



Greater Peoria Economic Development Council
Partnership Planning Grant
April 1, 2022 to September 30, 2022

The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) is pleased to submit a six-month progress report on its efforts under its Partnership Planning Grant (ED22CHI3020013). Below are listed each item from the approved Statement of Work (in bold) followed by GPEDC's progress.

Develop or update the CEDS for the region, as appropriate, using the CEDS and CEDS process to foster collaborative regional economic development efforts by coordinating and implementing the economic development activities of the District.

No official adjustments to the Big Table CEDS have been made since its adoption in March 2021. GPEDC created a [four page summary of accomplishments](#) to help citizens and stakeholders understand progress towards goals. The [Big Table CEDS website](#) continues to be maintained and updated.

Conduct analyses of economic trends in the District's economy.

GPEDC utilizes the Greater Peoria DataHub (<https://data.greaterpeoria.us>) to monitor and display updated information on important economic metrics such as housing information and the regional employment situation. The CEO uses his weekly email to stakeholders (n=172) to provide context to this analysis, particularly around the monthly employment and jobs reports. The CEO also discusses regional economic trends during a weekly radio segment on WMBD AM 1470. GPEDC also partners with the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness to conduct the quarterly Cost of Living Index.

GPEDC created a contracted "Data Fellow" position to augment the work of staff and GPEDC's research intern. During the reporting period, GPEDC conducted an input/output analysis for the City of Pekin; created a dashboard to demonstrate the low cost of living as compared to peers; updated the region's top employers list; conducted research on potential local suppliers to the electric vehicle industry; provided an analysis on college graduates in the region; investigated fastest growing industries by location quotient; and provided data and analysis for the Illinois Defense Network. GPEDC also shares a monthly report with stakeholders on employment and jobs reports.

Provide economic development program outreach to local member governments to facilitate project development and implementation of strategies to ensure the region's capacity to provide the necessary infrastructure and workforce to attract private investment and encourage the creation and expansion of higher-paying jobs.

GPEDC builds robust collaborations with regional partners, both public and private, to facilitate progress toward Greater Peoria's regional goals. While no potential EDA projects formally emerged over the past six months, GPEDC staff worked with various stakeholders to uncover potential projects. Of particular note is work done in Mason and Peoria counties, both of whom are or will be impacted by the closure of coal power plants. GPEDC staff engage with local officials to develop potential project ideas. These were submitted formally to the state of Illinois through a "Request for Information" surrounding upcoming state funding for economic recovery in coal-impacted communities. GPEDC will continue refining these concepts and seek EDA funding when appropriate.

Other efforts over the reporting period include the following:

- GPEDC was a key partner in Illinois Central College's winning EDA Good Jobs Challenge grant, which was announced during this performance period. GPEDC served as the bridge between educational institutions and

employers, securing the commitment of dozens of businesses. CRO Director Susan Brehm attended the kick off press conference this summer.

- Illinois Central College was awarded \$911,900 to make improvements to workforce development facilities at their East Peoria and Pekin campuses. GPEDC assisted with the application submission and will serve as grant administrator.
- GPEDC partnered with Peoria County and its consultant to complete an EDA funded study of infrastructure in the Mapleton Industrial Corridor.
- Continued serving as the grant administrator for Distillery Labs \$2 million EDA award and Illinois Central College's \$3 million EDA award for its Workforce Sustainability Center.
- Utilized the monthly Technical Working Group meetings to host a presentation and discussion on improving walkability; local water and sewer resources; historic renovation programs; and energy efficiency programs.
- Continued routine and timely dissemination of information about a variety of state and federal funding programs to community and economic development professionals and elected officials. Redistributed the regional EDA Integrator's bulletins to local governments and other economic stakeholders.

Implement the strategic direction/action plan of the CEDS including grant writing, planning and technical assistance, other economic development assistance, training, travel, and other related activities, if directly associated to CEDS Implementation.

As a traditional economic development organization, as well as a planning organization, GPEDC engages in a wide array of activities toward implementation of the CEDS. For GPEDC, the CEDS becomes an internal strategic plan from which work activities are generated. Below is a list of activities and accomplishments arranged by the CEDS' goal areas and is limited to activities with direct GPEDC participation (although sometimes, and often, in partnership with others).

Goal: Promote adaptive economic development that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, supports existing businesses, and attracts new employers.

