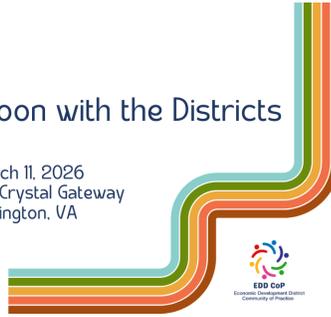


2026 Afternoon with the Districts

March 11, 2026
Marriott Crystal Gateway
Arlington, VA



Marriott Crystal Gateway
1700 Richmond Hwy, Arlington, VA 22202 | Salon 5 & 6

11:30 a.m. **Check-in and Lunch**

12:00 p.m. **Welcome, Networking & EDA Update**

- **Brett Schwartz**, Associate Director, NADO Research Foundation
- **Bernadette Grafton**, Team Lead, Research & National Technical Assistance, U.S. EDA

12:30 p.m. **Keynote – Storytelling for Influence and Engagement**

You may not consider yourself to be a storyteller, but the reality is - you are! We cannot move through a single day without sharing stories or being shaped by them. Storytelling is one of the practices that makes us uniquely human, and the ways stories are told, heard, and amplified profoundly influence how people think, feel, and act.

Today, however, influence demands more than intuition or tradition. To engage communities responsibly and effectively, we must evolve this ancient form of connection and apply it in strategically modern and ethical ways. This keynote presentation will take us on a journey through the past, present, and future of storytelling for influence and engagement, offering practical insights into how EDD leaders and staff can use stories to build trust, inspire action, and create meaningful impact.

- **Professor John D. Trybus**, Ph.D., story scientist and executive director, Georgetown University Center for Social Impact Communication

1:30 p.m. *Networking Break*

1:45 p.m. **Peer Presentations: EDD Communication & Outreach Strategies**

During this session, EDD staff will share ways they have communicated their stories and organizational impact to funders, partners, and the public.

- **Scott Warner**, Executive Director, Mid-Shore Regional Council (MD)
- **Eric Wright**, Director of Planning & Development, East Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission
- **Jen Gregory**, Executive Director, Southern Tier 8 Regional Board (NY)
- Moderator: **London Weier**, Research & Writing Fellow, NADO Research Foundation

2:45 p.m. *Networking Break*

3:00 p.m. **Small Group Discussions and Reflection**

4:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

4:15 p.m. **Networking Meet Up in Hotel Lobby Restaurant**



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