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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



****The newsletter will resume its bi-weekly Wednesday schedule on May 3 ****

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

- The [Christian Science Monitor reports](#) on a variety of efforts across Appalachia that are **supporting the growth of small businesses and fostering entrepreneurship** to diversify local and regional economies. From the article: “Perhaps more

than at any time in the past, the focus is on bootstrap ingenuity – encouraging a more entrepreneurial economy. The goal is not just to pump money into the region, but to help communities like Hindman [Kentucky] foster the desire and have the tools to build a new future for themselves, one small business at a time.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- [Route 50 highlights](#) Wise, Virginia’s economic diversification strategy which includes initiatives underway to support **advanced manufacturing, the drone industry, data centers, downtown redevelopment, and agriculture**. Carl Snodgrass, executive director of the [Wise County Industrial Authority](#), discusses the importance of persistence and taking the long-view in these efforts: “It’s a little like fishing. It takes time, the results are unpredictable and it doesn’t help any to get impatient.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- An [article](#) from [PolicyLink](#) explains how **arts, creative placemaking, and design are supporting economic development** in Appalachian coal country. From the article: “[T]here’s a strong network of businesses and nonprofits that are looking beyond coal, and embracing equity-focused regional economic development for marginalized communities — creating employment opportunities in technology and innovation, and arts and culture, as even more promising growth industries for the region.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- In a [piece](#) for West Virginia’s [State Journal](#), Zachary Drennen, president of [Strong Mountain Communities](#), announces a **pitch contest that will be held at the West Virginia Good Jobs Conference in Beckley on November 6-8**. From the article: “The contest is divided into five business categories, each of which is likely to have a role in the future of southern West Virginia’s economy: agriculture and natural resource use (including post-mine land-use), S.T.E.M., lifestyle and innovation, manufacturing and community impact (nonprofits and social enterprises). Winners in each category will receive awards of \$10,000 and \$5,000 for first and second places, respectively.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The [Harlan Daily Enterprise](#) in Kentucky [covers](#) a recent Harlan County Chamber of Commerce meeting that discussed the importance of tourism to the area and the **value of working regionally across towns and state lines**. William Tribell of the Bell County Historical Society noted the connection between communities: “We share these borders, we share this traffic...highways pass through these communities.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [US Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) recently opened the application period for the fiscal year (FY) 2017 [Rural Cooperative Development Grant](#) program. The program funds **cooperative development to aid rural communities in**

economic development. More information can be found in the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) [here](#).

- [USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) works with farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners nationwide to identify and address natural resource objectives in balance with operational goals in order to benefit soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources locally, regionally, and nationally. Applications are now being accepted through **April 21** for grants funded under the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\)](#). Through the RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners in **innovative, workable, and cost-effective approaches to benefit farming, ranching, and forest operations, local economies, and the communities and resources** in a watershed or other geographic area. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.
- [RAND](#) has published a new [report](#) that addresses **wages, employment, and STEM education** in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Click [here](#) to download the report.
- The [US Census Bureau](#) has provided **updates to the My Congressional District Tool web application**. New information includes 2016 congressional district boundary changes and download capability to .csv file for both single districts and statewide district data sets. The My Congressional District application is available [here](#).
- In a new report, [SelectUSA](#) outlines the **impact of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the nation's manufacturing sector**. Key findings show over 2.4 million US jobs in manufacturing are supported by FDI and total FDI stock in US manufacturing totaled \$1.2 trillion in 2015, the greatest amount of any sector. The report can be found [here](#).

Events and Trainings

- Join the [Orton Family Foundation](#) on **April 20 from 3 – 4 pm ET** for a [free conference call](#) to learn more about local philanthropy. Small cities and towns are finding that all residents can be philanthropists. This call will cover **effective strategies for encouraging a culture of local philanthropy** that builds community vibrancy and prosperity. Speakers include Lisa Duran of [Grassroots Grantmakers](#), Don Macke of the [Center for Rural Entrepreneurship](#), and Mayor Thom Harnett of Gardiner, Maine. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.
- The [Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group](#), as a part of its America's Rural Opportunity series, is hosting a panel on **natural resources' role in rural economies**. *Reframing Natural Resource Economies* will take a look at successful and sustainable application of natural resources to rural economic development. The event is scheduled for **April 20 from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm ET**. Click [here](#) to register and participate via live stream. More information on Aspen's Rural Development Innovation Group is available [here](#).

- On **April 21 from 1 – 2 PM ET**, the [NADO Research Foundation](#) will host the free webinar “[Access vs. Isolation: Preserving Rail Connectivity](#).” As regional economies change over time, the demand for transportation facilities and services also evolves. As a result of a decline in coal demand and output, private sector freight transportation has decreased. Rail lines and service are a valuable transportation network asset and a concern for maintaining and growing future economic activity that might rely on access to active rail lines. The webinar speakers will use **transportation impacts of the decline of coal production in Appalachia as an example to frame the issue of rail preservation** for attendees from across in the nation, as well as within the Appalachian region. The speakers will provide context for the economic changes that led to a change in transportation demand as well as suggest public sector strategies to preserve rail connectivity. Register online [here](#).
- 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.
- The [2017 National Brownfields Training Conference](#) will occur in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, **December 5 – 7**. Attendees will enjoy opportunities to participate in training events, observe success stories first hand during mobile workshops, learn from experts regarding **best practices for meeting brownfields challenges**, and network with thousands of other stakeholders. Learn more about this year’s eight topic areas and available session formats by clicking [here](#).

A Dose of Inspiration

- The [Kentucky Coal Museum](#) in Benham **has installed solar panels on its roof to lower energy costs**, [reports](#) the [Associated Press](#). From the article: “The Southeast Community and Technical College, which owns the museum, expects the solar panels to save between \$8,000 and \$10,000 a year on energy costs.” Click [here](#) to read the article.



This newsletter is made possible with the support of an [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) POWER grant to the [National Association of Counties](#) and the [National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation](#). The views and opinions expressed by other organizations or outside publications referenced in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of NACo, NADO, or ARC.