

# Elevating Equity *in* Economic Development

## An Inclusive Recovery Guide

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# Executive Summary

No part of the United States was untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic impacts of the pandemic especially laid bare racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic inequities in access to jobs, housing, income, digital infrastructure, education, and small business supports – bringing light to our country’s disparate economic condition across local and regional economies. Income inequality in the United States is at an [all-time high](#), and [during the pandemic, wealth inequality increased](#). The racial wealth gap remains stubbornly high, meaning [households of color are consistently subjected to greater economic risks](#). The pandemic preserved and exacerbated these gaps. Individuals of color were [more likely](#) to have reduced wages or lose their jobs. This is compounded by the racial wealth gap, where individuals of color are more likely to have [limited savings or assets to weather economic shocks and be employed in industries most affected by](#) the pandemic.

As cities and regions rebuild their economic foundations and resilience this decade, there is an urgency to incorporate inclusive economic models. Inclusive economic development delivers regional economic growth and reduces economic inequality. The approach is asset-led, identifying hidden assets and untapped value in local economies to expand GDP and create long-term economic resilience. Importantly, these models name the systems and structures that have created economic disparities, especially those rooted in race, gender, and place, and adopt strategies to address these systemic barriers. Inclusive growth models provide resources to activate under-resourced economic assets and therefore create new growth.

[Economic Development Districts \(EDDs\) and similar regional entities](#) have a unique role to play in planning for and achieving inclusive economic development for their regions. As embedded in their mandate, EDOs and EDDs have a responsibility to deliver regional growth, ensuring that all residents can participate in the regional economy. Regional economic development leaders are poised to plan and implement economic strategies which bring all talent and assets into the regional economy, not just residents in certain geographic areas or those who have historically had opportunities to participate. As regional economic development leaders seek to implement inclusive strategies, they should be taking steps to provide equitable support to small businesses in their region, ensure target industries attract diverse talent, and build diverse supply chains to build shared prosperity.

To understand the role and opportunity for EDDs to lead inclusive growth in their regions and embed equity in their COVID-19 recovery strategies, [New Growth Innovation Network](#) launched the [Inclusive Recovery Initiative](#), in March 2021, with support from the [Economic Development Administration](#). Over the last two years,

regional economic development practitioners have shared how they are taking steps toward inclusive growth and equitable outcomes and highlighted opportunities for other EDDs in this work, including:

1. [Organizational Commitment and Capacity](#): Internally, EDDs can embed equity through new organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies, practices, and statements to ensure that this core principle and approach cuts across all elements of economic planning, development, and funding.
2. [Equity in the CEDS](#): EDDs can activate their regional economic development strategy, most notably the [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#), to include an explicit focus on equity and inclusive growth opportunities specific to all areas of their region and across all economic strategies in the CEDS.
3. [Strategy and Implementation](#): EDDs can translate their CEDS plans into actions, implementing regional economic strategies which both address historical barriers and deliver robust regional economic growth. Since March 2020, there are evident growth opportunities. These include record rates of entrepreneurs of color starting businesses, new models for economic and community development partnerships, and a surge in innovations in programs and services to build community wealth, showing the untapped assets that can expand regional economies.

This guide is intended to inform regional economic development leaders across these three action areas noted above to support inclusive growth and address the inequities deepened throughout the pandemic. This guide is intended to support action, packed with field examples, data tools, and new ideas for EDDs to begin implementing.

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# Elevating Equity in Economic Development: An Inclusive Recovery Guide

## About the Initiative

The [Inclusive Recovery Initiative](#) was a national program supporting Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) and Districts (EDDs) in embedding inclusive and equitable growth strategies into their COVID-19 recovery strategies and in the development of regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs). Between March 2021 and June 2023, EDDs and EDOs engaged with the Initiative through:

- **Community of Practice:** A national network of EDOs to engage on topics that build equity and inclusion as a practice in their strategies. Over the course of the initiative, this community engaged in an online community, virtually convened six times, and hosted two peer conversations. These engagements resulted in learnings and insights from 102 EDDs and EDOs.
- **Technical Assistance:** To engage deeply with regions, six EDOs received technical assistance, including in-depth data analysis and best practice strategy development, to incorporate equity within their strategic planning process.

### About New Growth Innovation Network (NGIN)

This guide was developed by [New Growth Innovation Network](#) (NGIN), a knowledge, insight, and innovation hub, supporting economic development practitioners advance inclusive economic growth in their region. Established in 2018, NGIN is a nonprofit organization focused on closing structural opportunity gaps, to ensure that economically disenfranchised people of color, women, and neglected geographies are a core part of regional economic growth and prosperity. NGIN works to drive systemic change through the NGIN community of practitioners, its platform of insights, and innovations.

## **About NADO Research Foundation (NADO RF)**

### [National Association of Development Organizations \(NADO\) Research Foundation](#)

was a sub-awardee on the project and an important collaborator in this work. NADO RF provides technical assistance, education, research, and training to support and strengthen the national network of Regional Development Organizations (RDOs).

## **Authors and Project Team**

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## **Expert Stakeholders**

New Growth Innovation Network believes in the voices of [practitioners as experts](#) (named in the appendix) and is grateful to the stakeholders whose insights and contributions shaped this work.

## **Funding and Disclaimer**

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# Organizational Commitment and Capacity

Throughout the initiative, many EDDs and EDOs were interviewed, participated in calls, or received technical assistance. From [this engagement process](#), the below four themes, listed in no particular order, emerged on how these organizations are embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion principles within their organization.

- [Crafting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statements](#): As a starting point, these statements present an opportunity to affirm, internally and externally, a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These statements should be tied to a larger plan with action steps.
- [Addressing Equity in the Organization](#): Leaders must look inward at the organization to ensure the right steps have been taken to prepare staff, begin challenging conversations and establish policies and practices that reinforce a commitment to equity.
- [Addressing Equity in the Community](#): To address historical inequities and distrust, the importance of local partnerships and consulting with local groups already focused on equity is even more critical.
- [Understanding the Data](#): Many leaders have begun using their research and leveraging their existing information assets to better focus on and understand regional demographics and disparities.

## Crafting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statements

To publicly acknowledge racial, gender, and geographic inequities in their region and build accountability, [some interviewed EDDs](#) have developed and adopted a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement collaboratively with the executive director, the board, and the staff. These statements present an opportunity for the organization to affirm, internally and externally, a commitment to equity. These statements, to avoid being performative, should be tied to a larger organizational plan with action steps to build credibility in the community.

### Examples

- [West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission](#) | *Michigan, Pop. 260,010 (5 counties)* The commission crafted an [equity statement](#) and stated equity goals to ensure future work is aligned with the existing equity and inclusion focus. Learn more [here](#).
- [Souris Basin Planning Council](#) | *North Dakota, Pop. 98,360 (7 counties)* The council developed a [mission and inclusivity statement](#) to align new programs with organizational goals. Learn more [here](#).
- [Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Council](#) | *Ohio, Pop. 164,317 (8 counties)* Through a detailed [Diversity and Inclusion Work Plan](#) and [Diversity Statement](#), the council has emphasized its equity focus publicly. Learn more [here](#).

### Questions for Reflection

- Does our organization have a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement? A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Plan?
- If so, how does this statement drive action? What actions have been taken within our organization and outside of our organization?
- If not, how does our organization express a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within and outside the organization? Is there organizational buy-in for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at all levels (executive director, the board, and staff)?
- What barriers may prevent you from committing to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion? How can you address those barriers?



# Addressing Equity within the Organization

For an organization to be equitable, leadership and staff must look internally at the organization's policies, practices, and procedures to ensure that inequities are being reinforced. These practices vary but may include staff training or modifying policies such as salary range transparency in job listings, holiday schedules, dress codes, and telework policies that may reinforce gender or racial inequities. Organizational leaders need to ensure that while they are bolstering their outward-facing planning and development activities to reduce inequities and disparities, that they are not reinforcing them through their internal policies and practices. These steps may include but are not limited to, preparing staff, beginning challenging conversations as needed, and undertaking training to expand capacity as needed.

## Examples

- [Triangle J Council of Governments](#) | *North Carolina, Pop. 2,028,193 (7 counties)*  
Staff received equity training from external consultants, began a book club to read relevant works, and launched an internal task force. Beyond this, funds were allocated to dedicate 10% of one staff member's time to DEI work, which included managing the relationship with the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#). Learn more [here](#).
- [Chittenden County Regional Planning Council](#) | *Vermont, Pop. 178,922 (4 counties)*  
With the support of an external Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consultant, the council completed an [equity assessment](#) of the organization and led a CCRPC-sponsored Equity Summit. Learn more [here](#).
- [Old Colony Planning Commission](#) | *Massachusetts, Pop. 44,989 (3 counties)*  
The commission developed a procurement policy that ensures RFPs are intentionally sent to diverse suppliers and created a repository of workforce agencies that intentionally reach diverse candidates when advertising for staff members. Learn more [here](#).
- [Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Council](#) | *Ohio, Pop. 164,317 (8 counties)*  
Building on their [Diversity Statement](#) and [Work Plan](#), the council partnered with [YWCA Columbus](#) for social and racial justice classes for employees, member organizations, and community partners. Learn more [here](#).

## Questions for Reflection

- What practices and policies exist within our organization to promote equity? Are there practices or policies which limit equity being realized in our organization?
- Does our organization's leadership identify and communicate equity and inclusion? Has leadership communicated that equity and inclusion are a priority? How does our organization facilitate internal conversations about equity and inclusion?
- What tools/frameworks is our organization currently using that support inclusion?

## Resource: Living Cities Racial Equity and Inclusion Competency Frameworks

An [evaluation and assessment tool](#) to review how leadership and staff embed racial equity and inclusion within an organization. Living Cities surveys staff using these competencies and [publishes key findings publicly](#).

# Addressing Equity in the Community

As economic development leaders look inward at their organization, it is important to look outward into how regional economic development is contributing to existing inequities or are explicitly seeking to reduce their disparities. Economic development organizations may have previously led economic strategies which inadvertently led to the economic exclusion of specific parts of the region or certain populations. Historic budget choices, investment prioritization, real estate development approaches, partnership approaches, and beyond will mean the region already has a certain impression of the actions taken toward equity. To address historical events and legacy distrust, local partnerships and consulting with local groups already focused on equity are even more critical.

## Examples

- [Mid-Columbia Economic Development](#) | *Oregon/Washington, Pop. 51,844 (4 counties)*

Working directly with a local non-profit, the organization conducted focus groups with underrepresented communities to get feedback on the [document/CEDS development](#). This resulted in better identification of local needs, including the need to translate [select documentation into Spanish](#). Learn more [here](#).

- [PlanRVA](#) | *Virginia, Pop. 1,120,304 (7 counties)*

The commission developed an [Equitable Community Engagement Strategy](#) to engage the community, established an on-call bench of consultants to support the strategy and public outreach needs, and created a [full-time Community Engagement Manager role](#). Learn more [here](#).

- [Land of Sky Regional Council](#) | *North Carolina, Pop. 434,748 (4 counties)*

With an eye on equity in workforce development, the council built partnerships with the [Asheville Chamber Inclusive Hiring Partners](#) program and re-entry and second-chance hiring program [ARC Inspire](#). LOSRC supports the [Generation Plus](#) team, which is working to reduce isolation, build social networks, and educate and advocate for the LGBTQ+ 55 and older population. Learn more [here](#).

## Questions for Reflection

- What are the local organizations focused on equity in our region? Which organizations work closely with key equity groups in our community?
- Which organizations may have aligned goals related to workforce development, small business and entrepreneurship, and housing?
- Has our organization worked with these organizations in the past? How closely have we worked together? Does our organization have the trust of these organizations and their leaders?
- How can we identify and engage these organizations? How can we build trust with these organizations? Are there past actions that produced inequitable economic outcomes that need to be acknowledged before trust can be rebuilt?

# Understanding the Data

Regional economic developers have an incredible asset in that they understand their regional economic data and can use that to identify inequities and disparities. Bringing economic data together with an equity and inclusion mindset is a powerful way to create economic opportunities that produce shared prosperity across the region. These approaches include regions using data to inform [inclusive cluster strategies](#) resulting in increasing the diversity of business owners across the supply chain. Another approach is developing asset-based metrics for [small business strategies](#) in identifying where diverse founders are already successful.

## Examples

- [Land of Sky Regional Council](#) | *North Carolina, Pop. 434,748 (4 counties)*  
To begin community conversations, the council developed an online [Story Map](#) of data on racial disparities to better understand these challenges and how to address them. Learn more [here](#).
- [Chittenden County Regional Planning Council](#) | *Vermont, Pop. 178,922 (4 counties)*  
To raise awareness, the council publishes an [annual report](#) and [online data scorecard](#) on regional disparities, disaggregating key metrics of community well-being by race and geography. Learn more [here](#).

## Questions for Reflection

- What data does our organization already have about economic disparities or gaps by race, gender, ability, or geography?
- What demographic and economic data is available disaggregated by race, gender, and geography? What data is available from national, state, and local sources? What research may be conducted by local universities?
- What specific economic inclusion and exclusion data could we use to identify opportunities for investment and growth such as, small business data and growth trajectory, access to capital by business owner demographics, sectoral specific data disaggregated by race, gender, and geography)?



**Resource: Innovative Data**

Explore the [Innovative Data section of this guide](#) for a compilation of data equity tools.

## Equity in CEDS

As Economic Development Districts seek to incorporate broader Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices within their organization and approach, the CEDS is a primary avenue to put equity front and center in the region's planning, priorities, and projects. The CEDS is both a public engagement and planning process and a document representing the vision for the regional economy. If the CEDS does not include considerations and plans to address racial, gender, and geographic disparities and inequities, then the region is hindering opportunities for growth and expanding racial, gender, and geographic economic gaps. For a CEDS to be effective in charting the future of the regional economy, then it must be equitable.

- [Embedding Equity in the Process](#): Before a region crafts the CEDS document, a robust community engagement and information collection process is vital.
  - [Transparency and Accountability](#)
  - [Strategic Partnerships](#)
  - [Innovative Data](#)
- [Embedding Equity in the Document](#): Following the engagement process, regions can consider incorporating equity and weaving community voice within each section of the CEDS.
  - [Summary Background](#)
  - [Regional Analysis](#)
  - [Action Plan](#)
  - [Evaluation Framework](#)
  - [Economic Resilience](#)

### **Resource: What is a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?**

“A CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region.” These plans are prerequisites for an Economic Development District (EDD) designation and are updated every five years. CEDS must include a summary background, a regional analysis, a Strategic Direction/Action Plan, and an Evaluation Framework. **Learn from [the EDA](#) or from [NADO's CEDS Central resources](#).**

# Incorporating Equity into the Process

Before a region crafts its CEDS document, a robust community engagement and information collection process is vital. What the EDD eventually publishes in the CEDS document is heavily based on the public engagement process, meaning that equity considerations must be baked into the engagement process at the outset. At the initiative's launch, NGIN engaged with 68 EDDs and EDOs between May and October 2021. These organizations varied in geography, size, and level of diversity, but three consistent themes emerged from these discussions on the challenges they are facing today.

