

Eastern West Virginia
Community & Technical College



An Implementation Playbook

For

**Fostering Entrepreneurship and
Economic Diversification**

In the

Potomac Highlands of West Virginia

March 2016

Prepared by
Pegasus Planning and Development



Point A Consulting
From Point A to Point B and beyond

March 29, 2016



Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College (Eastern) created the Institute of Rural Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (IREED) to develop and sustain relationships with internal and external stakeholders to provide a collective strategy to build institutional and community capital for entrepreneurship development. Its mission is to create, support and sustain an innovation-based new economy in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia.

The goal of the following IREED endeavor was not to perform a traditional "scan and plan" type of analysis, but rather search for new possibilities and industries that could augment, expand and diversify our community's wonderful existing and longstanding businesses and industries. While IREED recognizes that attracting new businesses and big employers is important, that was not part of this effort.

Specifically it was the goal to outline and identify potential income diversification strategies within our region. The areas of focus outlined should serve as "umbrellas" for future programs and projects that communities within the Potomac Highlands may wish to identify.

The goal for this effort is to increase collaborative efforts to create greater economic and entrepreneurial activities for all members of our community. In addition, IREED endeavored to identify potential opportunities that will create incentives for younger members of our community to remain in West Virginia and not leave.

Now the difficult work begins, turning ideas into action and action into traction for new opportunities. I encourage all the counties Eastern serves, the broader region and the state of West Virginia to view this effort through a lens of collaboration and mutual interests.

By working together we have an extraordinary opportunity to enhance the great work that is being done in every region to increase the economic outlook for our region, our community and its citizens.

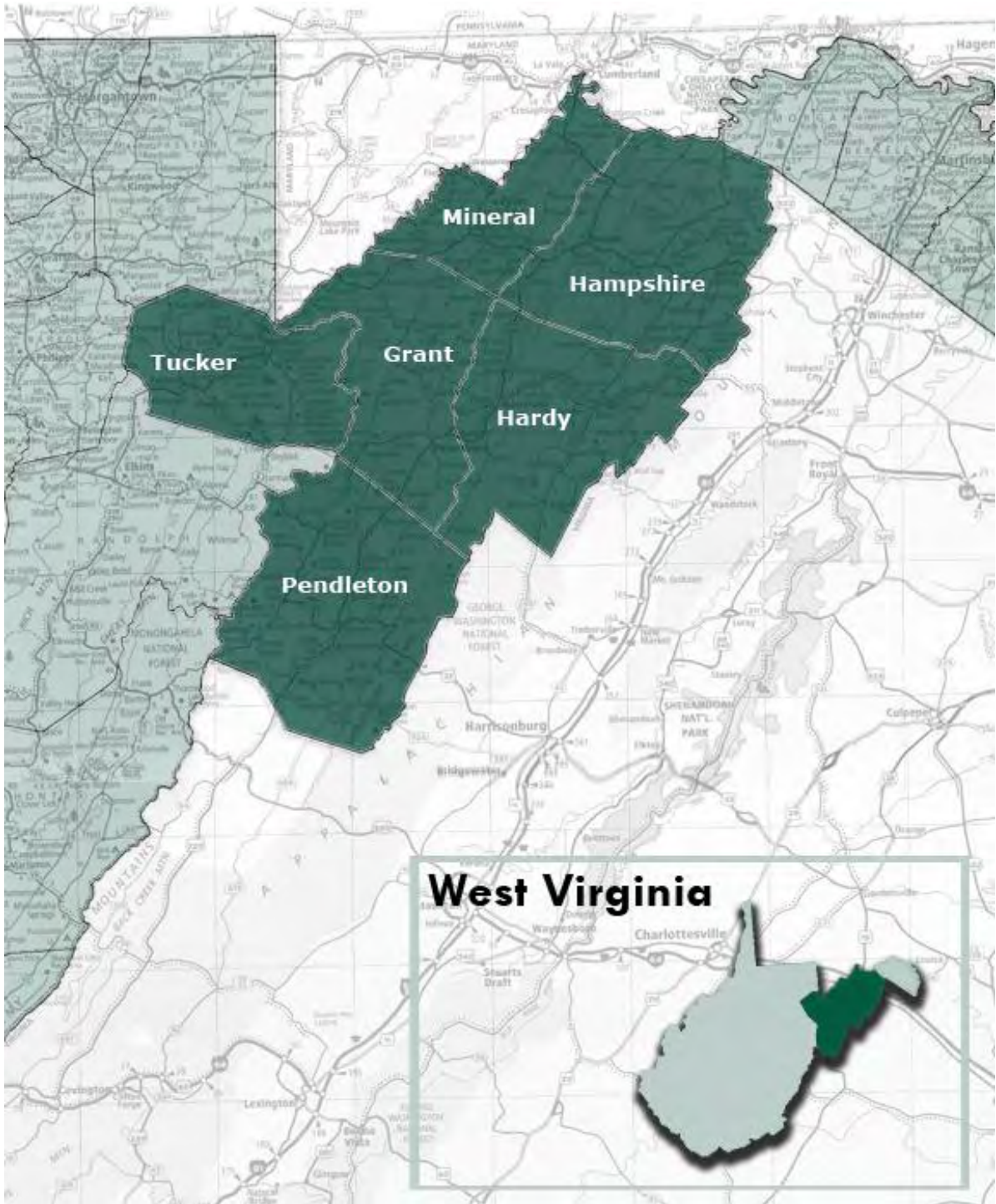
Finally, I would like to thank The Benedum Foundation and many people who have had a hand in crafting this effort. Ideas, input and suggestions from the broadest array of community members were solicited to help create a cogent, yet actionable plan. As this is an ongoing and ever changing effort, to those who may not have had a chance to participate, please feel free to reach out to me personally, as we encourage everyone to become active, constructive and collaborative participants to enhance the quality of place, which we call the Potomac Highlands.

