



Michigan State University
**EDA Comprehensive Economic Recovery Initiative
(CERI)**

Final Report

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Center for Community and Economic Development



i. Overview of Activities

The CERI project was designed to rebuild and strengthen Michigan's economy and resiliency as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The initiative included providing technical assistance to communities and regions under four pillars: resiliency planning, 21st century communication infrastructure, circular economies, and financial resiliency:

- **Resiliency Planning** - Planning comprehensively to speed recovery after natural or manmade shocks.
- **21st Century Communication Infrastructure** – Support activities that will increase access and use of digital and online platforms in rural and low-income urban communities for civic engagement, commerce, healthcare and education.
- **Circular Economies** - Support the development of products and services that maximize the reuse of local or regional supply chains aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of non-renewable resources.
- **Financial Resilience** - Increase and expand the capacity of community financial institutions and individuals to invest in local businesses to mitigate the vicissitudes that result from less accessible and viable capital markets for small businesses.

Drawing from MSU CCED's long history of community engaged scholarship, the CERI project focused on supporting the most distressed communities and regions in Michigan; identifying and engaging a broad base of stakeholders to work together on projects within the four pillar areas indicated above. Over the project period, the CERI team worked with Economic Development Districts (EDD); higher education institutions; local, state, and private leaders, nonprofits, state agencies, state associations, and others invested in pursuing sustainability, equity, and resiliency in critical topics of concern in disadvantaged communities and regions during the COVID-19 crisis. The CERI team commissioned 16 projects under the CERI award. An executive summary of selected projects within each pillar follows below. For a complete list of projects supported under the CERI award, please see Section B.

ii. Accomplishments, Benefits, and Impacts

The CERI project was focused on the four pillars. The projects providing technical assistance were intended to support hard hit Michigan communities and regions, using virtual trainings, live and recorded webinars. CERI awarded \$60,000 to 16 local and regional projects across Michigan. Each project focused on at least one of the Pillars. The following section describes each of the projects completed under the initiative and lessons learned through the completion of the CERI initiative overall as well as through the completion of each individual project CERI supported.



Lessons Learned from Conducting CERI

In conducting the CERI initiative, the CERI team identified that internal capacity and accessing technical assistance were the two most important needs facing communities and their partners in working together to rebound and generate greater resilience in the wake and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, cuts to staff coupled with an influx of federal and state relief funding made it difficult for communities to take advantage of many of the opportunities presented by the unprecedented level of funding. CERI provided community partners and practitioners with the opportunity to identify how to leverage their existing capacity to jumpstart projects to initiate programmatic and policy-based recovery and resiliency efforts in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the facilitation of the project, the value of the MSU Regional Economic Innovation University Center to communities, partners, and practitioners from across Michigan was reinforced in their feedback about the value of the Center in assisting with networking to additional resources or funding opportunities relevant, creating linkages, providing technical assistance and expertise, and enabling them to build their capacity to begin moving forward with recovery efforts and initiatives.

A 'Resiliency Planning' Thought Leaders Series

Hosted by MSU Extension Land Use Educators and MSU faculty with support from Student Research Assistants and agency partners.

Falling under the Resiliency Planning Pillar, this six-session live webinar 'thought leader' series ran from March through April 2021 (see appendix 5). It was intended to open discussion on the role of regional economic planning and local master planning to prepare for a more resilient and sustainable post COVID environment. The series not only addressed the steps for current planning but allowed for considerations for future resiliency. The webinar series highlighted the programs and research of 19 'thought-leaders,' MSU faculty members within the departments of Community Sustainability, Forestry, the School of Planning, Design and Construction, MSU Extension and officials from federal, state, regional and local agencies who work in various facets of resiliency planning.

Lessons Learned:

In 2021, the *Michigan State University Extension Land Use Team* hosted an engaging series of live webinars about resiliency planning for communities. More than 200 community leaders and officials from across Michigan tuned in to learn what it means to achieve socio-environmental and economic resiliency; how to utilize innovative approaches to planning and public engagement, while also hearing about key state/federal programs to help achieve success.



Viewer feedback reported a high level of learning during the series, and inspiration to change behavior at the personal level and policy-level. Policymakers routinely mention its value to MSUE Educators and ask for the video links almost two years after the series began. To view video recordings of Series sessions, please see Appendix A for direct links to each of the six webinars.

