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Introduction

ioby’s MISSION AND THEORY OF CHANGE

ioby directly supports residents rebuilding and strengthening healthy and sustainable neighborhoods, towns, and cities. We blend resource organizing and crowdfunding to help leaders of local projects find the resources they need within their own communities. Our vision is to create a future in which our communities are shaped by the powerful good ideas of our own neighbors. Our mission is to mobilize neighbors who have good ideas to become powerful civic leaders who plan, fund, and make positive change in their own neighborhoods.

ioby removes friction from neighborhood action, helping people to make positive change. ioby supports resident leaders in every step, from idea through implementation. We focus on local residents because we know that they have great ideas to improve the neighborhoods where they live, work, and play. But there are many barriers to leading positive change, such as: lack of funding, lack of confidence, lack of knowledge about permitting processes, lack of 501(c)3 status, lack of teammates, and fear that no one will help.

ioby’s model—including a crowdfunding platform, coaching, fiscal sponsorship, resources, and project implementation support—removes these barriers, so that great ideas from residents can be implemented locally, quickly, and with neighbor support. Making it easier for residents to take neighborhood action is important because neighborhoods are the most tangible, relatable, accessible places for us to practice civic participation and flex the civic muscle we need for a healthy democracy.

While ioby is available to residents across the United States, we currently have Action Strategists—community organizers who work intentionally to support residents, increase civic engagement, and strengthen community power in neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment—working with residents in Memphis, Cincinnati, Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh to support them in making positive change happen where they live.

WHAT IS PHASE 0?

Before we begin a deliberate phase of work in a new place, ioby strives to learn as much as possible about the civic landscape from the very people who we will eventually be supporting. We do not make any assumptions at the outset about the skills, needs, and resources of the community leaders whom we hope will eventually be using our platform and services. We aim to support and contribute to, rather than supplant or duplicate, the services of existing local technical assistance providers. The Phase 0 research reveals residents’ goals for their communities and helps us develop a strategy to best position our services toward those goals.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

ioby aims to identify opportunities and craft a strategy for our team to increase civic engagement and enable residents to complete projects that improve public spaces and make their neighborhoods, towns, and cities stronger. To be successful in Central Appalachia, ioby must first:

1. Improve ioby’s understanding of the region’s civic landscape.
2. Assess competition and new opportunities for ioby to add value to the region’s civic sector.
3. Measure the region against ioby’s predictors of success.
4. Evaluate potential demand for ioby’s services in the region.
5. Identify the trends that drive communities’ interest in taking on projects like those that ioby typically supports.
6. Characterize civic participation across the region.
7. Recommend strategies to source and serve ioby project leaders across the region.
Methodology & Limitations

LOCAL RESEARCH FELLOW

To conduct Phase 0 research in seven regions in the South, ioby felt that it was essential to engage with local research fellows who had deep roots and connections in their region. In Central Appalachia, ioby hired Alea Tveit for this role. Alea Tveit is originally from Nashville, TN and currently lives and works as a student and community activist in Chattanooga, TN. With a passion for environmental and social justice, anti-racism work, gender studies, and community-led grassroots work, she received her undergraduate degree in Environmental Sociology with a minor in Women’s Studies at the University of Tennessee. She spent the last five years working in local Chattanooga nonprofits with focuses on community grassroots organizing, social and racial justice, equity, public education advocacy, and research. She is currently pursuing a Masters of Macro Social Work at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

GIS FELLOW

ioby hired a GIS Fellow, Sarah Kontos, to help us understand and visually represent the diverse social, economic, and physical landscapes in each of the southern regions. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the IRS, and other sources, Sarah Kontos created maps that informed many of the findings and strategies presented in this report. Sarah Kontos is a spatial analyst and urban designer based in Brooklyn, New York. She has worked for a wide and varied range of nonprofits and city-adjacent agencies to translate lived experiences into novel spatial and analytical frameworks. She also has previous experience as a GIS analyst-for-hire, a data visualization specialist, and a teacher, and has served on volunteer boards related to pedestrian and bicycle advocacy. She holds a B.A. in Urban Studies and History from the University of Pittsburgh and an M.S. in Design and Urban Ecologies from Parsons, The New School.

WORKSHOPS

ioby’s Local Research Fellow led two grassroots fundraising workshops, on October 3, 2019 in Chattanooga, TN and November 2, 2019 in Nashville, TN. ioby’s City Partnerships Director, delivered an additional grassroots fundraising workshop by webinar in partnership with the Appalachian Community Fund on March 25, 2020. Attendees provided valuable feedback on ioby’s mission, training content, and approach to grassroots fundraising.

INTERVIEWS

From a total of 35 one-on-one conversations with civic leaders and 23 attendees of ioby’s grassroots fundraising workshops in Central Appalachia, ioby began to identify the context, opportunities, and challenges involved in working in the region. While the Local Research Fellow was already connected to some of the interviewees, she also relied on existing contacts who introduced her to additional leaders in the region.

INTERVIEWEES AND WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of all interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewee or Workshop Attendee</th>
<th>Title and Affiliation(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Gilliland</td>
<td>Board Chair, Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA) &amp; Chattanooga in Action for Love, Equality and Benevolence (CALEB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Fleming</td>
<td>Teachers and Leaders Division, Tennessee Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberlee Archie</td>
<td>Director of Equity and Inclusion, City of Asheville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Interviewee or Workshop Attendee</td>
<td>Title and Affiliation(s)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rondell Crier</td>
<td>Director of Studio Everything, Artist/Placemaker, Board Member of Community Foundation, ArtsBuild, the Buzz, YaYa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah Golson</td>
<td>Director of 800 Collective, Artist/Placemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Conrad</td>
<td>Community Organizer and Facilitator, Associate Director of Programs at NAPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Mckissic</td>
<td>President of ArtsBuild, and Co-Founder of Race Equity Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Langgle-Martin</td>
<td>Community Engagement Manager, The Nashville Food Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Hughes</td>
<td>East Tennessee Community Organizer, Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua Smith</td>
<td>Executive Director, Community Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline Coldwell</td>
<td>Vice President, Upstate Pride SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Tyree</td>
<td>Executive Director of the Hub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda Perron</td>
<td>Program Coordinator/Job Developer, West Virginia Women Work (WVWWW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Ramey</td>
<td>Program Director, Southwestern Community Action Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Cupit</td>
<td>President and CEO, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Zakia Shabazz</td>
<td>United Parents Against Lead (UPAL), Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative (VEJC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekyah Davis</td>
<td>Black Appalachian Young and Rising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brian Johns</td>
<td>Virginia Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Abbott</td>
<td>Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Hodge</td>
<td>Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briana Perry</td>
<td>Executive Director, Healthy and Free TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah Hashinger</td>
<td>Community Organizer, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Newton</td>
<td>Executive Director, SPLASH Youth Arts Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricki Draper</td>
<td>Marion County Drinking Water, Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards (SAMS), Highlander Center, Appalachian Transition Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Interviewee or Workshop Attendee</td>
<td>Title and Affiliation(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanya Turner</td>
<td>Executive Director, Sexy Sex Ed, Appalshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Dozier</td>
<td>Cultural activist, anti-racism educator, itinerant blues preacher, historian, community organizer, One Human Family Gospel Choir, Race Justice Family Road Trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Davis</td>
<td>Appalachian Community Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Suttles</td>
<td>Director of Scholarships, Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga &amp; Board Member, Benwood Foundation, Sankofa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Nolte</td>
<td>Lyndhurst Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margo Miller</td>
<td>Executive Director, Appalachian Community Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lara Mack</td>
<td>Appalachian Voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou Murrey</td>
<td>Stay Together Appalachian Youth (STAY) Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Fitzgerald</td>
<td>Metro Arts Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Streets Anderson</td>
<td>Community Volunteer, Nashville Bahai Spiritual Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaya Todai</td>
<td>Accelerate Change, Community Organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cody Junier</td>
<td>Adventure Science Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Tveit</td>
<td>Nashville Musicians Association (Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Carr</td>
<td>Alliance Bernstein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrina Kennedy</td>
<td>Nissan North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey Anderson</td>
<td>Resident, Nashville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy Smith</td>
<td>Center for Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Conrad</td>
<td>Community Organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Streets-Anderson</td>
<td>Community Organizer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SURVEY

ioby designed a survey to uncover new perspectives on the civic landscape and asked community-based organizations to share it with constituents. The survey included questions about civic pride, attachment, trust in institutions, and the region’s existing culture of giving to grassroots projects. As an incentive for residents to complete the survey, respondents were entered to win one of thirty $200 gift cards.

We received 116 survey responses from Central Appalachia:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity (Self-reported)</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Share of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>58.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native/Indigenous</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>116</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIMITATIONS

We have identified limitations in our market research in Central Appalachia. Because the region is large and varied, compared to the way ioby has typically focused Phase 0 research on a single city, the perspectives of interviewees are not representative of the entire region. Rather, perspectives are only representative of the town or city of the participant.

The Cherokee Nation are the Indigenous Peoples from the Appalachian region. Despite the effects of colonization, genocide, and efforts to forcibly remove Indigenous Peoples from their land, there is still Cherokee presence in Appalachia, particularly the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. ioby’s interviews and survey did not reach anyone from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, therefore limiting the profile of Central Appalachia in this report. In future work, ioby will aim to center and bring focus to Indigenous People in this region.
Central Appalachia’s Assets and Challenges

Guided by the tenets of asset-based community development, ioby always aims to understand the existing conditions of a place before we make plans to grow our local presence. Central Appalachia’s civic assets are numerous. Based on the stories and insights of interviewees, they include:

- Strong sense of community and support; many interviewees told ioby that residents show up for each other in times of need.
- Residents demonstrate their deep attachment to place, space, and land that leads them to care for their homes, towns, and for the natural environment.
- Strong activism and leadership, particularly among young people, the LGBTQ+ community, and communities of color.

These assets have aided the region as residents and community-based organizations have grappled with profound challenges in their towns, cities, and neighborhoods. According to interviewees, these include:

- Systems of oppression, including systemic racism, that require organizations and leaders to examine and dismantle deep root causes.
- Stark contrasts between concentrated wealth and deep poverty.
- Issues relating to environmental injustice and exploited natural environments.
- A stark digital divide that reflects and exacerbates structural inequality.

**Objective #1: Improve ioby’s understanding of each sub-region’s civic landscape.**

Systems of racism, classism, and oppression profoundly impact people of color, LGBTQ+ communities, and low-income populations. Communities of color have historically and continuously been violently oppressed and erased from the narrative of Appalachia through: a history of genocide and violent, forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from the region; slavery; redlining; segregation; racial generational trauma; racialized violence; and extractive and environmentally destructive industries that generate profit for rich, white elites from outside of the region. While not a comprehensive list of all racist practices in Central Appalachia, interviewees of color described in detail the racism and many forms of discrimination they face every day, and have faced historically, at the hands of white supremacy and systemic oppression.

