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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 of “**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](#). This 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 Lightworks Fiber company is creating new jobs and training opportunities for displaced coal workers in Delta County, CO**, reports *NPR*. From the article: "When Teresa Neal and her husband heard about the mass layoffs, they saw an opportunity. Their then fledgling company, Lightworks, began bidding — and winning — contracts offered by the local electric utility that was looking to expand broadband to thousands of homes and businesses. Coal was going away and broadband was key... So, one weekend, the Neals took their barn and literally transformed it into a makeshift training facility for former coal miners. They started teaching them about fiber, Neal says — how it worked and, more importantly, how to splice it. They've retrained and hired more than 80 miners so far." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The nonprofit **Grow Appalachia is providing fresh, healthy food to local residents, supporting economic development, and promoting leadership development in the region**, reports the *Richmond Register*. From the article: "Partnering with local nonprofits throughout central Appalachia, Grow Appalachia leverages garden grants to empower community members with the information, infrastructure, and initial investment they need to grow as much of their own food as possible. Since 2010, more than 6,000 families in six states have grown more than four million pounds of food, mostly in their own backyards. More than 500 classes have been taught through Grow Appalachia programs, teaching gardening and preserving techniques." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- At the recent National Association of Counties / NADO Research Foundation event "Strengthening Economies in Wyoming: A Forum for Coal-Reliant Communities," **Wyoming Governor Matt Mead spoke about the importance of diversifying the state's economy and pursuing new opportunities for economic development**, reports the *Gillette News Record*. From the article: "'I will not accept we don't control our own fate," he said. "I don't accept that the whole future of Wyoming is based upon what coal prices are or what oil prices are. If we're the Cowboy State, if we're this independent state, if we're the Equality State, certainly we should have the courage to say we're going to make a better future for ourselves and our young people.'" Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **The Appalachian Regional Commission has announced the recipients of its most recent round of POWER funding which will provide \$26.5 million to 35 projects across nine states**. From the press release: "These 35 awards are projected to create or retain over 5,400 jobs and leverage more than \$193 million in private investment into 59 of the Region's coal-impacted counties by supporting workforce training and education in manufacturing, technology, healthcare, and other industry sectors. They also invest in infrastructure enhancements to continue developing the Region's tourism, entrepreneurial, and agriculture sectors, as well as increase access to community-based capital, including impact-investing funds, venture capital, and angel investment streams." Click [here](#) to read the press release.

- An analysis of Utah county strategic economic development plans by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute **shows common themes and opportunities across the state's rural regions**, reports *UtahPolicy.com*. From the article: "Overall self-identified goals revolved around broader themes and ideas and included expanding existing industries, diversifying the local economy, investing in infrastructure, [and] expanding education programs that will develop a strong workforce and further increase tourism." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), an Eastern Kentucky non-partisan economic development agency, **will expand its staff and open new offices in eight communities to support its mission of strengthening and diversifying the region's economy**, reports the *Lexington Herald-Leader*. From the article: "The offices will be staffed with officials who can offer support to local business owners and entrepreneurs. Part of SOAR's mission is to support start-up businesses and connect them with other entrepreneurs in the region." Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

- The [Treasury Department](#) and the [Internal Revenue Service](#) **have issued proposed regulations and other published guidance for the new Opportunity Zone tax incentive**. Opportunity Zones, created by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, were designed to spur investment in distressed communities throughout the country through tax benefits. Under a nomination process completed in June, 8,761 communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories were designated as qualified Opportunity Zones. Opportunity Zones retain their designation for 10 years. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- The [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) has released the **funding matrix and dashboard reports from the Office of Community Planning and Development**. These reports cover the funding information for all cities and states that receive funds from Community Development Block Grants, Continuum of Care, Emergency Solutions Grants, HOME, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS, and Housing Trust Fund. These reports can be found [here](#).
- [America Walks](#), partners of the Every Body Walk! Collaborative, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Juliet Ashby Hillman Foundation, Lyft, WalkBoston, and other generous sponsors, have announced another round of the Community Change Grant program. This **program will award grantees \$1,500 in community stipends for projects related to creating healthy, active, and engaged places to live, work, and play**. Projects should be able to demonstrate how they will create healthy, active, and engaged communities that support walking as transportation, health, and recreation. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply by **November 2**.
- The [Appalachia Funders Network](#) and the [Central Appalachian Network \(CAN\)](#) have identified healthy food access as a critical priority for the region's communities and economy. Over the past two years, these organizations have worked together to

conduct and publish six case studies of projects at the intersection of local food systems, food security, and health.

