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# GROWING **STRONGER ECONOMIES** IN OUR NATION'S COAL COMMUNITIES

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](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

- **The small city of Becker, MN is planning for a future without the Sherburne County Generating Station (Sherco), the largest coal-fired power plant in the Upper Midwest**, reports *MPR News*. From the article: "The news earlier this month that Google is looking to build a \$600 million data center next to Sherco created quite a buzz among the city's roughly 5,000 residents...For city officials, the move would fit with Becker's efforts to reinvent itself for a future without coal. And it makes perfect sense, [City Administrator Greg Pruszinske] said: The city has available land, electricity, nearby highways and rail lines, and a ready workforce...Even if the Google center doesn't happen, Becker has other projects in the works. Xcel plans to build a natural gas plant to replace the Sherco coal units it's retiring. That's projected to create about 150 jobs. And Northern Metal Recycling is building a new plant next to Sherco this year, moving its scrap metal recycling operations from Minneapolis." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *WV News* reports on the **challenges facing Southern West Virginia in its quest to diversify, as well as some new ideas that might support economic growth**. From the article: "As for solutions, [Steve Roberts, president of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce]...suggested that instead of trying to develop every hard-hit community, resources should be prioritized first in what he called "centers of excellence." These would be communities that have infrastructure, amenities, business operations, and educational centers such as the WVU Institute of Technology in Beckley. He said if these places can be built up, then there might be a better chance to aid more rural communities down the road. "Beckley can be a center of prosperity," Roberts said, noting that Lewisburg, Bluefield, and Princeton could also fit the bill. Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **Three locations in Wyoming are being considered for the future home of an experimental coal plant**, reports *U.S. News and World Report*. From the article: "The *Gillette News Record* reports that [Governor Mark] Gordon told the Wyoming Press Association Convention Friday that the Integrated Test Center near Gillette is one possibility. The other potential sites include the Dave Johnson Power Plant in Converse County and the Jim Bridger Plant in Sweetwater County. Gordon has asked state lawmakers for \$10 million to build a 5-megawatt plant that would be capable of capturing at least 75 percent of its carbon emissions." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Christian Science Monitor* reports on a **global conversation taking place about how best to create opportunities for displaced coal workers as communities attempt to diversify in response to changes in the coal industry**. From the article: "[T]he biggest key to shifting opinions may be economic. "All these towns that were part of the old economy could have the opportunity to become a part of the new economy," says [Pittsburgh Mayor Bill] Peduto. "There's a saying that I've used in past campaigns: If you want to take a gun out of a kid's hand, put a paycheck in it. And if you want to turn a mineworker into an environmentalist, put a paycheck in their hand."" Click [here](#) to read the article.

- **A new form of hemp grain has been created in Kentucky that could establish the state as the epicenter of hemp development and production**, creating new economic development opportunities for farmers, processors, and more, reports *WUKY*. From the article: "They're calling it the "Holy Grail" of hemp: a genetic variant with 0.0% THC. Why is that number important? Because under the new federal guidelines for hemp, growers must keep THC content under a .3 percent regulatory ceiling, or risk noncompliance... Hemp production was recently legalized under the 2018 federal Farm Bill, and Kentucky officials sense an opportunity to market the state as the "Silicon Valley of hemp."" Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- The [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) will begin **accepting applications for the 2019 round of the Partnership for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative on February 1, 2019**. The 2019 Request for Proposals (RFP) is available [here](#). Completed applications are due no later than **April 10, 2019 at 5 p.m. ET**. Approximately \$45 million will be awarded through this competitive grant process. In FY 2019, ARC's POWER Initiative will continue focusing on regional investments that maximize economic revitalization in the Appalachian region's coal-impacted communities. Before submitting a funding proposal, potential applicants must contact the appropriate ARC [state program manager](#) for specific guidance pertaining to the eligible use of POWER funds in their state. ARC has awarded \$120 million to date through the POWER Initiative in order to help coal-impacted communities in [309 Appalachian counties](#) diversify and grow their economies. POWER project summaries detailing past awardees' action plans are available [here](#). With questions about the POWER Initiative, email [power@arc.gov](mailto:power@arc.gov).
- The Environmental Protection Agency has **released application guidance for Fiscal Year 2019 brownfields grant funding**. Funding guidelines are available [here](#). Last year, the EPA awarded \$54.3 million for brownfields assessment and cleanup of a total of 144 communities across the county. For FY 2019, a total of \$50 million is expected to be awarded to more than 100 recipients. Participants can access the webinar [here](#). The deadline to submit proposals is **January 31, 2019**.
- The [Clif Bar Family Foundation](#) is **accepting applications for its small grants program** through **February 1**. Funding priorities are to: protect Earth's beauty and bounty; create a robust, healthy food system; increase opportunities for outdoor activity; reduce environmental health hazards; and build stronger communities. These grants are awarded for general organizational support as well as funding for specific projects. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply.
- [EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants \(EJSG\) Program](#) provides **funding directly to community-based organizations for projects that help residents of underserved communities understand and address local environmental and public health issues**. Projects should engage, educate, and empower communities to better understand local environmental and

public health issues and develop strategies for addressing those issues, building consensus in the community, and setting community priorities. Applications are due **February 15, 2019**. Click [here](#) for more information.

