

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **March 23 & 24: WealthWorks in Appalachia - Tools to Build a Resilient Energy Economy in the Buckeye Hills Region** | Join us March 23 - 24, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. for a free virtual workshop examining how WealthWorks can help the Buckeye Hills region catalyze growth in the local energy economy. This two-day workshop, hosted by Rural Action, Buckeye Hills Regional Council, and ACEnet, will show how the WealthWorks strategic capital framework emphasizes the creation of value chains and is a proven tool for growing economic opportunities in rural communities. More than twice as many Ohioans work in clean energy than the number of lawyers, web developers, accountants, auditors, and real estate agents combined. Reducing energy waste and generating local electricity through renewables is a powerful way to stimulate economic growth, especially in communities recovering from shifts in other parts of the energy industry. Learn more and register through our events calendar at buckeyehills.org/events.
- **Ohio Virtual Public Meeting Authority Restored Through June** | The Ohio Legislature has approved a new provision allowing public boards, councils, and commissions to conduct online meetings and hearings through June 30, 2022. Ohio's Open Meetings Act requires that members of a public body be present in-person to be counted as part of a quorum and to deliberate, discuss or vote on any issue considered at the meeting. However, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the General Assembly approved a temporary exception allowing virtual meetings, which expired June 30, 2021. House Bill 51, a tax measure approved earlier this month, included an amendment to restore virtual public meeting authority through the end of June 2022. Gov. Mike DeWine signed the bill into law on February 17. You can read the full text of the bill [HERE](#). If you have questions, contact your legal counsel or the [Ohio Attorney General's Office](#).
- **Save the Date: AOS 2022 Local Government Officials Conference April 13 & 14** | Ohio Auditor of State Keith Fater will host this year's Local Government Officials conference virtually and free of charge on April 13 and 14. More information regarding registration, agenda topics, and the virtual registration link will be coming soon. Visit the [Auditor of State's training page](#) to view information about current and upcoming training opportunities.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- **Opportunity Appalachia Launch** | Ohio Southeast Economic Development (OhioSE) and Opportunity Appalachia hosted a webinar on Friday, February 25 to launch a second, expanded phase of Opportunity Appalachia. As the lead partner in Ohio, OhioSE is inviting all interested community and economic development leaders, local elected officials, developers, and business owners in our region to learn about the opportunity to obtain technical assistance for important development projects to move your community forward.

Opportunity Appalachia will provide targeted support for downtown and rural development projects to build entrepreneurial communities where local businesses can thrive, creating quality jobs for residents, helping

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to address the COVID-19 downturn, and revitalizing local economies. The \$2.25 million in funding for technical assistance will provide support for more than 40 projects which are anticipated to create 3,000 jobs and bring \$400 million of new investment into Central Appalachian communities. The expanded program targets Appalachian communities in five states: Tennessee, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The Ohio program anticipates awards given up to eight (8) projects with the allocated portion of these funds. Selected communities will each access \$30,000 to \$75,000 in technical assistance to support their proposed development projects, to include (but not limited to):

- Development of investment prospectus, preparation of pro forma financial projections, structuring of project financing,
- Market research, demand assessment,
- Architectural and engineering,
- Business plan preparation, operations planning,
- Identification of project developers, and
- Investor outreach.

To learn more about Opportunity Appalachia, view a listing of participating projects from the first round, or to find the program application, click [HERE](#).

For specific questions about Ohio projects, contact Katy Farber at katy@ohiose.com.

Buckeye Hills Regional Council, OMEGA, and the Ohio University Voinovich School are also partners in RISE Ohio, a complementary effort to help communities make an economic transition to new industries and ensure continued job creation, as well as economic growth and diversification. This program will enable these communities to engage in Opportunity Zone planning, along with assisting them with the impacts of coal-fired power plant closures. You can learn more at buckeyehills.org/rise-ohio

