

July 10, 2019



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

- **Colorado Public Radio highlights how the small community of Nucla in Western Colorado is pursuing a mix of economic diversification strategies following the loss of the local coal and uranium mining industries and the impending closure of a power plant in 2022.** From the article: “[Deana Sherriff] is with the West End Economic Development Corporation, which started only a few years ago, and now has a renewed sense of urgency with coal operations soon to wind down. The organization has made a commercial kitchen and coworking space available to locals and offers classes on how to start a small business...So far, nearly 30 businesses are in the works. Sherriff is working with entrepreneurs from out of town, too. One industry that has its eye on the area is cannabis. The first two dispensaries are in the works for nearby Naturita, plus a hemp co-op... The area has won a bunch of grants to develop the airport and beautify parks, and residents themselves have set up a charitable fund to support local organizations. The money comes from right here, with much of the trust made up of small monthly donations from valley families.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The US Economic Development Administration is supporting the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments in Youngstown, OH with a **grant to support the Eastgate Economic and Resiliency Project which will address challenges caused by the downturn in the local coal industry and the closure of the General Motors Lordstown Complex**, reports the *Business Journal*. From the article: “The recovery coordination team will work with local stakeholders to develop and implement a strategy to help the region respond to those challenges. The grant will be matched with \$150,000 in local investment... “This award will give us the capacity to address these impacts by working to diversify our industrial base as well as strengthening our entrepreneurial ecosystem,” [ERCOG executive Director James Kinnick] said. “In addition, we will continue our existing efforts to coordinate the actions of our local economic development partners to provide the greatest possible impact for residents and businesses in our region.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- The *Casper Star Tribune* reports on **how Gillette, WY is reacting to last week’s unexpected closure of two coal mines which is directly impacting around 700 workers.** From the article: “For many residents, the unexpected shuttering of the Blackjewel mines came as a shock and awakened painful memories from March 2016, when two other nearby mines laid off more than 460 workers. “I don’t think (Gillette) has totally recovered today,” [retired coal worker Sandie Jones] said of the 2016 layoffs. To her, many more businesses and vendors will eventually take a financial hit if the gates of Eagle Butte and Belle Ayr mines stay closed. Dixie Woolever, a Gillette resident who works for the city’s schools, expressed concern over the future of education and the housing market. “Because everything trickles down, there’s a lot of vendors in this community that service the coal mines, and a big pull-out like this affects every one of them,” she said. “We are in limbo,” Naomi Chambers, a Gillette business owner said as she sipped her minestrone soup. She works at an art shop in downtown Gillette, but her current and former husband are both coal miners. “All of the stores are ordering for their Christmas sales and you don’t know how to order,” she said. “You don’t know how many people are sticking around.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- **A \$94 million loan from USDA to the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority is expected to support energy diversification efforts and economic development in the Four Corners region with the impending closure of the Navajo Generating Station in December 2019**, reports *Utah Public Radio*. From the article: ““With the number of cloudless days that they have, doing this solar project is just exactly what needs to be put into play,” said Randy Parker, the Utah director of USDA Rural Development. “They have Kayenta I and Kayenta II. Kayenta II should be coming online in the very near future. I mean, we’re literally weeks away from that. The expectation is that they will be generating revenue literally in weeks.” Parker said that the loan to the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority should support expansion of electricity in the Navajo Nation, where 15,000 people live without power. Additional electricity will be sold to repay the loan.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **A mix of factors in April led the US to produce more energy from renewable sources than coal for the first time ever**, reports *CBS News*. From the article: “A full 22% of the electricity generated in the US in April came from renewable sources like wind, solar, hydroelectric, and geothermal power, according to the US Energy Information Administration... Just 20% of power production in April came from coal... In the US, late spring and early fall typically see the lowest electricity use because of reduced demand for heating and cooling. Meanwhile, generation of hydroelectric—the largest source of renewable electricity—“tends to peak in the spring as melting snowpack results in increased water supply at downstream generators,” the EIA said.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- The [Department of Agriculture](#) will accept **applications for the Rural e-Connectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect Program)** 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 [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) is currently **accepting proposals from qualified researchers and consultants to conduct research and provide guidance regarding public transportation in the Appalachian region**. Public transportation is an important lifeline for those with limited vehicle availability, especially in non-urban areas where biking or walking is unrealistic. This project will help ARC better understand the extent to which existing public transportation services are adequately creating or enhancing access for disadvantaged populations, particularly in rural areas. The deadline for proposals is **July 12**. More information on this program is available [here](#).

