

APPALACHIAN TRANSITION FELLOWSHIP EVALUATION

2017 Cohort of Transition Fellows



appalachian
transition
fellowship

A Program of:



Report Prepared By:



**RURAL
SUPPORT
PARTNERS**

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The purpose of this report is to help Highlander, Fellows, host communities, funders, and other key stakeholders to 1) understand the impact of the Appalachian Transition Fellowship Program (AppFellows) on Fellows, host communities, and the region, and 2) make recommendations to improve this and other fellowship programs based on lessons learned and best practices from the Fellowship's successes and challenges in 2017.

Evaluation Summary

The transition away from coal industry dependent economies presents an opportunity to grow an Appalachian economy that is more diversified, resilient, and equitable. AppFellows was conceived as a strategy to accelerate the region's economic transition by strengthening the next generation of leaders while increasing cross sector collaboration and connectivity within the region.

In its second cohort, the program placed 10 next generation leaders in host communities within Central Appalachia. Following a comprehensive evaluation process that gathered quantitative and qualitative data, this report summarizes the impact and effectiveness of the program in the following four areas:

Impact of the Fellowship on the Appalachian Transition Fellows

- Fellows are more confident in their ability to facilitate community-led change.
- Fellows more fully understand the historic and current context of Appalachia and the promising economic sectors that the region can use to accelerate a just transition.
- Fellows have a clearer vision of how they will inform and contribute to the transition.

Impact of the Fellowship on Host Organizations

- Host organizations reported that they have more connections locally and across the region with other nonprofits, foundations, government agencies, and private businesses as a result of the Fellowship.
- Some hosts reported that they have higher organizational capacity, new funds raised, and new and stronger programs as a result of the Fellowship.

Impact of the Fellowship on Host Communities

- Fellows' projects brought attention to opportunities in promising economic sectors, spurred collaboration towards aligned goals, and influenced a more positive narrative in the region. For example, fellows:
 - Conducted research to more effectively communicate community needs and make the case for additional funding for host organizations
 - Created opportunities for entrepreneurs to generate additional revenue and created events that helped community members restore hope and pride in their home town
 - United community members around their cultural traditions and told stories of perseverance, innovation, and opportunity

Effectiveness of Fellowship Programming and Management

- The Fellowship Management Team was responsive to concerns, feedback, and needs that arose
- The Management Team created the space for Fellows to learn skills and make connections across the region so that they could stay in the region and continue to contribute to the Appalachian Transition.

The evaluation also identified areas for improvement within the Fellowship, including the need for more consistent communication, role clarity, and host/fellow involvement in the placement process.

Appalachian Transition Fellowship Program Overview

Central Appalachia is in a state of economic transition. The rapid decline of historical industries, such as coal and manufacturing has forced a shift in public dialogue around the region's economic future. This shift presents an urgent opportunity to bring together nonprofits, community leaders, businesses, policy-makers, and funders to develop diverse economies in promising sectors like local foods, clean energy, health, sustainable textiles, and the arts. Meaningful cross-sector alignment around the Appalachian Transition allows community-based economies to prosper while protecting the environmental and cultural assets of the region. AppFellows seeks to capitalize on current transition momentum by increasing the capacity of communities and next generation leaders for the purpose of advancing just and resilient local economies across the region.

Program Goals

AppFellows aims to (1) increase the capacity of local leaders, organizations, and communities to advance the economic transition, (2) strengthen the skills and leadership of a cohort of emerging leaders in the region, and (3) engage individuals and institutions across the region in stronger partnerships and collaborative networks.

For Fellows, the anticipated results were an increase in skills and capacity, new knowledge from expert trainings, stronger peer and mentor support, stronger professional networks, greater knowledge of the region's history and culture, and a sharpened sense of purpose and opportunity. For host organizations, the anticipated results were increased organizational capacity to collaborate on cross-sector transition projects, stronger regional partnerships, and a commitment to developing the next generation of Appalachian leaders.

Program Design

AppFellows completed its second year-long Fellowship from January through December 2017. It placed 10 next generation leaders each with a group of two to five host organizations working in communities around Central Appalachia, where they received training and mentoring and took on a host project that met specific needs in the host communities. Highlander Research and Education Center (Highlander) launched the first cohort of Fellows in 2014 after an initial 2-year planning period informed by local, regional, and national stakeholders.

Highlander's AppFellows Management Team performs program development and coordination including host and fellow recruitment and matching, fellow mentorship and training, host support, workshop design and coordination.



Figure 1: Fellowship by the numbers.