![Map 1. The majority of the region's people of color live in urban areas.](image-url)
INSTITUTIONAL RACISM
Interviewees shared several examples of institutional racism in the region, including urban renewal projects that destroyed historically Black neighborhoods and businesses, predatory housing practices, housing and school segregation, so-called "revitalization" projects in low-income neighborhoods that have catalyzed high levels of gentrification, food deserts and insecurity, and targeted disinvestment and redlining in communities of color. Students of color, particularly young Black girls, are disproportionately suspended. Teachers, government officials, and media in the region are all predominantly controlled by white men and do not reflect or represent the portion of the population that identify as Black and Brown.

Many shared stories about the high levels of policing, police murder, and brutality against Black and Brown peoples in addition to racist mass incarceration practices in Appalachia in which predominantly white rural towns build prisons to disproportionately hold Black men from larger cities. In healthcare, people of color do not receive the same level or access to care that white people do, and have endured violent histories of experimentation. The State of North Carolina’s Eugenics Board was among the most aggressive in the nation, authorizing the sterilization of more than 7,600 residents between 1929 and 1974, including many children of color.1 In Tennessee, Black women have one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the United States.2

Nationally, the murder rate for Black transgender women (1 in 2,600) is more than seven times the overall murder rate (1 in 19,000),3 and one in five transgender individuals has experienced homelessness in their lifetimes.4 Organizations in Appalachia like Tranzmission in Western North Carolina and Queer Appalachia in Western Virginia provide essential services, protection, and visibility to trans women of color in the region.5

Central Appalachia also experiences trends of higher environmental burden and injustice occurring in low-income communities and communities of color. The rich natural resources in the region have attracted industries that use extractive practices like coal mining, fracking, mountaintop removal, and the construction of the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley Pipelines. Communities in areas where these practices take place experience higher exposure to air and water pollutants and toxic chemicals like lead. In addition, many communities in low-income and rural areas have poor water and sewer infrastructure and aging housing stock, which increases residents’ chance of exposure to environmental risk.

DISTRUST IN GOVERNMENT
Many interviewees described very low trust in government and institutions among residents in Central Appalachia. Interviewees pointed to the history of the region’s governments and institutions actively suppressing Black and Brown leadership and representation and of lying to, perpetuating inequity in, and destroying communities of color. Many also pointed to the 2019 scandal involving Virginia Governor Ralph Northam in blackface and his refusal to resign.

When asked about trust in government, one interviewee shared that residents of color in the region are acutely aware of local and state governments’ histories of bombing and destroying several thriving majority-Black towns and Black-owned businesses in cities across the country after the Civil War. According to the interviewee, people in the region cite the stories of the destruction of Black communities in Knoxville, TN; Tulsa, OK; St. Louis, MO; and Wilmington, NC as reasons that they do not trust their government today.

INTERPERSONAL RACISM

"I love the South but the South doesn't love me." - Anonymous

Interviewees of color described the intense emotional labor that Black and Brown people endure when doing social justice work and socializing with peers. In addition to experiencing microaggressions constantly in the work and social spaces, one participant mentioned the exhaustion and triggering nature of having to relive racist experiences in order to educate white people about racism and dismantling white supremacy. In addition, race justice work is often seen as too radical to many of the regions’ institutions and workplaces, leading to the firing and “blacklisting” of people fighting for equity and racial justice.

Stories about identity and narrative came up often when talking to interviewees of color. Despite being a diverse region with deep ties to place and resilient histories of Black, Brown, and LGBTQ+ populations, Appalachia is often stereotyped as the region of the “poor white.” Deep ties to community and places in Appalachia coexist with deep traumas that have occurred at the hands of Southern institutions and governments. One interviewee of color said, “I love the South but the South doesn’t love me.” This sentiment seems to be shared widely among people of color in the region. At a federal level, one participant said that the “homogeneous white narrative of Appalachia” has often been used strategically, to distract from white supremacy and Black resistance efforts, like the Civil Rights Movements and Black Lives Matter, and shift the focus back on whiteness and electing white politicians.

Many interviews used terms like “resilient” to describe people of color and LGBTQ+ people in Appalachia. As one interviewee described, “People of color are very resilient, who have learned to thrive and survive in this environment.” Another interviewee shared, “They chased Black people out, but we are here and continue to exist and resist.” Many Black and Brown and LGBTQ+ groups, particularly young people, are working to reframe the Appalachian identity and increase visibility of oppressed groups. Many civic leaders and organizations across the region are championing racial and social justice, dismantling white supremacy and systems of oppression, leading environmental justice and anti-racism work, and creating equitable, community-led spaces that prioritize Black and Brown leadership.

URBAN RENEWAL

Urban renewal projects were used across cities in the Appalachian region to displace and dissolve Black and working-class communities. Many of these projects included “downtown revitalization” efforts that federal and local governments claimed would lead to economic prosperity to those living in downtown areas. Communities of color were forcibly displaced in order to accommodate the construction of highways and major roads, new luxury and middle-class housing, parks, and schools that were meant to serve white residents. Some larger cities in the region that experienced urban renewal that predominately displaced Black families and Black-owned businesses include Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Franklin, Murfreesboro, Lexington, Bowling Green, Frankfort, Roanoke, and Huntsville.

Other cities in which urban renewal sparked large-scale displacement, but where families of color made up under 50% of those displaced, include: Louisville, Johnson City, Huntington, Morristown, Newport, Covington, and Asheville. Interviewees specifically mentioned the impacts of urban renewal projects in Nashville, Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Roanoke.

- In Nashville, one interviewee discussed the devastating and lasting consequences that the construction of the I-40 and I-265 highways had on a historically Black community and Black-owned businesses in North Nashville. The construction of the highways
in 1968 displaced 1,400 residents and created a physical barrier that separates the neighborhood in two, and prevents people of color from having access to any of the economic prosperity that resulted from the downtown project.  

- In Chattanooga, interviewees noted that the construction of the Golden Gateway/Westside residential project displaced about 1,484 families, including 971 families of color, between 1958 and 1974.  

- In 2014, the City of Chattanooga displaced 400 low-income families when it demolished the Harriet Tubman Public Houses to accommodate new “economic development” in the area that the City promised would attract industry and create new jobs.  

- When promoting their plans for urban renewal from 1959-1974, the City of Knoxville told low-income home-owners that they would have their homes replaced and new businesses would be brought to their neighborhoods. Instead, the government displaced more than 2,500 families and 107 Black-owned businesses. One interviewee told ioby that low-income housing still does not exist in the area.  

- Finally, in Roanoke, interviewees told ioby that residential construction and downtown development displaced 432 families of color between 1955 and 1970 and has left the city permanently segregated.

**OPPORTUNITY ZONES**

ioby anticipates that the introduction of new funding for real estate projects catalyzed by the federal Opportunity Zones program may deepen residents’ concerns about the threat of displacement. Through this program, investors are offered a set of attractive tax benefits for their investments in real estate, housing, infrastructure, and existing or start-up businesses in designated Opportunity Zones. These Opportunity Zones, nominated by the governor of each state, are typically in low-income towns and neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment. Injections of new real estate investment in these concentrated areas threaten to intensify and accelerate the displacement of rent-burdened residents.

**“THE FOREST HAS NO TREES”: BROKEN PROMISES TO COMMUNITIES**

“I see community members getting used for quotas for grant reports to get more funding, or make people in power feel good. These promises are smoke and mirrors. Foundations want to appear to give to entities making real change but they either give to where real change is not happening, or, when real change begins, they stop it or take control in a way that will benefit them and their image. Promises around schools, housing, the integrity of our police force, etc. are being thrown at us and they are not true.” - Interviewee

“Some of the promises have been vague enough that you can’t tell if they have been kept or not. They are vague and not co-authored with the community, it is all big picture things but the forest has no trees.” - Interviewee

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8 Ibid.


10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

• **Economic Development:** Appalachia has been promised many “shiny, new” or “savior” initiatives with regard to its economic prosperity with little to no community input. Many of these promises have left community members feeling powerless, deflated, abused, or betrayed. Many interviewees described how promises concerning economic revitalization in downtowns and neighborhoods were often used as a smokescreen to conceal plans for gentrification and the destruction of Black neighborhoods. In most cases, meaningful investment was not being made in communities who had historically lived in those areas targeted for revitalization.

• **Economic Transition:** Large corporations and governments often promise new jobs, usually through the transition from one extractive industry to another, such as from underground coal extraction to mountaintop removal or the creation of natural gas pipelines. In addition, several interviewees mentioned that institutions like the Appalachian Regional Council and local governments have promised economic transition through practices that are widely seen as colonial or imperialist, such as the creation of prisons. One interviewee said that these practices create value on the “backs of the people who are suffering.”

• **New Prisons, New Jobs:** Although governments across Appalachia have looked to the construction of new prisons in former coal fields to create new jobs, these prisons have not delivered on promises of new prosperity in the region and have instead perpetuated mass incarceration and environmental degradation.

• **Tourism:** Local and state governments that have invested in attracting tourism to the region have been met with skepticism by residents who do not believe that tourism will lead to a robust economic transition from energy extraction.

• **Environmental Justice:** Promises to residents have also been made and broken regarding environmental justice. One interviewee recalled that their local government promised to test for lead in the drinking water supply but did not fund remediation where lead was found.

States in Central Appalachia are among the largest importers of solid waste from other states. Virginia, which imports 26% of its waste, ranks third in the nation among states that are net importers of trash, South Carolina, which imports 16% of its waste, ranks sixth; Kentucky ranks ninth (15% imported) and Georgia ranks 10th (14% imported). Rural, low-income, and Black communities are most vulnerable to toxin exposure due to their proximity to landfills in the region.

• **Other broken promises:** Appalachian communities have also been promised affordable housing, new broadband infrastructure, and new roads that have not yet been built.

• **Transparency, Equity, Community Leadership, and Sustainability:** Several interviewees mentioned promises relating to greater transparency in governments’ and institutions’ decision-making and the prioritization of equity, community-led power, and sustainability. These interviewees emphasized that these ideas were “only big words” and that these changes have not occurred as promised. The City of Chattanooga in particular has made several promises relating to sustainability through the Thrive Regional Partnership’s “Thrive 2055” planning initiative, and the “Velocity 2040” community planning process. City officials often refer to a “Chattanooga renaissance” that was catalyzed by the opening of the Aquarium in 1992 and sustained by the City’s substantial investments in high-speed internet infrastructure. Many community members find the City’s promises to be vague, do not trust the City to deliver on its promises, perceive these plans to be vessels for gentrification, and feel powerless over outcomes because they are not being led or stewarded by affected communities.

