



WHITE PAPER: WHAT'S NEXT EKY?! COMMUNITY ACCELERATOR, YEAR 2

Accelerating Economic Development in
Rural Appalachian Kentucky Communities

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Executive Summary

“For Jackson it has gotten more people involved in leadership. People have stepped up to do things who weren’t necessarily active in the community before...being a part of the program over the last 2 years has brought our community so many advantages that we would not have received and there are more to come!” - Greg Lakes, Jackson County

What’s Next EKY?!’s Community Accelerator

Through coaching, tools, and resources provided to grassroots community groups in distressed counties in Appalachian Kentucky, the Community Accelerator program empowers citizens to create positive change in their communities to support community and economic development.

Background

Appalachian Kentucky has some of the most distressed counties in the nation. Years of extractive industry, disinvestment, and outmigration have resulted in high unemployment, persistent poverty, an aging population, and degraded infrastructure. Appalachian Kentucky also has some of the most creative, committed, resilient, and industrious citizen leaders that you will find in the nation. These leaders continue to lean into the challenges facing their communities because they are rooted in the culture and place they call home. What’s Next EKY?! (WNEKY) is a grassroots network created to support these leaders and communities to connect, collaborate, and celebrate the victories in the fight to rebuild vibrant places to live and work. The Community Accelerator program is an initiative of WNEKY that provides resources and support to increase the capacity of local leaders and groups to realize positive changes that supports community and economic development.

Case Studies

Three communities participated in the pilot of the Community Accelerator. Grayson, Kentucky began in 2022 while Jackson County and Letcher County, Kentucky, joined in 2023. Grayson is a small city near Ashland and adjacent to I-64 which has better access to larger population centers than either of the other two communities. Letcher County, deep in the coalfields and bordering on Southwest Virginia experienced devastating flooding in July 2022. Jackson County, about 1.5 hours southeast of Lexington is sparsely populated by small communities and contains over 50,000 acres of the Daniel Boone National Forest. While there are significant differences between the communities, they all face similar challenges. Each community had different goals and outcomes, but all were successful in making progress and having a positive impact on their communities.

Participant Survey Results

All three communities provided feedback through a survey for participants, and all expressed that the Community Accelerator had been helpful to them. One community, still recovering from a flooding

event, was not able to take full advantage of the resources. All the communities have elected to continue in the Community Accelerator program for another year.

Lessons Learned

In reflecting on what we've learned during the pilot phase of the Community Accelerator, the lesson that seems to resonate most loudly is that communities know what they need and when support, resources, and tools are made available to help increase their capacity, they can achieve great things. Additionally, over the last two years, we've learned that:

- A committed, diverse core team is vital to success
- Monthly coaching is important to help with problem solving, strategy, and process management
- Peer learning, both in-person and virtual, leads to connection, inspiration, and collaboration
- The right resource or tool at the right time can be transformational
- Collaboration generates enthusiasm and greater collective impact. And, it's just more fun!
- A Community Accelerator coordinator is necessary to continue to allow the program to expand.

Future Implementation Plan

WNEKY will expand the number of communities served to 5 in 2025. To do this, we will need to contract a program coordinator and one more coach. We will also need to raise \$40,000 in 2024 to support the expansion. The WNEKY fundraising team will begin meeting monthly in March to develop and implement a fundraising plan.

Conclusion

The Community Accelerator program is a promising model that empowers grassroots leaders to organize and mobilize their communities to create positive change leading to community and economic development. It mobilizes the assets that every community has, such as leaders who are already on the ground working for good and provides them with support and resources that can allow them to realize their dreams for their families and communities. The Community Accelerator also strengthens regional networks and provides opportunities for collaboration and greater collective impact.

Community	Projects & Successes	Accelerator Services Participation
Jackson County Creative Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Jackson County Creative Community Group was formed to collaborate on projects to improve the community, support creative entrepreneurs, and encourage public engagement with arts and culture. The Facebook group has 373 members and meets monthly. 2. Mural Trail Project – 8 Murals, designed by students, painted at a kid’s summer camp, and installed around the county encouraging tourism. 3. Awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Jackson County Development Association. 4. Organized local small businesses to sell products at downtown Jeep Fest and “Cruise In” events. 5. Has partnered with Backroads of Appalachia to ensure that local creatives have opportunities to vend at Backroads events. 6. Regularly shares opportunities for local creatives and artisans to vend at festivals and events. 7. Has launched a second mural project to be completed in 2024. 8. Received a business support grant from the Mountain Association to create a new website which will feature the activities of the group as well as a directory, bio, and links to ecommerce pages of local creatives and artisans. 9. Has held the following trainings led by Vallorie Henderson of the Kentucky Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for creatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Using social media to market your business b. Pitch Training: How to talk about your business 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monthly Coaching 2. Participation in Peer Learning calls 3. Community Accelerator Training Retreat 4. Participation in the Strategic Planning Workshop 5. “Save Your Town” Action visit 6. Business Training for Creatives and Artists with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) of Kentucky.
Grayson Creative Community/ Main Street	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Started a Main Street program. 2. Formed a Strategic Doing group to unify the town’s marketing efforts and develop a new website and town branding. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monthly Coaching 2. Peer Learning calls 3. Community Accelerator Training Retreat

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Awarded a \$191,100 USDA RBDG grant and raised \$198,900 in matching funds to start a downtown business incubator. 4. Awarded \$50,000 T-Mobile grant to repair the downtown library and purchase computers. 5. Awarded \$15,000 National Association of Realtors grant by performing a Downtown Real Estate Assessment. 6. Awarded \$25,000 USDA RBDG by performing a Downtown Redevelopment Survey to re-envision Main Street. 7. Hosted the first Grayson Mainstreet Fall Festival – a new festival co-hosted by Grayson Mainstreet and Grayson Tourism drew hundreds of residents to shop with vendors, farmers, and Main Street businesses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Strategic Planning Workshop 5. “Save Your Town” Action visit 6. Building Equitable Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Workshop hosted by Kentucky Mainstreet
<p>Letcher County Culture Hub</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Built the capacity of the organization by developing a job description with key performance indicators for a new Coordinator, and then recruited and hired for the position. 2. Partnered with the Promise Zone to gain a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA to build capacity of the organization and support programs for 1 year. 3. Hosted a Save Your Town workshop, where community groups formed to design projects and were given seed funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queer Arts Collective is developing a queer arts gallery. • Blackey is forming an ancestral/heritage research archive. • Carcassonne is installing wayfinding signage guiding visitors to their community center and renowned square dances. • Save His Sheep is feeding and clothing flood survivors. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monthly Coaching 2. Peer Learning calls 3. Community Accelerator Training Retreat 4. Strategic Planning Workshop 5. “Save Your Town” Project Workshop 6. Building Equitable Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Workshop hosted by Kentucky Mainstreet

Background

Rural communities in Appalachian Kentucky face a myriad number of challenges stemming from economic, social, and infrastructural factors. These challenges often intertwine, exacerbating the difficulties faced by residents in these areas.

