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A Bi-weekly Update from the National Association of Counties
and the National Association of Development Organizations



Welcome to **“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 [US Economic Development Administration’s Denver Regional Office](#).

It will provide 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 will be 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

- Raton, New Mexico is taking a multi-faceted approach to diversifying its economy after its coal mine shut down four years ago, reports *High Country News*. From the article: "...[T]own officials and business owners are hopeful; they're working toward a slow, stable recovery built by keeping existing businesses healthy and attracting new ones. Their measured approach to recovery holds potential lessons for other small rural towns seeking long-term, stable solutions to job woes. **Town officials want tourists, but they also are banking on attracting mid-sized manufacturing companies, Internet entrepreneurs, and small niche businesses.**" Click [here](#) to read the article.
- With funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission, Harlan, KY is **launching a downtown redevelopment effort to support economic development, grow and attract businesses, and improve quality of life for residents**, reports *WYMT*. The historic Belk building is at the center of the discussions, but the effort is county-wide. From the article: "A series of meetings have been set up to allow community members to come in and share their vision of not only the old Belk building but the county as a whole... "While the meeting...will focus in part on the Belk building, it's with an awareness of the bigger picture," said [Carrie Billett, Belk Project Community Engagement Coordinator]." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Emery County Progress* cover Utah's new loan through [USDA's Telecommunications Program](#), which will **support broadband infrastructure projects in rural parts of the state**. From the article: "In Utah, Beehive Telephone Company, Inc. is receiving a \$16,687,000 loan to make system improvements in 11 of its 12 exchanges, which will allow the company to enhance its offerings, providing significantly faster broadband speeds and allowing for video services and superior voice services. Beehive Telephone Company, Inc. serves some of Utah's most remote communities, providing telecommunications service to high cost areas which may otherwise be unreachable." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The Appalachian Beekeeping Collective in West Virginia is **training local residents, including former coal miners, how to care for bees, their hives, and produce honey**, reports *EcoWatch*. From the article: "The Appalachian Beekeeping Collective plans to process, market, and distribute honey. The ultimate goal is to bring millions of dollars into the region and provide income for hundreds of Appalachians. The new beekeepers will receive hives either for free or at a reduced price, depending on their income." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Clean Coal Technologies, Inc. is building a test plant in northeast Wyoming **to develop a coal refining process that aims to produce more energy and less emissions**, reports the *Denver Post*. From the article: ""It's one thing taking the moisture out of coal, but if you do not consume that de-watered coal pretty quickly, you have spontaneous combustion problems," [Richard Horner of University of Wyoming's School of Energy Resources] said. "What CCTI has done, which

makes it intriguing, is that they've taken volatiles out of the coal together with the water, which improves the BTU value. Then, they're taking those volatiles and spraying it back on the coal, which stabilizes it. That's quite original." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- The *New York Times* provides snapshots of a variety of **economic diversification efforts underway in Montana, Wyoming, and West Virginia, particularly in the solar and wind industries**. From the article: "[F]ortunes have declined as coal has fallen from providing more than half of the nation's electricity in 2000 to about one-third last year. Thousands of workers have lost their jobs and moved on — leaving idled mines, abandoned homes, and shuttered stores downtown. Now, though, new businesses are emerging. They are as varied as the layers of rock that surround a coal seam, but in a twist, a considerable number involve renewable energy. And past jobs in fossil fuels are proving to make for good training." Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) is offering **funding for initiatives expanding access to local foods in schools**. The [Farm to School Program](#) provides grants to plan, establish, or sustain Farm to School programs. Implementation, planning, and training grants are funded at varying levels under this opportunity. Applications are due **December 8**. Further details are available [here](#).
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Rural Utilities Service](#) (RUS) is providing \$10 million to help communities with high energy costs. The [High Energy Cost Rural Communities Grant Program](#) provides **funding for installation of on- and off-grid renewable energy systems and energy efficiencies upgrades**. Applications are due **December 11**. More information is available [here](#).
- Applications are due **December 15** for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants](#). These grants **fund programs that recruit, train, and place local, unemployed, and under-employed residents with the skills needed to secure full-time employment in the environmental field**. EPA encourages applicants to develop their curricula based on local labor market assessments and employers' hiring needs, while also delivering comprehensive training that results in graduates securing multiple certifications. As in past rounds, regional councils and workforce investment boards/workforce development boards are eligible to apply. Click [here](#) to learn more information and to apply.
- The [Surdna Foundation](#) is providing **grants for nonprofits to connect artists with business training and financial resources**. The *Thriving Cultures* program seeks nonprofits which support business development, financial resources, and arts

programs to apply for funding furthering this important area of economic development. Letters of inquiry are accepted throughout the year. Click [here](#) for more information.

