

March 27, 2019



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

- Eastern Kentucky University has received a POWER grant from the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) to **support an aviation maintenance technician training program**, reports the *Times-Tribune*. From the article: “The 18-month program, slated to begin training students in January 2020, will be partially taught in traditional classrooms on the partnering college campuses... Each college and university program location was strategically chosen for its proximity to a partnering regional airport. Once trainees fulfill basic coursework requirements inside the traditional classroom setting, the training will move to the regional airports for hands-on work training.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Billings Gazette* shares **highlights of a recent report about the future of the Powder River Basin coal industry and the challenges it faces with shifts in the energy sector**. From the article: “Cheap natural gas, rising renewables, and federal regulations are commonly cited as reasons for coal’s current troubles. Less attention is paid to the technological disruptions that the report identifies as continuing the downward trend for PRB coal. They include a report that grid management is changing rapidly and so more renewables like wind and solar are being incorporated than was thought possible in the past. Battery storage advancement is also noted as a significant contributing factor in the changing picture for U.S. coal... Travis Deti, executive director of the Wyoming Mining Association, said studies like these are sometimes overly dramatic, but that the basic assumption that coal faces challenges is true. “I do think it’s fair to say there is a long-term concern in the coal industry,” he said. “No one is surprised at that. Everyone is very realistic about it.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- A post on the [Wilson Center’s New Security Beat](#) highlights some **lessons learned from China’s economic diversification efforts that may be useful for coal-reliant states like Wyoming**. From the article: “According to Dr. Duan [of the Institute for Environment and Sustainable Development], the provincial government supports training and re-employment, such as mine reclamation jobs or subsidies for individuals to start their own businesses. Even ride-share companies like DiDi have partnered with coal companies to hire laid off coal miners as drivers, says Duan. While this kind of safety net does not help all unemployed coal workers, according to Han Wenke [a member of China’s National Development and Reform Commission’s Energy Research Institute], “the case of Shanxi proves that policy and institutional factors can address the challenges and opportunities facing energy transition.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **The Navajo Generating Station in Arizona will close in December after a Navajo Nation company declined to purchase it in an effort to keep the plant operating** after the current owners decided to shut down due to cost considerations, reports the *Associated Press*. From the article: “Navajo leaders asked the Navajo Transitional Energy Company last year to look into acquiring the power plant and the coal mine as a way to save the revenue and hundreds of jobs held by tribal members. Negotiations with the power plant owners came to a halt recently over who ultimately would be responsible for cleanup. The owners wanted the energy company to take on any known or unknown liabilities for the

plant, but the Navajo Nation declined. With that and a decision Thursday from a Navajo Nation Council committee not to support the acquisition, the energy company called it quits." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- **Former coal communities in Pennsylvania are working to tackle blight and abandoned structures to improve quality of life and economic development opportunities**, reports the *News-Observer*. From the article: "Like a number of similar municipalities in Washington, Greene, and Fayette counties - known familiarly as "old coal patch towns" - Marianna is dealing with dozens of abandoned and neglected properties, absentee landlords, crime and safety concerns, a diminished tax base, and a heap of filth... Marianna, however, has gotten money to strike back. The borough recently received \$100,000 from the county's Local Share Account to address blight. The borough is in the process of clearing 21 blighted properties, which includes demolishing dilapidated structures..." "We want to get these properties on the tax rolls while restoring a lot of beauty to our community," Councilman Wes Silva said after receiving a ceremonial oversized check from the county commissioners. "You can get so much more in tax dollars with something other than an empty lot," said Jeremy Berardinelli, a council colleague of Silva." 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

- Presentation slides are now available from the recent NADO-DDAA Washington Conference session “Lifting Up Communities through Economic Diversification” that shared a **variety of place-based diversification efforts from around the country that are tapping into local and regional assets to diversify and strengthen economies**. The presentations feature federal partners that are supporting economic diversification initiatives and case studies from coal-reliant regions in Utah and Ohio. Click [here](#) to access the slides.

- Join the Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition on **March 28 at 1 p.m. ET** for a half-hour webinar to **discuss how to successfully pair Brownfield resources with AML Pilot funding for community redevelopment projects**. Mead Anderson with Virginia DEQ will present on a recent success story, and Carrie Staton will share technical assistance resources available through Central Appalachian Brownfields Network (CABIN). Click [here](#) to register.
- The [Orton Family Foundation](#) will host the webinar “Civics, Civility, and Circles – How to Restore and Create Community, Now!” on **March 28 at 1 p.m. ET**. Learn about various organizations and programs that are **focused on getting people to talk to each other respectfully, regardless of their points of view**. Click [here](#) for more 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.
- Join National TAB for a webinar on **April 24 at 2 p.m. ET** featuring **strategies to make every community healthy, wealthy and wise**. Improving environmental and human health outcomes in communities across the country is challenging under any circumstances. In the early part of the 21st Century this is particularly true given the economic, political, and social changes occurring. [EPA’s Office of Community Revitalization](#) has developed strategies and programs that assist communities’ efforts to take stock of their assets and identify visions for growth that supports a better environment and healthy living. Through this webinar you’ll hear how EPA collaborates with communities to grow their economies and improve the environment. Click [here](#) to register.
- **Slides are available from NACo and NADO RF’s presentation at the Colorado Plateau Economic Development Symposium held recently 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 slides.
- [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

- **A 500,000-panel solar farm is planned for Pikeville, KY on a reclaimed mine site and is expected to create 200 construction jobs and 50 permanent jobs**, reports *WSAZ*. From the article: "Project Co-Developer Adam Edelen says the best part of this project is simple. "The best part is we will create new jobs for out of work coal miners," said Edelen... "Coal miners are the best-trained workers in the world. These are people who show up for work every day. They are used to working in a team. They are highly trained," explained Edelen. After the failure of recent projects, Edelen ensures this project is set in stone. "This project is going to happen and we strongly believe that people need to keep their word and we intend to do that here."" Click [here](#) to read the article.



This newsletter is made possible with the support of a [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 RF, or EDA.