



## PROGRAM

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) &  
The Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA)

# 2025 Washington Conference

March 9-12, 2025

The Crystal Gateway Marriott | 1700 Richmond Highway, Arlington Virginia

*This draft agenda is subject to change.*

## Sunday, March 9, 2025

NADO and DDAA board members and advisory committee members are asked to participate in pre-conference meetings throughout the day on Sunday, March 9. All conference attendees are encouraged to attend the **opening reception** on Sunday evening beginning at 5:30 p.m. ET. DDAA members are also invited to attend the DDAA Dinner Banquet that follows at 6:30 p.m. ET.

**10:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.**

Registration

Arlington Foyer

**10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

NADO Research Foundation Advisory Committee Meeting

Pentagon B

*This meeting is for NADO Research Foundation Advisory Committee members only*

**12:00-2:00 p.m.**

NADO Executive Committee Meeting

Pentagon B

*This meeting is for NADO Executive Committee members only*

**1:00-3:00 p.m.**

DDAA Board of Directors Meeting

Pentagon A

*This meeting is for DDAA Board members only*

**3:30-5:30 p.m.**

NADO Board of Directors Meeting

Salons 5-6

*This meeting is for NADO Board members only*

**5:30-6:30 p.m.**

**Opening Reception**

*This reception is open to all attendees*

*Arlington Foyer*

**6:30-8:00 p.m.**

**DDAA Dinner Banquet**

*This dinner banquet is for DDAA members only*

*Salons 3-4*

**Speakers:**

- **Gayle Manchin**, Federal Co-Chair, Appalachian Regional Commission
- **Heather Feldman**, Executive Director, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission
- **Jill Foys**, Executive Director, Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission
- **Karen Fabiano**, Program Manager, Appalachian Regional Commission

**Moderator:**

- **Chris Chiles**, Executive Director, Kyova Interstate Planning Commission; President, DDAA

# Monday, March 10, 2025

Concurrent breakout sessions on Monday are open to all participants, including both NADO and DDAA members. The “NADO track,” “DDAA track,” and “Joint track” labels denote which attendees may find the session content most relevant, but all attendees are welcome.

## 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Registration – All attendees

Arlington Foyer

## 7:45-9:00 a.m.

DDAA Breakfast and Annual Business Meeting

Salons 1-2

*This breakfast is for DDAA members only*

## 9:05-10:30 a.m.

Opening Plenary Session - All attendees

Salons 3-4

This opening plenary session will begin with remarks from Daniel Lippman, a reporter from POLITICO who covers Washington and the White House. Following Daniel’s remarks, a panel discussion will be held featuring perspectives from national association leadership who are working to support practitioners in the community and economic development field. Panelists will discuss how they are helping their stakeholders navigate recent policy developments, including the Trump Administration’s Executive Orders and other rapidly evolving federal guidance. They will also discuss the successful passage of EDA reauthorization, and will share highlights and updates pertaining to their organizations’ current work.

### Opening remarks:

- **Daniel Lippman**, POLITICO Reporter on the White House and Washington; Former Co-Author of POLITICO Playbook

### Panelists:

- **Erich Zimmerman**, Executive Director, National Association of Regional Councils
- **Matt Chase**, CEO/Executive Director, National Association of Counties
- **Nathan Ohle**, President and CEO, International Economic Development Council
- **Joe McKinney**, Executive Director, National Association of Development Organizations

## 10:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions (A, B, C, D)

*Breakout (A): NADO track*

Salon 1

### Defense Communities and Regional Collaboration

The Department of Defense (DoD) offers a variety of domestic planning, infrastructure, and training opportunities designed to support the readiness of local military installations, and to serve communities and citizens. Hear from a panel of experts and community development practitioners about how they are collaborating to support military communities and to provide public services to communities across the country.

### Speakers:

- **Blake Edge**, Director of Community & Economic Development, Green River Area Development District
- **Captain Chris Park**, Deputy Program Manager, Innovative Readiness Training, Air National Guard, U.S. Air Force

- **Christina Wooden**, Health Programs Manager, Delta Regional Authority

**Moderator:**

- **Andrew Coker**, Program Manager, National Association of Development Organizations

*Breakout (B): NADO track*

*Salon 2*

**Regional Organizations and Population Aging: What's Changing and What's Ahead**

As the U.S. population ages, Regional Development Organizations (RDOs) are increasingly involved in providing aging services, as well as housing, transportation, and workforce solutions. Many RDOs are also designated as Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and/or operate programs that play a vital role in supporting older adults and people with disabilities. This session will bring together national experts and RDO and AAA leadership to discuss the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities at the intersection of aging and regional development. Attendees will gain insights into emerging trends, challenges, and best practices that are shaping the future of aging at the regional level.