Evaluation Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation is to identify what the AppFellows program has done well, ways in which the program can improve, and to capture the important impacts of the program. Using a variety of data collection methods, this report presents findings in four areas:

1. The impact of the Fellowship on the Fellows' professional development
2. The impact of the Fellowship on host organizations
3. The impact of the Fellowship on the host communities
4. The effectiveness of Fellowship programming and management

Data collection for the evaluation components involved quantitative and qualitative data. Host organizations participated in two focus groups, and Fellows participated in four. Hosts and Fellows also completed a comprehensive survey that captured data in all four evaluation areas. These methods produced a deep understanding of the effectiveness of the program's processes, what the Fellows learned, whether and how the hosts were better off, and challenges encountered by Fellows and hosts.

Fellows took responsibility for measuring the progress they made on host projects and the related impacts on the community. Each fellow developed an assessment framework that identified metrics to measure and report on their progress. They updated these frameworks throughout the year and provided a presentation at the final gathering in which they described their impacts across multiple forms of community wealth.



Photo Credit: Catherine Moore

Impact of the Fellowship on the Appalachian Transition Fellows

Professional Skill Development

The Fellows identified, through surveys, interviews and focus groups, numerous professional skills they acquired or deepened over the course of their Fellowship. Those skills, detailed below, can be categorized as soft skills and hard skills.

- **Fellows have more soft skills to navigate nonprofit systems and foster collaboration.** In an under-resourced nonprofit sector, Fellows learned how to:
 - Navigate various interests in the nonprofit sector
 - Cultivate the relationships and trust required to make progress
 - Foster a culture of shared values and a common vision
- **Fellows gained more hard skills to build their resume, including:**
 - Nonprofit management skills like framing issues for different audiences and grant writing
 - Technical skills such as photography/videography, editing audio, and design software
 - General professional skills in areas such as public speaking, applied research, project management, email marketing and event planning



Photo Credit Catherine Moore

Lessons Learned and Insights

Each Fellow had different experiences based on their placement and the sectors in which they worked, yet many lessons they will take away from their Fellowship are shared among all the Fellows:

- **Understand what social justice means in the Appalachian context.** The Fellows learned that strategies for moving toward a just and equitable transition need to reflect the unique challenges faced by communities in Appalachia.
- **Reflect critically on structural racism's impact on the ability to make change.** Highlander's foundational values and social justice history helped Fellows identify their own forms of privilege and recognize the structural racism that continues to exist in Appalachia and beyond.
- **Fellows saw how the grant resources provided don't always align with the on-the-ground needs, thus constraining progress.** Nonprofit work is driven, and often constrained, by the dynamics between grantors and grantees. Fellows witnessed firsthand, the "Nonprofit Starvation Cycle", where funders have unrealistic expectations about the true costs of managing nonprofit work, and nonprofits in turn undervalue their true costs in order to receive the grant funding, thus reinforcing the unrealistic expectations.

Most Useful Learning Topics

Among the seven Fellows that completed the survey, the learning topics that were most useful to their experience were:

- **Understanding of Appalachia**, including the historical and current contexts of Appalachia's economy, culture, and health, as well as local, state, and national policies impacting the region.
- **Sector-level knowledge** about the business, nonprofit, philanthropy, government, education, and health sectors and systems.
- **Popular Education concepts**, including facilitating collective action by drawing on folks' wisdom and experiences to foster change.

Application of New Skills and Learnings

Fellows gained a great deal of confidence when they put their skills and learning to use in host communities:

- **Fellows deepened their practice of participatory community engagement when they applied what they learned to projects:**
 - Facilitated community meetings
 - Represented Appalachia thoughtfully, with respect and integrity
 - Demonstrated their understanding and empathy of the needs in Appalachia
 - Built bridges across cultures
 - Shifted their mindset from focusing on problems to acting on solutions
- **All Fellows gained the confidence to use their voice in the Appalachian Transition**, whether identifying inequities within communities or recognizing ways the nonprofit system needs to change.



Photo Credit Catherine Moore

Impact on Future Career Path and Commitment to a Just Economic Transition for Appalachia

Fellows better understand their role in advancing social change in the region. For most Fellows, this experience shaped their future ambitions. At a minimum, AppFellows helped them to focus on their personal values and pinpoint their strengths and professional motivations.

"I learned a lot about myself in how I see change happen and what I believe in and how it works."

~Anonymous Fellow

Fellows have a clearer vision of how they want to inform and contribute to the Appalachian transition. Fellows were inspired to listen deeply and see the wisdom in community members. At the same time, their deeply held values forced them to think critically about the limited role of the nonprofit sector and how they can better address the real challenges in society. They benefited greatly from the perspective that Highlander brings as a social justice organization.

Fellows are committed to supporting future cohorts of AppFellows. Fellows took it upon themselves to institute an Advisory Board made up of first and second cohort Fellows who pledge to serve as mentors for future fellows and advocate for funding the program. They benefited greatly from the perspective of alumni fellows and wish to formalize the peer support.



