

# From the Desk of the CEO



Dear CALED Members and Friends,

As we head into the holiday season, it is a great opportunity to reflect on our progress, as well as set our sights on 2020 goals to make a difference on behalf of our members. Before that, though, we give thanks to you – our members, our partners, and leaders in helping us work actively to deliver on our mission

to advance our members’ ability to achieve excellence in delivering economic development services to their communities and business clients. CALED is your association, and we could not be as relevant and impactful as we have been without your engagement.

## | Thank You!

In 2019, we completed two long-term projects that we feel will make a significant difference for local economic development in California. First, as you may have seen in our outreach, we completed the creation of a California Economic Development Certification, the Accredited California Economic Developer Certification (ACE) and held our first offering of the Advanced Institute in partnership with Fresno State University. In 2020, we will hold the first exam to become an ACE and look forward to having those that earn the certification walk the stage at our 2020 Annual Conference – Getting it done.

**Save the Date!**  
**March 25-27**



Also, thanks to a generous grant from USDA Rural Development and match funding from the California Enterprise Development Authority, we just completed the California Rural Infrastructure Financing Guidebook. The Guidebook is focused on methodologies for assessing infrastructure projects and how to finance them. It has detailed information about economic development finance tools and our work with pilot counties, Colusa, Del Norte, and Mono, as real-world case studies, and you will find information on economic development financing sources, how to prioritize projects and, if a project “pencils.” While the Guidebook lists rural financing resources, we believe it will benefit all communities and have mailed copies to all CALED members and to all California legislators.

Aside from projects, 2019 was a busy year in other areas as well, such as legislation. With a new governor and super-majority legislature,

we were busy actively monitoring over seventy-five bills impacting economic development and strategically engaging with those that could disproportionately help or hurt our members deliver economic development to their communities. Some of those include:

- AB 116: This bill removes the requirement for Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs) to receive voter approval prior to issuing bonds. It has been signed by Governor Newsom. This is effort we began when we sponsored SB 128, which was repurposed and a trailer bill followed that had similar language but was removed during the process.
- AB 485: This bill would require each local agency to provide specified information to the public before approving an economic development subsidy for a warehouse distribution center, as defined, and to, among things, hold hearings and report on those subsidies. CALED opposed this legislation, but it was signed by the Governor.
- SB 633: This bill introduced complicated and imprecise language around potential land uses for brownfield sites and seemed to elevate the level to which sites would need to be remediated. We worked with partners, CALED leaders, and volunteers to stop SB 633. It is now a two-year bill.

Additionally, we supported the push for California tax conformity on Opportunity Zones, but felt strongly that a strategic expansion of eligible projects was needed in order for California communities to maximize the economic development benefit of the program.

As I look ahead to 2020, I know we have more work to do in the areas of increasing capacity at the local level, supporting California’s economic development professionals with tools and networking opportunities, being a visible and trusted voice for economic development at the state level, and continuing to engage with members to ensure we are delivering relevant programs and services to help you. If you have input or thoughts on any of these issues or ways CALED can better serve you, please do not hesitate to contact me or any of our board members.

Thank you for your membership and wishing you the joys of the season and a prosperous New Year.

Gurbax Sahota