Economic hardships loom large in Appalachian Kentucky, with industries such as coal mining experiencing decline due to automation and shifts in energy markets. This has led to widespread unemployment and underemployment, leaving many families struggling to make ends meet. Limited job opportunities force many residents to seek employment outside the region, contributing to a cycle of outmigration and population decline.

The region also grapples with aging infrastructure, including roads, water, sewer, commercial buildings, and housing stock. Additionally, some communities have limited access to essential services such as healthcare, emergency services, water treatment, and broadband connectivity. Remote geography and the lack of any public transport further compounds these issues, making it difficult for residents to access basic amenities and hindering efforts to attract investment and development.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes targeted economic development initiatives, investments in infrastructure and healthcare, improvements in education, and efforts to combat social isolation. Collaboration between nonprofit organizations, community stakeholders, and local officials is essential to create sustainable solutions that lead to thriving communities in Appalachian Kentucky. The Community Accelerator program arose out of a desire to assist rural communities in Appalachian Kentucky to grow their economies and create more livable communities.

In 2017, a group of Eastern Kentucky based nonprofits collaborated to launch a grassroots community network, What's Next East Kentucky? (WNEKY). The network is led by a steering committee consisting of community members and regional partners. Since launching, the network has hosted workshops, local learning journeys, and monthly "Community Connections" calls addressing various topics identified by community members.

WNEKY was formed to fill the need for a community-led network that would support local leaders and groups as they grappled with the difficult and long-standing challenges facing communities in Appalachian Kentucky. The isolation and parochialism created by geography, county lines, and long-standing sports rivalries led to many communities feeling disconnected from other nearby communities facing the same challenges. Without strong networks in place to share new approaches and successes, community leaders struggled to create novel solutions for difficult problems. WNEKY works to help connect communities, foster collaboration across the region, and celebrate what's working to help rebuild thriving communities.

Early in the development of the network, it became obvious that many communities were struggling with the same needs for increased capacity and resources to support community led initiatives. The idea for the Community Accelerator program came from Ruthie Caldwell of Vision Granted and Jeffery Justice with the Pine Mountain Partnership who had recently completed a Co.Starters Business Accelerator program offered by the nonprofit Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR). They wondered if there could be an accelerator that would help communities with community and economic development in the same way that Co.Starters helps individual businesses. They presented this concept as a capstone

project for the inaugural group of the BRIGHT Kentucky leadership program. It was later adopted by WNEKY and fully developed by Ruthie Caldwell, Betsy Whaley of the Mountain Association, Donna Daniels with the Brushy Fork Leadership Institute, and Dan and Mindy Click with the Grayson Gallery and Art Center.

The Community Accelerator program was initiated with a \$15,000 Just Transition Fund grant, and then piloted in 2021-2022 in the towns of Pikeville and Grayson, funded by a \$50,000 USDA RBDG Opportunity grant. In 2023 the program was awarded a \$50,000 ARC POWER Planning grant to test new program elements. That year it continued to serve the town of Grayson, KY and added two new counties: Letcher and Jackson. As the program develops, WNEKY tests new elements for efficacy and the program continues to improve and refine the model based on participant feedback. The goal of the Community Accelerator program is to support grassroots leaders in communities as they organize local residents to advance projects that result in positive change.

Case Study: Revitalizing Grayson, Kentucky: A Community-Led Renaissance

Background: Grayson, in Carter County, Kentucky, has long been grappling with economic decline, aging infrastructure, and deteriorating community cohesion. Unlike many counties in Eastern Kentucky, Carter County experienced a modest population increase between 1990 – 2020. As the county seat and with its proximity to larger population centers in Ashland, Kentucky and Huntington, West Virginia, Grayson has fared better than some of its neighboring communities. However, with an unemployment rate of 8.3% and a poverty rate of 30%, Grayson and Carter County are facing numerous economic challenges. It was in this context that local community leaders, Dan and Mindy Click, founders of the nonprofit Grayson Gallery and Art Center, saw the potential of WNEKY’s Community Accelerator program as a pathway to change. Through their leadership, the Grayson Creative Community (GCC) was formed and has brought renewed energy and excitement about the town’s future.

Community-Led Initiatives: GCC initiated a series of projects aimed at rejuvenating downtown. The "Spruce Up Main!" downtown cleanup day, held in November 2021, brought the community together and laid the groundwork for future endeavors. The group's collaboration with Shane Barton of Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK), a regional partner in WNEKY, led to a facilitated economic development meeting in December 2021, resulting in plans for community projects and a \$13K grant for developing an outdoor public space downtown. At that same meeting, the group decided to pursue state designation for Grayson as a "Gig City." This resulted in volunteers putting in countless hours to do internet speed tests for local residents and businesses. In 2023, Grayson received designation as a Gig City which will benefit the city’s efforts to attract new businesses.

Planning and Collaboration: In January 2022, community leaders underwent training in "Strategic Doing," laying the groundwork for future collaboration with a proven method to help groups move from ideas to action. With Coaching from Ruthie Caldwell of Vision Granted, the group embarked on a process to renovate a vacant lot downtown. That space, "The Gap," was transformed from an empty, overgrown lot on Main Street to a pocket park with planters, murals, lighting, picnic tables and a stage that is being used regularly for community events. The creation of The Gap was made possible by the collaboration of local utilities who installed the water and lights, the City of Grayson that provided grading and gravel, and volunteers who built the planters and picnic tables. The Gap has become a focal point for the revival happening on Main Street.

Community Engagement and Economic Development: In 2023, the GCC spearheaded these initiatives:

- Negotiated with the local Extension office to bring the Farmer’s Market downtown
- Received a grant from the Board of Realtors for a Downtown Assessment
- Collaborated in a rebranding initiative for the City of Grayson
- Held flood relief fundraisers for Eastern Kentucky Communities damaged by flooding
- Became a Kentucky Mainstreet Community
- Collaborated with the Tourism Commission to have a new festival, Ocktoberfest, on Main Street
- Participated in Mainstreet Kentucky’s Candy Cane Lane shop local initiative
- Collaborated with Grayson Tourism to develop a business Accelerator, the "Blue Goose Collective."

Future Prospects: Through collaborative learning, strategic planning, and community engagement, Grayson is witnessing a transformation. The establishment of the Grayson Mainstreet program, downtown assessments, citywide rebranding, and plans for a business incubator on Main Street underscore the town's commitment to sustained revitalization.

Conclusion: The case of Grayson, Kentucky, serves as a testament to the power of community-led initiatives in driving economic development and fostering resilience in rural areas. By leveraging partnerships, coaching, strategic doing, and grassroots efforts, Grayson is charting a course towards a brighter, more prosperous future for its residents.



