



Kanawha Valley Event Recap

16 total
attendees


5 farmers/value-
added producers

4 grocery
stores/retailers

5 support service
providers

6 county range

The West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition's (WVFFC) second Rural Grocer Network gathering of 2023 took place on Thursday, October 12th. A healthy mix of retailers, farmers, value-added producers, and support service providers were in attendance from Cabell, Jackson, Kanawha, Nicholas, and Wayne counties. We even had a visitor from a neighbor in Meigs County, Ohio!



As a group, we identified the wants and needs of retailers and farmers/value-added producers alike. We then turned to the 5 support service providers in attendance to discuss solutions to the challenges facing each group. The following page provides a summary of both the problems and solutions we identified.

Rural retailers from the region identified multiple challenges they have been facing, and the support service providers in attendance provided solutions in response.

Challenges

Solutions

Staffing

Workforce West Virginia and Jobs & Hope have multiple programs that pay for on-the-job training, summer interns, wage reimbursements, tax credits, & more! Info flyer attached.

Identifying Sources & Logistics of Distribution

If you're looking for new vendors to buy from, reach out to Audra O'Dell for a comprehensive list of farmers & producers in your region.

Retailers struggle with access due to their own rurality & the means of local producers to distribute their product far and wide. The LIFT Center being opened in Charleston by Advantage Valley in 2026 hopes to partially address this, but in the meantime, reaching out to Supporting Appalachia is a good move! Info flyer attached.

Location/Rurality

Many retailers mentioned the struggle of being a "destination" location. Try marketing! Social media is great tool. WVFFC/FASTER WV/PCAP can also fund technical assistance in this area.

Equipment

FASTER WV offers equipment grants and loans, WVFFC offers a Revolving Loan Fund, Partner Community Capital (CDFI) also offers lending options, and Truist is a more traditional lender.

Local farmers and value-added producers identified multiple challenges they have been facing, and the support service providers in attendance provided solutions in response.

Challenges

Solutions

Scaling

Audra O'Dell (WVFFC) offers assistance in scaling farm and value-added businesses. FASTER WV also offers business coaching. WVDA can offer multiple services, such as business planning, label review, etc.

Distribution
(challenges related to the distance between retailers)

The LIFT Center being opened in Charleston by Advantage Valley in 2026 hopes to partially address this, but in the meantime, reaching out to Supporting Appalachia is a good move! Info flyer attached.

Entry Into the Market

Marketing is a great tool to utilize when trying to get the word out about your product! FASTER WV & Partner Community Capital can offer technical assistance grants in this realm. Also, having a social media presence is helpful!

Profit
Margins/Pricing

FASTER WV offers business coaching to assist in increasing revenue, technical assistance grants, and free courses in accounting, marketing, and more. The WVDA's Business Development team & PCAP also offer guidance in this realm.

Scattered Resources
& Unclear Path
Forward

Audra O'Dell is working to form Mountain State Co-Hop (info flyer attached), which will serve as a resource guide for farm & value-added producers! In the meantime, Audra herself is a great resource as well as Lacy Davidson from the WVDA.



Kanawha Valley Event Contacts

Grocers/ Retailers

Fresh Start Market Summersville (Nicholas Co.)

Shawn Singer

(304) 880-3446

freshstartmarketco@outlook.com



J.Q. Dickinson Salt-Works Appalachian Mercantile Malden (Kanawha Co.)

Nancy Bruns

(304) 925-7918

appalachianmercantile@jqdsalt.com



Pleasant View Farm Market Ravenswood (Jackson Co.)

Sarah McCoy

(304) 780-0121

pvfarmmarket@gmail.com



Twelvepole Trading Post Wayne (Wayne Co.)

Lacy Davidson

(304) 691-4017

twelvepoletradingpost@gmail.com



Farmers/Producers

J.Q. Dickinson Salt-Works Malden (Kanawha Co.)



(304) 925-7918, info@jqdsalt.com

★ **Artisan salts, spice blends, caramel
sauces, & more!**

Peppermint Acres Kenova (Wayne Co.)