- **Succession Planning: Executive Director Search** | In response to the [Request for Proposals](#) issued on December 6, Buckeye Hills Regional Council received three proposals from interested executive search firms. After reviewing and scoring the proposals, the Executive Committee selected SERDI as the search firm. SERDI created a member/stakeholder survey that was distributed in mid-February. The Buckeye Hills Regional Council Executive Search Committee will meet on March 24 with SERDI Director Jim Youngquist to review the survey responses. During this meeting, the search committee will also draft the Executive Director job description, the candidate rating sheet, and the calendar of activities for the search process. Our search committee is composed of the BHRC Executive Committee members and the mayors of Logan and Belpre. We will continue to keep you informed as the process progresses.
- **IIJA Broadband Webinar** | On February 24, Buckeye Hills Regional Council Broadband Specialist Ryan Collins hosted a 20-minute overview and Q&A of the IIJA's broadband provisions and the opportunities it presents to communities in our region to bridge the digital divide in Southeast Ohio. Resources and a recording from the webinar may be found on our website at buckeyehills.org/broadband
- **Ohio University Ridges Development Advisors** | Community Building Partners and BHRC met with OU President Sherman to provide an update on activities and the development strategy for the former Insane Asylum known as the Ridges. The ARC application was submitted to secure funding that will be used to ensure the financial feasibility of the strategy prior to presenting to community stakeholders.

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STATE UPDATES

- **With No Maps and New Federal Lawsuit, Redistricting Enters 'Uncharted' Waters** | Although they could not agree on new legislative districts, Republicans, Democrats, and advocates do agree on this: the state is in an unprecedented electoral situation. Last Friday brought a new federal lawsuit but little clarity the day after the Ohio Redistricting Commission violated an Ohio Supreme Court order by adjourning without adopting new House and Senate maps. Senate President Matt Huffman last Wednesday backed off his idea to split legislative and U.S. House races into a separate primary. House Speaker Bob Cupp, meanwhile, reiterated his chamber's opposition to delaying the election currently set for May 3 due to uncertainty over district maps.

FEDERAL UPDATES

- **Congress Passes Continuing Resolution** | This week, shortly before the previous Continuing Resolution (CR) was set to expire on February 18, the [Senate passed](#) a new CR to extend government funding through March 11. Already [passed by the House](#), this new stopgap measure provides a three-week extension during which Congressional leaders will work toward following through on a full-year appropriations package for the remainder of FY22.
- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Guidebook** | On January 31, the White House released a [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law guidebook](#) to provide information, so you know what to apply for, whom to contact, and how to get ready to rebuild. This guidebook is a roadmap to the funding available under the law, as well as an explanatory document that shows direct federal spending at the program level. Additional updates will be posted online at [Build.gov](#). To help partners better understand the programs within the guidebook, the White House is launching Infrastructure School, a series of twelve webinars over the coming weeks that will provide an in-depth look into the programs contained within each of the twelve major chapters in the guidebook Please see the below for the schedule of remaining sessions.
 - **Safety: Tuesday, March 8** at 4pm – 5pm - [Register Here](#)
 - **Clean Energy and Power: Thursday, March 10** at 4pm – 5pm - [Register Here](#)
 - **Water: Tuesday, March 15** at 4pm – 5pm - [Register Here](#)
 - **Resilience. Thursday, March 17** at 4pm – 5pm - [Register Here](#)
 - **Environmental Remediation: Tuesday, March 22** at 4pm – 5pm - [Register Here](#)
 - **Broadband: Thursday, March 24** at 4pm – 5pm- [Register Here](#)
- **ARC Seeks Applicants Addressing Substance Use Disorder Recovery-to-Work Efforts** | The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has issued a [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) for its [Investments Supporting Partnerships In Recovery Ecosystems \(INSPIRE\)](#) Initiative. The grant program addresses the region's substance use disorder crisis with investments of \$10 million in the creation and expansion of a recovery ecosystem that helps facilitate workforce entry and re-entry. Awards issued through the INSPIRE Initiative will support a wide variety of projects on the post-treatment to employment continuum, including investments in healthcare networks to better meet the needs of substance use disorder recovery professionals, recovery-focused job and workforce training programs, expanded recovery support networks, training and certification of recovery specialists, and more.
- **ARPA Webinar Resources** | The last week of January saw webinars from U.S. Treasury, ARC, and OBM regarding the American Rescue Plan Act. Below are links to the recordings and slides from each of these presentations.

