Southwest Virginia Creative Economy Plan | 2020-2022
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA’S CREATIVE ECONOMY PLAN
2020 - 2022

OUTCOME: Over the next three years, regional economic development partners working in the creative economy cluster will increase momentum, propelling Southwest Virginia’s creative economy by:

- Providing new and renewed regional services to communities, nonprofit partners and businesses.
- Engaging strategic partnerships that encourage region-wide collaboration for partner success.
- Encouraging sustainable and diverse development across all fields of the creative economy.

DEFINITION: What is the creative economy? Official definition: Innovative business development techniques finding success based on novel imaginative qualities that no longer rely on the limited resources of land, labor and capital.

The creative economy is all about assets that currently exist - from natural assets to cultural assets to intellectual assets to structural assets. The Creative Economy Strategic Plan will analyze the following areas: Downtown Development. Community Development. Tourism & Economic Development. Music. Artisans & Makers. Agritourism & Food. History & Heritage. Outdoor Recreation.

PHILOSOPHY: This is the region’s creative economy plan. The staff and boards of Friends of Southwest Virginia and the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation can do nothing alone. For some strategies, the organizations may not even act as the lead partner. However, staff time, resources, and coordinating support may be instrumental contributions in achieving the region and communities we desire.

Key partners include Commonwealth and Federal agencies, planning district commissions, The Crooked Road, ‘Round the Mountain, regional outdoor recreation groups, revitalization committees, Opportunity SWVA, four-year and community colleges, local governments and nonprofit organizations working on community development and creative economy strategies.

LEVEL OF DETAIL: This high-level plan sets forth goals that the staff and boards will organize to achieve. Those achievements could be a result of any number of possible tactical approaches. Laying out those specific strategies and tactics are not the purpose of this plan. Staff will further identify strategies, resources, partners, and responsible parties in collaboration with key partners.
FOOTPRINT: The Southwest Virginia Creative Economy Plan will cover 19 counties, 4 cities and 53 towns:
PROCESS: Over the course of two years, hundreds of organizations and partners throughout Southwest Virginia and the Commonwealth came together to carefully analyze existing programs, products and resources and forecast the future of the creative economy. In a process facilitated by the Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development, planning steps included the following:

- Regional Creative Economy Asset Inventory - Inventory and status of all existing developed natural and cultural assets
- Regional Project Database Development - Inventory by region and city / county of all projects currently in development from concept to construction
- Regional Roundtable Stakeholder Meetings - Meetings of regional and state-level stakeholders to identify regional gaps and issues
- Planning District Feedback Sessions - 5 Feedback Sessions in Planning Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, and 12 to garner public partner feedback. Over 250 partners attended the sessions.
- Online Survey - Over 180 partners provided robust written feedback on current and future creative economy initiatives throughout the region.
- Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation Board of Trustees and Friends of Southwest Virginia Board of Directors Endorsement - As the government foundation and non-profit organization charged with leading development of the creative economy in Southwest Virginia, these two entities approved and endorsed the regional plan on December 13, 2018.
- Regional Collaboration with Planning District Commissions - In conjunction with the five planning district commissions, key points of collaboration and cross-over with the federally required ‘Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy” were identified.

PROGRESS TRACKING: Staff will further develop the plan in alignment with the budgeting process. Board and Foundation members will have the opportunity to serve on project teams. Quarterly progress reports will be in the form of an annotated gridded plan highlighting decision points, resource needs, progress to date, and areas of concern and opportunity.

PROMOTION: Promotion of the plan will advance recognition of the creative economy goals and strategies, their impacts, and the communities making progress. It will include a video series, coordinated social media messaging, a regional creative economy conference and robust visibility in other regional gatherings.
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| Downtown Revitalization | Promote **Main Street revitalization and stewardship strategies** to enhance local economies while preserving character and conserving natural resources. | Hometowns “Mini-main street” networks developed in 3 anchor areas. | Opportunity SWVA:  
  ● Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI)  
  ● Communities of the New High Knob Regional Initiative (HKRI)  
  ● Mount Rogers Communities | LENOWISCO:  
  ● 1-2  
  Cumberland Plateau:  
  ● Goal 7, Goal 11.13  
  Mount Rogers:  
  ● CED Tourism: 5  
  New River Valley:  
  ● 1.1  
  West Piedmont:  
  ● 2.5 |
|                     | Promote **SWVA entrepreneurship** and connect creative economy assets to businesses. | In **one pilot network**: Increase number of creative economy business 3% above baseline through participation and goal setting in Opportunity SWVA. | Opportunity SWVA in partnership with an established network: **CRVI VISTA**. | LENOWISCO:  
  Goal 1-2  
  Cumberland Plateau:  
  ● Goal 8, Goal 11:12  
  Mount Rogers:  
  ● SET Goal 1: B  
  ● CED Tourism: 4  
  New River Valley:  
  ● 1.1  
  West Piedmont:  
  ● 1.2  
  ● 1.4  
  ● 1.5  
  ● 3.4 |
Support communities in planning, promoting, and undertaking a **downtown business hours shift** in support of greater tourism downtown activity.