(304) 951-2525, peppermintacres@gmail.com

✓ **Brown, white, and quail eggs!**

Pleasant View Farm Ravenswood (Jackson Co.)



(304) 780-0121, Pleasantviewangus@gmail.com

★ **Angus beef and pork (aged and fresh)
for retail sale and a stock producer!**

Snowville Creamery Pomeroy (Meigs Co, Ohio)



(740) 698-2340, info@snowvillecreamery.com

✓ **Milk, cheese, half & half, whipping cream,
cheese crisps, yogurt, creme fraiche!**

We B Fryin Snacks Charleston (Kanawha Co.)



(304) 444-7796, webfryin@outlook.com

★ **Sweet and savory crunchy wheat snacks!**

Support Service Providers

Tyler Brandstetter

(681) 220-2888

Business Coach, FASTER WV (Advantage Valley)

tylereadvantagevalley.com

Tyler's work with FASTER WV (Fostering Advantages for Start-Ups & Entrepreneurial Resurgence in WV) identifies, encourages, and supports small businesses and entrepreneurs through one-on-one business coaching, free classes and workshops, business plan formulation and guidance, mini-grants (for equipment or technical assistance), and loans from a micro-loan fund (can be used for most anything, except vehicles).

Jess Toon

(304) 926-0567

Rural Grocer Network Coordinator, WVFFC

jtoon@wvfoodandfarm.org

Jess' work with WV Food and Farm Coalition is centered around promoting sustainability and viability of rural grocers. Her work involves coordinating: tailored technical assistance (free of charge), peer-to-peer learning through Rural Grocer Network member gatherings, access to necessary equipment through a Revolving Equipment Fund, and collaborative placemaking activities to highlight regional identities and promote ecotourism efforts.

Lacy Davidson

304-546-7930

Business Development Planning Coordinator, WVDA

ldavidsonwvda.us

Lacy's program with the WVDA works with producers, suppliers and organizations to support agricultural marketing, advocacy, and outreach. Her team's goal is to reach out with tools and partnerships to make potential businesses aware of the services and support the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) and its partners can provide. These support services can be, but are not limited to: agritourism business planning tools, cross promotion opportunities, product label review, business and production planning, assistance in finding market opportunities, help to develop marketing and business plans, and providing product development and technical assistance. Info flyer attached!

Audra O'Dell

(304) 669-8973

Value-Added Product Coordinator, WVFFC

aodellewvfoodandfarm.org

Audra's work with WV Food and Farm Coalition provides multifaceted support to value-added product producers statewide. She also is working to form Mountain State Co-Hop, a cooperative group offering a marketing platform, a solid partnership with Future Generations to extend distribution beyond WV's borders, assistance in scaling food business, as well as a curriculum being built to address label design, logistics and aggregation assistance, non-food shelf-stable assistance, and a guide/decision tree to alleviate the stress of navigating value-added and cottage food businesses and their relevant regulations.

Support Service Providers

Kevin O'Connor

304-288-0340

Lender, Partner Community Capital (PCAP)

koconnor@partnercapital.org

Kevin is the Senior Vice President & WV Market Manager of Partner Community Capital, a CDFI partnering with small businesses to make projects and success possible and in their community. PCAP lends to businesses, agricultural enterprises, and non-profits so they can provide job creation, delivery of vital products and services, and environmental stewardship. As a CDFI, PCAP provides access to capital to borrowers who cannot meet the credit standards of traditional financial institutions. PCAP uses a range of credit enhancement programs to make good/flexible loans happen, offers free business advisory services, and can partner with traditional lenders and/or other community development lenders to help entrepreneurs get all the financing and support they need.

Liberty Newberry

(304) 761-2784

Value Chain Cluster Initiative (VC2) - PCAP

lnewberry@partnercapital.org

Liberty and her team provide hands-on business development and coaching services to help expand local food and farm businesses in West Virginia. By nurturing a strong network of businesses ranging from production, processing, retail, restaurants, agri-tourism and more, they support quality jobs, sustainable agriculture, healthy food options and valuable local dollars that circulate locally. In essence, VC2 helps identify and procure the best technical assistance consultant to provide the services their applicants need, free of charge to the applicant! This technical assistance can range from, but is not limited to: accounting, marketing, designing site plans, business strategic planning/analysis, and connecting you to specialized help.

