



SOAR
SHAPING OUR APPALACHIAN REGION



CASE FOR SUPPORT

Creating a Future in Appalachia. TOGETHER.

2019 EDITION

Core Values

FAITH | We believe in what others may deem impossible.

GRIT | We press on, even when it may seem easier to quit.

TEAMWORK | We will work together harmoniously and simultaneously, with vigor, to Create a Future in Appalachia.

LEADERSHIP | We commit to be the driving force that embraces and drives change to Create a Future in Appalachia.

SERVICE | We will put others first and demonstrate the traits of servant leadership to move our region forward.

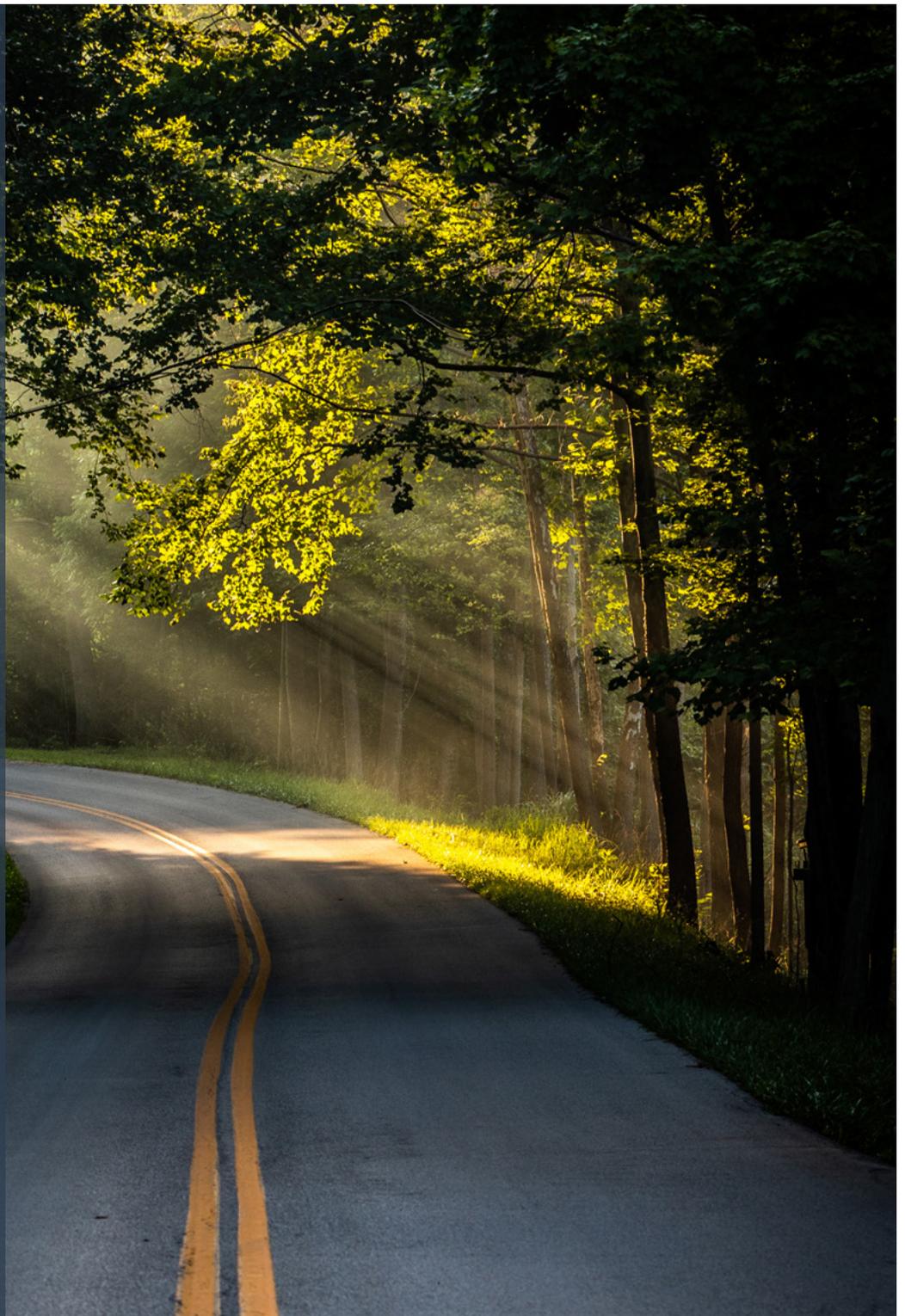
COMPASSION | We act because we care about our neighbors and the futures of the communities we serve.

