

Background on the EDA and the EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance

The Economic Development Administration's (EDA's) mission is to lead the Federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for economic growth and success in the worldwide economy. EDA fulfills this mission through strategic investments and partnerships that create the regional economic ecosystems required to foster globally competitive regions throughout the United States. EDA supports development in economically distressed areas of the United States by fostering job creation and attracting private investment

The EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance grants will support a wide range of non-construction and construction activities. Examples of projects that EDA may fund through its CARES Act Recovery Assistance include economic recovery planning and preparing technical assistance strategies to address economic dislocations caused by the coronavirus pandemic, preparing or updating resiliency plans to respond to future pandemics, implementing entrepreneurial support programs to diversify economies, and constructing public works and facilities that will support economic recovery, including the deployment of broadband for purposes including supporting telehealth and remote learning for job skills.

The Key component of the CARES Act is that prior to the COVID-19, EDA funding was focused on distress areas and opportunities zones. So, the City of Ann Arbor and many areas in Washtenaw County did not qualify for EDA funding. Because of COVID-19, all communities across the United States are eligible to apply for EDA funding.

SPARK has a history of working with the EDA. The application process is very arduous. For example, the notification of the project was 45 pages long and the application requires over 20 attachments. SPARK has been successful applying for past grant opportunities and because of our experience of working with the EDA, SPARK has been invited to apply for grants. Past SPARK EDA grants include a planning grant for the American Center for Mobility (ACM) for \$270,000 in 2015, which provided the framework for the creation of ACM and funding for SPARK East in Ypsilanti.

Based on our discussions with the regional office of the EDA, SPARK recommends that the Ann Arbor Region apply for a minimum of \$3 million and provide a 20% match to ensure that we have the most competitive application and open the door for potential future funding opportunities. SPARK is sharing best practices and lessons learned with our sister organization in Jackson County which recently applied for a \$6 million grant to complete infrastructure for a new 180 acre industrial Park.