As the group of finalists for Generation West Virginia’s Impact West Virginia Fellowship program introduced themselves, I couldn’t help but be inspired. The group of young developers, marketers, accountants, analysts, entrepreneurs, designers, and managers from both in- and out-of state have one clear thing in common: they are each choosing West Virginia and they each want to use their diverse skill sets to be a part of making impact in our state’s communities.

It’s no news that we lose too many West Virginians to opportunities in other states, threatening the stability of our state’s tax base, our ability to attract new employers, and local leadership capacity in our communities. At Generation West Virginia, the statewide organization dedicated to attracting and retaining young talent in the state, we’re working hard to develop programming to help reverse these trends. After receiving nearly 200 applications from around the country for the seven Impact West Virginia Fellowship spots in this first cohort, we think this program is one part of the solution.

Generation West Virginia has done significant research on the factors that both attract and retain young talent. We’ve developed the Impact West Virginia Fellowship based off of the important elements young professionals look for in choosing where to live and work.

Job creation is of course a critical strategy to ensuring more of the next generation can choose to stay in West Virginia. The availability of a diverse range of high-quality job options is a key piece of this puzzle. After all, young people can’t stay if there isn’t a job for them here.
Perhaps most importantly, the Impact West Virginia Fellowship creates new jobs here in West Virginia. It was developed to expand both sides of the talent pipeline—ensure a steady stream of opportunity for the next generation of employees and a steady stream of talent for the next generation of employers. Through this yearlong program, Impact West Virginia Fellows will work four days a week as paid employees with one of the participating Host Companies—Core10, Downstream Strategies, EntreEd, MESH Design and Development, Vaught, Inc., and WesBanco. We hope to expand the cohort of Host Companies each year to have a total of 35 Impact West Virginia Fellow positions in five years.

However, access to quality jobs alone is not enough to attract and retain young talent. Quality of place is a key driver for young people in choosing where to live and work, especially as more and more young people have more geographic flexibility by working remotely for employers across the globe. Quality of place is used as an all-encompassing term to describe all of the qualities that together make up thriving, vibrant communities. Often its definition focuses on culture, arts, and entertainment, paired with transit options like public transportation, bikeability, and walkability. However, I’ve found that especially for this impact-driven and entrepreneurial generation, another critical component of quality of place is the opportunity to feel a part of a community and to have the ability to contribute to its future.

Knowing this, Impact West Virginia was created to not only highlight the wonderful arts, culture, and entertainment that our communities offer; but to also show the opportunities for young people to be active leaders and truly have a seat at the table in creating innovative community solutions. We know the work isn’t done here in our beloved state but that quality is an asset for this generation who is attracted to places where they can be a part of shaping the future.

Impact West Virginia Fellows are exposed to this potential every week as they work four days a week with their Host Company and spend each Friday volunteering with a local nonprofit in the community. Fellows donate their time, knowledge and skills to helping organizations create positive change in communities across the Mountain State.

We believe in the Impact West Virginia Fellowship as a part of the solution but it is indeed only one program. I wish I could tell you there was a silver bullet solution to the decades-long generational flight we’ve faced as a state, but it’s going to take a sustained effort across sectors to truly shift the population trends in West Virginia. Our mission of attracting and retaining young talent really is one that must be shared across policymakers, community and economic developers, employers, educators, and all who are working toward a better West Virginia.

The Impact West Virginia Fellowship is just one program but the program elements are reflective of the kinds strategies that all sectors and organizations can employ in your own work to attract and retain the next generation. There are small things that we can do right now to make a difference in this shared mission.

Since we know that quality jobs are a driving factor in attracting and retaining young talent, what can we all do to more intentionally increase career pathways within our individual sectors or organizations? Fellowships can be powerful tools to attract top employees for their combined opportunities in gaining relevant work experience.
and professional development. As the job market becomes even more competitive and jobs are requiring candidates to have even more work experience, fellowships have come to play an integral role in expanding the talent pipeline. By offering early professionals a point of entry into West Virginia’s workforce, they are tools that can be incorporated into your own recruitment strategies internally. Further, internships have been proven to increase retention of students post-graduation as they connect them with future employment opportunities in the region.

Young people are choosing places where they can be engaged in shaping the future of that place. What can we all do to give young people a seat at the table so that they buy-in to the future of our workplaces and communities here in West Virginia? Local governments might think about participatory budgeting to give citizens increased input in determining the priorities of development in their community. Employers can engage the next generation through simple workplace strategies like a quarterly “Millennials Council,” where young employees have opportunities to meet with organizational leadership to share ideas and give feedback. Groups of individuals can come together to host community clean-up days or pop-up festivals. All of these things add up to creating places where we are more than just spectators but become integral members of our community and workplace.