The GAP, Grayson, KY

GRAYSON BLUE GOOSE COLLECTIVE

Downtown Business Incubator

Community Accelerator Year 1 Project: vacant lot next to the proposed Blue Goose Business Incubator Space



BEFORE



AFTER

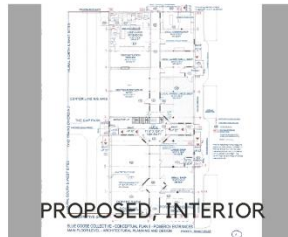
Community Accelerator Year 2 Project: developed plans & gained \$191,100 USDA RBDG Grant to renovate the Future Home of the Blue Goose Collective Business Incubator



CURRENT, EXTERIOR



CURRENT, INTERIOR



PROPOSED, INTERIOR

Case Study: Letcher County, Building Capacity After Disaster

Background: Letcher County is full of beautiful, sprawling, steep mountains with many isolated communities. It is a historic coal county with many of the small towns being former coal camps, built and owned by coal companies. As the mining industry changed and demand for coal decreased, many miners lost their jobs and towns, supported by an economy based on one extractive industry, fell on hard times. Coal companies, many owned by out of state corporations, left and took the wealth with them. Many younger people left as well in search of economic opportunity to support their families.

The Letcher County Culture Hub was formed because residents who stayed wanted to create a solidarity economy in which local people retain ownership and control of their economy. As they say it, *“we own what we make.”* The Culture Hub was born nearly a decade ago and is now a network of community-led organizations in Letcher County who aspire to work together to build a culture and economy where *“we own what we make.”* Originally the Culture Hub had a dynamic full-time director who recruited organizations to work on collaborative projects like a solar installation which was, at the time, the largest in Eastern Kentucky. Since then, the founder left the organization, the pandemic hit, and virtual meetings in a county with poor access to broadband further disconnected members.

Then the unimaginable happened. The Central Appalachian Floods devastated the county in 2022 with hundreds of Letcher County homes and businesses destroyed overnight. The few remaining members of the Culture Hub struggled to fulfill the basic needs of their community in the aftermath. Unfortunately, the coordinator hired to succeed the founder left the position at the beginning of their participation in the Community Accelerator program. After years of overcoming extreme hardship, the Culture Hub began the Community Accelerator program with zero staff, dwindling membership, and a volunteer board made up of members who were still working insane hours performing flood relief efforts in their own towns. Fortunately, a wonderful opportunity in the form of a \$50,000, 10 year recurring annual grant brought the hope of sustainable leadership capacity. With the support of the Community Accelerator coach for the first six months of the program, The Culture Hub was able to hire a coordinator who could build their capacity, grow their membership, and begin fundraising and coordinating programs.

Planning and Collaboration: Due to the flood and other hardships, the Letcher County Culture Hub needed additional support to coordinate programs and build their organizational capacity. As part of the Community Accelerator program, WNEKY was able to collaborate with the Kentucky Promise Zone and Kentucky Campus Compact to help the Culture Hub gain a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA for one year. In July 2023, the Culture Hub hired the coordinator, and hosted Deb Brown’s Save Your Town workshop at the Pine Mountain Grill inviting residents from all over the county to participate.

Community Engagement & Economic Development: Following the Save Your Town workshop, residents were invited to build teams and pitch their community and economic development ideas. Four teams were awarded seed funding of \$500-\$1,000 to begin their projects.

- \$1,000: Queer Arts Collective is developing a queer arts gallery.
- \$500: Blackey is forming an ancestral/heritage research archive.
- \$500: Carcassonne is installing wayfinding signage guiding visitors to their community center and renowned square dances.
- \$500: Save His Sheep is feeding and clothing flood survivors.

Now with the full-time AmeriCorps VISTA and part-time coordinator, the Culture Hub has been able to participate in events all over the county to build relationships and recruit new members, increase their social media influence, update the website, re-activate former programs, and start new programs like a Domestic Violence Survivor Story Circle and a Grandmother's Collaborative encouraging youth to connect with local, mature role models.

Conclusion: Considering the recent flood and the newly vacant coordinator position, Letcher County began their journey at a serious disadvantage compared to the other communities in the Community Accelerator. This is especially evident in the low number of members they sent to participate in the Zoom and in-person meetings in the first half of the program. However, the Culture Hub found the coaching sessions and Save Your Town workshop to be extremely valuable. The 1-year cohort was nearly halfway complete by the time a coordinator was hired. However, this Community Accelerator has been instrumental in helping the organization build capacity in the first year and is helping to set it up for success in their second year..



Kelsey Cloonan

July 25, 2023 · 🌐



Tomorrow afternoon during [Growing Home - a community revival!](#)

Deb Brown is a nationally renowned consultant and will be right here in Letcher County with us. Her Idea Friendly Workshop is open to the public, AND thanks to the [Letcher County Culture Hub](#), up to FIVE organizations will be awarded \$500 to implement the idea they bring to this workshop.

Thank you all for your investment in our community! Can't wait to see all the ideas and community building brought to the table tomorrow ❤️



Case Study: Jackson County, KY – Growing a Creative Economy

Background: Jackson County, Kentucky, is a beautiful place with many natural assets. One fourth of the county, 52,000 acres, is part of the Daniel Boone National Forest which stretches across 21 counties in Eastern Kentucky. The county of 13,300 residents has three small communities with the county seat, McKee, population 837, being the largest. While the county has faced notable challenges in the last three decades with outmigration, aging residents, limited economic opportunities, persistent poverty and a reliance on declining industries, there are also indicators of new life and hope to be found. Jackson County is fortunate to have many citizens committed to bringing new opportunities and vitality to their communities.

In 2022, Greg Lakes, volunteer Tourism Director, co-owner of Clover Bottom Bed and Breakfast, and a wire sculpture artist, had the vision of bringing together a group of artists and creatives to see if they might work together to build their creative economy. That first meeting in October, led by consultant Judy Sizemore and Small Business Development Center (SBDC) of Kentucky Business Coach, Vallorie Henderson, was attended by over 20 local artisans, crafters, and creative entrepreneurs. They determined that, while they did not know exactly what to do, they did want to build a group together.

Greg, who is a member of the What's Next EKY?! Steering Committee, had heard about the Community Accelerator program that had been piloted in Grayson and Pikeville, in 2021-22, and quickly moved to enroll Jackson County in the second year of the pilot. Vallorie Henderson, a WNEKY Regional Partner, along with Betsy Whaley, Director of Strategic Initiatives for the Mountain Association, agreed to jointly coach the Jackson County group and held the first meeting to present the Community Accelerator program the next month. The group of 26 artists, crafters and creative entrepreneurs that were present enthusiastically affirmed that they would like to participate in the Community Accelerator program. Thus, the Jackson County Creative Community (JCCC) was formed and began meeting monthly in January of 2023.

Network Building: While some of the individuals in the JCCC knew one another, many did not. The group included local business owners, farmers, teachers, retired teachers, stay at home parents, etc. Most of the group had been in Jackson County their whole lives but some were new to the community. Some had been actively involved in community projects for years, others had never volunteered before. It was very important that the group get to know one another and begin to build trust and connect over a common sense of purpose. The JCCC meetings in January and February used an Open Space format in which attendees got to suggest topics they'd like to talk about related to the creative economy then break up into small groups to discuss. The topics that emerged with the most interest were: opportunities for artists and creatives to sell their products, marketing the creative community, and engaging youth in arts and culture. The small working groups each came up with some ideas that could be implemented relatively easily. These early discussions and actions served to build relationships, cohesion, and trust in the group. It also affirmed that this group would have a bias for action.