- [Transparency and Accountability](#): Leading with transparency about the purpose and intentions of the CEDS in the community allows for mending past perceptions of distrust and builds opportunities with communities searching for a process that openly shares shortfalls, opportunity gaps, and areas for growth.
- [Strategic Partnerships](#): Actionable CEDS are developed and strengthened by solid partnerships built by robust community engagement strategies; this goes beyond making leadership tables more extensive and diverse and leads towards inclusive buy-in and greater collaboration.
- [Innovative Data](#): Most CEDS use data to describe their economies and population in broad strokes without diving deeper into demographic and geographic specifics within their region, leaving a missed opportunity for inclusive growth and development.

**The Inclusive Recovery Initiative Engagement Report:** In addition to these three areas for opportunities, NGIN outlined additional insights from engaging in conversation with these EDDs and EDOs in an [Engagement Report](#).

## Transparency and Accountability

Given that CEDS strategies are based on community stakeholder engagement and feedback, an EDD must be transparent and accountable in its process, goals, and outcomes across the region. To gather honest and accurate insights into the economic health of residents, EDDs and EDOs must lay the groundwork for mending past distrust and building opportunities alongside the region. This process includes openly sharing shortfalls, opportunity gaps, and areas for growth with regional stakeholders. Transparency and accountability should not only occur through the community engagement process, but be embedded throughout, from transparency around data and metrics to accountability and reporting mechanisms in the action plan.

## Considerations

- **Share the process in the published CEDS.** Outline the range and reach of the community engagement process within the CEDS document. By sharing this process, it is possible to build transparency and allow community members to see their input recognized. Provide an overview of how engagement was conducted geographically, demographically, and across mediums (locations, online, in-person, and by mail or phone). This summary should allow residents to see how they are reflected in the region's final strategies and priorities.
- **Share advisory council selection, role, and involvement.** The selected advisory council must have geographic representation and diversity across race, ethnicity, and class structures. Inviting trusted community-based organizations to represent community voice may take time, but it will create powerful results when translating analysis into actionable strategies and goals. In the document, be clear about how individuals were selected, the time frame and commitment needed, and if any honorariums were provided for the expertise provided during the process.
- **Reengage residents that were involved.** Individuals in historically excluded communities may have been involved in engagement and planning processes in the past, where they were surveyed, interviewed, and engaged with little or no follow-up. These residents' resulting engagement fatigue can lead to distrust and may even reinforce their views of the historical systems of power and decision-making that have limited their engagement and voice. Ensure that relationships are maintained with these trusted messengers, key residents, and strategic partners to share the results of the engagement process and how they are

reflected in the CEDS, and the steps taken in implementation. When undertaking the annual CEDS update, explore opportunities for intentional follow-up and engagement with these stakeholders.

- **Engage with trusted messengers.** Originating from [the public health field](#), the concept of the trusted messenger directly engages and partners with residents that have lived experience for their expertise and perspectives in reaching communities that have been historically excluded. These messengers bring unique perspectives and assets to understand historical systems that those without lived experience may lack. Engage these individuals early and throughout the community engagement process.
- **Explore participatory processes.** Identify ways to embed community participation and ownership transparently in engagement activities. There is a [spectrum of participation levels](#) to support shared decision-making and center community input throughout the process. Consider engagement methods that take steps to incorporate community ownership rather than providing information and strictly soliciting reactions.
- **Publicly share resulting metrics and outcomes.** When incorporating macro-level and program-level metrics in the CEDS Evaluation Framework, ensure accountability to the community by reporting on progress towards these metrics to key stakeholders, partners, and the broader community at least annually. Bolster transparency by showing the data sources and methods used to calculate progress towards goals. When compiling metrics and outcomes to share, plan listening sessions on how the community is or is not benefiting, identifying if changes need to be made or strategies need to be implemented.

**Example:** [Greater Peoria Economic Development Council](#) | *Illinois, Pop. 391,418 (5 counties)*

[The Big Table: Greater Peoria](#) is the outreach and engagement process that led to the creation of their CEDS. As a result of this process, diversity, equity, and inclusion were infused throughout the goal areas to address systemic barriers to wealth creation and quality of life in the region.

**Example:** [Mid-Columbia Economic Development District](#) | *Oregon/Washington, Pop. 51,844 (5 counties)*

MCEDD viewed the CEDS process as a method to “consider where there are gaps in economic opportunity, barriers to accessing this benefit that may vary by



population or community, and ways to support improving outcomes." To achieve this, staff held seven virtual public sessions and partnered with a local community-based organization to host focus groups with the region's Native American and Latino/a/Hispanic communities. [A summary of the CEDS in Spanish](#) was also created. Learn more [here](#).

**Idea: The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership**

Shared by [Next Street](#) this framework examines community engagement across a spectrum of development stages that lead to true community ownership.

Developmental Stages	Impact	Community Engagement Goal	Message to Community
<b>Ignore</b>	<i>Marginalization</i>	Deny access to decision-making processes	"Your voice, needs, and interests do not matter."
<b>Inform</b>	<i>Placation</i>	Provide the community with relevant information	"We will keep you informed."
<b>Consult</b>	<i>Tokenization</i>	Gather input from the community	"We care what you think."
<b>Involve</b>	<i>Voice</i>	Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into the process and inform planning	"You are making us think (and therefore act) differently about the issue."
<b>Collaborate</b>	<i>Delegated Power</i>	Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in the implementation of decisions	"Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue."
<b>Defer to</b>	<i>Community Ownership</i>	Foster democratic participation and equity by placing full decision-making hands in the community	"It's time to unlock collective power and capacity for transformative solutions."

From [Rosa Gonzalez and Facilitating Power \(2019\)](#).

## **Resource: Equitable Community Engagement**

Explore the [Equitable Community Engagement section of this guide](#) for additional examples and tools.

## Strategic Partnerships

Actionable CEDS are developed and strengthened by solid partnerships built by robust community engagement strategies; this goes beyond making leadership tables more extensive and diverse and leads towards inclusive buy-in and greater collaboration. By working only with the organizations that traditionally influence economic development strategies, the CEDS will reflect input from a narrow window within the region. Broaden the regional organizational partners to bring in the voices that have faced systemic barriers and the most significant economic challenges. By building strategic partnerships with trusted organizations across the region, the CEDS can be informed by the individuals who have been left out of past engagement efforts. By bringing a wider pool of stakeholders and partners to the table, the EDD will have a more accurate CEDS which is more representative of the entire region and the economic health of all residents.

## Considerations

- **Inventory current partners.** Map partner organizations geographically to understand which areas of the region they serve, including urban, rural, and persistent poverty areas of the region. Examine the sectors and audience of current partners, including the representation of governmental, non-profit, and community-based organizations engaged throughout the planning process.
- **Broaden the definition of organizational partners.** Look beyond traditional economic development organizations, such as the chamber of commerce and municipal economic development entities, to provide insights into the planning process. Incorporate community-based organizations, including civic organizations and grassroots organizations, into the engagement process. These partners could include those deeply embedded in the community, such as neighborhood associations, cooperatives, or local non-profits. Additionally, engage with local organizations working directly with historically excluded audiences, such as the local Black Chamber of Commerce or the local YWCA.
- **Map community assets.** In the spirit of [Asset Based Community Development](#), identifying and mapping community assets allows for identifying strengths, resources, individuals, and organizational partners within the community that have aligned goals. When beginning the planning process, ensure that assets have been identified in the community and the relationships among them regionally.
- **Understand local and organizational power dynamics.** When beginning and growing relationships with strategic partners, recognize and acknowledge power

dynamics that may be present. Many reasons may keep individuals from being open about equity challenges within the region due to authority, position, funding support, race or gender differences, or other factors. Be aware of these dynamics with partners and seek to address them in the settings and convenings of stakeholders throughout the planning process.

- **Set clear expectations, roles, and responsibilities.** When engaging with local organizations, recognize their role and capacity to contribute to the planning process in time and staff expertise. Be upfront about the time commitment, what partners will need to provide, and the timeline for the planning process. Ensure these individuals and organizations are recognized for their contributions.

**Example:** [3Core Economic Development Corporation](#) | California, Pop. 230,189 (3 counties)

In their [2022 CEDS](#), 3Core provided a detailed list of stakeholders and contributors, including local tribes, housing stakeholders, and environmental stakeholders. In [the Appendix](#), each stakeholder had a profile that outlined their priority projects, challenges, and opportunities.

**Resource:** “[Nothing about us without us.](#)”

From the disability rights movement, the ethos of “[nothing about us without us](#)” speaks to the history of excluding marginalized communities in decision-making and policy-making directly affecting them. When considering who is involved and brings expertise to the community engagement process, mainly through the advisory board, [redefine who community experts are](#). Expand the definition to include those most affected by the issues the EDD/EDO is trying to address, from workforce development to housing. Their lived experience gives them insights into [the root causes](#) of problems otherwise not seen. When taking steps to engage these experts, ensure they are not tokenized by [addressing biases, sharing power, and encouraging co-design](#). **Learn from [Detroit Future City’s approach to Centering Community Voice](#).**

**Idea: What is Community Asset Mapping?**

An approach to understanding resources and strengths within the community, including networks, relationships, organizations, and skills. Many conversations discuss assessing community needs, which is a crucial step in understanding the community. Identifying strengths within the community is solutions-oriented rather than solely focused on the challenges. This reframing of residents and

communities as possessing aspirations, strengths, and knowledge allows for a more robust understanding of the community. **Learn how the [City of Boise, Idaho](#) approached asset mapping.**

**Resource: Equitable Community Engagement**

Explore the [Equitable Community Engagement section of this guide](#) for additional examples and tools.



## Innovative Data

A significant strength of economic development districts is their comfort with data and data-informed decision-making. Often, EDDs host information and tools that provide critical information to the region on economic well-being. Most CEDS use data to describe their economies and population in broad strokes without diving deeper into regional disparities, leaving a missed opportunity for inclusive growth and development. For example, discussing poverty, unemployment, or business ownership without discussing where within the region the gaps are or breaking key metrics down by race or gender presents a very different economic picture of the region. Data is crucial for decision-making, and data equity is an important consideration. As with all structures and systems, how data is collected, measured, analyzed, and ultimately shared has an inherent bias. Within the process of updating the CEDS, including collecting and analyzing data on the region, there is an opportunity to evaluate the information to include.

### Resource: What is Data Equity?

Data equity has emerged as a best practice to understand how biased decisions and assumptions influence how data is collected, analyzed, interpreted, and communicated. This understanding explores the fallacies that data and research can be entirely objective and how choices in understanding data and metrics have crucial equity implications for communities. **Learn more at [We All Count](#).**

### Considerations

- **Disaggregate the data.** Applying different lenses to the information is critical to understanding where equity gaps exist in the community. Breaking metrics down by race and ethnicity, gender, income, and geography across the region paints a very different picture of where disparities exist.
- **Identify community disparities from the data.** Once the data has been disaggregated, the door is opened to exploring this information to identify significant gaps across services and supports for key equity groups. Using resources like [Urban Institute's Spatial Equity Data Tool](#), steps can be taken to identify substantial demographic or geographic service disparities across the region.
- **Identify community strengths from the data.** Disparities are just some of the insights that this disaggregated data can provide. Commonly when analyzing data by race, gender, or other equity lenses, disparities and deficits are highlighted. Exclusively focusing on disparities and deficits in the findings narrows the story

of these individuals and communities and can reinforce stigmas. Ensure that analysis equally considers the strengths and assets of these communities and the ways that increasing economic and ecosystem supports can produce increased economic vibrancy for communities and expand the GDP for the region.

- **Use qualitative and quantitative data.** Quantitative data can give key insights into identifying themes, issue areas, and conditions. And when using creative opportunities to collect qualitative data from surveys, focus groups, interviews, and listening sessions, ensure the voice of the community is incorporated into the CEDS strategies. These opportunities to listen and reflect on insights directly from the community may provide additional context to macro-level demographics.
- **Identify geographic service gaps in the community.** Considering metrics and data at the regional level, look at how these metrics play out geographically across the region. Consider [mapping service gaps](#) throughout the community. Identify the areas of the region that lack access to [healthcare](#), [transit](#), [childcare](#), [food](#), and [digital access](#). These maps can provide important geographic insights to incorporate into planning and offer considerations for approaching outreach and engagement.

### **Idea: Create a Regional Equity Atlas**

When identifying key indicators and metrics for racial and economic equity for the region, draw on inspiration from the [National Equity Atlas](#) and local equity atlases from [San Antonio](#) (Texas) and [Atlanta](#) (Georgia) to create a regional atlas. In addition to informing planning and engagement, these maps can support the local community in using data to incorporate equity into decision-making thoughtfully.

**Learn more from the [National Equity Atlas](#) and the [Regional Equity Atlas](#).**

### **Resource: Evaluation Framework**

Explore the [Evaluation Framework section of this guide](#) for additional examples of how EDDs and EDOs are incorporating these data equity practices in their CEDS.

# Incorporating Equity into the Document (CEDS)

The CEDS document paints a picture of the regional economy and the intentions and actions to drive what the future will hold for the region. Given that this published document is shared broadly, it can be more comfortable to paint as positive of a picture of the region as possible. However, the CEDS is a plan, and for it to be effective and address core community needs, the CEDS must reflect the economic realities of all residents and address those disparities. If the regional CEDS doesn't address equity, the CEDS will not be effective in serving all residents of the region. Each section of the CEDS should incorporate considerations for residents and communities that have been historically excluded, particularly in exclusion from full economic participation and wealth creation opportunities. Importantly, lead from an asset framing, identifying those opportunities that will grow the region's GDP by investing in diverse talent and in underinvested communities.

- **Summary Background:** Ground the CEDS in acknowledging the history of the local community and economy, including how these factors may have contributed to economic disparities in the past, and make a case for equitable growth going forward, which will deliver shared prosperity across the region.
- **Regional Analysis:** Create a matrix of priorities, considerations, and opportunities for the region that address equity and economic growth with extensive stakeholder input.
- **Action Plan:** Translate the findings and strategic direction into a set of goals and actions, including clarity around the root causes of equity issues, partners, and intended results.
- **Evaluation Framework:** Define how results will be measured, incorporating specific indicators that are [macro-level](#), [program-level](#), and [qualitative](#).
- **Economic Resilience:** As illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing recovery, historically excluded communities are disproportionately affected by economic shocks or events. The regional CEDS should address resilience efforts for residents at most likely to be impacted by economic shocks, [natural disasters](#), and [climate change](#).

**Resource: [CEDS Content Guidelines](#)**

The EDA has developed guidelines to “assist economic development practitioners with the development or update of a CEDS.” Among these guidelines are considerations to [incorporate equity within the CEDS](#), including how data and metrics describe the region, using asset-based language, and putting equity at the forefront in resilience planning. **Review [these guidelines for resources](#) to bolster the CEDS.**

## Summary Background

Ground the CEDS in acknowledging the history of the local community and economy, including how these factors may contribute to economic disparities, and make a case for equitable growth. The Summary Background of a CEDS is the reader's introduction to the region. This section answers where the plan is taking place and whom it represents. An equitable CEDS will introduce the economic history of its area, bridging a shared understanding of the critical questions, "Who are we?", "What have we done?" and "Where have we been?"