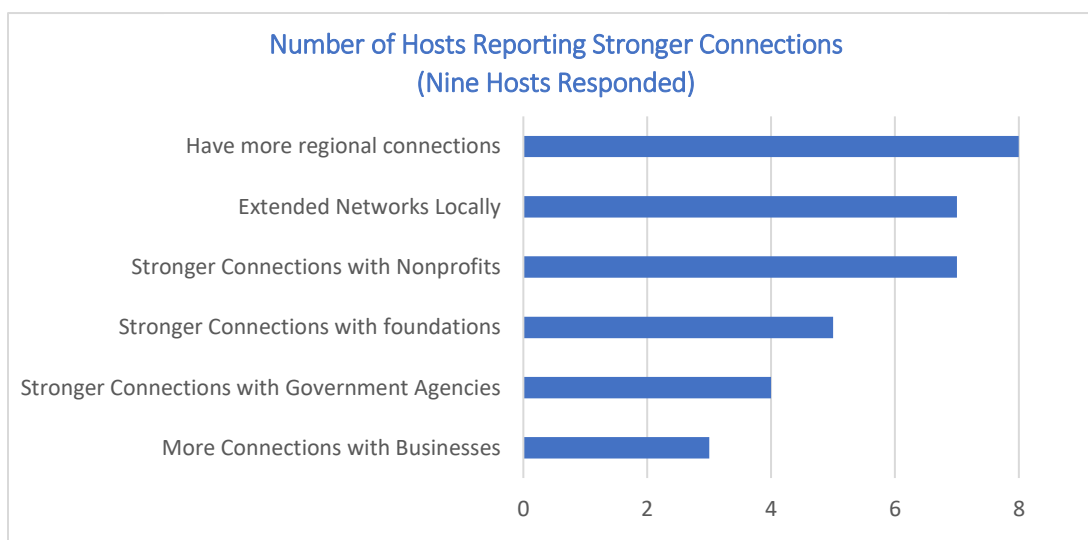
Photo Credit Catherine Moore

Impact of the Fellowship on Host Organizations

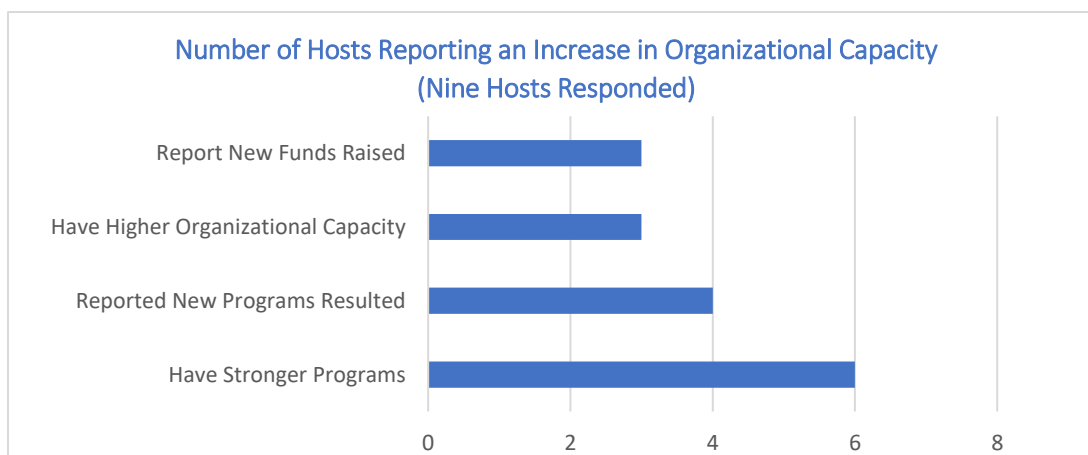
The Fellowship placed fellows in two to five host organizations representing the nonprofit sector, business, or education fields. Throughout the Fellowship year, the fellow worked with their hosts on a community development project designed to foster collaboration and support common goals of the multiple host organizations. Based on surveys completed by nine hosts and two focus groups, hosts experienced some meaningful benefits and learned several important lessons from the challenges they encountered throughout the Fellowship year.