A Save Your Town Action Visit with Deb Brown in April of 2023 brought together concerned citizens, business owners, students, and local officials to talk about ideas that could be implemented by residents that would improve the livability and economy of Jackson County. The JCCC hosted four community meetings targeting different groups of stakeholders which were well attended. People reported feeling a sense of hope and energy after the meetings and some of the ideas that were discussed are still alive and may yet be realized.

Community Collaboration and Initiatives: In March of 2023, WNEKY sponsored a Community Accelerator Retreat hosted by the Grayson Creative Community in Grayson, KY. Five members of the JCCC attended the retreat where they got to see Grayson's work, learned about Strategic Doing, and the larger goals of WNEKY. The group left the retreat with a clear vision and plan for a community mural project in Jackson County. This experience generated a sense of excitement for the group which they then carried back to the larger JCCC meeting the next month. Having a project to do together that would impact each small community in the county created a sense of cohesion and purpose in the group. The project the group designed using the "Strategic Doing" Method, was to create 8 murals the size of a piece of plywood designed by school children throughout the county. Once back home, they sponsored a design contest in each school and even included the local home-schooling group. A design was selected from each school. Money from the ARC Planning grant was used to purchase the supplies.

One of the retreat attendees, Lori Tincher, is a painter and owns Tranquil Trees Art Studio in McKee. She also has a vision for engaging youth with the arts and had been a part of the discussions on that topic for the previous two months. She was very enthusiastic about the mural project and emerged as a leader of the implementation phase of the project. A strong working committee of committed volunteers planned

a 1.5-day painting camp for local children and their family members to come in and paint the mural boards. Some of the painters were also the designers of the murals. Paint was donated by the local Sherwin Williams representative, and the County Extension office provided the space for the painting camp to occur. After finishing, Greg Lakes, with the assistance of county officials, installed the murals at 8 locations all around the county in proximity to the schools where the designers were students. A ribbon cutting was held in October 2023. The group has already begun planning for another mural project in 2024 – this one on a public building.

Building Entrepreneurial Skills: The JCCC is fortunate to have Vallorie Henderson, SBDC of Kentucky Business Coach, as an active coach for the JCCC. Vallorie finds ways at every meeting to encourage attendees, most of whom are creative entrepreneurs, to think about their art as a business opportunity. An artist herself, Vallorie can speak with authority on what it takes to build a business. While some in the group were a little resistant at first to thinking about the business aspect of their creative endeavors, in recent months, there has been more interest in specific training. In October, the group hosted a training on using social media to market your business. For 2024, the group will be hosting the following training sessions:

- Pitch Training – Learning how to talk about your business
- Pricing Your Work
- Selling Your Work Online
- Business Basics
- Protecting Your Intellectual Property.

Conclusion

The Jackson County Creative Community is creating a network that connects individuals and groups in different parts of the county for the purpose of building strong and vibrant communities in Jackson County. Through focusing on projects that engage young people and create public art, the group is rebuilding a sense of pride and hope in the place they call home. Concurrently, the group is working to build the creative economy by supporting entrepreneurs with business training and opportunities to sell their products. The creative economy supports the nascent tourism economy that is being built around outdoor recreation and the abundant natural assets the county possesses. The JCCC is actively working to build a vibrant future and new economy, together.



Dan Click

October 3, 2023 · 🌐



AND that great-looking team, [Gregory Lakes](#)...keep on keepin' on!



Gregory Lakes

September 25, 2023 · 🌐

Productive meeting tonight with the Jackson county creative community. Mini mural project nearing completion, web page and social media building, strategic doing project, SEO training, Artist (elevator pitch), and craft fair building for the community. Lots of energy, proud of the group!



Dan Click

December 8, 2023 · 🌐



Mindy and I really enjoyed our visit! My photos may not do justice to the occasion because the experience was the thing... We're all so proud of our McKee (Jackson County), KY partners and their very own Creative Community folks like Greg Lakes!
Support and resources from Vallorie Henderson with the KY SBDC, the What's Next Eastern Kentucky?! network, Ruthie Caldwell's "Vision Granted" firm and our ongoing Community Accelerator program with support from Betsy Whaley, the via t... [See more](#)



Participant Survey Results

Following Year 2, a leader for each of the participating communities completed an online survey using a Google Form. Highlights of the survey results are shown below in graphic form with quotes from participants italicized in blue providing additional details.

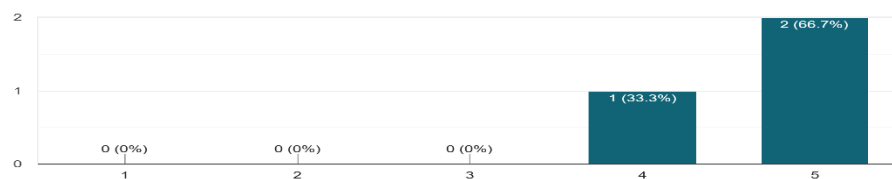
As a general overview, 2023 participants were pleased with the program with 100% interested in participating in next year's cohort. Two of the teams expressed multiple successes and excitement about each of the program elements, while the third expressed deep appreciation for a few elements, yet was unable to answer some questions because of limited participation by their group due to special circumstances. Two groups described how the Community Accelerator program produced these exciting achievements:

"Grayson was accepted into the Ky Main Street program in Jan. 2023. That allowed us access to 90k in grants so far. 50k from T-Mobile for library roof repair, 15k from National Association of Realtors for a downtown assessment to help Grayson Main Street to plan their work and organize their committees, and 25k USDA RBDG for a Downtown Redevelopment Survey to re-envision Main Street and a Communications Program to build websites for Main Street Program and 5 additional businesses. Coaching has helped us to write grant applications competitive enough to receive these grants, plus another USDA RBDG FOR 191,100k to help renovate a Main Street building into a business incubator."

"The Community Accelerator program provided an avenue for my community to come together to discuss needs and wants. It provided a spark for community members to vision what we could do together, and helped us open doors to new ideas and ways to accomplish. The save your town visit was spot on. We are still gaining momentum from the insights that were revealed. The strategic doing exercise helped our creative community to finish a mural project with our schools. The ribbon cutting for the mural project was attended by county leaders, school administrators, and county citizens who were energized by the impact of public art."

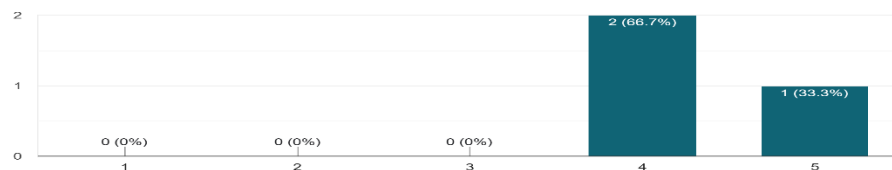
OVERALL PROGRAM RATING: 4.6 OF 5

2. How would you rate the overall program?
3 responses



"EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAM" RATING: 4.3 OF 5

Rate the effectiveness with 1 being "Not Beneficial," 3 being "Somewhat Beneficial," and 5 being "Very Beneficial."
3 responses

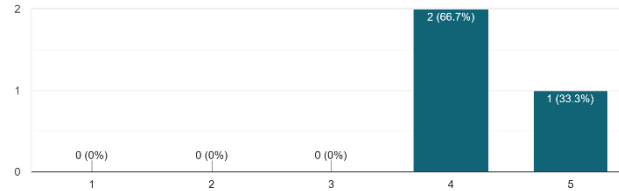


PROGRAM ELEMENTS

A. Deb Brown Save Your Town Action Visit: 4.3 of 5 average rating

Rate the effectiveness with 1 being "Not Beneficial," 3 being "Somewhat Beneficial," and 5 being "Very Beneficial."

