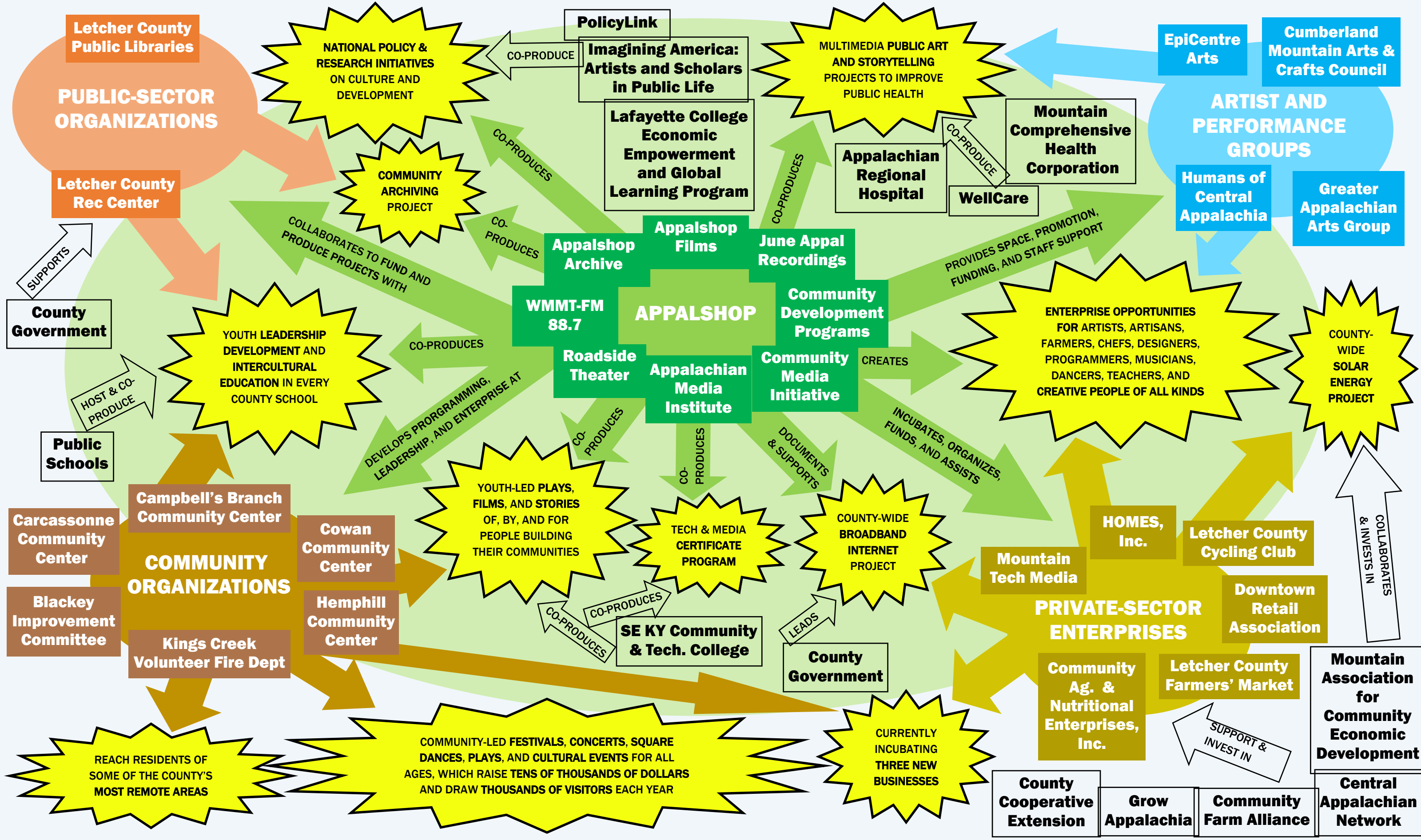


THE LETCHER COUNTY CULTURE HUB – A Sketch



Letcher County Public Libraries

PUBLIC-SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS

Letcher County Rec Center

County Government

Public Schools

Carcassonne Community Center

Blackey Improvement Committee

Campbell's Branch Community Center

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Cowan Community Center

Hemphill Community Center

Kings Creek Volunteer Fire Dept

PolicyLink

Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life

Lafayette College Economic Empowerment and Global Learning Program

Appalshop Archive

Appalshop Films

June Appal Recordings

WMMT-FM 88.7

APPALSHOP

Community Development Programs

Roadside Theater

Appalachian Media Institute

Community Media Initiative

YOUTH-LED PLAYS, FILMS, AND STORIES OF, BY, AND FOR PEOPLE BUILDING THEIR COMMUNITIES

TECH & MEDIA CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

COUNTY-WIDE BROADBAND INTERNET PROJECT

SE KY Community & Tech. College

County Government

COUNTRY-WIDE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT

Mountain Tech Media

HOMES, Inc.

Letcher County Cycling Club

Downtown Retail Association

PRIVATE-SECTOR ENTERPRISES

Community Ag. & Nutritional Enterprises, Inc.

