

Findings from Conversations with Economic Development Organizations on Inclusion and Equity

New Growth Innovation Network (NGIN) is implementing an Inclusive Recovery Initiative, aimed at supporting Economic Development Organizations and Districts in embedding inclusive and equitable growth strategies into their COVID-19 recovery strategies. This initiative will provide in-depth technical assistance to six Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) to incorporate equity into their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies. The program will also include a Community of Practice of EDOs nationwide to engage on topics that build equity and inclusion as a practice in their strategies.

As part of this project, NGIN engaged with 68 EDOs on this topic between May and October 2021. EDOs varied in geography, size, and level of diversity, but some consistent themes emerged from these discussions on challenges they are facing today. EDOs across the country expressed a strong desire to develop new solutions and strategies to tackle equity but face some critical challenges.

For more information on the Inclusive Recovery Initiative and the New Growth Innovation Network, visit newgrowth.org and follow us on [LinkedIn](#). Stay tuned for additional updates on findings from our engagements.

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1 Tools

Economic development leaders are struggling to identify the economic development tools and strategies that are available to them and best suited to their region to embed equity into their existing work.

2 Data

Regional organizations often rely on data for decision making and often lack the data to understand economic disparities in their regions and how to address them. This is exacerbated in rural areas where innovative data solutions are limited.

3 Engaging Diverse Voices

Traditional community engagement techniques are still being used, but EDOs are recognizing the need to advance their methods and grow more opportunities for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) leadership.

4 Small Business Support

During COVID, inclusive economic development recovery strategies have often led with support for small businesses owned and operated by BIPOC and/or women, as well as entrepreneurship.

5 Rural Specific Challenges

Rural areas struggle with job and population loss, meaning equity has been a lower priority for economic leaders. Additionally, in some small communities, a few large employers may dominate the labor market making it difficult for small and minority-owned businesses.

Ecosystem Barriers

Related to economic development strategies, NGIN also heard feedback on important ecosystem factors, which may be hampering inclusive economic development.

- Broadband mapping and transparency on access versus adoption is an impediment to economic competitiveness and equitable access to employment opportunities.
- Transportation access is a growing concern for job accessibility, career mobility, and accessible affordable housing.
- Access to childcare is a challenge in both urban and rural areas, making it difficult for some to re-enter the workforce. This disproportionately impacts women.