

June 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



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!

NOTE: The newsletter will return to its usual Wednesday cycle on July 12.

Economic Diversification News

- [CNN](#) interviewed **recent high school and college graduates from coal communities in West Virginia to hear about their career plans and their thoughts about the future of their communities.** Says Logan County's Grace Bannister, who will enroll at Harvard University in the fall: "I hope to someday come back and either try to make a difference working in the legal sector to help people get their lives on track, or I'd really like to someday run for public office - maybe Senate or governor to try to help on a national level." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The [Bristol Herald Courier](#) covers how a workforce development initiative supported through POWER funding is **creating opportunities for laid off coal workers in Southwest Virginia, like Jimmy Pittman who is receiving educational training at the Mountain Empire Community College (MECC).** From the article: "Jimmy Pittman said he and his co-workers had seen the impending unemployment coming long before it happened. Many of them were preparing, taking steps to get out of debt or not creating any new debt. Through the POWER Grant, Pittman is now in the midst of classes at MECC. Topics covered include electrical work and heating and air conditioning." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- [WJAC](#) in West-Central Pennsylvania profiled **"Startup Alleghenies," a new project led by the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission, with support from the Appalachian Regional Commission.** From the article (which also contains a video): "Business owners in Blair County said it's extremely difficult to start a business in the region because of the lack of funding and assistance, but a new entrepreneurial project announced this week aims to change that... The project, revealed on Tuesday, is called Startup Alleghenies, and the commission called it an "ecosystem for entrepreneurship."" Click [here](#) to read the article.
- A story in [Politico](#) describes how Kentucky's sources of metallurgic coal and its byproducts can be used to develop **high-tech products, hardware, and infrastructure.** From the article: "In addition to metallurgic coal, another bright spot in the future of eastern Kentucky is a reserve of coal near Hazard called the Fire Clay seam, which yields a surprising byproduct during the coal cleaning process: large quantities of rare earth elements (REEs) - vital to the production of smart phones, tablets, electricity-generating windmills and military hardware. Experts say there's enough to meet U.S. demand for 20 years." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- An article in [Strategy+Business](#) discusses how **automation will continue to limit any possibility of a major job recovery in the coal industry.** From the article: "The image of coal miners using shovels and picks to remove coal from the earth is not the typical mode of production. About half of coal production today takes place in Wyoming, where vast open mines are run by giant (and increasingly smarter) machines, vehicles, and drills. And with each passing year, coal mine operators have a broadening array of labor-saving products and services to choose from." Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [US Economic Development Administration](#) announced late last week new funding for coal-reliant communities and regions through the **2017 Assistance to Coal Communities (ACC 2017) initiative**. \$30 million in ACC 2017 funds is available for applications that are targeted to 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. Click [here](#) for more information.
- AARP is accepting applications for its [Community Challenge grant program](#) through **July 15**. Project proposals should be aimed at improving a community's built environment; expanding opportunities for all residents; and/or driving community engagement and interaction across diverse community residents. Projects can range from **short-term activities costing a few hundred dollars to sizable efforts that might need thousands**. Learn more about the program in a video [here](#) and click [here](#) to apply.
- The [Department of Agriculture](#) is accepting applications to the Socially-Disadvantaged Groups Grant (SDGG). The program offers **technical assistance in directing resources to assist rural Americans in need**. Eligible applicants include cooperatives, groups of cooperatives, and cooperative development centers. Maximum awards are \$175,000 and applications are due **July 25**. For more information, click [here](#).
- The [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#) is accepting applications for its new [Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program](#), which is **dedicated to restoring and sustaining healthy forests, rivers, and streams for the region's native bird and freshwater fish populations**. Up to \$1.3 million is available this year for grants in the Appalachian region of Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia. Grants will be awarded in two categories: habitat restoration grants and focal geography grants. Applications are due **July 27**. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply.
- The [Federal Reserve Bank of New York](#) discusses how **fostering connections between banks and workforce development programs can benefit local economies** in the new report, "How Banks Can Support Workforce Development." The report points to the [Community Reinvestment Act](#) and [Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA) in promoting financial institutions as a key resource in workforce and community development. Click [here](#) for the report.
- The [US Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) has released a series of videos on using [Community Development Block Grant](#) (CDBG) funding for public service activities. *How to Use CDBG for Public Service Activities* details eligible and ineligible activities, meeting the CDBG national objective, and **enhancing the impact of CDBG-funded projects in local communities**. Additional resources are available through the [Explore CDBG](#) webpage. The video series is available [here](#).

- [Upskill America](#), an initiative of the [Economic Opportunities Program at the Aspen Institute](#), has released its latest report on employers' investment in workforce. *Upskilling Playbook for Employers* offers **examples of employers engaging workers on their respective needs and in turn, helping the company prosper**. Upskill America compiles and shares information to inform and inspire companies to pursue upskilling strategies within various fields. The report is available [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.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be hosting a webinar on **mapping changes related to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**. The webinar will provide information on helping property owners transition to new flood maps. Join the webinar on **June 29 from 3 – 5 pm ET**; registration is available [here](#).
- 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.

A Dose of Inspiration

- A new video highlights the powerful work underway in **Williamson, WV** through the [Local Foods, Local Places](#) program, supported in part by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Appalachian Regional Commission. The [Williamson Health and Wellness Center](#) serves as an **anchor in the community which has a farmers' market, community garden, and new restaurants serving fresh, local foods**. All of these efforts are improving the health and quality of life for local residents and supporting main street redevelopment in Williamson. Click [here](#) to watch the video.

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