February 8, 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

Region VII Planning and Development Council (WV)

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.

We welcome your feedback on content and ideas and encourage you to share this newsletter with your colleagues and partners. If you would like to add or remove a name from the mailing list, please e-mail Brett Schwartz at bschwartz@nado.org. Previous issues are archived here.

Photos wanted! If you have a photo from your community or region that you would like to submit for use as our alternating banner photo, please respond to this e-mail with a photo attachment and brief description of the image.

Thanks for reading!

Economic Diversification News

➢ An article in *CityLab* discusses how **registered apprenticeship programs support workforce development and job training efforts**. Through these programs, participants are paid during their training and receive on-the-job and classroom instruction. From the piece: "When apprentices graduate from a program, they earn an industry-recognized credential from DOL or the state apprenticeship agency. Depending on where the program is registered and the occupation, the credential could be a national or state occupational certification, or a journeyperson's certificate." Click here to read the article.

➢ *Inside Philanthropy* briefly summarizes the **state of philanthropic support in Appalachia**, including which foundations are committed to the region and what issues they are addressing. From the article: "This region is in a period of transition, and the predominant issues here continue to be jobs and economic security. The decline of the coal industry has a lot to do with that, but other concerns are the pervasive public health crisis, the undervaluing of natural resources, and persistent under-investment in the region's organizations, community capacity, and youth." Click here to read the article.

➢ The *Huntington Herald-Dispatch* describes the role that **tourism can play in supporting diversification efforts** in West Virginia. The article describes opportunities to support better coordination and collaboration on tourism initiatives, noting "the state has much to offer, not only with outdoor recreation such as skiing, whitewater sports and ATV trails, but also with historic attractions and strong Appalachia arts and music traditions." Click here to read the article.

➢ *Forbes* highlights Bit Source, the Pikeville, Kentucky-based company that is **training former coal miners in coding and information technology skills**. Currently, nine former miners are working at the company following their training program. "We wanted to hire people who didn't have the skills, but had the aptitude," says Rusty Justice, co-founder of Bit Source. Click here to read the article.

➢ An article in the *New York Times* covers **ways that college and universities are reaching out to students from rural communities**. Only 29 percent of the 18 to 24 year-old population in rural America are in college (compared to 47 percent in urban areas). From the article: "To college administrators, rural students, many of them the first in their families to attend college, have become the new underrepresented minority. In their aim to shape leaders and provide access to the disadvantaged, higher education experts have been recognizing that these students bring valuable experiences and viewpoints to campuses that don't typically attract agriculture majors." Click here to read the article, which also describes efforts in Kentucky to improve access to higher education.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

➢ The National Information and Telecommunications Administration (NITA) and National Science Foundation (NSF) have released a report on broadband research. *National Broadband Research Agenda* considers input from academia, public, and federal staff in developing lessons on **four key areas in research and development of broadband: technology, deployment, adoption, and socioeconomic impacts**. Research from the report supports the information and communications technology sector and reveals successful ways to impact broadband access, adoption, and choice. The report is available here.

➢ The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) recently issued several reports related to **job training networks**. Training and Employment Guidance Letter 16-16 describes implementation procedures on the American Job Center network and is available here. Training and Employment Guidance Letter 17-16 provides guidance on the one-stop delivery system and is available here. Training and Employment Notice 35-16 describes the final report on self-employment training for rural and older dislocated workers and is available here.

➢ Last week, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4), along with partners in the Aging and Disability Networks, unveiled the Aging and Disability Business Institute website. The website provides **in-depth information for community-based organizations (CBOs) such as Area Agencies on Aging and Centers for Independent Living**. Through the website, n4a and partners aim to help lower health care costs and aid CBOs in facilitating local business operations. The website is available here.

➢ The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has announced the availability of $27 million in grants to fund innovative projects designed to **strengthen market opportunities for local and regional food producers and businesses**. Applications are sought for the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program, which includes Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) grants, and the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP). The grant applications for FSMIP, FMPP, and LFPP must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov by **11:59 pm ET on March 27**.

➢ The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has opened applications to the Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program and Community Connect Grant Program. The Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program **provides funding for construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment to expand services of broadband speeds in eligible rural areas**. Application submission windows will be **March 1 to March 31** and **September 1 to September 30**. The Community Connect Grant Program funds broadband expansion in areas that are not currently being considered by private service-providers. Applications are due **March 13**. For further details on

the Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program, click here. More information on the Community Connect Grant Program can be found here.

Free Events and Trainings

- NACo, NADO, and ARC are hosting a second **small group workshop** event on **February 13ᵗʰ from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm at The Hive facility in Beckley, WV.** The clinic is set to include continued peer-to-peer learning opportunities among the cohort of teams from the ARC region that participated in the 2015 Innovation Challenge workshops, as well as technical assistance presentations and best practice strategies and resources. This particular clinic will focus on **marketing, tourism, local foods, and entrepreneurship**. Please see agenda here https://naco.sharefile.com/d-s072b4bad55b40a48.   If you are interested in attending, please e-mail Jack Morgan at JMorgan@naco.org for more information and to RSVP.
  Presenters include:

  -Erik Pages, EntreWorks Consulting, President
  -Karen Fabiano, Appalachian Regional Commission, POWER Manager – Technical Assistance Program
  -Jake Lynch, WV Community Development Hub, Director of Network Communications

- Brownfield grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are one of many sources of funds that can support redevelopment of contaminated sites. An upcoming webinar hosted by the EPA Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization on **February 28 from 1 – 2:30 ET** will highlight a number of redevelopment resources available from the National Park Service (NPS), The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to **leverage your brownfield dollars**. The webinar will also feature a presentation from a community that has successfully used grants, loans, and other support from these agencies for its revitalization efforts. It is the fourth in OBLR's webinar series on what communities need to know to successfully leverage resources for brownfields revitalization. Click here to register.

- The Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland, in partnership with the Low Impact Development Center, Inc., has released two new courses available from the Municipal Online Stormwater Training (MOST) Center. The courses are "Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development 101" and "Erosion and Sediment Control for Construction Sites." The MOST Center is a free, **virtual center created to eliminate barriers communities often cite as obstacles to implementing effective stormwater management programs** – accessibility issues, budget restraints, and lack of expertise. It uses interactive lessons, videos, graphics, knowledge checks, and other tools to deliver training content in an engaging, user-friendly format. Click here to learn more and access the trainings.

- ➢ **Rate setting, financial management, and department budgeting** are vital components to ensuring financial longevity for municipal water operations. With increasing demand on utilities, expanding or declining populations, and the need for future infrastructure repair, it is necessary to look beyond the sort term financial planning and look towards financing for the future. A free webinar on **February 16 from 1 – 2 pm ET** hosted by the Environmental Finance Center Network and the American Water Works Association will introduce methods that can be used for budgeting for the future. Topics will include projecting for future scenarios, tracking and benchmarking financial performance, and creating financial plans that will extend beyond those that are currently being used. Click here to register.

A Dose of Inspiration

- ➢ Essen, Germany has recently been designated as the 2017 European Green Capital. Following the decline of its coal and steel industry, Essen has **transformed into an epicenter of sustainability and culture, while still honoring its industrial past**. Learn how this region went from "green to grey to green again" in an audio report from *Deutsche Welle*. Click here to listen.

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