• **New Solutions from Outside of the Region:** One interviewee from West Virginia also spoke to promises from companies from outside of the region that claimed to be interested in “saving” Appalachia by offering classes in new vocations and skills such as coding, or starting a new non-profit in the area. Ultimately this interviewee said they “had companies come here and it was a scam.” Overwhelmingly, interviewees felt many promises were made but very few were kept. Each of these broken promises fractured communities’ trust and hopefulness in new initiatives that claim to benefit residents, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color.

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.
Only 34% of surveyed participants said they trusted philanthropists to keep their promises to the community and only 16% said they trusted the government to keep their promises made to the community. Overall, there is a lack of trust in foundations and local governments and their ability to fund community work that is truly led by the community. The degree to which organizations and residents receive funding for their work was described as largely dependent on the type of organization or project seeking funding, what type of work was being done, value alignment with funders, and the extent of the leader’s personal relationships to funders.

Those organizations and community members working on systemic changes such as prioritizing Black and Brown leadership, anti-racism, gender justice, LGBTQ+ rights and justice, dismantling oppressive systems and white supremacy, reproductive justice, equity and community-led decision-making, anti-capitalism and economic justice, disrupting mass incarceration, and providing support to the formerly incarcerated, had a more difficult, if not impossible, time finding traditional funding entities to support their work. One interviewee said that traditional foundations were more interested in supporting direct service work than systemic work, confirming that most local funders would rather be prescriptive to community needs instead of engaging in a process that supported community power and justice.

Many participants spoke to their communities’ distrust of many funders who had not prioritized residents’ voices, expertise, and leadership, and who had created harm in communities of color under the guise of “equity, diversity, and inclusion.” There tends to be a disconnect between a community’s priorities for what they would like to see funded and the priorities of leaders in foundations and governments who would rather invest in projects that perpetuate their own power.

Interviewees across the region told ioby that community leaders are not often invited to the table or given opportunities to have direct relationships with funders or those in local government. When they are, it is to meet input requirements at the beginning of a grant cycle or be counted as a number in a government campaign. Many participants suggested that community plans and inputs sit on a shelf somewhere, “gathering dust.” In addition, due to the lived realities of racism, exploitation, oppression, histories of slavery and colonization, and violence at the hands of the government, there is an extreme lack of trust in government, particularly in communities of color where governments have destroyed communities and perpetuated oppression.

PLANS UNDERWAY
Interviewees noted that nonprofits, governments, and foundations are leading several regional initiatives, including:

1. Projects aimed at a just economic transition, particularly in impoverished former coal fields.
2. Environmental justice projects through regional coalitions, ranging from efforts to remove lead from drinking water, oppose new pipelines and extractive industries, resist mountaintop removal, remediate former coal fields, create new sewer and water infrastructure in rural areas, and promote just food systems.
3. Participation in equity coalitions and anti-oppression work.
4. Public health initiatives, ranging from reproductive justice to shame-free opioid epidemic care.
5. Supporting young people, particularly in Black, Brown, or LGBTQ+ communities to create spaces in Appalachia where they want to live, work, and put down roots.
6. Educational initiatives such as supporting public schools; training facilitators and community organizers in areas such as sexual health and consent, anti-racism, or civic engagement; or workshops and classes for adults to learn job skills.

Regional organizations like Appalachian Voices, Alliance for Appalachia, the Highlander Center, Upstate Pride, the Virginia Environmental Justice Coalition, STAY Project, Black Appalachia Young and Rising, and Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards are working on regional efforts for environmental justice, race justice, LGBTQ+ justice, equity, and anti-oppression.

Local organizations like TN Healthy and Free, Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM), the Equity Alliance, the Black Voters Matter Fund, the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC), Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, Studio Everything, and the City of Asheville’s Office of Equity and Inclusion are creating citywide and statewide initiatives regarding reproductive justice, immigrant rights, just community-led economic systems, promoting Black and Brown leadership, activism through art, environmental and economic justice, equity, and social justice.
HEALING AND REPARATIONS

"I think a lot of people are trying to do it, but reconciliation has to have a justice component. I remember reading bell hooks and she said, ‘It is not a problem if white folks dont like us, they just need to leave us alone,’ and the problem is they won’t leave Black people alone. But when Black people began to live and thrive, what happened? They bombed our communities and instituted a coup to take over and prevent us from thriving in our own space. So how do you grasp restitution from something like that? You are preventing people from gaining generational wealth and then taking it when they do get wealth.” - Interviewee

"Some of these families who had their land stolen are living in poverty with no land or resources and the just thing to do would be to give their property and land back but what they get instead is a monument or a community center. That is not fair, that is not restitution, that is not justice." - Interviewee

"There is a need for Black and Brown people to be encouraged to build their own new courageous spaces that are centering Black and Brown people and allows them to tell you and invite others in when they feel safe. There should never be a presumption that they should feel safe around white people; there is no evidence that I should feel safe around you until you tell me otherwise.” - Interviewee

Interviewees cited the work of the City of Asheville’s Department of Equity and Inclusion, Nashville’s TN Leaders for Equity, the National League of Cities’ Race, Equity and Leadership Council, and a few region-wide equity, racial justice, and environmental justice coalitions as examples of formal government and institutional initiatives that are prioritizing healing, truth, restorative justice, reconciliation, and racial justice work. Outside of this, however, the majority of interviewees spoke to no formal institutionalized plan for reconciliation or reparations work. Many felt that those in power would generally not be willing to acknowledge their complicity in white supremacy, forfeit power or resources, or make meaningful changes to systems that have benefitted them.

One participant emphasized that movements for reparations are led by the grassroots: “I don’t know if the government is the place to look for reparations, so I really think it needs to be a community-led effort.” The majority of interviewees agreed with this sentiment, and many know of only a few individuals or organizations who are working for reparations to some extent. Conversations and actions regarding reparations are not happening widely. The small amount of reparations work in the region, therefore, can largely be described as a community-led effort. Interviewees specifically mentioned some work being done in education, restorative justice, economic justice, environmental justice, culture and history awareness-building, and housing, but some said that there is not yet any work being done at the intersections of reparations and health and reproductive justice.

The individuals and entities named by participants as engaging in some reparations or reconciliation work, outside formal institutional spaces, included: Urban League chapters, the Highlander Center, Chattanooga Councilwoman Demetrus Coonrod, American Friend Service Committee, the Race Equity Institute, Partnership for Southern Equity, Efia Nwangaza and the Malcolm X Center, James Mckissic and Lakwesha Ewing working on the Race Equity Center in Chattanooga, Kevin Muhammad and the Nation of Islam, local Black Lives Matter chapters, Gidean’s Army, the Equity Alliance and the Black Voters Matter Fund, the Louisville campaign to end cash bail, American Descendants of Slavery (#ADOS), Appalachian Community Fund, Urban Land Institute, Workers Dignity, the Baha’i Community, First People’s Fund, Knoxville for All City Council Movement with David Hayes, Knoxville Councilwoman Amelia Parker, the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality, Bridge City, Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training, Nashville Economic Justice Alliance, We Remember Nashville, the Equity Justice Initiative (EJI), and the Southern Poverty Law Center.
Compared to the rest of the United States, Appalachia is deeply and disproportionately impacted by the opioid epidemic. Alarmingly, Appalachian counties have a 72% higher death rate from opioid overdose than non-Appalachian counties. Opioid prescription rates are 45% higher in Appalachia than anywhere else in the country, a trend that has been consistent since the early 2000s. The opioid crisis has been fueled by conditions of chronic regional poverty, scarce regional resources for public health, a lack of preventative education and care, and scarce rehabilitative spaces. West Virginia has seen the highest rates of opioid overdose in the country and has been at the center of the crisis in Appalachia. One interviewee in West Virginia said that the severity of the opioid epidemic in their county has spurred advocacy around creating preventative programming, needle disposal boxes, community task forces, response tool kits, and public awareness campaigns.

Over the last 30 years, rural communities across Appalachia have seen the construction of 29 prisons, many of them on the sites of closed coal mines. After decades of exploitation leading to extreme environmental and economic destruction at the hands of companies, many rural communities were left with very few options for economic growth. These communities were further exploited by private sector leaders and politicians who claimed that the prison industry would be a lifeline and replacement economy. Currently, prisons are constructed in some of the poorest and most isolated parts of the region, with no evidence that these prisons stimulate economic growth or job creation. What was an environmentally extractive regional economy has now shifted into one that perpetuates racial oppression, mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex, and the removal of people of color from their communities. While counties that house prisons are majority white, the majority of those incarcerated in rural Appalachian prisons are people of color, particularly Black men, who have been extracted from larger urban or metropolitan areas outside of Appalachia.

One interviewee in Eastern Kentucky discussed her community’s resistance to the building of a federal prison in Letcher County, a former impoverished coal mining county. The construction of the Letcher County prison had many government backers, including U.S. Congressman Hal Rogers. The construction of the prison would have cost over $500 million, which would have made it the most expensive federal prison in the United States. However, construction was halted in 2018 due to community organizing, advocacy efforts, and opposition to the prison over concerns that it was environmentally unjust, posed potential public health risks, and contributed to racially unjust mass incarceration. This story is just one example of the powerful organizing efforts in Appalachia aimed at ending mass incarceration in the region.

Overwhelmingly, interviewees in the region’s mid-sized cities said that downtown areas have tended to receive the largest share of investments and capital. Usually in the name of “economic development” or “revitalization,” many cities prioritize investment in businesses and high-income housing in downtown areas. Outside of downtown areas, historically Black communities have been targeted for new investment in the forms of “revitalization” efforts, urban renewal, or “Opportunity Zones.” Almost every interviewee said that investments are being made in predominantly Black and Brown areas, either in downtown centers or residential neighborhoods, but that these investments are not going to current residents. Instead, this new investment is benefitting upper and middle-class white transplants.

The term “revitalization” was overwhelmingly perceived as having negative connotations and, in fact, is a term that signifies gentrification and displacement of Black and low-income residents. Specific examples came from interviewees in larger cities like Nashville, Chattanooga, Roanoke, Asheville, and Louisville, where revitalization, redlining, and gentrification led to the demolition of homes owned by low-income residents, Black-owned businesses, and predominantly Black schools. In Chattanooga, school integration efforts caused a large amount of white flight to the suburbs, leaving Downtown almost entirely Black and Brown. In recent years, new investment in the Aquarium and small, white-owned businesses on MLK Boulevard (e.g. through the Innovation District program) has increased demand for Downtown real estate, and increasing prices have pushed out low-income residents. Displacement stemming from gentrification in Downtown Chattanooga has even pushed some low-income and Black families to smaller cities like Cleveland, TN.

