

REGIONS ON THE RISE

Energizing & Empowering RDOs

Jack Morgan, Director of Programs
September 2025



NADO provides advocacy, education, research, and training for the nation's regional development organizations (RDOs). NADO and its members promote regional strategies, partnerships, and solutions to strengthen the economic competitiveness and quality of life across America's local communities.

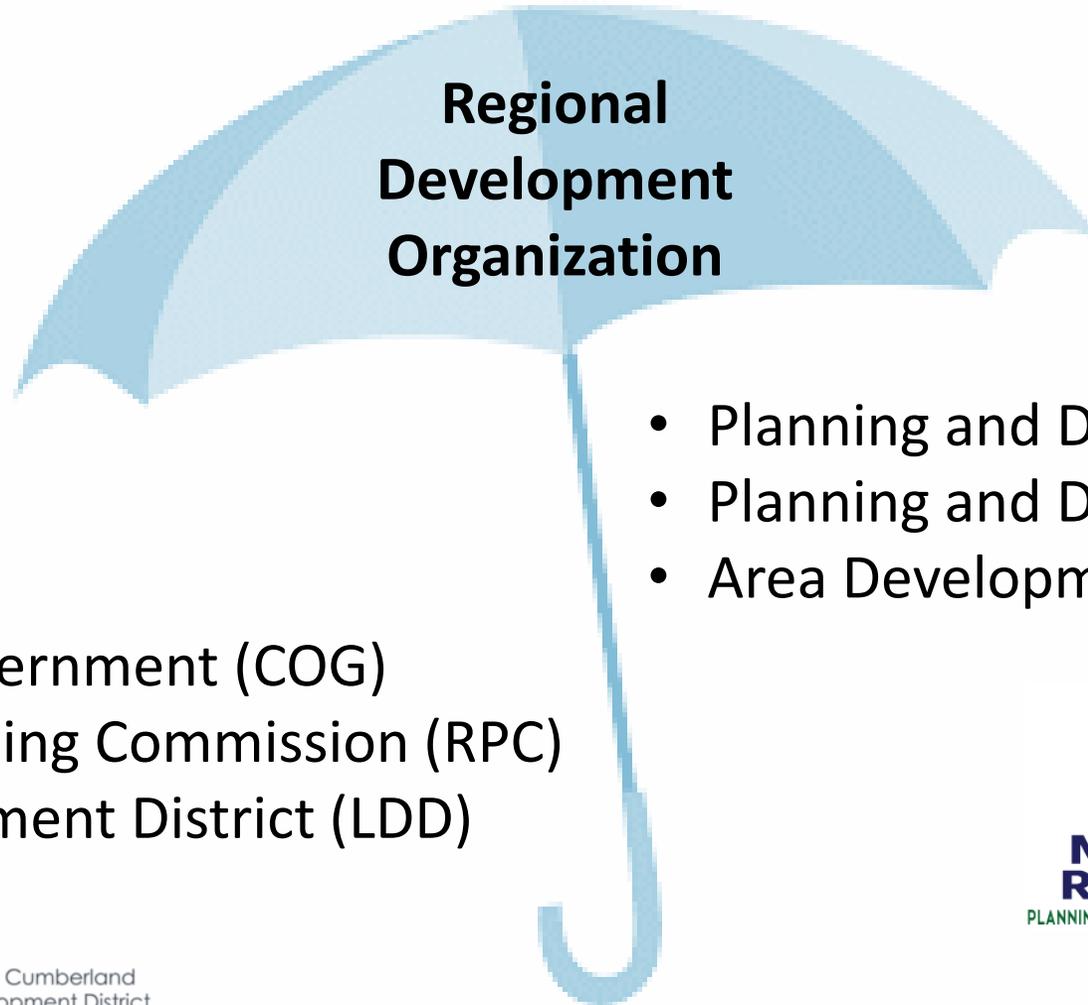


The NADO Research Foundation provides education, research, and training designed for RDO executive leadership, staff, and policy board members. It examines new and innovative practices in regional development and strives to improve the organizational and professional capacity of regional development organizations and their partners.

Regional Development Organization (RDO) is an “Umbrella Term” for:

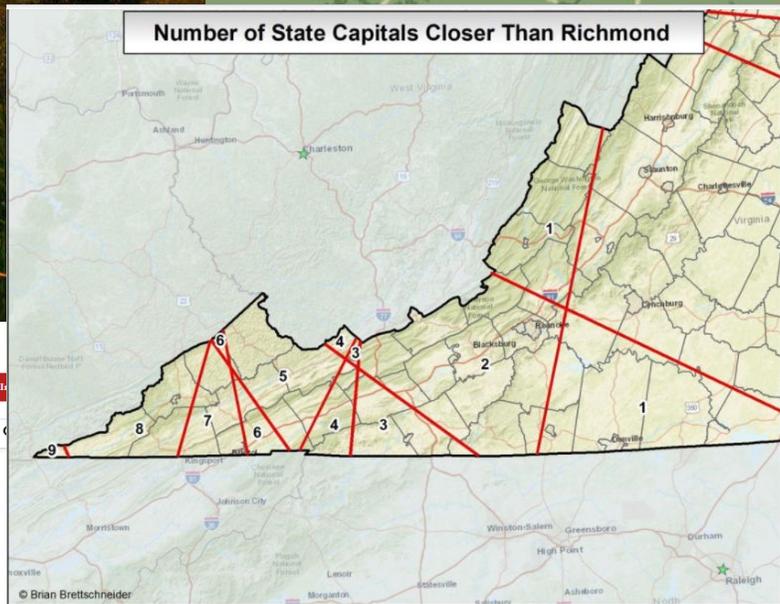
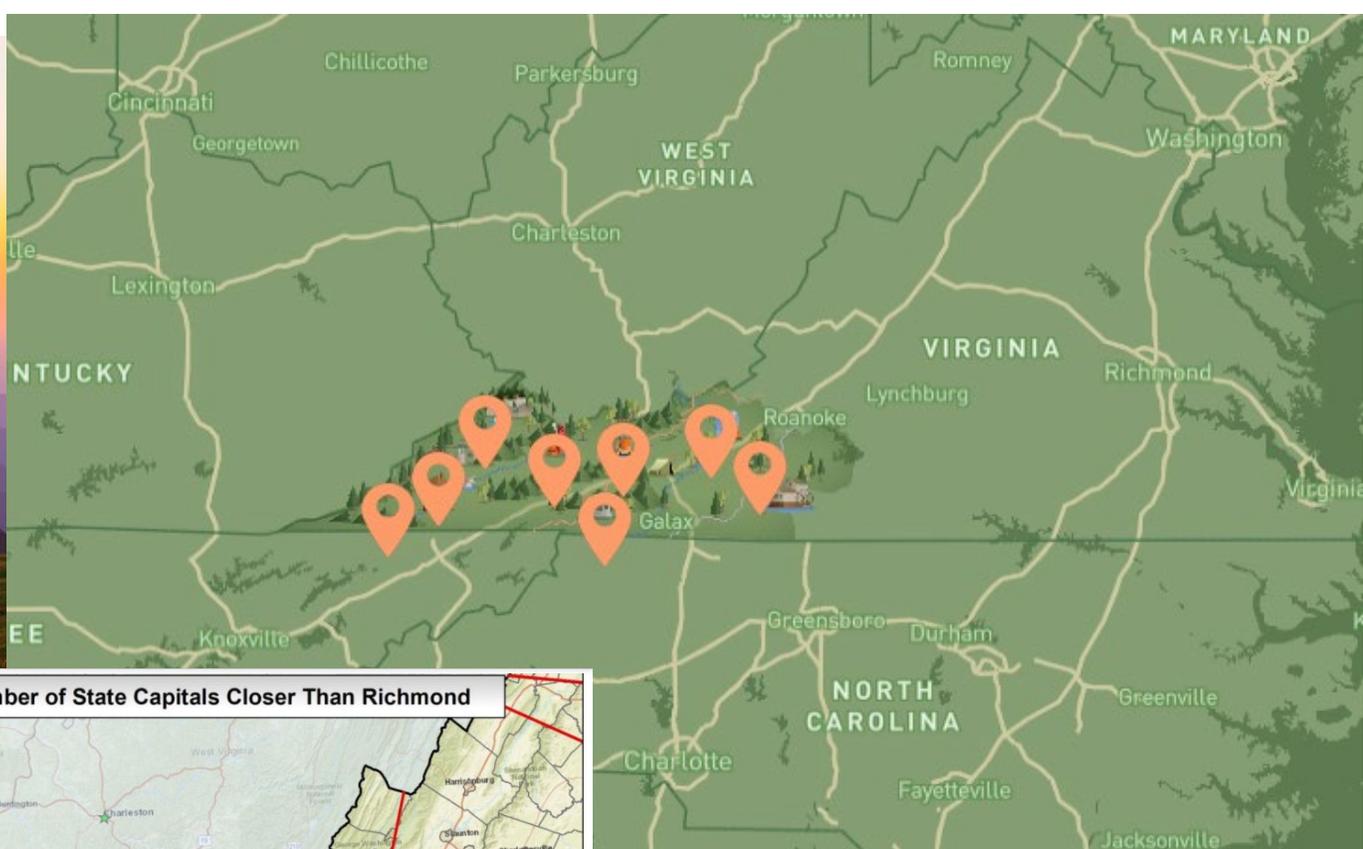


- Council of Government (COG)
- Regional Planning Commission (RPC)
- Local Development District (LDD)



- Planning and Development District (PDD)
- Planning and Development Commission (PDC)
- Area Development District (ADD)





Brian Brettschneider, a mapping hobbyist in Alaska, ran a computer program to find the state that had territory closer to other state capitals than their own. Virginia had more than any other state. The very western tip of Virginia is closer to nine other state capitals than it is to Richmond.

OPINION

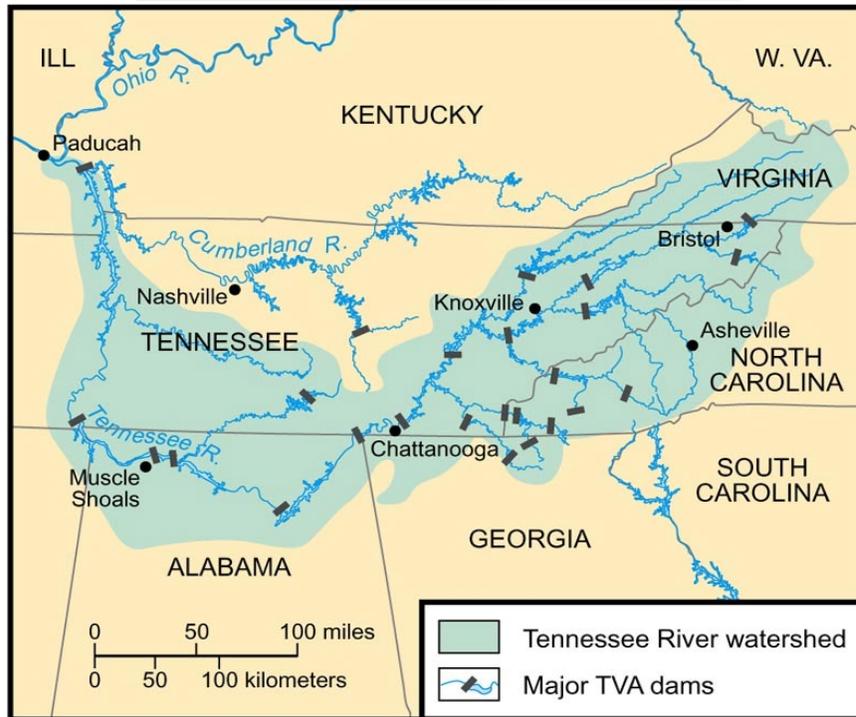
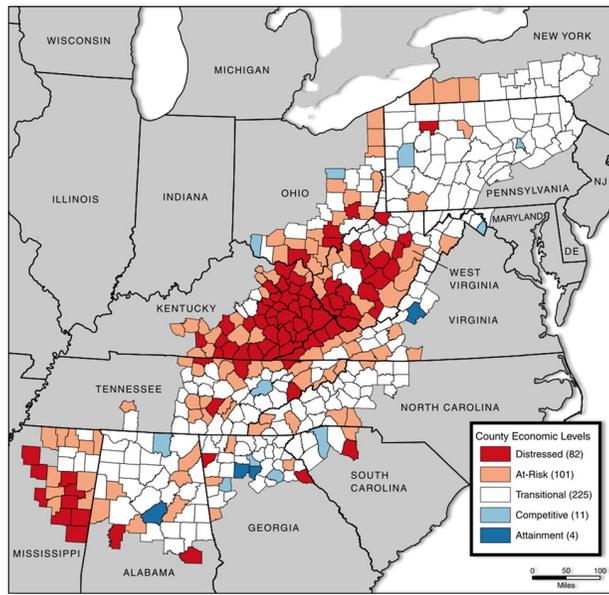
‘Whatever the hell is west of Roanoke.’ Them’s fighting words!