PURPOSE | Purpose is the overarching belief that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

STRATEGY | We believe there are significant, long-term benefits to spending adequate time focusing on what is important but not urgent.

ACCOUNTABILITY | We believe in providing and accepting accountability.

CREATIVITY | We approach opportunities in a creative, innovative, and collaborative manner with a focus on the future.



Creating a Future in Appalachia. **TOGETHER.**

SOAR is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that is a champion for Appalachia Kentucky. More than 3,000 individuals created a plan for the future of Appalachia Kentucky. We work through our partners to move the plan forward and make sure that plan does not sit on a shelf. Marginal change is simply treating the symptoms. We exist to drive transformative change.

SOAR innovation

In 2019, SOAR launched SOAR Innovation, a collaboration with the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development's KY Innovation Office. SOAR Innovation is designed to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs that desire to leverage innovation, technology, and connectivity to expand existing markets, create new markets, export, and/or utilize e-commerce. A team of Business and Innovation Champions are positioned throughout the region to work with entrepreneurs and small businesses to deploy the services of SOAR's partners to expand existing businesses and to create new innovation-led enterprises, which aligns with our Blueprint goal of creating Small Businesses in the Digital Economy. We believe that SOAR Innovation will leverage the digital economy for economic growth better than any rural region in America.



The History

In 1961, a group of people assembled in Prestonsburg, Ky. to discuss what was then called “Program 60.” One of the conclusions reached by the Commission was: “there must be a formulated concurrent comprehensive regional program of development effecting all phases of human endeavor.”

Formed in 2013, SOAR was created as a collaborative effort to address challenges and explore opportunities throughout Appalachia Kentucky. Unlike task forces and commissions that had analyzed Appalachia Kentucky for more than 50 years, SOAR was created as a platform for the people of Appalachia Kentucky to be engaged, embrace new ideas, leverage resources, and build capacity to create a Future in Appalachia.

On December 9, 2013, the first SOAR Summit was held at the East Kentucky Expo Center in Pikeville, Ky. Through the assistance of Congressman Hal Rogers and former Governor Steve Beshear and state and federal partners, including the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and USDA Rural Development, the first-ever convening exceeded all expectations with more than 1,500 people in attendance.

In 2016, SOAR released its Blueprint for the Future of Appalachia. This comprehensive strategy identified seven goals that emerged from working groups and the input of thousands of citizens from across the region. It highlights the need for connectivity and ways to utilize it to transform Appalachia Kentucky, and the foundation that guides SOAR's program of work.

Mission

To expand job creation, enhance regional opportunity, innovation, and identity, improve the quality of life, and support all those working to achieve these goals in Appalachian Kentucky.