[Michigan Healthy Urban Environments](#)

Led by Ann Erhardt, in collaboration with Public Sector Consultants of Michigan

COVID-19 has highlighted many disparities and instabilities in both the health care systems and the economy. This project aimed to address those issues, while also discussing how those negative impacts will be mirrored and even exacerbated by climate change events. The project further investigated how the impacts of climate change are integrated with extractive systems and policies based in capitalism and white supremacist culture, and how this can be connected to complex solutions of racial equity. This project falls under the Resiliency Planning Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

The project team will continue to cultivate partnerships to submit grant applications. Any further work on MiHUE will be dependent upon access to resources and funding to implement a pilot program in South Lansing or a similar community.

Additionally, after several in-depth conversations and brainstorming sessions, project partners PSC, LEDC, and the MSU CCED recommend the following actions to secure MiHUE program funding to continue implementation efforts: 1) utilize the updated grant language to pursue funding in the high-priority areas identified by project partners, 2) Pursue the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grants identified through the grant research process as a beneficial, potential funding source for the MiHUE program, 3) Develop the MiHUE mission and vision statements, 4) Establish the MiHUE program direction and necessary elements for implementation.

Finally, in addition to the ongoing partnership with MSU CCED and CERI, MiHUE is continuing to develop a partnership with Lansing Economic Development Corporation (LEDC). Through this partnership and established partnerships with the first iterations of MiHUE, there is an extensive opportunity to partner with many community organizations in the area(s) where MiHUE is implemented. To view the project's final report, see Appendix B.

[Building Broadband Better with Community Empowerment Networks](#)

Led by REI Innovation Fellow, Mitchell Shapiro and partnered with Merit Network and the Michigan Broadband Cooperative



Whether it is education, outreach, work, etc., the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath has moved many day-to-day activities to a virtual platform. Because of this, the need to address the longstanding digital divide in Michigan became even more urgent. This project worked to help bridge this divide by developing a proposal to engage in an in-depth study on the feasibility and benefits of Automated Open Access networks in the broadband space. This project falls under the 21st Century Communications Infrastructure Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

While the Community Empowerment Network has many appealing attributes, its acceptance faces an uphill battle. A key reason for this is that large incumbent ISPs, see the model as a threat to their market dominance and profit margins. As a result, they oppose its proliferation using their well-funded and time-tested legal, lobbying and public relations operations.

Most recently, this resistance has manifested in the form of incumbent ISPs' influence on the terms of state and federal grant programs intended to support expansion of high-performance broadband. Nevertheless, the concepts underlying the Community Empowerment Network model, including public ownership and open access operation, have expanded their base of informed supporters at the community, regional, state and national levels. Among the things that can help expand that support and overcome ISPs' well-funded resistance are further research related to technology and business models, and public communication and community engagement efforts similar to those made in this project. Such efforts are especially timely in the months and years ahead, as large amounts of federal dollars are invested in support of broadband expansion through legislative programs such as CARES, ARPA and IIJA.

A strong relationship with EntryPoint Networks, a leader in the development of advanced open access network technologies, was developed during the course of this project. In addition, leaders and planners at the state, regional and local level—including both rural and urban communities--have been exposed to the Community Empowerment Network model and expressed appreciation for its strengths and a desire to learn more about its ability to help bridge Michigan's digital divides.

This project has developed a package of in-depth yet accessible content that can help support that education, especially if funding is available to support extended and expanded efforts to promote and augment this content. Such efforts can help more policymakers, network planners and community leaders understand the purpose, function and value of Community Empowerment Networks, and whether and how these networks can benefit their communities. This enhanced understanding will, in turn, help achieve an expansion of affordable high-performance networks that supports increasing value creation and strong and equitable community and economic development for many years to come. To access direct links to the full webinar and a series of shorter video clips please see Appendix C.



Catalyzing Waste Reduction Opportunities for Small and Rural Communities

Led by Terry Link, Starting Now, LLC and Bill Stough, Sustainability Research Group

This Circular Economies Pillar research project looked at viable options for addressing waste reduction in small and rural communities, while strengthening the markets for both profit, nonprofit and community owned enterprises within the community. The project included a plan to develop potential models that can be adopted by communities across the state to reduce landfill waste, while at the same time spurring partnerships across local regional entities.

