



What is the Reimagining Your Community Visioning Session Project?

The ReImagine Your Community Visioning Session Project will bring together 5-10 community leaders from across the region for a series of monthly meetings with the goal of supporting participants to create a bottom-up, collective visioning process for a sustainable, equitable economy in their community, neighborhood or region. Each participant will receive a modest stipend to support the implementation of the [ReImagine Your Community Toolkit](#) and the privilege of being part of a small cohort of Appalachian changemakers from a diverse spectrum of communities.

This collective vision can help serve as a guide, a source of ideas and galvanizing collective force for securing competitive federal climate infrastructure grants.

Who should apply?

Successful applicants will be community champions willing and able to bring together diverse stakeholder groups—organized labor, faith, environment, racial justice, economic, community and workforce development leaders and elected officials—in order to create a collective vision of a more sustainable, equitable economy for their community, neighborhood or region.

What is the central goal of ReImagine Your Community?

This work will expand the ReImagine Your Community local visioning model originally spearheaded by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and ReImagine Beaver County, Pennsylvania to other locations.

Through this work, we are making connections between faith, local government, labor, racial justice, and environmental partners and building trusting, authentic, and reciprocal relationships to move vision to action. The ReImagine Your Community project is designed to engage regular people from different backgrounds and neighborhoods, whose opinions are not usually sought, in envisioning their communities, and learning how to make their ideas for sustainable community development become reality.

One of our key tools is our ReImagine Your Community Toolkit:

[The ReImagine Your Community Toolkit](#) provides a step-by-step process on how to imagine projects to make one's neighborhood, town, county, or region more sustainable. This may range from putting solar panels on places of worship or adding electric car charging stations to a main street to starting up a regenerative hemp farm that creates jobs, or gathering support to reimagine new uses for old coal plants, such as environmental friendly industrial parks manufacturing the sustainable products of the future like battery technology or biomaterials.

We know that sustainable development is about more than just renewable energy. That's why the Relmagine Your Community Toolkit looks at the bigger picture. By looking at the sustainable development sector holistically, the Toolkit can contribute to a new economy designed for everyone.

The Relmagine Your Community Toolkit prioritizes hearing from everyone, making sure that the ideas and actions you use the Toolkit to create reflect your community and your unique needs. By inviting everyone to the table, we can work together to build trust, creating an inclusive environment where all voices are heard, and identifying win-win-win solutions for all key stakeholder groups.

Together, we can reimagine communities to not only meet a community's present needs, but also do so in a way that ensures a brighter future for generations to come.

When will the meetings happen?

From September 2023 to March 2024, participants will join in virtual one hour Zoom sessions each month to deep dive into topics covered in the toolkit and learn and be inspired by each other at every step of the process.

What are the topics of the monthly meetings?

- Introductory Group Meeting
- Community Outreach
- Communications
- Meeting Facilitation & Planning
- Visioning Debrief
- Post-event Materials & Dissemination

What are the expectations for participants?

Participants will strive to attend each monthly virtual zoom meeting and do occasional readings between meetings. Participants are encouraged to work toward becoming advocates and building the coalition of stakeholders needed for initiating new investments, agreements, and standards in their communities. Communities that vision together, stay together.

By the end of the project, participants are expected to:

- Create a coalition or group of local advocates
- Lead a respective visioning session in their community. "Community" can be defined as a city block, a village, a town, a cluster of towns, or a county
- Identifying 3-7 sustainable economic development projects or other opportunities in their respective geography
- Create follow-up materials for their work including (1) media eg. photos or video documenting the experience and (2) a report detailing the experience and the proposed projects. See Relmagine Beaver County for an example [video on this page](#) and [vision write up here](#).

Both the process and the results will help prepare communities for drawing down competitive grants for climate infrastructure projects, empower residents and stakeholders to participate in the process, and create a coalition of interested stakeholders bought into working together to achieve the vision. Participants will also develop close relationships and join a network of like-minded community champions across the Ohio River Valley region of Appalachia (Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Kentucky).

Who all can participate?

This program is open to anyone living in Appalachian Kentucky, West Virginia, Ohio, or Pennsylvania who identifies as a community advocate. We understand community advocates to be community members, local electeds, nonprofit folks, labor union members, people of faith, climate organizers, advocates in disadvantaged neighborhoods and/or those historically left out of the community and economic development process who want to make a change. Overall, the target audience of this program is someone looking to develop greater community preparedness in order to bring new resources into their community. If you identify as a community advocate but live outside of one of these four states, we may accept your application on a case-by-case basis.

The goal will be for 5-10 community advocates to host a visioning session based on the Relmage Your Community Toolkit by November 2023, with final reporting and media completed by February 2024. Demonstrations of cross-stakeholder collaboration will be necessary as is a willingness to listen to other people's ideas that may differ from your own, in order to find common ground.

Participants can include anyone who shares our goal to create a foundation to develop potentially formal [Community Benefits and Labor Standards](#) on sustainable economic development projects and help shape economic development policy and projects in their community.

Why Relmage Your Community?

There are many governmental, business, and nonprofit programs and funding opportunities available in Appalachia right now. In order to successfully access these opportunities, applicants need an engaged coalition and shared vision from broad and diverse stakeholder groups. Our work in this project focuses on equipping communities with the necessary tools to help prepare them to identify stakeholders, build these vital coalitions, and begin to engage in the next level of technical assistance programs. This can prepare a group to present their vision for the next stage in sustainable development and give them a leg up to receiving grants and funding. Additionally, we help communities prepare for [Community benefit policies, plans and agreements](#), which can further contribute to your community's sustainable development goals. We are looking to emphasize themes such as, "How do we build relationships on trust and inclusivity, not solely power? How we include people traditionally excluded from decision-making?" As Martin Luther King, Jr. said "What does healing mean for those communities?"

What is Relmage Your Community (RYC) and what it isn't?

What kind of services does Relmage Appalachia offer participants in RYC?

Visioning and community benefit support are provided predominantly through facilitation and sharing tools. Relmage Appalachia is organizing communities of practice to foster peer-to-peer learning across different communities, regions, and state lines. This collaborative approach promotes community building among individuals involved in similar initiatives, facilitating networking opportunities, and the exchange of experiences and best practices. Additionally, Relmage Appalachia offers regional-level research support in the form of best practices, models for replication and expansion, high-level data, and narrative/messaging support to assist communities in their sustainable development efforts. Lastly, a \$2500 will be provided per participant; this can be used to support participants' time as well as costs associated with the process, including generation of materials and media.

Relmage Appalachia networks of experts are able to provide:

- Education outlining the process and steps involved in visioning, coalition building, and community outreach
- Mentorship
- Connections to experts and other sources for resources, networking support, and technical support designed to help you design an economic development plan, site analysis, feasibility studies, etc.
- Support communication and storytelling to amplify your success stories and needs
- Summarize and track grant opportunities

What do WE *not* offer (but that others we know might)?

At this time, ReImagine Appalachia does not have capacity to support the type of work listed below. However, many of our partner organizations provide these services. **We would be happy to help connect you to a group that may be able to best assist you in:**

- Community organizing training
- Help with identifying stakeholders within your community
- Grant writing support
- Long term or ongoing coaching
- Direct assistance with project development
- Technical support in creating an large-scale economic development plan
- Site assessment, site analysis, and building evaluations
- Funding beyond the \$2,500 stipends

How do I apply?

If you would like to apply to participate in the ReImagine Your Community: Visioning Session Project, please fill out [this brief form](#) to help us learn more about your community and why you feel like this would be a good fit for you. Applications will be taken on a rolling basis until all positions are filled.