



➤ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The CSG West Economic Development Committee convened July 18th, 2019 during the CSG West Annual Meeting in Big Sky, Montana. The Committee was led by Utah Representative Bradley Last and California Senator Ben Allen, the respective chair and vice chair of the committee.

During the session committee members and attendees heard from topic experts on incentives in economic development and Opportunity Zones where the panelists shared one important overarching message: collaborate with economic developers. Serving as liaisons to businesses in the community, economic developers help mobilize the allocation of resources, promote their efficient utilization, and generate the best possible outcomes.

Mark Robyn, Senior Officer on the State Fiscal Health Project at The Pew Charitable Trusts, spoke on strategies designed to more effectively evaluate economic development incentives. From having a clear and measurable goal to having fiscal protections, Mr. Robyn illustrated appropriate measures for an evaluation process and how it has evolved over the past several years. Brett Doney, President and CEO of Great Falls Montana Development Authority and High Plains Financial, followed by connecting personal experiences and recent examples to regional concerns. Mr. Doney provided committee members with five lessons in economic development incentives: 1) stop talking and listen; 2) do the least amount possible; 3) you better clean your plate before you ask for dessert; 4) understand motivation and who you are negotiating with; and 5) incentives don't work without leadership at the local level. With 120 economic developers in the western region, Mr. Robyn and Mr. Doney highlighted the importance of investing in economic development capacity prior to designing economic strategies.





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Created by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Opportunity Zones provide tax benefits to promote investment in distressed communities with the intention of spurring economic growth. Across all 50 states, there are 8,766 Opportunity Zones. Within the CSG West member states, there are 1,695 zones with approximately 7.6 million residents. Kenan Fikri, Research Director at the Economic Innovation Group, spoke to this topic providing a regulatory update and overview of the latest developments such as Brownfield remediations and housing of all types. He concluded his remarks with a review of the emerging state roles on Opportunity Zones.



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