

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** Economic Development Administration (EDA), Department of Commerce
- **Federal Funding Opportunity Title:** *Economic Development Research Project to Assess the Effectiveness of EDA's Economic Development District Partnership Planning Program and the Quality of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies – National Technical Assistance, Training, Research and Evaluation Program* under section 207 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. § 3147), as amended.
- **Announcement Type:** Initial announcement of federal funding opportunity dated July 27, 2009.
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.312, Economic Development—Research and Evaluation
- **Dates:** To be considered timely, a completed application, regardless of the format in which it is submitted, must be either: (a) transmitted and time-stamped at www.grants.gov no later than September 8, 2009 at 5:00 pm Eastern Time; or (b) received by the EDA representative listed in section VII. of this announcement no later than September 8, 2009 at 5:00 pm Eastern Time. Any application transmitted or received, as the case may be, after that deadline will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered for funding. Because this announcement solicits applications for a single research project and it is anticipated that a single award will be made, EDA expects to notify the applicant selected for investment assistance under this announcement by September 30, 2009.
- **Application Submissions:** Applications may be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov or via email to Hillary Sherman at HSherman@eda.doc.gov. Paper (hardcopy) applications may be submitted to EDA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. by hand-delivery or postal mail. Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring that EDA receives complete, accurate, and timely applications. *See* section IV.D. of this announcement for application submission information.
- **Federal Funding Opportunity Description:** Pursuant to the National Technical Assistance, Research and Evaluation Program, EDA is soliciting applications for an economic development research project that addresses the effectiveness of EDA's Economic Development District Partnership Planning Program and the quality of associated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) developed under the Program.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Federal Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective and Solicitation Information

The Economic Development Administration's (EDA) mission is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. Through its National Technical Assistance, Training, Research and Evaluation (NTA) Program, EDA works towards fulfilling its mission by funding research and technical assistance projects to promote the competitiveness and innovation of distressed rural and urban regions throughout the United States and its territories. By working in conjunction with its research partners, EDA assists States, local governments, and community-based organizations to achieve their highest economic potential.

EDA advises applicants to read carefully the description of the research project set forth below. If an applicant submits more than one application under this announcement, EDA will evaluate only the first application received and will consider subsequent applications non-responsive. All submissions under this announcement should propose rigorous, peer-review quality methods for conducting research and identify practitioner-accessible methods and tools by which the research can be disseminated to the economic development community.

B. Project Description

EDA's Planning Program is one of six economic development assistance programs the agency operates under its authorizing legislation, the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 3121 *et seq.*) (PWEDA). Under the Planning Program EDA provides assistance to eligible recipients to create regional economic development plans in order to stimulate and guide the economic development efforts of a community or region. As part of the Planning Program, EDA supports Partnership Planning investments to Economic Development Districts (EDDs) to facilitate the development, implementation, revision, or replacement of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs).

Pursuant to its NTA Program, EDA is soliciting applications for an economic development research project to evaluate the effectiveness of EDA's EDD Partnership Planning Program and to complete an assessment of EDDs' CEDs documents.

Project Title: Assessing the Effectiveness of EDA's EDD Partnership Planning Program and the Quality of CEDs

Background Statement

Communities across the United States are developing regional economic development strategies and working to create new regional innovation clusters in order to remain competitive in the global economy. In this environment, a coordinated regional planning effort, as fostered

by EDA's EDD Partnership Planning Program and articulated in a CEDS, is a critical component of successful regional economic development.

About Economic Development Districts

EDA provides Partnership Planning grants to over 370 EDDs. These grants enable EDDs to manage and coordinate the development and implementation of CEDS to address the unique needs of their respective regions. In addition, EDDs organize and assist with the implementation of economic development activities within their regions. It is important to note that EDDs work in a wide variety of environments. Distressed regions exhibit a variety of economic environments that may be influenced by a number of factors, including population density (such as urban, suburban, metro-rural, and non metro-rural) and available human and financial resources. Although EDA recognizes that these and other exogenous factors may impact economic outcomes regardless of EDD performance or the quality of a CEDS, the agency continues to find that, all else equal, improved EDD performance and CEDS quality increase the probability of improved economic development outcomes.

