

March 14, 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 Herald-Dispatch* profiles **apprenticeship programs in West Virginia and Ohio that provide opportunities for displaced coal miners and other interested participants**. From the article: “[W]hen it comes to folks continuing their education beyond high school, local apprenticeship programs, such as those at Coalfield Development, at technical and trade schools, as well as unions, are helping train the next generation of master craftsmen - whether they are doing plumbing and pipefitting or doing electrical work to install solar panels while they work.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Utah is becoming a top state for solar power generation and experts expect this trajectory to continue, reports the *Salt Lake Tribune*. From the article: “Much of the **growth has to do with Utah’s geography...It ranks as the fifth-sunniest state in the nation, and there’s a lot of wide, empty land available for building solar farms**. Pricing is also a key factor...and the main reason solar is expected to continue to grow: The cost to build solar farms continues to fall.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- A radio program from *West Virginia Public Broadcasting* featured a **round-up of stories about economic diversification initiatives throughout Appalachia, including farming, tech jobs, tourism, and rare earth elements**. From the story: “*Inside Appalachia* host Jessica Lilly closes the episode with some personal thoughts about the future of economic development in our region. “Sometimes folks have land that’s made mostly of rocks, with little soil and plant nutrients, so innovators find a plant, lavender, with such resilience that it still grows. While these aren’t supporting an entire economy or community just yet, I’d like to think, this is just the beginning.”” Click [here](#) to listen to the story.
- The *Seattle Times* covers how the impending **closure of coal-fired power plants in Colstrip, Montana will impact the local economy, workforce, and environment**. From the article: “Since 1975, more than 460 million tons of coal have been mined from the earth around Colstrip, most of it to produce power for Northwest utilities... As coal’s fortunes have declined, it has become harder to wrest profits from the Colstrip plant in a region flush with other sources of power. Talen Montana, the owner charged with operating the plant, has lost millions trying to sell Colstrip power, according to Dale Lebsack, a Talen senior vice president.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Register-Herald* reports on a presentation delivered by Appalachian Regional Commission Director of Planning and Research Kostas Skordas at a recent ARC POWER workshop that covered the ripple effects of the downturn of the coal industry. From the article: “As the nation and the world have shifted away from coal as a power generation source in favor of natural gas and renewables, not only have mines closed and their miners been displaced, so have power plant and rail workers...While Skordas believes many of the jobs are lost forever, he said that he believes that the **workers in those industries have shown evidence of being able to diversify their skill in how many qualifications they have gained as miners and other types of workers**.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- **Wyoming has been allocated \$91 million from the U.S. Department of Interior through Abandoned Mine Land Funds**, reports the *Casper Star Tribune*. From the article: “The extra funding in the next two years comes with restrictions on how the environmental department can spend it. The first priority is abandoned coal mine cleanup. The second use of funding could be non-coal reclamation. If the first two priorities are met, the Department of Environmental Quality could spend the money on public facilities in areas affected by historic coal mining.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- Applications are now open to the [U.S. Department of Treasury’s Community Development Financial Institutions Fund](#) (CDFI Fund) and [Native American CDFI Assistance Program](#) (NACA Program). The CDFI Fund **provides affordable financing and related support to low-income communities without access to credit, capital, and financial services**. Applications are due **April 4**. More information on the CDFI Fund including how to apply is available [here](#); additional information on the NACA Program is available [here](#).
- The [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) is accepting applications to the FY2017 Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). YDHP will select up to 11 communities, including five rural communities, to **support the development and implementation of a comprehensive community plan to end youth homelessness**. Applications are due **April 17**. More details and instructions to apply are available [here](#).
- The [Walmart Community Foundation](#) is accepting applications to its Community Grant Program. The Foundation awards grants to nonprofits and agencies **involved in community and economic development, public safety, and environmental sustainability**. Awards range between \$250 to \$5,000. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. More information can be found [here](#).
- The [NADO Research Foundation](#) has released the report [Integrating Economic Resilience in Performance-based Transportation Planning](#). Using information from dozens of regional planning and development organizations and their partners, the **report suggests a framework for considering economic resilience and the input of economic development stakeholders throughout the planning process**—from developing a vision, goals, and objectives to selecting measures, prioritizing projects, and communicating performance information.
- The [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) has **launched a new website “Opioid Misuse in America.”** The purpose of this website is to assist rural leaders with resources, information, and best practices to help rural communities respond to and manage the crisis. The website is available at: <https://www.usda.gov/topics/opioids>