Benefits to Host Organizations

Hosts experienced more and stronger connections because of the Fellowship:



Some hosts saw an increase in organizational capacity because of the Fellowship:



Lessons Learned Across the Host Organizations

Host organizations expressed some shared challenges with the experience of hosting and mentoring Fellows. They identified the following lessons for future host organizations to take into consideration:

- **Set up processes and standards with Fellows to ensure that basic standards of work are met:** At least three hosts reported that their fellow had trouble managing time, staying focused, and meeting deadlines. Setting up time management and accountability processes from the beginning would have mitigated some of these challenges.
- **Recognize that the upfront cost can be a barrier for some hosts:** In addition to half the fellow's salary, hosts provide office space, computer, and staff time to mentor and supervise their fellow. At least one host's plans for office space and computer fell through, leaving the fellow with poor internet and no private space to work.
- **Anticipate that Fellows' support needs from the host may be significant:** Four hosts reported a steep learning curve that required considerably more staff time than expected to train and mentor the fellow. By the end of the Fellowship year, three hosts expressed that they did not see a return on their investment of time and money.
- **Work with the fellow to balance their heart for social justice with a pragmatic understanding of how to make change at the pace communities can handle:** Fellows bring an essential enthusiasm for making change and need support being patient and managing expectations for how much change the community can bear without creating resistance.



Photo Credit Catherine Moore



Photo Credit Catherine Moore



Photo Credit Catherine Moore



Photo Credit Catherine Moore

Impact of the Fellowship on Host Communities

Fellows measured the impact of their projects using the Community Wealth Creation Framework, which uses eight forms of community wealth to better understand the assets within a community and the interventions that can strengthen them. Using this approach helped Fellows assess how their work benefited the constituents served by their host organizations.

Each fellow used these forms of wealth (see table) to develop a customized measurement plan that assessed opportunities, defined goals, planned activities, determined indicators of progress, and captured impacts. This section of the evaluation compiles the impacts of all fellow projects across each form of wealth that grew, providing a summary of the overall value and specific results of each.

Intellectual Wealth

Improved intellectual wealth gives people and communities better access to the knowledge and innovations needed to improve their lives, solve problems, and strengthen their community. As a movement, Appalachian Transition is dependent on the continuous development, refinement, and sharing of intellectual capital. Fellows conducted a range of research that hosts and communities can now use to more effectively communicate needs, make the case for funding, and access information. Results include:

- **Helped bring understanding and analysis to emerging economic sectors.** In the natural fibers industry, one fellow assessed what producer and processor infrastructure exists in Central and East Kentucky and [published findings](#) about the challenges and opportunities to the sector's growth.
- **Three Fellows recorded useful community information and better conveyed organizations' messaging by creating and updating websites and blogs.** Examples include the [Eastern Kentucky Food & Dance Trail](#), which houses a directory and profiles of 23 venues, markets, cultural organizations, events, and more; [two posts](#) on the Appalachian Voices website, which informed readers about the findings of a land study in Wise County, VA; and the [AppFellows media page](#), which shares the photos, podcasts, and videos taken and developed by one of the Fellows to market the events and activities of other Fellows. In all, the Fellows' projects have been well documented and widely shared with over 1,000 photos taken, 500 photos edited and shared, 20 audio interviews conducted, three videos developed, and 10 events recorded on video.
- **Twenty-Five East Kentuckians better understand how the new tax code will impact them** after attending a tax forum organized by a fellow and Kentuckians For The Commonwealth.
- **Fellows passed on best practices they learned to future Fellows, staff, or community members.** One fellow developed a community research toolkit to support future individuals conducting archival research, oral histories, and analysis. It contains specific resources related to the land study project and other best practices.

Multiple Forms of Wealth	
	Intellectual Wealth Shared Knowledge, Innovation, & Technology
	Individual Wealth Skills, Health, Confidence, & Income
	Social Wealth Trust Relationships, & Mutual Support
	Cultural Wealth traditions, Customs, & Community Identity
	Natural Wealth Resilient Natural Resources
	Built Wealth Community Infrastructure
	Political Wealth Influence & Voice
	Financial Wealth Community Investment & Household Savings

Individual Wealth

In addition to good ideas, individuals need the skills, resources, income, and abilities to turn transition ideas into action. Building individual wealth is about increasing the health of individuals, the capacity of businesses, and the empowerment of community members to chart their own pathways to meaningful change. Fellows created opportunities for entrepreneurs to boost business revenue and community members to restore hope and pride in their home town.

- One fellow helped boost sales for small business by informing the public on the availability of local products.** Over 300 businesses that make value-added products in West Virginia are included in a Local Food Enterprise Catalog, which lists a business description, products offered, and wholesale pricing information for public access on where to find locally made products.
- One fellow helped put more money in entrepreneurs' pockets.** Artists, farmers, musicians, and local breweries sold their wares and talents during a weekly summertime arts and music series. Throughout the summer, 950 people attended; nine musical acts received \$1,800 for their live musical offerings; artists earned \$2,000 in sales; and 30 vendors earned a total of \$6,407 in sales. No fees or cut of sales were charged to the vendors.
- Community members have new skills and a sense of hope for their future.** After floods devastated West Virginia communities in 2016, the Meadow River Valley community is re-energized with a sense of possibility and a plan of action. One fellow helped organize trainings for community facilitators to gain skills in guiding a community visioning process.



