

January 17, 2018



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



Welcome to the latest issue “**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 [U.S. Economic Development Administration’s Denver Regional Office](#). The newsletter provides 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 is 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

- The *Albuquerque Journal* discusses the economic impact in the Four Corners region from the recent shutdown of two of the four units at the San Juan Generating Station and opportunities to support diversification. From the article: “[S]an Juan leaders want to build the region’s tourism, agriculture, food processing, and alternative energy industries; encourage light manufacturing to support those things; and retrain energy-related workers for new employment opportunities. Existing businesses are also diversifying their products and markets, such as the family-run, Farmington-based Process Equipment & Service Co., which has focused on the natural gas industry since 1970. It now has expanded into oil, and developed many new domestic and foreign markets.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The U.S. Department of Energy is **encouraging the development of a natural gas storage hub in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania**, reports the *Washington Examiner*. From the article: “The news was announced by the Appalachia Development Group LLC, which the Energy Department invited...to apply for a \$1.9 billion loan guarantee to support the development of a first-of-a-kind Appalachia Storage and Trading Hub. The storage hub will be used to store natural gas liquids that Appalachia has an abundance of but has been looking to create a market for. Companies from around the world have been looking to exploit natural gas by building refining facilities in the region.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- A new report from Wyoming’s ENDOW (Economically Needed Diversity Options for Wyoming) initiative **offers preliminary recommendations and proposals to support the state’s diversification efforts**, report the *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*. From the article: “Wyoming’s elected officials are digesting a report on diversifying the state’s economy that prioritizes improving commercial air service, broadband access, and developing the state’s workforce...Ten recommendations represent a mix of legislative and executive actions, policy changes, and funding requests that total just more than \$36.3 million...A lack of reliable air service was identified as one of the top barriers to economic diversification, as businesses are reluctant to locate in a large, rural state without it.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *Blue Ridge Outdoors* covers the **impact of outdoor recreation and tourism on Appalachia’s economy**, noting that to effectively transform the region, these sectors must be aligned with broader quality of life and economic development efforts. From the article: “Outfitters have sprouted from the pastoral banks of the North Fork to urban stretches of the French Broad. Mountain communities are reinventing themselves to attract hikers, mountain bikers, and climbers. Revamped downtowns across the region are complete with microbreweries and Airbnbs. And the region’s national forests and state parks are being reimagined not just as weekend getaways but as economic support systems for small towns and entire states alike.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The Southeastern Montana Development Corporation, located in Colstrip, is featured in the latest installment of the NADO Research Foundation’s *CEDS Spotlight* case study series. **SEMDC incorporated the “Colstrip Economic Diversification**

Strategy” into its 2016 – 2020 CEDS to provide more economic opportunities, generate investment, and improve quality of life in the region as it faces the challenges of the declining coal industry. From the case study: “[The strategy] identifies six goals with 17 strategies to support economic diversification and improved quality of life in Colstrip and the surrounding region. The six focus areas are: coal, energy, and renewable technology; high tech industry and entrepreneurship; manufacturing; high skilled labor with trades; agriculture and outdoor recreation/tourism; and quality of life. The plan also seeks to leverage Colstrip’s local assets and competitive advantages, including its established industrial infrastructure, dedicated workforce, strong education system, and proximity to nature trails and a lake.” Click [here](#) to read the case study.

