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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

- [MetroNews](#) reports on a project in West Virginia, funded in part by the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#), that is **training coal miners and others about how to grow lavender plants on former coalfields and learn business skills**. From the [article](#): “An initial class of 25 out-of-work miners will be trained to cultivate the crop as well as receive training on business essentials and entrepreneurial skills. Upon completion of the program participants can market themselves to other agricultural companies or utilize their skills to begin their own businesses.” Click [here](#) to read more.
- [Education Week](#) highlights how **Kentucky’s growing drone industry – including the proposed USA Drone Port in Hazard – can serve as an educational opportunity for K-12 students** and encourage young people to seek job opportunities locally following graduation. Seth Hatfield, a high school sophomore whose grandfather was a coal miner, says, “I feel like this is a great opportunity for me, and I feel really lucky that all of this is happening in my area, close to my hometown.” Click [here](#) to read more.
- The [Wall Street Journal](#) covers a variety of **economic diversification initiatives underway in Kentucky in the areas of information technology, drones, agriculture, and solar energy**. Says Peter Hille, president of the [Mountain Association for Community Economic Development](#), “There’s no silver bullet to solve this. But there could be a thousand silver BBs.” Click [here](#) to read more.
- An article in [Forbes](#) discusses **options utility companies can pursue when coal plants shut down**. These include “applying existing financial tools like ratepayer bond refinancing” and “some measure of performance-based regulation over preserving traditional cost-of service utility regulation.” Click [here](#) to read more.
- Last month, the NACo and NADO RF team held an economic diversification forum for Western coal-reliant communities in Denver, CO. [Mountain Town News](#) shares highlights of the opening presentation delivered by Erik Pages, President of [EntreWorks Consulting](#) (and NACo/NADO RF team consultant). Some of the economic development advice Pages shared for communities included: “Hit for singles, not home runs. Almost all of those major quick reactions that swing for the fences fail miserably. They almost never work. **What you want to do instead of creating new jobs 100 at a time is to create jobs, one at a time - and do it for 15 years straight.**” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- 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.
- 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**.
- [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. 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](#).

- The [Federal Highway Administration](#) and [Federal Transit Administration's Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program](#) have released a **series of fact sheets about Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)**. Using information from five NADO member organizations and their state partners, the fact sheets address the issues: *What is an RTPO?*, *How do RTPOs Benefit Rural Regions?*, *Work Program Development & Content*, *Transportation Improvement Program Development*, *A Statewide Approach to Transportation Planning that Works*, and *Public Participation in Transportation Planning*. View the fact sheets [here](#).
- [AARP](#) has designed a [Pop-Up Demonstration Toolkit](#) for **communities to develop projects over a three-month window**. Pop-up demonstration projects – also known as "tactical urbanism," "Do-It-Yourself urbanism," or "DIY urbanism" – typically involve community members working together to bring attention to overlooked spaces, address neighborhood issues, or demonstrate things they want changed or improved within a public or sometimes private space such as a streetscape, empty building, or underused lot. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Events and Trainings

- 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.
- [NADO](#) will hold a special webinar, [An Analysis of the President's FY2018 Federal Budget Request](#), on **May 31 from 2 – 3 pm ET**. During the webinar, NADO legislative staff will provide **in-depth analysis of the president's FY2018 budget request to Congress**. Learn how the budget request is expected to impact regional planning and development organizations and the federal programs that support their efforts. Click [here](#) 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 [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

- In this [TEDx talk](#), Harlan, Kentucky high school English teacher Steven Palmer encourages **Appalachian communities to invest in their young people** and provide opportunities for them to cultivate their talents in their hometowns. He says, “The best-kept secrets of Appalachia...are the young, creative, critical thinking minds that sit within its classrooms.” Click [here](#) to watch the video.



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