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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 RF 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

- *Huffington Post* reports on how **Northern Arizona counties and tribal communities are preparing for the impending closure of the Navajo Generating Station at the end of the year** which will lead to the loss of hundreds of jobs at both the plant and a mine. From the article: “With a depleted workforce and few prospects to fill the economic void, the region needs to quickly find some way to make up for the losses. In Coconino County, which contains Page and LeChee, officials estimate the region as a whole would lose nearly \$7 million a year in taxes associated with the plant, said Lena Fowler, a county supervisor who grew up on the Navajo reservation. She is pushing the northern Arizona region to train workers for a post-coal future...Its spectacular landscapes — beguiling slot canyons, mesas and Lake Powell — attract busloads and boatloads of tourists in the summer, but winter months are spare. County leaders are looking to extend the tourist season, such as asking the federal government to keep the nearby Grand Canyon open longer in the winter.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **The Building Opportunities Beyond Coal Accelerating Transitions (BOBCAT) Network will address the challenges facing southwest Ohio following the decommissioning of two coal-fired power plants last summer**, reports the *Ledger Independent*. From the article: “The proposal’s end goal is to it assist communities in the OVRDC [Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission] region through entrepreneurial growth, workforce development, cluster expansion, opportunity zone enhancement, and identification of infrastructure investment needs. Adams County Commissioner, Ty Pell said he thinks the funding proposal will help to expedite local economic development. “It will give us some out-of-the-box thinking when it comes to pursuing funds,” Pell said. “It will also help us see what industries will work best in our area, and it will provide feedback on who’s hiring and what skills sets they require – which we can address in the new job training center we’re currently developing here in the county.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *Bloomberg* provides an overview of **efforts underway in many Western coal-reliant regions that are diversifying their economies through outdoor recreation and tourism**. From the article: “[S]hifts from extraction to recreation are occurring all over the Interior West, as communities once dependent on mineral production seek to diversify. Energy towns from Colorado to Montana are putting public lands to new uses—and cashing in on a recreation boom that added \$412 billion to the national GDP in 2016, up 15 percent from four years earlier. Skiing, hiking, and other outdoor pursuits now comprise an industry that contributes more to the national GDP than mining, oil, and gas. From fly-fishing guides and resort stays to boot manufacturing and mountain bike sales, the sector grew faster than the U.S. economy in 2016, the latest year data is available, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *Governing* describes how **Kentucky’s Tri-Cities (Cumberland, Benham, and Lynch) are investing in tourism, outdoor recreation, the arts, and more to diversify the region’s economy**. From the article: “The Tri-Cities are counting on their natural beauty, history, and culture to reinvent themselves as tourist destinations. But with a small and declining

population, a remote location and limited funding, it won't be easy. "Coal mining built this community, and this community is totally worth saving," said Cumberland Mayor Charles Raleigh. "Now we have to find a way to stay without them." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- *NPR* reports on the **NRG COSIA Carbon XPRIZE, an international competition that has brought finalists to Gillette, WY to showcase their research on innovative carbon technologies at the Dry Fork Station**. From the article: "The site will soon be full of mini industrial plants used to transform carbon dioxide into valuable commercial products...High purity carbon monoxide could be used for, say, greener fuel alternatives. Other finalists are using CO₂ to create cement, plastics, and adhesives. During the competition, each finalist will work to scale up their technology and demonstrate its potential." Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- The Economic Development Administration (EDA) is now accepting applications for the [2019 Regional Innovation Strategies \(RIS\) Program](#). The [RIS Program](#) offers funding through two competitions:
 - **FY19 i6 Challenge**—catalyzing high-growth entrepreneurship throughout the country, the i6 Challenge awards up to \$750,000 for projects that increase regional capacity to accelerate the translation of innovations, ideas, intellectual property, and research into products, services, companies, and jobs.
 - **FY19 Seed Fund Support (SFS) Grant Competition**—unlocking risk capital for entrepreneurs and startups to grow, SFS grants provide up to \$300,000 for projects that create, launch, or expand equity-based seed funds or that create networks and tools that enable capital to flow into high-growth startups in all parts of the U.S.For information on eligibility and how to apply visit EDA's [Regional Innovation Strategies webpage](#) for details on upcoming RIS webinars, frequently asked questions, previous awardees, and to read the official [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) in its entirety. All applications to the 2019 RIS Program competitions must be submitted no later than **April 4**.
- The [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) is now **accepting applications for the 2019 round of the Partnership for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative**. The 2019 Request for Proposals (RFP) is available [here](#). Completed applications are due no later than **April 10 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. 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.

