



# APPLI

Appalachian Learning Initiative

A scenic landscape painting of a forested mountain valley. In the foreground, a dense green forest covers a hillside. A river flows through the middle ground, reflecting the sky. In the background, blue-toned mountains rise under a sunset sky with orange and yellow clouds. A large, white, stylized arch graphic is superimposed over the top half of the image, framing the scene.

## Annual Report Fiscal Year 2023

November 2023



Appalachian Learning Initiative  
Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2023  
Table of Contents

Letter from the Executive Director	3
Our Mission	4
Our Impacts	5
Our Research	6
Adult Literacy and Its Impacts on Public Health	6
Our Projects & Resources	8
Infographics Database	8
Reading Lists	9
Appalachian Adult Education Directory	10
Financial Reporting	11
Statement from the Board of Directors	11
Donations	11
Expenditure Totals by Category	11
What's Ahead in 2024	12

Letter from the Executive Director

Year Two for the Appalachian Learning Initiative (APPLI, pronounced like “apply”) has been an year of growth and expansion for our organization. We have launched a new directory of over 115 Appalachian adult education providers, conducted and presented original research on the link adult literacy and public health, made crucial decisions about the social media platforms we use for outreach to our over 1,000 followers, expanded our research into the public health space, created and premiered nine informational videos, and recommended 46 books across 8 reading lists. In addition to original content, we have worked with several community partners to provide infographic and written content, including the Community Access National Network (CANN), ADAP Advocacy, and PlusInc. We have informed readers about issues related to adult educational attainment, health outcomes, and access to public health and social services in the 13-state Appalachian Region and beyond.



We have also welcomed three new members to our Board of Directors—Tasha Graves, AS, Audrey Peters, MA, and Kate Woodworth, MS. The expansion of our Board to include these new voices and areas of expertise will help to broaden the reach and scope of APPLI to better advocate for and serve Appalachian adults and their families.

Going into Year Three, APPLI will continue to expand upon our mission to highlight the educational, public health, and social issues that matter to everyday Appalachians. This will include providing more opportunities for direct input from our audiences, creating more opportunities to inform advocacy efforts to improve the lives of Appalachians, and working to fulfill our promise to launch a first-of-its-kind patient-centric directory for the Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) program—The HOPWA Directory.

Our growth in Fiscal Year 2023 would not have been possible without the support of our Board of Directors, the dedication of our researchers, Crystal D. Harper and Amanda G.S. Morgan, and the guidance and advice from the following: Jen Laws (CANN), Brandon Macsata (ADAP Advocacy, PlusInc), Wesley Sullivan, Bob Joneson, Erik Kosman, and Michael Gilley.

Thank you for continuing to support and grow with us.  
We look forward to connecting with you in 2024.

Marcus J. Hopkins  
Founder & Executive Director



# Our Mission

APPLI's mission is to work toward a world in which every adult living in Appalachia, and across the United States, has equitable access to:

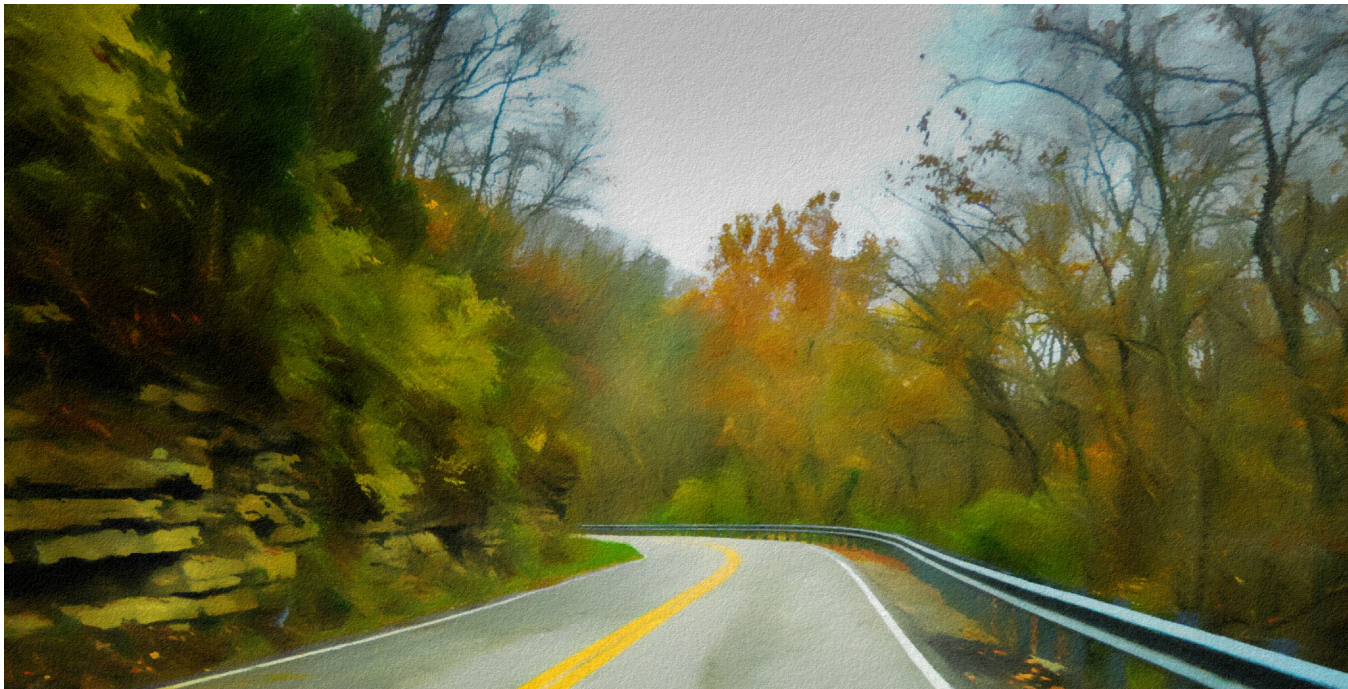
- Free or low-cost educational opportunities to improve their ability to read and perform basic mathematics
- Information about public health and infectious diseases that is timely, accurate, and easy to understand
- High-quality, affordable, and accountable healthcare and social services to improve their quality of life



APPLI believes that all people have the fundamental right to robust, equitable, and accessible education, healthcare, and social services regardless of:

- Race, ethnicity, or national origin
- Sex (including gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation)
- Disability
- Age
- Religious beliefs (or lack, thereof)
- Income
- Health status

# Our Impacts



115

Over 115 Appalachian adult education providers listed

80

80 pages of original research

46

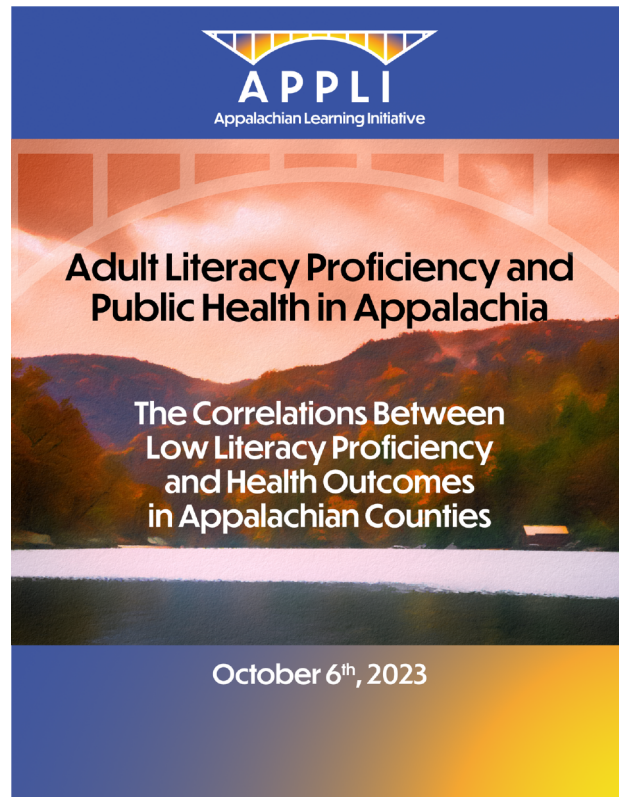
46 books recommended

In our second year of operation (2023), the Appalachian Learning Initiative has:

- Launched the Appalachian Adult Education Directory with 117 locations currently listed across Appalachia's 13 states
- Presented and [published an in-depth report](#) on the correlation between adult literacy proficiency and public health outcomes
- Created 9 informational videos
- Recommended 46 books across 8 reading lists
- Operated 7 social media channels that have gained over 1,000 followers
- Started the process of developing a first-of-its-kind directory for the Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS housing assistance program



# Our Research



## Adult Literacy and Its Impacts on Public Health

In 2023, the Appalachian Learning Initiative embarked on its first major research effort focusing on the impact of adult literacy proficiency and health outcomes.

