

Performance Progress Report

Grantee:	North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission
Project Title:	EDA Partnership Planning Grant
Project Number:	ED19PHI3020069
CEDS Performance Year:	July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022
Reporting period end date:	June 30, 2022
Report Prepared by:	Katie Lenze
Five-year CEDS Time Period:	2022-2026

Regional CEDS Updates:

Economic Conditions:

Regional economic conditions, for the period July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2022, were challenging for the six-county economic development district (Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter Counties). Unemployment rates for individual counties have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic and continued population loss over a 20-year period. The latest county unemployment rates available (for May 2022) indicate the following: Cameron County, 4.9%; Clearfield County, 4.7%; Elk County, 4.5%; Jefferson County, 4.1%; McKean County, 4.6%; Potter County, 4.8%; Pennsylvania, 4.3%; and USA, 3.68%. (All rates are not seasonally adjusted as published by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.) Comparing 2000 to 2020, the total population of the six-county region declined by 16,997 according to the U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census. The 2020 figure represents a 7.3% decline in the population over the past 20 years. The decline can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, aging population, shifts in family patterns, and increased poverty.

The six-county region per capita incomes are roughly \$11,000 below Pennsylvania and \$10,000 below U.S. averages. The median household income is below state and nation. Clearfield County rising faster than Pennsylvania and the U.S. The annual wages for these areas are below average (\$20,000/ per year). Allowing the cost of living, leading to less purchasing power than state, nation. The aging population income continues to increase due to retirement, disability benefits and medical benefits. The Workforce and Entrepreneurship was identified as an investment priority in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Resiliency Plan 2022-2026. Domestic migration continues to be a concern for the region. Over 80% of the North Central Pennsylvania out- migration to D.C. and 16 states in the South and Southeast. These concerns need to be addressed. Below is a brief sector overview of the current conditions of our region:

- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 impact was significant to the six-county region. From March 2020 to March 2021, the region had the second fewest Covid cases among Pennsylvania regions but has the second highest case rate per capita. Nearly 13,500 jobs were lost in the first two months of the pandemic but 93% of March 2019 totals were regained by March 2021. The civilian labor force dropped 2.4% in March-April 2020, but nearly recovered by August 2021. Unemployment rates were affected at a national level, businesses such as restaurants, brick and mortar retail, tourism, and entertainment. As predicted hotel tax receipts for NCPA counties followed national trends, declining then recovering then declining once again due to the Delta variant.
- **Natural Gas:** This sector is slightly above the national average. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), the market pricing is \$11.25 per thousand cubic feet. Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, major supply and demand factors occurred.

- **Manufacturing:** Manufacturing in the six-county region represents 25.8% of all jobs according to the Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis. Manufacturers help drive Pennsylvania’s economy, with \$33.12 billion in manufactured goods export in 2020 (National Association of Manufacturers). The free trade agreement (FTA) partners help create jobs from exports.
- **Forest Products:** The market price per thousand board of lumber is \$642.00. This has been a substantial increase over several years. Canadian tariffs (17.9%) on softwood lumber have contributed to the increase to the lumber prices. This sector remains under considerable stress.
- **Healthcare:** Healthcare and social services represent the second largest employment sector (16.1%) in the six-county region. North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development assisted with the submission of funding request in May 2019 for the Penn Highlands DuBois Behavioral Health Expansion Entrance. This success helped revolutionize mental healthcare in the region and bring 110 new employees into the sector.
- **Civilian Labor Force:** Labor force projections continue to fall due to decreasing labor participation rate of youths and the prime age group. Participation rates of older workers are increasing but remain significantly lower than the prime age group. As of June 2022, the regional civilian labor force was 94,300, down 5,700 from May 2019 with 100,000 workers. This rapid descent in civilian labor causes area employers to consider the ramifications caused by COVID-19 and a distressed sector prior to the pandemic.

SWOT Analysis:

Regional SWOT Analysis was developed in November 2021. Analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) using data trends, focus groups and visioning sessions, online survey, and existing reports and research. Both positive and negative impacts on the region were discussed and evaluated at the regional CEDS meeting leading to the preparation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Resiliency Plan 2022-2026.