Lessons Learned:

As the project team delved deeper into the rural and small community solid waste challenges, it became clearer that there needs to be a rethinking of waste reduction orientation that perhaps can be driven by the experience and practice of rural and small community recycling programs. Large urban areas operate in a different world of solid waste realities than their often poorer cousins in the hinterlands. In urban areas, handling solid waste offers bigger profits to be pursued and pocketed due to larger commodity streams and denser population logistics. The drive for profit shifts orientation away from the societal and common good that is at the heart of what drives many, if not most, of the founders of rural and small community recycling and waste reduction programs.

The team's research found that in most cases it was local community members that initiated any efforts to divert recoverable materials from the waste stream, either through building a network of concerned volunteers and/or finding supportive government officials to bring the community together to tackle the challenges of waste reduction. These waste reduction champions forged relationships not only with volunteers and supportive local officials but also with key businesses that wanted to reduce their own waste, often saving themselves money.

The framework of the circular economy helps situate waste reduction efforts in a larger and more compelling context. Small and rural communities offer an appropriate laboratory to develop workable and sustainable approaches to the necessary waste reduction efforts communities' collective futures demand. Enabling conditions that build social capital while shrinking our ecological footprint are perhaps more doable in smaller communities. Community development professionals might begin to look at how to put the circular economy to work in their communities. Focusing on waste reduction might be the first place to start. To view the full report produced by this project, please see Appendix D.

Michigan Inventors Coalition

Led by John Hopkins of the Michigan Inventors Coalition

This project generated a successful synchronous online investment crowdfunding/market research event that allowed multiple inventors to begin moving their products towards the market. The project



team captured their learnings from conducting this event and constructed a guide other groups across the state can utilize to conduct similar events. This project falls under the Financial Resiliency Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

The Michigan Inventors Coalition (MIC) observed the opportunity and need to support its members and inventors/entrepreneurs in preparing to and receiving help organizing and facilitating an investment crowdfunding campaign. MIC encountered a few challenges while pursuing this process. The challenges pertained to picking an event date far enough in advance to pool contestants, market the event, and identify potential investment technical assistance partners. Overall, technical assistance was identified as one of the largest hurdles in the utilization of investment crowdfunding at the time the project was completed.

However, there tend to be 'hotbeds' where individuals and/or individual organizations are active and have developed support mechanisms. Investment crowdfunding support and training organizations are few and are often paired with specific entrepreneurial programs or geographies. Therefore, the project leaders found that the best way to initiate the process of identifying investment crowdfunding technical assistance is to talk with others in your area who have raised capital using the mechanism and contact their networks. For this project, the program leaders contacted The National Coalition for Community Capital (NC3), which has a technical assistance directory that lists industry professionals from across the country. To view the material produced by this project, see Appendix E.

[Creating a Community of Practice: 21st Century Economic Development Planning](#)

Led by Dr. Rex LaMore and a coalition of University Centers across the country

This project resulted in an application to EDA to support a comprehensive CEDS+ planning initiative to be conducted with partners in Michigan, Indiana, Maryland, Oregon, and Kansas. If funded, the 5 UC (University Center) partners would have worked with multiple EDDs (as identified by each UC partner) to conduct additional economic planning processes to incorporate additional resiliency factors (social and environmental) into their CEDS development process. This project falls under the Resiliency Planning Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

The CEDS document and process is an invaluable opportunity for EDDs to reassess the vision for their region in their efforts to develop resilience to future shock events, such as climate change, economic downturns, and pandemics. However, if regions are going to truly enhance their resiliency, it is important they consider the whole of their region, rather than focusing on traditional economic indicators. Therefore, this project found that including social and environmental data in the process of regions developing their CEDS, in addition to traditional economic variables, can aid regions in more accurately describing the wholistic nature of their region and create more opportunities for considering sustainability, equity, and financial resilience in economic development policy and the



vision for the region. Additionally, conducting an inventory of a region's CEDS Strategy Committee can illuminate the community perspectives that may historically been left out from the CEDS development process, creating opportunities for the region to create more inclusive public engagement processes through the CEDS, generating a more diverse and representative committee, resulting in more ownership over the goals, strategies, and implementation plan adopted in the CEDS. To view the full proposal associated with this project, please see Appendix F.

