

COVID-19 IMPACT

ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GOVERNMENTS

Mark W. Sweeney, AICP

Executive Director

O: 405.234.2264

msweeney@acogok.org

acogok.org

acog

SEPTEMBER 2021

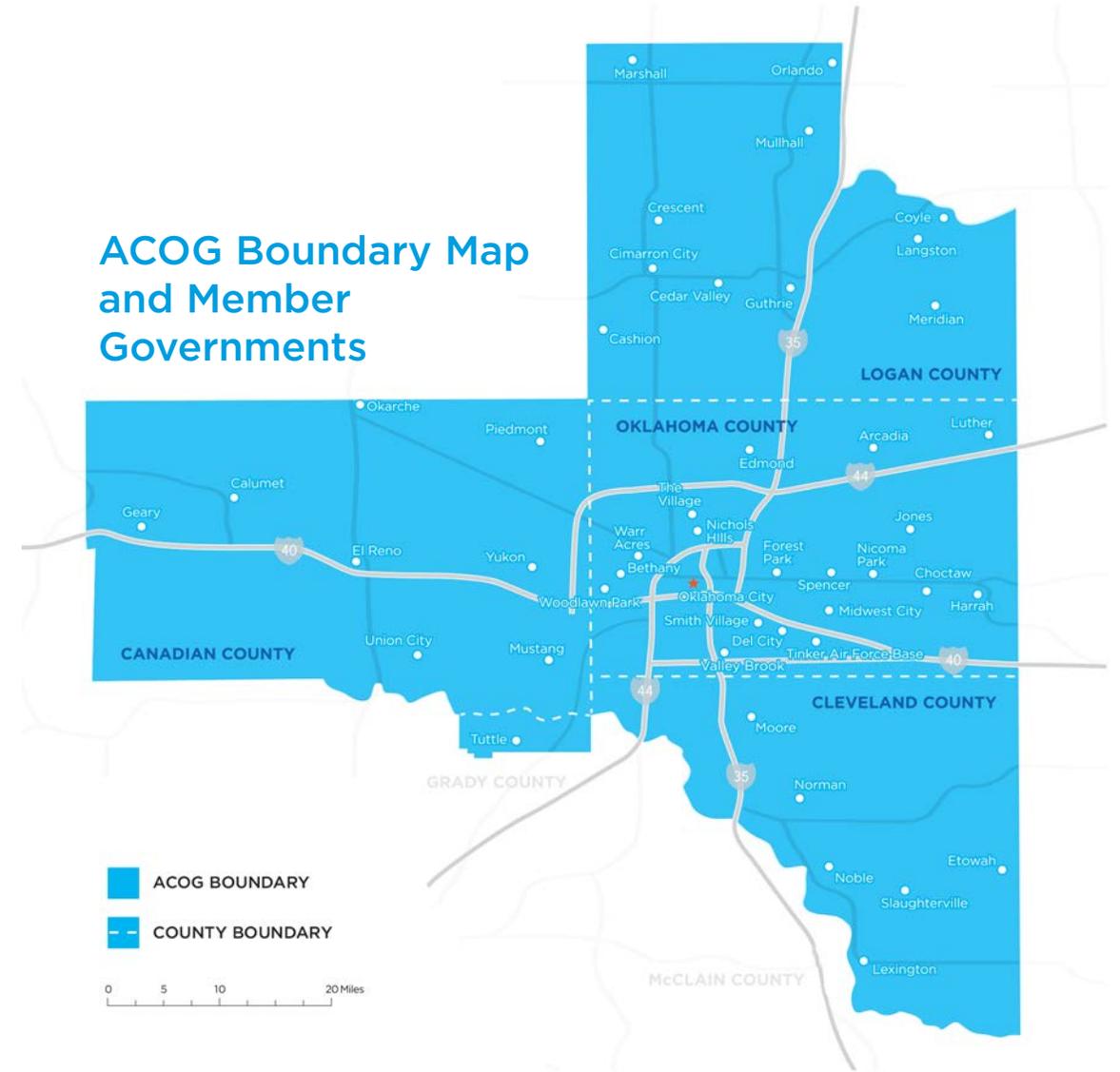
WHAT IS ACOG?

The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) is a voluntary association of cities, towns, and counties that advocates for regional planning and cooperation.

