

Economic Development Administration: An Overview of Roles, Structure, and Goals

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The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), a bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC), was established pursuant to the enactment of the Public Works and Economic Development Act (PWEDA) of 1965 (42 U.S.C. §§3121 et seq.) to assist state and local stakeholders with developing the conditions and amenities to grow businesses, create jobs, and expand investment in economically distressed areas. Other federal agencies administer programs and facilitate state and local economic development activities, yet EDA is the only federal agency with economic development as its exclusive mission. While the agency's mission remains unchanged in recent years, its roles, structure, and goals have shifted, as discussed in this report.

EDA administers grant programs that fund economic development activities, primarily through competitive processes that solicit community-directed proposals aligned with the agency's statutorily established investment priorities. The priorities include critical infrastructure, workforce, innovation and entrepreneurship, economic recovery resilience, and manufacturing. Many EDA grant programs are flexible and can be used for one or more activity, such as workforce development, infrastructure development, or planning.

Since the 2000s, Congress has supported various types of policies to promote innovation and to prepare regions for expanded innovation- and technology-based economic development (TBED). Among other innovation-related policies, Congress has authorized EDA programs to promote regional competitive advantages through innovation clusters and similar efforts. In recent years, Congress has authorized new programs, such as the Regional Innovation and Technology Hubs program, to facilitate regional innovation strategies and address national competitiveness and other economic development objectives. EDA's Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE) administers several such programs, and in recent years, the OIE also facilitated a federal advisory committee and other interagency activities involving innovation and TBED.

In addition to assisting state and local stakeholders with jobs, investment, and business development, EDA also plays a significant role in disaster economic recovery. Since FY2011, Congress has approved \$3.4 billion in supplemental funding for economic recovery in response to select natural disasters (not including funding provided for COVID-19 economic recovery) and established an Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience at EDA. EDA is the lead agency in the Economic Recovery Support Function (ERSF), which is one of the six recovery support functions coordinated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF). Through the NDRF structure, EDA coordinates certain interagency activities among state and federal entities, tribes, territories, nongovernmental partners and stakeholders following major disasters. Between 2013 and 2025, EDA coordinated 45 ERSF missions.

EDA regularly evaluates its programs, goals, and processes and evaluates its outcomes using Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goals and metrics. EDA's GRPA goals are tied to infrastructure and non-infrastructure grant activities. Additionally, EDA reports to Congress on its grant, disaster recovery, temporary hiring, and other activities, and is regularly evaluated by the DOC Office of Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and outside groups. The agency continues to implement a reorganization plan, which was submitted to Congress in 2025.

In January 2025, the Economic Development Reauthorization Act (EDRA) of 2024 (P.L. 118-272) reauthorized the EDA. EDRA revised existing authorities, codified new and existing roles, expanded criteria for existing programs, and changed program and administrative requirements. Prior to 2025, Congress amended and extended EDA authorities in 2004. Although EDRA implementation may not be complete as of the date of publication, EDA has initiated activities associated with several new programs authorized by the act. For instance, EDRA required EDA to create a strategic plan for tribal economic development, to be informed by a tribal consultation process, and established the Office of Tribal Economic Development.

Considering expanded roles and supplemental funding, as well as an increased footprint in TBED activities, Congress may consider policies to change, expand, or focus EDA's roles, structure, and interagency activities. Congress may also seek to continue oversight on the implementation of reauthorization legislation as well as the implementation of its recent reorganization plan.

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Introduction

The Economic Development Administration (EDA), a bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC), provides financial and technical assistance to support locally driven, regionally oriented economic development strategies. The definitions of economic development and the local scope of practice have changed in response to shifts in regional and global economies, advances in technology, and other conditions and circumstances (see textbox).¹ EDA's programs, roles, and investment priorities have also shifted since the agency was

created over 60 years ago. EDA's programs continue to include support for infrastructure, public works, and distressed areas, but now also include strategies focused on entrepreneurship, innovation, disaster recovery, and facilitating state and local economic development capacity.² In addition to administering and monitoring grant programs, EDA's roles have also expanded to include research, technical assistance, and post-disaster economic recovery coordination across agencies, among others.

In addition to providing appropriations, Congress performs oversight and conducts hearings on EDA programs and administration. Recent hearings regarding the EDA have addressed agency capacity, grant allocations, grant requirements, disaster recovery, coordination with federal regional commissions and authorities, and reauthorization of appropriations for programs established by the Public Works and Economic Development Act (PWEDA) of 1965 (42 U.S.C. §§3121 et seq.), among other matters (see the **Appendix A** for a list of hearings in the 117th-119th Congresses).

EDA, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and outside groups have published reports on EDA's program metrics, processes, interagency activities, and other topics in recent years; this report summarizes select publications and evaluations as well.

This report provides a broad overview of the EDA. Following an abbreviated history of the agency and the programs that assist with state and local activities, the report discusses the agency's investment priorities, roles, structure, staff levels, performance metrics, and recent evaluations.³

EDA's Definition of Economic Development

The EDA defines economic development as creating "the conditions for economic growth and improved quality of life by expanding the capacity of individuals, firms, and communities to maximize the use of their talents and skills to support innovation, lower transaction costs, and responsibly produce and trade valuable goods and services."

Source: EDA, "Key Definitions," <https://www.eda.gov/performance/key-definitions/>.

¹ See also e.g., Karl F Seidman, *Economic Development Finance* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 5; International Economic Development Council (IEDC), "What Economic Development Does for a Community," https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Downloads/IEDC_Why_and_Impact_Economic_Development.pdf; and Emil E. Malizia and Edward Feser, *Understanding Local Economic Development* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers, 1999), pp. 12-13.

² Testimony by Mr. Dennis Alvord, Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for the Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management, *Investing in America: Reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration*, 117th Cong., 1st sess., April 28, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/117/meeting/house/112512/witnesses/HHRG-117-PW13-Wstate-AlvordD-20210428.pdf>.

³ For more information on the statutory history of the agency, see CRS Report R41241, *Economic Development Administration: A Review of Elements of Its Statutory History*, by Julie M. Lawhorn.

Agency Overview

EDA programs support the development of capacity for communities to address the conditions, circumstances, and opportunities that are unique to their region. Some EDA programs (e.g., Public Works, Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA), and Recompete, among others) prioritize areas experiencing economic distress. The programs are generally flexible and support economic adjustment, economic resiliency, infrastructure, workforce, disaster economic recovery, innovation, planning, technical assistance, and related activities.⁴ EDA solicits competitive proposals to align with the agency's program goals and its five investment priorities (see "Investment Priorities" below).

EDA Mission and Origins

The EDA's mission is to "lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy."⁵ It is the only federal agency with economic development as its exclusive mission.⁶ The EDA was created by the Public Works and Economic Development Act (PWEDA) of 1965 (P.L. 89-136, 42 U.S.C. §§3121 et seq.) to support job creation, job retention, and investment in economically distressed areas.⁷ The findings section of PWEDA reflect the origins of the agency's approach to locally driven economic development:

while economic development is an inherently local process, the Federal Government should work in partnership with public and private State, regional, tribal, and local organizations to maximize the impact of existing resources and enable regions, communities, and citizens to participate more fully in the American dream and national prosperity.⁸

EDA describes its approach as working "directly with local economic development officials to support their bottom-up, regionally owned economic development initiatives"⁹ and helping communities "build capacity for economic development based on local business conditions and needs."¹⁰ For instance, EDA programs generally do not require applicants to specialize in specific industries or strategies, and instead assist with locally developed projects to advance industries or strategies based on a region's particular assets and challenges. As noted in subsequent sections, EDA programs continue to support investments in infrastructure and public works and to assist

⁴ EDA, "EDA Program List," <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs>.

⁵ EDA, "Overview," <https://eda.gov/about>.

⁶ EDA, "EDA Informational Brochure," <https://www.eda.gov/archives/2021/files/programs/disaster-recovery/EDA-Disaster-Brochure.pdf>.

⁷ For information on the agency's statutory history, see CRS Report R41241, *Economic Development Administration: A Review of Elements of Its Statutory History*, by Julie M. Lawhorn. See also EDA, "History of EDA," <https://www.eda.gov/archives/2016/50/history>; and Robert W. Lake et al., "EDA and U.S. Economic Distress 1965–2000," EDA Research Report, 99-07-13812, July 2004.

⁸ 42 U.S.C. §3121(a)(4). See also, Maryann Feldman et al., "The Logic of Economic Development: A Definition and Model for Investment," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2016), pp. 5-21; also available at <https://www.eda.gov/grant-resources/reports/research-reports>. The report defines economic development as "the development of capacities that expand economic actors' capabilities."

⁹ EDA, *FY2024 Congressional Budget Justification*, p. 153, <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/EDA-FY2024-Congressional-Budget-Submission.pdf>.

¹⁰ EDA, "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act Frequently Asked Questions," <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/cares/faq>.

communities experiencing economic distress.¹¹ EDA's activities have shifted to also include programs that address changing industry dynamics, global competition, technological developments, and other events, conditions, and priorities. Programs are available to both urban and rural areas.¹² For a summary of congressional debate prior to the establishment of EDA in the 1960s, see CRS Report R41241, *Economic Development Administration: A Review of Elements of Its Statutory History*. See **Appendix A** for a legislative history prior to the enactment of PWEDA.