Photo Credit Catherine Moore

Social Wealth

Change moves at the speed of trust, which means that a lasting Appalachian Transition relies on a foundation of relationships and community connections. Fellows worked to support collaboration and create space for community visions and planning to take place. Social wealth grew in three areas:

- **Increased trust:** A group of West Virginia farmers, nonprofits and farmers market managers have more trust and a plan for doubling SNAP benefits at farmer's markets statewide.
- **More collaboration:** After the community visioning process to rebuild from the 2016 West Virginia flooding mentioned above, community members in the Meadow River Valley gained a new sense of community cohesion, identity, and pride in where they're from. Their collaborations are now rebuilding a more resilient, connected community than existed before the floods.
- **Increased participation:** AppFellows bring a new perspective and inject new energy into community projects. Some Fellows noticed new people attending events and community meetings and were able to restart dormant projects.

Cultural Wealth

Appalachian Transition is also about a region that celebrates and sustains its diverse cultural traditions. Cultural wealth grows when communities lift up place-based narratives that push back on outside stereotypes and generalizations about the region. AppFellows have united communities around their traditions and found ways to tell stories of perseverance, innovation, and opportunity. Results in this area include:

- **There are more stories told about the rich histories of Appalachian people, their livelihoods, and cultural heritage.**
 - One fellow produced 7 podcasts and 3 written stories for the Woven Roots: Appalachian Fiber Story Project (available on the [Appalachian Transition Fellowship Blog](#)). The recordings tell the stories of the work that weavers, farmers, mill owners, designers, and others are doing to grow the natural fiber industry in the region.
 - Two more Fellows recorded oral histories to collect stories about land ownership over time and pride in working from the land, either in the mines or cultivating the soil. They also recorded the histories of marginalized populations whose stories often get passed over in portrayals of Central Appalachia.
- **More people are preserving traditions and relating over their common histories.** Another fellow broadened the regional narrative by fostering a growing movement where people from various backgrounds come together to celebrate food and dance traditions throughout Eastern Kentucky.



Photo Credit Hope Hart

Natural Wealth

Appalachia's economic transition must be sustainable, as the health of a region's natural resources is inextricably tied to its people's health, happiness, and ability to make a living. Natural wealth is increased by restoring, using, and protecting the environment in ways that allow communities to thrive. Results include:

- **Calhoun County, WV is better prepared to use its natural wealth to attract scientists, recreational tourism, and additional funding to the county.** The Calhoun County Park Board now has an informational brochure promoting the certification of the Calhoun County Park as a Dark Skies Park (an area with no light pollution diluting the night's sky).
- **Two counties are more prepared to promote the reclamation and recovery of land for productive and sustainable use.** Two Fellows, one in VA and one in KY, conducted land studies to understand land ownership, land use and distribution, and everyone and everything that supports that structure.



Photo Credit Appalachian Voices

Built Wealth

Built wealth is the physical infrastructure that a community needs to be safe, healthy, and prosperous. The sectors that are driving economic transition also require infrastructure to allow them to thrive and grow. Fellows projects met acute needs of host organizations and communities. Results include:

- **A local grocer is using a donated truck to support local foods distribution infrastructure.** One fellow influenced a local bread factory to donate a bread truck, valued at \$23,000, to a local food grocer in West Virginia. Funding requests have also been submitted that would pay for placing a branding decal on the truck and converting it to a refrigerated truck.
- **Entrepreneurs and city officials have access to information for city or business planning.** One fellow's project will make available to the public an inventory of buildings and businesses in downtown Hazard, KY.

Political Wealth

To be able to participate in a just transition, communities need a voice in resource allocation, decision-making, and policy development. Fellow projects built political wealth by gathering information to help communities make informed political decisions and by influencing local policy through increased civic engagement.

- **Citizens are more informed.** Related to intellectual wealth, two Fellows have uncovered important public information that local communities can use to hold elected officials accountable to residents. In Wise County, VA, a comprehensive land study describes the complexities of the county's land ownership structure. It reports that corporations and the US Forest Service own 70% of the land and that the highest tax payers to the county are all corporations that manage or perform extractive energy production. A similar land study was also performed in Harlan County, KY.
- **New policies support downtown community revitalization.** Another fellow's project supported the passage of an ordinance where downtown property owners who neglect their downtown properties or are absentee have to pay a tax rate five times higher than the normal rate if they violate building code ordinances. Related to Built Wealth, this encourages downtown property owners to maintain their properties and is intended to reduce the number of vacant, and unused buildings. This fellow's project also led to more public attendance at city council meetings.