ACOG boasts three federal designations:

- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Central Oklahoma region, as designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Central Oklahoma Clean Cities Coalition (COKCCC) as designated by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
- Capital Area Economic Development District (CAPEDD) of Oklahoma as designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)

ACOG Boundary Map and Member Governments



ACOG FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

WHEN AND WHY WAS ACOG CREATED?

ACOG was created in 1966 by local governments under authority provided by the State enabling legislation known as the Inter-Local Cooperation Act (Title 74 O.S. 1971, Sections 1001-1008) to lead regional collaboration in Central Oklahoma. ACOG was established to aid local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit, coordinating for sound regional development, and to **serve as a clearinghouse for state and federal funds.**

GEOGRAPHICALLY SPEAKING, WHERE IS THE ACOG REGION?

The ACOG region comprises Canadian, Cleveland, Logan, and Oklahoma counties and is known as Sub-State Planning Region 8. Local governments that are adjacent to/or border one of the four counties are also eligible for membership in ACOG.

ACOG FAQs (CONTINUED)

HOW IS ACOG FUNDED?

ACOG receives federal and state program funding, as well as local funding. All local government members of ACOG contribute annual dues which entitle them to serve on the Board of Directors and be involved in selected policy committees and receive technical and administrative services.

WHO DOES ACOG SERVE?

With an estimated population of 1.2 million people, the ACOG region is the largest population and economic center for the state. However, our membership is diverse:

- Oklahoma City = 681,000 residents
- Norman = 128,000 residents
- Edmond = 94,428 residents
- Lake Aluma = 87 residents
- Smith Village = 49 residents
- Meridian = 14 residents

HOW COVID-19 IMPACTED ACOG ORGANIZATION

ACOG STAFF WORK FROM HOME

In March of 2020, ACOG employed 32 staff members who officed out of 4205 N. Lincoln Blvd. in Oklahoma City. When the stay-at-home initiative went into effect, staff was sent home in two waves. A skeleton staff of 10 continued to commute to the ACOG office during this time.

- Each employee was able to take their ACOG issued laptop home to work
 - Used Microsoft Teams & email to communicate with colleagues
 - Accessed work files by connecting to Microsoft One Drive and/or VPN server
 - Voice mail messages retrieved through email
 - Work Progress Reports were due each Friday
- Majority of Staff Returned to Office in May 2020
 - Masks, Social Distancing, Surface Cleaning
 - Office closed to outside visitors, employees only until August 2020

ACOG STAFF WORK FROM HOME (CONTINUED)

Positives:

- Employees saved 30-60 minutes of commuting time
 - Applied that time to finish projects or personal wellness
- Scheduled ACOG educational events were transitioned to successful virtual or outside events
- Utilized Social Media channels for communication

Opportunities:

- Cost savings on mileage and conference travel

Challenges:

- Staff access to Internet
- Copying and Scanning
- Cost of Supplies
- Time Sensitive Issues Made More Complicated



ACOG BOARD & POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

As a sub-state planning agency, the ACOG Board of Directors (BOD), the 9-1-1 ACOG BOD and Policy Committees are required to follow the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act.

- Meet every month (except July)
- BOD approves monthly finances
- March 2020 - BOD meeting cancelled: no quorum and no virtual option
- Did not have an effective system in place to operate in an emergency

ACOG BOARD & POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

(CONTINUED)

- ACOG IT/Facilities Management Department researched best virtual meeting software and selected Go-To Meeting which was not a budgeted expense for FY 2020
- Researched and followed state guidance on Open Meeting Act
- Held successful combination virtual/in-person BOD & Policy Committee meetings from April 2020 - November 2020 with a call-in option
- Utilized OK County Ballroom for increased socially distanced meetings

CHALLENGES:

- Virtual meeting software training for staff and BOD (difficult transition between consecutive meetings)
- Multiple hours researching virtual agenda communications (ACOG produces 6-8 agendas per month)
- Messaging changed as state & local COVID-19 protocols were altered

INTERACTIONS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS & STATE AGENCIES DURING COVID-19

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERACTIONS

At a time when our services were needed more, with the exception of the federal EDA CARES Act funding, **ACOG and its sister Councils of Government, did not receive funding from the State**, including a downward trend in reduced funding for sub-state planning from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

Convened monthly meetings with **ACOG area City Managers** to monitor the impact on local sales tax revenue. By August 2020, City Managers reported that sales tax revenue was at a steady increase, due to the fact that citizens were staying home, and their online orders included their ZIP code + 4. This offset some of the decreased sales at restaurants and retail establishments.