- **U.S. Treasury**

- [Slide Deck](#)

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- [Webinar Recording](#) (While not from the January 26 session, the presentation and material are similar)
- [State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund webpage](#)
- **ARC**
 - Part 1 – Getting Down to the Basics of the ARPA Fiscal Recovery Fund
 - [Webinar Recording](#)
 - [Slide Deck](#)
 - Part 2 – Nuances, Compliance Considerations, and Eligible Use Focus
 - [Webinar Recording](#)
 - [Slide Deck](#)
- **OBM**
 - [Webinar Recording](#)
 - [Slide Deck](#)

AFFILIATE PARTNERS MEETINGS/EVENTS/OTHER

- **Ohio University Board of Trustees, Voinovich School Mayors Partnership for Progress** | I attended my first Ohio University Board of Trustees meeting and also attended the orientation. I learned a lot about the challenges facing University leadership and am actively looking forward to participating in future board meetings and identifying ways in which the University can engage and support its students and communities.
- **Voinovich School/Mayors Partnership for Progress** | I continue to meet regularly leadership of the Voinovich School and the Mayors Partnership for Progress to brainstorm opportunities for additional collaboration between our organizations, as well as strengthen our collective advocacy efforts.
- **Southeast Ohio Community Leaders Group** | I continue to be part of policy and advocacy discussions with other regional and community leaders including the Mayors Partnership for Progress, Voinovich School at Ohio University, Foundation for Appalachian Ohio, OhioSE, Appalachian Partnership, Inc., Appalachian Childrens' Coalition, Ohio University College of Health Sciences and Professions, and several Executives-in-Residence at the Voinovich School to work together to present a joint message to the administration and the legislature on issues important to the Region.
- **National Association of Development Organizations** | I continue to participate in monthly NADO Executive Committee meetings to represent the Midwest. In my role as President this year, we are planning additional communication to the membership via videos that will be shared with the membership via email.
- **Ohio Association of Regional Councils** | I continue to engage with the OARC Policy Committee and the Broadband Working Group to discuss legislation of importance and opportunities on the horizon for regional councils and our members across the state.
- **ARPA** | The staff continue to participate in webinars and training events to learn the details of the ARPA funding, the mechanism(s) for roll out of funding, and to hear what might be coming up next so we can pass that along to the membership.
- **Ohio Rural Development Alliance** | I participated in the ORDA meeting to learn the latest legislation being considered at the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives and ensure BHRC is well positioned for future opportunities that may arise with state funding.
- **Buckeye Hills Support Services** | I continue to engage as needed in support of the construction of Buckeye Fields Senior Apartments – a 64-unit low-income senior housing project being undertaken by the non-profit BHSS in partnership with Community Building Partners.

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- **Hippodrome Historic Colony Theater Association** | I continue to attend the bi-monthly HHCTA board meetings to provide updates on state and federal programs that may positively impact the theater and the regional arts and cultural community in rural Appalachian Ohio.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS:

- **Office Hours for Senator Brown in Marietta** | On **Friday, March 4**, Beth Clodfelter, Appalachian Regional Representative for Senator Sherrod Brown, will hold office hours on behalf of the Senator in Marietta. She will be at the Washington County Courthouse, by the Recorder's Office, from 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.
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- **SAVE THE DATE: GENERAL POLICY COUNCIL – ANNUAL MEETING** | The Buckeye Hills General Policy Council full membership will meet **Friday, May 6, 2022**.
- **Appalachian Ohio State of the Region Conference** | The Appalachian Ohio State of the Region Conference will gather public officials, economic development experts, and business and organizational leaders on **May 10th** in the Baker University Center Ballroom on the Ohio University Campus in Athens. The event brings public officials, economic development experts, business and organizational leaders and others to Ohio University each year to discuss different issues related to economic growth in the Appalachian Ohio region.

CONTACT INFO: Misty Crosby, Executive Director | mcrosby@buckeyehills.org | 740-376-1034

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