

CEDS 2021 Opportunities

Tourism, Recreation, Arts, and Culture

Tourism and recreation opportunities abound within the SCEDD public land-rich district. The groundwork for substantially increasing the amount of cultural heritage and outdoor recreational tourism must be laid by ensuring adequate short-term housing, promotional/marketing activities, and development of new opportunities. SCEDD is already home to world class hunting, fishing, water sports, skiing, and outdoor recreation activities. Almost half of Colorado's 14,000-ft. peaks are in SCEDD counties. Dark Skies astro tourism is an expanding area of tourism for this part of Colorado. The area has five scenic byways, six state parks, two national parks and one national monument, Browns Canyon. The San Isabel National Forest runs through six SCEDD counties, along with five national forest wilderness areas. Significant amounts of BLM lands are in several SCEDD counties and there are dozens of state wildlife areas.

Three state-certified creative districts/corridors are in SCEDD counties, and the SCEDD service area is home to dozens of high-quality museums and art galleries. Three state museums are in SCEDD's service area. ~~The cities of~~Salida's and Trinidad's creative districts contain more historic buildings than any other city in Colorado. Pueblo boasts a creative corridor along Union Avenue, with numerous galleries and performance venues. Efforts are underway to further develop creative districts. There are currently ~~thirty-eight~~38 museums in the ~~thirteen~~13 counties that make ~~up~~ the SCEDD ~~region~~, and at least that many galleries. All these amenities serve as ~~a~~ beacons to tourists, businesses, and people looking to relocate.

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, Prowers)

The Comanche National Grasslands are in Baca, Otero, and Las Animas ~~Ce~~counties. The grasslands are a popular birding area, which is a huge part of outdoor tourism. Opportunities exist for guided birding excursions. Similarly, these counties are rich in cultural and archeological sites, ~~Q~~once again a possible source for guided tourist activities. John Martin Reservoir State Park is in Bent County. Park concession businesses are a potential source of economic development, especially in the areas of birding and watchable wildlife. Crowley County boasts Lake Henry and Lake Meredith ~~;~~ both provide opportunities for recreation-based businesses.



Otero Junior College, La Junta
Otero County

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

Guided trips along scenic byways are a national tourism growth area, and Colorado has more scenic highways than any other state. All of Colorado's scenic byways saw increased traffic during the pandemic as a means of safe travel. In-state and regional travel is expected to stay strong, especially along scenic routes. The Upper Arkansas ~~SCEDD-sub~~region is home to ~~three~~3 state scenic byways. The Top of the Rockies Byway is found in Lake County and includes Colorado's highest peak, Mt. Elbert. The Collegiate Peaks Byway connects Lake County to Chaffee County. The Frontier Pathway Scenic Byway runs through Custer, Fremont, and Pueblo Counties, helping to boost tourism/visitation in those areas.

Chaffee County is one of Colorado's oldest and premier outdoor recreation areas. Several recreation-related businesses have been in the area for decades, making for stiff competition. However, the county still sees room for growth in this industry.

Similar to Chaffee County, Fremont County, ~~similar to Chaffee County~~, is an outdoor recreation destination. Gravel rides and mountain biking are increasing. The wide range of recreation choices provides fertile ground for entrepreneurs. Custer County sees opportunities for recreation businesses in the areas of cycling, road races, and scenic highway tours.

South-Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Huerfano County and Las Animas County are both ripe for heritage tourism development, especially around outdoor recreation, and museums. The area is lacking in both retail-related businesses and recreational services, such as rental gear, retail outlets, and guide services. The Scenic Highway of Legends runs through both counties and was recently named a federal scenic byway, which will increase visitation. Dark Sky tourism (aka Astro Tourism) is another growth area. Both Huerfano and Las Animas Counties have expressed a need for more outdoor recreation-based retail outlets and related guide services -- e.g., gravel/mountain bike rides, hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, nature tours, and historical tour rides.

The Scenic Highway of Legends (SHOL), shared by Las Animas and Huerfano Counties, connects three state parks. This highway was recently awarded federal scenic byway designation. The SHOL already attracts thousands of visitors, ~~and the~~ ~~the~~ new designation provides federal marketing dollars. However, yet this attraction is also in need of funding for planning is needed to enhance ~~the~~ ~~is~~ attraction before marketing plans are completed. The proposed southern mountain Loop Project includes the ideas of adding a walking foot and bike trails to be paired with the SHOL. This project is ~~is~~ over a \$100 million, ~~project~~, which would bring even more visitation and recreational opportunities. Las Animas County is also home to the Santa Fe Trail Scenic Byway.