Unable to have face-to-face interactions with local government staff. For example, each one of **9-1-1 ACOG's 21 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)** were on lockdown for a period of time.

INTERACTIONS WITH STATE AGENCIES

- Limited access to state agencies via virtual meetings
- Agencies were under different protocols (home vs. office) and different software platforms created meeting confusion
- Coordination with state agencies was hampered by the lack of office accessibility during the budgeting process which resulted in delayed funding allocations and information pivotal to the approval of the ACOG Annual Budget
- Legislative lobbying was severely curtailed during the 2020 session

ACOG RESILIENCY INITIATIVES

EDA CARES ACT

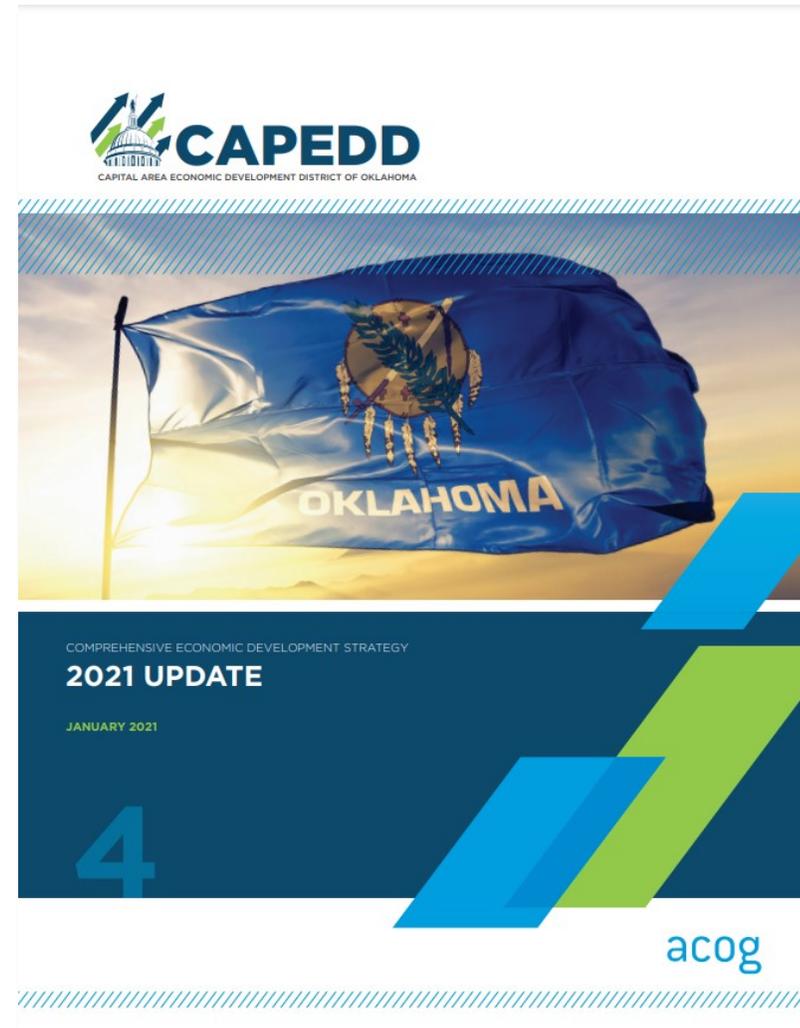
In August 2020, ACOG was a recipient of a \$400,000 CARES Act Recovery Assistance Grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA)

To ensure that the 4-county ACOG region is equipped with a resiliency and recovery plan for future COVID-type disasters, ACOG utilized Cares Act grant funds to pursue a tactical update of its 2019 **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** (CEDS) and fund the innovative **Community Economic Resilience Initiative** (CERI).

