

# Celebrating Partnership & Looking Ahead:

## *REI RECEIVES 2026 DISTINGUISHED PARTNERSHIP AWARD*

We're excited to share that the Regional Economic Innovation (REI) initiative and its statewide Consultative Panel have been selected for the 2026

Distinguished Partnership Award for Community Engaged Service. This recognition reflects the strength of our statewide partnerships and a shared commitment to advancing community-driven economic development across Michigan.

Over the past decade, REI has partnered with communities, practitioners, and institutions to co-create innovative economic development tools, models, programs, and practices that support local innovation and resilience. Through applied research, technical assistance, capacity building, and cross-sector collaboration, REI's impact has always been rooted in partnership. This award recognizes not only the program, but the collective work of the many partners who have helped shape and sustain it. REI's work has consistently focused on translating partnerships into innovative tools and strategies that support locally driven economic development.



**Jenan Jondy**  
REI Project  
Coordinator,  
CCED



This recognition comes during a period of transition following the nationwide end of the EDA University Center Program. Continued support from Michigan State University and match funders has allowed REI to sustain its work and remain responsive to evolving community needs while continuing to explore new approaches.



*Thank you!*  
REI CONSULTATIVE PANEL



**Charles A. Hasemann**  
Ass. VP for MSU Innovation & Economic Development



**John Egelhaaf**  
Executive Director, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission



**Chris Miller**  
CEO, National Coalition for Community Capital (NC3)



**Meghan Swain**  
Executive Director for the Michigan Economic Developers Association



**Terence O'Neill**  
Entrepreneurship Librarian, Michigan State University



**Naheed Huq**  
Manager of Talent and Economic Development, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)



**Sriram Narayanan**  
Full-time Professor and the Eli Broad Endowed Professor of Supply Chain Management at the Broad College of Business, MSU, Supply Chain Management Department



**Ken Szymusiak**  
Managing Director, Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (Burgess IEI)



**Grace Carey**  
Program Officer at the Michigan Municipal League Foundation



**Ritchie H. Harrison**  
Independent Consultant, The Everyday Sacred



**Laurel Ofstein**  
Faculty Director, Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at MSU & Associate Professor-Fixed Term, Department of Management of the Broad College of Business



**Dave Ivan**  
Community, Food & Environment Institute Director, MSU Extension



**Mohamed Ayoub**  
City of Westland Planning Director



**Richard Wooten**  
District 11 Director, Michigan State University Extension



**Kara Wood**  
Executive Director, Grand Action 2.0



**Bill Ernat**  
Program Manager for Economic & Community Development, EMCOG



**Erin Kuhn**  
Executive Director, West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission



**Jamie Rye**  
Director, West Michigan Regional Planning Commission



**Francisco Villarruel**  
University Outreach and Engagement Senior Fellow & Professor



**Rita Fields**  
Dual CEO of 313 Industries, Inc. and Copper Phoenix Consulting, LLC; Chief Talent & Strategy Officer for Lighthouse Michigan; Professor in the School of Management at UM-Flint



**Jonathan Leinonen**  
Instructor and Project Advisor, School of Business and Economics, MTU



**Eric Shannon**  
Performance & Management Reporting Specialist, City of Grand Rapids



**Arnold Weinfeld**  
Rural Partners for Michigan



**Eric Frederick**  
State Program Manager, Connect Michigan



**Pablo Majano**  
MEDC Senior Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) Planner



**Thomas M. Smith**  
Retired MSU Extension Specialist in Agriculture and Agribusiness



**Tony Willis**  
Chief Equity Development Officer, Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP)



**Dr. Sarah Gretter**  
Director, Apple Developer Academy and launch lead of the Apple Manufacturing Academy



**Cassi Meitl**  
Senior Planner, Spalding DeDecker



**Bill Stough**  
Independent Consultant, Bill Stough LLC



**Beth Hammond**  
Managing Director for the Center for Ethical and Socially Responsible Leadership at the Broad College of Business at MSU



**Keith Morgan**  
Vice President and Chief Programs Officer at the Urban League of West MI



**David Struck**  
Lead economic development planner SEMCOG



**Mark Wilson**  
Professor, Urban & Regional Planning, MSU