Axios wonders what’s out here, so we’ll tell them.

by **Dwayne Yancey**
April 3, 2024

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Email](#) **We’re in a different state (of mind).**





THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

1962

Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962

1965

-Housing & Community Development Act

-Appalachian Regional Development Act

-Water Resources Planning Act

-Public Works & Economic Development Act

-1966

Economic Development Districts

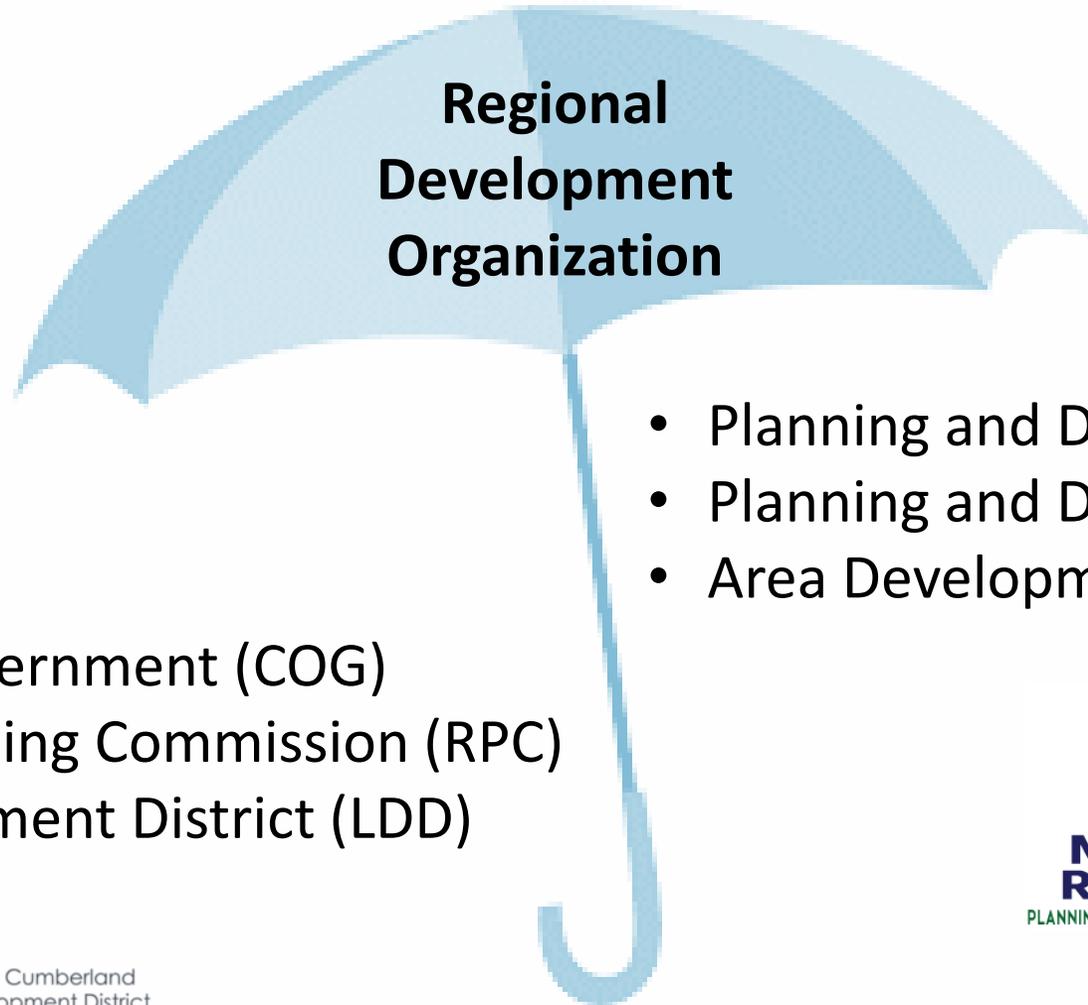
Regional Planning/Development on APA AICP Exam



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Regional Development Organizations (RDOs) support and facilitate:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



RURAL DEVELOPMENT



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



CONVENING LOCAL LEADERSHIP



PUBLIC HEALTH



GRANT WRITING



INFRASTRUCTURE



LENDING



URBAN AND RURAL PLANNING



HOUSING



BROADBAND



RDOs Often Have Federal Designations

Many RDOs have federally-designated roles and provide federally-funded services

U.S. Department of
Commerce



Economic Development
Districts (EDDs)

U.S. Department of
Transportation



Metropolitan Planning
Organizations (MPOs)

U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services



Area Agencies on Aging
(AAAs)