Digitally Connected Community Farms

Led by Partridge Creek Farms in Collaboration with MSU Rural Computing Consortium & Jean Hardy, PhD

This project generated a best practice guide for adoption and utilization of sensors and data collection protocol on a small farm level in food insecure and hard to farm areas. The best practices guide addressed a pressing challenge, climate resiliency utilizing technology, faced by many communities looking to build more resilient local food systems in light of the ongoing supply-chain related challenges initiated by COVID. With Partridge Creek Farms as a primary partner, the best practices guide was widely distributed to relevant stakeholders across the state. This project pertains to the 21st Century Communications Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

The project partners intend on continuing the research relationship between the MSU team and PCF, as well as potentially expanding to other community farms and small-scale farming ventures in Michigan. The team at MSU is currently working on developing their own, lower cost agricultural sensors to make them more affordable for community partners.

The partners learned four primary outcomes that others should consider when approaching new digital adoption. While these recommendations are most likely beneficial to small community farms and gardens, the partners expect that smaller commercial farms running on slimmer margins and who can't afford the newest technology will also find opportunity in them. The project team provides much more detail in its Final Report (see Appendix G), but at a high level the four outcomes are:

- Guidance on selecting the appropriate technology, including: complementing or replacing existing technology, adopting technology that corresponds to the skill levels of staff, the longevity of technological interventions and planning for that time, and considerations of geography and what technology is most appropriate for the geography the work is being done in.
- Incorporate new technology into existing data practices, including: what data is most needed and are there existing gaps in data access, what provides the largest return for the organization in the long run, and how does the return on investment look differently for non-profit ventures who are primarily mission driven rather than profit driven.



- Harness local technology champions. Technology champions are community members who have advanced technological skills that staff do not, or are willing to develop that skill to serve the organization’s mission. Organizations should be asking about the technological skills and actively seeking out technology champions in their local communities before they decide to seek out new technology in their work.
- Our last outcome implores others to avoid what we call “data-driven mission creep.” Shiny, new objects create shiny, new data, which results in shiny, new opportunities for an organization. It’s tempting to dive in to all these new opportunities, but it’s important to reflect on what the mission of the organization is before getting too wrapped up in what new technology can offer with respect to data outputs.

Laying a Foundation for Sustainable Building Materials Management in Detroit

Led by Madi Kraus, Detroit Green Living Science

This project was conducted with support from SEMCOG and resulted in an executive report summary detailing the gaps in relevant data sets identified by Green Living Science as essential to building a robust and sustainable building material reuse, recycling, and reprocessing economy in Detroit. With the cost of materials and new developments exorbitantly high as a result of the pandemic, there was hardly a better time to examine new models that help build resilience and break dependence on global supply chains within the construction sector. This project addresses the Circular Economies Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

City representatives and officials have repeatedly expressed the need for cohesive local impact data to justify decision making and programs to increase investment in deconstruction and workforce development. This project allowed further engagement between the City of Detroit Department of Public Works and the Demolition Department. The project also established a foundation for continued research and advocacy regarding demolition and deconstruction occurring in Detroit to inform future research and determine the course of action for the Construction and Demolition Subcommittee of Detroit City Council’s Green Task Force (C&D Committee) as political advocates and topical experts. Finally, the project highlighted the need for improved access to up-to-date construction, demolition, and deconstruction data in Detroit. Without updated data, it is difficult to capture the construction, demolition, and deconstruction efforts occurring in the city to more effectively inform recommendations for how the City of Detroit Department of Public Works, Demolition Department, City Council Green Task Force C&D Committee, and other community advocates might work together to address deconstruction investment, demolition related public health, and workforce development needs. To view the full report produced from this project, see Appendix H.