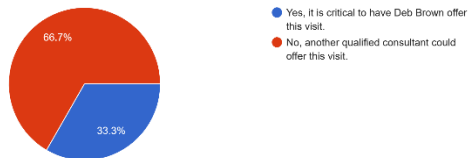
3 responses



"Deb Brown was able to bring folks together to share ideas on what projects could be easily done."

Do you believe it is critical to have Deb Brown offer this Action Visit, or could it be effective if offered by a local consultant such as Kentucky Main Street program's Kitty Dougoud?

3 responses



Description of Program: Deb is a nationally renowned consultant for small rural towns. As owner of Building Possibility and co-owner of Save Your Town, Deb travels to communities and offers "Action Visits" where the local towns people gather groups to have discussions about the town's future, and then she tours the town with local residents asking questions and providing ideas from other towns across America. Jackson County and Grayson were both able to participate in this program in the same week. Deb's report can be viewed here: <https://buildingpossibility.com/ky/>. However, the Letcher County visit had to be scheduled later in the summer and was abbreviated, having Deb offer a single Presentation/Action Workshop and then travel to some of the communities who participated in the workshop to visit their sites, ask questions, and offer guidance. Deb has continued to be an excellent connector in sharing resources with communities throughout the year.

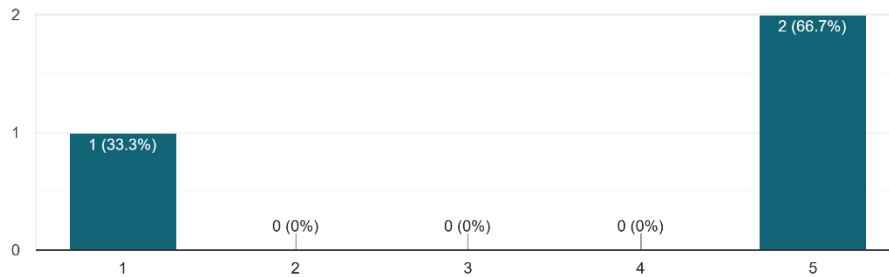
Data Interpretation: Participants appreciated Deb Brown's Action Visit to their community, which brought a new perspective to their town, helped them answer questions they had never been asked, and brought new people together to collaborate. During monthly meetings, participants would regularly share new projects that were developing because of her visit. In the end, 1 of 3 groups believed having Deb come to their town was absolutely critical, while 2 of 3 believed that while this aspect of the program was very helpful, if budget constraints are an issue in the future, then another local, qualified consultant could effectively provide the Action Visit if needed.

Following Deb's visit to his town, one participant said, "inviting the right people is hugely important." He then mentioned that he said to Deb he invited a group of people and didn't know who would show up. She told him: "if there are two people then that's progress." He said, if he had to do it again, he would do more hands-on invitations sharing the quality of what was going to happen because now they know the value of this and though many people came, he wishes even more had met her, because he said, "they need to take her to the good, the bad, and the ugly of the community so she can really see what it's like. Don't spare any time with her. Be with her as much as possible."

B. Strategic Doing Workshop: 3.6 of 5 average rating

Strategic Doing Workshop: Rate the effectiveness with 1 being "Not Beneficial," 3 being "Somewhat Beneficial," and 5 being "Very Beneficial."

3 responses



Description of Program: Strategic Doing is a type of agile strategic planning. In Spring 2023, Mary Marshall, a professional facilitator from the University of North Alabama’s Agile Strategy Lab, attended the Community Accelerator retreat in Grayson, KY where participants from Grayson, Letcher and Jackson Counties learned about the Strategic Doing methodology and then went through the Strategic Doing planning process resulting in one project for each group. Two groups formed teams that led to successful projects; however, one group had an unusual group of team members from other counties included and they had difficulty collaborating. In the end, the third group chose a project, but the team members were unenthusiastic about the concept and over-burdened by the recent flood efforts, so they did not continue to develop it. Learn more about Strategic Doing here:

<https://agilestrategylab.org/solution/strategicdoing/>

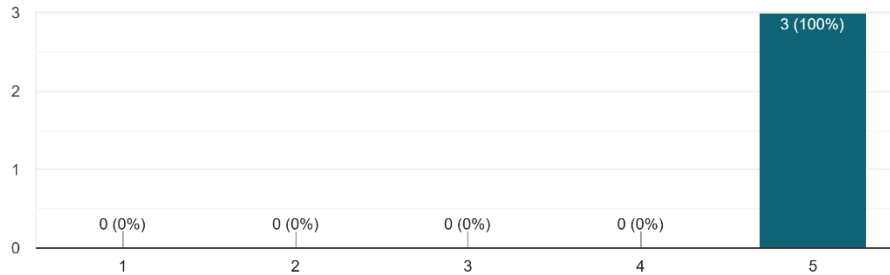
Data Interpretation: Two groups believed “Strategic Doing” was “Very Beneficial” because the workshop led to projects they believe to be valuable in their community, and these projects likely would not have happened without the workshop sparking the idea. For the third community, had the group been better matched and better able to collaborate long-term, they may have found more value in this workshop.

- *“Our group was able to finally begin a re-branding project that had been proposed but was idle.”*
- *“We continue to benefit by learning the strategic doing process.”*
- *“Unknown. Project did not move forward.”*

C. Peer Learning Zoom Meetings: 5 of 5 average rating

Peer Learning Zoom Meetings with Other Communities: Rate the effectiveness with 1 being "Not Beneficial," 3 being "Somewhat Beneficial," and 5 being "Very Beneficial."

3 responses



Description of Program: Except during months when in-person meetings could occur, WNEKY hosted monthly Zoom meetings for participants to share updates with the other communities, discuss challenges, brainstorm solutions, share resources, and set goals. This helped communities connect during months they did not see one another and provided a regular meeting that held participants accountable and allowed them time to bond, build trust, and celebrate success.

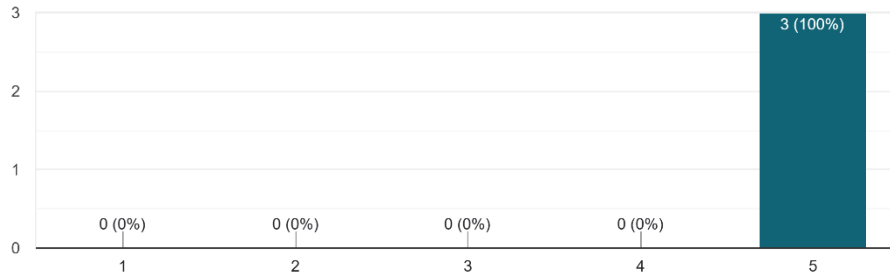
Data Interpretation: All communities gave this the highest possible score, rating "Peer Learning Zoom Meetings" as "Very Beneficial." This shows that regular connection between communities was one of the most helpful aspects of the program.