- GPEDC's CEO agreed to serve as the interim Executive Director of Distillery Labs, a major regional initiative around innovation and entrepreneurship. In this capacity, which he will maintain until construction begins, he managed day-to-day operations, led programmatic efforts and collaborated with stakeholders, design team and construction team to refine the program and design to meet budget limits.
- Developed and executed entrepreneurship programming including monthly educational sessions, tech exposure events through IoT Peoria, and social networking events.
- Built connections with student entrepreneur teams at Bradley University to encourage business growth and root them in Peoria.
- Provided mentorship, advice and programmatic support to a new cohort of five startups going through the gBeta startup accelerator program. Hosted events for those not selected to connect them to resources and continued to provide mentoring and coaching as needed.
- As members of the Peoria County Advisory Committee on Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development, developed the "passport" digital stamp project for advisors/mentors from all the entrepreneurship support organizations in the region to engage with entrepreneurs and small business owners in the Greater Peoria region through a unified platform.
- Partnered to host a "Startup Showcase" to serve as a forum for pitch night gBeta participants.
- Continued partnership with Morton EDC, Bradley's Small Business Development Center and Distillery Labs to organize the AgTech Connect Mixer to connect and engage with farmers, business owners and scientists.
- Assisted the City of Delavan win a USDA Rural Business Development Grant to provide technical assistance and training for small rural businesses.
- Recruited rural incubator (Mashuplab.ca) to pilot a 7-day small biz entrepreneurship bootcamp for startup businesses in Havana.
- Continued to deliver programming through the Illinois Defense Network to assist local manufacturers and service providers connect with US Defense Department contracting opportunities. In September, GPEDC and other members of the Illinois Defense Network were named a Defense Manufacturing Community by the US Department of Defense, resulting in a 5 year, \$5M grant (to be split among IDN partners) to continue this work.

- Managed the Peoria County Enterprise Zones. Continued amendment process for the Peoria County Urban Enterprise Zone.
- Conducted business retention and expansion visits with inter-regional businesses.
- Continued organization and management of the Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network. Began implementing refined and refocused marketing efforts for Network members. Held two general membership meetings, including co-hosting a meeting with the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center on the “future of manufacturing.”
- Finalized EDA-funded study of infrastructure and utility limitations in the Mapleton industrial corridor in Peoria County.
- Organized a networking and educational meeting for local supply chain and procurement professionals to better understand local purchasing challenges and gaps.
- Partnered with Intersect Illinois and Bloomington-Normal EDC to host a site selector familiarization tour focussing on electric and autonomous vehicle industries.
- Began planning a similar Fall familiarization tour that will focus exclusively on Peoria and the biomedical manufacturing industry.
- Worked with the City of Peoria, Village of Morton and Peoria County to better understand and prepare potential industrial sites for investment; coordinated regional responses to numerous Requests for Information from industrial site selectors.
- Under the “Community Navigator” grant from the state of Illinois, managed a network of eleven local organizations to provide outreach and assistance to communities and small businesses regarding local and state grant programs.
- Convened conversations and collaborated with various stakeholders in Peoria and Mason counties to respond to funding opportunities stemming from the closure of coal power plants. Represented the region at a convening of the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization.
- Launched a revamped [GPEDC website](#) to better market the assets of the region to external audiences.

Goal: Develop a more resilient, robust and equitable talent pipeline in Greater Peoria.

- Assisted Illinois Central College and its partners with the successful award of an EDA Good Jobs Challenge grant to create the IT Workforce Accelerator.
- Stewarded “CareerSpark You’re Hired” through its completion in June. You’re Hired is an online hiring fair for high schoolers throughout the region. Over 5600 students registered and 35 companies participated.
- Planned a return to an in-person CareerSpark career expo for 8th graders to be held in October.
- Finalized report on manufacturing employer needs via the Talent Pipeline Management methodology and validated findings through individual meetings with businesses.
- Managed the Greater Peoria Job Board at <https://jobs.peoria.org> to connect job seekers with employers that are hiring.
- Continued partnership with the Peoria CEO Council, Discover Peoria and regional chambers of commerce to implement the strategies of the GP2030 talent attraction initiative.
- Coordinated a Welcome Wagon Meet & Greet for newcomers to the region, helping to plug new residents into the community and orient them to the community.
- Agreed to serve as fiscal agent for the Scaling Transformative Advanced Manufacturing Pathways (STAMP) Grant from the Illinois Manufacturers Association, allowing local workforce development organizations to access funds to connect people with jobs.
- Partnered with Discovery Partnership Institute Tech Talent Lab to provide workshops for schools and libraries focused on building regional capacity for computer science and digital literacy learning opportunities for youth.

Goal: Foster diverse and inclusive communities where all residents and visitors enjoy active, secure, healthy and fulfilled lives.

- Completed planning efforts around rural broadband expansion in Peoria and Woodford counties. The work included creating and disseminating surveys and preparing a final report with recommendations that were presented to the respective county boards.
- Continued follow up work with Tazewell County broadband committee.

- Connected with numerous internet service providers to gauge interest in expanding services to rural areas within Greater Peoria.
- On behalf of Peoria County, authored a Request for Proposal for an engineering firm to conduct a feasibility study for broadband expansion.
- Through a grant from Heartland Forward, provided stipends to K-5 educators to learn about teaching digital literacy.
- Continued partnership with PCs for People so that more low income families can access low-cost or free computers.
- Provided technical assistance and advice to communities regarding attracting downtown reinvestment.
- Helped host a forum on urban walkability for local community and economic development officials.
- Served on the board of the Partnership for a Healthy Community which conducted an assessment and created its priorities and action plan for the next three years.

Goal: Sustain and expand the economic value of the region's natural resources.