This research, co-authored by APPLI's Founder & Executive Director, Marcus J. Hopkins, Crystal D. Harper, MA, Amanda G.S. Morgan, CPhT, W. Matthew Cox, PhD, Tasha B. Graves, AS, Audrey D. Peters, MA, Kate L. Woodworth, MS, and Michael R. McKenna, MPA, measured the correlation between the ability of Appalachian adults to read with 25 measures of public health, including specific health behaviors and the incidence, prevalence, and mortality rates of infectious and non-infectious diseases

and conditions.

In the process of conducting this research, APPLI's team collected over 11,500 individual points of data for each of Appalachia's 13 states, 423 counties, 8 independent Virginia cities, and national metrics United States. We then used Pearson's Correlation Coefficient formula to measure the relationship between adult reading proficiency and each measure of public health, the result of which are expressed on a scale between -1.0 and 1.0. The findings (r) that are closes to the center (r = 0) indicate that there is no correlation, while those furthest away from 0 (e.g., r = -0.9 or r = 0.7) indicate strong negative or positive correlations, respectively. The stronger the correlation, the likelier it is that adult literacy serves as a factor that drives certain health outcomes.

### Pearson Correlation Coefficient Formula

$$r = \frac{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$



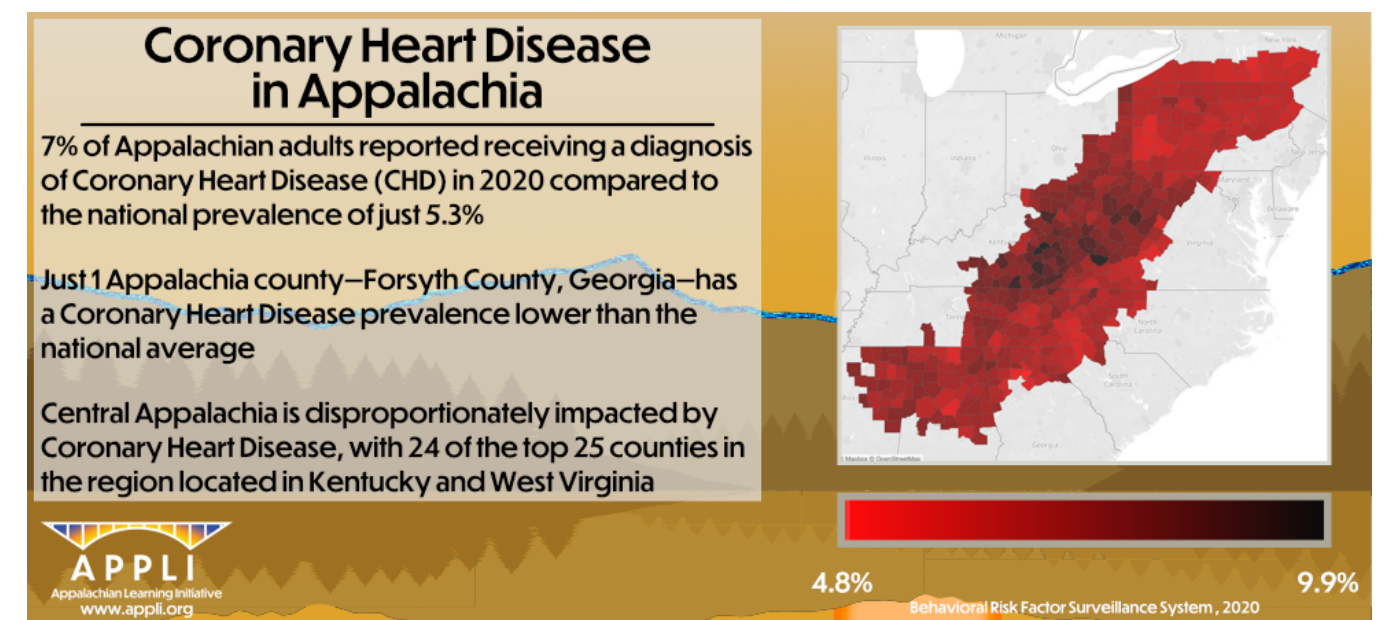
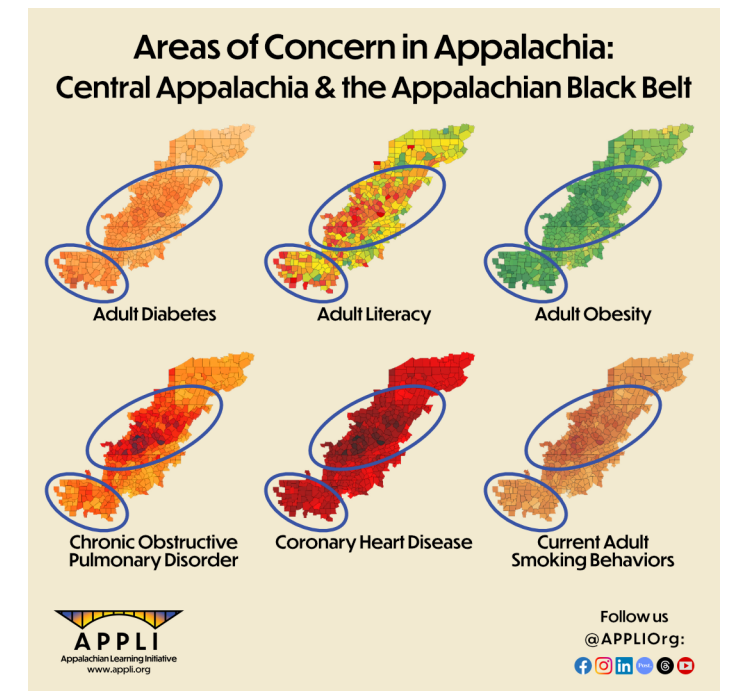
Follow us  
@APPLIOrg:  
f i n t y t

