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Mr. John Edmond, Regional Representative  
Economic Development Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Seattle Regional Office  
Jackson Federal Building  
915 Second Avenue, Room 1890  
Seattle, WA 98174-1001

**RE: FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge Notice of Funding Opportunity EDA-HDQ-ARPB-2021-2006976- Phase 2**

Dear Mr. Edmond:

I write this letter in support of the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance (LVGEA) and the Southern Nevada Build Back Better Coalition's grant proposal.

The state of Nevada was hit hard by both the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic. While the state as a whole was negatively impacted and had the highest unemployment rate in the country for both downturns, communities of color were impacted more severely. A report by the Guinn Center found that due to disproportionate representation in the service sectors, which were hit the hardest, Latino and African Americans had the highest unemployment rate both during and after the Great Recession.

These communities, already not having fully recovered from the Great Recession, were again more disproportionately impacted than the rest of Nevada during the pandemic. The report found that the hardest hit sectors of retail, tourism and gaming, and accommodation and food services are comprised of a disproportionately high number of diverse racial and ethnic groups; communities of color suffered the highest job losses during the pandemic; the average wage in the sectors that employ significant numbers of people of color is often lower than the state average wage; and unemployment claim data by sector showed sectors employing significant shares of people of color were significantly affected by the COVID-19 economic crisis.

Given the historic job loss and volatility to employment in the service sectors, with the diversity of occupations in the manufacturing industry, as well as the greater opportunities for advancement within the industry as workers gain more skills and experience, Southern Nevada can reduce long-term inequities by recruiting manufacturing firms to the region and developing workforce in those communities that have been hit hard by economic downturns.

The Urban Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to providing access, engagement, and opportunities for procurement in local, regional, national and global markets for small and diverse businesses. One of its main priorities is to expand diversity.

During Phase 2 application process, the Urban Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with the Latin Chamber of Commerce and Asian Chamber of Commerce (Tri-Chambers) created a process to engage with and gather feedback from community members on inclusion strategy to ensure the benefits of the cluster are equitably shared across all affected communities. Focus groups were held (three with leads from the Urban Chamber), and input was gathered from 120 members of underserved communities. It was important to us the plan be created directly by people in our community to ensure no one is unequally affected in the future. The Tri-Chambers designed the process to promote maximum community input. Calls for participation were led through coordinated marketing efforts of the Tri-Chambers, their public relations firms, outreach coordinators, as well as public entities engaged with the Regional Plan. Focus groups were led and facilitated by culturally and technically



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competent chamber representatives who worked directly with participating members of our community. This public feedback was documented and directly informed the plan.

Commitment

Recognizing that the region is embarking on a new market, an investment in the Tri-Chambers who provide economic development support to underserved business communities will be made. The Urban Chamber commits to the following activities as part of the Tri-Chamber effort:

- To adequately prepare the Tri-Chambers for the regional push in advanced manufacturing, staff of the Chambers will participate in professional development activities to promote the Tri-Chambers' ability to provide technical support and guidance for businesses seeking assistance in this field.
- The Tri-Chambers will be responsible for working with Project Component Leads to coordinate informational sessions, making a concentrated effort to notify underserved business owners of project details, including anticipated timelines, projected budgets, and bidding expectations for interested contractors pursuing subawards. These outreach activities will be coordinated by the Tri-Chambers with involvement of community partners who were identified during focus group activities, as appropriate.
- Tri-Chambers will ensure efforts requiring support from vendors, recruiters, media outlets, and translators whose specialties focus on diverse populations are included.
- Sessions will be hosted in accessible event spaces and will be accompanied by localized materials (i.e., Spanish, Filipino, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese), as determined necessary by the Tri-Chambers.
- We will regularly report metrics which will include the number of staff who have participated in development activities, the number of businesses assisted with topics related to advanced manufacturing initiatives, and a summary of outreach activities related to the Regional Challenge grant.

We believe this plan means a real opportunity for the region's leaders to work together to eliminate inequities and this grant can offer pathways for the next generation of underserved students, workforce, and entrepreneurs through education, certification, training, and capital investments, as well as real opportunities within the development process. With the proper tracking and accountability of these efforts, we believe the results will build on themselves as completed infrastructure projects create additional pathways to equitably support Southern Nevada's diverse population.

Sincerely,

Kenneth C. Evans  
President