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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](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

- *Deseret News* reports on **how coworking and shared spaces in rural Utah can help strengthen and diversify small towns much in the same way they have benefited larger cities**. From the article: “[Says Mo Reeder, co-founder of V School, a coding school], “There are a lot of smart people who live in these smaller communities and coworking space could help accelerate their success. Working in close proximity with other people, collaborating on projects creates synergy and opportunities for all involved to grow their businesses.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Daily Mail WV* profiles **the efforts of Advantage Valley, an economic development group that supports regional economic development opportunities throughout West Virginia, including by engaging with manufacturers and local businesses impacted by the downturn in the coal industry**. From the article: ““From an economic development perspective, we are more appealing as a region than as individual counties or cities,” said Advantage Valley Executive Director Terrell Ellis. “We’re far stronger together than apart. We recognize that companies are looking for the best locations,” Ellis said. “Now more than ever, as companies experience shortages in workforce availability, communities face dwindling resources and infrastructure development, and funding agencies demand more impact for their investments, we need to act cooperatively.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- A news segment from *Global News* **describes the challenges coal-reliant communities in Canada are facing as the country moves to close all coal-fired power plants by 2030**. From the video: “These communities see a loss of jobs, a loss of their community – indeed a loss of their very way of life and their identity,” says Mark Rowlinson, [a member of a federal task force that is calling on the national government to establish a financed plan to address these issues]. “Workers need support right now and communities need investment right now.” Click [here](#) to watch the video.
- **Harlan County, KY recently broke ground on the Harlan County Business Park, the region’s first build-ready site**, reports the *Harlan Enterprise*. From the article: ““Today is a major milestone for economic development in Harlan County, with the groundbreaking for southeastern Kentucky’s first Cabinet of Economic Development state certified build-ready site,” [Harlan County Judge-Executive Dan Mosley] said... Mosley said the property was the only piece of land to “check all of the boxes,” by being out of the flood plain, more than 50 acres, accessible to multiple utilities and broadband and “right off one of the only four-lane sections of road that are in our county.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- In a press release, **the U.S. Department of Energy announced the Coal FIRST initiative that will explore research and development opportunities for coal plants**. From the press release: “Under the Coal FIRST initiative, DOE is supporting research and development (R&D) projects that will help develop plants that: are capable of flexible operations to meet the needs of the grid; use innovative and cutting-edge components that enable improved efficiency and have near zero emissions with carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) capture; provide resilient power to Americans; are small compared to today’s conventional utility-

scale coal; [are] small compared to today's conventional utility-scale coal; and transform how coal power plant technologies are designed and manufactured." Click [here](#) to read the press release.

## Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- [Recreation Economy for Rural Communities](#) is a new planning assistance program from the [U.S. Forest Service](#), the [Northern Border Regional Commission](#), and [EPA](#) to **help communities develop strategies and an action plan to revitalize their Main Streets through outdoor recreation**. Outdoor activities are increasingly popular across the United States. Communities can take advantage of this trend to revitalize Main Streets. By conserving forests and other natural lands and making them available for outdoor recreation, small towns can boost air quality and water quality and focus development downtown. Communities are invited to apply for planning assistance; the application deadline is **May 31**. Click [here](#) to learn more 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](https://www.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](mailto: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](#)."

## Events and Trainings

- [The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies \(NASAA\)](#) is hosting a web seminar entitled "Rural Prosperity through the Arts and Creative Sector" on **Thursday, April 25 from 3-4:15 p.m. ET**. There is a growing body of research demonstrating how the arts and the creative industries help rural communities thrive. A [new action guide for governors and states](#) from the National Governors Association summarizes this evidence and highlights exemplary efforts by state arts agencies, other state agencies and nonprofit organizations to strengthen rural communities and economies through the arts. Join NASAA and representatives from the National Governors Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, Colorado Creative Industries, Rural LISC, and First Peoples Fund **for a discussion about rural creative economic development and learn how the arts can support constituents living in small and remote communities throughout your state**. To register, email [Eric Giles](#) and include your name, title, agency name, and phone number in your email.
- [The Delta Regional Authority \(DRA\)](#) has partnered with the [U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration](#) and the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) to make approximately \$28.5 million available in [National Dislocated Worker Reserve: Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities \(WORC\) Grants](#) **to support workforce training and education in rural communities across the Delta and Appalachian regions**. To complement the federal partnership, DRA will host two technical assistance workshops, make an additional \$1.5 million in grants available in July 2019, and offer post-award technical assistance to grantees. The Delta Workforce Program will prioritize investing in communities and regions that have been negatively impacted by economic transition and recovered more slowly to help build their workforce pipelines and strengthen their economies. DRA will be hosting technical assistance workshops in Memphis, Tennessee on **June 4** and in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on **June 6**. The deadline for WORC Grants is **July 15** and the deadline for DRA workforce grants is **August 30**. For more information on these grants, workshops, and to apply please click [here](#).
- 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 [Orton Family Foundation](#) will host the webinar "Moving Past Triage – Real Solutions to the Opioid Epidemic in Rural America" on **May 2 at 1 p.m. ET**. The **webinar will feature three leaders with different vantage points who share the same goal - to stop this epidemic**. Guests on this free webinar are: Anne Hazlett, Senior Adviser for Rural Affairs at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP); Lisa Roberts, a public health nurse who watched the epidemic unfold in Ohio; and Tina Stride who channeled grief and loss into action, starting a nonprofit in West Virginia that gets people into treatment. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- The **National Regional Transportation Conference will be held from June 17-19 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 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**. If you have any questions, please contact Brett Schwartz at [bschwartz@nado.org](mailto: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 in Asheville, NC**. More details will be available soon at [www.arc.gov](http://www.arc.gov).

## A Dose of Inspiration

- **Navajo entrepreneurs are working to bring solar energy and jobs to the reservation which will soon be impacted by the impending closure of the Navajo Generating Station at the end of the year**, reports *NPR*. From the article: “[Brett] Isaac and a group of entrepreneurs have formed Navajo Power, a renewable energy company that's trying to help the tribe shift away from coal. The tribe has built two utility-sized solar farms already and it's working on a third. "It takes the benefit of something that's abundant and converts it into something usable," Isaac said. "So that aligns a lot not only with Navajo philosophy, but a lot of indigenous communities about how you responsibly source things.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.



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