- The [President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis](#) has published its **final report on the federal response to addressing opioid addiction**. The report offers key recommendations in fighting opioid abuse including block granting federal funding to states for life-saving programs and establishing educational campaigns to prevent drug use and addiction. The report also cites the importance of technology and telemedicine to support drug treatment in underserved regions. Click [here](#) for the report.
- The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) has released a new guide called the [Local Foods, Local Places Toolkit](#) that is meant **to help communities develop their own plans for setting and achieving local food and revitalization goals**. A facilitator, either from the community or hired from outside, could use this toolkit to help a community articulate its goals, engage stakeholders, and prioritize achievable actions to make progress. Inspired by lessons learned from the [Local Foods, Local Places Program](#), the toolkit provides step-by-step instruction for planning and hosting a community workshop that produces an action plan laying out next steps for implementation. Click [here](#) to learn more and access the guide.
- The [Lincoln Institute of Land Policy](#) and [Policymap](#) recently introduced [The Place Database](#), an **interactive mapping tool which allows users to access and display datasets at various geographic levels**. Information has been provided through a host of sources including the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), [U.S. Census Bureau](#), and [Internal Revenue Service](#). The Place Database, along with other data tools, are available through the Lincoln Institute [here](#).
- From October 2016 – July 2017, the [National Association of Counties](#) and the [NADO Research Foundation](#) partnered with the [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) to continue providing mentoring and technical assistance to eleven multi-disciplinary community teams from across Appalachia as they accelerated their efforts to diversify their traditionally coal-reliant economies. This targeted initiative empowered and assisted county officials, regional development organizations, and their local partners in further developing opportunities for economic diversification, job creation, workforce development, and asset-based economic development. This report **showcases best practices and projects underway in the region to support economic diversification and broader economic development** in Appalachian coal country. Click [here](#) to download the report.

Events and Trainings

- The U.S. Department of Commerce's [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA) is hosting an **upcoming webinar on expanding gigabit communications to rural communities**. "Electric Co-ops Bringing Fiber to

Rural America,” sponsored by NTIA’s [BroadbandUSA](#), will discuss co-ops’ role in expanding broadband access in rural areas. The webinar is scheduled for **November 15 from 2 – 3 p.m. ET**. Click [here](#) to register. A tip sheet is also available listing technical assistance offered by BroadbandUSA. The sheet is available [here](#).

- The [U.S. Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA) is promoting [Regional Economic Diversification Summits](#) (REDS) throughout the country. Instead of a “Washington-knows-best” approach, REDS are designed to respond directly to locally identified economic development strategies and priorities. While each separate event will address unique priorities and objectives, each REDS will be planned to accomplish the following four common objectives: Strengthen Relationships Among Federal, State, Regional, Local Stakeholders; Remove Obstacles and Expand Access to Resources for Economic Diversification; Achieve Optimal Resource Alignment; and Advance Action Plans and Outcome Metrics. **Federal agencies, host organizations, and regional participants will establish a shared commitment to advancing regional economic development priorities.** Click [here](#) for more information. For more information about scheduling a REDS in your community, contact your regional EDA office [here](#).
- The [National Association of Counties](#) and the [NADO Research Foundation](#) hosted a workshop [Strengthening Economies in Utah: A Forum for Coal-Reliant Communities](#) on October 18-20 at the Sevier County Fairgrounds in Richfield, Utah, with the support of the [U.S. Economic Development Administration - Denver Regional Office](#). This educational and interactive forum was designed to **convene and assist counties and regions in Utah that are experiencing economic challenges due to changing conditions of the coal industry.** The meeting brought together stakeholders from the public and private sectors to share best practices, lessons learned, and new opportunities to support economic diversification and other economic development efforts. During the forum, plenary sessions, small group discussions, and a mobile tour covered a variety of topics including entrepreneurship, technology, workforce development, energy, outdoor recreation, and strategic partnerships. Click [here](#) for training materials from the event.
- Registration and hotel accommodations are now open for the [2017 National Brownfields Conference](#), taking place **December 5 – 7, 2017** in Pittsburgh, PA with pre-conference programming on December 4. Join fellow planners, investors, developers, scholars, students, and government leaders to discuss **best practices, share challenges and successes, and stimulate new ideas with the goal of enhancing and expanding brownfields revitalization and economic redevelopment.** Register for the conference and book your hotel stay [here](#).

A Dose of Inspiration

- Norton, Virginia, located in Wise County, was voted the 2017 [Blue Ridge Outdoors Top Adventure Town](#). The community is repositioning itself as a leader in outdoor recreation and tourism following the decline in the area’s coal industry. According

to Norton City Manager Fred Ramey, "Since the downturn in the coal market, one of the things we were left with is the amenities – we had the transportation system in place, we had the hotels, we had the restaurants. That perfectly situated us to the point that we wanted to focus on outdoor recreation." Click [here](#) to watch a video to learn more.



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