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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****APPALACHIAN POWER PROVIDES FUNDING TO SPUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ITS SERVICE AREA**

ROANOKE, Va., December 7, 2017 – Organizations in communities affected by a downturn in the coal industry are among the nonprofits and localities that will receive an economic development grant from Appalachian Power. The awards are part of ongoing efforts to promote economic growth in the company's service territory.

Eight organizations will receive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 through the company's Economic Development Growth Enhancement (EDGE) program administered by John Smolak, economic and business development director. The funds may be used for site development or to support marketing and promotion, or new business development and retention.

Appalachian Power distributes EDGE grants on an annual basis. The company will award \$91,000 in EDGE grants to nonprofits and localities this year.

"Appalachian Power is proud to partner with our local, regional and state organizations on outstanding economic development projects in Virginia and West Virginia," Smolak said. "The EDGE Grant's focus is to help prepare our communities for new job growth and investment opportunities and we want to help them succeed."

The Robert C. Byrd Institute, part of the Marshall University Research Corporation, will receive a \$13,000 EDGE Grant. The RCBI assists West Virginia counties affected by the downturn in the coal industry. The organization said it will use the funds to support research and a feasibility study to determine the potential success of locating an aerospace maintenance, repair and overhaul facility in the tri-state region of West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky.

"With this funding from Appalachian Power, we will be able to expand our efforts and work toward introducing new aerospace businesses into the market," said Charlotte Weber, RCBI's vice president of development.

Below is a complete list of the 2017 EDGE Grant recipients in Virginia and West Virginia.

**Virginia**

- **\$20,000** to assist the Martinsville–Henry County Economic Development Corporation with development of comprehensive marketing materials for the Commonwealth Crossing Industrial Park and the Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT), which will enable companies to recruit, hire, and train employees at a new facility in the park.
- **\$15,000** to support the Roanoke County Economic Development Department with updating its website. The updated site will be interactive and mobile friendly, and include the latest demographic, building and community-related information.
- **\$6,000** in funds to the Amherst County Economic Development Authority to assist with the creation of six conceptual site development plans for specific parcels in two local industrial parks.
- **\$7,000** to the Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority to develop and implement a new marketing plan for the Wildwood Commerce Park, which is an AEP certified site.
- **\$5,000** to support the Virginia’s First Regional Industrial Facility Authority (VFRIFA) to enhance the group’s marketing plan for the New River Commerce Park, which is an AEP certified site. Plans include development of a revised master plan and marketing materials.

**West Virginia**

- **\$13,000** to the Robert C. Byrd Institute (RCBI), part of the Marshall University Research Corporation, to support research and a feasibility study to determine the potential success of an aerospace maintenance, repair and overhaul facility (MRO) for the Tri-State Region of West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky.
- **\$12,500** to the Mercer County Development Authority to enhance and redesign the organization’s website.
- **\$12,500** to the City of Bluefield Economic Development Department to support development of a comprehensive master plan for an 80 acre city-owned business park.

“We are very thankful to Appalachian Power for selecting the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation as a recipient of its EDGE grant program,” said the organization’s President and CEO Mark Heath. “This grant will allow us to pursue more extensive marketing efforts for our newly graded industrial park, Commonwealth Crossing, as well as the new Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training (CCAT) that will be constructed on Tract 1 inside the park.”

Appalachian Power has 1 million customers in Virginia, West Virginia and Tennessee (as AEP Appalachian Power). It is a unit of American Electric Power, one of the largest electric utilities in the United States, delivering electricity and custom energy solutions to nearly 5.4 million customers in 11 states. AEP owns the nation's largest electricity transmission system, a more than 40,000-mile network that includes more 765-kilovolt extra-high voltage transmission lines than all other U.S. transmission systems combined. AEP also operates 224,000 miles of distribution lines. AEP ranks among the nation's largest generators of electricity, owning approximately 26,000 megawatts of generating capacity in the U.S. AEP supplies 3,200 megawatts of renewable energy to customers.

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