Letcher County Farmers' Market

Mountain Association for Community Economic Development

County Cooperative Extension

Grow Appalachia

Community Farm Alliance

Central Appalachian Network

EpiCentre Arts

Cumberland Mountain Arts & Crafts Council

ARTIST AND PERFORMANCE GROUPS

Humans of Central Appalachia

Greater Appalachian Arts Group

Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation

WellCare

Appalachian Regional Hospital

ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISTS, ARTISANS, FARMERS, CHEFS, DESIGNERS, PROGRAMMERS, MUSICIANS, DANCERS, TEACHERS, AND CREATIVE PEOPLE OF ALL KINDS

COUNTY-WIDE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT

YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN EVERY COUNTY SCHOOL

NATIONAL POLICY & RESEARCH INITIATIVES ON CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ARCHIVING PROJECT

MULTIMEDIA PUBLIC ART AND STORYTELLING PROJECTS TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH

DEVELOPS PROGRAMMING, LEADERSHIP, AND ENTERPRISE AT

COLLABORATES TO FUND AND PRODUCE PROJECTS WITH

CO-PRODUCES

CO-PRODUCES

CO-PRODUCES

CO-PRODUCES

CO-PRODUCES

CO-PRODUCES

CO-PRODUCES

CO-PRODUCES

CO-PRODUCE

CREATES

INCUBATES, ORGANIZES, FUNDS, AND ASSISTS

DOCUMENTS & SUPPORTS

CO-PRODUCES

PROVIDES SPACE, PROMOTION, FUNDING, AND STAFF SUPPORT

COLLABORATES & INVESTS IN

SUPPORT & INVEST IN

SUPPORTS

HOST & CO-PRODUCE

COLLABORATES & INVESTS IN

REACH RESIDENTS OF SOME OF THE COUNTY'S MOST REMOTE AREAS

COMMUNITY-LED FESTIVALS, CONCERTS, SQUARE DANCES, PLAYS, AND CULTURAL EVENTS FOR ALL AGES, WHICH RAISE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS AND DRAW THOUSANDS OF VISITORS EACH YEAR

CURRENTLY INCUBATING THREE NEW BUSINESSES

THE STORY OF APPALSHOP AS CULTURE HUB

In 1969, a group of young people in Letcher County, Kentucky started making films together. Funded by the American Film Institute and the Office of Economic Opportunity's War on Poverty, they started the **Appalachian Film Workshop**—soon shortened to **Appalshop**—to train local people in media making skills. Through the skills they built, they would create new opportunities for economic growth. Through the media they made, they would tell a new story about the place they called home—a place of poverty and illness, but also of deep cultural bonds and riches. Their commitment to linking economic and cultural development through grassroots arts and culture has defined Appalshop's work ever since.

By 2013, Appalshop had become a national leader in grassroots media-making and community development. In addition to an extensive catalogue of over 200 documentary films, Appalshop now included a professional theater company that has worked in every state (**Roadside Theater**); a radio station broadcasting ordinary people's stories and music through five states and streaming worldwide (**WMMT-FM 88.7**); a record label preserving and fostering a new generation of mountain musicians (**June Appal Recordings**); an expanded, award-winning youth media training program (the **Appalachian Media Institute**); a news service broadcasting in-depth coverage of critical issues overlooked by the commercial media (**Community Media Initiative**); and an **Archive** housing extensive first-person accounts of mountain culture.

In 2014, Appalshop began its next chapter. Faced with the end of central Appalachia's coal-based economy, Appalshop looked to its roots in cultural and economic development. A new generation of Appalshop leaders partnered with economists from Lafayette College's **Economic Empowerment and Global Learning Project (EEGLP)** and researchers from **Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life (IA)** to launch a national initiative for civic and economic development based in creative place-making and placekeeping. This initiative has drawn practitioners and researchers from across the country to the mountains of eastern Kentucky in pursuit of answers to two central questions: 1) *How can arts and culture promote individual voice and collective agency, unbounding a community's imagination and ambition in order to create the conditions for equitable economic and civic development?* 2) *What are the core organizing principles and practices that enable a community to overcome internal and external barriers and build an economy that's broad-based, equitable, and sustainable?*

At the center of this culture-driven development initiative is the **Letcher County Culture Hub**: a growing collaboration among for- and nonprofit businesses, community centers, artist and artisan organizations, business associations, volunteer fire departments, elected officials, government and educational organizations, and citizen-driven enterprises of all kinds, convened and facilitated by Appalshop community organizers (see *reverse*). The Culture Hub is founded on the principle, drawn from EEGLP economists and IA researchers, that every community has *latent assets* they can turn into new *community wealth*—but only if the people living there can *unbound their imaginations* and tell new stories about themselves. The Culture Hub facilitates this process through bringing diverse partners together in an ever-growing network of collaboration, allowing them to recognize and create new opportunities for wealth creation—including the revival and expansion of cultural events that are once again drawing visitors from around the country; the creation of new markets for artists, musicians, and other cultural producers; the strengthening of anchor institutions that reach the most disenfranchised citizens of the county; and the founding of new businesses in sectors from food production to technology. Now the Culture Hub is spreading beyond the boundaries of its immediate area, as Appalshop and its partners launch new collaborative projects with organizations across the region and the country.

“It's a community-led effort,” observed New York *Times* reporter Sheryl Gay Stolberg, after visiting Appalshop in 2016. Through the Culture Hub, citizens of Letcher County are “deeply engaged in their own futures”: imagining them, making them, and lighting the way for low-income communities nationwide.

Want to learn more, share your thoughts, or get involved? Visit appalshop.org or contact Ben Fink at benfink@appalshop.org.