

September 18, 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](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

- The *Adventure Journal* reports on **outdoor recreation opportunities in Southwest Virginia that are tapping into the region's beauty, history, and trails to diversify the economy and attract residents and tourists.** From the article: "Many places, like St. Paul, have turned to outdoor recreation, including paddling, biking, hiking, hunting, fishing, and driving off-road vehicles. Outdoor activities appeal partly because of the region's natural beauty and access to national forests, but also because they complement other economic development efforts. The underlying theory proponents put forward suggests people come first to visit and then start to move to these places. Broadband internet has created more opportunities for people to live wherever they like, and many choose to live in places with close access to recreation. As more people are attracted to the area, economic development follows as employers chase talent." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **Wyoming is moving towards the creation of so-called "blockchain banks" that could be in place by next summer and position the state as a leader in the field,** according to the *Wyoming Business Report*. From the article: "About five new "blockchain banks" could bring as much as \$20 billion in assets into Wyoming by summer 2020 as applications open for the new type of bank charter Oct. 1. Lawmakers are currently working to refine the law passed in 2019 that allows for "Special Purpose Depository Institutions" in Wyoming, a national first that has put Wyoming on the map for "underserved" financial markets like cryptocurrency, blockchain, coal, paycheck lending, and firearms... The new charters, colloquially known as SPDI (pronounced speedy) banks, don't require backing by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., instead relying on a 100% cash reserve for securing all cryptocurrency assets like the well-known, but less widely understood bitcoin." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **Brandon Dennison, the founder of Coalfield Development Corporation, recently received the Heinz Award for Technology, Economy, and Employment** and was interviewed by the *Daily Yonder* about Coalfield's workforce development and training model, his vision for the future of Appalachia, and more. From the article: "We're creating new businesses, and the businesses are staffed by local people. The businesses are designed to show what a new economy that's not just coal can look like. They're designed to tap into that creative ingenuity and that grit that I really believe is here and that I see is here every day. So, I think what makes [Coalfield Development] different from other social enterprises is we put people straight to work. We're not just a training program where you get a certificate. We're an employer, and we're an employer of local people. We're betting our whole business model on the ingenuity and the creativity of local people." Click [here](#) to read the article.
- *Belt Magazine* reports on **multiple food system initiatives underway in West Virginia that are supporting local economies, encouraging local ownership, and providing fresh foods to residents.** From the article: "In the face of a giant broken food system, [efforts like these] can feel like just a drop in the bucket. But local food organizers say it's an

important start. "It's hard to know these things and to feel so small within the system," [Amanda Marple, general manager of FIRSHAND Cooperative] said. "But having a more collective or cooperative approach is something to make you feel not quite as lost or as individualized." Click [here](#) to read the article.

- **CCU Coal and Construction in Eastern Ohio has announced it will cut half of its workforce – 205 jobs – by the end of next month and is looking at diversifying its own operations** in the face of the changing energy market, reports the *Columbus Dispatch*. From the article: "[Chuck Ungurean, CCU Coal's owner] said he is trying to diversify the company away from its dependence on coal to include earth-moving operations. He said he bought the old Westermoreland assets in an attempt to preserve jobs and to begin reclaiming the company's mining operations. "The bottom line is that reclamation liabilities have been taken care of, we're pursuing other interests to keep as many people working as possible and we hope to recall as many as possible depending on what we come up with," he said." Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- The [US Environmental Protection Agency](#) **invites communities interested in revitalizing neighborhoods through development of local food systems to apply for [Local Foods, Local Places](#) technical assistance.** Local Foods, Local Places supports projects that create livable, walkable, economically vibrant main streets and mixed-use neighborhoods; boost economic opportunities for local farmers and main street businesses; and improve access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged populations. Eligible applicants include local governments, Indian tribes, and nonprofit institutions and organizations proposing to work in a neighborhood, town, or city of any size anywhere in the United States. Communities with projects located in [federally designated Opportunity Zones](#) will receive special consideration. Highest consideration will be given to those communities who can identify how Local Foods, Local Places assistance will leverage the Opportunity Zone designation to support implementation of the resulting action plan. The deadline is **September 30**. Complete application instructions are available [here](#).
- The [US Economic Development Administration](#) has **made \$587 million available for eligible applicants in communities affected by disasters in 2018 and 2019.** Applicants should propose long-term, regionally-oriented, and collaborative strategies designed to generate economic growth and resilience. EDA will continue to accept applications on a rolling basis. For more information, 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 U.S. Census Bureau recently released a [2020 Census Toolkit for State and Local Officials](#). The **toolkit provides resources designed to help increase response rates to the Census and motivate constituents to respond**. The results of the Census ultimately impact federal funding and support that communities receive. Encouraging accurate and complete Census participation and results helps ensure adequate federal support for communities and regions across the country. Click [here](#) to access the toolkit.
- The [US Economic Development Administration](#) 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 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 [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](#).

## Events and Trainings

- 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.

- The [Western Governors' Association](#) is holding a workshop series this fall as part of the [Reimagining the Rural West Initiative](#). **The workshops will provide a forum for rural practitioners, stakeholders, and policymakers to discuss opportunities and challenges facing rural communities in the West**, share best practices from across the region, and inform Western Governors' policy on rural issues. WGA encourages anyone with experience and expertise in rural development to come and share their perspective at any of the regional workshops. More information and agendas for each event can be found via the registration links below, or by emailing Lauren DeNinno at [ldeninno@westgov.org](mailto:ldeninno@westgov.org).
  - **October 1** - Fargo, ND – register [here](#)
  - **November 4-5** – Santa Fe, NM – register [here](#)
  - **December 3** – Post Falls, ID – register [here](#)
  
- Join [Recast City](#) on **October 10 at 12 p.m. ET** for a free webinar on how to **boost the local economy and create thriving communities through small-scale manufacturing and supporting small business entrepreneurs**. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register.
  
- [EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization](#) is **hosting a free multi-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: [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

- Joe Toscano in *Forbes* describes the **tremendous potential that exists in small communities across the country to drive innovation and new advancements in a variety of sectors**. From the article: "These communities are competing with the big hubs and have a desire to push further, but they need opportunities to move forward. They need to be recognized beyond just another small town or developing community. And it is up to business leaders to see these communities for what they are: both a great business opportunity and a way to strengthen our country's economy, as a whole...By enabling these communities there is an opportunity to discover unique solutions created in smaller markets that not only open up an opportunity for communities to create new jobs but also spur competition and innovation in ways that may not otherwise exist—something our world desperately needs." Click [here](#) to read the article.

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