



**Appalachian Sustainable
Products Network**

Appalachian Sustainable Products Network launches, Issues call for Manufacturers in West Virginia, Ohio and Pa to Participate in Pilot No-Cost Product Life Cycle Assessment

*ASPEN will equip Upper Appalachia to meet **\$83 billion U.S. residential and commercial sector demand for the products and materials used to construct, renovate, maintain and operate energy-efficient buildings and infrastructure and connect buildings to a cleaner grid***

PITTSBURGH (March 25, 2024, 2024) -- The Green Building Alliance (GBA), together with West Virginia University, including WVU Extension and Vantage Ventures; Catalyst Connection; Youngstown Business Incubator; and BRITE Energy Innovators, today announced the launch of the **Appalachian Sustainable Products Network (ASPEN)** and website, www.ASPENbuilds.org, and issued an **invitation for regional manufacturers to participate in a no cost Life Cycle Assessment of their product(s), valued at \$50,000.**

Funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission's Appalachian Initiative for Stronger Economies (ARC ARISE), together with match funding support from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, ASPEN will equip Upper Appalachia to meet increasing residential and commercial sector demand for the products and materials used to construct, renovate, maintain and operate healthy, energy-efficient buildings and infrastructure, and connect buildings to a cleaner grid.

Demand for these products and materials is on the rise:

\$83 Billion U.S. Market: The US green building market surpassed \$83 billion in 2021 and is experiencing significant growth.

[Statista | Size of the green building market in the United States from 2017 to 2021](#)

12.3% Annual Growth: The global green building materials market is projected to grow from \$422 billion in 2023 to \$951 billion by 2030, at an annual growth rate of 12.3%.

[Fortune Business Insights | Green Building Materials](#)

1 in 4 Decarbonizing: About one quarter of the largest commercial real estate investment trusts are making serious, science-based commitments to decarbonize their buildings.

[U.S. Commercial Real Estate Market: State of Decarbonization 2023](#)

ASPEN is seeking **manufacturers of building products and/or materials** to participate in the Pilot LCA between **April and June 2024** and will require approximately **1-2 weeks participation** of the manufacturer.

Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs), which measure environmental impact by considering the entire life cycle of a product from raw material extraction to disposal, will be conducted by GBA at no cost to participating manufacturers. LCAs typically require up to six months of engagement, but close collaboration with the GBA team will enable engagement with manufacturers to be completed within one- to two-person weeks of effort on the part of the manufacturer.

At the conclusion of the Pilot, manufacturers will receive a report with the results of the LCA as well as an LCA model of their product. This model can be used to help manufacturers identify product design changes to lessen environmental impact and can serve as the base report for generating a third-party certified Environmental Product Declaration (EPD). EPDs can offer a

major boost to market access, particularly for manufacturers of building products and materials. The cost for an LCA averages \$50,000; through the ASPN Pilot, manufacturers can participate in an LCA at no cost.

In addition to the LCA Pilot program, the planning phase of ASPN includes the following:

- **Market Analysis** to quantify opportunity, demand and growth within the green building and sustainable development sector and for the region.
- **Ecosystem Map** to identify and assist producers, manufacturers and other entities in the regional supply chain find and better support one another; connect them with resources; and highlight dynamic hubs of sustainability activity within the region.

Both the Market Analysis and Ecosystem Map processes are underway, and together with the Pilot Study, will spur further innovation as companies refine their product lines to meet higher performance standards.

“By strengthening the reliability and growing the scope of the region’s manufacturing supply chain in sustainable building products, the Appalachian Sustainable Products Network will contribute to the regeneration of Upper Appalachia as it transitions from the extractive industries that once fueled its economy,” says Jenna Cramer, President and CEO, Green Building Alliance. “We invite all those engaged in the regional economy to join in or access the upcoming webinar to learn more about the project, the market study and ecosystem mapping process, and the product Life Cycle Assessment Pilot.”

By considering the entire life cycle of a product from raw material extraction to disposal, an LCA enables businesses to identify opportunities for improvement, optimize resource efficiency, reduce waste, and make informed decisions regarding product design and supply chain management.

“By engaging in a Life Cycle Assessment, manufacturers can identify opportunities to optimize resource efficiency, reduce waste, and make informed decisions regarding product design and supply chain management,” says Greg Norris, GBA Vice President of Life Cycle Sustainability. “These studies will be for internal use by the manufacturers and should provide major and actionable insights. Each could also be later extended to support communications or certifications that open up new market opportunities, particularly in the buildings and construction industry where demand for energy efficient, reliable and green design is growing rapidly. Most significantly, this is a quantitative assessment that is the gold standard in understanding the environmental consequences of a product.”

The LCA process can provide companies with answers to the following:

- **Design:** What changes can be made to the product to lessen its environmental impact?
- **Purchasing:** Which product has the least environmental impact?
- **Marketing:** Competitive advantage. Having an LCA-based Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) report can be a major boost to market access, particularly for building products and materials.
- **Benchmarking:** How does the company compare to others in the industry?
- **Resource preservation:** Are there opportunities for resource preservation? Are there areas where resources are being used inefficiently or where alternative materials or processes may be more sustainable?
- **Tracking:** How does the company’s environmental performance this year compare with past years?
- **Policy:** What initiatives will help the company improve its overall environmental outcomes?

“By supporting and equipping regional manufacturers to respond to rising demand for products and materials used in energy-efficient building, design, construction and infrastructure, ASPN will help to accelerate Upper Appalachia’s economic transformation,” says Petra Mitchell, President and CEO of Catalyst Connection. “This collaborative effort will not only enable local manufacturers to become stronger and more competitive, it will also drive job growth and open new opportunities for workforce development in the region, all while addressing the very real impacts of climate change.”

To learn more about opportunities to engage with ASPN, visit www.ASPNbuilds.org.

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Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is an economic development entity of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 423 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC’s mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the Region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation is a regional philanthropy focusing on West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania in keeping with the wishes of Michael and Sarah Benedum. The Foundation generally invests two-thirds of its grant dollars in West Virginia and one-third in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The Foundation makes grants in two program areas that span both states: Education and Economic Development. In addition, the Foundation supports Community Development and Health & Human Services grants programs in West Virginia, and in Southwestern Pennsylvania supports the major performing arts organizations within the Cultural District.

Green Building Alliance (GBA) is the nation’s first regional green building non-profit organization bringing 30 years of experience and expertise working with a broad and diverse network of partners to positively transform the world through the built environment to create a healthy, just, and sustainable future for everyone. GBA drives the supply and demand of green buildings, sustainable and equitable communities, healthy environments, and clean energy through education, training, technical assistance, policy, network-building, and action.

BRITE Energy Innovators is a non-profit launched in 2011, based in Warren, Ohio that hosts a signature entrepreneur program and supportive services to enhance energy technology viability and community understanding.

Catalyst Connection is a private not-for-profit organization headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that provides consulting and training services to small manufacturers in western Pennsylvania, accelerating revenue growth and improving productivity.

West Virginia University (WVU) Extension and Vantage Ventures WVU Extension employs an interdisciplinary approach to economic development by bringing communities, non-profits, businesses, and decisionmakers together to build capacity by using data-informed programming to empower action in creating better economic development futures for the state. Vantage Ventures works throughout WV to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem and ensure economic opportunity for every resident by building high impact, scalable companies that benefit the state, country, and world.

Youngstown Business Incubator (YBI) leverages its strong network of academic, philanthropic, government agencies, and institutional partners to spur entrepreneurial opportunities in northeast Ohio.