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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

- In a [piece](#) in the [Lexington Herald-Leader](#), entrepreneur Jason Belcher makes the case for **continuing to invest in the state's aerospace industry**, particularly in East Kentucky, noting Hazard's proposed [USA Drone Port](#) and the [Space Science Center at Morehead State University](#). Belcher writes: "Eastern Kentucky has been hit hard by job losses in the coal industry. The aerospace sector offers a ray of hope for a region looking for some good economic news...This isn't pie-in-the-sky daydreaming, it is actual work already being done with real results." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The [Bristol Herald Courier covered](#) the 2017 Southwest Virginia Economic Forum, "a gathering of **business professionals, civic leaders, government officials, and citizens to discuss strengthening the Southwest Virginia economy.**" Steve Smith, the president and CEO of K-VA-T Food Stores, which owns the Food City chain, shared his thoughts about economic progress in the region: "I think it's a coming together of a lot of folks who are really focused on economic development and trying to do the right things, collaborating with each other to bring jobs to our region to keep the best and brightest here." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The [Center for Rural Development describes](#) how high-speed broadband is benefiting small businesses and economic development in Eastern Kentucky and how [KentuckyWired](#), the state's broadband expansion project, is supporting these efforts. Says Jon Huston, owner of a collectable gaming card company based in Corbin, "**Internet now, today, is as vital as electricity was or water or sewerage. It is a necessity.**" Click [here](#) to read the article.
- [Route Fifty](#) profiles the **plans being developed to create a 12,000 acre Appalachian Wildlife Center in Bell County, Kentucky on reclaimed mine land.** According to the [article](#), it is anticipated that the site "would draw tourists from places like Knoxville, Tennessee, Louisville, Kentucky, and Cincinnati. In addition to a loop road and walking trails for viewing elk, there would be opportunities for bird watching and stargazing. The site would be intended as a hub for wildlife research as well." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- [Phys.org](#) covers **West Virginia's initiatives to diversify and retool its economy.** From the [article](#): "Th[e] rebirth involves deploying high-speed internet—scarce in the remote state—turning blighted industrial areas into a new research and development park, and retraining dislocated workers in highly-skilled fields from solar and craft furniture, to organic farming on former strip mine sites." Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [US Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) is accepting applications to the Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program. The program supports **startup, expansion, or operational improvement of rural cooperatives** and additional business entities. Electronic applications are due **May 26** and paper applications are due **June 2**. For more information, click [here](#).
- 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 EDA Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship will host an informational webinar on **May 22 at 3 pm ET**. Click [here](#) to register.
- The [US Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) has issued a funding opportunity under the Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Fields (WAMS) program. The program seeks **to increase the number of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas to engage in STEM fields** relevant to USDA's priorities. Applications are due **June 8**. For more information, click [here](#)
- The [US Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA) announced funding availability for the FY 2017 [International Engagement Ready Communities Competition](#). The program contributes to **community-based efforts in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and enhancing export promotion**. Through collaboration between EDA, [SelectUSA](#), and [Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee](#) (TPCC), the program contributes to research on international engagement strategies and creating best practice reports and a competitiveness assessment tool. Organizations involved in economic or infrastructure development are eligible to apply including state and local governments, tribal organizations, institutions of higher learning, and related public or private entities. Applications are due **June 12**. For more information, click [here](#) to access the notice of funding availability.

Events and Trainings

- On a [webinar](#) scheduled for **May 17 from 2 – 3 pm ET**, the [Rural Health Information Hub \(RHlhub\)](#) and [NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis](#) will introduce a new Rural Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Toolkit **designed to help rural communities plan, implement, and sustain substance abuse services**. Developed by NORC on behalf of the [Federal](#)

[Office of Rural Health Policy](#) (FORHP), the toolkit identifies model programs and resources that will benefit rural communities seeking to implement substance abuse prevention and treatment programs. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.

- An upcoming [webinar](#) from the [Conservation Fund](#) on **June 5 at 1 pm ET** will discuss **arts initiatives in Appalachia**. This is the second in a series of webinars highlighting tools, topics, and issues facing gateway communities in the Appalachian region and beyond. Click [here](#) to register.
- The [Appalachian Conference on Social Enterprise](#) is scheduled for **May 19 and 20 in Morgantown, WV**. Join business and community leaders finding innovative ways to **make profit while creating positive and lasting impacts in the region**. Learn more and register [here](#).
- The recording is now available for a recent [Smart Growth Network](#) webinar with Kendra Briechle of the [Conservation Fund](#) who discussed how rural communities are fostering smart growth by **investing in their downtowns, expanding transportation choices, creating economic opportunities, and protecting the cultural and natural resources of rural landscapes**. Click [here](#) to watch the webinar on-demand.
- The [US Census Bureau](#) has a variety of [free webinars and online trainings](#) scheduled from now through August. These trainings show **how to find and use Census data for multiple uses**, including informing your business planning, supporting grant proposals and research projects, planning for local schools and hospitals, and much more. Click [here](#) to see the full training schedule and to learn more.

A Dose of Inspiration

- A [short documentary](#) titled "Go Your Own Way: Building a New Future for Appalachia" addresses the **challenges and opportunities for young people seeking to stay in the region**. The documentary was made during the 2016 Summer Documentary Institute, an 8-week internship for central Appalachian youth aged 14-22 at [Appalshop's Appalachian Media Institute](#). Click [here](#) to watch.



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