

July 26, 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*



**Please note:** Our newsletter will take a hiatus until September as we transition it into a nationally-focused publication that will also address coal-reliant regions and communities in Western states. We will continue to highlight projects and resources for Appalachian communities and hope our readers will benefit from this national perspective on these issues.

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](mailto: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

- [NPR](#) covers the prospects for **Somerset County in Southwestern Pennsylvania to diversify its economy through the health care and wind energy sectors**. The county had a new coal mine open in June that will provide 70 jobs, but residents are looking for new opportunities to support the regional economy outside the industry. From the article: "It seems unlikely that one industry can dominate Somerset like coal once did, and as the county looks to reinvent itself, it is sowing seeds of a more diverse economy." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The [West Virginia Community Development Hub](#) describes the economic impact of the Hatfield McCoy ATV trail in West Virginia, as well as the workforce development opportunities it provides for local residents. From the article: "Last year, [the Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College] launched a **Powersports Technology program to teach students to service, repair, and maintain a variety of powersports equipment like motorcycles, ATVs, UTVs, and personal watercraft**. Program graduates are prepared to be entry-level technicians and most often work as service technicians, but may also find employment as service writers, parts department personnel, and sales staff." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The [Lexington-Herald Leader](#) summarizes the findings of a new Appalachian Regional Commission study on **the impact of the Appalachian Development Highway System**. From the article: "Economic activity associated with the Appalachian Development Highway System has helped create or support more than 168,000 jobs in the 13-state Appalachian region, with \$7.3 billion in added income for workers in 2015, the study said." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- [CNBC](#) explains how **Appalachian states may become a petrochemicals hub, given the region can develop storage, transportation, and other industry infrastructure**. From the article: "It took about 60 years for the Gulf to develop into the highly integrated petrochemical hub it is today. [Paul Boulter, vice president of industry and innovation at Team NEO] believes the Appalachian region can develop one in much less time, maybe just 15 years, partly by planning the system as a whole. The United States has also become a leader in producing cheap natural gas byproducts in recent years, making it attractive to investors, he said." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The Wise County, Virginia town of Appalachia recently held a meeting organized by the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission to **plan for the community's future and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the area**, reports [Coalfield.com](#). From the article: "Identified strengths included the people; the town's volunteer base; natural beauty; pride that while national attention is being focused on the larger Appalachian region, the town embodies both the name and the region; the cultural arts center and model railroad; outdoor activities and opportunities; and the town's history. Identified weaknesses included loss of schools; negativity and resistance to change; challenges with attracting/retaining young families; lack of access to funding; lack of jobs and employment opportunities; the drug problem;

increases in publicly subsidized rental housing; and lack of room to expand because the town is surrounded by land owned by coal companies, the railroad and the Jefferson National Forest.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [US Economic Development Administration](#) has **announced new funding for coal-reliant communities and regions** through the [2017 Assistance to Coal Communities \(ACC 2017\)](#) initiative. \$30 million in ACC 2017 funds are available for projects targeted at directly assist communities and regions severely impacted by the declining use of coal through activities and programs that support economic diversification, job creation, capital investment, workforce development, and re-employment opportunities. Funds are available immediately and must be awarded by **September 30**. A webinar was recently held to explain the program and is archived [here](#). Click [here](#) for more information about funding and eligibility.
- The [US Department of Agriculture](#) is accepting applications to the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program. Funding is available for **eligible applicants to assist in outreach and training in farm and ranch operations and ownership**. There is \$8.4 million available in the program and applications are due **August 7**. More information is available [here](#).
- The [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) has **announced two grant opportunities** under the [Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program](#). The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program funds flood mitigation planning and projects preventing damage to buildings covered under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program funds hazard mitigation planning and projects. The application window for both programs is **August 14 to November 14**. More information on FMA is available [here](#); click [here](#) for details on the PDM.
- The [US Department of Transportation](#) is accepting **applications for the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program**. INFRA has \$1.5 billion available for projects which meet national and regional economic goals and leverage non-federal funding. Through FAST Act requirements, at least 25% of the funding will be applied to rural projects. Applications are due **November 2**. For more details, the notice of funding opportunity is available [here](#).
- The [US Census Bureau](#) recently updated its **Census Business Builder which offers users the ability to upload their own data and compare it with the Census data and other data sets**. In the Small Business Edition and Regional Analyst Edition of the Business Builder, data is available on demographic and economic statistics. Small Business Edition offers small business owners data for a business plan and key information on markets. The Regional Analyst Edition showcases people and business within a market area. Updated data sets on agriculture, trade, and consumer spending are available as well. Click [here](#) to go to Census Business Builder.

- The [US Conference of Mayors](#) recently released a **report on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and its impact in communities**. “CDBG Works: How Mayors Put CDBG to Work” details CDBG’s use and effectiveness through a wide variety of economic and community development projects. Project examples from cities throughout the nation are featured as well. The report is available [here](#).
- The [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) has released the [2017 BroadbandUSA Federal Funding Guide](#). The booklet shares **information on federal engagement and investments in broadband**. Click [here](#) to access the guide.

## Events and Trainings

- The [Orton Family Foundation](#) is hosting a [free call](#) on July 27 from 3 – 4 pm ET about **strategies to mobilize volunteers in small towns and rural communities**. The discussion will highlight how to rally community members to increase civic participation and create positive change and to keep volunteers motivated and engaged for the long run. Click [here](#) to register.
- Investing in **agriculture and regional food systems has emerged as a leading diversification strategy** across coal country. Join the [National Association of Counties](#) and the [NADO Research Foundation](#) for a webinar **on August 8 at 3 PM ET** to learn about practical tools and strategies in incorporating regional food systems into economic development and diversification planning. Additionally, this webinar will feature current examples of coal-reliant communities of Colorado as case study examples. Click [here](#) to register.
- The [SOAR Summit 2017](#) is scheduled for **August 3 and 4 in Pikeville, KY** and will **showcase solutions currently driving economic growth in the region centered around seven areas of focus**. The conference will convene federal partners, funders, and support organizations while giving those in the region taking action access to these resources. This year will also have a mini-grant program to provide the top projects with access to funding resources to help them expand their impact. Click [here](#) for more information.
- The [2017 #WVBrownfields Conference](#) will take place **September 12 – 14 at the Erickson Alumni Center in Morgantown, WV**. The theme for this year’s conference is **Ready, Set, Redevelop**. The event kicks off on Sept. 12 with training for licensed remediation specialists, a grant writing workshop, and mobile workshops highlighting brownfields projects in Morgantown. The first full day of the conference, Sept. 13, will feature programming and sessions related to brownfield redevelopment in West Virginia. The second day, Sept. 14, will feature sessions covering regional brownfields topics impacting Central Appalachia. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.

## A Dose of Inspiration

- [Outside](#) magazine profiles Stephen Bowling's **efforts to promote hiking and active lifestyles in Jackson, Kentucky**. Bowling, the public library's executive director, has organized hiking trips for local residents. From the article: "Bowling's new hiking club, sponsored by the Breathitt County Public Library, is his latest effort to get people in this rural town out into nature. The trips usually attract around 20 people...Most of Bowling's patrons lack any experience in the outdoors and don't fancy themselves hikers, bikers, or fitness enthusiasts. But Bowling doesn't judge; he's just happy they've showed up." Click [here](#) to read the article.



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