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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

- EnerBlue Inc., an energy storage company, recently announced it will move its facilities to Pikeville and Lexington, KY, which will create 875 full-time jobs in Eastern Kentucky, according to the *Lane Report*. From the article: “EnerBlu will construct a 1

million-s.f., high-tech facility in Pikeville to manufacture lithium-titanate (LTO) batteries, called EnerBlu Advanced Energy Storage Units. **The batteries will power transit busses, commercial trucks, military vehicles, and other equipment. Construction is scheduled to start in mid-2018 and the facility's opening is planned for 2020.** Additionally, the company will relocate its headquarters from Riverside, CA. to a 150,000-s.f. building in Lexington, where it will create 110 administrative, research-and-development, and executive positions. The office is expected to open early next year." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- *High Country News* discusses how the North Fork Valley town of Paonia, CO (pop. 1,400) recently received designation through the state's **"Space to Create" program to develop affordable housing and workspace for creative industries to stimulate economic development.** From the article: "Like many rural towns across the region, where Old West industries like ranching and mining coexist uneasily with newer ones like fine art and organic farming, Paonia is grappling with its changing identity. While Space to Create seeks to bring jobs to the valley, those jobs won't look like the lost coal jobs. That may leave some people feeling left behind. But as Town Administrator Ken Knight pointed out, nothing about Space to Create would prevent future extraction jobs if one of the local mines were to reopen, though that's unlikely. And this is the economic opportunity available right now." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Communities across Appalachia are **tapping into their cultural, historical, and natural assets to encourage tourism, historic preservation, and other events and attractions,** reports the *Portland Press Herald*. From the article: "A Shawnee, Ohio, event re-enacted a Prohibition rally outside the real-life former speakeasy. In Corbin, Kentucky, they're constructing an elk-viewing area on a former mountaintop mine. Virginia's Crooked Road traces country music history. Ohio's Winding Road takes visitors back to the birth of the U.S. labor movement... Even those with good coal jobs sometimes feel they need backup plans. Rodney Embrey loves his job in communications at the Buckingham mine in Corning, Ohio, but he's also started a lucrative side business with a friend selling antiques." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Jackson Hole News and Guide* reports on Wyoming's current economic situation and the importance of diversification and tourism to enable the state to remain competitive. From the article: "With coal continuing to struggle, the only shovel large enough to dig the state out of the hole is diversification. **Though unemployment is down throughout Wyoming, it is largely due to the fact that the state's workforce shrunk by 3 percent in the third quarter of 2017,** according to [Wyoming Department of Economic Analysis Chief Economist Wenlin] Liu. As baby boomers retire and younger workers leave for better jobs in states like Colorado and Utah with a stronger labor market, without diversification, Wyoming's most precious asset will continue to dissipate." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *YaleEnvironment360* highlights **efforts underway in Appalachia to restore native forests on former coal mining sites.** From the article: "Nonprofits such as Green Forest Works have joined dozens of state environmental agencies and local communities in this effort. The American Chestnut Foundation, for example, is planting test plots of potentially blight-

resistant chestnut trees in former strip mines. The new nonprofit Appalachian Headwaters, funded by the bankruptcies of the coal companies Alpha Natural Resources and Patriot Coal, is helping restore 250 acres of forest in Boone and McDowell counties in West Virginia.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- Colstrip, MT will receive \$10 million from a settlement with Puget Sound Energy to support economic diversification initiatives in the region, reports *Montana Public Radio*. From the article: “Regulators in Washington state have approved a major settlement with a utility that owns part of the Colstrip power plant. **It includes \$10 million to help Colstrip transition away from a coal driven economy...** The settlement approved this week does not set a closure date for Colstrip’s two new and larger units. However, some environmental groups say this signals that those units could shut down by 2030. Colstrip supporters say the plant could stay open more than decade longer.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *EntreEd* profiles a project underway in Clay County, WV that is teaching students about farming and entrepreneurship by overseeing a high tunnel to grow vegetables. From the article: “Vegetables range from kale, radishes, romaine lettuce, and snap peas all of which students choose from a seed catalog in the spring. **After the students harvest their vegetables, they bring them inside to have them cooked for school lunches, afterschool programs, and for Clay County High School...** This initiative not only gives the students personal ownership but also shows them what it takes to be a young entrepreneur.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) is accepting **proposals to fund training and counseling programs for veteran small business owners**. The Boots to Business (B2B) program supports training opportunities including technical and financial skill development and comprehensive business assessments to current and former military personnel engaged in starting or growing a small business. SBA expects to award 17 to 23 grants between \$225,000 and \$375,000. Applications are due **January 8**. Click [here](#) for more details.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) is seeking applications for the AgVets Program that provides grants to nonprofit organizations for **training programs and services to establish and enhance farming and ranching opportunities for military veterans**. A letter of intent is due **January 11** and the application is due **February 8**. Click [here](#) for more information.
- 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.

- A new report is available describing the state of small business in rural areas. The Report on Rural Firms, released by the Federal Reserve Banks of [Richmond](#) and [Atlanta](#), **shows favorable standing for most small rural businesses including better credit and longer tenure than urban counterparts**. Click [here](#) for the report.
- The [New Markets Tax Credit Coalition](#) has issued a new report on the economic impact of the [New Market Tax Credit](#) (NMTC). The NMTC Economic Impact Report reviews data from the [U.S. Department of Treasury](#) and 5,000 projects financed by NMTC from 2003 - 2015. Overall, the study shows the program's **significant return-on-investment of over one million jobs and \$150 billion in economic activity**. Click [here](#) for the report.
- The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is **accepting applications for its 2018 National Small Business Week Awards**. Since 1963, National Small Business Week has recognized the outstanding achievements of America's small businesses for their contributions to their local communities and our nation's economy. Click [here](#) to view forms, criteria, and guidelines for submitting a nomination. National Small Business Week is **April 29 – May 5, 2018**. The deadline for nominations is **January 9**.

Events and Trainings

- 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.
- Join the St. Louis Federal Reserve on **January 11** for the webinar "Broadband Under the Community Reinvestment Act." As part of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), infrastructure investment includes facilitating the construction, expansion, improvement, maintenance, or operation of essential infrastructure or facilities for health services, education, public safety, public services, industrial parks, or affordable housing. Broadband is included as a form of infrastructure investment—an essential community service. This Connecting Communities webinar **will highlight possible opportunities for financial institutions to receive CRA consideration and take advantage of new opportunities to help close the digital divide across communities and improve economic stability**. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

- 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.
- Registration is open for the [17th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference](#) scheduled for **February 1 – 3, 2018** in San Francisco, CA. This year, the conference program will focus on "inspiration and implementation," and will feature eight focused thematic tracks and provide participants with an opportunity for a more dynamic, hands-on learning experience. NADO Research Foundation staff **will deliver training on economic diversification and resilience as part of the "Building Capacity in Small Towns and Rural Communities" track**. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

A Dose of Inspiration

- Wyoming's [Economically Needed Diversity Options for Wyoming \(ENDOW\) Initiative](#) is an **effort launched by Governor Matt Mead in November 2016 to coordinate diversification efforts** throughout the state. In this [short video](#) produced by the Wyoming Business Council, learn more about ENDOW, its goals, and key players involved. Click [here](#) to watch the video via YouTube.



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