Financial Wealth

Financial wealth is about ensuring that families, businesses, and local institutions have the financial resources (income security, savings, endowments, etc.) that allow them to weather challenges and invest in opportunities.

- **A grassroots fundraiser lets the community decide where funds go.** One fellow's project initiated a grassroots, democratic fundraiser that will continue several times each year. Community members pay \$5 to attend a soup dinner and listen to leaders of community organization propose where the dinner's proceeds should go. At the end of the dinner, participants vote for their preferred project. The first *Hazard Soup* raised \$200 for a community composting project that employs addicts in recovery.



- **Fellows increased grant funding to support investments in transition strategies.** One fellow applied for funding to the National Endowment for the Arts for a \$50,000 Our Town Grant in Hazard, KY. Another Fellow supported planning for large federal grants like a \$100,000 USDA proposal to fund doubled SNAP benefits at farmer's markets statewide in West Virginia (105% of the match has been raised and the federal grant is pending).
- **Made the case for more time and financial resources applied to communicating Transition efforts.** One fellow created and analyzed results from a survey sent to organizations around the region and uncovered that communications and media is a high priority for organizations in Appalachia, yet organizations often lack the resources, staff, or equipment to meet their communications needs.

Project Impacts Summary

Overall, Fellows' projects brought attention to growth opportunities in promising sectors, spurred collaboration towards aligned goals, and influenced a more positive narrative in the region. While Fellows only targeted a few forms of wealth through their individual projects, their projects were strategically chosen to fulfill a critical need that would build the foundation and rationale for attracting more resources to transition efforts. Because fellow projects were connected to the broader network of transition-oriented efforts, their impacts add up to meaningful progress towards the region's economic transition.

Lessons Learned for Fellow Projects

While the impact described above is impressive, Fellows and hosts had hoped for even more progress than what took root. In a survey of host organization representatives, seven out of nine hosts "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their fellow's project had meaningful community impact. Yet, hosts responded less favorably about their satisfaction: only four out of nine hosts were either "satisfied" or "strongly satisfied" with the progress their fellow made on their host project.

Accounting for the dissatisfaction may be a number of items that the AppFellows management team is aware of and taking steps to address:

- Hosts expected Fellows would have more time dedicated to the host project. Fellow travel to monthly skill workshops and quarterly Gatherings took the fellow away from the host project often.
- Several projects encountered unexpected challenges due to Fellows' health issues or to the nature of the host project.

It also appears that there was a mismatch between the skills some of the projects needed and the skills that the Fellows had or could reasonably learn in time. In future years, it will be important for the Management Team to work more closely with the hosts to clarify expectations and support the Fellow skills that are critical to the project's success.

Effectiveness of Fellowship Programming and Management

This evaluation component identifies what the Fellowship Management Team did to coordinate the Fellowship, and how well it was carried out. Figure 1 on page 2 outlines the Fellowship by the numbers and the activities that the management team oversaw; for a list of Fellows and their host projects, see appendix A.

What Worked Well

The Management Team prioritized mutual support opportunities among Fellows, resulting in a tight-knit cohort of peers. Fellows reported that the structured mutual support and relationship-building activities among Fellows was extremely helpful, and a productive aspect of the Fellowship's design. They also benefited greatly from connecting with and learning from alumni Fellows' experiences.

The Management Team responded effectively to fellow and host concerns and unexpected challenges. As needs or feedback arose during the Fellowship, both Fellows and hosts saw the Management Team take action to address concerns with appropriate empathy and urgency.

The Management Team is committed to supporting the Fellows' emotional and mental health needs. Part of any Fellowship is about stepping outside comfort zones and being challenged by expectations. The Management Team was an important resource for Fellows that asked for this type of support.

The Management Team created the space and opportunity for Fellows to make connections across the region. The numerous gatherings, skill trainings, and other conferences helped the Fellows meet other people working towards the Appalachian Transition.

The Orientation Learning Tour and monthly skills workshops were useful for Fellows' professional development. Of the seven Fellows who completed the end of year survey, the component of the program they considered the best use of their time was monthly skills workshop, followed by the Orientation Learning Tour.

"What was most useful was having a support group of 10 other fellows doing similar work in the region, who became coworkers, friends, allies throughout the year."

~Anonymous Fellow

Recommendations for Improvement

Fellowship logistics and management need more dedicated attention and staff time. Hosts and Fellows indicated that the Management Team seemed stretched by other project management roles at Highlander, which often resulted in inadequate advance communication for gatherings, hurried scheduling, untimely expense reimbursements, and not enough follow-through.

Host organizations and Fellows need more voice and choice in the fellow placement process. Both Fellows and hosts expressed a strong interest in having more input and choice in the process of determining fellow placements. This would help hosts and Fellows align existing skills with project needs.

