DRAFT EMAIL/LETTER TEMPLATE TO BE SENT TO YOUR SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE

Month day, 2025

Dear Senator/Representative,

On behalf of [my organization,] as well as other Economic Development District (EDD) organizations similar to mine across the country that are federally designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA), I am reaching out to ask for your support in including **robust funding for EDA,** and particularly for **EDA Partnership Planning funding,** in FY 2026 appropriations.

Specifically, I encourage Congress to include at least **$100 million for EDA Partnership Planning** in the final **FY 2026 Commerce, Justice, Science,** and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

**$100 million is the authorized funding level for EDA Partnership Planning**, and I encourage Congress to provide an appropriated funding level that is equivalent to the authorized amount. As you may know, EDA and its programs were recently reauthorized when the *Water Resources Development Act (Senate Bill 4367)* was signed into law on January 4, 2025 following its passage in the House and Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support. Title II of the legislation, *the Economic Development Reauthorization Act of 2024,* reauthorized the EDA and many of its programs.

An increase in EDA Partnership Planning funding is particularly needed because, **currently, each locally-based EDD receives just $70,000 annually, which is barely enough to cover the salary of one full-time staff person** who is tasked with carrying out EDA’s federally-mandated requirements for local EDDs, such as the process of creating an updating a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) plan for the region.

A funding level of $100 million overall would provide closer to $250,000 annually for each EDD, of which there are 400+ total across the country. This would allow most EDDs to hire and retain **at least two full-time dedicated staff members** to carry out EDA-mandated responsibilities.

Although EDA’s current overall annual appropriation level is **40% higher** than it was five years ago, funds for local EDA Partnership Planning funds have increased by **less than 5%** within the same timeframe. This places an increasingly heavy administrative burden on the very same core local stakeholders that EDA is designed to support, by overburdening local EDD organizations like mine with implementation responsibilities without providing enough funding for project planning and administrative and staff capacity. As a result, EDDsare under pressure to administer and manage high volumes of projects and to fulfill federally mandated responsibilities without sufficient support. This problem disproportionately impacts many **rural communities** and persistently economically under-resourced regions.

Beginning in FY 2021, appropriators took important steps to begin incrementally increasing the Partnership Planning funding level. EDDs are grateful for recent incremental increases, however the Partnership Planning funding level for FY24 has fallen back once again, down to **$34.5 million**. Generally, the appropriation level for Partnership Planning has continued to remain relatively flat, even while EDA’s overall appropriation has continued to receive substantial increases over time. Furthermore, modest increases in Partnership Planning do not adequately support or keep pace with the needs of the more than 400 EDDs facilitating local community and economic development support work nationally.

In fact, the Congressionally appropriated annual increases for Partnership Planning over the past five years have been so minor that **EDA has made an administrative decision** **not** **to provide any additional planning funds** directly to EDDs. No increase in annual funding levels was provided by EDA to its local EDD stakeholdersin FY 2021, FY 2022, or FY 2023, despite the Congressionally appropriated increases for Partnership Planning during each of those years.

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| **Economic Development Administration** | **FY 2020** | **FY 2021** | **FY 2022** | **FY 2023** | **FY 2024** | **FY 2025** | **FY 2026**  **NADO Request** |
| EDA Overall Appropriation | $333  million | $346  million | $373.5  million | $498  million | $468  million | N/A | \_\_\_ |
| Total – Economic Development Assistance Programs | $292.5  million | $305.5  million | $330  million | $430  million | $400  million | N/A | At least **$545 million** is requested, which is the authorized funding level. |
| **Partnership Planning** | **$33**  **million** | **$33.5**  **million** | **$34.5**  **million** | **$36**  **million** | **$34.5**  **million** | **N/A** | At least **$100 million** is requested, which is the authorized funding level. |

Given the small nature of recent annual appropriations increases for this line item, along with the steadily growing volume of EDDs becoming designated every year and other stakeholders also vying for these resources, **EDA has not provided any additional EDA Partnership Planning funding to local EDD stakeholders**. For these reasons, Congressional action is critically needed to increase Partnership Planning funding in FY 2026.

EDA Partnership Planning Grants are crucially important because they help support local economic and community development organizations and their work. EDA-designated Economic Development Districts use EDA planning funds to: facilitate the EDA-mandated local planning process to help ensure the success of subsequent EDA project investments; to assist other local organizations with grant writing and applications for EDA funding; to solicit local public input to determine which local projects are priorities for EDA investment; and to help other local EDA grantees steward the funding they receive properly.

For these reasons, **Congressional action is needed to increase Partnership Planning funding in FY 2026 to at least $100 million.**

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Organization