

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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CONTACT:

Jenan Jondy, REI Coordinator
517-884-6477
1615 E. Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48912

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2025 REI Student-Led, Faculty-Guided Projects and Innovation Fellow Awards Announced

LANSING, MI — The Michigan State University (MSU) EDA University Center for Regional Economic Innovation (REI) is excited to announce its 2025 cohort of Student Led Faculty Guided technical assistance projects from Michigan State University, as well as this year's Innovation Fellow.

Student-Led, Faculty-Guided projects provide assistance to Michigan communities in completing local and regional economic development initiatives. Work is completed by students at colleges and universities throughout the state, under the supervision of experienced faculty. Through these projects, students gain firsthand and practical experience in the application of previously studied theory, and economic development professionals receive technical assistance that might not otherwise be available.



University Outreach and Engagement

Center for Community and
Economic Development

1615 East Michigan Avenue
Lansing, MI 48912-2822

517-353-9555
Fax: 517-884-6489
ced.msu.edu

Through additional support from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), the 2025 projects will include the *Downtown Beaverton Land Use and Parking Optimization Study*, which aims to balance parking needs with sustainable design; the *Lansing Riverfront Revitalization* project, enhancing public spaces and identifying private development opportunities; and the *Van Dyke Corridor Implementation Plan* in South Warren, targeting key economic opportunities and community improvements. Further, the *Delhi and Watertown Townships Sign Ordinance Update* will ensure compliance with Court decisions regarding the regulation of signs based on content; the *City of Sterling Heights Corridor Study* will provide planners with data and recommendations to attract development and support local stakeholders, and the *Watertown Township Sign Ordinance Modernization* project will make recommendations for modern sign regulations, including digital signage.

In addition to SLFG projects, REI continues to support Innovation Fellows in distressed Michigan communities. Established in 2016, the Innovation Fellows Program seeks to incorporate the tools, models, and policies identified in Co-Learning Projects into practice. Innovation Fellows provide on-the-ground support and coordination to

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move concepts to actions, implementing new economic development tools, models, policies, and practices. This year's Innovation Fellow, Jon Willow, will focus on leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance coalition-building within Michigan's MITTEN regions, addressing administrative inefficiencies, resource limitations, and organizational burnout to advance digital equity.

Jon's expertise in digital equity is rooted in her extensive work with Michigan-based organizations. As co-founder of the Community Broadband Action Network (CBAN), she has built a network of over 200 members, including communities and broadband providers, fostering partnerships in underserved areas. Her technical skills, demonstrated through CBAN's Digital Navigator Program, reflect her ability to develop user-friendly workflows and data visualizations that translate complex information into actionable insights.

Congratulations to the 2025 project awardees! REI is excited to support these innovative projects and looks forward to their contributions toward Michigan's economic and community development goals. For more information on the 2025 REI projects, please visit: <https://reicenter.org/projects/current-projects>



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