

February 28, 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](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

- *Kentucky Today* profiles how Shawn Thatcher **went from laid-off heavy equipment operator to entrepreneur and owner**, along with his wife Crystal, of Thatcher's Downtown, a bakery-coffee shop-barbeque restaurant in Jackson, Kentucky. From the article: "Shawn is a Member of the Breathitt Lodge 649 and they had a small building next to its meeting space. It was previously occupied by a barber shop and beauty shop. The tenants abruptly closed. Shawn waited several months and thought about it before inquiring. The wheels were shortly in motion and Thatcher's Downtown became a reality." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Northwestern Energy has indicated that it **will not obtain the Hardin Generating Facility in Eastern Montana, leading to a possible shuttering within the year**, reports the *Billings Gazette*. From the article: "The owners of the plant announced the potential for closure last fall unless a buyer stepped in to keep things running. The plant, built in 2006, is supplied by the Absaloka Coal Mine on the Crow Reservation...[T]he power plant is still courting other entities, which are right now confidential. But the plant's future is far from secured." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The newly opened **Western Hotel is poised to become an economic driver for St. Paul, a community of less than 1,000 people located in Southwest Virginia's coalfields**, reports the *Bristol Herald Courier*. From the article: "Developers formally opened the doors of the 30-room property inside the three-story, former Willis building in the heart of St. Paul's downtown. The \$7.8 million project was a collaboration between the town, county, and Creative Boutique Hotels, which includes partners MB Contractors, Cornerstone Hospitality, and architect Hal Craddock." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Glenrock, Wyoming is looking into options to **use carbon dioxide from its coal-fired power plant to improve access to oil from nearby fields**, reports the *Casper Star Tribune*. From the article: "[T]here are millions of dollars' worth of oil lying beneath the surface of the Big Muddy oilfield between Glenrock and Casper. You can't get it by traditional means, not by deep wells or shallow, horizontal drilling or fracking. It's trapped in the rocky layers beneath the surface, and the best known way to get to it is to pump in carbon dioxide..." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The University of Pikeville and the agriculture start-up AppHarvest have continued to forge a strong partnership, with plans to begin building a high-tech greenhouse this spring, reports the *Lane Report*. From the article: "AppHarvest is currently operating from an office located in UPIKE's new Health Professions Education Building. The **university is actively exploring the idea of developing curriculum that aligns with the high-tech Ag industry and specifically provides valuable skills desired by AppHarvest's large-scale greenhouse operation.**" Click [here](#) to read the article.

- Carbon County, Utah recently hosted a summit in Price to bring together key partners to address the county's opioid challenges, reports *90.1 KUER*. From the article: "Around 250 social workers, pharmacists, police officers, and recovery advocates gathered in this coal mining town on the Utah State University Eastern campus...Cameron Williams is a former ER doctor in Price. Now he works at the community health center in town. He says **there's been economic pressure on people working in the coal industry for years. Williams has seen miners use opioids to stay at work even if they're injured and in pain.**" Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Leo Raudy writes in *GreenBiz* about the social and economic imperative for private industry to support coal-reliant communities with transition and clean-up efforts. From the article: "Whether it's locating data centers and new facilities in coal country, investing a portion of well over \$2 trillion of potentially repatriated profits in redevelopment projects and job retraining, or direct philanthropy - **there are many opportunities to help these communities in need while also creating business value**...Growth and innovation should be the result of this type of investment, even if the underlying imperative arises from a sense of ethical obligation." Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) (ARC) has issued a [request for proposals](#) (RFP) for the [Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization \(POWER\) Initiative](#) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. POWER is a congressionally funded initiative that targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production. **Priority areas for ARC investments through this initiative include developing a competitive workforce, enhancing access to and use of broadband services, fostering entrepreneurial activities, and developing industry clusters. ARC is making up to \$20 million available through the RFP.** Click [here](#) to learn more.
- The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) has announced up to \$3 million in funding for locally-focused environmental education grants through the 2018 EE Local Grant Program. EPA will award three to four grants in each of EPA's ten Regions, for no less than \$50,000 and no more than \$100,000 each, for a total of 30-35 grants nationwide. In addition to other environmental topics, the 2018 EE Local Grant Program **includes support for projects that reflect the intersection of environmental issues with agricultural best-practices, conservation of natural resources, food waste management, and natural disaster preparedness.** Proposals are due **March 15**. Click [here](#) for more information.
- 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 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

- 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.
- The [Aging and Disability Business Institute](#) is hosting an **upcoming webinar on business development for Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).** Relevant strategies for improving AAAs will be discussed including strengthening community partnerships, developing various revenue, and marketing techniques. The webinar will be held on **February 28 at 1:00 p.m. ET.** Click [here](#) to register.
- On **March 7**, the [Aspen Institute](#) will livestream **a panel discussion that will highlight three programs – from Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, and the Tribal West – that are successfully moving Rural Opportunity Youth into career training, higher education, and employment in multiple sectors.** Opportunity Youth are defined as 16-24-year-olds who are not in school, not working, and disconnected from the people, networks, and employment they need to prosper. Hear how rural communities are innovating to make these young people realize their potential, advance their livelihoods, and contribute to their communities and the nation’s future. Click [here](#) to register for the webcast.

- As part of the [Smart Management for Small Water Systems Program](#), the [Environmental Finance Center Network](#) is hosting the webinar “Demystifying Electric Bills: Common Energy Bill Elements and Making Sense of Rate Structures” on **March 8**. This webinar will discuss how **energy costs can represent the largest controllable cost of providing water services and how understanding its energy bill is important** for every water utility. Click [here](#) to register.
- 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

- **The 2018 Winter Olympic Games were held in a coal region of South Korea which drew comparisons to the coalfields of Appalachia, having some ask: “If South Korea could do it...why couldn’t Kentucky?”** From the *Associated Press* article: “The Pyeongchang Winter Games are spread across South Korea's Gangwon Province, a rural region that few overseas had heard of until its hard-fought bid to be an Olympic host - a massively expensive proposition with dubious payoff, now typically dared only by world-class cities and established resort towns. Its organizers touted it as an opportunity to invest in much-needed infrastructure and transportation upgrades - and with it, restore a sense of pride and purpose. But will it work? And would it work in its American equivalent, the coalfields of Appalachia?” Click [here](#) to read the article.

////////////////////////////////////

*This newsletter is made possible with the support of an [US Economic Development Administration – Denver Regional Office](#) POWER grant to the [National Association of Counties](#) and the [National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation](#). The views and opinions expressed by other organizations or outside publications referenced in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of NACo, NADO, or EDA.*