## Considerations

- **Tell the story of the region.** As the introduction to the CEDS, the Summary Background should provide a complete picture of the region, providing a story rather than just facts or figures. This section sets the stage for the entire plan. Employing a storytelling approach can bring community voices into the description and honestly acknowledge the region's history, including looking at experiences by race, geography, income, gender, and beyond. Be creative in how the story of the region is told; go beyond natural and economic assets to tell a more complete story of the region's residents and experiences.
- **Acknowledge the history of the region.** Perhaps the most challenging is to apply an equity lens to the history of a regional economy and publicly acknowledge the barriers that have led to economic exclusion by race, gender, income, geography, and beyond within the region. If EDDs don't develop a shared understanding of the wrongs of the past, acknowledge legacies of distrust between leaders and communities, and name the systemic barriers to economic prosperity, it is not possible to establish a foundation for action or repair trust. This history of the region is the opportunity to make a case for equitable development and why change needs to occur. Do not avoid acknowledging historical wrongs that have shaped the regional economy, such as the forced resettlement of indigenous residents or the legacy left by slavery.
- **Use disaggregated data when storytelling.** Data should be used as part of this storytelling effort to paint a more accurate picture of the people and businesses that exist within the region. Data that describes the demographics, industry clusters, and income should be disaggregated to show how populations have grown in the area, how income differs across race and geography, and how the

economy's structure contributes to economic disparities.

- **Incorporate community voice in the summary background.** In the same way, that disaggregated data can be employed in telling the story of a local economy, incorporating qualitative data and community voice in telling the story of the region, historically and presently. Balance metrics and facts with [community-sources narratives, and quotes](#) from the region.

**Example:** [Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission](#) | *Wisconsin, Pop. 145,994 (5 counties)*

In their [2021 CEDS](#), the commission included a racial and ethnic disparities section within their summary background. This focus included the geographic distribution of race, poverty, household income, and employment disparities. Still, it recognized the history of segregation and resulting inequities that must be addressed.

**Example:** [Northeast Oregon Economic Development District](#) | *Oregon, Pop. 50,167 (3 counties)*

In their [2020 CEDS update](#), as part of their goal to build the capacity of non-profits and local governments, NOEDD staff received certifications in storytelling for community development and collaborated with partner organizations to host a public storytelling event. These efforts coincided with a two-part Journey to Equity workshop to support equity-focused efforts within local organizations and gatherings focused on organizations serving the local Latinx community. This local partnership building, paired with staff training, served to contribute to their CEDS update and future regional collaborations.

### **Idea: Acknowledge Indigenous Histories**

In Indigenous, or First American, communities, the orator is the archivist, researcher, and knowledge keeper. They educate the community on what has been done to build the community to help inform how one should move forward. An equitable CEDS includes the history of all those who have lived in the region, including Indigenous communities. Every effort should be made to incorporate indigenous voices in the CEDS planning process, including acknowledging the indigenous history of the region if residents were forced to resettle. **Learn more**

about [the history of storytelling and oral traditions in the Indigenous community](#) from ICDPRO (Indigenous Community Development and Prosperity).

**Example:** [Berkshire Regional Planning Commission](#) | *Massachusetts, Pop. 4,432,617 (5 counties)*

In their [2023 CEDS](#) for Berkshire County, the commission included an indigenous acknowledgment to recognize the indigenous communities that had been forced from the region and reinforced this history as a step for their CEDS to seek to build “a more inclusive and equitable space for all.”

## Resources

- [Solutions Journalism’s Economic Mobility Guide](#): A guide for storytellers and journalists that provide guidance, examples, and ideas for discussing topics across economic mobility and poverty, including avoiding stereotypes and orienting stories towards solutions.
- [National League of Cities’ Roadmap to Repair](#): A set of case studies, histories, and definitions to deepen city and community leaders’ efforts in acknowledging and supporting indigenous communities.

## Review your current CEDS

- Who bears witness to this land and its development over the years? How have our actions accelerated growth and others diminished it across a variety of lived experiences? What learnings are we bringing forward with us?
- How did you tell the story of the region? How did it reflect the economic history of the region? Does this history reflect the experience of all residents?
- How did you use data to tell the story of the region? How did you incorporate community voice within the story of the region? How did these reflect the experience of residents who have been economically excluded?



## Regional Analysis

The CEDS contains a matrix of priorities, considerations, and opportunities for the region. For the CEDS to address disparities in the region, this matrix should address equity and economic growth with extensive stakeholder input.

Traditionally, this section comprises an overarching or topical SWOT analysis, which is intended to encourage critical thinking, stakeholder and community feedback, and qualitative data collection. However, if this matrix isn't based on intentional community engagement and outreach, it will not reflect the realities of the regional economy, particularly leaving out the voices of those excluded from participating in the economy. Consider how the regional analysis can use a framework that highlights assets and brings in community voices to illustrate priorities.

### Considerations

- **Explore alternatives to the SWOT analysis.** The SWOT analysis presents challenges when taking an asset-based approach and may not be the best analysis tool for the region. Consider other frameworks that may give a different, asset-based framing to the region. Several EDOs have integrated alternative frameworks within their CEDS alongside or in place of their SWOT analysis.
- **Include broad stakeholder input in the creation of the regional analysis.** The analysis is only as useful as the input and feedback that informs it. A regional analysis that only represents a narrow viewpoint will not represent the realities of the region. When continuing to gather feedback through the CEDS engagement process, engage a broad and diverse group of stakeholders and community members to contribute their input to the regional analysis to ensure that this component of the CEDS is representative of many different views.
- **Connect the regional analysis to data in the Summary Background.** The regional analysis serves as a key bridge between the summary background and the action plan, translating the current state of the regional economy to future action. When identifying the components in the analysis, ensure this analysis is connected to the history presented in the Summary Background. When seeking to represent the Summary Background honestly and authentically, ensure that steps are taken to acknowledge disparities that systems have created and the opportunities to address these inequities.

- **Be specific about communities to avoid identifying monolithic solutions.** Be specific when discussing demographic groups by race, age, gender, geography, and ability, in the regional analysis. For example, presenting educational attainment or poverty rates without highlighting who faces the most significant barriers will reduce the specificity and impact of the strategies in the Strategic Direction or Action Plan.
- **Take an asset-based approach.** When adding specificity in demographics to the regional analysis, [avoid discussing these audiences as weaknesses or threats](#). Framing these gaps, and therefore these communities, as deficits reinforce stereotypes and historical narratives of these individuals. Instead, when outlining these areas for growth, highlight the systemic barriers that have created these gaps that will need to be addressed to create impact.

### Alternatives to SWOT

While the SWOT analysis is a traditional tool for understanding and analyzing organizations and defining priorities, it may not be the most suited to understanding the needs of the community. When considering how to understand the core factors impacting the region, look at several models that connect the summary background to the action plan.

- **Strength, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Risks (SOAR):** This analysis utilizes an asset-based framework, reframing weaknesses, aspirations, and threats as results. See how the [Merrimack Valley Regional Planning Commission](#) used the SOAR analysis in [their recent CEDS](#).
- **Capital Frameworks:** Aligned with an asset-based approach, several analyses focus on defining different types of community capital from a regional lens. The [Community Capitals Framework \(CCF\)](#), commonly used in rural economic development, identifies seven types of capital: built, cultural, financial, human, natural, political, and social. The [WealthWorks' capital framework](#) identifies eight forms of capital: intellectual, financial, natural, cultural, built, political, individual, and social. See how the [North Olympic Peninsula Resource and Conservation and Development Council](#) and [Region 5 Development Commission](#) used community capital analysis in their recent CEDS.

- **Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, Exceptions (NOISE):** [This analysis](#) has more typically been used in strategic business planning, but the framing of assets and action could make it a valuable tool.

### **Resource: What is Asset-based Language?**

Asset-based language describes situations or individuals by their [strengths and potentials](#), rather than deficit-based language, which highlights what's missing. Using asset-based language ensures descriptors that are people-first and describe pathways to advance economic opportunity and regional shared prosperity. In using [deficit-based language](#), descriptors can reinforce stereotypes and stigmas. **When framing the region's opportunities, [review the language and descriptors included](#) to ensure an asset-based orientation.**

### **Review your current CEDS:**

- Does the CEDS frame your analysis through the SWOT framework? Does it use an alternative framework? Would a different framework better represent the community engagement insights?
- How did stakeholder input and feedback inform your analysis? How did residents and community groups both inform and modify the analysis included in your final document?
- Does the CEDS include asset-based or deficit-based language? How do you describe historically excluded communities and their strengths?

## Action Plan

Following the community engagement process and SWOT analysis, the next step is translating this information into strategies and goals. The action plan or strategic direction in the CEDS should be organized as laying the foundation for the region's strategic direction to tackle the inequities that set back community progress. When embedding equity within the CEDS, be clear about the root causes of equity issues, partners, and intended results. The action plan is the opportunity to step beyond just identifying disparities and inequities in the region and plan concrete steps to address them.

## Considerations

- **Identify systemic changes.** When setting priorities, engage the CEDS strategy committee and [strategic partners](#) in discussing the systemic challenges and root causes of the disparities and inequities identified earlier in the CEDS. Ensure that the activities and objectives address systemic changes rather than symptoms of the larger problem for long-term sustainability and impact.
- **Be specific about demographics.** When adding clarity to the goals, include as much information as possible about the intended audience for the goal, including race, gender, age, geography, and more. With goals related to reducing disparities for specific communities through community engagement, such as young Black men or Immigrant mothers, include these specifics in program goals, metrics, and considerations for partner organizations.
- **Be geographically inclusive.** Regions are comprised of varying density levels, including a combination of urban cores, small-to-midsize cities, and rural towns. Ensure that the action plan includes activities and objectives related to the entire region recognizing communities of all sizes. Consider opportunities to focus goals and objectives geographically, as it refers to inequities, and ensure that criteria are included in the Action Plan.
- **Identify [strategic partners](#) that are embedded in the community.** In the action plan, including organizational partners for each goal or objective. Ensure that these partners have community trust and relationships with the intended audience and have been involved in creating the plan.
- **Connect action plan with organizational equity plan.** As EDDs and EDOs have taken steps to create [diversity, equity, and inclusion statements](#) for their

organizations and within their CEDS, steps may be taken to create an aligned diversity, equity, and inclusion action plan for accountability at the organizational level. While this is a different plan than the action plan included in the CEDS, consider how these plans may complement each other, including staff training, community engagement efforts, and beyond.

### **Idea: Address Root Causes**

To maximize the impact of the Action Plan and reduce inequities in the region, taking steps to address the root causes or systems that have created the disparities is required. Root causes are the underlying factors that cause systemic problems. By looking for root causes of problems and the multiple factors contributing to disparities, the EDD/EDO can more effectively design solutions that will solve the issue. Communities of color have faced a range of systems contributing to economic exclusion, from lender discrimination, lack of infrastructure investments, insufficient access to healthcare, and more. In crafting the action plan, ensure the cause of the problem is being addressed, rather than a symptom. Use a root cause analysis, with community stakeholders, to explore more impactful solutions.

**Facilitate root cause analysis discussions with resources from [Tableau](#) and [County Health Rankings](#).**

### **Idea: Create Actionable Goals**

Similar to SMART [goals](#), goals should be detailed enough to support taking action. When setting goals, consider the following:

- **Equity Considerations.** Identify an equity issue found during the [engagement process](#) and the [SWOT analysis](#) and include specific demographics and geography of the affected communities.
- **Partners.** Before publishing the CEDS, engage [strategic partners](#) with community trust and topical expertise to support each identified goal.
- **Measurements.** Include specific metrics that outline how success will be measured, with both program-level outputs and macro-level outcomes.

- **Time frame.** Share the anticipated time frame and priority level during the duration of the CEDS, including the anticipated year of completion.
- **Responsibility.** In the CEDS or internally, name the staff member, organizational partner, or stakeholder that will be responsible for the goal and objectives.

**Review your current CEDS:**

- Do your goals and objectives address changes in the systems that create inequities? Are these activities addressing the root cause of the challenges related to workforce, business ownership, wealth creation, and more? What are the long-term implications and sustainability of these activities?
- Do your goals and objectives include demographic information for the intended audience, including race, gender, age, and more? How are you specifically targeting resources and programs to support these identified audiences?
- Have the [strategic partners](#) identified for your goals and objectives been involved in the community engagement process and the CEDS development? How are these partners embedded in the community? Do they have community relationships and trust?

## Evaluation Framework

One of the most significant challenges in implementing equitable strategies is identifying how to measure equity and impact. The outcomes and issues the EDD/EDO is seeking to address with equitable strategies take time to fix, often resulting from generational strategies that either contributed to or perpetuated marginalization across many communities and racial groups. When creating indicators for the region, consider these guideposts for the more significant long-term impact. This approach of explicitly incorporating equity within metrics and indicators can help each CEDS update build upon each other, providing direction for future advisory councils and stakeholders in the region. **To create a range of guideposts for measuring the progress of equitable growth, consider three key areas: macro-level, program-level, and qualitative indicators.**

- **Macro-level Indicators:** Build on the use of macro-level data throughout the CEDS by identifying key long-term regional equity metrics.
- **Program-level Indicators:** Craft shorter-term metrics for programs and activities related to CEDS priorities to ensure longer-term progress.
- **Qualitative Indicators:** Incorporate community voice and tell a more complete story of the region by incorporating data from interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

## Resources

- **[Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard](#):** [A coalition of community-based organizations](#) in the Twin Cities region crafted a six-part framework and scoring system to build a collective commitment to equitable development.
- **[Indicators for an Inclusive Regional Economy](#):** Created by the [Center for Economic Inclusion](#) for the Minneapolis-St. Paul region, this guide draws connections between regional indicators and cultural communities represented in the region to understand economic inclusion and exclusion better.



## **Review your current CEDS**

- What macro-level indicators did you identify? Are any indicators focused on race, gender, ability, or geography within the region? If you identified peer regions, did you include demographic considerations? Have you explored migration data related to the region? What metrics did you use to measure inequality or segregation?
- What program-level indicators did you identify? Are any indicators focused on race, gender, ability, or geography within the region? How were these indicators integrated in program development and planning of your activities? Did you identify outputs and outcomes for programs internally? Who are your research partners?
- How did you collect qualitative information? How is this information reflected in the CEDS? Did you collect demographic information at events and in interviews, focus groups, and surveys? Did you include quotes? Did you include stories to illustrate priorities?

## MACRO-LEVEL INDICATORS

Data will be incorporated and referred to throughout the entire CEDS, from showcasing trends in the summary background to identifying priorities in the regional analysis. These are typically broad macro-level data points, such as income, poverty, and education across race and geography. These indicators don't often change dramatically on five-year timelines. This section is the opportunity to outline metrics for longer-term analysis across future CEDS will help benchmark progress further into the future.

- **Disaggregate indicators by demographics.** As discussed in this guide, disaggregating data is the first step in approaching data equity. Disaggregated data is needed to fully know who is impacted and how systemic barriers may influence outcomes. When measuring an overall poverty reduction, there must be a demographic lens to ensure racial, gender, or other disparities are addressed. When identifying macro-level indicators, ensure that several are demographic-specific, including race, age, gender, or geography.
- **When identifying peer regions, incorporate demographics.** Some EDDs like to include a peer comparison metric within their CEDS to provide regional context and comparison for the regional economy. These comparisons are only as useful as the methodology used to identify them. In identifying peer metro areas, include equity and demographic metrics to ensure alignment with selected comparison regions, including racial segregation and income inequality.

