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From the Desk of the CEO

Dear CALED Members,



As we rush to put the final touches on our 2026 Annual Conference, we know many of you are rushing to move your projects and work forward as well – all in an environment that seems to be changing by the minute. This speaks to our conference theme – *Economic Development in Motion*. We intentionally chose this to reflect on how while the overarching goal of economic development to create wealth from which community benefits are realized remains, the way we meet that goal requires economic developers to constantly assess changes and adapt to help their businesses. A reminder that even what is perceived as traditional economic development is not static. Economic development evolves and economic developers are In Motion to meet whatever new challenge or opportunity awaits.

At CALED, we must also do the same. In 2026, we saw changes and are taking steps to engage in new ways. In January, the CALED Board of Directors approved an AI use policy to upskill our team in the use of AI tools in an ethical and transparent way. The policy includes that public-facing content created with AI must be checked for accuracy



and tracked internally. So, if you see anything from CALED indicating AI assistance was used and you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to learn how and why. And, in case you are wondering, this letter is not AI generated or assisted.

By the time this Journal reaches you, we will have already made two trips to Washington D.C. to advocate for economic development tools as well as to create connections between California local economic developers to the federal entities with resources to help advance your work. You will learn more about that work later in this Journal. It is also reflected in the conference agenda with multiple federal representatives speaking to share their resources and tips on how you can connect with them.



Additionally, out of concern for the loss of California's designated Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Center, we have leaned in to see how we can help – seeking first to understand where the gaps are for our members, and then, to see how we can help. This work is just beginning, but we do know, whether it is finding ways to support manufacturing in California like fighting to preserve the CEQA exemption for advanced manufacturing or making federal tools like industrial development bonds (IDBs) more accessible to support manufacturing growth, there is a need to keep California's voice at the table in the discussion on how to help manufacturing expand in the United States.

In 2006, we created the California Enterprise Development Authority (CEDA) to address gaps in economic development financing tools – with a focus on IDBs. As we celebrate CEDA's 20-year anniversary this year, we continue to adapt to make this financing tool better. Part of our advocacy in Washington D.C., included meetings to provide suggestions to improve IDBs so more manufacturers could use them to expand their operations. In 2026, you will learn more about CEDA's successes and how it continues to support economic development – well beyond project finance.

If you have questions about any of this work, please reach to the CALED team and like you, we'll be In Motion, doing what we can to help you succeed!

Sincerely,
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