**Speakers:**

- **Sandy Markwood**, Chief Executive Officer, USAging
- **Annette Gutierrez**, Executive Director, Rio Grande Council of Governments
- **Shannon Guzman**, Director, Housing and Livable Communities, AARP Public Policy Institute

**Moderator:**

- **Jarrett Haley**, Executive Director, Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency

*Breakout (C): DDAA track*

*Salon 5*

**Enhancing Board Member Engagement with Local Development Districts**

This session will explore strategies that can help enhance the effectiveness and involvement of Local Development Districts' (LDD) board members. This interactive session will cover best practices for communication, collaboration, and fostering meaningful contributions from board members. Participants will leave with actionable strategies to strengthen governance and decision-making within their organizations.

**Speaker:**

- **Jim Youngquist**, Executive Director, Southeast Regional Directors Institute (SERDI)

*Breakout (D): Joint track*

*Salon 6*

**Leveraging Wealth Creation Strategies through the CEDS: Building Resilient Economies for the Future**

During this session, speakers will explore the integration of wealth creation principles and strategies with Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS). Speakers will share insights on how sustainable wealth creation approaches can fit into the CEDS. Attendees will learn how aligning workforce development, infrastructure investment, entrepreneurship, and community engagement can lead to long-term economic resilience. Participants will also learn new strategies for fostering inclusive growth and prosperity through CEDS planning.

**Speakers:**

- **John Dean**, Senior Agricultural Marketing Specialist, Team Lead in AMS Local and Regional Foods Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- **Sean Hegyi**, Community Development Manager, South Eastern Council of Governments

**Moderator:**

- **Melissa Levy**, Regional Development Researcher, National Association of Development Organizations

## 12:00-1:45 p.m.

Plenary Luncheon – All attendees

Salons 3-4

### Presentation of Awards

A presentation of awards to honored guests will precede the lunch panel discussion. NADO and DDAA will present awards to Senator Capito of West Virginia and former Senator Carper of Delaware in recognition of their outstanding leadership and commitment to communities, and their successful bipartisan effort to champion EDA reauthorization legislation.

#### Presentation of Awards:

- **Chris Chiles**, Executive Director, Kyova Interstate Planning Commission; President, DDAA
- **Shane Whitehair**, Executive Director, Region VII Planning and Development Council
- **Charlie Baker**, Executive Director, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Second Vice President, NADO

#### Honored Guests:

- **Senator Shelley Moore Capito**
- **Former Senator Thomas R. Carper**

### Policy and Practice: Supporting and Investing in Rural Regions

This plenary session will feature two experts who have spent their careers championing strategies, programs, and policies designed to help rural places thrive. During this session, Tony Pipa will discuss the Brookings Institution's Reimagining Rural Policy Initiative, which seeks to modernize and transform U.S. federal policy in order to strengthen community and economic development in underserved rural places across the country. Tony will also discuss some of the stories and themes from his podcast, *Reimagine Rural*, which profiles rural towns across America that are making progress on their efforts to thrive amidst social and economic change. Additionally, during this session you will also hear from Farah Ahmad who will discuss her organization, Partners for Rural Transformation, a coalition of six Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) serving persistently poor and rural communities. She will also discuss lessons learned from her previous leadership roles with USDA Rural Development and the White House National Economic Council.

#### Speakers:

- **Tony Pipa**, Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, The Brookings Institution
- **Farah Ahmad**, President, Partners for Rural Transformation

#### Moderator:

- **Charlie Baker**, Executive Director, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Second Vice President, NADO

## 2:00-3:15 p.m.

### Concurrent Breakout Sessions (A, B, C, D)

Breakout (A): NADO track

Salon 1

#### Regional and Rural Transportation

During this session, attendees will learn about state transportation funding initiatives, as well as hear from a panel of transportation experts who will discuss the transportation policy landscape and how NADO and other peer organizations are advocating for the needs of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs).

#### Speakers:

- **Jim Kolb**, Partner, Summit Strategies
- **Kevin Adam**, Legislative Liaison, Rural Transportation Advocacy Council
- **Carolyn Simons**, Senior Director, State Funding Policy, American Road and Transportation Builders Association

**Moderator:**

- **Carrie Kissel**, Associate Director, National Association of Development Organizations

*Breakout (B): NADO track*

*Salon 2*

**Comparative Approaches to Regionalism: International Perspectives**

This session will feature a panel of European experts who are focused on fostering regionalism in an international context. These experts are involved in supporting the work of the Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas (METREX), which is a non-profit network of more than fifty metropolitan regions in Europe. These experts will discuss how their respective regions are working together in a collaborative manner to address regional challenges, enhance urban-rural connectivity, and foster productive, inclusive, and sustainable regional growth.

