

Mission, Vision, Organizational Structure

A proposal for consideration by the Appalachian Land Study
Drafted by the Teri Blanton & Betsy Taylor, Visioning Working Group

Mission

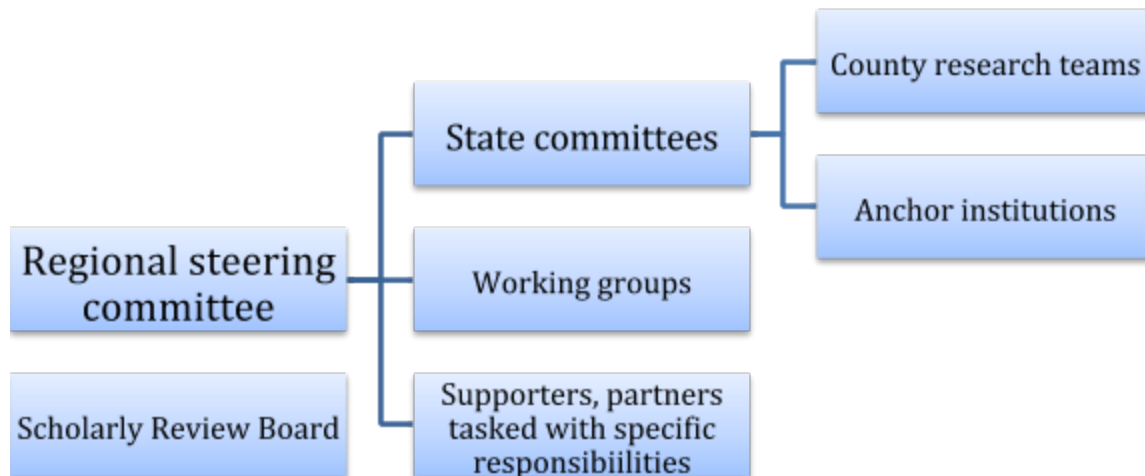
The mission of the Appalachian Land Study is to provide accurate data about land and mineral ownership to citizens, scholars, local governments, and other stakeholders who are working to build a bright future for Appalachia.

Vision & principles

- *We are a collaborative research network formed to provide the public with trustworthy data about ownership of, and public revenues from, land and minerals in Appalachia.*
- *We collect and analyze data using methods that follow the highest scholarly standards for accuracy and rigor.*
- *Our results will be disseminated to the public and subjected to rigorous scholarly peer review.*
- *Our research teams work in a collaborative and egalitarian manner, with balanced representation from diverse sectors (such as community members, scholars, regional universities and colleges, non-profits, think-tanks, planners, officials, and other stakeholder categories identified by the steering committees).*
- *Our goal is to shape policy and serve Appalachian communities as they build healthy and prosperous communities, and care for water, forests, air, land, and culture.*
- *Research questions are developed through a participatory design process in which collaborative multistakeholder teams solicit input from communities who are directly affected by issues studied and from other stakeholders.*
- *We value local knowledge and we seek to integrate insights from local knowledge with multidisciplinary scholarly perspectives.*
- *Our topic is multifaceted and complex, so we triangulate multiple analytic and methodological frameworks, and use mixed methods (participatory, qualitative, and quantitative).*
- *Before publication, findings will be returned to participating communities for debate, review, and revision. The research project will strive to process data as rapidly as possible so that results are being returned to communities and the public on a continuous basis.*
- *We envision mainstreaming findings into sustainable, accessible, and useful online data portals and data tools.*
- *The research process is designed to empower communities and to build civic capacity to use and apply data to real life challenges and policy matters.*
- *Participants will be paid for their work (especially local community members or others whose jobs do not include these research activities as work covered by their wages).*
- *We are particularly concerned to build leadership and skills of youth, so the research*

- process gives priority to the needs and perspectives of youth.*
- *This research serves the public good, seeks social justice, and is independent. We do not accept funding from corporations or other special interests.*
 - *We are self-critical and welcome constructive criticism from others. We will continually reassess whether the project serves the public interest and the common good.*

Organizational chart



Mandate of Regional Steering Committee

This committee will oversee the collaborative research project and make regional scale decisions about research design. It will operate according to the study's vision and principles. Its most important role is to nurture a vibrant community of inquiry that encourages innovation, high ethical standards, and listens carefully to what is actually happening in Appalachia. A key goal should be to nurture trust, respect, and mutual inspiration among participants in all aspects and levels of the research process. The meetings of the steering committees will be safe spaces in which people can freely express ideas and feelings, and in which their perspectives, identities, values, and emotions will be respected and validated. This is not a top-down organizing structure. After State Committees and County Teams form they will send representatives to wider committees. Equal consultation and transparent communication among all levels and collaborators will be essential.

