community open space.

#### **National Geographic Society**

#### **Sustainable Tourism Resource Center**

1145 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: (202) 857-7000

Internet: [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)  
Increases knowledge about sustainable tourism and destination stewardship through World Legacy Awards, resource directory, Geotourism study and other reference materials.

#### **National Trust for Historic Preservation**

1785 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: (202) 588-6000

Internet: [www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)  
National non-profit organization with more than 250,000 members dedicated to the preservation of America's historic treasures.

### Financial Institutions

#### **Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation**

2920 Reynolda Road  
Winston-Salem, NC 27106

Tel: (336) 746-9222

Internet: [www.mrbf.org](http://www.mrbf.org)  
Concentrates on assisting people in the Southeast to build just and caring communities. Areas of focus include grassroots leadership development, community problem solving, enterprise and asset development, and organizational development.

#### **Claude Worthington**

#### **Benedum Foundation**

1400 Benedum-Trees Bldg,  
223 Fourth Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Tel: (412) 288-0360

Internet: <http://fdncenter.org/grantmaker/benedum>  
A regional foundation serving West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania.

### Suggestions for Further Reading

*Appreciative Inquiry: Changing the Spread of Imagination*, by Jane Magueder, Watkins, Bernard J. Mohr

*Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities* by Howe, McMahon and Propst, Island Press, Washington DC (1997)

*Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, by Northwestern University for Policy Research (1993)

*Creating Successful Communities: A Guidebook to Growth Management Strategies*, by Mantell, Harper, Propst, Island Press, Washington DC (1989)

*Evaluation of The Appalachian Regional Commission's Community Capacity Building Projects* study, conducted by Westat, for ARC (July 2004)

*Economic Value of the Natural World*, by David Pearce, MIT Press (August 1993) Economic rationale for conserving the environment based on results from detailed case studies and analyses.

*Rise of the Creative Class and How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, by Richard Florida (2002)

*Rural Sustainable Development in America*, by Ivonne Audirac, J. Wiley & Sons (1997)

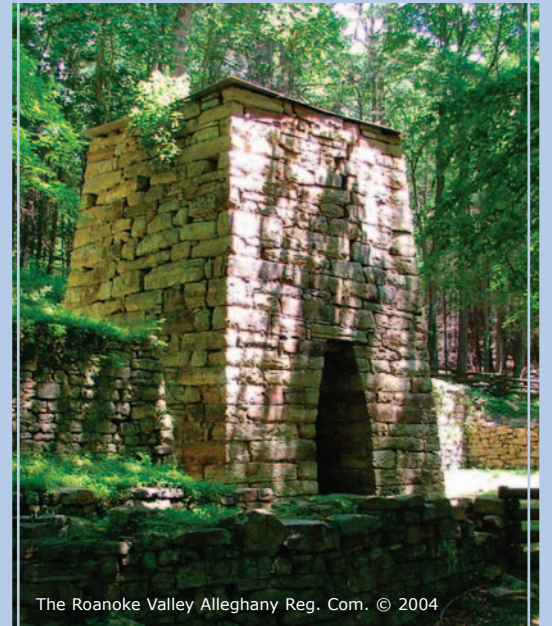
*Where We Live: A Citizen's Guide to Conducting a Community Environmental Inventory* by Harker and Natter, Island Press, Washington, DC (1995)

*“The greatest thing a man can do in this world is to make the most possible out of the stuff that has been given him. This is success, and there is no other.”*

-- Orison Swett Marden (1850-1924)  
Founder of Success magazine



David Fattaleh / WV Tourism



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