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~~Dark sky tourism (aka astro tourism)~~ Astro tourism is strong in and Custer County and there are plans for expansion with Colorado Star Gazing. Events, such as the Rocky Stars Stare Festival, continue to draw larger crowds every year. Similarly, Huerfano and Las Animas Counties are ~~is~~ expanding into this type of tourism. effort. Las Animas County has plans to expand into this type of tourism. Opportunities exist for events, plus observatories or "star parks."

Pueblo County

Tourism, arts, culture, and recreation are ~~a~~ growing and emerging industries in Pueblo. The Pueblo Chili and Frijole Festival draws more than 100,000 attendees and is second only to the Colorado State Fair held in Pueblo. The mild climate provides a long season for water sports, fishing, cycling,

hiking, and more. It could be said that the Frontier Pathway “begins” in Pueblo County as it heads west along Lake Pueblo State Park, which is Colorado’s most visited state park. The road continues west into Custer County where it comes to the towns of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe, then back to Pueblo County via the Wet Mountains and ends in Colorado City. Guided auto or bike tours provide two opportunities along the Frontier Pathway. Many state parks are experiencing a need for concessionaires providing various services and activities. Lake Pueblo is ripe for this expansion. With its rich history, Pueblo boasts a strong arts and cultural community with numerous museums, galleries, and historic sites.

Renewable Energy

Colorado ranked seventh among the states in installed wind power capacity in 2020. In 2018, Colorado’s southeastern plains comprised 95.5 percent of the renewable energy capacity in the state and represented all the state’s wind energy and about 55 percent of the state’s solar capacity. By 2024, the eastern plains’ renewable capacity is expected to expand by more than 22 percent, by adding 1,109 MW and bringing the region’s wind and solar capacity to 6,069 MW. The cluster of industries that supports renewable and advanced energy in Colorado includes companies that produce and conserve energy using wind, solar, biomass, fuel cells, hydroelectric resources, and green transportation technologies. The cluster also includes companies that manufacture renewable energy equipment, storage, and power transformers, and businesses that provide engineering and other support services. Lastly, the cluster includes energy research companies that provide laboratory testing, scientific and technical consulting services, and institutional research related to the environment, natural resources, and energy

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Prowers)

Renewable energy has been a prominent and growing industry in Southeastern Colorado. Several wind and solar farms are already in place, with additional ones under construction. Investments in transmission lines will continue to open additional opportunities for wind and solar. Investments are anticipated to grow as part of the federal government’s push to expand alternative and green energy resources. Most of the Southeastern Plains of Colorado fall into the top two categories for high solar gain, making the area attractive to more solar energy installations. Wind power is also a high development priority in the eastern portion of the sub-region. Planned transmission lines on the five-year horizon will open up additional areas of Baca, Kiowa, Crowley, and Prowers Counties.

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

Lake County wants to develop a ~~small-scale~~ small-scale solar farm to assist with energy production and ~~assist with~~ controlling electric costs. Custer County ~~has no~~ doesn’t have any renewable energy facilities. However, there is a proposal to develop the Custer County Solar Garden Coop, a grid-connected solar energy production farm for local use. It would be a community solar garden farm to create energy credits from the local, connected utilities (Black Hills and Sangre de Cristo) to be used solely by community “owners” to offset/reduce/eliminate their energy costs. Small scale solar projects that assist local businesses and owners will be the prominent industry growth over the next five years.

South-Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

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Wind and solar farms are both found in Huerfano and Las Animas Counties. Huerfano is home to Colorado's largest [and highest producing](#) wind farm, and it extends to other adjacent counties in the ~~SEDD region~~[sub-region](#). An existing solar farm, primarily located in La Animas County ~~and but in~~ part in Huerfano County, is ~~planned~~[ingeeed](#) to expand in 2022. Further expansion is possible for both solar and wind energy in Huerfano and Las Animas Counties.

Pueblo County

With 320 days of sunshine, Pueblo County has huge potential for solar as well as wind energy development. Numerous projects have been planned and proposed but none have been realized. However, the City of Pueblo has committed to transition entirely to clean, renewable energy by 2035. There are plans for much of that goal to be realized by local development. Considering that Pueblo has the highest electrical costs in the ~~Ffront R~~[range](#), local development of alternative energy could lower these costs. ~~Vestas CS Wind Energy Systems~~ has a large facility just south of Pueblo, which makes towers for wind turbines, which also adds to Pueblo's potential for being a leader in wind energy manufacturing and production.