About the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The CEDS results from a comprehensive strategic planning process and is designed to serve as a guide for local practitioners seeking to leverage their region's assets, create thriving clusters of innovation, and address potential threats to economic stability and growth. In short, the CEDS serves as a regional economic development "cookbook." It describes regional assets, assesses opportunities, and addresses regional challenges over a five-year horizon. Ideally, the CEDS incorporates, at least by reference, key factors including workforce statistics, industry clusters, natural resources, and transportation.

Proposed Study

The project proposed under this FFO consists of two phases: Phase I – EDD Effectiveness Evaluation and Phase II – CEDS Quality Assessment. The successful recipient will be expected to undertake and complete both. EDA expects methodologically rigorous applications capable of producing peer-review quality research that advances the understanding of economic development professionals, while providing practitioner-accessible tools. Additionally, the outcomes from this research should build upon the findings and work products from previous EDA research, including the work on industry and occupational clusters conducted by Purdue University and the Indiana Business Research Center (available at <http://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/>) and work on regional strategic planning conducted by Western Carolina University (available at <http://knowyourregion.wcu.edu/>).

Phase I: EDD Effectiveness Evaluation

During Phase I, the recipient will determine and report on the characteristics and components of effective EDDs, develop and test an EDD Evaluation Tool that will assess these characteristics and components, and report to EDA on recommended methods to improve EDD performance.

Phase II: CEDS Quality Assessment

During Phase II, the recipient will assess the effectiveness of the CEDS development process and resulting document, develop and test an Assessment Tool for the CEDS document, and report to EDA on recommended methods to improve CEDS guidance and requirements.

At the completion of both phases, EDA anticipates that the recipient will provide training to local planning organizations, EDDs, and EDA staff. *See* the section titled “EDD Evaluation and CEDS Assessment Training” below for more information.

Tasks

The project tasks are separated into Phase I and Phase II. *See* “Completion Deadlines” below for more information on the phase deadlines. To be considered responsive, applicants must ensure that applications provide concrete information on how the required tasks for both Phases I and II will be completed and provided to EDA. To the extent practicable, open source data should be utilized. If proprietary data is employed, an estimate of the long-term costs should be included in the application. In the case of tools, case studies, and other practitioner accessible tasks, integration with previous EDA research on industry and occupational clusters and regional strategic planning, as noted above, should be considered.

In the context of this FFO, “practitioner-accessible” means that an output or product should be universally user-friendly, intuitive, and easy to understand and implement by economic development practitioners in the field. Also, EDA expects that any such output or product should be formatted to be posted on a publicly accessible website, preferably in portable document format (PDF).

Phase I: Analysis of EDDs and Development of a Comprehensive Tool to Evaluate EDD Effectiveness

1. Practitioner-accessible report on EDD Effectiveness.

The EDD Effectiveness report has four components:

(a) Results of a study on the effectiveness of EDDs. The recipient must develop and report on a peer-review quality method for evaluating the qualitative and quantitative components and key indicators of effective EDDs. Indicators should focus on the areas of: (i) management standards; (ii) financial accountability; (iii) program performance; and (iv) other areas that are identified based on current literature and best practices. EDA’s regulatory requirements for evaluating EDDs, which are set out at 13 C.F.R. § 304.4(a), should be incorporated into any evaluation method that is developed.

(b) A detailed description of the methods for developing and testing the EDD Evaluation Tool, the requirements of which are provided below in Phase I, paragraph 2.

(c) Results of the EDD Evaluation sampling as described below in Phase I, paragraph 3.

(d) EDD best practices case studies as described below in Phase I, paragraph 4.

Task Format: Research resulting from this analysis should be provided to EDA in a peer-review quality, professionally organized, and practitioner-accessible final report on EDD effectiveness.

2. Development of practitioner-accessible EDD Evaluation Toolkit.

The EDD Evaluation Toolkit has three components:

(a) An EDD Evaluation Tool that must: (i) provide qualitative and quantitative means of assessing EDD effectiveness; and (ii) incorporate the EDD evaluation criteria set out at 13 C.F.R. § 304.4(a).

