

# *Appalachia Funders* **NETWORK** learning · analysis · collaboration

## **Overview of Appalachia Funders Network's Working Groups**

Our Network working groups play a key role in helping us deepen our learning and analysis around promising economic development efforts. Specifically, these groups connect grant makers around a particular area of interest to accelerate the economic transition of Central Appalachia. **Working groups strive to:**

- Develop a common analysis and shared vision of the opportunities and challenges within the working group topic (i.e. Food Systems, Health, Energy, Entrepreneurship, Community Capacity)
- Develop a shared understanding of best practices and strategies to grow promising sectors.
- Engage funders to collaborate, leverage investments, share lessons learned and develop a common measurement system around key investment priorities.
- Engage with leading experts in the field and development practitioners to inform the group's collective learning and analysis.

The Appalachia Funders Network's framework was developed over the last five years and represents the combined learning and wisdom of the Network's members. Health is lifted up as one of the sectors that hold the promise for a healthier workforce, job creation and health equity in Central Appalachia.

Navigating these opportunities will require cross-sector partnerships and regional strategies. In 2015 the Health Working Group will develop a common understanding and shared strategies for developing this promising sector.

## **The Health Working Group**

In 2014, members of the Health Working Group convened to assess their collective geographic footprint, health funding priorities, and barriers to the implementation and sustainability of health improvement strategies. These stakeholders discussed a mutual commitment to accelerating the economic transformation of central Appalachia by:

- Orienting investors and other stakeholders to the social determinants of health and Appalachia's regional health disparities;
- Identifying economic development opportunities in the healthcare sector;
- Integrating health and healthcare issues into the Funders Network's Framework;
- Encouraging coordinated investment in strategic initiatives that promote health in all policies; and
- Promoting a regional culture of health that supports equity, improved health outcomes, and greater economic strength.

Indicators of success for the Health Working Group might ultimately include:

- Improved access to affordable, high-quality, integrated health care;
- Reduction of health disparities;
- Widespread access to nutritious food;
- Increased sustainability of businesses in all sectors;
- Development of health-related projects and services unique to the region; and
- Evidence of health in all policies supported by AFN investment.

## **Health Working Group Priorities and Plans for 2015**

During 2015, members of the Funders Network and its Health Working Group will work to refine its understanding of regional health conditions in the Appalachian economic and cultural context. Activities may include:

- Educating funders on the concepts of social determinants of health, health equity, and health in all policies;
- Highlighting existing regional health data which may suggest economic opportunity and strategic priorities; and
- Exploring health-oriented approaches to local investment, such as built environment, public education, and technical assistance grants that support community-level health and well-being.

In addition, in 2015 the Health Working Group will be involved in a deep analysis of the health of central Appalachia. The “Changing our Future” project, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, seeks to engage grantmakers in coordinated and strategic action to advance policy and environmental changes that address childhood obesity in Appalachia. With RWJF support, AFN has engaged a research team to:

- Aggregate data on the state of health (particularly measures related to childhood obesity) in Central Appalachian states, and on the funders investing in health improvement strategies in Central Appalachia; Review and summarize information on high impact strategies that are, or could be, funded at the community level; Assess the appetite for funders to co-invest in promising or proven strategies; and Document the lessons learned from high performing efforts to improve the population health across the region.

Research findings are expected to help further our understanding of the healthcare sector as a promising sector that can accelerate the Appalachian economic transition, and to enable creation of a “Culture of Health” in the region.

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## **Health Working Group Membership**

The Health Working Group is comprised of initial members representing the Appalachia Funders Network’s states (Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, and Western North Carolina). Membership is open to public and private funders interested in addressing Central Appalachia’s health and quality of life issues in a community economic development context. Please contact Leah Ferguson at [leah@ruralsupportpartners.com](mailto:leah@ruralsupportpartners.com) to learn how you can join the Health Work Group.

## **Co-Chairs of the Health Working Group (April 2015)**

**Susan Zepeda, President/CEO** Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky

**Terri Donlin Huesman, Vice President** Osteopathic Heritage Foundations

## **Members of the Health Working Group**

Jen Algire, **Greater Clark Foundation**  
Bonnie Blackenship, **Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland**  
Darryl Cannady, **Appalachian Community Fund/South**  
Marianne Clowes, **Parkersburg Area Community Foundation**  
Cynthia Drennan, **Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund**  
Paul Kaboth, **Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland**

Lisa Nelson, **Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland**  
Mary Petrus, **Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland**  
Sheri Ryder, **Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation**  
Eric Stockton, **Appalachian Regional Commission**  
Kimberly Tieman, **Benedum Foundation**  
Susan Urano, **Athens Foundation**  
Theresa Wukusick, **HealthPath Foundation of Ohio**