

## Publications

### Q&A with Nathan Ohle, President & CEO of International Economic Development Council

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In this edition of *Development Incentives Quarterly*, we welcome Nathan Ohle, president & CEO of International Economic Development Council (IEDC). In the Q&A, Nathan discusses the IEDC, its 100-year history and the value it provides to its membership. He also outlines trends that he is seeing related to the expanding role economic development professionals are playing in their communities.

#### Can you provide us with a little background on the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and its purpose?

Based in Washington, D.C., IEDC is the world's largest association for economic developers. Originating a century ago, we are a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization that represents the entire economic development profession. Members include practitioners in economic development through local, state, provincial, and federal governments, non-profits, public-private partnerships, entrepreneurial support organizations, chambers of commerce, utilities, universities, and a variety of other organizations.

We are the leading voice in driving the future of the field. IEDC provides professional development through courses and certifications, networking, research, policy advocacy, partnerships, and other valuable offerings to economic development professionals across the globe. For more information, please visit [www.IEDC.org](http://www.IEDC.org).

#### What are the benefits of joining IEDC for economic development professionals?

IEDC is the one-stop shop for economic developers at every stage of their careers, in every part of the economic development ecosystem. From professional development and certifications to our communities of practice, from our awards programs to policy and advocacy, from

research and best practices to conferences and events, we offer unparalleled value to our members. We also have a focus on ensuring that barriers to entry for anyone in the field are as low as possible, and there are countless ways to get engaged.

As the world's premier association for economic developers, we support and serve those who drive economic prosperity in communities and regions. In a profession where decisions impact real lives and local economies, IEDC delivers the resources that matter most including cutting-edge research and solutions that inform smarter strategies and produce better results. We also offer training that hones the skills our members need, and networking that opens doors to game-changing partnerships.

Our communities are counting on us, and IEDC helps members overcome obstacles and seize opportunities, today and into the future.

### **What are some of the trends you are seeing in the changing role of economic developers and how does IEDC help its members address those challenges?**

One of the biggest trends we're seeing is that economic developers are being pulled in directions they have never trained for in the past. They must now do the traditional job of attracting, retaining and growing businesses and drive opportunity through entrepreneurs and small businesses, while also convening and coordinating networks across sectors that haven't traditionally been part of the day-to-day work: housing, workforce, childcare, community development, and more.

IEDC's groundbreaking [2025 State of the Field](#) research confirms this. The first research of its kind, informed by nearly 700 practitioners and more than 150,000 data points, the report illustrates a consistent pattern across community types, organization sizes, and regions: economic developers describe a role that has expanded beyond growth metrics.

We are seeing growing demands for what the report calls systems stewardship. Practitioners are moving from programmatic delivery to facilitating relationships, aligning incentives, and coordinating regional strategies. Over 61 percent say that establishing and maintaining partnerships and networks is a core part of their work. They are connecting people, education, industry, infrastructure, and governance in ways that support long-term stability and prosperity.

IEDC is equipping the field to meet this moment and thrive into the future. Through our training, conferences and events, networks, policy advocacy, and publications, we are preparing our members to interpret complex data, manage cross-sector relationships, and work through ambiguity – playing a leadership role in systems, not just transactions.

### **IEDC is celebrating its 100th anniversary, what plans does IEDC have for its continued success?**

For 100 years, IEDC and its preceding organizations have united practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders to tackle complex challenges — from job creation and workforce transitions to resilience, equity, and sustainable growth.

This year's centennial celebration underscores not only how far the profession has come, but also IEDC's ongoing role in shaping its future. By honoring the lessons of the past and spotlighting today's leaders and ideas, the centennial marks a commitment to the next generation of economic development leaders and the opportunities that lie ahead.

In fact, we were pleased to recognize Vorys' Justin Heather at our recent Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., with a Future Leader Award for his achievements in business development and real estate in Illinois and Texas.

We've learned over the past 100 years that our voice and collective impact through our more than 5,000 members are greater when we work together. This milestone year offers a powerful opportunity to honor that legacy while looking ahead to the innovation, leadership, and collaboration that will define the next chapters in our profession.

We have many exciting activities planned — from partnerships to events to storytelling. These include:

- Video testimonials and photographs
- Social media campaigns using the hashtags #EconDev100 and #IEDC100
- Economic Development Week, May 4-8
- A Centennial Thought Leader Series with original articles by high-profile authors, academics, philanthropists, and policy experts, and
- A Centennial Event Series, partnering with local and regional organizations and others hosting high-impact events in places like Canada, Brazil, London, Virginia, Montana, New York, Texas, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Florida.

Additionally, our Annual Conference in New Orleans, Oct. 25-28, will feature a major conference-wide celebration and a mini museum of memorabilia and immersive exhibits.

We welcome everyone involved in the economic development profession to engage in IEDC. There has never been a time when the role of economic developers has been more important. I am confident that our collective expertise and vision will guide us to new heights and empower economic developers to strengthen communities worldwide.

For more information about our centennial activities and how you can get involved, please visit <https://100.iedconline.org/>.