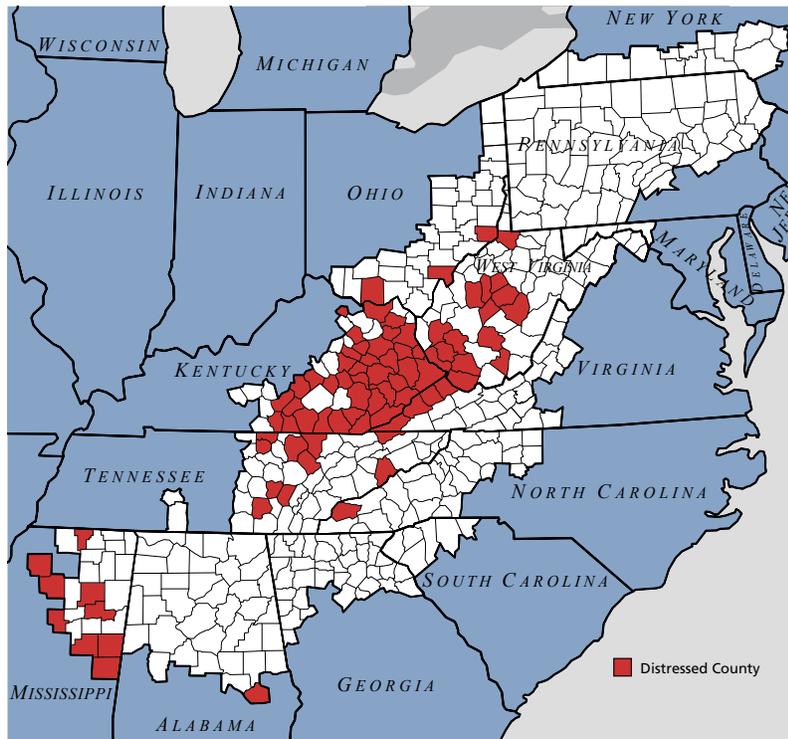
Vision

An Appalachia Kentucky engaged in a landscape-changing enterprise: shaped by a shared and envisioned future, driven by innovation, entrepreneurship, and a commitment to common purpose, with improved education, health, and economic outcomes, and expanding opportunities, for all our region's citizens.

THE TASK AT HAND

Central Appalachia (Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia) is home to the largest concentration of distressed counties in the country. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) calculates distressed as being in the bottom 10 percent in the nation in the following economic indicators: three-year average unemployment rates, per capita market income, and poverty rates.

Throughout Appalachia, there are 81 counties categorized as distressed, including 38 of 54 counties in Appalachia Kentucky, or 47 percent, of all distressed counties in Appalachia. Central Appalachia represents 70 percent, or 57 counties, of all distressed counties in Appalachia.



ARC-DESIGNATED DISTRESSED COUNTIES

Fiscal Year 2019

Created by the
Appalachian Regional Commission
August 2018

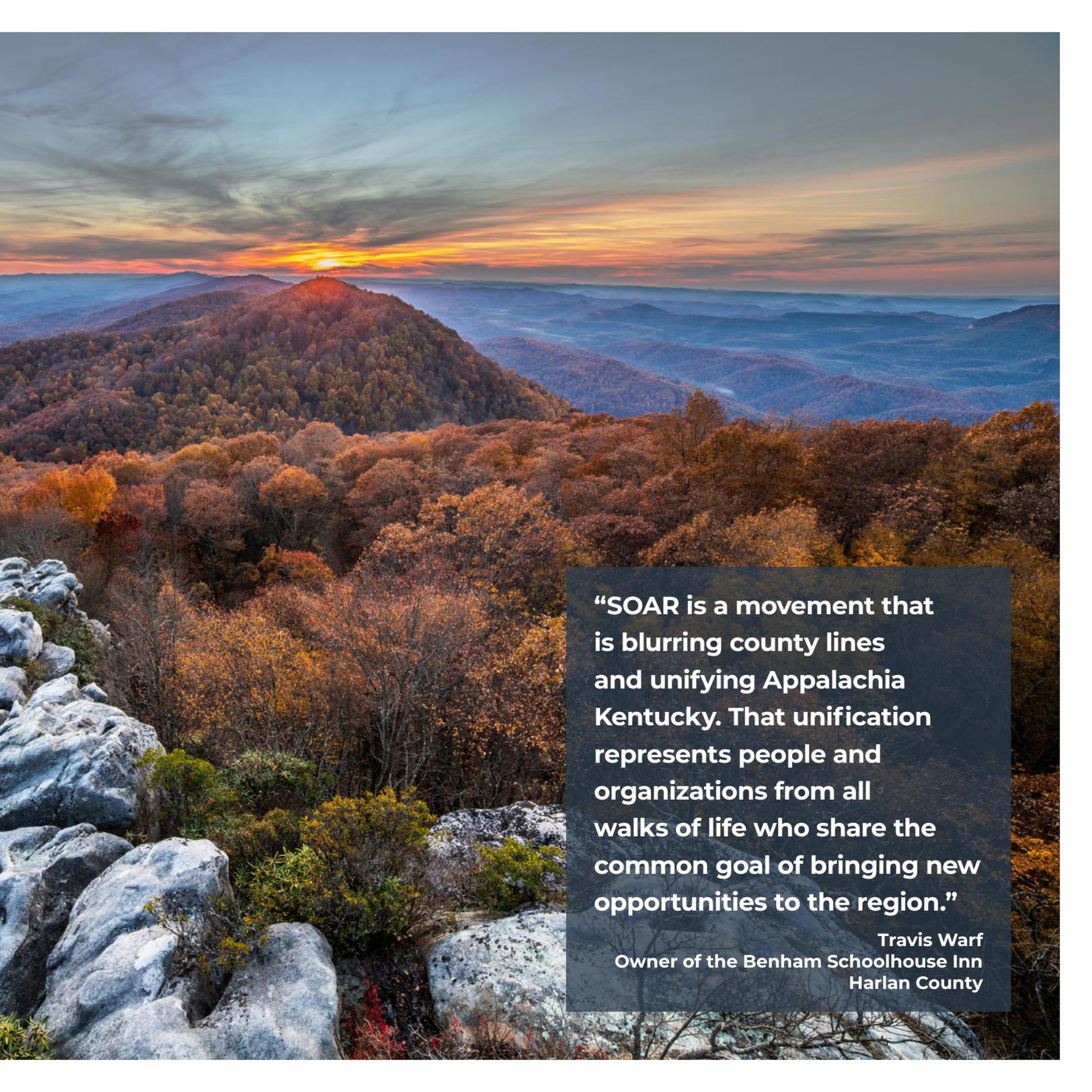
DATA SOURCES:

Unemployment data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2014–2016

Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS, 2016

Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012–2016

**To us, this is not a challenge.
It is an opportunity to be
disruptive and create a
transformative movement
unlike any in the U.S.**



“SOAR is a movement that is blurring county lines and unifying Appalachia Kentucky. That unification represents people and organizations from all walks of life who share the common goal of bringing new opportunities to the region.”

**Travis Warf
Owner of the Benham Schoolhouse Inn
Harlan County**

“The power of connectivity is transforming Appalachia Kentucky. Our investment in a 100% percent fiber optic, gigabit capable network, has resulted in a tremendous growth in remote jobs in our service area. We are committed to SOAR’s Blueprint and believe that connectivity is the cornerstone to deploy all of the Blueprint’s goals.”

Keith Gabbard
General Manager of Peoples Rural Telephone
Jackson and Owsley Counties



Blueprint.

A Plan for Our Future

SOAR’s Blueprint for the Future of Appalachia is a plan that outlines seven goals that will drive the transformation of Appalachia Kentucky. The first goal is connectivity, and the other six goals are what we plan to do with it to transform the region. The Blueprint was created through the input of thousands of people across the region.



BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY

Increase the availability of affordable high-speed broadband, through fiber, to businesses and residents; and increase adoption rates throughout the SOAR region



WORKFORCE 21st Century Workforce

Develop our regional workforce to be competitive in the digital economy and other emerging industries



BUSINESS Small Business

To create more and expand existing small businesses within the region by taking full advantage of the digital economy



HEALTH Healthy Communities

To reduce the physical and economic impact of obesity, diabetes, and substance abuse



INDUSTRY Industrial Development

Increase the amount of industrial employment including, manufacturing, natural resources, processing, and distribution



FOODS Regional Food Systems

Create a local foods movement by connecting local producers to markets for their products both within and outside the region



TOURISM Regional Tourism Development

Establish Appalachia Kentucky as a tourism destination





OUR PLAN... OUR FUTURE

There have been many plans to assist Appalachia Kentucky. We don't dispute their intentions and desired outcomes, but we believe the execution of lasting and sustainable transformation must be driven by the desire and passion of those who call Appalachia Kentucky home. Through working groups and listening sessions, we drafted a Blueprint for the Future Appalachia. The seven objectives outlined in the Blueprint represent the passion of our people and their communities, and the desire to build an economy of diverse opportunities, while fully embracing technology and its benefits to areas of e-commerce, remote work, and business and industry development and expansion. We believe that technology can disrupt poverty.

The Blueprint is future-focused and is adaptable to local and regional governments, economic and community development organizations, education, and community and civic organizations to be used as a framework for strategic planning and a unified vision for the Future of Appalachia.

INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF APPALACHIA

We are not asking for a donation or a gift. We are asking that you consider a tax-deductible investment in the future of Appalachia Kentucky. **Your investment will be used to build collaborations, drive innovation, and leverage technology to disrupt poverty.** We've made significant progress, but there's still much work to do. Your investment will build capacity that creates positive outcomes aligned with our Regional Blueprint.

HEY GOOGLE, THIS IS APPALACHIA KENTUCKY

Bit Source launched in 2014, and the compelling story of displaced coal miners being trained to be coders and programmers went viral, reaching millions of people through world-wide media coverage. The coverage eventually piqued the attention of Google, and in the fall of 2017, Google produced a video to help tell the Bit Source story. In the summer of 2018, representatives from Bit Source went to Google headquarters to partake in a fireside chat and attended a Grow with Google event. Following the event, Bit Source attended the Google Developer Agency meet-up. Bit Source is now a Google Agency which means that the company gets early access to Google technology to better serve its clients.