U.S. Department of
Labor

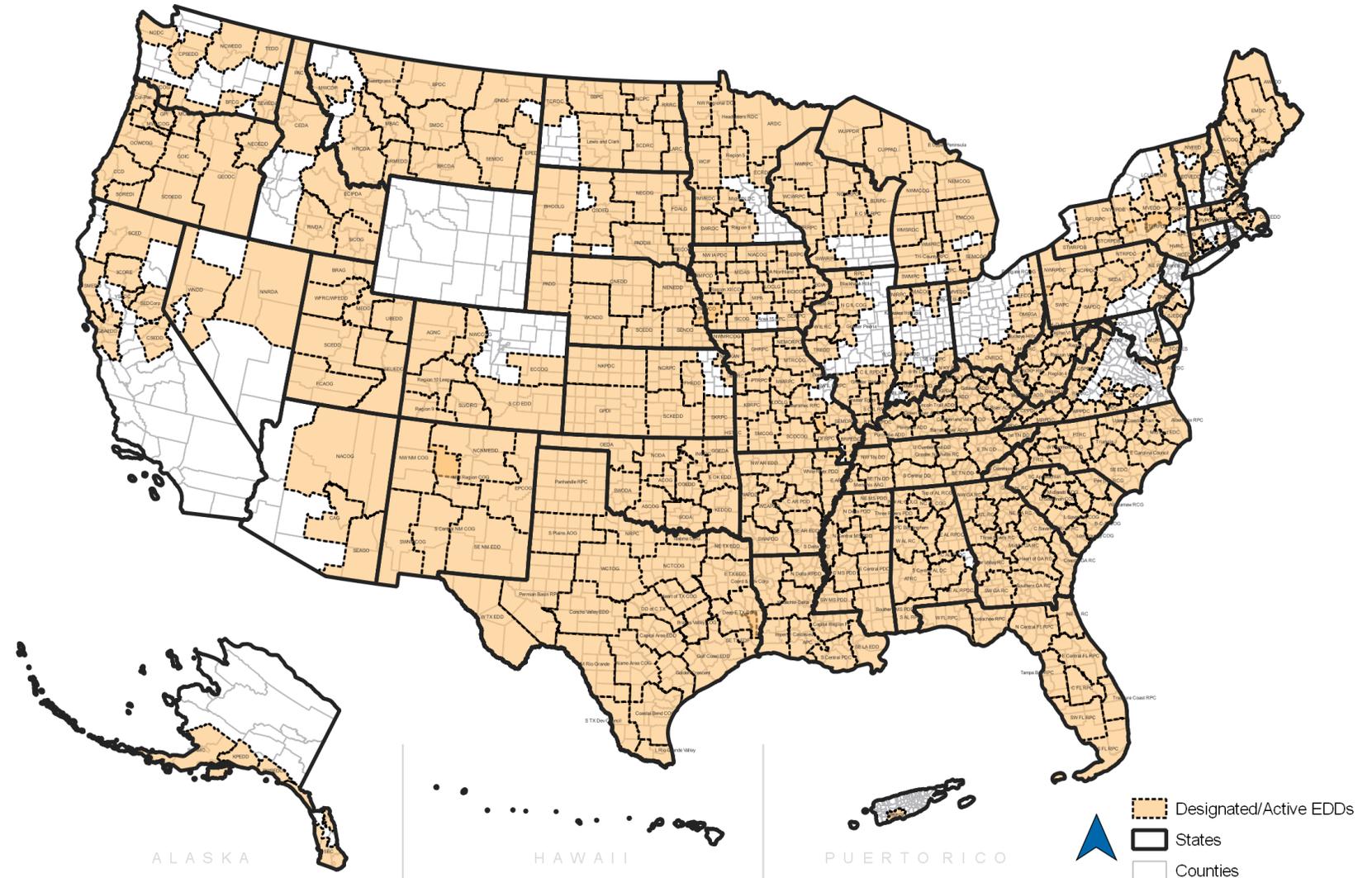


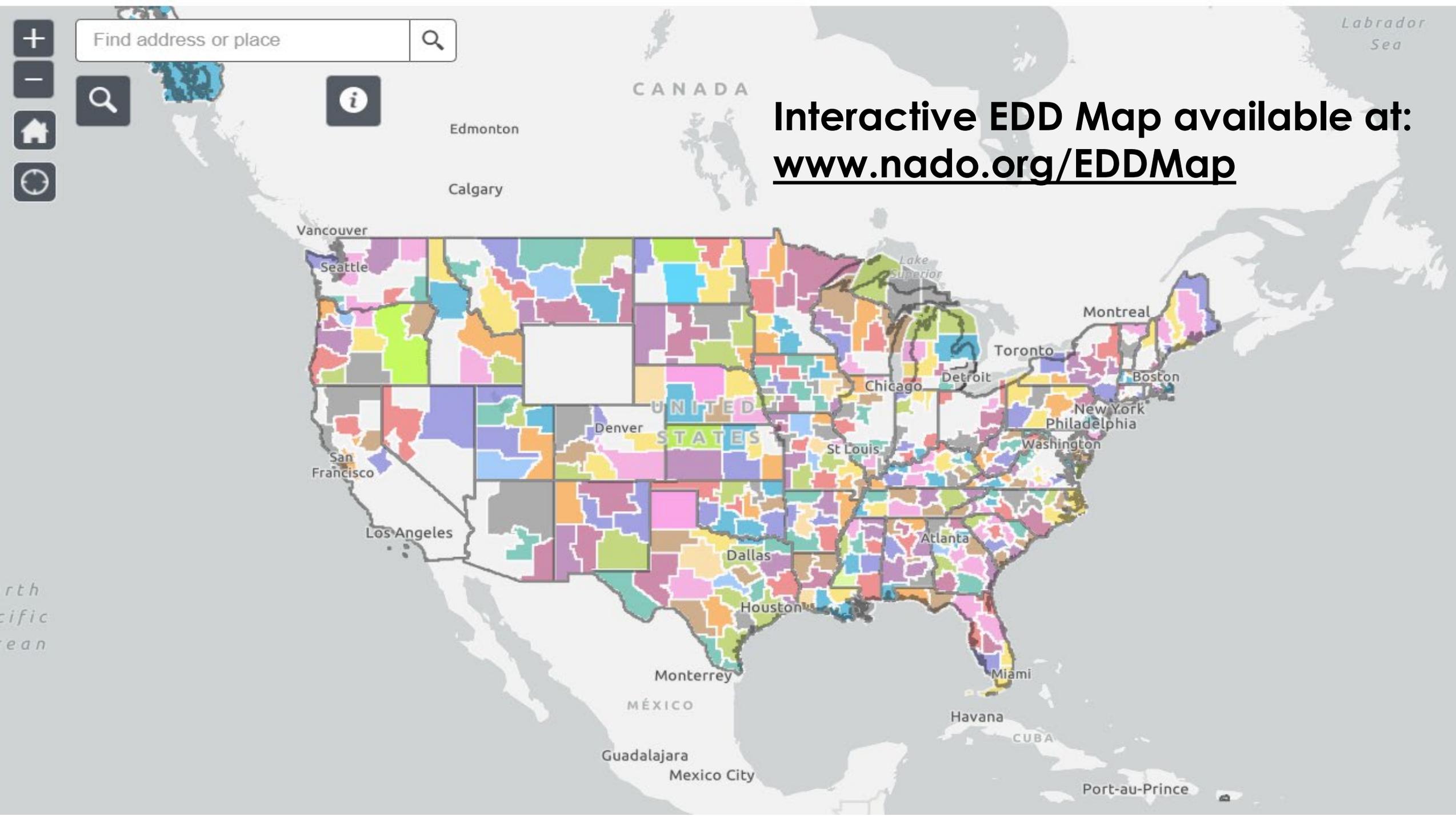
Workforce Investment
Boards (WIBs)