- The [NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis](#) has released a final report and series of practice briefs from the [Exploring Strategies to Improve Health and Equity in Rural Communities](#) project. The project focused on **enhanced understanding of culture and history, priorities, assets, partners, and promising strategies unique to and common across rural communities and regions**. The NORC Walsh Center team engaged partners across sectors to explore how assets can be leveraged to strengthen rural communities and to create conditions that promote overall health and well-being. Click [here](#) to access the final report and practice briefs.

Events and Trainings

- On **March 14 from 2 – 3 p.m. ET**, the [Center for Creative Land Recycling](#) will host a webinar on small town and rural redevelopment. The webinar will discuss how **a suite of techniques known as "New Economy" strategies can allow developers to begin to think differently about how to mitigate the risks associated with projects in areas that are otherwise unlikely to be developed**. The webinar will feature examples and brief case studies from the field. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- On **March 20 from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. ET**, the [National Center for Rural Road Safety](#) will present a webinar on how **Regional Transportation Planning Organizations can be created and can contribute to improving regional transportation safety**. The webinar will feature an overview of RTPOs, as well as case studies from state department of transportation staff from Ohio and Washington. Learn more and register for the free webinar [here](#).
- To help rural places get up to speed on broadband infrastructure, [Smart Growth America](#), the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#), [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), and the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) provided workshops to rural communities through the [Cool & Connected](#) program. These workshops helped the **communities find new economic opportunities by providing planning guidance for sustainable downtown development and investments in broadband, or reliable, high-speed internet access**. During a webinar on **March 20 from 2 to 3 p.m. ET**, guests from Zanesville, OH and Eastport, ME will speak to their efforts to revitalize their downtowns, talk about how *Cool & Connected* impacted their communities, and discuss what they've been working on since. Click [here](#) to register.
- Since 2007, the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) (ARC) and the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) (NEA), in partnership with [The Conservation Fund](#), have helped Appalachian "gateway" communities – those that are entry points, or border, Appalachia's national and state parks and forests – expand tourism, arts, and other economic development opportunities. With programming that has included targeted technical assistance, community tourism assessments, tourism planning workshops, and small grants for project implementation, the [Appalachian Gateway Communities Initiative](#) (AGCI) has touched more than 1,000 communities and 100 counties. In August 2018, The Conservation Fund will host the [Advanced Project Implementation Workshop for Appalachian Gateway Communities](#) in Shepherdstown, WV. This **3-day workshop is**

designed for teams from gateway communities that have previously participated in AGCI activities or are ready to implement new or ongoing community projects. Interested teams can [submit a letter of intent](#), including information about the prospective team as well as a brief description of the project, by **March 30, 2018**. Click [here](#) for more information.

- Registration is 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 with any questions.
- The [Appalachian Funders Network](#) is hosting its **annual meeting “Strong Roots, New Branches: Transition in Action” in Pikeville, Kentucky on April 24 – 26**. This annual meeting is a space for learning and analysis, where members build trust and relationships, expand their connections, develop lasting partnerships, and align their investment strategies to accelerate large scale change across Central Appalachia. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.

A Dose of Inspiration

- **“We see attracting and retaining young talent as *the* economic development strategy for West Virginia,”** says Natalie Roper, Executive Director of [Generation West Virginia](#), in a video that showcases the organization’s [Impact Fellowship](#) program. The program’s goal is “to connect young people to opportunities that ensure they can choose West Virginia, connect employers with top talent, and, in doing so, highlight the true potential that exists for the next generation to work and thrive in West Virginia.” Click [here](#) to watch the video via YouTube.

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