**Speakers:**

- **Gianina Panatau**, General Director, Bucharest Metropolitan Area (Romania); Vice President, METREX
- **Jakub Mazur**, Deputy Mayor, Wroclaw Municipality (Poland); President, METREX
- **Rafael Amorim**, First Executive Secretary, CIM Cavado (Portugal); Member, METREX
- **Chuck Bean**, former Executive Director, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
- **John Austin Stokes**, Executive Director, Concho Valley Council of Governments

**Moderator:**

- **Chris Brown**, Immediate Past President, NADO; Board Director, Ark-Tex Council of Governments

*Breakout (C): DDAA Track*

*Salon 5*

**No Stupid Questions: Addressing Common Questions About LDD Operations**

This open-forum session encourages participants to ask any questions about Local Development District (LDD) operations, projects, or challenges. Experienced LDD leaders will provide clear, supportive answers in a judgment-free environment to ensure all attendees feel welcome to contribute. Gain valuable knowledge, clarify uncertainties, and connect with others seeking solutions to common issues.

**Speakers:**

- **Chelsea Robertson**, Executive Director, Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board
- **Danna Stansbury**, Executive Director, Foothills Regional Commission
- **Heather Feldman**, Executive Director, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission
- **Michelle G. Jordan**, Executive Director, Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments

**Moderator:**

- **Karen Fabiano**, Program Manager, Appalachian Regional Commission

*Breakout (D): Joint Track*

*Salon 6*

**Workforce Solutions for Resilient Regions: Funding and the Future of Workforce Development Programs**

As local and national political landscapes change, workforce development boards and workforce training programs will be faced with new opportunities and challenges. This panel discussion will explore the evolving landscape of workforce development programs and will highlight funding opportunities, potential

policy or regulatory changes, and innovative programmatic strategies. The panel will feature national and local experts who will discuss how federal, state, and local funding is being utilized and how workforce program practitioners are adapting to meet the needs of communities.

**Speakers:**

- Gail Ravnitzky Sillberglied, Senior Director, Government Relations & Advocacy, National Association of Workforce Boards
- Michael Matthews, Legislative Director for Community, Economic, and Workforce Development, National Association of Counties
- Roberta Lovett, Deputy Executive Director, Southern Georgia Regional Commission

**Moderator:**

- **Joe D’Antonio**, Program Manager, National Association of Development Organizations

**3:30-4:30 p.m.**

**NADO Regional Chapter Meetings**

*Regional chapter meetings provide an opportunity for NADO members to discuss updates and current events pertaining to their regions. NADO and DDAA members are welcome.*

*Central Region: Salon 1*

*East Region: Salon 2*

*Midwest Region: Salon 5*

*Southeast Region: Rosslyn*

*Southwest Region: Salon 6*

*West Region: Pentagon A*

**4:30-6:00 p.m.**

**Federal Stakeholders Networking Reception – All attendees**

*Salons 3-4*

This networking reception provides an opportunity for NADO and DDAA members to interact with federal agency staff and leadership and other national stakeholder organization representatives.

# Tuesday, March 11, 2025

*NADO member attendees are encouraged to participate in meetings on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, March 11. For those attendees who do not plan to attend Hill meetings, additional conference content is offered at the conference venue throughout the day.*

## **7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.**

**Registration - All attendees**

*Arlington Foyer*

## **8:00-9:00 a.m.**

**DDAA Breakfast**

*Salons 1-2*

*This breakfast is for DDAA members only*

## **9:15-10:15 a.m.**

**Plenary Session: Collaborating with the Current Administration - All attendees** *Salons 3-4*

Before you depart for your meetings on Capitol Hill with your Senators and Representatives, hear from Michelle Amante, who will provide insights on some of the Administration's key priorities, initiatives, and Executive Orders. Michelle will also explain how the Partnership for Public Service – a nonpartisan organization focused on improving government efficiency – is helping to support the current administration by providing nonpartisan research, policy recommendations, and expertise designed to improve the effectiveness and management of federal agencies; advocating for legislative changes to strengthen the civil service; and collaborating with federal leaders to identify best practices for government operations.

**Speaker:**

- **Michelle Amante**, Senior Vice President of Government Programs, Partnership for Public Service

**Moderator:**

- **Matthew Dolge**, First Vice President, NADO; Executive Director, Piedmont Triad Regional Council

## **10:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.**

**Capitol Hill Meetings (on your own) - NADO track**

*NOTE: Attendees are encouraged to spend this open block of time on Capitol Hill educating your members of Congress about your work. Hill meetings are self-directed. If you need help securing contact information for Hill staffers and schedulers, please contact Jamie McCormick at [jmccormick@nado.org](mailto:jmccormick@nado.org).*

## **10:30-11:45 a.m.**

**Concurrent Breakout Sessions (A and B)**

*Breakout (A): DDAA track*

*Salon 5*

**ARC Pathways: A Comprehensive Grant Management Platform for Success**

Are you an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grantee, or do you support other applicants who are pursuing ARC grants? Curious about how ARC's new grants management system will work? In this



session, ARC staff will guide you through Pathway's new features and will discuss how to best support applicants when using the system.

