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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

- **A new makerspace in Marietta, OH, supported through the Appalachian Ohio Innovation Gateway Network, is providing training, programming, and other opportunities for residents and businesses,** reports the *Marietta Times*. From the article: "The Makerspace at the Epicenter is running full tilt, with equipment available and a slate of classes and outreach events. The project, which got underway last year, now has a full-time coordinator - Jenny Bruce - and is taking memberships from people interested in creating anything that requires tools, a workspace, and perhaps some instruction or assistance." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *White Mountain Independent* shares the results of a **recent study that explored economic diversification opportunities for coal-reliant counties in Northern Arizona**. From the article: "[G]rowth strategies include cultivating industry "clusters," attract tourists, retirees, and other residents (including remote workers) with a higher quality of life (amenities, open space, and low cost of living), and building community partnerships at the local and regional levels, including education/job training partnerships, professional organizations, etc. In northeast Arizona, the study found that natural resources, tourism/recreation, local services (health, education, public administration), construction and utilities/power production are Navajo and Apache counties' economic strengths." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, VA and Big Sandy Community and Technical College in Pikeville, KY **have signed the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) pledge**, reports the *TimesNews*. From the article: "During the gathering in Pikeville, MECC President Kristen Westover and BSCTC's Sherry Zylka signed their colleges to the NACCE's Presidents for Entrepreneurship Pledge (PFEP) to commit to five action steps aimed at advancing entrepreneurship in the classroom and in their communities. The action steps range from creating and expanding internal and external teams dedicated to entrepreneurship to increasing entrepreneurial engagement in community colleges to spur innovation and job creation. Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Seattle Times* reports on the pros and cons of a proposed pumped storage project near Martinsdale, MT, about six miles from Colstrip's transmission lines. From the article: "When demand is low, [the facility] would **store energy in the form of water pumped from a low-lying pond to another pool carved out of the rim top**. When demand is high, this flow would be reversed and run through turbines to produce hydropower for Montana, Oregon, and Washington." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Lane Report* notes that Kentucky Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes is forming a **partnership with three county judge-executives from Eastern Kentucky to explore opportunities around solar energy for the region**. From the article: ""Eastern Kentucky is perfectly positioned for solar energy," said Grimes. "In a region where rising energy costs are driving up power bills and unemployment is a serious issue, solar energy can help to diversify our energy sources, lower

utility costs, and create good jobs. I'm excited about what this investment opportunity could mean for this area I love so much.'" Click [here](#) to read the article.

- The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality has **proposed new rules that would limit self-bonding in an effort to address how coal companies might pay for future clean-up and reclamation**, reports *Wyoming Public Media*. From the article: "[O]ne proposal would force companies to diversify how they bond. The DEQ wants to cap self-bonding at 75 percent of a company's clean-up obligations down from 100 percent... The proposed regulations would also prohibit backing bonds with machinery or equipment, limit self-bonding to mines that have at least 10 years of life ahead, and depend on the ultimate parent entity to qualify for self-bonding." 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). YHDP 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 [U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development](#) (USDA-RD) is accepting applications for Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement projects. The projects help **agriculture producers and small businesses lower their energy costs and use through renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements**. The deadline to apply for grants is **April 30**; loan applications are accepted throughout the year. More information is available [here](#).
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD) [Rural Utilities Service](#) (RUS) will be hosting **webinars on the Community Connect Grant Program**. The webinars will detail eligibility and regulatory requirements of the program. Presentations will also include instructions on how to apply. A Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) was published on March 15 and is available [here](#). The webinars are scheduled for **April 5 and April 10 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. ET**. Click [here](#) to register for the April 5 session; registration for the April 10 session is available [here](#). Applications to the Community Connect Grant Program are due **May 14**.

- The [Employment and Training Administration](#) (ETA) is accepting applications to the National Health Emergency (NHE) Dislocated Worker Demonstration Grant Program. Grants are available for **projects to retrain workers in communities impacted by widespread opioid use, addiction, and overdose**. The agency expects to award seven to ten demonstration projects between \$500,000 to \$5 million each. The March 20 Training and Employment Guidance Letter provides further details – click [here](#) for the letter.
  
- In 2017, [AARP](#) launched the first AARP Community Challenge and funded 88 efforts representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Those projects improved housing, public spaces, and transportation. The **Community Challenge grant program is an important part of AARP’s work to promote livable communities, in which it supports the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities and counties nationwide to become great places for people of all ages**. The program is open to nonprofit community organizations and government entities; other types of organizations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For the 2018 AARP Community Challenge, AARP will be focusing efforts in four categories:
  - Delivering a range of transportation and mobility options through permanent or temporary solutions to increase connectivity, walkability, bikeability, and access to public and private transit
  - Creating vibrant public places through permanent or temporary solutions that improve open spaces, parks, and access to other amenities
  - Supporting the availability of a range of housing through permanent or temporary solutions that increase accessible and affordable housing options
  - Other innovative projects to improve the community.

Applications for AARP Community Challenge grants will be accepted through **May 16**. All applications must be submitted through [www.AARP.org/CommunityChallenge](http://www.AARP.org/CommunityChallenge) and all projects must be completed by November 5. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.

- 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 [Community Development Financial Institutions Fund](#) (CDFI Fund) has released its 2017 Year in Review. The report **details CDFI Fund’s activities to improve economic opportunity in distressed communities**. In 2017, the organization contributed \$472 million in financial assistance, loans, and bond guarantees and \$7 billion in New Market Tax Credits (NMTCs). The 2017 review is available [here](#).

## Events and Trainings

- 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](mailto:jmorgan@naco.org) with any questions.
- 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.
- Shine a spotlight on the work your county and its partners are doing to **build a culture of preparedness as part of the National Association of Counties’ Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Social Media Day!** @NACoTweets will host a Twitter chat on Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness at **2 p.m. Eastern on April 11** using #ResilientCounties. Start collecting your top examples, and learn how to participate [here](#).
- 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.
- The [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL) is **celebrating Older Americans Month in May**. ACL has many materials and resources to help your agency promote this year’s theme, *Engage at Every Age*. Click [here](#) to access activities, resources, and materials.

## A Dose of Inspiration

- A **grassroots community group in Williamsburg, KY is renovating the town's historic, abandoned Lane Theatre**, reports *WYMT*. From the article: ""The community, remembering when they were children coming to movies here...they can hardly wait for it to reopen to bring their kids," said John Stewart with the Williamsburg Action Team." Click [here](#) to read the article / watch the news segment.

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