

NADO
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

AND

NADO
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS
RESEARCH FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Arrowhead Regional Commission, MN



Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments, SC



Brazos Valley Council of Governments, TX



West Central Initiative, MN



Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, NM



Alamo Area Council of Governments, TX



Buckeye Hills Regional Council, OH



Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, CO

MESSAGE

*from the
NADO
President*



With 2020 behind us and as we start a new year, **NADO and the NADO Research Foundation** have much to reflect on, as do all NADO members and partners at the local, regional, state, and federal levels. We began 2020 with enthusiasm, ready to relocate to larger office space, increase staff, broaden our reach with new partnerships, enhance our research and information programs with new grants and contracts, and continue to advocate for our members on Capitol Hill. The unique and challenging circumstances presented by the COVID-19 global pandemic may have caused us to change how we work, but they did not slow us down! As we head into a new year, we wanted to take a moment to pause and reflect on the work we have all collectively accomplished to help NADO succeed in promoting regional development organizations across the nation.

It has been my pleasure, and a great honor, to serve as NADO's president during this unprecedented time. We are a strong organization, and on behalf of the NADO Board of Directors and staff, please know we truly appreciate the very hard and meaningful work that our members are doing daily throughout their regions. You are making a difference. NADO is making a difference.

Kevin Byrd

President, NADO and Executive Director,
New River Valley Regional Commission (VA)



MESSAGE

*from the
NADO
Executive
Director*



The year of the pivot was certainly 2020: adapting our three major convenings (Washington Policy Conference, National Regional Transportation Conference, and Annual Training Conference) from in person to virtual events; transitioning overnight from enjoying our new offices to working remotely; achieving important advocacy goals without meeting in person with Hill or agency staff; on-boarding new staff virtually; not skipping a beat with our internal operations, including our annual audit; conducting association governance meetings remotely using new technology; developing new strategies to meet Research Foundation grant deliverables; and significantly expanding the Research Foundation's grants and contracts portfolio. We are proud to report that all of these accomplishments occurred with staff working remotely from, at times, seven states and the District of Columbia. We are proud that our work continued almost seamlessly to advocate for NADO members and to provide resources needed to navigate these challenging times.

Looking forward to 2021, please be assured that NADO will continue its efforts to promote regional development and the work of regional development organizations across the nation as we meet with members of the new administration and agency staff. We sincerely thank you for your continued support and look forward to seeing you all again soon!

Joe McKinney
Executive Director, NADO and the NADO
Research Foundation



2020 AT A GLANCE

The year 2020 marked the first full year in implementing **NADO's Strategic Action Plan**, which was approved by the NADO Board of Directors in August 2019. The Plan's six pillars—*Build Institutional Change, Create New Partnerships, Promote Organizational and Staff Capacity, Broaden Advocacy and Networking, Expand Operational Resources, and Strengthen Membership Base*—provide a roadmap

for our path forward. Much has been accomplished in this first year of the five-year plan. A full report can be found on www.NADO.org.

After over 30 years, **an office relocation** took us from the Hall of the States building to larger and more accommodating space in early 2020. The new space is better suited for our expanding staff and more favorable to our bottom line. We enjoyed our space for about six weeks before the COVID-19 global pandemic moved us all to working from home. We worked from home through the end of 2020 but look forward to being back in our offices sometime in 2021.

Although the **COVID-19 pandemic's impact** on our nation's economy presented numerous obstacles, the pandemic has also illustrated that NADO members can meet adverse challenges and situations head-on and continue to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Between March and September, NADO surveyed members three times to learn more about the ways they were responding to the pandemic, how it was impacting their daily operations, and to understand how they were using Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds designated specifically for U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)-funded Economic Development Districts (EDDs). NADO members shared their strategies for continuity of services, the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic, and outlined ways that federal programs could help them continue to provide services to residents. This information was beneficial for NADO staff as they worked with staff on Capitol Hill and in various federal agencies to better understand NADO members' immediate and long-term needs. Input from the membership was vital to NADO's **advocacy work which resulted in increased funds for the EDA and EDDs in the CARES Act.**

2020 AT A GLANCE

NADO's major membership events—the NADO-DDAA Washington Policy Conference, the National Regional Transportation Conference, and the Annual Training Conference—put NADO staff into full learning mode as new training platforms were researched, tested, and ultimately used to conduct the events virtually. While we all missed the energy and synergy of meeting in person, we were thrilled that so many members and others from various federal agencies and national organizations attended these events and benefited from virtual training and networking opportunities.