Housing Construction

Much of ~~the~~ ~~SCEDD region~~ is experiencing an attainable housing shortage, and in some cases it is severe. The onslaught of ~~COVIDevid~~ saw a migration from ~~many cities and~~ urban areas, as more people were able to work remotely, ~~to less-populated rural areas~~. Additionally, Colorado is the ~~twelfth-12th~~ fastest growing state, which has resulted in skyrocketing home prices, especially in the metro-Denver area. This marked growth, along with increased prices, is also being felt in Pueblo and ~~in~~ the more mountainous counties. High construction costs and labor shortages have made this ~~more of~~ a weakness in many areas. ~~Hh~~ However, there are a few counties that have recently seen growth in manufactured ~~d and/or~~ modular home construction.

Southeastern Plains (Crowley, Prowers)

Manufactured homes and tiny homes are part of the solution to housing needs in this region. Lamar Community College is exploring [training in](#) modular home building ~~training as one-an~~ option for future home building needs in [the area](#). Crowley County Correctionals Facility's [WeBuild program](#) ~~has partnered with has the~~ Habitat for Humanity [to provide high-quality wooden cabinets, vanities and more for Habitat homes.](#) ~~We Build program, which can engineer and build two prefab homes.~~

Upper Arkansas (Chaffee)

Chaffee County has seen a new, manufactured home business that is slated to begin construction of new homes in 2021. Fading West is hoping to capitalize on economies-of-scale and labor in production.

South-Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Attainable housing is needed in both South Central counties. There are serious shortages resulting in many workers not being able to reside in the communities they serve. From civil servants to general workforce, there is an immediate need and opportunity to construct workforce and other attainable housing. Currently, it appears that a public/private partnership is the best solution ~~to in~~ which to approach this issue. As of this writing, the real estate market in this sub-rregion, as in most of Colorado, is red hot with as houses selling at or above asking prices. High costs for building materials means the only new homes being built are by more wealthy individuals. Lack of qualified builders is an issue in ~~all three~~ both counties. Because travel distances can be prohibitive, especially with high demand being closer to home, most builders do not need to travel for work, ~~but~~ opportunities do exist.



Ordway, Crowley County

For Huerfano, there is a proposed tiny househousing development being considered in Walsenburg via a developer from Denver. ~~This project is looking at homes being made by Indie Dwell in Pueblo. Huerfano County was successful in receiving a \$100k planning grant to study the feasibility of new housing in Gardner.~~ There is a need for more subsidized housing for low income/low-income families and for seniors in Huerfano County as well as, mainly in Walsenburg, ~~but also in and~~ La Veta. Opportunities for rehabilitation of existing housing stock remains economically viable to the contracting community. Huerfano Economic Development ~~County government~~ is also developing the capital stack for the ~~studying the~~ feasibility of building seven, attainable housing units in Walsenburg, ~~perhaps by Indie Dwell.~~

Pueblo County

Traditionally, Pueblo's housing costs were among the lowest in the state and housing was plentiful. The marijuana industry had some impact on this, but COVID-19 resulted in significant price increases and sales. However, Pueblo still has the lowest housing and rental costs of any major front range city. This can be a draw for teleworkers, especially within the city limits where high speed internet is available. Pueblo's low wages result in a shortage of attainable workforce housing. However, Pueblo's Housing Authority, NeighborWorks, and a mature construction industry make for a powerful mix for addressing housing needs in the area.

Agribusiness/Value-Added Agriculture:

In two of the four SCEDD sub-regions, agribusiness is one of the top economic engines. In all sub-regions, it is significant. Farming and ranching make up the top tiers and are found in every county, along with food processing facilities ranging from wine making to meat packing. Small scale dairy

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production plants, from goat cheese to cow's milk, are also seen throughout the ~~region~~district. The Arkansas River Valley is one of Colorado's top ~~;~~ traditional agricultural ~~le~~ production areas. New and niche markets are emerging. Air B&Bs and "ranch stays" – ~~with hands-on activities and tours -- at farms~~ are increasing, ~~often with hands-on activities and tours included~~. Camping and "glamping" on private land is growing. Most ag lands also attract hunters. With many landowners, hunting and fishing are a supplement to their incomes. Organic meat production is growing, ~~;~~ and that market is expanding. Biochar ~~facilities~~ ~~facilities, processing everything from yucca to beetle kill and fire-damaged forest lands~~, are planned from the prairies to the mountains, ~~processing everything from yucca to beetle kill and fire-damaged forest lands~~.

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, Prowers)

Increased hemp production with a focus on processing and manufacturing hemp, could benefit large sections of the ~~L~~lower Arkansas ~~Valley R~~egion ~~from through~~ Pueblo ~~down~~. Dairy production and ~~other~~ expansion into other agribusinesses that support ~~the~~ one of the largest economic drivers is a natural expansion. ~~H~~investments in infrastructure that allow these businesses access to developable land is a need.

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont)

Like the rest of ~~the~~ SCEDD, ~~;~~ ~~region~~ agriculture is strong in this sub-region, mainly in the areas of cattle ranching and hay production. Custer County lacks rail but has hemp grows in place, which could expand. Fremont County has a wide range of value-~~;~~ added ag and the agriculture industry has room to expand across the county.

South-Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Both Huerfano and Las Animas Counties expressed a need for new USDA meat processing facilities in the counties. There is large demand for meat processing and backlogs are occurring. Current facilities are overwhelmed and require long distance travel to and from. Both Huerfano and Las Animas Counties expressed a need for load weigh facilities. As above, such facilities are few and far between. Opportunities for hemp growing and processing also exist in both South Central counties. Access to rail and major highways is already in place in Las Animas County and closed railroad sidings could be upgraded and reopened in Huerfano County. ~~Some ranchers are researching bio-char facilities utilizing yucca as a resource~~.

Pueblo County

Pueblo is famous for its green chili and the area has a history steeped in agriculture along the Arkansas River. In fact, the lower Arkansas River Valley is the oldest food growing region in the state. A significant amount of food is grown in or just down river from Pueblo. Food and hemp processing facilities already exist ~~in~~ here, and this is seen as a growth area for agribusiness in Pueblo. Access to transportation via highway and rail add to Pueblo's ability to serve this industry.

Remote Workforce Development

The likelihood of larg~~e~~er tech businesses with more than 200 employees relocating to ~~most many~~ of the counties ~~in the~~within SCEDD ~~region~~ is unlikely, with the exceptions ~~;~~ of Pueblo and, perhaps, La Junta or Lamar. ~~In addition, o~~rganizations, such as Southern Colorado Innovation Link (SCIL),

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are developing a tech and intellectual property entrepreneurial ecosystems, of which lend themselves to are remote and even virtual, company cultures. There are also opportunities for training, developing, and utilizing a remote workforces. Small scale call centers, such as Pax 8 in Fremont County, serve as an examples of this concept. The next wave of blue-collar and middle-class jobs are going to need basic tech skills. Regional colleges and community colleges could provide educational/training services by teaming/partnering with state workforce offices and the private sector. In fact, efforts are already underway. Three community colleges and one university are located within SCEDD's service area, and one university, CSU Pueblo. Trinidad State College is Adams State University in Alamosa is out of the SCEDD region but is working to bring services to Huerfano County. Colorado Mountain College (CMC) has campuses in Leadville and Salida and offers. Several of the degree programs offered by CMC are oriented towards industries within their respective communities and, or similar rural communities. Continued and expanded interactions with higher education will enhance employment opportunities and business development.

The ability to expand medical degree programs at the regional educational institutions should be pursued. Efforts involving community based and/or private enterprise are in progress. An area that is emerging and has potential for more growth is the effort to create temporary rental office spaces with tech support and services. One such firm has offered to team with SCEDD and others to provide classroom space/WIFI/tech equipment for trainings, workshops, webinars, etc. Such efforts would be enhanced, when done in concert with area state workforce offices. Until broadband becomes more widely available in rural areas (and perhaps even after), temporary/short term office rental space is a viable alternative and a business opportunity.

Health Care, including physician and provider training: Related to the above is expansion of the medical industry, which is huge in this area. For instance, in Huerfano County the regional health center, is and has been for decades, the largest employer in the county-. In addition, Pueblo serves as the medical-services hub for the all of SCEDD of SCEDD region. The idea of expanding medical degree programs at educational institutions and hospitals in Pueblo throughout the district should be pursued.

Efforts involving community-based and private enterprises are in progress. An area that is emerging and has potential for more growth is the effort to create temporary, rental office spaces with tech support and services. One such firm has offered to team with SCEDD and others to provide classroom space, WIFI space, WIFI, and tech equipment for trainings, workshops, webinars, etc. These efforts would be enhanced by including state workforce offices. Until broadband becomes more widely available in rural areas (and perhaps even after), temporary, short term office space is a viable alternative and a business opportunity.

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, Prowers)

Once again, improved broadband throughout this sub-region would provide the foundation for more people being able to work from home or in other remote situations. Parts of this sub-region already enjoy high speed internet, but there is room for expansion and /improvement. Similarly, the community college system in this area could play an important role in job training for a more remote based workforce. Lamar has positioned itself with a technical-industrial area that could create regional support needs in the remote workforces.

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

Pax8 now has a presence in Fremont County and the county is looking to expand this program, as well as the overall model. Adjacent Custer County is closing in on providing high speed broadband to residents and businesses and is pursuing Pax8 as a means of introducing the idea of developing/creating a remote workforce. The desirable lifestyle and access to broadband in many of the urban communities has allow this workforce to grow. The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased the workforce in this sub-region.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

As noted above, high speed internet is needed for remote work force programs. A private business that provides low-cost office space rentals with broadband and other services has opened in ~~Walsenburg-Walsenburg~~. The Huerfano County Economic Development Inc. is pursuing a co-working and maker-space project. Huerfano County is aware of the model being developed in Fremont and Custer Counties and would like to pursue the same business model

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

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South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

As noted above, high speed internet is needed for remote work force programs. A private business has opened in Walsenburg providing low-cost office space rentals along with broadband and other services. The Huerfano County Economic Development Board is pursuing a similar, and expanded, project in La Veta. Huerfano County is aware of these models being developed in Fremont and Custer County and also would like to pursue this business model.

Pueblo County

Pueblo has traditionally relied on Pueblo Community College (PCC) and CSU-Pueblo to help develop and train the local, skilled labor workforce. NAdditionally, nearby Colorado Springs is home to several other more colleges/universities which that provide additional even more programs. Yet, Pueblo has there is currently a shortage of trained tradesmen in its in many trades, and it is a competitive market. Although Pueblo is known as a “Union Town”, research shows there is a need for additional, local training programs in the more traditional trades. Plans are to see have local trades and businesses work even more closely with high schools, PCC, and CSUUSC-Pueblo in developing g more specific training programs to meet the demands of the local area and both area and the district regional demands. From welding, to maintenance, to medical technician’s, skilled, trade jobs now pay as well as many careers, which require a four-year college degree.

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

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Southern Colorado Innovation Link (SCIL) is the EDA-funded technology accelerator formed in 2019. They are part of Pueblo Corporate College ~~and~~ have 20 partners in the counties within the PCC catchment area. They mentor entrepreneurs in the tech, scalable product, and intellectual property sectors. They are the ~~go-to-go-to~~ source for monetizing ideas, products, and tech businesses. In simple terms, they make ~~these people~~ entrepreneurs pitch-ready and then try to connect them with financial resources. (As otherwise noted, there is a shortage of ~~equity and~~ debt capital available within ~~the~~ SCEDD ~~region~~, but SCIL has done a great job in connecting entrepreneurs with other ~~funders, and~~ funders and has even co-founded a new angel investor network. This should be regarded as a precursor to an angel investor or venture capital fund.)

~~They have~~ SCIL has taken note of other successful startup, support organizations ~~---~~, namely the Innosphere in Fort Collins, Colorado. The Innosphere was started in 1999, and provides a mix of commercialization programs, a Venture Capital Fund, and specialized office and lab facilities. For example, in 2020, Innosphere supported 34 startups and emerging growth companies in high-tech ~~industries, and~~ industries and raised \$7.75 million in capital for 21 companies. They work in close collaboration with universities to turn technologies into ~~startups, and~~ startups and turn those startups into high growth businesses. The Innosphere focus is the Bioscience innovation cluster.

SCIL was designed to ~~complement~~ complement the existing clusters that includes Advanced Manufacturing and Infrastructure Engineering. Efforts are underway for SCIL to apply for the Build Back Better grant to, among other things, create a regional innovation cluster for technology. The experience that SCIL brings to the table will likely be crucial to that effort. This could provide a region-specific skill set and provide a focal point to create a venture capital fund and an innovation revolving loan fund.

A second potential Incubator or Accelerator has been a topic of discussion for some time amongst SCIL partners and regional stakeholders ~~and s, as it~~ could build on one of the most developed economic sectors within Pueblo, ~~as well as~~ and subsequently the larger region. ~~I. Therefore, it~~ could be focused specifically on innovative transportation technologies in conjunction with the American Association of Railroads and the Transportation Technology Center Inc. ~~(Note: It should be noted that~~ There are a number of ~~numerous~~ similar ~~and~~ large businesses within the sub-region, ~~however, these~~ those two businesses were included because of their long-standing importance in the community, and relevance ~~at the~~ within the ~~n~~ National level ~~within the~~ transportation industry.)