Specific responsibilities

- To build community and inspire creativity and bold vision
- To set goals and objectives
- To develop and enforce a timeline with clear benchmarks
- To oversee research design:
 - o Identification of research questions
 - o Literature review
 - o Geographic scope of study
 - o Methods
 - o Analytical and theoretical frameworks
 - o Data analysis and data management
 - o Quality control
 - o Write up and dissemination
- To establish a core set of research activities that all states will perform, and provide the knowledge sharing platforms needed for input of local and state data using universal regional standards, protocols, and templates (In addition, individual states might be taking on unique research tailored to their locale. And, the regional committee can get involved as helpful to states and counties)
- To design and oversee training programs for people doing data collection
- To work with state committees to develop materials and best practices for excellent facilitation of public forums and community meetings
- To identify stakeholders and consolidate their input, in the context of ongoing power mapping and strategic planning to build wide support and co-opt potential opposition.
- To serve as the communications clearinghouse for reports from and to state committees
- To develop and oversee communications campaigns to the general public at the regional and national levels: clarify key themes, develop effective messages, disseminate to targeted audiences
- To form and dissolve regional working groups and partnerships as needed
- To coordinate fundraising efforts for regional projects, and develop common resources that can be used by state level fundraising (concept papers, archives of proposals and letters of inquiry)
- To oversee budget and financial accounts
- Select committee chair (or co-chairs), note-taker, facilitator / time-keeper as needed

Composition

- Geographic balance among states
- Balanced representation from different sectors: communities directly affected; students and youth; scholars; lawyers; planners, experts, practitioners, people with government experience; activists and nonprofit staff; other key stakeholders identified by the committee
- Learn from experience of people who worked on 1979 study
- Each state committee has voting representatives on regional committee. Working groups have someone who serves as liaison with Regional Steering Committee (whether they have voting rights to be decided)

- Have an odd number of members

Timeframe

- February 2017: initial board members are self-nominated
- March-August 2017: committee meets at regular intervals and develops basic research design, research process
- Sep. 2017-August 2019: new board members rotate in as nominated by the state and regional committees. Try to achieve a balance between bringing in new people (to widen leadership and perspectives) while keeping continuity and organizational memory. If needed, set possible limit on number of members in interest of efficiency.

Mandate of State Steering Committees

These committees will oversee the conduct of research in their states and will operate according to the study's vision and principles. We propose that a meeting be convened in each state to bring together diverse stakeholders to establish a state steering committee as an outcome of the meeting. (It will be important to have excellent facilitation for these meetings).

Specific responsibilities

- To listen deeply to realities and needs in local communities and in their state by conducting public forums, community listening projects, and other participatory deliberation forums and research
- To liaise and translate between local, state, and regional stakeholders
- To identify and build partnerships with academic institutions in their state that will serve as anchor institutions for the state committee -- such as technical, community, and liberal arts and land grant universities, and, think tanks. They should be invested in the area, and able to contribute to workforce development. It will be particularly valuable if long-term partnerships can be developed with particular faculty, classes, and programs, so that the Land Study will provide regular field sites for internships, class projects, and theses.
- To identify research questions: a) that should be included in regional research and b) other research questions uniquely important in their state that they will seek to research
- Within their state and in participating communities, to identify stakeholders and consolidate input, in the context of ongoing power mapping and strategic planning to build wide support and co-opt potential opposition.
- To catalyze and support county level research teams who will be primary data collectors
- To serve as the communications clearinghouse for reports from and to county committees
- To develop and oversee communications campaigns to the general public in their state: clarify key themes, develop effective messages, disseminate to targeted audiences
- Select committee chair (or co-chairs), note-taker, facilitator / time-keeper as needed

Composition

- Geographic balance among counties, and between rural and urban
- Balanced representation among sectors: communities directly affected; students and youth; scholars; lawyers; planners, experts, practitioners, people with government experience; activists and nonprofit staff; artists, videographers, photographers, writers, storytellers and other culture workers; other key stakeholders identified by the committee
- Learn from experience of people who worked on 1979 study
- Send voting representatives to the regional committee

Timeframe

- February - July 2017: convene state meetings
- Sep. 2017-August 2019: new board members rotate in as nominated by the state committees. Try to achieve a balance between bringing in new people (to widen leadership and perspectives) while keeping continuity and organizational memory. If needed, set possible limit on number of members in interest of efficiency

Balancing community and scholarly roles

We want a healthy balance between community and scholarly input and control. On one hand, we want local communities to take the lead in identifying research questions and public needs. On the other hand, we want scholars to take the lead in setting standards and protocols for data quality, management, and analysis, so that the study follows the highest standards of scholarly independence and rigor. Therefore, we propose the following research cycle:

Charge to Research Director

Karen Rignall (Assistant Professor, Community and Leadership Development Dept, School of Agriculture, University of KY) will play a coordinating role in development, monitoring and evaluation of data protocols and standards. She would also help to coordinate the academic dimensions of the study, integrating diverse theoretical models and methods, supporting community-led processes for developing research questions and design and fundraising. Her responsibilities would be to work with steering committees and scholars to align community, policy, and scholarly goals of the study and to support development and field-testing of standardized protocols for data analysis and sharing. Key in this would be systems for quality control based on scholarly best practices. She oversees and manages central datasets. She supports the process of scholarly writing based on the study. She will convene the independent Scholarly Review Board.