Mike Holtsclaw

Market President, Truist

michael.holtsclaw@truist.com

Mike brings nearly 20 years of grocery experience to his role at Truist, where he is focused on commercial lending, deposits, and related financial services for business clients. Mike's combined perspective from both the retailer and traditional lender lenses made him a valuable perspective at our gathering! He underlined the importance of having a plan/end result, understanding financials/margins/cash flow/inventory/assets/value/efficiency, and searching for the answers/resources to bring you a better understanding of those aspects of your business. From Mike's view, community banks are key - he recommends starting planning and development (technical assistance and/or business coaching) prior to seeking funding.

EMPLOYER INCENTIVES



Individuals are struggling to find stable employment upon reentry. It's time to bridge the gaps and create job opportunities for dependable and engaged employees. There are resources and incentives available for employers to make this a reality in West Virginia.

Jobs & Hope WV WorkForce Employment Program

A collaboration of Program Partners: Jobs & Hope WV, WorkForce WV and West Virginia Military Authority, offering subsidized job placement(s) for WV employers who hire Jobs & Hope participants. Benefits include salary reimbursement for wages up to 1,040 hours up to \$25,000 per employee, free drug screening, additional support services through the Jobs & Hope Transition Agents. For more information, call **(304)561-6416** or email ng.wv.wvamg.mbx.jh-workforce@army.mil

On-the-Job Training

OJT provides opportunities for participants to "learn as they earn." The employer also benefits by being reimbursed for part of the participant's wages during the training period, while having the services of a full-time employee.

➔ <https://workforcewv.org/job-seekers-test2/training-test/classrooms-and-on-the-job-training-test>

Governor's Guaranteed Workforce Funds

This WV Department of Economic Development program provides companies reimbursement funds and technical assistance for training employees. GGWF can cover up to 50

percent of training expenses or up to \$2,000 per worker. The program is not limited to new employees and can help train a trainer.

➔ <https://westvirginia.gov/incentives-and-programs/workforce-programs/>

Federal Bonding

The federal bond that is available at no cost to employers was recently doubled from \$5,000 to \$10,000. This can be used for full- or part-time employees, including those hired through a temp agency. The form and additional info can be found at:

➔ <https://workforcewv.org/federal-bonding-program>

WorkForce Opportunity Tax Credit

The WOTC is a federal tax credit program that offers significant incentives for employers who hire and retain individuals from specific target groups that have previously experienced difficulty in securing employment.

➔ <https://workforcewv.org/employers/step-3-explore-tax-credits>

Substance Misuse Toolkit

This toolkit for employers was recently added to the West Virginia Chamber website and I think you may find it helpful.

➔ www.wvchamber.com/Drug-Responsible-Workplace/default.aspx



STATE PARTNERS



ON-THE-JOB TRAINING



FEDERAL BONDING



TAX CREDITS

FREE SUBSTANCE MISUSE TOOLKIT

FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT:

- ➔ WorkForce West Virginia-Workforce Development Unit, 304-558-5050
- ➔ Deb Harris, Jobs & Hope WV, at 304-558-8833 or drharris@k12.wv.us

SUPPORTING APPALACHIA

Through Regional Food System Partnerships

OUR STORY:

For generations, our families have worked, nurtured, and cultivated the land. Appalachia's hills and hollers may not make it easy, but we've always found a way. We're used to relying on ourselves and doing the hard work.

Our traditions of independence and innovation are our strength—and they're also our future.

By joining forces to create a network of farmers, food hubs, and buyers throughout Appalachia, we have the power to spark a rural revolution. To increase market access for farmers and food producers of every size region-wide. To build a local food system that thrives.

The time for a new rural is now, with the demand for delicious, locally-grown food steadily on the rise. We have an opportunity, if we stand together, to each come out stronger. Because when Appalachian farms feed Appalachian families, our entire region will prosper.

