



CARES Act Supplemental EDD Award

Project Performance Report

Date: October 24, 2021
Grant Recipient: Land of Sky Regional Council
Grant Number: ED20ATL3070030
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Recipient Contact: Erica Anderson

In order to improve and promote the economic competitiveness of our region in response to COVID-19 impacts, Land of Sky Regional Council (LOSRC) supported the following authorized activities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and respond to economic injury as a result of coronavirus:

2020/2021 Administrative Plan

Progress update on Specific work elements for this grant period:

1. **Regional Disaster Economic Recovery Coordination:** Provide regional disaster economic recovery coordination during a two-year period to serve the communities and local governments within the Land of Sky Region. Staff will also serve as a liaison in identifying potential resiliency, mitigation, and economic recovery projects in the disaster-impacted areas. Additional work elements of the position will include but not be limited to the following:
 - a. Update the Land of Sky CEDS to include short-term and long-term economic development data analysis, planning, and coordination to include a focus on pandemic recovery and resiliency based on the existing or anticipated COVID-19 impacts:
 - i. Staff has begun collecting data on major employers in the region in preparation for identifying job hubs. This data will be layered with laborshed and commuter data to determine the workforce area of major hubs.
<https://losrc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=3db8474da7e24f36b59ea25af4b6916e>
 - ii. Staff has begun assembling and evaluating regional planning documents to develop a crosswalk in reviewing economic resilience priorities across the region. We have been working with Dogwood Health Trust, the region's Chambers of Commerce, and business leaders to assemble an RFP for economic and workforce analysis for our region's opportunities in greater economic resilience.
 - iii. Staff has been working with the local MPO and RPO to develop the ELUS (Land Use dataset) for the region to be used for modeling the future growth.

- iv. The region’s resiliency data tool continues to be built out with input from communities, service providers, and emergency management personnel. Two grants have been submitted to BRIC and Z Smith Reynolds to complete the tool and begin training for local units of government in its use.
 - v. Staff is serving on the Statewide Resiliency Steering Committee to help guide development of a framework and implementation mechanisms for mitigation and recovery. Work continues on framework development and many staff have been involved in providing feedback to ensure the western region is well-represented in the process.
 - b. Assist in local, state, and federally led coronavirus recovery planning efforts among the most highly impacted communities as part of the CEDS;
 - i. Staff developed a regional Racial Disparity analysis to highlight challenges and opportunities for growth in our region:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4378eb31075b4732ab90c28d0cf538cb>
 - ii. Staff assisted develop an infrastructure application for a manufacturing entity in Buncombe County. The \$12 million grant was awarded by Golden Leaf Foundation to the Community Betterment Foundation, a division of the Asheville-Buncombe Chamber of Commerce. Land of Sky is administering the grant.
 - iii. Staff is assisting the City of Brevard with a Capital Improvement Plan for infrastructure extension in order to expand services, tax base, and opportunity for further economic development.
 - iv. Staff have worked with communities to submit applications for COVID – CARES Act funds for emergency housing relief, broadband assistance, and utility payments. We assisted develop 4 applications (one for each of our counties).
 - v. The ECD Director serves on the Regional Business Support EOC. This team has met virtually, twice a week since the beginning of the COVID19 declaration. The communication and collaboration has resulted in many successful projects and strategies to connect assistance and develop relationships for future efforts.
 - vi. Staff submitted a BBB Challenge proposal in collaboration with over 40 entities to work toward a more resilient region with higher wage, higher skill jobs in the data analytics cluster.
 - vii. Staff are submitting a Good Jobs Challenge for the region to better address training pathways for high-growth, high-need sectors.
- 2. **Provide Technical Assistance and capacity building** for member organizations, local businesses, and other local stakeholders impacted by coronavirus.
 - a. Provide support to small businesses through a coalition of Chambers of Commerce, Community Colleges, State and Federal agencies, and nonprofits. We will work closely with these entities to develop an ecosystem infographic and improve outreach to sole proprietors and businesses with fewer than 25 employees through local governments and the coalition.

