



Building a Regional Network for  
Asset-Based Economic Development

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# In this Presentation...



- Who is CAN?
- CAN's Approach
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  - Building a Regional Network
- What Makes a Successful Network?

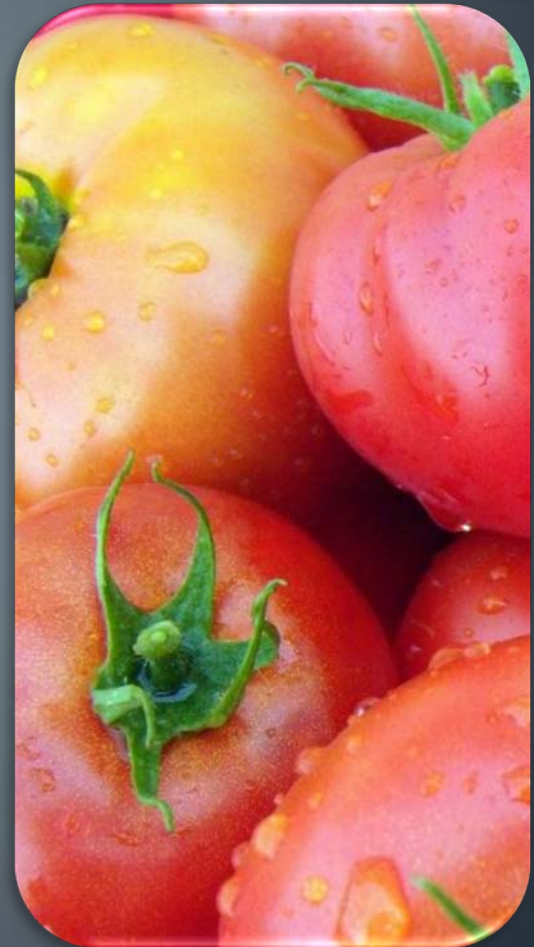
# The Central Appalachian Network

- Network of non-profits working for a more just and sustainable Appalachia
- Serve as conveners and regional network-builders
- Work for economic development in ways that benefit the environment and communities
- Current focus on local food systems



# The Central Appalachian Network

- Appalachian Center for Economic Networks – Athens, OH
- Appalachian Sustainable Development – Abingdon, VA
- Center for Economic Options – Charleston, WV
- Mountain Association for Community Economic Development – Berea, KY
- Natural Capital Investment Fund – Shepherdstown, WV
- Rural Action – Trimble, OH



# What Does CAN Do?

1. Works to strengthen and connect local and regional value chains, especially agricultural value chains
2. Builds multiple forms of wealth that stick in rural and low-wealth communities
3. Connects people, businesses, and organizations across the region to advance learning and conversations about sustainable economic development



# 1. What is a Value Chain?

- Network of businesses, non-profits, and collaborating organizations who work together to satisfy market demand for a product
- Includes core actors – the basic supply chain – who share the values the consumer is looking for
- Also includes supporters (economic development, local government, trainers, researchers, media, etc.)





# Why the Value Chain Approach?

- Helps us think in terms of systems instead of isolated projects
- Driven by demand – what products are consumers looking for, and what values are important to them?
- Lends itself to building multiple forms of wealth in rural communities