- **Key themes:**
 - Workforce availability challenges are impeding growth and elevating the urgency of continuing to align education and training programs with employer needs
 - Lower comparative levels of college degree attainment limit North Central region area’s potential to capture opportunities in higher-skill job sectors
 - North Central Pennsylvania region stakeholders have tremendous pride in- and awareness of- the region’s natural beauty and outdoor recreation amenities
 - Many see enormous potential to better leverage them for population and economic growth
 - North Central Pennsylvania region faces critical challenges to expand access to high-speed internet and increase its capacity of “right-sized,” “right priced” housing.
 - Supporting existing employers and creating new small businesses opportunities around tourism and outdoor recreation were cited as economic priorities

Performance Measures:

- **Initial Call for Projects:** Completing North Central’s online Project Profile questionnaire was the first step for local officials to pursue project funding from state or federal partners.

County:	Total Projects:
Cameron	0
Clearfield	14
Elk	6
Jefferson	8
McKean	19
Potter	3
Region	2
Total:	52

North Central Project Intake Form

- **CEDS Five Year Plan:** A new regional CEDS Five Year Plan which included an economic recovery and resiliency plan was designed for the 2022- 2026 period by the regional CEDS committee. A significant amount of committee and staff time were involved in the new plan.
 - New goals, strategies, and partners for the five-year period
 - A new vision statement for the organization
 - New evaluation framework and performance measures for the five-year period
 - New economic resilience and vulnerability assessment
 - Understanding the impacts of COVID19 on the regional economy
- **Jefferson County Business Park:** Staff assisted with the Jefferson County Business Park located in Brookville off Interstate 80 (exit 81) and Pennsylvania Route 28. In August 2013, the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced a \$297,925 grant to Jefferson County and the Brookville Municipal Authority in Brookville. A RACP contract was awarded in 2022.
 - One community served
 - 100 acres to be developed
 - 55 jobs created (Love’s Travel Shop)
- **Regional Broadband Vertical Asset Inventory:** Staff prepared an application to the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) in the amount of \$99,500 and \$104,000 from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a total cost of \$203,500. The funding helped identify any structure, building, tower, or geographical feature that could offer as suitable location or the installation of wireless equipment to serve hard to reach areas. The project was approved August 2019.
 - 6 communities served
 - 1 job created
 - 400 vertical assets mapped
 - 1,200 responses to be utilized for future project locations

- **River's Landing Project:** Staff assisted with the River's Landing Project in Clearfield County with obtaining funding for the two- story commercial, multi-occupancy and incubation building along the Susquehanna River. The project's estimated total is \$4,280,000 and the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) funded \$2,000,000. It was approved on September 30, 2019.
 - One community served
 - 12,000 sq ft urban brownfield site
 - 50 jobs created
 - 6 jobs retained
 - \$10 million in private investment

- **PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc.:** Staff assisted the PA Wilds Center, a regional nonprofit organization with a \$860,000 grant awarded in November 2019 from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA). The three-year grant, which matched with \$277,500 in local investment, will expand market access for businesses in the PA Wilds via an e-commerce maker marketplace, and the expansion of the PA Wilds Conservation Shops- brick and mortar gifts shops that provide visitor services and sell regionally made products at state parks through a public-private partnership with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The project was approved November 2019.
 - 69 Value Chains
 - 11 Businesses Involved in Beta Launch
 - 1 full-time job created

- **Liaison Work as an Affiliate of the Pennsylvania State Data Center (PaSDC):** EDA program staff continued to provide United States Census data, as well as new information from the American Community Survey and American Fact Finder to various businesses, governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, students, and private citizens during the reporting data.
 - CEDS dashboard

- **Facilitated regional discussions/ efforts for EDA's Build Back Better Challenge:** Staff worked to assist potential applicants, attend brainstorm sessions, as well as facilitate efforts in which North Central Planning could serve as the lead applicant for the Build Back Better Application.

- **Participation on Census Complete Count Committees for the 2020 U.S. Census:** Staff member participated on Complete Count Committees (CCC) to promote the Census in the North Central region.

- **Technical Assistance:** Various requests by municipalities, municipal organizations and/or non-profit organizations were attended to during the reporting period. Many of these requests were for state or federal funding information, as well as meetings about developing projects for application submission. Some requests represented follow-up

work from state or federal representatives inquiring about funding options available at the local level.

Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group (AHUG)	Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau	Austin Dam Memorial Association	Austin Borough	BC3 at Brockway
Boys and Girls Club of St. Marys	Bradford Area Alliance	Bradford City Water Authority	Bradford Regional Airport	Bradford Sanitary Authority
Bradford Township	Brady Township Troutville Borough Water Association	Brockway Area Ambulance	Brockway Borough	Cameron County IDA
City of Bradford	City of DuBois	City of St. Marys	Clearfield County	Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging
Clearfield County DMO Visitor Center	Clearfield Educational Foundation- Future	Clearfield Ahead Development	Christ the King Manor	Community Education Center
DuBois Airport	Elk County	Elk County Conservation District	Elk County Riders	Friends of Twin Lakes
Galeton Public Library	Hazel Hurst Water Company	Headwaters Charitable Trust	Houtzdale Revitalization Association	Jeff Tech
Jefferson County	Johnsonburg Borough	Johnsonburg Community Trust	Johnsonburg Municipal Authority	Kane Area Development Center
Kinzua Valley Trail Club	Lawrence Township	Lewis Run Borough	Lock Haven University- Clearfield	Lumber Heritage Region
Lutheran Home at Kane	McKean County	McKean County Economic Development	McKean County Planning	Mount Jewett to Kinzua Bridge Trail Club
North Central PA Launchbox	Northwest IRC	Olean General Hospital	PA Great Outdoors Visitor Bureau	PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship
PA Wilds Planning Team	Penn Highlands Healthcare	Penn State University	Potter County	Potter County Conservation District
Potter County Planning	Prism Glass Recycling	Rew Water Association	Reynoldsville Area Industrial Development Corporation	Ridgway Borough
Ridgway Industrial Development Corporation	Ridgway Township	Ridgway YMCA	Roulette Township	Sandy Township
Seneca Highlands CTC	Strategy Solutions	Superuser Technologies	Tri County Rural Electric Cooperative	Tuna Valley Trail Association
University of Pittsburgh at Bradford	UPMC Kane	Village of Rixford	Visit Clearfield County	Warsaw Township
Westover Borough	Workforce Solutions	Zippo Manufacturing		

Summary of Accomplishments:

Activity		Task	Benefits/Outcome/Impacts/Deliverables	Milestone Date
Project Form	Intake	CEDS Committee involved in drafting the online form	A sub- committee of regional CEDS committee was involved in the drafting the Project Intake Form. Specific staff members provided community outreach to local government, municipalities, non-profits, and public.	March 2022
New Five Year CEDS and Economic Resiliency Plan		CEDS Committee involved in drafting the plan	A sub-committee of regional CEDS committee was formed to identify planning elements to be incorporated in the new Five Year CEDS and Economic Resiliency Plan based on the SWOT analysis conducted in November 2021. A thorough review took place from June 2022 through the projected final approval of the plan.	Projected milestone: September 23, 2022
Jefferson County Business Park		Community Outreach/ Technical Support	CEDS Goals: 1,2,4,5. Assist with technical support and outreach	February 2021
Regional Broadband Vertical Asset Inventory		EDA Assistance	CEDS Goals: 4. Request for EDA assistance to develop broadband and cell coverage.	June 30, 2019
		Prepare Funding Application	CEDS Goals 4,5. Submit funding application	
		Work with Funding Agency Review Process	CEDS Goals 4,5. Review requests for additional information or reporting. Funding approval: \$99,500	August 2019
River's Landing Project		Community Outreach	CEDS Goals 2,4,5. Develop funding need justification and project description	September 30, 2018
		Prepare Funding Application	CEDS Goals 2,4,5. Submit funding application	
		Work with funding agency review process	CEDS Goals 2,4,5. Review requests for additional information or reporting. Funding approval: \$2,000,000	
PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship		Community Outreach/ Technical Support	CEDS goals: 1,2,4,5. Assist with technical support and outreach.	November 2019- March 2021
Liaison Work as an Affiliate of the Pennsylvania State Data Center (PaSDC)		Staff involved in creating a digital CEDS dashboard	EDA program staff continued to provide United States Census data, as well as new information from the American Community Survey and American Fact Finder to various businesses, governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, student, and private citizens during the reporting period. The requested data and information are provided without cost at informational meetings throughout the region and at regional CEDS meetings.	May 2020