The general rationale for federal investment in economic development projects is that federal assistance may facilitate future economic growth or development in areas with low levels of private investment and/or employment opportunities.¹³ Around the time of EDA's authorization, additional reasons cited for assisting economically disadvantaged regions included an overall concern for national prosperity, the distribution of economic activity, and alternatives to welfare programs.¹⁴ Some Members of Congress continue to express support for federal economic development policies based on these objectives. Additionally, some Members of Congress have expressed interest in supporting economically disadvantaged areas and furthering national competitiveness, national security, and innovation goals.¹⁵ Around the time of EDA's authorization, researchers noted that opposition to such policies was based on concerns "over the interference with private enterprise, opposition to extension of federal powers, and rejection of any program hinting of central planning."¹⁶

In recent years, certain Members of Congress and outside groups have suggested reforms to federal economic development policy, including enhanced coordination among agencies and

¹¹ For additional analysis on infrastructure and the economy, see CRS Report R46826, *Infrastructure and the Economy*, by Lida R. Weinstock.

¹² EDA's *Informational Brochure* (published 2017) noted that funds are awarded to both rural and urban communities with approximately two-thirds of assistance awarded to rural communities. See EDA, "EDA Informational Brochure," <https://www.eda.gov/sites/default/files/filebase/archives/2021/pdf/about/EDA-TriFold-2017.pdf>.

¹³ According to some researchers, economic development policy objectives at multiple levels of government have focused on poverty, regional disparities, and long-term economic distress. Beginning in the 1980s, objectives expanded to include economic growth and national competitiveness as well as addressing regional economic impacts related to changing trade patterns. See U.S. Senate, Committee on Public Works, *Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965*, report to accompany S. 1648, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, S. Rept. 89-193; Emil E. Malizia and Edward J. Feser, *Understanding Local Economic Development* (Center for Urban Policy Research, 1999), p. 6; and EDA, "Highlight: the Evolution of Economic Development," <https://www.eda.gov/archives/2016/news/blogs/2015/08/01/highlight.htm>.

¹⁴ John. H. Cumberland, *Regional Development Experiences and Prospects in the United States of America* (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1971), pp. 6-20; and U.S. Senate, Committee on Public Works, *Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965*, report to accompany S. 1648, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, S. Rept. 89-193, p. 18; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Public Works, *Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965*, report to accompany H.R. 6991, S. 1648, 89th Cong., 1st sess., June 22, 1965, H. Rept. 89-539 (Washington: GPO 1965). For additional analysis on the origins of EDA and other federal economic development policies, see Robert W. Lake et al., "EDA and U.S. Economic Distress 1965-2000," EDA Research Report, 99-07-13812, July 2004, pp. 65-67.

¹⁵ Senate EPW Committee, *Reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration: State and Local Perspectives*, 118th Cong., 1st sess., June 21, 2023, S. Hrg. 118-142, p. 5, <https://www.congress.gov/118/chrg/CHRG-118shrg53731/CHRG-118shrg53731.pdf>.

¹⁶ Proponents of federal economic development policy note that eligibility for certain federal programs requires alignment with local or regional plans. Some programs, like EDA's partnership planning and technical assistance programs, were designed to provide financial assistance for such planning. Additionally, throughout its history, EDA has applied a "bottom up" approach to community-driven economic development. See John. H. Cumberland, *Regional Development Experiences and Prospects in the United States of America* (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1971), pp. 6, 74-75; U.S. Senate, Committee on Public Works, *Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965*, report to accompany S. 1648, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, S. Rept. 89-193; and EDA, "Highlight: the Evolution of Economic Development."

levels of government or different delivery systems for aid.¹⁷ Other Members of Congress and outside groups argue that federal economic development policies are ineffective or duplicative and that economic development is the domain of state and local government and private stakeholders.¹⁸ Some critics of federal economic development policies call for economic development assistance programs to be eliminated entirely.¹⁹

A full analysis of the federal role in economic development and the share of federal economic development in overall discretionary spending is beyond the scope of this report. For additional information about economic development broadly, see EDA's Research and Evaluation website for analysis of economic development, including a report that discusses how to understand, measure, and analyze economic development, among others.²⁰

2025 EDA Reauthorization

Prior to 2025, Congress last amended and extended EDA authorities in 2004 through the Economic Development Administration Reauthorization Act (EDARA; P.L. 108-373). In hearings during the 117th and 118th Congresses, Members of Congress discussed issues related to EDA's grant requirements, grant allocations, disaster recovery, and capacity, and the reauthorization of appropriations for programs established by PWEDA among other matters.²¹ Congressional debate centered on modernizing EDA's programs and authorities to meet changing technology and industries versus keeping broad-based programs that may be adapted to a range of challenges and opportunities. In deliberations preceding EDA's reauthorization, Members of Congress also expressed varying perspectives on the preferred level of federal participation in state and local economic development and raised questions about the extent of EDA and other federal agency collaboration versus the potential duplication of programs and services.²²

In January 2025, the Economic Development Reauthorization Act (EDRA) of 2024 (P.L. 118-272) reauthorized the EDA. EDRA revised existing authorities, codified new and existing roles, expanded criteria for existing programs, and changed program and administrative requirements. In general, EDRA made significant changes to EDA because the legislation

- statutorily established EDA investment priorities;
- amended cost-sharing and other program requirements;
- prioritized small, rural, under-resourced, and tribal communities for certain EDA programs and activities;

¹⁷ See, for example, Amy Liu et al., "Making Local Economies Prosperous and Resilient: The Case for a Modern Economic Development Administration," The Brookings Institution, June 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/EDA-Report-Brief.pdf>

¹⁸ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I), Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, *Regional Commissions: A Review of Federal Economic Development Program Effectiveness*, 118th Cong., 1st sess., October 19, 2023, Serial No. 118-32, pp. 2-3, <https://www.congress.gov/118/chrg/CHRG-118hrg56927/CHRG-118hrg56927.pdf>.

¹⁹ See, for example, Chris Edwards and Tad DeHaven, "Economic Development Administration," April 2, 2018, Cato Institute, <https://www.cato.org/downsizing-government-essay/economic-development-administration>.

²⁰ See EDA, "Research and Evaluation," <https://www.eda.gov/resources/reports/research-evaluation>.

²¹ For a list of hearings in the 117th - 119th Congresses related to the reauthorization of EDA, see **Table B-1**.

²² House Committee on T&I, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, *Regional Commissions: A Review of Federal Economic Development Program Effectiveness*, 118th Cong., 1st sess., October 19, 2023, Serial No. 118-32, pp. 2-3, 9, 35, <https://www.congress.gov/118/chrg/CHRG-118hrg56927/CHRG-118hrg56927.pdf>.

- expanded and codified EDA's role in disaster economic recovery and tribal economic development;²³
- authorized new programs, amended program authorities to modernize or refine the scope of existing programs, and codified EDA's authority to support certain types of projects and activities (e.g., broadband, workforce training, project predevelopment);
- expanded and codified EDA's coordination and partnership activities; and
- authorized a total of \$3.2 billion over five years (FY2025-FY2029) for certain EDA programs and expenses among other changes.²⁴

EDRA's reauthorization of EDA signaled continued congressional interest in promoting job creation and private investment in distressed communities through flexible, core economic development grant programs. EDRA also indicated congressional interest in allowing EDA to provide new forms of assistance and expand program access to certain communities and for certain development activities. For instance, EDRA's changes to core EDA program criteria appear to be designed to specifically address economic development needs of rural, small, and tribal communities and the needs of areas experiencing economic distress resulting from changes in energy and manufacturing industries. EDRA authorized assistance for regional economies that may be preparing for and responding to natural disasters, plant closures, broadband challenges, trade dynamics, and other problems and opportunities as well.²⁵

See **Appendix B** for a list of hearings on EDA oversight or related matters in recent years.

EDA Grant Programs

EDA administers grant programs that fund economic development activities, primarily through competitive processes that solicit community-directed proposals aligned with the agency's statutorily established investment priorities. Many EDA grant programs are flexible and can be used for one or more activity, such as workforce development, infrastructure development, or planning.

²³ The Economic Development Reauthorization Act (EDRA) of 2024 (P.L. 118-272) established EDA's Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience (ODRR) and authorized it to direct and implement the EDA's post-disaster economic recovery responsibilities (see Section 2228). EDRA also directed EDA to coordinate with other federal agencies specifically on tribal economic development strategies and established a new Office of Tribal Economic Development (OTED) to coordinate and expand the agency's existing activities with tribal entities (see Section 2227).

²⁴ The law did not appropriate funds to the EDA; it only authorized such appropriations in future legislation. See 42 U.S.C. §3231.

²⁵ For additional information about EDRA, see CRS Report R48516, *Economic Development Reauthorization Act (EDRA) of 2024*, by Julie M. Lawhorn.

Recovery and Resiliency

EDA programs support state and local activities that facilitate long-term strategies to drive economic diversification, promote sector and cluster development, or otherwise build a region's capacity for economic recovery and resilience. According to the EDA, "in the context of economic development, economic resilience aims to better prepare regions to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock, disruption, or stress it may experience." Shocks may include national or global economic downturns; regional industry downturns; or external events, such as a natural or man-made disaster. For example, EDA projects may support resiliency goals by assisting with business continuity and preparedness efforts or by facilitating long-term recovery from natural disasters and other economic shocks.