- The [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) has **launched a new special initiative, Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries (APP)**, and is accepting grant applications now through **February 25, 2019**. This funding opportunity is designed to strengthen the ability of small and rural libraries, archives, and related organizations to serve their communities. award sizes range from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply.
- Every year, [Community Builders](#) **offers a limited number of community assistance opportunities in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Colorado**. This is an opportunity for local leaders to acquire necessary tools and information to build prosperous, livable communities. A competitive process is used to identify projects with a high likelihood of success. Projects should address a compelling need or opportunity, have clear and realistic goals, demonstrate buy-in and support of key partners and leadership, while offering a strong prospect for implementation. Apply by **March 1**. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- The [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Office of Rural Development](#) has announced the [ReConnect program](#) which will **offer up to \$600 million nationwide in loans and grants to help build broadband infrastructure in rural America through a new pilot program**. The loans and grants will consist of \$200 million in grants, \$200 million in low-interest loans, and \$200 million in loan and grant combinations. Projects funded through this initiative must serve communities with fewer than 20,000 people that have no broadband service or where existing service is slower than 10 megabits per second (mbps) download and 1 mbps upload. To qualify, projects must increase access speeds to at least 25 mbps upload and 3 mbps download. Priority will be given to projects that propose to deliver higher-capacity connections to rural homes, businesses, and farms. The start of the application window will be announced in February 2019. Applications **must be received by April 29, 2019, for grant funding, by May 29, 2019, for combined loan and grant funding, and by June 28, 2019, for loan funding**. The USDA will host a series of webinars and in-person workshops to share information and answer questions about the program. The full list of public events will be made available soon on the [ReConnect Program resource portal](#).
- The [Northern Arizona Council of Governments \(NACOG\) Economic Development District](#) is made up of four counties in Northern Arizona – Apache, Coconino, Navajo and Yavapai. Three of the four counties (Apache, Coconino and Navajo) are impacted by the downturn of the coal industry. Several coal-driven industries are facing imminent closure in 2019, resulting in the loss of an estimated 2,000 jobs and multi-million dollar economic impacts for the District and State. Led by NACOG Economic Development Council and workforce leaders with the assistance from Arizona’s Office of Economic Opportunities, the Northern Arizona Regional Alliance Coalition has developed a [white paper describing the economic impact of the coal industry closure and opportunities for workforce development, training, and broader economic diversification](#). Click

[here](#) to download the white paper, "Northern Arizona Coal Communities Workforce Initiatives."

- The [Western Governors' Association \(WGA\)](#) is seeking input from stakeholders in the West. WGA represents the governors of 19 Western states and 3 U.S.-flag islands. *Reimagining the Rural West* is the central policy initiative of incoming WGA Chair, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum. ***Reimagining the Rural West will explore how governors can support vibrant and enduring rural communities by enhancing economic development, infrastructure, and quality of life.*** The initiative will identify common challenges and opportunities, highlight best practices and success stories, and provide a forum for the development of bipartisan policy solutions. WGA is seeking responses to a [survey](#) to help scope the initiative before the June 2019 kickoff. Anyone with experience and expertise in rural community and economic development in the West is encouraged to submit responses. Click [here](#) to download the survey. Please submit any surveys you complete or receive to Lauren DeNinno at [ldeninno@westgov.org](mailto:ldeninno@westgov.org).
- [AARP](#) has released an "Economic Development Workbook," the [sixth book](#) in the AARP Roadmap to Livability Collection. By introducing the economic benefits of making a community more livable, **this publication illustrates how livability principles contribute to and enhance a community's economic performance.** The information in the workbook is not meant to replace a community's existing economic development strategies. Instead, the facts and examples provided can help people who are working on livability projects to be effective communicators about how an investment in livability can benefit the community and support complementary initiatives. It includes an assessment exercise that will help a team create a more vibrant, desirable, and competitive environment for residential and commercial investments. Click [here](#) to access the workbook.
- [RHIHub](#) has created the [Rural Philanthropy Toolkit](#) that **compiles emerging practices and resources to support rural communities seeking to build relationships with philanthropies across the United States.** The toolkit presents practical strategies that can help rural communities build successful partnerships with philanthropies. In particular, it focuses on: preparing for partnerships with philanthropies; conducting outreach to philanthropies; and establishing and sustaining partnerships with philanthropies. Click [here](#) to access the toolkit.
- [Brookings](#) has released a new [report](#), "Automation and Artificial Intelligence: How Machines Are Affecting People and Places." Intended to bring often-inscrutable trends down to earth, **the report develops both backward and forward-looking analyses of the impacts of automation over the years 1980 to 2016 and 2016 to 2030 to assess past and upcoming trends as they affect both people and communities in the United States.** The report focuses on areas of potential occupational change rather than net employment losses or gains. Special attention is applied to digging beneath national top-line statistics to explore industry, geographical, and demographic variations. Finally, the report concludes by suggesting a comprehensive response framework for national and state-local policymakers. Click [here](#) to read the report.