Regardless of the interviewee’s city or area of Appalachia, answers were largely the same: Black, Brown, and low-income communities continue to see little or few benefits from new investment in their neighborhoods.
As illustrated by the map above, new investment in urban areas is attracting people with higher incomes to the region's cities, even as per capita income has fallen rapidly in rural and some suburban areas.

Residents in large portions of the region are already severely rent burdened, paying an average of more than 50% of their adjusted gross income on rent. These residents are most vulnerable to displacement when rents rise due to new investment.
DIGITAL DIVIDE
There is a sizable digital divide in Appalachia, particularly in the region's rural areas. Many rural areas do not have adequate infrastructure for internet or mobile access. As a result, residents are charged a disproportionately large fee for very poor, if any, digital service. The lack of phone, internet, or computer access in rural Appalachia leaves these areas of the region very digitally isolated. To access their emails, many residents must travel to the nearest library. One nonprofit leader in the region said that, because digital education is not widely available in rural areas, people often lack basic computer skills like sending emails. This makes it more difficult for those in impoverished rural areas to look for and apply for jobs or grants. It is also important to note that Appalachia is a rapidly aging population and many older adults in the region also require assistance when using new technologies.

Objective #2: Assess competition and new opportunities for ioby to add value to the region’s civic sector.

Individuals and community groups who are not nonprofit affiliated and working on projects rely on fundraising in their communities, community-allocated funds, giving circles, or receiving funding through nonprofits that redistribute grant funding from foundations. Organizations and nonprofits are often funded by a blend of individual fundraising, member dues, and grants from foundations or government. Many participants, particularly in justice work, emphasized that they mostly received donations and relied on community fundraising, member dues, and specific equity-focused grant funding for their work and were generally less reliant on foundation or government money.

While not a comprehensive list of funders in the region, interviewees mentioned the following foundations, giving circles, community funds, or funding groups who have given to organizations, projects, or initiatives (in no particular order): Community Shares; Benwood Foundation; Lyndhurst Foundation; Footprint Foundation; Sankofa Fund; McKellen; Community Foundations; Unfoundation; the Appalachian Voices Fund; Just Transitions Fund; Power Plus Grants; Tobacco Commission; United Way; Government Funding in Disaster Recovery; Mining Recovery; USDA; Kauffman; CarePoint; Loan of Women’s Foundation; Wells Fargo; ArtsBuild; Teen Angel; Women’s Fund; Tzedek Foundation; Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation; Mertz Gilmore Foundation; Chattanooga in Action for Love, Equality and Benevolence (CALEB); Immigrants’ Rights Funds; STAY; Progressive Donor Network; Black Voters Matter Fund; WATO and Women’s Department of Labor; Appalachian Community Fund; Carnegie; SWAY; Metro Government; Frist Foundation; Baptist Healing Trust; Public Education Foundations; Climate and Equity Fund; Community Action; Causeway; University Funding; and Clayton.

Interviewees frequently noted that there is a strong sense of taking care of each other in Appalachia, and that a large amount of decentralized giving occurs between neighbors to creatively adapt and make due with what resources they have. While not through a formalized platform, the concepts of crowdfunding and local giving circles are not uncommon in Appalachian communities. This is compounded by the fact that much of Appalachia, rural areas in particular, do not have internet access and digital crowdfunding platforms are not widely used or feasible without adequate broadband infrastructure.

SANKOFA and the Appalachian Community Fund were two notable examples of giving circles and community-based funding organizations with missions and visions that include prioritizing Black and Brown leadership, supporting LGBTQ+ justice, supporting economic justice, and moving away from unjust philanthropic models. Although neither organization operates a crowdfunding platform, these organizations use community-led grantmaking models to distribute resources to causes and projects, with an emphasis on resident leadership.

Interviewees said that Indiegogo and GoFundMe are popular crowdfunding platforms in the region. GoFundMe was mentioned in the context of raising funds for individuals, such as a campaign for a medical bill or a school fee, and one participant mentioned Indiegogo’s services for nonprofits and social good projects. An interviewee suggested that Indiegogo’s low fees (no fees for users) prevented other platforms from succeeding in Chattanooga.
In Chattanooga, Causeway is an organization with a similar mission and vision to ioby. Created by a consortium of local foundations in 2011, Causeway operated a crowdfunding platform until 2016, for local community projects for social good. Many community organizers and residents who worked with the organization feel that Causeway’s platform exploited Black and Brown labor and broke the trust of residents and community organizers who do social justice work. Many residents and projects that received funding through Causeway’s now-defunct crowdfunding platform claim that they were not able to use the funds that they had raised, and that the organization’s management had discouraged some leaders from using the platform. Causeway now exists as a grantmaker and is attempting to transition to a resource hub for Chattanooga. Still, the organization’s early shortcomings fueled skepticism among many civic leaders in Chattanooga, particularly among leaders of color, regarding crowdfunding platforms. This potentially could be a challenge point for ioby in Chattanooga, as Causeway’s mission and vision, on paper, seem similar to that of ioby. Major relationship building and trust would have to occur on the front end in that space to overcome the large amount of initial skepticism.

Additionally, Causeway’s poor reputation among Chattanoogans may pose a challenge to ioby, as local civic leaders may compare ioby.org to Causeway’s now-defunct crowdfunding platform. No other platform has filled the civic crowdfunding space that Causeway once occupied, and there remain some major misgivings regarding crowdfunding platforms that claim to be community-led.

**PERCEPTIONS OF DUPLICATION**

Some interviewees suggested that the Unfoundation may potentially perceive ioby to be a competitor. The Unfoundation was founded in Chattanooga and marketed as a grassroots philanthropic organization in which members contribute $100 per month and funds are pooled together to award $3,000 microgrants to community-led projects and ideas. This process requires a detailed application and funds are awarded by an advisory board.

There is a robust culture of Appalachian residents participating in decentralized, offline individual giving campaigns with and for their neighbors. It is unclear if ioby would be seen as competing or undermining the work of some of the grassroots grantmakers and giving circles currently working in the region. For example, Sankofa Fund is a Black-led giving circle meant to disburse funds to Black-led projects in Chattanooga. The Sankofa Fund’s application process more closely resembles a grantmaking process than ioby’s crowdfunding platform.

Ioby’s many successful partnerships with grassroots grantmakers offer a template for how we can complement, rather than compete with, small grants programs in Central Appalachia. Grantmaking institutions across the country have worked with ioby to train and equip their grantees to raise matching funds using our crowdfunding platform.

Another example of an Appalachian grassroots grantmaker, ArtsBuild is a nonprofit that disburses funds to public arts projects but is not a crowdfunding platform. The Black Voters Fund works on equity and racial justice in voting; Chattanooga in Action for Love, Equality and Benevolence (CALEB) is working on the Community Bail Fund and the Immigrant Bond Fund; and the Appalachian Community Fund supports anti-racism and social justice work. In addition, organizations like Workers Dignity are organizing workers to create economic justice. Individual giving is certainly taking place in Appalachia, but not through a crowdfunding platform. Many interviewees, even those working for the organizations mentioned above, demonstrated an interest in using ioby’s platform as an added tool for community funding and to build their fundraising capacities.

Because so many leaders of organizations from outside Appalachia have claimed to know the region and have promised new and exciting ways to “save” Appalachia, and because there is a history of those from the outside coming to the region to extract and abscond with the region’s wealth, ioby may initially encounter some skepticism from civic leaders in the region when beginning to expand locally. Some interviewees shared some skepticism that something like ioby’s platform would be trusted, integrated, or seen as non-patronizing. Others in the region noted a sizable gap in access to community funding and felt the platform would meet a need that is not currently being explored. They suggested that ioby may be successful in the region, as long as ioby is able to demonstrate that projects are community-led and the organization continues to invest in building deep relationships with civic leaders in the region. The nonprofit sector is large in Appalachia. There are many nonprofits all claiming to provide critical support.
to the region’s communities, and there are leaders of community foundations and giving circles who may consider ioby’s presence in the region to be contributing to an oversaturation of nonprofits. To successfully earn the trust of civic leaders in Central Appalachia, ioby will need to make a clear distinction between our crowdfunding model and the work of community foundations and giving circles in the region.

**Objective #3: Measure the region against ioby’s predictors of success.**

ioby measures success by the number of leaders trained in online grassroots fundraising and supported on our platform, as well as the amount of “citizen philanthropy” funneled to projects led by neighbors and community-based organizations. Based on our experience working in Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cleveland, Memphis, and New York, ioby has identified five predictors of success.

1. **CULTURE OF GIVING**

**Background:** A strong culture of giving is characterized by general participation in charitable giving across income brackets and a general comfort with grassroots fundraising among would-be users of ioby’s platform. This is measured using a combination of interviews, survey responses, and IRS charitable giving data.

**Why this matters:** In a place with a robust culture of giving, ioby leaders are more likely to succeed because they are more comfortable asking for donations and their neighbors are already accustomed to donating to charitable projects. For example, the average household in Memphis donates about 5.6% of adjusted gross income to charitable organizations, a figure considerably higher than the national average of about three percent. Coming from Memphis’ culture of giving, most ioby leaders in the city have felt comfortable making asks of donors and have had great successes in their grassroots fundraising campaigns.

**Finding in Central Appalachia: STRONG**

There is a strong culture in Appalachia of people taking care of each other. Particularly in rural areas, community members often donate time or money to support friends, family, and a good cause. One interviewee, referring specifically to rural Appalachia, said that they saw people in poverty being more likely to give and be generous with their limited resources than other socioeconomic brackets because they understand community needs better than anyone else. The interviewee also suggested that Appalachians in poverty have learned to come together to support each other because they have felt abandoned by people in power.

Survey participants also supported the idea that many in the community feel comfortable giving to causes that directly help each other and their community, with 66% responding that people in their neighborhoods were likely to donate to charitable causes. Appalachians give disproportionately to churches and other places of worship because they are trusted organizations that cultivate cultural traditions of giving, provide people with moral incentive, and, as one interviewee stated, “they ask for money, plain and simple.”

Notably, 39% of survey respondents thought that their neighbors would be too afraid to donate to risky projects. This suggests that many people in Appalachia are not generally willing to donate to new, untested ideas or projects with a high chance of failure.

Large, recognizable and trusted organizations that operate direct service programs also receive large numbers of donations from residents. Finally, in crisis or disaster events or in times of urgently needed action (e.g. a family needing housing, books for school, or food) many interviewees said that there was a notable uptick in local giving. In this case, it was mentioned that people are more likely to give to trusted organizations that address those urgent funding needs when they can clearly see the immediate impact of giving and easily heed a call to action.
Many interviewees said that an Appalachian’s likelihood of giving a donation to a small or mid-sized nonprofit depended heavily on their trust in that organization, the types of causes it is working on, and how connected the organization is to its base. Those who cared deeply about race or environmental justice work and were part of a base for those areas, for example, would be more likely to give to an organization working on those issues than a more traditional direct service nonprofit.

