

**The Harlan County Project: Phase 15**

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## THE HARLAN COUNTY PROJECT: PHASE 15

**PROJECT FOCUS:** Students working with the Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College Appalachian Program will conduct a student-led regional youth conference called **It's Good To Be Young In The Mountains** (IG2BYITM) in Harlan, Kentucky August 13-16, 2015 as part of a program to develop youth leadership and promote tourism/visitors to Harlan County, Kentucky and the surrounding counties.

### PROJECT DETAILS:

**Course Number, Name, and Instructor:** AAD 200: Fundamentals of Arts Administration, Robert Gipe, instructor.

**Community Partners:** Appalshop, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, the Harlan Civic Center, the Robert E. Frazier Foundation, Harlan Tourism, Tri-Cities Tourism, the Higher Ground coalition, the STAY (Stay Together Appalachian Youth) Project, Harlan County Fiscal Court.

**Need:** Harlan County is still an ARC distressed county. It needs to develop its tourism industry as coal mining declines. It needs to become an easier, more vibrant, place for people to visit and live. It needs for its young people to have hope, skills, and the possibility to stay. The work we will present in Washington, DC is part of a National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant project, one the community partners listed collaborated on writing. The NEA Our Town proposal resulted from discussion among the community partners articulating the needs stated here.

**Number and description of planned meetings with the community partner:** We meet with Appalshop staff weekly, KFTC staff monthly, tourism and Civic Center officials twice a month, and fiscal court members 3-5 times a year. These partners have been part of the grant writing and project planning, and representatives of many of the partners serve on the IG2BYITM planning committee.

**Overview of the project, including its central focus (10-12 sentences):** During 2014-2015, young people in our community, many of whom have been and will be ATP students, led the creation of **Higher Ground 5: Find A Way**, a multi-generational community performance project with a cast of 50 attending by over a thousand local residents. Many of those students will be involved in the AAD 200 class, the ATP project in fall 2015, and the production of IG2BYITM. The IG2BYITM conference, which is being organized by area youth, will contain workshops and presentations on personal health and finance, entrepreneurship, local food production and distribution, artistic expression, technology jobs, and

demonstrations of how youth can participate in community development in the region. The conference will also include youth-led tours of the county, performances, keynote addresses, and conference-wide discussion about the creation of a youth agenda for regional development. The conference, which is being marketed as “a thinking person’s festival,” employs young people in all aspects of the conference’s creation. Young people are learning communication, marketing, social media, community organizing, and money management skills. Students are also creating public art in anticipation of the visitors/confererees arrival, contacting local officials about participating, enhancing the curb appeal of downtown buildings, and bringing together young people—including many students and former students met during ATP gatherings—to make the conference happen. The project is part of a regional “rebranding” effort involving arts, tourism, and local government and builds on the 2012 Network of Ensemble Theaters Microfest in Harlan and Whitesburg, and the 2013 Appalachia’s Bright Future conference in Harlan. These two national gatherings announced the area as a place where discussions of sustainable futures, culturally-centered community development, and integrated thinking about art, environment, and economy take place. The proposed conference will further imprint this identity on local, regional, and national consciousness.

### **Goals and Objectives:**

- Students will create an event that brings hundreds of visitors to Harlan County.
- Students will develop Harlan County’s tourism capacity.
- Students will develop leadership skills and awareness of community assets that can foster sustainability.
- Students will be engaged as active learners and participants in community projects.
- Students will engage in active research to assist communities in creative approaches to sustainability through asset development
- In doing all these things, students will strengthen the capacity of Appalachian people to compete in the global economy

**PROJECT OUTCOMES:** In bulleted format, list all anticipated activities that meet the goals and objectives, including the poster, the conference presentation in Washington, D.C., and the required community presentation(s). Be sure that you have addressed all required goals, guidelines, and outcomes in the attached scope of work.

- Improved appearance of downtown Cumberland through the efforts of students working on building beautification and public art projects.
- Creation of a regional youth conference in Harlan, Kentucky
- Plans for follow-up IG2BYITM events in Harlan, Letcher, and Bell counties.
- Research partnerships between communities and institutions of higher education in the region.

- Research, recommendations, and action that lead to sustainability of Appalachian communities by capitalizing on their assets.
- Research, recommendations, and actions that are consistent with the goals of the ARC strategic plan.
- Development of a network of students and faculty across the region who may continue research and service partnerships beyond the current project.
- Development of leadership and civic-capacity among the students engaged in the project.
- Enhancement of student and community awareness of the work of the ARC at all levels.
- Improved working relationships between academic institutions and local, state, and federal partners in the work of the Commission.
- Opportunities for students, most of whom are Appalachian natives and/or residents, to experience various parts of the region and the work of the Commission in Washington, D.C.
- Opportunities for students to share their research activities in the broader professional community of Appalachian Studies scholars and activists in the Appalachian Studies Association.
- Improved working relationships among the institutions of higher education, their constituent communities, and the Appalachian Regional Commission.
- Improved coordination of research and service efforts/initiatives toward community sustainability.
- Active engagement with a single, community partner-organization or group throughout the semester.
- Presentation of research at a conference in Washington, D.C., on December 4-5, 2015. All students who attend the conference must be active presenters.
- Creation of a poster for presentation at poster sessions in Washington, D.C.
- Presentation of research to at least one civic organization or to elected officials within the community, in addition to the primary community partner or presentation of research at a national conference or participation in a poster session or panel discussion, or delivery of a formal session at the Appalachian Studies Association's Annual Conference in March 2016.
- Submission to the Commission a final report of the research findings documenting how the project met the required guidelines and goals stated above.