



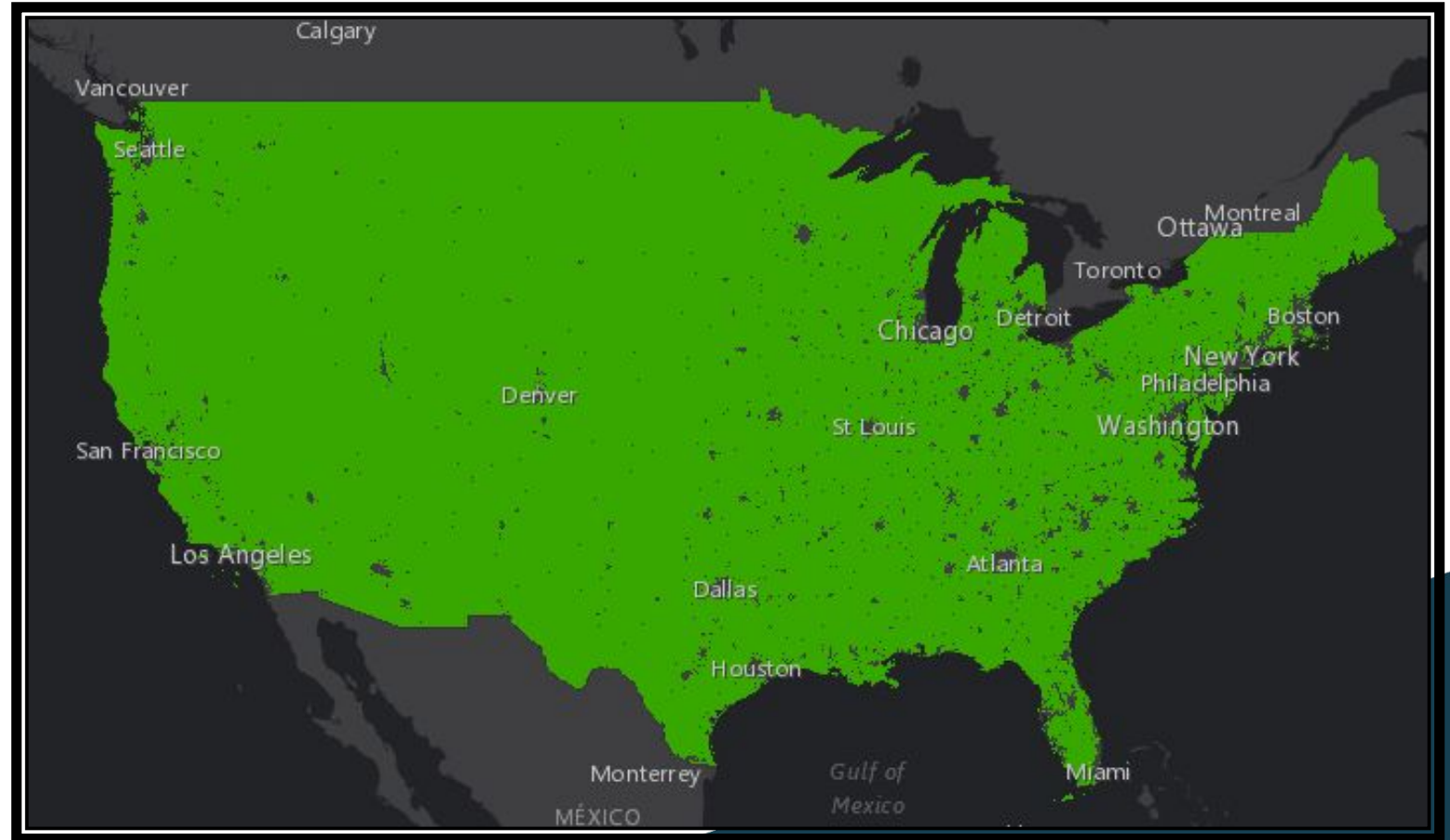
Empowering Rural Women's Business Centers

Best Practices for Economic Growth & Community Development



Setting the Stage: What is Rural?

