

2026 EDD Wealth Creation Summit: Strengthening Regions Through Wealth Creation



April 14-16, 2026
Riverhouse Resort, Bend, Oregon

Draft Agenda

Tuesday, April 14

11:00 am – 4:00 pm Registration – Exhibit Hall

1:00 – 1:30 pm

Welcome & Networking Activity

- Melissa Levy, NADO
- Brett Schwartz, NADO
- Matthew Dolge, Piedmont Triad Regional Council & NADO President

1:30 - 2:30 pm

Opening Plenary – Keeping Rural Prosperity Local – Exhibit Hall

Learn from Kimber Lanning about strategies to reduce economic leakage and unleash rural opportunity. Highlights will include small business incubation and acceleration, micro-lending, value chain development, and job creation.

Speaker: Kimber Lanning, CEO, Arizona Rural Development Council/
Local First Arizona

3:00 – 4:30 pm

Concurrent sessions

A. ***Advancing Regional Sectors Through Collaboration.*** Discover how EDDs are bringing businesses, workforce partners, and community organizations together to build stronger, more resilient regional sectors. This session highlights practical approaches for convening partners, aligning assets, and reducing gaps to create sector strategies that keep opportunity local. – Cascade C

Speakers:

- Deb Smith, Clearwater Economic Development Association
- Jason Hartmann, Mid Columbia Economic Development District
- Leslie Palotas, Economic Development Alliance of Lincoln County

B. ***Building Stronger Regions: The Role of Trust and Relationship Building in Working with Communities.*** This session explores what it takes to meaningfully engage groups that are often overlooked. Through real case examples, including work with Tribal Nations, we'll examine cultural nuances, common misconceptions, and the role of trust and relationship-building. Participants will leave with practical strategies for

engaging communities with greater respect, awareness, and authenticity. – Cascade D

Speaker:

- Dr. Joanie Buckley, Strategic Equation LLC

5:00 – 6:00 pm **Networking Reception** – Cascade Deck/Cascade F

8:00 – 10:00 pm **Optional Evening Activity:** Stargazing and networking at the Hopservatory at Worthy Brewing. Enjoy stargazing in this dark sky community with an astronomer guide. Transportation on your own. - 495 NE Bellevue Dr, Bend, OR

Wednesday, April 15

8:00 am – 4:00 pm Registration – Outside Deschutes

9:00 am – 10:15 am **Concurrent sessions**

A. ***Wealth Creation Basics: A New Lens for the Work You Already Do.***

Wealth creation offers a fresh lens for the work EDDs already do—from CEDS development to measurement to strategy design. This session introduces the core concepts and shows how they can help regions align assets, partners, and priorities to build lasting local value. You'll also hear a real-world example of how one region translated its CEDS goals into action by launching an outdoor recreation loan fund that keeps opportunity rooted locally. – Deschutes N

Speakers:

- Ryan Richardson, Superior California Economic Development
- Carrie Kissel, NADO
- Melissa Levy, NADO

B. ***Rooted Prosperity: Structures That Keep Wealth in the Region***

Local ownership structures, like cooperatives, collaborations, and employee-owned enterprises, play a powerful role in keeping wealth anchored in the region. This session explores how these models create shared value, strengthen community control of key assets, and build long-term regional resilience. Hear from leaders using these approaches to root prosperity locally and chart a more durable economic future. – Deschutes S

Speakers:

- Brenda Smith, High Desert Partnership
- Nelda Murri, Wallowa Beekeepers Cooperative
- Jason Schneider, Civic Possible

Moderator: Lisa Dawson, Northeast Oregon Economic Development District

10:30 am – 11:45 am **Concurrent sessions**

A. ***Paths and Partners: Mapping Value Chains and Mobilizing Assets to Solve Problems.*** This session focuses on how regions can align assets, partners, and activities to move deliberately toward shared goals and measurable outcomes. Value chain mapping will be introduced as one practical tool for revealing connections, gaps, and leverage points that make coordinated action possible. Participants will leave with strategies to mobilize partners, clarify roles, and turn regional priorities into progress. – Deschutes N

Speakers:

- Melissa Levy NADO
- Carrie Kissel, NADO

B. ***Grounded Economies: How Natural Asset Stewardship Shapes Regional Futures.*** Natural resource economies, like forestry, fisheries, agriculture, and mariculture, shape the identity and long-term resilience of many rural regions. This session explores how thoughtful stewardship of these assets can create lasting value, support local ownership, and strengthen regional futures. Participants will learn practical strategies for balancing economic opportunity with ecological health to keep wealth rooted in place. – Deschutes S

Speakers:

- Nils Christoffersen, Wallowa Resources
- Claire Everson, Western Reign Creative
- Amy Hause, Rural Development Initiatives
- Robert Venables, Southeast Conference & NADO Second Vice President

12:00 – 12:45 pm **Lunch with Oregon's EDDs** – Exhibit Hall

1:00 – 5:00 pm **Mobile and onsite workshops** - with RDI Regards to Rural. Participants will choose one workshop for the afternoon, by April 10.