Market-end Feasibility Studies & Economic Impact Surveys for Lansing's Hyper-Local Food Systems

Led by Lansing Urban Farm Project

The purpose of this study was to utilize findings to generate more successful business models for the hyper-local food system in Lansing, MI and beyond. Increasing the efficiency of local supply chains creates opportunities for long-term growth and living wages for urban/small farms. Additionally, it increases localized food sovereignty and, therefore, resiliency of local markets to periodic economic shock and supply chain disruptions. The findings of this study were compiled into a report which was shared broadly with local stakeholders. This project pertains to the Resiliency Planning Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

One highlight of the project is the willingness of restaurants, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on national and regional supply chains, to build relationships with local producers. This shows the willingness of multiple actors of our local food system to establish routes for local procurement and sales.

It is also pertinent to note that the project ended after the farming season in Michigan, which means that it is an opportune time to continue to build relationships between urban farmers and institutional counterparts. Importantly, there is interest from both urban farmers and institutional counterparts in the Lansing Area to develop a collaborative network of small-scale suppliers.

Overall, this project was an excellent opportunity for individuals to learn about and address the needs of the broader community. Given the small size of this project team, resources to increase the research and publication value of the project were limited. Further assistance to increase the efficacy and value of the report was an unaddressed need by the project team. To view the project's full report, please see Appendix I.

Building a Foundation for Micropolitan Collaboration: Data Discovery in Wexford and Missaukee Counties

Led by Lisa Miller in Collaboration with Alliance for Economic Success

This project undertook a CEDS discovery and area data analysis that set a foundation to further analyze the Northwest Lower Michigan Region #10 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) through the lens of community and economic data in Wexford and Missaukee counties, thus, supporting informed, collaborative prioritization at the local level. Deliverables included local data collection that is being utilized to develop meaningful dashboards and a report highlighting methods, analysis, and recommendations for next steps. This project addresses the Resiliency Planning Pillar.

Lessons Learned:



Given the geographic location of the Greater Cadillac Area in the southernmost section of Economic Development District Region 10, it is important that the Alliance for Economic Success, an economic development organization serving two counties in the larger district, understands its service area in the context of the region. The data collected through this project also has the opportunity to expand into a more robust toolkit to be used for other rural counties and micropolitan areas to undertake a similar approach to ‘jump start’ economic development planning. This project has also been the catalyst for local relationships between and among economic development organizations and social, service, and environmental nonprofit organizations. To view the materials produced from this project, see Appendix J.

[CEDAM Fellows Training Partnership](#)

Led by Sarah Teater of Community and Economic Development Association of Michigan

This project leveraged the CEDAM Fellows program – a community and economic development fellowship program that places fellows in residence in a community for a period of 15 months to work on building solutions in response to challenges identified by community members. This project was the first of many future collaborations between the fellows and EDA, in which our Michigan EDR (Lee Shirey) will train the fellows to become ‘EDA advocates embedded in community’. This partnership generated additional EDA applications through the year-long residency of the fellows; and was the first of many steps in a newly forming collaboration between MSU CCED, CEDAM, and EDA. This project falls under the Resiliency Planning Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

The training provided valuable information for CEDAM community development fellows working across the state. The training shared valuable resources so that fellows could tap into regional economic efforts and understand the federal funding available for economic development projects. CEDAM plans to include similar training for future fellow cohorts, strengthening the collaboration of partners on economic development in Michigan. To view the training presentation, please see Appendix K.

[Rural Innovation Policy Research](#)

Led by Jean Hardy, PhD, Assistant Professor of Media & Information at MSU, Director, Rural Computing Research Consortium, with support from Student Research Assistant

This study seeks to answer the following: First, how do state and federal governments support innovation in rural America through policy? Second, what are the downstream impacts of this legislation? In other words, how is the money actually used? To do this, the authors will conduct a pilot study analyzing policy and budget documents for state and federal support of rural innovation. The team will begin by defining and delineating what activities typically support rural innovation. To answer the first question, the team will then select four pieces of legislation, two federal and two



focusing on the State of Michigan, to analyze for their support of rural innovation activities. To answer the second question, the authors will systematically follow the legislation and its budget downstream to the entities who were on the receiving end of the funding to evaluate how the funds were used to support innovation activities. The pilot study will produce two key deliverables: 1) a preliminary suite of research tools for evaluating policy supporting rural innovation and its downstream impacts; 2) a report documenting our preliminary findings to be written for key stakeholder groups such as policy makers and economic development officials who are interested in how to support rural innovation. This project addresses the Resiliency Planning Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

Of the 37 programs identified using Rural Innovation Typology, 13 focused on broadband, 13 focused on agriculture, five on energy transitions, three on education and workforce development, three on entrepreneurship, two on forestry, and two on clustering and regional innovation. Of the 37 unique programs, 26 of them appear in five rural-oriented bills (e.g., the Farm Bill), three appear in “innovation” bills (e.g., the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act), and seven appear in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. These findings demonstrate that there is significant opportunity for federal innovation programs to do additional geographic targeting in rural areas. Overall, a large majority of the programs address broadband and agriculture. This demonstrates further limitations for the impact of federal policy support for innovation.