- i. Complete Business Mapping – develop a regional map of ‘hubs’ of PPE and resource-based businesses and manufacturers.
 - ii. Provide Zoning & Planning support –
 1. Staff has created a mapping and collaboration effort has resulted in a DRAFT storymap highlighting outdoor based businesses and industry. This will serve as a guide for a broader regional connection to highlight outdoor recreation based opportunities, many of which are emerging economic drivers in the region.
<https://losrc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Shortlist/index.html?appid=6fc168900d01436191cf07805b53b505&edit>
 - iii. Provide Zoning & Planning support –
 1. Staff assisted seven communities update zoning ordinances to meet current regulatory changes and allow for housing and home-based business.
 2. Staff are working with 4 communities to update their land use plans.
 3. Staff are assisting 8 communities with grant administration and grant writing for planning projects.
 4. Staff have kicked of a stormwater consortium to assist communities address increasing flooding challenges in the region, education, and training for infrastructure.
 5. Staff have begun working with partners to address the childcare crisis in the region. Employers are expressing concern they are losing trained workforce due to lack of childcare, remote school requirements, and the gap in support for families with children. Staff have begun working with partners to address the childcare crisis in the region. Employers are expressing concern they are losing trained workforce due to lack of childcare, remote school requirements, and the gap in support for families with children.
 - iv. Staff served on the Regional PPE Taskforce and providing ongoing support and assistance connecting supply and demand for local governments, public agencies, and others while creating economic development opportunities for manufacturers in the region.
 - v. Staff is focusing on assisting develop connections among local government and businesses owned and comprised of Black, Indigenous and People of Color.
 - vi. Staff is assisting the region’s economic development group, CarolinaWest, implement an equity business model from the City of Asheville that builds opportunities for businesses of color to contract for government services.
- b. Staff is serving as the region WestNGN Broadband Coordinator. We are coordinating activities for broadband and WIFI connections in partnership with the NC DIT office, local governments, and providers. Through these relationships, we have been approached to implement around 100 WIFI locations in areas that lack connection and/or are economically vulnerable.

- i. We have worked with our region’s communities on 3 successful GREAT Broadband grants.
- ii. Staff submitted two successful Downtown WIFI grants.
- iii. Staff are partnering with local governments to administer a broadband inclusion plan for the region, in part funded by BAND NC.
- iv. Staff have provided support for Broadband companies to identify gaps in fiber and WIFI coverage, opportunities for funding assistance, and leveraging public funds where applicable.
- v. Staff have assisted develop, and serve as staff or members, broadband committees in each county to implement priority strategies to extend access and infrastructure.

Timeframe and Outputs

Activity	Timeframe	Status
Incorporate COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience into regional planning and implementation		
Data Collection, analysis and support for local governments, agencies and partners	Annually 6/30/2022	On-going - July 2020
Develop a Cross-walk of Local and Regional Plans for Resilience Factors	6/30/2021	Underway - August 2020
CEDS revision to incorporate COVID-19 impacts and priorities	1/1/2022	Complete
Assist in coronavirus recovery planning efforts		
Identify and facilitate economic development projects	6/30/2022	-Project Ranger application submitted (\$12M infrastructure to GLF) -I-26 Interchange/Access Road application development (EDA/ARC) -Mars Hill ED project funded through ARC -Henderson and Transylvania Counties ACCESS Roads funded
Serve as a liaison between local, state, and federal partners in order to speed the recovery process through strategic technical assistance	6/30/2022	On-going - July 2020 Resilience Workshops with EPA, NOAA, other partners
Small Business Support Ecosystem development and support		

<p>Business Mapping – regional map with partners of ‘hubs’ of PPE and resource-based businesses and manufacturers</p>	<p>3/30/2021</p>	<p>Complete - August 2020 with goal as interactive map. The EOC Business Support team has continued to meet biweekly and will continue indefinitely as impacts are still being felt and everyone acknowledges great value.</p>
<p>Zoning & Planning support – housing, changes due to parking, small business walk-ups, distancing, etc.</p>	<p>6/30/2022</p>	<p>On-going - July 2020 - TA provided as requested. Have been hosting housing partners meetings to facilitate working together and less duplication.</p>
<p>Regional PPE Taskforce participation and support</p>	<p>6/30/2022</p>	<p>Complete. This taskforce has been ended.</p>
<p>WestNGN Broadband Initiative</p>		
<p>Coordinate activities for broadband implementation throughout the region</p>	<p>6/30/2022</p>	<p>On-going - Grants, projects, and implementation. To date there have been 7 grants developed and approved for funding in the region. We have become the regional broadband TA for the greater western region and are administering many programs for the state to deliver equipment and service to bridge digital inequities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -digital planning complete -Project Connect – school hot spot lending program for low-income students -WIFI in underserved areas lacking broadband -mainstreet WIFI programs -WIFI in Public Housing -Community College laptop/hotspot lending program -assistance developing GREAT grants for community broadband connections -developing and refining broadband coverage data -relationship development with units of local governments, broadband providers, and cellular tower providers to improve opportunities for sustaining infrastructure improvements.