# Our Research (Cont.)

## Findings

APPLI found that the ability of adults to read at or below an Eighth Grade Level across Appalachia's jurisdictions had strong correlations with the prevalence of adult diabetes (r = 0.7), adult obesity (r = 0.7), COPD (r = 0.7), Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) (r = 0.8), and current adult smoking behavior (r = 0.8). The data for cervical cancer mortality contained only two data pairs that were not Suppressed or zero values, thus failing to meet a minimum confidence interval to draw an accurate correlation.

In addition to finding that adult literacy proficiency may impact health behaviors and outcomes, APPLI also found that jurisdictions located in Central Appalachia (Kentucky, Northeastern Tennessee, Southeastern Virginia, and West Virginia) and the Appalachian Black Belt (Central Alabama and Central and Western Mississippi) had the highest correlations between adult literacy and health outcomes. Each of these Appalachian subregions face considerable legislative and policy barriers that have resulted in poor educational and health outcomes, and APPLI recommends that state and local governments, Community-Based Organizations, and educational institutions focus on improving outcomes in these jurisdictions.

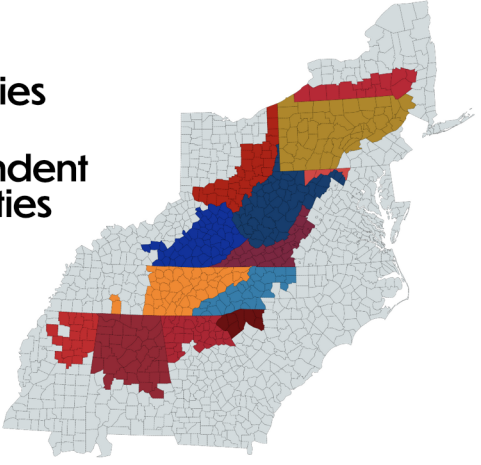





# Our Projects & Resources


### Visualizing Appalachia

13 States  
423 Counties  
8 Independent Virginia Cities





Follow us  
@APPLIOrg:



## Infographics Database

In 2022, the Appalachian Learning Initiative created over 900 state- and county-specific infographics on the topics of adult literacy and adult numeracy proficiency in Appalachian jurisdictions. These infographics were uploaded into APPLI's [Infographics Database](#)—a searchable repository that allows users to find information specific to each of Appalachia's 13 states, 423 counties, and 8 independent Virginia cities.