Growth/Expansion of EDDs

By the Numbers:

- **Over 400** designated/active EDDs
- **6** cross-state EDDs
- **85%** of counties covered by an EDD





Find address or place



Interactive EDD Map available at:
www.nado.org/EDDMap

CANADA

Edmonton

Calgary

Vancouver

Seattle

San Francisco

Los Angeles

Denver

UNITED STATES

Dallas

Houston

Monterrey

Guadalajara

Mexico City

MÉXICO

Lake Superior

Chicago

St Louis

Detroit

Toronto

Montreal

Boston

New York

Philadelphia

Washington

Atlanta

Miami

Havana

CUBA

Port-au-Prince

Labrador Sea

North Pacific Ocean



Stronger CEDS, Stronger Regions

CEDS Resource & Training Archive

www.CEDSCentral.com

A New Era for the CEDS

From this...

...to this!



Summary Background An Economic Development Snapshot

PEOPLE

- 72% Small Businesses
- 3,351 Jobs in the region that employ more than 25 people
- 23,423 (2012) vs 22,613 (2015) PROJECTED LABOR FORCE LOSS
- 2.7% AGE 65+
- PERCENT OF POPULATION 65+

TRENDS

- Need for larger workforce
- Need to attract investment
- Need for skilled workforce
- Need for affordable housing
- Need for improved transit
- Need for better schools

INDUSTRIES WITH THE GREATEST FUTURE NEED

- Manufacturing and local resources
- Healthcare and local resources
- Education and local resources
- 1.5 Billion Market value of products
- 7,000 Jobs in the region that employ more than 25 people

Case Study: Career Pathway

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Respond & Recover

East Central Florida CEDS Dashboard

Economy

Employment

Urban-Rural Digital Divide: 55% in rural areas have broadband access vs 94% in urban settings.

Mean Travel Time to Work: 23 minutes

Data Sources: US Census, State Employment Departments, StatsAmerica, State Broadband Report

A New Era for the CEDS

From this...

...to this!



Credit: Everyday Health



A New Era for the CEDS

From this...

...to this!



Credit: countingjobs.com.au

The eight capitals	
The capital	The definition
 Individual	The existing stock of skills, understanding, physical health and mental wellness in a region's people.
 Intellectual	The existing stock of knowledge, resourcefulness, creativity and innovation in a region's people, institutions, organizations and sectors.
 Social	The existing stock of trust, relationships and networks in a region's population.
 Cultural	The existing stock of traditions, customs, ways of doing, and world views in a region's population.
 Natural	The existing stock of natural resources—for example, water, land, air, plants and animals—in a region's places.
 Built	The existing stock of constructed infrastructure—for example, buildings, sewer systems, broadband, roads—in a region's places.
 Political	The existing stock of goodwill, influence and power that people, organizations and institutions in the region can exercise in decision-making.
 Financial	The existing stock of monetary resources available in the region for investment in the region.

Credit: Wealthworks.org

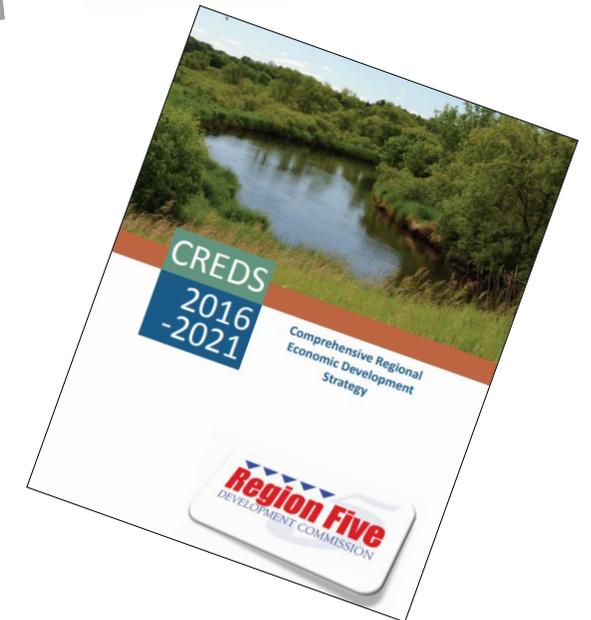
A New Era for the CEDS

From this...



Credit: Industry Week

...to this!

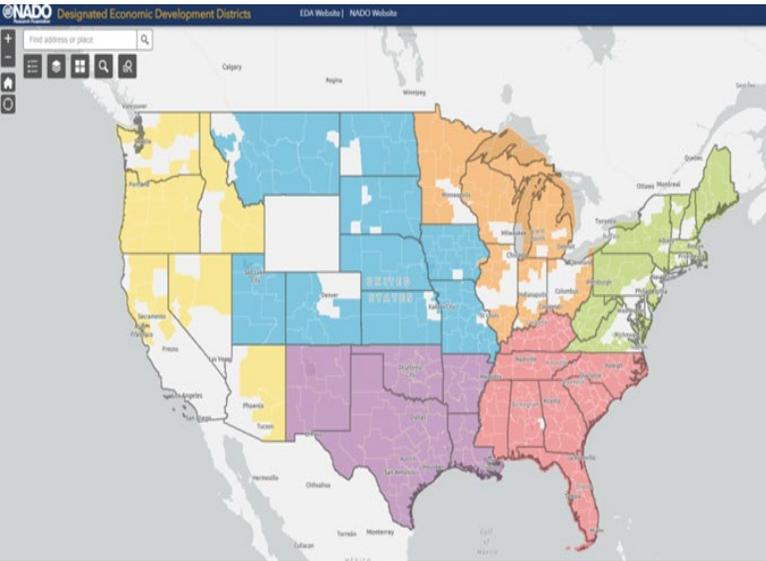




Stronger CEDS, Stronger Regions

CEDS Resource & Training Archive

www.CEDSCentral.com



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9/17/2025



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Educate



Energize



Empower



NADO Advocacy Blog

[Home](#) » [Advocacy Blog](#)

Read about some of NADO's latest advocacy updates and achievements below.