(b) A rating system or score card to evaluate EDDs based on the identified indicators of effectiveness and a set of broad recommendations for strategic methods to mitigate low levels of performance identified through the evaluation process must accompany the EDD Evaluation Tool.

(c) A description of appropriate strategies for implementing the Evaluation Tool and any training materials (handbooks, directions, etc.) necessary to prepare local planning organizations, EDDs, and EDA staff to use the Evaluation Tool in evaluating EDDs.

The applicant must provide a detailed description of the proposed methods for developing and testing the Evaluation Tool in the practitioner-accessible EDD Evaluation report as described above in Phase I, paragraph 1.

Task Format: The Evaluation Tool, accompanying rating system and recommendations for strategic methods to mitigate low levels of performance, implementation strategies, and training materials should be provided in a practitioner-accessible training Toolkit.

Training on the purpose, function, and use of the EDD Evaluation Tool should be provided to EDA headquarters and regional office staff and to EDDs. Please see the section titled “EDD Evaluation and CEDS Assessment Training” below for more information.

3. Evaluation of a sample of EDDs using the EDD Evaluation Tool and a comparative analysis of results.

The applicant should highlight a proposed approach for evaluating a sample of EDDs with the EDD Evaluation Tool, as well as an easily replicable method for conducting comparative analysis of results.

Task Format: Results of the evaluation of a sample of EDDs should be provided to EDA in an appendix to the final report on EDD Effectiveness as described above in Phase I, paragraph 1. The results of the evaluation should be redacted to exclude any information that would identify the subject organizations.

4. Identification of best practices in EDD effectiveness.

The recipient should provide best practice examples of how EDDs affect positive economic outcomes for each identified qualitative and quantitative key indicator incorporated into the EDD Evaluation Tool. In the interest of providing successful EDD strategies in a variety of regional environments, if available, the recipient should provide a best practice example of each indicator in each of the following type of region: (i) non-metro rural, (ii) metro, (iii) suburban, and (iv) metro-influenced rural regions.

Task Format: Best practices should be synthesized into a series of practitioner-accessible case studies. These case studies should be delivered in two ways. First, the case studies should be included in the final report on EDD effectiveness as described above in Phase I, paragraph 1. Second, the recipient should format the case studies to be made separately available through a publicly available website as part of EDA's ongoing efforts to ensure relevant research is made widely accessible to economic development professionals.

5. A report to EDA recommending methods to improve the performance indicators of the EDD program.

Based on the research described above, the applicant will identify methods that could strengthen internal and external performance indicators for the EDD Program.

Task Format: Recommendations for program impacts criteria and internal/external performance measures should be provided in a report to EDA. Note that this report is separate from the final EDD Effectiveness Report described above in Phase I, paragraph 1.

Phase I: Summary of Tasks – to be provided to EDA at the conclusion of Phase I

- Practitioner-accessible final report on EDD effectiveness formatted to be posted on a publicly available website. Report components are:

- A method for evaluating the qualitative and quantitative components and key indicators of effective EDDs (*see* Phase I, paragraph 1);
 - A description of the methods for developing and testing the EDD Evaluation Tool (*see* Phase I, paragraph 1);
 - An evaluation of a sample of EDDs using the EDD Evaluation Tool and a comparative analysis of results (*see* Phase I, paragraph 3); and
 - Case Studies on Best Practices in EDD Effectiveness (*see* Phase I, paragraph 4).
- Practitioner-accessible EDD Evaluation Toolkit formatted to be posted on a publicly available website. Toolkit components are:
 - An EDD Evaluation Tool (*see* Phase I, paragraph 2);
 - An EDD rating system (*see* Phase I, paragraph 2);
 - An implementation method (*see* Phase I, paragraph 2);
 - Recommendations for strategic methods to mitigate low levels of performance (*see* Phase I, paragraph 2); and
 - Training materials (*see* Phase I, paragraph 2).
 - Case studies formatted to be posted on a publicly available website (*see* Phase I, paragraph 4).
 - Report to EDA on improving EDD Program Performance, including prospective new performance indicators (*see* Phase I, paragraph 5).

