

2024 SWREDA Conference
May 14 – 17, 2024 | Oklahoma City, OK
May 9, 2024-subject to change



Tuesday, May 14

12:00 – 5:00 pm **Conference Registration** **Century Foyer**

1:00 – 5:00 pm **Executive Directors Leadership Institute** **Plaza North**

This exclusive session provides a workshop setting for Executive Directors to engage in deep-dive discussions and share best practices, as well as sharpen their individual leadership skills. The Institute will focus on advanced strategies for staff and board development, navigating complex human resource and community relations challenges, and the building of a personal strategic plan. Attendees will benefit from practical insights through peer-led examples and opportunities for valuable information exchange.

- Facilitator: Patton McDowell, Founder and President, PMA Nonprofit Leadership
- Moderator: Jamie Setze, Chair, SWREDA and Executive Director, Capital Region Planning Commission

Wednesday, May 15

8:00 am – 5:00 pm **Conference Registration** **Century Foyer**

9:00 am – 12:00 pm **University Centers Meeting with EDA** **One Broadway Ballroom**

Representatives from the 12 EDA-designated University Centers in the Austin Region are invited to attend this meeting with EDA staff.

- Facilitator: LaDonna Barbee, Program Analyst, EDA Austin Regional Office

10:00 – 11:00 am **New Executive Directors Meeting** **Green Country**

Executive Directors who have been in their positions for less than two years, or those that were not able to attend this meeting at the 2023 SWREDA Conference, are invited to this informal opportunity to meet with EDA Regional Director Jorge Ayala and to exchange information with your peers.

- Facilitator: Jorge Ayala, EDA Austin Regional Director

11:00 am – 12:00 pm **Emerging Leaders All Cohorts Meetup** **Red Carpet**

There have been six Cohorts of the Training Program for Emerging Leaders since its inception in 2015 as a pilot project, with 38 participants over the years. All Emerging Leaders graduates, and those finishing the sixth cohort, are invited to meet up with your peers from across the cohorts, share your experiences, and offer your suggestions for enhancing the program moving forward.

- Facilitators: Laurie Thompson, Ciara Ristig, Jack Morgan, NADO

11:15 am – 12:30 pm **SWREDA Board of Directors Meeting** **Frontier Country**

1:30 – 3:00 pm **Plenary: Conference Welcome and Collaborations for Resilient Regional Development** **Century Ballroom**

Welcome

- Welcome: Mark Sweeney, Executive Director, Vice Chair, SWREDA and Executive Director, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments
- Christy Gillenwater, President and CEO, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber

Collaborations for Regional Development

Across the five-state footprint of the EDA Austin Regional Office there are an abundance of exciting and innovative strategies designed to build strong, vibrant economic ecosystems. During this session you will hear from several EDA-funded organizations who are creating new partnerships with other EDA grantees.

sources for RLFs, the benefits of having an RLF, how to apply for an EDA RLF grant, the guiding principles for EDA RLFs, and how to use EDA-funded RLF dollars.

- Kelly Davila, Director of Regional Services and Economic Development, South Plains Association of Governments, Lubbock
- Mary Louk, Credit Manager, Grow America

EDGE Training for Construction Grantees

Green Country

In 2023, EDA launched EDGE, a new platform for grants management that replaced Grantsonline, and has completed the process of migrating all current grants to the platform. EDA staff will provide guidance and tips for navigating EDGE for construction grantees in the post-award phase.

- Osvaldo Rocha, Project Engineer, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region
- Corey Dunn, Civil Engineer and Area Environmental Officer, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region

Inland Ports: Economic Development and Multi-Modal Assets

Plaza South

Learn how regional organizations are working with intermodal authorities and supporting the development of inland port sites along arterial waterways to promote regional economic development goals. Hear from both an inland port representative and a regional organization representative on how these partnerships can mutually benefit both entities and their wider regions.