In larger cities like Nashville, one interviewee suggested that young people tend to financially support social justice organizations that tell compelling stories, and often give to organizations with whom they have personal relationships. Regardless of the type of giving, this was a consistent theme among those interviewed; many confirmed that stories mattered most in determining whether people give to causes, nonprofits, or projects. A human connection and a sentiment of “putting people first” are the threads that connect most giving in Appalachia.

Using the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*’s “giving ratio” (calculated as itemized charitable deductions as a percentage of gross income) as our metric, charitable giving appears most common in the region’s urban areas, as well as in the towns along both sides of the Georgia and North Carolina border.

Importantly, in areas where income is very low, it is unlikely worthwhile to itemize deductions. For this reason, the “giving ratio” is often criticized for being a great measure of who itemizes donations and little else. We do not find giving ratios to be a complete look at generosity, which would include giving to faith institutions, helping family members in need, and giving cash at local organizations’ fundraising events.

2. COOPERATIVE CIVIC SECTOR

**Background:** A cooperative civic sector is characterized by a culture of collaboration among organizations and government, where collaboration is born out of a mutually enforced creative or strategic ethos rather than from a funder.

**Why this matters:** ioby finds it easier to build meaningful connections to organizations and grassroots leaders in cities where nonprofit leaders are deeply committed to each other’s success. For example, Memphis nonprofits have deeply interwoven staff, board and members, that are reinforced by social connections. Because Memphis boasts this supremely collaborative environment for nonprofits, our local partners and champions have had great success encouraging other organizations in the city to work with ioby.

Finding in Central Appalachia: **MIXED**
Although there was no consensus among interviewees regarding the degree to which nonprofits are connected to each other and to residents, almost all said that "it depends" largely on the type of work being done, the intentionality around connecting with each other and communities, and the funding environment. Many interviewees said they felt that many organizations worked in silos, had very little trust for each other, were not widely connected in mission or values, and were afraid of others stealing ideas and wanted to ensure ownership of the work. Because of this lack of connection and siloing, many felt there was a strong sense of competition between organizations, particularly regarding funding. Many mentioned that it feels as if nonprofits are jumping through hoops to get very small grants from foundations, and some even went as far as to say that, due to limited resources—particularly in community-based work—some entities felt forced to change their organizations' mission and direction in order to secure grants that would meet their funding needs.

In addition, Appalachia's nonprofits possess varying degrees of alignment in values; some align in values of social justice, equity, and systemic change work, and others engage in saviorism and the perpetuation of oppression. Many told interviewees that those nonprofits connected to the work of creating systemic change and aligned on values of social justice and community leadership tend to be able to work effectively with each other and with communities.

Some interviewees said that many nonprofits do not connect well with communities because they have not invested in building meaningful relationships with residents or, in some cases, they have lost the trust of the people they serve. Poor relationships with communities may also stem from organizations' focus on charity rather than community-building and a regional oversaturation of nonprofits that frequently results in overlapping or redundant work.

One interviewee said that it is challenging to pressure nonprofits to collaborate in their communities' best interest because so many leaders of organizations want to take ownership of the work. However, those nonprofits that focus intentionally on building relationships with communities and participating in anti-oppression work generally have success in connecting well with residents and through coalitions with organizations that do similar work.

In their interviews, every representative from an organization mentioned that they have built deep, trusting relationships with long-term nonprofit partners in order to help create wide-scale change. They feel that these collaborations have been successful because of the nature of the coalition-building work that was being done. Outside of this, relationships deeply matter in building partnerships, and some mentioned that they wished there was more collaboration and fewer funders who pit organizations against each other for limited funding.

Interviewees said that organizations with histories of neglecting or overlooking communities, leaders whose identities do not match the identities of the people who they were claiming to serve, or were from outside the region and did not take time to build trust, were not as effective in their collaborations. In addition, many mentioned that community members who have been engaged in the work of these
organizations have felt that their stories had been exploited in order to earn local influence and that their power was not prioritized. However, grassroots organizations and those engaged in anti-oppression work have found much greater success in building relationships with communities.

Some interviewees shared that nonprofits in their areas of Central Appalachia had displayed intentionality around fostering effective collaboration:

- A leader of an organization in Bowling Green, Kentucky said, "We are not in silos here and we are trying to partner with everyone. We have a meeting each month to learn about new people and programs in our nonprofits and we have a monthly vision group for all nonprofits in the area to try to find ways to work together. That way if the community needs something, all the organizations will know just who to call and can give someone a specific person for a referral."

- An executive director of an organization in West Virginia said, "There are robust networks of organizations that are working deeply with communities and on challenges. The biggest challenge is organizing ourselves on what we are doing and offering and not overwhelming communities with the same service by five different nonprofits. Constant practice like mindfulness to suppress the natural urge and reaction of ownership of this work, the way we encourage that practice is through deep relationship building. West Virginia is a small state, there is not a lot of us. We all know each other and are able to invest time in that relationship-building, and when conflict comes up we can approach as individuals and not institutions. I will say we do not see that same thing in larger institutions or government institutions and part of educational institutes; I think there are individuals in those spaces who are trying to move their institutions to that deeply collaborative approach."

The map below reveals large clusters of incorporated nonprofits in the region’s metropolitan areas, with the greatest concentrations in and around Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Greenville, and Asheville.

### 3. OPENNESS TO GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISING

**Background:** To successfully motivate and prepare residents to crowdfund for their ideas, ioby depends on a general openness to the tenets of grassroots fundraising and asset-based community development. This includes willingness on the part of residents and community-based organizations to ask neighbors, relatives, friends, colleagues, and strangers for donations to their projects.
Why this matters: ioby may predict the extent to which residents and leaders of community-based organizations will embrace ioby’s model of online grassroots fundraising by looking at local examples of successful fundraising campaigns and by surveying residents about their proclivities for fundraising. Example: When ioby first set down roots in Cleveland, leaders of some community development organizations were already looking at how they might use crowdfunding to extend their reach to grassroots donors. This openness to grassroots fundraising enabled ioby to quickly grow our presence in Cleveland.

Finding in Central Appalachia: STRONG

"There is distrust between nonprofits and funders, but also a sense that nonprofits have to do whatever it takes and be willing to change and drift from their mission to get money to survive. It is definitely a love-hate relationship. There are instances where organizations have felt like it wasn't worth it to meet expectations of funders. It is not worth it to have to, for example, fundraise for six months and do a 30-page report in order to only get $2,000; there is just no balance there." - Interviewee

Many organizations and leaders of projects in communities have lost faith in major foundations’ willingness to support their anti-oppression, systemic work. Instead, these organizations and leaders say that they would prefer to end reliance on current philanthropic structures and foundational support in favor of community-led funds or organizations working on more just community based funding models like Sankofa and the Appalachian Community Fund.

The majority of interviewees, particularly those in community-led movements and anti-oppression work, expressed that local nonprofit leaders working in their fields generally do not expect many large funders to provide significant, if any, support for their work. While some interviewees were able to name larger funders who they felt were contributing positively to community-based work and projects or were actively working on adjusting philanthropic models to support equity and social justice, many were frustrated by the trend of funders using "equity," "racial justice," or "community-led" as buzz words without actually moving their foundations’ giving practices away from oppressive and exploitative models.

A few interviewees mentioned that leaders of justice-oriented nonprofits feel that larger foundations do not genuinely care about their work and force them to meet several burdensome requirements in order to earn very small grants. Many leaders of small organizations said that their organizations rely heavily on individual donations, but that their capacity for that type of fundraising work is limited. Other organizations rely on a blend of individual donations and government and foundation funding but the makeup of organizations’ revenue streams depend on the type of work that they do, whether they are part of a larger coalition or were federally chartered, or if their work in their communities resembles a more traditional direct service model.

There exists an extreme distrust of foundations in the region that stems from histories of wealth accumulation from colonization, stealing land from Indigenous Communities, using slave labor, and, in Appalachia specifically, exploitation of the land leading to environmental degradation. Community members told ioby that they generally feel like their opinions do not matter to funders and, when they are occasionally asked to engage in foundations’ decision-making, they feel that their presence simply amounts to tokenism and that their voices are not actually being considered. Identities of those in power don’t often match those who they are claiming to serve. Although "equity" has become a buzzword among funders in the region, interviewees told ioby that there has been no demonstrated effort by funders to actually redistribute power to communities and prioritize Black and Brown leadership.

The majority of interviewees spoke to their communities’ commitment to rallying support for each other, particularly in times of hardship. Interviewees said that people in Appalachia have a history of standing with their neighbors as a form of survival and resistance, especially in areas of high poverty and lower
health and wellness outcomes where communities have been exploited by those in power. Interviewees shared stories of community members helping each other by helping individuals to pay their medical bills, as well as offering nonmonetary support in the forms of child care and care for older adults. 54% of survey respondents said that people in their community are likely to fundraise from their network and ask for financial support for a project or cause. Only 3% of survey respondents felt that people in their community would be very uncomfortable fundraising in their network.

4. TRANSPARENT, ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Background:** ioby determines the transparency and accessibility of local government by examining the extent to which residents find it easy to obtain permission for projects in public spaces.

**Why this matters:** Because many ioby projects take place in public spaces, project leaders often seek permits for their work. In municipalities and counties where residents are easily able to obtain official permission to execute a project, ioby leaders are able to complete their projects more quickly and, often, with greater efficacy. Example: In Pittsburgh, the Office of Community Affairs and the Mayor’s Bureau of Neighborhood Empowerment proactively educate residents at public forums in neighborhoods across the city about the kinds of permits that are required for projects in public spaces and assist them in navigating bureaucratic processes. The City of Pittsburgh’s willingness to assist residents as they seek support for their projects has been an asset for ioby in the city.

**Finding in Central Appalachia: WEAK**

“The illusion is that the government is transparent but the government is always difficult to navigate. The smokescreen is this illusion of transparency but what happens behind closed doors is what is actually realized, and that is not what is publicly shared to the community.” - Interviewee

“It depends on who you are and how much money you have. If you are a cis white man who has relationships in municipalities, you will get what you want. If you are anyone else, then no. It depends on the color of your skin and how much money you have in order to get what you want in government.” - Interviewee

While rare, there are some government entities that protect community accountability and ensure that city agencies are communicating transparently with residents. These include:

- The City of Asheville, North Carolina’s Office of Equity and Inclusion, which comprises a dedicated staff who hold other departments accountable to residents and engage in internal anti-racism work.
- TN Leaders for Equity, a statewide coalition of 147 school districts that are working to make services more transparent working to involve communities in change processes.
- Specific politicians, such as council members, state senators, coalition leaders, and appointees who center equity, racial justice, and community-led movements, and who have prioritized transparency and direct communication with residents.