Sources: EDA, "CEDS Guidelines—Economic Resilience," <https://www.eda.gov/grant-resources/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/content/economic-resilience>; and "Investment Priorities," <https://www.eda.gov/funding/investment-priorities>.

Investment Priorities

EDA encourages grant applicants to align their proposals with its investment priorities.²⁶ In 2025, EDRA established EDA investment priorities in statute. In doing so, a Member of Congress remarked that, "Congress is giving EDA clear direction about our priorities."²⁷ Prior to EDRA, the sitting Administration established EDA's investment priorities.

Table 1 lists the investment priorities, as well as the EDA's priorities since FY2012.

Table 1. Comparison of EDA Investment Priorities, FY2012-Present

FY2012-FY2016	FY2017-April 2021	April 2021-December 2024	January 2025-present
(Administration priorities)	(Administration priorities)	(Administration priorities)	(Statutory priorities)
• Collaborative regional innovation • Public private partnerships • National strategic priorities • Global competitiveness • Environmentally sustainable development • Economically distressed and underserved communities	• Recovery and resilience • Critical infrastructure • Workforce development and manufacturing • Exports and foreign direct investment (FDI) • Opportunity zones	• Equity • Recovery and resilience • Workforce development • Manufacturing • Technology-based economic development • Environmentally sustainable development • Exports and FDI	• Critical infrastructure • Workforce • Innovation and entrepreneurship • Economic recovery resilience • Manufacturing

Source: EDA, "Investment Priorities," <https://www.eda.gov/funding/investment-priorities>; *FY2014 Congressional Budget Justification*, https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/EDA_FY2014_CJ.pdf; and P.L. 118-272.

²⁶ EDA, "Investment Priorities," <https://www.eda.gov/funding/investment-priorities>.

²⁷ *Congressional Record*, vol. 170, no. 182 (December 9, 2024), p. H6525, <https://www.congress.gov/118/crec/2024/12/09/170/182/CREC-2024-12-09.pdf#page=81>.

Disaster Economic Recovery and Interagency Roles²⁸

EDA has supported disaster economic recovery since the 1960s.²⁹ In support of the current National Preparedness Goal, EDA serves as the lead agency for the “Economic Recovery Support Function (ERSF)” under the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF).³⁰ According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), “The NDRF identifies Recovery Support Functions that provide a structure to facilitate problem solving, improve access to resources, and foster coordination among state and federal agencies, tribes, territories, nongovernmental partners and stakeholders.”³¹ The EDA’s primary role in the NDRF is to “facilitate the delivery of federal economic development assistance to support long-term economic recovery planning and project implementation in communities across the nation.”³² As a convener, EDA may bring together federal, state, and local stakeholders for post-disaster regional resource exchange events. In some post-disaster scenarios, EDA supports or leads efforts to assess regional assets and challenges to facilitate long-term recovery.³³ Between 2013 and 2025, EDA coordinated 45 ERSF missions.³⁴ For instance,

- Following the wildfires in Maui, HI that occurred in August 2023, EDA coordinated economic recovery efforts in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies.³⁵
- EDA coordinated a “Federal Interagency Resource Exchange” following Hurricane Laura in August 2021.³⁶

²⁸ For additional information, see CRS In Focus IF12576, *EDA’s Disaster Economic Recovery and Resiliency Roles*, by Julie M. Lawhorn; and CRS Infographic IG10045, *Economic Development Administration (EDA) Disaster Recovery Funding*, by Julie M. Lawhorn. Also, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) completed an evaluation of EDA’s recent disaster economic recovery activities in July 2026. See “EDA’s Management of Disaster Economic Recovery Assistance (2026)” and GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes,” GAO-26-107742, July 02, 2026, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107742>.

²⁹ According to an EDA-commissioned history of its programs,

Destruction caused by Hurricane Camille in 1969 and Tropical Storm Agnes in 1972 led to the addition of Title VIII to PWEDA in 1974, giving EDA specific authority to provide economic aid in areas affected by natural disasters. For affected communities, EDA assistance smoothes [sic] the transition between short-term emergency disaster relief (provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other groups) and longer-term economic redevelopment.

See Robert W. Lake et al., “EDA and U.S. Economic Distress 1965–2000,” EDA Research Report, 99-07-13812, July 2004, pp. xviii, 122.

³⁰ EDA, “EDA and Disaster Recovery,” <https://eda.gov/disaster-recovery>; and U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “National Preparedness Goal,” Second Edition, September 2015, https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_gpd_national-preparedness-goal-2nd-edition_051525.pdf.

³¹ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), “National Disaster Recovery Framework,” <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/recovery>.

³² EDA, “Spotlight: EDA Investments Advance Economic Recovery in American Communities Impacted by Natural Disasters,” <https://www.eda.gov/archives/2021/news/blogs/2020/09/01/spotlight.htm>.

³³ EDA, “Recovering from Harvey: EDA Leads the Coordination of Federal Resources,” January 12, 2021, <https://www.eda.gov/impact/success-stories/disaster-recovery/recovering-harvey-eda-leads-coordination-federal-resources>.

³⁴ GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes,” GAO-26-107742, July 02, 2026, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107742>. For a summary of past and present Economic Recovery Support Function (ERSF) missions, see EDA, “ERSF Mission Assignments,” <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/disaster-recovery/ersf-mission-assignments>.

³⁵ EDA, “ERSF Mission Assignments.”

³⁶ See EDA, “Where We Work,” <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/disaster-recovery/where-we-work>.

- Following Hurricane Harvey in August 2017, EDA's Austin Regional Office collaborated with EDDs, federal agencies (e.g., FEMA, the Small Business Administration (SBA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Federal Reserve, Department of Transportation), and state and local stakeholders to develop a Recovery Support Strategy (RSS). EDA also led regional workshops in Texas and provided recovery grants to impacted communities.³⁷
- Through its ERSF, EDA deployed to Puerto Rico following Hurricanes Maria and Irma in September 2017 to provide support, coordination, and additional capacity to economic recovery efforts.³⁸

As a grant-making agency, the EDA also administers program funds for state and local entities to plan and implement disaster economic recovery efforts—primarily through its EAA program. For example, between 2017 and 2021, EDA invested over \$111 million in 34 grants to Puerto Rico following hurricanes Maria and Irma.³⁹ Following Tropical Storm Helene in western North Carolina in September 2024, EDA provided multiple awards for disaster economic recovery activities in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.⁴⁰ After flooding in 2019, EDA provided a grant to the City of Moberly, MO, aimed to improve water and wastewater infrastructure and prevent future damage to downtown businesses.⁴¹

In recent years, EDA's economic development integration (EDI) activities have occurred at various levels—federal, state, regional, and local—and through various types of partnership and coordination efforts.⁴² Examples of recent and ongoing integration activities are noted below.

- EDA's regional offices work with EDDs to facilitate connections among local, state, and federal contacts and programs—often convening for planning purposes or post-disaster recovery initiatives.⁴³

³⁷ EDA, "EDA Investments in Disaster Recovery and Resiliency Programs for Regions Impacted by Hurricane Harvey," <https://www.eda.gov/impact/success-stories/disaster-recovery/eda-investments-disaster-recovery-and-resiliency-programs>; and "Recovering from Harvey: EDA Leads Coordination of Federal Resources," January 12, 2021, <https://www.eda.gov/impact/success-stories/disaster-recovery/recovering-harvey-eda-leads-coordination-federal-resources>.

³⁸ EDA, "EDA Continues to Support the Caribbean Following the Devastating 2017 Hurricane Season," September 20, 2021, <https://www.eda.gov/news/blog/2021/09/20/eda-continues-support-caribbean-following-devastating-2017-hurricane-season>.

³⁹ EDA, "EDA Continues to Support the Caribbean Following the Devastating 2017 Hurricane Season," September 20, 2021, <https://www.eda.gov/news/blog/2021/09/20/eda-continues-support-caribbean-following-devastating-2017-hurricane-season>.

⁴⁰ EDA, "U.S. Department of Commerce Invests \$15.8 Million in First Awards for Fiscal Year 2025 Disaster Supplemental Funding to Support Economic Recovery in 11 States and Territories," September 16, 2025, <https://www.eda.gov/news/press-release/2025/09/16/us-department-commerce-invests-158-million-first-awards-fiscal-year>.

⁴¹ EDA "After Reoccurring Flooding, Moberly, Missouri, Business Owners to See Relief," May 12, 2021, <https://eda.gov/success-stories/disaster/stories/moberly-mo.htm>.

⁴² For several years, EDA led integration activities across federal economic development programs in an effort to enhance collaboration, increase access to resources, and to reduce administrative burdens (see "EDA's Economic Development Integration (EDI) Role (2021)" and EDA, "Economic Development Integration," <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/economic-development-integration>).

⁴³ EDA, "Economic Development Integration," <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/economic-development-integration/history>. In recent years, EDA's regional offices have staff identified as regional integrators as well. See EDA, "Regional Integrator Contacts," <https://eda.gov/integration/contact>. As of date of publication, EDA has Regional Economic Development Integrators at three of the EDA's six regional offices. Regional integrators may help stakeholders by convening meetings, building coalitions, identifying resources, and other activities to facilitate (continued...)