Scholarly Review Board

We will convene an independent panel of scholars who commit to serve for a year or two. These scholars will not be involved in the research teams conducting the work but will provide independent review of models, methods, and products.

Composition

- Karen Rignall, project Research Director, will work with the steering committees to develop a list of the kinds of expertise we need
- She and her research assistants will identify the top ranked scholars in the needed areas of expertise by interviewing scholars and scoping scholarly literatures

Responsibilities

- The Research Director will invite scholars and establish appropriate platforms for communication
- The Research Director will liaise between the Scholarly Review Board and the steering committee
- Scholars will commit to reviewing project reports every 3 to 6 months, and sending in written evaluations (including evaluation of research design, data quality control and management)
- Panels, forums, and workshops will be convened in scholarly venues. We will reach out to the Appalachian Studies Association to explore possible series of events at the annual conferences from 2017-2020
- An appropriate process for rigorous scholarly peer-review of end products will be developed
- Articles will also be written for peer-reviewed journals, with the Research Director playing a key role in catalyzing and supporting these write ups

Working Groups

[To be decided by the Steering Committee. Suggestions so far include:

- **Policy Working Group:** Plays a coordinating role in clarifying impacts related to existing policy, and possible needs for new policy. Writes policy relevant reports. [Possible anchor entities might include Appalachian Citizens Law Center]
- **Communications, Deliberation, Visualizations Working Group:** Oversees and coordinates wiki and other digital platforms for internal team deliberation, as well as for dissemination to, and participation by, the general public. [Possible anchor entities: Center for Rural Strategies? Appalshop? LiKEN?]
- **Methods and Data Working Group:** The purpose of this group is to a) learn in greater depth about the approaches that have already been used to study land; b) help plan some initial scoping studies to see how different methods work when applied, and what we learn that we didn't anticipate. These initial studies will help inform future grant writing and our future work. They will be planned in conjunction with the regional steering committee once it's formed; c) review the methods, variables, and indicators used in the original land study; d) propose to the regional steering committee a set of rigorous methods for the study that will stand up to scholarly and public scrutiny but that will also build grassroots power and capacity. [Lindsay Shade is convening this group. Contact her if interested in joining]

Types of partnership and collaboration

Core Land Study Working Group: The steering committees of the Land Study are made up of individuals who do not represent organizations. Rather, the Land Study is composed of teams of knowledgeable people who come together out of common concern for a public interest issue. It is not a collaboration among, or consortium of organizations. Participants will be ambassadors to the various civic networks they represent, and will communicate the concerns and reactions of their constituents. However, when they come to Land Study meetings they should engage as independent individuals and scholars following the path of inquiry according to reason and evidence. They do not represent any special interests or particular organizations.

The Land Study group will develop informal collaborations or more formal memoranda of understanding with particular organizations that can provide necessary skills and capacities to the work:

- **Anchor institutions:** regional universities, colleges, and think tanks with particular expertise will provide core support to Steering Committees
- **Resource people:**
 - **FACILITATORS:** Teri and Betsy suggest that we reach out to people who have a strong history in the region as facilitators of meetings, to facilitate initial meetings and to do train the trainer sessions for community meetings
 - **OFFICIALS, CONTRACTORS, PRACTITIONERS WITH NEEDED EXPERTISE:** retired

or current bureaucrats could provide uniquely valuable help, such as PVA officials, surveyors, etc.

- **Core partners:** we anticipate that we will need close partnership with some specialized institutions in developing our website, digital platforms, communication campaigns, etc. Teri and Betsy suggest we invite the following:
 - Center for Rural Strategies and Appalshop: communications campaigns
 - Alliance for Appalachia: train the trainers in facilitation and design of internal and public meetings;
 - Y'ALL & Scholar Activist Alliance: to build student / Land Study long term collaboration
- **Key stakeholders and potential collaborators:** to whom we should reach out early and try to build good working relationships:
 - Faith communities
 - Landowners
 - Local governments
 - Public Health departments and associations
 - Planning organizations and professional associations
 - Community land trusts, commons, and other land-focused entities or movements
 - Nature conservancies
 - Others to be identified by steering committees

Timeline

December 2016

- (12/30) Scoping studies list: Betsy

2017

January

- (1/15) Draft & circulate vision statement: Teri & Betsy
- Anchor institutions – informal conversations re/ past work & lessons learned
- NORTH CAROLINA: ASU faculty & students kick off a study group
- TENNESSEE: teach in & outreach, @ Clearfork Community Institute
- (1/30) Vision statement finalized, after circulation to Land Study listserv

February

- Form regional steering committee
- Begin scoping studies

March

- [Appalachian Studies Association meetings](#), Blacksburg VA, March 9-12
 - Roundtable
 - Meeting of regional steering committee

April - June

- State meetings to form steering committees
- Continue scoping and begin pilot studies

July

- Data systems set up

August

- Initial Regional Steering Committee dissolve
- Consolidate Scholarly Review Board
- Finish and publish scoping studies

September

- Reconvene new Regional Steering Committee (which can include members of earlier Regional Steering Committee)
- Begin big study as funding manifests