Phase II: Analysis of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Development of a CEDS Quality Assessment Tool

1. Practitioner-accessible CEDS Assessment Report.

The CEDS Assessment Report has five components:

- (a) Results of an analysis of the CEDS development process and resulting document. The recipient must create an analysis backed by peer-review quality research that identifies quantitative and qualitative components of CEDS that help regions to become competitive, sustainable, and agile.
- (b) A detailed description of the methods for developing and testing the CEDS Assessment Tool as described below in Phase II, paragraph 2.
- (c) CEDS template as described below in Phase II, paragraph 3.
- (d) Results of the CEDS Assessment Tool sampling as described below in Phase II, paragraph 3.
- (e) Best quality CEDS examples as described below in Phase II, paragraph 4.

Task Format: The final CEDS Assessment Report should be practitioner-accessible and formatted to be posted on a publicly available website.

2. Practitioner-accessible CEDS Assessment Toolkit.

The CEDS Assessment Toolkit has two components:

(a) A CEDS Assessment Tool that provides qualitative and quantitative means of assessing the CEDS document and incorporates a rating system or score card. The CEDS Assessment Tool should evaluate the 10 technical elements required by the CEDS as set out at 13 C.F.R. § 303.7(b). In addition, it should consider:

- (i) The identification of community economic needs identified in a CEDS and the CEDS' responsiveness to these needs;
- (ii) The level of participation of the region's stakeholders in preparing a CEDS; and
- (iii) The quality of a CEDS' implementation plan.

(b) Any training materials (handbooks, directions, etc.) necessary to prepare local planning organizations, EDDs, and EDA staff to use the Assessment Tool in assessing CEDS.

In addition, the recipient should provide a detailed description of the methods proposed for developing, testing, and implementing the CEDS Assessment Tool within the CEDS Assessment Report as described above in Phase II, paragraph 1.

Task Format: The CEDS Assessment Tool, rating system, and training materials should be provided in a practitioner-accessible training Toolkit. Training on the purpose, function, and use of the CEDS Assessment Tool should be provided to EDA headquarters and regional office staff. Please see the section titled "EDD Evaluation and CEDS Assessment Training" below for more information.

3. Formulation of a practitioner-accessible standardized CEDS template for EDDs to use as they develop, implement, revise or replace a CEDS.

This standardized CEDS template should comply with EDA's requirements for CEDS as set out at 13 C.F.R. § 303.7 and provide general guidance on how the 10 required technical elements of the CEDS should be developed, including information on data sources and examples of best practices. This template should highlight factors identified that make regions competitive, sustainable, and agile.

Task Format: The standardized CEDS template should be included in the final CEDS Assessment Report to EDA as described above in Phase II, paragraph 1.

4. Assessment of a sample of CEDS using the CEDS Assessment Tool.

The applicant should highlight proposed methods for evaluating a diverse sample of CEDS. The report should include an easily replicable method for conducting a comparative analysis of CEDS.

Task Format: Results of the assessment of a sample of CEDS should be provided to EDA in an appendix to the final CEDS Assessment Report described above in Phase II, paragraph 1. The results of the evaluation should be redacted to exclude any information that would identify the subject organizations.

5. Identification of CEDS best practices to provide a detailed explanation of the reasons why the examples have been selected.

At least two best practice quality examples should be provided for each of the 10 required technical elements of the CEDS. Also, at least two best practice quality examples of a complete CEDS document that represent both urban and rural communities should be provided.

Task Format: Best practice quality examples should be provided to EDA in two ways. First, they should be included in an appendix to the final CEDS Assessment Report to EDA. Second, they should be formatted separately to be posted on a publicly available website as part of EDA's ongoing efforts to ensure relevant research is made widely accessible to economic development practitioners.

6. A report to EDA with recommendations on how the existing CEDS guidance and requirements could be improved to more effectively address relevant issues in regional economic development, including innovation, entrepreneurship, globalization, disaster preparedness, and climate change.

Task Format: Recommendations for improving CEDS guidance and requirements should be provided in a report to EDA. Note that this report is separate from the final CEDS Assessment Report described above in Phase II, paragraph 1.

Phase II: Summary of Tasks – to be provided to EDA at the conclusion of Phase II.