- EDA partners with other federal agencies that administer economic development programs, including the USDA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Labor (DOL), and SBA, among others.⁴⁴
- Eligible EDA grant recipients are allowed to combine funding from other agencies and nonfederal sources to facilitate economic development goals because state and local economic development practices are often implemented in connection with other programs.⁴⁵
- In FY2026, EDA met with the federal regional commissions and authorities to discuss agency coordination of efforts to address economic development in distressed regions.⁴⁶

EDA Structure

EDA's organizational structure includes offices for chief counsel, finance and management services, and external affairs and communications (see **Figure 1**). Other EDA offices include

- The **Office of Regional Operations**, which oversees (1) the **Regional Offices** that administer the programs authorized by PWEDA, (2) the **Office of Tribal Economic Development**, and (3) the **Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience**;⁴⁷
- The **Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE)**, which administers EDA programs authorized Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980, as amended (e.g., Build to Scale [B2S], Tech Hubs, Recompete);⁴⁸ and

coordinated responses to state and local economic development issues. For an example, see EDA, "EDA's Economic Integrator Catalyzes Interagency Investments in San Diego," <https://www.eda.gov/impact/success-stories/economic-development-integration/edas-economic-integrator-catalyzes>.

⁴⁴ EDA, "Economic Development Integration (EDI)," <https://eda.gov/integration> and "EDI Networking and Collaboration," <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/economic-development-integration/networking-collaboration>.

⁴⁵ Limitations may apply to the total amount of federal project funding, depending on the program, type of applicant, and determination of special need. See 42 U.S.C. §3144. The FY2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs noted that, "Funds from other federal financial assistance awards may be considered matching share funds only if authorized by statute, which may be determined by EDA's reasonable interpretation of the statute." See EDA, "FY 2025 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Notice of Funding Opportunity," pp. 9-10, <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=346815>, and 13 C.F.R. §300.3 and 2 C.F.R. §200.306.

⁴⁶ Testimony of Mr. Ben Page, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, in U.S. Congress, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I), Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, *Smarter Spending, Stronger Results: Reducing Duplication and Ensuring Effectiveness Through Economic Development Reforms*, 119th Cong., 2nd sess. January 22, 2026, <https://www.congress.gov/119/meeting/house/118896/witnesses/HHRG-119-PW13-Wstate-PageB-20260122.pdf>.

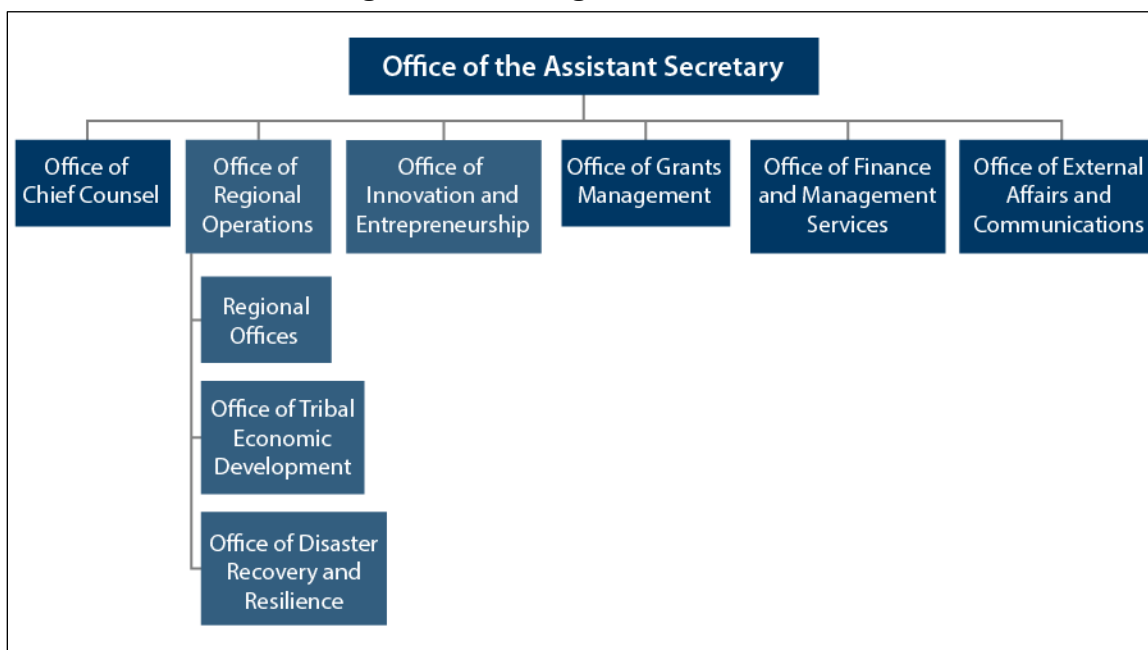
⁴⁷ As of January 2026, Congress had approved EDA's reorganization plan to establish the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience and the Office of Tribal Economic Development. See Page, Testimony in *Smarter Spending, Stronger Results: Reducing Duplication and Ensuring Effectiveness Through Economic Development Reforms*; and EDA, "EDA Update on Operational Modernization," April 2, 2026, <https://www.eda.gov/news/blog/2026/04/02/eda-update-operational-modernization>.

⁴⁸ The America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-358) established the EDA's Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE).

- The **Office of Grants Management**, which is to “promote standard operating procedures and ensure consistency of grants management.”⁴⁹

EDA locations include a headquarters office in Washington, DC, and six regional offices. EDA administers programs at the headquarters and regional office levels. According to EDA, the ORO and the OIE are “programming offices;” ORO administers EDA’s Public Works and Economic Development Act (PWEDA) Programs and OIE administers EDA’s Stevenson-Wydler programs.

Figure I. EDA Organizational Chart



Source: CRS with data from DOC, EDA, *FY2027 Congressional Justification*, p. 5, <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2026-04/FY2027-EDA-CJ-Submission.pdf>.

Notes: The Office of Regional Operations and Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship are EDA’s two programming offices. The Office of the Assistant Secretary oversees EDA’s research and technical assistance programs.

2026 Reorganization

In 2026, EDA announced the implementation of an agency reorganization plan to reflect new programs, new offices created by reauthorization legislation, and new “operating models.”⁵⁰ The reorganization plan calls for the establishment of two new offices required by EDRA (e.g., the Office of Tribal Economic Development and the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience [ODRR]) as well as a new Office of Grants Management.⁵¹ Following the reorganization, the Office of the Assistant Secretary oversees EDA’s research and technical assistance programs. As previously noted, EDRA authorized the ODRR in statute in 2025, yet prior to the reorganization and passage of legislation, EDA operated an Office of Economic Development Integration and Disaster Recovery. EDA is in the process of establishing the ODRR and no longer has an office

⁴⁹ EDA, “EDA Update on Operational Modernization.”

⁵⁰ EDA, “EDA Update on Operational Modernization,” April 2, 2026, <https://www.eda.gov/news/blog/2026/04/02/eda-update-operational-modernization>. EDA’s Departmental Organizational Order is available at <https://www.commerce.gov/node/5054>.

⁵¹ EDA, “EDA Update on Operational Modernization,” April 2, 2026.

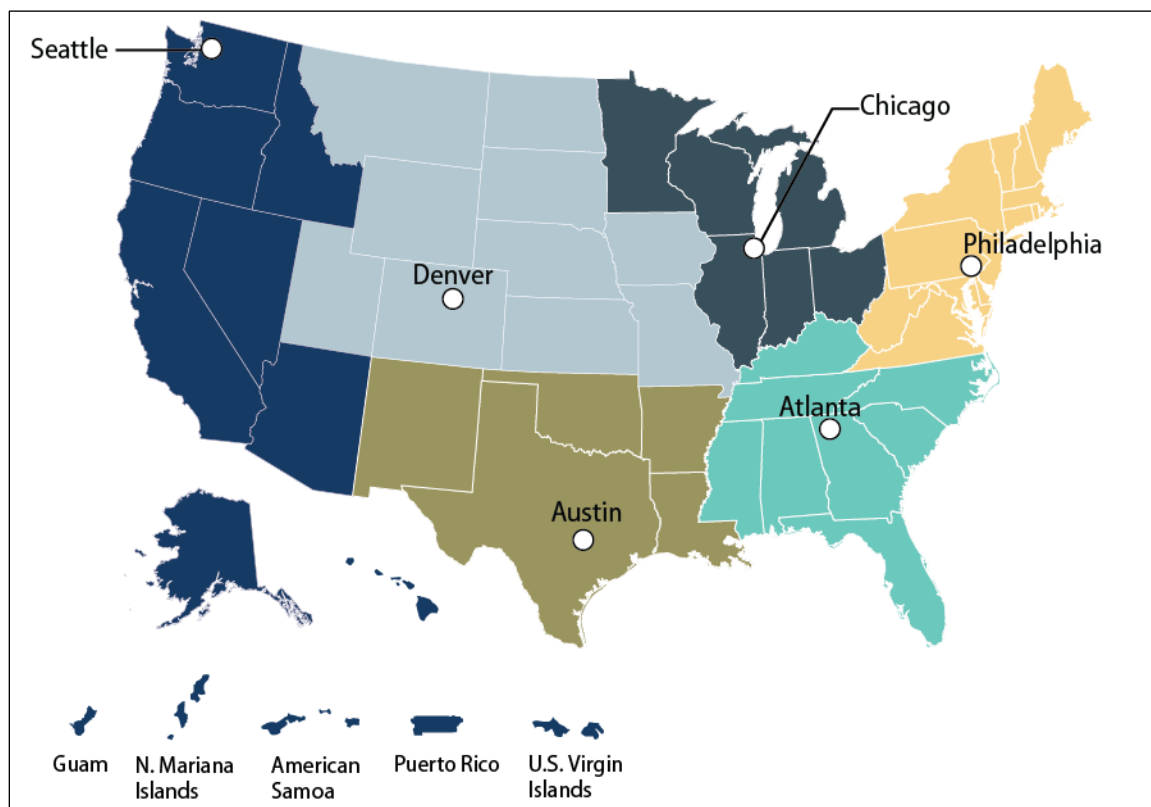
with “economic development integration” in the title (see **Figure 1**).⁵² For a summary of EDA’s ongoing economic integration activities and additional information about the former Office of Economic Integration and Disaster Recovery, see “Disaster Economic Recovery and Interagency Roles” and “EDA’s Economic Development Integration (EDI) Role (2021).” The reorganization changed the name of the Office of Regional Affairs (ORA) to the Office of Regional Operations (ORO). Prior to the reorganization, the ORA/ORO oversaw the Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE). The OIE is currently situated under the Office of the Assistant Secretary (see **Figure 1**).

