

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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CONTACT:

Jenan Jondy, REI Coordinator

517-353-9555

1615 E. Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48912

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Regional Economic Innovation Announces 2026 Projects Supporting Michigan Communities

East Lansing, MI — The Regional Economic Innovation (REI) program announces its 2026 projects, including three Co-Learning Plan projects, one Innovation Fellowship, one statewide event, and five Student-Led, Faculty-Guided projects.



University Outreach and Engagement

Center for Community
and Economic
Development

1615 East Michigan Avenue
Lansing, MI 48912

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

The 2026 Co-Learning Plan (CLP) projects focus on addressing place-based challenges in economically challenged communities. One project examines how community anchor-based Low-Power Wide-Area Network (LPWAN) models can support intermittent, low-data communication in rural areas where broadband and cellular service are unreliable, with the goal of improving access to care. A second CLP project explores community-centered economic development models that emphasize shared ownership, democratic finance, and long-term community investment, particularly for ALICE households, aimed at stabilizing small businesses and building durable local wealth. The third CLP project focuses on how Community Benefit Agreements and Community Benefit Ordinances can be adapted for rural contexts to ensure large-scale development delivers tangible, community-defined benefits.

REI is also supporting one 2026 Innovation Fellowship, a feasibility study and implementation-ready roadmap for an industry-led Circular Economy Council in Michigan. Student Led Faculty Guided projects include a focus on analyzing timber lease revenues and economic reinvestment in Luce County; in Southwest Lansing focused on developing an open-source data tool to explore food access, housing, and economic opportunity; in East Lansing supporting updates to the East Village Plan through community engagement; in Grand Rapids creating a citywide inventory of bus stop shade to inform equitable climate adaptation and transit investments; and a neighborhood revitalization initiative in Flint.

Complementing these efforts, REI continues to support the Michigan Inventors Expo, scheduled for July 9, 2026, at the Kellogg Conference Center in East Lansing. The Expo brings together inventors, startups, small businesses, and economic development professionals for expert panels, networking, exhibitor showcases, and a pitch competition designed to help innovators refine ideas, build connections, and move concepts toward market.

REI continues to advance equitable, community-centered economic development by working to co-create with Michigan communities, translating research into action and supporting resilient local economies. To learn more about these projects, visit:

reicenter.org

About the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) *The Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) is dedicated to sustainable economic growth across Michigan. As part of University Outreach and Engagement, CCED leverages academic resources with community-driven initiatives, focusing on applied research, capacity building, and innovative partnerships that address complex economic and social challenges. Through programs like Regional Economic Innovation (REI), CCED has supported leaders and organizations in strengthening economic resilience, fostering development, and driving community-led transformation. Learn more at ced.msu.edu.*

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