



Tuesday, May 14

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

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

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.

Wednesday, May 15

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

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

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

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

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.

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

There have been six Cohorts of the Training Program for Emerging Leaders Program since its inception in 2015 as a pilot project, with 38 participants over the years. All Emerging Leaders graduates, and those finishing up 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.

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

1:30 – 2:45 pm **Plenary: Conference Welcome and Collaborations for Resilient Regional Development**

Across the five-state footprint of the EDA Austin Regional Office 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.

2:45 – 3:00 pm **Break**

3:00 – 4:15 pm **Plenary: Strategic Planning for Economic 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.

5:00 – 6:30 pm **Opening Reception at the Park House Event Center at the Myriad Botanical Gardens (Hosted by the SWREDA Board and sponsored by Guernsey, 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

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

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

9:30 – 9:45 am Break

9:30 am – 12:00 pm Mobile Workshop: Oklahoma Biotech Innovation Center

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**

This workshop will cover general information about revolving loan funds (RLFs), specifics about the Economic Development Administration's (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.

- **EDGE Training for Construction Grantees**

EDA launched EDGE, a new platform for grants management that replaces Grantsonline. In 2023 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.

- **Inland Ports: Economic Development and Multi-Modal Assets**

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.

10:55 am – 12:00 pm Concurrent Sessions

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

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.

- **EDA Environmental Review: Demystifying the NEPA Process**

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.

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

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.

12:15 – 1:30 pm Plenary Luncheon

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

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

The agenda will be updated regularly, please visit again to find the latest version!

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**

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.

• **Building Economically Resilient Communities**

With support from EDA, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) partnered with the Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities (IQC) and Oklahoma Main Street Center 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.

• **University Centers: Potential for Partnerships Around the Region**

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.

3:00 – 3:15 pm Break

4:00 – 5:00 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.

5:30 – 6:30 pm Star of the Southwest Award Roundtable Reception

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

8:00 – 9:00 am Plenary Breakfast: SWREDA Annual Business Meeting

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.

9:15 – 10:15 am Federal Legislative Update

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.

10:15 – 10:30 am Break

10:30 – 11:30 am Plenary: State of the Region

EDA's investments in the Austin region over the past year have been significant. 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.

11:30 am Closing Remarks and Conference Adjournment