



### ISSUE

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) supports sufficient and sustained funding for regional economic development opportunities in urban, suburban and rural areas that invest in infrastructure development, job creation and boosting local, regional and national economies.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### PARTNERSHIPS

- Support and enhance the federal-state-local-regional partnership on economic development issues.
- Engage directly with local elected officials, who understand the local needs, opportunities and obligations through their “on-the-ground” perspective.
- Encourage local collaboration on a regional-scale for the planning and implementation of economic development initiatives and infrastructure projects in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.
- Enhance opportunities for public-private partnerships with businesses and academic institutions in urban and rural areas.
- Expand the federal interagency Sustainable Communities Partnership to include U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Support federal-state regional commissions such as the Appalachian Regional Commission.

#### FUNDING

- Reauthorize the Economic Development Administration (EDA) through a five-year reauthorization at FY2008 funding level of \$500 million (at a minimum) to provide for programs and operations resources at all levels of the agency.
- Increase funding and flexibility for EDA’s core programs – Planning, Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs.
- Support regional economic cluster initiatives through new funding sources that benefit urban and rural areas.
- Reauthorize the Farm Bill with enhanced resources for rural development opportunities, particularly as it relates to infrastructure maintenance or creation.
- Increase disaster response and recovery funding in applicable reauthorization bills.
- Fund brownfields cleanup and assessment programs, and eliminate regulatory hurdles that hinder economic development.
- Support regional food system planning that links rural and urban networks, and connects comprehensive regional planning.
- Provide increased funding for local capacity and technical assistance to local governments and regional planning organizations.
- Authorize “Regional Infrastructure Improvement Zones” (RIIZs), a change to the federal tax code that would allow for businesses or individuals to make tax deductible contributions toward COG/MPO pre-approved infrastructure projects.

#### PROGRAM

- Support locally-driven, flexible livable community strategies to help spur economic development opportunities.
- Provide opportunities that encourage and support regional approaches to comprehensive economic development.
- Endorse holistic approaches to economic development and seek coordination among federal agencies that are responsible for economic development issues to streamline and maximize programs, policies and funding.
- Assist communities and all regions in pursuing economic development and vitality.
- Use current and create new federal tools to help distressed communities with long-term economic stagnation, persistent unemployment, chronic shortages of private investment capital and poverty.
- Support regional planning efforts for broadband expansion and implementation, particularly in rural areas.
- Provide incentives to regions and localities that perform comprehensive, integrated regional planning and innovative implementation that crosslink transportation, housing and economic development with environmental considerations.
- Support opportunities and incentives for expansion of alternative energy research programs and renewable energy grants to enhance urban and rural economies.
- Enhance efforts that provide a new framework of innovation for promoting economic development and job creation in rural communities.

### BACKGROUND

The economic health and competitiveness of the United States depends on creating strong regional and local economies. Regional planning organizations – large and small, urban and rural – have in-depth experience in leading economic development initiatives and policies to promote sustainable, workable and livable communities. The federal government must leverage public and private investment, incentives, innovation and entrepreneurship to ensure that local governments and regional planning organizations have the tools needed to make communities economically vibrant and sustainable.