As part of our initiative to expand organizational resources, the **Research Foundation secured more than \$1.5 million in new grants and contracts** in 2020. These multi-year grants will allow the Research Foundation to continue its research, training, and information-sharing work in regional resilience, organizational capacity building, and rural/regional transportation. During the 2019 NADO Annual Business Meeting, the association approved the first modification to its dues structure in almost 20 years. The **increased membership dues will further NADO's advocacy efforts on behalf of our members**; it will also help us build our strategic partnerships with other national organizations.

During the past year, NADO and the NADO Research Foundation hired **new staff as part of a strategy to enhance organizational capacity**. We are pleased to have added a Membership and Meetings Manager, a Database and Grants Manager, and Graduate Fellows to our team. The **Association's Bylaws were also modified** to add a new Diamond level membership and to change the name of the Sustaining Associate level to Partner.

Photo Credit: Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments, SC



NADO BY THE NUMBERS

NADO MEMBERSHIP BY CATEGORY

TOTAL MEMBERS – 379

GENERAL MEMBERS – 312

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS – 67

NADO MEMBERSHIP BY DUES LEVEL

DIAMOND – 1

PLATINUM PLUS – 9

PLATINUM – 24

SUSTAINING – 60

GENERAL – 218

ASSOCIATE – 54

PARTNER – 13



ADVOCACY
HIGHLIGHTS:

NADO
SUCCESSFULLY
ADVOCATED FOR
EDA FUNDING
AND REFORMS

In collaboration with other national partners, NADO's legislative team successfully advocated for the inclusion of **\$1.5 billion in supplemental funding for the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA)** within the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which was signed into law on March 27, 2020.

NADO also successfully advocated to reform the EDA Revolving Loan Fund program in order to increase the program's efficiency and extend more local flexibility to EDA RLF operators. On October 30, 2020 the Reinvigorating Lending for the Future Act of 2020 (RLF Act) was signed into law.

NADO 2020 MEMBERSHIP AWARDS



ALICEANN
WOHLBRUCK
IMPACT AWARD
RECOGNIZED

79

PROJECTS
FROM 48
MEMBERS

EXCELLENCE IN
TRANSPORTATION
AWARDS
MADE TO

7

PROJECTS
FROM 5
MEMBERS

PHOTO
CONTEST HAD
NEARLY 120
SUBMISSIONS
WITH

11

WINNERS
AND RUNNERS-
UP ACROSS
6 CATEGORIES

**NADO
RESEARCH
FOUNDATION
SECURED**

NEW GRANT FUNDS

**TO ENHANCE PROGRAMS
FOR MEMBERS**

\$1.57M **IN NEW GRANT
FUNDING
RECEIVED**

**8 NEW
GRANTS**

to support our core program areas of rural and regional transportation, resilient regions, and organizational capacity building for activities related to research, information, and training.

TRAINING & OUTREACH

**TARGETED TO
NADO MEMBERS**

**3 NATIONAL
CONFERENCES**

the NADO-DDAA Washington Policy Conference, the National Regional Transportation Conference, and the Annual Training Conference

26 WEBINARS

covering a broad range of topics: OMB Guidelines; COVID-19 response and member continuity of operations; Opportunity Zones; rural mobility, economic resilience, and substance use disorder; strengthening EDA-HBCU partnerships; economic recovery post-COVID-19; EDA CARES Act funding; CEDS; rural wealth creation and COVID-19 response and recovery; data sources and uses.

