



NADO's 2026 Annual Training Conference Peppermill Resort Spa Casino | Reno, NV October 19 – 22, 2026

Pre-Conference EDA Seattle Region Peer Networking Event – Sunday, October 18

Join colleagues for a pre-conference networking event on Sunday, October 18, from 12:00 to 4:30 p.m. Designed for conference attendees from the EDA Seattle Region, this gathering offers an opportunity to connect with peers, engage with representatives from EDA and NADO, and build relationships ahead of the conference. Lunch will be provided. *There is no cost to attend, but pre-registration is required.* [Click here to register.](#)

Monday, October 19

8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Conference Registration & Information Desk Open

9:00 – 10:30 a.m. NADO Research Foundation Advisory Committee Meeting

9:45 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Mobile Workshop

Tahoe Prosperity Center: Regional Collaboration in a One-of-a-Kind Economy

Visit the Tahoe Prosperity Center for a mobile workshop exploring how regional collaboration drives economic development in the uniquely complex Lake Tahoe Basin which spans two states, is governed by a bi-state agency, and relies on coordinated, cross-jurisdictional solutions. The tour will highlight how partnerships across sectors, guided by shared data and community input, are advancing priorities like workforce housing, broadband access, small-scale biomass innovation, economic resilience, and community vitality. Participants will also learn about Tahoe Prosperity Center's Business Walks, a hands-on way to gather insights from local businesses.

Limited to 40 participants. Meet the tour group at 9:45 a.m. for a bus departure at 10 a.m. The group will return to the hotel by 3:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$65.*

9:45 a.m. – 2:45 p.m. Mobile Workshop

From Wagon Ruts to Main Street Wins: A Visit to Gardnerville

Discover how the organization Mainstreet Gardnerville is breathing new life into a historic downtown on this guided tour of Gardnerville, NV (pop. 5,800). Explore how this former 19th-century wagon-train stop has evolved into a vibrant 21st-century community through a blend of business investment, strategic grant funding, and the dedication of local volunteers. Along the way, you'll see firsthand the projects and partnerships that are helping preserve the town's character while supporting its growth.

Limited to 50 participants. Meet the tour group at 9:45 a.m. for a bus departure at 10 a.m. The group will return to the hotel by 2:45 p.m. Lunch will be provided. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$65.*

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Mobile Workshop

Virginia City Bonanza: Bringing the Past to the Future

In 1859, Virginia City, NV was founded to support a community of miners that had come to extract the Comstock Lode, one of the first major silver deposits found in the United States. After the depletion of the Comstock Lode, the town looked to other sources of economic prosperity and found its rich history as a mining town deserved preserving. Since that time Virginia City has been through a variety of economic booms and changes over its history. On this tour, explore the city's historic downtown and key landmarks that were integral to its development as a mining hotspot. The tour will offer participants an understanding of how historic preservation can be utilized as a transition strategy toward other drivers of growth and opportunity.

Limited to 40 participants. Meet the tour group at 10 a.m. for a bus departure at 10:15 a.m. The group will return to the hotel by 3:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$65.*

10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Learning Lab

Peers to the Rescue: RDOs KO Brownfields

Looking to unlock the potential of brownfield redevelopment in your region? This interactive session will highlight the tools, resources, and success stories that can help Regional Development Organizations leverage brownfield programs to advance economic development goals. Facilitated by experts from the Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) program, including Kansas State University TAB and the Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR), the session will provide an overview of federal and state brownfield initiatives, currently available grants, and free technical assistance opportunities. Most importantly, you'll hear directly from RDO staff that have successfully used brownfield resources to revitalize sites, attract investment, and create new opportunities for their communities.

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Learning Labs

Crisis Communications Essentials: Proactive Planning for the Unpredictable

A communications crisis is a matter of when, not if. This hands-on, learning lab will equip leaders with the practical tools needed to get ahead of a crisis, respond effectively in the moment, and build long-term resilience for the next one. Through interactive group discussions and real-time application, participants will conduct a landscape analysis, perform a deep-dive self-assessment of their organization's vulnerabilities and assets, and walk away with a concrete crisis checklist. This session moves beyond theory to give attendees an actionable roadmap to protect their reputation before a crisis occurs.

