



The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) is working to ensure that regional councils – large, small, urban and rural – are incorporated into national economic development initiatives that promote building sustainable, workable and livable communities.

CURRENT STATE – The nature of a global marketplace, aging infrastructure, an expanding service sector and lack of federal and state monies are being felt in all corners of the U.S. post-industrial economy. Significant change and improvements are required in order to maintain national and international competitiveness and sustainability.

REGIONAL COUNCIL ROLE – Regional councils are at the forefront of innovative practices and entrepreneurship that support community, economic, rural and workforce development activities. In each of these development arenas, regional councils are recognized as experienced partners, consensus builders and program managers. They have a proven record for, administering local, state and federal funds and programs that bolster the economic vitality of a region.

Regional councils collaborate with local and multi-jurisdictional government leaders, enterprises that create jobs, citizen groups, and other organizations. Regional councils develop innovative approaches and replicable practices that support strategic investments for sustainability and growth agendas in the nation's communities and regions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA) – EDA programs have provided an invaluable resource to the nation's communities as they have moved to implement regional strategies that promote innovation and worldwide competitiveness. Continuance of these programs is critical to sustain the nation's posture in the world economy.

Sufficient and sustained funding for the Economic Development Administration (EDA) is needed to maintain the important functions of EDA contributions to planning, public works and community development in urban and rural areas. These core programs and EDA's long-standing relationship with economic development districts is essential to regional economic development, particularly in rural areas.

FARM BILL – Rural development is critical to the economic sustainability and growth of non-urbanized areas, which are largely agricultural, rich in natural resources and uniquely diverse. Regional councils are key players in advancing rural development through innovative and comprehensive strategic planning and alliances with private, public and nonprofit entities. NARC supports increased investment through the 2007 Farm Bill, particularly the core programs of the Rural Development title, providing stronger and more flexible authority and coordination at the rural planning and regional levels.

HOUSING – The preservation and creation of safe, affordable housing is essential for continued prosperity in America among families, in our communities and to support our businesses. The availability of and access to affordable housing near employment is increasingly more important to remain competitive in a global marketplace. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires increased funding to allow for support and expansion of vital economic and community development programs, both rural and urban, to promote regionalism, and stimulate commerce and sustainable growth.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – A trained, readily available workforce is essential to retain existing industries and to attract new ones in America's communities. RCs and MPOs promote regional and market-based approaches to worker training through strategic alliances with the private sector, community leaders and academic institutions. Local elected officials, many who serve on regional council and MPO boards, provide strong leadership and sound oversight for workforce programs.

REGIONAL COMMISSIONS – The growing national needs and the successes of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has prompted the establishment of five new regional commissions to retain a strong federal/state/local/regional partnership focused on the endemic economic development problems of certain regions. It is essential that these commissions, including ARC, are fully funded to continue flexible programming to prioritize, plan and execute critical economic development programs that improve the region(s).