EDA Regional Offices

EDA’s regional offices review and process grant applications for certain economic development programs; monitor approved projects; and provide outreach and technical assistance services.

Figure 2 illustrates the six regions and locations of the regional offices. Following the implementation of the agency’s reorganization plan in 2026, EDA’s six regional offices would remain; however, a “single executive [will] oversee two regional offices.”⁵³

Figure 2. EDA Regional Offices



Source: CRS using information from EDA, “Overview,” <https://www.eda.gov/about>.

⁵² See GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes,” GAO-26-107742, July 02, 2026, p. 19.

⁵³ EDA, “EDA Update on Operational Modernization,” April 2, 2026.

Office of Tribal Economic Development (OTED)

In 2025, EDRA (P.L. 118-272) authorized a new Office of Tribal Economic Development (OTED) and directed EDA to coordinate and expand the agency's existing activities with tribal entities. EDRA directed OTED to assist tribal communities with accessing economic development assistance, maintain an active role in coordination with other federal agencies, and participate in rulemaking and consultations that may impact tribal communities. EDRA also required EDA to publish a comprehensive online directory of economic development programs for tribal communities and maintain sufficient staff to carry out OTED outreach activities.⁵⁴ EDRA required EDA to complete a strategic plan for tribal economic development in consultation with tribal entities by January 4, 2026 (and every three years thereafter). EDA held the consultation on September 25, 2025, as required in the reauthorization.⁵⁵

Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience (ODRR)

EDRA established the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience (ODRR) in 2025 and authorized it to direct and implement the EDA's post-disaster economic recovery responsibilities.⁵⁶ As noted above, as of January 2026, Congress had approved EDA's reorganization plan to establish the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience.⁵⁷ EDRA also directed the EDA to continue its existing National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) roles and establish a Disaster Team to be composed of ODRR and non-EDA staff.⁵⁸ Under the NDRF, EDA is the lead entity for the Economic Recovery Support Function (ERSF) and the mission of ERSF is to

integrate the expertise of the federal government to help state, local, Tribal Nation, and territorial governments (SLTTs) and their partners in sustaining and rebuilding businesses, revitalizing employment, and developing economic opportunities that result in economically resilient communities after large-scale or catastrophic incidents.⁵⁹

EDRA allowed EDA to hire temporary personnel for ODRR responsibilities and to convert them to EDA competitive service positions under certain circumstances. The expanded hiring authorities expire on September 30, 2029.⁶⁰ The ODRR helped design the FY2025 disaster recovery Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).⁶¹

⁵⁴ EDA, "Tribal Economic Development Resources," <https://www.eda.gov/resources/tribal-economic-development-resources>.

⁵⁵ EDA, "Consultations," <https://www.eda.gov/resources/tribal-economic-development-resources/consultations>. EDA's website indicates that EDA has carried out similar consultations since 2021.

⁵⁶ P.L. 118-272, §2228. Prior to the enactment of P.L. 118-272, EDA administered a national program focused on Disaster Recovery and Economic Integration since FY2021, though an agency office had not yet been formally established in statute.

⁵⁷ Page, Testimony in *Smarter Spending, Stronger Results: Reducing Duplication and Ensuring Effectiveness Through Economic Development Reforms*.

⁵⁸ P.L. 118-272, §2228. For additional information, see CRS Report R46696, *National Preparedness: A Summary and Select Issues*; and FEMA, "National Disaster Recovery Framework," <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/recovery>.

⁵⁹ FEMA, "Economic Recovery Support Function," <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/recovery/recovery-support-functions/economic-rsf>.

⁶⁰ 42 U.S.C. §3199.

⁶¹ Page, Testimony in *Smarter Spending, Stronger Results: Reducing Duplication and Ensuring Effectiveness Through Economic Development Reforms*.

Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE)

The America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-358) established the Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE) to coordinate activities related to innovation, commercialization, and entrepreneurship between the Department of Commerce, other federal agencies, and state and local governments.⁶² For several years, OIE administered the now inactive National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (NACIE), a federal advisory committee.⁶³

EDA also participates in the Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE), an international trade, business technical assistance, and innovation network. ACE is facilitated by the Organization of American States (OAS) as the Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC) Technical Secretariat, with the support from the Government of the United States, through EDA and the U.S. Department of State/Permanent Mission of the United States to the OAS.⁶⁴

EDA Staff Levels

EDA staff levels fluctuated between 2017 and 2026. The number of employees was at the lowest level of 180 in 2017 and increased to a high of 324 in 2023. In June 2026, EDA had approximately 190 employees.⁶⁵ **Figure 3** and **Table 2** present the number of employees for 2017 to 2026.

EDA may continue to adjust staffing levels as it implements recent supplemental recovery appropriations and manages related oversight and technical assistance activities. For instance, supplemental appropriations to EDA in fiscal years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, and 2025 allowed a certain percentage (usually 2% or 3%) to be used for the agency's Salaries and Expenses account.⁶⁶ Additionally, Congress provided temporary special hiring authority to EDA through the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136) and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act (P.L. 117-2).⁶⁷ In 2025, Executive Branch efforts to reduce the size of the federal workforce (e.g., hiring freezes, deferred resignations, early retirement offerings) may have also impacted EDA's staff levels.⁶⁸

⁶² EDA, "About OIE," <https://eda.gov/oie/>.

⁶³ EDA, "National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (NACIE)," <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/national-advisory-council-on-innovation-and-entrepreneurship>.

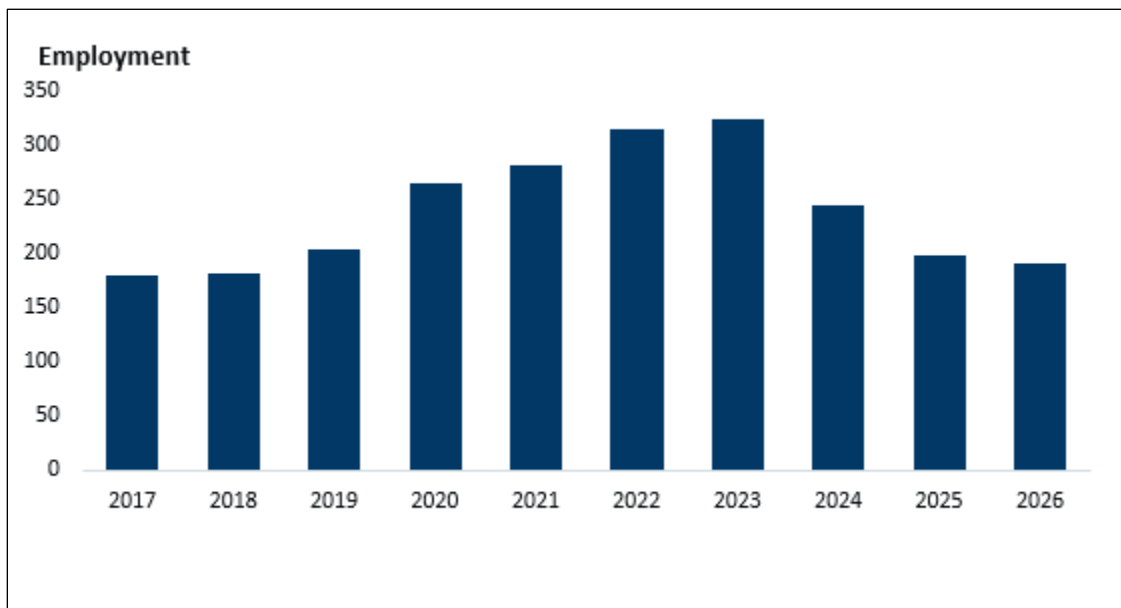
⁶⁴ Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE), "What is ACE?" <https://riacevents.org/ACE/about-us/> and, EDA, "Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE)," <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/ace>.

⁶⁵ Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Federal Workforce Data for EDA's Federal Civilian Workforce, <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>.

⁶⁶ See GAO, "Federal Hiring: OPM Should Collect and Share COVID-19 Lessons Learned to Inform Hiring During Future Emergencies," GAO-22-104297, October 25, 2021, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104297.pdf>. The GAO report further noted that P.L. 116-136 allowed the DOC to "as appropriate, appoint these temporary employees into permanent competitive service positions after they have completed 2 years of continuous service."