Almost all interviewees spoke to the lack of trust and transparency in local governments, difficulties navigating government services, and difficulties, particularly in rural areas, in getting municipal services. Many felt that governments do not care about community voices and, therefore, any community outreach was disingenuous and would not result in anything other than community plans “collecting dust on a shelf.” Most described no transparency and visibility when it came to governments’ decision-making processes. One interviewee described their state, West Virginia, as being in an “information blackout”, and that the lack of information created red tape and a general lack of trust in all levels of government.

Another interviewee mentioned that ease of access to government is largely determined by a person’s socioeconomic status. Calling it a system of "have and have nots,” this interviewee said that residents living
in poverty or without internet, like many in Appalachia, are simply never able to get information from the government.

5. CIVIC PRIDE

**Background:** Civic pride refers to residents’ demonstrable sense of pride to be from their town, neighborhood, city, and region. ioby measures pride through interviews and survey.

**Why this matters:** When residents are proud to be from a neighborhood, town, city, and/or region, ioby is more likely to be able to motivate them to create and fund civic projects. Example: ioby has found that many New Yorkers have a strong pride in their city, and connect their personal identities to their borough. Project leaders in New York City are willing to spend time working with neighbors to fundraise for and implement an ioby project because they have personal and long-term interests in making their neighborhoods stronger and more sustainable.

**Finding in Central Appalachia: STRONG**

"I think generally most people will rep their neighborhoods where their family is from. If you are proud to be from the South or this region, it is because you have deep roots and attachments, and you also know there is deep work and faults here and it is also a work in progress." - Interviewee

"I think this is an identity based thing. There are a lot of people reclaiming the Appalachian identity and diversity here. Communities of color and LGBTQ+ Communities are pushing that narrative of reclaiming identity while also recognizing and pushing awareness that people have been oppressed here." - Interviewee

Understanding the level of pride in Appalachia is a complex topic that intersects deeply with identity. On the one hand, there is an overwhelming and deep sense of pride and connection to place and space in Appalachia, particularly from interviewees who live in West Virginia. Interviewees described being extremely close to family and neighbors, and having deep ties to their home. Some families, who have been living in the same town for generations, feel very attached to where they came from. Many participants spoke about the environment and the “pride and gratitude for the natural beauty” and the landscape in Appalachia, which makes it a unique place to live. Pride is also closely aligned with resilience and resistance in Appalachia and, as one interviewee said, “There are people here who want to fight, resist, and make communities a space they want to be in.”

Interviewees said that people in the region take care of each other, and some said that this is due to a history of Appalachia being exploited or largely ignored by people in the rest of the country. From interviews, we developed a sense that people in the region have come to rely on each other to fight for their survival and what matters most to them. Only 9% of survey respondents did not think people are proud to be from Appalachia and only 22% felt that people in their neighborhood or town do not trust each other.

**Impacts of injustice, erasure, and oppression on pride**

Many interviewees of color, women, and those who identify as LGBTQ+ expressed very conflicted feelings on the topic of pride and the complex nature of both loving the South and also being oppressed by it. Oppressed communities, specifically communities of color, have faced slavery, violent racism, colonization, discrimination, exploitation, narrative erasure, murder, and so forth at the hands of people and institutions in the South and, as one participant said, “In general it is hard to be proud of a place where you don’t feel safe, included, wanted, or have a community, which is why it is really important work to build communities and have the resources to have these communities come together to decide on the places they want to create and see.”

Another interviewee agreed: "I hear pride of being from the South coming from mostly low-income white
people, but Southern pride can instill fear in people of color because of the Confederate flag, symbols of the Confederacy, and what ‘Southern pride’ means.

There are currently several conversations among civic leaders in the region about reclaiming the Appalachian identity to be one that is inclusive of the diverse communities of Central Appalachia and creates space for feelings of inclusion, healing, safety, and being home. This social justice oriented, anti-oppression work focused on identity, place, and bringing visibility to the diverse Appalachian narrative has been led by young people, Black and Brown communities, and LGBTQ+ communities.

**COMPARING CENTRAL APPALACHIA TO IOBY’S FOCUS PLACES (AT THE TIME OF IOBY’S ARRIVAL)**

When measured only against other places where ioby has hired local staff, Central Appalachia appears to be a weak fit for ioby’s typical approach to working in a new place. (We propose an alternative model for working in Central Appalachia in Objective #7, beginning on page 30.) We expect that ioby’s efforts to source and cultivate local leaders with ideas for their communities will benefit from Central Appalachia’s strong culture of giving and openness to grassroots fundraising. Interviewees across Central Appalachia told ioby that nonprofits compete for what they perceive to be limited foundation funding. This is a common challenge in many places where ioby has worked. To address this challenge, it will be important to present ioby as a resource that deepens the pool of philanthropy by opening access to new donors and matching funds (if available).

Some scores from ioby’s previous Phase 0 reports have been changed to more accurately reflect the nuance in our findings.
Objective #4: Evaluate potential demand for ioby’s services in the region.

Before determining ioby’s approach to working in a place, we must predict the degree to which residents will be interested in using ioby’s crowdfunding platform, grassroots fundraising coaching, and fiscal sponsorship service. This prediction hinges on the extent to which residents and community-based organizations in Central Appalachia have led and donated to the types of community-led, “DIY,” and tactical urbanism projects that ioby tends to support.

Based on these criteria, we predict that there is a strong demand for ioby’s services in Central Appalachia. Across the region, communities, individuals, and groups not affiliated with 501c3s are largely responsible for carrying out the bulk of community-based work. Due to the general lack of resources for individuals or those doing community-led systemic work, leaders have found creative ways to show up, survive, and build community change in public spaces. In addition to benefiting from our grassroots fundraising trainings, one-on-one fundraising support, and crowdfunding platform, groups that do not have 501c3 status are able to collect tax-deductible donations by using ioby’s fiscal sponsorship service. As the only crowdfunding platform that offers type "C" fiscal sponsorship, ioby is uniquely positioned to help Central Appalachia’s grassroots leaders fund and create their projects.

Interviewees cited a large number of DIY projects led by residents in the region. These projects generally fall within one of four categories:

1. Social justice: people of color, women, environmental groups, and LGBTQ+ communities have advocated for human rights for generations in Appalachia. Notable work in this area includes:
   - Community fundraising for local community bail funds
   - Reparations or economic justice funds, and fundraising for immigrant rights
   - Anti-oppression, equity, and anti-racism trainings, organizing, and protests
   - Grassroots leadership and community organizing through groups like Workers’ Dignity, the Equity Alliance, Black Appalachia Young and Rising, and the STAY Project, all of which center equity and community advocacy
   - Protests against ICE
   - Indigenous rights and land movements
   - Community centers and advocacy spaces like Casa Azafrán in Nashville
   - Restorative justice programs in schools and community centers
   - Decolonization efforts
   - Poverty-disrupting work through community organizing around workers rights
   - SexySexEd trainings and reproductive justice movements
   - Organizing around gender, specifically around the rights of women of color
   - LGBTQ+ activism through local Pride movements and fundraising for Black trans women’s rights
   - Anti-prison organizing and protests successfully halting the construction of new prisons.

2. Environmental justice: several interviewees referenced groups engaging in decentralized or informal work to support the health and wellness of communities. One participant mentioned a group in Kentucky that is organizing for residents’ right to clean drinking water. Describing the communal nature of that effort, the interviewee told ioby that “people are making due and figuring out decentralized solutions themselves to support each other in collecting water. People go to other family members to collect water from each other if they need and people will offer water to other families who need it.” Additional work related to environmental justice in the region includes:
   - Community activist groups working on community gardening and disrupting food deserts
   - Protests against the construction of major pipelines
   - Protests against mountaintop removal
   - Organizing for a transition to a non-extractive and just regional economy
3. Public arts and culture movements: Individuals in Appalachia have historically used art as a way to document, tell stories, increase visibility, and protest as well as for activism. The practice of using art in public spaces as a tool to support participatory and community-led movements is particularly profound in Chattanooga. Many local artists like Rondell Crier and Studio Everything, Josiah Golson and 800s Collective, and Isaac Duncan III use art for anti-racism, community organizing and facilitation, and anti-oppression community work. In addition, James Mckissic and Shane Marrow through ArtsBuild and RISE/Jazzanooga provide community music, arts, and cultural spaces meant to center people of color and educate community members. Other examples of leaders in this space include:

- The Nashville Civic Design Center
- Public art in parking spaces and murals across the region
- The Global Education Center in Nashville
- SKyPAC in Bowling Green, KY and other performing arts centers and folk schools
- Casa Azafrán in Nashville
- The NORF Art Collective in North Nashville
- Workers’ Dignity and Black Appalachia Young and Rising were all also mentioned by interviewees as examples of organizations that are using or advocating for the use of public arts, music, performance, and culture as a form of community organizing, protest, healing, activism, equity, visibility, and anti-oppression work.

4. Transportation: several participants from the region’s large and mid-sized cities said that there are local movements of eco-friendly transportation alternatives, including those centered on encouraging communities to ride bicycles.

Objective #5: Identify the trends that drive communities’ interest in taking on projects like those that ioby typically supports.

Learning from our work in New York, Memphis, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and places around the country, we know that ioby’s services are most helpful to grassroots leaders working in areas with histories of disinvestment. To be most impactful, we aim to understand how conditions of institutional disinvestment and resource scarcity have shaped residents’ approaches to creating projects in their towns and neighborhoods.

Residents who create and fund projects in Central Appalachia often say that they were inspired to take action when they discovered the extent to which their communities had been impacted by structural inequality, environmental exploitation, and a variety of social and economic injustices that result in areas of concentrated poverty. These trends inspire and inform the types of projects that residents and community-based organizations lead.

POVERTY, EXTRACTION, OPPORTUNISM

Poverty rates in Central Appalachia are higher than the national average, with recent reports revealing a combined poverty rate of 19.7% in Appalachia compared to the national rate of 15.6%. Some areas, such as Appalachian Kentucky, experience a poverty rate as high as 25.4%.

Due to the rich natural resources of the region, including timber, minerals, natural gas, and coal, Central Appalachia’s history has been marked by heavy concentrations of single resource extractive industries.