Speedy RLF Pre-Screens: How to Get to a Yes or No Quickly

An effective pre-screen process can help Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs identify viable borrowers quickly, use staff time efficiently, and create a more consistent experience for applicants. This interactive Learning Lab will explore practical approaches to designing and implementing an effective EDA RLF pre-screening process. Participants will discuss what information to collect upfront, how to evaluate basic eligibility and credit readiness, when to advance or decline a request, how to incorporate AI into their prescreen process, and how to document decisions. The session will also provide an opportunity for RLF practitioners to share tools, challenges, and best practices they can adapt to their own programs.

Creating Partnerships, Developing Effective Alliances, and Building Executive Director and Board Relationships

Strong organizations are built on strong relationships. This session will explore practical strategies for strengthening communication, trust, and alignment among staff, board members, and external partners. Participants will learn how to navigate differing interests, build collaborative cultures, and develop alliances that support organizational goals. Through

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facilitated discussion, attendees will have the opportunity to share lessons learned in building and sustaining productive relationships. While all are welcome to attend, the session is particularly designed for executive directors, senior staff, and RDO board members seeking to strengthen leadership partnerships and organizational effectiveness.

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. NADO Executive Committee and Research Foundation Board Meeting

12:15 – 3:00 p.m. Mobile Workshop

Downtown Reno Revitalization: From Brownfields to Economic Engines

This tour will offer an inside look at how the City of Reno is transforming vacant, underutilized, and legacy sites into drivers of economic growth and community vitality. Participants will explore a variety of sites and projects to learn how targeted investments are reshaping downtown Reno into a more vibrant, walkable, and economically resilient district. Attendees will gain practical insights on unlocking redevelopment through public realm investment; activating vacant corridors with façade and tenant programs; navigating complex adaptive reuse projects; leveraging partnerships to accelerate revitalization; and utilizing federal (U.S. EPA) and state brownfield grants and technical assistance.

Limited to 50 participants. Meet the tour group at 12:15 p.m. for a bus departure at 12:30 p.m. The group will return to the hotel by 3:00 p.m. This activity includes a downtown walking tour. Please wear comfortable shoes and eat lunch in advance. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$45.*

1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Conversation Café

Conversation Café: Housing Solutions

Housing challenges are affecting communities of all sizes, influencing workforce availability, economic growth, and quality of life. This session will provide an informal space with other conference attendees to discuss housing issues facing your region, from affordability and availability to zoning, infrastructure, financing, and more.

1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Learning Lab

Industry Clusters and the Economic Development Toolbox

Industry clusters are an economic development tool that are proven to help regions drive growth, innovation, and resilience. However, clusters are difficult, if not impossible, to build from the top-down and instead require identifying and supporting existing regional strengths. This Learning Lab will define industry clusters, compare them to other economic development strategies, and discuss how to identify and support industries in your region. The session will take a workshop approach, using small group activities and discussion to explore practical applications and tools for your Economic Development District or Regional Development Organization.

1:00 – 3:00 p.m. NADO Board of Directors Meeting

**3:15 – 4:15 p.m. Conference Opening Plenary:
Main Street Matters**

The conference opening plenary session features remarks from Jen Tune, Executive Director of Main Street Gardnerville. Located an hour south of Reno, Gardnerville is a community of approximately 6,200 residents and holds the distinction of being the first community in Nevada to earn the Main Street designation. Under Jen's leadership, Main Street Gardnerville has advanced a mission to revitalize downtown by leveraging design, organization, promotion, and economic vitality strategies to strengthen the district's unique identity while preserving its historic character. During this

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presentation, Jen will share lessons learned and practical insights that can inspire other communities seeking to strengthen their downtowns and create thriving places to live, work, and visit.