Expanded or shifted downtown business hours for an increase in tax revenue in at least 5 communities, celebrated and promoted with a regional night out.

**Friends of SWVA and Opportunity SWVA** with Virginia Main Street assistance

LENOWISCO:
- Goals 2-3
- Cumberland Plateau:
  - Goal 7-8
- Mount Rogers:
  - CED Tourism: 4,5
  - SET Goal 1:B
- New River Valley:
  - 1.1
- West Piedmont:
  - 2.5

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| Community Development | Strengthen **networking** opportunities among community and economic revitalization committees of local governments (*capstoned with the creative economy conference*) | A coordinated regional master network of at least 20 creative economy, downtown based affinity groups, regional clusters, anchor areas, cooperatives or interstate collaboratives for sharing models, strategies and resources. Relaunch and programming of the Southwest Virginia Creative Economy Conference. | **Friends of SWVA** with support from Opportunity SWVA. | LENOWISCO:
- Goal 6-3
- Cumberland Plateau:
  - Goal 11
- Mount Rogers:
  - CED Tourism: 5
  - CED Manufacturing: 5
  - CED Community Enhancement: 3
- New River Valley:
  - 3.2
- West Piedmont:
  - 3.1
  - 3.3 |
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<th>Provide communities, organizations, and businesses with avenues and models for serving and engaging <strong>targeted populations</strong> in the creative economy.</th>
<th>Umbrella programs or models serving at least least 3 distinct populations, such as veterans, those in addiction recovery, those re-entering communities after incarceration, youth, seniors, recent immigrants, or under-represented groups.</th>
<th>All regional economic development organizations with <strong>Friends of Southwest Virginia</strong> as convener and tracker through the Southwest Virginia Regional Partner Roundtable.</th>
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<td>Foster a culture of <strong>entrepreneurial communities.</strong></td>
<td>Active engagement of at least 30 communities in entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship strategies.</td>
<td><strong>Opportunity SWVA</strong> as convener and tracker</td>
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**LENOWISCO:**
- **Goal 4-1**
- **Cumberland Plateau:**
  - **Goal 10, 11.7**
- **Mount Rogers:**
  - **CED Manufacturing:** 5
  - **CED Agribusiness:** 2
  - **CED Community Enhancement:** 2
- **West Piedmont:**
  - 1.4
  - 3.2
  - 3.4
  - 3.5

**NEWISO:**
- **Goal 1-2**
- **Cumberland Plateau:**
  - **Goal 8; Goal 11: 12**
- **Mount Rogers:**
  - **CED Tourism:** 4
  - **CED Community Enhancement:** 3
  - **SET Goal 4: A**
- **New River Valley:**
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- **West Piedmont:**
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<td><strong>Tourism &amp; Economic Development</strong></td>
<td>Create a “Certified SWVA” program to promote regional pride, knowledge, and information sharing.</td>
<td>At least 5 ambassadors identified, trained, and certified in each county.</td>
<td>Friends of SWVA Joint Marketing Committee and Marketing Roundtable</td>
<td>LENO WISCO:</td>
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### Assist local and regional partners in connecting industrial recruitment and the creative economy.

Identify, develop, and promote at least 5 stories of business location or investment determinant upon creative economy investments.

**Friends of SWVA in partnership with traditional economic development organizations of Southwest Virginia**

- **LENOWISCO:**
  - Goal: 1-1
  - Cumberland Plateau:
    - Goal 1, 11.1, 11.3
  - Mount Rogers:
    - CED Tourism: 3
    - CED Manufacturing: 2
    - SET Goal 1: A, B
  - New River Valley:
    - 5.2
  - West Piedmont:
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    - 1.3
    - 1.4
    - 1.5
    - 2.1
    - 4.2
    - 4.3

### Provide marketing and advertising access to larger markets for partners with limited budgets.

Establish a cooperative marketing program for DMOs, communities and businesses with at least 30 participants.