The idea of Bit Source took root when Co-Owners Lynn Parrish and Rusty Justice joined SOAR on a fact-finding mission. During a tour of a co-working space, Parrish and Justice learned that coding was perceived as a trade, like mining and welding. This was something they understood.

And Bit Source has been mining code ever since and connecting Appalachia Kentucky's tech talent to companies across the globe.

In 2016, SOAR and MIT hosted a Hackathon where an idea was presented on how to integrate

technology to the region's – and the nation's – substance use disorder epidemic. This led to the creation of the ODSave app, which connects those who find someone suspected of an overdose with responders equipped with life-saving Narcan. Bit Source is home to a one of SOAR's Business and Innovation team members who works closely with innovation-led or innovation-capable small businesses, start-ups, and entrepreneurs.



Jared Arnett, executive director of SOAR, and Luke Ramsay, of the University of Kentucky's Community and Economic Development Initiative, are members of the Kentucky cohort of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) REAP (Regional Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program) program.



Bit Source Programmers Michael Harrison and Brack Quillen work at the company's headquarters in downtown Pikeville. The company has gained national attention for retraining those displaced from the coal industry to work in a digital and global economy.



Jared Arnett, executive director of SOAR, left, and Rusty Justice, far right, co-owner of Bit Source, watch as a Bit Source Programmer Jamie Adams highlights his work for a client.

“Appalachia Kentucky is not a problem to be solved, it is a solution to be discovered.”

**Jeff Whitehead, Executive Director
Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP)**

DISRUPTING POVERTY BY LEVERAGING EXISTING RESOURCES, IT WORKS

To accomplish outcomes that have never been realized, you must do things that have never been done. SOAR is leading the way in uniting a region and our partners behind a plan to leverage technology, innovation, and the digital economy to disrupt poverty.

Teleworks USA is a program operated by the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP). Started in 2011 as Kentucky Teleworks, Teleworks USA matches people throughout Appalachia Kentucky with opportunities to work remotely. The program is unique because it not only leverages connectivity to create jobs, it also forges working relationships with remote work companies to greater utilize customized training and other services provided through EKCEP.

“While there are many differences between remote work and brick and mortar work, we have found that there are many similarities between remote employers and brick and mortar employers,” said Michael Cornett, director of agency expansion at EKCEP and director of Teleworks USA. “Remote employers are looking at retention, productivity, and professional development and training opportunities. The remote employers we work closely with have

experienced great success because of our attention to detail, customized training services, and the screening and vetting of applicants.”

To assist with training and to provide teleworkers an area to work if they cannot work from home, Teleworks USA has created eight Telework Hubs across the region in Jackson County, Owsley County, Lawrence County, Perry County, Pike County, Harlan County, Lee County, and Leslie County.

Since 2015, Teleworks USA has placed more than 2,000 people in remote work jobs, representing an estimate \$48 million economic impact. In 2018 alone, there were 674 jobs created representing more than \$15 million in new annual wages to Appalachia Kentucky.

SOAR has worked closely with Teleworks USA since its inception. In 2017, SOAR worked with FlexJobs.com to establish a collaboration between the organization, which is an online job board for remote work, and Teleworks USA. Those utilizing Teleworks USA now have access to complementary subscriptions to FlexJobs.com. Additionally, SOAR was a sponsor of a recruitment visit from 11 companies that toured Teleworks USA hubs across the region in 2018.

TELEWORKSUSA

2018 YEAR-END PERFORMANCE

AND INTERNET SERVICE SPEEDS BY HUB COMMUNITY

UP TO **1,000** MBPS (1G)



JACKSON CO. | Annville
146 job placements
15 workshops / **137** grads
ISP: PRTC
Hub opened Jan. 2015
Lifetime job placements: **574**



OWSLEY CO. | Booneville
91 job placements
7 workshops | **39** grads
ISP: PRTC
Hub opened July 2016
Lifetime job placements: **232**



LAWRENCE CO. | Louisa
62 job placements
16 workshops | **111** grads
ISP: Foothills Communication
Hub opened Sept. 2017
Lifetime job placements: **90**