Thank you,

Chuck Terrell, President / "Head Coach"



Service Area for Eastern West Virginia Community & Technical College

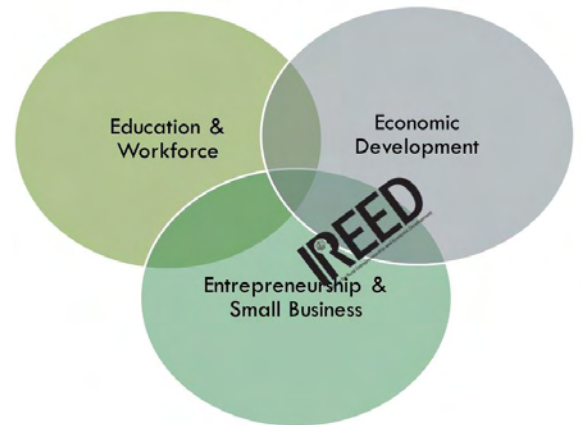


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Executive Summary

Community Colleges play a critical role in the Nation’s workforce education and training. Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College (EWVCTC) is one of few colleges that goes beyond the expected and traditional role in higher education and workforce development.

In 2014, EWVCTC created an entrepreneurship initiative called the Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (IREED), which led to 1) an Entrepreneur-in-Residence program and 2) the creation of the New Biz Launchpad in the Town of Wardensville. In conjunction with local entrepreneurs, the Town of Wardensville and Mayor, the New Biz Launchpad has served as a co-catalyst in the shifting of Wardensville to an entrepreneurial ecosystem. In 2015, 11 new ventures alone were started or moved in to the Town.



Graphic 1:
Illustrative image of the specific role played by IREED
Within EWVCTC’s overall economic strategy efforts.
Source: Pegasus Planning & Development

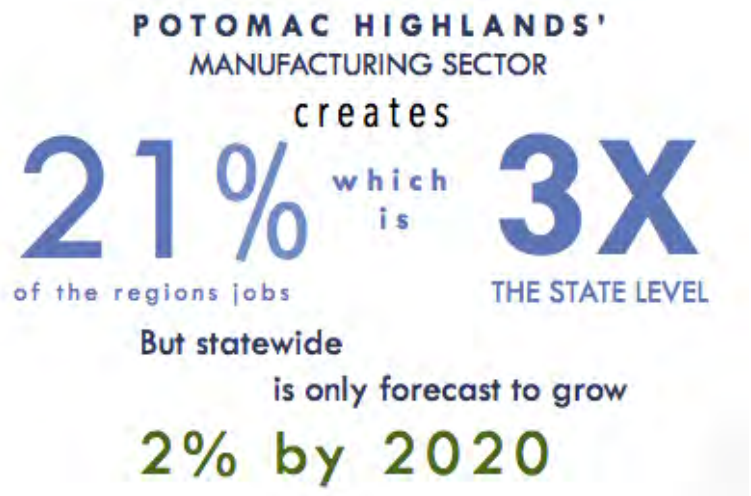
The third initiative under IREED is to examine what the best opportunities are for entrepreneurship in the region and to create a “Playbook” for IREED to take the regional entrepreneurship initiatives to the next level.

This document IS the Playbook for IREED and EWVCTC. It is not a report, but rather a succinct implementation plan to guide the region’s growth in entrepreneurship and increase economic diversification. **The Playbook focuses on three main areas:**

- **Agriculture;**
- **Tourism; and**
- **The Arts.**

These three areas of the economy do exist in the region, yet it is important to understand the context in which they exist. West Virginia suffers from high unemployment and a traditional reliance on mining and manufacturing (both of which are in historic decline).

EWVCTC was accurate in their belief that an entrepreneurship initiative could be a boost for the region’s economy. Wardensville’s success can be replicated and built upon, and by using this Playbook, IREED and EWVCTC can further impact the region’s long-term economic diversification and success.



Graphic 2:
Manufacturing Employment Trends
Source: WVU BBER Data (2015),
Pegasus Planning & Development
Target Industry Assessment

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EWVCTC and its partner Foundation hired the consulting team of Pegasus Planning and Development with assistance from Point A Consulting to analyze the best opportunities for IREED and build a strategy to help IREED further its success in the region.



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Findings to Support IREED's Playbook Strategies

The following summarizes the major findings of a 4-month long study:

- ✦ Teaching and Training are EWWCTC CORE FUNCTIONS:
 - Through IREED, EWWCTC also serves as convener for economic development and small business development efforts across its 6-county service region.
 - The role of EWWCTC as convener of specialized events such as the *Creative Economy Summit* and the Ag Tech Summit serve as a mechanism to share best practices and a way to promote “virtual strategic planning” and continue the engagement of stakeholders.
- ✦ In collaboration with many partners, EWWCTC's Launch Pad program has achieved tremendous SUCCESS in a short time:
 - The Entrepreneur-in-Residence has become a national expert on rural and community college entrepreneurship and is supported by a small support staff.
 - It has leadership and partner funding support in place to sustain its growth yet requires additional funding for a concentrated 5-year program that includes expansion of services focused on recommendations found within this report.
 - Stakeholders and community members from other counties would like to see its services replicated in other locations.
- ✦ Target Industries identified for IREED are generally valid.
 - ✦ However, not all of them should be focus of the small business development efforts by the New Biz Launch Pad (e.g., Wind Energy may be a good workforce development effort but lacks the opportunity for small business development).
- ✦ Generally, the West Virginia economy has relied on large industry such as mining to support most job growth. The Potomac Highlands also has a relatively weak culture of supporting small business.
 - ✦ Therefore, IREED's and the New Biz Launch Pad's support for New/Small Business initiatives is critical to encouraging a regional shift from solely *focusing and relying on business recruitment*, to greater economic diversification by encouraging entrepreneurs and small businesses across the proposed Target Industries.
- ✦ Small business owners, and new entrepreneurs across *all of the IREED target industries* have SIMILAR NEEDS for business skill development and mentoring in key areas including:
 1. *Business planning and scaling;*
 2. *Marketing and business development; and*
 3. *Accounting.*
- ✦ A key competitive advantage and source of many of Potomac Highlands' greatest opportunities is its **PROXIMITY TO MAJOR EAST COAST POPULATION CENTERS** (D.C., VA, MD, and PA) which affects all IREED targeted industries.
- ✦ The relatively new (and expanding) Corridor-H extension is critical to the logistics competitiveness for all target industries, as well as to improving the region's accessibility for Tourism.
- ✦ In tandem with transportation improvement, a greater emphasis on **Place-making and strengthening traditional town centers** is needed to support both IREED's TOURISM and its ARTS Development strategies.