⁶⁷ The CARES Act (P.L. 116-136) and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act (P.L. 117-2) provided a total of \$4.5 billion of supplemental funding to EDA in FY2020 and FY2021.

⁶⁸ See GAO, "Federal Response Workforce Readiness," p. 12; White House Memorandum, "Hiring Freeze," 90 *Federal Register* 8247-8248, January 20, 2025, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2025-01-28/pdf/2025-01905.pdf>; White House Memorandum, "Extension of Hiring Freeze," April 17, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/extension-of-hiring-freeze/>; and White House Memorandum, "Ensuring Accountability and Prioritizing Public Safety in Federal Hiring," July 7, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/07/ensuring-accountability-and-prioritizing-public-safety-in-federal-hiring/>.

Figure 3. EDA Employees, 2017-2026

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Workforce Data for EDA's Federal Civilian Workforce, <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>.

Note: For FY2017-FY2025, each total provides the number of employees as of September each year. For FY2026, the total is a personnel count as of June 2026.

Table 2. EDA Employment, FY2017-FY2026

Year	Employment
2017	180
2018	181
2019	202
2020	261
2021	281
2022	314
2023	324
2024	244
2025	198
2026	190

Sources: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Workforce Data for EDA's Federal Civilian Workforce, <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>.

Note: For FY2017-FY2025, each total is a personnel count as of September of the year noted. For FY2026, the total is a personnel count as of June 2026.

As Congress considers provisions in recent bills designed to reauthorize, alter, update, or expand EDA's programs, it may seek to review the scale and scope of financial resources, workforce capacity, and authorities that may be needed to meet future needs and roles of the EDA. For instance, in its FY2025 budget request, EDA noted that "Since 2018, EDA has seen its active grant portfolio grow by more than 8 times, going from 1,670 grants valued at \$694 million at the

end of 2017 to over 3,000 grants valued at over \$6 billion in 2024.”⁶⁹ Congress may seek to review EDA’s workforce plan, permanent and temporary staffing levels, and hiring authorities to ensure that the agency is equipped to implement and oversee new programs and authorities.

EDA Performance Metrics, Select Reports, and Evaluations

According to EDA, between FY2012 and FY2021, the agency invested over \$5.3 billion in 7,921 projects.⁷⁰ EDA, GAO, and outside groups have published reports on EDA’s program metrics and processes, as well as interagency activities and other topics in recent years. Select reports and evaluations are summarized below. **Appendix B** provides a list of hearings on EDA oversight or related matters in recent years.

Performance Goals and Metrics

EDA collects and measures performance according to two Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goals. The first goal is connected to infrastructure investments, and the second goal is connected to non-infrastructure investments.⁷¹ By example, Public Works is an infrastructure program and Build to Scale is generally classified as a non-infrastructure program. Examples of the agency’s goals and associated metrics are detailed in **Table 3**.

Table 3. EDA Performance Goals and Select Metrics

Performance Goal	Examples of Metrics
Infrastructure investments that promote private enterprise and job creation in economically distressed communities and regions.	- Private sector dollars invested in economically distressed regions as a result of EDA’s investments. - Jobs created or retained in economically distressed regions as a result of EDA’s investments.
Non-infrastructure investments that build community capacity to achieve and sustain regional competitiveness and economic growth.	- New technologies marketed due to EDA support. - Funding secured by entrepreneurs due to EDA support. - New customer and business relationships developed due to EDA support. - Grantees leveraging EDA-supported Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) for decisionmaking - EDA-sponsored capacity building events.

Source: EDA, “EDA Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation,” <https://www.eda.gov/performance>.

Note: For more information and to review the complete set of performance metrics, see “Performance Data Collection Instruments and Processes,” <https://eda.gov/performance/gpra> and DOC, “Economic Development Administration: Performance Summary,” <https://performance.commerce.gov/stories/s/EDA-Performance-Dashboard/yffr-pn4z>.

⁶⁹ EDA, “FY2025 Congressional Budget Justification,” p. 115, <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/EDA-FY2025-Justification-Congressional-Submission.pdf>.

⁷⁰ EDA, “EDA Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation,” <https://www.eda.gov/performance>.

⁷¹ EDA, “EDA Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation,” <https://www.eda.gov/performance>.

Reports to Congress and Publicly Available Reports

PWEDA requires EDA to include information in its annual report to Congress about project milestones and private sector leveraging goals set for investments awarded to rural and urban economically distressed areas and to highly distressed areas.⁷² EDA is also required to report on disaster recovery and temporary hiring activities.⁷³ PWEDA further requires EDA to report on construction project milestones (e.g., award date, completion date, closeout date), project costs, and outcomes and to make the report publicly available.⁷⁴

Inspector General Oversight

The mission of the DOC Office of Inspector General (OIG) is to improve the DOC's programs and operations through independent and objective oversight. The OIG's methods of oversight include audits, evaluations, investigations, and related activities.⁷⁵ In recent years, DOC OIG testimonies and reports have analyzed the Public Works program, the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program (administered through the EAA program), and disaster recovery awards (also administered through the EAA program), with the OIG making recommendations for changes to grant application review, compliance, and related practices to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.⁷⁶ A report focused on the EDA by the OIG's Office of Audit and Evaluation (OAE) was issued in November 2023 and discussed EDA's administration of disaster recovery funding.⁷⁷ The report found that while EDA generally monitored grants, it did not always follow up on late submissions as required.⁷⁸ In February 2025, the OIG's OAE announced that it planned to audit the EDA's FY2019 disaster relief grant costs.⁷⁹

In recent years, the OIG also examined other aspects of EDA. In January 2021, an OIG report reviewed findings from an examination of EDA's administration of CARES Act (P.L. 116-136).

⁷² 42 U.S.C. §3213. For an example of such reports and data, see EDA, *FY2019 Annual Report*, pp. 8-10, <https://www.eda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/FY2019-Approved-EDA-Annual-Report.pdf>.

⁷³ 42 U.S.C. §3199(d) and 42 U.S.C. §3199(b)(4).

⁷⁴ 42 U.S.C. §3213(c).

⁷⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) Office of Inspector General (OIG), "Mission," <https://www.oig.doc.gov/about/our-mission/>; "FAQs," <https://www.oig.doc.gov/about/faqs/>; and "Organization," <https://www.oig.doc.gov/about/organization/>.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., September 9, 2008, S. Hrg. 110-1262, <https://www.congress.gov/110/chrgr/CHRG-110shrg88906/CHRG-110shrg88906.pdf>; "The Economic Development Administration Faces Challenges in Effectively Monitoring Its Revolving Loan Funds," Final Report No. OIG-15-031-A, June 5, 2015, <https://www.oig.doc.gov/OIGPublications/OIG-15-031-A.pdf>; and "EDA Is Not Fully Complying with All Its Disaster Relief Award Policies," Final Report No. OIG-21-014-A, December 21, 2020, <https://www.oig.doc.gov/OIGPublications/OIG-21-014-A.pdf>.

⁷⁷ According to the DOC OIG, the Office of Audit and Evaluation activities "include performance audits and evaluations, and financial audits. OAE also reviews and handles resolution of certain single audits conducted by state and local auditors on recipients of Commerce financial awards." DOC OIG, "Audit and Evaluation," <https://www.oig.doc.gov/about/organization/audit-and-evaluation/>.

⁷⁸ DOC OIG, "EDA Generally Monitored Grants Awarded Under the FY 2019 EDA Disaster Supplemental Notice of Funding Opportunity," Final Report OIG-24-005-A, November 6, 2023, <https://www.oig.doc.gov/Pages/EDA-Generally-Monitored-Grants-Awarded-Under-the-FY-2019-EDA-Disaster-Supplemental-Notice-of-Funding-Opportunity.aspx>.

⁷⁹ DOC OIG, "Audit of EDA's FY 2019 Disaster Relief Grants Costs Claimed and Oversight Efforts," February 11, 2025, <https://www.oig.doc.gov/detail-disaster-relief/?entry=24092>.

funding.⁸⁰ The report found that (1) EDA was proactive in implementing the requirements of the CARES Act; (2) EDA mitigated challenges during implementation of the CARES Act; and (3) EDA exceeded obligation milestones and completed required certifications. The report reiterated a recommendation from a prior DOC OIG report for EDA to complete a comprehensive workforce plan for ongoing and future emergency and disaster relief efforts due to insufficient staffing and related concerns.⁸¹ In April 2025, the DOC OIG published a report with findings from an examination of EDA's CARES Act RLF program. The report noted that EDA did not ensure RLF funds were loaned in accordance with federal regulations and RLF plans.⁸² In June 2025, the DOC OIG published a report with findings on the planning and implementation of the EDA's grant management IT system. One of the OIG's 10 recommendations focused on EDA's system of internal control of IT investments; the other recommendations involved Department-level matters. DOC's response to the report indicated that the Department would implement the recommendation for an analysis of the EDA's internal controls.⁸³

Select Government Accountability Office (GAO) Reports

GAO has published reports on EDA's interagency activities, program implementation and management, and other topics. Recent GAO reports on EDA have reviewed the agency's management of post-disaster economic recovery support function (ERSF) and its economic development integration role, among other topics.⁸⁴

EDA's Management of Disaster Economic Recovery Assistance (2026)

In July 2026, GAO reviewed EDA's disaster economic recovery roles and grants. The report examined the activities, measurement, staffing, and coordination of EDA's ERSF. The report also analyzed the status of disaster appropriations for FY2018 through FY2025, the types and characteristics of projects supported with grant awards, and performance metrics associated with disaster recovery grant activities.⁸⁵

GAO observed that the EDA's role in disaster economic recovery has expanded significantly in the FY2014 through FY2024 period, as have the frequency and intensity of major disasters. At the same time, EDA's staffing levels decreased.⁸⁶ Regarding EDA's ERSF, GAO noted that EDA

⁸⁰ DOC OIG, "EDA Was Effective in Implementing the Requirements for Awarding Funds Under the CARES Act," Final Report No. OIG-21-017-1, January 5, 2021, <https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/2021-01/OIG-21-017-1.pdf>.

