
Critical Update: The Future of REI

Jenan Jondy

REI Project Coordinator, CCED

For more than a decade, the MSU EDA University Center for Regional Economic Innovation (REI) has delivered impact statewide - over \$68 million in economic impact, more than 190 projects in 46 counties, and engagement with over 7,000 stakeholders. Through applied research, technical assistance, and innovation-driven partnerships, REI has advanced MSU's land-grant mission, strengthened community capacity, and provided high-impact learning experiences for students.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) has officially notified Michigan State University's Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) that Fiscal Year 2025–26 funding for the University Center program has been “paused” due to budget constraints.

This decision is not a reflection of REI’s performance. On the contrary, EDA has recognized the important contributions of University Centers in driving regional job creation, fostering innovation, and supporting community and business expansion. While we are deeply disappointed by the abrupt termination of this longstanding federal partnership, MSU’s commitment to the important work of REI and our many partners across the state will continue. Recognizing the strategic value of REI in advancing community and economic development with distressed communities in our state and with the support of on and off campus partners we anticipate being able to complete our proposed scope of work for 2025-26. We intend to honor to the extent feasible our commitment to the communities and partners who have worked alongside us to advance inclusive economic development across Michigan. We are profoundly grateful for your continued partnership during this transition. Together, we have built a strong foundation of innovation and collaboration that we intend to sustain and grow, even as our program adapts to this new landscape.

We ask our partners and supporters to reach out to your U.S. Senators and Representatives to share the positive impact REI has had in your community and emphasize the importance of this unique program. Your voice is critical in ensuring Michigan’s communities continue to have access to innovation-focused economic development support.