- ✦ Interesting and potentially important business linkages to foreign countries are being explored. Future IREED strategies should identify opportunities that may exist with other countries where similar economic, cultural or geographic interests exist.

Critical Pathfinding

Delivery of Economic Development as well as Tourism and other Small Business support services across the region is fragmented and inconsistent. The Potomac Highlands regional **AGRICULTURE** sector must develop capacity in aggregation, logistics and distribution in order to be more competitive. Given the proximity to major markets, this strategy should be paramount for IREED.

TOURISM and ARTS efforts should be carried out on a regional and collaborative basis, with a renewed focus on marketing and developing new events.

Critical Path Recommendation

Future efforts through IREED must consider new county-by-county strategies and collaborative county ventures which can be blended to achieve maximum benefits and impact for the region.

- ✦ Embrace concept of EWWCTC as a “portal” for access to the entrepreneurial ecosystem;
- ✦ Promote *Diffusion of Innovation* across the 6 counties ; and
- ✦ Proving ground for Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) to learn Best Practices from each other.

Overarching Precept

IREED has achieved significant traction in such a short amount of time. By continuing to focus on partnerships and local + regional initiatives, **the EWWCTC’s IREED program could become a model for rural entrepreneurship by creating reproducible, low cost and impactful solutions.**

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Playbook Summary Table

Agriculture Strategies

Agriculture has the greatest potential to drive ECONOMIC and INCOME growth for the Potomac Highlands Region.

- Action 1** Convene, Build and Align an Ag Action Council through IREED.
- Action 1a** Action Council Focus >>> Provide Strategic Development and Marketing Support.
- Action 2** Build on assets of the Ag Research Farms at WVU and Potomac State; make them a focus for research, training and implementation of key Ag Action Strategies. Formalize partnership relationship with IREED to assist with Potomac State's burgeoning AgEnterprise program and the expanded farm and potential incubator.
- Action 3** Promote BEST PRACTICE business skills and entrepreneurial training for established and emerging farmers.
- Action 4** Promote Diversification as Pathway to New Market Opportunities.
- Action 5** Promote Value-added Processing. Biochar is an example opportunity for the region. Biochar is value-added processing of animal feces/waste and/or wood waste. There are other value-added options for the region, but biochar is a low-hanging fruit.
- Action 6** Promote Direct Sales by Farmers as Pathway to New Market Opportunities.
- Action 7** Build on "food networks" across the state and in adjacent states (Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia) as a *mechanism* to support other Agricultural development Actions.
- Action 8** Showcase *Success Stories in Ag Innovation* through a six-county regional marketing initiative; use it as vehicle to recruit others into the network.

Tourism Strategies

Tourism Development represents a significant opportunity for ENTREPRENEUR-driven ECONOMIC GROWTH across the Potomac Highlands region.

- Action 1** Convene, Build and Align a Tourism Action Council through IREED.
- Action 1a** Action Council Focus >>> Provide Strategic Development & Marketing Support
- Action 2** Inventory Tourism-related businesses across the region.
- Action 3** Share Best Practices across counties.
- Action 4** Create a "Launch Pad for Tourism" program module.
- Action 5** Promote ease of accessibility and related efforts to improve accessibility of the region. Promote quality of life and place.
- Action 6** Showcase *Success Stories in Tourism Development* across the six-county region; use it as vehicle to recruit entrepreneurs and others into the network.

Arts Strategies

Arts Development has important potential as a future driver of ENTREPRENEUR-driven economic growth across the Potomac Highlands Region.

- Action 1** Convene, Build and Align an Arts Action Council through IREED.
- Action 1a** Action Council Focus >>> Provide Strategic Development & Marketing Support.
- Action 2** Engage County EDOs or Visitor Bureaus to INVENTORY ARTS-related BUSINESSES across the region to Identify gaps / opportunities for entrepreneurs.
- Action 3** Identify national BEST PRACTICES for Arts Community development that can be modeled in the Potomac Highlands.
- Action 4** Create a “Launch Pad for the Arts” program module.
- Action 5** Create or utilize mobile “Maker Spaces” specifically geared to the artisans and crafts.
- Action 6** Identify and prioritize opportunities for PLACE-MAKING that leverage arts-oriented strengths and emerging clusters across the Potomac Highlands Region.
- Action 7** Share local success stories and innovative approaches across counties and beyond.

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Agricultural Playbook Strategies

Agriculture has the greatest potential to drive ECONOMIC and INCOME growth for the Potomac Highlands Region

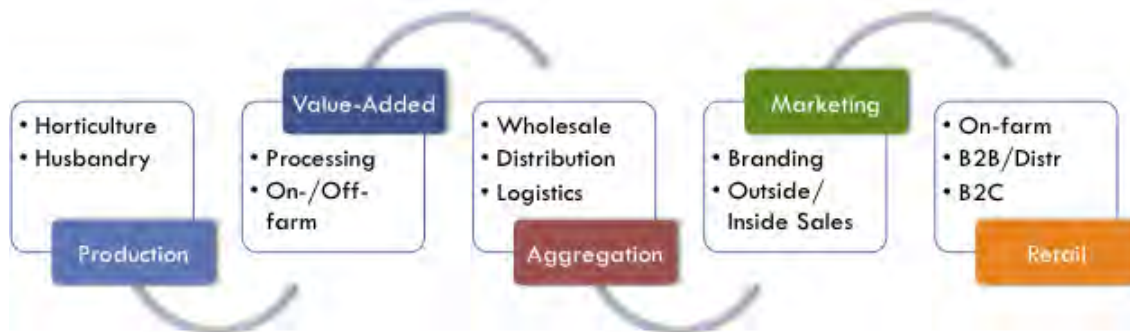
Positioning and Analysis

The Potomac Highlands has 2700+ farms and \$400 million+ sales (2012 Census of Agriculture 5 county region excludes Tucker County). An approach of aggregation of food processing and joint marketing for fresh produce and farm products will likely have the greatest potential to improve the viability of the current small farms as well as increase the desire for new Agricultural based enterprises. As the graphic below illustrates, Agriculture as an Industry has many subcomponents from production to value-added processing to marketing to retail. Entrepreneurs can thrive at each phase in this process, and it is important to businesses in each phase of this ecosystem that every subcomponent is successful.

