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# 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



**Editors' Note:** This will be the last issue of "Growing Stronger Economies in Our Nation's Coal Communities" as our project supported by the US EDA Denver Regional Office has concluded. It has been an honor to curate and share news articles, funding opportunities, and training resources with our continuously-growing subscription list over the past two years. We hope the newsletter has supported your local economic diversification and resilience efforts and helped foster a national conversation around these important issues. We are grateful to you for reading the newsletter and sending in content, as well as to the EDA Denver Regional Office for its support on this project which included in-person workshops and conferences, webinars, and remote consultations.

Archives of past newsletters are available at [www.nado.org/readytodiversify](http://www.nado.org/readytodiversify). We will continue to explore opportunities to support your work and share resources with the subscriber list. We also welcome any suggestions on ways to potentially continue the newsletter with a new funding source.

Please stay in touch and many thanks for the good work you are doing everyday in your communities!

Brett Schwartz, NADO Research Foundation, [bschwartz@nado.org](mailto:bschwartz@nado.org)  
Jack Morgan, National Association of Counties, [jmorgan@naco.org](mailto:jmorgan@naco.org)

## Economic Diversification News

- **A new teleworking career training center has opened in Manchester, KY and will provide a wide variety of courses, training, and more to potential teleworkers in the region**, reports the *Sentinel Echo*. From the article: “Eastern Kentucky University, in partnership with Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP), has launched a new Teleworks USA Digital Career Center at its Manchester campus to bring new remote-work preparation and job-placement opportunities in the digital economy to Clay and surrounding counties. The new Teleworks USA Digital Career Center offers a fully equipped workshop training space for prospective teleworkers to complete Teleworks USA’s self-paced customer service and digital literacy workshops. The program allows students to get expert support in preparing to and applying for telework job opportunities that allow them to work at home using a computer over the internet.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **A wind farm in Rosebud County, MT that will be located near the Colstrip Power Plant has received a tax abatement from county commissioners**, reports the *Montana Standard*. From the article: “Clearwater Wind will receive a 50% tax abatement, cutting the annual taxes on the \$500 million wind farm to about \$2.93 million in Rosebud County. The 120-turbine project near the community of Angela crosses into Custer County and could eventually touch Garfield County as well...The Pacific Northwest is the wind farm’s target market. The region’s largest utilities already draw electricity from the 2,000-megawatt Colstrip Power Plant. Two of Colstrip’s four coal-fired units are slated for closure in three months. Capacity on the line servicing the power plant is being eyed by several renewable energy projects.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship Inc. has received funding from US EDA to support entrepreneurship efforts in the region which covers approximately 25% of the state’s land acreage in north central Pennsylvania**, reports the *Bradford Era*. From the article: “The three-year grant...will expand market access for businesses in the Pennsylvania Wilds via an e-commerce maker marketplace, and expansion of the PA Wilds Conservation Shops — brick and mortar gift shops that sell regionally-made products at state parks through a public-private partnership with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)... The EDA investment will also support continued growth of the Center’s entrepreneurial network, the Wilds Cooperative of PA, through expanded education, resources, and networking opportunities for small businesses and other community and economic development stakeholders.” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- **Tri-State Generation and Transmission recently closed its Nucla, CO station last month, ahead of its initial 2022 planned closure**, reports the *Denver Post*. From the article: “Tri-State said in a statement that the closure allows it to meet its deadline for ending operations under Colorado’s plan to cut regional haze...The utility said it will provide \$500,000 over the next five years to the community to help with the transition. The 35 employees will stay to help start decommissioning the plant. Dismantling of the facility, which started operating in 1959, is expected to begin during the first half of 2020. Tri-State spokesman Mark Stutz said in an email Friday that it hasn’t been decided yet how the \$500,000 will be distributed. Employees will stay on the job through the spring of 2020. Stutz said the majority of the workers were planning to retire or move to other

jobs with Tri-State.” Click [here](#) to read the article.