4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

NADO 101

New to NADO or looking to take your participation to the next level? This session will offer you a deeper understanding of the full scope of what our association has to offer and explain how to get more involved. Join us to meet NADO leadership and staff, connect with fellow members and conference attendees, and learn how to make the most of your time at the ATC and all year long through NADO.

6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Opening Reception

DRAFT

Tuesday, October 20

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Conference Registration & Information Desk Open

**9:00 – 10:15 a.m. Keynote Plenary:
Why You Need to Think Like a Hacker**

What can ethical hackers teach us about leadership, problem-solving, and protecting our organizations? In this special keynote, bestselling author and ethical hacking expert Ted Harrington will share stories from the front lines of cybersecurity and demonstrate why leaders across every sector need to think more like hackers. Drawing on his experience leading teams that have helped organizations such as Google, Amazon, and Netflix identify and address security vulnerabilities, Ted will explore the mindset that drives hackers to question assumptions, uncover hidden weaknesses, and see opportunities others miss. Through real-world examples and entertaining stories, participants will learn the key traits that define the hacker mindset and how those traits can be applied to strengthen decision-making, foster innovation, and improve organizational resilience.

10:15 – 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break with the Exhibitors

10:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Mobile Workshop

Inside Energy: Geothermal Energy at the Peppermill Resort Spa and Casino – Tour I

As part of its 2007 expansion project, the Peppermill Resort Spa and Casino (the conference venue) invested \$9.7 million to install a geothermal energy system that provides the energy that heats the domestic hot water for the Tuscany tower, including the 43,000 square foot Spa Toscana and Fitness Center, as well as two outdoor swimming pools and spas. This tour will show participants the inner workings of geothermal energy at the Peppermill and provide insights on how communities across the country can access this renewable energy source. *Note: The conference includes two geothermal energy tour options; the programming and information will be the same for each tour.*

Limited to 20 participants. Meet the tour group at 10:15 a.m. for departure at 10:30 a.m. The group will return by 12:30 p.m. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$20.*

10:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Mobile Workshop

Engines of Change: Reno's National Automobile Museum

Roll over to the National Automobile Museum, located in downtown Reno, which celebrates the past, present, and future of the automobile. Built on the legacy of William F. "Bill" Harrah and supported by a global community of enthusiasts, the museum has inspired visitors since 1989 through engaging exhibits and programs. Participants will enjoy a special presentation from the museum's president covering its history, governance, fundraising efforts, and impact on downtown Reno's economic development. Afterward, attendees can explore exhibits featuring more than 200 vehicles from the late 1800s to today, including cars once owned by Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, and President John F. Kennedy.

Limited to 50 participants. Meet group at 10:15 am for a bus departure at 10:30 a.m. The group will return to the hotel by 12:45 p.m., though participants are welcome to stay longer at the museum and return on their own. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$40.*

10:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Mobile Workshop

From Waste to Worth: Inside Wastewater Reuse at Reno-Stead Water Reclamation Facility

The City of Reno's Utilities Services Department owns and operates the Reno-Stead Water Reclamation Facility which processes 2 million gallons of wastewater per day. Join a tour of this award-winning facility to learn more about responsible use and reuse of valuable water resources in the Reno area. The visit will include a presentation on the site's growth plan and approach to interagency cooperation followed by a walking tour of the facility. Participants will learn how resilient approaches to resource management can expand opportunities for long-term economic competitiveness.

Limited to 20 participants. Meet the tour group at 10:15 a.m. for a bus departure at 10:30 a.m. The group will return to the hotel by 1:00 p.m. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$45.*

10:30 – 11:45 a.m. Concurrent Sessions

Aligning Your Brand *and* Your Story for a Stronger RDO

With shifting state and federal priorities requiring Regional Development Organizations to adapt rapidly on the ground, many leaders are facing a stark misalignment between the vital stories they need to tell and their current brand. Driven by a recent wave of RDO requests for brand updates, staff from the PR firm Formation will pull back the curtain on its own experience navigating a needed brand refresh when its day-to-day messaging outgrew its visual identity. This session will share the honest lessons learned during the pivot, demonstrating how to reconnect effective storytelling with true brand alignment at this critical organizational juncture. To turn these real-world insights into immediate action, attendees will receive a practical, rubric-style "At-a-Glance" evaluation handout to audit their own brand health and clearly determine what kind of update their organization needs.

