



Caitlin Cain  
Vice President, Rural LISC  
4516 Perrier  
New Orleans, LA 70115

May 12, 2021

**RE: EDA “CARES Act” Letter of Support for Rural LISC’s “Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide: Strengthening Workforce Investment in Oklahoma Initiative”**

Dear Ms. Cain:

I am writing this on behalf of the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) to express our support of your proposal “Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide: Strengthening Workforce Investment in Oklahoma Initiative,” which will help you apply for planning funds from the Economic Development Administration. We understand that Rural LISC seeks to utilize EDA funding to assess and expand on stakeholder outreach and capacity development in support of workforce development and job creation in rural Oklahoma, not simply inclusive of but targeting specifically communities of color and tribal populations.

We understand that if awarded an EDA grant, Rural LISC will utilize these funds to expand the industry sector workforce ecosystem mapping and program development strategy launched by the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) in their 2019 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update. Rural LISC will identify and vet new community-based entities within the rural areas of not only ACOG, but also Central OK Economic Development District (COEDD) and South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA)—two nearby councils of government. The aim of this partnership is to connect resources and enhance existing career pathway programming among existing place-based organizations.

As a main partner in this effort, ACOG will help create and foster the collaborative partnerships vital to meeting and bridging the gaps for the parts of the community oftentimes neglected. Officially designated as the Capital Area Economic Development District (CAPEDD) of Oklahoma for the US Economic Development Administration, ACOG’s mission is to ensure competitiveness at the national level by leading the local, regionally driven economic development planning process that leverages the involvement of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors and establishes a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. ACOG’s regional economic development programs are anchored in initiatives and activities designed to successfully implement the goals of the 2021 Updated CEDS. Both the 2019 CEDS and the 2021 Updated CEDS prioritize support for the region’s workforce development partners in strengthening a diverse and inclusive talent pipeline as one means of achieving economic resiliency. Rural LISC’s proposal fits perfectly within this vision and we look forward to collaborating on this initiative.

Please accept this letter as demonstration of our support for your efforts. We look forward to helping further this critical work for Central Oklahoma.

Sincerely,

Mark W. Sweeney, AICP  
Executive Director

Chair  
**Steven J. Gentling**  
Guthrie Mayor

Vice-Chair  
**Vacant**

Secretary/Treasurer  
**Josh Moore**  
Edmond Councilmember

Executive Director  
**Mark W. Sweeney, AICP**