



## MEMORANDUM

To: Economic Development Committee Members

From: Julian M.D. Jacquin, Economic Development Manager

Date: June 22, 2021

Re: Certified Economic Development Community

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At its May meeting, the Committee discussed a program idea proposed by Chair Edens to consider a new certification program for municipalities with their own economic development program/department. Certification programs already exist for full-time professionals (CEcD, EDFP, and newly the MoCED program) and elected/appointed officials, entry-level staff, and public citizens (UMSL Chancellor's Certificate in Economic Development and Heartlands Economic Development Course), but a certification program for an entire municipality does not exist at the State or local level and would have to be created from scratch by another party. The Committee voted at its May meeting to move forward with further research on this idea to discuss any interest and feasibility with regional and State officials.

In my role as Public Policy Chair for the Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC), I attended the 2021 MEDC Annual Conference this past week in Lake of the Ozarks. 100+ economic development professionals attended, including representatives from local municipalities, counties, regional chambers of commerce, private utility companies, the Missouri Partnership, and the Missouri Department of Economic Development. These groups would be responsible for creating, and administering, any city-wide economic development certification program, and it was logical to discuss their interest in any program at this event. As requested by the Committee in May, I spoke with the Major Projects Manager of the St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC), the Executive Director of the Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC) and the Regional Engagement Director for the Missouri Department of Economic Development (MO DED).

Overall, these groups generally understood the request but did not support a new economic development certification program for municipalities. Comments provided by these groups included the following:

- Concern over starting another Missouri certification program immediately after launching the Missouri Certified Economic Developer (MoCED) Program, which was just approved, and testing will begin at the 2021 MEDC Fall Conference later this year.
- The existing AEDO Certification (Accredited Economic Development Organization) by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is intended for economic development departments, agencies, and private organizations, and not city-wide for an entire municipality. There are only four AEDO's in Missouri and 65 across the country.

- An initial reaction by MO DED that a city-wide certification program should be managed by the Missouri Municipal League (MML), and not a public entity such as the Department of Economic Development.
- Oklahoma and Arkansas both tried to create a similar municipal certification program in the 1990's and 2000's, and the feedback I received noted that both programs "fell apart" within the first five years.
- In Oklahoma, the "certified cities" program was initially managed by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce, then the Oklahoma Development Alliance, then the Southwestern Oklahoma Development Authority. This program in Oklahoma required judges to be located outside the state of Oklahoma, which then required those judges to be trained, with ongoing management and coordination with these individuals.
- In Arkansas, the feedback I received noted that the municipal certification program "got political" and strayed away from its original intent.
- We found information online from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development that established an Economic Development Certified Community (EDCC) program, but the most recent information on the State's website is a 2017 Application for Certification/Recertification, last updated in July 2018.
- Any municipal certification program may be more feasible for a larger city or economic development agency to lead with their own established Department, expanded resources and additional staffing. Initial response was that Wildwood may be too small, or niche, of a community to be considered.
- Neither the Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC) or Missouri Department of Economic Development (MO DED) expressed initial interest in creating, or managing, this program in Missouri.

Chair Edens and I will be available for any comments or questions at the June 22, 2021 Meeting of the Economic Development Committee.

JMDJ