- Practitioner-accessible final CEDS Assessment Report formatted to be posted on a publicly available website that should include:
 - An analysis that identifies quantitative and qualitative components of CEDS (*see* Phase II, paragraph 1);
 - Description of the methods for developing and testing the CEDS Assessment Tool (*see* Phase II, paragraph 2);
 - CEDS document template (*see* Phase II, paragraph 3);
 - Results of the assessment of a sample CEDS (*see* Phase II, paragraph 4);
 - Identification of CEDS best practices that provide a detailed explanation of the reasons why the examples have been selected (*see* Phase II, paragraph 5); and

- Recommendations for improving CEDS requirements and guidance (*see* Phase II, paragraph 6).
- Practitioner training Toolkit formatted to be posted on a publicly available website that should include:
 - A CEDS Assessment Tool (*see* Phase II, paragraph 2);
 - Rating system (*see* Phase II, paragraph 2); and
 - Training materials (*see* Phase II, paragraph 2).
- Best practice quality CEDS examples that address both rural and urban communities and the ten required technical elements for CEDS (13 C.F.R § 303.7), formatted to be posted on a publicly available website (*see* Phase II, paragraph 5)

EDD Evaluation and CEDS Assessment Training

Following the conclusion of both phases and EDA’s acceptance of all tasks, EDA anticipates that the successful recipient will provide training to practitioners and EDA staff on the purpose, function, and use of the both the EDD Evaluation and the CEDS Assessment Tools. EDA anticipates that training on both Tools will be coordinated, for example in the course of a two-day training suite. The location of the training(s) is not known at this time. EDA anticipates inviting the recipient to six training meetings likely to be at locations convenient to EDA regional offices in Austin, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Denver, Colorado; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Seattle, Washington; or the Headquarters office in the District of Columbia.

Also, the addition of research and project data to an existing website to disseminate the results of the research study and provide links to data encapsulated in reports free of charge is preferred.

Any information disseminated to the public under this announcement is subject to the Information Quality Act (Pub. L. No. 106-554). Applicants are required to comply with the Information Quality Guidelines issued by EDA pursuant to the Information Quality Act, which are designed to ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information disseminated by EDA. These guidelines can be found on EDA’s website at www.eda.gov.

Completion Deadlines

EDA anticipates a two year project period. Typically, EDA gives a recipient one year from the award date to complete the scope of work, which consists of completing all tasks under both project Phases. EDA anticipates that Phase I will be completed approximately half way through the first year of the project period and that Phase II will be completed by the end of the first year of the project period. It is expected that the second year of the project period will consist of the training component after completion of the two phases of the project.

The research project period will begin with an initial meeting (kickoff meeting) between the recipient and EDA staff to ensure that all parties are in agreement as to project terms, research methods, desired outcomes, project calendar, various reporting dates, and grants

administration procedures. The recipient is to schedule the kickoff meeting with EDA within 10 days of formal acceptance of the award. After the kickoff meeting, the recipient must submit a final work plan and a statement of adequacy of accounting procedures to EDA staff for review and approval, within at least 30 days. Throughout the project period there will be regular contact between EDA staff and the recipient for updates on project progress and to discuss research methods, including but not limited to sampling and analytical approaches. Interim progress reports will be required throughout the project period and will be incorporated into the grant award agreement. The schedule of interim progress reports will be determined subsequent to the award. Typically, the recipient is required to submit draft final reports to EDA at least 90 days before the reports are due according to the project calendar.

C. Program Authority

The authority for the NTA Program is section 207 PWEDA and 13 C.F.R. part 306, subpart A. EDA's regulations, which will govern an award made under this announcement, are codified at 13 C.F.R. chapter III. The regulations and PWEDA are accessible on EDA's Internet website at www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/Lawsreg.xml.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

EDA may use funds appropriated under the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (Pub. L. No. 111-8, 123 Stat. 524 (2009)) to make awards under the NTA Program authorized by PWEDA. Approximately \$1,000,000 is available, and shall remain available until expended, for funding awards under the NTA Program. EDA anticipates spending approximately \$460,000 of available NTA Program funds to fund the project solicited under this announcement. Phases I and II of the project are expected to be completed within one year from the date the award is made, but the recipient may be required to remain available to present research findings at select training meetings approximately six to twelve months after completion of the study. Although the schedule for such meetings and conferences will likely not be known until EDA has received the final research report, they will be scheduled in consultation with the recipient, and the recipient will have ample time to prepare.

