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**International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Announces the
Economic Recovery Corps' Inaugural Cohort of 65 Fellows & Host Communities**
Developing the next generation of community practitioners and economic development leaders

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and its partners are excited to announce the first cohort of Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) fellows and host communities. Launched in 2023 through a \$30 million cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA), ERC is designed to build capacity in some of the hardest-hit and most economically distressed areas across the United States while cultivating the next generation of economic development leaders. This month, 65 Fellows will commence their two-and-a-half-year field placements with host organizations across the nation. Fellows will spearhead catalytic projects that advance new ways of doing economic development to build more resilient, inclusive, and equitable economies. The ERC program will officially launch with a four-day training and networking event in Portland, Oregon on February 12-15, 2024.

Authorized under the CARES Act, ERC was created to address long-standing economic issues in America that surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for historically underserved populations and communities. These communities and regions have undergone economic distress that led to vastly different outcomes that continue to impact economic recovery today. By connecting 65 Fellows with communities across the country to deliver intensive capacity building support for 2.5 years, ERC program will help activate regional economic development strategies and promote innovation and knowledge-sharing between urban, rural, and tribal areas across the U.S. to elevate new practices and transform the field of economic development. The program is led by IEDC in partnership with six leading national organizations that represent every facet of America's economic development landscape.

"This inaugural cohort of the Economic Recovery Corps has the potential to infuse new energy and new opportunities in regional economic development nationwide," commented U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Alejandra Y. Castillo. "We can usher in a new era of economic prosperity that leaves no community in America behind by simultaneously centering to the needs of under-resourced regions and investing in the next generation of economic development leaders."

The 65 selected Host projects are located across 44 states and territories and represent an exciting cross-section of rural, urban, and tribal communities. Of the 65 Host sites, 62 percent

are rural, 23 percent are mixed (urban, suburban, and rural), and 15 percent are urban. Hosts reflect the entire community and economic development field spectrum, from city and county government to regional coalitions, economic development organizations, economic development districts (EDDs), and entrepreneurial support organizations. Nine of the 65 projects are led by Tribes or involve a Tribal organization as a primary partner. The host sites and project needs represent the interconnectedness that economic development has with pressing needs in communities of all sizes, including workforce development, entrepreneurial ecosystem building, housing and childcare, climate resiliency, broadband, access to capital, and more. Each project receives a dedicated Fellow, fully funded for 2.5 years, who will act as a field catalyst to greater build, strengthen, and coordinate relationships and local efforts alongside their host community.

“The Economic Recovery Corps program is unique on many levels,” added Nicole Manapol, ERC Senior Program Director at IEDC and a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV). “To balance the immediate needs of a community with longer term capacity needs, we intentionally recruited seasoned practitioners who could add instant value to their host community. We also recruited candidates from diverse backgrounds and sectors, with an emphasis on identifying local talent or those with lived experiences that reflect the cultural context of the 65 host communities. Collectively, these efforts will help to diversify the economic development field with new types of practitioners while cultivating talent in host geographies to sustain momentum beyond the 30-month fellowship.”

IEDC received more than 500 applications from potential host organizations and over 1,400 Fellow applications from June through August and conducted thousands of hours of interviews alongside ERC program partners between July and November to select the final cohort of 65 fellows and hosts. Sixty-nine percent of the fellows are women, and 54 percent identify as people of color. Fellows come with significant professional experience (6-15+ years) across a variety of sectors including planning, entrepreneurship, community and economic development, public administration, marketing, rural development, and more.

Many fellows are moving back to serve their home community, such as Will Warren, an Ohio Appalachian native paired with Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) who is invigorated to shift his community’s narrative and lead with an asset-based approach to community and economic development. “Even though the region is often first seen for its challenges, I’m well aware of the incredible opportunities the region possesses including the numerous active organizations in the area doing incredible work. I’m excited to collaborate with them and local stakeholders to identify unified development goals, processes, and systems. Throughout my professional career I have worked in and with many regions across the U.S., but I have always considered how my work and the best practices I’ve gathered can be implemented in the place I call home; I can’t wait to be a small part of its brighter future ahead.”

“The overwhelming response to the ERC program has been deeply inspiring,” said Michael Pugh, LISC CEO. “These organizations are eager to expand their capacity to drive equitable economic growth in their communities, and the fellows are just as eager to contribute their skills to vital, transformative efforts. That shared commitment to impact is truly remarkable,” he added. LISC is part of Talent for Good, a coalition of partners facilitated by Baltimore Corps, committed to equity-focused workforce strategies that connect talent to opportunity. Talent for Good’s ERC



coalition efforts led to more than 500 organizations applying to host a fellow and over 1,400 fellow applicants for 65 positions.

Although the ERC Fellowship is just beginning, the program is already attracting the attention of philanthropic partners like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which awarded IEDC \$1 million in December 2023 to examine how long-term investments in capacity building, like the ERC program model, impact economic mobility in under resourced and historically underserved communities.

Among host sites, the overall ERC recruitment and onboarding process proved impactful, especially the opportunity to participate in the program's project accelerator to help them design Fellow projects. "From connecting with passionate peers nationwide tackling similar issues with different contexts, to developing a thoughtful yet flexible long-term project that welcomed room for iteration, co-creation, collaboration, and course correction, it shifted our mindset and emboldened us when identifying desirable impact outcomes. We've been incorporating these resources from the project accelerator into our organizational workflows and grant applications since engaging in the ERC project," stated Ashley Llewellyn, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives at St. Tammany Corporation in Louisiana.

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

IEDC is joined by six other partner organizations including the [Center on Rural Innovation \(CORI\)](#), [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\)](#), [National Association of Counties Research Foundation \(NACo RF\)](#), [National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation \(NADO RF\)](#), [National League of Cities Institute \(NLCI\)](#), and [RAIN Catalysts](#). The ERC partner coalition will lend their expertise and coaching to fellow and host participants, and impart lessons learned and research from ERC to the economic development community at large.

Fellows will commence their 30-month ERC Fellowship this month after convening in Portland, Oregon on February 12-15, 2024, and will conclude the fellowship in summer of 2026.

Meet the inspiring cohort of 65 fellows and explore the impactful projects unique to each host community by visiting www.economicrecoverycorps.org.

Interested in supporting the ERC program or one of the 65 projects located near you? Contact IEDC at economicrecoverycorps.org/contact-us and sign up for exciting program updates over the next 30 months by joining our newsletter at economicrecoverycorps.org/updates.

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About IEDC

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization serving economic developers. With more than 4,300 members, IEDC is the largest organization of its kind. Economic developers promote economic well-being and quality of life for their communities by creating, retaining, and expanding jobs that facilitate growth, enhance wealth and provide a stable tax base. From public to private, rural to urban, and local to international, IEDC's members engage in the full range of economic development practices. Given the breadth of economic development work, our members are employed in various settings, including local, state, provincial, and federal governments, public-private partnerships, chambers of commerce, universities, and a variety of other institutions. When we succeed, our members create high-quality jobs, develop vibrant communities, and improve the quality of life in their regions. Learn more at iedconline.org.

About the U.S. Economic Development Administration (www.eda.gov)

The mission of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing the nation's regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. An agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce, EDA invests in communities and supports regional collaboration in order to create jobs for U.S. workers, promote American innovation, and accelerate long-term sustainable economic growth.