- TechConnect West Virginia and the West Virginia Small Business Development Center **have received a US Small Business Administration grant that will support R&D-focused small businesses throughout WV**, reports the *Register-Herald*. From the article: “[The grant] will raise awareness of the benefits of applying for the federal SBIR/STTR programs while providing financial and technical assistance to help companies and researchers do so. “Everyone agrees we need to grow our economy, and spurring West Virginia’s next generation R&D-focused small businesses to apply for the federal SBIR/STTR programs is a smart way to do it,” Anne Barth, executive director of TechConnect, said...“Researchers can leverage federal and now state money to test new products and services with the goal of establishing new businesses and creating jobs.”” Click [here](#) to read the article.
- Last week, *Forbes* published an op-ed written by Dr. John Fleming, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, promoting the potential of Opportunity Zones. Fleming writes: “With the potential to impact the lives of so many people, including the more than 35 million Americans living in the specially-designated areas, Opportunity Zones can be a powerful driver of transformative investment and economic development in our nation’s low-income neighborhoods... Those looking for socially conscious investing can rest assured that these Opportunity Zone investments will target development in areas of the country that need it most. Last year, the unemployment rate in Opportunity Zones was nearly 1.6 times higher than the average U.S. census tract. Similarly, the average poverty rate across Opportunity Zones exceeded 32%.” Click [here](#) to read the full article.

## Funding Opportunities and Educational Resources

- 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 [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) has begun accepting requests for Technical Assistance (TA) under the new [Distressed Cities Technical Assistance \(DCTA\) Program](#). This TA program is **specifically designed to assist communities with populations under 40,000 that are struggling to recover from natural disaster and economic decline**. The TA program will be community-specific and scaled to ensure a measurable impact on communities’ growth and resilience, as well as an efficient use of public funds. DCTA may be used to build capacity around: financial management; economic revitalization; affordable housing development; disaster recovery and resiliency planning; cross-sector partnership building; and utilizing federal

development programs. To learn more about this new TA program, including eligibility requirements and how to request assistance, visit the [Distressed Cities Technical Assistance](#) page on the HUD Exchange.

- 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](#) has published a [Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) notice in the Federal Register **seeking public input on how the federal government can better align its economic development programs and resources in order to encourage and facilitate investments in economically distressed communities, including in qualified Opportunity Zones**. EDA recognizes that while Opportunity Zone incentives are intended to leverage private capital, economically distressed communities may not be able to rely on private capital and tax incentives alone to create the necessary conditions for long-term sustainable economic growth. Many communities are also in need of public sector investment and technical assistance. EDA requests information and input from stakeholders who support economic development in Opportunity Zones, including state, local, and tribal officials; institutions of higher education; nonprofits, philanthropic organizations and other impact investors; economic development practitioners and other experts in relevant disciplines; and affected stakeholders in the private sector. More information is available [here](#). Comments must be submitted by **October 18**.
- 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

- The webinar recording is available for the recent webinar [“The Art of the Narrative: Creating CEDS and Other Plans that People Want to Read”](#), hosted by the [NADO Research Foundation](#) and [Formation PR + Brand](#). This webinar shared tools and techniques that can be used to incorporate eye-catching and informative messaging, design, and imagery into your CEDS and other plans. From the webinar recording – which is now available on-demand – you can learn how to harness the power of storytelling and tap into compelling visuals to draw in your audience with materials that make the CEDS come alive and speak to a variety of audiences. Click [here](#) to access the recording and presentation slides.
- 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.
- The [2019 Women & Technology Conference will](#) be held in **Charleston, WV on October 21** and will **feature inspiring women speakers on the cutting edge of technology, value-added panel discussions, quality networking and more.** Technology touches all aspects of life, and the information shared at the conference will be relevant to all industry sectors and educational institutions. Women working in technology fields as well as those interested in pursuing, or migrating to, a technology-focused career. In addition, anyone interested in exploring ways to bridge the tech gender gap and inspiring future generations of girls to pursue STEM fields is encouraged to attend. 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!](#)

- 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).
  - **November 4-5** – Santa Fe, NM – register [here](#)
  - **December 3** – Post Falls, ID – register [here](#)

### A Dose of Inspiration

- **Norton, VA is positioning itself as an outdoor recreation destination as part of a larger effort to better diversify the local and regional economy**, reports *WEKU*. From the article: "In the 1970s, Norton began developing the Flag Rock Recreation Area, a 1,000-acre park a few miles from downtown. Norton ramped up those efforts more recently and the park is a central piece of the city's plan to reorient its economy to outdoor recreation. New campgrounds and hiking trails have been built. A visitor's center that will be easily accessible from downtown is in the works. The city has also built eight miles of mountain bike trails, with more in development...Recreation isn't a silver bullet, [Norton trail coordinator Shayne Fields] said, but it could be a key part of the solution. "If we want to get an industry here — something other than the coal industry, you know, since it's probably not coming back — we're going to have to provide some kind of environment here that's going to make those young working people want to stay here," he said. "If we've got a good recreational economy-based setup here, we'll have venues for people to come and play."" Click [here](#) to read the article.



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