

May 23, 2018



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

- *Utah Business* profiles four rural counties in the state and what efforts are underway there to support economic diversification, including workforce development, education, and tourism. From the article: “[Carbon County] has been involved with the University of Utah in a carbon fiber project. The university received a federal grant to study the ability to take coal and use its byproduct to spin carbon fiber that can be used in the auto industry, airline industry, and outdoor recreation industry.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Charleston Gazette-Mail* reports on West Virginia’s pursuit of funding to improve mobile voice and broadband service, particularly in rural areas, in advance of a visit from Federal Communications Commission officials. From the article: “Much of the state is initially eligible for funding for mobile voice and broadband expansion via the FCC’s Mobility Fund Phase II. The program would incentivize mobile providers to establish 4G LTE in coverage-starved areas by distributing up to \$4.53 billion in funding.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Montana has received federal funding through the POWER program to support coal-reliant communities with economic diversification and workforce development initiatives, reports *KULR*. From the article: “The funding covers workforce training for Colstrip and other communities in Eastern Montana affected by coal-related layoffs, including the Northern Cheyenne, Crow, and Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux reservations. The dollars will go directly towards training over 1,100 workers in 23 eastern and southcentral Montana counties for new jobs in a diversified economy.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Former coal miners are using their skills and expertise in a variety of different industries, including wind and solar energy, information technology, and machinery and robotics, reports the *Environmental Defense Fund Blog*. From the article: “Struggling coal mining towns offer an abundance of highly trained workers, many of whom are eager for new opportunities and stable jobs. **Mine work today requires mechanical and technical skills that are transferable to new industries, a fact that companies inside and outside the energy sector are beginning to discover** in America’s tightening labor market.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *The Daily Yonder* highlights a new report from the U.S. Department of Commerce that describes the tremendous economic impact of the outdoor recreation industry in the United States. From the article: “The outdoor recreation industry is a critical engine for the national economy, larger in size than the agriculture and fossil fuel mining and drilling sectors, according to a recent Department of Commerce report. The report also said that rural communities and small business owners are a key ingredient in the growing economic engine.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- Last week, around 400 people participated in the 2018 Southwest Virginia Economic Forum, where the major **focus was on workforce development and career pathways**, reports the *Bristol Herald Courier*. From the article: “[Secretary of Commerce and Trade Brian Ball said], “You’ve got a brand here, you’ve got cooperative building efforts, you’ve got entrepreneurial approaches, positive business attraction [efforts], and you’re working on retention and development of 21st century workforce competencies. You’re going to need all of them. There is no silver bullet to get you where you want to go.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- Applications are now being accepted for the 2018 Smart Infrastructure Challenge, organized by [Venture Smarter](#). Regional teams are **encouraged to create an innovative smart infrastructure vision and planning framework to compete for grant funding, access to project financing, and support resources to pursue the plan**. Project tracks include: Smart, Connected Development; Smarter, Safer Streets; Smart, Critical Infrastructure; and Next Generation Infrastructure. A letter of intent is due **May 31**. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.
- The [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) recently announced funding availability under the Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs Act (PRIME Act). The program **supports technical assistance and capacity building activities to help entrepreneurs**. Additional consideration will be given to applicants providing training and technical assistance in rural areas and HubZones. Applications are due **June 1**. Click [here](#) for the funding notice.
- The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) [Office of Community Services](#) (OSC) is **accepting applications to the Community Economic Development grant program**. Funding is provided for Community Development Corporations (CDCs) to implement projects improving job creation and business development among low-income populations. Applications are due **June 15**. Click [here](#) for the grant posting.
- The [Rockefeller Foundation](#) and [Chan Zuckerberg Initiative](#) have announced new funding through the [Communities Thrive Challenge](#). The purpose of this challenge is to **fund and help to strengthen and scale community-driven approaches that enable low-income or otherwise financially insecure people find and retain well-paid and meaningful work, achieve financial security, or build economically vibrant neighborhoods**. This might include nonprofit programs; businesses, organizing or advocacy models; technologies; economic development strategies, or other approaches that deliver significant and consistent results in any of the following areas. Register by **June 12** and apply by **June 19**. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- The [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) and [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) recently **opened applications to the Veterans Housing Rehabilitation and Modification Pilot Program**. Funding is available to modify or

rehabilitate eligible veterans' primary residences. Eligible applications include nonprofits which support veterans and low-income individuals. Applications are due **June 25**. Click [here](#) for more details.

