Message from Our Executive Director

The past year has been a time of extraordinary change at The Hub. New staff, new organizational leadership, new programs, and new partnerships have all led to a sense of rejuvenation and vibrancy as we head into The Hub’s ninth year.

This past year, we deepened our impact by driving forward innovative approaches to community development as well as betting big on the importance of narrative change and policy solutions for blighted properties. We grew our reach to include entrepreneurial development and investing in ideas for locally-driven economic diversification as long-term solutions to build leadership and transform West Virginia’s coalfield communities.

Through all this change and expansion, The Hub remains deeply committed to creating a community development culture that is built on collaboration and partnerships, that isn't afraid to experiment, and that is constantly searching for innovative solutions to systemic challenges.

We are consistently steered by two principles: in order to lead we must begin by serving, and successful leadership is found in joining communities as equal partners to build the future we want to see together.

I’m excited to share our past year with you through this report, and look forward to working together as we build a brighter future for communities in West Virginia.

Very Best,

Stephanie Tyree
Stephanie Tyree

Thank you to the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, One Foundation, Just Transition Fund, US Economic Development Administration, Appalachian Regional Commission, US Department of Agriculture, The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, and all of our generous donors.

Front cover: Alderson team wins mini-grant. See “Community Coaching” page for story.
**The Hub Dashboard**

**Outside Funding Leveraged**
- **$1.1 Million** to 25+ community projects
- **$34.3 Million** to 41 Appalachian Regional Commission Power Projects
- **$35.4 Million** total outside funding leveraged to 66+ projects

**Arc Power Projects Funding Growth**
- 2015: 4 Projects, $0.8 Million
- 2016: 41 Projects, $35.4 Million

**The Hub’s Four Approaches to Community Development:**
1. Community Coaching & Local Capacity Building
2. Convening Communities of Interest
3. Policy Solutions for Systemic Change
4. Community Development Communications

**12 Communities Coached**

**106,518 Total Impact Community Population (WV Residents)**

**24 Projects Initiated by Communities**

**6 Projects Completed by Communities (Includes Current and Recent Past Participants)**

**78 New Partners Engaged**

**17 Community Mini-Grants Awarded**

**$41,465 Total Community Mini-Grants Investment**

**305 WV Communications Network Members**

**Policy Solution Progress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Area</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property Tax Sale Reform Policy</td>
<td>Received national research award to analyze how to put blighted properties into productive reuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Historic Tax Credit Policy</td>
<td>Bill passed out of House + Senate to increase property tax credits; failed in special session; expected to be reintroduced in 2018 session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Reuse Agency Authorization Policy</td>
<td>Bill passed to allow land banks first access to purchase county tax sale properties valued at greater than $25,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Data shown here reflects activities from June 2016 - May 2017.
In fall 2016, The Hub kicked off a mini-grant competition, Bucks for Bright Ideas, to encourage new projects in communities participating in the Innovation Acceleration Strategy program. The final five candidates were invited to make presentations for three awards at an event in December.

After a public vote, three diverse projects rooted in local community priorities received awards:

- **$5000 Award:** Alderson Main Streets is creating a riverfront redevelopment plan with Downstream Strategies. The group used the grant to successfully leverage funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission.

- **$3000 Award:** Lincoln County Farmers Market is building a marketing plan to expand local agriculture, including the creation of a farm trail. As a result of the funding, the group is applying for status as an independent 501c3.

- **$1000 Award:** Wyoming County high schooler Joey Watson is partnering with his local 4H Club and Southern Community and Technical College to build a remote control car racetrack. Meetups will begin when the track opens in late 2017.

Building on the success of Bucks for Bright Ideas, The Hub rolled out a non-competitive mini-grant program for the Innovation Acceleration Strategy program communities that have invested more than $30,000 into similar projects around the state. The initiative was generously funded through the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation.
Hub Convening Leads to New $1 Million Revenue Stream

In early 2017, Woody Thrasher was appointed to be WV’s new Secretary of Commerce. By leveraging the Hub’s network, the organization was able to meet the Secretary in person prior to his start date, and get an appointment with him during his first week in his new position. The Hub saw an opportunity to make a pitch: the Department of Commerce should be a stronger partner to the economic and community development organizations working hard to diversify the state’s economy.

Instead of meeting individually with the Secretary, The Hub took a gamble and invited 15 of WV’s strongest economic and community development organizations to showcase the value of their work. The gamble paid off. The Secretary was intrigued and asked The Hub to convene bi-weekly meetings to meet other stakeholders.

Over six subsequent meetings, The Hub convened 50 stakeholders to meet with the Secretary and representatives from his office. Stakeholders spoke of their work, their impact, and how the Department could be a strong partner. The Hub focused its role as a convener, catalyzer, and amplifier of the work happening across the state.

At the final meeting, the Secretary announced a new $1 million grant fund available to these and similar organizations that was inspired by the engagement. In addition to broadly promoting the opportunity, The Hub provided coaching to 20 potential grantees and 11 grants were awarded in June 2017.