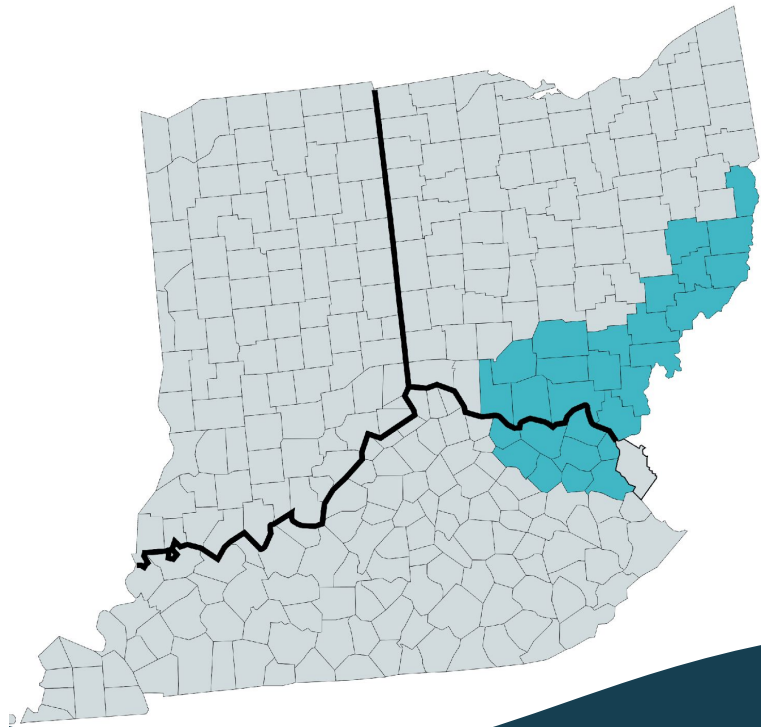
The US Census Bureau considers “rural” to include all people, housing, and territory that are not within an urban area. Any area that is not urban is rural. The Census defines urban as: Urbanized Areas (UAs) of 50,000 or more people.



Setting the Stage: Demographics

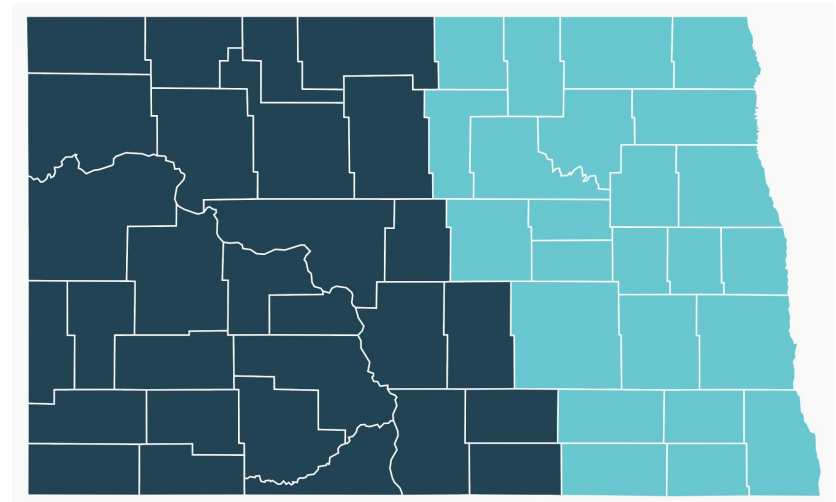
WBC of Central Appalachia

- Population: 907,088 (50.8% female)
- # of WBC Staff: 3



North Dakota WBC

- Population: 775,000 (48% female)
- # of WBC Staff: 7



Open Discussion: Describe YOUR Challenges

Challenges for Rural WBCs

- Limited awareness and visibility
- Geographic barriers
- Lack of digital connectivity
- Socio-cultural factors
- Limited resources and capacity



**Open Discussion:
How did you solve them?**



Ignite Appalachia

What:

- Ignite Appalachia 8- week entrepreneurial bootcamp/ pitch competition

Goals/Insights:

- Catalyst for new business starts/expansions in the region
- Nearly 100 participants, resulting in 35 business starts, 12 expansions
- Raised over \$50000 for cash prizes
- Partner with universities, chambers of commerce, ED offices, SBDC to deliver

Community Advocacy Tour

What:

- Focus groups, one per region, to build trust, hear directly from women business owners about their triumphs and challenges, gather data.

Goals (long term):

- Foster equitable access to Opportunity, Funding, Knowledge, and Support to level the playing field and reduce barriers related to limited funding opportunities, social expectations, gender biases, work life balance (competing demands for their time), and in some areas, legal inequities, and a lack of local and government support.
- Increase number of successful WOBs in North Dakota.
- Advance workforce retention and employee growth.
- Fortify the resiliency and sustainability of local communities.

Comments or Questions?

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Investing in the growth
of small business

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