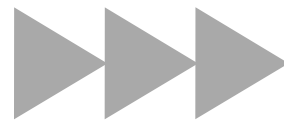


# Shaping a Just Transition Toward Appalachia's Bright Future



## STORY

## our past and our present

**As Kentuckians, as Appalachians, we have a story to tell about ourselves.** We each have a story about our individual lives & the things we value and love, a story about the places we live & our communities, and a story about the economy & political systems we live in.

**Appalachian Kentucky is a region of assets and opportunities.** We have a rich cultural history—music, arts & storytelling to name a few. We are blessed with beautiful and ecologically diverse mountains, forests and waterways. We have talented people and strong institutions that are working toward a brighter Appalachian future.

**For more than 100 years, coal mined in Appalachia fueled America:** the steel mills, auto plants and growing cities that birthed the country we have today. For decades, our region's workers and communities have both benefitted from and seen the costs of being one of the largest coal producers in the country.

**The Appalachian region is currently undergoing deep change and transition.** Changes in the economics of Appalachian coal and other fossil fuels cast a spotlight on an economy in trouble. Coal production and employment is in steep decline, and will continue to be so for years to come.

**Yet, we can and must shape our story and the transition toward a brighter future.**

## VISION

## a bright and just future

**Eastern Kentucky's economy is changing fast, but our future is unwritten.**

**It won't be easy, but we can have a bright future here, if we build it.** We have the opportunity to move forward together, to build a diverse, homegrown economy good for all people here in the mountains. Our communities have many undervalued assets, including our people, culture, water, renewable resources and natural beauty. Locally owned enterprises can build on these strengths, providing decent jobs and other community benefits that grow from a thriving local economy.

**We have to aim at a *just transition*,** one that improves the quality of life for people and communities affected by economic disruption and ecological damage. Achieving that goal will take stronger relationships and collaboration among local consumers and producers, workers and community members, elected leaders and the communities they serve. A just transition also means supporting today's workers while keeping in mind the effects of our decisions on future generations.

**Efforts to promote a just transition should be guided by these key principles:**

- ➔ Improve the quality of life for people and communities affected by economic disruption, environmental damage, and inequality
- ➔ Foster inclusion, participation and collaboration
- ➔ Generate good, stable jobs and broad access to opportunities and benefits
- ➔ Promote innovation, self-reliance, and broadly held local wealth
- ➔ Protect and restore public health and our environment
- ➔ Respect the past while also strengthening communities and culture
- ➔ Consider the effects of decisions on future generations

# LEADERSHIP

plan and lead

**Our economic future depends on strong community and political leadership:** grassroots leaders, local residents, workers, public officials, and enterprises willing to think about another way forward. This transition will be hard. Honest conversations and a willingness to think about what is next are needed. Supporting those willing to have hard conversations and working to convince others who aren't there yet is necessary.

**A just transition will take a commitment to planning together and working together.** Our region is gifted with a range of assets and opportunities that can be a larger part of a growing economy. We need leaders who respect our present and future assets and opportunities and help shape the path toward a future that doesn't do damage to our land, air, water, or people.

# ACTION

**To shape our just transition and build our bright future, we have much work to do.**

**There are a variety of ways we can take action.** We can take action in our individual lives, such as starting a small business or buying from local producers. We can take action at the community level, such as talking with local leaders and attending public meetings. And we can take political and policy action, such as running for office or supporting legislation.

**We need to promote the promising sectors in our region and build on our local assets.**

These sectors include the following and more:

- ▶ local agriculture
- ▶ sustainable forestry
- ▶ renewable energy
- ▶ land & environmental repair
- ▶ energy efficiency
- ▶ health care & childcare
- ▶ arts & culture
- ▶ tourism & recreation

**A bright future will require local action and policy changes across all sectors that:**

## **Grow strong businesses and organizations**

Building a local economy will take skilled local entrepreneurs who care about their communities. Ensuring effective entrepreneurial support from the state and access to affordable capital will be needed to create local jobs and other economic opportunities.

## **Support workers**

As coal jobs decline, workers will need more support. The state and federal government should provide time-limited financial support and real education and training opportunities for workers transitioning into new sectors.

## **Increase financial investment in infrastructure and education**

The state and federal governments need to invest more in the future of the region. Creating a future fund from the coal severance tax is one important direction. Large-scale investment--such as in infrastructure and especially education--will help support large-scale solutions.

grow support invest

# CONVERSATION

**Everyone needs to be part of this conversation.** Solutions to hard problems lie in the relationships and ideas that grow when we listen to each other. An honest, hopeful and public conversation is needed about the future of our communities. All of us have a role to play. Out of these conversations we can create a better way forward, a bright future together.

