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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

- **A mix of projects are underway throughout southeast Ohio to support economic diversification through broadband investments, outdoor recreation, tourism, renewable energy, and other areas**, reports *The Post*. From the article: "While the region has been through many cycles of jobs, from coal to oil to developing recreational activities and the exporting to talent to other communities, [Sam Brady, the executive director of the Jackson County Economic Development Partnership] said the identity of the people there has remained the same. "The deep roots felt by those who have lived here generationally have really determined the identity," Brady said. "Coal, iron ore, iron furnaces ... Those are all boom bust cycles, and those don't determine our identity. The work ethic, the devotion to family, the devotion to community, devotion to your neighbor, that's what determines the identity of a community."" Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **Arizona Public Service Co. will explore converting one of the generators at the Cholla Power Plant (scheduled to close in 2025) to burn pine trees as an energy source**, reports the *Arizona Republic*. From the article: "The ponderosa pine forests in Arizona are severely overgrown from more than a century of fire suppression and livestock grazing, which eliminates the frequent, small fires that kept the tree growth in check...Finding a commercial use for the small trees has been a challenge, which makes burning them for electricity attractive. After a 60-day test, APS will update the Arizona Corporation Commission regarding whether converting the coal generator to burn biomass would be cost efficient, officials said." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- A blog post from the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED) shares how **four community organizations in Letcher County, KY are exploring financing options to support solar installations on their buildings to reduce energy costs**. From the post: "The organizations are part of the Letcher County Culture Hub, a growing network of community-led organizations in Letcher County who work together to create new opportunities. The Hub has worked together to bring solar to Letcher County, collaborating to get bids from potential installers, learn about financing options, and execute projects... MACED, along with others in the Hub, see improvements like solar and renewable energy installation as a critical part of improving the value of homes and buildings in the region, as well as for downtown revitalization and development efforts." Click [here](#) to read the post.
- The *Colorado Sun* reports on how **Colorado Springs's downtown redevelopment plans are affected by the presence of the Martin Drake Power Plant and what conversations are underway in the community to address the city's future**. From the article: "The Martin Drake part of the equation is not easy to solve. The site, near where Interstate 25 meets with U.S. 24, has been home to a power plant since 1925, and much of downtown Colorado Springs' electricity is routed through that area...Colorado Springs leaders have been talking about the future of Martin Drake and its 35-acre campus hugging the city's downtown for years...[T]he conversation has been forced to the forefront as the first real development moves toward completion. A museum for the U.S. Olympic Committee — which is within eyesight of the plant — is slated to open next year,

and a 10,000-seat stadium for Colorado Springs' soccer team is planned for the area just east of Martin Drake." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- *Energy News Network* reports on how the **Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in southwestern Colorado is developing a community solar program with a long-term vision for a sustainable business model**. From the article: ""We hope to meet the end goal of net-zero carbon emissions for the whole reservation," said Scott Clow, the tribe's environmental director. Beyond that, the tribe hopes to learn how to build, finance and run a much larger solar business, one that would use more of its sun-baked, 960-square-mile reservation for arrays that could feed solar electricity into markets as far away as the West Coast. Clow, who is not a member of the tribe, explained in an interview that the Utes are "excellently positioned geographically" because the reservation is located near the power grid that connects two large, coal-fired power plants in the Four Corners area of the United States that are about to shut down." Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- [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 [Foundation for Overcoming Challenges and Utilizing Strengths \(FOCUS WV\) program](#) **catalyzes community-based brownfield projects in West Virginia by providing local project redevelopment stakeholders with technical and financial assistance** to find solutions to existing and anticipated risks and liabilities associated with environmental unknowns. The FOCUS WV program provides grant funds to eligible, community-driven projects to address immediate barriers to progress in the redevelopment process. The FOCUS WV Program encourages brownfield redevelopment and enhanced economic development across West Virginia by providing resources to: enable communities to market and/or reposition challenging but strategic sites; enhance a community's ability to engage on strategic community development projects by

understanding the resources available; and build the capacity of communities to develop and implement a redevelopment vision. Click [here](#) for more information and to apply by **May 13**.