**Friends of SWVA Joint Marketing Committee and Marketing Roundtable**

- **LENOWISCO:**
  - Goal 6-1
  - Cumberland Plateau:
    - Goal 1; Goal 11.9
  - Mount Rogers:
    - CED Manufacturing: 2
    - SET Goal 1:B
  - New River Valley:
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| **Music**        | Assist The Crooked Road in **partner engagement** for project and program expansion. | Partnership and participation in regional outreach and communications across all 19 counties. | **The Crooked Road** | **LENOWISCO:**  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● Goal:6-1  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | Cumberland Plateau:  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● Goal 11.7  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | Mount Rogers:  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● CED Tourism: 5  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● CED Community Enhancement: 3  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● SET Goal 4: A  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | New River Valley:  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● 5.2  
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|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● 4.3  |
| **Artisans and Makers** | Re-engage 'Round the Mountain **membership.** | At least 15 members in each of the 19 counties. | **'Round the Mountain** | **LENOWISCO:**  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● Goal: 1-2  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | Cumberland Plateau:  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● Goal 11.7  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | Mount Rogers:  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● New River Valley:  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● 5.2.3  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | West Piedmont:  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● 1.5  
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|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● 4.1  
|                  |                                                                      |                                                                              |                      | ● 4.3  |
Revitalize the **Artisan Trails** of Southwest Virginia as effective local cooperatives.

At least 10 networks activated by an annual event, campaign or cooperative event planned and coordinated from within the cooperative.

**'Round the Mountain**

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Provide guidance and coordinated problem solving for **value-added ag businesses** and organizations showcasing and selling SWVA made food and beverages

Aggregation and promotion of SWVA agritourism and food sector start ups, with coordinated assistance and marketing support provided to 5 SWVA business startups in the agritourism and food sector.

**Appalachian Sustainable Development** with marketing support from Friends of SWVA

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<td>● Goal 1-4</td>
<td>● Goal 5, 8</td>
<td>● CED Agribusiness: 1,2,3</td>
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<td>Develop an agritourism stakeholder group to determine next steps for SWVA’s industry.</td>
<td>Aggregation and initial promotion of agritourism assets developed by a regional group of stakeholders.</td>
<td>Convening and coordination by Friends of SWVA</td>
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<td>Expand and develop craft beverage tourism opportunities</td>
<td>Growth within the SWVA Mountain Brew Trail including wineries and distilleries.</td>
<td>‘Round the Mountain and Regional Culinary Stakeholders</td>
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LENOWISCO:
- Goal 1-4
- Cumberland Plateau:
  - Goal 5
- Mount Rogers:
  - CED Agribusiness: 3
  - SET Goal 4: A
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<td>History and Heritage</td>
<td>Develop the Great Road Story.</td>
<td>An active regional group identifying opportunities for interpretation, collaborative museum support, and entrepreneurship tied to westward expansion and settlement in SWVA.</td>
<td>Regional Historical Museums</td>
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<td>Identify, explore and interpret the minority stories of Southwest Virginia.</td>
<td>Establishment of a stakeholder group to explore the untold minority stories of the region with a resulting trail or overlay with an existing trail.</td>
<td>Friends of SWVA as convener and marketer</td>
<td>LENOWISCO:</td>
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<td>Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>Ensure adequate <strong>first-responder resources</strong> for the increase in outdoor recreation users.</td>
<td>Establishment of a regional roundtable promoting or providing training and/or certification for first responder units in communities and institutions.</td>
<td><strong>Friends of SWVA</strong> as convener to begin discussion with both government and outdoor recreation voices.</td>
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<td>Develop <strong>collaborative relationships</strong> with state and federal permitting and land-owning agencies.</td>
<td><strong>Formal agreements</strong> between localities or non-profits in 3 specific areas.</td>
<td><strong>Friends of SWVA</strong> as convener.</td>
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**LENOWISCO:**
- **Goal: 4-2**
- **Cumberland Plateau:**
  - **Goal 1, 2, 11**
- **Mount Rogers:**
- **New River Valley:**
  - **6.1**
- **West Piedmont:**
  - **4.2**
Develop **collaborative relationships** with state and federal permitting and land-owning agencies.

Best practices for general guidance in working with agencies

**Friends of SWVA** as convener and aggregator

**LENOWISCO:**
- Goal: 4-2

**Cumberland Plateau:**
- Goal 11

**Mount Rogers:**

**New River Valley:**
- 6.1

**West Piedmont:**
- 4.2
- 4.3
REGIONAL EMPHASES: The five subregions of Southwest Virginia are represented by Planning District Commissions and have Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies and Regional Action Plans to achieve specific goals to advance the economy of their districts. These reports cover a large amount of the creative economy and where possible are cross referenced in order to address these specific goals within the planning districts.