- *"Meeting regularly with other accelerator communities helped build friendships that translated into helping each other with ideas and in-person visits to help them celebrate successes!"*
- *"Zoom meetings helped us stay focused in between in-person gatherings and projects."*

D. Coaching: 5 of 5 average rating

Coaching: Rate the effectiveness with 1 being "Not Beneficial," 3 being "Somewhat Beneficial," and 5 being "Very Beneficial."

3 responses



Description of Program: Each community was assigned at least one coach who met with members of that community monthly and supported the community by sharing opportunities and resources, and helping participants navigate challenges.

Data Interpretation: All communities gave this the highest possible score, rating "Coaching" as "Very Beneficial."

- *"So many successes! Grant writing training leading to multiple grants, encouragement to apply for Main Street program, help with the reports required when receiving a grant, etc."*
- *"A facilitator has helped us stay on track where we may have lost our way as volunteerism sometimes slows."*
- *"This has been a sounding board keeping me sane. so necessary!"*

E. In-Person Meetings: 5 of 5 average rating

Description of Program: Communities were invited to send four participants to each in-person meeting, including a Retreat in Grayson in the Spring, Deb Brown workshop in the Summer in Letcher County, Main Street meeting in Louisville in the Fall, and a ribbon cutting event for the mural project in Jackson County in the Winter. Lodging was booked free of charge and other travel costs were reimbursed to participants. Meetings with the greatest participation were in Grayson and Jackson County. These meetings provided time for the participants to bond, gain training and professional development, and visit each of the other participant's communities.

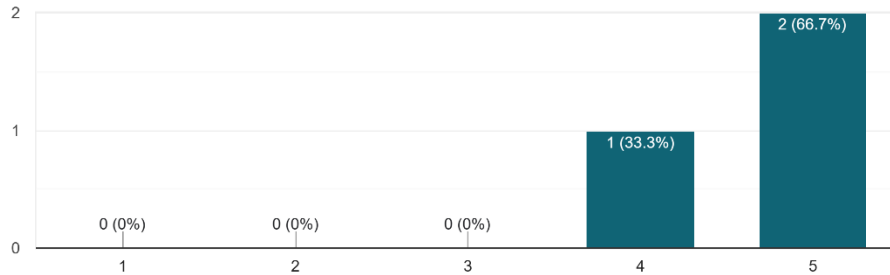
Data Interpretation: All communities gave this the highest possible score, rating Coaching as "Very Beneficial."

- *"The training session in Grayson helped bring projects forward and It was so uplifting to help celebrate in Jackson County!"*
- *"Helped us see how similar we all are in each community."*
- *"Coming together with other communities is refreshing and motivating"*

F. Learning Stipend: 4.6 of 5 average rating

Learning Stipend: Rate the effectiveness with 1 being "Not Beneficial," 3 being "Somewhat Beneficial," and 5 being "Very Beneficial."

3 responses



Description of Program: Communities were offered a \$2,500 learning stipend for successfully completing the program. Each community used this as seed funding for projects spurred by the Community Accelerator program.

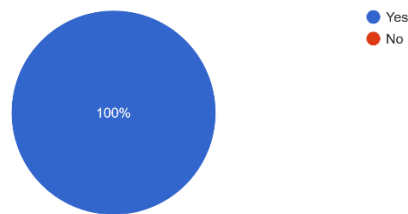
Data Interpretation: All participants viewed the "Learning Stipend" as either "Beneficial" or "Very Beneficial."

- *"We were able to pay for some materials for the Main Street program and will help us bring a special program to the Grayson Gallery in February."*
- *"We now have an active creative community group that has motivated people in our community to participate in growing."*

Future Participation in the Program: 100% YES!

Are you interested in participating in next year's Community Accelerator program?

3 responses



Participant Suggestions for Improvement:

- *"More in-person visits, if possible."*
- *"Continue to build by adding more communities to the program would help past and future communities."*

Lessons Learned

The Core Team: Ideally, the community should have a diverse, committed core team with at least 4 members who have previously had some experience with community projects, organizing, project management, etc. There should also be at least one “key point of contact” who is willing to lead when needed. Having 4 core team members ensures continuous leadership as it would be less likely for members to feel overwhelmed and leave. A membership agreement has been developed to onboard communities. This agreement clearly outlines the benefits each community is eligible to access as part of the Community Accelerator Program and the responsibilities of the participating community group. The agreement requires at least four leaders from the community to agree to serve as core team members. It also has each core member provide information such as the organization they represent, if applicable, and the unique skills, experience, or attributes they will bring to the team.

Coaching: A coach is vital to help the core team stay focused, set goals, and connect with resources and potential partners to collaborate on projects throughout the Community Accelerator program. The coach serves as a guide helping the team get “unstuck” when there are barriers and helping them seek out opportunities throughout the process. For instance, at one point Grayson had completed two types of facilitated meetings (Open Space Technology and Round Robin) but needed direction in gaining funding to implement their ideas. Because of the Community Accelerator program and connections with other regional partners in What’s Next EKY?!, coaches helped Grayson remove barriers and gain funding. A regional partner connected Grayson with some private grant funding, and Grayson was able to work with other local partners in their town to gain volunteers, services, and gap funding to complete the project. In the end, they were able to transform an empty lot downtown, where a former building had burned down, into an inviting public space based on the things community members wanted to see in their downtown. Because of the Community Accelerator program, Grayson activated a downtown space that is now used for public events like Chamber of Commerce networking meetings and other events featuring local small businesses.

Peer Learning: Communities willing to connect regularly to learn from one another and share successes and challenges accelerate faster. Networking is a key aspect of the Community Accelerator program. For instance, Grayson has now met with Pikeville a few times to gain more information about their Business Accelerator Program downtown called The Shoppes at 225, and now Grayson has gained funding and is developing their own downtown business incubator with lessons learned from their peers in Pikeville. Discussions among Community Accelerator program participants at an in-person visit about how to engage more volunteers and avoid burnout provided much needed support and creative problem solving.

Tools and Resources: Using the right tools at the right time to support communities in tackling big problems, or moving from talking to action, is very important. We found that having a coach in place to connect communities to the resources of the network’s regional partners such as UK Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky, Mountain Association, and Brushy Fork Leadership Institute helped communities leverage their opportunities, gain a sense of empowerment, and recognize that they could make things happen. We also utilized the [“Strategic Doing”](#) methodology to help communities identify resources and move projects from planning to implementation. This methodology will be used going forward with the Community Accelerator program.

Monthly Zoom Meetings: These meetings helped Community Accelerator program core teams connect and share successes; however, typically only 1 or 2 members from each community participated. It is recommended the future coordinator share a brief training or resource for 10-minutes or less at the beginning of this meeting. By asking participants what type of training they would like to gain and advertising it one week or more before the meeting, this could increase participation so more community members feel continuously engaged throughout the program.

