

EDA Investment Abstract

Collaborations/partnerships:

All nine of Connecticut's Council of Governments (COGs) are collaborating on this project. Each in turn will collaborate with their member municipalities to coordinate and staff long-term recovery committees. The COGs will also collaborate with the Global Resilience Institute at Northeastern University to develop a tool for identifying and prioritizing recovery needs and projects. AdvanceCT will serve as an institutional partner to advance statewide initiatives, such as business retention and expansion efforts, as well as establishing Business Resource Centers. Each COG will also partner with a regional chamber of commerce or other economic development entity in their region to rethink and implement priority projects from their CEDS.

Project's Location:

An investment from the FY2020 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs including CARES Act Funding will serve the entire State of Connecticut via the nine regional councils of governments.

Regional Impact (include the location of project and other counties, or regions that may be impacted)

All nine regions of Connecticut will be impacted. Combined, the nine regions serve all 169 of Connecticut's municipalities.

Applicant/Co-Applicants (if applicable):

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) will be the applicant for the purposes of this grant. CRCOG will serve as the fiduciary with the other eight COGs, the Global Resilience Institute, AdvanceCT, and regional economic development partners, serving as institutional partners.

Project Eligibility

For this project the COVID-19 pandemic is the basis for eligibility.

Private or Public Investment and source:

This project will follow a six-month planning process funded by the State of Connecticut with CARES Act Block Grant funds. The total value of that investment is \$4 million.

Proposed Total Cost of Project:

Estimated \$10 million

Proposed EDA Funding Investment:

Estimated \$10 million

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EDA Program Type:

Economic Adjustment Assistance

Project Scope

Connecticut's nine Councils of Governments (COGs) are proposing a consolidated grant application for CARES Act Funding through the US Economic Development Administration. The grant would fund a comprehensive suite of services to support Connecticut's economic recovery and bolster its resiliency to future economic disasters. There are four major components of the project:

Regional Long-term Recovery Committees

Implementing Partners: All nine regional COGs

This grant will fund regional economic recovery coordinators in each of the nine regions of Connecticut. The primary task of the coordinators will be to lead and coordinate the Regional Long-Term Recovery Steering Committees established in response to the COVID-19 emergency as well as provide staff support to each Local Long-Term Recovery Steering Committee.

Each Regional Long-Term Recovery Steering Committee will be responsible for the identification of regional unmet needs and determining the appropriate resources and policies to address those concerns. The Committees will consist of a wide range of partners/stakeholders from regional and municipal chambers of commerce, business and financial service providers, social service organizations, higher education, health care, and community and cultural organizations that will facilitate economic recovery and resiliency between the public, private and non-profit sectors. Committees will also assist in other local, state, and federally led coronavirus recovery planning efforts; help in sourcing grant-eligible projects and programs with state and federal resources to ensure eligible entities take full advantage of available funding opportunities; and with fostering private and non-profit partnership opportunities.

Long-term Recovery Planning (Statewide)

Implementing Partners: All nine regional COGs; Global Resilience Institute

The COGs will partner with the Global Resilience Institute (GRI) at Northeastern University, to assist with developing and testing a statewide Long-Term Economic Recovery and Resilience Strategy and Action Plan. GRI is an interdisciplinary institute committed to developing and deploying practical and innovative tools, applications, and skills that strengthen the resilience of individuals, communities, infrastructure, systems, networks and societies. GRI has developed an Integrated Resilience Enhancement System (I-RES) process that uses a data collection and community engagement process: (1) to understand the baseline economic and social challenges of communities and regions; (2) to assess existing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) and any other economic development planning already in place through a "resilience lens;" and (3) to assist the COGs in creating a long-term resilient economic development strategy and implementing plans.

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Regional Business Resource Centers

Implementing Partners: AdvanceCT; Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)

Physical Business Resource Centers (BRC) will be set up in nine (9) locations across Connecticut (leveraging existing facilities and staff) where small/medium-sized businesses (SMEs), can receive multifaceted business recovery counsel to respond to the economic devastation triggered by the effect of COVID on Connecticut's economy. The BRCs will prioritize establishing operations in underserved and distressed communities, communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic, with the intent to evolve into permanent resource centers supporting the survival and growth of "Main Street" and SME businesses.