### Idea: Understanding Migration

Among the common descriptors that individuals use to describe their region is growing or declining. While growth, regarding population, jobs, or industries, is an important metric to better understand the movement of residents, migration data can illuminate population trends alongside descriptive demographics, including if young adults are staying in the region or Black residents are leaving the region. When broken out with demographics, these trends can provide a fuller picture of equity changes over time. For example, [in St. Louis](#), migration trends have shown that many factors, including historic disinvestment and the rising cost of living, have led to Black residents' displacement from historically Black neighborhoods. Additionally, this data illuminates how [federal rural investments](#) may impact youth

outmigration. By better understanding migration, steps can be taken to leverage [shrink-smart](#) or [smart-growth](#) strategies within the region. **Explore more through the [Census Bureau's Migration Data](#) searchable tools and maps.**

**Example:** [Sacramento Area Council of Governments](#) | California, Pop. 2,397,382 (6 counties)

In their [2020 CEDS](#), the four organizational CEDS partners identified impact metrics across four areas, including regional inclusive economic indicators, innovation, and business growth indicators, workforce indicators, and transportation infrastructure. Several of these metrics focus on equity, including metrics by race, gender, and the use of the [Brookings Institution's Metro Monitor](#) inclusion and prosperity metrics.

### **Idea: Potential Indicators**

When crafting indicators for the region, potential equity metrics could include:

- **[Gini Index](#):** A metric of economic inequality, the Gini coefficient summarizes the spread of income across the population, from equally shared to held by one or a few individuals.
- **[Theil's H Index](#):** A metric of racial segregation that indicates how evenly members of racial and ethnic groups are distributed across a region as a whole.
- **[Living Wage](#):** Understand how cost burdens, such as housing and transportation, impact low-wage workers can be understood by [calculating a living wage](#) and exploring metrics related to income and living wage by racial and demographic groups.
- **[Racial Wealth Gap](#):** Metrics that look at average household wealth gaps across racial groups serve to illustrate inequities. For example, comparing the average wealth gap between households with a white householder against households with a Black householder could serve as a metric to understand racial wealth gaps regionally.

**Resource: Innovative Data**

Explore the [Innovative Data section of this guide](#) for a compilation of data equity tools.

## PROGRAM-LEVEL INDICATORS

Building on macro-level indicators, incorporate program-level metrics to better illustrate the regional organization's role and foster transparency and accountability. When launching and leading programs related to identified regional priorities, set shorter-term metrics about these activities to support the longer-term macro-level indicators.

- **Consider evaluation metrics in program planning.** When translating the CEDS goals into objectives and activities, ensure that all program planning includes evaluation at the outset. Using frameworks like a [theory of change or a logic model](#), begin with the program's intended goal and then work backward to ensure that the intended impact on the community is at the center of the activities.
- **Build research partnerships.** Look at local community assets, such as anchor institutions and potential university partners, including [EDA-funded University Centers](#), with resources and insight into designing program evaluation methods. Seek ways to build deeper partnerships with these institutions, both as strong economic drivers and in the insights they can support in developing metrics and indicators for short-term and long-term success. Take steps to formalize these agreements with memorandums of understanding and data-sharing agreements to protect the privacy of any participants.

### Idea: Outputs and Outcomes

When looking at the intended impact of EDD/EDO programs, give thought to both the short-term and the impact. In programming planning, through tools like [logic models](#), craft both outputs and outcomes for each program led by the EDD/EDO. Be clear about the differentiation of these two items; an output metric may not translate to a broader impact, and outcomes can't be evidence-based without output metrics. Both metrics should be specific about demographics to ensure that an equity lens is being applied to program evaluation.

- **Outputs:** Identify the direct evidence of the activity. For example, how many people were trained, how many referrals were made, or how much funding was distributed.

- **Outcomes:** Identify the result of the activity. For example, how many people found employment, how many people received business licenses, or how many jobs were created.

Use this [example Economic Development Logic Model from the EDA](#) to identify outputs and outcomes with program partners to ensure consensus, buy-in, and success in reaching broader goals.

**Example:** [Greater Portland, Inc.](#) | Oregon, Pop. 1,832,634 (4 counties)

In their [2022 CEDS](#), the EDD team built an [interactive online matrix of their action plan](#), which included all the objectives, related outcomes, corresponding metrics, and leading organizations. These metrics include tracking program participants by race and metrics for participation in a regional equity summit.

## Resources

- **Evaluation in Service of Racial Equity Tools:** A three-part recorded webinar series and guide from the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) provides examples and strategies to incorporate anti-bias and racial equity within program evaluation measures.
- **Centering Racial Equity in Measurement and Evaluation:** Review lessons learned from non-profit organizations adjusting internal processes, updating frameworks and materials, and expanding accountability to embed racial equity in program evaluation.

## QUALITATIVE INDICATORS

Qualitative research creates the opportunity to embed community voice directly into the CEDS. Qualitative data is essential in telling the full story of the regional economy, providing deeper context and consideration to the story the larger data tells. Create opportunities for qualitative insights by hosting public forums or listening sessions, conducting targeted focus groups, and collecting broader local community surveys. These efforts should be embedded through the CEDS development process, not just at the outset or after a draft has been completed; there should be opportunities throughout to provide the community with room to provide input, feedback, and proposed changes.

- **Collect demographics.** Consider how to collect demographic information for any survey, focus group, interview, or another type of qualitative research. With these demographics, parse out results, insights, and experiences by gender, race, age, and beyond. When seeking to address systemic barriers, use information that is broken out to identify differences in experiences. Consider making these identifiers optional to allow for the comfort level of participants or respondents. Additionally, explore how these questions are worded and the response selections available. For example, regarding gender, consider offering alternative options beyond just male and female to account for a range of identities.
- **Collaborate with [strategic partners](#) for data collection.** When identifying [strategic partners](#), consider how they may support the distribution of any surveys or hosting focus groups, interviews, or events. The trusted role and relationship these partners may have would allow for greater feedback and insights for the CEDS. Explore how trusted partner locations, such as public housing facilities, libraries, or public schools, in specific areas in the region could be more accessible to specific audiences. The partnerships formed during the CEDS development process significantly impact the final document and strategies within it.

**Example:** [Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission](#) | Vermont, Pop. 58,191  
(4 counties)

When compiling the [2022 CEDS for the West Central Vermont region](#), the commission worked closely with partners to host regional economic development



workshops. Early in the process, [one of these CEDS Workshops](#) was co-hosted with the [Vermont Racial Justice Alliance](#). This workshop sought to inform leaders and partners across the region about the CEDS development and begin gathering feedback from stakeholders that would inform their SOAR analysis. Since this meeting, the commission has released two drafts of their CEDS for continued community feedback with [multiple avenues](#) for feedback virtually and in-person. Learn more [here](#).

## Resources

- **[Who's Coming? Respectful Audience Surveying Toolkit](#)**: To inform survey design, this toolkit from [OFBYFOR ALL](#) provides insights to thoughtfully collect demographic information.
- **[Qualitative Research Practice Guide](#)**: [Code for America](#) shares their qualitative research best practices in this guide, which includes considerations for ethics, interviews, and analyzing data.

## Economic Resilience

As illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing recovery, historically excluded communities are disproportionately affected by economic shocks or events. The region can only be adequately resilient if it is inclusive. The CEDS should address resilience efforts for residents at the greatest risk of being affected by these shocks. Inclusive economic resilience requires strong partnerships between public and private entities that actively involve the voices and perspectives of excluded communities. When defining and planning for economic resilience in the community, explore possibilities and solutions that address resilience to economic disruptions, natural disaster resilience, and climate resilience.

- **Resilience to Economic Disruptions:** In adjusting to a new normal beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, apply lessons learned to ensure future planning addresses gaps and needs that could be presented by other economic disruptions, such as other public health emergencies, technology shifts, the departure of major employers, and cyberattacks.
- **Natural Disaster Resilience:** In understanding the inequitable impact of natural disasters on communities, incorporate equity considerations in planning for the economic impacts of natural disasters.
- **Climate Resilience:** As conditions change, identify short-term and long-term steps to reduce the impact of climate change in the region.

### Definition: Resiliency

“The capacity to recover quickly and overcome social, psychological, physical, or cultural difficulties, traumas, or challenges—often bouncing back to a state of greater wisdom and strength.” **Learn more in NGIN’s [Communication Resource Guide for Inclusive Economic Development](#).**

### Definition: Economic Resiliency

“Economic resilience aims to better prepare regions to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock, disruption, or stress it may experience.” **Learn more from the [EDA’s CEDS Content Guidelines](#).**

## **Idea: Beyond Resiliency**

In considering asset-based language, the [concept of resilience](#) often puts the responsibility of success or failure on individuals and reinforces the previous status quo. Resilience preserves what is already in place rather than challenging systems and structures that reinforce inequities. **When considering what resiliency looks like in the community, look at how efforts to mitigate changes can also support changing historical systems and inequities.**

### **Review your current CEDS**

- How does the CEDS address resiliency? How does it address resiliency for historically excluded communities who are most affected by economic shocks?
- How does the CEDS discuss recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic? How are lessons from the pandemic being implemented to improve workforce and small business resiliency for minority- and women-owned businesses?
- How does the CEDS plan for recovery and resilience to a variety of risks or potential economic disruptions, such as natural disasters, climate change, public health emergencies, cyber-attacks, or other disruptions? How will this planning impact the regional economy? Which residents will be most at-risk to these future shocks?

## RESILIENCE TO ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS

As seen throughout the pandemic, individual experiences varied widely. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, many lessons were learned that could be applied to mitigate the impacts of other future economic disruptions, such as public health emergencies, the departure of major employers, and cyberattacks. This lens applies to all sectors, from public health to education. Still, when understanding the long-lasting impact of the pandemic on local economies, these learnings can help address historical inequities.

### Considerations

- **Identify gaps in access to pandemic-related support.** When looking backward at what happened during the pandemic and how those factors influenced the region's economic recovery, understand who did and did not receive relief funding and why. Small businesses in communities of [color faced barriers in accessing pandemic relief funding](#), with barriers spanning a lack of outreach and communication, historical distrust, access to financial institutions they did not previously have relationships with, and digital access. Engage the community to adjust the program design and requirements to ensure equitable access to funding in the future.
- **Continue measuring the economic impacts of the pandemic.** Early in the pandemic, impact metrics became critical, in both case counts and hospital capacity, but also in understanding the impact on the local workforce and small businesses. As EDDs created data metrics and dashboards, continue using these metrics, alongside disaggregated equity metrics, to understand the longer-term impact of the pandemic on the community. Given that the pandemic is ongoing with new strains and additional public health concerns, these metrics can also help identify trends to build more equitable policies and programs in this new normal.
- **Identify programs and models adopted in pandemic recovery.** 2020 saw a surge in expanded social safety net programs, including increased unemployment benefits, rental vouchers, financial assistance, and increased healthcare access. Before the pandemic, many of these programs, such as [guaranteed income programs](#), were rare, but during the pandemic and into recovery have flourished

and scaled across communities. While many of these programs were short-term, outcomes and successes illustrated the potential for longer-term and larger-scale investment beyond the short-term of the pandemic economic recovery. These programs have powerful equity implications for communities of color, women, and geographies that have faced structural economic exclusion.

- **Invest in partnerships built through immediate COVID-19 responses.** Given the scale and disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, new organizational partnerships were vital in distributing information, creating access to financial relief, and creating access to and building trust in vaccine distribution. These new partnerships, including strengthened public health partnerships and community-based organization relationships, should be just as critical in pandemic recovery as in pandemic response. Identify opportunities to pool resources from these partners to address equity gaps.

**Example:** [Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) | *Indiana, Pop. 2,013,784 (8 counties)*

In their [2022 CEDS](#), the MPO included equitable growth as a guiding principle for their overarching strategy. Their CEDS included a significant economic resilience framework focused on talent, business, and connectivity. Within this framework, staff outlined the creation of an occupational risk tool that incorporated COVID-19 risk and looked at digital access and broadband infrastructure gaps during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CEDS also clearly outlined the qualitative input that led to their strategies, including working group sessions, community newsletters, and roundtable participants.

## Resources

- [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#): Data on economic distress, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the emergence of industry clusters at the regional and local levels.
- [Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker](#): Combines federal data and anonymized corporate data to provide a timeline of the economic impacts of COVID-19 from 2022 until today. These metrics include consumer spending, small business, employment, education, and public health.

## NATURAL DISASTER RESILIENCY

Natural disaster resiliency relies on strong partnerships between public, private, and non-profit stakeholders, and an understanding of the needs of historically excluded populations. Repeatedly, there are disparities in the ability to evacuate safely, access protective infrastructure, or access financial assistance in recovery. These disparities reflect pre-existing structural inequalities, such as poverty and discrimination. In looking at the recovery process, these structural inequities can expand. Inclusive natural disaster resiliency planning focuses on involving the community in the planning process for relevant resources and support services.

### Considerations

- **Develop emergency management partnerships.** [Strategic partner](#) involvement in developing and implementing the region's CEDS is crucial, and disaster resiliency is no exception. As the region creates hazard mitigation plans, [look at opportunities to strengthen and align these plans](#) to the CEDS process. These joint efforts can ensure deeper and broader community engagement and incorporate equity considerations to reduce the potential economic impacts of natural disasters.
- **Ensure equity in disaster preparedness.** To ensure regional equitable resilience, equity must be a core consideration of any preparedness efforts that the EDD/EDO undertakes. To the widening of economic gaps as the result of natural disasters, [look across five core areas in planning efforts](#), including economic, environmental, social, administrative, and legal.

### Resource: What is Environmental Racism?

In looking at the future impacts of climate change, natural disasters, and pandemics, the history of [environmental racism](#) puts communities of color at greater risk. Environmental racism refers to the institutional policies and practices that have led to higher rates of hazardous waste disposal and resulting air and water pollution in communities of color. It also refers to the overexposure of indigenous communities to the effects of mining, oil extraction, and gas extraction. [This history](#) has led to a range of health conditions and further vulnerability to

extreme weather events, environmental degradation, and the effects of climate change for communities of color.

**Example:** [Kawerak, Inc.](#) | *Alaska, Pop. 9196 (20 native villages)*

In their [2019 CEDS for the Bering Straits region](#), a robust resiliency framework shared housing, energy, unemployment, skill development, and geography and distance needs. Given their sizable geographic footprint, work with 20 jurisdictions, and the historic disinvestment of Alaska Native communities, these considerations are crucial. They aligned these needs with strategies within the larger CEDS and outlined key disruptions and early-warning tools. These resilience efforts are also tied to larger efforts to invest in renewable energy infrastructure.

### **Idea: Understand the Phases of Disaster**

There are opportunities to address equity gaps from disaster preparation to recovery. Consider how the community has taken steps in the past to reduce these gaps at each stage.

1. **Prevention:** Actions taken to reduce the impact of a disaster, including planning, economic, and education measures.
2. **Preparedness:** The planning and preparation of partner roles, and responsibilities that ensure an adequate response reduce the impact of a disaster.
3. **Mitigation:** Actions taken to prevent or reduce the cause, impact, and consequences of disasters.
4. **Response:** The provision of services carried out immediately before, during, and immediately after the occurrence of a disaster or emergency.
5. **Recovery:** Resolving the damage done by the disaster, beyond the initial emergency period, these can take the form of both short-term and long-term recovery strategies for residents and businesses.