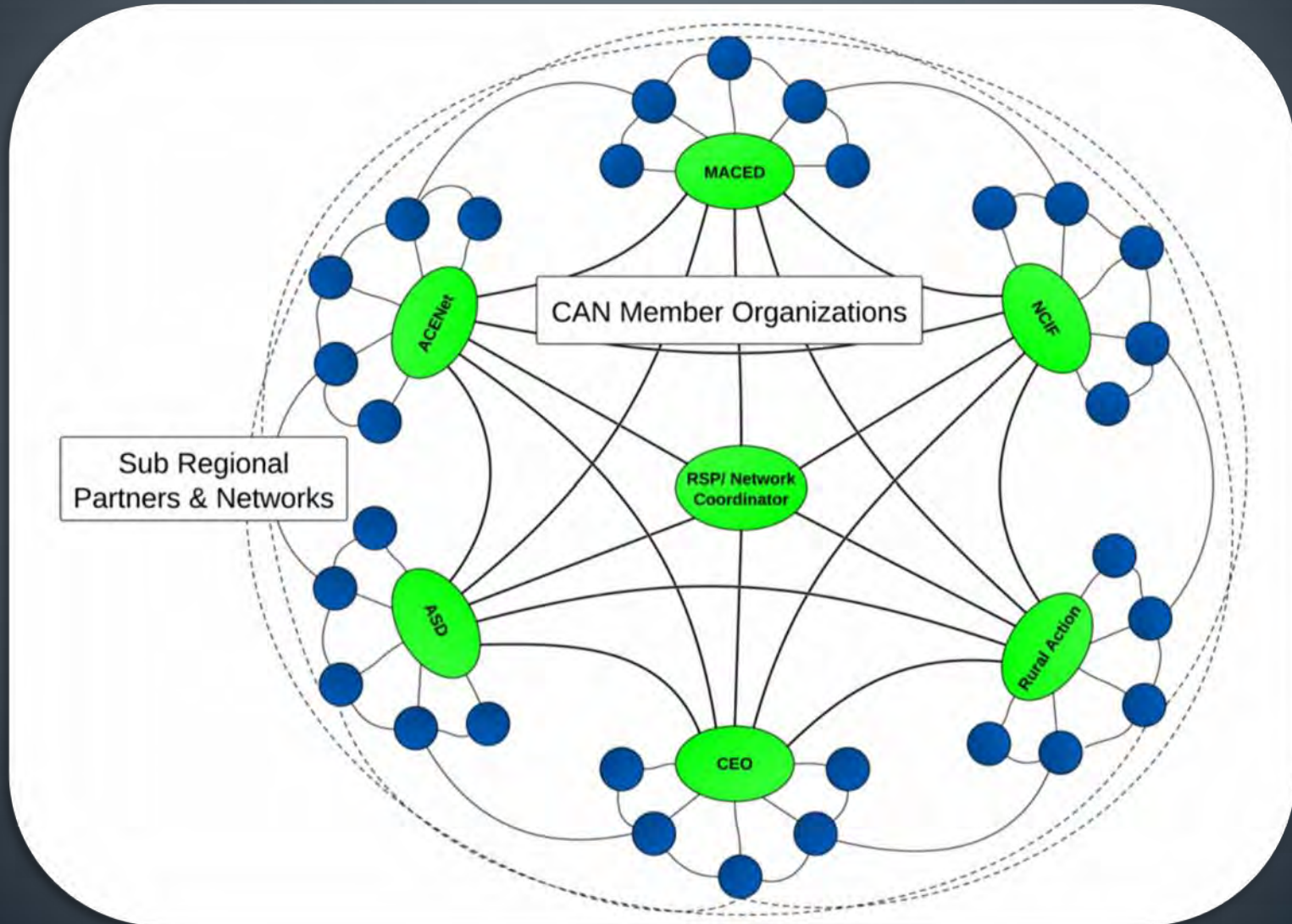
## 2. What are the Multiple Forms of Wealth?

- Wealth is not just money!
- Assets that contribute to the overall well-being of a community
  - Knowledge and innovation
  - Skills and capacities
  - Trust and relationships
  - Natural resources
  - Community-owned infrastructure
  - Political power and influence
  - Investment, capital, and savings

We use this framework to continually...



# 3. Making Regional Connections



# Regional Learning and Information-Sharing

- Sharing lessons and expertise across five states
- Facilitating connections between/among individual organizations
  - Co-operative development conversations
  - How to access federal grant funding



# Regional Learning and Information-Sharing

- Training and technical assistance events and webinars
- Experienced practitioners from across the region supporting more emerging value chains
  - Robin Robbins, ASD – marketing assistance and GAP training



# What Makes a Successful Network?

1. Trust and relationships
2. Shared analysis, vision, interest, and identity
3. Shared direction, measurement, goals, and work
4. Strong network management
5. Clear benefits for local people



# What Makes a Successful Network?

6. Shared power and control
7. Communication
8. Enough structure, but not too much
9. Mutual accountability
10. Clear benefits for member organizations