- *Civil Eats* covers how initiatives like Refresh Appalachia are nurturing an agricultural movement while supporting job training and skills development for unemployed coal miners and others. From the article: **“Besides growing food themselves, Refresh wants to help other startup farmers access markets and technical assistance.** This year the organization will offer a mobile poultry-processing trailer to local producers, for example, and then help sell the chickens through their burgeoning food hub.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) has announced an RFP for its Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. This program **supports the delivery of education, mentoring, and technical assistance programs to help beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States and its territories** with entering, establishing, building, and managing successful farm and ranch enterprises. Applications are due **February 8**. Click [here](#) for more information.
- The [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) has announced the **availability of grants funding Women Business Centers (WBCs)**. The WBC Program offers comprehensive business services for women entrepreneurs in both new and existing businesses. Two grant opportunities are available to fund non-profit organizations to create or expand WBCs. Applications are due **February 12**. Information on grants supporting new operations is available [here](#) and expanding existing WBCs can be found [here](#).
- The [Citizen’s Institute on Rural Design](#) (CIRD) is inviting rural communities to submit applications for design assistance. The **CIRD Program assists rural communities through design assistance in addressing issues such as multimodal transportation, healthy living, and downtown revitalization**. Awards include a \$10,000 stipend and in-kind professional design expertise and technical assistance valued at \$35,000 to host a local workshop. Applications are due **February 16**. More information on the program is available [here](#). A special webinar on the program and how to apply will be held **January 25 at 3:00 p.m. ET**. Click [here](#) to register.

- Twice a year [Community Builders](#) offers a limited number of **community assistance opportunities for communities located within Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Colorado**. Through community assistance, it provides local leaders the tools and information to build prosperous, livable communities. Community Builders assistance focuses on four key issues: Getting to Smarter Growth; Housing for Community; Building Resilient Communities; and Transportation for a New Economy. Click [here](#) to learn more. Applications are now being accepted until **February 23**.
- The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) has announced up to \$3 million in funding for locally-focused environmental education grants through the 2018 EE Local Grant Program. EPA will award three to four grants in each of EPA's ten Regions, for no less than \$50,000 and no more than \$100,000 each, for a total of 30-35 grants nationwide. In addition to other environmental topics, the 2018 EE Local Grant Program **includes support for projects that reflect the intersection of environmental issues with agricultural best-practices, conservation of natural resources, food waste management, and natural disaster preparedness**. Proposals are due **March 15**. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Interested in developing innovation in your region? Working with industries who need an advanced manufacturing workforce? Have a maker space that could be better utilized for real economic impact? Looking to spur rural development opportunities? The [Alliance for Rural Impact](#) wants to hear from you as it is developing **an opportunity for up to three regions nationwide to participate in a Creative Impact Pilot Project**. As technological advances continue to progress quickly, communities must find a way to adapt to these changes by building a flexible, cohesive system. The team will work with regional partners to integrate education, industry, community assets and philanthropic efforts to build a stronger, more adaptive economy for the future. For more information, email Jamie Wright at jamie@ruralimpact.org.
- The [Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) has published its **final report detailing recommendations to promote rural economies and communities**. Chaired by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue, the task force was established by President Trump in April 2017. The report addresses five key indicators of rural prosperity: e-Connectivity, Quality of Life, Rural Workforce, Technological Innovation, and Economic Development. Each focus areas contains recommendations for federal action in the form of regulatory changes, redirecting agency resources, incentivizing private investment, and advancing new technologies. The report is available [here](#).
- The NADO Research Foundation has released a 20-minute [webinar lecture](#) that **covers the ins and outs of economic resilience, what it means, why it matters, and how best to incorporate resilience into your region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**. During this presentation, you will learn: a definition of resilience that includes both natural and man-made shocks and disruptions; the value of taking a regional approach to resilience planning; the role of regional development organizations in supporting resilience efforts; and examples of case study best practice for infusing resilience into the CEDS content guidelines. Click [here](#) to access the recording.