**Learn more from IEDC's [RestoreYourEconomy.org](#) platform.**



## Resources

- **[CEDS and Hazard Mitigation Plan Alignment Guide](#)**: A collaborative guide from [FEMA \(Federal Emergency Management Agency\)](#) and [the EDA](#), look at the potential to connect and link strategies across economic development and hazard mitigation planning.
- **[Performance Metrics for Economic Recovery following Natural Disasters](#)**: This series of nine case studies, published by [IEDC](#), identifies locally based economic recovery indicators, including social equity indicators.
- **[Ten Principles for Building Resilience](#)**: A report from the [Urban Land Institute](#) explores ten economic, environmental, and social factors that contribute to resilience, including promoting equity, understanding vulnerabilities, and the cost of inaction.
- **[Community Resilience Estimates](#)**: This interactive tool from the Census Bureau calculates the percentage of residents facing various risk factors in natural disasters and emergencies, such as lack of health insurance, lack of internet access, and lack of vehicle access. Within [the set of online maps](#), the data is available at the state or county level and for [download](#) at the county or census tract level.

## CLIMATE RESILIENCY

As illustrated by natural disasters, pandemics, and beyond, climate change will bring additional inequitable impacts that reflect systemic failures. Inclusive climate resiliency involves actively engaging underrepresented and vulnerable communities in developing climate adaptation and mitigation plans and providing access to resources and support services.

### Considerations

- **Put equity at the center of any climate planning or goals.** Research shows that most local government climate and sustainability plans [do not include equity goals or treat them as an adjacent component](#). If equity is not a consideration as regions plan for climate change, historic inequities will only grow and [shape social and economic equity](#) for communities of color and geographies for the future. In defining climate goals, ensure that the goals are explicit about equity, including affordability, community engagement, and geographic impacts. Build additional accountability in the plan by reviewing all goals through an equity evaluation framework and crafting metrics that evaluate demographics and socioeconomic results.
- **Address planning and development impacts.** As illustrated in the built environment and history of urban planning, climate change will not affect communities and residents equally. Even in the same city, [heat islands](#), resulting from redlining and lack of green space, mean that low-income neighborhoods have higher temperatures, paying more for energy bills in homes that are usually less energy efficient, with significant long-term health concerns. When examining the physical landscapes of the local community, look at the circumstances leading to heat islands, among other environmental factors, and how they can be addressed. Consider infrastructure and urban planning efforts that can be undertaken to mitigate the inequitable environmental and health impacts, including the location of parks and transportation infrastructure.
- **Enhance access to efficient and renewable energy options.** To reduce the future impact of climate change, create affordable options and incentives to access efficient and renewable energy options, including solar energy, electric bikes, and energy-efficient appliances. Ensure that these programs prioritize and target key

demographics and geographic areas in the community that face greater barriers to accessing these solutions. Work closely with community members and [strategic partners](#) to ensure these programs reach the intended audience.

### **Idea: Create a Climate Equity Plan**

Several cities have begun taking steps to identify, address, and mitigate the equity impacts of climate change. In Austin, Texas, [the city's plan](#), launched in September 2021, includes 17 goals and 74 strategies available to view in a [live progress tracker](#). In creating the plan, the city created [a Community Climate Ambassador program](#) for resident engagement and evaluated all of the strategies through [an equity tool](#) for greater accountability and impact. Other cities have also undertaken similar planning efforts, including [Milwaukee, Wisconsin](#); [Richmond, Virginia](#); and [Minneapolis, Minnesota](#). **These plans may inspire the region to identify goals, strategies, and local community engagement on climate and economic resilience.**

### **Resource: [CEDS Content Guidelines](#)**

The EDA has developed guidelines to “assist economic development practitioners with the development or update of a CEDS.” Among these guidelines are considerations to support [climate resilience](#), including assessing risks and vulnerabilities, and prioritizing identified actions and implementation options.

**Review [these guidelines for resources](#) to bolster the CEDS.**

### **Example: [Mid-America Regional Council](#) | Missouri/Kansas, Pop. 1,186,175 (8 counties)**

The council builds on the regional collaborative model established with [KC Rising](#) to create [Climate Action KC](#). This coalition, with more than 100 local and state leaders, crafted a [climate action plan](#) to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

### **Example: [South Florida Regional Planning Council](#) | Florida, Pop. 4,743,946 (3 counties)**

Given their coastal location, the council identified climate change and sea level rise as the region's greatest challenge in [their 2022 CEDS](#). Climate change and several significant hurricanes in recent history have prioritized resilience planning for the council. Critical outcomes identified in the economic resilience plan include creating a new emergency operations center, supporting low-wealth communities

in launching sustainable businesses, and developing a coral restoration economy. The council also cited diversifying business and workforce opportunities beyond the hospitality and leisure industries.

**Example:** [Metropolitan Area Planning Council](#) | *Massachusetts, Pop. 4,432,617 (5 counties)*

In their [2020 CEDS](#), the council focused on the issues of equity and inclusion by defining terms, explaining their importance, and framing goals around these issues. Their process and plan have three major themes: racial equity, economic resilience, and climate resilience.

## Resources

- [Headwaters Economics](#): An independent, non-profit research group with various analysis tools, including [maps of climate change impact](#) and [maps of wildfire risk](#).
- [EJ Screen](#): A mapping and data tool from the [EPA](#) designed to provide users with access to a dataset that combines environmental and demographic indicators.
- [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#): Created by the [Council on Environmental Quality \(CEQ\)](#) to help Federal agencies identify communities that are “marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution.”
- [Maryland Climate Adaption and Resilience Framework Recommendations](#): An example of a state-level climate adaption plan that contains goals, policies, and implementation steps with justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations.

# Strategy and Implementation

Underpinning the entire CEDS document and engagement process are the strategies and actions that will be taken by the Economic Development District. Each region has its own optimal strategic actions to advance inclusive economic growth, which may include these six program areas with key equity implications.

- **[Small Business Support](#)**: Build on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to address the support and capital barriers for entrepreneurs and business owners of color.
- **[Inclusive Clusters and Industry Strategies](#)**: Elevate inclusive economic development practices within targeted industry cluster strategies.
- **[Equitable Workforce Development](#)**: Identify ways workforce development programs and services can address generational poverty and bolster economic mobility.
- **[Equitable Infrastructure](#)**: Consider opportunities to address [broadband](#) and [transportation](#) needs equitably across the community.
- **[Ecosystem Barriers](#)**: Address key ecosystem barriers that prevent talent in engaging in the region's economy by understanding and mitigating [childcare](#) and [housing](#) barriers.
- **[Equitable Community Engagement](#)**: Ensure that continuous community engagement builds trust and removes barriers to participation from groups that have historically not been engaged.

## Equitable Community Engagement

Ongoing community engagement is a vital part of successful economic strategies which deliver shared prosperity for the region. By engaging with the fullness of a community, a region opens the door to see all existing assets in the regional economy and create pathways to expand a region's GDP growth. The public participation process, the activities to gather community feedback for planning purposes, frequently favors the most privileged members of a community. [Research](#) from select cities has shown that white residents make up the “[overwhelming](#)” [majority](#) of public meeting attendees, over representing their input and participation in the planning process. While public meetings are only one avenue to public participation, this over-representation illustrates the importance of equitable community engagement strategies to ensure that all voices and communities are represented in the planning process.

### Considerations

- **Ensure two-way communication.** Center those with lived experience in the community at any engagement meetings and encourage space for concerns and feedback. Narratives individuals share may need to align with the common economic narrative of the region and ensure that these individuals are empowered to share their experiences. Ensure that after the engagement process, partners and stakeholders receive a copy of the action plan that addresses the concerns and feedback they shared that informed this work.
- **Map key audiences.** Understanding where in the community those who have been historically excluded from community engagement processes live and work is a crucial first step in ensuring that the EDD/EDO can reach them. When planning for the community engagement process, start by geographically mapping key audiences to ensure strategic locations for engagement opportunities.
- **Translate EDD/EDO materials.** Historically, many CEDS public engagement materials have only been available in English, from invitations to public meetings to the document itself. Ensure that any print materials and online information are available in languages spoken in the community and have translation services available at any live engagement opportunities. Begin by identifying which languages are spoken in the community, which may reflect key audiences, immigrant or refugee individuals, who reside there.

- **Seek both electric and physical engagement opportunities.** Only some people in the community have online connectivity, an electronic device, or the digital skills to complete an online survey or engage in an online convening. While technology has made it easier to gather feedback, be aware that key audiences whose voice needs to be included may not be able to access online engagement opportunities. Consider using locations that these audiences may frequent as locations for interviews or engagement, such as public libraries or senior centers. Beyond location, explore how pre-paid mailers or telephone engagements may provide alternatives to ensure that all are engaged in the planning process.
- **Be aware of location and scheduling constraints.** Ensure that the locations of any engagement meetings are convenient and safe for the key audiences who have been historically excluded. Select places in the geographic areas identified and ensure they are transit accessible. Beyond just the site of the meetings, ensure that the day and time of the meetings are accessible for those that may work hours beyond just 9-5 or conflict with other key community activities. [Some jurisdictions](#) have offered childcare at engagement meetings to reduce barriers for parents and caregivers.

### **Definition: Community Engagement**

The process by which organizations align in benefit of the community and individuals to build a focused method which integrates feedback to develop a collective vision and plan while simultaneously assessing the needs and unique community interests. **Learn more in NGIN's [Communication Resource Guide for Inclusive Economic Development](#).**

**Example: Sonoma-Mendocino Economic Development District** | *California, Pop. 581,085 (2 counties)*

In their [2022 CEDS, SoMo Strong](#), the staff outlined the range of public engagement methods, activities, and participation rates for each activity, which included expert interviews, expert focus groups, jurisdiction and agency interviews, community meetings, and a survey available in English and Spanish.

**Example:** [Headwaters Regional Development Commission](#) | Minnesota, Pop. 86,764 (5 counties)

In 2019, the commission launched [the 100 Cups of Coffee project](#), where interviewers had 100 one-on-one conversations with community members. As part of the creation of the Beltrami Area Resiliency Team, these conversations resulted in the identification of challenges around substance use, mental healthcare, childcare, education, and housing.

### **Idea: Conduct a Community Census**

[Penn Hills Community Development Corporation](#) in Pennsylvania secured funding to conduct a local community census. This census, branded as [Penn Hills Rising](#), will include hiring residents to complete a door-to-door conversation, collaboration with 65 community-based organizations across 39 neighborhoods, and a wide range of neighborhood meetings.

### **Resources**

- [Beyond Inclusion – Equity in Public Engagement Guide](#): Researchers at Simon Fraser University outline eight core principles to guide the inclusion of diverse voices in public engagement initiatives. This guide includes addressing barriers to accessibility and engaging participants with lived experiences.
- [Fostering Partnerships for Community Engagement Guidebook](#): Researchers at the Urban Institute share best practices and guiding questions to identify and build relationships with partners in service to community engagement.

### **Resources: Transparency and Accountability**

Explore the [Transparency and Accountability section of this guide](#) for additional examples and tools.



## Supporting Small Businesses

During the pandemic, small businesses were on the front lines of economic disruption, facing lost revenue and closures. These [economic disruptions](#) were felt differently across geographies, industries, and, importantly, racial demographics. Black-owned small businesses [closed at twice the rate](#) of white-owned small businesses. Asian-owned, Black-owned, and Hispanic-owned firms [all reduced operations significantly more](#) than white-owned small businesses. Dovetailing with these trends, there has been an increase in entrepreneurship, with [record business formation rates](#) since the pandemic's beginning. This increase in entrepreneurship brings more diversity, including record rates of [Black](#) and [Latino](#) entrepreneurs, though these rates are still behind rates of White entrepreneurship. There continues to be a significant need to address barriers for these entrepreneurs in launching and growing their businesses to contribute to local economic growth in the region.

### Considerations

- **Identify and invest in untapped assets.** This guide has discussed asset-based approaches, from language to mapping. When embedding equity in efforts to support and grow small businesses, start with the existing assets in the community, particularly successful entrepreneurs and business owners of color. These individuals will bring powerful expertise on where opportunities are and where barriers can be removed for other business owners, such as capital gaps or educational support.
- **Look back at who accessed COVID-19 small business assistance.** Start by looking backward at who was able to access COVID-19 small business relief programs and how they were able to access this support. Look at what preexisting inequities were in place for business owners of color that were compounded by the pandemic, especially access to capital. This was reflected in who could access COVID-19 assistance, with [significant disparities in Paycheck Protection Program](#) lending. By understanding the barriers in accessing pandemic support and how information was made available and disseminated to business owners of color, the EDD/EDO can identify gaps in services and outreach to address.
- **Address capital barriers.** Entrepreneurs need support and community when launching their businesses, but at a fundamental level, entrepreneurs cannot start businesses without funding. Capital access barriers have long hindered entrepreneurs and business owners of color, with traditional financial lenders

turning down business owners of color at [significantly higher rates](#) than their white counterparts. With increasing rates of entrepreneurs of color, these [capital barriers must be addressed](#) for local economic growth and to reduce racial wealth divides in the region. Consider the role of the EDD or EDO in creating and supporting [new investment vehicles for entrepreneurs of color](#), including partnerships with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and Community Credit Unions that don't extract wealth and provide low-interest rates and greater flexibility.

- **Challenge bias and expectations for business owners and entrepreneurs of color.** Most conversations around business owners of color build on biases by industry. With corner stores and barbershops being front of mind, these existing biases tend to focus support to microenterprises in specific sectors, such as retail and service industries. These industries and business models are considered limited growth compared to high-growth industries that scale in other industries. These industries were [more likely to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic](#) in lost revenue. When looking to support these business owners and entrepreneurs, focus on something other than programs and capital by industry. Create strategies to build the diversity of business ownership, not just by the number of companies but across the entire economy holistically, including industry and business size.
- **Explore resource navigation models.** Across [social services](#), [healthcare](#), and [digital inclusion](#) fields, community navigator models have expanded in providing individualized support, reducing organizational silos, and achieving equity outcomes. In response to the pandemic recovery, many programs focused on [business navigators](#) or [community navigators](#) seek to support entrepreneurs and small business owners in navigating the business launch or growth process. These navigation models structure a “front door” or individual with relationships across the community to connect the business owner to resources. With equity implications to reduce barriers to information and access to connections, consider how entrepreneurship and business support programs could use navigation models to connect business ownerships with community, support, and capital.

### **Idea: Character-Based Lending**

Most small business start-ups cannot access bank loans and other avenues for financing and these options may require existing economic assets. Models from several small business support and capital providers are creating alternatives that

focus less on credit score and assets and instead evaluate based on the character of the entrepreneur and business plan strength. These modes, from [MORTAR](#) in Cincinnati; [Access Ventures](#) in Kentucky; and [Boston Impact Initiative](#), create new pathways to evaluate and fund small business concepts in loan underwriting. **Learn more from the [Urban Manufacturing Alliance's Pathways to Patient Capital Action Guide](#).**

**Example: Northwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission** | *Wisconsin, Pop. 174,999 (10 counties)*

Through participation in the EDA-funded [Equitable Lending Leaders](#) program, the commission staff sought to more deeply engage five Native American nations and two major universities to strengthen their region's small business ecosystem. Viewing their Revolving Loan Fund as a public resource that needed to serve all areas and communities in the region, the loan fund team incorporated a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) section of their loan policies. This statement was tied to greater outreach efforts to reach different communities to diversify the applicant profile of their lending portfolio.

