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GROWING **STRONGER ECONOMIES** IN OUR NATION'S COAL COMMUNITIES

A Bi-weekly Update from the National Association of Counties
and the National Association of Development Organizations



Welcome to the first issue of “**Growing Stronger Economies in Our Nation’s Coal Communities.**” 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 [US Economic Development Administration’s Denver Regional Office](#).

This publication expands on NACo and NADO’s previous newsletter, “[Building Stronger Economies in Appalachian Coal Country.](#)” It will provide a national perspective on diversification efforts in coal communities, 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 your region. It will be delivered every other Wednesday.

Content Wanted! Have a news story or event that 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. Thanks for reading!

Economic Diversification News

- Farmers markets, agritourism, and partnerships with health care providers to offer healthy food to at-risk populations are just some of the ways that **local food is becoming an important piece of a larger strategy to build and retain wealth in Appalachian coal communities**, reports *The Nation*. From the article: “[A] resurgence in local farming, coupled with renewed interest in traditional Appalachian foodways, could help steer the region toward an environmentally and economically sustainable post-coal future. And unlike the historical attempts to develop Appalachia—imposed principally by external actors, both public and private—food and farming are located well within the region’s own history.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *KUNC* covers how coal communities in **Colorado are facing the loss of coal jobs and seeking out opportunities to diversify, improve quality of life, and support workforce training**. From the article: ““We have lost over one-thousand coal jobs,” said Delta Co. administrator Robbie leValley. On the county level, leValley said the region is finishing a broadband project to bring high speed internet to residents. They’re also updating plans to boost outdoor recreation – including hunting and fishing. “All of that becomes a cumulative effect. No, we’re not out of the woods yet. You don’t replace those jobs,” said leValley. “We’re building capacity and infrastructure. If we can build jobs five at a time then we’re on the right path.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *West Virginia Public Broadcasting* covers the **opportunities and challenges facing Eastern Kentucky’s hemp industry as it seeks to diversify the regional economy**. From the article: “Hemp can be used for a wide range of products - plastics, health foods, biofuels...But the most lucrative product is cannabidiol oil, or CBD oil...[S]ome studies suggest it can be used to treat epilepsy, anxiety, and depression. All these claims need more scientific research, but in the meantime, there’s a growing market for CBD oil.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *Inside Energy* highlights the **growing wind energy industry in Wyoming and how it is benefiting farmers and ranchers** throughout the state. From the article: “There are two massive private projects going up in the state, both among the largest in the world. And earlier this year, regional utility PacifiCorp announced a multi-billion dollar plan to upgrade and expand wind production in Wyoming. And they already have customers across six states.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Brandon Dennison, founder and CEO of the [Coalfield Development Corporation](#), writes in a piece for the *Union of Concerned Scientists* blog about workforce development and training efforts underway in Central Appalachia. From the article: “Our model puts people to work while developing new skills. **Under the 33-6-3 model, each of the enterprises hires unemployed people to work the following weekly schedule:** 33 hours a week are spent doing paid labor for these enterprises on projects which tangibly improve the community; 6 hours a week are devoted to core community college classes for an Applied Science degree; and 3 hours are committed to life skills coaching, such as parenting, financial

management, time management, physical health, teamwork, communication, and goal setting.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- *Nation Swell* reports how **Montana is nurturing a start-up and entrepreneurial ecosystem** with the support of a variety of partners, including the [Montana High Tech Business Alliance](#), led by executive director Christina Henderson. From the article: “As the executive director of the High Tech Business Alliance, Henderson’s main job is to support networking among entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs. “Folks who are launching a company need access to mentors, legal, and financial help, and information about exporting,” she says. Companies with fewer than five employees can join the organization for free, attend events, and meet established entrepreneurs who can offer advice and practical help.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [Rural Utilities Service](#) (RUS) is providing \$10 million to help communities with high energy costs. The [High Energy Cost Rural Communities Grant Program](#) provides **funding for installation of on- and off-grid renewable energy systems and energy efficiencies upgrades**. Applications are due **December 11**. More information is available [here](#).
- Applications are due **December 15** for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) [Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants](#). These grants **fund programs that recruit, train, and place local, unemployed, and under-employed residents with the skills needed to secure full-time employment in the environmental field**. EPA encourages applicants to develop their curricula based on local labor market assessments and employers’ hiring needs, while also delivering comprehensive training that results in graduates securing multiple certifications. As in past rounds, regional councils and workforce investment boards/workforce development boards are eligible to apply. Click [here](#) to learn more information and to apply.
- [America Walks](#) is extending another round of [community change micro grants](#) to individuals and communities interested in improving the public sphere for walking or otherwise helping to make walking more commonplace. This program awards up to \$1,500 to fund or help to **catalyze smaller-scale, low-cost projects and programs that increase the prevalence of walking, expand the diversity of people and organizations working to advance walkability, and help to make walking safer, easier, and more fun for all community members**. Now in its third year, these grants to-date have provided catalytic assistance with innovative projects across the country, from maps that help encourage residents to explore their neighborhoods on foot to murals that help to enliven the pedestrian realm to targeted advertising that has helped to get the

word out about existing walking programs. Applications are due **November 10**. Click [here](#) to learn more and to apply.