MORE INFORMATION:

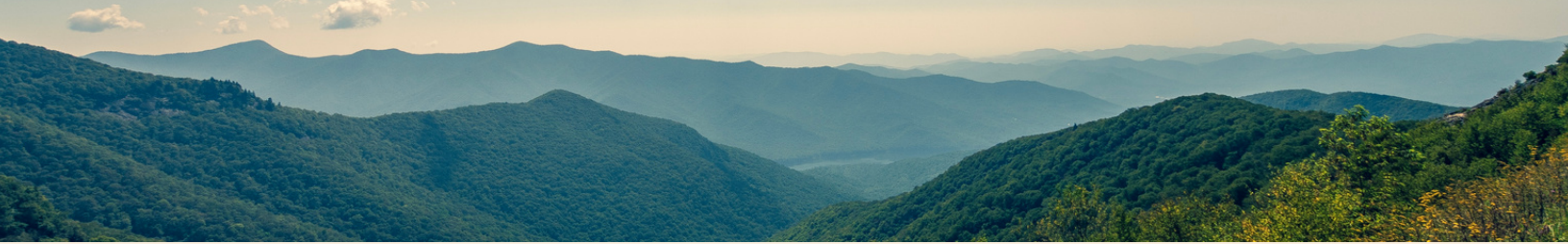
276-431-3385

sales@asdevelop.org

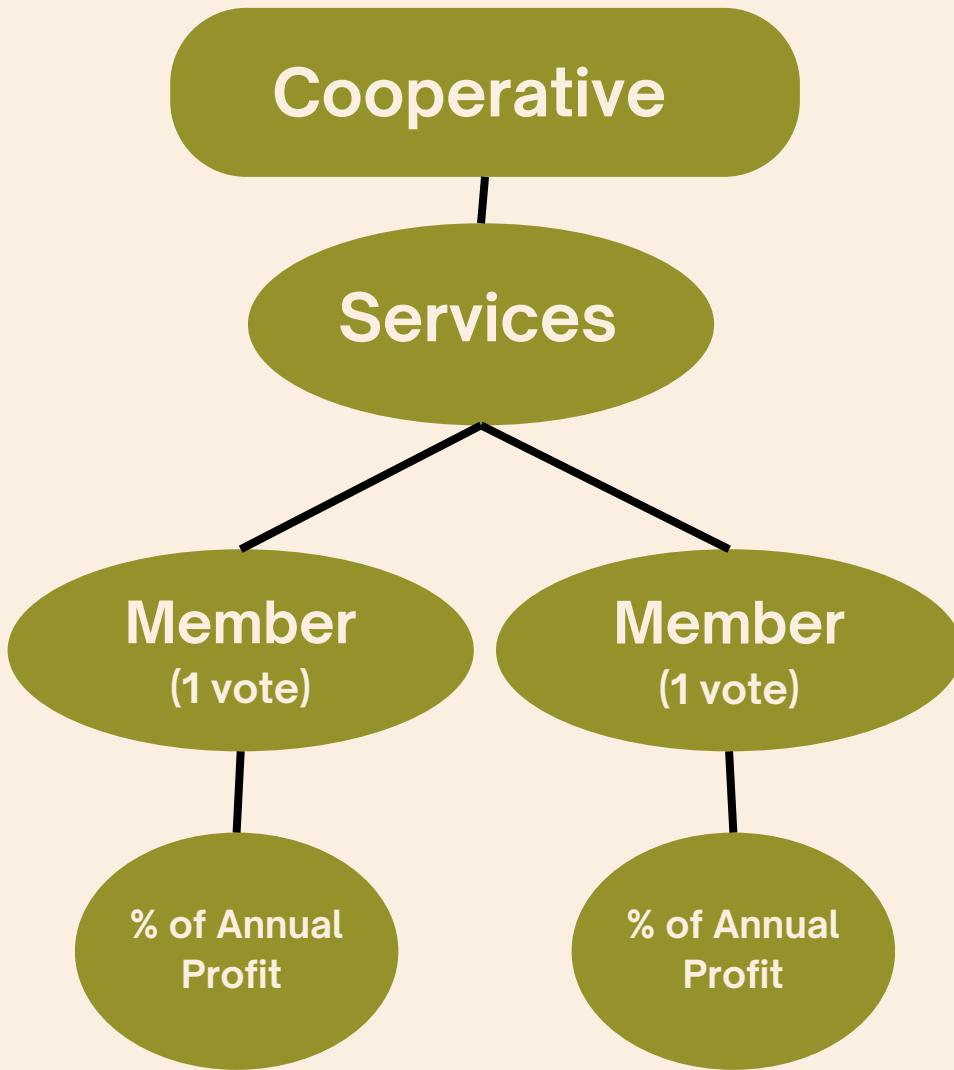


Our Partners:





How it works:



What we offer:

- profit sharing
- shared use equipment
- Member owned
- aggregation/distribution
- marketing
- sales
- educational resources/workshops
- collective funding
- bulk purchasing
- resourcing
- economic savings
- improved bargaining power
- reduced costs/increased income
- improved product or service quality
- access to services otherwise unavailable

Questions?

Jenn Brown
President

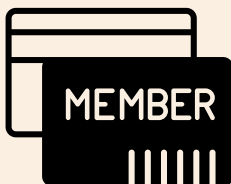
757.897.6724

mountainstatecohop@gmail.com

Mountain State CO-HOP Fact Sheet

About Us

In January 2022, 12 farmers met to address economic and market barriers facing local farmers and value-added producers. Through their combined experience and vision, Mountain State Co-Hop was created. Mountain State Co-Hop allocates resources, provides education, increases market advantage for the organization's members, and offers high-quality, clean, and ecologically conscious products.



Hinerman Hill Farm, Turtle on a Post, Spotted Horse Farm, Random Rabbit, Hopped Up Farm, Hops Meadow Farm, Mountain Life Farm, Radabaugh Farm, Hobbs Homestead, Tortoise on a Stump Farm, Lost Ridge Farm, & Officialis Inc.

Our Members

What We Offer

Marketing Assistance & Management

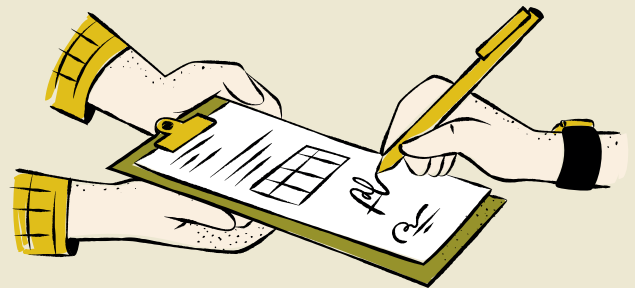
By joining Mountain State Co-Hop, you will have access to extensive marketing assistance including but not limited to, product promotion, sales, and merchandising.

