

June 14, 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](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

- [Yes! Magazine](#) profiles how the [Letcher County Culture Hub](#), a project of [Appalshop](#), is driving **arts, culture, and food systems projects and supporting economic diversification efforts in Letcher County, KY**. From the article: "The Hemphill Community Center is just one of the Hub's many projects. Others include an amphitheater that stages a summer drama and runs a crafts festival; a new bluegrass festival put on by several volunteer fire departments that made them \$2,700 in profit last year; and revival of the oldest square dance series in Kentucky. An industrial-scale kitchen is in the works to enable agricultural producers to scale up production and commercially package food products." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- A piece in [Vice Impact](#) discusses the **economic potential of the forest products industry in coal-reliant communities**, highlighting the work of the [Appalachian Woodlands Alliance](#) which promotes sustainable forestry practices. From the article: "There's great economic and ecological value in the Appalachian woodlands...The Appalachian Woodlands Alliance aims to demonstrate those values to private forestland owners, providing resources to make it easier to plan for a sustainable future. Additionally, the AWA works to meet and increase consumer demand, creating a virtuous cycle of sustainable supply and demand for landowners." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The [Washington Examiner](#) discusses opportunities for the **use of coal outside of energy production, including in the manufacturing of high-tech products**. From the article: "The direction of the industry is aimed at harvesting what are known as "rare earth elements," for which the U.S. industry depends on China. The 19 elements are key ingredients in building complex electronics used in smartphones, jets, defense applications, advanced wind turbines and renewable energy, not to mention light-emitting diodes, or LEDs." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The University of Virginia's College at Wise is receiving **\$3.5 million from the University of Virginia to support the Wise Innovation Ecosystem**, reports the [Bristol Herald Courier](#). From the article: "The majority of the funds will support a Center for Innovation, including the hiring of a professor of entrepreneurship, a professor of cyber-MIS, a center manager and operation costs, including start-up scholarships, student internships, an entrepreneurship boot camp, a cyber-security symposium, an entrepreneurial certificate program and the Student Innovation Center." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Bristol, Virginia's [WCYB](#) reports on a new program, funded through a POWER grant, to **support displaced coal workers with skills to develop tourism-based business**. From the article: "[The Virginia Tourism Corporation] said the businesses will hopefully be directly connect to or a spinoff from the region's outdoor amenities. Those include bed and breakfast establishments, cabin rentals and restaurants, among others. Job placement is also available through the program." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- [Governing](#) discusses the **local impact on communities when a nuclear plant shuts down – effects that parallel coal communities’ experiences with the loss of a mine** – and emphasizes the importance of planning for closure. From the article: “It’s a challenge. Most towns with nuclear power plants aren’t used to doing long-term strategic planning. Whatever their environmental risks, nuclear power plants are such good providers that local governments in their areas haven’t had to think about the economic realities that hit some of their neighbors years ago.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [US Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA) published a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for its 2017 [Regional Innovation Strategies](#) (RIS) program. EDA is accepting applications to the i6 Challenge and Seed Fund Support (SFS) Grant. The i6 Challenge supports **building companies and job creation by turning ideas and research into products, services, and employment opportunities**. The SFS grants support technical assistance and operational costs in the formation of cluster-based seed funds leading to the financing of innovative startups. The NOFA is available [here](#). Applications are due **June 23**.
- The [US Department of Homeland Security](#) (DHS) is **accepting applications for grants to ten preparedness programs**. Grants are available to local, state, tribal, nonprofit, and private entities to support readiness and response in mitigating terrorism, disasters, and other emergencies. The programs total \$1.6 billion in available funding. More information on the grant opportunities is available [here](#).
- Starting **June 12**, [PeopleForBikes](#) will begin **accepting applications for bicycle infrastructure projects**. The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program funds up to \$10,000 for projects such as bike lanes, parks, or stations. The deadline to send letters of interest is due **July 21**. More information is available [here](#).
- Downstream Strategies, Penn State, and Dialogue + Design Associates, with the support of the Appalachian Regional Commission, are conducting a four part project, [“Strengthening Economic Resilience in Appalachia”](#) that will 1) develop a comprehensive economic analysis to explore economic resilience; 2) identify a series of best-practice strategies for strengthening local economic resilience; 3) conduct up to 10 in-depth case studies; and 4) create a user-friendly guidebook geared toward local economic development practitioners by the fall of 2017. **The project team is seeking feedback from local and regional stakeholders via a questionnaire by June 14**. Click [here](#) to access the questionnaire.
- The [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) has released results from a two-year study on developing a skilled technical workforce. The report, [Building America’s Skilled Technical Workforce](#), offers recommendations for various stakeholders involved in workforce training. Findings reveal the challenges facing both employee and employer in linking

education to good-paying, quality jobs. The study concludes that **secondary and postsecondary institutions need to better prepare students for the job market through wider training opportunities, including support of apprenticeships**. Also, lifelong learning opportunities supports employers and educational institutions in their respective workforce training and development goals. The report is available [here](#).