- **Region 1: LENOWISCO Planning District Commission**
  - Report: COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2015 CEDS REPORT
    - Goal 1: Encourage a strong regional economy through a diverse base of interests, including large employers and startups.
    - Goal 2: Develop and maintain a workforce adequately skilled to meet the challenges of today's economy.
    - Goal 3: Ensure the region has adequate infrastructure in place to support the growth of higher-wage industry clusters and to ensure regional, national and global connectivity.
    - Goal 4: Maintain and promote the region’s natural beauty and its cultural amenities, and seek sustainable growth opportunities.
    - Goal 5: Target existing underutilized commercial and industrial properties for redevelopment.
    - Goal 6: Project a positive identity for the LENOWISCO region.

- **Region 2: Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission**
    - Goal 1: Economic Development/Tourism
    - Goal 2: Workforce Development/Education
    - Goal 3: Infrastructure Development
    - Goal 4: Transportation
    - Goal 5: Asset-based Development
    - Goal 6: Natural Resources
    - Goal 7: Physical Environment
    - Goal 8: Entrepreneurship
    - Goal 9: Housing
    - Goal 10: Health & Substance Abuse
    - Goal 11: Regional Collaboration/Governmental Efficiency
    - Link: [http://www.cppdc.org/Reports/CEDS%202018.pdf](http://www.cppdc.org/Reports/CEDS%202018.pdf)
• Region 3: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission
  ○ Report: Mount Rogers Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
  ■ **Tourism:**
  ■ Goal 1: Collectively deploy the shared SWVA Brand
  ■ Goal 2: Implement a hospitality training program to create a high standard of service and to project to Southwest Virginia as a region of choice
  ■ Goal 3: Secure funding to grow and attract new tourism businesses for visitors and investment
  ■ Goal 4 Increase local business sourcing by aligning local resources with regional tourism cluster needs
  ■ Goal 5: Create focus on the exclusivity of Mount Rogers Region
  ■ **Agribusiness:**
  ■ Goal 1: Advance economic opportunities in agriculture, food, and natural resources
  ■ Goal 2: Equip the region’s youth and adults for employment in the agribusiness industry
  ■ Goal 3: Develop an Agribusiness Trail
  ■ **Manufacturing:**
  ■ Goal 1: Create accessible high quality regional data for Mount Rogers
  ■ Goal 2: Develop a coordinated, regionally funded marketing strategy to attract new manufactures
  ■ Goal 3: Cultivate regional linkages between workforces initiatives
  ■ Goal 4: Coordinate effective plan to address workforce turnover/retention in manufacturing for Mount Rogers Region
  ■ Goal 5: Create more awareness for the existing Career and Technical Education programs in the school systems to create a stronger workforce with the necessary skills
  ■ **Community Enhancement:**
  ■ Goal 1: Develop a public relations strategy to keep the public informed about the region and empower them to help “tell the story” of the region
  ■ Goal 2: Enhance the overall health and wellness- mental and physical- of the community, with a focus on support and opportunities for those struggling with addiction.
  ■ Goal 3: Build partnerships with local government and other agencies to ensure the proper infrastructure is in place to support current needs and future growth for the region
  ○ Report: Mount Rogers Stronger Economics Together Plan
  ■ Link: [https://www.mrpdc.org/docs/MRPD%20SET%20Document-Final.pdf](https://www.mrpdc.org/docs/MRPD%20SET%20Document-Final.pdf)
● Region 4: New River Valley Regional Commission
    ■ Priority 1: Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development
    ■ Priority 2: Preparation and Continued Support of Qualified Workforce
    ■ Priority 3: Available Land, Quality Infrastructure, and Affordable Housing
    ■ Priority 4: Attracting New Business to the Region
    ■ Priority 5: Regional Marketing/Awareness to Promote the New River Valley
    ■ Priority 6: Preserve Natural and Historic Areas
    ■ Priority 7: Business Friendly Governance and Representation

● Region 12: West Piedmont Planning District Commission
    ■ Goal 1: Increase economic growth and global competitiveness
    ■ Goal 2: Improve infrastructure needed to grow the regional economy
    ■ Goal 3: Grow, retain, and attract talent
    ■ Goal 4: Enhance quality of life