The main issues common to small farmers in the Potomac Highlands include:

1. Business skills: planning, marketing and financial management
2. Adoption of new on-farm technologies and Best Practices for production
 - Need to promote AG-INNOVATION comprehensively (beyond “Ag-Tech”)
 - Focus on Workforce education and small business / ENTREPRENEURSHIP programs toward creating a new class of Potomac Highlands “Farmers of the Future!”

“Agriculture” has many SUBCOMPONENTS



...ALL of which must work together for the sector strategy to be effective and drive growth.

Graphic 3:

Subcomponents of the Agricultural Economy
Source: Pegasus Planning & Development

List of Actions for Agriculture

Action 1 1

Convene, Build and Align an Ag Action Council through IREED, including:

- Potomac State College (the current collaboration of EWVCTC and Potomac State College is a great example of what is referred to as a “2+4” academic track program (2 years of community college to transfer to a 4-year degree) and could easily be replicated for Ag business training (especially given the plans for Potomac State for an expanded Ag Enterprise program));
- Marshall, the Robert C Byrd Institute & WVU College of Agriculture for technology development expertise;
- WVU Extension for outreach;
- 4H and FFA leadership;
- USDA collaborations (Rural Development, Ag Research Service, NRCS, NIFA et al);
- County EDOs to recruit specialty Ag processing, logistics and related businesses
- Craft breweries and local food establishments
- Others -- to support marketing, branding, outreach

Action 1a 1

Action Council Focus >>> Provide Strategic Development and Marketing Support via:

- Individual farms / farmers
- Collaborative efforts
- Build Regional Brand awareness / Farm Branding
- Focus on wholesale segment of food plus farm to table
- Leverage regional Ag Tourism promotion efforts
- Leverage proximity to major East Coast markets

Action 2

Build on assets of the Ag Research Farms at WVU and Potomac State; make them a focus for research, training and implementation of key Ag Action Strategies. Formalize partnership relationships with IREED to assist with Potomac State’s burgeoning AgEnterprise program and the expanded farm and potential incubator.

Action 3

Promote BEST PRACTICE business skills and entrepreneurial training for established and beginning farmers.

- Create a “Launch Pad for Farmers” program module
- Promote adoption of cutting-edge on-farm technologies

Action 4

Promote Diversification as Pathway to New Market Opportunities

- Specialty crops (Organics, Fruits & Veg, High Tunnel farming)
- Higher value animal products
- Focus on forest products as appropriate

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Action 5

Promote Value-added Processing

- On-farm, direct sales
- Aggregators / Food Hubs / Commercial Kitchens

Action 6

Promote Direct Sales by Farmers as Pathway to New Market Opportunities

- On-farm
- Via Farmer's Markets
- Direct-to-consumers / restaurants

Action 7

Build on “**food networks**” across the state and in adjacent states (Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia) as a *mechanism* to support other Agricultural development actions

Action 8

Showcase *Success Stories in Ag Innovation* through a six-county regional marketing initiative; use it as vehicle to recruit others into the network.

AGRICULTURE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

The Ag Action Council, once convened, should establish its own detailed **Program of Work**, to encompass the key Actions outlined above (or others that they may identify). It should establish priorities and specific responsibilities, including *realistic and achievable* milestones and/or timelines for each.

The Actions proposed above are intended to be cross-cutting and complementary – they can be pursued alone or in combination, including some Actions that may be “Low Hanging Fruit.”

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAYBOOK STRATEGIES

Tourism Development represents a significant opportunity for ENTREPRENEUR-driven ECONOMIC GROWTH across the Potomac Highlands region.

Positioning and Analysis

Many types of destinations and visitor interests exist in the region, all of which SHOULD WORK TOGETHER for the tourism sector strategy to be effective and drive growth. These include:

- Adventure & Recreational Tourism;
- Heritage Tourism;
- Seasonal Tourism;
- Arts / Culture / Music Tourism; and
- Ag Tourism.

Some Potomac Highlands Tourism assets are **NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED** draws such as rock climbing, natural rivers & white water. Many, if not most tourism businesses, are small enterprises that leverage the region's natural amenities.

- However, they are for the most part *GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED*; AND,
- The fragmented nature of the “tourism delivery system” creates **SPECIAL CHALLENGES** to reaching the economic potential of the Potomac Highland’s Tourism sector:
 - Need for coordination—most individual tourism venues and local tourism resources are too small-scale to market aggressively on their own.
 - **SUB-SECTORS** are exceptionally **INTERDEPENDENT**
 - *Visitors → recreational attractions → an array of food, beverage and dining options → lodging establishments*
- Tourism assets / attractions are unevenly distributed across the six-County Potomac Highland region.
 - **STRATEGIES** must allow flexibility for localization at the same time should be regionally **COORDINATED** and marketed.
- Businesses need **ONGOING EDUCATION & training** in industry **MANAGEMENT** best practices
- Small businesses have difficulty accessing capital needed to develop facilities on which their competitive draw depends.