- [TechConnect West Virginia](#), an organization working to grow the state's economy, has developed **a comprehensive listing of active business incubators and accelerators located throughout West Virginia**. The document is available for review and download at [www.techconnectwv.org](http://www.techconnectwv.org). Assistance centers can be found in Athens, Beckley, Bluefield, Buckhannon, Charleston, Elkins, Fairmont, Huntington, Madison, Morgantown, Shepherdstown, South Charleston, and Wardensville. While each facility is different, the types of services typically offered by incubators may include a combination of shared space and equipment, idea and prototype development, coaching, support for protection of intellectual property, and other technical assistance. Accelerators typically offer an intense, compressed learning experience in a cohort model that focuses on education, mentoring, and financing. Click [here](#) for more information.
- The [US Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control](#) has developed the website <https://www.thecommunityguide.org> which offers **tools, publications, and resources on how the built environment impacts health outcomes**. One set of resources recommends using street connectivity, sidewalk and trail infrastructure, bicycle infrastructure, public transit infrastructure and access, and mixed land use environments that increase the diversity and proximity of local destinations where people live, work, and spend their recreation and leisure time. Find recommendations and references for a healthy built environment [here](#).

## Events and Trainings

- NACo and NADO RF are hosting a webinar, [“Strengthening Economies in Coal-Reliant Communities through Brownfield Redevelopment,”](#) on **July 11 from 3 – 4 pm ET**. This interactive webinar to explore how **brownfield redevelopment is serving as an avenue to spark economic investment and development, particularly in communities impacted by the changing conditions in the coal industry**. Learn best practices in reuse of these brownfield sites and technical assistance resources available from a team of brownfield assistance experts working in communities across the country. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- In small towns, the local food movement is doing more than putting meals on plates. It is nourishing economies by keeping farms vital and downtowns alive. The [Citizens' Institute on Rural Design®](#) is holding a free hour-long webinar on **June 14** on how **farmers' markets and food co-ops are addressing their local community needs while stimulating downtown**

**development.** The webinar has reached capacity, but you can sign up to receive a recording of the webinar [here](#).

- On **June 14 from 1:30 – 3:00 pm ET**, the [Federal Highway Administration](#) (FHWA) and [Eno Center for Transportation](#) will present a **webinar on effective transportation planning to address social, political, economic, technological, and environmental change**. Scenario planning provides a framework for a decision-making process that considers what is likely to happen, what could happen, and what the community desires for the future. Click [here](#) for more details and to register.
- An upcoming webinar, *Responding to Natural Disasters in Rural Communities*, will be held on **June 21 from 2 – 3 pm ET**. The webinar is a part of the 2017 Rural Behavioral Health Webinar Series sponsored by The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) and the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) in collaboration with the [American Institutes for Research](#) (AIR). Through these webinars participants will learn about **strategies to create and sustain services and supports that reduce the impact of behavioral health issues and promote a good quality of life** for an entire community. More information on the webinar series and registration is available [here](#).
- The [US Census Bureau](#) is hosting a webinar on using Census Bureau statistics for web apps. The Census Bureau Application Programming Interface (API) allows developers to **tailor and insert specific data sets from Census sources** such as the [American Community Survey](#) (ACS). The webinar is scheduled for **June 21 from 2 – 3 pm ET**. Click [here](#) to join the webinar.
- The [Women & Technology Conference](#) is scheduled for **June 26 in Charleston, WV**. The conference, an initiative of [TechConnectWV](#), **addresses the under-representation of women in STEM fields and aims to encourage women involved in technology education and research, private enterprises, the public sector, investing, and entrepreneurship**. This year's event will feature inspiring women speakers on the cutting edge of technology, value-added educational sessions, and quality networking. TechConnect is pleased to partner with the [Charleston Area Alliance](#) by combining the conference luncheon with the Alliance's Elevations Professional Women's Network Luncheon. Charleston native Dr. Anne Fischer will deliver keynote remarks about her groundbreaking research at the Defense Advanced Projects Agency (DARPA). Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

## A Dose of Inspiration

- On **June 25**, the [National Geographic Channel](#) will premiere a new documentary, *From the Ashes*. From the official website: "From Appalachia to the West's Powder River Basin, the film goes beyond the rhetoric of the "war on coal" to present compelling and often heartbreaking stories about what's at stake for our economy, health, and climate." Click [here](#) to watch the trailer.

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