

# From the Desk of the CEO



Dear CALED Members and Friends,

2015 is coming to an end and first and foremost, we wish you all a wonderful holiday season and best wishes for the year ahead. With that in mind, my last report to you this year includes observations from 2015 and some things to look forward to in 2016. Recently, I

have had several groups ask me to talk to them about trends I see in economic development. In traveling the state and talking to our members and partners this year, I have noticed the following:

- ♦ **Economic development job openings and investments are increasing**

We see this most clearly based on the number of job openings promoted on our website, but also, in talking to our private-sector members that are busy replying to RFPs and working with municipalities on their economic development issues.

- ♦ **Economic development is still very political**

As elected officials and leaders continue to champion or run for election on the promise of job creation and business attraction, economic development staff are under the gun to meet their expectations, as well as deliver on the economic development goals outlined in their strategies. And, as we know, these goals can be inconsistent at best.

- ♦ **There is increased demand for accountability and transparency in economic development**

For most California economic developers, this is not new, but there is a heightened rhetoric and legislation about this issue – especially as it relates to the use and creation of incentives.

- ♦ **Economic development is more technical and data driven**

With fewer resources over the last several years, more communities have focused on getting the most out of what they have by using data to support their economic development decisions. This includes economic impact studies, strategies aligned with industry cluster analysis, and the increased use of GIS software.

- ♦ **Need to train public staff on new economic development tools**

With the brain drain experienced due to the loss of redevelopment, communities are being pressed to train current staff on how to use the new Tax Increment Finance tools. Additionally, these staff need to know what other economic development finance tools are available to them, as well as how to use the tools together.

- ♦ **Ongoing need to explain and measure local economic development**

This is not a new trend, but a persistent concern for economic development. As I talk to elected officials and community leaders, I remind them that economic development is the creation of wealth through which community benefits are created. And that economic development goals and metrics should be specific to the unique competitive advantages their community has to offer.

These trends will guide our activities in 2016 and continue to shape the economic development profession. With the past year in mind and as you look ahead to goals for 2016, here are some of the exciting things the CALED team members are looking forward to in the New Year:

- ♦ Coordinating a successful year of webinars to provide our members with relevant information they can share with their communities...*Jillian*

- ♦ Implementing and promoting the Academy's workplan to educate economic developers on the best ways to grow healthy, vibrant communities...*Carol*

- ♦ Launching CALED's new membership database online so that our members can better connect with one another...*Kristy*

- ♦ Furthering awareness of CALED's and CEDA's financing tools to assist businesses with access to low-cost capital...*Helen*

- ♦ Engaging with our members at the annual conference and hearing about what they are doing in their communities...*Michelle*

As for me, I am looking forward to spending more time with our members in their communities. The more time we spend with you, the better we truly understand your needs and create programs and services to meet them. Please feel free to contact us if we can assist you in your economic development efforts.

Thank you and best wishes for a prosperous 2016!

Gurbax Sahota