



FY 2025 INSPIRE Initiative

Background on ARC's Investments Supporting Partnerships in Recovery Ecosystems (INSPIRE) Initiative

The Appalachian Region (the Region) has been disproportionately impacted by the issue of substance use. Across decades, substance names have changed, but the individual and cumulative community-level impacts have compounded and continue to present an impediment to socioeconomic and personal growth. Substance use disorder (SUD) prevention and treatment in the Region have been extensively explored and described through research studies, funded community-based intervention programs, sponsored conferences, and publications. One theme that consistently emerges is that individuals with SUD encounter numerous barriers to entering the Region's workforce, which can have a negative impact on workforce participation rates and economic development, with consequences that span generations.

While new funding streams are important to effectively address the substance use crisis, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC, the Commission) has heard from Appalachian leaders regarding the need to better coordinate funds and to focus on an important goal: to assist individuals in recovery to access an organized set of SUD recovery services while pursuing training and education necessary to obtain, or maintain, employment (particularly regional demand-driven jobs and high-demand occupations that offer family-sustaining wages).

The Commission's work in this area is guided by dozens of experts at the local, state, and federal level. On May 13, 2019, ARC announced the formation of the Substance Use Disorder Advisory Council (SUDAC), currently a 22-member volunteer advisory group of leaders from recovery services, healthcare, law enforcement, economic development, private industry, education, state government, and other sectors. By drawing on their own experiences as well as community insights gathered during ARC's six regional Recovery-to-Work Listening Sessions, the SUDAC developed recommendations for ARC to consider as part of a strategic plan to build and strengthen recovery ecosystems in Appalachian communities. For more information on the SUDAC, visit the [ARC website](#).

Experts and community leaders consistently state that for persons in recovery from SUD, having stable and meaningful employment is an important component of successfully maintaining recovery. The Commission carefully considered what role it could most effectively play to address the challenge of helping individuals in recovery obtain and maintain employment. Building on decades of successful experience in engaging regional community empathy, energy, and expertise, ARC pursued a process to define the elements needed to create community recovery ecosystems that could achieve the stated goal. In addition, ARC pursued a process to target resources to assist communities to organize an appropriate mix of services and interorganizational agreements. This effort was titled Recovery to Work. The following reports, as well as additional background information, are available on the ARC website:

- [*The Report of Recommendations: Appalachian Regional Commission's Substance Abuse Advisory Council*](#) (published September 2019)
- [*Final Report: Appalachian Regional Commission Recovery-to-Work Listening Sessions December 2018–April 2019*](#) (published July 2019)