

August 21, 2019



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 bschwarz@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

- **The small town of Helper, UT, located in Carbon County, is experiencing a resurgence thanks to Main Street redevelopment, the arts, and tourism efforts driven by the local community**, reports the *Salt Lake Tribune*. From the article: "The rebuilding is being done by lifelong Helper residents and recent transplants, artists, and dreamers who, seeking to escape the hustle of the Wasatch Front, are lured by ridiculously cheap real estate prices. "We just fell in love with the beauty, the people, and the opportunity to make a difference in a small community," said Roy Jespersen, who moved to town with his architect wife, Anne, and launched The Helper Project, a nonprofit that supports the town's revitalization, beautification, and cultural connections. The project holds a curated art exhibition as an annual fundraiser, with 30% of the proceeds helping the town and 70% going back to the artists. The project uses its share to build small but important amenities, such as decorative trash cans on Main Street and dog-waste stations on the Price River parkway." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **A nearly 3 million-square foot greenhouse facility in Morehead, KY developed by the startup AppHarvest is expected to be functional by mid-2020 and grow food using hydroponic techniques**, reports *Forbes*. From the article: "[A]ccording to [AppHarvest Founder Jonathan Webb] it will be able to grow pesticide-free tomatoes and cucumbers year-round using 90% less water than traditional farming—and do so in the middle of coal country. Water will come from rainwater kept in a retention pool and there will be circular irrigation systems...The facility is also in a strategically-situated location that's within a day's drive of 70% of the U.S. population, according to the company. That should slash the amount of gas used in transportation compared to imports trucked across the country to the East Coast, while supplying markets with fresher produce." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **KULR8 discusses the opportunities and challenges facing Wyoming's wind industry, which could create 4,700 new jobs and generate \$7.1 billion**. From the article: "Although a thriving wind market will likely never replace the colossal revenue stream coal once provided, it may be a critical part of the future, according to several energy experts. But myriad hurdles often stand between wind energy proposals and their actualization — from limited transmission line capacity and lawmakers' ambivalence over taxation, to onerous permitting requirements in the state. This chapter in wind energy leaves Wyoming with a decision: to invest in wind or leave it to neighboring states, [Rob Godby, economist at the University of Wyoming] noted. "Wind is really the only sector that would provide significant economic diversification," he said. "The capital investment in wind, while it's not nearly the scale of the tax revenues we get from coal or oil and gas, are to the tune of multi-billions of dollars."" Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Brookings reports on **efforts underway in Wytheville, a town in Southwest Virginia's coal country, that is working on Main Street redevelopment projects while simultaneously building an entrepreneurial ecosystem through a competition called**

Evolution Wytheville. From the article: "The competition was open to anyone looking to start a business in the downtown district, and leaders conducted a local and regional awareness campaign to attract new and expanding businesses... Judges evaluated plans on the amount of foot traffic the business would generate, the number of jobs it would create, and the quality of the overall plan. Four winners eventually took home \$75,000 in prize money—two winners each opened breweries, one a Vietnamese bakery, and the other an art school." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- **Two companies in Utah are exploring the possibility of using giant underground salt domes located one hundred miles south of Salt Lake City to serve as storage for solar and wind energy,** reports the *Los Angeles Times* via the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. From the article: "It would work like a giant battery. Hollow caverns carved out of the salt — each more than 1,000 feet from top to bottom and several hundred feet wide — would be pumped full of air at high pressure, using energy generated by solar panels or wind turbines during times when the power isn't needed. Like storing wind (or sun) in a bottle. When the power is eventually needed, the tightly packed air would be released from the caverns, turning turbines on the way out to generate electricity. The electricity would be ferried to Southern California through a 488-mile transmission line, built in the 1980s to transmit energy from Intermountain Power Plant, which is now the last coal-fired generating station serving California. The coal plant is scheduled to shut down in 2025." Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- The [National Association of Counties \(NACo\)](#) and [County Health Rankings & Roadmaps \(CHR&R\)](#) have partnered to offer the [Rural Impact County Challenge \(RICC\) Action Learning Cohort opportunity](#). **Recognizing the critical role local officials play in supporting innovation and change, NACo has a national initiative to help advance county efforts to both expand affordable housing and understand the link between housing, health, and equity.** The RICC Action Learning Cohort seeks to highlight and support counties in their exploration, learning, and action. Selected teams will join together as a community of learners in a structured format to learn, collaborate, and network. Teams receive individual and group-based support from CHR&R staff to accelerate learning and action in communities. The application deadline is **Thursday, August 22**. Selected teams will be notified no later than September 6. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply.
- The [Delta Regional Authority \(DRA\)](#) and the [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) have partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA) to make approximately \$29.2 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 provide an additional \$1.5 million in grant funding, and will offer post-award technical assistance to grantees in the Delta region.** The Delta Workforce Program will prioritize investments in communities and regions that have been negatively impacted by

economic transitions to help build their workforce pipelines and strengthen their economies. The deadline to apply for DRA workforce grants is **August 30**. For more information on the DRA partnership, click [here](#).

