

January 16, 2019



Welcome to the latest 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 [U.S. Economic Development Administration’s Denver Regional Office](#). This 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

- The Navajo Transitional Energy Company is **exploring the possibility of buying the Navajo Generating Station (slated for closure in less than a year) as well as the Kayenta mine**, reports the *Salt Lake Tribune*. From the article: “The energy company says it wants to keep the plant and Kayenta Mine open for at least another 10 years to preserve hundreds of jobs held mostly by Navajos, as well as the revenue. The company’s board met recently and said it would pursue both... The company was created to buy a coal mine in northwestern New Mexico and owns a 7 percent stake in the nearby Four Corners Power Plant.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **PBS News Hour** reports on the *Culture of Recovery* program, an initiative of the Appalachian Artisan Center in Hindman, KY. From the article: “**Master craftspeople teach Appalachian art, such as luthiery, blacksmithing and ceramics, through the Culture of Recovery program**, which was launched in January with a two-year grant of \$475,000, which is part of \$8.7 million given by ArtPlace’s National Creative Placemaking Fund. Students from the drug court study their crafts on Tuesdays, and patients at Hickory Hill, a nearby drug rehabilitation center, get lessons on Wednesdays.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The **Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED) will partner with the Utah Association of Counties, the Sorenson Impact Center, and consultant Patrick Mullen to direct the state’s efforts to capitalize on the new Opportunity Zones program**, says GOED in a recent press release. From the release: “UAC and Sorenson’s responsibilities will be threefold: engaging and educating rural communities housing Opportunity Zones, developing marketing content and strategies for Opportunity Zone economic development, and connecting local officials and stakeholders with prospective investors... In Utah, 46 zones were designated as Opportunity Zones, 19 of which are in rural communities.” Click [here](#) to read the press release.
- *Fortune* takes a look at economic diversification efforts in Hazard, Kentucky, a community of 5,000 that has been hit particularly hard by the downturn in the coal industry. From the article: “The town faces an uphill battle in diversifying its economy. But residents are trying. Hazard entrepreneur Joey McKenney founded Appalachian Apparel Co. in 2017, designing and making products himself. He recently opened a store in downtown Hazard, hoping to be the spark that revitalizes a once-vibrant city center. **McKenney says he’s been told that he wouldn’t be successful because the coal industry is fading. His response? “There are people here who refuse to give up.”**” Click [here](#) to read the article (and don’t miss the short video at the top of the page).
- Wyoming’s **Rocky Mountain Power utility is conducting a resource management plan to get a better understanding of the economics of its coal-fired power plants**, reports the *Casper Star-Tribune*. From the article: “The cost, and the value, of burning coal for electricity continues to be a point of contention, and one with multifaceted impacts on Wyoming. The state produces the most coal in the nation. Its power plants burn coal that feeds electricity demand across multiple states, and in

both sides of the industry — mining and electricity — Wyomingites are employed. As other sources of power, like wind production, fall in cost to utilities and their customers, the financial burden of new coal generation and existing coal generation is under scrutiny." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- The **144-mile Ohio Art Corridor featuring sculptures and other works of art recently debuted in Southeastern Ohio**, reports *USA Today*. From the article: ""Our desire is to draw people out of the big cities, to take a drive through the beautiful Appalachian country of Ohio, to learn, grow, and have experiences that they otherwise would not have," says Rebekah Griesmyer, executive director of The Ohio Art Corridor. "We desire to instill pride and purpose into those that live in the small cities and towns highlighted on The Ohio Art Corridor."" Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) will begin **accepting applications for the 2019 round of the Partnership for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative on February 1, 2019**. The 2019 Request for Proposals (RFP) is available [here](#). Completed applications are due no later than **April 10, 2019 at 5 p.m. ET**. Approximately \$45 million will be awarded through this competitive grant process. In FY 2019, ARC's POWER Initiative will continue focusing on regional investments that maximize economic revitalization in the Appalachian region's coal-impacted communities. Before submitting a funding proposal, potential applicants must contact the appropriate ARC [state program manager](#) for specific guidance pertaining to the eligible use of POWER funds in their state. ARC has awarded \$120 million to date through the POWER Initiative in order to help coal-impacted communities in [309 Appalachian counties](#) diversify and grow their economies. POWER project summaries detailing past awardees' action plans are available [here](#). With questions about the POWER Initiative, email [power@arc.gov](mailto:power@arc.gov).
- The Environmental Protection Agency has **released application guidance for Fiscal Year 2019 brownfields grant funding**. Funding guidelines are available [here](#). Last year, the EPA awarded \$54.3 million for brownfields assessment and cleanup of a total of 144 communities across the county. For FY 2019, a total of \$50 million is expected to be awarded to more than 100 recipients. Participants can access the webinar [here](#). The deadline to submit proposals is **January 31, 2019**.
- The [Clif Bar Family Foundation](#) is **accepting applications for its small grants program** through **February 1**. Funding priorities are to: protect Earth's beauty and bounty; create a robust, healthy food system; increase opportunities for outdoor activity; reduce environmental health hazards; and build stronger communities. These grants are awarded for general organizational support as well as funding for specific projects. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply.