B. Type of Funding Instrument

Subject to the availability of funds, EDA anticipates that an award made under this competitive solicitation will be in the form of a cooperative agreement for a two-year project period (the second year of the project period will relate to the training component after completion of the two phases of the project).

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to PWEDA, eligible applicants for and recipients of EDA investment assistance include a District Organization; an Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; a State; a city or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; an institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; and a public or private non-profit organization or association.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Share Requirement

Generally, the amount of the EDA grant may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the project. Under this announcement, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development (Assistant Secretary) also has the discretion to establish a maximum EDA investment rate of up to 100 percent where the project: (a) merits and is not otherwise feasible without an increase to the EDA investment rate; or (b) will be of no or only incidental benefit to the recipient. *See* section 204(c)(3) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3144) and 13 C.F.R. § 301.4(b)(4).

EDA will consider the nature of the contribution (cash or in-kind), the amount of any matching share funds, and fairly assess any in-kind contributions in evaluating the cost to the Government and the feasibility of the project budget (*see* section V. below). While cash contributions are preferred, in-kind contributions, fairly evaluated by EDA, may provide the non-federal share of the total project cost. *See* section 204(b) of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3144). In-kind contributions, which may include assumptions of debt and contributions of space, equipment, and services, are eligible to be included as part of the non-federal share of eligible project costs if they meet applicable federal cost principles and uniform administrative requirements. Funds from other federal financial assistance awards are considered matching share funds only if authorized by statute, which may be determined by EDA's reasonable interpretation of the statute. *See* 13 C.F.R. § 300.3. The applicant must show that the matching share is committed to the project for the entire project period, will be available as needed, and is not conditioned or encumbered in any way that precludes its use consistent with the requirements of EDA investment assistance. *See* 13 C.F.R. § 301.5.

IV. Application and Submission Requirements

A. Application Package

Important: Please refer to important information in section IV.D. of this FFO titled "Application Submission Information" to help ensure your application is timely received by EDA.

The applicant must complete and submit the *Application for Investment Assistance* (Form ED-900), and additional federal grant assistance forms from the Standard Form (SF) 424 family and certain Department of Commerce (CD) forms, as appropriate, as part of a complete

application package. The following will assist the applicant in determining which forms are required for a complete application. Please see section IV.C. below for information on obtaining application packages.

Applicants seeking assistance under this announcement must complete and submit the following application package:

1. Form ED-900 (*Application for Investment Assistance*)
2. Form SF-424 (*Application for Federal Assistance*)
3. Form SF-424A (*Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs*)
4. Form SF-424B (*Assurances—Non-Construction Programs*)
5. Form CD-511 (*Certification Regarding Lobbying*)

In addition, applicants may be required to submit to an individual background screening using the form titled *Applicant for Funding Assistance* (Form CD-346) and to provide certain lobbying information using the form titled *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities* (Form SF-LLL). Form ED-900 provides detailed guidance to help the applicant assess whether Forms CD-346 and SF-LLL are required and how to access them.

Form ED-900 is divided into lettered sections that correspond to specific program components that address all of EDA’s statutory and regulatory requirements. Based on the type of program, the Form ED-900 details the sections and exhibits that the applicant must complete. Because this announcement seeks Research and Evaluation Assistance applications only, an applicant only needs to complete those sections of the Form ED-900 identified in the table below. Complete instructions are included in the Form ED-900.

EDA Program	Required Form ED-900 Sections
Research and Evaluation Assistance	Complete Sections A, C, and E and Exhibit B.

B. Page Limitation Requirements

Applicants are advised to observe the following page limitation requirements that relate to Form ED-900. To ensure adherence to these requirements, applicants that choose to complete the Form ED-900 electronically are advised to first compose their responses in a separate word processing program and then cut and paste the text into the Form ED-900.