Single Audit Readiness and Survival 2026

The federal government's first line of defense against noncompliance with federal grant requirements remains the independent audit that is required by the Single Audit Act of 1984 and Subpart F of 2 CFR 200. Regional Development Organizations that expend \$1,000,000 or more in federal assistance awards during their fiscal years are covered. Results of the audit play a role in a number of key organizational opportunities and responsibilities. Each year, the Office of Management and Budget releases a revised Compliance Supplement to the audit requirement. It is essentially a guide that tells auditors what requirements to test and suggests how to do the testing. It might be intended for auditors but it's equally important for recipients and subrecipients. In fact, it's often been called the "Cliff's Notes" © of federal grant administration. This session will unpack the key sections of the most recent Supplement and provide directions about how RDOs can use it for readiness...and survival.

Future-Proofing Economies Through Disaster Resilience

Weather-related disasters and other kinds of shocks can create long-term damage to community infrastructure and wellbeing. Regional Development Organizations are well suited to support their regions in preparing for and recovering from disasters as conveners, technical assistance providers, and long-term resiliency planners. In this session, participants will have the opportunity to learn more about regional approaches to infrastructure resilience and connect with national leaders advancing solutions to disaster preparedness.

Beyond Growth: Building Community Wealth with the Wealth Builders Game

Discover how a wealth-based approach to economic development can create stronger, more resilient communities. Through
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hands-on gameplay and discussion, participants will explore the WealthWorks framework and identify opportunities to build, connect, and leverage local assets. Participants will have the opportunity to play the Wealth Builders Game, which is a collaborative game about using the various forms of wealth and a variety of partners to move toward key outcomes.

12:00 – 1:30 p.m. Lunch on Your Own

12:00 – 1:30 p.m. SERDI Council of Peers Meeting

1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Mobile Workshop

MidTown Reno on Foot: Placemaking, Small Business, and the Creative Economy

This guided walking tour of MidTown Reno will explore how placemaking, locally owned businesses, and creative entrepreneurs have helped transform the district into a vibrant economic and cultural hub. Participants will learn how public art, adaptive reuse, and community driven development support small business growth and foster a resilient creative economy. The tour will highlight real world examples of how place-based strategies can shape dynamic neighborhoods.

Limited to 30 participants. Meet the tour group at 1 p.m. for a hotel departure at 1:15 p.m. The group will return to the hotel by 4:00 p.m. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$40.*

1:30 – 2:45 p.m. Concurrent Sessions

Housing Doesn't Build Itself: Stop Admiring the Problem and Start Building Solutions

Rural America does not have an information shortage about housing—we have an implementation shortage. Through the combined perspectives of a regional economic development organization and an affordable housing developer, this session examines the real barriers that keep rural housing projects from moving forward and the role regional organizations can play in removing those bottlenecks. Participants will leave with a challenge: identify one stalled housing project in their region, determine what is actually stopping it, and identify one concrete action they can take to move it forward.

OMB Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200) - A Status Update

On May 29, 2026, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed significant revisions to 2 CFR 200, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements that govern federal grant funding. While Congress has paused implementation until after the midterm elections, the proposed changes remain under consideration and could have far-reaching implications for organizations that manage federal awards. This session will provide a practical overview of the proposed revisions from the perspective of Regional Development Organizations. Participants will learn about the key policy changes under consideration, the concerns and objections raised, and the potential impacts on grant administration, compliance, and program delivery.