All these challenges are offset in part by the ability to leverage proximity to major East Coast Population Centers, particularly Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

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List of Actions for Tourism Development

Action 1

Convene, Build and Align a Tourism *Action* Council through IREED, consisting of:

- Economic Development Organizations from each County;
- Visitor Bureaus, business associations and/or Chambers from each County;
- State & Federal Tourism officials and organizations;
- Local elected officials;
- EWVCTC and Potomac State programs and resource persons;
- Key tourism venue operators and similar stakeholders;
- Craft breweries and local food establishments;
- Build on existing multi-county efforts; and
- Other stakeholder categories or resources

Action 1a

Action Council Focus >>> Provide Strategic Development & Marketing Support via:

- New attractions development;
- Clustering, creating critical mass and “sense of destination”;
 - Developing stronger town-centers as destinations;
 - Building on existing towns as nodes of strength;
- Hospitality facilities development;
- Regional Branding & Marketing Coordination; and
- Leveraging potential of “Ag Tourism” and the Arts in addition to natural geographic features of interest.

Action 2

- Inventory Tourism-related businesses across the region
 - Develop a comprehensive inventory of tourism assets; and
 - Identify gaps / opportunities for entrepreneurs to open or expand tourism-related businesses

Action 3

- Share Best Practices across counties
 - Promote strong collaboration with State of West Virginia tourism marketing efforts

Action 4

- Create a “*Launch Pad for Tourism*” program module

Action 5

- Promote accessibility i.e. Corridor H and related efforts to improve accessibility of the region
 - Some parts of Potomac Highlands now 1.5 to 2 hours closer for East Coast urban visitors

Action 6

- Showcase *Success Stories in Tourism Development* across the six-county region and beyond; use it as vehicle to recruit others entrepreneurs and businesses into the network.

TOURISM IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

The Tourism Action Council, once convened, should establish its own detailed **Program of Work**, to encompass the key Actions outlined above (or others that they may identify). It should establish priorities and specific responsibilities, including *realistic and achievable* milestones and/or timelines for each.

The Actions proposed above are intended to be are cross-cutting and complementary – they can be pursued alone or in combination, including some Actions that may be “Low Hanging Fruit.”

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ARTS DEVELOPMENT PLAYBOOK STRATEGIES

Arts Development has important potential as a future driver of ENTREPRENEUR-driven economic growth across the Potomac Highlands Region

Positioning and Analysis

Arts and Tourism go hand in hand, and can be a driver for cultural diversity and economic growth. Many types of arts-based destinations and visitor experiences exist in the region, all of which SHOULD WORK TOGETHER for the sector strategy to be effective and drive growth.

- Art and Craft Galleries
- Local Craft-makers
- Music venues
- Festivals

Arts Challenges are similar to those for Tourism

- Arts-oriented attractions are UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED across the six-County region.
 - Strategies must be LOCALIZED and COORDINATED and marketed.
- Arts-oriented entrepreneurs need CONTINUING EDUCATION and training in industry “Management best practices”
- Arts businesses may have special difficulty accessing capital

Some artists work on a SOLITARY basis → may crave the kind of tranquil, rural environment the Potomac Highlands offers.

- The Potomac Highlands can attract more artists and related businesses to cluster, e.g. developing their “retail side” such as through art galleries or music performance venues.

Nearly all art forms need PLACES where Art-loving consumers can interact, typically in town centers.

- Therefore, actions aimed at strengthening the attractiveness and draw of Potomac Highland TOWN CENTERS is a critical element

Like Tourism, the challenges for Arts Development in the Potomac Highlands are offset in part by the unique ability to leverage proximity to major East Coast population centers.

List of Actions for Arts Development Action 1

Convene, Build and Align an Arts *Action Council* through IREED, consisting of:

- Economic Development Organizations, Visitor Bureaus, business associations and/or Chambers from each County
- Local, State & Federal Arts and Cultural officials and organizations
- Local elected officials
- EWVCTC, Potomac State and WVU programs and resource persons
- Key arts venue operators and similar stakeholders

- Other stakeholder categories or resources TBD

Action 1a

Arts Action Council Focus >>> Provide Strategic Development & Marketing Support via:

- New arts attractions development
- Clustering, creating critical mass and “sense of destination”
 - Developing stronger town centers as destinations
 - Building on existing town nodes of strength
- Arts & Music festivals development
- Regional Branding & Marketing coordination
- Leverage the potential of Arts Tourism (along with Ag Tourism) in addition to the region’s natural geographic features of interest

Action 2

Engage County EDOs or Visitor Bureaus to INVENTORY ARTS-related BUSINESSES across the region

- Identify gaps / opportunities for entrepreneurs

Action 3

Identify national BEST PRACTICES for Arts Community development that can be replicated in the Potomac Highlands.

- Example: Paducah, KY Arts District housing incentive program

Action 4

Create a “Launch Pad for the Arts” program module

Action 5

Create or utilize “Maker Space” type program specifically geared to the Artisan crafts

Action 6

Identify and prioritize opportunities for PLACE-MAKING that leverage arts-oriented strengths and emerging clusters across the Potomac Highlands Region.

Action 7

Share local success stories and innovative approaches across counties and beyond.

ARTS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

The Arts Action Council, once convened, should establish its own detailed **Program of Work**, to encompass the key Actions outlined above (or others that they may identify). It should establish priorities and specific responsibilities, including *realistic and achievable* milestones and/or timelines for each.

The Actions proposed above are intended to be cross-cutting and complementary – they can be pursued alone or in combination, including some Actions that may be “Low Hanging Fruit.”

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OVERARCHING IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

The process of discovery, analysis and synthesis utilized by consultants during this project has been designed to culminate in an actionable PLAYBOOK to guide future efforts by Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College and its key strategic partners, as they continue to advance their entrepreneurial and economic development missions.

The *form* of this economic development mission correctly *does* and *should* emphasize **entrepreneurship** as the principal delivery vehicle and organizing framework for strategies, actions and tactics designed to promote the economic and rural community development of the Potomac Highlands.