Educational Resources

Mountain State Co-Hop offers multitudinous educational resources; ranging from Cottage Foods regulation, hop farming assistance, and Farmers Market Vendor guide support.

Equipment Use Aid

Mountain State Co-Hop provides an array of equipment for farmers to use, such as mobile oast boxes (2), resources to build a micro-picker for individual farms, a hammer mill, a cyclone collector, a low-temp pelletizer, and a nitrogen flush vacuum sealer.



Contact:



(757) 897-6724
(304) 669-8973



mountainstatecohop@gmail.com
aodell@wvfoodandfarm.org

West Virginia Department of Agriculture Business Development Division

The **WVDA Business Development Division** supports the economic development of West Virginia's agriculture industry by fostering the growth of agribusinesses in domestic and international markets. Business Development works with agripreneurs, including veterans and youth, to assist in the areas of market development and opportunity, marketing, technical assistance and training/educational programs.

businessdevelopment@wvda.us | 304.558.2210



WV Agriculture, at a glance

20,000 Total Farms • 3,600,00 Total Farmed Acres • \$241M in Ag Exports (2017)

Business & Production Planning

WVDA Planning

Coordinators act as local liaisons, coordinators, and facilitators, helping develop agriculture projects and assist agribusinesses. They participate in economic and business development efforts, while addressing food insecurities and building resiliency in local communities.