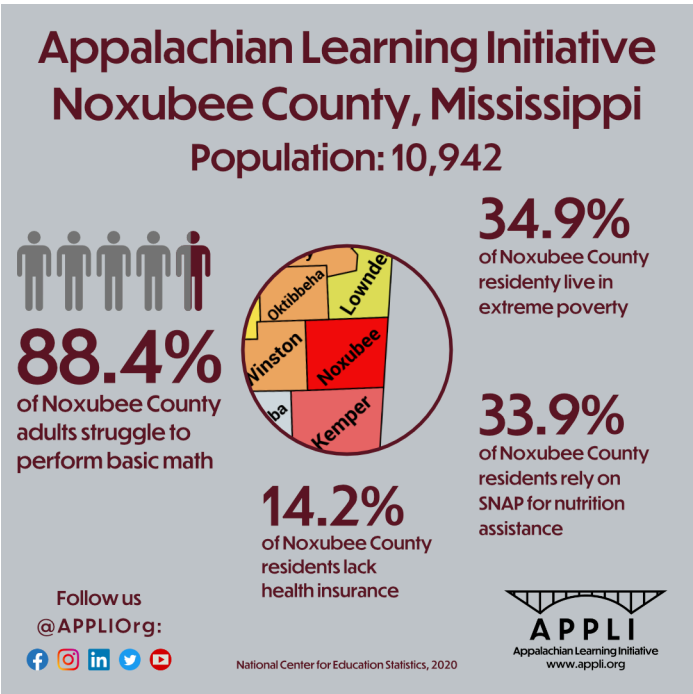
This effort represents one of the first attempts to gather and present detailed, county-level data about

Appalachia in a manner that makes it easy for individuals, advocates, and organizations to find and share in order to raise awareness about the issues faced by Appalachians.

APPLI's goal in hosting this database is for people and organization to use it as a resource for advocacy, for educating local, state, and federal administrators and legislators about the educational, health, and social needs of people living in Appalachia, and for informing and driving legislative and administrative policy changes to improve the lives of our fellow Appalachians.

You can visit the Infographics Database at the following address:

<https://www.appli.org/infographics>



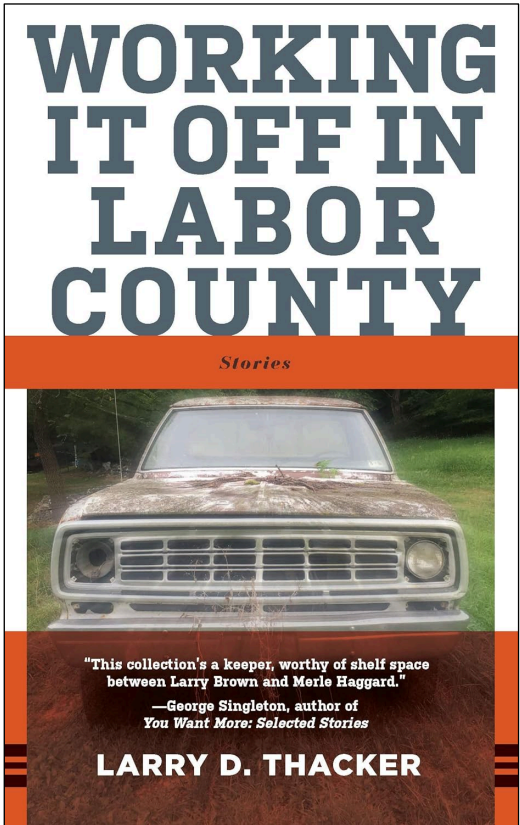
# Our Projects & Resources (Cont.)

## Reading Lists

In June 2022, APPLI launched the first in its series of seasonal and celebration-specific [recommended reading lists](#). The Pride 2022 reading list included works by LGBTQ+ authors chosen to highlight a diverse collection of authors and experiences.

Since that time, APPLI has released 14 reading lists, one for each season and lists celebrating certain national holidays and recognition months, including Labor Day 2022, Black History Month 2023, and Women's History Month 2023.

After the initial debut of our reading lists, APPLI has shifted away from general reading lists to a focus on featuring works of fiction and non-fiction about life or set in Appalachia with an emphasis on highlighting Appalachian authors, including Larry D. Thacker, Silas House, Denise Gardenia, Ann Pancake, bell hooks, and other phenomenal novelists, essayists, and poets.





As with our Pride 2022 reading list, we work to ensure that the books we select a representative of a broad range of experiences and perspectives from across Appalachia. From our research, we know that, just as the geography of the Appalachian Region is not the same from county to county, neither is the Appalachian experience universal amongst its resident. The Appalachian Mountains are home to a diverse population in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, education, and income. We do our best to reflect that diversity in our selections.

You can view our Recommended Reading Lists at the following address:


<https://www.appli.org/appli-reading-lists>

This fall, read a book about Appalachia





Follow us  
@APPLIOrg:





# Our Projects & Resources (Cont.)

Do you provide adult education services in Appalachia?

Take our Appalachian Adult Education Provider Survey!