Building on this premise, and weaving in the findings and recommendations from an initial assessment of target industry sectors (as defined for this engagement by EWWCTC), it is clear that many of the essential building blocks leading to a *potentially* high impact service delivery system exist, in one form or another, throughout the region.

This includes, among others:

- The formal structure of Economic Development Organizations and related development organizations in each of the six Potomac Highland Counties;
- A committed, driven and growing group of entrepreneurs;
- A network of informed and engaged strategic partners (including State and Federal elected officials, local mayors, etc.);
- An overarching regional development agency (Region 8);
- Two institutions of higher education with innovative and forward-looking leadership, committed to principles of collaboration and coordination;
- Access to resources of Statewide Higher Ed institutions: West Virginia University (through its Department of Agriculture, plus Potomac State's relationship) and Marshall University (through its Robert C. Byrd Institute);
- A foundational organizational structure in the form of IREED;
- A strong pilot program exclusively focused on entrepreneurship through the New Biz Launch Pad;
- Evidence of success stories in entrepreneurship in selected nodes and clusters;

These elements notwithstanding, taken together they are still lacking in critical scale, integration, and the ideal level of focus that would be required to effect significant change.

Additionally, the organizations and individuals currently among the EWWCTC strategic partners and who provide the backbone for IREED all have, out of necessity, focused, relatively narrow missions – the things for which they may regularly control. It is in the nature of things therefore that none of them *individually* can look broadly across each of the target industries, and work

comprehensively with all facets that are needed in order to gear up the region's overall entrepreneurship strategy and propel it to a new and higher level of accomplishment.

For these reasons, each of the articulated strategy areas is launched with a parallel recommendation to establish an Action Council focused on each of the targeted industry sectors of Agriculture, Tourism, and Arts.

The key to change in this environment is ongoing, consistent engagement of key stakeholders in an organized, facilitated process of communication and coordination of plans, execution and implementation. This kind of “virtual strategic planning”, also referred to as a “Action Councils” can provide the leadership for each of these areas - committing to come together (repeatedly) to work through the issues and opportunities facing those sectors.

This takes the form of:

- Increasingly detailed identification of goals, objectives, and sub-tasks;
- Identifying in detail the opportunities that are most worthy of being pursued;
- Identifying in detail the gaps and constraints that are obstacles in achieving those goals;
- Ongoing, continuous identification of resources needed to make progress towards the goals (and, this includes human and institutional resources – not just funding);
- Identifying and engaging [sign them up!] CHAMPIONS and key implementers for individual projects and initiatives;
- Evaluation and monitoring of progress towards benchmarks and milestones; and
- Mutual accountability for real, meaningful progress toward agreed upon goals and objectives.

The biggest constraint currently facing E WVCTC and its key partners is a human resource gap – *person-power* to drive forward a process such as envisioned and described above.

The first order of business is to provide a significant level of *professionally qualified staffing support to undergird the efforts of each of the three Action Councils.* The Action Councils would function as an extension of the organizational structure and process of IREED, i.e. in parallel with other IREED initiatives, such as the New Biz Launch Pad. (And Launch Pad obviously is imbedded in the structure of each Partnership Council, as a key element of their prospective efforts.)

The funding of this staffing infrastructure to support the Partnership Councils process is the critical path action for this Playbook. A variety of avenues may be explored toward this end, including the use of Loaned Executives (but dedicated to this purpose – so they may be fully effective); part-time personnel from among the Partnership Councils being assigned to this role; or the identification and recruitment of full-time professionals who can bring new insights, fresh energy and dedicated focus to these efforts.

The number of persons required to fulfill the strategic intent of this proposal could vary, depending on the extent of their time commitment, professional field and skills, and other factors. (Job descriptions would need to be developed to set the parameters for what is required to meet the ambitious goal for this process.) On a continuum of funding, the latter option – one or more fully

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dedicated staff -- is clearly the most ambitious, and should be explored with care from among a variety of existing or prospective sources.

The recommended Actions contained in this Playbook do not stand in isolation. They are an integrated package of mutually-supporting initiatives. Therefore, until this fundamental step is addressed, the Playbook as outlined in the preceding pages is likely to sit on a shelf; or, expectations about seeing the implementation of many (or *any*) of the recommended Actions are likely to be disappointing. There is a reason that the expression “managing expectations” is in such good currency these days.

Funding Strategy

Phase I Capacity Building and Project Planning

Scope

Initially, IREED should focus on building capacity through IREED's creation and leadership of sector-focused Action Councils. The work of these councils will lay the groundwork for Phase II by:

- Sharing and defining best practices
- Showcasing successful regional entrepreneurs and small businesses
- Providing expert guidance to EWVCTC's business skills and entrepreneurship training program (funded by its SBDC grant) to ensure that, to the extent possible with its existing limited funding, it meets the needs of entrepreneurs in the agriculture, tourism, and arts sectors
- Assisting IREED in designing and implementing Launchpad program modules for each of the three target sectors
- Facilitating connections between IREED/EWVCTC staff, entrepreneurs, more established regional business and economic development leaders, and regional bankers and other funders in order to:
 - Market and publicize IREED's services and ensure that a wide range of entrepreneurs—particularly those in agriculture, tourism, and the arts—are aware of the full range of IREED's services and avail themselves of this opportunity
 - Recruit senior business and economic development leaders to serve as volunteer advisors and mentors to entrepreneurs, as appropriate
 - Reduce the difficulties entrepreneurs face when trying to access credit
- Assisting EWVCTC in (a) defining the region's training and professional development gaps in the three target sectors, (b) determining the appropriate means of filling these gaps (e.g. formal coursework, distance learning, experiential learning, etc.), and (c) designing and implementing curricula to give entrepreneurs the skills they need to be successful
- Providing expert guidance to EWVCTC faculty and staff as they design and oversee interdisciplinary student consulting teams charged with:
 - Creating a database of existing entrepreneurs and small businesses in each of the three target sectors
 - Creating an inventory of existing regional assets in each of the three target sectors
 - Identifying, analyzing, and prioritizing specific implementation projects (see Phase II)

Funding required

IREED should seek one full-time person or consultant for a two-year commitment, at a cost of \$80,000 annually (or \$160,000 total), to convene and coordinate the three Action Councils.