- The [National Endowment for the Arts](#) (NEA) is accepting applications **now through February 14, 2019** for its [Art Works grant program](#). **Projects may be large or small, existing or new, and may take place in any part of the nation's 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.** NEA encourages applications for artistically excellent projects that address any of the following activities: Honor the 2020 centennial of women's voting rights in the United States (aka the Women's Suffrage Centennial); Engage with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic or Latino organizations, or the Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian arts; Celebrate America's creativity and cultural heritage; invite a dialogue that fosters a mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all persons and groups; Enrich our humanity by broadening our understanding of ourselves as individuals and as a society. Matching grants generally will range from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.
- [EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants \(EJSG\) Program](#) provides **funding directly to community-based organizations for projects that help residents of underserved communities understand and address local environmental and public health issues.** Projects should engage, educate, and empower communities to better understand local environmental and public health issues and develop strategies for addressing those issues, building consensus in the community, and setting community priorities. Applications are due **February 15, 2019**. Click [here](#) for more information.
- The [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) has **launched a new special initiative, Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries (APP)**, and is accepting grant applications now through **February 25, 2019**. This funding opportunity is designed to strengthen the ability of small and rural libraries, archives, and related organizations to serve their communities. award sizes range from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply.
- Every year, [Community Builders](#) **offers a limited number of community assistance opportunities in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Colorado.** This is an opportunity for local leaders to acquire necessary tools and information to build prosperous, livable communities. A competitive process is used to identify projects with a high likelihood of success. Projects should address a compelling need or opportunity, have clear and realistic goals, demonstrate buy-in and support of key partners and leadership, while offering a strong prospect for implementation. Apply by **March 1**. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- The [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Office of Rural Development](#) has announced the [ReConnect program](#) which will **offer up to \$600 million nationwide in loans and grants to help build broadband infrastructure in rural America through a new pilot program.** The loans and grants will consist of \$200 million in grants, \$200 million in low-interest loans, and \$200 million in loan and grant combinations. Projects funded through this initiative must serve communities with fewer than 20,000 people that have no broadband service or where existing service is slower than 10 megabits per second (mbps) download and 1 mbps upload. To qualify, projects must increase access speeds to at least 25 mbps upload and 3 mbps download. Priority will be given to projects that propose to deliver higher-capacity connections to rural homes, businesses, and farms. The start of the application window will be announced in February 2019. Applications **must be received by April**

**29, 2019, for grant funding, by May 29, 2019, for combined loan and grant funding, and by June 28, 2019, for loan funding.** The USDA will host a series of webinars and in-person workshops to share information and answer questions about the program. The full list of public events will be made available soon on the [ReConnect Program resource portal](#).

