

January 31, 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](mailto: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

- Wyoming is now becoming more of a player in the national wind energy market as additional wind installations come online, reports the *Christian Science Monitor*. From the article: "**The Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project is slated to become the largest wind farm in the United States once it's up and running.** And it's causing some in Wyoming – a state whose economy has been devastated by the decline of its bedrock fossil fuel industries – to rethink their attitude toward renewable energy." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Brandon Dennison of Coalfield Development writes in a piece for *Newsweek* about the **need to support coal communities through workforce development, education, and mentor opportunities**. From the article: "As a state and a region [West Virginia and Appalachia], we're proud to have powered this country for over 100 years. But our legacy is not our destiny. By tapping back into the real Appalachian identity of creativity, gumption, and grit, we can pioneer strategies that can build a future for our communities that's even better than when coal was booming." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Helena Independent Record* reports on a community meeting held this week in Colstrip, MT as residents, business leaders, and elected officials discussed strategies to address the anticipated closure of two of its coal plant units by 2022. From the article: "**With \$10 million on the table to the get the job done, Colstrip began laying plans Monday for life after power-plant shareholder Puget Sound Energy cuts ties to coal.** State and local officials, led by Gov. Steve Bullock and Attorney General Tim Fox, gathered just a few blocks away from Colstrip Power Plant to discuss transitioning the community to a future without Puget Sound Energy. The Washington utility holds significant shares of the four-unit coal-fired generating station and will begin shutting units down in five years or less." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *Next American City* covers how **Berea, KY is experiencing a renaissance, supported in part by a creative placemaking strategy that has led to it becoming one of the fastest growing municipalities in the state**. From the article: "It's difficult to make a direct connection between any one economic strategy and growth, but local officials say that their investment in building an arts economy has paid off because it gives people a reason to stay. If they stay, they spend their money locally, and that money feeds back into the local economy. In this time of economic upheaval, when the future of work looks nothing like its past and job insecurity is ubiquitous in rural places, it's worth cultivating best practices from any and all available sources. It just so happens that Eastern Kentucky can look to a neighboring small city that took a chance on the arts, and it paid off." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Denver Post* highlights how the oil town of **Rangely, CO is seeking to diversify its economy by growing the retail and small business sectors** and can serve as an example to coal-reliant communities and other small towns that have experienced a boom and bust economy. From the article: "Rangely and Rio Blanco County have applied for and won awards

and grants to aid efforts to boost the climate there for retail businesses. In the process, tourism and retail have emerged as potential economic drivers the town wants to chase.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- The *Lane Report* profiles the work and interests of Lora Smith, co-founder of the Appalachian Impact Fund. From the article: “[T]he organization opened its doors in January 2017 in a former hardware store the fund purchased on Main Street in Hazard. The three-story building **serves as headquarters for the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky, Appalachian Food Summit, Appalachian Arts Alliance and other nonprofits.**” 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](#).
- 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.

- The [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) (ARC) has released [An Economic Analysis of the Appalachian Coal Industry Ecosystem](#), a new research series that **examines major trends in the region's coal economy over the last decade and explores some of the current and potential impacts** these shifts can have on five elements of the coal ecosystem: production and employment, supply chain industries, rail transportation, electric power generation, and human capital. Click [here](#) to access the reports.
- The [Federal Highway Administration](#) (FHWA) has updated the document [The Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book: Key Issues for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials, and Staff](#). This document is a **useful primer for new and returning transportation board and committee members or entry-level transportation staff on major components of the federally required transportation planning process** and roles for regional and state agencies and transit operators. The guide is divided into two sections: an introduction to the planning process and its relationship to decision making, and an overview of major policy considerations that may be significant for a region, such as air quality, equity, and performance measurement. Click [here](#) to access the document

## Events and Trainings

- Registration is now open 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. Click [here](#) to learn more and register. Contact Jack Morgan at [jmorgan@naco.org](mailto:jmorgan@naco.org) with any questions.
- The [National Association of Counties](#) and the [NADO Research Foundation](#) are hosting a free [webinar](#) on **February 7 from 2:00 – 3:15 p.m. ET** to take a **deep dive into the value of place and community branding as a powerful tool in stimulating both economic development and community pride and identity**. The webinar will explore this topic through the lens of coal country, as many traditionally coal-reliant communities are seeking to build stronger economies and revitalize communities. Attendees will hear from community branding subject-matter experts, in addition to local and regional implementation examples of place branding and digital storytelling, including social media and community videos. Click [here](#) to register.
- 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.

- Join the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) (ARC) at a [free workshop](#) to learn about available funding to help Appalachia's coal-impacted communities diversify and strengthen their local economies through the POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) Initiative. Workshop attendees will learn about the objectives of the 2018 POWER Initiative, which organizations are eligible for funding, and how to develop a competitive funding proposal. The workshops will also provide information on the latest research about coal-impacted communities, case studies about successful POWER investments, and networking time for participants. Workshops are open to community leaders, industry representatives, and economic development officials, as well as representatives of nonprofits, educational institutions, local governments, and other interested organizations. Click [here](#) for location, dates, and registration.
- The recording is now available for a recent Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition webinar that discussed **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**. Click [here](#) to view the recording.
- The [NADO Research Foundation](#) hosted the [webinar](#) "Using the SWOT to Plan for Resilience: A New Approach to a Classic Tool" with Barbara Wyckoff of Creative Disrupters to discuss **how the SWOT 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**. During the webinar, participants learned a new approach to economic resilience and how it is being implemented across the country; how to integrate sustainability and resilience into the SWOT assessment of a region's economy, as required by the U.S. Economic Development Administration for completing the CEDS; and how to develop preliminary indicators for measuring for multiple types of local assets. The recording and slides are available [here](#).

## A Dose of Inspiration

- The *PBS News Hour* highlights how job training and workforce development programs, aligned with community college courses, are creating sustainable jobs for workers in coal communities. Click [here](#) to watch the segment via YouTube.



*This newsletter is made possible with the support of an [US Economic Development Administration – Denver Regional Office](#) 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 EDA.*