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CONVENING COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

16-17 HIGHLIGHTS + IMPROVEMENTS

- Held two statewide convenings with more than 200 grantees and potential grantees for the ARC’s POWER initiative, leading to $34.3 million in federal funding for WV
- Presented at multiple national conferences to teach the ARC POWER Initiative Convening model
- Secured new $1 million funding stream through WVDOC for community and economic development
- Invited by new national funder to join a small delegation in Germany to study the economic transition away from the coal industry

ASSOCIATED PROJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>GOALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARC POWER INITIATIVE CONVENINGS</td>
<td>Increasing capacity + revenue streams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WV DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE COMMUNITY &amp; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONVENINGS</td>
<td>Demonstrating value of the state’s community development sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABANDONED PROPERTIES COALITION</td>
<td>Improving community assets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Historic Property Tax Credit Earns Widespread Popular Support**

In early 2016, four people in The Hub-convened Abandoned Properties Coalition signed on to research the possibility of pushing forward policy around increasing tax credits to redevelop historic properties in WV. By the time legislation reached the floor during WV’s 2017 session, the effort had grown to 39 organizers, including a pro bono lobbyist, and featured 38 cities, counties, and organizations who endorsed the proposal. The effort gained enough traction to merit four bills introduced in the House and Senate with 34 legislators sponsoring those bills.

The original group of four had spawned a grassroots movement in support of improving WV communities that began calling itself Revitalize West Virginia’s Downtowns Coalition. The group went on to attend 85 meetings with legislators and hold five public forums to educate more than 200 people total. The legislation was cited by name as part of the justification given by the Office of the Governor for the 2017 special session.

The state historic property tax credit bill passed out of both the House and the Senate during the regular session but died in conference committee on the last day. The momentum and widespread support this policy received in its first year of introduction is a testament to the great value that West Virginians place on revitalizing their downtowns. The Coalition has already begun plans to reinvigorate this effort for the 2018 legislative session.

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**16-17 HIGHLIGHTS + IMPROVEMENTS**

- 3000+ people educated about the value of historic property tax credits through the Revitalize West Virginia’s Downtowns website
- 30+ media mentions for historic property tax legislation
- Passed legislation to grant state Land Reuse Agencies and land banks first pick of properties at county tax sales
- Secured support through the Center for Community Progress to analyze the cost of blight on West Virginia communities + provide policy recommendations
- Completed intensive multi-year policy coaching with WV Food and Farm Coalition and WV Farmers Market Association; organizations lobbied independently for the first time in 2017 session

**ASSOCIATED PROJECTS | GOALS**

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<tr>
<td>REVITALIZE WEST VIRGINIA’S DOWNTOWNS COALITION</td>
<td>Educating public + passing property redevelopment legislation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CENTER FOR COMMUNITY PROGRESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESEARCH</td>
<td>Identifying economic data on cost of blight to communities and policy strategies to address vacancy and dilapidation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPERTY RESCUE INITIATIVE</td>
<td>Providing community support to secure state funding for demolition and code enforcement</td>
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Lincoln County Takes Back Ownership of Community News

Lincoln County, WV, population 21,564, has one weekly newspaper. Residents must pay to read any news in print or online through The Lincoln County Journal and the publication gives few column inches to the numerous positive events and stories happening in the area. The Hub’s community coach Dan Taylor saw an opportunity - and a need - to help residents promote stories about good things happening in Lincoln County.

Getting the word out about community events, progress that community-led groups are making on projects, and positive stories about what may seem to be small, everyday moments can be an essential part of turning the tide for the better in WV communities.

In February 2017, Dan enlisted previous Director of Strategic Network Communications Jake Lynch to travel to Lincoln County for a training. At the workshop, Jake walked community members through the process of creating and updating an online blog plus best practices for generating stories and photography. Jake also encouraged the community members to create an associated Facebook page for their blog and taught them how promoting stories on social media can amplify their voices. While he was teaching, Jake set up a WordPress blog for the community members. The Lincoln Log was born and community members were armed with the knowledge to start promoting their own stories.

16-17 HIGHLIGHTS + IMPROVEMENTS

- Added 147 people to the WV Communications Network for a total of 305 members to promote resource sharing and relationship development between people publicly communicating about West Virginia
- Increased registrants for New Story, a two-day event designed to shift narratives in + about West Virginia, by 20% from 268 to 324
- Increased the number of people learning about community development initiatives through the Hub website by 38% over the previous year, from 43,744 to 60,467 people
- Partnered with the National Conference on Citizenry to release the first ever WV Civic Health index

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<td>Shifting challenging narratives in + about WV</td>
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<td>WV COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK</td>
<td>Connecting communications professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS COACHING</td>
<td>Building communications capacity for community development stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE OF OUR COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>Shifting common narratives about WV through partnering with traditional media to provide data and metrics analysis about community-led development initiatives</td>
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