CEDS UPDATE: RESILIENCY

CEDS is a strategic blueprint for regional economic development & designed to guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of a region. The 2021 update emphasizes:

- **INFRASTRUCTURE:** Enhance the region's transportation & telecommunications systems
- **RESILIENCY:** Build a resilient economy through business development & attraction; diversification of economic base
- **INNOVATION:** Grow the region's startup, entrepreneurship
- **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES:** Encourage & incentivize wellness for citizens
- **GOVERNMENT AGILITY:** Provide tools for local governments to remain agile to the quickly changing needs of communities



2021 CEDS Update Available Here: <http://www.acogok.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CEDS-UPDATE.pdf>

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC RESILIENCY INITIATIVE (CERI)

To assist ACOG municipal governments to proactively respond and recover from COVID-19, ACOG unveiled the CERI program in late 2020.

CERI offers municipal governments the opportunity to develop planning demonstration (demo) projects that will model strategic community and economic investment with a focus on sustainable economic recovery and long-term resiliency during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT DOES CERI DO?

CERI aims to engage area governments to develop the tools they need to become economically resilient.

- CERI does not offer grant funding
- CERI does offer planning consultant services with a strategic emphasis on community identity and placemaking

WHO DID ACOG PARTNER WITH?

ACOG partnered with the **University of Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities (IQC)** and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce's **Oklahoma Main Street Center (OMSC)** to provide a toolkit of services to successful applicants that serve as the foundation for effective economic revitalization and resiliency.

WHO COULD APPLY FOR CERi?

Any municipal government within the 4-county (Canadian, Cleveland, Logan and Oklahoma) ACOG region that is host to an Activity Center as identified by the Encompass 2040 Regional Transportation Plan were eligible.

A local government must express a need and commitment for professional services in developing plans and implementation methods to create a demo site.

CERI ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Town Center Development/Redevelopment
- Historic Commercial Business District Revitalization (Main Street Program)
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Corridor/Special District Studies
- Regional Park & Recreational Projects

CERI INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Community-wide Comprehensive/Master Plans
- Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs)
- Any proposed planning project that exceeds a 12-month time frame for completion

CERI PROGRAM TIMELINE

- December 29, 2020: Call for Applications
- January 5, 2021: CERI Application Forum (Virtual)
- March 12, 2021: Final Submittal Deadline
- March 22, 2021: CERI Applications Review by ACOG Appointed CERI Review Committee
- March 25, 2021: CERI Planning Demo Sites Selected by ACOG Board of Directors
- **April 2021: MOUs with CERI Demo Site Cities & ACOG Board of Directors approves Inter-Local Government Agreement with IQC for Consulting Services**
- **August 2021 - May 9, 2022: IQC Planning Consultant Services Provided for Demo Sites**
- **May 24, 2022: CERI Planning Demo Sites Project Completion and Final Reports from IQC**

CERI SELECTED PLANNING DEMO SITES

HARRAH, OK: HISTORIC DOWNTOWN PROJECT

- Plan emphasizes infill development, community events and a walkable Downtown



EL RENO, OK: ROUTE 66 SUNSET DRIVE

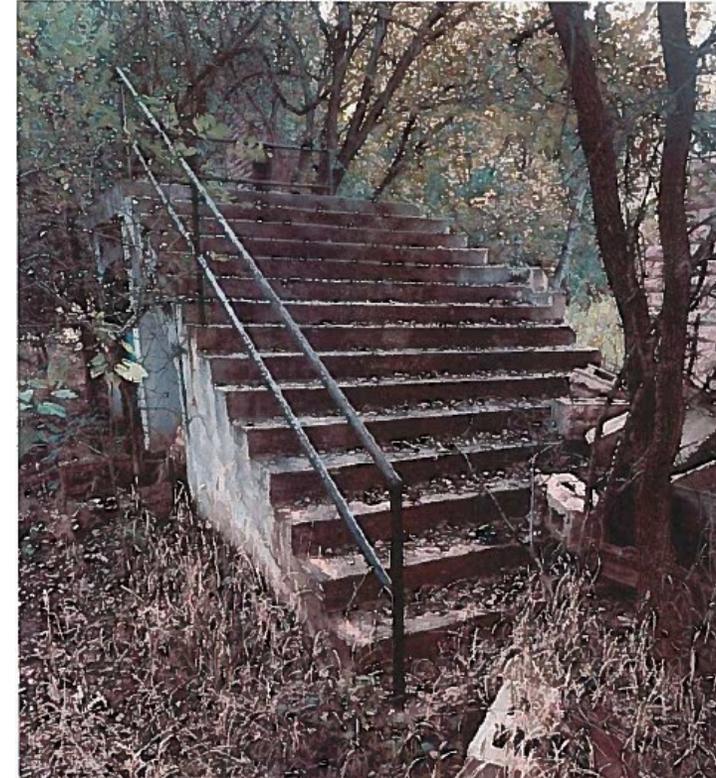
- Plan involves a Corridor study of Route 66/Sunset Drive as it travels west from Historic Downtown El Reno to S. Country Club Rd. for future cultural heritage tourism in El Reno.



