

April 5, 2017



Building Stronger Economies in Appalachian Coal Country

A Bi-weekly Update from the National Association of Counties and the National Association of Development Organizations



Welcome to the latest installment of “**Building Stronger Economies in Appalachian Coal Country.**” This curated bi-weekly newsletter is a joint resource from the [National Association of Counties \(NACo\)](#) and the [National Association of Development Organizations \(NADO\) Research Foundation](#). NACo and NADO are collaborating on a POWER technical assistance grant generously provided by the [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#). This newsletter is delivered every other Wednesday and contains news about economic diversification efforts in Appalachia, resources and funding opportunities, and upcoming events and trainings to support your work in a variety of areas to improve economic development, infrastructure, and quality of life in the region.

Content Wanted! Have a news story or event you would like featured in our newsletter? Send an e-mail to Brett Schwartz at bschwartz@nado.org. We welcome your feedback on content and ideas and encourage you to share this newsletter with your colleagues and partners. Previous issues are archived [here](#).

Thanks for reading!

Economic Diversification News

- A new [article](#) in the *[IEDC Economic Development Journal](#)* from Erik Pages of [EntreWorks Consulting](#) provides **key lessons learned so far from the coal industry transition**. From the article: “Coal-dependent communities face major economic challenges. They must retrain displaced workers and develop new economic engines, while at the same time coping with a complex mix of other challenges related to health care, talent development, and environmental contamination.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- [Fast Company interviews](#) US Congressman Ro Khanna (D-CA), who represents Silicon Valley communities, following his recent visit to Eastern Kentucky with Representative Hal Rogers (R-KY) to discuss **technology, entrepreneurship, and the emerging “Silicon Holler.”** From the interview: “I was incredibly impressed by the energy and vision in Eastern Kentucky. Any community that has that boldness of vision and brings in all the stakeholders can be a leader in providing the jobs of the 21st century.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- [The Guardian covers](#) the **opportunities and challenges for growing the solar industry in West Virginia**, highlighting [Solar Holler](#) and the [Coalfield Development Corporation](#). From the article: “Since joining forces in 2015, Solar Holler and Coalfield have done rooftop solar projects and LED lighting installations for churches, a public library, a building owned by Catholic Charities, some affordable housing units and local businesses. Solar Holler is working on 1 megawatt-worth of projects at various stages of development, or enough to power about 100 homes.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) [recently announced four additional POWER awards](#), totaling \$2.4 million in funding. These grants bring ARC’s total investment to \$75.5 million through POWER to create jobs and opportunity in the region’s coal-impacted communities. According to ARC, these projects will “create and retain hundreds of jobs in advanced manufacturing and agriculture through [Canaan Valley Institute’s](#) Sustainable Jobs Initiative and [Huntington Municipal Development Authority’s](#) development of the Polymer Technology Center of Huntington (“P-TeCH”); build a workforce pipeline through the Region’s community colleges with American Association of Community Colleges’ (AACC) Industry-Informed Infrastructure in Appalachian Colleges (“I3”) project; and identify additional economic opportunities for economic growth in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania through [Workforce Initiative Association’s Coal Business United Resource Network \(Coal BURN\) Real-Time Insights for Real-Time Actions](#) project.” Click [here](#) to read more.
- The [Daily Yonder](#) summarizes the **two coal mine reclamation proposals** filed separately last week in the Senate by Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV). Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [US Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) recently opened the application period for the fiscal year (FY) 2017 [Rural Cooperative Development Grant](#) program. The program funds **cooperative development to aid rural communities in economic development**. More information can be found in the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) [here](#).
- The [National Endowment for the Arts](#) is accepting applications for its [Challenge America grants](#). The Challenge America category offers **support primarily to small and mid-sized organizations for projects that extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations** - those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability. The first phase of the application is due **April 13**. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.
- [USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) works with farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners nationwide to identify and address natural resource objectives in balance with operational goals in order to benefit soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources locally, regionally, and nationally. Applications are now being accepted through **April 21** for grants funded under the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\)](#). Through the RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners in **innovative, workable, and cost-effective approaches to benefit farming, ranching, and forest operations, local economies, and the communities and resources** in a watershed or other geographic area. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.
- A new [report](#) from the [Population Reference Bureau](#) summarizes recent research conducted by [National Institute on Aging](#)-supported researchers and others who have studied the association between neighborhood characteristics and the health and well-being of older adults. Research finds that the **social, economic, demographic, and physical characteristics of communities may influence older residents' health and well-being**. Neighborhood characteristics affect people of all ages, but older adults – classified here as adults over age 50 – may be affected more than other groups. This research can inform policy decisions about community resource allocation and development planning. Click [here](#) to download the report.
- Research from [George Washington University](#) identifies **federal programs available to support entrepreneurship**. Dr. Andrew Reamer compiled information into a working document describing various federal entities engaged with bolstering entrepreneurship. The guide is available [here](#).
- The [EPA Office of Sustainable Communities](#) publication [Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities and Towns](#) is a **step-by-step guide to building a place-based economic development strategy**. It is intended for small and mid-sized cities, particularly those that have limited population growth, areas of disinvestment, and/or a struggling economy. Staff from municipal governments and regional economic development organizations, nonprofit organizations seeking to help revitalize communities, and other stakeholders can use this tool to