- Partnered with Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and the board of the Heart of Illinois Regional Port District to revive the Port District and secure a \$500,000 state appropriation for the first year of operations.
- Heart of Illinois Regional Port District (HIRPD) and Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, with GPEDC assistance, awarded a \$465,000 IDOT State Planning Report to fund the creation of HIRPD's Master Port Plan.
- Coordinated a presentation to Havana business and community leaders regarding the importance of the Port District; conducted a tour of Mason county assets connected to commerce on the Illinois River.
- Continued providing assistance to Sorce Freshwater Co to harvest and process Asian Carp from Illinois River.

Coordinate federal, state, local and not-for-profit resources/funds to optimize the implementation of the CEDS strategic direction/action plan and progress toward attainment of regional goals, objectives and vision.

GPEDC serves as the trusted source in the region for timely and updated information for businesses, institutions and local government leaders. GPEDC uses a weekly email blast to stakeholders, monthly newsletter and social media platforms to deliver this information. As such GPEDC has also provided direct assistance to dozens of businesses in need of help. GPEDC organizes and hosts the "Technical Working Group," a monthly meeting of local community and economic development professionals. The meeting is used as a collaborative forum to share resources, network and provide timely information on programs. Topics over the past six months included Ameren's energy efficiency programs, C-PACE funding, OSF headquarters renovation, and City of Peoria business assistance programs. GPEDC was also tapped by the state of Illinois to serve as a "Community Navigator" hub and created a network of ten local agencies that assist local businesses to apply for state grants. Last year, 136 businesses in GPEDC's region were awarded \$5,045,000 in state "Back to Business" grants. GPEDC was asked to extend their work through the end of 2022 and to expand work into adjacent McLean County.

As noted above, GPEDC has also been instrumental in convening stakeholders in Mason and Peoria counties regarding opportunities to attract resources in the wake of the closure of the Havana and Edwards coal-fired power plants. GPEDC coordinated responses for Mason and Peoria counties to a state of Illinois Request for Information regarding community needs for economic recovery funding. GPEDC has also engaged with and on behalf of these counties with the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization.

As also noted above, GPEDC has taken the lead in planning activities around the expansion of broadband in the region's rural counties. In the past six months, GPEDC finalized work under two planning grants from the Illinois Office of Broadband, one each in Peoria and Woodford counties. Staff crafted a Request for Proposal for Peoria County to issue in October seeking an engineering consultant to conduct a feasibility study. While the Tazewell county planning effort concluded earlier in 2022, GPEDC continued engaging the committee and County board to outline potential next steps. GPEDC also initiated conversations with Mason county regarding rural broadband.

Host and/or assist with coordinating Regional Economic Diversification Summit (REDS) meetings and activities related to implementation of the CEDS.

GPEDC has not organized a CEDS meeting but is a core partner in organizing the Big Table event scheduled for October 20, 2022. The Big Table is a day long community conversation on the strengths of the region and plans for improvement.

Identify relevant opportunities for multi federal agency involvement in economic development activities as it relates to the implementation of the CEDS and inform the EDA CRO Economic Development Integrator and/or the Economic Development Representative when appropriate.

While the EDA regional office has not been notified, GPEDC continues its efforts to identify opportunities for federal assistance with local economic development priorities. A summary list (all noted above in full):

- Collaborated with Peoria and Mason counties regarding the Interagency Working Group to discover funding opportunities to address the impact of coal plant closures.
- Coordinated efforts around rural broadband planning.
- As part of the Illinois Defense Network (IDN), the Greater Peoria area was named a Defense Manufacturing Community. The IDN was awarded a 5-year, \$5 million grant to support local manufacturers. GPEDC will receive approximately \$140,000 a year to promote these services.
- Partnered with Illinois Central College, Bradley University and Eureka College and a number of local community organizations to be awarded an EDA Good Jobs Challenge and to begin planning the work.

Conduct other economic development activities such as research, planning and advisory functions as it relates to the implementation of the CEDS.

GPEDC conducted the following economic development activities over the reporting period:

- Served as the central point of information regarding COVID economic relief and became a trusted source for local media.
- Participated in a weekly discussion regarding the local economy, regional assets, and available programming on a local radio morning show.
- Captured and reported out regional unemployment data monthly.
- Conducted COLI data collection quarterly.
- Developed and distributed regional marketing materials.
- Regularly updated the regional data website with information that is important to business owners and local governments to monitor the health of the local economy.
- Disseminated EDA Integrator and information on other federal resources to area stakeholders.

Provide reports, data and regional information as requested by EDA in a timely manner.

All reports submitted as requested.

Comply with EDA regulations particularly those regarding eligibility, designation, and CEDS.

GPEDC is in compliance with all EDA regulations.

Include a disaster/resiliency strategy as a component of the CEDS (The Disaster Strategy shall comply with the CEDS Content Guidelines and may be a separate section of the CEDS, or may incorporate by reference a separate plan that details the Recipient's emergency planning, response and recovery plan to be implemented should a disaster occur. The Disaster Strategy may also contain a list of implementation priorities and steps to stabilize and support a community's economic resiliency).

A disaster/resilience strategy was included in the Big Table CEDS 2021-2025.

Comply with any audit requirements.

GPEDC is in full compliance with EDA audit requirements.

Comply with and support GPRA reporting.

GPEDC is in full compliance with all reporting requirements.