Several members of the Appalachia Funders Network helped fund the work to document and highlight lessons from innovative projects around the region, while CAN conducted research and interviews and compiled the case studies. Click [here](#) to learn more.

- [Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Appalachia](#) is a collection of entrepreneurship research, case studies, and data from [EntreWorks Consulting](#), the [Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness](#), and the [Center for Rural Entrepreneurship](#) on behalf of the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#). The goal of the project is to **document entrepreneurship metrics and strengthen Appalachian communities' understanding of the entrepreneurial environment not only locally, but across the larger region**. It includes an [entrepreneurship dashboard](#), [resources inventory](#), and [reports and case studies](#). Click [here](#) to learn more and access these materials.

Events and Trainings

- [NTIA's Broadband USA](#) and the [Center for Innovative Technology](#) are hosting the Virginia Broadband Summit on **October 30** in Roanoke, VA. This **summit will provide information to help accelerate broadband connectivity, improve digital inclusion, and support local priorities**. Topics include local broadband planning, funding, and engagement with service providers. Speakers and attendees from Virginia, federal agencies, and across the country will come together to explore ways to facilitate the expansion of broadband capacity, access, and utilization. The agenda is now available [online](#). The summit is free and open to the public. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- On **October 31 at 2 p.m. ET**, [Community Builders](#) will host a webinar that will **explore the role of coworking spaces as an important tool for community and economic development**. Featuring speakers from both the economic development and coworking fields, the presenters will discuss the measurable impacts of coworking spaces (especially in small cities across the American West), as well as tips and lessons learned from the field. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- On **November 8** the [Mountain Women Mean Business](#) event in **Harlan, KY** will **highlight women-led businesses that are leading the charge for an economic transition and diversified economy**. The goal of the event is to support, uplift, and empower women across the region in all of their endeavors with sessions that will focus on forming a business, finance, managing technology, growing revenue streams, and much more. Click [here](#) to register and learn more.
- On **November 8 and 9**, the [Jackson Hole Global Forum](#) will **bring together diverse experts to discuss and compare the current challenges and potential opportunities for U.S. coal communities and similar regions around the world** to generate climate solutions and new models of economic growth. "[Climate Solutions, Coal Communities, and Economic Diversification](#)" will focus on the particular challenges faced by carbon-intensive areas. It will help provide the global context,

new ideas, new partnerships, and new recommendations for communities, businesses, policymakers, and concerned citizens in Wyoming and beyond. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.

- The [Environmental Finance Center Network](#) is hosting a variety **of free webinars for small water systems** in October and November. Click the links to learn more and to register: [Working Together to Protect Your Drinking Water Source \(October 25\)](#) and [Risk and Resilience: Addressing Vulnerability for Coastal Communities \(November 2\)](#).
- [AARP](#)'s 2018 Livable Communities National Conference is scheduled for **November 12 – 14 in Charlotte, NC**. Join hundreds of elected officials, planning professionals, local leaders, and community advocates from throughout the nation to **learn from livability experts, connect with peers who are driving community change, and visit innovative projects and programs in and around Charlotte**. This conference is for anyone who is committed to making their state, county, city, town, or neighborhood a great place for people of all ages during all life's stages. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- The [National Summit for Gateway Communities](#) will celebrate the role of gateway communities in the stewardship of America's public lands and identify opportunities to help them thrive. It will bring together **gateway communities, their partners, and experts from conservation, community and economic development, recreation and tourism, planning, and other creative fields to highlight success stories and lessons learned** while engaging in robust discussions that lead to specific actions for invigorating the future of gateway and rural communities. The summit will take place on **December 11-13, 2018**, at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.

A Dose of Inspiration

- The **small city of Benham, KY, population 500 and home to the Kentucky Coal Mining Museum, is investing in solar energy infrastructure to reduce energy costs for the municipality and local residents**, reports the *Energy News Network*. From the article: "Members of the Benham Power Board, overseeing one of the country's tiniest municipal utilities, plugged into solar to cut \$15,000 a year from the city's collective power bill. Solar savings will provide financial relief to the city's biggest electricity customers — the museum, the Benham Schoolhouse Inn, and the water and sewer plants — instead of being spread among all residents and their 280 or so meters." Click [here](#) to read the article.



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