



Press Release

<i>Immediate Release:</i> February 7, 2024	<i>Contact:</i> Chris Setti , CEO, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (309) 472-6291
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Greater Peoria Welcomes Inaugural Economic Recovery Corps Fellowship to Drive Business Outreach and Regional Revitalization

Peoria, IL (Wednesday, February 7, 2024)— The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) and Lincoln Economic Advancement & Development (LEAD) are proud to announce their selection as co-host organizations in the first cohort of the Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) Fellowship program. In a highly competitive selection process that attracted over 500 applications from across the United States, the "Connecting the Dots through Business Outreach" initiative in Greater Peoria emerged as the sole project from Illinois to be honored among just 65 accepted projects nationwide.

This innovative program, aimed at fostering economic growth across the U.S., will see the introduction of a targeted business outreach initiative with the appointment of Dorsey Hill as the dedicated ERC Fellow. The ERC Fellowship, initiated in 2023 through a cooperative agreement worth \$30 million with the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration and led by the International Economic Development Council, is designed to build capacity and cultivate the next generation of economic development leaders.

Chris Setti, CEO of GPEDC, expressed his enthusiasm for the project: “We're excited to join the Economic Recovery Corps Fellowship's inaugural cohort, reinforcing our dedication to Greater Peoria's economic development. The 'Connecting the Dots through Business Outreach' project, supported by this partnership with Dorsey, will provide more opportunities to connect with our businesses, provide them with targeted assistance and referrals, and gather input and data that will help drive regional strategies for sustainable growth.”

The "Connecting the Dots through Business Outreach" project focuses on leveraging the Greater Peoria area's unique mix of urban and rural economies, aiming to revitalize the region by engaging with businesses outside urban centers, particularly starting in Lincoln and Logan County. Dorsey Hill, the ERC Fellow, will play a pivotal role in this initiative, utilizing a robust business outreach program to understand and connect interregional businesses, fostering a more interconnected and resilient regional economy.

Andrea Runge, CEO of LEAD, underscored the importance of this collaboration. “Selection as a co-host with GPEDC for the ERC Fellowship introduces new opportunities to engage our business community and fuel economic development strategies for Lincoln and Logan County. It focuses on unlocking the potential within our community and fostering a stronger, more connected regional economy. Dorsey's expertise and passion are key to our strategy in revitalizing and promoting sustainable economic growth across the region.”

“ERC is more than a fellowship; it is a testament to the power of collaboration and strategic partnerships deeply needed to produce lasting social and economic impact. By joining forces with national partners, host organizations, funders, and practitioners eager for new models and practices, ERC will build capacity in places of need while supporting the next generation of economic development leaders, all while driving more equitable economic outcomes,” said Nathan Ohle, President & CEO of IEDC. “By investing in capacity building and leadership

development, facilitating knowledge sharing and partnerships, the ERC program will set the stage for the future of economic development and a new age of collaboration in the economic development field.”

In addition to partnering with Andrea Runge at LEAD, Dorsey will work closely with the entire Greater Peoria EDC team to ensure that her work benefits from and is integrated with the organization's broader initiatives. She will most closely work with Kathie Brown, Director of Rural Outreach and Development, and Sally Hanley, Vice President of Programs, who will help advise on business engagements and regional resources.

The selection of Greater Peoria for the placement of an ERC Fellow is another example of the investment that has been made in our region by the US Economic Development Administration. Their continued partnership provides capital, planning, and human resources to the region that improve economic resiliency and diversification. GPEDC and LEAD are looking forward to working with Dorsey to implement the initiatives outlined in the Big Table Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

For further details on the ERC Fellowship program and the Greater Peoria project, please visit <https://economicrecoverycorps.org/> and <https://greaterpeoriaedc.org/rural-outreach-and-development/connecting-the-dots-through-business-outreach/>

About the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council

The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) is a regional economic development organization covering the Greater Peoria area spanning five counties in central Illinois: Logan, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford. The GPEDC's mission is to promote economic development in the region through its six core programs which are Business Attraction, Business Assistance, Workforce Solutions, Innovation and Startups, Rural Development, and the development and promotion of a regional Manufacturing Network.

About the Lincoln Economic Advancement & Development

Lincoln Economic Advancement & Development, Inc. (LEAD) is the premier partner for business growth and expansion in Lincoln, Illinois. Specializing in providing expert guidance and invaluable resources, LEAD makes it easier for businesses to navigate the complexities of moving or expanding, offering streamlined access to central Illinois markets and beyond.

About the Economic Recovery Corps Program

The Economic Recovery Corps Program (ERC) is a multi-year, collaborative initiative designed to accelerate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in distressed communities and regions throughout the U.S. by connecting organizations with the talent and capacity needed to advance new ways of doing economic development that promote economic resilience and transformative change. The ERC Program matched 65 Host sites nationwide with a dedicated Fellow, fully funded for 2.5 years, who will act as a field catalyst to build, strengthen, and coordinate relationships and local efforts alongside their host community. Fellows will receive robust professional development and training, equipping them with the network and tools to usher in a new era of economic development centered on equity.

Press Contact

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