Childcare as Economic Infrastructure: Workforce Strategies That Work

Across the country, Regional Development Organizations are increasingly recognizing childcare as a core economic development issue. Limited childcare availability, rising costs for families, and workforce challenges within the childcare sector create significant barriers to labor force participation, business growth, and regional competitiveness. This session will explore how communities are addressing childcare shortages through innovative partnerships, policy solutions, and workforce strategies that support working families while strengthening local economies. Participants will learn how investing in childcare can expand workforce capacity, attract and retain talent, and build more resilient and inclusive regions.

CEDS Conversation Carousel

Join this interactive session to engage in a series of facilitated peer to peer discussions about the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Participants will rotate through three to four short, focused discussions on topics such as CEDS planning and implementation, engagement, economic resilience, and effective communications and storytelling. This session will also include a short presentation on the latest CEDS best practices and updates.

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Nominating Committee

All NADO members are invited to attend and hear from the candidates for NADO's Board of Directors Officer positions.

2:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Mobile Workshop

Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center: A Visit to the World's Largest Industrial Park

The Tahoe Reno Industrial Center is a 107,000-acre park that encompasses a developable 30,000 acre industrial complex and is the largest industrial park in the world. It hosts Tesla Gigafactory 1 and data centers for Blockchains, Google, Jet.com, and Switch. The industrial center is poised to expand in the age of AI with a 1100-Megawatt powerplant and water rights to provide for cooling needs. Participants will discover how this unique development stays ahead in a constantly shifting landscape, as well as practical lessons that can inform regional planning elsewhere

Limited to 30 participants. Meet the tour group at 2:30 p.m. for a bus departure at 2:45 p.m. The group will return to the hotel by 5:30 p.m. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$45.*

2:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Refresh and Connect Break

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Inside Out AI - Mastering Internal AI Policies and External AI Relations

AI is changing the way Regional Development Organizations work internally and the way they connect with their communities. In this session attendees will learn how to write a strong internal AI policy to secure informational assets while empowering worker efficiency. Attendees will also learn how to design their websites and optimize their communication for new AI powered search engines. AI is changing our organizations inside and out; this session will help with both!

Utilizing Community Benefit Agreements to Align Growth with Local Priorities

When large projects such as industrial parks, energy development, data centers, and others come to a community, Development Agreements can serve as a tool for local and county officials to ensure that the residents of these communities see benefits and fair considerations in the development process. Community Benefits Agreements (CBA), Host Community Agreements (HCA), and Good Neighbor Agreements (GNA) are just a few types of these kinds of agreements that can protect residents from negative externalities and bring considerable economic benefit to the area as a whole. In this session, learn more about CBAs and what role Regional Development Organizations can play in the development agreement process.

Game Night! Scenario Planning for Rural and Small Metro Regions

In this interactive session, attendees will practice scenario planning techniques that can help your organization or your region plan for potential outcomes in uncertain times. This session focuses on a low-tech, approachable framework to scenario planning, rather than the data-intensive forecasting methods that are sometimes used. Attendees can expect to learn about decision making techniques, practice making decisions with unpredictable variables, and discuss what considerations shape next steps. Come prepared to engage with the group!

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Federal Grants Management Office Hours

Have questions about federal grants, cooperative agreements, subawards, or the ever-evolving world of grants management? Join longtime NADO policy advisor and trainer Bob Lloyd for an informal office hours session designed to address your questions and concerns. Drawing on decades of experience interpreting and applying federal grants regulations, Bob will discuss the policies and requirements that govern federal awards and provide additional insights on topics covered in his previous grants management sessions during this year's conference. Participants are encouraged to bring questions, share experiences, and engage in discussion about real-world compliance, administration, and oversight challenges. Given the nature of the subject, his answers are unlikely to be "Yes" or "No" ...

Conversation Café: Meeting Regional Water Infrastructure Needs

Reliable water and wastewater systems are essential to community development, yet many regions face aging infrastructure, limited resources, and growing demands. This informal discussion will bring together attendees to explore common water infrastructure challenges and opportunities, including system upgrades, funding strategies, resilience planning, and regional approaches to service delivery.