Thanks to this project, the project team has increased interest in research outcomes from the MSU Quello Center for Media & Information Policy, as well as the Michigan Office of Rural Development. The team hopes to utilize its findings to assist the Office of Rural Development to identify new opportunities for promoting rural innovation in Michigan. To view the report produced by this project, see Appendix L.

[Connecting Discards, Reuse, and STEM: A Regional Approach](#)

Led by Eastern Michigan Council of Governments

The Eastern Michigan Council of Governments, on behalf of the Great Lakes Bay Zero Waste Consortium (GLBZWC), is seeking to determine the potential for the development of a collaborative program in support of circular economies that will connect material discards, such as construction and demolition (C&D) materials and manufacturing scraps, with regional Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs, artisans, entrepreneurs, workforce development programs, and community members. As such, this project will conduct research to determine opportunities for diversion of discarded materials used in the built environment and in the manufacturing process in the region, including current disposal and diversion data and practices of generators of C&D materials, current disposal and diversion data and practices during historical building renovation and demolition, existing end-markets for C&D materials and architectural building salvage, identification of potential sources of manufacturing scrap suitable for adaptive reuse, entrepreneurial opportunities, and STEM



education and maker space opportunities. Research will consist of surveys and interviews with generators in the region regarding their interest in pursuing initiative and identification of potential stakeholders/partners in addition to identifying and interviewing current C&D recovery/architectural salvage operations in Michigan to learn best practices. This project pertains to the Circular Economies Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

Survey participation from generators of discards was low throughout the project and the short time frame (approximately five months) impacted the ability to reach out and gain a significant amount of data from them. There was significant interest among those who took part in the project, and they indicated that further pursuit of this project is warranted. To view the materials produced by this project, see Appendix M.

[Building Regional Broadband Planning Capacity in Michigan: Addressing Equity in the Development of Broadband-Focused Public-Private Partnerships](#)

Led by REI Innovation Fellow, Mitch Shapiro, in collaboration with Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and Southcentral Michigan Planning Council

This project seeks to understand the broadband-related ecosystem and its key factors—different individual, types, motivations, and resources of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and different communities' needs, planning capacities, and broadband development strategies—between the seven counties contained in Michigan Regional Prosperity Region #8. The Prosperity Region is comprised of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and Southcentral Michigan Planning Council. The project also seeks to understand whether and how effectively the issues of equity and inclusion are being addressed by these various combinations of factors and forms of private-public partnerships. The result of this project will be a collaborative grant proposal to the Economic Development Administration's Local Technical Assistance program. This project addresses the 21st Century Communications Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

Facilitating public-private collaborations that help achieve the state's digital inclusion goals requires an approach to broadband planning that: 1) achieves a greater harmonization of the priorities and resources of local communities and private service providers; 2) places greater emphasis on achieving and leveraging universal broadband access to increase and expand prosperity rather than focusing solely on generating attractive financial returns for network investors and; 3) includes a regional planning perspective that can help address the fact that much of today's broadband infrastructure is a patchwork of cross-jurisdictional networks utilizing different technologies and owned by different entities, a reality that adds to the complexity individual communities face in seeking an ISP partner in the task of bridging its digital divide.



While private companies will and should continue to play important roles in the expansion of broadband access, COVID has made it painfully clear that broadband access is now essential infrastructure and that broadband planning must place more emphasis on equity and affordability. Helping to achieve this rebalancing of priorities is a natural but underdeveloped role for regional planning organizations.

Federal and state funding agencies can be extraordinary resources to support efforts by regional and community planners to help ensure that federal funds are used effectively to achieve digital connectivity equity. To view the report produced by this project, see Appendix N.