**Example: [Mid-Region Council of Governments](#)** | *New Mexico, Pop. 1,068,376 (5 counties)*

In their [2020 CEDS](#), the MRCOG team identifies [key strategies for inclusive entrepreneurship](#) across both rural and urban entrepreneurs. These strategies include identifying partners and metrics for developing programs by and for people of color, women, and other groups that have had special barriers to entry to entrepreneurship.

## Resources

- **[Building Equitable Local Ecosystems for Small Business Brief](#)**: A summary of [the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's \(LISC\)](#) ecosystem-focused approach to serving small and micro-businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **[Innovative Finance Playbook](#)**: Created with support from the Economic Development Administration, this playbook supports diverse founders and funders in understanding the breadth of resources, details of types of innovative models, and the best ways to support inclusive entrepreneurship.

## Inclusive Clusters and Industry Strategies

Regional industry clusters aren't a new approach to economic development. By design, they identify promising growth opportunities in a region, target resources to accelerate that growth, and ensure the conditions to deliver economic competitiveness. Leveraging cluster strategies with a [specific focus on inclusive growth](#), however, changes how industry strategies are delivered in place. As regions analyze industry activities and support target clusters, key considerations to activate inclusive clusters include how resources are targeted, how to identify growth opportunities, and how to create workforce partnerships.

### Considerations

- **Ensure inclusivity considerations in cluster selection and measurement.** Inclusivity needs to be deliberate. For cluster selection, practitioners can identify those parts of the economy where diverse business owners and diverse talent are already thriving, as potential industry clusters to prioritize. Additionally, economic practitioners can identify how excluded individuals and businesses outside of target clusters can be connected to the target cluster, so they can both drive and benefit from the growth. Ensuring inclusivity remains a central point as the industry cluster grows by setting equitable goals must be part of the planning at the outset. Create metrics that track inclusive metrics, including job ladders, business supplier diversity, and opportunities for entrepreneurs.
- **Foster regional collaboration.** Smaller towns, rural communities, and disinvested parts of larger cities are often ignored in cluster strategies. Yet EDDs are uniquely positioned to identify, build, and serve industry clusters, which are most apparent at a regional rather than a local level. Economic practitioners can identify places and communities to activate in the cluster strategy, which will expand the overall economic growth of the cluster while also paving pathways of opportunity. Focusing on [building coalitions and networks focused on cluster support](#), while reinforcing the commitment to inclusive growth will be key to the success.
- **Bolster public-private partnerships, especially for talent and businesses.** Just as clusters require jurisdictional collaboration at the regional level, the need for partnerships and collaboration exists across sectors and industry entities. Businesses within clusters can easily [view other companies as competitors](#). This hinders building supportive systems that encourage inclusive economic growth

and requires the collaboration of these companies to participate and support the larger cluster. Investments in diverse talent and workforce programs are integral to successful inclusive cluster strategies.

- **Consider capital implications and needs.** Support can also [include capital investment and financial products](#) that align with the needs of the businesses. With access to capital as a significant barrier for business owners and entrepreneurs of color, women business owners and business owners in small towns, targeted financial products and opportunities can address equity barriers. [For example, in Chicago, a cluster-focused organization](#) designed financial products that targeted a subset of businesses that were smaller and primarily minority-owned to meet their working capital needs, which in turn contributed to the overall growth of the industry cluster.

**Definition:** Historically, there is evidence that certain geography types and diverse communities are excluded from regional industry clusters, especially for high-growth industries in the innovation economy where significant wealth is created. Smaller towns and rural communities are often excluded from innovation-led economic growth and experience slower economic recoveries. Additionally, women and diverse talent have struggled to participate and prosper in the innovation economy. Within regional growth clusters, especially high-growth sectors and the innovation economy, the inclusive economic model embeds equity within the cluster strategy to deliver equitable job creation, supply chain expansion, business growth, and innovation infrastructure.

### **Resource: The Chicagoland Food and Beverage Network**

A [classic example](#) of adapting an industry cluster strategy and aligning it to inclusive growth is the [Chicagoland Food and Beverage Network \(CFBN\)](#). Chicago serves as a [key location](#) for the processing, packaging, and distribution of a significant portion of the Midwest's agricultural production. In responding to industry changes, including new regulations and workforce implications, the network supports these businesses to address needs and create opportunities around consulting, workforce, and innovations.

**Example:** [Berkshire Regional Planning Commission](#) | Massachusetts, Pop. 4,432,617 (5 counties)

In their [2023 CEDS](#), the commission provided updates on the [Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 initiative](#). In partnership with [1Berkshire](#), the blueprint identified five industry clusters and developed partner hubs for each. These efforts included the creation of an advisory board, implementation support, and benchmarking.

## Resources

- **[U.S. Cluster Mapping](#)**: Created with support from the [EDA](#), this platform analyzes and summarizes several open data sets that identify regional clusters by location and industry.
- **[Cluster-Based Inclusive Regional Economic Development](#)**: This report explores four models of inclusive clusters, including definitions, cluster identification and analysis, and workforce considerations.
- **[Cluster Growth Toolkit](#)**: From the [Initiative for a Competitive Inner City \(ICIC\)](#), this set of guides provides community leaders with strategies to leverage clusters for inclusive economic growth.



# Equitable Workforce Development

As the pandemic highlighted existing economic inequities, historical workforce disparities were at the forefront, with record rates of unemployment and the [resulting financial consequences for low-income households](#). Hispanic and Black workers faced unemployment for the longest duration during the COVID-19 pandemic. With widespread school and childcare closures, women were more likely to leave the labor force to accommodate childcare needs. These labor market trends mirror the impacts on Black and Hispanic workers and women in [past economic downturns](#), facing greater job loss rates and slower wage recovery. Workforce development systems can be [uniquely positioned to disrupt cycles of systemic poverty](#) by acknowledging and addressing the inequities that prevented inclusive economic growth during previous economic downturns.

## Considerations

- **Be specific about a focus on equity efforts.** Most workforce organizations fulfill their mission by serving “everyone.” Accounting for historical and systemic racism and sexism, discrimination by ability, and the barriers presented by the criminal legal system, it becomes apparent that access to quality jobs and employment has entrenched inequities. Workforce development systems should equitably focus resources and programs on the individuals and communities with the most significant barriers to employment and identify ways to serve them effectively and realistically. Program goals, activities, and success metrics should reflect the specifics of the audience the EDD/EDO seeks to serve.
- **Identify and engage backbone organizations.** Workforce development at its core is broad, spanning sectors and approaches; as such, a wide range of partners and stakeholders all play unique roles in the local ecosystem, and the complexity only grows when looking at the broader region. [Stakeholders include](#) workforce development boards, employers, higher education and community colleges, community-based organizations, unions and trade associations, public libraries, and beyond. To avoid [fragmentation across these stakeholders](#), apply a [collective impact lens](#) to identify regional backbone organizations. These [backbone organizations](#), or conveners, serve as the primary connector of strategies, activities, funding, and measurement. These organizations may be uniquely able with local partners to build a deeper understanding of local workforce trends.

- **Bolster wraparound services.** While training and education may be central to workforce development, inclusive strategies also address the broader range of barriers in accessing upskilling or reskilling programs with [wraparound supports](#). These supports, including transportation, childcare, and counseling, addressing larger systemic barriers that disproportionately face workers of color and women and lead to stronger labor market and program outcomes.
- **Look beyond employment disparities.** Most of the metrics within workforce development focus on employment, attaining employment, or maintaining employment. Disaggregating these traditional employment metrics by race and gender helps provide another window into disparities and addresses barriers and hiring discrimination. Also, to account for [job quality](#), metrics should go beyond just employment secured to [include wages and benefits secured](#) to understand the full picture of economic mobility for workers by race and gender. These metrics of quality and progress, including wage gains, [over time provide a much more complete picture](#) to service providers of individual impact, rather than reinforcing job placement as the only metric of success.

## Definitions

- **Inclusive Workforce Development:** Inclusivity requires more than just balanced representation and hiring in the workforce. A cohesive approach would entail creating holistic pathways for BIPOC, women, and low-wealth individuals, so they are able to grow in the lifetime of their employment and career. This elevates solutions to combat wealth disparities for these groups as it supports activating and targeting resources to address gaps in the ecosystem, such as investing in education programs and training facilities, adjusting supportive services, such as childcare, transportation, banking services, affordable housing, etc., or addressing biases in the workplace that hamper their ability to grow and succeed.
- **Occupational segregation:** Occurs when one demographic group is overrepresented or underrepresented among different kinds of work or types of jobs. According to Economic Policy Institute, over the next decade, eight of the ten major groups of professional occupations are projected to have above-average job growth resulting in continued disparities in employment patterns in the economy.



- **Underemployed:** When an individual possesses qualifications or skills which are not fully maximized in their current employment, with emphasis on adults who are economically disadvantaged, unskilled, or have other barriers to employment.

Learn more in NGIN's [Communication Resource Guide for Inclusive Economic Development](#).

**Example:** [Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency](#) | Kentucky, Pop. 1,008,204 (7 counties)

In their [2023 CEDS](#), the agency developed specific goals and metrics related to workforce development wraparound services, including expanding childcare. The CEDS specifically discusses and provides data on targeted outreach groups for services, including individuals with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, veterans, justice-involved residents, foster youth, and those experiencing homelessness.

**Example:** [San Diego County Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs](#) | California, Pop. 3,398,634 (1 county)

In their [2022 CEDS](#), the county presented several workforce development strategies, including legal structures like Community Benefits Agreements and “Learn and Earn” programs. To connect workforce development and climate resilience, the county [explored policies that can increase the accessibility to clean energy jobs](#) equitably.

**Resource:** [CEDS Content Guidelines](#)

The EDA has developed guidelines to “assist economic development practitioners with the development or update of a CEDS.” Among these guidelines are resources to support [workforce development](#), including the value of sectoral partnerships and the importance of good jobs. Review [these guidelines for resources to bolster the CEDS](#).

**Idea: Putting Workers at the Center**

Usually, employers, rather than workers, sit at the center of workforce development strategies. Employing strategies that center workers, including their rights, voice,

and empowerment, encourages economic mobility. The [Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance](#) in Illinois serves as a model, with their efforts to fund and supports workforce partnerships in the manufacturing, health care, and early childhood sectors and grow apprenticeships in pandemic-impacted industries. The alliance has developed a [workers' rights for workforce development curriculum](#) and leads [the Raise the Floor Alliance](#) to improve job quality and workplace standards for low-wage workers. **Learn more about [this model](#).**

## Resources

- **[Data for an Inclusive Economic Recovery Report](#)**: In this report, the [National Skills Coalition](#) looks at metrics that address structural inequities for federal investments in workforce development, including enhanced outcome metrics and identifying and addressing workforce equity gaps.
- **[Ready for Equity in Workforce Development Tool](#)**: From [Race Forward](#), this guide looks at how race inequities have served as a critical barrier in the workforce development field and provides models and solutions for making gains. This tool includes readiness assessment criteria to meet workforce development practitioners where they currently are.
- **[Roadmap for Racial Equity](#)**: This guide from the [National Skills Coalition](#) outlines workforce and education policies that support tracking progress toward racial equity, including post-secondary training, correctional education, apprenticeships, sector partnerships, and upskilling strategies.

## Equitable Infrastructure

Infrastructure can be [defined as](#) “the physical framework upon which the U.S. economy operates, and our standard of living depends.” As such, the existing infrastructure, from highways to hazardous waste sites, [illustrates a stark picture of historical inequities and racism](#) in policy and funding. As national conversations around infrastructure investments and improvements seek to apply an equity lens, economic development districts are increasingly examining the impact of local infrastructure investments. Equitable infrastructure seeks to incorporate equity in each stage of planning, engagement, prioritization, and in building, to ensure that racial, gender, and geographic disparities are not being exacerbated further. Front of mind for practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic were both **broadband and digital access and transportation access**.

## BROADBAND AND DIGITAL ACCESS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a spotlight was shown on the essential need for digital access, with an increasing focus on the lack of internet access and broadband availability and affordability. During the pandemic, digital access meant the ability to go to school, stay employed or keep a business open. In recovery, as more services and activities remain primarily online, digital access is only more essential. Economic development districts saw firsthand how broadband mapping gaps and a lack of transparency on access and adoption have directly impeded economic competitiveness and equitable access to employment opportunities.

### Considerations

- **Consider broadband maps and metrics critically.** In reference to national federal data, be aware of the [significant lack of data and historical overstating of broadband access](#) presented nationally. As the Federal Communications Commission is taking steps to improve the data available in the [National Broadband Map](#), look to additional data sources to inform what may be a more accurate representation of broadband access in the community and raise awareness as the overstated data may impact the region's ability to access federal funds. Additionally, broadband access exists on a spectrum that includes the type of access, cost, and speed. When crafting metrics for local broadband access, consider how the type of access, the cost of access, and speed can impact online

access regionally.

- **Explore the nuance of broadband access and broadband adoption.** While metrics that look at broadband access show key infrastructure gaps, low-income residents, disproportionately residents of color, may also lack access because of [the high cost](#). When making broadband infrastructure investments, consider inequitable financial barriers to online access and the availability of [information about low-cost internet access programs](#).
- **Consider digital access holistically.** While reliable broadband access is an essential component of digital access, it is not the only essential component. True digital access must address three components: broadband access and affordability, electric device access, and digital literacy and skills. Identify steps to ensure full digital access, including device dissemination and access, and digital literacy training for workforce development and beyond.

#### **Resource: What is Digital Redlining?**

As Internet Service Providers seek to maximize profits, there is continued underinvestment in lower-income neighborhoods and communities, which are disproportionately communities of color. As Internet Service Providers prioritize investments based on wealth and competition, low-income communities are [paying more for slower internet service than higher-income areas](#), if there is even basic infrastructure available. As with historical redlining, where systemic racism and discrimination withheld loans for housing, these systems, through [digital redlining](#), are continuing to influence who has broadband access and their cost and speed of service. **Learn more from the [National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#).**

**Example: [Acadiana Planning Commission](#) | Louisiana, Pop. 604,726 (7 counties)**

To better understand the impacts of local broadband gaps, the commission conducted a baseline assessment of broadband services throughout the region and developed an action plan for improvements. Ultimately, the commission secured [more than \\$33 million in public and private investment](#) to expand high-speed broadband access to rural communities in the region. Once constructed, these projects will halve the number of parishes in the region without reliable broadband,

connecting rural residents who faced significant barriers to online learning, telehealth, and teleworking opportunities during the pandemic.

**Example: [Land of Sky Regional Council](#) | North Carolina, Pop. 434,748 (4 counties)**

Crafted by the council, the [Bridging the Digital Divide Digital Inclusion Plan](#) is a comprehensive plan to increase and diversify broadband access in their region. To create the plan, the council enacted a formal process including a large regional forum, in-depth focus group meetings, and stakeholder engagement across the region. Results include the development of six laptop and hot spot lending pilots, the installation of free Wi-Fi in ten community centers, three downtown Wi-Fi access points, and providing devices to individuals pursuing education who are justice-involved or in recovery programs. Learn more [here](#).

**Example: [Metropolitan Area Planning Council](#) | Massachusetts, Pop. 4,432,617 (5 counties)**

Focusing on the local cities of Revere and Chelsea, the council crafted a [digital access and equity plan](#) to address accessibility, availability, and affordability of fast, reliable internet. The development of this plan included a working group with broad community stakeholder representation, a survey available in both English and Spanish, the creation of updated internet service maps, and a community needs assessment focused on both digital literacy and device access.

**Example: [River Valley Regional Commission](#) | Georgia, Pop. 369,115 (16 counties)**

During COVID-19 school closures, the commission supported study connectivity by building on a previous geospatial analysis of the [Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative's](#) broadband availability data and identified areas with students most at risk from a lack of broadband access. The [Macon County School System](#) used this data and funding from the [Georgia Department of Education](#) to install 14 wireless routers that enabled over 700 students to access the internet at the speeds necessary to support online attendance.

## Resources

- **[Broadband Now's National Broadband Map](#)**: A map compiling multiple data sources nationally to create the most to-date map of broadband availability, speeds, and pricing at the local level.
- **[Digital Inclusion 101](#)**: The [National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#) has curated an introductory set of resources, videos, and approaches in their Digital Inclusion 101 primer.
- **[Community Broadband Networks](#)**: Explore the [Institute for Local Self-Reliance's research](#), [map](#), and [podcast](#) that explore the creation of local community-owned networks.
- **[Leveraging Digital and Social Infrastructure for Economic Inclusion Report](#)**: A report from NGIN that looks at connections and models across BIPOC wealth creation, economic mobility, and digital access.

## TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

Transportation access, whether it be the ability to buy a car, access to carpooling, or access to reliable and frequent public transportation, is a growing concern for job accessibility, career mobility, and accessible, affordable housing. Lack of access to reliable and affordable transit impacts wealth building and career mobility. The pandemic has shown increased workplace flexibility, including remote work, for individuals not in essential, service roles. This flexibility is increasingly out of reach for low-income communities, disproportionately communities of color, who are more likely to hold frontline and low-wage roles.

### Considerations

- **Conduct a Transportation Equity Needs Assessment.** Engage and create participatory transportation projects with an equity focus. These [needs assessments](#) can include inventorying and assessing the range of mobility needs for specific communities, particularly regarding [affordability, mobility, safety, health, and access to opportunity](#).

- **Look at state-level opportunities.** With historic federal investment in infrastructure, the Department of Transportation is distributing the [bulk of the available investments directly to state agencies](#). When looking at transportation improvement and equity in the region, additional investments may be available through state programs and initiatives.
- **Elevate equity in the prioritization process.** As Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) undertake the creation of long-range transportation plans (LRTPs) and transportation improvement programs (TIPs) their [prioritization processes](#) typically take the form of a scoring assessment or a holistic assessment. In either of these approaches, [equity should be a primary evaluation criterion](#) across multiple modes of transportation, beyond just transit, and include significant public involvement.
- **Draw inspiration from solutions in accessible mobility.** Facing mobility barriers, individuals with disabilities and older adults illustrate how innovations and technology have created [new approaches and solutions](#) with [technology](#) and [shared mobility](#) to address transportation barriers. Transportation departments are looking at how to [deepen the impact of 5310 funding](#) to examine mobility options for older adults and individuals with disabilities with considerations for demographics and race.
- **Look at rural-specific transportation solutions:** Geography and the diffuse nature of rural areas make planning and funding transportation programs difficult and require [specific solutions and models](#). [Additional models](#) for rural communities include [connector services](#), [coordinated services](#), and [voucher approaches](#).

**Example: [Centralina Economic Development District](#) | North Carolina, Pop. 2,288,454 (9 counties)**

As shared in their [2023 CEDS](#), staff looked beyond just the cost of transportation to develop a [transit equity portal](#) that incorporated new metrics for vehicle accessibility, transit propensity, and persistent poverty. As part of the larger [CONNECT Beyond Mobility Initiative](#), these metrics look at needs in the region's urban and rural communities.



**Example:** [Mid-Columbia Economic Development District](#) | Oregon/Washington, Pop. 51,844 (5 counties)

As the lead agency for the [Gorge TransLink Alliance](#), the district convenes a bi-state partnership of five rural transportation providers for the Columbia River Gorge region. The [GOrgE Pass](#) is an affordable integrated fare system that gives users unlimited rides for a year on all fixed-route transit services in the region. The pass program has enabled partnerships with human service organizations to provide free passes to individuals who qualify. A portion of each pass purchase is directed to the [Gorge Equity Fund](#). Learn more [here](#).

### **Resource: Understanding Historical Racial Inequities in America's Transportation Infrastructure**

With regard to the built environment, there may be no greater illustration of racial inequities and infrastructure than the [interstate highway system](#). In the mid-1950s, large-scale federal investment crafted a national expressway network. These infrastructure investments devastated low-income neighborhoods, primarily Black ones. Entire Black communities were destroyed, and these highways, as physical barriers combined with zoning legislation, reinforced Black and white segregation. In supporting segregation, these constructed highways reinforced Black neighborhoods' challenges, including continued disinvestment, inadequate schools, and decreasing housing values. Highways are not alone in how urban planning has reinforced segregation with policies and investments; these impacts are seen in [transit access](#), [walkability](#), and [car ownership](#). **Learn about federal actions to mitigate these historic inequalities through the [U.S. Department of Transportation's Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill](#).**

### **Idea: Crowdfund Community Transportation Ideas**

In northeast Ohio, the [Fund for Our Economic Future](#) brings together philanthropic, civic, and community leaders to develop long-term, equitable economic solutions. In 2019, [the Paradox Prize](#) catalyzed a public competition to identify efficient, affordable, and accessible transportation solutions for the region. [Winning ideas](#) included workforce development partnerships, non-profit electric car-sharing services, and on-demand car-pooling options in rural areas. **Explore their [key learnings](#).**



## Resources

- **AllTransit:** From the [Center for Neighborhood Technology](#), the compiled metrics and maps provide a robust set of transit connectivity, access, and frequency data across the United States.
- **H+T Index:** From the [Center for Neighborhood Technology](#), this index provides a comprehensive view of affordability that includes both the cost of housing and the cost of transportation at the neighborhood level.
- **[Data Guide for Advancing Racial Equity through Federally Funded Public Transit, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Projects](#):** This guide provides sample evaluation metrics for transportation access, including sources for demographic, mobility, economic, health and housing data. The guide aligns these metrics to the four core federal funding priorities in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

## Ecosystem Barriers

Ecosystem barriers are the wider range of factors keeping individuals from participating economically. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many ecosystem factors caused financial anxiety for low-income residents, including housing and childcare. As residents lost wages and spent any savings, they faced a looming threat of eviction and prolonged school closures. All these factors compounded during the pandemic alongside public health fears. To develop equitable interventions to support those most affected by these barriers, consider how the region is addressing needs in **housing and childcare**.

### HOUSING

Following the 2008 financial crisis, Black and Hispanic households were [more likely to face housing-related hardships](#), such as eviction or delays in mortgage or rent payments, than compared with white households. This was only compounded for homeowners in neighborhoods of color, who also saw steep declines in the value of their homes following the financial crisis. The inequitable impact of these economic shocks play out similarly in the COVID-19 pandemic, where the eviction and foreclosure rate for [Black and Hispanic households increased by 7%](#), compared with 2% for white households. These trends, built on a history of economic exclusion, only widen the existing racial wealth gap. As eviction moratoriums spread and provided only temporary housing stability, a [larger conversation emerged](#) on the need to address more proactive and sustainable housing solutions.

- **Prioritize residents most impacted by housing instability.** A [long history of systemic racism and redlining](#) has shaped generational wealth and access to asset-building and has shaped economic mobility today. With the racial and [gender inequities](#) that played out in the COVID-19 pandemic, it emphasizes the need for housing programs to be specifically designed for and outreach conducted to the most impacted residents. Lead with race and gender at the center and [acknowledge institutional inequities](#) that have and still create housing instability.
- **Create pipelines for housing-challenged communities.** While leading with an equity focus, including centering race and gender, also consider key audiences with historical housing challenges and programs that can be tailored to their unique needs. These communities include justice-involved residents, individuals

with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, and LGBTQ+ and gender-diverse individuals. [These audiences](#) are all more likely to be unhoused or face housing instability. Ensure support programs are [housing-first](#) and provide critical support and assistance for these audiences.

- **Build pathways to homeownership.** Homeownership allows lower-income and young households to invest in assets and build wealth. When designing and building homeownership programs, consider how to coordinate efforts across partners [with increased access](#) to down-payment assistance and affordable credit. Consider policies in the community that can lead to zoning reform or incentivize mixed-income housing. When building these pathways and programs, remember that homeownership is just one strategy to create housing access and build wealth but the only strategy.
- **Explore community ownership models.** As the “Buy the Block” movement takes root in [Houston](#), [Rochester](#), and [Baltimore](#), there is continued momentum to build new community ownership models that create affordable and commercial property housing and ensure residents are not displaced. Explore opportunities for inclusive growth in [community land trusts](#) and opportunities through [land banks](#).
- **Create support for renters and avenues for tenant advocacy.** Build on any steps to distribute rent relief or housing support funding during the COVID-19 pandemic by creating opportunities to educate tenants about [anti-displacement strategies](#), including tenant education, code enforcement, and more.

**Example:** [East Central Intergovernmental Association](#) | Iowa, Pop. 198,817 (5 counties)

The association sought to address the lack of affordable starter homes in their region through a collaborative project that formed a pocket neighborhood, the [Bear River Cottages](#), in Maquoketa, Iowa. While leveraging local partnerships and grant funding, each of the ten 1,000-square-foot homes in this cluster-style development centered around a common landscaped area was sold to eligible households (buyers making 80% or less of the Area Median Income) for \$150,000.

**Example:** [Sweetgrass Development](#) | Montana, Pop. 111,913 (5 counties)

In collaboration with the [City of Shelby](#) in Montana, Sweetgrass Development sought to address increasing housing costs and renovate an abandoned school. Staff provided expertise in brownfield cleanup and restoration, access to EPA funding, and supported the city in completing the property assessments. To move this project forward, staff developed a plan to clean up and renovate the building. The long-term goal after the cleanup ends is to convert the space into affordable, multi-family housing designed to meet the needs of Shelby residents.

**Example:** [Headwaters Regional Development Commission](#) | Minnesota, Pop. 86,764 (5 counties)

In their [2022 CEDS](#), the commission includes “affordable and quality housing” as the region’s most significant priority. This aligns with [existing strategies](#), including the “Home Stretch” Homebuyer Education curricula, housing rehabilitation partnerships, and supportive housing facilities. These efforts are aligned with the commission’s Racial Equity Accountability Project (REAP). This project looks at housing outcomes and homelessness response through the lens of structural and systematic barriers and seeks to identify solutions to reduce racial disparities in housing.

## Definitions

- **Affordable Housing:** A mixture of quality housing options in which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities. Affordable housing can also refer to housing funding through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) or other federally funded programs. See also Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH).
- **Inclusionary Zoning:** Usually practiced in urban areas, inclusionary zoning is the practice of planning communities and developments that will provide housing to all income brackets. Inclusionary zoning ordinances often require any new housing construction to include a set percentage of affordable housing units, often set by a percentage of Area Median Income (AMI).

- **Redlining:** The refusal to provide mortgages in neighborhoods that were deemed to be a poor financial risk by using race-based underwriting criteria. Often a practice used by banks and loan officers during city development or redevelopment periods as a discrimination tool. The practice was common in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but was outlawed with the 1968 Fair Housing Act. **Learn more in NGIN’s [Communication Resource Guide for Inclusive Economic Development](#).**

## Resources

- **[Segregated by Design](#):** A film that examines the history of redlining and its continued impact on neighborhoods and housing policy today.
- **[Inclusive Processes to Advance Racial Equity in Housing Recovery](#):** Part of a larger series, this set of strategies from [PolicyLink](#) looks at how to advance racial equity in housing by implementing COVID-19 recovery strategies.
- **[Community Land Trust Technical Manual](#):** From the [Grounded Solutions Network](#), this manual provides guidance on launching and operating a Community Land Trust, including draft documentation.
- **[An Equitable Framework for Housing Policy Solutions for COVID-19 and Beyond](#):** In this report, [Urban Institute](#) researchers look at lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and the Great Recession to identify housing policy priorities that contribute to racial equity.

## CHILDCARE

The childcare crisis in the United States is not new. For decades now, many families continue to struggle finding and paying for childcare. Meanwhile daycare providers are among the lowest-paid workers in the country, often lacking benefits such as [health insurance](#). The disruption brought by the COVID-19 pandemic renewed conversations, while [2 out of 3](#) working parents changed their childcare arrangements, and [2 out of 3](#) childcare centers that serve less than 75 children struggle to break even. And now, [50% of parents](#) who have not returned to work cite childcare challenges as the reason. To support an inclusive recovery, consider new strategies to address the childcare crisis in the region.

- **Target small business support to childcare businesses.** When revisiting small business support strategies, consider how these efforts could be tied to supporting local childcare businesses. Some organizations, including examples in [Maine](#) and [Texas](#), have sought to find ways to support the start-up or expansion of childcare businesses, including access to funding and support in licensing. Consider how small business support assets and strategies could be focused on supporting childcare access.
- **Explore for-profit and nonprofit models.** Many call the for-profit childcare business model “broken.” This perspective highlights the challenge of balancing rising costs and supply and demand for businesses. When looking at opportunities within the region for the childcare workforce and the opportunity to build wealth through shared ownership, consider how in planning, the EDD can support and explore both for-profit and non-profit models, including the potential for [cooperative or shared](#) business ownership structures.
- **Address childcare workforce challenges.** Childcare providers typically face [high-employee turnover](#). Look at steps that can be taken to incentive childcare workers, including increasing wages, and benefits and [expanding health insurance coverage](#) to these employees.
- **Consider nonstandard schedules.** As steps are taken to address the need for more affordable childcare, look at how scheduling could support greater childcare accessibility. Many low-wage, essential workers face challenges in their roles that require work on evenings, nights, and weekends, [when most childcare providers are closed](#). When understanding key industries in the region, such as healthcare or retail, or seasonal industries impacted by tourism, there may be an opportunity at the regional level to remove workforce barriers by crafting or incentivizing childcare solutions that address scheduling flexibility to increase accessibility.
- **Provide workforce transition support.** As individuals, primarily women left the workforce during the pandemic due to childcare challenges, there will be a continued need to support returning to work after an absence. [Many organizations and programs](#) have been helping women in returning to their careers, but with the scale of departures during the pandemic, additional demand and support will be needed. Look at how the region’s workforce strategies may align with scaling [return-to-work programs](#) and targeting job placement efforts.

## **Idea: Who is most impacted by the childcare crisis?**

The childcare crisis doesn't affect all households equally. These challenges disproportionately affect women, women of color, single-parent households, and low-wage workers. During the pandemic, women left the labor market at such a rate that it threatened to [set back](#) labor force participation and wage gains made across decades and led many to refer to this trend as "[shecession](#)." Beyond just the impact on women, women of color were [more likely](#) to leave the labor force than white women. When these factors are compounded beyond of the fact that women and women of color are [overrepresented in the "essential" workforce](#), typically low-wage and with erratic schedules. **In crafting workforce development or entrepreneurship programs, ensure opportunities to address wraparound needs for those facing childcare challenges.**

**Example:** [Mid-Minnesota Development Commission](#) | *Minnesota, Pop. 116,862 (4 counties)*

The commission crafted an economic opportunity program that focused specifically on expanding access to affordable childcare with a focus on rural communities in their region. In collaboration with [First Children's Finance](#), staff provides childcare businesses with marketing, consultation, and other services. Additionally, the partnership has begun planning strategies to open more childcare locations in rural communities.