⁸¹ DOC OIG, "EDA Was Effective in Implementing the Requirements for Awarding Funds Under the CARES Act," Final Report OIG-21-017-I, January 5, 2021, <https://www.oig.doc.gov/OIGPublications/OIG-21-017-I.pdf>.

⁸² DOC OIG, "EDA Needs to Improve Oversight of CARES Act Revolving Loan Funds to Ensure Loans Are Made to Eligible Borrowers and Used as Intended," Final Report No. OIG-25-019-A, April 30, 2025, <https://www.oig.doc.gov/wp-content/OIGPublications/OIG-25-019-A-SECURED.pdf>.

⁸³ DOC OIG, "The Department's Vision for an Enterprise Grants Management System Has Not Been Realized," Final Report Number OIG-25-025-A, June 30, 2025, https://www.oig.doc.gov/wp-content/OIGPublications/OIG-25-025-A_Final-Report-SECURED.pdf.

⁸⁴ For additional GAO reports involving EDA or federal economic development policies, see GAO, "Reports and Testimonies," <https://www.gao.gov/reports-testimonies>.

⁸⁵ GAO, "Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes." GAO noted that the report was required by S.Rept. 118-62, which "includes a provision for us to evaluate EDA's role in disaster recovery, including its coordination of the Economic RSF and the measures it uses to assess its performance in carrying out its disaster recovery responsibilities." The report also noted that P.L. 118-158 (the American Relief Act, 2025) includes a provision for GAO to conduct audits and investigations related to disasters declared in 2023 and 2024.

⁸⁶ GAO, "Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes," pp. 1, 21, 47.

generally implemented “leading practices” for interagency collaboration and noted certain challenges related to measuring the impact of the ERSF role and related activities. GAO noted EDA’s “challenges in its capacity to provide assistance,” and that ESRF operating documents had not been updated.⁸⁷ Staff levels and administrative challenges also limited EDA’s readiness, according to a FEMA assessment cited in the GAO report.⁸⁸ In terms of EDA’s post-disaster interagency roles and activities, GAO indicated that EDA did not fully monitor, assess, and communicate the status of strategic outcomes.⁸⁹

The GAO report also summarized key characteristics of disaster recovery grants made between 2014 and 2024. For instance, GAO noted that during the review period, EDA disaster recovery grants primarily funded infrastructure and construction activities, local governments were the most common type of awardees, and the southern region of the United States received the highest number of awards. Grant amounts ranged from \$100,000 to \$180 million. Among other findings, the GAO report also noted that EDA’s current set of performance measures does not assess the impact of disaster recovery activities.⁹⁰

GAO also reviewed information provided by state and local stakeholders (e.g., grantees, potential applicants, EDDs). Stakeholder feedback indicated that small communities faced challenges in applying for federal funding from EDA and other agencies, and that EDDs, depending on their capacity, may provide support in applying for and managing federal grants.⁹¹ GAO recommended that “Congress consider establishing an independent commission to recommend reforms to the federal approach to disaster recovery” in response to stakeholder feedback that EDA funding is sometimes unavailable until years after a disaster and other challenges.⁹²

EDA’s Implementation of the 10-20-30 Formula (2021)

In 2021, GAO analyzed how federal agencies, including EDA, used the 10-20-30 formula. The provision directs 10% of federal funds for specific programs to counties with 20% poverty rates or more for the past 30 years.⁹³ EDA applies the 10-20-30 provision to the Public Works and B2S programs. The GAO analysis reviewed agency budget and administrative data for fiscal years 2017-2020 and found that federal agencies used different approaches when designating persistent poverty counties (PPCs). The report also noted that EDA provided over 10 percent of designated funds to persistent-poverty counties in fiscal years 2017–2020, and that EDA was already required to target Public Works funds to economically distressed areas.⁹⁴

In 2021, separate from GAO’s efforts, EDA made a Research and National Technical Assistance (RNTA) award for the “Advancing Economic Development in Persistently Poor Communities” project. According to EDA, the project “will identify and analyze areas of persistent poverty in the United States, develop a typology of persistently poor places based on their needs to better

⁸⁷ GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcome,” pp. 20-21.

⁸⁸ GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes,” pp. 19-20.

⁸⁹ GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes,” pp. 13-21.

⁹⁰ GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes,” pp. 38-46.

⁹¹ GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes,” p. 31.

⁹² GAO, “Economic Development Administration: Actions Needed to Assess Disaster Recovery Outcomes,” p. 27.

⁹³ For more information, see CRS Report R45100, *The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties*, by Joseph Dalaker.

⁹⁴ GAO, “Areas with High Poverty—Changing How the 10-20-30 Funding Formula Is Applied Could Increase Impact in Persistent Poverty Counties,” GAO-21-470, May 27, 2021, p. 12, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-470.pdf>. For EDA’s list of Persistent Poverty Counties, see <https://eda.gov/performance/tools>.

inform future policy approaches, and assess how effective past EDA investments have been in alleviating deprivation in areas suffering from persistent poverty.”⁹⁵

EDA’s Economic Development Integration (EDI) Role (2021)

Following a 2011 GAO report on fragmentation and overlap of economic development programs, OMB selected the EDA’s proposal for an economic development integration role.⁹⁶ In response, EDA established an EDI team to coordinate federally supported local economic development efforts and assist communities applying for federal funding.⁹⁷

In July 2021, GAO analyzed opportunities for further collaboration among EDA, HUD, and USDA. In its final report, GAO recommended that, in collaboration with HUD, EDA should (1) update its written interagency agreement with HUD on community and economic development planning and (2) monitor its progress toward outcomes of its interagency agreement. At the time of this report the EDA implemented the recommendations. GAO also recommended that USDA review options to expand collaboration between EDA, HUD, and USDA, and this recommendation was also considered fully addressed at the time of this report.⁹⁸ GAO noted existing interagency efforts to integrate federal economic development activities, include the Thriving Communities Network and the Rural Partners Network, among other federal interagency initiatives, in its update on the status of report recommendations.⁹⁹

EDA staff and the ODRR continue to use EDI tools for interagency cooperation in post-disaster and other activities, however, EDA’s organization chart no longer includes an office with an explicit EDI function.¹⁰⁰

Other, Select Program Evaluations

Additional evaluations are available on EDA’s Performance Measurement and Evaluation website, including best practices research and the 2023 report on “Enhancing Rural Innovation in the United States” by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ EDA, “Tackling Persistent Poverty Is Goal of New EEDA-Economic Innovation Group Initiative,” July 19, 2021, <https://www.eda.gov/news/blog/2021/07/19/tackling-persistent-poverty-goal-new-eda-economic-innovation-group-initiative>; and August Benzow, et al., “Advancing Economic Development in Persistent-Poverty Communities,” Economic Innovation Group, <https://eig.org/persistent-poverty-in-communities/>. As noted, the measurement of persistent poverty counties may vary. To view an interactive mapping tool that displays areas of persistent poverty based on FY2023 designations and EDA’s methodology, see the “EDA-Census Poverty Status Viewer” at <https://www.eda.gov/resources/tools/>.

⁹⁶ EDA, “A Brief History of Economic Development Integration,” <https://eda.gov/integration/>; and GAO, “Efficiency and Effectiveness of Fragmented Economic Development Programs Are Unclear,” May 19, 2011, GAO-11-477R, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-11-477r>.

⁹⁷ GAO, “Economic Development: Opportunities Exist for Further Collaboration Among EDA, HUD, and USDA,” GAO-21-579, July 2021, p. 18, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-579>.

⁹⁸ GAO, “Economic Development: Opportunities Exist for Further Collaboration Among EDA, HUD, and USDA,” GAO-21-579, July 2021.

⁹⁹ GAO, “Recommendations,” https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-579#summary_recommend.

¹⁰⁰ As recently as FY2026, the EDA’s annual congressional justification included an organization chart that listed an “Office of Economic Development Integration and Disaster Recovery” under its office of Regional Affairs, National Programs. See DOC, “EDA FY2026 Congressional Justification,” June 2025, p. 5, <https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2025-06/EDA-FY2026-Congressional-Budget-Submission.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ EDA, “EDA Research and Evaluation,” <https://www.eda.gov/resources/reports/research-evaluation>.