LEGISLATIVE & ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

Working with a coalition of national partners, **NADO's legislative team successfully advocated for the inclusion of \$1.5 billion in supplemental funding for EDA** within the CARES Act, which was signed into law on March 27, 2020. A significant portion of the additional funding appropriated to EDA via the CARES Act was in turn allocated to Economic Development Districts (EDDs) and EDA Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) operators to support their efforts to facilitate economic recovery and mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their regions. The CARES Act also provided supplemental funding for other programs and agencies that are important to NADO members, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, among others. In collaboration with other national stakeholders, NADO advocated for supplemental funding for these agencies in advance of the passage of the CARES Act and will continue to advocate for these agencies' funding and programs in the future.

Following the passage of the CARES Act, EDA provided non-competitive funding directly to EDDs and EDA RLF operators in good standing to help support their regional efforts to mitigate the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. EDA also released new guidance on increased flexibilities for EDA RLF operators in recognition of the pandemic's impact on small businesses and the increasing demand for RLF loans. The provision of this supplemental funding—in combination with EDA's innovative efforts to infuse funding into communities rapidly—supported NADO members' early efforts to help their communities begin to combat the many challenges posed by the pandemic.

LEGISLATIVE & ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

NADO also successfully advocated to reform the EDA Revolving Loan Fund program in order to increase local flexibility and reduce administrative burdens for EDA RLF operators. NADO worked closely with Senator Capito (R-WV), Senator Cardin (D-MD), Congressman Peterson (D-MN), and Congressman Katko (R-NY) who jointly introduced two bipartisan, bicameral bills (S. 4075 and H.R. 7388) entitled the Reinvigorating Lending for the Future Act (RLF Act) of 2020. After passing in the House and Senate, the RLF Act was signed into law on October 30, 2020, and became Public Law 116-192. The RLF Act reforms the EDA Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program by eliminating burdensome “in perpetuity” reporting requirements and releasing the federal interest in EDA RLFs after seven years, thereby providing increased local flexibility to EDA RLF operators as they administer the program on behalf of their communities. The legislation permits EDA to release the federal interest in RLFs that have operated satisfactorily for seven years since the disbursement of grant funds. The passage of this legislation will improve the efficiency of the EDA RLF program during a time when the program is of paramount importance, as it is helping small businesses combat the economic consequences of the pandemic.

In addition to NADO’s advocacy efforts surrounding EDA programs and funding, **NADO continues to advocate for robust funding for other federal agencies and programs that support economic and community development work, many of which received supplemental federal funding via the CARES Act.** NADO will continue to work with other national stakeholder organizations and coalitions that collectively identify and advocate for shared priorities. Following the November 2020 general election, NADO’s legislative team began working with members of the incoming administration’s transition team to relay guidance and input for the next administration’s consideration.

NADO is grateful to the many NADO members, coalition partners, and other advocates who engaged members of Congress and helped advocate for NADO’s legislative priorities this year, as well as the Senate and House champions who introduced legislation and the congressional staffers who dedicated their time and support. NADO extends our appreciation to the Ridge Policy Group for their work in support of NADO’s advocacy goals, and we thank the NADO membership for approving a dues increase in 2019 which allowed NADO to direct additional resources toward advocacy in 2020.

NADO RESEARCH FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS

RURAL AND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

The Research Foundation's focus on rural and regional transportation was enhanced in 2020 with **support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide technical assistance to rural and tribal transit programs** in 11 states and two Native American reservations. We **completed a multi-year project on Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) with funding from the Federal Highway Administration**. Our project work has resulted in 14 case studies and reports covering topics such as transportation technology and operations, travel information and transportation, transportation and safety, and rural ITS (available on www.RuralTransportation.org).

In 2021, our work in the rural transportation world will expand with **new funding from the National Academies of Sciences** to research the connections between transportation and job access in rural communities, and Cambridge Systematics to provide technical support on projects related to rural highway safety. In addition, a new grant from USDA will allow us to continue delivering technical assistance to rural transit programs.

RPO America continues to provide a valuable service to NADO members who are engaged in rural transportation planning. Through **www.RuralTransportation.org** we are able to provide relevant and timely resources. And, while we were not able to meet in person for the 2020 National Regional Transportation Conference, we are hoping we can hold the conference in 2021 in Kansas City, MO, July 20 – 22.

