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September 19, 2023

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
and the Honorable Executive Council
New Hampshire Statehouse
107 N Main St
Concord, NH 03301

Re: Council of Partner Agencies

INFORMATIONAL ITEM

Pursuant to RSA 12-O:8, the following report details activity for the Council of Partner Agencies (CoPA), administered by the Department of Business and Economic Affairs, for calendar year 2021-22.

CoPA was established in RSA 12-O:7. The council's purpose is to consult with, and advise, the commissioner of Business and Economic Affairs regarding policy, programs, and operations of the department and to establish a framework for communication and coordinated activities among its members.

The mission of CoPA is a multi-organizational forum that develops, coordinates, and implements broad economic policy initiatives that, through both systemic and specific changes, lead to sustained and expanded economic improvements for New Hampshire.

The council meets bi-monthly, and all meetings are properly noticed to comply with RSA 91-A. The council moved from virtual meetings to onsite meetings in 2021.

The council is comprised of the following statewide organizations, as noted in RSA 12-O:7:

- New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs
- New Hampshire Business Finance Authority
- New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority
- New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority
- Community College System of New Hampshire
- University System of New Hampshire

In addition, CoPA invites groups to its meeting to speak on issues pertinent to the group and the state's economic vitality.

During 2021-22, CoPA undertook the following activities:

- Continued joint awareness and promotion of each organization's activities, resources, and efforts, including USNH initiatives.

- Organizational coordination of grant activities resulting from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, and the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR). This led to dozens of relief and recovery programs; particularly in the areas of housing, broadband, and business recovery and expansion.
- Housing initiatives, which included:
 - InvestNH, which distributed \$100 million of funds toward workforce and market-rate housing (more than 30 projects); building demolition, and zoning grants. Advocated for (and received) additional InvestNH funding from the Legislature.
 - Rental and homeowner's assistance programs that were executed by NH Housing Finance Authority and GOFERR.
 - Release of Statewide Housing Assessment at end of 2022.
- Broadband initiatives, which included:
 - Two RFPs totaling \$90 million to reach nearly 50,000 unserved and underserved locations, particularly in rural areas.
 - Broadband Matching Grant Initiative (BMGI), which will initially provide more than \$25 million toward connecting unserved and underserved locations within a community.
 - Development of digital equity and five-year broadband development plans.
- Discussing with University of New Hampshire possibility of expanded internships between UNH Career and Professional Services and various CoPA agencies.
- Discussion of childcare initiatives in the state and how CoPA could participate in these efforts.
- BFA executed \$61 million State Small Business Credit Initiative funds (SSBCI), with funds set aside for rural businesses, very small businesses, and small- to medium-sized businesses.
- CDFA received a grant to develop Community Navigators program, which provided technical business assistance to underrepresented communities (such as immigrant and rural communities).

CoPA played a vital role in helping the state economy recover from the pandemic and the state has emerged strong. During 2023 and 2024, CoPA will evaluate the federally funded pandemic-era programs to determine their success, lessons learned from them, and ways to build upon successful programs in the post-COVID world. CoPA will also continue to strategize on ways to make the state's economy more resilient; better able to weather economic downturns; recover quicker; and grow stronger.

Please let me know if there is any additional information we can provide.

Sincerely,



Taylor Caswell
Council Chair / BEA Commissioner