Veterans & Warriors to Agriculture



The **Veterans & Warriors to Agriculture** program's mission is to recruit, re-train, and mentor men and women currently serving, or those who have served our country, for new career opportunities in agriculture. From business planning to capital investment, the program assists servicemen and women in the transition from the battlefield to agriculture enterprises.

vetstoag@wvda.us

West Virginia Grown

The Business Development Division houses the **West Virginia Grown Program**, the state's premier branding program for agriculture products. The West Virginia Grown logo indicates to buyers that the product was grown or processed with quality ingredients (in the Mountain State), and that their dollars are going right back into the communities where they live. West Virginia Grown is an important component in helping grow and diversify the state's economy, as well as expand local food systems throughout West Virginia. wvgrown@wvda.us



Product Label Review

Business Development Staff offer assistance in product development by way of label review of foods and cosmetics made in West Virginia. WVDA review addresses compliance with federal labeling requirements (FDA Guidelines) which include The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) and the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act.



productlabeling@wvda.us



WVDA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

And there's more!

AGRITOURISM

Best described as the intersection of agriculture and tourism, West Virginia agribusinesses offer visitors a unique on-farm education experience. West Virginia farms are open year-round for classic activities such as corn mazes, Christmas tree pick your owns, on-farm markets and pumpkin patches, as well as some unique features in agri-tainment including field ziplines and farm to table experiences.

Business Development staff provides agritourism business planning tools as well as cross promotion opportunities to help the Mountain State's rural communities engage in creating farm visits and extended stays.

For more information: agtourism@wvda.us.

FOOD SAFETY

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Audits

The WVDA operates under a USDA cooperative agreement to perform GAP Audits for West Virginia farmers/producers. This third party audit is required by some wholesalers, hospitals, retail grocery chains, higher education institutions, and others to guarantee the highest degree of food safety and traceability.

Those participants who successfully complete a GAP audit are eligible to receive a reimbursement of up to 75 percent of the cost with a maximum of \$750. Reimbursement funds are issued via Specialty Crop Block Grant Funds.

Produce Safety Rule/FSMA/On Farm Readiness Review

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and newly initiated Produce Safety Rule (PSR) reflect a whole-farm and nationwide effort to implement risk assessment, prevention and inspection as tools to ensure consumers a safe and healthy food supply.

WVDA participates in all components of the program through a cooperative agreement. The Business Development group provides outreach and education on these important programs.

For more information: produce@wvda.us.

For a free On Farm Readiness Review program for qualified growers: ofrr@wvda.us

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

The WVDA Business Development Division assists farmers and agribusinesses in both the start-up and growth phases by providing assistance in finding market opportunities, helping to develop marketing and business plans, providing product development and technical assistance, and by broadly promoting West Virginia agriculture, both domestically and abroad.

USDA PROGRAMS

Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG)

The purpose of the SCBG program is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as "fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture."

The WVDA administers this program and disburses SCBG funds after a competitive review and selection process from an outside panel. Past recipients have ranged from universities to local elementary schools to commodity associations.

For more information: grants@wvda.us.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

The SFMNP is a federally funded grant program, administered by the WVDA, that provides low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods at participating farmers' markets and roadside stands.

Only farmers, farmers' markets, and roadside stands authorized by the WVDA may accept and redeem vouchers.

Farm to School

Farm-to-School is a program that encourages the incorporation of local products into the school meal programs, integrates agricultural education into the classroom, and cultivates and expands school gardens.

West Virginia's Farm To School effort is spearheaded by the West Virginia Farm To School Community Development Group (WVFTSCDG), a public/private task force made up of the West Virginia Department of Education, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, The West Virginia University Extension Small Farm Center, New Appalachian Farm and Research Center, and the Collaborative for the 21st Century Appalachia.