

2021

SWREDA CONFERENCE

Collaboration: The Key to Resilience

SEPTEMBER 1 - 3, 2021

Embassy Suites Northwest Arkansas
Rogers, Arkansas



The conference is being offered by the Southwest Region Economic Development Association (SWREDA) with planning assistance by the NADO Research Foundation and with support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration Austin Regional Office.



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STAY CONNECTED!

Stay connected during the conference using the free Wi-Fi throughout the conference area. Open Embassy Mtg and access JQH Free.



Tweeting about the conference?
Use the hashtag #SWREDA21.



Facebook.com/nado.org
@NADOWeb

Most photos in this program are from the EDA Austin Region and were provided to NADO by our members in the 5-state region as part of our annual photo contest which illustrates the work that EDDs are doing to support their regions. For more information, visit www.nado.org.

CONFERENCE LOGISTICS

- Conference sessions will be held in the John Q. Hammons Conference Center which is directly connected to the Embassy Suites.
- The meeting rooms are located on the main floor.
- The Star of the Southwest Awards Roundtable Reception will occur in the Grand Ballroom 7-8.
- Badges should be worn throughout the conference.
- Conference room temperatures vary; we suggest you layer your clothing and adjust as needed.
- Conference attire is business casual.
- Because the Embassy Suites provides a complimentary breakfast daily, the conference agenda does not include any breakfasts.
- The Arkansas Development District Organizations (ADDO) is hosting an after dinner reception with music on Thursday evening: 8:00 - 11:00 p.m. in Grand Ballroom 7-8.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Conference registration will occur in the Grand Foyer of the Convention Center. Stop by to pick up your conference packet and name badge.

REGISTRATION HOURS

Wednesday, Sept 1
8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Sept 2
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Friday, Sept 3
8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

SWREDA 2021 CONFERENCE AND COVID-19

As we convene in Rogers for the 2021 SWREDA Conference, we know that attendees are impacted in various ways by the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. Many have families that have experienced great loss and hardship. Across the 5-state region, Economic Development Districts have lost colleagues and board members to the virus. We hope that throughout the conference, attendees will take time to reflect on the lives lost to and impacted by the virus.

Planning a conference during a global pandemic has presented various challenges and we ask attendees to bear with us as the conference schedule may change based on evolving local, state, and national (CDC) health guidelines and protocols. In addition, we will be informed by the Embassy Suites of any changes in safety protocols as determined by their corporate office.

While Arkansas does not currently have a mask mandate, state health officials continue to recommend that Arkansans wear masks indoors in public when unable to maintain 6 feet of distance from people outside their households. On July 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) updated its mask guidance to recommend that fully vaccinated individuals wear masks indoors areas with substantial and high transmission of COVID-19. All of Arkansas is considered at the high risk transmission level.

In light of this, you may see staff and attendees, though vaccinated, still wearing masks for an extra layer of protection.

SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Conference Registration *Grand Foyer*

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Emerging Leaders Meeting *Ambassador B-C*

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

EDA Austin Regional Director Meeting with New Executive Directors *Embassy Boardroom*

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

SWREDA Board Meeting *Ambassador Ballroom A*

1:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Conference Welcome *Grand Ballroom 9-10*

1:30 – 2:15 p.m.

OPENING PLENARY: Community Initiatives *Grand Ballroom 9-10*

2:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Break *Grand Foyer*

2:30 – 3:15 p.m.

2021 Federal Legislative Overview *Grand Ballroom 9-10*

3:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Break *Grand Foyer*

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Showcase Star of the Southwest *Grand Ballroom 9-10*

5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Star of the Southwest Roundtable Reception *Grand Ballroom 7-8*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Conference Registration *Grand Foyer*

8:45 – 10:15 a.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

- Workforce Development *Ambassador B-C*
- Developing Strong Projects *Ambassador D-E*

10:15 – 10:30 a.m.

Break *Grand Foyer*

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

- Tourism and Recreation Build Healthy Economies *Ambassador B-C*
- Promoting Entrepreneurship to Build Regional Economies *Ambassador D-E*

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Conference Plenary Lunch *Grand Ballroom 7-8*

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

- Creative Collaborations for Economic Development *Ambassador B-C*
- Broadband Leads to Economic Growth *Ambassador D-E*

3:00 – 3:15 p.m.