OUTREACH COUNTIES
Menifee, Morgan, Wolfe
13 job placements
4 workshops | **20** grads
ISP: Mountain Telephone
Launched Oct. 2018
Lifetime job placements: **23**

UP TO **100** MBPS



PERRY CO. | Hazard
116 job placements
29 workshops | **160** grads
ISP: Windstream
Hub opened Jan. 2015
Lifetime job placements: **368**



PIKE CO. | Pikeville
73 job placements
11 workshops | **93** grads
ISP: Suddenlink, Inter Mountain Cable
Hub opened Dec. 2016
Lifetime job placements: **184**

UP TO **50** MBPS



HARLAN CO. | Harlan
62 job placements
16 workshops | **111** grads
ISP: Foothills Communication
Hub opened Sept. 2017
Lifetime job placements: **90**

<**25** MBPS



LEE CO. | Beattyville
58 job placements
18 workshops | **48** grads
ISP: At&t
Hub opened March 2016
Lifetime job placements: **197**

2,004

JOB PLACEMENTS

Since January 2015

Across all hubs and outreach counties.

Starting wages: **\$9-13 / hr.**

<**25** MBPS



LESLIE CO. | Hyden
43 job placements
9 workshops | **27** grads
ISP: TDS
Hub opened May 2017
Lifetime job placements: **92**

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INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF APPALACHIA

We are not asking for a donation or a gift. We are asking that you consider a tax-deductible investment in the future of Appalachia Kentucky. Your investment will be used to build collaborations, drive innovation, and leverage technology to disrupt poverty. We've made significant progress, but there's still much work to do. Your investment will build capacity that creates positive outcomes aligned with our Blueprint for the Future of Appalachia.

PRESENTING PARTNER

\$100,000 annually

- TOP Presence on signage at all official events, including but not limited to:
 - Quarterly Executive Board Meetings
 - Annual SOAR Summit – Opportunity to speak
 - Any other event that becomes part of SOAR's program of work
- TOP Presence on SOAR website with link to Official Partner website
- Ability to pass out literature at all official SOAR events
- Use of SOAR LOGO on Official Partner website and all literature (use must be approved by SOAR staff)
- Use of SOAR LOGO with officially approved merchandise with Official Partner logo (use must be approved by SOAR staff)
- Eight invitations to a private legislative reception in Frankfort with the SOAR Executive Board
- Ability to host an Executive Board Meeting
- Participation by 1 Representative in Corporate Partners Semi-Annual meetings on how to market SOAR and to give advice to SOAR Executive Board

FOUNDING PARTNER

\$50,000 to \$99,999

- MAJOR Presence on signage at all official events, including but not limited to:
 - Quarterly Executive Board Meetings
 - Annual SOAR Summits
 - Any other event that becomes part of SOAR's program of work
- MAJOR Presence on SOAR website with link to Official Partner website
- Ability to pass out literature at all official SOAR events
- Use of SOAR LOGO on Official Partner website and all literature (use must be approved by SOAR staff)
- Use of SOAR LOGO with officially approved merchandise with Official Partner logo (use must be approved by SOAR staff)
- Four invitations to a private legislative reception in Frankfort with the SOAR Executive Board
- Ability to host an Executive Board Meeting
- Participation by 1 Representative in Corporate Partners Semi-Annual meetings on how to market SOAR and to give advice to SOAR Executive Board

Creating a Future in Appalachia. **TOGETHER.**

EAST KENTUCKY PARTNER

\$25,000 to \$49,999

- Logo Presence on signage at all official events, including but not limited to:
 - Quarterly Executive Board Meetings
 - Annual SOAR Summits
 - Any other event that becomes part of SOAR's program of work
- Logo Presence on SOAR's home page with link to Official Partner website
- Use of SOAR LOGO on Official Partner website and all literature (use must be approved by SOAR staff)
- Use of SOAR LOGO with officially approved merchandise with Official Partner logo (use must be approved by SOAR staff)
- Two invitations to a private legislative reception in Frankfort with the SOAR Executive Board
- Participation by 1 Representative in Corporate Partners Semi-Annual meetings on how to market SOAR and to give advice to SOAR Executive Board

UNITY PARTNERSHIP

\$12,500 to \$24,999

- MAJOR Organization listing on SOAR's homepage with link to Official Partner Website
- MAJOR Organization listing on signage at all official events, including but not limited to:
 - Quarterly Executive Board Meetings
 - Annual SOAR Summit
- Use of SOAR LOGO on Official Partner website and all literature (use must be approved by SOAR staff)