**Example:** [Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments](#) | *Oregon, Pop. 654,831 (4 counties)*

To address childcare gaps, the council leads the [Foster Grandparents Program](#) to link senior volunteers with youth needing additional mentoring and support. Volunteers serve as reading partners, homework tutors, and mentors. With funding from [Americorps](#) and the [Early Learning Hub at Linn-Benton Community College](#), the program helps to advance equity by providing youth with the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential.



**Example:** [Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission](#) | Minnesota, Pop. 42,389 (5 counties)

In 2019, the Commission [cited childcare access](#) as a growing challenge and as an economic driver. To better understand solutions and approaches within their region, they conducted [six case studies and curated local, regional, state, and national resources](#). Each case study included an analysis of enrollment, fees, staffing structure, staff wages, and financing, which was supplemented by interviews to understand the background, challenges, and successes.

### **Idea: Incubating Childcare Businesses**

[Coastal Enterprises, Inc. \(CEI\)](#), a CDFI located in Maine, launched a [Childcare Business Lab](#) following a state-wide listening tour. The lab sought to bring together small business start-up education with guidance on delivering high-quality childcare programming, including support through the licensing process. CEI looks at how this cohort-based model can be scaled across the state, in other languages for key immigrant audiences, and potentially for other regions. **Learn more from the [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#).**

### **Resources**

- **[Childcare Gaps Assessment](#)**: From the [Bipartisan Policy Center](#), this interactive map and assessment tool quantifies the supply of, the potential need for, and gaps in childcare in 35 states as of 2019.
- **[Childcare Deserts](#)**: An interactive map visualizes local childcare supply and poverty rates across the United States. Created by the [Center for American Progress](#), it is paired with [fact sheets](#) and [issue briefs](#).
- **[EPIC \(Executives Partnering to Invest in Children\)](#)**: A state-wide organization in Colorado has convened business leaders and corporate executives to address childcare barriers with information about tax credits to Colorado families and employees, state advocacy on childcare needs, and efforts to invest in and launch childcare businesses across the state.



# Appendix

**Featured Examples:** This guide includes examples from more than 35 Economic Development Districts and Organizations in more than 20 states. This appendix contains a complete listing of each example, and links to pertinent sections, by state, to identify other geographic examples that may be relevant in the EDA region or beyond.

**Featured Resources:** This guide includes more than 50 resources ranging from articles, reports, data tools, and guides. This appendix contains a complete list of each resource with links directly to the document or webpage organized by the type of tool.

**Acknowledgements:** Between March 2021 and May 2023, New Growth Innovation Network engaged a wide variety of expert practitioners and economic development stakeholders to inform this guide. These practitioners and stakeholders served in roles as Equity in Practice advisors, key organizational partners, and speakers at convenings, and partook in technical assistance offerings, interviews about regional approaches, and attended peer convenings. NGIN is grateful to the stakeholders whose insights and contributions shaped this work.

## Featured Examples

### Alaska

- **Kawerak, Inc.**
  - [Economic Resilience](#)

### California

- **3Core Economic Development Commission**
  - [Strategic Partnerships](#)
- **Sacramento Area Council of Governments**
  - [Evaluation Framework](#)
- **San Diego County Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs**
  - [Equitable Workforce Development](#)
- **Sonoma-Mendocino Economic Development District**
  - [Equitable Community Engagement](#)

### Florida

- **South Florida Regional Planning Council**
  - [Economic Resilience](#)

### Georgia

- **River Valley Regional Commission**
  - [Equitable Infrastructure](#)

### Illinois

- **Greater Peoria Economic Development Council**
  - [Transparency and Accountability](#)

### Indiana

- **Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization**
  - [Economic Resilience](#)

### Iowa

- **East Central Intergovernmental Association**
  - [Ecosystem Barriers](#)

### Kansas

- **Mid-America Regional Council**
  - [Economic Resilience](#)

### Kentucky

- **Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency**

- [Equitable Workforce Development](#)

## Louisiana

- **Acadiana Planning Commission**
  - [Equitable Infrastructure](#)

## Massachusetts

- **Berkshire Regional Planning Commission**
  - [Inclusive Clusters and Industry Strategies](#)
- **Merrimack Valley Regional Planning Commission**
  - [Regional Analysis](#)
- **Metropolitan Area Planning Commission**
  - [Equitable Infrastructure](#)
- **Old Colony Planning Commission**
  - [Addressing Equity in the Organization](#)

## Michigan

- **West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission**
  - [Crafting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statements](#)

## Minnesota

- **Headwaters Regional Development Commission**
  - [Ecosystem Barriers](#)
  - [Equitable Community Engagement](#)
- **Metropolitan Area Planning Council**
  - [Economic Resilience](#)
- **Mid-Minnesota Development Commission**
  - [Ecosystem Barriers](#)
- **Region 5 Development Commission**
  - [Regional Analysis](#)
- **Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission**
  - [Ecosystem Barriers](#)

## Missouri

- **Mid-America Regional Council**
  - [Economic Resilience](#)

## Montana

- **Sweetgrass Development**
  - [Ecosystem Barriers](#)

## North Carolina

- **Centralina Economic Development District**



- [Equitable Infrastructure](#)
- **Land of Sky Regional Council**
  - [Addressing Equity in the Community](#)
  - [Understanding the Data](#)
  - [Equitable Infrastructure](#)
- **Triangle J Council of Governments**
  - [Addressing Equity in the Organization](#)

#### **New Mexico**

- **Mid-Region Council of Governments**
  - [Small Business Support](#)

#### **North Dakota**

- **Souris Basin Planning Council**
  - [Crafting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statements](#)

#### **Ohio**

- **Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Council**
  - [Crafting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statements](#)
  - [Addressing Equity in the Organization](#)

#### **Oregon**

- **Greater Portland, Inc.**
  - [Evaluation Framework](#)
- **Mid-Columbia Economic Development**
  - [Addressing Equity in the Community](#)
  - [Transparency and Accountability](#)
  - [Equitable Infrastructure](#)
- **Northeast Oregon Economic Development District**
  - [Summary Background](#)
- **Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments**
  - [Ecosystem Barriers](#)

#### **Vermont**

- **Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission**
  - [Addressing Equity in the Organization](#)
  - [Understanding the Data](#)
  - [Evaluation Framework](#)

#### **Virginia**

- **PlanRVA**
  - [Addressing Equity in the Community](#)

## Washington

- **Mid-Columbia Economic Development**
  - [Addressing Equity in the Community](#)
  - [Transparency and Accountability](#)
  - [Equitable Infrastructure](#)
- **North Olympic Peninsula Resource Conservation and Development Council**
  - [Regional Analysis](#)

## Wisconsin

- **Northwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**
  - [Small Business Support](#)
- **Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**
  - [Summary Background](#)

## Featured Resources

### Articles

- [\*\*Applying an Asset-Frame to Rural Economic Development\*\*](#) | NADO Research Foundation
- [\*\*Centering Workers in Workforce Development\*\*](#) | Aspen Institute
- [\*\*Dollars to Megabits\*\*](#) | The Markup
- [\*\*Investing in Childcare Entrepreneurs\*\*](#) | Stanford Social Innovation Review
- [\*\*Root Cause Analysis Explained\*\*](#) | Tableau

### Models and Templates

- [\*\*Climate Equity Plan\*\*](#) | City of Austin
- [\*\*Maryland Climate Adaption and Resilience Framework Recommendations\*\*](#) | University of Virginia Institute for Engagement and Negotiation Project
- [\*\*Penn Hills Community Census\*\*](#) | Penn Hills Community Development Corporation
- [\*\*Racial Equity and Inclusion Competency Framework\*\*](#) | Living Cities
- [\*\*RVA Green 2050\*\*](#) | City of Richmond
- [\*\*EPIC \(Executives Partnering to Invest in Children\)\*\*](#)

### Reports

- [\*\*An Equitable Framework for Housing Policy Solutions for COVID-19 and Beyond\*\*](#) | Urban Institute
- [\*\*AT&T's Digital Redlining Leaving Communities Behind for Profit\*\*](#) | National Digital Inclusion Alliance
- [\*\*Centering Racial Equity in Measurement and Evaluation\*\*](#) | Urban Institute
- [\*\*Cluster-Based Inclusive Regional Economic Development\*\*](#) | JFF
- [\*\*Leveraging Digital and Social Infrastructure for Economic Inclusion\*\*](#) | NGIN
- [\*\*Paradox Prize Winning Ideas\*\*](#) | Fund for Our Economic Future

### Data Tools

- [\*\*AllTransit\*\*](#) | Center for Neighborhood Technology
- [\*\*Black Wealth Data Center\*\*](#) | Prosperity Now
- [\*\*Childcare Deserts\*\*](#) | Center for American Progress
- [\*\*Childcare Gaps Assessment\*\*](#) | Bipartisan Policy Center



- **Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool** | Council on Environmental Quality
- **Close the Gaps Tools** | Federal Reserve
- **Community Resilience Estimates** | Census Bureau
- **Data for Equity** | U.S. Census Bureau
- **Track the Recovery** | Opportunity Insights
- **EJ Screen** | EPA
- **Gini Index** | Census Bureau
- **H+T Index** | Center for Neighborhood Technology
- **Headwaters Economics**
- **Indicators for an Inclusive Regional Economy** | Center for Economic Inclusion
- **Living Wage Calculator** | MIT
- **Migration Data** | Census Bureau
- **National Broadband Map** | BroadbandNow
- **National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE)** | StatsAmerica
- **National Equity Atlas** | PolicyLink
- **Theil's H Index** | Policy Map
- **U.S. Cluster Mapping** | StatsAmerica

## Films

- **Segregated by Design** | Silkworm Studio

## Guides/Tools

- **Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement** | Simon Fraser University
- **Building Equitable Local Ecosystems for Small Business Brief** | LISC
- **CEDS and Hazard Mitigation Plan Alignment Guide** | FEMA
- **CEDS Central** | NADO (National Association of Development Organizations) Research Foundation
- **CEDS Content Guidelines** | EDA
- **Centering Community Voice** | Detroit Future City
- **Cluster Growth Toolkit** | ICIC
- **Community Asset Mapping** | City of Boise
- **Community Broadband Networks** | Institute for Local Self Reliance
- **Community Capital Framework** | Wealthworks
- **Community Land Trust Technical Manual** | Grounded Solutions Network



- **Data for an Inclusive Economic Recovery** | National Skills Coalition
- **Data Guide for Advancing Racial Equity through Federally Funded Public Transit, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Projects** | Urban Institute
- **Economic Development Logic Model** | EDA
- **Digital Inclusion 101** | National Digital Inclusion Alliance
- **Do No Harm Guide** | Urban Institute
- **Economic Mobility Guide** | Solutions Journalism
- **Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard** | The Alliance
- **Evaluation in Service of Racial Equity Tools** | Community Science
- **Fostering Partnerships for Community Engagement** | Urban Institute
- **Inclusive Communication Resource Guide for Inclusive Economic Development** | NGIN
- **Inclusive Processes to Advance Racial Equity in Housing Recovery** | PolicyLink
- **Innovative Finance Playbook** | Blueprint Local
- **Performance Metrics for Economic Recovery following Natural Disasters** | IEDC
- **Qualitative Research Practice Guide** | Code for America
- **Racial Equity Data Hub** | Tableau Foundation
- **Ready for Equity in Workforce Development Tool** | Race Forward
- **Roadmap to Repair** | National League of Cities
- **Spectrum of Public Participation** | International Association of Public Participation
- **Ten Principles for Building Resilience** | Urban Land Institute
- **Understand and Identify Root Causes of Inequalities** | County Health Rankings
- **What is Data Equity?** | We All Count
- **Who's Coming? Respectful Audience Surveying Tool** | OF/BY/FOR ALL
- **Workers' Rights for Workforce Development Curriculum** | University of Illinois

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## **Economic Development Stakeholders:**

- **3CORE Economic Development District**
- **Adirondack North Country Association**
- **Apalachee Regional Planning Council**
- **Ark-Tex Council of Governments**
- **Bay-Lake Region Planning Commission**
- **Bear River Association of Governments**
- **Benton-Franklin Council of Governments**
- **Bi-State Regional Commission**
- **Black Hawk Hills Regional Council**
- **Boonslick Regional Planning Commission**
- **Capital District Regional Planning Commission**
- **Capital Regional Planning Commission**
- **Central Florida Regional Planning Council**
- **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission**
- **Centralina Regional Council**
- **Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission**
- **Cowlitz Wahkiakum Council of Governments**
- **Crockett Economic and Industrial Development Corporation**
- **East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission**
- **East Central Council of Governments**
- **East Tennessee Development District**
- **East Texas Council of Governments**
- **Eastern Maine Development Corporation**
- **Eastern Plains Council of Governments**
- **First Tennessee Development District**
- **Five County Association of Governments**
- **Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce**
- **Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation**
- **Greater Peoria Economic Development Council**
- **Greater Phoenix Economic Council**
- **Greater Portland Inc.**
- **Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation**
- **Green River Area Development District**
- **Gulf Coast Economic Development District**
- **Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission**
- **Heart of Texas Council of Governments**
- **Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments**
- **Ithaca Area Economic Development**
- **Kaysinger Basin Regional Planning Commission**
- **Lake Agassiz Regional Council**
- **Lamoille County Planning Commission**

- **Lee-Russell Council of Governments**
- **Meramec Regional Planning Commission**
- **Metropolitan Area Planning Agency**
- **Mid America Regional Council**
- **Mid-Columbia Economic Development District**
- **Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission**
- **Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments**
- **Mohawk Valley Economic Development District**
- **New River Valley Regional Commission**
- **North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission**
- **North Central Texas Council of Governments**
- **North Central Washington Economic Development District**
- **Northeast Florida Regional Council**
- **Northeast Georgia Regional Commission**
- **Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency**
- **Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization**
- **Northeast Oregon Economic Development District**
- **Northeastern Vermont Development Association**
- **Northern Maine Development Commission**
- **Northern Oklahoma Development Authority**
- **Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District**
- **Northwest Missouri Regional Council of Governments**
- **Northwest Regional Planning Commission**
- **Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association**
- **Panhandle Area Development District**
- **Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission**
- **Piedmont Triad Regional Council**
- **Pioneer Trails Regional Planning Commission**
- **Pioneer Trails Regional Planning Commission**
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- **Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado**
- **Region Five Development Commission**
- **Region One Planning & Development Council**
- **Region XII Council of Governments**
- **Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission**
- **Appalachian Council of Governments**
- **Souris Basin Planning Council**
- **South Central Planning and Development Commission**



- **South Delta Planning and Development District**
- **South Texas Development Council**
- **Southeast Idaho Council of Governments**
- **Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission**
- **Southeast Tennessee Development District**
- **Southern Georgia Regional Commission**
- **Southern Tier 8 Regional Board**
- **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission**
- **Southwest Michigan Planning Commission**
- **Southwest Missouri Regional Council of Governments**
- **Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments**
- **Southwest Regional Development Commission**
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- **Three Rivers Planning and Development District**
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- **Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments**
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- **West Piedmont Planning Commission District**
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