<https://cutt.ly/APPLI-Adult-Ed-Survey>

Follow us @APPLIOrg:

APPLI Appalachian Learning Initiative www.appli.org

## Appalachian Adult Education Directory

In January 2023, APPLI undertook the challenge of launching [a directory of adult education providers](#) serving adults living in the Appalachian Region.

We began this process by launching a regional survey that we circulated to Community-Based Organizations, private institutions, community and technical colleges, universities, and government agencies across Appalachia in order to establish a baseline of educational opportunities

in the region.

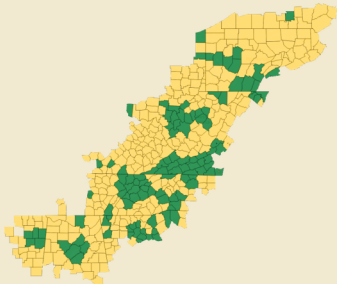
In just under two months, we received over 30 responses to our survey which prompted us to release our first-of-its-kind regional educational directory on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This feature of our website allows users to find providers serving their county using an easy-to-navigate directory of verified providers to find the services that best suit their needs. Since its launch, the Appalachian Adult Education Directory has grown to include 117 locations in each of Appalachia’s 13 states.

The survey to identify providers remains open, and we will continue to expand and revise the directory as more information and responses become available.

You can visit the Appalachian Adult Education Directory at the following address:

<https://www.appli.org/adult-ed-directory>

Adult Literacy Service Providers in Appalachian Jurisdictions



62 adult literacy service providers responded to survey requests. They serve just 121 – 28.1% – Appalachian jurisdictions

APPLI Appalachian Learning Initiative www.appli.org

Follow us @APPLIOrg:

# Financial Reporting

## Statement from the Board of Directors



As of October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, in Fiscal Year 2023, the Appalachian Learning Initiative received income from donations totaling \$9,694.38 and expenditures totaling \$9,692.71. This represents the first Fiscal Year that APPLI received individual and corporate donations from persons and companies other than its Executive Director, and

also the first fiscal year ending in positive figures. No new debts were assumed in FY 2023.

## Donations

In November 2022, APPLI launched its first fundraising campaign, including our first dedicated donation campaign on Giving Tuesday 2022 (November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022) which raised a total of \$557.39 dollars from three donors—Marcus J. Hopkins, April Perrine, and Marie Ricard. The general fundraising campaign on APPLI’s website raised \$1,021.70 from two donors—Marcus J. Hopkins and Helen Howe. Fundraising through APPLI’s Facebook and Instagram channels brought in \$515.00, the donations from which are anonymized. Direct donations from Zelle totaled \$,2955.00. APPLI also received a \$1,000.00 corporate donation from Modivcare (Denver, CO). Additional donations from Marcus J. Hopkins totaled \$3,716.92.

## Expenditure Totals by Category

Category	Total
Operational	\$3,015.89
Office	\$1,494.26
Transportation	\$0.00
Software & Licenses	\$2,837.97
Utilities	\$0.00
Equipment	\$2,344.59
Total	\$9,692.71



# What's Ahead in 2024

## Coming Soon

### The HOPWA Directory

In the APPLI’s 2022 Annual Report, we announced the development of a first-of-its-kind patient-centric national directory for the Housing Opportunities for Persons With HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) program—the HOPWA Directory—the only federal housing program specifically designed to address the critical housing needs of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).

In 2023, we began pursuing financial support for this directory under the fiscal sponsorship of the [Community Access National Network \(CANN\)](#) and in collaboration with [ADAP Advocacy](#) and [PlusInc](#). Though we submitted over 20 funding requests to pharmaceutical companies, private foundations, and other potential funders, we were unable to secure financial support for this project.

While the initial lack of interest in this project was disappointing, we are dedicated to making the HOPWA Directory a reality. We will continue to pursue funding in 2024.

### Appalachian Advocacy Toolkits

In 2023, APPLI also began gathering information to develop state-specific Appalachian Advocacy Toolkits. These toolkits will provide users with annually updated information about each state in Appalachia, including the contact information for state and federal elected and administrative officials specific to Appalachian jurisdictions, as well as current state and federal policies, funding levels, and statistics about the areas of research APPLI covers—adult educational attainment, public health, and social services.

Gathering the data and developing materials is a huge undertaking for an all-volunteer organization, and we hope to begin launching the first of these toolkits in the second quarter of 2024.



Follow us  
@APPLIOrg:

