

The Big Sandy Area Development District is a multi-county organization serving its five county area of Eastern Kentucky, charged with planning, promoting, and coordinating programs for regional economic and social development. The organizational structure of the District represents and responds to the elected and appointed officials of member counties, cities, special agencies of these governments, and the citizenry at large. The District Board and staff work closely with elected officials and other community leaders of the area to first determine and then, in partnership with state and federal agencies, to achieve development goals and objectives by following agreed upon development strategies.

The Area Development District concept originated in Kentucky under the Governor Bert T. Combs Administration in 1961 with what were called 'area development councils'. The Kentucky Area Development Office was created that same year as the focal point state agency for providing coordinated assistance to the Councils. Today this role is served by the Governor's Office through the Department for Local Government. The multi-county structure of these councils and the natural economy of using a regional approach was a Kentucky recommendation to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and has been written into a number of federal acts, including the Appalachian Development Act and the Public Works and Economic Development Act, of 1965. Most recently the concept was written into the Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. The grouping of counties into development districts as they are today was determined in 1967. By executive order of the Governor, all state agencies were directed to work consistently with the fifteen designated areas in developing and implementing local area approaches to programs and projects.

The Big Sandy Area Development Council--the partnership of Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin, and Pike Counties--received Appalachian Regional Commission designation and funding in January, 1968. In December the same year, the Council received US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration designation and funding. In September 1969 the Board of Directors amended its articles to exchange the word 'district' for 'council' in the organization's name. On February 10, 1972 the Kentucky General Assembly established the area development districts as special purpose units of government with enactment of Kentucky Revised Statute 147A.050 120.