Photo Credit: Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments, AL

RESILIENT REGIONS & COMMUNITIES

With support from EDA, we continue to **manage and deliver the Stronger CEDS, Stronger Regions program to assist EDDs and other regional organizations with their CEDS planning, writing, and implementation efforts.** In 2020, we expanded the breadth of resources available at www.CEDSCentral.com, delivered the Summertime with the CEDS webinar series that covered nine topics related to the CEDS and economic resilience and recovery, published 10 CEDS in Action case studies, hosted a series of Data Deep Dive webinars, and provided a mix of desktop consulting and technical assistance to EDDs working on their CEDS. EDA's generous support will enable us to continue this important work through 2021.

Our **partnerships with the University of North Carolina (UNC) and the Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR)** have resulted in connecting NADO members with information and resources about small water systems management (UNC) and training about brownfields as an economic development strategy (CCLR). Our **collaboration with the Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP)** focusing on rural wealth creation continues.

A new **partnership with Smart Growth America (SGA), the Nuclear Decommissioning Collaborative, and CCLR, funded by EDA,** includes an 18-month project to work with nuclear power plant host communities to better prepare and respond to the significant economic challenges posed by plant closure.

Photo Credit: West Central Initiative, MN

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

In early 2020, the **EDA Austin Regional Office** committed to another round of multi-year funding to further our partnership with the **Southwest Region Economic Development Association (SWREDA)** to provide event planning assistance and support our work on the **Training Program for Emerging Leaders**. The EDA Denver Regional Office is providing support for the Research Foundation to **work with the Iowa Association of Councils of Governments to develop a conference** for four states in the region.

A new opportunity with **EDA Headquarters** in 2021 will enable the Research Foundation to **develop an EDD curriculum and an EDD peer mentoring program**.

RESEARCH, INFORMATION, AND TRAINING

The **primary goals of the Research Foundation are to conduct research, disseminate information, and deliver training** that is responsive to our membership. These goals are achieved largely through myriad grants and contracts secured through a robust fundraising effort. The Research Foundation team also manages the NADO Member Inquiry platform; over the past year information shared among the membership covered position descriptions, examples of RFPs, tiny home ordinances, community rating systems, rural housing programs, social media policies, rural community livability, mapping systems, and other topics related to EDD organizational structure and program development and delivery.

In 2020, the Research Foundation **launched the RDO COVID-19 Resource Center and the Equity and Inclusion Resources for RDOs page on www.NADO.org**. Updated regularly, these pages offer a variety of resources to the membership including member examples, training events, federal and private philanthropic resources, information from other national organizations, tools, and other resources.

RESEARCH, INFORMATION, AND TRAINING

The Research Foundation team **develops the content for NADO's Annual Training Conference (ATC)**. While pleased with the outcome of the 2020 Virtual ATC, we are hopeful the 2021 ATC will occur as planned in Portland, OR, October 16 – 19.

The NADO Research Foundation receives **invaluable input from the NADO Research Foundation Advisory Committee and the National RPO Council of Peers**. The Advisory Committee—eight members representing each of the NADO membership regions, the Associate membership category, and the Research Foundation Board of Directors—provides ideas for further research and training. Committee members are selected by the NADO Research Foundation Board of Directors. The RPO Council of Peers serves as the leadership of RPO America and provides advice, input, and ideas to NADO. Members are appointed by the NADO President, with the advice and consent of the NADO Board of Directors.



Photo Credit:
Northwest New
Mexico Council
of Governments,
NM

NADO & NADO RESEARCH FOUNDATION COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

Each year, NADO and the NADO Research Foundation collaborate with federal and state agencies, national technical assistance centers, fellow associations, and research institutions to gain and lend expertise on economic development, environmental resilience, regional planning, transportation, and workforce development. Fostering these partnerships provides opportunities to share intellectual capital and subject matter expertise, promote the innovative practices of RDOs and RTPOs, and increase awareness of NADO's programs and resources.

NADO Board members identified **building partnerships** as the most significant opportunity for NADO in the next five years. The 2020-2024 NADO and NADO Research Foundation Strategic Action Plan notes that expanding NADO's reach to create new cross-sector partnerships will provide the organization with added capacity to provide advocacy, education, research, and training for the nation's RDOs. In addition, collaborating with partners on key topic areas through events, conferences, and training enables NADO to build new connections, as well as create and share timely information.