1. Section A.2. of Form ED-900 requires applicants to submit a detailed description of the project scope of work. This description must not exceed ten pages typed in a minimum 11 point common typeface, inclusive of all diagrams, tables, and any ancillary materials, excluding biographical information, as outlined below.
2. Section C.3. of Form ED-900 requests information on the qualifications and capacity of key project staff. These descriptions must not exceed two pages

per individual, with an additional two pages allowed for a single summary description of all organizations or consultants named in the application.

C. Obtaining Application Packages

Applicants may obtain the application package electronically at www.grants.gov. Alternatively, applicants may request a paper (hardcopy) application package by contacting the designated point of contact listed in section VII.B. of this FFO.

D. Application Submission Information

The content of a completed application package is the same for paper submissions as it is for electronic submissions. EDA will not accept facsimile transmissions of applications.

1. Electronic Submissions

Applicants may submit applications electronically in accordance with the instructions provided at www.grants.gov. The preferred file format for electronic attachments is PDF; however, EDA will accept electronic files in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or Microsoft Excel.

Applicants should access the following link for assistance in navigating www.grants.gov and for a list of useful resources: www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant_help.jsp. If you do not find an answer to your question under Frequently Asked Questions, try consulting the Applicant's User Guide, which may be downloaded at www.grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp. If you still cannot find an answer to your question or require technical support, contact the www.grants.gov Contact Center via email at support@grants.gov or telephone at 1-800-518-4726. The hours of operation for the Contact Center are Monday-Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time (except for federal holidays).

Applicants also may email completed application packages to Hillary Sherman at hsherman@eda.doc.gov. To take advantage of screen-fillable functionality, an applicant choosing this option must download the application package from www.grants.gov and make sure to choose the Forms SF-424, SF-424A, and SF-424B to attach as "Optional Documents," and use the "Save As" function to save the application package to the applicant's computer.

2. Paper Submissions

All components of the application package may be accessed and downloaded in a screen-fillable format at www.grants.gov. The applicant should download and print copies of the application package. If an applicant is required to submit either Form CD-346 or Form SF-LLL, the Form ED-900 provides detailed guidance on accessing both forms.

The applicant must submit one original and two copies of the completed application package via postal mail, shipped overnight, or hand-delivered to the EDA representative listed below in section VII.B. Department of Commerce mail security measures may delay receipt of

United States Postal Service mail for up to two weeks. Therefore, applicants who submit paper submissions are advised to use guaranteed overnight delivery services.

3. Submission Deadline

To be considered timely, a completed application, regardless of the format in which it is submitted, must be either: (a) received by the EDA representative listed in section VII. of this announcement no later than September 8, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time; or (b) transmitted and time-stamped at www.grants.gov no later than September 8, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Any application received or transmitted, as the case may be, after September 8, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered for funding. The closing date and time are the same for paper submissions as for electronic submissions. By September 30, 2009, EDA expects to notify the applicant selected for investment assistance under this announcement.

Applicants are advised that they are solely responsible for ensuring that EDA receives complete, timely, and accurate applications. The date and time that an application will be deemed to be submitted electronically will be determined in accordance with the electronic filing instructions provided for this FFO on www.grants.gov. Applications received after the applicable closing date and time will not be considered for funding.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to start early and not to wait until the approaching due date before logging on and reviewing the instructions for submitting an application through www.grants.gov. Applicants are advised that there are registration requirements for submitting an application through www.grants.gov. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that these are completed in time for timely application submission. Applicants also are advised that www.grants.gov has experienced recent capacity problems and should submit their applications as early as possible. Applicants should save and print written proof of an electronic submission made at www.grants.gov. If problems occur, the applicant is advised to (a) print any error message received; and (b) call the www.grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications for funding under this announcement are not subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372, “*Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.*”

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria and Selection Procedures

To apply for an award under this announcement, an eligible applicant must submit a completed application package to EDA by the deadline specified and in the manner provided in section IV.D. of this FFO. Applications that do not meet all requirements or that exceed the page limitations set forth in section IV.B. of this announcement will be considered non-responsive and will not be considered by the review panel. A panel comprised of at least three full-time federal

employees, of whom at least one shall be an EDA employee, will be formed to review applications. The review panel will evaluate applications and rate and rank them using the following criteria of approximate equal weight:

1. Conformance with EDA's statutory and regulatory requirements, including the extent to which the proposed project satisfies the award requirements set out below and as provided in 13 C.F.R. § 306.2:
 - a. Strengthens the capacity of local, State, or national organizations and institutions to undertake and promote effective economic development programs targeted at distressed regions;
 - b. Benefits distressed regions; and
 - c. Demonstrates innovative approaches to stimulate economic development in distressed regions.
2. The degree to which an EDA investment will have strong, qualified organizational leadership, relevant project management experience, and a significant commitment of appropriate human resources talent to ensure the project's successful execution (*see* 13 C.F.R. § 301.8(b)).
3. The ability of the applicant to implement the proposed project successfully (*see* 13 C.F.R. § 301.8).
4. The clarity, precision, and applicability of the research methods proposed.
5. The clarity, precision, and applicability of the analytical methods proposed.
6. The clarity, precision, and applicability of the survey and sampling methods proposed.
7. The feasibility of the budget presented.
8. The cost to the Federal Government, using the best value to the government standard.

The review panel's rating and ranking of the applications will be presented to the Assistant Secretary, who is the Selecting Official.

For purposes of this FFO, EDA will consider only applications submitted by applicants with the current capacity to undertake research that advances economic development practice and theory, and that have the potential for impact on a regional or national scale. *See* section 3 of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3122) and 13 C.F.R. §§ 300.3 and 306.2. The addition of research and project data to an existing website or the design of a companion website to disseminate the results of each research study and provide links to data encapsulated in reports free of charge is preferred.

B. Selection Factors

The Assistant Secretary, as the Selecting Official, expects to fund the highest ranking application for this research project, as recommended by the review panel, submitted under this announcement. Depending on the quality of the applications received, the Assistant Secretary may select more than one application. However, the Assistant Secretary may not make any selection. Also, the Assistant Secretary may select an application out of rank order for the following reasons:

1. A determination that the selected application better meets the overall objectives of sections 2 and 207 of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. §§ 3121 and 3147);
2. The applicant's performance under previous awards; or
3. The availability of funding.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Because this announcement solicits applications for a single research project and it is anticipated that only one award will be made, EDA expects to notify the applicant selected for investment assistance under this announcement by September 30, 2009. The successful applicant should expect to receive funding for the project within 45 days of EDA's notice of selection. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their applications were not selected for funding.

The Selecting Official will issue the grant award on Form CD-450, *Financial Assistance Award*, which is the authorizing financial assistance award document. By signing the Form CD-450, the recipient agrees to comply with all award provisions. EDA will send the grant by an appropriate delivery method to the appropriate business office of the recipient's organization, and it must be signed and returned without modification by the recipient within 30 days of receipt.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the *Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements*, published in the *Federal Register* on February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696). This notice may be accessed through the *Federal Register* Internet website at www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/retrieve.html, making sure the radial button for the correct *Federal Register* volume is selected (in this instance, 2008 *Federal Register*, Vol. 73), entering the *Federal Register* page number provided in the previous sentence (7696), and clicking the "Submit" button.

C. Other Information and Requirements

Certain EDA, Department of Commerce, and other award requirements are as follows:

1. All recipients of EDA investment assistance are required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant award. All financial reports must be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies) to the EDA Program Officer. See 13 C.F.R. § 302.16.
2. Projects are expected to be completed in a timely manner consistent with the nature of the project. The completion deadlines for the project are specified in section I.B. of this announcement.

3. If an application is selected for funding, EDA has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with an award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at EDA's sole discretion.
4. EDA is committed to a policy of non-discrimination in the administration of all its programs.

VII. Agency Contacts

A. Additional Information

EDA's Internet website at www.eda.gov contains additional information on EDA and its programs. For additional information on the NTA Program or to obtain a paper application package for this announcement, please contact Hillary Sherman via email at HSherman@eda.doc.gov (preferred) or by telephone at (202) 482-3357.

B. Addresses for Application Submissions

Applications submitted pursuant to this announcement may be:

1. Submitted electronically via www.grants.gov or emailed to Hillary Sherman, Program Analyst, at HSherman@eda.doc.gov; or
2. Hand-delivered or mailed to Hillary Sherman, Program Analyst, Economic Development Administration, Room 7009, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20230.