- From October 2016 – July 2017, the [National Association of Counties](#) and the [NADO Research Foundation](#) partnered with the [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) to continue providing mentoring and technical assistance to eleven multi-disciplinary community teams from across Appalachia as they accelerated their efforts to diversify their traditionally coal-reliant economies. This targeted initiative empowered and assisted county officials, regional development organizations, and their local partners in further developing opportunities for economic diversification, job creation, workforce development, and asset-based economic development. This report **showcases best practices and projects underway in the region to support economic diversification and broader economic development** in Appalachian coal country. Click [here](#) to download the report.
- The [National Skills Coalition](#) (NSC) released an updated “scan” of states with established sector partnership policies. There are 32 states with these type of policies, up from eleven two years ago. The report reveals that an **increasing number of states are offering technical assistance to local sector partnerships** and states are using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reserve funds to support the partnerships. The updated 50-state scan is available [here](#).

Events and Trainings

- The [National Association of Counties](#) and the [NADO Research Foundation](#) hosted a workshop *Strengthening Economies in Utah: A Forum for Coal-Reliant Communities* on October 18-20 at the Sevier County Fairgrounds in Richfield, Utah, with the support of the [U.S. Economic Development Administration - Denver Regional Office](#). This educational and interactive forum was designed to **convene and assist counties and regions in Utah that are experiencing economic challenges due to changing conditions of the coal industry**. The meeting brought together stakeholders from the public and private sectors to share best practices, lessons learned, and new opportunities to support economic diversification and other economic development efforts. During the forum, plenary sessions, small group discussions, and a mobile tour covered a variety of topics including entrepreneurship, technology, workforce development, energy, outdoor recreation, and strategic partnerships. Click [here](#) for training materials from the event.
- A webinar hosted by the [National Governors Association](#) (NGA) and [Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness](#) (CREC) will examine state approaches to sharing economic and workforce program data. The webinar, “State Data Sharing to Support Economic and Workforce Development Policymaking,” will feature program evaluators and policy analysts from five states engaged in the [State Data Sharing Initiative](#) (SDS), a research and technical assistance-based project coordinated through CREC. The webinar is scheduled for **November 1 from 1:30 – 2:30 P.M. ET**. Registration is available [here](#).

- Redevelopment and community investment can be challenging. Environmental issues—perceived or real—add another barrier to an already risky process. Join [Community Builders](#) on **November 1 at 2:00 p.m. ET** for a [webinar](#) on how environmental liability concerns impact lending for redevelopment projects. What are the actual risks and requirements for local lenders? What can lenders or communities do to mitigate these risks? Speakers will present two different approaches—from the lending community and from a public-private partnership—to **remove barriers to investment and redevelopment in your community**. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.
- Join the [St. Louis Federal Reserve](#) on **November 2 from 3 – 4 p.m. ET** for a [free webinar](#) that will highlight two innovative programs and a policy strategy that offer working solutions to address the appraisal gap and mitigate the impact of blight, vacancy, and abandonment in distressed communities across the country. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- Through the [Healthy Places for Healthy People](#) program, the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) has been helping local communities and health care officials **create walkable, healthy, and economically vibrant downtowns and neighborhoods that improve health, protect the environment, and support economic growth**. A webinar on **November 14 at 1:00 p.m. ET** will look at the connections among economic, human, and environmental health factors and present case studies on the lessons learned to date, as well as ideas on how local communities can create programs and partnerships that can lead to healthier community outcomes. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- The [U.S. Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA) will be hosting [Regional Economic Diversification Summits](#) (REDS) throughout the country. Instead of a “Washington-knows-best” approach, REDS are designed to respond directly to locally identified economic development strategies and priorities. While each separate event will address unique priorities and objectives, each REDS will be planned to accomplish the following four common objectives: Strengthen Relationships Among Federal, State, Regional, Local Stakeholders; Remove Obstacles and Expand Access to Resources for Economic Diversification; Achieve Optimal Resource Alignment; and Advance Action Plans and Outcome Metrics. **Federal agencies, host organizations, and regional participants will establish a shared commitment to advancing regional economic development priorities**. Click [here](#) for more information. To schedule a REDS in your community, contact your regional EDA office [here](#).
- Registration and hotel accommodations are now open for the [2017 National Brownfields Conference](#), taking place **December 5 – 7, 2017** in Pittsburgh, PA with pre-conference programming on December 4. Join fellow planners, investors, developers, scholars, students, and government leaders to discuss **best practices, share challenges and successes, and stimulate new ideas with the goal of enhancing and expanding brownfields revitalization and economic redevelopment**. Register for the conference and book your hotel stay [here](#).

A Dose of Inspiration

- *West Virginia Public Radio* showcases Appalachian residents who are making the region a better place and challenging the status quo. From the show: "Too many times, when stories of Appalachia are in the national spotlight, we hear shallow, shocking, and grim stories. But they miss some of the most inspiring aspects to our realities: the struggle, the perseverance, and the resilience. On this week's episode of *Inside Appalachia* we'll **meet storytellers who work to help Appalachians tell their own stories, and capture the true Appalachian spirit behind the statistics.**" Click [here](#) to read the story and listen to the broadcast.

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