- Ashley Garris, Assistant Executive Director/Director of Economic Development, Western Arkansas Planning and Development District
- Brian Bigbie, Economic Development Manager, Tulsa Ports
- Moderator: Errin Clocker, Executive Director, Grand Gateway Economic Development Authority

10:55 am – 12:00 pm Concurrent Sessions

Get 'NERDE': A Data Deep Dive with Argonne National Laboratory

Plaza North

Argonne National Laboratory's National Economic Research and Resilience Center hosts both the National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE) and the Economic Development Capacity Index (EDCI), with funding support from the US EDA. Learn how to get and use data for your region – by recording your RDO's everyday interactions, discoveries and activities and integrating that data with these national tools. Discuss the value and limitations of data for your region's local conditions, when and how to employ various data tools, and test drive and offer your feedback on the NERDE and EDCI.

- Alison Turner, Senior Economic Development Researcher, Argonne Labs
- Moderator: Charles Simon, Director of Regional Planning and Services, Capital Area Council of Governments

EDA Environmental Review: Demystifying the NEPA Process

Green Country

EDA grant applications require the submission of an Environmental Narrative for construction-related projects. During this session you will learn why this documentation is required and how it is used by EDA as part of grant award processing. We will cover the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the various forms of NEPA documents and best practices for developing good environmental narratives.

- Michael Francis, Ph.D., US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region
- Moderator: Heather Urena, Executive Director, Kisatchie-Delta Planning and Development District

Bridging the Digital Divide: Tackling Digital Access, Equity, and Resilience Through Broadband Connectivity

Plaza South

Equitable access to broadband internet is a critical determinant of socio-economic development. While urban centers have largely reaped the benefits of high-speed internet, rural communities face significant challenges in infrastructure and connectivity. Louisiana, with its diverse landscapes and dispersed populations, presents a compelling case study for understanding the complexities of regional/state collaboration and broadband deployment. Discussion will include digital

3:30 – 4:45 pm Plenary Session: Star of the Southwest Award Showcase Century Ballroom
 Each year, the SWREDA Board of Directors recognizes projects that showcase their positive impact on a community's or region's economic vitality. This year's awardees include a high-tech workforce and economic development center, a multi-region RLF that helped create over 300 jobs, expansion of a regional physical therapy facility, and an accelerator that provides capital to tech-based startups. Learn about the projects, including funding, partnerships, impact, and future plans during this session. During the Star of the Southwest Award Reception immediately following this session, you will be able to meet with the winning organizations.

- Jan Smith, Executive Director, White River Planning and Development District
- Kelly Davila, Director of Regional Services/Economic Development, South Plains Association of Governments
- Vicki Eggers, Economic Development Director, Northern Oklahoma Development Authority
- Jamie Setze, Chair, SWREDA, and Executive Director, Capital Region Planning Commission
- Moderator: Joe Willis, Executive Director, Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District

5:00 – 6:30 pm Star of the Southwest Award Roundtable Reception One Broadway Ballroom
 Learn more about the five Star of the Southwest Award projects over light snacks and beverages.

Friday, May 17

8:00 – 11:30 am Conference Registration Century Foyer

8:00 – 9:15 am Plenary Breakfast: SWREDA Annual Business Meeting Century Ballroom
 All Economic Development Districts from the EDA Austin region are encouraged to attend this meeting to learn more about SWREDA's governance, membership benefits, and future plans for the organization.

- Jamie Setze, Chair, SWREDA and Executive Director, Capital Region Planning Commission, Baton Rouge

9:15 – 9:30 am Break

9:30 – 10:15 am Federal Legislative Update Plaza Ballroom
 Stay on top of the latest news from Capitol Hill affecting Economic Development Districts and others engaged in regional development. NADO Executive Director Joe McKinney will offer insights into current legislative efforts in Congress, as well as relevant updates about EDA and other federal agencies.

- Mirielle Burgoyne, Executive Director/Director of Government Relations, NADO
- Moderator: Debora Glasgow, Executive Director, South Western Oklahoma Development Authority

10:15 – 10:30 am Break Century Foyer

10:30 – 11:30 am Plenary: State of the Region Plaza Ballroom
 EDA has made significant investments in the Austin Region in 2023. As the conference winds down, hear from Austin Regional Director Jorge Ayala as he recounts the success of the past year and shares insight into the coming year.

- Jorge Ayala, Regional Director, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region

11:30 am Closing Remarks and Conference Adjournment Plaza Ballroom

- Jamie Setze, Chair, SWREDA and Executive Director, Capital Region Planning Commission