CERI SELECTED PLANNING DEMO SITES (CONTINUED)

GUTHRIE, OK: NOBLE PARK CULTURAL & RECREATION AREA

- Noble Park has historical and cultural importance within the African American community in the City of Guthrie and State of Oklahoma
- CERI Program will help aggregate various plans that have been brought forward over the years for educational and recreational opportunities for the land & also create a connective hub for pedestrians and bicycle users from the west side, east side and downtown of the City



OPPORTUNITIES GOING FORWARD

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ACOG COMMUNITY SURVEY

At the June 24, 2021 ACOG BOD meeting, members answered a two-question survey to determine the ARPA investment priorities in ACOG member communities.

Twenty of ACOG communities were present for the survey.

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA COMMUNITIES' PRIORITIES FOR ARPA INVESTMENT

ROADS

- Choctaw
- Harrah
- Meridian
- Moore
- Cedar Valley
- Lake Aluma
- Piedmont
- Canadian County
- Warr Acres
- Oklahoma County
- OKC

WATER

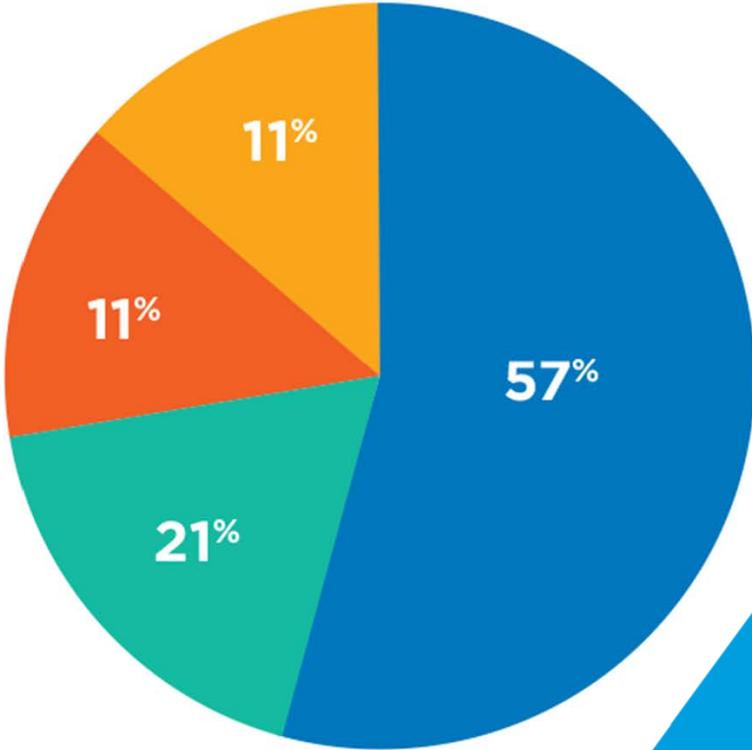
- Tuttle
- Goldsby
- Luther
- The Village

BROADBAND

- Slaughterville
- Norman

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Edmond
- Cleveland County



MAJOR TAKEAWAYS

- Based on the historical precedent, utilize Councils of Government (COGs) as a clearinghouse for ARPA funds
- CERI is a competitive program that is scalable and could be used statewide to spark reinvestment and recovery in smaller Oklahoma communities
- Incorporate the virtual option as a permanent fixture in the Oklahoma Meeting Act to provide agencies flexibility in conducting public meetings
- Provide technology grants to smaller, rural communities to better equip them to address issues during a pandemic

QUESTIONS?

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