Progress on this issue is going to take a commitment from each of our individual sectors of work to be partners in this mission to better attract and retain the next generation in West Virginia. Let’s each add one new strategy to our work, no matter how small, that intentionally expands access to new opportunities for employment or gives new voices a seat at the table in building a better future for this place. Together, it will add up to real impact.

Natalie Roper has been the Executive Director of Generation West Virginia (GWV) since October 2014. Natalie works with local and state partners to strengthen statewide programming and infrastructure needed to attract, retain, and advance young talent in the Mountain State. Natalie received her undergraduate degree and Master’s Degree in Public Policy from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia. With an interdisciplinary background in nonprofit administration, grassroots advocacy, and social innovation, Natalie leads GWV’s efforts to serve as a voice and a source of action for young West Virginians. Natalie is a 2016 WV Living “Wonder Woman,” 2015 WV Woman Rising Star and a proud alumna of the 2015 Leadership WV Class. A West Virginian by choice, Natalie is motivated each day to help make the state a place where more of the next generation can choose to stay.
When trying to understand the impact that this Foundation has had, two fundamental questions arise: “How are the communities in which TGKVF works different than they would have been without the Foundation’s support?” and “How have things been altered or influenced due to TGKVF’s grantmaking?” Answering such questions is difficult for several reasons. Programs that operate in “real-world” community settings are subject to the influences of a variety of environmental factors. These factors include the local economy, unemployment rates, and the declining utilization of coal. There are also local and regional influences, such as the prevalence of illegal drug usage, disease outbreaks, access to preventative healthcare, and regional/cultural food preferences. The ability of any single program, policy or organization to significantly counteract such environmental trends is limited.

Indeed, programs that attempt to address issues of social importance in a community or region rarely work in isolation. Basic underlying social issues such as hunger, poverty, access to adequate housing, access to healthcare, disease prevention, social inequality, and the like, are often the target of federal, state, and local governmental efforts. These issues are also directly addressed by a multitude of business, non-profit, and religious organizations.

The complexity of social and economic problems and the difficulty of accurately defining and measuring them, often makes it challenging to gain a clear understanding of whether problems are getting better or worse. A multitude of service system actors and environmental influences can make understanding the direct impact of a program or group of programs even more challenging. The direct measurement of the impact of such efforts, requires a long-term, rigorous approach. TGKVF is at the beginning of such a process and has built a conceptual framework along with the structural processes required for the identification and collection of consistent data across funded programs. The framework and processes were launched in January 2017 and we look forward to gaining a better understanding of our impact in the years to come.

“Indeed, programs that attempt to address issues of social importance in a community or region rarely work in isolation.”
The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation (TGKVF) Board of Trustees approved the distribution of eight grants totaling $288,476 at its March 15, 2017 meeting.

The Kanawha-Charleston Health Department was one of the organizations receiving a grant for the Harm Reduction Program. "Joanie," a participant for nine months, arrived at the clinic one day and said to the staff, "Do you recognize me? You haven’t seen me in several months because I am now clean, thanks to your help. [The health providers here] always treated me with respect and never made me feel embarrassed for coming to the needle exchange [program]."

Three responsive grants, totaling $115,000, were awarded to Basic Needs and Arts & Culture programs. The Education, Health, and Community Economic Development (CED) priority areas were represented in five grants, totaling $173,476.

**WVU Extension - STEM Ambassador Program: $50,000 (Education)**

WVU Extension will be entering its third year of funding for the STEM Ambassador Program. This program provides STEM learning opportunities in each of TGKVF’s six counties for youth in kindergarten through 12th grade. College students from the Kanawha Valley (the STEM Ambassadors) plan and implement community STEM programs during 4-H camps, community events, and public programming. This program encourages aspirations for careers in STEM and lifelong learning for participants.

"The kids could remember the types of energy we had learned about the day before. I felt like I was really getting through to them. They loved the solar ovens!"

– Laurel Kemmerling, Fayette County STEM Ambassador

**The Education Alliance - Born Learning Academy: $12,876 (Education)**

The Born Learning Academy program connects schools with families of young children during the critical early learning period, prior to school enrollment. Families participate in "academy" trainings where they learn to create teachable moments for their children. This grant renews the program for a second year at Edgewood Elementary (Kanawha County), Brookview Elementary (Boone County), and Hamlin PK-8 (Lincoln County).

“Our Born Learning Academy has become a family. Our families just keep coming back, even our families from last year. We have really been able to bond together and become a support system. It is truly something special.”

– Born Learning Academy Coordinator

**Kanawha-Charleston Health Department - Harm Reduction Program: $50,000 (Health)**

The Harm Reduction Clinic (HRC) combats the heroin/opioid epidemic and the infectious diseases that come from the sharing of needles. HRC is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing the harm to individuals and society associated with drug use. Volunteers include substance abuse treatment personnel, nurses, pharmacist and medical students.