Events and Trainings

- Join the NADO Research Foundation and Barbara Wyckoff of Creative Disrupters on **January 17 from 2 – 3 p.m. ET** for a [free interactive webinar](#) to **learn how a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis can build resilience and sustainability in your region as well as introduce and provide tools for rethinking economic development and facilitating conversations in your communities.** A SWOT allows for a region to come together to perform a “status check” and answer the question “Where are we now?” in terms of competitive advantages and disadvantages. One of the four required sections of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), the SWOT should serve as a key tool to foster economic resilience and generate a regional call to action. Click [here](#) to register.
- The [Rural Health Research Gateway](#) is hosting an upcoming **webinar focusing on opioids in rural areas.** “Strategies to Combat Opioid Use in Rural Communities” will be held on **January 18 at 2:00 p.m. ET.** There is no registration, but the audience is limited to the first 1,500 callers. Click [here](#) to join.
- The Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition is hosting a webinar on **January 23** that will discuss **updates on the status of AML (Abandoned Mine Land) Pilot and RECLAIM funding, key lessons from successful AML Pilot projects, and resources for developing proposals in 2018.** The Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition is a group of four NGOs in Central Appalachia that work in community engagement around AML cleanup and redevelopment. The Coalition supports the development of innovative reclamation proposals from local organizations and governments. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.
- The [Council of Development Finance Agencies](#) (CDFA) and [U.S. Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA) recently announced **a new partnership dedicated to bringing technical assistance, best practices, and collaboration to the national EDA Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) network.** The CDFA EDA RLF Best Practices Program will feature training, webinars, and peer-to-peer learning exchanges. The program’s first webinars will be hosted in the coming weeks: Exploring the Role of Revolving Loan Funds in Economic Development is scheduled for **January 23 at 2 p.m. ET** and Maximizing Revolving Loan Fund Impact is scheduled for **February 20 at p.m. ET.** More information on the program, including webinar registration, is available [here](#).
- On January 23, the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) (NEA), [Art of the Rural](#), and [Rural Policy Research Institute](#) (RUPRI) will be discussing the [RUPRI Rural Cultural Wealth Lab](#) through an informational webinar. The Rural Cultural Wealth Lab is one of four inaugural NEA Research Labs awarded following last year’s national competition. The **project explores how rural arts and culture, entrepreneurship and innovation, and cultural wealth contribute to the Comprehensive Rural Wealth Framework created by RUPRI to better recognize rural assets.** The webinar is scheduled for **Tuesday, January 23 from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. ET.** Registration is available [here](#).

- Join [Community Builders](#) on **January 31** for a webinar on brownfields and downtown redevelopment. Using case studies from Kalispell, Montana, and Rifle, Colorado, speakers will show how **brownfields funding and resources can support planning efforts and spur downtown revitalization**. Learn how the town of Rifle used brownfields funding to identify opportunity sites in their downtown, and then redevelop a theater into a community asset. Hear how Kalispell leveraged a U.S. EPA Area-Wide Planning Grant to leverage funding opportunities and create the transformative Core & Rail Redevelopment project. Click [here](#) to register.
- On **January 31 – February 2**, join Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne, and dozens of elected officials and community and business leaders from throughout Colorado to participate in **visioning workshops and educational programs related to climate preparedness and clean energy development in Colorado**. The Colorado Communities Symposium will feature a series of plenary sessions, breakout tracks with interactive scenario planning sessions, training events and roundtable discussions, tabletop exhibition, post-conference workshops and meetings, networking events, and an awards dinner. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.
- Save the date for “Strengthening Economies in Montana: A Forum for Coal Reliant Communities” to be held in **Billings, MT** on **April 18 and 19** and hosted by NACo and the NADO Research Foundation. This **free convening will bring together stakeholders from the public and private sectors for an educational and interactive gathering to share best practices, lessons learned, and new opportunities to support economic diversification**. Prepare for a mix of interactive sessions and small group discussions designed to deepen and foster new partnerships aimed at promoting innovation and prosperity throughout Montana and the Western regions. Registration will open shortly. Contact Jack Morgan at jmorgan@naco.org with any questions.

A Dose of Inspiration

- Amanda Laucher, co-founder of [Mined Mines](#), and her brother Marvin Laucher, coder and former coal miner, recently shared the story and philosophy behind Mined Mines at the Build Stuff Conference. From the presentation: **“We are focused on transitioning coal miners and coal mining communities into the tech economy...We start with a 16-week boot camp plus a 16-week pre-apprenticeship, then move people into an apprentice program and then to a full-time salary position.”** Click [here](#) to watch the keynote via YouTube.

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