18 Ibid.
Since the 19th century, the coal industry has been the predominant economy of the Appalachian region.\textsuperscript{19} By the 1920s, Appalachia produced 92\% of coal used in the United States.\textsuperscript{20}

Beginning in the 1970s, the coal industry in Appalachia began to bust from a combination of the introduction of more robust environmental regulations, emerging interest in other sources of energy like natural gas and oil, as well as a boom in coal mining in the Western United States.\textsuperscript{21} Some areas of Central Appalachia have seen an 82\% reduction of coal mining jobs since the 1980s as a result of the economic bust.\textsuperscript{22} Some Appalachian communities have continued their reliance on coal mining by using mountaintop removal as an alternative mining technique.\textsuperscript{23}

In addition to the coal mining industry degrading the Appalachian environment and contributing to higher health risks and pollution burden, the economic coal bust has left Central Appalachia as one of the poorest regions in the country.\textsuperscript{24} In addition, “absentee” or outside corporate ownership of resource rich land in Appalachia is extremely high; for example, over 77\% of coal-rich land in Appalachia is owned externally, ranging from 37\% of land in Tennessee to 85\% of land in West Virginia.\textsuperscript{25,26} This means that outside corporations control the majority of the wealth of the region and prevent many Appalachian residents from having access to the land where they live.

With the decline of coal, many communities have embraced the notion of a diverse economic transition. Several interviewees told lobby that many downtown districts in towns and cities across the region have expressed interest in promoting tourism and new sources of renewable energy as alternative industries.

Leaders in government and corporations have promised many impoverished former coal communities a path to economic stability through the construction of new prisons.\textsuperscript{27} These leaders claim that new prisons will serve as an antidote to local structural unemployment and poverty. Instead, they perpetuate systems of mass incarceration and racial injustice within the region, and the counties in Central Appalachia that have built new prisons have higher poverty rates and lower per-capita income than other counties within the region.\textsuperscript{28} One interviewee described their frustration with the trend of those in power promising economic prosperity “on the backs of the people who are suffering” through new extractive economies that have roots in colonization, imperialism, and saviorism.

\textsuperscript{19} Doshi, S., McInnis, A., & John Todd. (July 2010). The Solutions Journal. "Beyond Coal: A Resilient New Economy for Appalachia.”
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Fahe.
\textsuperscript{26} Schumann.
As a response, many communities in Appalachia are organizing around creating a just economic transition where equity, social and racial justice, environmental justice, and community-led plans are centered in the formation of new economies in former coal mining communities. The idea of a just economic transition is adapting as more communities become involved and it looks different for each community; the economy has never been good or just for communities of color or for LGBTQ+ communities, so to leaders in those communities, the notion of “economic justice” looks different. These groups are organizing around preventing the construction of prisons and pipelines while also advocating for community-led economic transition plans that center equity and racial justice.

**Objective #6: Characterize civic participation across the region.**

By most accounts, residents in Central Appalachia do not suffer from widespread apathy or a lack of interest in civic activities such as volunteering, donating to a civic project, voting, and meeting with decision-makers. Instead, survey respondents reported that the chief barriers that prevent residents from becoming more civically engaged are:

- A lack of knowledge about where to begin (65%)
- Civic participation just takes too much time for some people (47%)

More than a third of survey respondents (38%) claimed that people don’t have enough spare cash to donate to causes or campaigns, and 41% believe that their neighbors are disheartened because they do not believe that their participation will result in any important changes. Only 28% of respondents said that their communities are apathetic or simply do not care enough.

**Which of the following barriers prevent people in your community from becoming civically engaged (i.e. volunteering, donating to a civic project, voting, meeting with a decision-maker)?**

*Based on 116 survey responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People don’t know where to start</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic participation just takes too much time for some people</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People feel that participating in civic life won’t change anything, so it’s not worth it</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People think that they wouldn’t enjoy being civically engaged</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People don’t have enough spare cash to donate to causes or campaigns</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
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Given that ioby's success depends on local leaders' willingness to crowdfund, we are particularly concerned by the 38% of survey respondents' belief that civic crowdfunding places a financial burden on a community. We encounter this myth often in our work, and it often helps residents to know that research indicates that there is no correlation between a community's median household income and the success of a crowdfunding campaign in their neighborhood. This perception, regardless of whether it is grounded in an accurate assessment of residents’ giving habits, may prevent civic leaders from attempting to lead grassroots fundraising campaigns.

The data suggest that, in order to broaden and deepen community engagement in Central Appalachia, ioby should partner with leaders in government and nonprofits to:

- Use ioby's platform and services to increase the number and accessibility of entry points for residents who wish to become involved in public decision-making processes but who do not know where to begin.
- Offer opportunities for "quick wins," or community-led projects that are funded and implemented quickly, that prove to neighbors that real and meaningful change is achievable in the short-term.

In interviews, the barriers to engagement that came up most often included:

1. A lack of trust in government, based on generations of exploitation and abuse, particularly in communities of color.
2. The feeling that community members' voices and participation did not truly matter or change things, so that participating is ultimately a harmful process to the community.

This lack of trust in these systems and institutions does not indicate a lack of care, but interviewees suggested that people feel hopeless and exhausted with processes that do not center community leadership or bring about actual change. In addition, relationship-building was cited by everyone as an essential element to civic engagement, and interviewees said that transactional relationships or a lack of deep relationship-building and trust-building over time were barriers in creating spaces where people feel comfortable to engage.

Poverty was also cited as a major barrier leading to a lack of time and resources, such as reliable transportation, that would allow for higher civic engagement. Lack of childcare, not having meetings located near enough to affected communities, having long meetings without food available, and hosting meetings during work hours were also cited as major barriers. Transparency was also an issue, and interviewees mentioned that outreach does not always prioritize communities. Materials are not translated into multiple languages, governments and organizations seeking input do not always communicate or conduct outreach offline, and, more generally, many people do not have information about when, where, and for what reason meetings occur.

In rural areas, interviewees cited a lack of transportation options, a lack of deep relationships with decision-makers, limited offline outreach, and the generational knowledge that their voices will largely be ignored as a group. Importantly, people in rural areas feel that their trust has been broken repeatedly by institutions and government and they generally do not feel hopeful about the outcomes of civic engagement. In addition, civic leaders working in rural areas of Central Appalachia told ioby that poor health and an immediate need to take care of older populations or someone with poorer health was another major barrier to engagement.

Overall, across the region, civic leaders contend with a widespread sense of exhaustion and mistrust in institutions that stem from histories of exploitation in Central Appalachia. Despite these barriers, leaders are engaging in robust, community-driven engagement processes. There are many groups and communities that choose to engage in community-led systemic, economic, environmental, and political movements to lead change that has an impact on residents' lives.

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WHAT DOES CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TYPICALLY LOOK LIKE?
Community organizing and community-led movement-building are deeply present in Appalachia, and most interviewees said that their organizations prioritize equity and the power of people on the ground, and intentionally give power back to the communities they serve. Because of the urgency of poverty, racism, and environmental injustice in the region, Appalachia has a culture of people taking matters into their own hands to create change.

Not all organizations, communities, and institutions share values related to creating systemic change, and many institutions are creating barriers to this type of work. Some have even demonstrated an interest in erasing the Appalachian culture of resistance from the narrative of the region. Still, it is extremely important to note that communities in the region have historically advocated for themselves in movements that have become a large part of what civic engagement looks like in Appalachia.

What civic engagement looks like in the region also comes down to timing and relationships. It takes substantial time, trust, and relationship-building to create community led-movements, and some organizations and causes have had more successes than others in attracting regular or large attendance to public meetings. In addition, most participants mentioned that in moments of urgency, tragedy, or disaster, hundreds of people tend to show up to meetings and protests. This high level of attention and commitment is difficult to sustain over the longer term.

In the area’s major cities, residents mobilize around movements for affordable housing and anti-gentrification efforts, Black Lives Matter, and—with Nashville being a notable example—immigrants’ rights and protecting undocumented residents from ICE raids. In rural Appalachia and mid-sized to small cities, interviewees cited environmental justice as the cause that most successfully mobilized residents. In addition to movements and protests to restore and protect nature, there have been protests and movements to end mountaintop removal, end the building of the pipeline in Virginia, and provide clean and safe drinking water. Just economic transition and anti-prison movements were also cited as large initiatives in the region, particularly in Kentucky and West Virginia. Young people are organizing to make Appalachia a space where they want to live and that honors and uplifts the diverse identity of the region. Young Black and Brown communities and young LGBTQ+ communities are leading this effort to make Appalachia a place that they can call home. Finally, there is a large community push around uncovering and documenting stories of those who live in Appalachia, particularly in Black and Indigenous communities.

The recent 2019 Knoxville City Council election is a notable example of electoral politics motivating people to take action. David Hayes, a community organizer, led a campaign for City Council called “Knoxville for All,” that many interviewees mentioned and one described as “beautiful to watch.” Knoxville for All focused specifically on lifting up working class and Black and Brown communities in Knoxville and wider Appalachia. The campaign was a community-led anti-racism movement that aimed to create a government that disrupted systemic oppression, racism, and entrenched power structures. In addition, during this same campaign, Amelia Parker, another community organizer and human rights advocate, ran a grassroots campaign for another Knoxville City Council seat with community support. Parker went on to win her seat and became the first Black person to ever be elected to an At-Large City Council seat in Knoxville.

Objective #7: Recommend strategies to source and serve ioby project leaders across the region.

Our research suggests that there is considerable opportunity for ioby to positively impact the region’s civic landscape. When developing a strategy to grow ioby’s presence in a place, we ask the following questions:

How do we reach people who might be interested in leading fundraising campaigns with ioby?

Civic leaders in Central Appalachia understand the value of neighbors working together to create positive change. In interviews and supplementary research, we uncovered several recent examples of residents, organizations, and civic leaders who have led fellow Appalachians in projects aimed at countering the effects of systemic racism, environmental exploitation, and other forms of injustice. We are inspired by
the region’s robust culture of giving, residents’ openness to grassroots fundraising, and civic groups’ clear philosophical alignment with ioby’s theory of change.

ioby's approach to crowdfunding and community-building seemed to resonate most strongly with local leaders in Chattanooga, where leaders in the city’s low-income communities and communities of color are looking for resources to curb gentrification, prevent the displacement of long-time residents and the destruction of Black neighborhoods, and create opportunities for residents to engage in public decision-making.

Based on our conversations with leaders of organizations across the region, it is clear that residents and civic leaders are generally, and with good reason, distrustful of organizations led by people from outside of Appalachia. This distrust seems to stem from a common feeling that solutions are only reasonable or palatable when they come from people in the area. Communities in Appalachia are the experts in identifying and building solutions to their own region’s challenges; Appalachians are their own heroes and “saviors.” Philosophically, this aligns nicely with ioby’s founding principle—that people closest to a problem are best suited to solve it—and signals a strong fit for our services. Practically, however, this distrust presents a significant barrier to our work. An organization like ioby, from outside of the region, will need to demonstrate our value and commitment to local groups and organizations before we can expect to build trust with civic leaders.