Community Toolkit: While the toolkit is online and available to any community, we anticipate that it will be most useful for Community Accelerator program core teams and coaches. It will serve as a repository and library for the tools we have identified as useful at different stages of a community's development. We intend to include an introduction to the toolkit as part of onboarding for new communities and coaches.

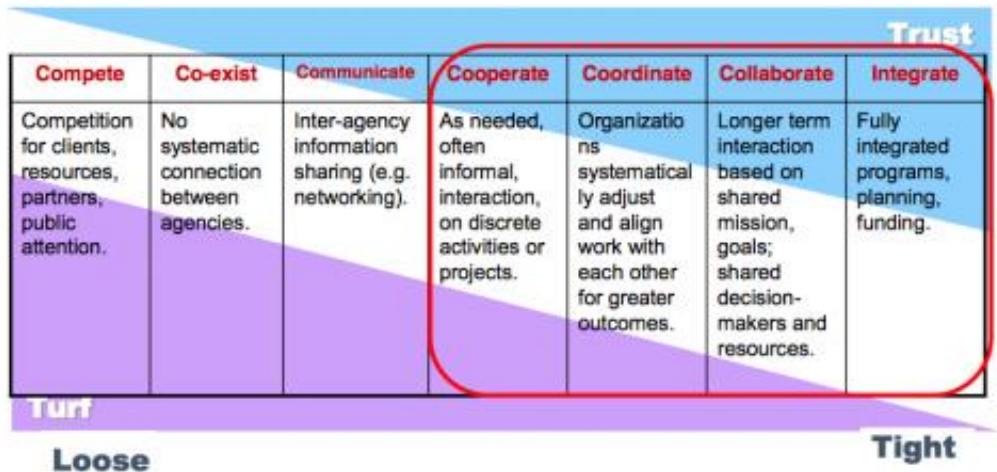
Dedicated Coordinator: During 2023, the Community Accelerator program expanded to have multiple coaches, which worked well, but this also added more coordination duties between the coaches and communities. Therefore, it is recommended in future iterations of the program to hire a single dedicated coordinator whose primary responsibility is to serve as the single point of contact for the program and to plan and coordinate logistics for meetings, trainings, and special events.

Making Hard Work Fun: Melinda Villagran, a Communications Professor at Texas State University, once said that to persuade someone you need to make them believe something is: (1) easy, (2) fun, and (3) popular. Similarly, when it comes to enticing community members to join community and economic development efforts, the work may never be easy, but it *can* become *easier* when the team makes the work feel "fun" and "popular." The communities that achieved the most significant impact are the teams who had fun together and invited diverse people from all walks of life to participate; this made even difficult tasks seem like a joy to be a part of. After all, since most of the participants were volunteers, it's much easier to accomplish great things together when you're having fun. Since all of these communities have gone through extremely difficult economic hardships and many of the volunteers participating have experienced serious traumatic events in their lives, to help these communities recruit volunteers and entice them to stay, it is important for the Community Accelerator program to focus on being a positive, uplifting experience where participants build collaborative relationships, cross boundaries, weed out toxic behaviors, promote social healing, and result in people making their communities a happier, more welcoming place to live with a better quality of life. It is recommended that future Community Accelerator programs offer training teaching concepts like this.

Turf vs. Trust and Collaboration: Communities with participants who had already built trust before the Community Accelerator program or who were able to establish trust quickly were more successful than communities closer to the "Turf" side of "The Collaboration Spectrum" (see below). This means a helpful workshop in future Community Accelerator programs could focus on helping groups build trust and work better together as a team. This would be especially helpful to offer at the beginning of the 1-year cohort for teams that have never worked together before and would also benefit existing teams to deepen relationships and improve collaboration to achieve greater impact. In many distressed communities, there is a long history of scarcity. A scarcity mindset leads to guarding resources and

fearing collaboration. Coaching should focus on helping communities embrace abundance and lean into collaboration as a means of accessing more resources, not less. Collaboration leads to greater collective impact which can then lead to more success with accessing resources.

THE COLLABORATION SPECTRUM



5

*source: Collective Impact Forum. *Turf, Trust, and the Collaboration Spectrum*
<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/blog/turf-trust-and-the-collaboration-spectrum/>

Future Implementation Plan

New Communities: Through a collaboration with the Mountain Association, WNEKY has access to funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission to add 3 new communities to the Community Accelerator program in 2024-25. We currently have 3 active communities – Grayson Creative Community (GCC) is entering its third year, and the Jackson County Creative Community (JCCC) and Letcher County Culture Hub (LCCH) are entering their second year. Neon Rising, a grassroots community group in Neon, KY joined the Community Accelerator Program in November 2023 and is ramping up their participation. We are cultivating relationships with a group in Sharpsville, KY, and a group in Owsley County, KY. A call for applications for the Community Accelerator program in July of 2024 will result in the selection of two additional communities to participate in 2025. Our hope is that this call for applications would allow us to build relationships with new communities and assess their readiness for the Community Accelerator program.

Program Development: Over the next year, we will continue to offer the services offered in Year 2, including Coaching, Peer Learning Zoom Calls, In-Person Meetings, and will also evaluate potential improvements and additional services based on feedback from participants. Potential programs being investigated as possible additions in Year 3 are:

- **PLACE Initiative Climate Receiver County Community Assessment:** Our partners in Floyd County, KY will be piloting this assessment on March 12th and two of the PLACE Initiative’s facilitators will join the Community Accelerator Retreat on March 14th-15th to speak about their Climate Receiver County Map and Community Assessment program. If the communities are interested in participating, this may be an added program at one of the in-person meetings in Year 3 and 4. To explain, many of the Community Accelerator program participants attended the Brushy Fork Leadership Summit in November 2023, where Invest Appalachia CEO Andrew Crosson's keynote speech referenced [PLACE Initiative's Climate Receiver Communities Map](#). The map graphic caused lots of discussion and many people in the audience asked how they could learn more and get involved to help their community become ready to receive some of these potential "climate migrants." What are climate migrants? People who are leaving towns where things like drought, excessive heat, and forest fires are rampant, and instead are migrating toward communities with more temperate climates and access to water—places like Eastern Kentucky. This migration is already happening, but for Eastern Kentucky communities to benefit from this migration we must prepare to receive these new people. That means, communities need more houses, jobs, and places for businesses. It also means these communities need more infrastructure like broadband, access to childcare and education, and things that improve the quality of people's lives, like improved walkability, diverse restaurants, and fun things to do. PLACE Initiative has an assessment communities can take to help them identify opportunities to improve and develop an action plan.
- **“Building Flourishing Communities with Strategic Doing”:** Since 2 or 3 communities responded well to the Strategic Doing workshop last year, we are investigating a new version. The Agile Strategy Lab is launching this new version of Strategic Doing workshops specifically to help communities:
 - Navigate complex challenges collaboratively
 - Drive sustainable growth and positive change
 - Empower individuals and teams to achieve their full potential.

