



**Economic Development Administration – Grant 08-83-05025  
ED18AUS3020021  
Progress Report April 1, 2019 to September 30, 2019**

Background

From April 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019, EDA Grant 08-83-05025 charges the Gulf Coast Economic Development District (GCEDD) with performing activities that contribute to the long-term economic recovery of the 13-county Gulf Coast Planning Region from Hurricane Harvey (DR-4332). The District's primary functions are to provide technical assistance to economic development organizations, provide planning assistance for regional economic development initiatives, and maintain the region's eligibility to apply for economic development grants and assistance from the EDA.

Technical Assistance

GCEDD provided support through technical and planning assistance to communities in order to facilitate EDA grant applications for the EDA Disaster Supplemental Funds. The Economic Development Administration's requested that all grant applications for the Long-Term Economic Recovery Grant be submitted by May 1, 2019. From April 1 to May 1 the Gulf Coast Economic Development District was focused on providing technical assistance to applicants in completing the outstanding applications. The Gulf Coast Economic Development District provided additional technical assistance beyond the close of the application cycle to applicants as the provided additional documentation as requested by the Economic Development Administration.

Beginning in June, when applications were no longer being accepted for the long-term economic recovery grant, the Gulf Coast Economic Development District shifted its focus from providing technical assistance to long-term economic recovery initiatives. The primary two initiatives for economic recovery are expanding the regional broadband infrastructure and driving Opportunity Zone investments to the communities most impacted by Hurricane Harvey. The effort includes the development of a Regional Broadband Plan and an Opportunity Zone Report.

With the assistance of the Economic Development Administration and the International Economic Development Council, the Gulf Coast Economic Development District held an Opportunity Zone Summit to enhance the capacity of municipal economic developers to attract investment to Opportunity Zones. The summit was held on August 19, 2019 and attracted approximately seventy-five participants from across the region. Participants received an overview of the topic, perspectives from Opportunity Zone investors, perspectives from municipalities, and from a real estate developer's perspective. The Opportunity Zone Summit was followed by site visits to six communities in the Houston-Galveston region. The site visits included the communities of Bay City, El Campo, Palacios, Richmond, Texas City, and Wharton with the support of two International Economic Development Council expert volunteers. The site visits were followed by the development of findings and recommendations for those communities. The site visits served as case studies for an Opportunity Zones Report that is currently under development.