Celebrating 60 Years of the Economic Development Administration: A Pillar of Regional Progress

On behalf of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), we are proud to join in celebrating the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). EDA has



Trump Administration Rolls out New Interagency Workforce Development Plan

On August 12, the U.S. Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Education have released a coordinated national workforce strategy designed to align training programs with current labor market needs and technological



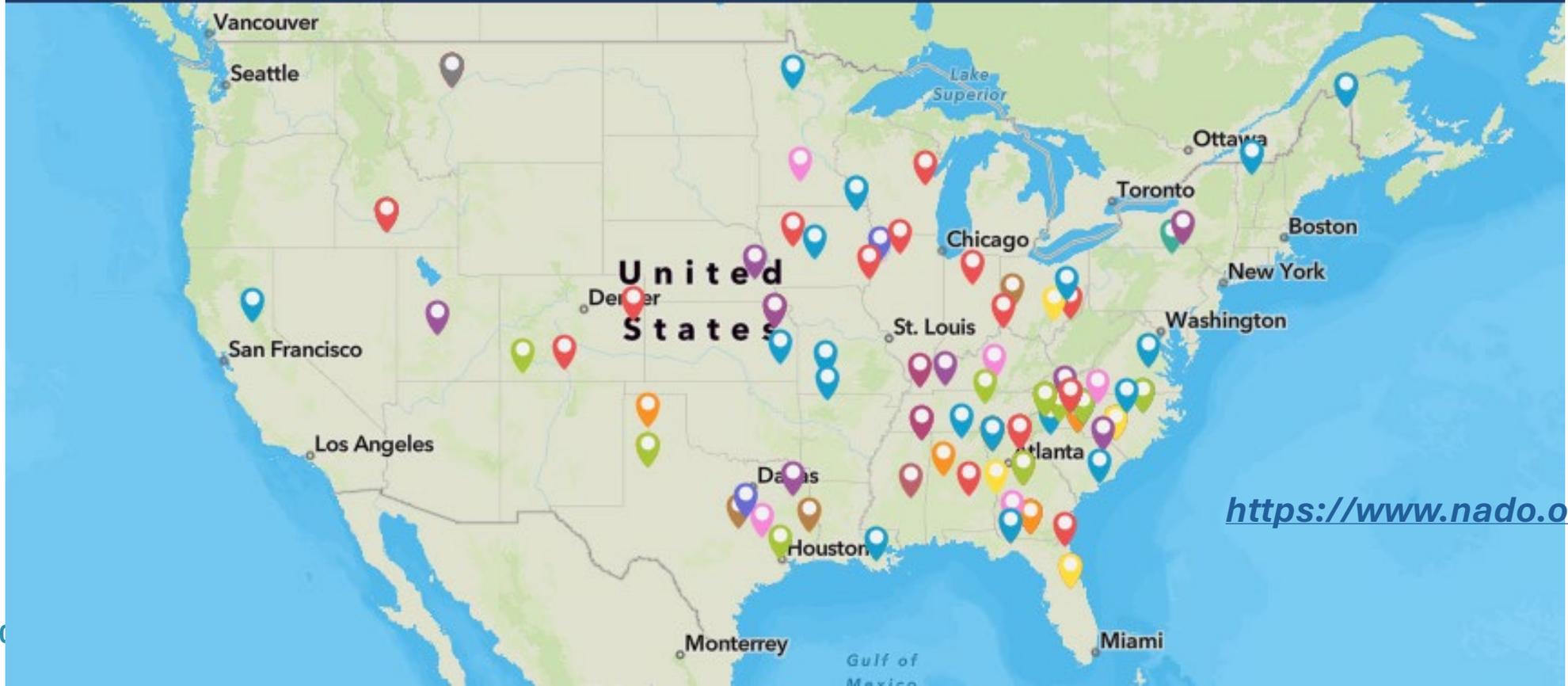
Trump Administration Signs Executive Order Governing Federal Grantmaking

On August 7, 2025, President Trump signed an Executive Order (EO) titled "Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking," which directs federal agencies to strengthen oversight over the discretionary grant process

Program Updates: Member Award Programs



2025 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award and Transportation Excellence Award Winners



<https://www.nado.org/awards/>



EDD CoP

Economic Development District
Community of Practice





EDD CoP
Economic Development District
Community of Practice

EDDs in Action

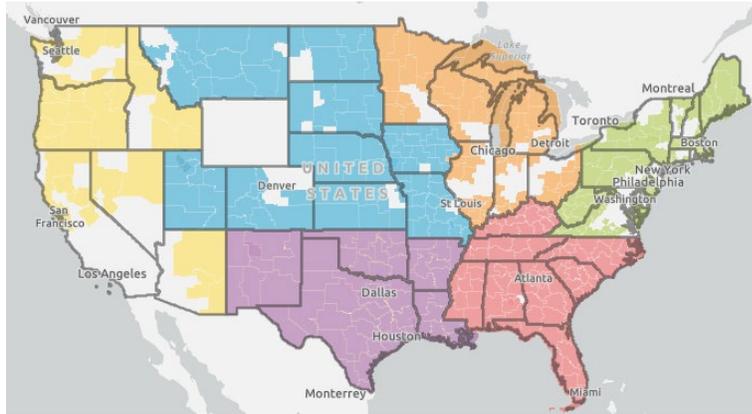
Case Studies Series



NADO
Research Foundation

EDD CoP
Economic Development District
Community of Practice

Virtual EDD Chapter Meet Ups



NADO
Research Foundation

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS AND MILITARY INSTALLATIONS: Partnerships for Future Planning and Community Cooperation

SEPTEMBER 2023 // Planning Report Prepared by NADO Research Foundation

NADO
Research Foundation

INVESTING IN RURAL DOWNTOWNS: What role are EDDs playing?