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Sample duties might include recruiting members; preparing and chairing monthly meetings; writing and disseminating monthly newsletters; preparing press releases to showcase successful regional entrepreneurs and small businesses, and to highlight the work of the councils; compiling and disseminating performance metrics to track the success of each council in building capacity and attaining its goals; developing materials for each individual Launchpad program module; overseeing and coordinating the creation of a database of existing entrepreneurs and small businesses and an inventory of regional assets; and overseeing the identification, analyzing, and prioritizing of specific implementation projects.

The individual's focus in the first year would be getting the councils up and running; at the end of the first year, the goal would be to have the entrepreneur/small business database and asset inventory completed and the implementation projects (see Phase II) identified. The focus of the second year would be on further refining these implementation projects and securing the required funding, while continuing the ongoing work of the councils.

Potential funding sources (Phase I)

The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation—with its strong interest in promoting entrepreneurship, commitment to investing two-thirds of its funds in West Virginia, and assets of over \$372 million—is the most likely funder for the capacity-building phase. Based on an analysis of the foundation's 2014 annual report, the foundation's grants generally are in the range of \$50,000 to \$180,000.

Other potential sources for capacity building funding, in addition to the Benedum Foundation include the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and US Economic Development Administration.

The US EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance (which is included in the chart found below), has a very flexible bucket of funds for capacity building, technical assistance, feasibility studies, analyses, etc. That said, it's a competitive program (and EDA tends to prefer funding actual physical projects) and does require local match. IREED should contact EDA's Philadelphia Regional Office first to discuss your interest and the funds applicability, since the application process can be relatively lengthy.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), which has identified "local food" as a targeted investment sector in its 2016-2020 strategic plan, partnered with five federal agencies to create the Local Foods, Local Places (LFLP) Initiative; and created an agritourism promotion program called Bon Appetit Appalachia (<http://visitappalachia.com/bonappetitappalachia/>); dozens of Potomac Highlands businesses are already highlighted in the Bon Appetit Appalachia campaign. ARC has long been a funder of a wide variety of projects in West Virginia and in neighboring states, with a particular emphasis on workforce training; entrepreneurship; and promoting tourism, agriculture, and the arts. In 2012, it partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Economic Development Administration to sponsor the Rural Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge; funded projects included the Marshall University Research Foundation's Southern West Virginia Rural Jobs Accelerator Partnership and the Shepherdstown-based West Virginia Value Chain Cluster

Initiative, which focused on food-related clusters, as well as arts and agriculture promotion projects in NC and VA (see <http://www.arc.gov/funding/RuralJobsandInnovationAcceleratorChallenge.asp>). Because ARC does not have a formalized grant application process, each Action Council should coordinate with ARC's West Virginia representative to identify potential funding partnerships.

Other potential funding sources to further research for capacity building, include the following:

<https://www.frs.org/rural-community-outreach/grant-program>

<http://www.tfff.org/what-we-do/vital-rural-communities>

<http://www.rupri.org/Forms/How%20States%20Fund%20Initiatives.pdf>

http://charity.lovetoknow.com/Grants_for_Rural_Nonprofit_Organizations

<http://www.ncruralcenter.org/about-the-center2/50-leadership-a-engagement/149-atc-funding>

http://programs.lisc.org/rural_lisc/?gclid=CLEz3ovPoMsCFYI9gQodldkD5A

<http://www.cfra.org/renewrural/RBEG>

<http://www.tfff.org/what-we-do/vital-rural-communities/community-economic-development/economic-vitality>

http://www.aspenccsg.org/rdp/_documents/brochure.pdf

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Phase II Implementation

Scope

Implementation projects would seek to address the sector-specific needs identified by the Action Councils in Phase I. Most likely, these projects will include a mix of projects designed to benefit the entire Potomac Highlands region, as well as projects with more narrowly defined geographic boundaries, and fall into four general categories:

- The design and delivery of new training and professional development modules;
- Technical assistance in a variety of areas, such as destination marketing; arts, tourism, and ag tourism promotion; events planning and marketing; regional branding; building “food networks”; developing new market opportunities for farmers, foresters, and other ag entrepreneurs through aggregation, joint marketing and branding, and value-added processing; and promoting farm-to-table programs, direct-to-consumer sales, farmers’ markets, and new specialty crops and animal products;
- Site-specific projects to convert existing facilities, or build new facilities, to benefit the region’s entrepreneurs (e.g. commercial kitchen, shared canning facility); and
- “Placemaking” initiatives to revitalize and promote the region’s historic Main Streets

Potential funding sources (Phase II)

At this point in the process, it is not feasible to estimate the budget for specific implementation projects. However, once detailed action plans for the strategies listed above have been vetted, the funding sources below and in the table at the end of this Playbook should be consulted.

In addition to the potential sources of funds for capacity building listed above, there are many state and federal funding competitions tailored to the four types of implementation projects described above:

NCAT -- National Center for Appropriate Technology -- www.ncat.org

USDA Rural Utilities Service -- Broadband initiatives

USDA Rural Housing Service -- Housing Preservation Grant program

USDA Rural Development Community Facilities program

USDA Rural Development Distance Learning and Telemedicine

USDA Rural Business Cooperative Service

- [Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant](#) (REDLG) program
- the [Intermediary Relending Program](#) (IRP)

- the [Rural Business Development Grant](#) (RBDG) program
- the [Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program](#) (RMAP) program

USDA Value Added Producer Grants

USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program

USDA Local Food Promotion Program

USDA NRCS High Tunnel System Initiative

USDA NIFA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, www.usda.gov/newfarmers

Below is an additional list of potential partners, model organizations as well as specific federal funding agencies and programs that may be a starting point or help to fuel the wide range of initiatives that could be possibly generated through implementation of the Playbook actions.