4:15 – 5:15 p.m.

NADO Membership Chapter Meetings

Chapter Meetings offer an opportunity for you to connect with peers from your region, share solutions to challenges, talk about new funding opportunities, and provide NADO leadership with feedback and insights about particular topics. All NADO members are encouraged to attend their Chapter Meeting. (NADO Membership Chapters align with the EDA Regional Offices).

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

EDD CoP Peer Cohorts Meetup

Open to all participants in the NADO EDD CoP Peer Cohorts, this meetup will give participants the opportunity to meet and network in person.

8:00 – 10:00 p.m.

NADO Karaoke Night

Back by popular demand! Show off your talents on the stage at Peppermill's in-house music venue, the EDGE Nightclub. Start practicing your routine now!

Wednesday, October 21

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Conference Registration & Information Desk Open

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. DDAA Breakfast

All attendees from a Local Development District located in the 13-state Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) footprint are invited to attend this breakfast and hear from ARC's leadership.

8:30 – 11:45 a.m. Mobile Workshop

Truckee River Walking Tour

The Reno Department of Wildlife will host a guided walking tour at the Oxbow Nature Study Center focused on connections between outdoor recreation, tourism, and local economic development. Participants will explore local trails while learning how natural amenities create opportunities to promote recreational access and sustainable development. Please wear comfortable walking shoes and come prepared with sunscreen and water.

Limited to 25 participants. Meet in the lobby at 8:30 a.m. for a bus departure at 8:45 a.m. The group will return to the hotel by 11:45 a.m. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$35.*

9:15 – 10:30 a.m. Concurrent Sessions

Beyond the Numbers: Using Metrics to Drive Meaningful Change

The measures we choose shape the decisions we make. This session introduces the *You Get What You Measure* framework and helps participants identify metrics that align with their community's values, goals, and desired outcomes. The *You Get What You Measure* approach is focused on identifying shared goals and indicators of progress. This method uses a collaborative process, which identifies strategic goals, key leverage indicators, strategic actions, and measures of progress, allowing organizations to choose the most impactful actions.

Centering Development: Industry Perspectives on Data Centers

Demand from AI and traditional computing needs are driving the expansion of data centers in rural communities across the United States. Regional organizations want to know what they can do to prepare their communities for data center development and how the data center industry relates to the communities that host them. In this session, attendees will hear from representatives of the data center industry and get answers to how their communities can best prepare for new data center investment.

How Revolving Loan Funds Create Community Value

This session explores how Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs) create value that extends far beyond providing access to capital. The discussion will examine how RLFs fill financing gaps left by traditional lenders, support business growth and job creation, build long-term community wealth, support regional priorities, and leverage partnerships to maximize impact. Two experienced RLF managers will share real-world case studies from their organizations, illustrating how flexible financing and strong local relationships have helped achieve economic development goals in their communities. Attendees will gain practical strategies and examples for using RLFs as powerful tools to advance regional priorities, support entrepreneurs, and create lasting economic opportunity.

Cultivating Relationships with Tribes for Shared Prosperity

Many Regional Development Organizations serve regions that overlap with or border Tribal Nations, creating opportunities to build meaningful partnerships that advance shared economic goals. Successful collaboration requires more than coordination; it depends on trust, respect for tribal sovereignty, and a commitment to long-term relationship building. In this session, attendees will explore foundational best practices for engaging with Tribal Nations and hear firsthand experiences from leaders who have cultivated strong tribal partnerships. Participants will leave with practical insights for building partnerships that strengthen regional competitiveness, expand opportunity, and support economic growth.

