

## Mapping Our Futures :

### Highlander Center Economic and Governance Curriculum

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#### Introduction

In these challenging political times in the United States, it is more critical than ever to build progressive community power, strategies and vision, while resisting dismantling of progressive policies fought for by generations of people and challenging the growth of fear, racism and xenophobia. The Economics and Governance Curriculum was conceived of as a way to bring a process to marginalized communities to build their relationships, knowledge and projects locally. This multi-year collaboration is led by the Highlander Research and Education Center [www.highlandercenter.org](http://www.highlandercenter.org), with support from other national and regional organizations. Popular education modules engage community groups to assess community assets; analyse resources and capacity; identify decision-makers; develop new alliances, organizations and enterprises; and take action to address community needs through responsible and sustainable practices. The curriculum provides a structured process through which participants develop skills in research, analysis and collaboration, learn about their communities and about systems that are larger than their own community, and identify action steps to make transitions in their organizations and enterprises. The process includes a range of approaches from individual to global ways of analyzing communities. The design of the curriculum promotes co-responsibility by building collective ways of working that enable more people to work together effectively. This project contributes to the Alliance's objectives in three ways:

1. The participatory process of collaborative curriculum development makes this a living project, with users sharing responsibility for collective learning, identifying and building resources and capacity for transformation.
2. The experience of using the curriculum develops the capacity of groups to understand the systems shaping and controlling the contexts in which they are living and working.
3. The curriculum guides users to imagine and then create initiatives, programs, institutions and campaigns in their communities for transformation and transitions to responsible and sustainable societies.

The E&G curriculum is thus a 'resource' in two respects: it is a collaborative educational process that participants experience, and participants using the curriculum become resources in their own communities.

#### 2016 Report of Activities

##### Revisions, Adaptations and Collaborations

After our first training of trainers event in November 2015, based on feedback from participants, Highlander staff created a new version of the curriculum, and developed several

versions of different lengths. We included most of the original themes but created simpler processes. We created a 1.5 and 3 hour introductory version, as well as a one day and two day version so that this content could be available in multiple venues. These sessions have been used in various venues over 2016:

### Workshops

Introductory shorter versions –There have been facilitated sessions of 1 -3 hours with our introductory workshop at multiple venues in the last year. This included:

- Appalachian Studies Association, March 2016
- Solidarity Economy Conference, March 2016?
- Common bound Conference, New Economies Coalition, Buffalo, NY June 2016
- STAY Summer Institute, July 2016
- Seeds of Fire Living Legacy Tour, July 2016

One Day Version – We shared this one day version with 60 participants at Highlander’s Homecoming Event, and also built upon this curriculum with panels and workshops relating to economic alternatives, the Movement for Black Lives Policy Platform and also including international resource people who came for Homecoming but also stayed and spent time with Highlander staff sharing their work and challenges.

Two Day Version – December 1-4, at the Isle of Palms South Carolina with ten teams from communities interested in learning about and sharing this curriculum. (see list at end). After an introductory day facilitated by Highlander and Beautiful Solutions staff, the participants were organized into teams to facilitate the rest of the curriculum. This process worked really well – groups did great jobs sharing the sections with the group. In this process, we received a lot of feedback and suggestions and are making changes to the curriculum.

Due to multiple last minute logistical challenges, we also had to plan, cook and clean up all the meals for our weekend. This resulted in a very tangible way to share collective responsibility for our community and although a challenge, it really enriched our experience together.

We met with each group at the end of the training of trainers session and have specific next steps with each for 2017. We plan to support some of these facilitators to bring the curriculum to their communities.

### Collaborations

Alliance for Responsible and Sustainable Societies (Alliance-Respons) – We are very happy to be a partner with Alliance-Respons with this project. We have participated in a popular education process earlier in 2016 that included some Alliance-Respons members, through our membership in the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network. We believe that responsibility is an important base for this curriculum and its outcomes and we are also working to make this more explicit, by including “shared responsibility” in the organizing principles and also incorporating examples in some of the

later sections. We will also be working in the next year to develop a module for internal organizing within groups and collaboration, further developing ideas around internal responsibilities for collective undertakings.

Solidarity Economy Network (and RIPESS International Curriculum Project), Southern Grassroots Economy Project,, and New Economy Coalition – Highlander is an active member in these three coalitions and we have worked to share this curriculum in these venues but also to help plan and carryout conferences in 2016 that brought together groups from the U.S. and internationally to share strategies and challenges in creating different economic and governance systems.

### **Highlander Partnering to create *Beautiful Solutions - Toolbox for Liberation* -**

*Beautiful Solutions is a collection of the most promising strategies for building a post-capitalist future. From city-wide participatory budgeting in Brazil to large-scale cooperative economies in Ethiopia, there are powerful examples all around the world of communities meeting their needs without exploitation or injustice. With stories from every sector of society, Beautiful Solutions makes the case that there is an alternative and supports readers to explore solutions where they live.*

Highlander is a partner in this project, documenting strategies taking place in communities around the world. This gives us the capacity to share principles, values and examples that represent a spectrum of real examples to inspire communities. There is already a website: <https://solutions.thischangeseverything.org> The book is slated for publishing later in 2017, with plans for book launch events and trainings in communities, using Highlander's developing economics and governance curriculum.