- The [Center for Growth and Opportunity at Utah State University](#) has published a new [policy paper](#), “Cooperative Conservation: Determinants of Landowner Engagement in Saving Endangered Species.” **It analyzes surveys of private landowners to better understand factors that deter them from engaging in conservation efforts and to identify policy changes that could increase engagement.** The authors find that landowners want to be involved in conservation and to be known as good stewards of their land. The current approach to conserving endangered species, however, often discourages landowners from getting involved in conservation. The results also suggest that landowners are more motivated to help endangered species when conservation efforts are less punitive, more cooperative, and led by non-regulatory local agencies. Click [here](#) to read the paper.

## Events and Trainings

- Save the date for NACo and NADO RF’s [“Strengthening Economies in the West: Coal-Reliant Communities Challenge,”](#) scheduled for **May 1-3 in Denver, CO**. This **hands-on, interactive forum will bring together local/regional teams from Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Montana** to learn more about economic diversification planning and strategies, build out a diversification road-map, network with peers from across the four-state region, and engage with staff from a mix of federal agencies focused on diversification and economic resilience. The team application will be made available shortly. Click [here](#) for more information. Questions? Contact Jack Morgan at [jmorgan@naco.org](mailto:jmorgan@naco.org).
- **The Central Appalachian Brownfields Innovation Network (CABIN) is partnering with the Tennessee Environmental Conference (TNEC) for two and a half days of brownfield and environmental learning and networking opportunities on March 18-20 in Kingsport, TN.** The Central Appalachian Regional Brownfield Summit educates stakeholders from across the region on complex redevelopment issues; provides the opportunity for communities to network with peers, agency representatives, development professionals, and environmental experts in person; and highlights success stories from across the region. The TNEC conference, now in its 18th year, will feature more than 40 presenters addressing the latest trends, practices, and policies aimed at preserving resources, balancing growth, improving human health and protecting the environment – and a special track all about brownfields. Click [here](#) for additional information and to register.
- [Brightfields 2019 – Virginia](#) is an **interactive solar marketplace event that will bring together solar developers, property owners, policy makers, and professionals** for educational sessions, active networking, and live market-making in a 'Solar Market Mixer'. The event is designed for (1) landowners, property managers and communities interested in the development of solar energy on their land (rather than rooftops), (2) solar developers seeking land for purchase or lease, (3) public and private sector professionals working in the solar space, (4) anyone motivated towards developing greenfields, greyfields, brownfields, landfills and Superfund sites into solar power generating assets, or (5) anyone seeking to learn more about the application of solar power production onto the land. It will be held **April 9 and 10 in Richmond, VA**. Click [here](#) for more



information and to register.

- [LISC](#) has announced a **six-part webinar series called “How to Do Creative Placemaking”** that will run **through April**. Creative placemaking—the practice of integrating arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities—has become a widespread practice in communities of all shapes and sizes to advance local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. Webinars will cover topics such as building partnerships, community engagement, measuring impact, communicating success, hiring & contracting artists, and more. Click [here](#) to learn more and register.
- The **National Regional Transportation Conference will be held from June 17-19, 2019 in Columbus, Ohio**. The event provides peer-to-peer learning opportunities for regional transportation planners, state Department of Transportation representatives, and local and private sector partners working with multiple transportation modes. The conference also provides training and networking opportunities and covers a variety of rural and small metropolitan transportation topics. With hands-on workshops, best practice panels, and facilitated networking sessions that feature peer trainers and expert speakers, the conference will offer training for organizations and individuals just beginning to work in transportation, as well as those with more experience. Stay tuned for a call for presentation abstracts and additional information on registration. Visit the [conference website](#) for updates.

## A Dose of Inspiration

- **The [Appalachian Beekeeping Collective](#) in West Virginia is training out-of-work coal miners in beekeeping as a way to make supplemental income**, reports *WAMU*. From the article: “To date, the nonprofit, based in the small town of Hinton, has trained 35 beekeepers (with an estimated 50 more signed up for classes that begin in a few weeks) and operates in 17 counties throughout the state. Those who complete the free Introduction to Beekeeping classes receive equipment and bees free or at a reduced cost and have access to ongoing training and mentorship. Partners maintain between two and 20 hives...At an average retail price of \$7.32 per pound in 2018, beekeepers could earn an estimated \$732 in supplemental income per hive per season. With multiple hives, that can add up quickly: Twenty hives could mean nearly \$15,000 per season. There are also opportunities to produce candles, lip balm, and other wax products with additional training offered through the organization.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

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