

2022



SWREDA  
Southwest Region Economic Development Association



# SWREDA CONFERENCE

## Building Resilient Regional Economies

The conference is being offered by the Southwest Region Economic Development Association (SWREDA) with planning assistance by the NADO Research Foundation and the Texas Association of Regional Councils with support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration Austin Regional Office.

> **April 27-29, 2022**  
Omni Houston Galleria  
Houston, TX



2022



**SWREDA**  
Southwest Region Economic Development Association

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Most photos in this program are from the EDA Austin Region and were provided to NADO by our members in the 5-state region as part of our annual photo contest which illustrates the work that EDDs are doing to support their regions. For more information, visit [www.nado.org](http://www.nado.org).

## > Conference Logistics

- Badges should be worn throughout the conference.
- Conference room temperatures vary; we suggest you layer your clothing and adjust as needed.
- Conference attire is business casual.
- The conference meeting rooms are located on two floors in the Omni:
  - First floor: Observation Foyer, Gemini, Saturn, Apollo, Constellation, The Landing
  - Second floor: Greenway A, Greenway B, Westbury, Post Oak A & C

## > Stay Connected!

Stay connected during the conference using the free Wi-Fi throughout the conference area. Open the network "Omni Meeting" and enter the passcode SWREDA2022.



Tweeting about the conference? Use the hashtag #SWREDA22.



Facebook.com/nado.org  
@NADOWeb

## > Conference Registration

Conference registration will occur in the Observation Foyer. Stop by to pick up your conference packet and name badge.

## > Registration Hours

**Wednesday, April 27**

7:30 am – 5:30 pm

**Thursday, April 28**

8:00 am – 4:30 pm

**Friday, April 29**

8:30 am – 11:30 am

# SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

## > WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27

**7:30 am – 5:00 pm**  
Conference Registration *Observation Foyer*

**8:00 am – 12:00 pm**  
EDA Austin Peer Reviews *Greenway A*

**9:00 am – 11:00 am**  
University Center Meeting *Greenway B*

**11:15 am – 12:15 pm**  
Regional Director Meeting with  
New EDD Executive Directors *Saturn*

**11:15 am – 12:30 pm**  
SWREDA Board of Directors Meeting *Westbury*

**1:00 pm – 2:15 pm**  
OPENING PLENARY:  
State of the State and Region *Constellation  
Ballroom*

**2:15 pm – 2:30 pm**  
Break *Observation Foyer*

**2:30 pm – 3:30 pm**  
PLENARY SESSION:  
Federal Legislative Update *Constellation  
Ballroom*

**3:30 pm – 3:45 pm**  
Break *Observation Foyer*

**3:45 pm – 5:00 pm**  
PLENARY:  
Build Back Better Showcase *Constellation  
Ballroom*

**5:00 pm – 6:30 pm**  
RECEPTION:  
Build Back Better Roundtable Reception *The Landing*

## > THURSDAY, APRIL 28

**8:00 am – 4:30 pm**  
Conference Registration *Observation Foyer*

**9:00 am – 10:15 am**  
PLENARY SESSION:  
Trends in the Regional Economy and  
Opportunities for Economic  
Development *Constellation  
Ballroom*

**9:00 am – 11:30 am**  
Mobile Workshop to the East End  
Maker Hub *Hotel Lobby*

**10:15 am – 10:45 am**  
Break *Observation Foyer*

**10:45 am – 12:00 pm**  
CONCURRENT SESSIONS  
• Expanding Opportunities for  
Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses *Constellation East*  
• Creating Opportunities for Innovation *Constellation West*

**12:00 pm – 1:30 pm**  
Plenary Lunch *Post Oak A & C*

**1:45 pm – 3:00 pm**  
CONCURRENT SESSIONS  
• Surviving Economic Shock: Resiliency  
Strategies for Small Businesses *Constellation East*  
• Local Approaches to Small Business  
Development *Constellation West*

**3:00 pm – 3:15 pm**  
Break *Observation Foyer*

**3:15 pm – 4:30 pm**  
PLENARY SESSION:  
University Center Showcase *Constellation  
Ballroom*

## > FRIDAY, APRIL 29

**7:30 am – 9:00 am**  
Good Conversation Continental Breakfast *The Landing*

**9:15 am – 10:30 am**  
PLENARY SESSION:  
Putting the CEDS into Action *Constellation  
Ballroom*

**10:30 am – 11:00 am**  
Break / Hotel Checkout *Observation Foyer*

**11:00 am – 12:30 pm**  
PLENARY SESSION:  
EDA State of the Region and  
SWREDA Membership Meeting *Constellation  
Ballroom*

**12:30 pm**  
Conference Adjourns



# FULL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## > WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27

**7:30 am – 5:00 pm**

Conference Registration

*Observation Foyer*

**8:00 am – 12:00 pm**

EDA Austin Peer Reviews

*Greenway A*

Peer Reviews were scheduled with EDA staff; the schedule is available at the conference registration desk.

