

APPALACHIAN
sustainable
DEVELOPMENT

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Appalachian Sustainable Development announces \$493,902 award from Appalachian Regional Commission to build pathways for recovery-centered supported employment

DUFFIELD, Va. - Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) has been awarded \$493,902 for its Groundwork workforce development program's project titled: Building Pathways for Recovery-Centered Supported Employment project. This project will build a strong and supported assistance pipeline specifically for those experiencing substance use disorder (SUD) recovery. It will build the capacity of Groundwork participants to transition into well-paid jobs supporting businesses, organizations, and the regional recovery ecosystem in Scott and Tazewell counties. It is anticipated that 40 participants, 12 businesses, 10 organizations, and two communities will be served by this project. Groundwork is ASD's paid, on-the-job training and skill development program designed to help individuals with barriers build a more resilient future, while fulfilling ASD's mission to support local food and agriculture. Since its inception in 2020, Groundwork has trained 64 participants in food- and ag-related careers, with a recidivism rate of less than 5% among applicable Groundwork participants.

Kathlyn Terry Baker, ASD's CEO shared, "We are truly grateful for the opportunity to strengthen our workforce development programming by building more pathways to meaningful careers for participants. This expansion will provide targeted assistance to people experiencing substance use disorder. Like the ARC, we have seen the great needs in the communities we serve and look forward to launching this project."

On September 18th, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) awarded nearly \$11.5 million to 39 projects through their Investments Supporting Partnerships in Recovery Ecosystems (INSPIRE), which aims to address the impact of SUD in Appalachia with investments in projects that create or expand services in the recovery ecosystem leading to workforce entry and re-entry. Grantees will strengthen the SUD recovery ecosystem in 127 counties in nine Appalachian states—Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia— by expanding recovery-focused partnerships, peer

support and other wraparound services, and skills and workforce training programs that help prepare individuals in recovery for meaningful job opportunities.

“Substance use disorder is a region-wide epidemic that impacts Appalachian families and community workforces,” said ARC Federal Co-Chair Gayle Manchin. “I commend our 2024 INSPIRE grantees for their dedication in helping Appalachians who have struggled with substance use disorder regain a sense of hope and purpose by enabling them to rejoin their communities, bolster workforce development, and make positive impacts on the region.”

With this package, ARC has invested \$53.6 million in 166 projects across all 13 Appalachian states since INSPIRE was established in April of 2021. Together, ARC’s INSPIRE investments will impact 360 Appalachian counties, improve over 3,000 businesses and help prepare nearly 16,200 individuals for new opportunities in the workforce. SUD recovery-to-work initiatives may be starting to make an impact, according to a new ARC research report that examines trends in diseases of despair including overdose, suicide, and liver disease. From 2021 to 2022, the overall diseases of despair mortality rate decreased 4 percent in the Appalachian Region while remaining virtually unchanged in the rest of the United States. However, work remains to be done, as these rates—in both Appalachia and the rest of the country—remain much higher than the pre-pandemic figures of 2019.

About the Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is an economic development entity of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 423 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC’s mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

About Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD)

Growing a stronger Appalachia through agriculture. That’s what drives ASD’s commitment to build a thriving regional food and agriculture system that benefits every Appalachian. Since 1995, ASD has been working to provide hope and make a difference for the people who call the region home. What began as opportunities for struggling tobacco farmers to grow fruits and vegetables has become lasting solutions to regional challenges that impact workforce development, agriculture education, food access, economic development, and resource conservation. To further expand that work, ASD is now developing a destination agriculture campus where innovation meets agriculture in Washington County, Virginia. To learn more about ASD, visit: <https://asdevelop.org>.

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