Rural communities across America are facing formidable challenges. These communities are integral in defining our country, and their wellbeing affects us all. Opportunity exists. We - residents, mediamakers, audience alike - can inspire change.

When the coal market was strong, McDowell County, W.Va., was known as “the nation’s coal bin” and home to 100,000 people. Only about 22,000 people remain today. This boom and bust has resulted in a suffering economy, educational system and overall quality of life. Additionally, residents have been unfairly represented by the media, neglected by government and continually stereotyped by outsiders. Through Hollow, the community will represent themselves as they see fit—addressing the issues, breaking stereotypes and sharing ideas as they work to preserve their home.

Hollow is driven by two online entities—an HTML5-interactive experience (with a low-bandwidth option) that tells the story of McDowell County through individual portraits while encouraging user participation, as well as a community tool that provides residents with a means of tracking various initiatives related to future improvements and accessing transparent local government documents and activity. These two entities will share data, and content will be added by users and residents, capturing the evolution of the story and the progress of the county.

From an online perspective, success will be measured through social media interaction, clicks on call-to-actions, ongoing resident and user-generated content and the amount of overall traffic to the sites. Overall success will be measured by the ability of residents to inspire each other to reach future goals and make improvements within their county.

Hollow is regionally focused, but the hope is to inspire ideas and actions across all of rural America.