Photo Credit: Alamo Area Council of Governments, TX



COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

In 2020, NADO and the NADO Research Foundation conducted research, offered training workshops and virtual events, served as members of committees and consortia, and moderated and presented at conferences or on webinars with the following partners:

- Alaska Municipal League
- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
- Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO)
- Ball State University
- Cambridge Systematics
- Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR)
- Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness (CREC)
- Center on Rural Innovation
- Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA)
- Geos Institute
- Headwaters Economics
- Indiana Business Research Center / StatsAmerica
- International Economic Development Council (IEDC)
- National Academies of Sciences, Transportation Research Board (TRB)
- National Association of Counties (NACo)
- National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)
- National Center for Rural Road Safety
- National League of Cities (NLC)
- National Rural Transit Assistance Program (National RTAP)
- Powder River Basin Resource Council
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)
- Smart Growth America (SGA)
- University of North Carolina (UNC)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of Transportation
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Western Transportation Institute
- White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- White House Office of National Drug Control Policy

NADO LEADERSHIP & STAFF

NADO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Kevin Byrd, *President*

New River Valley Regional Commission (Radford, VA)

Misty Crosby, *First Vice President*

Buckeye Hills Regional Council (Marietta, OH)

Chris Fetzer, *Second Vice President*

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Chris Brown, *Treasurer*

Ark-Tex Council of Governments (Texarkana, TX)

Rick Hunsaker, *Secretary*

Region XII Council of Governments (Carroll, IA)

Scott Koons, *Immediate Past President*

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council (Gainesville, FL)

(The NADO Executive Committee also serves as the NADO Research Foundation Board of Directors.)



NADO STAFF, GRADUATE FELLOWS, AND CONSULTANTS

Joe McKinney, *Executive Director*

Laurie Thompson, *Deputy Executive Director / NADO Research Foundation Director*

Mirielle Burgoyne, *Deputy Executive Director / Legislative Director*

Carrie Kissel, *Associate Director*

Brett Schwartz, *Associate Director*

Rachel Beyerle, *Senior Program Manager*

Brittany Salazar, *Membership and Meetings Manager*

Krystal De Leon, *Database and Grants Manager*

Austin Barrington, *Research Fellow*

Jamie McCormick, *Policy Fellow*

Alex Middleberg, *Policy Fellow*

Jackie Bryant, *Financial Consultant*

Vicki Glass, *Meetings Consultant*

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Names **in yellow** are elected officials

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PA Commission (Ridgway, PA)

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Russell Devorsky, *Executive Director*, Heart of Texas Council of Governments (Waco, TX)

Debora Glasgow, *Executive Director*, South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (Burns Flat, OK)

Dwayne Pratt, *Executive Director*, West Central Arkansas Planning and Development District (Hot Springs, AR)

Melissa Rivers, *Executive Director*, East Arkansas Planning and Development District (Jonesboro, AR)

John Stokes, *Executive Director*, Concho Valley Council of Governments (San Angelo, TX)

WEST REGION

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Dave Doran, *Executive Director*, Southeast Idaho Council of Governments (Pocatello, ID)

Bob Nash, *CEO*, Superior California Economic Development; *Director*, Bella Vista Water District (Redding, CA)

ASSOCIATE REPRESENTATIVES

Kevin Adam, *Legislative Liaison*, Arizona Rural Transportation Advocacy Council (Phoenix, AZ)

Linda Salmonson, *Economic Development Manager*, East River Electric Power Co-op (Madison, SD)

Jim Youngquist, *Director*, Arkansas Economic Development Institute (Little Rock, AR)



AND



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Photo Credit: Buckeye Hills
Regional Council, OH

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) works to strengthen America's local governments, communities, and economies through the regional strategies, partnerships, and solutions of the nation's network of 520 regional development organizations.

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The majority of the photos used in this report were submitted by members for NADO's 2020 Photo Contest. For more information, visit www.NADO.org.