**9:00 am – 11:00 am**

University Center Meeting

*Greenway B*

Representatives from the EDA-funded University Centers in the EDA Austin region are invited to join EDA staff to share information about their programs and learn more about EDA's program objectives.

**11:15 am – 12:15 pm**

Regional Director Meeting with New EDD Executive Directors

*Saturn*

EDA Austin Regional Director Jorge Ayala invites all new Economic Development District executive directors (those on the job for three years or less) to join him for an informal meeting.

**11:15 am – 12:30 pm**

SWREDA Board of Directors Meeting

*Westbury*

**1:00 pm – 2:15 pm**

Opening Plenary: State of the State and Region

*Constellation Ballroom*

- **Conference Welcome:** *Sandy Chancey*, SWREDA Chair and Executive Director, Eastern Plains COG, NM
- **Welcome to Houston:** *Chuck Wemple*, Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council, TX
- **Welcome to Texas:** *The Honorable Greg Abbott*, Governor (virtual welcome)
- **State of the State and Region:** *The Honorable Glenn Hegar*, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

**2:15 pm – 2:30 pm**

Break

*Observation Foyer*

**2:30 pm – 3:30 pm**

Plenary Session: Federal Legislative Update

*Constellation Ballroom*

Stay on top of the latest news from Capitol Hill affecting Economic Development Districts and others engaged in regional development. NADO Executive Director Joe McKinney will offer insights into current legislative efforts in Congress, as well as relevant updates about EDA and other federal agencies.

- **Joe McKinney**, Executive Director, NADO, Washington, DC
- **Moderator:** *Sandy Chancey*, SWREDA Chair and Executive Director, Eastern Plains COG, NM

**3:30 pm – 3:45 pm**

Break

*Observation Foyer*

**3:45 pm – 5:00 pm**

Plenary: Build Back Better Showcase

*Constellation Ballroom*

In December 2021, EDA selected 60 Build Back Better Challenge Finalists from a pool of over 500 applicants, providing them with significant funding to fully develop their proposed projects and compete for additional funding to implement projects that focus on industry specific sectors. The finalists proposed projects to develop regional industry clusters that create job and income opportunities, promote economic equality, and foster the United States competitiveness in the global economy. Finalists from the EDA Austin region will share information about their projects.

- **Moderator:** *Betty Voights*, SWREDA Secretary-Treasurer and Executive Director, CAPCOG, TX

**The E-Health Transformation Center:** The Center is designed to promote economic growth and resilience through electronic health solutions, entrepreneurial health care technology, and equitable workforce development across Northwest Arkansas.

- **Amy Wenger**, Vice-Chancellor, UAMS Northwest Campus, AR
- **Ryan Cork**, Executive Director, Northwest Arkansas Council Healthcare Transformation Division, AR

**Addressing the Nursing Shortage in Southeast and Deep East Texas:** The project aims to address the nursing shortage within its health care services cluster through increased training programs for nurses, comprehensive recruiting strategies, and promoting entrepreneurship among nurses interested in launching businesses.

- **Ben Stafford**, PhD, Vice President for Workforce and Continuing Education, Lamar State College, TX

**Building the Oklahoma Biotech Innovation Center:** A cross-sector coalition will tackle regional challenges associated with the global biotech industry by investing in labs and research facilities, workforce training, and strategizing to build the region's biotech services to better compete globally.

- **Jeff Seymour**, Executive Vice President, Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, OK

**Tulsa Regional Advanced Mobility Corridor:** The Corridor will transform the region into a hub for R&D and the advanced mobility industry, boosting economic output and creating jobs.

- **Brian Bigbie**, Principal Economic Development Planner, Indian Nations Council of Governments, OK

**Reclaiming Aerospace and Defense Manufacturing Dominance through Frontier Technologies:** The project strives to close America's gap in aerospace and defense manufacturing capabilities through the creation of the West Texas Aerospace and Defense Manufacturing Coalition.

- **Annette Gutierrez**, Executive Director, Rio Grande COG, TX

**Gulf Coast Health Sciences Corridor:** This initiative hopes to build the region as a national leader in health sciences, focusing on obesity and chronic disease. The project will focus on workforce development opportunities for women, rural residents, and people of color.