Facilitated regional discussions/ efforts for EDA's Build Back Better Challenge	Staff involved as lead applicant	Staff worked to assist potential applicants, attend brainstorming sessions, serve as lead applicant for the Build Back Better Application. Focus groups, one-on-one interviews, board presentations and Commissioner input sessions were held. Two strong applications came out of the region that North Central and the CEDS committee supported. Penn Highlands DuBois for the evolution of the Penn Highlands DuBois Nursing Education Program and the PA Wilds is seeking a Build Back Better investment to scale emerging outdoor recreation industry clusters in rural Pennsylvania.	July 2021-March 2022
Participation on Census Complete Count Committees for the 2020 U.S. Census	Committee members collaborate to promote count	The committee was assisted by the regional U.S. Census Coordinator for the area. Several conference calls were conducted to discuss the regional response status and initiatives to inform residents.	April 2020

Challenges and Mitigation:

The North Central Region economy is characterized by many small and medium sized manufacturing firms, many of which continue to face staffing challenges as part of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic and subsequent supply chain interruptions.

Project Demand is growing especially related to municipal infrastructure needs.

A major challenge throughout the six-county region is the inability to provide adequate matching funds, where required in a community/ economic development project. This continues to be a problem. The population decline, increasing population and out-migration of younger generations. Also, approximately 23% of Land in the North Central Region is public land, not taxed or owners pay a rate in lieu of taxes. There are also farmland and forest preservation exemptions which can contribute to accessing local matching dollars.

Another challenge is multiple geographic designations, each with unique needs, rules, and local governments. This comes with less resources and fewer staff. North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission can be the main source for assistance to local governments for projects.

Mitigation is difficult for the six-county region. School districts are considering consolidation. The main justification for the consolidations is a way to cut costs. Population and student enrollment continues to decline, creating an inflated cost of education per pupil.

Next Steps:

- Staff will continue to pursue projects related to the implementation of the new CEDS Five Year Plan.
- Staff is also providing guidance and technical assistance to regional projects seeking Appalachian Regional Commission, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection funding. These projects will implement regional CEDS goals and strategies pertaining to infrastructure, workforce and entrepreneurship, natural resources and tourism, and quality of life. These projects are briefly listed below:

- **Village of Hope, Inc.:** ARC POWER funding is being requested to assist with the implementation of natural gas lines and expansion of broadband capabilities. (ARC POWER request is \$175,000) Not Funded
- **Platt Road Wastewater:** The purpose of the project is to provide sanitary sewer service to the area adjacent to and along both sides of Platt Road in Sandy Township. (ARC request is \$278,463 to be matched by \$396,862 in state CDBG funds with additional federal funds of \$1,250,000 for a total project cost of: \$1,925,325.) Funded
- **Westover Borough Second Water Source:** The purpose of this project is to obtain a second water source that can provide the quality of water required when Rouges Harbor Run is experiencing low flows. (ARC request is \$125,000 to be matched with \$255,856 in CDBG and state funds and \$117,295 in local funds and CDBG funds. Total project cost: \$498,151.) Funded
- **McKean Incubator- Accelerator Feasibility Study:** The purpose of this study is to determine the market opportunity for a business incubator to service all of McKean County, to recommend a format and scope of services, and to assess its potential financial performance and required resources. (ARC request is \$40,000 to be matched by \$40,000 in local funds. Total project cost: \$80,000.) Funded
- **Pittsburgh at Bradford Instructional Equipment of Engineering Technology Program:** The purpose of this project is to support essential equipment, instructional for the new Mechanical Engineering Technology and Energy Engineering Technology programs. (ARC request is \$150,000 to be matched with \$191,000 in local funds. Total project cost is \$341,122.) Funded
- **UPMC Kane HVAC:** The purpose of this project is HVAC improvements for the proper air flow exchange in various areas of the hospital including emergency services, patient care areas, professional service areas, and the sterile supply unit. (ARC request is \$100,000 to be matched by \$390,000 secured cash match. Total project cost: \$490,000.) Not Funded
- **MJ2KB- Knox and Kane Rail Trail:** The purpose of this project is to install guard rails along the Knox & Kane Rail Trail between the Mt. Jewett Trailhead and Lantz Corners (US Route 219). (DCNR request is \$25,000 to be matched by cash match and in-kind match of \$35,533.95. Total project cost: \$60,533.95.) Funded
- **Kinzua Valley Trail:** The purpose of this project is to resurface the Kinzua Valley Trail from Markham to Whiting Run. (DCNR request is \$15,811.21 to be matched by cash match and in-kind match \$15,830.70. Total project cost: \$31,641.91) Funded
- **Sandy Beach Stream/ Dock Project:** The purpose of this project is to provide ADA accessible fishing access, while improving the health of the streams that the dock will provide access to. (DCNR request is \$15,000 to be matched by cash match and in-kind match of \$38,111. Total project cost: \$53,111.) Funded
- **Knox Kane Trestle:** The purpose of this project is to improve state highway and trestle safety improvements along the 74-mile Knox Kane rail trail. (Multimodal request for \$850,000 with a match of \$465,456. Total project cost: \$1,315,456.) Submitted

