

UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

September 7, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide two key recommendations on ways the federal government can assist states and communities in integrating tourism into broader economic development and disaster planning, which is critical to the success of the United States tourism industry.

Our recommendations focus on the alignment of local and regional tourism plans with regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS), as part of the EDA's Economic Development Districts so that tourism is included in economic development and disaster planning by the federal government. As CEDS are the gateway for USEDA federal funding and support for disaster recovery efforts, the travel industry must be better informed on how the CEDS can be used to support tourism entities—including small businesses and minority businesses. It is critical that the Department lead the federal effort to include tourism in economic development initiatives nationwide, and these recommendations aim to facilitate industry access to federal economic development resources and disaster recovery support.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1 - The Department of Commerce develop and communicate a summary of federal resources to tourism and economic development entities, which details how to access tourism planning and disaster recovery support.

- Develop a strategy/process to consolidate a listing of federal resources for tourism planning and disaster recovery to share with tourism and economic entities, to include a summary of resources available and the process for applying for support across various federal agencies.
- Provide training programs on how federal grants and disaster recovery funds are tied to CEDS. This would include how to align with state and regional economic development plans and transparent guidelines across the EDA regions for emergency funds and grant programs.
- Increase messaging that tourism strategies should be incorporated into economic development in resiliency planning and destination recovery strategies and stress the value of including tourism stakeholders in the CEDS planning and renewal processes through the efforts of the EDA.

Recommendation #2 - The Department of Commerce prioritize efforts to provide timely data on climate-related events, natural disasters, and other crises.

- In December 2021, the TTAB recommended that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) develop a communication resource to share forecasted extreme

weather events with the tourism industry, and other business sectors, to allow regions time to adequately prepare for both short-term and long-term impacts. We suggest prioritizing this effort, and for the EDA and NOAA to provide training programs for the tourism industry to understand 1) how to access the NOAA data, and 2) how to utilize the NOAA tools and reports for preparing risk assessments, disaster recovery, and crisis management plans. NOAA resources can also help communities develop messaging to potential visitors to redirect travel to non-impacted areas rather than cancelling travel plans, and develop consistent messaging around fire safety, flooding, and other weather-related events.

- Engage stakeholders from the tourism industry to provide input on the update of the National Disaster Recovery Framework. This will provide FEMA with additional insight on how to work together to restore communities following a disaster.
- Expand the efforts of the SBA's Office of Disaster Assistance to provide training and assistance to help with disaster planning and recovery. The SBA is working to prepare business owners for various threats, including those related to natural disaster and workforce issues.

Following a disaster, the recovery of the tourism industry is critical to the disaster response effort. We believe that increased training and education of tourism and economic development leaders is critical for disaster preparation, crisis communication, and implementation of recovery plans.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support of the travel and tourism industry. We are grateful that you've initiated this process to ensure that travel and tourism is integrated in current and future economic development and disaster planning. We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations and are committed to assisting in the implementation of these initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,



Bill Hornbuckle
Chair

Brad Dean
Vice Chair

APPENDIX

Potential Resources for Recommendation #1

- Overview of EDA's support for regional economic development planning via [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#). Includes:
 - [CEDS Content Guidelines](#). The CEDS Content Guidelines were developed by EDA to provide practical recommendations about the content and format of a CEDS that will result in an engaging, technically sound strategy for guiding regional development.
 - Information about EDA designated regional [Economic Development District \(EDD\)](#) organizations that help lead local CEDS processes.
- EDA's [Economic Development Directory](#) can help stakeholder identify the EDD in their region, as well as other State and regional economic development agencies and resources to collaborate with to better align tourism and economic development plans and projects.
- EDA supports the CEDS process through its [Partnership Planning](#) program, which provides grants to EDA designated Economic Development Districts and Tribal planning partners to develop and implement CEDS. EDA can also support state and regional planning to support economic development, including plans for strengthening regional travel and tourism economies, through its [Economic Adjustment Assistance](#) program.
- Projects seeking assistance under EDA's [Economic Adjustment Assistance](#) and [Public Works](#) grant programs must be consistent with the region's current CEDS or an equivalent economic development plan.
- EDA has also supported efforts that encourage stronger alignment among CEDS and other state and regional planning efforts through our [Economic Development Integration](#) practice and tools, such as these materials that illustrate opportunities and benefits of [coordinating CEDS and HUD Consolidated planning processes](#) to reinforce economic and community development goals. And we are currently partnering with FEMA on materials that can assist state and local entities coordinate between CEDS and Hazard Mitigation planning for more resilient and equitable regional economies.
- [National Economic Resilience Data Explorer \(NERDE\)](#). Argonne National Labs
Argonne has developed a data dashboard to help a variety of users across the country with local economic recovery and resilience analysis. The National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE) consolidates information and data on economic distress criteria, COVID-19 impacts to local economies, and the existence and emergence of industry clusters at the county-level.
- [CEDS Central](#) NADO Research Foundation
This website assists Economic Development Districts and other regional entities as they undertake regionally owned planning processes to craft impactful, technically sound strategies guiding economic development through trainings, technical assistance, webinars, publications, and more.
- [CEDS Library - StatsAmerica](#) Searchable access to Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) by Economic Development Districts nationwide. Highlighted tools within StatsAmerica that may be of particular interest:
 - [The Regionizer- StatsAmerica](#). This tool allows users to build customized regional data profiles based on the counties you choose. Data profiles include demographic, housing, commuting, occupation clusters, and industry clusters metrics.
 - Links to other valuable data sources and tools for planners, including the Census Bureau's [Census Business Builder -Regional Analyst Edition](#)
- Economic Recovery Support Function (ERSF) <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/recovery/recovery-support-functions/economic-rsf>

- The National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)
https://www.eda.gov/archives/2016/pdf/NDRF_Fact_Sheet.pdf