

August 7, 2019



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

- **Hayden Station is scheduled to close by 2036 and officials in Routt County, CO are looking into ways to support local residents and businesses through diversification efforts**, reports the *Craig Daily Press*. From the article: "Generations of Yampa Valley residents have dug and burned coal, and city and county Economic Development Director John Bristol said those are good jobs at the plant, which provide families with salaries, health insurance, and retirement benefits. The money in those salaries also gets circulated to local businesses, pays mortgages and, through purchases, makes its way into other local pockets... Attracting and keeping businesses in the county can help achieve multiple goals, both in providing jobs and diversifying tax revenues in the county. [Hayden Town Manager Mathew Mendisco] said Hayden is focused on growth, in building out the town under existing land use platform, but particularly in boosting commercial growth in the West Routt special districts." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **Extracting Rare Earth Materials as part of mine cleanup efforts can provide an economic boost to coal communities and also improve the environment**, reports *WOWK*. From the article: "While they aren't household names, Rare Earth Elements are used in many products. Cell phones, computers, magnets, and especially in national defense hardware... Coal mines produce pollutants known as acid mine drainage. When it rains, water passes through the old mine and down a hill carrying the acid mine drainage. But the state built a water treatment plant here. Water comes in and goes through a clarifying process. The clean water is safely released, but the sludge is pumped back up the hill where it dries and hardens. That sludge – and some of the water – contains those Rare Earth Elements that can be processed and sold." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **The Northern Cheyenne Tribe in Montana has received \$2 million in federal funding to support a 26-acre solar farm**, reports the *Sidney Herald*. From the article: "The project, to be located near Busby, should generate 2.6 megawatts of power, enough electricity to power about 470 homes... Located in a southeast portion of Montana where there isn't natural gas service, residents of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation either rely on electricity to heat their homes, or use propane delivered by truck. Both services can be expensive.... Less than a half-hour up the road, Colstrip Power Plant and Rosebud Coal Mine have been reliable employers for the Northern Cheyenne since the 1970s. But the power plant's future appears uncertain. The two oldest of the Colstrip's four units are scheduled to close at year's end." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *West Virginia Public Broadcasting* reports on **the economic and environmental impacts of growing giant miscanthus on former coal lands, as well as some of the challenges in finding a market for this biomass**. From the article: "While other agricultural crops struggle with the poor soil quality here from past mining, giant miscanthus thrives...[F]or every two tons of grassy material a regular pasture produces, [West Virginia University Professor Jeff Skousen] estimates miscanthus grows 10 to 12 tons. That grassy material is what is called biomass, which can be turned into value-added products like heating pellets, biofuels like ethanol, and more...Skousen and other researchers see potential in giant miscanthus not only to create

economic opportunity in Appalachia but to revitalize reclaimed strip mines and help reduce the emissions that cause climate change. Yet the commercial market for this “power plant” has yet to bloom, and some wonder whether it’s ultimately the best path for reclaimed mine land.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- **This summer, Appalshop, Inc. celebrated the opening of Eastern Kentucky’s largest net-metered renewable energy system.** From the article: “With 192 panels incorporated into the roof of a freestanding “solar pavilion” on Appalshop’s grounds, and another 42 solar panels on the roof of its Boone building across the street, the net-metered system will generate more than 12 houses’ worth of electricity, more than any other renewable system in the region. Together, the panels will produce 60-70 percent of Appalshop’s monthly energy usage (some months, over 100 percent) and save an additional \$100,000 over the panels’ initial cost.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- The [National Endowment for the Arts \(NEA\)](#) is seeking applicants for **Our Town grants**. “**Our Town**” is the NEA’s creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the NEA supports projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. These projects require a partnership between a local government entity and nonprofit organization, one of which must be a cultural organization, and should engage in partnership with other sectors (such as agriculture and food, economic development, education and youth, environment and energy, health, housing, public safety, transportation, and workforce development). Matching grants range from \$25,000 to \$200,000, with a minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount. The deadline to apply for these grants is **August 8**. For more information and applications are available [here](#).
- The [US Department of Labor](#) is seeking applicants for the *Re-Employment Support and Training for the Opioid Related Epidemic (RESTORE)* grant program. **RESTORE grants will directly address the employment needs of women affected by the opioid crisis and combat its impact in some of the hardest hit areas of the country.** Applicants will establish or build on cooperative relationships among service providers and key stakeholders in order to train and employ women workers who have been adversely affected by the opioid crisis. Applicants may propose to serve women workers in communities impacted by the health and economic effects of widespread opioid use, addiction, and overdose. The grants are intended to provide employment training, career services, and supportive services to women who have been directly or indirectly affected by the opioid crisis in order to support positive outcomes for women participants. The deadline to apply is **August 23**. More information on this program and applications are available [here](#).
- 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 relend the funds for local economic development efforts. Application deadlines and more information on this program is available [here](#).
- 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 [Geos Institute](#) has recently launched the Climate Ready Communities program which includes **a free, step-by-step Practical Guide to Building Climate Resilience.** This Guide is based on 10 years of experience helping communities understand and adapt to changing climate conditions and the proven framework known as Whole Community Resilience developed by the Geos Institute during this time. This framework uses a cross-sector, multi-stakeholder approach that is

adaptive over time and creates multiple benefits across the community. Climate Ready Communities aims to help local leaders develop climate resilience plans, while also strengthening local adaptive capacity to ensure that communities have the skills necessary to implement and update their plans over time. Click [here](#) to learn more.

- 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.
- 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](#) 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!](#)

A Dose of Inspiration

- The [Utah Coal Country Strike Team](#), initiated by the University of Utah's [Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute](#), **is a multi-disciplinary team of experts that has secured a \$500,000 state appropriation, landed commitments from over two dozen large employers and organizations, and developed an evidence-based, counterfactual trend model to measure success.** The Strike Team's work plan calls for harnessing the strengths of two public universities to train/re-train workers, invest in tourism infrastructure, revitalize housing in the community, and reinvent economic development incentives. Click [here](#) to watch a new video to learn more about the Strike Team, its vision, and goals.

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