Additionally, the Urban Institute, a non-profit research organization, has completed several EDA program evaluations under a cooperative agreement with EDA.¹⁰²

Concluding Remarks

Throughout the agency's history, a central feature of EDA's role has been to provide matching federal funds to assist state, local, and regional entities to advance projects in support of growth, or to address geographic disparities for distressed areas. In 2025, EDRA expanded EDA's authorities, structure, and requirements, which may enable the agency to serve more communities, achieve different outcomes, or coordinate across federal and state departments and agencies in different ways. Considering recent changes provided in EDRA, the agency's reorganization, and expanded disaster recovery roles, Congress may be interested in tracking the implementation of new programs, roles, and coordination activities and their impact on communities.

The EDA—through its program investments, partnerships, and integration roles—represents one of many channels of federal and nonfederal policies designed to address economic matters at the subnational level. In practice, economic development involves multiple stakeholders, and the associated outcomes and processes will likely be impacted by multiple macroeconomic factors and community-level circumstances, conditions, and histories. Policy considerations related to EDA are likely to involve a strategic and contextual evaluation of adjacent policies, related agencies, supporting actors, and awareness of the many dynamic factors impacting global, national, and regional economies.

¹⁰² Urban Institute, "Understanding the Economic Development Administration's Investments and Impacts," <https://www.urban.org/eda>. The Urban Institute also created a website with images, stories, and an interactive data tool to convey information about EDA's impact. See EDA, "EDA at Work," <https://www.eda.gov/eda-at-work/>.

Appendix A. Precursors to PWEDA and EDA Programs Since 1965

EDA programs focused on investments in infrastructure, public works, and basic services in the agency's first thirty years, along with support for planning and technical assistance.¹⁰³ The following milestones highlight precursors to current EDA programs as well as program and investment directions since the 1960s:

- In 1961, prior to the enactment of PWEDA, Congress approved appropriations for a set of loans and public works grants through the Area Redevelopment Act (P.L. 87-27), which established the EDA's predecessor agency, the Area Redevelopment Administration (ARA).¹⁰⁴ ARA programs were smaller in scope and scale compared to later EDA programs, and expired just prior to the enactment of PWEDA. Economic development assistance programs during this time focused on commercial and industrial growth (often through investment in infrastructure and public works, business loans, and planning grants) at the state and local levels.¹⁰⁵
- In August 1965, PWEDA (P.L. 89-136) was enacted. PWEDA authorized grant and loan programs that continued support for industrial and commercial growth in economically depressed areas. Prior to PWEDA amendments in the late 1960s, EDA programs focused assistance on rural areas experiencing economic distress. Eligibility criteria for economic distress were later changed by statutory and administrative changes through the 1970s.¹⁰⁶
- In the 1970s, Congress authorized the EAA and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs.¹⁰⁷ Congress also began providing appropriations for defense adjustment¹⁰⁸ and disaster recovery through the EAA program.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Robert W. Lake et al., "EDA and U.S. Economic Distress 1965–2000," EDA Research Report, 99-07-13812, July 2004, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Peter K. Eisinger, *The Rise of the Entrepreneurial State: State and Local Economic Development Policy in the United States*, Robert M. La Follette Institute of Public Affairs (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 100-101. See also CRS Report R41241, *Economic Development Administration: A Review of Elements of Its Statutory History*, by Julie M. Lawhorn.

¹⁰⁵ Area Redevelopment Administration (ARA) focused assistance on economically distressed areas impacted by chronic unemployment. In addition to ARA, the two other laws considered precursors to PWEDA were the Public Works Acceleration Act of 1963 (PWAA; P.L. 87-658) and the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965 (ARDA; P.L. 89-4). The PWAA authorized an appropriation of \$900 million for federal public works programs to address the 1960-1961 recession and support areas with high unemployment. ARDA authorized \$1.1 billion for assistance to the Appalachian region. See CRS Report R41241, *Economic Development Administration: A Review of Elements of Its Statutory History*, by Julie M. Lawhorn; and Robert W. Lake et al., "EDA and U.S. Economic Distress 1965–2000," EDA Research Report, 99-07-13812, July 2004.

¹⁰⁶ For additional context, see CRS Report R41241, *Economic Development Administration: A Review of Elements of Its Statutory History*, by Julie M. Lawhorn; and Peter K. Eisinger, *The Rise of the Entrepreneurial State: State and Local Economic Development Policy in the United States*, Robert M. La Follette Institute of Public Affairs (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 100-101, 123-124.

¹⁰⁷ EDA, "History of EDA," <https://www.eda.gov/archives/2016/50/history>.

¹⁰⁸ Defense adjustment refers to activities that assist communities affected by base closures, reductions in defense contracts, or reductions in Department of Energy defense-related funding. See Robert W. Lake et al., "EDA and U.S. Economic Distress 1965–2000," EDA Research Report, 99-07-13812, July 2004, pp. 118-121.

¹⁰⁹ Robert W. Lake et al., "EDA and U.S. Economic Distress 1965–2000," EDA Research Report, 99-07-13812, July 2004, p. 5.

- In the 1980s and 1990s, EDA initiated—and later expanded—the University Center program. The agency also expanded its work on industry or regional clusters,¹¹⁰ Economic Development Districts (EDDs), and efforts to assist communities with regional economic development plans.¹¹¹
- The EDA’s disaster economic recovery roles and activities have expanded since the early 1990s when EDA began receiving supplemental appropriations for disaster economic recovery.¹¹² Since FY2011, Congress has approved \$3.4 billion in supplemental funding for economic recovery in response to natural disasters.¹¹³ EDA continues to facilitate economic resilience in advance of disasters, as well as to support communities during the long-term recovery and redevelopment phases, which can take years or decades. During this time, Congress also has supported multiple rounds of disaster recovery and COVID-19 economic recovery assistance. EDA also continues to lead select economic development integration efforts at federal, regional, and local levels and has done so since the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) identified this role for EDA in the mid-2000s.¹¹⁴
- Since the 2000s, Congress has supported various types of policies to promote innovation and to prepare regions for expanded innovation- and technology-based development. Among other innovation-related policies, Congress has authorized programs to promote regional competitive advantages through innovation clusters and similar programs administered by the EDA and other agencies.

¹¹⁰ EDA defines regional clusters as

geographic concentrations of firms, workers and industries that do business with each other and have common needs for talent, technology, and infrastructure. Regional clusters are essentially networks of similar, synergistic, or complementary entities that are engaged in or with a particular industry sector; have active channels for business transactions and communication; share specialized infrastructure, labor markets, and services; and leverage the region’s unique competitive strengths to stimulate innovation and create jobs. Regional clusters may cross municipal, county, and other jurisdictional boundaries.

See EDA, “Key Definitions,” <https://eda.gov/performance/key-definitions>.

¹¹¹ EDA, “History of EDA,” <https://www.eda.gov/archives/2016/50/history>.

¹¹² EDA, “Leading Economic Recovery Efforts in Disaster-Impacted Communities,” https://www.eda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/EDA_Disaster_Brochure_2022_PRINT.pdf.

¹¹³ Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55), Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-123), Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act, 2019 (P.L. 116-20), Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), and the American Relief Act, 2025 (P.L. 118-158).

¹¹⁴ EDA, “A Brief History of EDI,” <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/economic-development-integration/history>.

Appendix B. Selected Hearings

Table B-1. Selected Hearings on EDA Oversight or Reauthorization
(117th, 118th, and 119th Congresses)

Committee	Congress, Session, Date	Hearing Title	Hearing Report or Other Materials
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW)	117 th Cong., 1 st sess., Nov. 3, 2021	<i>Examining Programs at the Economic Development Administration</i>	https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=256D08CE-44DC-47B4-9663-F9AC5AA8950E
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I), Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management	117 th Cong., 1 st sess., April 28, 2021	<i>Investing in America: Reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration</i>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-117hrg45230/pdf/CHRG-117hrg45230.pdf
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs	117 th Cong., 1 st sess., May 12, 2021	<i>Examining the COVID-19 Response in Native Communities: Native Tourism Economies One Year Later</i>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-117shrg45580/pdf/CHRG-117shrg45580.pdf
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (SST), Subcommittee on Research and Technology	117 th Cong., 1 st sess., June 9, 2021	<i>Building Regional Innovation Economies</i>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-117hrg44720/pdf/CHRG-117hrg44720.pdf
House Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth	117 th Cong., 2 nd sess., May 11, 2022	<i>Bringing Prosperity to Left-Behind Communities: Using Targeted Place-based Development to Expand Economic Opportunity</i>	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRPT-117hrpt619/pdf/CRPT-117hrpt619.pdf
House SST Committee	117 th Cong., 2 nd sess., December 14, 2022	<i>Building Regional Innovation Economies Part II</i>	https://www.congress.gov/event/117th-congress/house-event/115219
Senate EPW Committee	118 th Cong., 1 st sess., June 21, 2023	<i>Reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration: State and Local Perspectives</i>	https://www.congress.gov/118/chrg/CHRG-118shrg53731/CHRG-118shrg53731.pdf
House T&I, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management	119 th Cong., 2 nd sess., January 22, 2026	<i>Smarter Spending, Stronger Results: Reducing Duplication and Ensuring Effectiveness Through Economic Development Reforms</i>	https://www.congress.gov/event/119th-congress/house-event/118896

Source: Sources: Compiled by CRS using ProQuest Congressional, govinfo.gov, and committee websites.

Notes: The hearings listed in this table do not represent a comprehensive list of all hearings involving EDA in the 117th-119th Congresses. The table does not include hearings focused on annual appropriations.

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