**Strategy #1: Launch a train-the-trainer model in Central Appalachia**

Rather than following the typical ioby model to hire an Action Strategist to act as a hub for the region, we propose a train-the-trainer program for civic leaders across Central Appalachia. To increase ioby’s presence in cities and towns across Central Appalachia, ioby will train a cohort of civic leaders, including community-facing members of staff from highly-regarded community-based organizations in the region to:

- Learn about community development models and frameworks that can help them more creatively address challenges in their towns and cities, including:
  - Asset-based community development (ABC
c-)
  - Tactical urbanism
  - Creative placemaking

- Preparing to lead a grassroots fundraising campaigns by:
  - Deciding whether crowdfunding with ioby is right for them
  - Building a strong and diverse fundraising team
  - Crafting and telling a compelling story about their work and its significance
  - Assessing their team’s fundraising capacity using a prospect chart
  - Creating an online communications strategy to support their fundraising campaign

The ideal participant in this cohort is a member of staff who spends at least 50% of their time working directly with community residents, and frequently organizes meetings, convenings, workshops, or trainings with residents who are focused on local project-based work. Each participating organization would be compensated for their staff time. Through this approach to building ioby's presence across Central Appalachia, we hope to:

- Equip residents and community-based organizations with the tools and skills that they need in order to access citizen philanthropy for projects that make their towns stronger, more connected, more vibrant, and more sustainable;
- Build strong and authentic relationships with leaders of nonprofit organizations that are highly regarded by leaders who might benefit from ioby's services and platform;
- Cultivate a robust culture of leading and giving to grassroots projects in cities, towns, and neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment.

We hope to engage several of our Phase 0 interviewees in the development of this program, including but not limited to representatives from the Appalachian Community Fund, the STAY Project, Virginia Organizing, 800 Collective, and the Equity Alliance.
**Strategy #2: Pursue match fund partnerships in Central Appalachia**

ioby has found that an effective way to prove our worth to civic leaders in a place is by accruing several examples of projects that are successfully funded and created very quickly.

To accelerate grassroots fundraising efforts in the region, ioby will pursue match fund partnerships. A time-limited, match opportunity with broad eligibility criteria would serve as a strong incentive for organizations to begin connecting residents and community-based organizations in their networks to ioby's crowdfunding platform and services.

ioby expects that this strategy would be most impactful when paired with Strategy #1. Place-based matching funds are most successful when the local leaders and organizations who are promoting the opportunity are equipped to explain the advantages of crowdfunding and prepare people in their networks to run their fundraising campaigns.

When ioby has successfully supported grassroots campaigns across the region, we may begin to see momentum build as well-regarded community leaders and leaders of organizations refer people in their networks to ioby.

**How do we build on and work with forms of civic participation that are already working? (e.g. Public meetings, charrettes, etc.)**

ioby will form strategic partnerships with organizations and agencies led by people who have already earned the trust of civic leaders and potential users of ioby's platform. ioby has already partnered with the Appalachia Community Fund (ACF) to offer a grassroots fundraising workshop for civic leaders who are interested in using ioby's tools to accelerate resident-driven projects in their towns and neighborhoods. By positioning crowdfunding as an effective supplement to organizations' fundraising and community-building activities, ioby hopes that community leaders will perceive ioby to be an important addition to the local civic infrastructure.

**How will we overcome residents' negative association with crowdfunding platforms following Causeway's decision to close their platform?**

Interviewees told ioby that Causeway's decision to close their crowdfunding platform fueled skepticism among many civic leaders in Chattanooga, particularly among leaders of color, regarding crowdfunding platforms. Skepticism regarding Causeway's now-defunct crowdfunding platform may be a challenge point for ioby in Chattanooga, as ioby's mission and model resemble Causeway's. We plan to overcome the negative association with crowdfunding platforms by:

- Partnering with Causeway: Although the organization has closed its crowdfunding platform, Causeway continues to advise and award small grants to grassroots groups as they develop their ideas to "solve some of Chattanooga's toughest challenges." We hope to earn the trust of Causeway so that they may refer leaders with funding needs to ioby's platform.

- Clearly communicating the differences between Causeway's and ioby's crowdfunding platform and wrap-around services. ioby differs from Causeway's crowdfunding platform, and other crowdfunding platforms, in five key ways:

  1) We support projects from idea through implementation, and focus our support and our evaluation of our success on the development of the leader of the project, rather than on the project or on the financial transactions. Informed by organizing models such as asset-based community development (ABCD) and resource organizing, ioby's training and coaching are designed to build the confidence and fundraising capacities of grassroots leaders.

  2) As a nonprofit, ioby is able to guarantee that all donations made on our platform are tax-deductible. For groups without 501(c)(3) status, we offer project-specific (Type C) fiscal sponsorship.

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3) iby believes that residents know what is best for their neighborhoods. We only require that projects be based in the United States or its territory and have a public benefit.

4) iby is mission-driven to focus on communities with the most need, and so we deliberately build networks of leaders in areas with histories of disinvestment.

5) iby stewards a national network of civically engaged neighbors that project leaders join when they run a campaign with us. We encourage our nationwide network to learn from each other, and provide opportunities for them to do so.

- Building relationships with leaders who used Causeway’s platform and inviting them to work with us to meet their group or organization’s next funding need. By running campaigns on our platform, these leaders will signal to their donors that they trust iby. Over time, we hope that these leaders and donors will understand the value that iby brings to the region’s civic landscape.

**Should we make plans to source specific project types?**

The types of projects that iby supports in a neighborhood will vary based on residents’ assets, needs, passions, and urgent funding needs. We predict iby will be asked to support a variety of projects, including campaigns led by organizations championing environmental and racial justice in the region.

**How can we reach potential partners and leaders in areas with tightly knit social and professional networks?**

In places where it is especially difficult for outsiders to join social and professional networks, it will be important for iby to earn the trust of residents and community leaders before we can expect many of them to use iby’s platform and services. In places where residents have voiced skepticism toward outside organizations like iby, our team:

- Spends time cultivating relationships with highly regarded leaders and communicating our strong mission alignment with their groups and organizations.
- Relies on referrals from highly regarded leaders and organizations in the region, including leaders whom we interviewed for this Phase 0 report.
- Amplifies stories of local leaders who have successfully funded projects on iby’s platform.

As projects are successfully funded on our platform and more leaders become familiar with our staff and services, we expect that iby will gradually become an essential part of the region’s civic landscape.

**How do we circumvent barriers to civic participation in order to reach the deep roots?**

Survey respondents told iby that the following barriers most commonly prevent people in their communities from becoming civically engaged:

1. **People don’t know where to start.**
   To address this barrier, iby will create resources that help residents understand how to create and fund projects for their neighborhoods. We may position civic crowdfunding as a first step for residents hoping to become more civically engaged by: helping leaders create their campaign pages, sharpening leaders’ grassroots fundraising skills, and connecting them to technical experts in the city and across the region and country who can assist with implementation.

2. **People don’t have enough spare cash to donate to causes or campaigns.**
   From our work in neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment across the country, we have found that “quick wins” are the best way to counter deeply rooted perceptions that civic participation is time consuming, or that low-income people are unable to donate to campaigns. We should be able to dispel these notions, and trust should be easier to gain, when we are able to point to a series of strong examples of how iby’s model works in Central Appalachia.
3. **People feel that participating in civic life won't change anything, so it's not worth doing.**

By sharing stories of leaders who have successfully funded and built projects in their own neighborhoods, ioby can inspire residents to take action. At the same time, we would encourage leaders to fund and deliver projects quickly, so that residents understand that they are able to make meaningful changes without much difficulty.

**Outputs**

In the medium term, ioby expects that a training program and match fund for leaders in the region will have the following results:

3. More people in Central Appalachia will lead projects at the town and neighborhood scale that are concerned with making their communities stronger, safer, and more sustainable. These projects will be designed by residents, funded by neighbors, and implemented by the community. Public spaces will have more stewards invested in positive change.
4. Civic leaders across the region will become better equipped to fundraise, use digital communications, and organize their communities.
5. Leaders will have a network of like-minded people doing similar work around the region and country, to whom they can turn for peer support.
6. New, previously untapped sources of citizen philanthropy will become available to civic groups working to make their communities stronger.

**Outcomes**

In the long term, we expect that:

1. Previously disengaged residents will connect to community-based organizations and contribute meaningfully to their work. As a result, public engagement will expand and diversify, and the regional civic sector will become stronger and more resilient.
2. Municipal and county agencies will be better positioned to make smart decisions and policies for residents based on authentic input from community leaders, the ingenuity of residents who live closest to the problems in the community, and small-scale demonstrations that build community buy-in.
3. Residents will feel more ownership over initiatives that affect their towns and blocks, and see the larger scale impact of their own projects in their communities.
Appendix A — Survey Questions

1. In which of the following regions do you live?
2. Are people generally proud to be from your town or city?
3. Are people generally proud to be from your region?
4. Have you ever worked on (e.g. volunteered for, donated to, or led) a project to make your community better in some way?
5. Who initiated the project?
6. If you had an idea for a project that would improve your town (or neighborhood, if you live in a city) in some way, who do you think would be very likely to fund it? (Check all that apply)
7. If you had an idea for a project that would benefit your community in some way, do you know of anyone in local or county government who would be willing to help you get the necessary approvals, permits, or resources to make it happen?
8. If you had an idea for a project that would benefit your community in some way, how likely would you be to crowdfund for that project?
9. If you answered that you are unlikely to crowdfund for a project, what are some reasons that you might not pursue this option?
10. How comfortable are people in your community with fundraising from their neighbors, friends, family, and colleagues?
11. Are people in your community likely to donate to projects that they think are positively impacting the community?
12. Would people in your community feel comfortable donating to a project that has a risk of failing?
13. Have you ever crowdfunded for a project before?
14. Was your crowdfunding campaign successful?
15. If you answered "no," what do you think could have made your campaign more successful?
16. Which of the following barriers prevent people in your community from becoming civically engaged (i.e. volunteering, donating to a civic project, voting, meeting with a decision-maker)?
17. Do people in your town (or neighborhood, if you live in a city) trust each other?
18. Do long-term residents in your town or neighborhood tend to trust new transplants to the community?
19. Do new transplants to your town or neighborhood tend to trust long-term residents?
20. To what extent do you know what nonprofit organizations are doing to support your community?
21. Do you trust government to keep its promises to your community?
22. Do you trust philanthropists to keep their promises to your community? Why or why not?
23. What is your full name?
24. Email address
25. Occupation (if applicable)
26. What is your zip code?
27. In what town or city do you live?
28. What is the name of the neighborhood where you live? (If applicable)
29. How would you describe your race and/or ethnicity?
30. For how long have you lived in your town or city?
31. Who sent you this survey, or how did you discover it?
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