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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.

*Please note: The next issue will be delivered on May 26 and will then resume its bi-weekly schedule*

**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

- **Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development has created playbooks to generate conversations around new investment and business opportunities at retired coal plant sites**, reports *NPR*. From the article: "The agency produces promotional "playbooks" that outline the characteristics of a site — both the benefits and drawbacks — and then offers ideas for what kinds of businesses might locate there...A draft copy of the Shamokin Dam playbook shows the site wouldn't be suitable for building houses, and there would be limits on using the soil and groundwater. The report suggests potential uses include a second natural gas power plant, which already is planned. Other options are a warehouse, wood waste recycling, or a data center. The plan also highlights assets, including nearby railroad tracks, access to municipal or river water, and power transmission lines." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **Becker, MN is preparing for a possible earlier-than-expected closure of the Sherco power plant and residents are looking into new local opportunities**, reports *MPR News*. From the article: "The central Minnesota community was already bracing for two of the plant's three coal-fired generators to close in the next few years. Then, last week came the announcement that the entire plant could close, much sooner than expected...Becker Mayor Tracy Bertram said residents are still absorbing Xcel's latest announcement. "A lot of people were like, 'What does this mean for us? How are we doing?'" she said...Bertram said many Becker residents are focused on new development and businesses coming to town. Xcel plans to build a natural gas plant on the Sherco site that will preserve about 150 jobs. Northern Metal Recycling is building a new recycling facility next to the plant, and tech giant Google has proposed building a \$600 million data center that would employ about 50 permanent workers. "I think that a lot of the citizens are hopeful about what is going to be happening, that they're focused there instead of the doom and gloom," Bertram said." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **The findings of a new report developed for identifying business and industry opportunities to support economic diversification in southwest Wyoming were recently presented to the public** at a meeting in Evanston, reports the *Kemmerer Gazette*. From the article: "The top choices in the industrial area were blockchain processing, downstream chemical product manufacturing, aerospace parts, wind turbine manufacturing, manufacturing of mining and oil and gas machinery, and firearms and ammunition manufacturing. In the service area their first choice was back office, which includes call centers. They also suggested retirement communities and computer design services, among others. Under the targeted tourism area the top suggestions were fossil hunting and a boutique hotel... "You need to act now," [Brock Naylor, marketing and communications supervisor at Thomas P. Miller & Associates] said. "Get the community on board with the branding and imaging. Invest in the logo with signage in retail, restaurants, parks and trails, and greenspace. Develop your assets now."" Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *Yes!* magazine reports on **efforts underway in Central Appalachia to support wildlife restoration on former mining lands, including the introduction of elk to the habitat**. From the article: "[S]everal states have used [these areas] as

reintroduction sites for elk in hopes of enriching the habitat for diverse animal species. And the hopes that follow involve some economic revival in coal country from tourist dollars spent by wildlife watchers and, eventually, hunters... By breaking up the otherwise forested landscape and creating ponds and other wetlands, these open grasslands attract insects, amphibians, and migratory songbirds. Wildlife restoration is just one of the new uses of about 1.5 million acres of Central Appalachian land affected by strip- and mountaintop-removal-mining since the 1970s. Other communities have turned their land into sites for solar energy farms, outdoor recreation hubs, industrial parks, and more." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- **The former coal town of Greensboro, PA (pop. 249) is embracing asset-based economic development by promoting its artisan and musical heritage through an art co-op**, reports *WESA*. From the article: "The co-op not only provides a space for artists to sell their work, but it's also a space for artists to create. There is a woodshop, a bike shop, pottery room, music room, painting area – anything an artist wants to do there is likely a tool for it. Members pay a \$200 lifetime membership or the equivalent in labor, and profits from wares made at the co-op are split 50/50 with the artist...Members are fixing up old store fronts to use as studios. They're also using local clay to create art." Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- 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**.
- Through the [Native American CDFI Assistance Program \(NACA Program\)](#), the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund provides (i) FA awards of up to \$1 million to Certified Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) serving Native American, Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian populations or Native American areas defined as Federally-designated reservations, Hawaiian homelands, Alaska Native Villages and U.S. Census Bureau-designated Tribal Statistical Areas (collectively, "Native Communities") to build their financial capacity to lend to Eligible Markets and/or their Target Markets, and (ii) TA grants of up to \$150,000 to build Certified, Certifiable, and Emerging CDFIs' organizational capacity to serve Eligible Markets and/or their Target Markets and Sponsoring Entities ability to create Certified CDFIs that serve Native