- **Local Bridge Replacement/ Rehabilitation Bundle:** The purpose of this project is to design and replace/rehabilitate the six number one ranked bridges of concern in each of the six counties across the North Central region. (USDOT request is \$11,645,392 with a nonfederal match of \$2,911,347. Total project cost is \$14,556,739.) Submitted
- **Lutheran Home at Kane Access Road:** The purpose of this project is to promote economic development by constructing a roadway to allow access to the 25- acre campus of The Lutheran Home at Kane. (ARC total request is \$1,596,832, no match required.) Pre-Application Submitted
- **Bradford Township Owens and Doe Hill Access Road:** The purpose of this project is to enhance public infrastructure by constructing roadway on Owens and Doe Hill in Bradford Township to facilitate full buildout of the park. (ARC total request is \$2,153,000, no match required.) Pre-Application Submitted
- **Reynoldsville Area Industrial Development Corporation South 5th Street Extension:** The purpose of the project is to construct a roadway that will connect South 5th Street with Industrial Boulevard in Reynoldsville Area Development Park. (ARC total request is \$1,028,120.78, no match required.) Pre-Application Submitted
- **Industrial Park Road Improvements- Phase 2:** The purpose of this project is to improve roadway on Industrial Park Road to complete the final phase of road improvements through the Clearfield Commerce Park to ensure continued use and facilitate the full buildout. (ARC total request is \$792,000, no match required.) Pre-Application Submitted

Client Success Stories:

During the reporting period, a total of 9 major success stories were accomplished/ implemented:

1. The project intake form which involved staff time from April 6, 2021. The project intake form was established to assist stakeholders across the six-county region with identifying and securing federal and state resources that strengthen the communities of north central Pennsylvania. At the March 2022 CEDS meeting, the project intake form was implemented. 52 projects were submitted through the 6-county region.
 - **[North Central Project Intake Form](#)**
2. The liaison works as an affiliate of the Pennsylvania State Data Center (PaSDC). EDA program staff continued to provide United States Census data, as well as current information from the American Community Survey and American Fact Finder to various business, governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, students, and private citizens during the reporting period. The requested data and information are provided without cost at informational meetings throughout the region and at regional CEDS meetings. Staff members participated in the Pennsylvania State Data Center Affiliate Workshop Zoom meeting in May 2020. Additional data research on the civilian labor force and population projections was continued throughout the reporting period.