**Speakers:**

- **Elijah Biggs**, Business Analyst, Information Technology Division, Appalachian Regional Commission
- **Krystal Rodney**, Instructional Designer & Trainer, Information Technology Division, Appalachian Regional Commission

**Moderator:**

- **Karen Fabiano**, Program Manager, Appalachian Regional Commission

*Breakout (B): DDAA track*

*Salon 6*

**The Role of LDDs in Strengthening Childcare Support Systems**

Learn how Local Development Districts (LDDs) can play a crucial role in addressing childcare challenges across Appalachia. This session will highlight successful partnerships, funding opportunities, and innovative solutions to increase childcare availability and affordability. Attendees will gain tools to support working families and foster economic development in their communities.

**Speakers:**

- **Jonathan Adler**, Vice President, Wonderschool
- **Elli Travis**, Sr. Economic Development Specialist, Virginia Tech

**Moderator:**

- **Mereb Hagos**, Project Manager, The Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness

**11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m.**

**Lunch on your own**

**1:30-2:45 p.m.**

*Breakout Session: DDAA track*

*Salon 5*

**Leveraging GIS and Technology Services for Regional Development and Organizational Revenue**

Discover how LDDs can leverage GIS and other technology services to drive regional growth and diversify revenue streams. This session will showcase real-world applications, from infrastructure planning to economic development projects. Participants will leave with ideas to expand their tech capabilities and better serve their communities.

**Speakers:**

- **Brooke Ferguson**, Economic Development Director, Appalachian Council of Governments
- **Marty Little**, Senior Planner, Catawba Regional Council of Governments
- **Faith Bryan**, Information Services Director, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission

**Moderator:**

- **Leif Olson**, Senior Research Analyst, Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness

**1:30-2:45 p.m.**

*Breakout Session: DDAA track*

*Salon 6*

**Cultivating Leadership: Engaging Appalachia's Emerging Leaders**

Explore approaches to nurture and empower young leaders across Appalachia to drive regional progress. This session covers mentorship programs, leadership training, and strategies for building intergenerational collaboration. Learn how to inspire the next generation to contribute to sustainable development in the

region.

**Speakers:**

- **Jen Gregory**, Executive Director, Southern Tier 8
- **Patrick Larson**, Director of Economic Development, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission
- **Kennedy Webb**, Public Information Officer, Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association

**4:30-6:00 p.m.**

**Reception - All attendees**

*Arlington Foyer (First Floor)*

# Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Conference content for the NADO & DDAA joint conference concludes at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 12. Following the conference, there is a post-conference training hosted by the Economic Development District (EDD) Community of Practice (CoP). This post-conference training session is free to attend, but separate registration is required.

## 8:00-10:00 a.m.

**Registration** – All attendees

Arlington Foyer

## 8:00-9:45 a.m.

**Plenary Breakfast** – All attendees

Salons 5-6

### **Disaster Preparation, Mitigation, and Recovery**

During this session hear from Brock Long, who was appointed as the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during the first term of the Trump Administration, and who now serves as the Executive Chairman of Hagerty Consulting. Former Administrator Long will provide insights born from his decades of experience responding to disaster scenarios and facilitating emergency management and community resilience efforts.

**Speakers:**

- Brock Long, Executive Chairman, Hagerty Consulting

**Moderator:**

- Justin Hembree, Executive Director, Mid-Carolina Regional Council

## 10:00-11:00 a.m.

**Closing Plenary Session** – All attendees

Salon 4

### **Aligning Outdoor Recreation Amenities with Economic Development Strategies**

This panel discussion will explore the intersection of outdoor recreation and community and economic development. The panelists will address current trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the outdoor recreation landscape and will discuss how communities are putting their outdoor recreation amenities at the forefront of their approaches to economic development.

**Speakers:**

- Jessica Wahl Turner, President, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable
- Ta Enos, Founder & CEO, PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship
- Ryan Chao, President, Rails to Trails Conservancy
- Sean Byrne, ACG Advocacy

**Moderator:**

- Ryan Richardson, Executive Director, Superior California Economic Development

## 11:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Salons 5-6

**An Afternoon with the Districts** – Post-conference workshop. Separate registration required.