Communities. Click [here](#) to **read the NOFA and apply for Financial Assistance Awards or Technical Assistance Grants by June 6.**

- [HUD's Rural Capacity Building program](#) **enhances the capacity and ability of rural housing development organizations, Community Development Corporations (CDCs), Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs), local governments, and Indian tribes (eligible beneficiaries) to carry out affordable housing and community development activities in rural areas for the benefit of low- and moderate-income families and persons.** The Rural Capacity Building program achieves this by funding National Organizations with expertise in rural housing and rural community development who work directly to build the capacity of eligible beneficiaries. Applications are open for Rural Capacity Building for Community Development and Affordable Housing Grants (RCB) will be accepted **until June 11.** Click [here](#) to learn more in the NOFA.
- Grants from the [Farmers Market Promotion Program \(FMPP\)](#) **are available to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products, and to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets** by developing, improving, expanding, and providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to, or assisting in the development, improvement, and expansion of, domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. The 2019 Grant application period is now open. Applications are due by **June 18.** Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.
- 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 **July 12** 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](#).
- [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. 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](#).

- A [U.S. Department of Transportation \(DOT\)](#) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is available **for its competitive grant program known as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD, formerly known as TIGER)**. A total of \$900 million was appropriated for this program in FY 2019. The application is currently available online [here](#). The application deadline is **July 15**.
- The [Citizens Institute on Rural Design \(CIRD\)](#) **will continue its tradition offering local design workshops that address specific community challenges, and also create a new cohort learning program that will engage rural leaders from up to 20 additional communities**. All rural communities of 50,000 or less are eligible to apply for the CIRD local workshop and learning cohort opportunities. Nonprofits, tribal or municipal governments, regional planning organizations, and other community partners are encouraged to apply. Applications are being accepted through **July 22** and an informational webinar on this opportunity will be held on **June 11**. Click [here](#) for more information.
- The [Central Appalachian Network \(CAN\)](#) has released a **new report called “Creative Placemaking in Central Appalachia: Understanding the Role of Arts and Culture in Appalachia’s Economic Transition.”** CAN commissioned this scan of creative placemaking in Central Appalachia in order to understand what creative placemaking looks like on the ground, assess the state of the field regionally, offer ideas to strengthen and accelerate current momentum, and ultimately bring more attention and resources to advance the approach of creative placemaking in the region. Click [here](#) to learn more and download the report.
- The [National Association of Counties](#), in collaboration with the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#), **has published a new report “Opioids in America: The Role of Counties in Reversing a Regional Epidemic.”** It includes research findings as well as recommendations for local action on the part of Appalachian county officials that can help to decrease overdose and addiction rates in the region. Click [here](#) to learn more and download the report.

## Events and Trainings

- The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) has launched a training webinar series to build the capacity of environmental justice practitioners working at the state level. The third webinar “Using Comprehensive Area-Wide Planning Approaches to Promote Equitable Development” on **June 18 at 1 p.m. ET will share lessons for achieving community involvement, revitalization, and resilience from area-wide planning approaches used to address brownfields or other community**

**challenges** and discuss how states can support such comprehensive collaborative approaches. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.

- Drinking water systems exist to provide communities with safe, reliable water today and into the future. It's a vital public service that needs to be accessible to all residents, and having plentiful, reliable water helps drive local economies. Water systems should ensure that their infrastructure remains in good condition over time and that they manage their limited supply of water in the most effective way possible that meets community priorities. A free webinar from [Water Finance Assistance](#) on **June 19 at 2 p.m. ET will explore four common priorities for water systems - appropriate revenue, promoting economic development, efficient customer use of water, and affordability.** The webinar will then demonstrate a simple metric that can be calculated for each priority area. Attendees will be able to replicate these calculations for their own systems easily. Click [here](#) 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.
- **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

- A recent article in *Inc.* ran with the headline **"How 2 Former Miners Fell in Love, Moved to a Farm, Got into Woodworking, and Launched a Hugely Popular Kitchen Utensil Company."** Read the story [here](#).



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