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WV projects get \$5.6 million in latest POWER grants

October 26, 2016



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SAM OWENS | Gazette-Mail file photo

In Huntington in August, Earl Gohl (right), co-chairman of the Appalachian Regional Commission, and other officials announced more than \$38 million in grants nationwide under President Barack Obama's POWER Initiative to help coalfield communities in West Virginia and across the country. A second round of grants, announced Wednesday, will distribute more than \$5 million to West Virginia projects and nearly \$28 million nationwide.

Coalfield communities in West Virginia and around the country received millions of dollars on Wednesday, as part of the second round of grants under President Barack Obama's POWER Initiative.

The program is designed to help communities that are hard-hit by the decline of the coal industry. In August, West Virginia programs and communities received more than \$16 million as part of the first round of grants — nearly 40 percent of the money given out.

This time around, West Virginia projects got more than \$5.6 million, of nearly \$28 million distributed.

The grants are administered by the Appalachian Regional Commission and the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration.

The largest West Virginia grant was \$2.04 million to the city of Bluefield for the Bluefield Commercialization Station project. The project will turn a 50,000-square-foot freight station into a business incubator, and will “support the creation and retention of 72 jobs, expand at least 12 local businesses, and leverage \$510,000 in private investment,” according to a White House fact sheet. The Shott Foundation of Bluefield is also contributing to the project.



The Marshall University Research Corporation received more than \$1.5 million for the Sprouting Farms project, which aims to help develop agriculture in nine Southern West Virginia counties. Wednesday's grant will go toward training programs, buying and upgrading the project site and facilities, and supporting new agricultural businesses and program graduates. The project will create 20 new businesses and 33 new jobs, according to the White House fact sheet, and is also being supported by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

Other grants announced Wednesday include:

- \$362,989 to the Center for Rural Health Development in Hurricane for the WV Rural Health Infrastructure Loan Fund project, a revolving loan fund designed to strengthen the health care industry in 25 West Virginia counties.

- \$150,000 to Reconnecting McDowell in Charleston develop an economic development and diversification strategy for the city of Welch and McDowell County centered on the Renaissance Village Apartments, a housing project that will develop rental housing in downtown Welch for teachers and young professionals employed in the area.

- \$140,000 to West Virginia Connecting Communities in Charleston, working with the New River Gorge Trail Association on an economic feasibility study for a regionally-connected bike trail system in Fayette and Nicholas counties.

- \$123,488 to the Region 4 Planning and Development Council in Summersville to develop a strategic plan for the Upper Kanawha Valley, in partnership with the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship.

- \$105,000 to Williamson Health and Wellness Center to provide grant writing assistance, and develop a feasibility study, strategic plan, and preliminary architectural design work for a former “pill mill” in downtown Williamson. If deemed viable, the building will be rebuilt as a one-stop facility that would provide workforce training, opioid addiction and substance abuse treatment services to help people in recovery get ready to join the workforce.

- \$93,495 to the West Virginia Community Development Hub in Fairmont which, in partnership with the International Economic Development Council, will provide technical assistance to Boone, Greenbrier, Lincoln, McDowell and Wyoming counties.

- \$90,000 to the Randolph County Development Authority in Elkins to promote and expand the hardwood industry cluster, in partnership with the Hardwood Alliance Zone.

• \$60,000 to the Webster County Economic Development Authority in Webster Springs to conduct a feasibility study for the development of a multi-county all-terrain vehicle trail system in five counties.

• \$497,000 to the Region 1-Planning and Development Council in Princeton for the Coalfields Cluster Mapping Initiative research project, which will map the coal industry supply chain across Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia.



• \$349,999 to the West Virginia University Research Corporation in Morgantown for the Economic Analysis of Coal Industry Ecosystem in Appalachia project. This study will examine the full ecosystem of the coal industry in Appalachia, and specifically identify, quantify, and map data on all relevant coal industry activity throughout the Appalachian region.

• \$149,998 to Downstream Strategies in Morgantown for the Strengthening Economic Resilience in Appalachian Communities project. This research will explore and document strategies and policies local leaders can use to enhance the future economic prospects of coal-impacted communities.

AP Top 25 Poll

Poll Released: Oct 23

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1	Alabama (60)	1
2	Michigan (1)	3
3	Clemson	4
4	Washington	5
5	Louisville	7

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