10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Mobile Workshop

Inside Energy: Geothermal Energy at the Peppermill Resort Spa and Casino – Tour II

As part of its 2007 expansion project, the Peppermill Resort Spa and Casino (the conference venue) invested \$9.7 million to install a geothermal energy system that provides the energy that heats the domestic hot water for the Tuscan tower, including the 43,000 square foot Spa Toscana and Fitness Center, as well as two outdoor swimming pools and spas. This tour will show participants the inner workings of geothermal energy at the Peppermill and provide insights on how communities across the country can access this renewable energy source. *Note: The conference includes two geothermal energy tour options; the programming and information will be the same for each tour.*

Limited to 20 participants. Meet the tour group at 10 a.m. for a 10:15 a.m. departure. The group will return by 12:15 p.m. *Pre-registration is required; additional fee of \$20.*

10:30 – 10:45 a.m. Morning Networking Break

10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Concurrent Sessions

From Vacancy to Vitality: Bringing California's Downtown Revitalization Playbook to Life

Get a first look at the *California Downtown Revitalization Playbook* and explore practical strategies for addressing vacant and underutilized properties, economic leakage, small business support, and more. Through discussion and interactive activities, participants will identify opportunities and exchange ideas for creating more vibrant downtowns.

Diversifying Funding Streams and Partner Profiles

Diverse funding streams are a key pillar of resilience for Regional Development Organizations. As the federal and state funding landscape continues to shift, it is more important than ever that RDOs find additional ways to provide their services to communities. In this session attendees will learn how other RDOs are diversifying their funding streams with fee for services offerings, different approaches to grant writing, and other services.

Understanding the DOJ's ADA Web Accessibility Rule: Compliance Strategies for RDOs

The U.S. Department of Justice's 2024 ADA Title II Final Rule sets new accessibility requirements for websites, mobile apps, and other digital content provided by state and local governments, as well as other public entities. This session will cover the rule's requirements, key deadlines, covered content, and key exceptions. Presenters will also discuss approaches for assessing current digital accessibility, planning remediation, and building sustainable accessibility practices. Join NADO's Government Relations team and veteran web developer Ryan Beck of BECK Digital for this informative and timely session.

Conversation Café: Outdoor Recreation for Economic Development

Outdoor recreation is increasingly recognized as a powerful driver of economic growth, talent attraction, tourism, and
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community vitality. This conversation café invites attendees to discuss how Regional Development Organizations can help communities capitalize on outdoor assets such as parks, trails, waterways, public lands, and recreation-related businesses to support economic growth and regional resilience.

12:15 – 1:30 p.m.

President's Award Lunch

NADO President Matthew Dolge will announce the recipient of the 2026 President's Award which recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to regional development. All attendees are invited to attend the luncheon.

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Federal Advocacy Update

As the nation prepares for the 2026 midterm elections, federal policy and funding priorities continue to evolve. This session will provide a timely update from NADO staff on key developments affecting Regional Development Organizations, discuss the importance of local advocacy in shaping national outcomes, and offer a preview of the 2027 NADO Washington Conference. Participants will gain valuable context on the current federal landscape and practical strategies for effectively advocating on behalf of their regions and communities.

Food as a Catalyst: Building Health, Wealth, and Regional Prosperity

Food systems can be powerful engines for both community health and economic development. Through stories from North Carolina, Georgia, and Nevada, this session explores how cross-sector partnerships are improving food access, strengthening local value chains, supporting producers, and creating lasting economic benefits for regions and residents alike. Learn about food systems work from a variety of perspectives, including an Economic Development District, a business, a regional food organization, and a small business support agency.

Data Centers 201: Growing Your Expertise in a Growing Field

Data centers are driving significant investment in communities across the country, but that growth also brings new demands on local electrical and water infrastructure. As communities weigh how to make the most of these opportunities, RDOs are looking for ways to productively engage developers and political decision-makers. In this session that will move beyond the basics, attendees will hear from RDO staff working directly on data center development and learn how their organizations can help lead these conversations.