JANUARY 2024 // Report Prepared by NADO Research Foundation

SOLVING THE HOUSING PUZZLE:

EDDs as Regional Housing Changemakers

NADO
Research Foundation

Wealth Creation

Wealth Creation Home | Wealth Creation Reports | Blog | Training Materials and Resources

Wealth Creation

Multiple Forms of Wealth
A diverse portfolio of wealth creation opportunities is essential for long-term success. This includes not only financial assets but also human capital, social capital, and intellectual property. EDDs can facilitate access to these various forms of wealth through mentorship, training, and investment opportunities.

Economic Development Districts (EDDs)
EDDs are the primary drivers of local economic growth. They provide the infrastructure, services, and support needed for businesses to thrive and create jobs. EDDs can also act as a catalyst for wealth creation by identifying and nurturing high-potential sectors and entrepreneurs.

Local Ownership and Control
Local ownership and control are essential for wealth creation. EDDs can promote local ownership by providing technical assistance, financing, and marketing support to local businesses. They can also encourage local investment and reinvestment in the community.

Improved Livelihoods for Everyone
Wealth creation is not just about the rich getting richer. It's about creating opportunities for everyone to improve their standard of living. EDDs can focus on creating jobs, increasing income, and providing access to essential services and infrastructure.

Value Chain Development
Value chain development is a key strategy for wealth creation. EDDs can help businesses identify and develop their value chains, from production to distribution. This can lead to increased efficiency, higher quality products, and greater market access.

NADO
Research Foundation

Looking Through the Lens of Wealth Creation

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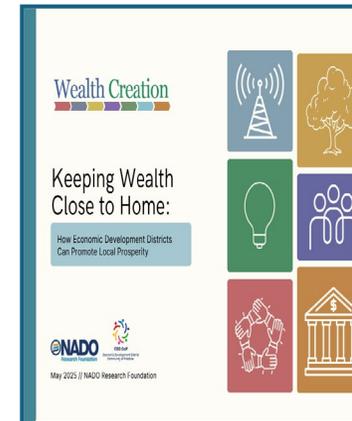
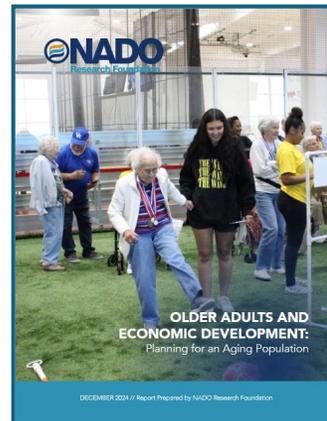
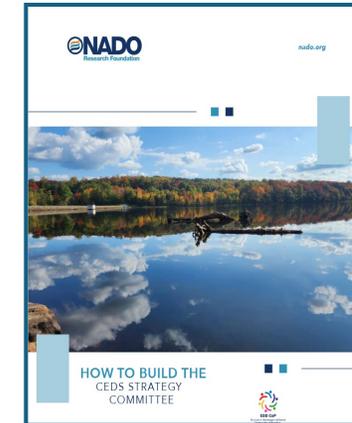
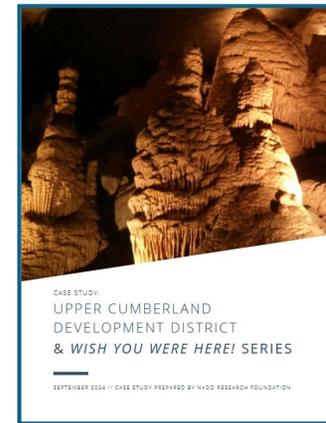
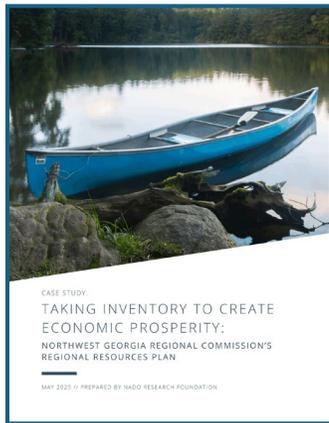
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Program Updates: EDD CoP Training Topics

- ABCs of CEDS
- Helping Communities Navigate Grants & Funding Opportunities
- Communications Strategies
- Navigating the Future: AI & RDOs
- Regions Working Together
- Early Career Engagement
- Trends in Housing
- Housing Finance
- Regional Workforce Development Strategies
- Regional Food Systems
- RDOs and Aging Populations
- New Partners in Value Chain Mapping
- Entrepreneurship & Placemaking
- Leveraging Wealth Creation through the CEDS
- Grant Coast Allowability
- Single Audit Readiness & Survival
- Procurement & Federal Funds
- Indirect Cost Recovery
- Tribal Engagement for EDDs
- Working with EDDs to Build Resilient, Equitable Regions
- Focusing on Regional Assets
- Encouraging Sector Collaboration
- RLF 201
- Thriving at Work: A Team-Based Approach to Health & Wellness
- Leveraging Zoning for Economic Resilience
- Leveraging Data to Support Disaster Preparedness & Recovery
- Building Resilient Value Chains



Program Updates: EDD CoP Publications



Program Updates: EDD CoP Publications

Building the Dream Team:
Recommendations for Attracting, Retaining, and Nurturing EDD Staff

Introduction

At many Economic Development Districts (EDDs) across the country, the quality and passion of staff is often the "secret sauce" that allows these organizations to best serve their local communities. With a dedicated and engaged team, EDDs can more effectively meet their goals of connecting partners, identifying funding opportunities, writing and administering grants, collecting and reporting data, and improving community and regional plans.

An influx of pandemic recovery stimulus funding from federal agencies, including the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), helped facilitate and expand hiring for new positions at EDDs in 2021 and 2022. However, now that many of these funds have been expended, EDDs continue to face the general challenge of attracting and retaining staff. This challenge is particularly acute for districts serving small towns and rural regions, where it is difficult to compete with the more competitive salaries, benefits, and other resources offered by the private sector and organizations in larger markets.

