

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Content Guidelines:

Recommendations for Creating an Impactful CEDS

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1. Overview

These guidelines have been developed to assist economic development practitioners with the development or update of a CEDS. As a collection of tools and examples, they are intended to be aspirational in nature and should not be construed as additional requirements.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) contributes to effective economic development in America’s communities and regions through a place-based, regionally driven economic development planning process. Economic development planning – as implemented through the CEDS – is not only a cornerstone of the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) programs, but successfully serves as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. The CEDS provides the capacity-building¹ foundation by which the public sector, working in conjunction with other economic actors (individuals, firms, industries), creates the environment for regional economic prosperity.

Simply put, 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.² It is a key component in establishing and maintaining a robust economic ecosystem by helping to build regional capacity (through hard and soft infrastructure) that contributes to individual, firm, and community success. The CEDS provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what capacity building efforts would best serve economic development in the region. The CEDS should take into account and, where appropriate, integrate or leverage other regional planning efforts, including the use of other available federal funds, private sector resources, and state support which can advance a region’s CEDS goals and objectives. Regions must update their CEDS at least every five years to qualify for EDA assistance under its Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs. In addition, a CEDS is a prerequisite for designation by EDA as an Economic Development District (EDD).

This guidance is primarily intended to assist in efforts to develop the *content* of a CEDS document. It suggests how to develop the document’s format and substance to make the strongest, most useful and effective CEDS possible. The focus on content in these guidelines does not diminish the importance of the process used to develop a CEDS. A well-led, broadly inclusive process is vital to the creation of a relevant and effective document. It also serves to build leadership, enhance cooperation, and foster public ownership and enthusiasm. While the

¹ The terms “capacities” and “capacity building” refer to the public sector’s role in investing in new ideas, knowledge transfer, and infrastructure to build a foundation so that the private sector can flourish (i.e., enable economic development to promote regional prosperity).

² For the purpose of these Content Guidelines, the terms “area,” “region,” and “community” are often used interchangeably to refer to an appropriate political, economic, or geographic entity for addressing economic development.

high-level steps required to prepare a CEDS can be found in the Preparation section of this document, EDA suggests contacting the appropriate EDA regional office (specific points of contact can be found on EDA's website (www.eda.gov)) to learn more about the overall CEDS process and additional resources and guidance available.

From the regulations governing the CEDS (see 13 C.F.R. § 303.7), the following sections *must* be included in the CEDS document:

1. Summary Background: A summary background of the economic conditions of the region;
2. SWOT Analysis: An in-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (commonly known as a “SWOT” analysis);
3. Strategic Direction/Action Plan: The strategic direction and action plan should build on findings from the SWOT analysis and incorporate/integrate elements from other regional plans (e.g., land use and transportation, workforce development, etc.) where appropriate as determined by the EDD or community/region engaged in development of the CEDS. The action plan should also identify the stakeholder(s) responsible for implementation, timetables, and opportunities for the integrated use of other local, state, and federal funds;
4. Evaluation Framework: Performance measures used to evaluate the organization's implementation of the CEDS and impact on the regional economy.

In addition to the sections noted above, the CEDS must incorporate the concept of economic resilience. Economic resilience can be defined as “the ability of regions to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock, disruption, or stress that it may experience”. The EDD or community responsible for the CEDS can address resilience as a separate section, distinct goal or priority action item, and/or as an area of investigation in the SWOT analysis. It may be most effective, however, to infuse the concept of resilience throughout the CEDS document. As a baseline, EDA suggests regions undertake a two-pronged approach to help identify and counter the vulnerabilities that each region may face (see section on Economic Resilience for more information).

This document provides recommendations on what should be included in each of the sections required by EDA's regulations, and suggests tools, resources, and examples to help in each section's development. As a collection of tools and examples, it is intended to be aspirational in nature and should not be construed as additional requirements. This guidance stresses the importance of linking the sections (e.g., using background information that is relevant to the SWOT) to improve the CEDS focus and impact. Moreover, it emphasizes strategic approaches based on regional visioning, goals, measurable objectives, and prioritized actions – rather than the CEDS serving as an inventory of programs and projects already in process in regions. In addition, this guidance underscores the need to think beyond traditional job creation and embrace capacity building and broad-based wealth creation when developing goals, measurable objectives, actions, and performance measures. It also highlights the need to undertake an asset-based approach (i.e., efforts that focus on the strengths of a community or region) while considering the interdependencies between regional economic prosperity and other topics such as

job-driven workforce development, natural resource management and development and sustainable land use. Finally, this guidance provides practical recommendations about formatting a CEDS that will result in an engaging, technically-sound strategy for guiding regional development.

Please note, however, that the CEDS examples recommended in this document are intended to be informative and a source of inspiration and should not be replicated wholesale for the CEDS section or area referenced. Each region's unique assets and challenges may make the use of another region's section structure and/or content ineffective.

2. Content

A CEDS should be developed with broad based community participation and result in a document that is readily accessible to regional stakeholders. Potential partners for developing a CEDS could include government agencies, private sector interests, education providers, non-profits, community and labor groups, workforce boards, utilities, etc. Stakeholders should be able to use it as a guide to understanding the regional economy and to take action to improve it. The CEDS should take into account and, where appropriate, incorporate or leverage other regional planning efforts, including the use of available federal funds, private sector resources, and state support which can advance a region's CEDS goals and objectives. Its quality should be judged by its usefulness as a tool for regional economic development decision-making.

There are four main elements of a CEDS: 1) summary background, 2) SWOT analysis, 3) strategic direction/action plan, and 4) evaluation framework. The background should provide an overview of the region's economic situation. Building on data from the summary background, the SWOT analysis should assess the state of the regional economy, including the opportunities and threats posed by internal and external trends and forces, and the availability of resources for economic development. The region's vision, goals, and measurable objectives, together with an appraisal of the region's competitive advantages, should form the basis of the strategic direction and action plan. The evaluation framework should establish criteria and performance measures for evaluating the region's implementation of the strategic direction and progress toward goals and measurable objectives. The elements of the CEDS, seen through a lens of economic resiliency, should logically build upon and/or shape each other to result in a coherent, targeted document.

Recommended Resource: See *South Florida's 2012 CEDS with the "six pillars" statewide framework which provides a clearly articulated, unifying framework across EDDs in the state: (<http://www.sfrpc.com/CEDS/SouthFloridaCEDS2012-17.pdf>).*

Below are recommendations for what should be included in each of the required sections, and suggested tools, resources and examples to help in each section's development:

A. Summary Background: A summary background of the economic development conditions of the region

A background summary of the region should answer the question, “What have we done?”, and present a clear understanding of the local economic situation, supported by current, *relevant* data. The information should be presented in the CEDS in a clear and concise way and be easily understood by the general public. To that end, and with an eye towards inclusivity and equity, the background summary should include the history of all those who have lived in the region. Incorporating a shared understanding of any wrongs of the past, legacies of distrust between leaders and communities, and systemic barriers to economic prosperity contributes to the transparency needed to build a foundation for action (for more information, see the section on Equity).

Data featured in the summary background section should be presented in an accessible manner (again see section on Equity) that is disaggregated where possible in order to show how populations have grown in the region, how income differs across race and geography, and how the structure of the economy contributes to economic disparities. Consider, in particular, data that allows for clear and relevant connections to the SWOT analysis and strategic direction. For example, data analysis revealing that a region’s population is significantly older than the state or U.S. population as a whole is an important finding because it could impact workforce availability. However, it is not necessary to create multiple, detailed tables that break down population by age to prove that point—conserve space in the CEDS by moving that sort of information to an appendix.

Relevant information should be gathered in the following areas that affect the regional economy, *as appropriate*. In other words, not all of these items need to be addressed at length, especially if they are not relevant to regional conditions or needed to define or substantiate goals, measurable objectives, or specific actions. Identify key trends, make the points briefly and clearly for a summary section, and move other supporting data to an appendix. Relevant information may include:

- Demographic and socioeconomic data, including the human capital assets of the area and labor force characteristics such as the educational attainment of the working age population;
- Environmental, geographic, climatic, and cultural (including historic preservation) and natural resource profiles (e.g., mining resources, timber, fisheries, aquaculture, eco-tourism, etc.). Ideally, an environmental baseline for the area should be developed that identifies any environmental elements that may affect and/or constrain the regional economy. Relevant published literature for the region should be researched and dialogues established with the environmental regulators at the local, state and federal levels (for example: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (UFWS), state environmental agencies, etc.), as well as the State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. Please contact the appropriate EDA regional office for more information and guidance.
- Infrastructure assets of the area that relate to economic development including water, sewer, telecommunications/broadband, energy distribution systems, transportation modes, etc.;

- Emerging or declining clusters or industry sectors – and their past, present, and projected impacts on the region’s competitive advantages and ability to build capacity for economic development;
- Relationship of an area’s economy to that of a larger region or state (including global perspective), with particular regard to local advantages or disadvantages;
- Factors that directly affect economic performance in the area such as workforce issues; innovation assets; industry supply chains; state and local laws; financial resources; transportation systems; energy costs; business, personal, and property taxes; bonding capacity; land use patterns; and
- Other factors that relate to economic performance in an area such as housing; health services; educational, cultural and recreational resources; and public safety.

The CEDS should be a vehicle for promoting integration between economic development and other regional plans (including other federally-funded plans), which could include, but not be limited to, sustainability, transportation (e.g., Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program), land use, housing, environmental protection, natural resource management and development, workforce development, disaster resilience, or others.

The CEDS should also identify opportunities for the integrated use of other local, state, private, and federal funds. The nature and extent of the integration between regional plans and funding streams will vary based on the unique circumstances of each CEDS region, but every effort should be made to leverage scarce resources to avoid duplication and increase impact.

In addition, the research should include a review of the long-term trends of the area to gain a more complete understanding of how the region’s current economic situation has been shaped over time by national and global forces.

***Recommended Resources:** Data sources include the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis (<http://bea.gov/>) and the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov/>). In particular, the Census Bureau’s Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program provides information combining federal, state and Census Bureau data on employers and employees (<http://lehd.ces.census.gov/>). It includes statistics on employment, earnings, and job flows at detailed levels of geography and industry and for different demographic groups. Census’ OnTheMap tool (<http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>) is a web-based mapping and reporting application that shows where workers are employed and where they live. It also provides companion reports on items such as age, earnings, industry distributions, and educational attainment. In addition, for communities with a focus on manufacturing, Census’ Investing in Manufacturing Communities Data Tool provides information on supply chains, workforce, research and innovation, and trade assets (<http://www.census.gov/fastfacts/imcp/>).*

Other sources include the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://bls.gov/>), including the Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>); state,

tribal, and local governments; and universities. EDA-funded University Centers may serve as valuable resources in providing and analyzing the necessary data as well. In addition, this section may benefit from leveraging EDA-funded data tools, such as the Economic Development Capacity Index Tool (<https://www.anl.gov/dis/economic-development-capacity-index>) and the National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (<https://www.anl.gov/dis/economic-development-capacity-index>). Most EDD regions do not align with standard, federally-defined regions, such as metropolitan statistical areas. Most EDD regions are pre-loaded into STATS America, which makes collecting and aggregating data for multiple counties unnecessary. Information should also draw from any relevant and recent studies available.

B. SWOT Analysis: An in-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

A SWOT analysis of the regional economy should answer the question, “Where are we now?” by using the *relevant* data (see above) and background information to help identify the critical internal and external factors that speak to the region’s unique assets and competitive positioning. The SWOT is a strategic planning tool used by organizations to ensure that there is a clear objective informed by a comprehensive understanding of a region’s capabilities and capacity. A SWOT analysis identifies the region’s competitive advantages—those indigenous assets that make the region special or competitive in the national and global economies—juxtaposed against those internal or external factors that can keep a region from realizing its potential. Determining and analyzing what the region already possesses that could be leveraged better to build the capacity for growth, including competitive cultural, economic, technological, intellectual and physical assets, is critical to developing the strategic direction and implementation plan to promote regional economic vitality. Leveraging assets refers to using the activities and engagement of business, government leaders and other stakeholders to maximize the economic potential of a region.

It should be noted that, while a SWOT analysis is critical, there are various “SWOT-like” frameworks (other than a SWOT) that may be employed successfully. In fact, some of these other frameworks (e.g., “SOAR” [Strengths, Opportunities, Assets, and Risks] and “NOISE” [Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths and Exceptions]) *may* work better for your regions and for the stakeholders you are trying to engage. Consider employing whichever SWOT-like analysis allows for the broadest and most diverse group of stakeholders and community members to contribute their inputs (see the Equity section for more information on conducting an inclusive and equitable SWOT (or SWOT-like) analysis).

In addition, the SWOT analysis (or equivalent, as noted above) should consider economic resiliency. Specifically, what factors and/or elements are in place (or need to be put in place) to ensure the long-term success, viability, and durability of the regional economy?

Recommended Resource: See NADO’s 2011 report *Mobilize Maine: Asset-Based Regional Economic Development* at http://www.knowyourregion.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/NADO_MM_FINALlores.pdf for an example of an asset-based strategy.

SWOT analysis elements are commonly understood in the following terms:

- **Strengths** are a region's relative competitive advantages (e.g., industry supply chains and clusters, extensive port, rail, and broadband assets, specialized workforce skills, higher education levels, collaboration among stakeholders) and often are internal in nature;
- **Weaknesses** are a region's relative competitive disadvantages (e.g., a risk-averse or change-resistant regional culture), also often internal in nature;
- **Opportunities** are chances or occasions for regional improvement or progress (e.g., expansion of a biosciences research lab in the region), often external in nature; and
- **Threats** are chances or occasions for negative impacts on the region or regional decline (e.g., several companies in the region considering moving to lower-cost areas of the state), also often are external in nature.

***Recommended Resources:** The SWOT should assess a wide-variety of regional attributes and dynamics. Specific areas and potential tools to facilitate their analysis are identified below:*

- *State of the regional economy. What are the strengths and weaknesses? What are the strong existing and growth sectors? Which areas are most distressed? What is driving job creation or loss and the state of economy in general? What are the region's assets? See the Regional Innovation Accelerator Network (RIAN) at <http://www.regionalinnovation.org/assets.cfm> for more information on identifying and measuring asset categories (i.e., tangible, intangible, and business climate assets).*
- *Regional clusters. Which clusters, and industries and occupations within the cluster, are growing and declining, and why? EDA defines clusters as a geographic concentration of firms, workers and industries that do business with each other and have common needs for talent, technology, and infrastructure. See the U.S. Cluster Mapping Tool (<http://www.clustermapping.us/>) for more information on clusters and the promotion of clusters.*
- *External trends and forces. What are the opportunities and threats? How is the region positioned to succeed in the national and global economies? What sources of exports and tourism, as well as foreign direct investment, can bring new wealth to the region? What industry sectors and clusters have growth potential through international trade and investment, and what are the region's target foreign markets based on these industries? What local public, private and nonprofit partnerships have been developed to promote exports and increase the region's export base? What are the strategic needs or gaps to fully implement an export promotion and investment attraction program (e.g., foreign outreach events, marketing materials, and research; and regional transportation infrastructure or regulatory issues)?*

Helpful resources for information on global competitiveness and positioning include the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration's (ITA) program for investment attraction, SelectUSA (<http://www.SelectUSA.gov>), and local

export promotion contacts, U.S. Export Assistance Centers/U.S. Commercial Service (<http://export.gov/eac/index.asp>). The following web resources also provide useful tools for analyzing a region's export trends: a) the U.S. Census Bureau's USA Trade Online (<https://usatrade.census.gov/>) provides monthly and annual trade statistics for goods at the district and port level, as well as state exports and imports; b) ITA develops state-level (<http://www.trade.gov/mas/ian/statereports/index.asp>) and metropolitan statistical area-level factsheets (<http://www.trade.gov/mas/ian/Metroreport/index.asp>) and TradeStats Express state (<http://tse.export.gov/TSE/TSEhome.aspx>) and metro (<http://tse.export.gov/metro/SelectReports.aspx?DATA=Metro>) databases with information on exported products, the number of exporting companies by state, and jobs supported by exports by state.

- Broadband: Do communities, institutions, and businesses agree on the broadband and telecommunications needs of the region? Has the region discussed ways to leverage high-speed broadband infrastructure to support economic growth and development, business retention, and expansion, as well as its applicability to advancing equity, health, education, public safety, energy, and civic life? With the passage of recent legislation, including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), how do local and community needs intersect with state-level plans to promote greater broadband infrastructure access, expansion, affordable services, and digital equity in vulnerable communities? The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) provides high-speed internet-related resources, including federal grant programs, such as; the State Broadband Leaders Network and Digital Equity Leaders Network (multi-stakeholder groups comprised of state and local-level government practitioners who work on addressing community broadband needs); broadband data and mapping; and additional tools and resources to support planning activities. For funding opportunities made available through the BIL, please visit the website for the Internet For All initiative at <https://www.InternetForAll.gov/>. For technical assistance, information about additional programs and funding opportunities, and planning support, visit the BroadbandUSA website at <https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov>. Check with your state economic development office, broadband office, and state broadband leader(s) to learn about planning efforts underway, how to coordinate with their work, and whether your state has recently collected data on broadband infrastructure, availability, and use.
- Institutions of Higher Education/HBCUs. What institutions of higher education exist in the region? What resources are available within those institutions that can support regional resilience and economic development? Does the region have any EDA-funded University Centers and, if so, what services are provided by those institutions that can be leveraged? Are there Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), that can assist in the planning process with resources related to economic development decision-making, workforce development and training, entrepreneurial and innovation efforts, and research and business assistance? How can these institutions help in the planning process, including assisting with data and analytics? Are there existing relationships

between these institutions and other economic development partners in the region that can be strengthened to further support regional economic development objectives?

*EDA-funded **University Centers** are focused on using university assets to build regional economic ecosystems that support innovation and high-growth entrepreneurship, resiliency, and inclusiveness. Specifically, they provide expertise and technical assistance to develop, implement, and support regional strategies. Expertise and technical assistance can be focused on workforce training programs, applied research centers, technology commercialization, feasibility studies, market research and data analysis, and economic impact analyses training among many other types of activities. The following web resources provide some examples of ways in which University Centers have supported regional economic development goals: (a) EDA's University Center Program webpage (<https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/university-centers?q=/programs/university-centers/>), (b) NCGrowth, a University Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, helps businesses and communities create jobs and equitable opportunities through applied research and technical assistance (<https://ncgrowth.unc.edu/index.php/what-we-do/>), and (c) Purdue Center for Regional Development, a University Center at Purdue University, develops and improves online data tools, produces regional economic profiles and other informational resources, engages key stakeholders in mapping regional assets and opportunities, and strengthens regional collaboration and innovation networks (<https://www.pcrd.purdue.edu/signature-programs/eda-university-center.php>).*

***HBCUs** invest strategically in institutions and individuals at the local level to actively pursue innovation and entrepreneurship that can help more Americans improve their connectivity to and productivity within the 21st century. HBCUs have made significant contributions to the general welfare and prosperity of the United States while producing many leaders in business, government, academia, and the military. The most visible example of EDA's ongoing partnership with the HBCU community consists of those that have been designated as EDA University Centers (<https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/university-centers/hbcu>).*

HBCUs working with local ecosystems and communities can build processes by which innovators, students, current and prospective employees and employers, and entrepreneurs can better develop and launch solutions to solve real-world problems and maximize real-world opportunities. Today, there are 101 accredited HBCUs, public and private, concentrated in 19 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The economic returns produced by HBCUs are particularly evident at the state level, generating billions in total economic impact and thousands of jobs for their local and regional economies (<https://uncf.org/programs/hbcu-impact>). Across the states and territories where HBCUs are located, they annually provide an average of 6,385 jobs in each state and generate an average of \$704.7 million in total economic impact (<https://uncf.org/pages/hbcus-punching-above-their-weight>).

Of the many contributions that HBCUs make to the communities and regions in which they operate, one of the most compelling is workforce development. HBCUs often leverage specialized degree programs and students to support local business needs – including the increasing number of companies looking to diversify their workforces. Local economies are positioned to succeed in the global economy by possessing a highly trained, technically skilled workforce, and HBCUs generate talent that regularly feeds these local ecosystems. In particular, HBCUs have implemented proven practices to assist students in STEM (i.e., science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields to obtain significant professional experiences, research opportunities, and mentorships. It is estimated that the United States will need nearly 1 million STEM professionals in the next few years, and HBCUs are leading the charge by producing 27% of African American students with bachelor's degrees in STEM fields. In addition, 21 of the top 50 institutions for educating African American graduates who go on to receive their doctorates in science, math, and engineering, are HBCUs (<https://www.edi.nih.gov/blog/communities/top-10-stem-historically-black-colleges-and-universities>).

Current examples of workforce-focused partnerships between regional planning organizations and HBCUs include a collaboration between Triangle J Council of Governments (TJCOG) and North Carolina Central University to research law enforcement recruitment, training gaps, and potential candidates in the region and provide departments with data-driven recommendations to improve their local recruitment efforts. For more information, see <https://www.tjcog.org/partnerships/regional-recruitment-partnership>. In addition, the Gulf Coast Economic Development District (GCEDD) partnered with Prairie View A&M University to establish the Rural Workforce Academy that provides skilled trades training certification and job placement to rural counties impacted by disasters. For more information, check out <https://www.pvamu.edu/cahs/rural-workforce-academy/>.

In addition to workforce-related collaborations between EDDs and institutions of higher education/HBCUs, there are other ways certain EDDs have acknowledged and leveraged these institutions as key regional assets and contributors to a regional planning process that is innovative, competitive and inclusive of all interests who stand to benefit from strong local economies. EDDs that include university/HBCU administrators on their CEDS Strategy Committees and/or EDD boards are benefiting from the local insights and community knowledge that these institutions bring to the planning process for economic development capacity building (see the Piedmont Triad Regional Council at <https://www.ptrc.org/services/economic-development> and the Capital Region Planning Commission at <https://crpcla.org/economic-development>).

- *Environmental Sustainability/Climate. How can economic development be pursued, with an eye towards environmental sustainability and climate resilience? What unique environmental/climate risks face the regional community? How could future climate shifts alter or amplify these risks? What regional assets are at particular risk*

to future climate-related uncertainty? Are the existing infrastructure and workforce adaptable in the face of climate-related industrial shifts? How can land use, housing, economic development, transportation, and infrastructure planning be better integrated to support regional prosperity, while remaining conscious of regional/local climate challenges and environmental sustainability goals? Are there specific sustainability or climate plans or efforts that can be aligned or integrated with the CEDS? Are there opportunities to redevelop brownfields and vacant industrial space in an environmentally conscious way? What specific projects or efforts related to renewable energy, energy efficiency and reuse/recycling/restoration/preservation can be pursued as economic development drivers? What specific efforts, practices or policies have been established to lessen the negative environmental impacts of development, especially with regards to traditionally disadvantaged, disproportionately affected populations (environmental justice). (See the US Climate Resilience Toolkit and Climate Explorer Tool (<https://toolkit.climate.gov> and <https://crt-climate-explorer.nemac.org>) for more information on general climate resilience and existing climate risks. Also see Argonne National Lab's National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (<https://www.anl.gov/dis/nerde-county-dashboard> for information on county or EDD-level natural hazard risk and information on historical disaster declarations. For more specific resources, please see the Resilience subsection on Climate Resilience.

- *Energy needs. Are the energy needs of the region – and the importance of reliable energy security – understood? Have the methods of production, transmission, and distribution been analyzed in relation to regional economic development efforts (e.g., utility siting)? In particular, have opportunities for distributed and advanced energy been considered and addressed? Have utility companies been consulted and included in discussions about economic resilience and overall regional development? Have future energy needs been considered and planned for in light of changes in demand and climate? For information on Smart Grid see <http://energy.gov/oe/articles/economic-impact-recovery-act-investments-smart-grid-report-now-available>.*
- *Partners for economic development. Who are the influential actors in the region? These may include organizations, businesses, or individuals that represent important issues, including those that may be less familiar to the economic development organization such as social service delivery and natural resource organizations.*
- *Resources for economic development. What relevant groups, organizations or individuals are located in the region? Who – including other federal agencies beyond EDA – can provide support and funding to build capacity for economic development activities? How can the CEDS leverage federal, state, and private sector funding resources in pursuit of its economic development objectives?*

Also, for an example of a relevant SWOT section of a strategy, see <http://arcreativealliance.com/resources/Southeast+Arkansas+Growth+Initiative+-+Regional+Plan+for+Economic+Development+-+Draft.pdf>

C. Strategic Direction/Action Plan: Strategic direction and an action plan (flowing from the SWOT analysis), which should be consistent with other relevant state/regional/local plans.

The strategic direction and corresponding action plan contained within the CEDS are the heart and soul of the document. They should answer the questions “Where do we want to go?” and “How are we going to get there?” by leveraging the analysis undertaken in the SWOT. The strategic direction and associated action plan should logically flow from the critical internal and external factors that speak to the region’s assets and limitations and its role in capacity building. The strategic direction should evolve from a clearly defined vision with prioritized goals and measurable objectives. A successful action plan should then focus on those regionally-driven strategic priorities that will be undertaken to bring the prosperity aspirations of the region’s stakeholders to fruition.

- **Strategic Direction: Vision Statement and Goals/Objectives**

The vision statement, goals, and objectives should respond to the analysis of the area’s development potential and problems (i.e., SWOT analysis). The goals should reflect the desires of most regional stakeholders and should also be realistic and limited to a manageable number. Some should address things that can be realized within a short period of time, while others require a longer period for implementation. The vision, goals, and measurable objectives will provide a strategic framework for public and private decision-making and serve as the basis for the formulation and focus of the action plan.

Sample Vision and Goal/Objective:

Vision - Increase regional prosperity by being a globally competitive, business-friendly region, comprised of healthy communities that sustain a high-quality of life.

Goal 1 – Enhance emerging health care cluster

Objective 1 – Expand rural health care workforce development by increasing the percentage of people age 25+ with a completed postsecondary degree by 10% over the next five years.

The **vision statement** should answer the question “Where do we want to be in the next ten to twenty years?” The most common method for developing a vision statement is through a series of sessions or workshops. Regardless of the method used to form the vision statement, the visioning process should include broad community participation. A draft vision statement (and the associated goals and objectives) should be widely circulated for review and comment to ensure maximum stakeholder engagement.

Goals and objectives provide the basis for formulating the action plan and serve as milestones to evaluate regional progress. *Goals* are broad outcomes or general intentions that build upon the vision and are often intangible. Each goal should have a rationale that is clearly understood and publicly supported. *Objectives* are more specific, measurable, concrete, and support the obtainment of the goals. Goals and objectives provide benchmarks by which area officials, economic development stakeholders, and the community can measure performance. The goal and objectives should be consistent with community aspirations for economic prosperity.

The goals and objectives should be prioritized to provide a basis for decisions on the use of available resources. Establishing priorities at the goal-setting stage is a critical step toward formulating the CEDS. The following factors should be considered:

- The effect that achieving each goal will have on the development potential or problem.
- Actions related to the goals and objectives that are already underway or planned.
- The relationship of this goal and objective to the accomplishments of the other goals and objectives.

The successful establishment of a vision with corresponding goals and measurable objectives—properly prioritized and based on a reasonable view of the region’s strengths and capabilities—will result in a well-defined strategic framework that will drive overall implementation of the CEDS.

Recommended Resource: See *North Central Florida RPC’s CEDS* (http://ncfrpc.org/Publications/CEDS/NCFRPC_CEDS_2013-2017.pdf) or the measurable aspects of the Mobilize Maine strategy: <http://mobilizemaine.org/goals-accomplishment/>.

• **Action Plan: Implementation**

The action plan answers the question “How do we get there?” and is based primarily on the prioritized goals and objectives of the strategic direction. The action plan distills the vision, goals and objectives into concrete, specific actions to achieve the aspirations of the region’s stakeholders. Building on the well-defined strategic direction, the action plan should explicitly describe how the region will work together to achieve its goals and measurable objectives, including activity ownership, timetables, and committed resources.

The action plan, however, should NOT simply be a list of projects. Nor should it exclusively reflect those activities which EDA alone could potentially support.

The action plan should include a wide-range of activity types (housing, transportation, broadband, environmental, sector specific or cluster asset-leveraging efforts, etc.) and must be clearly linked to the goals and objectives from the strategic framework. A limited number of activities with the highest priority and potential for regional impact should be identified and described. Descriptions of these high priority activities of regional significance should include:

- a) An outline of the steps required to take each selected high-priority activity from inception to successful completion;
- b) A roster of the key individuals and institutions that will be responsible for implementing and supporting these steps;

- c) A reasonable estimate of the costs associated with implementing the activity;
- d) A list of the integrated funding sources (public, private and nonprofit) to support the costs; and
- e) A realistic time frame for execution (i.e., implementation schedule), with relevant benchmarks and performance measures that speak to overall impact.

A detailed, well-considered action plan increases the overall value of the CEDS, and makes it relevant and useful. While the action plan should provide a guide to prioritizing resources and efforts, it should not be used to limit the identification and implementation of other activities that support the strategic direction that was established as part of the development of the vision, goals and objectives within the CEDS.

Identification of priority activities should include broad-based participation from regional stakeholders, involving those affected by the proposed activities and those that can ensure their success. Partnerships with a variety of organizations and the private sector in the region are a key to successful implementation. Identifying elements for action may be undertaken using the following questions for guidance:

- What are the activities and what are their expected benefits?
- Which activities address the area's greatest need or best enhance the region's competitive advantages?
- Do these activities represent the best use of limited resources?
- Will the activities have positive economic, environmental, and social impacts and how can these be measured?
- Will the activities contribute to the overall economic resiliency of the region?

Recommended Resource: For example, see the Action Plan in Southeastern Utah's CEDS at <http://seualg.utah.gov/EDD/SEUEDD.htm>.

As with the background summary and the SWOT, the goals, objectives and action plan should incorporate the efforts undertaken to increase inclusivity and equity (for more information, see the Equity section). Use any disparities identified during discovery and research to inform the goals, objectives, and/or action items aimed at building inclusive economic development capacity (and consider whether it makes sense to include a separate goal/objective/action that is specifically aimed at benefiting a specific underserved population or community). Specifically, make sure all goals, objectives and action items:

- Clearly identify an equity advantage found during the strategic planning and engagement process;
- Identify what institutions to convene to activate a collective approach to elevating opportunity;
- Outline what is being measured or the desired outcome;

- Identify the length of time needed to address an approach which builds shared prosperity; and
- Name who is responsible or best equipped to drive a new approach.

D. Evaluation Framework: Performance measures used to evaluate the organization’s implementation of the CEDS and its impact on the regional economy.

The evaluation framework serves as a mechanism to gauge progress on the successful implementation of the overall CEDS while providing information for the CEDS Annual Performance Report (see section on Preparation), as required by EDA. These regular updates keep the strategic direction and action plan outlined in the CEDS current and the plan as a whole relevant. The evaluation framework is an important element of the ongoing planning process and should answer the questions “How are we doing?” and “What can we do better?” The evaluation framework, with its associated measures and timelines, should cascade from the strategic direction and action plan, which, in turn, flow from the SWOT analysis.

Performance measures should be identified to evaluate the progress of activities in achieving the vision, goals and objectives. EDDs and communities should consider traditional (e.g., jobs created and/or retained, private investment) and non-traditional (e.g., wealth creation such as GDP per capita, household income, per capita income, wages, net worth) performance measures for evaluating regional impact.

Although important, job creation/retention is just one element in determining whether a region is building the appropriate capacity to help the private sector flourish and the region, as a whole, prosper. Job creation is the result of successful economic development investments and should be linked with broadband availability and adoption, quality of place, established entrepreneur networks, supply of skilled workers, increases in workers’ earnings and wages, a climate of innovation, and/or other strategic investments.

The measures that are ultimately selected should be based upon what is important to the region, what conditions the region needs to reverse or create, and what regional assets can be leveraged. In effect, the measures should reinforce the *relevant* data and background information collected, SWOT analysis undertaken, and strategic direction and action plan developed to help identify the critical internal and external factors that speak to the region’s assets, limitations, and overall ability to build capacity. It is also important to understand that the inclusive elements of economic capacity building may not immediately remedy longstanding marginalization across communities and racial groups, but efforts should be undertaken to measure progress nonetheless (see the Equity section for more information on different ways to measure the effectiveness of equitable strategies).

Recommended Resource: See NADO’s *Performance Metrics Matter: Go Beyond Counting Jobs to Create a Highly Effective Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* at <http://www.nado.org/performance-metrics-matter/> for more information on performance metrics can be used to create a more effective CEDS.

There are numerous options to consider (depending upon regional priorities, as noted above) when thinking about how to measure regional capacity building and prosperity. However, the concept of wealth is one that should be highlighted because of its natural alignment with asset-based strategies and approaches. More than just jobs and income, regional wealth is represented by intellectual, individual, social, natural, built environment, political, financial, and cultural assets. These assets, when invested in, nurtured, and leveraged appropriately, can reflect the true level of a region's economic (and social) well-being. Finding ways to better identify, foster, and measure these assets can help a region towards a more lasting prosperity since a focus on wealth creation and retention can build a region's resiliency and long-term sustainability.

Recommended Resource: See www.wealthworks.org for more tools and information on building and measuring regional wealth.

When developing measures of any kind, some key questions to ask that may help determine the quality and applicability of the measures include:

- Can the measures be evaluated in an objective, timely, and cost-effective fashion?
- Are the measures focused on an outcome or result (i.e., data and information on the success of a specific process or engagement) rather than an output or activity (i.e., data or information on activities to help achieve an outcome)?
- Do the measures include a clear statement of the results expected?
- Do the measures support regional goals?
- Do the measures allow for meaningful trend or statistical analysis?
- Are the measures challenging but at the same time attainable?
- Are assumptions and definitions specified for what constitutes satisfactory performance?
- Have those who are responsible for the performance being measured been both identified and fully involved in the development of the measures?
- Are the measures tracking trends that are completely within the region's control or will national or global developments impact performance?

If a desired result from a strategic direction contained within the CEDS is not achieved, measures can help identify specific weak points and/or identify better approaches. In addition, while the CEDS evaluation is the responsibility of the economic development organization's professional staff, an outside party (e.g., staff from another EDD), a university center, or a consultant, may assist in the evaluation. For EDA investments in projects listed in the CEDS, the outcomes of the projects should be tied clearly to the performance measures in the CEDS (i.e., how did the grant-funded project help achieve a goal and measurable objective in the CEDS?). The evaluation should document where actual results met, exceeded, or fell short of projected outcomes.

Jobs and private investment will remain critical evaluation factors for CEDS plans and EDA-funded projects. Nonetheless, jobs and private investment do not tell the whole story about the impact of EDDs and implementation of CEDS. Take a comprehensive view of performance measures when communicating the results of CEDS implementation.

E. Economic Resilience:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that regional economic prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions (i.e., 'shocks') to its economic base. Many definitions of economic resilience limit its focus on the ability to quickly recover from a disruption. However, in the context of economic development, economic resilience aims to better prepare regions to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock, disruption, or stress it may experience. Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity. Often, the shocks/disruptions to the economic base of an area or region are manifested in three ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending;
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region's economic activity; and/or
- Other external shocks (a natural or man-made disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, the impacts of climate change, etc.).

At the regional or community level, economic development practitioners are instrumental in building the capacity for economic resilience. Economic development professionals and organizations often become the focal point for post-incident coordination, information dissemination, responding to external inquiries, and the lead grant administrator for federally-funded recovery initiatives.

In building economic resilience, it is critical that economic development organizations consider their role in the pre- and post-incident environment to include **steady-state** and **responsive** initiatives.

Steady-state initiatives tend to be long-term efforts that seek to bolster the community or region's ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives can include establishing capabilities for the economic development organization to be responsive to the region's recovery needs following an incident.

Examples of **steady-state** economic resilience initiatives include:

- Engaging in comprehensive planning efforts that involve extensive involvement from the community to define and implement a collective vision for resilience that includes the integration and/or alignment of other planning efforts (e.g., hazard mitigation plans) and funding sources;
- Undertaking efforts to broaden the industrial base with diversification initiatives, such as targeting the development of emerging clusters or industries that (a) build on the region's unique assets and competitive strengths; and (b) provide stability during downturns that disproportionately impact any single cluster or industry;
- Adapting business retention and expansion programs (e.g., economic gardening or other enterprise supports) to assist firms with economic recovery post-disruption;

- Building a resilient workforce that can better shift between jobs or industries when their core employment is threatened through job-driven skills strategies and support organizations;
- Maintaining geographic information systems (GIS) that link with municipal business licenses, tax information, and other business establishment data bases to track local and regional “churn” and available development sites. GIS can also be integrated with hazard information to make rapid post-incident impact assessments;
- Ensuring redundancy in telecommunications and broadband networks to protect commerce and public safety in the event of natural or manmade disasters;
- Promoting business continuity and preparedness (i.e., ensuring businesses understand their vulnerabilities—including supply chains—in the face of disruptions and are prepared to take actions to resume operations after an event); and
- Employing safe development practices in business districts and surrounding communities. Strategies may include locating structures outside of floodplains, preserving natural lands that act as buffers from storms, and protecting downtowns and other existing development from the impacts of extreme weather.

Some examples of *responsive* economic resilience initiatives include:

- Conducting pre-disaster recovery planning to define key stakeholders, roles, responsibilities, and key actions;
- Establishing a process for regular communication, monitoring, and updating of business community needs and issues (which can then be used after an incident) ;
- Establishing/using a capability to rapidly contact key local, regional, state, and federal officials to communicate business sector needs and coordinate impact assessment efforts; and
- Establishing/using coordination mechanisms and leadership succession plans for short, intermediate, and long-term recovery needs.

The CEDS provides a critical mechanism to help identify regional vulnerabilities and prevent and/or respond to economic disruptions. Therefore, embracing economic resilience must be a key component of the CEDS document.

Integrating resilience into the CEDS should be undertaken as part of a two-pronged approach:

- 1) **Planning for and implementing resilience** through specific goals or actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the region (**steady-state**), and
- 2) **Establishing information networks** among the various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges (**responsive**).

***Recommended Resource:** See NADO’s CEDS Resiliency Library (<http://www.nado.org/resources/ceds-library/>) for catalogued examples of how EDDs are currently addressing resilience. The library allows users to browse CEDS that incorporate resilience by state and topic.*

- **Planning for and Implementing Resilience**

All communities, whether those in locations likely to experience significant natural disasters or those dealing with immediate or pending economic shifts, must be able to recognize their vulnerabilities. They should then develop goals, strategies, and actions that can mitigate the effects of an economic incident and support long-term recovery efforts. While there is no universal blueprint for building regional economic resilience, the following items may help in establishing a general framework or identifying specific activities/projects:

1. *Identify persistent economic challenges or deficiencies:* What are the region’s economic “weak spots” (i.e., vulnerabilities)? Is there a specific asset deficiency (e.g., poorly educated workforce, excessive dependency on a single employer or industry, lack of transportation access/options, low levels of broadband availability and/or adoption, impediments hindering a firm's ability to gain access to the financial resources required to advance its business, major employers located in vulnerable areas)? Has a “planning horizon” been established (e.g., 10 to 15 years) for assessing economic vulnerabilities?
2. *Prepare for disruptions by identifying “early-warning” tools:* Does the region have an “anticipatory focus” that will help it react quickly when confronted with potential disruptions and challenges? Do community economic development professionals work with their local/regional emergency managers to address the risks identified through hazard mitigation planning? Do community leaders employ mechanisms (e.g., scorecards, state of the region reports, economic dashboards) that offer a regularly updated assessment of the regional economy?
3. *Build mechanisms that create flexibility:* Do the local governments have detailed and tested disaster response and recovery plans? Do the local governments and major employers have access to “surge” capital/credit resources? Does the region have a good handle on its assets to help identify emerging economic sectors that may lead to a diversified economic base? Has the region established mechanisms to realign and retrain its workforce post-disruption?
4. *Promote a positive vision for the region:* Is the messaging about the region’s assets and opportunities positive (to encourage investments in both times of tranquility and disruption)? Do stakeholders understand that actions that build resilience are good for the regional economy whether or not an economic shock occurs, and have they reached consensus on a set of actions they can take proactively? Are economic shocks used as an opportunity to “re-vision” (i.e., reassess) the region’s economy?

Regardless of the specific steady-state approaches considered or undertaken, the CEDS, *at a minimum*, should include an identification of the region’s key vulnerabilities and resilience-building goals, measureable objectives, and/or projects in the action plan.

Recommended Resource: See *Southeastern Vermont CEDS* (<http://seveds.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/FINALCEDSReport.2013.pdf>) for a good example of how to

effectively describe a region's economic vulnerabilities and recommend a strong set of measurable objectives and actions to address the challenges.

- **Establishing Information Networks**

In addition to identifying regional vulnerabilities and specific actions to address them, the region should establish mechanisms to facilitate active and regular communication between the relevant sectors to collaborate on common challenges. The economic development organization should be prepared to serve as a responsive participant in economic recovery efforts. The region should also be prepared to serve as an information hub by collecting data and convening the appropriate players to facilitate recovery post-disruption. The effectiveness of a region's response to a major economic disruption is often enhanced if the public, private, education, and nonprofit sectors are aware of each other's roles and responsibilities – particularly as they pertain to recovering from economic shocks. Established communication networks and information collection protocols coupled with broadly understood knowledge of key elements (such as supply-chain relationships) can help speed a region's response. Once the networks are established, participants can be called upon in times of crisis to provide services and support in the case of a disruption.

More experienced economic development organizations will find opportunities to enhance and expand their business retention and expansion programs as a vehicle to mobilize action and facilitate information sharing. Other networking examples include the establishment of Business Emergency Operation Centers (BEOC) or Business Recovery One-Stop Centers. Among other actions, BEOCs serve as a hub of business-to-business collaboration and communication to connect private sector organizations with each other and with emergency response and recovery efforts while interfacing with local and federal emergency operations centers to ensure assistance and resources are being directed to businesses in need.

Recommended Resource: *Information on establishing a Business Recovery Center can be found at <http://restoreyoureconomy.org/recovery/business-recovery-center/>. Several states operate BEOCs, including Louisiana, Rhode Island, Missouri, and New Jersey. They take a variety of forms: state funded, state and university partnerships, and privately organized collaborations with universities. There is also a National BEOC operated by FEMA (see http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1852-25045-2704/fema_factsheet_nbeoc_final_508.pdf).*

Regardless of the specific responsive approaches considered or undertaken, the CEDS, *at a minimum*, should demonstrate how the region serves as both a source for information to deal with an economic challenge and as a convener of regional stakeholders to gather data and encourage collaboration post-disruption.

A note on structure: The two-pronged approach to resilience noted above can be included in the CEDS as a separate section. However, resilience could also be addressed by weaving the concept throughout the document (e.g., identifying a region's vulnerabilities in the SWOT section, then developing specific goals or action items to counter those vulnerabilities in the strategic direction/action plan, followed by an exploration of ways to measure success in the

evaluation framework). Regardless of how resilience is included in the CEDS, it is critical for regions to identify vulnerabilities and, where possible, bolster the capacities that may lead to economic resilience as part of regional planning efforts.

Recommended Resource: *The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council's Economic and Disaster Resiliency Study* (http://ncfrpc.org/Publications/EADRS/NCFRPC_EconomicAndDisasterResiliencyStudy.pdf) assesses the vulnerability of the region's industries, critical infrastructure, housing, and other economic assets to hurricanes, and models the effects of a catastrophic event. This type of assessment could be used to inform the SWOT analysis.

- **Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning**

It should be noted that a number of regions, particularly those that are prone to natural disasters, have engaged in resilience planning by focusing on the development of disaster recovery strategies. Developing and implementing a strategy for disaster recovery is often a good first step in establishing resilient regions. Specifically, certain regions have integrated economic development strategies, sustainability principles and hazard mitigation planning to ensure such activities are undertaken in a complimentary fashion. Examples of the benefits from this “cross-pollination” planning include promoting local procurement and hiring, the pre-prioritization of the resumption of major employers, and the siting of new commercial and industrial development in locations that are out of harm's way.

In addition to providing a vehicle to approach resilience in a comprehensive fashion, a CEDS can often fill an important role in ensuring that disaster mitigation efforts are well-coordinated across municipal and county-lines to shape stronger, more resilient regions. Regardless of focus (i.e., broader economic resilience or a more directed look at disaster recovery planning), the CEDS should still include the two primary elements: 1) “steady-state” initiatives that seek to bolster the community or region's long-term ability to withstand or avoid a shock and, 2) “responsive” initiatives that establish and utilize capabilities for an economic development organization to be responsive to the region's recovery needs post-disruption.

Recommended Resources: See the Eastern Plains Economic Development Corporation's appendix on disaster and economic recovery and resilience in its most recent CEDS at <http://www.epedc.com/brochures/full2012-2017CEDS.pdf>. Other examples include South Florida RPC's CEDS (<http://www.sfrpc.com/CEDS/SouthFloridaCEDS2012-17.pdf>), Iowa Northland Regional COG's CEDS (http://www.inrcog.org/pdf/2012_CEDS.pdf), and Mountainland EDD's CEDS (<https://mountainland.org/site/webroot/images/upload/files/ED/Mountainland%20Full%20CEDS%2012-19-14-1.pdf>).

The Northwest Oregon CEDS quantifies the region's economic vulnerability by measuring the number of businesses and jobs located in flood zones, total and by industry, and the number of critical facilities in flood zones (http://www.nworegon.org/Assets/dept_2/PM/pdf/2014-2018ceds-final.pdf).

EDA, working with the State of Colorado, has developed an Economic Resilience Planning Evaluation Tool (https://www.eda.gov/sites/default/files/filebase/files/about/disaster-recovery/EDA_CO-Economic-Resilience-Planning_Oct2014.pdf) that contains a list of economic mitigation, preparedness and/or recovery components that could be used in infusing resilience into a CEDS.

A number of tools exist to help regions craft robust disaster resilience strategies. The Infrastructure Security Partnership's 2011 Regional Disaster Resilience Guide for Developing an Action Plan (RDR Guide) provides a practical, "how to" approach to help communities and regions develop a useable disaster resilience strategy along with a number of key lessons learned from recent disasters and events. (see the RDR Guide at <http://tisp.org/index.cfm?cdid=10962&pid=10261>). Also see Florida's guidebook Post-Disaster Redevelopment Planning: A Guide for Florida Communities at <http://www.floridadisaster.org/Recovery/IndividualAssistance/pdredevelopmentplan/tools.htm#guidebook>. The guidebook is intended to assist communities developing post-disaster redevelopment plans during pre-disaster periods. It provides best practices for planning and implementation based on research and pilot programs associated with the initiative led by the Florida Department of Community Affairs and Florida Division of Emergency Management.

NADO's publication titled Resilient Regions: Integrating Economic Development Strategies, Sustainability Principles and Hazard Mitigation Planning (<http://www.nado.org/resilient-regions-integrating-economic-development-strategies-sustainability-principles-and-hazard-mitigation-planning/>) highlights how several regional organizations are incorporating disaster mitigation and sustainable development approaches into their economic recovery and resilience work.

In addition, RestoreYourEconomy.org (<http://restoreyoureconomy.org/>) contains a wealth of information to help regions impacted by disasters, as well as a number of tips and techniques to support overall economic resilience (see "Leadership in Times of Crisis: A Toolkit for Economic Recovery and Resiliency"). The site is a one-stop shop for disaster preparedness and post-disaster economic recovery resources, tools, event announcements as well as opportunities to connect with peers through social media groups.

- **Climate Resilience**

Overview

Over the past few decades, there has been an increase in the frequency and severity of climate and weather disruptions that are associated with climate change. Climate change threatens the well-being of businesses, supply chains, economic infrastructure, and other community assets – and the private sector is increasingly interested in investing in areas that have attempted to become more resilient to these climate events and shifts. By planning for and becoming more resilient to climate change, communities and regions can protect their

investments while also taking advantage of new economic development opportunities driven by environmental sustainability.

Climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to the climate³. Improving climate resilience involves assessing how climate change will increase risks, and/or create new risks, and taking steps to better cope with these risks. It includes **mitigation** strategies that tackle the causes of climate change and reduce or eliminate risks to people and property from these hazards. It also includes **adaptation** techniques that help people and built/natural systems to adjust to the new conditions to reduce risks to valued assets. Because the impacts of climate change are by nature regional, the CEDS provides a distinctive platform to help address climate hazards as part of regional economic development planning. As with economic resilience in general, there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to incorporating climate resilience into the CEDS. Addressing climate resilience requires an iterative process of: **1) assessing risks and vulnerabilities, 2) prioritizing identified actions, and 3) investigating options to implement.**

In addition, EDA supports projects that address climate mitigation strategies, which are strategies to help tackle the causes of climate change (e.g., clean energy).

Assessing Risks and Vulnerabilities

A region’s climate change risk is a function of the climate-related hazards it will face and its potential vulnerabilities (e.g., financial losses) from such hazards. Therefore, the first step in building climate resilience is to explore the potential climate-related hazards for the region and determine which regional economic assets (potentially identified in the SWOT) may be exposed to those hazards. Considering the sensitivity and adaptive capacity of these assets can reveal if they are truly vulnerable. The below questions will help a region assess its vulnerabilities to climate change hazards:

- **What are the dominant stresses and existing vulnerabilities facing the region, independent of future potential climate change risks?** *What natural hazards (extreme heat, wildfires, drought, sea level rise, inland flooding, etc.) are currently confronting the region (or have confronted the region in the past)? What natural hazards are projected to threaten the region in the future? What socio-economic factors, including where vulnerable groups reside and how such neighborhoods have fared in past weather extremes and disasters, come into play? What are the primary economic sectors and commercial centers whose losses or inoperability would have severe impacts on the community and the ability to recover from a disaster?*
- **How might changes in the climate increase these stresses?** *What natural hazards may become more frequent or increase in severity due to climate change? How might these future*

³ Center for Climate and Energy Solutions

hazards affect local businesses, industrial facilities, business centers, workers, and the community as a whole?

- *What are the vulnerabilities of the built environment? What are the locations of population and business centers (including their proximity to potential hazards)? What are the life expectancies of critical infrastructure, hazardous land-uses, transportation and communication networks, etc.? Are the communities building codes sufficient?*
- *How may infrastructure, including water, sewer, telecommunications/broadband, energy distribution systems, and transportation systems be affected by more severe weather patterns and projected climate change effects? What and where are the key infrastructure assets in the region? How would the construction standards, age and capacity of these assets stand up to climate hazards such as prolonged or severe rain, wind or storm events? Are there back-up or redundant systems or alternative power generation opportunities?*
- *How may the workforce be affected by the effects of climate change? How will climate shifts that impact the local and regional labor market be anticipated? Is the workforce sufficiently adaptable to endure potentially large shifts? Does the training infrastructure exist to assist workers? To what extent can we maintain current workforce industry allocations, while focusing on resilience and adaptation, as opposed to large sectoral shifts?*
- *What assets currently exist that may increase resiliency? What natural and other resources exist in the region that could help mitigate or reduce the impact of climate change hazards? How can the region take advantage of these assets and the growth in cleaner industries? How can the region help buffer the effect of economic transitions or changes to the workforce caused by climate change? How can climate change considerations be integrated into economic development, capital improvement, or infrastructure decisions?*

Regions will want to increase their familiarity with projected climate hazards by securing up-to-date, localized information from expert sources (including from tools such as the *Climate Explorer* (<https://crt-climate-explorer.nemac.org>) or the *Climate Mapping for Resilience and Adaptation* portal and assessment tool (<https://resilience.climate.gov/>), and, where applicable, potentially mapping the hazards and threats in the region. While current disaster information is informative, projected data are also important as threats will likely intensify over the next few decades.

Recommended Resources:

General Use: FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Plans; Coastal Zone Management plans <https://coast.noaa.gov/czm/>; Georgetown Climate <https://www.georgetownclimate.org/adaptation/plans.html>; US Climate Resilience Toolkit and Climate Explorer Tool <https://toolkit.climate.gov> and <https://crt-climate-explorer.nemac.org>; the Fourth National Climate Assessment <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>; EPA's Adaptation Resource Center (ARC-X) <https://www.epa.gov/arc-x>; FEMA, *Resilience and Planning Tool* <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/resilience-analysis-and-planning-tool>; FEMA's Hazus, <https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps/products-tools/hazus>; Argonne National Lab's National Economic Resilience Data Explorer <https://www.anl.gov/dis/nerde>

[county-dashboard](#); Argonne National Lab’s Climate Risk Portal <https://disgeoportal.egs.anl.gov/ClimRR/>; and NOAA’s Climate Mapping for Resilience and Adaptation tool <https://resilience.climate.gov/>

Coastal and Island Communities: NOAA, *Sea Level Rise Viewer* <https://coast.noaa.gov/slr/>; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s (NFWF) *CREST Tool* <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/national-coastal-resilience-fund/regional-coastal-resilience-assessments>; NOAA, Digital Coast <https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/>; IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, 2021, Small Islands Fact Sheet https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/factsheets/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Regional_Fact_Sheet_Small_Islands.pdf; East West Center, *Climate Change in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Indicators and Consideration for Key Sectors* <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/climate-change-in-the-commonwealth-the-northern-mariana-islands-indicators> and; NOAA, *The Distribution Mapping and Analysis Portal (DisMAP)* <https://apps-st.fisheries.noaa.gov/dismap/>

Flood Prone Areas: FEMA Flood Maps, Risk Rating 2.0 <https://www.fema.gov/flood-insurance/risk-rating>; NOAA, Interactive Flood Information Map <https://www.weather.gov/safety/flood-map>; First Street Foundation <https://firststreet.org/flood-factor/>; and US Army Corps of Engineers Silver Jackets Webinar, Climate Resilience in Flood Risk Management <https://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16021coll2/id/5504>

Wildfire Prone Communities: USDA Forest Service, Wildfire Risk <https://wildfirerisk.org/>; and First Street Foundation – <https://firststreet.org/>

Drought Prone Communities: National Integrated Drought Information System <https://www.drought.gov/>

Identifying and Prioritizing Actions

Once the risk to specific assets has been characterized, groups can begin examining potential solutions which could reduce risk. The goal is to think broadly to develop a range of potential efforts that could reduce specific risks. In identifying actions to mitigate climate risks, it is important to consider many factors, such as: network effects (how vulnerable is a large area to an outage of a particular utility [e.g., electricity]), population vulnerability (traditionally disadvantaged, persistently impoverished populations), and scalability (scaling climate resilience from one area to wider reaching effects). It is also important to think about past events when developing potential actions. Factors of consideration and a review of past hazard-related events can and should be informed by individuals or groups with direct knowledge of particular vulnerabilities or important aspects of the community. Key stakeholders to consult may include:

- Representatives from all potentially affected industries (e.g., recreation/tourism; marine and boating; fishing/agriculture; small businesses; grassroots organizations)
- Emergency managers and disaster mitigation planners
- Experts in natural resource management (e.g., flood plain managers; forestry experts; drought experts; land-use planners)
- Utility representatives (e.g., energy and water utilities; communications)
- Infrastructure professionals (e.g., transportation; broadband)
- Financial interests (e.g., insurance sector; climate financing or green bond experts; banking)
- Vulnerable groups and those hard-hit by disasters and climate changes (e.g., non-english speaking residents; uninsured businesses; disadvantaged or underserved communities)
- Civic organizations
- Local government entities
- Labor organizations
- Academia and other institutes of higher education
- Local philanthropic organizations

In addition, strongly consider investigating how other communities and regions have addressed climate resilience as part of their regional planning efforts. NADO’s CEDS Central site (<https://www.cedscentral.com/resilience.html>) and StatsAmerica’s CEDS Resource Library (<https://www.statsamerica.org/ceds/Default.aspx>) may provide thought-provoking examples of the actions other regions are taking to bolster climate resilience.

Recommended Resource:

Eastern Maine Development Corporation (Bangor, ME) (<https://www.cedscentral.com/best-practices.html>): EMDC's CEDS is influenced by the region it serves -- a coastal area home to a legacy industry that has been impacted both by the changing climate and shifts in the global economy. The CEDS sets forth a key goal to “Foster Methods of Adaptation and Mitigation to Strengthen the Region’s Resilience Against Climate-Related Impacts.”

With a deeper understanding of threats and vulnerabilities, as informed by preemptive planning and consultation with key stakeholders and other communities, regions can recognize their vulnerabilities and risks and make plans to address them.

Additional factors to consider in identifying actions may include:

Industry/Business - *Climate change will lead to substantial economic and business shifts. Changes may be like those that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that highlighted how international supply chains, health issues and workforce shortages can affect local economic development. Climate change will affect natural resource dependent industries, such as: commercial fishing and aquaculture (mariculture); small- and large-scale agriculture; tourism and outdoor recreation, etc.*

Sea level rise will affect the functionality and location of ports and businesses along the coast. Convening discussions with specific industry and labor sectors and businesses to understand how natural hazards may impact operations, how climate change may exacerbate these stresses, and how communities can support businesses in responding to these risks is critical. Additionally, what economic dependencies (e.g., supply chains) exist between inland cities (e.g., Las Vegas) and coastal port cities (e.g., San Diego) that could be impacted or disrupted by extreme events? Similarly, regions may want to consider how to encourage investment and create jobs in climate resilient and new green industries, such as renewable energy, green infrastructure and flood resilience technologies, carbon sequestration and the like.

Infrastructure - *Electrical power, drinking water, wastewater, and communication system outages are becoming increasingly common in certain parts of the country following severe disasters. Regions will want to inventory their infrastructure, utilities, buildings, transportation systems, and other economic development assets to determine how they will stand up to extreme events. Developing a climate resilience inventory of infrastructure may help to inform where to locate new businesses, workforce training centers, business districts, and infrastructure based on current and future risk to ensure long-term safety. Overlaying climate change data with land-use plans will be helpful for planning purposes. Consider more resilient land-use patterns and resilient building techniques for new and existing buildings (e.g., elevation requirements, updating building codes, green building techniques, wildfire resistant landscaping, etc.).*

Workforce/People - *Consider how climate change effects, as well as adaptation and mitigation efforts, may adversely impact existing jobs and consider ways to help workers make this transition. Such impacts may be felt more severely by disadvantaged communities and minority businesses. Evaluating the economic development potential of climate resilience activities, including private investment and job creation, can help regions identify new job and economic development opportunities. Moreover, repeat disasters and climate change can lead to mental health issues, anxiety and even trauma. Regions and communities may want to consider ways to support the total well-being of residents and employees when planning for climate resilience.*

After characterizing risk and understanding the relationships among the assets involved, it is important to identify an optimal sequence for addressing potential losses. The prioritization of specific actions should be based on the severity of risk associated with the exposed economic assets. While identifying specific actions to address all asset vulnerabilities may be the intent, it may be more practical/feasible to focus on those actions that will help build the resilience of the most important assets. Consider prioritizing actions by comparing the cost to implement the effort to the expected value of the benefit it will provide. If the total value of reduced risk to the asset through heightened resilience is expected to result in equal or better value than the cost of implementing the project, then that may be a project to

prioritize. The social benefits of a project in the cost-benefit analysis are also important to consider. Though they can be difficult to quantify, projects which build equity and community can be as important as those that have positive, predominantly financial effects. Consider hiring risk management consultants to assist with this cost-benefit process if needed. Once complete, this set of prioritized actions may find its way into the CEDS as either a measurable goal or objective or a key project in the action plan.

Recommended Resources:

General Use: *Climate Ready Communities: A Practical Guide to Building Climate Resilience* <https://climatereadycommunities.org/>; *Climate Change and Social Vulnerability in the United States: A Focus on Six Impacts*, <https://www.epa.gov/cira/social-vulnerability-report>; *The National Association of Climate Resilience Planners* <https://www.nacrp.org/>; PolicyLink <https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/understanding-climate-change-an-equitable-framework>; TNC/AE2COM, Nature Based Solutions and FEMA mitigation granting <https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/Promoting-Nature-Based-Hazard-Mitigation-Through-FEMA-Mitigation-Grants-05-10-2021-LR.pdf>; FEMA, *Mitigation Action Portfolio, Best practices and case studies of mitigation projects funded by FEMA* https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/feam_fy21-bric-mitigation-action-portfolio.pdf; HUD, *Climate Resilience Toolkit* <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HUD-Community-Resilient-Toolkit.pdf>; National Academies *Guidelines to Incorporate the Costs and Benefits of Adaptation Measures in Preparation for Extreme Weather Events and Climate Change* <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25847/guidelines-to-incorporate-the-costs-and-benefits-of-adaptation-measures-in-preparation-for-extreme-weather-events-and-climate-change>

Coastal and Island Communities: Sea Level Rise.org <https://sealevelrise.org/solutions/>

Flood Prone Areas: EPA, Stormwater infrastructure Planning Tool, <https://www.epa.gov/water-research/green-infrastructure-modeling-toolkit#clasic>

Investigating Options to Implement

With climate risks/hazards identified and priorities set, the next step is initiating implementation of the identified actions. In order for these efforts to come to fruition, a range of public and private funding and financing must be investigated and secured. There are many sources of funding available for climate resilience planning and implementation, as well as many types of funding/financing options (climate or green bond programs, infrastructure/green/resilience grants, planning grants, etc.), and it is important to understand the particular advantages and challenges posed by each of these financial instruments before securing funding. It may also be helpful to consider hiring specific staff resources (e.g., climate resilience coordinators) to help drive the planning and implementation of this issue.

Recommended Resources:

General Use: Economic Development Administration, EAA and Public Works <https://www.eda.gov/funding-opportunities>; FEMA, *Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)* <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities>; Climate Resilience Fund <https://www.climate-resiliencefund.org/>; US Climate Resilience Toolkit, Funding Opportunities Database <https://toolkit.climate.gov/content/funding-opportunities>; USDA, Forest Service Sustainability and Climate webpage <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/sc>; EPA, Climate Resilience Funding <https://www.epa.gov/arc-x/federal-funding-and-technical-assistance-climate-adaptation>; and Center for Disaster Philanthropy <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/>

Coastal and Island Communities: NFWF, National Coastal Resilience Fund <https://www.nfwf.org/programs/national-coastal-resilience-fund>

Framing the Issue

Climate risks and hazards can have various impacts on economic development planning that may impact stakeholders and various interests differently. To reach all relevant audiences, consider elevating intersecting priorities for stakeholders that demonstrate the links between the benefits, and co-benefits, of building climate resilience and the stakeholders' economic development priorities. This will aid in framing the issue in a way which is accessible to the widest possible stakeholder group. For example, consider highlighting the links between climate resilience and public safety (e.g., "safe infrastructure is required to effectively protect everyone in the community."), as a regional differentiator (e.g., "businesses want to start and grow in places that are better prepared to deal with climate hazards."), or as a good business practice (e.g., "climate-related enhancements may improve the value of the land beneath them and lead to increased property tax revenues."). Demonstrating the links between climate resilience and other issues, while focusing on shared values and expectations, can lead to a wider degree of buy-in from the community at large, and foster increased understanding around the importance of integrating climate resilience into economic development planning.

- **Measuring Resilience**

Measuring the economic resilience of a community or region, including the actions taken to foster resilience, will vary depending on the assets and vulnerabilities of each region. Two common measures are the degree of regional income equality (i.e., how evenly income is distributed across a regional population) and the degree of regional economic diversification (i.e., degree to which economic activity is spread across sectors). Regardless of the specific types of data collected and measures used, it may be helpful to benchmark data collected

against national averages to help identify trends and better inform the development of key strategies.

Recommended Resources: *See the University of Southern California and the University of California Berkeley's Network on Building Resilient Regions at <https://dornsife.usc.edu/perc/building-resilient-regions/> for general information on resilience and specifics on measuring resilience through the Resilience Capacity Index (RCI). As a means to gauge a region's ability to effectively respond to a future stress, the RCI identifies regional strengths and weaknesses, and provides regional leaders with the ability to compare their region's capacity profile to that of other metropolitan areas. In addition, see the Economic Diversity in Appalachia tool at <http://economicdiversityinappalachia.creconline.org/> for one method of determining industry, employment, and occupational diversity by region across the United States.*

F. Workforce Development:

Overview

As a critical component of economic development, the CEDS should highlight employer-driven, place-based workforce development efforts as an essential underpinning of the broader economic development strategy. To that end, when addressing workforce development in the creation or update of the CEDS, ensure any efforts:

- Are **employer led** to ensure skilled workers are connected to quality job opportunities.
- Are guided by **multiple community partners** such as educational institutions, labor unions, community-based organizations, and economic development organizations.
- Include **wrap-around services** to support the most vulnerable populations.
- Increase educational and workplace **diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion**.
- Prioritize proven **earn and learn models** like Registered Apprenticeships.
- Lead to **stackable, industry-recognized credentials** and ensure that information about credentials is publicly accessible through the use of linked open data formats that support full transparency and interoperability.
- **Measure and evaluate outcomes** such as workers' employment and earnings. Ensure that data is transparent, actionable, and linked back to those executing programs.
- Build **sustainable systems and partnerships** that endure to serve employers and workers beyond the federal investment.
- Connect **workforce development to economic development** (e.g., through the CEDS or CEDS Committee [see below]).
- Encourage the **use of other government and private funding**.
- Are **coordinated** across all levels of government (including federal).

The final point about coordinating efforts is crucial. While engaging all relevant stakeholders (public, private, educational, etc.) in activities such as curriculum development, training and/or work-based learning opportunities as central drivers for success, it is particularly important to

make sure that the public sector players are aligned in their approaches. For example, it will be extremely helpful for the region's workforce strategy to be aligned (and not in conflict) with the workforce strategy of local elected officials and the Workforce Investment Board (WIB). Moreover, having the local or regional WIB engaged in the development and/or review of the CEDS may further solidify these important linkages. Some regions have furthered these connections between economic and workforce development by inviting WIB leadership or other workforce officials to be ongoing participants on their CEDS Committees. For more information on WIBs, please check out the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) at <https://www.nawb.org/>.

Value of Sectoral Partnerships

One way for regions to ensure workforce development initiatives are well-coordinated and impactful is by encouraging the use of sectoral partnerships. A sectoral partnership is formed by a critical mass of employers from the same industry who join with other strategic partners to train and place workers into good, high-quality jobs (see below) that meet the needs of the targeted industry. The strategic partners can include K-12 education, community colleges, universities, community-based organizations, workforce boards, unions, industry associations, and employer-serving organizations. Sectoral partnerships are highly-effective in building regional resilience by breaking down silos between industry and other key stakeholders, ensuring that workforce systems – including strong talent pipelines – are developed that meet the needs of a local economy. Sectoral partnerships have been shown to improve training programs' participation and completion rates and have resulted in better employment and earnings outcomes for workers. At the same time, employers gain access to qualified talent that can support growth and overall competitiveness. To learn more about sectoral partnerships, please see Next Generation Sectoral Partnerships (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57ebae4d5016e1191947196b/t/5e45b8c0002e8a3e5fc025db/1581627590483/Training+Manu>). In addition, check out EDA's recent work supporting sectoral partnerships through its Good Jobs Challenge (<https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/american-rescue-plan/good-jobs-challenge>). The Good Jobs Challenge links workforce development and economic development by connecting local leaders with a diverse set of partners to generate new ways to equitably grow regional economies.

Importance of Good Jobs

A focus on good, high-quality jobs should be a guiding concept within any workforce development strategy. Good jobs reflect a combination of key attributes (see below) and are vital to healthy regional economies and successful businesses. In fact, many businesses understand that providing good quality jobs make them an employer of choice and creates a clear competitive advantage when it comes to recruitment and retention of key talent. Building the capacity for economic development with an eye towards establishing and growing businesses in your region that strive for (and abide by) these good job principles can often make your region more economically competitive.

The Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor have partnered to identify the characteristics of a good job, and as a result have developed eight principles (<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/goodjobs/Good-Jobs-Summit-Principles-Factsheet.pdf>) to create a framework and shared vision of job quality for workers, businesses, labor unions, advocates, researchers, and all levels of government:

- **Recruitment and Hiring:** Qualified applicants are actively recruited – especially those from underserved communities.
- **Benefits:** Full-time and part-time workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA):** All workers have equal opportunity. Workers are respected, empowered, and treated fairly. DEIA is a core value and practiced norm in the workplace.
- **Empowerment and Representation:** Workers can form and join unions. Workers can engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation. Workers contribute to decisions about their work, how it is performed, and organizational direction.
- **Job Security and Working Conditions:** Workers have a safe, healthy, and accessible workplace, built on input from workers and their representatives. Workers have job security without arbitrary or discriminatory discipline or dismissal. They have adequate hours and predictable schedules.
- **Organizational Culture:** All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization, and are engaged and respected especially by leadership.
- **Pay:** All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage before overtime, tips, and commissions. Workers' pay is fair, transparent, and equitable. Workers' wages increase with increased skills and experience.
- **Skills and Career Advancement:** Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs within their organizations or outside them. Workers have transparent promotion or advancement opportunities.

For more information on the principles and the Department of Commerce's and Department of Labor's Good Jobs Initiative, see <https://www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs>.

Recommended Resource:

The Department of Commerce's *Job Quality Toolkit* (<https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/Job-Quality-Toolkit.pdf>) provides strategies and actions to help small- and-medium-sized organizations recruit and retain a high-performing workforce.

Integrating Workforce Development into the CEDS

Because of the important connections between workforce development and economic development, consider multiple ways to incorporate workforce development within the CEDS. Specifically:

- Take into account the workforce -- both in terms of regional composition and the corresponding skills sets -- when developing the **background summary** of the CEDS.
- Plan to make an examination of the region's education and training infrastructure a key component of the **SWOT analysis**.
- Include specific **measurable goals, objectives, and/or action items** focused on workforce development both from the perspective of companies and of workers, and in particular, from underserved communities.
- Determine how best to **measure the impact** (e.g., employment and earnings outcomes) of any workforce development efforts.

Finally, workforce development strategies can play a pivotal role in building regional resilience. In addition to enhancing resilience through sectoral partnerships (see above), another way to enhance regional resilience is to focus on workers gaining new skills. Regions' unique mix of industries and talent should be prepared to evolve to face new challenges and opportunities – often requiring incumbent workers to acquire new skills. Consider developing specific strategies that will position the region to help its workforce contemplate a broad set of career options by learning different (or repurposing) skills for new and emerging opportunities. In addition, look for ways for local industries facing specific workforce challenges to adopt a skills-first mindset in order to identify and access new sources of talent. An emphasis on skills will help any workforce development strategy to be better positioned to handle a variety of economic disruptions and build long-term resilience (for more information, check out:

<https://www.cedscentral.com/simon.html>).

Please see the CEDS with particularly strong workforce development components (noted below) as inspiration for including workforce in your CEDS.

Recommended Resources:

There are many helpful resources which can be used to build a strong workforce development component in the CEDS, among which are: the Bureau of Labor Statistics website (<http://bls.gov/>), including the BLS Occupation Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>). Other useful sites include STATS America's Regionizer (<https://www.statsamerica.org/regions/> (provides county level occupation cluster data)) and Innovation Intelligence tools (<https://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/> (provides industry cluster strength data)).

Brookings, as part of their Workforce of the Future initiative, has developed a useful tool (<https://smartgrowthcities.io/#/city-outlook>) that helps local economic development officials

choose a successful growth strategy and provides a detailed analysis of the workforce implications of that strategy. From a workforce perspective, it can help regions determine the workforce requirements of different industries and help them learn about new, potential industries for the region based on the regional composition of the workforce.

The following web resources also provide useful information for workforce development considerations: (A) state and local workforce contacts can be found at <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/service-locator.aspx> (search for “Workforce Investment Boards” under the “Workforce Systems Contacts” link); (B) state labor market information can be found at <https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/ACINet.aspx> (click on the “State Information” link); and (C) state occupational projections can be searched at <https://projectionscentral.org/>.

Check out the work of Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national nonprofit driving transformation in the American workforce and education systems at <https://www.jff.org/>. JFF is leading a Community of Practice (CoP) (<https://www.eda.gov/communities/>) as an extension of EDA’s Good Jobs Challenge. Under JFF's leadership, the CoP will share best practices, provide technical assistance, and extend professional networks among the Good Jobs Challenge's 32 grantee organizations.

In addition to general resources, the following are some good examples of workforce development/considerations highlighted in the following CEDS:

- Strong workforce considerations
 - **Green River Area Development District:** https://gradd.com/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2020/11/CEDS-2020-Annual-Update-Final-Draft.pdf
 - **Greater Portland Economic Development District:** https://www.greaterportlandinc.com/media/userfiles/subsite_214/files/ceds-final-document.pdf
 - **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission: 2021:** https://www.gmrc.ga.gov/_files/ugd/c74cd0_d415a8611e874ccd935ded9465d6864a.pdf; 2022 DRAFT: https://www.gmrc.ga.gov/_files/ugd/c74cd0_d4666d2e60bb4c489f3c97a93da3c6f6.pdf
 - **Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission:** <https://cuppad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CEDS-Final-Draft-September-2021-Adopted.pdf>
 - **East Michigan Council of Governments:** http://www.discovernortheastmichigan.org/downloads/ceds_2021_2025.pdf
 - **Northeast Michigan Council of Governments:** http://www.discovernortheastmichigan.org/downloads/ceds_2021_2025.pdf
- Focus on workforce development strategies in support of targeted industry clusters

- **Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District:** <https://kpedd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/KPEDD-CEDS-Plan-2021-2026.pdf>
- **The Southeast Conference:** <https://www.seconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Updated-CEDS-2025-Feb-2022.pdf?2070f3&2070f3>
- Emphasizes establishing networks to collaborate on workforce development goals
 - **Greater Nashville Regional Council :** <https://www.gnrc.org/DocumentCenter/View/1371/Comprehensive-Economic-Development-Strategy---2020-Annual-Update>

G. Equity:

Overview

Incorporating equity and inclusive economic development ⁴ into the CEDS strengthens the quality of the process and the integrity of the document and makes regions more economically competitive. Equity, from an economic development planning perspective, is not a plug and play tool or checklist, but rather a set of strategies and targeted approaches to serve populations that may have been underserved by traditional methods to economic development. In the past, some economic development policies have failed to provide economic opportunities equally across all communities exacerbating economic exclusion, with particular discrimination by race, gender, socio-economic status and geography, resulting in geographic inequalities and impeding growth. Regions are now recognizing these impacts and are steadily equipping themselves with the knowledge and resources to take action.

The following serves as a preliminary guide for how EDDs and other regional planning organizations can approach equity and inclusion within their CEDS process and document. These recommendations serve as a vital step in incorporating processes and building definitive action towards inclusive, equitable growth. Embedding equity in the CEDS and regional economic strategies in an accessible, adoptable way which resonates with the widest possible portion of applicable shareholders can help enable a region to achieve more robust and durable economic growth by including valuable and untapped assets that may have previously been excluded from economic opportunity.

⁴ EDA defines equity as providing support to traditionally underserved populations or underserved communities. (See EDA's definition of underserved at <https://www.eda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/EDA-FY21-Investment-Priorities-Definitions.pdf>). New Growth Innovation Network (NGIN) defines inclusive economic development as a model for long-term regional prosperity, which equitably engages all individuals and assets in the community. It ensures that diverse talent and diverse business owners participate in the strategies that drive economic development in their region. This section grew out of a project EDA undertook with NGIN and its partners focused on inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19 economic impacts. Over the course of the project, the team worked with a group of EDDs to capture insights as they embedded economic inclusion and equitable economic strategies into their CEDS COVID-19 economic recovery plans. For more information, please view the award announcement (<https://www.eda.gov/news/blog/2021/03/08/eda-partners-new-growth-innovation-network-and-nado-research-foundation>) and the website (https://newgrowth.org/resources/eda_project/).

Process

EDDs should provide clarity on the approach used to create the CEDS, ensuring equitable principles serve as a foundation for the process. Adding language to the CEDS that lays out the process will help establish relationships early on and increase opportunities for engagement with community groups, diversifying the voices at the table and mirroring the groups most impacted by implemented strategies. When done well, the process enhances a level of transparency that organically calls for collaboration and clearly states a region's priorities and creates the necessary space for equitable outcomes. A few things must be considered to lead with equity in the process:

- **Lead with a commitment to transparency.** *Once there is buy-in, where an EDD or other regional planning organization expresses its commitment to honesty and openness in the CEDS, relationships previously difficult to sustain will solidify. The strategic planning process will reveal the shortfalls and opportunity gaps that inhibited success in the past and encourage previously left out communities to apply their input and expertise.*
- **Be intentional in your advisory council engagement and selection.** *It is important that strategic planning committees/advisory councils have not only geographic representation, but also diversity across race, ethnicity, and income. Inviting community-based organizations deeply connected to their community to represent community voices will take time but will yield powerful results when translating analysis into actionable strategies and goals.*
- **Be granular.** *Be clear how individuals are selected, the consideration criteria, and the timeframe and commitment needed, and if there are any honorariums given for the expertise provided during the process. Provide clarity on how often the advisors will convene.*
- **Clearly state the goal for convening.** *Centering equity makes starting points clear and identifies blind spots in any gatherings or convenings. The objectives begin to move towards establishing trust, breaking down silos, and reimagining a shared vision for the document.*
- **Make feedback circular.** *To eliminate the potential for community burnout, make sure to not only collect feedback from the community, but also to incorporate feedback from the community into the plan and share resources and information back to the community as a core action of the planning process. This is also a form of power sharing and addressing power dynamics between decision makers and community groups.*
- **Avoid static documents.** *Make room for modifications throughout the life-cycle of the CEDS. This will account for changing economic conditions in the community, allowing room for new voices to provide new perspectives on what was previously shared at the start of the planning process. Allow for continual inclusion of previously missing/marginalized voices, perspectives, and viewpoints. Make this part of any resilience-building efforts.*
- **Be clear about equity.** *Be direct and forthright in any equity conversations. An equity statement is welcomed but does not drive action. When equity is centered it will be woven throughout the document. The inequities in the region should be clearly identified in pre-research and should inform the planning process. Specificity in who*

is impacted should be woven throughout the CEDS document, so it is clear what impedes the community from building wealth collectively as a region.

- *Ensure access to engagement opportunities. When designing equitable engagement processes, consider the format, location, and scheduling of events that serve audiences who have been historically excluded from engagement in the past. Consider both virtual and in-person engagement formats to align with varying abilities of residents and digital access gaps. Translation of any materials and discussion in languages should reflect the languages spoken by the local community. Ensure any physical locations are safe and convenient to reach for all community members.*

Recommended Resource:

Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (<https://greaterpeoriaedc.org/regional-strategy-ceds/>) provides a good example of a transparent planning process that results in a CEDS in which equity is woven throughout the document. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are infused throughout the goal areas to address systemic barriers to wealth creation and quality of life in the region.

Summary Background

The Summary Background section of the CEDS is the reader’s first introduction to the region and describes the geographic area and the people who live and work there. An equitable CEDS will introduce the economic history of the region, creating a shared understanding of the critical questions, “What have we done?” and “Where have we been?”

Typically, in Indigenous communities, the orator is the archivist, researcher, and knowledge keeper all in one. They educate the community on what has been done to build the community to help inform how one should move forward. An equitable CEDS should similarly include the history of all those who have lived in the region, including Indigenous communities. This history builds a space for regions to make their case for equity. A shared understanding of any wrongs of the past, legacies of distrust between leaders and communities, and systemic barriers to economic prosperity creates the transparency needed to build a foundation for action.

Data in the Summary Background section 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 demographics, industry clusters, and income should be disaggregated where possible in order to show how populations have grown in the region. Breaking down metrics, such as income, by race and ethnicity, gender, and geography across the region provides a different lens into how the structure of the local economy contributes to economic disparities. Data that describes populations should also use an asset-based framework. While it is important to note disparities between races and geographies, language should clearly communicate and celebrate diversity, highlight the assets and economic successes of communities by industry and the opportunities that full access to economic systems can generate for communities.

Recommended Resources:

Below are some tools for EDDs and other regional organizations looking to identify equity data and/or present data equitably.

- PolicyLink's National Equity Atlas: <https://nationalequityatlas.org/>
- Federal Reserve's Close the Gaps tool: <https://fedcommunities.org/data/closethegaps/>
- U.S. Census Bureau's Data for Equity: <https://www.census.gov/about/what/data-equity.html>
- Urban Institute's Do No Harm Guide: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/do-no-harm-guide-applying-equity-awareness-data-visualization>

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD)

[\(https://www.gorgeeconomy.org/\)](https://www.gorgeeconomy.org/) provides a good example of a region introducing shared language in the CEDS with a common framework towards equity. MCEDD recognized the CEDS process as “an opportunity...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.” MCEDD held seven public sessions - all virtual - as part of the process to update its five-year CEDS 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 (https://assets.website-files.com/622e8847cde037798a8d0e62/62436ff0592ced0c064d5b16_MCEDD-CEDS_2022-2027_Resumen-Spanish_web.pdf) was also created and is hosted on their CEDS website.

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis is an important tool in the CEDS development process that encourages critical thinking, stakeholder/community feedback and input, and qualitative data collection. The process for developing the SWOT and the stakeholders involved are critical and should be noted in the CEDS as an introduction to the SWOT analysis. Allowing a broad and diverse group of stakeholders and community members to contribute their input to the SWOT analysis ensures that this component of the CEDS is representative of many different views. However, the SWOT analysis may result in particular challenges related to equity. Below are some of these critical pitfalls of the SWOT analysis related to equity and tips to avoid them:

SWOT Pitfalls		Tips for Ensuring an Equitable SWOT
Items in SWOT analysis do not align with other sections of the CEDS, particularly those items related to equity challenges that might rely on qualitative rather than quantitative data.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect SWOT to findings from data in the Summary Background • Ensure the items identified in the SWOT connect to the Strategic Action/Direction of the plan by highlighting opportunities that are actionable
The resulting SWOT does not accurately reflect the views of diverse populations and stakeholders.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include broad stakeholder input in the analysis to ensure diverse perspectives are present • Identify where community voice is included in the analysis; test findings with a broad group of community members across organizations, institutions, and place-based stakeholders

<p>The SWOT frames resource gaps between communities as a weakness or threat of a particular community rather than a systemic issue that needs to be addressed.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use data to identify monolithic solutions for racial and other demographic groups (i.e., framing income/employment gaps as weaknesses within the region) • Use an asset-based language framework (https://www.chcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UnderstandingAssetFramingGuidelinesAuthors.pdf) to allow more communities to access the plan.
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Here are some potential alternatives to the SWOT analysis that still achieve the result of a SWOT but may work better for your particular community or region:

Potential Alternatives to the SWOT Analysis		
Alternative	How it functions	Examples
Strength, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Risks (SOAR)	This analysis utilizes an asset-based framework as discussed above which allows easier access to action and solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (https://www.nado.org/ceds-spotlight-merrimack-valley-planning-commission/) • Dayton Region Economic Development Strategy (https://www.mvrpc.org/sites/default/files/dayton_region_economic_development_strategy_final_april_2022_web.pdf)
Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, Exceptions (NOISE)	This analysis is more typically been used in business strategic planning, but its focus on assets and action and a recognition of current activity could make it a useful tool for some regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOISE Alternative SWOT (https://mikecardus.com/noise-alternative-swot/)
WealthWorks: Eight Forms of Capital	This approach provides a framework to leverage local assets by exploring and naming multiple forms of capital/wealth that exist in a community or region. These are: Individual, Intellectual, Social, Natural, Built, Financial, Political, and Cultural.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WealthWorks (https://www.wealthworks.org/basics/explore-regional-wealth-building/wealth-eight-capitals) • Wealth Creation Approach to Support Economic Development in Rural Communities – NADO Issue Brief (https://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Levy_FINAL.pdf)

Strategic Direction/Action Plan

The next step following analysis and community engagement is compiling what changes have occurred across the region that impact equitable growth. This process is typically translated into

measurable goals and objectives and should lay the foundation for the strategic direction your region will take to tackle the inequities that inhibit community progress.

Regions are comprised of communities of varying density levels, including a combination of urban cores, small-to-midsized cities, and rural towns. Areas of concentrated economic disadvantage are persistent features of the U.S. landscape. An inclusive CEDS sets the tone for an entire region. Recognizing communities of all sizes and determining when to address specific community need is vital to sustaining equitable growth.

Common goals and strategies found in the CEDS include small business/entrepreneurial incubation, diversifying industries, creating quality jobs, and preserving natural resources. One common challenge related to equity is that CEDS plans rarely tackle the disparities found during discovery and research. Where poverty is identified, tracks to address it are often misdirected and point to other institutions to solve, without assessing the capacity of the ecosystem to address system issues that may perpetuate inaccessibility to wealth building opportunities.

The action plan is your opportunity to step beyond just identifying disparities and inequities in your region and plan concrete steps to address them. As you look to prioritize, ensure that your activities and objectives are addressing systemic changes rather than symptoms of the larger problem for long-term sustainability and impact. In setting these goals, include as much information as possible about the intended audience for the goal, including race, gender, age, geography, and other critical factors within your region.

Actionable strategies and goals should:

- Clearly identify an equity advantage found during the strategic planning and engagement process
- Identify what institutions to convene to activate a collective approach to elevating opportunity
- Outline what is being measured or the desired outcome
- Identify the length of time needed to address an approach which builds shared prosperity
- Name who is responsible or best equipped to drive a new approach

Recommended Resource:

[Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission \(SEWRPC\)](https://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPCFiles/EconDev/CEDSReport-June2021.pdf)

<https://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPCFiles/EconDev/CEDSReport-June2021.pdf> is a region in which its CEDS recognizes the importance and urgency of confronting the region's equity issues throughout the document. It also includes an "Equity Analysis of Action Plan" that applies an equity lens to all of the CEDS strategies in an effort to evaluate the extent that they would benefit people of color and low-income residents.

Evaluation Framework

One of the commonly asked questions when applying equitable strategies in regions is how to measure efforts and the timeline for results. Applying equitable strategies may not immediately remedy longstanding marginalization across communities and racial groups. Economic

development staff should track indicators linked to their long-term strategies. This approach allows for methodological approach to the CEDS which helps each update build upon the other, providing direction for future stakeholders in the region.