Key Partners:

- Donna Daniels and Leah VanWinkle, Brushy Fork Leadership Institute
- Shane Barton, CEDIK
- Ruthie Caldwell, Vision Granted
- Betsy Whaley, Mountain Association
- Kathy Allen, The Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky
- Dan and Mindy Click, The Grayson Gallery and Art Center
- Greg Lakes, Jackson Tourism
- Valerie Horn, Cowan Community Center
- Max Hammond, The Warrior’s Path
- Kitty Dougoud, Kentucky Mainstreet

Timeline: 2024

Month	Activities
Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls
Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls • VISTAs and Coaches Plan Retreat
Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Community Accelerator Retreat & Learning Journey – Letcher County & Harlan County, KY • Search for Community Accelerator Coordinator begins • WNEKY Fundraising Team begins monthly meetings
Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinator is contracted • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls • Plan June in-person meeting
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls • Coordinator designs the process for the Call for new Accelerator Communities
Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Person Meeting (Strategic Doing, Action Visit, or Community Assessment, etc.)
Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls • Plan Sept in-person meeting • Call for Applications for new Accelerator communities OPENS
Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls
Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Person Meeting (Strategic Doing, Action Visit, or Community Assessment, etc.) • Call for Applications for new Accelerator communities CLOSES • Selected communities announced
Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls • Kick-Off: 2 New Communities Begin
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls • In-Person Meeting: Brushy Fork Leadership Summit
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Community Accelerator Peer Learning Zoom Meeting & Coaching Calls

Funding Plan

What's Next EKY?! is fortunate to have funding for 2024-25 through the Mountain Association's ARC Power grant. We know, however that this funding will not be sufficient to meet the need of all distressed communities in Appalachian Kentucky. We will need to raise \$40,000 by October of 2024 to continue to expand the work as represented in our timeline and Year 4 budget. WNEKY's Steering Committee has formed a fundraising team to work on raising the funds needed to expand the program. This team has identified private foundations that we will be approaching in the coming months to build a strong foundation of support for this work. We are also exploring what federal funding sources might be available to expand the work in the future.

BUDGET: YEAR 3

SIMPLE PROJECT BUDGET	
Project Title: Community Accelerator, YR 3 (serve 5 communities)	
Project Lead: Mountain Association	
Personnel	
TRAVEL	
Travel for Communities & VISTAs	\$2,800
TOTAL TRAVEL:	\$2,800
EQUIPMENT (over \$5,000)	
CONSULTANTS & SUBAWARDS	
Coaches - 2, \$100/hr for 5hr/mo for 12 months	\$12,000
Facilitators - round robin, etc.	\$5,000
TOTAL CONSULTANTS & SUBAWARDS:	\$17,000
OTHER (rentals, insurance, fees, etc.)	
Meetings	\$3,000
Community Seed Funding Stipends: \$2,500 Neon, \$2,000 Jackson and Letcher, and \$1,500 for Grayson	\$8,000
Coordinator: 25 hours per month at \$50/hr (to coordinate the program and coach 2 communities)	\$15,000
TOTAL OTHER:	\$26,000
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	\$45,800
TOTAL BUDGET	\$45,800

BUDGET: YEAR 4

SIMPLE PROJECT BUDGET	
Project Title: Community Accelerator, YR 4 (serve 5 communities)	
Project Lead: Mountain Association	
Personnel	
TRAVEL	
Travel for Communities & VISTAs - \$700 per organization for travel (6 communities)	\$4,200
TOTAL TRAVEL:	\$4,200
EQUIPMENT (over \$5,000)	
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	
CONSULTANTS & SUBAWARDS	
Coaches - 4, \$100/hr for 5hr/mo for 12 months	\$24,000
Facilitators - round robin, etc.	\$5,000
TOTAL CONSULTANTS & SUBAWARDS:	\$29,000
OTHER (rentals, insurance, fees, etc.)	
Meetings	\$3,000
Community Seed Funding Stipends: \$2,500 2 new, \$2,000 Neon , and \$1,500 for Jackson and Letcher	\$10,000
Coordinator: 25 hours per month at \$50/hr (to coordinate the program and coach 2 communities)	\$15,000
TOTAL OTHER:	\$28,000
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	\$61,200
Indirect Costs - 5% for fiscal sponsor	\$3,060
TOTAL BUDGET	\$64,260

ATTACHMENTS

Upcoming Retreat March 14-15, 2024:

Registration Link: www.eventbrite.com/e/community-accelerators-retreat-tickets-812020684727?aff=oddtcreator



March 14
Site Visits

- 12pm Lunch at Cowan Community Center
- Carcassonne Community Center
- Cane Kitchen
- Appalshop
- Neon
- 5:30pm Dinner at Black Sheep Bakery
Hemphill Community Center
- 8:00pm Leave for overnight accommodations at Benham Schoolhouse Inn

Community Accelerators Retreat
March 14-15, 2024
Peer to Peer Learning & Networking

WHAT'S NEXT EKY?!
connect. collaborate. celebrate.

March 15
Benham Inn Sessions

- Kentucky breakfast buffet
- Session 1: Building Strong Networks w/Betsy Whaley of Mountain Association
- Break
- Session 2: Presenter TBA
- Lunch
- Site Tours
- 3pm Depart

Community Accelerator Retreat

Join us for an exciting in-person event starting out at the **Cowan Community Center** in **Whitesburg, KY**. Get ready to connect, learn, and grow with community-minded individuals who are passionate about accelerating sustainable growth in Eastern, KY. This retreat is designed to accelerate your community projects, providing you with valuable insights, strategies, and networking opportunities. Immerse yourself in inspiring workshops, engaging discussions, and interactive activities that will empower you to make a positive impact. Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to collaborate and learn from experts in the field. Mark your calendar and get ready for an unforgettable experience at the Community Accelerator Retreat!

Our scheduled agenda may change a little based site logistics. For the site tours, please anticipate carpooling options.

AGENDA: Community Accelerator Retreat

Date and time: March 14 · 12pm - March 15 · 3pm EDT

Location: Cowan Community Center

81 Sturgill Branch Whitesburg, KY 41858

Agenda

12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

Lunch at Cowan Community Center

Valorie Ison Horn, Director

1:30 AM - 5:00 PM

Site Tours

Visiting the following Sites: Carcassonne Community Center, Cane Kitchen, Appalshop, Neon

5:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Dinner & Site Visit: Hemphill Community Center/Black Sheep Bakery

Gwen Johnson

8:00 PM - 8:45 PM

Depart for Benham Schoolhouse Inn for those who reserved accommodations

9:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Casual Conversations at Benham Schoolhouse Inn

For those who want to spend time in conversation and debriefing about the day.

10:00 PM - 8:00 AM (+1 day)

Sleep Time/Personal Time

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Breakfast At Benham Schoolhouse Inn: Kentucky Breakfast Buffett

Benham Schoolhouse Inn

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Session 1: Building Strong Networks w/Betsy Whaley of Mountain Association

Betsy Whaley, Mountain Association

10:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Morning Break

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Session 2: Presenter TBA

12:30 PM - 1:00 PM

Lunch

Boxed Lunches w/Benham Schoolhouse Inn – Benham, KY

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Afternoon Site Visits

Coal Museum & Portal 31 – Benham, KY & Lynch, KY

3:00 PM

Depart