[Innovative Pre-College Initiative: Investing in Michigan, Majority-Minority, and Low-Income Communities](#)

Led by Rex LaMore, Ph.D., Director, MSU Center for Community and Economic Development and Stephen Gasteyer, Ph.D., Associate Professor, MSU Department of Sociology, College of Social Science, with support from Student Research Assistants

Through funding from the Creating Inclusive Excellence Grant provided by the MSU Office for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, this project seeks to investigate the feasibility of MSU strategically investing its financial resources (“Common Investment Fund”/Endowment) in the creation of a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), with the purpose of supporting community and economic revitalization in disadvantaged communities in Michigan. Supporting Community Capital initiatives, Community Investment Funds, and/or the creation of a CDFI will bring opportunities to MSU to create an inclusive and diverse community and improve the chances of providing world-class education to historically disadvantaged Michigan students through supporting the economic resilience of their communities with equitable and sustainable investment practices, while addressing the long-term structural inequities that underpin uneven access to higher education. This project pertains to the Financial Resiliency Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

Inequities in accessing higher education by race/ethnicity and income have existed for decades. Students of color and low-income students remain two demographics with the lowest college-education rates, many times for financial reasons. However, in its “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Report and Plan” (2021), MSU states a goal of improving the diversity of its student body through recruitment and retention. Through strategic community investing, Michigan State University has the opportunity to re-affirm its land-grant leadership as a premiere public research institution and global trailblazer of engagement by harnessing the power of Michigan CDFIs to effectuate revitalization, recruitment and retention.

The case studies and literature explored in the team’s draft feasibility study supports the notion that MSU has the power to create a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable campus by supporting



community revitalization efforts through investing in CDFIs operating across the state. In fact, in MSU's quest to remain a premier public, land-grant institution, the community university investing examples provided in the study should inspire MSU to take action to invest in its community, improving its inclusivity and diversity and therefore its alignment with the university's mission, values, and goals. Overall, supporting community investing strategies will improve the chances of providing world-class education to historically disadvantaged students through supporting the economic resilience of their communities through equitable and sustainable investment practices, while addressing the long-term structural inequities that underpin uneven access to higher education. To view the full project proposal, please see Appendix O.

Circular Economy Faculty Forums

Led by Rex LaMore, Ph.D., Director, MSU Center for Community and Economic Development with support from faculty from various MSU departments and Student Research Assistants

The Circular Economy Institute team at The Center for Community and Economic Development organized a virtual forum series focusing on how circular economies have impacted the research, outreach, and instruction of faculty at Michigan State University. The series welcomed faculty presenters from across twelve schools and colleges who presented on a variety of important topics relating to circular economies. The webinar series was organized by a team of faculty members passionate about promoting circular economies, including Vedat Verter, Ph.D., MSU Broad College of Business, Rafael Auras, Ph.D., MSU School of Packaging, Gemma Reguera, Ph.D., MSU College of Natural Sciences, Lawrence Drzal, Ph.D., MSU College of Engineering, and Janet Ireland, Ph.D., MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The series consisted of five panels throughout the fall and spring of 2021 to 2022, which were shared live over zoom as well as recorded and are available on CCED's YouTube page. For direct links to the panels, please see the Appendix. This project addresses the Circular Economies Pillar.

Lessons Learned:

The Circular Economy Faculty Forum series took place during the 2021-22 academic year, which complicated the logistics of meetings and panels as a result of guidance by Michigan State to host meetings and gatherings online whenever possible. However, Zoom proved a useful and universal tool that the network was familiar with that also allowed for presenting and recording of the panels within the same software. The project team also found that participation of faculty for the panels was somewhat difficult. While faculty members were enthusiastic about sharing their interests and research, getting people to commit to not only a timeslot for presenting, but also committing to listening to their fellow faculty members present on their work was a hurdle in the preparation and follow-through of the panels.



Despite these challenges, the project team found that by asking the faculty members of the smaller project Working Group on the initiative to make their colleagues aware of the team's efforts, the team was able to quickly expand its network and create a diverse partnership of faculty members from across the university. Those who attended the panels and were active participants were able to leverage the opportunity and make connections with other faculty members who might be able to collaborate on research and efforts in the field of circularity. To view the five webinar panels produced by this project, you can find direct links in Appendix P.