Break *Grand Foyer*

3:15 – 4:30 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

- CEDS Best Practices and Examples to Support Economic Development and Resilience *Ambassador B-C*
- Promoting Economic Growth with Creative Communities *Ambassador D-E*

8:00 – 11:00 p.m.

ADDO After Dinner Reception Live Band Entertainment *Grand Ballroom 7-8*

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Setting the Stage for Regional Resilience *Grand Ballroom 9-10*

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Break and Hotel Check Out *Grand Foyer*

10:30 – 11:15 a.m.

Closing Plenary: 2021 State of the Region Report *Grand Ballroom 9-10*

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

SWREDA Membership Meeting *Grand Ballroom 9-10*

FULL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2021

8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Conference Registration

Grand Foyer

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Emerging Leaders Peer Exchange

Graduates of the Emerging Leaders Program are invited to a peer exchange with NADO Research Foundation staff to share their thoughts and suggestions for enhancing the program over the coming years.

Ambassador B-C

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

EDA Regional Directors Meeting with New Executive Directors

EDA Austin Regional Director Jorge Ayala invites all new Economic Development District executive directors (those on the job for three years or less) to join him for an informal meeting.

Embassy Boardroom

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

SWREDA Board Meeting

Ambassador Ballroom A

1:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Conference Welcome

- **Renee Dycus**, SWREDA Chair and Executive Director, Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District, Magnolia, AR
- **Joe Willis**, SWREDA Board and Executive Director, Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, Harrison, AR
- **U.S. Congressman Steve Womack**, (AR-3), Rogers, AR
- **The Honorable Greg Hines**, Mayor, City of Rogers, AR

Grand Ballroom 9-10

1:30 – 2:15 p.m.

Opening Plenary: Community Initiatives

Northwest Arkansas is a thriving region that promotes creativity, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Leadership from five chambers of commerce will share unique approaches to economic and community development in their communities. Learn about the NW Arkansas Fab Lab in Fayetteville, exciting downtown revitalization in Rogers, Bentonville's strategy for industry recruitment, and the importance of tourism to the Springdale economy.

- **Steve Clark**, President/CEO, Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, Fayetteville, AR
- **Raymond Burns**, President/CEO, Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce, Rogers, AR
- **Graham Cobb**, President/CEO, Greater Bentonville Chamber of Commerce, Bentonville, AR
- **Bill Rogers**, President, Springdale Chamber of Commerce, Springdale, AR
- **Arthur Hulbert**, President, Chamber of Commerce, Siloam Springs, AR

Grand Ballroom 9-10

2:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Networking Break

Grand Foyer

2:30 – 3:15 p.m.

2021 Federal Legislative Overview

A new administration, new department and agency leadership, increased federal grant funds available for rural and regional economic development, an economy rebounding from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continued demand for services at the local and regional level are having a direct and often dramatic effect on the roles of Economic Development Districts and organizations nationwide. Learn about the most recent developments from the Hill and federal agencies that will have a direct bearing on your programs and services.

- **Joe McKinney**, Executive Director, NADO, Washington, DC

Grand Ballroom 9-10

3:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Networking Break

Grand Foyer

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Star of the Southwest Awards Showcase

Grand Ballroom 9-10

Across the EDA Austin region are shining examples of economic development projects that are having immediate impacts on the economy. These projects are leading to the creation and retention of jobs, new and expanded businesses, improved infrastructure, and workforce development opportunities that are lifting up local communities and regions. Five of these projects will be honored this year as recipients of the 2021 Star of the Southwest Award. During this session you will learn about the winning projects—partners, funding, impact, and more.