- **Kris Khalil**, Executive Director & BioFund Managing Director, New Orleans BioInnovation Center, LA

**H2theFuture: A Transformative Energy Cluster Strategy to Decarbonize the South Louisiana Industrial Corridor:** H2the Future plans to build a green hydrogen energy cluster that will decarbonize the South Louisiana industrial corridor while creating and preserving jobs, offering skills training, and working to remedy historical economic, environmental, and social inequities.

- **Sara Bradford**, Vice President of Advancement, GNO, Inc., LA

**Information Technology:** Create New Mexico, a cross-sector coalition led by the Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce Foundation, is hoping to secure Build Back Better funds to grow New Mexico into a creative technology industry leader. The coalition hopes to build resilient infrastructure, expand business programs and opportunities, foster greater collaboration between R&D entities and creative tech companies, attract greater investments, and help Native and rural communities gain access into the global marketplace.

- **Jessica Gentry**, Regional Economic Competitiveness Officer, Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce, NM

### 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm

#### Reception: Build Back Better Roundtable Reception

Over light snacks and refreshments, talk with representatives of the Build Back Better finalist organizations and learn more about their collaborations, planned impacts on the communities, funding, and more.

*The Landing*

## > THURSDAY, APRIL 28

### 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

#### Conference Registration

*Observation Foyer*

### 9:00 am – 10:15 am

#### Plenary Session: Trends in the Regional Economy and Opportunities for Economic Development

*Constellation Ballroom*

Trends in today's global economy are sending shockwaves to local and regional economies across the world and throughout the communities we all serve. From supply chain issues to workforce challenges, RDOs are being called on to work collaboratively across their regions to find solutions. With a background in regional economic development and expertise in data sources and uses, our speaker will provide insights into how these trends are impacting regional economies and what they could mean for reshaping regional development moving forward.

- **Chris Schreck**, Community Engagement Manager, Federal Reserve Bank, TX
- **Moderator: Betty Voights**, SWREDA Secretary-Treasurer and Executive Director, CAPCOG, TX

**9:00 am – 11:30 am**

**Mobile Workshop to the East End Maker Hub**

*Hotel Lobby*

The Urban Partnerships Community Development Corporation and TXRX Labs collaborated to launch the East End Maker Hub (EEMH), a state-of-the-art makerspace and manufacturing center. The partnership leveraged \$37 million—including support from the EDA Austin Regional Office. EEMH is expected to generate over \$150 million in annual economic impact to the Houston economy, create over 400 jobs, support locally-owned businesses, and provide a slate of career and trade skills training programs. EEMH leadership will provide an overview of the Hub and a tour of the space. The Mobile workshop is limited to 28 attendees and there is an additional fee of \$40 to participate.

**10:15 am – 10:45 am**

**Break**

*Observation Foyer*

**10:45 am – 12:00 pm**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

**Expanding Opportunities for Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses**

*Constellation East*

Learn about interesting approaches to promoting entrepreneurs and small businesses: Sparkyard, an initiative of the UNT Health Science Center, is a no-cost platform that connects entrepreneurs to resources; the Amarillo College Innovation Outpost is a new approach to a makerspace that is supporting both existing and emerging industries in the Texas Panhandle; and the Houston-Galveston Local Development Corporation assisted small businesses with CARES Act funding and is part of the Equitable Lending Leaders Initiative.

- **Marco Johnson, MBA**, Sparkyard Network Builder, UNTHSC, TX
- **Russell Lowery-Hart, PhD**, President, Amarillo College, TX
- **Omar Fortune**, Manager, Houston-Galveston Local Development Corporation, H-GAC, TX
- **Moderator: Priscilla Lucero**, Executive Director, Southwest New Mexico COG, NM

**Creating Opportunities for Innovation**

*Constellation West*

Attend this session to learn about best practices for promoting innovation including the Tomball Innovation Lab, which provides entrepreneurs 3D, robotics, coding and subliminal printers in a unique makerspace lab, and Greentown Labs, a climate tech start-up incubator focused on clean energy applications.