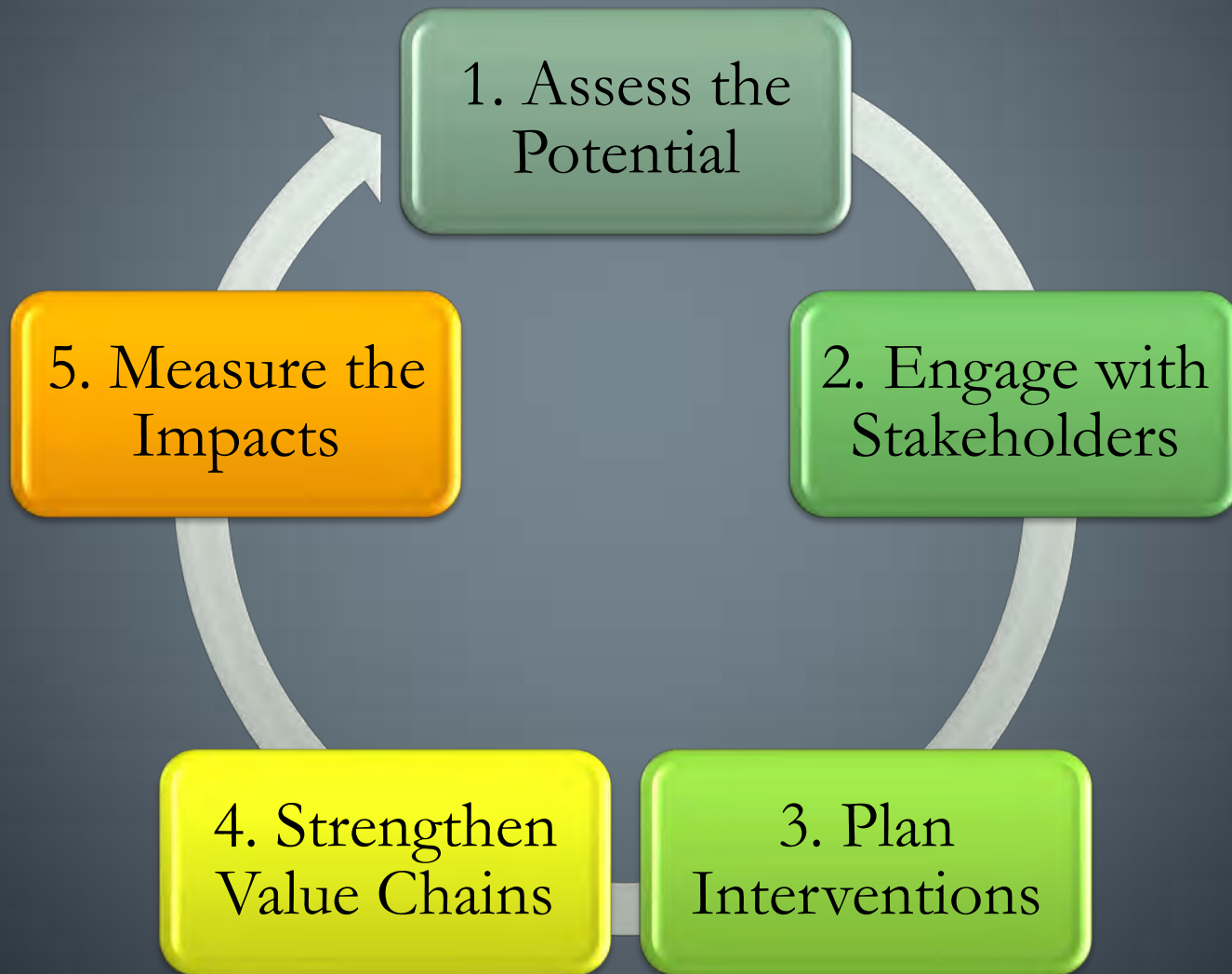
Full paper and toolkit available on [www.ruralsupportpartners.com](http://www.ruralsupportpartners.com).

# Example: Local Meat Value Chains



Photo credit: Marksbury Farm Market





# Local Meat Value Chains

- Assess the potential: conversations with partners around the region
  - Growing demand (increasing by 15-20% per year)
  - Good geographic fit – land that may be too steep for vegetable production works well for animals
  - Significant challenges, especially around processing infrastructure and regulation



# Local Meat Value Chains

- Engage with stakeholders & plan interventions—  
“Opportunities in Meat Processing in Central Appalachia” gathering
  - Develop a collective analysis
  - Problem-solve around the challenges
  - Develop solutions and next steps



# Working with Diverse Partners



- Planning team
  - Local EDC and producer
  - Statewide non-profit
  - Regional CAN members
- Participants
  - All of the above, and...
  - Producers
  - Processors
  - Buyers
  - Regulators
  - Funders/Investors

# For More Information



- Central Appalachian Network:  
[www.cannetwork.org](http://www.cannetwork.org)
  - Sign up for the mailing list
  - Connect with us on Facebook
- Appalachian Sustainable Development:  
[www.asdevelop.org](http://www.asdevelop.org)