- The [Charles A. Frueauff Foundation](#) offers **funding for projects in the areas of education, human services, and health**. Funding is available to support specific initiatives in economic development, health education, and healthcare facilities. Applications are due **July 1**. More information on application guidelines, eligibility, and previously-awarded projects is available [here](#).
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's [Rural Housing Service](#) is accepting applications to the Community Facilities Technical Assistance and Training Program. The program **provides funding towards planning activities for community facility needs**. Project goals should align with priorities outlined in the recent Rural Prosperity Task Force report. Applications are due **July 2**. Click [here](#) for the report; the funding notice is available [here](#).
- The [Amerisource Bergen Foundation](#) has announced the availability of **funding for education, prevention, and safe disposal of opioids**. The deadline to apply is **July 31**. More details are available [here](#).
- The [Delta Institute](#) has released its "Coal Plant Redevelopment Roadmap" **to provide coal-impacted municipalities with information and resources to navigate the transition process**. Throughout the document, community and site specific impacts are addressed in tandem to highlight that site reuse can and should be leveraged to create positive impacts across the community. This roadmap is intended to inform the municipal government's planning and response to closure, recognizing their decision-making authority. The document may also be useful for other representatives of the community, such as environmental or community advocates, economic development organizations, or citizens at large, who will be impacted by the closure and who will have a positive impact on the transition process. Click [here](#) to access the document.
- The [U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development](#) (USDA-RD) has launched **a new website designed to engage the public on issues impacting rural America**. An interactive feature allows comments to be submitted to Rural Development Innovation Center staff to review and consider in further agency actions and objectives. The website also highlights resources available to aid e-connectivity and community health among other issues. The website is available [here](#).

Events and Trainings

- Registration is [open](#) for "Strengthening Economies in Wyoming: A Forum for Coal Reliant Communities" to be held in **Gillette, WY on June 21 and 22** 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 Wyoming and the Western regions. Click [here](#) to register. Contact Jack Morgan at jmorgan@naco.org or Brett Schwartz at bschwartz@nado.org with any questions.

- The recording is now available from a recent NADO Research Foundation webinar that **featured the multiple free data tools and resources available from StatsAmerica to improve community and regional economic development planning**. Click [here](#) to access the recording and presentation slides.
- [Team Better Block](#) has spent the past eight years refining a new approach to transforming neighborhoods from the ground up, one block at a time. Join [CommunityBuilders](#) on **May 30 from 2 – 3 p.m. ET** for a **webinar that will explore the Better Block approach – a 90-day process that focuses on rapidly transforming a block using low-cost materials and volunteer ingenuity and power**. The result is an empowered group of new leaders, a clear demonstration of the community's vision, and an over-night road map to safety, mobility, and quality of place improvements. Communities build powerful connections around the shared experience of "making" a vision for the future together. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- The [U.S. Department of Transportation](#) (DOT) recently issued a [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) **inviting applications for \$1.5 billion in surface transportation grants provided by the fiscal year (FY) 2018 omnibus appropriations act**. The program, Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD), replaces the TIGER discretionary grant program. Selection criteria for the program are largely like those from the FY2017 round of TIGER awards. DOT intends to award 30 percent of BUILD grants to projects located in rural area and to support rural broadband deployment where it is part of an eligible transportation project. A series of webinars for applicants is planned for May:
 - [How to Compete for BUILD Transportation Grants – All Applicants](#), **May 24 from 2 – 4 p.m. ET**
 - [How to Compete for BUILD Transportation Grants – Rural and Tribal Applicants](#), **May 29 from 2 – 4 p.m. ET**
 - [Preparing a Benefit Cost Analysis \(BCA\) for a BUILD Application](#), **May 31 from 2 – 4 p.m. ET**
- During a webinar on **May 31 from 2 to 3 p.m. ET** hosted by [Brownfields Listings](#), **get a national overview of the current brightfield market and a synopsis of state solar policy, including preferences coming to the EPA Brownfields Grant Program as a result of the recently passed BUILD Act**. This brightfield webinar will also introduce new materials walking through the development solar projects through each step of the project development pathway developed jointly by the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), [Department of Energy](#), and the [National Renewable Energy Laboratory](#). Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- On **May 31 at 2 p.m. ET**, the Environmental Finance Center Network as part of the [Smart Management for Small Water Systems](#) project is hosting a free webinar, "Encouraging Customers to Conserve: Pricing and Non-Pricing Approaches." Water systems have a variety of reasons for wanting to encourage conservation, from environmental benefits to limited supply or

treatment capacity. This webinar **will explore pricing and non-pricing strategies that water systems can use to encourage their customers to conserve water**. You will learn how those approaches impact the system's ability to cover the full cost of providing safe drinking water today and into the future. Click [here](#) to register.

- Get a head start on the Brownfields ARC grant application period and understand how the BUILD Act may change the guidelines. Join the [Center for Creative Land Recycling](#) on **June 6 from 2 to 3 p.m. ET** for a webinar to hear what others have learned from their ARC grant applications and receive grant writing advice from expert grant writers from around the country. Click [here](#) to register.
- The [Appalachian Higher Education Network](#) is hosting its 5th annual conference on **June 19 to 21** in Asheville, North Carolina. At the event, **connect with colleagues and to learn about successful strategies to increase postsecondary education attainment in Appalachia**. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

A Dose of Inspiration

- The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* profiles Zack Marella, founder of ZRM Enterprises, a machine and fabrication company in Fayette County, PA. With the **downturn in the coal industry and the loss of some business in that sector, Marella sought to diversify the company and seek additional opportunities**. From the article: "ZRM solicited business from the timbering industry — repairing hydraulic cylinders that are used in loaders and skidders. The company also reached out to contractors to fix heavy-duty equipment and the occasional piece of farm machinery, where reverse engineering was needed to make replacement parts no longer available commercially... ZRM, which specializes in hydraulic cylinder repair, gear cutting and fabrication, is continuing to diversify with help from the Government Agency Coordination Office at California University of Pennsylvania, which aids businesses in landing federal, state, and local government contracts." Click [here](#) to read the article.

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