- **Kelly Violette, CECD, PCED, AICP**, Executive Director, Tomball Economic Development Corporation, TX
- **Janna Hoglund, MLIS**, Director, LSC-Tomball Community Library, TX
- **Juliana Garaizar**, Vice President of Innovation, Greentown Labs, TX
- **Moderator: Jamie Setze**, SWREDA Vice Chair and Executive Director, Capital Region Planning Commission, LA

**12:00 pm – 1:30 pm**

**Plenary Lunch**

*Post Oak A & C*

- **Alejandra Castillo**, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, U.S. Economic Development Administration, Washington, DC
- **Moderator: Jorge Ayala**, Austin Regional Director, U.S. Economic Development Administration, TX

**1:45 pm – 3:00 pm**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

**Surviving Economic Shock: Resiliency Strategies for Small Businesses**

*Constellation East*

Learn about different approaches to helping small businesses survive the effects of natural or man-made disasters: Coastal Bend COG's risk assessment and resiliency program integrates data with hazard information to assess risk for project locations, and Lamar University's Small Business Toolkit for Resiliency which helps small and medium size businesses use risk management assessments.

- **James Slaydon, PhD**, Professor of Finance, Lamar University, TX
- **Gevorg Sargsyan, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Finance, Lamar University, TX
- **Emily Martinez**, Director of Regional Economic Development, Coastal Bend COG, TX
- **Henry Venta, PhD**, Professor of Management, Lamar University, Beaumont, TX
- **Katya Wowk**, Senior Scientist and Director of Texas OneGulf, Harte Research Institute, Texas A&M, TX
- **Moderator: Kyle Ingham**, Executive Director, Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, TX

## Local Approaches to Small Business Development

Constellation West

From mobile small business boot camps to retrofitting Quonset huts into food incubators to bringing Main Streets back, learn creative avenues for helping local businesses succeed.

- **Veronica Dimas**, Executive Director, Brownsville Wellness Coalition, TX
- **Cheryl Mergo**, Senior Manager, Community and Environmental Planning, H-GAC, TX
- **Chuck Vanderbilt**, Community and Economic Development Manager, East Texas Council of Governments, TX
- **Moderator: Renee Dycus**, SWREDA Immediate Past Chair, Executive Director, Southwest Arkansas PDD, AR

### 3:00 pm – 3:15 pm

Break

Observation Foyer

### 3:15 pm – 4:30 pm

#### Plenary Session: University Center Showcase

Constellation Ballroom

EDA's University Center (UC) program recognizes the vital role that colleges and universities play in regional economic ecosystems across the nation. The panelists will share information about their unique programs and how they are designed to support innovation, resiliency, and inclusiveness.

- **Jeff Howlett**, Executive Director, East Texas Entrepreneurship Center, University of Texas, TX
- **John Gamble, PhD**, Mary & Jeff Bell Endowed Distinguished Professor of Business, Texas A&M, TX
- **Ron Garza**, Associate Vice President, Workforce and Economic Development, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, TX
- **Moderator: Susan Geist**, Management and Program Analyst, U.S. Economic Development Administration, TX

## > FRIDAY, APRIL 29

### 7:30 am – 9:00 am

#### Good Conversation Continental Breakfast

The Landing

Enjoy breakfast as you discuss topics of interest to you with your peers from across the five-state region.

- **Jamie Setze**, SWREDA Vice Chair and Executive Director, Capital Region Planning Commission, LA

### 9:15 am – 10:30 am

#### Plenary Session: Putting the CEDS into Action: Goal Setting, Project Planning, and Implementation

Constellation Ballroom

The goal of the CEDS process is not just to make an accessible, well-researched, and engaging planning document. It is ultimately meant to encourage action and create the space for impactful projects and initiatives to emerge that meet the economic development goals of your region. During this wide-ranging session, you'll hear about the benefits of setting S.M.A.R.T goals through the CEDS, opportunities to benchmark progress, a perspective from EDA on identifying and implementing effective projects, and case studies from EDDs on how projects emerged from the CEDS process to go on to make a real impact in their regions.

- **Brian Kelsey**, Assistant City Manager, City of Edinburg, TX
- **Stacey Webb**, Economic Development Representative, U.S. Economic Development Administration, TX
- **Emily Gojkovich**, Economic Development Planner, Southwest New Mexico Council of Governments, NM
- **Melissa Rivers**, Executive Director, East Arkansas Planning and Development District, AR
- **Moderator: Heather Urena**, Executive Director, Kisatchie-Delta Regional Planning and Development District, LA

### 10:30 am – 11:00 am

Break / Hotel Checkout

Observation Foyer

### 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

#### Plenary Session: EDA State of the Region and SWREDA Membership Meeting

Constellation Ballroom

- **Jorge Ayala**, Regional Director, U.S. Economic Development Administration, TX
- **Sandy Chancey**, SWREDA Chair and Executive Director, Eastern Plains COG, NM

### 12:30 pm

Conference Adjourns



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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