- 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**. For more details and to apply, click [here](#).
- The [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Rural Development](#) is **accepting applications for grants to support economic development in rural communities**. The grants are being made available through USDA's [Rural Community Development Initiative \(RCDI\) Program](#) in order to strengthen the rural economy. The grants are not provided directly to businesses or individuals. Instead, qualified intermediary organizations receiving RCDI grants will provide technical assistance and training to help nonprofit organizations and communities develop their capacity to undertake housing, community facility, or economic development projects. USDA also encourages applications that will support efforts to combat substance use disorders, including opioid misuse, in high-risk rural communities by strengthening their capacity to address prevention, treatment, and/or recovery needs. Grant amounts will range from \$50,000 to \$250,000. Nonprofits, low-income rural communities, and federally-recognized tribes are eligible to apply. Electronic applications must be submitted to [grants.gov](#) by **June 5**.
- [SolSmart](#) has recently launched [a regional designation pathway](#) that **will support regional organizations interested in advancing regional solar efforts through the provision of no-cost technical assistance**. Through SolSmart's Regional Organization Challenge Campaign, regional organizations new to the SolSmart program will be eligible to receive a special prize of tailored, in-person (or remote, if preferred) training sessions for its members. These training sessions will cover a variety of solar-related topics, including: best practices for permitting, inspection, and/or fire staff; planning and zoning considerations for solar energy (small and large-scale), solar procurement for municipalities, utility engagement, and much more. The Challenge Campaign will run **until June 21, 2019**. For more information or to get started, contact SolSmart Program Director Zach Greene at zgreene@solarfound.org. For more information about the regional designation pathway, click [here](#).
- The [Department of Agriculture](#) will accept **applications for the Rural e-Connectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect Program)** beginning on **April 23, 2019**. Application deadlines will extend through **May 31** (deadline for grants) and through **July 12** (deadline for low-interest loans). \$600 million is available in total. Of this, \$200 million is available in grants, \$200 million is available in loan and grant combinations, and \$200 million is available for low-interest loans. This funding will be available

nationwide to facilitate broadband deployment in rural areas that currently lack sufficient internet access. Telecommunications companies, rural electric cooperatives and utilities, internet service providers, and municipalities are all eligible to apply. Funds will be awarded to projects that have financially sustainable business models and that will bring high-speed broadband to rural homes, businesses, farms, ranches, and community facilities. Projects funded through this initiative must serve communities with fewer than 20,000 people that have no broadband service, or where existing service is slow. Further details are available [here](#).

- A new guide from the National Governors Association (NGA) called “Rural Prosperity through the Arts and Creative Sector” **offers research insights and lessons learned from states that are harnessing the power of the arts to drive rural prosperity**. Produced by NGA’s [Center for Best Practices](#), the guide offers creative policy solutions that draw on home-grown arts and cultural assets to address the urgent problems facing rural America. While there are many inspiring success stories to celebrate in rural areas, some regions also are contending with stark economic challenges, outmigration, education gaps, and infrastructure needs. By leveraging the creative industries, states can deploy proven strategies that help all rural communities to thrive. This action guide is part of a collaborative project between NGA, the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) and [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#). Click [here](#) to access the guide.
- The [Central Appalachian Network](#) has **released a suite of reports and toolkits focusing on supporting clean energy programs and initiatives** across the region. Click the linked titles to access the “[Central Appalachia Clean Energy Policy Toolkit](#),” the “[Central Appalachia Clean Energy Economic Impact Inventory](#),” and the “[Communications and Messaging Report](#).”
- 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

- The [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) is now accepting applications for the inaugural class of the [Appalachian Leadership Institute](#), **a new leadership and economic development training opportunity for community leaders who currently live and/or work in Appalachia**. The Appalachian Leadership Institute is an extensive nine-month program focusing on skill-

building, seminars, best practice reviews, field visits, mentoring, and networking. The curriculum will be anchored by six multi-day seminars around the region, followed by a capstone graduation in Washington, DC. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply by **June 1**.

- 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.
- 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. Visit the [conference website](#) to learn more and to register.
- 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; Opportunity Zones; 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

- **Five Major League Baseball stadiums will have @Shirt interactive kiosks for fans to purchase customized shirts from SustainU Clothing, a West Virginia-based sustainable clothing manufacturer that is part of Coalfield Development,** reports the *Clay Center Dispatch*. From the article: “[The kiosks] offer fans a chance to purchase game-specific match-up graphics with customizable features for all 81 of a team's home games in the regular season. Each graphic is only available in-venue and allows fans to uniquely commemorate their day to the ballpark with limited-edition apparel... Each order placed through the @Shirt Kiosk by SustainU helps to provide education and employment in Appalachia through Coalfield Development's 33-6-3 workforce development model. SustainU employs 16 people, while Coalfield Development has 60 crew members total across its various enterprises.” Click [here](#) to read the article.



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