3. The staff diligently worked to assist potential applicants, attend brainstorming sessions, as well as facilitate efforts in which North Central Planning could serve as the lead applicant for a Build Back Better Application. Various focus groups, one on one interviews, board presentations and Commissioner input sessions were held to try to identify regional projects. The PA Wilds submitted Phases 1 and 2 of a Build Back Challenge grant for investment to scale emerging outdoor recreation industry clusters in rural Pennsylvania. EDA program staff continued to work with the PA Wilds, providing data and information to assist in completing the phase 2 application in March 2022.
4. Staff members promoted the importance of the 2020 Census and the formation of the County Complete County Committees. The Committees collaborated on ideas on how to be informative and promote the complete county in their respective areas. The Committees were assisted by the regional U.S. Census Coordinator for the area. Several conference calls were conducted to discuss the regional response status and ways of continuing to get the word out. Additional efforts were made to inform residents that the U.S. Census is mandatory and household visits by U.S. Census employees would be occurring. Several successful events were held across the region promoting the 2020 U.S. Census.
5. The new five-year CEDS and Economic Resiliency Plan, which involved staff time from January 2021, commentary was taken and reviewed on the SWOT analysis. Staff activity was devoted to finalizing the new regional CEDS Five-year plan in 2022. Below are key dates in the plan's final development for public review and comment.
 - October 2021: Topic- specific focus groups and key stakeholder interviews were conducted.
 - November 2021: Development of an analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) using existing research and data input through extensive community engagement exercises and regional research.
 - June 10, 2022- July 10, 2022: The new CEDS Five Year Plan was advertised and posted online for a 30-day public comment period. The full regional CEDS committee and the public were invited to review and comment on the document.
 - June 22, 2022: A public meeting was held per the advertisement on June 22, 2022, to address any public comments.
 - The projected date of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Resiliency Plan 2022-2026 was approved by the regional CEDS committee and formal adoption by the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission is expected to be September 28, 2022. Once formally approved, the plan will be submitted to EDA's Philadelphia Regional Office.

The following success stories involved implementing the CEDS Five Year Plan:

6. Jefferson County Business Park: The purpose of this project is to build critical water and sewer infrastructure for the city's new Jefferson County Business Park located at the intersection of Interstate 80 (exit 81) and Pennsylvania Route 28. The 100 acres

developed will create 55 new jobs at Love's Travel Shop. (EDA request is \$297,925 and an RACP awarded in Spring 2022).

7. Regional Broadband Vertical Assist Inventory: The purpose of this project is to help identify any structure, building, tower, or geographical feature that could offer as suitable location or the installation of wireless equipment to serve hard to reach areas. Funding was obtained from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development (EDA) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (EDA request of \$99,500 and \$104,000 from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Total project cost: \$203,500). The project funding was approved August 2019.
8. River's Landing Project: The purpose of this project is to construct a two-story commercial, multi-occupancy and incubation building near downtown Clearfield Borough along the Susquehanna River. Each floor of the proposed two-story building would have 5,500 square feet of space for office and business use. The first floor would provide 1,900 square feet of office space for Clearly Ahead Development, and another 250 square feet for other office/ incubation services. The project site is an old brownfield development site and is in a newly designated Federal Opportunity Zone. The project is estimated to create 50 new jobs and \$10 million in private investment. (EDA request of \$2,000,000 was approved on September 30, 2019).
9. PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc.: The purpose of this project is to accelerate the growth of the PA Wilds entrepreneurial ecosystem. The grant will expand market access for businesses in the PA Wilds via an e-commerce maker marketplace, and expansion of the PA Wilds Conservation Shops- brick and mortar gift shops that provide visitor services and sell regionally made projects at state parks through public-private partnership with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The investment will support the second flagship location and launch a PA Wilds marketplace online so rural companies can reach new markets and keep a larger cut of every sale. The investment will also support continued growth of the Center's entrepreneurial network, the Wilds Cooperative of PA, through expanded education, resources and networking opportunities for small businesses and other community and economic development stakeholders and assist with the establishment of a business accelerator space, the PA Wilds Media Lab, to support the ecosystem. (EDA request of \$860,000 and matched with local funds of \$277,500). The project funding was approved November 2019.

EDA Assistance Needed:

- Training for EDD Staff on EDA expectations for EDDs and to what extent EDA would like to see EDDs involved in the application process for applicants.
- Guidance from EDA for EDD staff regarding if/when EDD staff should contact EDA to discuss potential projects for submittal.
- The requirement of a "CEDS Concurrence letter" from the EDD for projects submitted for funding through EDA and grants.gov. This will keep local stakeholders aware of projects and serve as a consistency check with regional CEDS

Press Engagements/Opportunities:

- July 26-28, 2022: State Director Bob Morgan is hosting three presentations to discuss potential funding opportunities at our office and two other regional locations through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- August 10, 2022: Economic Development Specialist Christopher Casper is hosting a presentation to discuss potential EDA funding opportunities and priorities for infrastructure projects.
- No other press engagements/ opportunities are scheduled, but that may change if future opportunities arise.