- A [US 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**. Click [here](#) for more information.
- [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](#).
- The [Rural Responses to the Opioid Epidemic](#) grant program leverages the combined resources of the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the State Justice Institute (SJI), and other partners. The goal of this **funding opportunity is to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdoses among individuals who come into contact with law enforcement or are involved in the criminal justice system in high-risk rural communities and regions**. Under this solicitation, up to eight rural communities or regions will be selected for an award of up to \$750,000 each for a 24-month time period. Grant funds may be used to support activities including: strategic planning; strengthening epidemiologic surveillance and public health data infrastructure; increasing the use of evidence-based/culturally appropriate prescribing interventions; developing and implementing community-level opioid overdose prevention activities; and expanding peer recovery and support services. More information on this grant program can be found [here](#). The deadline to apply is **5:00 pm ET on July 26**.

- The [Local Initiatives Support Corporation \(LISC\)](#) has partnered with the [Council for Development Finance Agencies \(CDFA\)](#) and the [Ford Foundation](#) to develop a **playbook for community partners on Opportunity Zones**. This playbook is the first in a series in which LISC aims to lay out potential trajectories and best practices for the range of Opportunity Zones actors. The new playbook is available [here](#).
- The [Utah Department of Workforce Services](#) has **released a new online guide called “Energy and Natural Resources Communities” to serve as a one-stop resource** to assist energy and natural resource communities in building and maintaining resiliency. This guide contains maps, case studies, ideas, and other resources to assist communities with their economic diversification planning. Click [here](#) to access the guide.

Events and Trainings

- A webinar on **July 16 at 11 a.m. ET** will discuss **how to utilize free brownfields technical expertise in your next brownfields project**. EPA's [Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program](#) funds several expert organizations so they can support your efforts to assess, cleanup, and reuse brownfield sites in your community. Learn how these organizations can help you manage a brownfields redevelopment project, incorporate equitable development approaches, workforce development, and leverage funding & financing opportunities. This webinar is designed specifically for communities in AL, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, MA, MD, ME, MS, NC, NH, PA, RI, SC, TN, VA, VT, WV. Click [here](#) to learn more and register.
- The [Delta Regional Authority \(DRA\)](#) is currently **accepting applications for the Delta Leadership Institute (DLI) Executive Academy for the 2019-2020 cycle**. The DLI Executive Academy is a professional development opportunity that prepares and trains community leaders to help improve the economic competitiveness of the Delta region. The program is open to residents of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. The application deadline is **July 16**. More information on this program is available [here](#).
- Utility mapping can assist your water system with asset management and water loss reduction if you know how to utilize it correctly. Join the [Smart Management for Small Water Systems](#) project on **July 23 at 2 p.m. ET** for a **webinar that will answer all your questions about mapping for water loss and asset management**. Examples of topics include: different maps, mapping, and data collection technologies; Types of attributes that can be collected; the analysis that can be done within the context of an asset management and water loss reduction framework. Click [here](#) to learn more and register.
- With support from the US Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) Denver Regional Office, the [NADO Research Foundation](#) is coordinating **Economic Brilliance and Resilience, an economic development conference** for Economic Development Districts (EDDs), university centers, tribal planning grantees, Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs, Regional

Innovation Strategies (RIS) grantees, and other stakeholders from the 10-state region. The conference will be held from **August 26-29** at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in **Denver, Colorado**. [Click here](#) to learn more and register online.

- **Registration is now open for “Appalachia Strong,”** an Appalachian Regional Commission Summit hosted by the State of North Carolina, scheduled for **September 4-6 in Asheville, NC**. Click [here](#) for more details and to register.

A Dose of Inspiration

- **Researchers at West Virginia University are investigating ways that the Miscanthus X giganteus plant can help restore the soil on reclaimed mine lands and also serve as an energy source,** reports the *Morgantown News*. From the article: “The plant can regenerate damaged acreage by soaking up carbon from the atmosphere and returning it to the soil. “The ideal outcome of this is to generate a ‘carbon negative agroecosystem,’” [Zachary Freedman, assistant professor at WVU] said. “Miscanthus has a high potential to save and/or improve marginal lands”... Miscanthus can be used to generate sustainable energy in a number of ways. For example, Miscanthus can be ground into pellets and burned. Or the sugars in the biomass can be used as a fermentation substrate for microbes. The result of that process is ethanol, which can be used as fuel.” 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.