

Letcher County Culture Hub Scholar Reviews

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Rachel Maunus (2022)

This job is essentially a community organizing position. The scholar in this position works, physically, in Appalshop, as Letcher County Culture Hub is technically a 'project' of Appalshop. The job requires a lot of research, reflection, and reading about the importance of effective and respectful community organizing, especially in the context of Appalachia, which has notoriously been a victim of voluntourism and other extraction for centuries. That reflection is facilitated by Annie Jane Cotten, who has been working in organizing for a large majority of her life and is always willing to call out problematic assumptions or instincts people have when taking on an organizing position.

Given that the Culture Hub has been around for less five years, a lot of the job is researching and creating foundational documents, structures, and practices to contribute to the sustainability and growth of the Culture Hub. There are almost twenty different partners, and they each have a different idea of what the Culture Hub should look like. Because of the diversity of thought, a large portion of this job is deeply listening to the needs, fears, desires, etc. of partners and community members.

For a large portion of my time, I worked on surveying community partners to assess their organizational assets and needs. I used those surveys to create a series of trainings and resources for partners, from bookkeeping to grant-writing to social media and promotion, among many others. I also researched and then subsequently created many one-page information sheets and templates to make accessible resources about economic structures and processes in accordance with Kentucky law.

1. The day to day is not routine, so scholars looking for a structured 9-5 may not want to apply for this position.
2. This job is not for scholars who have an idea of what Appalachia should look like, and see this as an opportunity to act on their own ideas of best practices.
3. Building off of that, this job is both fast-paced and slow-moving, direct action is often slowed by long conversations and analysis to preserve the intentionality and integrity of the work.
4. This job has room for many interests, talents, and tasks. It is broad enough to support any project or skill you would like to explore.
5. The scholar in this position will find themselves collaborating with many people they fundamentally disagree with. This job is a unique opportunity to explore the political depth and complexity in both individuals and the greater community.

Clare Bradshaw (2021)

The Letcher County Culture Hub was fast paced, always changing, and really exciting. The Culture Hub is working to create economic diversity in Letcher County through relationship-based community organizing and latent asset development. I was constantly driving

all over the county to meet with partners from a variety of fields--not-for-profit, arts and culture organizations, community centers, volunteer fire departments, local businesses, and more. My summer was spent building relationships with community partners, learning in depth about the strengths and opportunities for growth of the community, organizing/facilitating meetings, reading/writing literature about economic development in the region, and creating/implementing internal leadership development opportunities.

This position required me to be really flexible and ready for the day to change at any moment. I loved it, but I would definitely come into it with an open mind and be prepared for instability. Listen to partners and community members with an open ear and heart--my summer depended on the genuine friendships and connections I built. These made the work of the Culture Hub more personal and meaningful. Also be ready to think on your feet, you'll be put on the spot a lot in this position and often times in front of quite a few people.