- Use of SOAR LOGO with officially approved merchandise with Official Partner logo (use must be approved by SOAR staff)
- One invitation to selected Executive Committee receptions
- Participation by 1 Representative in Corporate Partners Semi-Annual meetings on how to market SOAR

CORNERSTONE PARTNER

\$5,000 to \$12,499

- Organization listing on SOAR's homepage with link to Official Partner Website
- Organization listing on signage at all official events, including but not limited to:
 - Quarterly Executive Board Meetings
 - Annual SOAR Summit

GRASSROOTS PARTNER

\$1,000 to \$4,999

- Organization LOGO listed in two Blueprint Categories on our website database of partners
- Increased organization recognition on SOAR's website and other communication
- Priority consideration for showcasing your blueprint related work at the Annual SOAR Summit
- Access to FREE SOAR Merchandise and Events
- Access and special promotion to our network of Blueprint Partners

BLUEPRINT PARTNER

- Organization name listed on website and other SOAR communication

Organizational Strategies

GROW THE NETWORK

- Increase the Number of Partners in our Formalized Network
- Increase the Capacity of all Stakeholders
- Establish shared measurement practices

DRIVE ALIGNED ACTION

- Increase the amount of innovative activity aligned with the blueprint
- Increase awareness of the aligned activity among partners
- Improve Cross-Sector collaboration

BE THE CHAMPION

- Promote and Inspire Appalachia
- Guide Vision and Strategy as the Respected Thought Leader
- Advance Policy and Build Public Will





Strategy Implementation

CONVENINGS

SOAR leverages its network of partners to host, co-host, and sponsor a variety of convenings ranging from community planning sessions, networking events for small businesses, startups, and entrepreneurs, and regional and cross-sector workshops and training sessions. The largest annual convening is the SOAR Summit. The two-day event attracts more than 1,000 people and is home to more than 70 exhibits aligned with the Blueprint for the Future of Appalachia.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is a key element to SOAR's Program of Work. SOAR's communication channels are vast, including e-mail, social media, websites, and other media outlets (radio, television, billboards, and digital). SOAR has established a media partnership program that includes WYMT, Fairway Outdoor, WDOC, Inc., and the Forcht Group of Kentucky. It also created the There is a Future website (www.thereisafuture.org) in 2018 as a way to shape a new narrative of Appalachia Kentucky and highlight and celebrate the many stories of transformation aligned with its Blueprint. Through a collaboration with PIKE TV, SOAR produces a series of in-depth videos throughout the year that highlights stories of transformation and cross-sector collaborations happening across the region.

CONSULTATIONS

SOAR's experience in building cross-sector collaborations, driving innovation, and leveraging technology to disrupt poverty has allowed the organization to lead and be a part of many transformative efforts across Appalachia Kentucky. Through SOAR Innovation, more than 200 small businesses, startups, and entrepreneurs are receiving services ranging from technical assistance, marketing, website, and finance. SOAR is a leading partner in other projects such as Digital Careers Now, a program aimed to provide accelerated, industry-driven training with an emphasis on remote work opportunity, and has served as a supporter for AppHarvest, a high-tech agriculture startup that is building a more than 2 million-square-foot greenhouse in Morehead.

THE PARTNERS

CREATING A FUTURE IN APPALACHIA, TOGETHER

More than 200 organizations and individuals have partnered to make this work possible. Our Partners are at the core of Creating a Future in Appalachia as they are local individuals, organizations, and businesses that represent the fabric of our region. Partnering with local people that live here means the promise to create opportunity is not an empty promise, it is a shared goal that we all benefit from. Even if you haven't made it official, if you share the common goal of building a brighter tomorrow here, you are already a partner in Creating a Future in Appalachia.

PRESENTING PARTNERS



FOUNDING PARTNERS



EAST KENTUCKY PARTNERS



UNITY PARTNERS



CORNERSTONE PARTNERS



GRASSROOTS PARTNERS



PUBLIC PARTNERS



MORE THAN 200 BLUEPRINT PARTNERS
AND 50 INDIVIDUAL PARTNERS

SOAR-KY.ORG



There is a uture.org



137 Main Street | Suite 300, Pikeville, KY 41501 | 606.766.1160

www.soar-ky.org