help guide their work. Click [here](#) to download the publication.

- A new [report](#) from the [Social Science Research Council](#) covers the topic of disconnected youth in the United States (teens and young adults age 16 to 24 who are not in school or the workforce). The report finds that **“rural counties as a whole are faring considerably worse than more populous counties in terms of youth disconnection.** In completely rural counties, the average youth disconnection rate is 20.3 percent, much higher than the rate for counties in urban centers (14.2 percent) or for suburban counties (12.3 percent).” Click [here](#) to read the report which presents information and data by state.

Events and Trainings

- On **April 5 from 2 – 3 PM ET**, the [Center for Creative Land Recycling](#) (CCLR) and the [National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals](#) (NALGEP) will host a **webinar on the budget outlook for the US Environmental Protection Agency’s brownfields program** and other federal programs that support community revitalization and economic development. Click [here](#) to learn more and register for the webinar.
- The [Federal Reserve](#) is hosting a [webinar](#) on **April 13 at 3 pm ET on middle skills jobs**. Employers argue that they cannot find qualified workers to fill open positions and sometimes ask for a higher level of education than the job requires in order to find the right candidate. New research from the Federal Reserve Banks of Philadelphia and Atlanta finds that the level of education requested to fill similar jobs across metro areas in the U.S. varies substantially. Employers’ preferences for a bachelor’s degree are higher where recent college graduates are relatively more numerous, where wages are higher, in larger metro areas, and in the Northeast. The report finds this to be true overall and for four middle-skills occupations that can provide less-educated workers with a toehold in the middle-class. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.
- On **April 21 from 1 – 2 PM ET**, the [NADO Research Foundation](#) will host the free webinar **“[Access vs. Isolation: Preserving Rail Connectivity.](#)”** As regional economies change over time, the demand for transportation facilities and services also evolves. As a result of a decline in coal demand and output, private sector freight transportation has decreased. Rail lines and service are a valuable transportation network asset and a concern for maintaining and growing future economic activity that might rely on access to active rail lines. The webinar speakers will use **transportation impacts of the decline of coal production in Appalachia as an example to frame the issue of rail preservation** for attendees from across in the nation, as well as within the Appalachian region. The speakers will provide context for the economic changes that led to a change in transportation demand as well as suggest public sector strategies to preserve rail connectivity. Register online [here](#).
- The [2017 National Brownfields Training Conference](#) will occur in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, **December 5 – 7**. Attendees will enjoy opportunities to participate in training events, observe success stories first hand during mobile workshops, learn from

experts regarding **best practices for meeting brownfields challenges**, and network with thousands of other stakeholders. The call for session proposals is now open through **March 24**. Learn more about this year's eight topic areas and available session formats by clicking [here](#).

A Dose of Inspiration

- A short two-part [West Virginia Public Broadcasting](#) video series discusses how **harvesting ginseng may be a piece of the larger puzzle supporting economic diversification** in the state. Developing this industry is not without its challenges, including market forces, regulation, and enforcement. Still, opportunities may abound with the right mix of innovation and creative thinking for this industry. Click for [Part 1](#) and for [Part 2](#) of the series on YouTube.



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