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 Fpyer

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

Century Ballroom

Resilient Regional Development

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.

- Hunter Goodman, Assistant Professor, Workforce and Economic Development, University of Arkansas
- Kathy Cullen, CFO, Oklahoma City Innovation District
- Lonnie Hunt, Executive Director, Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Economic Development District
- Rebecca Gage, Economic Development Grant Specialist, East Texas Economic Development District

3:00 – 3:15 pm Break Century Foyer

3:15 – 4:30 pm Plenary: Strategic Planning for Economic Century Ballroom
Development Organizations

This presentation will empower leaders with actionable strategies to elevate their organizations. It will explore the 5 Keys Framework, tailored specifically for the unique challenges and opportunities in economic development: Sharpen Your Vision, Develop Your Talent, Seek Collaboration, Attack Your Revenue Cycle, and Evaluate/Innovate. Each segment offers focused insights and practical ideas to refine your strategic approach and unlock new levels of organizational excellence.

- Speaker: Patton McDowell, PMA Nonprofit Management
- Moderator: Priscilla Lucero, Executive Director, Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments

5:00 – 6:30 pm Opening Reception at the Park House Event Center at the Meet in Hotel Lobby Myriad Botanical Gardens (Hosted by the SWREDA Board and sponsored by Oklahoma Gas & Electric and Anglin PR)

With generous support from our sponsors, the Opening Reception will be at the fabulous Park House Event Center at Myriad Botanical Gardens! The Park Center is a short, 5-minute walk from the hotel. While the reception will be indoors, guests will be able to enjoy the outside areas and walk around the gardens during the event. Complimentary beverages and light hors d'oeuvres will be provided. Plan to meet in the Hotel Lobby at 4:50 pm to walk over with a NADO group. The Park House Event Center is located at 301 W. Reno.

Thursday, May 16

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

8:30 am - 9:30 am Plenary: Federal Funding Opportunities

Century Ballroom

Learn about the latest federal funding opportunities from state and regional representatives.

- Joel Meese, State Director for Oklahoma, USDA Rural Development
- Cindy Axne, Senior Advisor for Rural Engagement, Delivery and Prosperity, US Department of Agriculture
- Jorge Ayala, Regional Director, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region
- Moderator: Apu Naik, Economic Development Integrator, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region

9:30 – 9:45 am Break Century Foyer

9:30 am – 12:00 pm Mobile Workshop: Oklahoma Biotech Innovation Center Meet in Hotel Lobby

Explore the various BBBRC projects that provide the foundation for the biomanufacturing ecosystem in Oklahoma City. This workshop will be a combination of presentations of all six funded projects, a walking tour of a state-of-the-art CDMO facility, and a driving tour of NE OKC and Convergence, an ecosystem reshaping Oklahoma City through innovation, collaboration, diversity, and advanced technology. *There is an additional fee of \$40 to attend this workshop and pre-registration is required.*

9:30 – 10:45 am Concurrent Sessions

Operation and Optimization: Revolving Loan Funds and EDDs

Plaza North

This workshop will cover general information about revolving loan funds (RLFs), specifics about EDA's RLF program, and why an RLF is a great tool for EDDs. Examples of topics covered include how to operationalize RLFs, various funding

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

communication, access, equity, inclusion, resilience, the needs of rural areas, and how under-resourced planning districts can support broadband efforts.

- Francesca Parent, Economic Recovery Corps Fellow, Kisatchie-Delta Planning and Development District
- Moderator: Renee Dycus, Executive Director, Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District

12:15 – 1:30 pm Plenary Luncheon

Century Ballroom

After lunch with your peers, EDA leadership will provide updates on their current programs and offer a look at the agency's future direction.

- Craig Buerstatte, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regional Affairs, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration
- Moderator: Jorge Ayala, Regional Director, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region

1:30 – 4:00 pm Mobile Workshop: First Americans Museum

Meet in Hotel Lobby

Learn how the museum honors and celebrates the cultures of the 39 diverse and distinct First American Nations in Oklahoma. This behind-the-scenes tour and discussion will offer insights into the planning and finding of FAM, its impact on the local and regional economies, and its role in sharing the important histories of the Indigenous cultures found in Oklahoma. *There is an additional fee of \$40 to attend this workshop and pre-registration is required.*

1:45 – 3:00 pm Concurrent Sessions

Developing Successful Projects for EDA Investments

Plaza North

Hear insights from EDA staff about what they are looking for when making funding decisions. Attendees will leave with ideas on how to make a submission as competitive as possible, and what makes a project strong enough for funding consideration.

- Matt Giannini, Area Director, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region
- Jessica Falk, Area Director, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region
- Moderator: Betty Voights, Executive Director, Capital Area Council of Governments

Building Economically Resilient Communities

Plaza South

With support from EDA, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) partnered with the University of Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities (IQC) to launch the Community Economic Resiliency Initiative (CERI). CERI helps local governments develop strategies for strategic investment, sustainable economic recovery, and long-term resiliency. Hear from key players about the program impacts.

- Vanessa Morrison, Interim Director, Institute for Quality Communities, The University of Oklahoma
- Rebecca Blaine, AICP, Research Fellow, Institute for Quality Communities, The University of Oklahoma
- Moderator: Mark Sweeney, Executive Director, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), and Vice Chair, SWREDA

University Centers: Potential for Partnerships Around the Region

Green Country

Recognizing the important role that University Centers can have in developing and sustaining robust economic ecosystems, EDA created the University Center program to foster technical assistance and resources to support local and regional economic development strategies. In late 2023, the EDA Austin announced a new cohort of 12 University Centers across the region. During this session you will learn about the various ways the current cohort intends to provide technical assistance to EDDs, Tribes, and economic development organizations around the region.

- Laurie Simmons, Director, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Commercialization, UTRGV Center for Innovation and Commercialization
- Stacey Webb, Economic Development Representative, US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Austin Region

 Century Foyer

3:30 – 4:45 pm Plenary Session: Star of the Southwest Award Showcase

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

Century Ballroom

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