Trainings should align with the skills needed to carry out the host projects. Hosts noted a need for the fellows to build basic professional skills while Fellows similarly reported needing skills that they could apply in their host projects. These include time management, community organizing, participatory research, meeting facilitation, grant writing, fundraising, and budgeting. Having more of these applicable skill workshops up front in the program would help Fellows have the agency and autonomy they wanted.

Clarify the amount of time Fellows will have to dedicate to the host project: Fellowship activities like quarterly gatherings, monthly trainings, and other required trips caused disruption and a lack of focus on the host project. More than an inconvenience, the time Fellows spent away from their host organizations caused projects to lose momentum.

Hosts and Fellows need more clarity on host supervision roles and what Fellows' obligations are to the organization and to the AppFellows program. Because the program structure meant that Fellows were paid by Highlander, but worked with host organizations, it was not clear who the Fellows were accountable to and who managed them. Up-front clarification and related check-ins would avoid confusion.

Hosts need more clarity on the principles, vision, process, and structure of the program. The Management Team should ensure that hosts fully understand their roles and responsibilities, have the tools to effectively play their role as mentors, and have the opportunity to troubleshoot challenges as needed.

A stronger host recruitment process could address some of the above issues. Hosts could benefit from a more rigorous application process that clarifies what is expected of them and exactly what they are making a commitment to do.

Fellows need help reconciling the discordance between the values and analysis promoted at Highlander and the strategies and practices at their host organizations. Fellows are drawn to the Fellowship because they are aligned with Highlander's values: (1) promoting a transition across Appalachia away from dependence on extractive industries; (2) anti-racist, inclusive community organizing practices; and (3) an orientation towards supporting meaningful, transformative, structural political change. Nearly all Fellows, in some way, shared that their host organizations, whose foci are generally more economic development than social justice orientated, do not always operate from these values as deeply as Highlander does. Additional thought is needed on how to sustain the values-based analysis and passion instilled by Highlander, while also helping Fellows understand how to work within the limitations and strengths of the economic development sector.

Reflections for Moving Forward

In the previous section, we've noted specific needs and suggestions for improving existing processes and activities carried out by the Fellowship Management Team. This section details more forward-looking reflections to enhance the Fellowship and next generation leadership development in general, using insights from Fellows and hosts over the course of the year.

Core Capacities of Effective Hosts and Fellows

As part of a final focus group (one with Fellows and one with hosts), Fellows described the ideal core capacities that a host would embody, and hosts described the ideal core capacities that a fellow would embody. The results are two lists that help each group understand the other's needs and can inform more broadly how to foster more effective intergenerational exchange.

Core Capacities of Effective Fellows	Core Capacities of Effective Hosts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pragmatic▪ Listens deeply▪ Curious and investigative▪ Able to see a way to make progress▪ Skilled in community organizing & participatory change processes▪ Anticipates when communities or groups are receptive or resistant and understands how to adjust course while ensuring inclusivity.▪ Driven by a heart for social justice and operates with a balanced sense of how to effectively move change at the pace that communities and organizations can handle▪ Recognizes what needs to be done to create a foundation for change and does it▪ Has deep respect for community and for the organizations that host them.▪ Able to reconcile one's own self-interest, the community's interest, and the host organization's interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Patient▪ Listens deeply▪ Reflective on the assumptions carried into conversations and the ability to accept different points of view▪ Has faith that the Fellow can achieve a given objective and empowers them to act.▪ Understands how the power hierarchy that exists between host and fellow can influence both parties' actions▪ Recognizes and uses the strengths of Fellows▪ Able to relate and have empathy towards the needs in the community (i.e. in marginalized communities)▪ Dedicated to participatory change and participatory community engagement▪ Committed to letting community needs define projects, not the source of funding

Advice for Supporting Young Leaders:

One of the goals of the Fellowship is to foster more commitment to supporting the next generation of leaders contributing to the Appalachian Transition. Seven out of nine hosts reported that they are more committed to supporting this type of leadership development in the future. Their insights and lessons are valuable to improving how AppFellows and the region supports and attracts next generation leadership:

- **Start with attainable goals and build toward more complex outcomes.** It's expected that Fellows experience learning curves at the beginning. Determine increments by which to measure success so young leaders can practice their skills, build stronger relationships with the right actors, and understand nuances.
- **Listen deeply:** Listening will not only let young leaders feel heard, it will foster deeper understanding between the host and fellow. From there, hosts can provide the appropriate amount

and the right kind of guidance. Like the Appalachian Transition more generally, this requires patience and long-term commitment.