1:00 - 5:00 PM

Workshop 1: Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation in Warm Springs

Join the Warm Springs Community Action Team (WSCAT) for a visit to Warm Springs in Central Oregon, home to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (Warm Springs, Wasco, and Paiute peoples). Participants will learn about the 128-year-old Commissary, a former Bureau of Indian Affairs storehouse relocated along Highway 26 and now being reimaged as a community business campus. The Commissary is under construction and the revitalized space will include retail and food storefronts, a pop-up arts and culture shop, and a small business incubator and coworking space to support tribal entrepreneurs. View the exterior of the building and learn how this

investment in local enterprise is strengthening economic opportunity and long-term resilience on tribal land.

1:00 - 4:45 PM

Workshop 2: From Timber to Tech: A Rural Community in Transition

Join Economic Development for Central Oregon (EDCO) for a visit to Prineville, the oldest city in Central Oregon and a rural community navigating major economic change. Once rooted in agriculture, ranching, and timber, Prineville has become home to large-scale technology investment. Participants will travel by bus past the Meta and Apple data center campuses before visiting City Hall to hear from the city manager and local leaders. Learn how the community has managed rapid growth, balanced trade-offs, and worked to maintain its identity during the shift from timber to tech.

1:00 - 4:30 PM

Workshop 3: Simpson Property Tour & Community Land Trust

Overview

RootedHomes will lead a guided tour of the Simpson property, offering a behind-the-scenes look at one of Central Oregon's largest permanently affordable homeownership development. Participants will learn how the Community Land Trust (CLT) model creates long-term housing stability by separating the cost of land from the cost of the home, ensuring affordability for generations. The session will also highlight RootedHomes' approach to net-zero energy construction, resident-driven design, and the role this development plays in supporting workforce housing and community resilience.

1:00 - 4:30 PM

Workshop 4: Cultivating Resilience: Agritourism & Rural Economic Development

Join the High Desert Food and Farm Alliance (HDFFA) for a field trip to two innovative farms in Sisters to explore how agricultural enterprises in the rural Central Oregon high desert are building economic resilience through diversification, agritourism, and creative community partnerships. Participants will learn how these farms are developing sustainable business models, expanding revenue streams, and strengthening local food systems while navigating the unique challenges of farming in a high-desert climate.

1:30 - 3:30 PM

Workshop 5: Civic Innovation for Trust

In a time of growing division, how can rural communities foster connection, trust, and collaboration? Josh Burgess, alongside regional community organizers, will lead a deep dive into Civic Assemblies—a promising model for inclusive dialogue, collaborative decision-making, and renewed civic trust. Participants will learn how these assemblies are being used to improve governance, build community capacity, and mend the social fabric in meaningful, lasting ways; and even get to try it out firsthand! – Deschutes N

5:30 pm **Reception** - Deschutes S/The Eddy

Thursday, April 16 – In Partnership with Rural Development Initiatives’ Regards to Rural

8:30 – 10:00 am Registration – Exhibit Hall

8:00 – 9:00 am **Networking Breakfast** – Exhibit Hall

9:15 – 10:15 am **Plenary: The Power of Place** - Cascade A, B, C, D, J
(with RDI Regards to Rural)
Speaker: Erin Borla, Roundhouse Foundation

10:30 – 12 noon ***Lessons from the Field: Surprising Wins, Hard Truths, and Emerging Issues in Rural Development.*** Rural regions are using wealth creation, rural development hubs, and the Thrive Rural Framework to navigate rapid change... and discovering some surprising strategies that actually work. This interactive session blends big-picture framing with real practitioner experience to explore lessons learned, emerging challenges, and the surprising wins showing up across the country. We’ll look at how communities are strengthening value chains, building different forms of capital, and preparing for fast-moving issues like AI, data centers, and pressures on health and human services. Through table discussions, participants will surface what’s working in their own regions and leave with practical tools, peer-tested ideas, and fresh inspiration for doing things differently. - Cascade A, B, C, D, J
(with RDI Regards to Rural)

Speakers:

- Bonita Robertson-Hardy, Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group
- Cheryal Hills, Region Five Development Commission
- Melissa Levy, NADO

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Closing Lunch** - Cascade A, B, C, D, J
(with RDI Regards to Rural)