There are three broad categories regions can use to measure progress:

- **Macro-level indicators** – These indicators include broad macroeconomic data points, such as income, poverty, and education across race and geography. These indicators may not move on a five-year timeline but will set up a long-term approach to analysis and impact measurement. Additionally, regions may want to look at data on population and workforce retention in addition to overall growth indicators in order to get a fuller picture of equity changes over time.
 - Potential resources:
 - **NERDE:** <https://www.anl.gov/dis/national-economic-resilience-data-explorer-nerde>
 - **National Equity Atlas:** <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators>
 - **Migration Data:** <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/migration.html>
 - **Investing in Rural Prosperity – A Framework for Advancing Shared Economic Prosperity in Rural Communities across the U.S.:** <https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/connectingCommunities#98/investing-in-rural-prosperity-a-framework-for-advancing-shared-economic-prosperity-in-rural-communities-across-the-united-states>
- **Program-level indicators** – In addition to macro-level indicators, regions should consider what program-level data should be collected in order to measure impact. These can be specific outputs related to programs and projects that serve particular businesses, employees, or residents. To identify metrics, organizations should consider building the evaluation process into program development. This may require memorandums of understanding and a strong university research partner. See examples of this model from Community Science (<https://communityscience.com/webinar/organizational-effectiveness/evaluation-in-service-of-equity/>).
- **Qualitative indicators** – These indicators should include community voice, potential timeline adjustments, and external factors that may require a shift in focus. Regions should create visibility for the work by providing a public forum for this evaluation process to show progress on a yearly basis. Surveys should provide stakeholders and community room for input and feedback and proposed changes to existing strategies.
 - Resource for developing equitable surveys (<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/evaluate/collecting-data/data-collection-methods>)

Economic Resilience

The economic resilience section aims to better prepare regions to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock, disruption, or stress it may experience. Regions that prioritize equity and economic inclusion are well-positioned to be more resilient and respond to an unpredictable economic and climate future. They are effective at amplifying the talents,

expertise, and potential of all residents, while at the same time seek to minimize socioeconomic disparities that can lead to regional instability and decline. A regional commitment to equity and inclusion is a regional commitment to becoming more resilient.

Make an effort to be intentional about incorporating equity and inclusion when crafting these strategies. For example, steady-state initiatives, designed to withstand an economic shock, may include building and strengthening networks with community groups, non-profits, and other organizations led by communities of color; enhancing inclusive workforce development initiatives; and building regional capacity to address the needs of communities at risk. Responsive initiatives require a solidified stakeholder network capable of providing assistance and resources to meet the needs of all communities within a region.

The negative effects of economic shocks, climate change, and planning decisions made without authentic community engagement most severely impact communities of color and low-income communities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines ⁵ environmental justice (EJ) as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” Consider incorporating the principles of EJ into the CEDS planning and implementation process, including through deeper engagement with local community groups and organizations, incorporating more voices and perspectives into decision making processes, and researching/presenting data on the environmental and health impacts of planning decisions.

Recommended Resources:

- EPA’s EJ Screen (<https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>) is a mapping and data tool designed to provide users with access to a dataset that combines environmental indicators (including air toxics risk, Superfund proximity, wastewater discharge, and more) and demographic indicators (including the percentage of people of color in a community, income levels, unemployment rates, age, and more).
- The Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>) was created to help Federal agencies identify communities that are “marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution,” and it can also be useful to reference in regional planning and development effort.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has developed a CEDS (<https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Final-CEDS-022521.pdf>) that focuses on the issues of equity and inclusion by defining terms, explaining their importance, and

⁵. United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2022, September 6). *Learn About Environmental Justice*. EPA. Retrieved March 23, 2023, from <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.

framing goals around these issues. The process and plan have three major themes: racial equity, economic resilience, and climate resilience.

3. Format

While the content of a CEDS is critical, the structure and presentation of the information contained within the document is also important. The following suggestions should help:

Keep your audience in mind. A CEDS must be a technically sound plan, but plans do little good if nobody reads them. Consider how your readers consume information. For example, a target of approximately 25 to 30 pages—with a three to five page executive summary containing key findings, opportunities, and initiatives—is a reasonable expectation for keeping a general audience engaged. Extremely busy readers, such as elected officials or business owners, may require a shorter version of the document as an overview, with a reference explaining where to go to find the more complete version. For professional planners, the full technical version of the CEDS may be appropriate. An executive summary, in particular, is an important and useful element since the general public, local officials, federal policy makers, and other senior level executives will generally seek information in a brief, easily digestible form. Decision makers, in particular, need an executive summary to make informed choices based on a short yet useful synopsis.

***Recommended Resource:** See North Central Florida RPC's "strategy" and "technical" versions of the CEDS: http://ncfrpc.org/Publications/CEDS/NCFRPC_CEDS_2013-2017.pdf. The Florida RPCs adopted this format as part of their statewide coordinated CEDS development.*

In addition, data that do not directly link and support the strategy should not be featured prominently in the main part of the document. Too much data can be a distraction, especially if it interrupts the flow of the narrative. Use appendices for data that cannot be tied directly to the vision, goals, measurable objectives, and strategies.

Communicate creatively. While the content of a CEDS is clearly the most significant factor, the region or organization developing the CEDS does itself a disservice if the document does not have a professional and appealing look and feel. Many groups, especially those unfamiliar with EDA, will look to the CEDS as an indication of the organization's or region's capabilities and overall commitment to effective economic development. Also, the CEDS should make extensive use of charts, graphs and professional photos to draw attention to and bolster the messages within the CEDS.

In addition, the CEDS should be crafted in whatever format provides the best medium for communicating the strategies within the document. Regions are encouraged to experiment with hard copy reports, web-based CEDS, or even mobile apps for phones or tablets if that is appropriate and of interest to the region. In some instances, a CEDS may be best developed in a traditional word processing format. However, many strategy documents are now being developed using other mediums. Different formats should be researched to widen the

possibilities. Recent strategy documents from consulting firms, research organizations and university centers may provide ideas on creative formats.

Recommended Resource: *For an example of a creative format, see http://nyworks.ny.gov/themes/nyopenrc/rc-files/southerntier/CU_RegEcoDevRprt_loR.pdf.*

Think beyond the document. When crafting the CEDS, a community should think creatively about how the document (or specific portions) may be used as a vehicle to engage stakeholders in a meaningful conversation and debate about their region. Consider how the CEDS can be used in social media – podcasts, blogs, videos, etc. How can the CEDS, or parts of it, be showcased on a website?

Recommended Resource: *Two examples of economic development organizations that have created engaging websites to complement their strategy documents include <http://pennyrilefuture.com/> and <http://ceds.alabama.gov/>.*

4. Preparation

The following is an overview of the steps required to prepare a CEDS, including recommended participants and the role of EDA. For more information on any step in the process of preparing a CEDS, please contact your appropriate EDA regional office (see <http://www.eda.gov/contact/>).

The preparation of a CEDS will depend on local circumstances, the organization’s staff capacity, and level of resources of the region. The time it takes to develop an effective process will vary depending on the area’s experience with economic development, the complexity of its problems, and the degree of coordination and cooperation among the participant stakeholders.

A key element in the process is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (Strategy Committee).⁶ Established by the planning organization, the Strategy Committee is the principal facilitator of the CEDS process and is responsible for developing and updating the CEDS. The Strategy Committee should broadly represent the main economic interests of the region.

Stakeholder Engagement

As previously noted, a CEDS emerges from a continuing planning process developed with broad based and diverse stakeholder participation that addresses the economic problems and potential of a region. The CEDS should include information about how and to what extent stakeholder input and support was solicited. Information on how the planning organization collaborated with its diverse set of stakeholders (including the public sector, private interests, non-profits, educational institutions, and community organizations) in the development of the CEDS and the formation of the Strategy Committee should be documented. For updated CEDS, information on how these critical stakeholder groups contributed to the plan’s implementation should be noted.

⁶ Establishment of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee is a requirement only for EDA funded EDDs and Native American tribes.

Documented evidence of these strategic partnerships strengthens a CEDS by demonstrating the commitment of local partners to coordinate work and investment across the region, helps to effectively target local funds and private sector resources, and legitimizes the CEDS as a product representing the region as a whole. Information should also be included that describes the planning organization's efforts to regularly engage partners and stakeholders on monitoring progress on the CEDS and to keep the plan both current and relevant.

Planners should take care to build stakeholder participation and buy-in for long term planning initiatives. Stakeholders need to understand how they fit into the picture of regional economic competitiveness and, more important, how engagement in a CEDS process will benefit their communities and organizations.

Consider using the CEDS as an opportunity to illustrate how the region's stakeholders are linked together. Illustrate the business-to-business linkages (clusters, supplier networks, value chains) and the social connections (social networks, places of worship, investor relationships). In addition, consider identifying opportunities for short-term, medium-term, and long-term activities in the CEDS. Stakeholder engagement can be maintained effectively and expanded to new stakeholders through short-term "wins."

Recommended Resource: *Innovate Kansas* <http://innovatekansas.org/>.

The steps below apply only to EDA-funded planning grantees (e.g., EDDs and Native American tribes):

Step 1: Establish and maintain an Economic Development Strategy Committee (Strategy Committee) to oversee the CEDS process. It is recommended that members of the Strategy Committee be listed in the CEDS.

Step 2: Define the Strategy Committee's role and relationships.

Step 3: Leverage staff resources.

Step 4: Adopt a program of work.

Step 5: Seek stakeholder input. Craft the initial CEDS document and solicit and address public comments (per 13 C.F.R. § 303.6).

Step 6: Finalize CEDS document.

Step 7: Submit a CEDS Annual Performance Report.

Step 8: Revise/update the CEDS (at least every five years).

You can and should contact your EDA regional office staff at any point in this process for general technical assistance and advice. The regional office staff can help with EDA approval of the CEDS and with the annual reports.

Economic development organizations are encouraged to work with and make use of other EDA programs such as University Centers, Local Technical Assistance, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Economic Adjustment Assistance. EDA regional office staff can provide current information on accessing these programs, as well as other non-EDA programs and that may be useful in the development and implementation of the CEDS.

5. Equivalent/Alternative Plans

As noted earlier, a CEDS should serve as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional economic collaboration.

However, a region does not have to develop a CEDS if a strategy has already been prepared or is being crafted for an alternate but complimentary purpose, for example, a regional sustainability plan. In the absence of an EDA-funded CEDS, and in an effort to reduce duplication and foster cross-agency collaboration, EDA may accept as a CEDS any regionally prepared plan, including plans prepared under federally or state supported programs. All that is required is that

- the alternate plan is current (developed or updated within the past five years and shows relevancy through actions such as public posting and/or active use)
- its preparation and contents address EDA’s regulations (13 C.F.R. § 303.7)
- the plan is consistent with these guidelines – containing at least a summary background, analysis, strategic direction/action plan, and an evaluation framework
- alternate plans should clearly define the area that the plan will serve and provide evidence of a robust participatory process (broad-based and inclusive community engagement)

Those plans submitted as a CEDS alternative or equivalent that are *not* accepted by EDA often lack one or more of the elements noted above. Many plans that are not accepted do not include a robust action/implementation plan (with well-defined priorities), or the plans may not have a sufficient evaluation framework (with clearly defined measures). The equivalent plan must also include a mechanism for regular updates and “check-ins” that will keep the strategies and activities outlined in the plan current, and ensure that the plan as a whole continues to be relevant.

When crafting a regional plan that will also serve as a CEDS alternative or equivalent that covers a geographic area already covered (in part) by one or more CEDS, those previously approved CEDS should be folded into (sometimes called “nesting”) the new plan. The existing plans and evaluation frameworks can be effectively used to strengthen the newer plan. At a minimum, the organization(s) (for example, the Economic Development District) that prepared the previously approved CEDS should be consulted. Including key elements from the previously approved CEDS will ensure that the larger regional plan continues to address more local needs and requirements.

One model of “nesting” is the statewide CEDS (EDA encourages regions to collaborate across regions and at the statewide level on CEDS plans). A number of states have (or are in the process of) rolling-up the work of their regions’ individual CEDS

- to more effectively address larger, cross-cutting needs and priorities or
- to attain benefits that accrue beyond regional boundaries and that may require economies of scale to implement.

Recommended Resource: See this example of a statewide CEDS:

<http://ceds.alabama.gov/>). Examples of successful alignment between the CEDS and HUD’s Sustainable Communities Planning Grant include Central Minnesota: <http://resilientregion.org/> and the Centralina region in the Charlotte area:

http://www.centralinaedc.org/2012_CEDS_Update.php

It is critical that you begin the process of developing a regional plan that can also serve as a CEDS alternative document by engaging the appropriate EDA regional office and that region’s point-of-contact for your state (<http://www.eda.gov/contact/>).

The EDA regional office staff can help guide the process and ensure the new plans meet the basic requirements noted above. They also may be able to point out examples where such approaches have been undertaken successfully. Moreover, they may be able to help align schedules and increase coordination while preventing duplication in the development of multiple regional plans.

It should also be noted that EDA does not formally “approve” these alternate/equivalent plans. Rather, the EDA regional office will accept or deny the plan when the community or region applies for an EDA-funded project.