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Evaluation Framework

Performance Measures Used to Evaluate the Organization's Implementation of the CEDS and Its Impact On The Regional Economy

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The evaluation framework serves as a mechanism to gauge progress on the successful implementation of the overall CEDS while providing information for the CEDS Annual Performance Report (see section on Preparation <<https://eda.gov/ceds/preparation.htm>>), as required by EDA. These regular updates keep the strategic direction and action plan outlined in the CEDS current and the plan as a whole relevant. The evaluation framework is an important element of the ongoing planning process and should answer the questions “How are we doing?” and “What can we do better?” The evaluation framework, with its associated measures and timelines, should cascade from the strategic direction and action plan, which, in turn, flow from the SWOT analysis.

Performance measures should be identified to evaluate the progress of activities in achieving the vision, goals and objectives. EDDs and communities should consider traditional (e.g., jobs created and/or retained, private investment) and non-traditional (e.g., wealth creation such as GDP per capita, household income, per capita income, wages, net worth) performance measures for evaluating regional impact.

Although important, job creation and retention is just one element in

determining whether a region is building the appropriate capacity to help the private sector flourish and the region, as a whole, prosper. Job creation is the result of successful economic development investments and should be linked with broadband availability and adoption, quality of place, established entrepreneur networks, supply of skilled workers, increases in workers' earnings and wages, a climate of innovation, and/or other strategic investments.


The measures that are ultimately selected should be based upon what is important to the region, what conditions the region needs to reverse or create, and what regional assets can be leveraged. In effect, the measures should reinforce the *relevant* data and background information collected, SWOT analysis undertaken, and strategic direction and action plan developed to help identify the critical internal and external factors that speak to the region's assets, limitations, and overall ability to build capacity. It is also important to understand that the inclusive elements of economic capacity building may not immediately remedy longstanding marginalization across communities and racial groups, but efforts should be undertaken to measure progress nonetheless (see the Equity section <<http://eda.gov/resources/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/content/equity>> for more information on different ways to measure the effectiveness of equitable strategies).



Recommended Resource: See NADO's Performance Metrics Matter: Go Beyond Counting Jobs to Create a Highly Effective Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy at <http://www.nado.org/performance-metrics-matter/> <<http://www.nado.org/performance-metrics-matter/>> for more information on performance metrics can be used to create a more effective CEDS.

There are numerous options to consider (depending upon regional priorities, as noted above) when thinking about how to measure regional capacity building and prosperity. However, the concept of wealth is one that should be highlighted because of its natural alignment with asset-based strategies and approaches. More than just jobs and income, regional wealth is represented by intellectual, individual, social, natural, built environment, political, financial, and cultural assets. These assets, when invested in, nurtured, and leveraged appropriately, can reflect the true level of a region's economic (and social) well-

being. Finding ways to better identify, foster, and measure these assets can help a region towards a more lasting prosperity since a focus on wealth creation and retention can build a region's resiliency and long-term sustainability.



Recommended Resource: See www.wealthworks.org <<http://www.wealthworks.org>> for more tools and information on building and measuring regional wealth.

When developing measures of any kind, some key questions to ask that may help determine the quality and applicability of the measures include:

- Can the measures be evaluated in an objective, timely, and cost-effective fashion?
- Are the measures focused on an outcome or result (i.e., data and information on the success of a specific process or engagement) rather than an output or activity (i.e., data or information on activities to help achieve an outcome)?
- Do the measures include a clear statement of the results expected?
- Do the measures support regional goals?
- Do the measures allow for meaningful trend or statistical analysis?
- Are the measures challenging but at the same time attainable?
- Are assumptions and definitions specified for what constitutes satisfactory performance?
- Have those who are responsible for the performance being measured been both identified and fully involved in the development of the measures?
- Are the measures tracking trends that are completely within the region's control or will national or global developments impact performance?

If a desired result from a strategic direction contained within the CEDS is not achieved, measures can help identify specific weak points and/or identify better approaches. In addition, while the CEDS evaluation is the responsibility of the economic development organization's professional staff, an outside party (e.g., staff from another EDD), a university center, or a consultant, may assist in the

evaluation. For EDA investments in projects listed in the CEDS, the outcomes of the projects should be tied clearly to the performance measures in the CEDS (i.e., how did the grant-funded project help achieve a goal and measurable objective in the CEDS?). The evaluation should document where actual results met, exceeded, or fell short of projected outcomes.

Jobs and private investment will remain critical evaluation factors for CEDS plans and EDA-funded projects. Nonetheless, jobs and private investment do not tell the whole story about the impact of EDDs and implementation of CEDS. Take a comprehensive view of performance measures when communicating the results of CEDS implementation.

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