Business Retention and Expansion

Implementing Partners: AdvanceCT and DECD

As part of Connecticut's Business Recovery initiative, AdvanceCT and DECD will upgrade business retention and expansion operations to accommodate the increased need for business assistance across the state. This will include:

- Upgrades and additional functionality to Connecticut's existing CRM system;
- Increased focus on smaller employers;
- Procuring a research vendor to compile data to assist with the expansion of Connecticut's BRE/Aftercare efforts;
- Procuring a vendor to compile emergency contact information from Connecticut's key employers (mobile phone numbers and other non-workplace forms of communication to send texts and alerts);
- Working with companies to appoint an internal company point of contact for emergency communications with AdvanceCT; and,
- Procuring state-wide communications platform to communicate broadly and efficiently with Connecticut businesses via direct messaging, text and voice messaging.

Reimagining Connecticut's Innovation Corridor (CIC)

Implementing Partners: AdvanceCT; DECD; Universities; Industry Associations

Connecticut currently has an Innovation Corridor, consisting of Biotech companies in the Stamford /New Haven /Hartford area, Insurtech companies in the Hartford area, and Software/Digital media companies in the Stamford area. As a result of the pandemic, many start-up SMEs are experiencing hardships and closures. The Reimagining CIC program focuses on innovation placemaking and efforts to shore-up Connecticut's Bioscience, Insurtech, and Advanced Manufacturing sectors with particular focus on supporting start-ups. The program will identify opportunities to furnish physical innovation infrastructure in one (or more) distressed communities, thereby extending the Innovation Corridor to include cities like Bridgeport or New London. By expanding Connecticut's Innovation Corridor to distressed communities, new opportunities will emerge to support for individuals and start-ups in some of Connecticut's underserved communities.

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Regional CEDS Implementation and Repositioning

Implementing Partners: Six Economic Development Districts not receiving non-competitive funding from EDA

Six of the nine Economic Development Districts (EDDs) in Connecticut were not eligible for non-competitive funding under the EDA CARES Act program. Each of those EDDs will work on implementation of short to medium term strategies linked to each region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The three EDDs funded under the non-competitive program will also be doing similar work but are not included in this proposal to avoid double-funding.

Examples of strategies that will be pursued include:

- Business retention/expansion and business attraction – Addressing the needs of companies currently in the region and attracting new businesses to strengthen our economic diversity and lessen the impacts of swings in the economy.
- Retaining and attracting talent – Engage, retain, and attract talent with a focus on underserved and underrepresented populations to better meet the needs of the region's employers and to create jobs paying a family living wage.
- Branding and promoting the region – Telling the region's story to promote its strengths as a place for companies seeking to grow and expand.

Brief Background of Economic Need

To combat COVID-19, the State of Connecticut issued a Declaration of Civil Preparedness and Public Health Emergency in March. Since that time the State has shed 288,400 jobs, a historic job loss, greater than the combined loss in jobs experienced in the economic recessions of the early 1990s and 2008 to 2010. In the May Labor Situation Report, CTDOL's Office of Research estimates the unemployment rate to be in the range of 19% for the mid-March to Mid-May period, which was based on Connecticut's residential unemployment insurance claims and adding similar factors for the unemployed self-employed. If CTDOL's Office of Research 19% unemployment rate estimates are correct, it would put Connecticut at the 4th highest unemployment rate in the country behind only Michigan, Nevada and Hawaii (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics – State Unemployment, May 2020).

As shocking as this economic data is, the information does not accurately depict the severity of the economic conditions in Connecticut. The impact of COVID-19 has affected all sectors of the state's economy. While many businesses responded by instituting remote work, this option was not feasible for a large proportion of the state's businesses, and they were forced to lay-off or furlough workers. Many businesses may rehire all employees once they are able to re-open, but others will reopen with a reduced workforce and may not reopen at all.

In two hundred words or less, explain how your project will serve one or more, of the following EDA Investment Priorities: <https://www.eda.gov/about/investment-priorities.htm>

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Recovery & Resilience: Each Regional Recovery Committee will consist of a wide range of stakeholders from regional and municipal chambers of commerce, business and financial service providers, social service organizations, higher education, health care, community and cultural organizations that will facilitate economic recovery and resiliency between the public, private and non-profit sectors. The BRCs will also provide essential recovery and resilience services to small businesses throughout the state.

Workforce Development & Manufacturing: Working in collaboration with our Regional Workforce Development Boards and Chambers of Commerce, EDA funds will be used for capacity building workshops and programs for small and medium sized businesses; and the creation of industry-specific recovery and resiliency plans that focus on the attraction and retention of Connecticut's most critical economic sectors.

Opportunity Zones: Although COVID-19 has significantly impacted every community in the State of Connecticut, some jurisdictions have been more disproportionately impacted, including in those communities with federally designated Opportunity Zones. Those communities account for over 60% of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and over 50% of deaths. This project will focus the economic recovery efforts on those communities, and more specifically those census tracts that were more severely impacted.