- The [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Rural Development](#) is **accepting applications for grants to establish broadband infrastructure in unserved rural communities**. The [Community Connect Program](#) helps rural communities extend access where broadband service is least likely to be commercially available, but where it can make a tremendous difference in the quality of life for people and businesses. State and local governments, federally-recognized tribes, nonprofits, and for-profit corporations are eligible to apply. Awardees must also use their USDA funding to offer free broadband service to all critical community facilities and a community center in their proposed service area for two years. The minimum grant amount is \$100,000; the maximum amount is \$3 million. Applicants must be able to provide a 15 percent match on the desired grant amount. The deadline to apply is **April 15**. For additional information about the current application window, see the [Funding Opportunity Announcement](#). Applicants are also encouraged to review the [Community Connect Grant Program Application Guide for Fiscal Year 2019](#) for details on how to complete a successful application.
- [AARP](#) is now accepting applications for its [Community Challenge](#) grant program. In 2019, the **grant program will provide funds for community-based “quick-action” projects related to housing, transportation, smart cities and public spaces**. The goal is to spark change and build momentum to improve livability for people of all ages. Applications are due by **April 17** and projects must be completed by November 4. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.
- The [Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky \(CEDIK\) at the University of Kentucky](#) is **administering scholarships where funding has been provided by the New York Community Trust to Appalachian students seeking education in health or a health-related field**. Because of the shortage of health care providers in the Appalachian region, along with the expected retirement of many physicians and an aging population that demands more health care, the need to educate and then retain young health care professionals is a real priority. Scholarships are allocated for full-time students with a maximum award of \$2,500 per semester. Part-time students are eligible to apply for partial scholarships. Students must be from an ARC defined Appalachian county to be eligible. The 2019-2020 academic year scholarship application period is now open. The application packet must be postmarked by **April 22**. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.
- The [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Rural Development](#) is **accepting applications for grants to use broadband technology to improve access to healthcare and educational services in rural communities**. Rural Development will award grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000 through its [Distance Learning and Telemedicine \(DLT\) Grant Program](#). The grants can be used to finance telecommunication equipment, computer networks, and advanced technologies to support job training, academic instruction, or access to specialized medical care in rural areas. The application deadline is **May 15, 2019**. For more details and to apply, click [here](#).
- [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.

- “Strengthening Economic Resilience in Appalachia: A Guidebook for Practitioners” is a new publication prepared for the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#). It contains **case studies from counties in the Appalachian region and across the country that offer insight into how communities have rebounded from the Recession and other economic disruptions** in mining, manufacturing, hospitality, education, transportation, or similar industries. Click [here](#) to access the guidebook.
- [Headwaters Economics](#) has compiled **new research that demonstrates Recreation counties, especially in non-metro places, draw new residents and have higher incomes and faster earnings growth than places without recreation.** Recreation appears to drive varied economic benefits, including short-term support for tourism-related businesses and longer-term support by recruiting new residents who may be business owners, entrepreneurs, or workers. Click [here](#) to view the findings.
- 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.

Events and Trainings

- **Slides are now available from NACo and NADO RF’s presentation at the Colorado Plateau Economic Development Symposium held last week in Page, AZ.** This convening brought together over one hundred attendees from Arizona, Utah, the Navajo Nation, and elsewhere to address the challenges facing the region with the impending closure of the Navajo Generating Station later this year. The presentation covered economic resilience planning and diversification strategies as well as provided case studies of successful diversification efforts in coal regions across the country. Click [here](#) to view the presentation.
- **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.

- Join the [Environmental Finance Center Network](#) on **March 27 at 2 p.m. ET** for the **webinar “Ask the Expert: Developing the Water Workforce.”** This one-hour webinar will include a brief overview of several of the major components of workforce planning and will focus the remaining time on a facilitated discussion of participant questions with two subject matter experts. Click [here](#) for more 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.

- The first ever [National CEDS Forum](#) is scheduled for **June 18-20, 2019 in Columbus, Ohio**. This **event will bring together staff from Economic Development Districts, regional organizations, tribes, and federal agencies for a mix of training sessions, tours, and networking opportunities**. Participants will learn about the latest best practices and resources available to support their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) planning, development, and implementation. Session topics will focus on: economic resilience and diversification; accessing and interpreting data; aligning the CEDS with other plans; outreach and engagement; federal funding opportunities; and more. The forum will be co-located with the [National Regional Transportation Conference](#) and will include a handful of joint sessions and tours. For more information or to register for this event go [here](#). Registration ends **May 15, 2019**. If you have any questions please contact Brett Schwartz at bschwartz@nado.org.
- **Save the date for “Appalachia Strong,”** an Appalachian Regional Commission Summit hosted by the State of North Carolina, scheduled for **September 4-6, 2019 in Asheville, NC**. More details will be available soon at www.arc.gov.

A Dose of Inspiration

- Researchers at Ohio State University are **exploring how a form of gypsum created through the desulfurization process at fossil fuel power plants can be used for agricultural purposes such as fertilizing plants**, reports *Modern Farmer*. From the article: “That method can produce what’s commonly known as FGD gypsum: basically, synthetic gypsum, almost identical to the stuff that’s dug up in mines. The new research from Ohio State studied the ways FGD gypsum can be used in agriculture and found that it could be very valuable. “The gypsum that is recovered has good quality,” says Warren Dick, the lead author of the study, in the study’s press release. “The gypsum particles are small and uniform in size making them quite reactive. This can be a real benefit in agriculture. We also determined that it is safe for agricultural use through many studies. Reusing it for agricultural purposes, instead of putting it in landfills, provides multiple wins.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.



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