- The [US Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Rural Development](#) is accepting applications for the [Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant \(REDLG\) Program](#). Through the **REDLG Program, USDA provides zero-interest loans and some grant funds to rural utilities, which they in turn pass through to local businesses for projects that will retain or create employment opportunities in rural communities**. The funding may be used to assist with business start-up and expansion costs; business incubators; feasibility studies; advanced telecommunications and computer networks for medical, educational, and job training services; and community facilities that spur economic development. Rural Development anticipates a maximum loan amount of \$2 million and a maximum grant amount of \$300,000. Awards are made on a competitive basis to utilities that will lend the funds for local economic development efforts. Application deadlines and more information on this program is available [here](#).
- The [U.S. Economic Development Administration \(EDA\)](#) has **made available \$587 million to eligible grantees in communities affected by natural disasters in 2018 and floods and tornadoes in 2019**. Applications should provide long-term, regionally-oriented, and collaborative development strategies designed to generate economic growth and resilience. No application deadlines apply and the EDA will continue to accept applications on a rolling basis. For more information, click [here](#).
- The [U.S. Economic Development Administration \(EDA\)](#) is encouraging its economic development partners to find ways to highlight Opportunity Zones in their regions in order to attract investment and encourage public-private partnerships. **EDA has created an EDA Opportunity Zones Webpage for economic development stakeholders** and others to use as a resource to help them foster job creation and attract private investment. Click [here](#) to access the EDA resource page.
- The [Columbia Center on Global Energy Policy](#) and [Brookings](#) have released a new report, "The Risk of Fiscal Collapse in Coal-reliant Communities" that **examines the implications of a carbon-constrained future on coal-dependent local governments in the United States. It considers the outlook for US coal production over the next decade under such conditions and explores the risk this will pose for county finances**. The paper also considers the responsibilities of jurisdictions to disclose these risks, particularly when they issue bonds, and the actions leaders can take to mitigate the risks. Click [here](#) to access the report.
- The [Appalachian Regional Commission \(ARC\)](#) has **released a new report summarizing the findings of six listening sessions focused on substance abuse related workforce issues**. At these sessions ARC leadership discussed these issues with representatives from local and state government, treatment and recovery service providers, workforce development entities, employers, law enforcement, and individuals currently in recovery. The report summarizes the outcome of these discussions,

which identified five common themes that ARC should consider when addressing the economic issues stemming from substance abuse. Click [here](#) to access the report.

- 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

- 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 EDA Denver 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.
- Join the [Smart Management for Small Water Systems](#) team for a free [webinar](#) on **August 29 at 1 p.m. ET** that **will cover opportunities for creatively aggregating funding to be used for watershed management**. Specifically, the webinar will look at innovative approaches and answer the questions: How can new revenue be generated for watershed management? How can the revenue be pooled and managed regionally? And how can the revenue be spent to maximize water quality and community benefits? Participants will learn about existing revenue mechanisms for watershed protection across the country, case studies for regional watershed management, and justifications for wholistic watershed management. Participants will also learn about additional considerations that ought to influence the way in which these approaches are implemented. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
- Registration is open for the 2019 [EntreEd Forum](#), hosted by the [National Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education](#), that will take place in Lexington, Kentucky on **September 27-29**. The EntreEd Forum **provides attendees with a unique opportunity to learn about entrepreneurship education via hands-on workshops, engaging activities, and an interactive agenda**. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.

[here](#) for more details and to register.

- **EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization** is **hosting a free three-part webinar series called RE-Development Academy for Communities that will discuss the process for redeveloping a contaminated site through the eyes of a property developer.** Community members (including local governments, economic development, and environmental protection departments, community nonprofits, brownfield redevelopment agencies & other local stakeholders), technical assistance providers, and state and tribal partners are encouraged to participate. Click each of the links separately to register for the webinars: [September 13 Webinar: Redevelopment Process: The Intersection of Real Estate and Brownfields](#); [October 18 Webinar: Peering into the Crystal Ball: How the Market Decides Future Use!](#); [November 8 Webinar: Pulling Back the Curtain: How Developers Make Money!](#)
- Sponsored by the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) and the [National Endowment for the Arts](#), the [Appalachian Gateway Communities Workshop](#) on **November 5-7 in Bristol, TN** will **provide teams with skills to capitalize on opportunities related to sustainable drivers for local economic development, cultural heritage and natural resource tourism, public arts promotion, and preservation and stewardship of community character.** In addition to enhancing a community's natural and historic assets, the role of the arts—particularly in revitalizing downtowns—will be explored by community teams to assist in developing strategies to safeguard community character and drive local economic development. The Appalachian Gateway Regional Workshop is open to teams of 4-7 members from communities that are entry points to Appalachia's most important natural assets—national and state parks and forests! Click [here](#) to learn more and apply by **September 16**.
- [Community Builders](#) is offering the [Building Better Places Training](#) on **November 6-8, 2019 in Grand Junction, CO**. Over two and a half days of intensive training, **community teams build leadership and understanding of planning, policy, development tools, community engagement and strategies for implementation.** Each team will leave the BBPT with a shared understanding of market conditions, opportunities for quality growth, key barriers impacting projects in their community, and how to overcome them. Community teams work with a dedicated facilitator to create a clear community action plan that identifies both short and long-term action items to accomplish the goals established at the training. Click [here](#) to learn more and apply by **September 16**.

A Dose of Inspiration

- **Sayed Masihullah Fakh, an Afghani Fulbright student who works for the Afghanistan Ministry of Mines & Petroleum, recently visited Williamson, West Virginia and met with local residents and leaders who are working on economic and community development issues.** From his blog post: "After seeing Williamson's dedication to community, I searched for a way to maintain a lasting connection with the town. I wanted something to remind me of the amazing moments I spent with the

genuinely nice people I met, including moments of serene silence on Second Avenue, where I had a veggie omelet. Thus, I came up with the idea of planting a red maple tree in a quiet corner of Williamson's elementary school, and someday, I hope to go back and pay a visit." Click [here](#) to read the blog.



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.