Northwest Arkansas Robotics Training Center

- **Joe Willis**, Executive Director, Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, Harrison, AR
- **Steve Clark**, President/CEO, Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, Fayetteville, AR

The SEED Center

- **Mike Hollier**, Executive Director, Imperial Calcasieu Regional Planning and Development District, Lake Charles, LA

City of Stilwell Wastewater Treatment Improvement Project

- **Ernie Moore**, Executive Director, Eastern Oklahoma Development District, Muskogee, OK

Keshet Ideas and Innovation Community, Keshet Dance Company

- **Augusta Meyers**, Mid-Region Council of Governments, Albuquerque, NM
- **Shira Greenberg**, Keshet Dance Company, Albuquerque, NM

DETCOG Regional Headquarters and Emergency Operations Center

- **Lonnie Hunt**, Executive Director, Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Economic Development District, Lufkin, TX
- **Moderator: Kyle Ingham**, Executive Director, Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, Amarillo, TX

5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Reception: Star of the Southwest Roundtables

Grand Ballroom 7-8

Over refreshments and light snacks learn more about the Star of the Southwest Awards recipients and meet with project representatives to hear the stories behind these transformative projects.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Conference Registration

Grand Foyer

8:45 – 10:15 a.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Workforce Development

Ambassador B-C

Learn from colleagues that have developed promising workforce development programs tailored to their communities. Pick up ideas about ways communities are working with federal and local partners to implement impactful programs.

- **Dennis Williamson**, Director of Workforce Development Western Arkansas Planning and Development District, Fort Smith, AR
- **Mike Rogers**, Senior Director of Maintenance and Refrigeration, Siloam Springs, AR
- **Priscilla Lucero**, Executive Director, Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments, Silver City, NM
- **Moderator: Patty Methvin**, Workforce Administrative Director, Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, Harrison, AR

Developing Strong Projects

Ambassador D-E

How do you make sure your EDA project is both competitive and technically accurate? What makes a strong project versus a weak one, and what about the ones when the scope just doesn't tell the story? Staff from the EDA Austin Regional office will discuss how they review project applications and what can make or break a project.

- **April Campbell**, Economic Development Representative, U.S. Economic Development Administration Regional Office, Austin, TX
- **Apurva R. Naik**, Economic Development Integrator, U.S. Economic Development Administration Regional Office, Austin, TX
- **Moderator: Betty Voights**, Executive Director, CAPCOG, Austin, TX

10:15 – 10:30 a.m.

Networking Break

Grand Foyer

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Tourism and Recreation Build Healthy Economies

Ambassador B-C

Across the nation, the tourism and outdoor recreation sectors are playing a significant role in a region's overall economic strategy and success. Many regions and communities have included tourism, recreation, and outdoor activities as key components of their CEDS or other strategic plans. Hear about ways local areas are prioritizing tourism and recreation as they look at new ways to bring economic prosperity to their regions.

- **Heather Smoak Urena**, Executive Director, Kisatchie-Delta Regional Planning and Development District, Alexandria, LA
- **Mike Malone**, Vice President, Corporate and Community Affairs, Runway Group, Bentonville, AR

Promoting Entrepreneurship to Build Regional Economies

Ambassador D-E

The communities and regions that will thrive in the face of an uncertain economic landscape are the ones that create opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses, embrace innovation, and build resilient ecosystems. This session will share best practices and case studies from an Economic Development District, University Center, and local consulting organization about how they are supporting and mentoring entrepreneurs and small businesses in a variety of ways.

- **Jeff Amarine**, Founder and Managing Director, Startup Junkie, Fayetteville, AR
- **Geoff Stewart**, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, LA
- **Emily Gojkovich**, Economic Development Planner, Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments, Silver City, NM
- **Moderator: Sandy Chancey**, Executive Director, Eastern Plains Council of Governments, Clovis, NM

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Conference Plenary Lunch

Grand Ballroom 7-8

- **Alejandra Castillo**, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C.
- **Michael Preston**, Secretary, Department of Commerce, State of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR
- **Facilitator: Jorge Ayala**, Regional Director, U.S. Economic Development Administration, Austin, TX

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Creative Collaborations for Economic Development

Ambassador B-C

Economic development is a team sport. From the early planning stages through the full realization of a project or initiative, success requires a high-level of coordination and communication across multiple organizations, stakeholders, and funders. During this session, learn the stories and partnerships behind three projects: an RLF program, an economic resiliency initiative, and a tech training facility.

