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Land of Sky Regional Council Receives \$952,963 from Appalachian Regional Commission's POWER Initiative

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Land of Sky Regional Council

For Immediate Release

Upscaling the Creative Manufacturing Sector in WNC is part of a nearly \$54 million award package that will create economic resiliency by igniting the Creative Manufacturing sector across 26 COUNTIES coal-impacted communities in WNC

Asheville, October 20th, 2023 — Land of Sky Regional Council has been awarded \$952,963 by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to grow the Creative Manufacturing industry in 26 Western North Carolina counties. Land of Sky Regional Council (LOSRC) and its partners will work collaboratively across 26 counties to implement strategies that bring together local leaders to invest in and grow the capacity, strength, and sustainability of the creative manufacturing economy of WNC. Project partners include the Southwestern Commission, High Country COG, Western Arts Agencies of North Carolina (WNC Arts), Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, AB Tech, Mountain BizWorks, Center for Craft, and others.

"It's imperative for WNC to have a diverse and creative economic ecosystem. We've spent the last year developing our Creative Manufacturing Sector Development Plan which helped us build an amazing network of partners and strategies that will be instrumental in getting this work off the ground. This project is expected to serve 705 businesses, create more than 110 jobs, retain 158 additional jobs, and leverage \$4,450,000 of private investment." Sara Nichols, [LOSRC](#) Senior Planner.

This award is part of a recently announced nearly \$54 million package supporting 64 projects in 217 coal-impacted counties through ARC's **POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization)** Initiative, which directs federal resources to economic diversification projects in Appalachian communities affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries. This is the largest single POWER awards package to date since the initiative launched in 2015.

"From workforce training and agriculture to downtown development and broadband expansion, the projects receiving grants in this round of POWER funding show that the future of

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Appalachia’s coal-impacted communities is economically diverse and innovative,” said **ARC Federal Co-Chair Gayle Manchin**. “Projects like these are resulting in life-changing transformations, which in turn, not only provides new economic opportunities but brings a renewed sense of hope and purpose across our Appalachian Region.”

"Mountain BizWorks is thrilled to be a part of this historic investment to advance the sustainable growth of craft businesses and manufacturing throughout Western North Carolina. Economic vitality springs from cultural vitality, and we know craft is both a rich part of our heritage and a powerful driver of our future opportunity. Together with our regional partners and craft entrepreneurs, we're committed to leveraging this ARC award to upscale the creative manufacturing sector in Western North Carolina." - Jamie Karolich, [Craft Your Commerce](#) Program Manager at Mountain BizWorks

Including today’s award package, ARC has invested over \$420 million in 507 projects impacting 365 coal-impacted counties since POWER was established in 2015. ARC’s investments have helped create or retain over 53,000 jobs and prepare over 142,000 workers and students for new opportunities in entrepreneurship, broadband, tourism, and other growing industries.

About the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

The Appalachian Regional Commission is an economic development partnership 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.