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Project Subcategory	Agency funding source	Grant name	Award range	Eligibility criteria	Website
		Various. DOL/ETA has awarded hundreds of Trade Adjustment Assistance for Community College and Career Training grants (for a total of \$2B) in 4 rounds--and WV did not win a single award. It is unclear whether DOL/ETA will offer additional rounds of these awards, which focused on partnering with the private sector to design new curricula in high-demand fields (several were in agriculture; arts and tourism are not a good fit).	Varies. For TAACCT, many awards were roughly \$2M.	Eligible applicants for TAACCT were consortia that included community colleges. Eligible applicants for most DOL/ETA awards are community colleges and/or local workforce investment boards. Coordination with Region 7 WIB is critical.	https://doleta.gov/
	USDA/Rural Development	Rural Business Development Grants	\$10,000-\$500,000	Eligible applicants include community colleges. Funds can be used for business counseling/training, leadership and entrepreneurship training, rural business incubators, and a wide range of other projects.	http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants
Collaborative economic planning and development through regional food systems	USDA	Rural Business Opportunity Grants	Max \$100,000	Eligible applicants: local governments, economic development organizations, non-profit organizations, cooperatives.	http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=kyf_grants_rd2_content.html
Enhance competitiveness of specialty crops through business planning, research, and marketing projects	USDA/Agricultural Marketing Service (but must be submitted through WV Department of Agriculture)	Specialty Crop Block Grant Program	Varies. In most recent year, most in range of \$200K-\$1.2M.	Not specified, but application must be submitted through WV Department of Agriculture; project must have ability to impact more than one state.	https://www.ams.usda.gov/service/s/grants/scbgp
Applied research projects that explore new market opportunities for farmers	USDA/Agricultural Marketing Service	Federal State Marketing Improvement Program	Not specified	State departments of ag, universities, and colleges (doesn't appear to include community colleges). WVU-Potomac State could be applicant, with EMVCT as partner.	https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Combined%20Grants%20Decision%20Trees.pdf
Promotes direct-to-consumer marketing and related supply chain activities	USDA/Agricultural Marketing Service	Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion	\$5,000-\$100,000	Agricultural businesses and cooperatives, CSAs, local governments, non-profits. Community colleges not eligible.	https://www.ams.usda.gov/service/s/grants/fmapp https://www.ams.usda.gov/service/s/grants/flbp
Ag innovation/conservation practices (e.g. water management, erosion control, high tunnel technology)	USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service (but apply through local NRCS office)	Agricultural Management Assistance, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, On-Farm Energy Initiative, Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative	Not specified; varies considerably.	Individual farmers/producers, ag firms, or cooperatives. IREED, however, could serve as key liaison for farmers/entrepreneurs it serves.	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wv/programs/
Processing and/or marketing of value-added, bio-based products	USDA/Rural Development	Value Added Producer Grants	max \$75,000 for planning grants; max \$250,000 for working capital grants	Independent producers, agricultural producer groups, farmer- or rancher-cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures are eligible to apply for this program. IREED could assist in forming cooperatives to apply for funding, or gathering data and providing other technical assistance to support individual applications.	http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants
Education, mentoring, and technical assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers	USDA/National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program	\$150,000-\$250,000	An eligible applicant is a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of qualified public and/or private entities; these entities may include a community college. Ag "brain trust" council could be ideal applicant.	http://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/rfa/FY16%20BRDP%20RFA.pdf

Project Category	Project Subcategory	Agency funding source	Grant name	Award range	Eligibility criteria	Website
	Business incubators/commercial kitchens/business parks, etc.	U.S. Economic Development Administration	Public Works; Economic Adjustment Assistance	\$100K - \$3M (Note: EDA invested \$900K in a food business incubator; see http://www.tcpalm.com/yournews/st-lucie-county/commissioners-get-cooking-with-sunshine-kitchen-ep-1197306205-340565871.html)	Community colleges are eligible applicants, as are a wide range of non-profits and economic development organizations.	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppid=279842
Site-specific projects to convert/construct shared facilities	A wide variety of essential community facilities, to include "local food systems, such as community gardens, food pantries, community kitchens, food banks, food hubs or greenhouses"	USDA/Rural Development	Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program	Not specified.	Public bodies and community-based non-profit corporations are eligible entities.	http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program
	Preservation and beautification	WV Department of Commerce/ West Virginia Development Office (federal grant, but administered by WVDO)	Small Cities Block Grant Program	Not specified.	Only incorporated municipalities may apply. EWVCTC/IREED would have to be a partner, not the applicant.	http://www.wvcommerce.org/peo/pe/communitiesresources/communityrevitalization/smallcitiesblockgrantfund/default.aspx
Placemaking/Main Street initiatives	Main Street revitalization	WV Department of Commerce/ Main Street West Virginia	Main Street West Virginia/On Trac	Not specified. Focus in on technical assistance with business retention and marketing, market analysis, fundraising, vision and strategic planning, property development, etc.	Only cities with federal Main Street designation may receive Main Street funding. Currently, Elkins is the only designated city in PH region. Cities must first participate in 2-year On Trac program to be eligible for designation. Romney and Parsons are currently On Trac cities.	http://www.wvcommerce.org/peo/pe/communitiesresources/communityrevitalization/mainstreetwestvirginia/default.aspx
	Preservation and beautification/ street and sidewalk repair	WV Department of Commerce	Governor's Community Participation Grant Program	Not specified.	Applicant must be a unit of local government.	http://www.wvcommerce.org/peo/pe/communitiesresources/financialresources/governorscommunityparticipationgrantprogram/default.aspx
	Creation or utilization of work of art, or art project or event, to highlight collaboration between arts and non-arts sectors (which could include agriculture; see description of past project at https://www.arts.gov/exploring-our-town/farmart-dtour)	National Endowment for the Arts	Art Works: Creativity Connects	\$20,000-\$100,000	Lead applicant must be arts organization; partner organization must be non-arts organization (but not local government, e.g. could be agricultural promotion non-profit).	https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/creativity-connects-projects#eligibility