- **Kelly Davila**, Director of Regional Services, South Plains Association of Governments, Lubbock, TX
- **Mark Sweeney**, Executive Director, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, Oklahoma City, OK
- **Jan Smith**, Executive Director, White River Planning and Development District, Batesville, AR
- **Moderator: Debora Glasgow**, Executive Director, SWODA, Burns Flat, OK

Broadband Leads to Economic Growth

Ambassador D-E

As this past year has shown more than ever, fast and reliable broadband service is a critical resource to support regional economic development, grow and sustain local businesses, and improve overall quality of life in communities. This session will share promising practices from communities working to develop and assure coverage.

- **Chuck Vanderbilt**, Regional Disaster Recovery Coordinator, East Texas Council of Governments, Kilgore, TX
- **Daniel Seguin**, Economic Disaster Recovery Coordinator, East Texas Council of Governments, Kilgore, TX
- **Andrew Coker**, Regional Economic Resiliency Coordinator, West Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, Hot Springs, AR
- **Rachel Godeaux**, Director of Community and Economic Development, Acadiana Planning Commission, Lafayette, LA
- **Moderator: Monique Boulet**, Executive Director, Acadiana Planning Commission, Lafayette, LA

3:00 – 3:15 p.m.

Networking Break

Grand Foyer

3:15 – 4:30 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

CEDS Best Practices and Examples to Support Economic Development and Resilience

Ambassador B-C

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning process and document that should create the space for your region to identify its strengths and weaknesses and bring together a diverse set of partners to generate good jobs, diversify the economy, and spur economic growth. During this session, learn how some of your peers have taken their CEDS to the next level through better public engagement and outreach, improved design and online capability, and by incorporating resilience planning and COVID-19 recovery strategies into the process and plan.

- **Monica Abeita**, Executive Director, North Central New Mexico Economic Development District, Santa Fe, NM
- **Dorothy Jackson**, Regional and Economic Development Manager, Heart of Texas Council of Governments, Waco, TX
- **Conya Spencer**, Director of Economic Development, Central Arkansas Planning & Development District, Lonoke, AR
- **Moderator: Jeremy Ragland**, Deputy Director, Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, Harrison, AR

Promoting Economic Growth with Creative Communities

Ambassador D-E

Community-driven arts and culture initiatives and strategies can be catalysts for vibrant local and regional economies. This session will look at state and local efforts in Arkansas that promote vibrant communities.

- **Sandy Martin**, President, Arkansas Film and Entertainment Commission, Eureka Springs, AR
- **Morgan Scholz**, Consultant, Startup Junkie, Fayetteville, AR
- **Sheree Barnes**, Operations Manager, Downtown Rogers, Inc., Rogers, AR (Invited)
- **Talicia Richardson**, Director, 64.6 Downtown, Fort Smith, AR (invited)
- **Moderator: Jonathan Cross**, Executive Director, Northern Oklahoma Development Authority, Enid, OK

8:00 - 11:00 p.m.

ADDO After Dinner Reception with Live Music

Grand Ballroom 7-8

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2021

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Setting the Stage for Regional Resilience

Grand Ballroom 9-10

As events over the past several years make all-too-clear, regions need to be better prepared to anticipate, withstand, and recover from multiple types of shocks and disruptions. Resilience planning and recovery will require regions to think creatively in the face of new and emerging threats. This session will highlight examples of how regions have responded to the current challenges of our time in creative and collaborative ways in an effort to become more resilient and better prepared for the future.

- **Jim Youngquist**, Executive Director, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, Little Rock, AR
- **Amber Berg**, Section Head, Community Development & Planning, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, Little Rock, AR
- **Kim Marousek**, Director of Planning, Capital Region Planning Commission, Baton Rouge, LA
- **Trevor Villines**, Regional Disaster Economic Recovery Coordinator, Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, Lonoke, AR

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Networking Break and Hotel Check Out

Grand Foyer

10:30 – 11:15 a.m.

2021 State of the Region Report

Grand Ballroom 9-10

EDA Austin Regional Director Jorge Ayala will provide the 2021 State of the Region Report.

