



Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

May 8, 2020

In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, a once-in-a-generation opportunity has been created. The CARES Act has produced a \$1.5 billion fund for economic recovery through the Economic Development Administration. Southwest Michigan must respond aggressively to capture our share of this funding for vital economic development projects and planning. The opportunity is uniquely broad and inclusive and the local match split required is amazingly small. This is our moment to be ambitious and innovative in reimagining our post-pandemic economy. What follows are the specifics of the opportunity.

The CARES Act directed \$1.5 billion to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce to administer grants through its Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program. The Chicago Region, which covers 6 states including Michigan, was allocated \$225 million.

As previously stated, the funding opportunity is quite broad, but examples of projects that may be funded include economic recovery planning and preparing technical strategies to address economic dislocations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, preparing or updating resiliency plans to respond to future pandemics, implementing entrepreneurial support programs to diversify economies, and constructing public works and facilities that will support economic recovery, including the deployment of broadband for purposes including supporting telehealth and remote learning for job skills. Eligible applicants include Indian tribes, state and local governments, institutions of higher education, and nonprofits acting in cooperation with officials of a political subdivision of Michigan. Historically, the federal share of the EAA program is generally 50-80% of the project cost. However, due to the severity of the economic impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, EDA now expects to fund at least 80% of eligible project costs.

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is the Economic Development District (EDD) as designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. As an EDD, we work with leaders in our community to develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) which serves as a regional strategy for economic development. The CEDS is a critical path in the flow of EDA funds to the region. If projects match the goals of the CEDS, they are considered for funding by the EDA. Because of the scale of the CARES funding, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) is developing a more robust project identification and selection process in order to advance the region's strongest project proposals to the EDA grant application. SWMPC will work closely with our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee, local applicants, and EDA to secure grant funds for southwest Michigan.

We are planning a virtual meeting for potential applicants to cover the detailed project selection process, a form to submit project proposals, and deadlines for submission. We will send out an invitation once the meeting has been scheduled and kindly ask that you hold your questions until that time.

[EDA's COVID-19 webpage](#) includes a frequently asked questions page relating to this funding. Information about the Southwest Michigan Economic Development District and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy can be found at www.swmpc.org/ceds.asp.

376 West Main Street, Suite 130 • Benton Harbor, MI 49022-3651