Expected and Actual Economic Benefits of the Project

Six full-time jobs were created as a result of the grant in addition to 1 full-time job retained.

iii. Timeline

All projects to be supported under the CERI program have been awarded. The CERI staff have received the final materials from all project authors. The staff has updated the project's webpage and social media platforms to represent all of the projects that have been funded and their deliverables. The team has compiled and made accessible all final documents and has completed project wrap-up and final reporting in adherence to the NCE agreement. Project deliverables and other relevant documents are accessible and available to EDA and other partners via the Appendix of the final report.

iv. Challenges

In March 2022, MSU CCED submitted to EDA a request for a no-cost time extension which would alter the current end date of June 30, 2022, to December 31, 2022. The extension request was granted on May 16, 2022. The fulfillment of this request entailed no change in the scope of work or budget agreement, but provided valuable time for our CERI project partners, who were still struggling with various COVID related barriers including increased process time, return to work/work from home cycles, labor shortages, difficulty planning and convening groups, digital literacy related slowdowns, etc. MSU CCED responded to these challenges by activating additional student research assistant labor to support the successful completion of CERI projects.

v. EDA Assistance

Over the past year and a half, CERI has established new relationships with a variety of partners and stakeholders. All four pillars of CERI have received valuable attention and effort. CERI staff worked hard to leverage higher education assets in collaboration with Economic Development Districts (EDDs) and other partners to support innovative economic development strategies to mitigate the



economic disaster that impacted and continues to impact many communities of Michigan, many of which are experiencing increasing disparities and widening income inequality gaps in underrepresented communities. CERI project partners may seek additional EDA assistance to engage in discovery-to-market efforts, develop concepts and strategies to create jobs, and cultivate innovation in distressed communities throughout Michigan.



vi. Appendix

A. A 'Resiliency Planning' Thought Leaders Series

Session 1: [MSUE Resiliency Planning Webinar Series: Session 1](#)

Session 2: [MSUE Resiliency Planning Webinar Series: Session 2](#)

Session 3: [MSUE Resiliency Planning Webinar Series: Session 3](#)

Session 4: [MSUE Resiliency Planning Webinar Series: Session 4](#)

Session 5: [MSUE Resiliency Planning Webinar Series: Session 5](#)

Session 6: [MSUE Resiliency Planning Webinar Series: Session 6](#)

B. [Michigan Healthy Urban Environments](#)

C. [Building Broadband Better with Community Empowerment Networks](#)

D. [Catalyzing Waste Reduction Opportunities for Small and Rural Communities](#)

E. [Michigan Inventors Coalition](#)



F. [Creating a Community of Practice: 21st Century Economic Development Planning](#)

G. [Digitally Connected Community Farms](#)

H. [Laying a Foundation for Sustainable Building Materials Management in Detroit](#)

I. [Market-end Feasibility Studies & Economic Impact Surveys for Lansing's Hyper-Local Food Systems](#)

J. [Building a Foundation for Micropolitan Collaboration: Data Discovery in Wexford and Missaukee Counties](#)

K. [CEDAM Fellows Training Partnership](#)

L. [Rural Innovation Policy Research](#)

M. [Connecting Discards, Reuse, and STEM: A Regional Approach](#)

N. [Building Regional Broadband Planning Capacity in Michigan: Addressing Equity in the Development of Broadband-Focused Public-Private Partnerships](#)

O. [Innovative Pre-College Initiative: Investing in Michigan, Majority-Minority, and Low-Income Communities](#)

P. Circular Economy Faculty Forums

Forum 1: [Circular Economies Institute Panel 1: Circular Economy, Bio-Based Solutions & Research](#)

Forum 2: [Circular Economies Institute Panel 2: Circular Economy, Transportation Systems & Mass Timber](#)

Forum 3: [Circular Economies Institute Panel 3: Sustainable Packaging Systems & Polymer Science](#)

Forum 4: [Circular Economies Institute Panel 4: Sustainable Supply Chains & Battery Technology Research](#)

Forum 5: [Circular Economies Institute Panel 5: Chemical Exposures and Synthesis of Chemical Building Blocks](#)