

Connect Appalachia Peer Meeting

An Appalachian Regional Commission INSPIRE Project

The Summit, Johnson City, TN - November 4, 2026

- 8:30 am **Welcome**
Participants are welcomed to the meeting and hear an overview of the day's events from the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness (CREC).
- 8:45 am **Introductions**
Facilitator Bob Isaacson (Senior VP for Economic Research and Policy, CREC) guides participants as they introduce themselves and their motivations for attending the meeting.
- 10:00 am **15-minute break**
- 10:15 am **Session 1: RTW Ecosystems**
This session outlines resources available when building your RTW ecosystem. Additionally, participants discuss best practices in coordinating across different organizations within a RTW ecosystem by evaluating differing needs and sustainability of support.
- 11:15 am **Session 2: Battling Employer Stigma**
In small groups, participants engage in in-depth discussion around challenges and strategies to combat employer stigma against workers in recovery. Groups will identify common employer comments and concerns and discuss how to achieve success.
- 12:00 pm **Lunch**
Provided by hosts.
- 1:00 pm **Session 3: Employer Engagement**
Engaging with employers for a RTW ecosystem requires building trust while also understanding their perspective and incentives. Here participants will discuss the techniques and tools needed to help encourage and equip employers to participate in a RTW ecosystem.
- 2:00 pm **15-minute break**
- 2:15 pm **Session 4: Employer Training**
Members of the ETSU Addiction Science Center provide an overview of the services available to organizations and employers, sharing the strategies they use to speak with employers and results. Participants will ask questions and engage in discussion with presenters.
- 3:15 pm **Closing/Next Steps**
Participants will create next steps for their organizations by discussing what their local RTW ecosystems immediately need and how they can use the larger community for support. Facilitator Bob Isaacson then will summarize the day's discussion and provide announcements.
- 4:00 **Adjourn**