Request for Proposals: Community Asset Scan

First Review of Proposals: July 6, 2022

The Appalachia Funders Network (AFN) is a rapidly evolving and maturing cross-sector funding network that supports our members in effectively contributing to the transformation of the Central Appalachian region. We prioritize equal access to the resources, systems, and infrastructure essential to thriving Appalachian communities. Our members include private and family foundations, government agencies, banks, and community development entities. Our region of focus is those Appalachian Regional Commission-designated counties within West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina. https://www.arc.gov/appalachian-counties-served-by-arc/

Context:

AFN seeks to improve understanding of the funding and investment gaps and existing community assets that correlate with levels of socio-economic wellbeing. We are undertaking this work in order to identify cross-sector opportunities for coordinated foundation funding and/or capital investing that will promote a pipeline of scalable or replicable projects. AFN envisions that this analysis will illuminate high opportunity areas in the region and inform a better understanding of the interconnected barriers that create low levels of wellbeing. We see great value in blending across domains that impact wellbeing and consider the effects of community assets, including those held by residents and by funders and investors of all types.

Dates:

Phase One: August through December 2022

Phase Two: January through June 2023

Value to the Network and Regional Funders and Investors:	
Data Collection/Analysis	- Understand the key variables that proxy the dimensions of socio-economic wellbeing - Understand the relationships between the presence and absence of community assets and higher or lower levels of wellbeing - Understand how to use this analysis to establish a baseline to assess progress

	● Package data and document the methodology in user-friendly formats for applied practical future use
Interpretation and Meaning-making	● Document achievements, capacities, and needs at local and sub-regional levels ● Illustrate proven, current practices/projects ready for external funding, capital investment or other support in order to scale further ● Help funders understand where and how to invest (e.g., geographic, domain, population) to have the greatest impact on socio-economic wellbeing ● Invite in cross-sector partners, current and new, to build understanding and shared strategies and to catalyze collective action on common agendas
Catalyze Action and Investment	● Use the results to forge productive conversations across sectors, identify collaborative opportunities, and attract transformative philanthropic commitments across the region (current and new, private and public) ● Use results to communicate about the region nationally and to build a regional narrative ● Support partners and communities to bolster their case to apply for funding

Products and Activities:

Phase One:

● Produce an Asset Scan based on county-level socio-economic data that indicates levels of wellbeing and the presence or absence of community assets. "Assets" include local nonprofit or government services; local infrastructure; small businesses; workforce and social services; natural and cultural resources; churches; residents' associations; and funding, investing, and other support from public and private sources.
● Assess correlative trends from the Asset Scan to hypothesize under what circumstances the investments in community assets by public and private funders can contribute to improvements in the various dimensions of socio-economic wellbeing across different communities.
● Draw upon the regional expertise of data practitioners and domain-specific researchers as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

- Work with AFN to establish and utilize a community advisory group to help with assets identification and other study aspects.
- Prepare and present findings (Dec. 2022) as a research white paper (including documentation of research methodology) and user-friendly one-page handouts/infographics.

Phase Two:

- Help co-design and co-facilitate an AFN-sponsored Town Hall or similar convening that brings together a diversity of regional and national funders, cross-sector regional stakeholders, service practitioners, and resident leaders to reflect upon the white paper's findings and build consensus on priority areas and methods for future investments (March/April 2023)
- Package the white paper and consensus positions into a user-friendly report along with story-maps (visual geographic depictions through manipulable or static tools) and develop a dissemination strategy for the public and policy-makers, as well as for use in AFN outreach (June 2023)

Outcomes:

At the end of Phase Two, AFN anticipates answering:

- What new or existing approaches could address barriers to accessing philanthropic capital, including organizational practices and lack of place-based funders?
- How can existing local assets (e.g., community-based organizations, expertise, space/land, local businesses, services, infrastructure) be fully leveraged to contribute to wellbeing?
- What bridges and capacities to accessing federal and private resources and funding need to be strengthened or created?
- Does the data gathered reflect the totality of what the audience for this work needs to move forward with decisions about individual or collective investments?
- How can the data be presented in the most useful manner for AFN members and partners?
- How can the results of this work, and Town Hall/convening synthesis, help lift up and acknowledge local assets to identify and activate social justice investing?

Other considerations:

- Total project costs not to exceed: $135,000 for Phase One and $20,000 for Phase Two
- Experience working within and inclusion of subject matter experts from the region as key players in your team is highly valued
- Overhead rates and indirect costs must be separately listed in your project budget (these will be a factor in considering proposals, in addition to team qualifications, study design, and proposal thoroughness)
- Subject matter experts and community advisory groups are to be compensated for their time

- Travel is not anticipated except for participation in the 2023 town hall/convening
- Costs for proprietary data acquisition should be included in the total project budget, however, note that the intent is to make all data and the methodology publicly available
- Total proposal length (e.g., narrative, budget, timeline, study team qualifications, comparable studies, likely data sources) not to exceed 5 pages.
- AFN is fiscally sponsored by the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky and any awarded contract would be with that entity
- Issuing a contract for this work is contingent upon available funding
- Submit proposals as one PDF to: coordinator@appalachiafunders.org
- Questions about the proposal process should be submitted to the above listed email only.