“Access to sterile syringes spares lives and saves taxpayers money. The Institute of Medicine has concluded the cost-effectiveness of needle exchanges is estimated to range from $3,000 to $50,000 per HIV infection prevented.”

– Dr. Michael Brumage, Executive Director & Health Officer, Kanawha-Charleston Health Department
Community Access, Incorporated - Horses & Journeys Warrior Wellness: $15,000 (Health)
The Horses & Journeys: Warrior Wellness project combines equine-assisted learning with guided hiking to assist military service members - both active duty and veterans - identify and strengthen their own practices for wellness. The project is entering its second year of funding and operation. It offers and promotes healthy lifestyles and develops or strengthens natural and community-based supports.

WV Community Development Hub - Energizing Entrepreneurial Community Development in Lincoln and Boone Counties: $45,600 (Community Economic Development)
The Hub will assist in the diversified growth of the Madison and Hamlin communities by supporting diverse, locally driven leadership teams. These teams will build economic diversification strategies and energize entrepreneurial community development to support small business growth and sustainability. Funding will cover a portion of the two programs’ evaluation expense, travel expense, two AmeriCorps VISTAs, and mini-grants for the Innovation Acceleration Strategy and Energizing Entrepreneurial Communities leadership and entrepreneurial plans.

Art in Action, Inc. - Classroom and Performance Supplies: $20,000 (Arts & Culture)
Arts in Action provides arts education and performance opportunities to communities in Putnam County and the West Side of Charleston. Classes include dance, music, visual arts, and theater. Students also participate in summertime Artistic Discovery Camps and dance workshops. Funding will ensure all children have access regardless of economic status.

FestivALL Charleston - 2017 Season: $25,000 (Arts & Culture)
FestivALL (June 2017) and FestivALL Fall (October 2017) will feature approximately 150 music, visual art, dance, theater, humanities, and family entertainment events with over 400 performances by local, national, and international artists. FestivALL, in cooperation with partner organizations and individuals, will produce, co-produce, and present all events, performances, and exhibitions. This grant award will fund nine specific events.

“The program has given me cause to know my country cares. At times we all feel lost, but this project and its sponsor give us pause to evaluate so many different aspects of the world around us. It makes me less angry and more responsible.”

– 2016 Program Participant

“Showing teams that they have the ability to affect their community in meaningful ways has been a real culture-shift. They have hope again.”

– Terry Bartley

“I searched for a long time for a place where special needs adults were welcomed in music and dance. Finally, I found Arts in Action.”

– Barbara Mallory, SuperStars Parent

“As a public artist, FestivALL has given me opportunities to show my work and involve the public in art events. As a teacher, it has given me ways to involve students in community arts.”
Regional Family Resource Network - Bottle and Diaper Project: $70,000 (Basic Needs)

In an effort to address diaper and formula needs, a team of organizations from Boone, Clay, Fayette, Kanawha, Lincoln, and Putnam Counties has created a system to place or strengthen baby pantries throughout all six of the Foundation’s counties to provide diapers, formula, education, and other resources to low-income families.

“TGKVF will help us fulfill our Mission of ‘building bridges of opportunities’ by giving Charleston residents the opportunity to achieve. We accomplish our mission by coordinating, facilitating, and/or initiating activities and programs that respond to the needs of families.”

Grant Writing with an Emphasis on Federal Funding

This hands-on training teaches new and experienced individuals, community, and non-profit organizations Best Practices for writing winning grant proposals.

Learn:
- How to successfully write/complete each section of a grant proposal
- Where to locate government and foundation funding
- Common language used in writing winning grant proposals
- Sample proposals will be used during training for hands-on practice

Register online at: www.tgkvf.org/grantwriting

About our Partner & Presenter

The Global Partners for Fathers & Families is an international consulting firm whose mission is to grow client services and funding through expert grant writing training, technical assistance and the use of technology. They are led by President/Founder, Patrick J. Patterson, MSW, MPH, national grant writing trainer and expert. Over his career, Mr. Patterson has successfully delivered more than 700 trainings, keynotes, workshops, and technical assistance sessions in 42 states and 4 countries.

The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation Mission Statement

Based on input from the community it serves, TGKVF makes thoughtful and proactive investments that grow the multiple forms of wealth necessary for our community to thrive. These forms of wealth include the individual, intellectual, social, political, natural, built, and financial assets within our community.
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**Upcoming:**

**November 2 and 3, 2017**  
Building Bridges for Good Measure Conference  
Schoenbaum Center  
Charleston, WV

Workshop tracks will include:  
- Leadership  
- Program delivery  
- Fund development  
- Financial management  
- Evaluation

Adventures on the Gorge  
Lansing, WV

**Contact Us**  
Huntington Square, Suite 1600  
900 Lee Street, East  
Charleston, WV 25301  
304.346.3620  
www.tgkvf.org

**TGKVF — One of the top 100 community foundations in the nation**