Despite these budget and resource limitations, forward-thinking EDDs are embracing creative and innovative approaches to finding, recruiting, and retaining staff for the long term. As part of the Economic Development District Community of Practice (EDD CoP), executive directors were asked to share some of the creative and meaningful ways they have managed hiring and staffing at their organizations. This resource covers some of the approaches taken by EDDs and also spotlights a handful of executive directors who share in their own words the ways they have retained new staff, shaped their work and office culture, and built a sense of belonging at their organizations.

Some of these examples may require changes to HR policy and need board approval. Others are small tweaks that can be implemented by an executive director almost overnight. Either way, all of these recommendations have the same purpose: to build a team of individuals that are dedicated and passionate about making a long-term difference at their EDDs and throughout their regions.

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- Employee Incentives and Opportunities Page 05

TOOLS OF THE TRADE:
REGIONAL BROWNFIELDS
RFPS FOR EDDS

NADO Research Foundation nado.org

**RESEARCH, PARTNERSHIPS, AND
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BETWEEN EDDS
AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

TIP SHEET

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UEDA

**TRIBAL
ENGAGEMENT 101
FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
DISTRICTS**

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**CREATING
THRIVING
REGIONS
THROUGH
ARTS AND
CULTURE:**
Tips and
Considerations
for EDDs

NADO Research Foundation nado.org

Exploring CSU Spur:
An Anchor Institution Hub for Innovation and Community Engagement

**Connecting Economic Development Districts & Higher Education Institutions:
University of Tennessee and Upper Cumberland Development District Case Study**

The University of Tennessee's Center for Industrial Services (UT CIS), an EDA-designated University Center, has built a longstanding and impactful partnership with Tennessee's Economic Development Districts (EDDs), particularly the Upper Cumberland Development District (UCDD). Through initiatives like the Tennessee Certified Economic Developer (TCED) Program, Asset-Based Planning Initiative, and Tennessee Workforce Development Academy, UT CIS has provided technical assistance, training, and research to help local communities foster economic growth.

The collaboration has been strengthened by consistent leadership, shared expertise, and an emphasis on involving EDDs in program development and decision-making. By bridging higher education and regional economic development, UT CIS and UCDD have demonstrated how tailored partnerships and mutual trust can support sustainable community and workforce development across Tennessee's regions.

**CONNECTING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS
& HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:**
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AND UPPER CUMBERLAND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT CASE STUDY

NADO Research Foundation nado.org **UEDA**

[Click here to read the case study.](#)

**Building Prosperity:
How EDDs are Enhancing CEDS with Wealth Creation Strategies**

Wealth Creation | CEDS Basics | Process | Content | Wealth Creation Initiatives | Summary

This resource offers insights and examples into how Economic Development Districts (EDDs) can incorporate wealth creation into both their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) process and content. There are also examples of how individual EDDs have accomplished this, along with links to tools that can help you get started.

Wealth creation is a community-centered, systems approach to community and economic development that applies a distinctive lens to asset-based development. Wealth creation uses a value chain approach to connect the community's existing assets with new market opportunities to build wealth and create livelihoods that are rooted locally. The focus is on supporting local ownership and building on existing assets to strengthen and grow the local economy.

Wealth creation allows communities to focus on what they have—instead of what they lack—to generate new and sustainable economic opportunities that are rooted in local people, places and businesses.

This framework supports and builds upon existing economic development programs like the CEDS, while allowing a more refined and local approach to economic development planning that ensures that the capacity and resources generated by the plan stay in the community.

**CONNECTING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS
& HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:**
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON AND NORTH-EAST OREGON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT CASE STUDY

NADO Research Foundation nado.org **UEDA**



Program Updates: EDD CoP Peer Learning



EDD CoP
Collaborative Learning Group

EDD CoP Collaborative Learning Group

The Collaborative Learning Group (CLG) is a 6-month virtual training and networking opportunity for new Economic Development District (EDD) staff who have been at their organization for 2 years or less.

[Learn More](#)



CEDS
Peer Exchange
Groups

CEDS Peer Exchange Groups

These informal groups are designed to help staff troubleshoot challenges with their CEDS, share methods and 'best practices', and support each other during yearly and 5-year CEDS updates.

[Learn More](#)

NADO
Mentor
Program
FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

NADO Mentor Program for Executive Directors

The NADO Mentor Program pairs experienced executive directors with new executive directors for one year to help new executive directors address the challenges facing their organizations and regions by connecting with experienced RDO leaders.

[Learn More](#)



New Executive Directors Resources

The New Executive Directors group was formed to share experiences, learn firsthand from experienced Directors, and have support when beginning this often-challenging role.

[Learn More](#)



Virtual EDD Chapter Meets Ups

Virtual EDD Chapter Meet Ups provide a space for Economic Development District staff to connect and network quarterly in small group discussions with peers in their EDA regions/NADO chapters.

[Learn More](#)



EDD CoP
Economic Development District
Community of Practice

Learn more at: www.nado.org/EDDCoP



Program Updates: EDD Capacity Building

Training Program for Emerging Leaders

Southwest Chapter: Funded by EDA Austin Regional Office

- 7th Cohort graduated May 2025; 8th Cohort to launch summer 2025
- 41 participants to date from all 5 states in the region
 - 33 EDDs
 - 7 became EDs; at least 2 in pipeline

Central Chapter: Funded by EDA Denver Regional Office

- 1st Cohort launched April 2025
- 25 applicants from 23 EDDs; 9 of the 10 states in the region
- Will graduate at ATC in SLC

Southeast Chapter: Funded by EDA Atlanta Regional Office

- 1st Cohort will launch in 2025





ECONOMIC RECOVERY CORPS

2.5 Year Fellowship

65 Fellows & Host
Communities

12 in NADO Subcohort w/
EDDs



ERC Partner Coalition



OUR GOALS

ACCELERATE CAPACITY

To build capacity in communities to accelerate locally driven economic development and drive economic outcomes.

DEVELOP TALENT

To build a pipeline of the next generation of economic development leaders equipped with the skills and practice to promote a new era of economic prosperity.





35
Days

13
Hours

47
Minutes

54
Seconds

Event Center



2025 Annual Training Conference

October 14-17, 2025
Salt Lake City, UT



2026 NADO & DDAA Washington Conference

March 8-11, 2026
Arlington, VA



2026 SWREDA Annual Conference

April 14-17, 2026
Austin, TX



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Thank You!
Questions?



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