From Pilot to Statewide Pathway: Building Nebraska's Manufacturing Workforce Through Regional Collaboration

Nebraska is tackling the challenge of building a consistent statewide manufacturing talent pipeline while letting regional partners respond to local employers and learners through the Nebraska Manufacturing Alliance Credential Level 1, a foundational workforce program delivered through community colleges and backed by manufacturers, workforce partners, and state agencies. As of August 2026, five cohorts have served 55 participants with 27 completers, and early results are strong: 93% of surveyed students felt more prepared for manufacturing work, and 100% found instructors helpful and would recommend the program. This session goes beyond the numbers to explore what it took to move the model from design to implementation, sharing lessons on coordinating colleges, incorporating employer input, standardizing curriculum and evaluation, and measuring outcomes consistently across regions.

3:15 – 4:00 p.m.

NADO Annual Business Meeting

All NADO members are encouraged to attend to learn more about the governance of your Association.

4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Impact Awards Reception

All attendees are invited to attend this reception to learn about the 2026 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award projects. Many awardees will be on hand to share the details of their project and answer questions. Light snacks and beverages will be provided along with our annual raffle.

DRAFT

Thursday, October 22

8:00 – 11:30 a.m. **Conference Registration & Information Desk Open**

8:30 – 10:00 a.m. **Good Conversations Breakfast**

10:15 – 11:15 a.m. **Concurrent Sessions**

Aging Populations and Innovative Strategies: Programs for Addressing Demographic Shifts

The aging population in rural areas has led to changes in the programs and resources that our communities need to thrive. Regional Development Organizations and their partners in Area Agencies on Aging are responding to these demographic shifts with innovative strategies and programs. In this session attendees will hear from leaders in regional programs serving aging populations and learn how to address these shifts at home. By coordinating state and county-based efforts, providing services within the RDO, and through long term planning processes, RDOs are able to ensure the smooth provision of services to aging populations and protect the economic viability of regions for years to come.

Leveraging Energy Projects to Build a Modern Rural Economy

Across the country, demand for energy capacity is accelerating as communities respond to large-scale industrial projects, population growth, data centers, advanced manufacturing, and other emerging technologies. Meeting this demand requires more than infrastructure alone. Strong "Power Regions" are built through strategic partnerships, diverse energy portfolios, thoughtful planning, and meaningful community engagement. In this session, attendees will develop an understanding of perspectives across industry, local government, and economic development. The session will explore the challenges and opportunities associated with expanding energy capacity, balancing growth with community priorities, and positioning regions for long-term economic competitiveness in an increasingly energy-driven economy.

RDO Talk Back Session

NADO wants to hear directly from you about how we can better support your efforts to serve your region. You know your region's challenges, opportunities, and priorities best. This interactive session will provide attendees with an opportunity to share what is happening in their communities, discuss emerging needs and trends, and help inform NADO's research and programming.

Conversation Café: Building and Sustaining a High-Performing Team

Recruiting and retaining talented staff has become one of the most pressing issues facing Regional Development Organizations. This conversation café offers an opportunity for attendees to discuss workforce challenges within their own organizations and exchange ideas for attracting, developing, and keeping strong team members. Topics may include hiring strategies, organizational culture, professional development, succession planning, workplace flexibility, and employee engagement.

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Plenary Closing:**
Building Economies Through Outdoor Recreation with the Confluence of States

As millions more Americans flock to the outdoors and increasingly put down roots in communities because of the high-quality outdoor access they offer, the Confluence of States, a bipartisan coalition of state offices of outdoor recreation, is helping communities harness the \$1.3 trillion outdoor recreation industry for economic development, community prosperity, public health, and conservation. Now with 22 outdoor recreation offices, these leaders provide critical conduits within state governments, connecting internally across agencies and externally to industry, local and federal government,

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and the broader outdoor recreation community. Through a panel of Confluence member state outdoor recreation directors facilitated by the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, this closing conference session will connect real examples from across the country to the pressing needs and emerging opportunities in front of Regional Development Organizations. The discussion will emphasize the necessary role of partnership among government, regional organizations, businesses and industry, and community leaders and local organizations.

Post-Conference Rural Energy Academy Peer Exchange & Site Visit – October 22 and 23

Additional registration required. Reach out to Krishna Kunapareddy for more information at:

Kkunapareddy@nado.org

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