- **Jorge Ayala**, Regional Director, U.S. Economic Development Administration Regional Office, Austin, TX
- **Moderator: Renee Dycus**, SWREDA Chair and Executive Director, Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District, Magnolia, AR

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

SWREDA Membership Meeting

Grand Ballroom 9-10

All SWREDA members are encouraged to attend.

As of August 23, 2021 and subject to change.

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WELCOME TO ROGERS SWREDA



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2021 STAR OF THE SOUTHWEST AWARDS

Congratulations to the 2021 Star of the Southwest Awards! The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Austin Regional Office is recognizing the achievements of five Economic Development Districts (EDDs) and their partner organizations for undertaking projects that have a strong and positive impact upon communities within their regions.

The EDA Austin Regional Office and the SWREDA Board are pleased to recognize Star of the Southwest Awardees during

two special events on Wednesday, September 1. First, the winners will provide brief presentations about the projects from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in Grand Ballroom 9 – 10. After the presentations, we hope you will join the winners at the Stars of the Southwest Awards Roundtable Reception in Grand Ballroom 7 - 8. During the reception, you will have the opportunity to talk individually with the winners about their projects. All conference attendees are encouraged to attend both events.

The **Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District** partnered with the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce and Northwest Arkansas Community College to establish the first Robotics Training Center in Northwest Arkansas. With an EDA investment of \$336,000, the project leveraged over \$600,000 in local, state, federal, and private investment, including \$365,000 from the Walton Family Foundation for scholarships, \$245,000 from the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, and \$9,000 from the State of Arkansas. The Training Center offers a wide array of robotics skills training with classes available to students new to the field or those such as existing programmers or robotics operators looking to hone their skillset. It opened in 2019 and has graduated 134 students. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Training Center is on track to continue to grow.



Robotics Training Center
(Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District)

Imperial Calcasieu Regional Planning and Development Commission (IMCAL) partnered with the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury and McNeese State University to build the Southwest Louisiana Entrepreneurial and Economic Development (SEED) Center in Lake Charles. An investment of \$3.9 million from EDA was instrumental in bringing the project to fruition. The SEED Center can house up to 30 startup and developing businesses through its business incubator and provides classrooms and offices for the McNeese State University College of Business, the McNeese State University Small Business Development Center, Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance, SCORE, and IMCAL. It is estimated that the training offered by the SEED Center has resulted in over 1,500 jobs created.



The SEED Center
(Imperial Calcasieu Regional Planning & Development Commission)

Highlighted in the **Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG)** Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), the arts and entertainment sector is a key component to the region's economy vitality. MRCOG worked with the Keshet Dance Company to create the Keshet Ideas and Innovation Community (KIIC). With a \$1 million investment from EDA, MRCOG and Keshet Dance Company initially leveraged nearly \$280,000 in public and private support for KIIC which provides a community for artists to convene, create, and collaborate. Since the project was launched, an additional \$5.6 million in private investments have been generated. KIIC has created or retained 185 jobs, and has supported over 500 artists with resources, residences, makers spaces, training and mentorship, office and art-to-market spaces, and various on-going support services.



With an EDA investment of \$1.5 million, the **Eastern Oklahoma Development District** leveraged nearly \$4 million in grants and loans from the State of Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation, Indian Health Service, TJEMCF Foundation, and USDA to conduct major improvements to the City of Stilwell sewage treatment facility. The improvements enabled SFC Global Supply to expand operations at their Schwan Foods facility in Stilwell. At completion of the project in 2021, 181 employees have retained their jobs and an additional 100 were hired. The project made it possible for Schwan Foods to add product lines, resulting in the elimination of seasonal employee layoffs and hiring additional staff.



The **Deep East Texas Council of Governments** partnered with the City of Lufkin Economic Development Corporation, T.L.L. Temple Foundation, and E.L. Kurth, Jr. Charitable Foundation to create the DETCOG Regional Headquarters and Emergency Operations Center. With a total EDA investment of \$1 million, DETCOG leveraged the balance of the \$3 million project from state, local, and private resources. The project enabled DETCOG to consolidate their operations into one facility in a more central location, allowing for greater coordination and collaboration. The project has created or retained almost 60 jobs.



**SWREDA**

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