- **Develop a training tailored specifically for intergenerational learning and exchange.**
Generations currently entering the workforce have different perspectives and assumptions than those of older generations. Hosts recommended that the Management Team create an opportunity to communicate those perspectives so that participants can better understand each other and avoid misconceptions or wrong assumptions.
- **Structure the Fellowship so that it sets outcomes at later stages of the Fellow lifecycle.**
Fellows generally spend the first three to five months learning about their projects and developing relationships with the players involved. Structure the fellow's work plan to include more learning objectives in the beginning and project outcomes after the fifth month of being in community.

Closing

Despite challenges and lessons learned, the second cohort of the Appalachian Transition Fellowship was successful in its strategy to strengthen the capacity of Fellows and increase the ability of host organizations to advance transition orientated projects.

The AppFellows Program mobilized and inspired 10 young leaders to carry forward an ambitious vision for just transition. Fellows have new skills, understanding, and confidence to make impactful change across the region. Most of these young leaders, and the first Fellow cohort before them, continue to work in and for the region, spreading the vision for more prosperous communities along the way.

Host organizations have new connections with the business, nonprofit, higher education, and governmental communities. And they learned important lessons about incorporating next generation leaders into the complex work of nonprofit community development. As a result, they are more committed to leadership development and have increased knowledge about what young people need to navigate these waters.

Communities have more civic engagement and trust to move their visions forward. They are more informed about community resources and public interests. More diverse people are relating through celebration of place and traditions. Policymakers are acting on the concerns and ideas of the communities they represent. And citizens are able to make more informed decisions about the policies that affect them. The home-grown narrative that portrays Central Appalachia as entrepreneurial, innovative, resilient, and creative is challenging simplistic and exploitative national narratives.

The road to a just Appalachian Transition is long and difficult, and it requires more collaborative and inclusive leadership to accelerate the momentum gained over the past decade. The Fellowship is a critical part of growing community leaders who are connected, collaborative, and all walking the same road towards Appalachia's bright future.

Appendix A – Host Communities & Fellow List

Kentucky Host Communities

- **Appalshop and the Highlander Research and Education Center** are supporting fellow **Hope Hart** in contributing to a regional communications strategy that builds cohesive messaging and framing within the region to support efforts toward a just economic transition, and to support Appalachians in telling their stories of transition and beautiful solutions.
- **Community Farm Alliance and Fibershed**, with fellow **Sam Hamlin**, are working on the Fibershed Value Chain project to support the reemergence of regional textile communities in Central Appalachia that enliven connection and ownership of “soil to skin” textile processes.
- **Hindman Settlement School, Knott County Chamber of Commerce, and Appalachian Food Summit**, with fellow **Abby Huggins**, are partnering to launch a Food and Dance trail in southeastern Kentucky that will support small businesses, celebrate the power of food and social traditions to build community, and sustain the region by diversifying the economy.
- **Mountain Association for Community Economic Development, Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky, and InVision Hazard** are working with fellow **Alice Beecher** to support the development of a local creative economy through creative placemaking and downtown revitalization in Hazard, Kentucky.
- **Livelihood Knowledge Exchange Network (LiKEN), Appalachian Citizens Law Center, Godbey Appalachian Center, Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College/SKCTC, Kentucky Environmental Foundation, Pine Mountain Settlement School, faculty with University of Kentucky Appalachian Center, and Departments of Geography and Community and Leadership Development** are working with fellow **Kristie Rodgers** to update the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force case study and support the work of the Land Study Collaboratory of Harlan County, working with local communities to gather “stories of place” and supporting participatory action research and popular education training in Eastern KY.
- **Southeast KY Community & Technical College Appalachian Program and Higher Ground** are hosting fellow **Finnley Willow** to support economic revitalization in Harlan County’s downtowns, connecting this work to coalition-building addressing substance abuse in the region through theater and a needle exchange program for IV drug users.

Virginia Host Communities

- **Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards, Appalachian Voices, and Virginia Tech**, with fellow **Terran Young**, are supporting the Virginia Coalfields Land Study to create the foundation of a prolonged and sustained campaign that promotes systemic change in regional land ownership.

West Virginia Host Communities

- **Mid Ohio Valley Regional Council and the Calhoun County Park Board**, with fellow **Brennan Zerbe**, are developing innovative solutions to rural economic isolation through a local “Dark Skies” project to build ecotourism and community education around star-gazing and astronomy.
- **Unlimited Futures and the Wild Ramp**, with fellow **Courtney Boyd**, are supporting new and existing entrepreneurs, increasing market access and strengthening the capacity to promote the local food cluster as a driver of a sustainable economy.

- **WV Center for Civic Life, WV Council of Churches, and Generation West Virginia, with fellow Brittany Means Carowick,** are supporting local communities across the state in advancing community-based initiatives to strengthen local food economies and rebuild communities devastated by flooding.