- The [Northern Arizona Council of Governments \(NACOG\) Economic Development District](#) is made up of four counties in Northern Arizona – Apache, Coconino, Navajo and Yavapai. Three of the four counties (Apache, Coconino and Navajo) are impacted by the downturn of the coal industry. Several coal-driven industries are facing imminent closure in 2019, resulting in the loss of an estimated 2,000 jobs and multi-million dollar economic impacts for the District and State. Led by NACOG Economic Development Council and workforce leaders with the assistance from Arizona’s Office of Economic Opportunities, the Northern Arizona Regional Alliance Coalition has developed a [white paper describing the economic impact of the coal industry closure and opportunities for workforce development, training, and broader economic diversification](#). Click [here](#) to download the white paper, “Northern Arizona Coal Communities Workforce Initiatives.”
- The [Aspen Institute’s Economic Opportunities Program](#) has released a new white paper, [Exploring Employee Share Ownership as a Potential Investment Strategy in Opportunity Zones](#), following a summit of experts and practitioners that occurred earlier this fall. The white paper explores how Opportunity Zones offer a chance to attract investment to places that need it – and they will have the most impact if the investments are part of an inclusive economic development strategy. Employee share ownership program (ESOP) conversion opportunities could be a strategy to help residents see benefit in Opportunity Zones.
- A report from the Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition **shares a variety of case studies of innovative mine reclamation in Central Appalachia**. This report seeks to spur innovative economic development throughout Appalachia in communities where the landscape has been irreparably changed by coal mining. Specifically, the report provides case studies of projects that advance community development amidst abandoned mine lands. Click [here](#) to download the report.

## Events and Trainings

- Save the date for NACo and NADO RF’s [“Strengthening Economies in the West: Coal-Reliant Communities Challenge,”](#) scheduled for **May 1-3 in Denver, CO**. This **hands-on, interactive forum will bring together local/regional teams from Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Utah** to learn more about economic diversification planning and strategies, build out a diversification road-map, network with peers from across the four-state region, and engage with staff from a mix of federal agencies focused on diversification and economic resilience. The team application will be made available shortly. Click [here](#) for more information. Questions? Contact Jack Morgan at [jmorgan@naco.org](mailto:jmorgan@naco.org).
- On **January 23**, the [WV Community Development Hub's](#) Director of Strategic Network Communications Emma Pepper will lead an **online webinar training to support West Virginians working for the greater good in sharing their story with**

**the world.** If you're with a small business or social enterprise, a nonprofit or community group, or are a West Virginian change-maker of any stripe, check out this workshop on promoting your work and getting noticed by the media. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.

- **The Central Appalachian Brownfields Innovation Network (CABIN) is partnering with the Tennessee Environmental Conference (TNEC) for two and a half days of brownfield and environmental learning and networking opportunities on March 18-20 in Kingsport, TN.** The Central Appalachian Regional Brownfield Summit educates stakeholders from across the region on complex redevelopment issues; provides the opportunity for communities to network with peers, agency representatives, development professionals, and environmental experts in person; and highlights success stories from across the region. The TNEC conference, now in its 18th year, will feature more than 40 presenters addressing the latest trends, practices, and policies aimed at preserving resources, balancing growth, improving human health and protecting the environment – and a special track all about brownfields. Click [here](#) for additional information and to register.
- [Brightfields 2019 – Virginia](#) is an **interactive solar marketplace event that will bring together solar developers, property owners, policy makers, and professionals** for educational sessions, active networking, and live market-making in a 'Solar Market Mixer. The event is designed for (1) landowners, property managers and communities interested in the development of solar energy on their land (rather than rooftops), (2) solar developers seeking land for purchase or lease, (3) public and private sector professionals working in the solar space, (4) anyone motivated towards developing greenfields, greyfields, brownfields, landfills and Superfund sites into solar power generating assets, or (5) anyone seeking to learn more about the application of solar power production onto the land. It will be held **April 9 and 10 in Richmond, VA.** Click [here](#) for more information and to register.
- [LISC](#) has announced a **six-part webinar series called “How to Do Creative Placemaking”** that will run **through April.** Creative placemaking—the practice of integrating arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities—has become a widespread practice in communities of all shapes and sizes to advance local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. Webinars will cover topics such as building partnerships, community engagement, measuring impact, communicating success, hiring & contracting artists, and more. Click [here](#) to learn more and register.

## A Dose of Inspiration

- Scientists at the University of Delaware are researching **the potential of developing a commercial-scale process that uses termites to ingest coal which in turn will release methane to create natural gas**, reports *UD Daily*. From the article: “‘It may sound crazy at first — termite-gut microbes eating coal — but think about what coal is. It’s basically wood that’s been cooked for 300 million years,” said [Prasad] Dhurjati, who is on the faculty of UD’s Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering...[Termite microbes] can digest coal, releasing methane and producing humic matter, a beneficial organic fertilizer, as a byproduct.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

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