SCIL has provided ~~subject matter expertise to~~ SCEDD in the form a SCEDD a preliminary five-step plan to help SCEDD evaluate the strength and interest ~~with of~~ community stakeholders and private businesses to develop the ~~aforementioned~~ accelerator program mentioned previously. This plan would include an assessment of potential commercialization and intellectual property considerations, job creation for complementary industries, and third-party operators of an accelerator program, wherein operational costs would be sponsored by the local governments and transportation industry partners.

City of Pueblo is working with CSU-Pueblo and Transportation Technology Center Incorporated (TTCI) on a project to develop a transportation innovation cluster for southern Colorado. This project will have workforce implications for the entire region. Projects under consideration include creating a Transportation Center of Excellence at CSU, an incubator for global companies pursuing railway innovations, a potential RLF for transportation technology startups, and either a Venture

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Capital or Private Equity Fund for this cluster. Workforce development could include a combination of on-site, mobile, and training exchange programs. Also under consideration is creating regional capacity for business retention and expansion in the transportation innovation cluster.

***** ADD PARAGRAPH FROM ERIC**

Food and Beverage Processing

Potential for the Food and Beverage Industry is viable, ~~however but~~ severely restricted by distribution challenges throughout the ~~entire region~~ district, with the exception of ~~being~~ Pueblo. The food and beverage industry has grown ~~seventeen percent~~ 17% over the last decade. Higher expectations from consumers for healthy food options along and the proliferation in online grocery sales during the COVID-19 pandemic, ~~has~~ created increased demand for online groceries. The food and beverage sector has been undergoing a shift, with consumers increasingly choosing healthy, fresh, organic, local, and ready-to-eat alternatives over traditional products that are mass-produced. Food ~~p~~Processing does require ample water ~~for its processes~~ and, of course, ~~b~~Beverage ~~p~~Processing will need even more ~~water since as~~ it often becomes part of the finished product. Connection to distribution routes via highways and rails, along with a readily available workforce, are needed for this industry to thrive, ~~as is a readily available workforce.~~

Southeastern Plains (Bent, Otero, Prowers)

Several smaller to mid-sized food processing and manufacturing businesses are found in this ~~sub-~~ region. Facilities making everything from honey to salsa ~~to beer~~ are already established in places like La Junta. The food production business has had its ups and downs in the area. However, with the rise in organic, specialty, and gourmet foods, southeastern Colorado is primed and ready for expansion. Areas such as Granada are seeing growth in local meat processing and several local brands are processed in Lamar.

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

~~Chaffee County is already home to some small specialty beverage producers. Things like microbreweries, wineries, specialty soft drinks, and small-scale distilleries are found in Canon City, Poncha Springs, Leadville, Buena Vista and Salida. Cañon City is home to a distillery equipment distribution firm.~~

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

~~Small scale production businesses and facilities are emerging. Currently there are no such facilities in Huerfano County. However, t~~There is interest in developing a meat packing facility in the sub-region. Local grass-fed and organic beef producers are nearby.

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

Chaffee County is already home to some small, specialty beverage producers. Microbreweries, wineries, specialty soft drinks, and small-scale distilleries are found in Canon City, Poncha Springs, Leadville, Buena Vista and Salida. Canon City is home to a distillery equipment distribution firm.

Pueblo County

Food and beverage processing has a long history in Pueblo and several such firms are found at the Pueblo Airport Industrial Park and along Highway 50 in Blende. Because Pueblo is already home to several small to mid-sized food processing and manufacturing businesses, this is seen as a competitive growth area for the county. Pueblo's access to ample water supplies is an advantage to this industry, which relies heavily on water for both production and cleaning. Similarly, direct access to crops and transportation provides this industry with a stable foundation for growth.

Aerospace and Defense

Pueblo is the only county ~~in the~~ within SCEDD ~~region~~ that currently has any significant ~~historical or ongoing~~ aerospace and defense ~~industry~~ activities. The Pueblo Memorial Airport and the U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot have been the primary locations for such work. Chemical demilitarization activities are the final mission at the depot ~~before its closure~~ and will wrap up within a few years. The chemical demilitarization plant will then be decommissioned. It is possible that, although some parts of the plant may be reused. The Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site, located in La Animas County, has also brought some business activity to that area.

Southeastern Plains (Otero, Prowers)

~~Otero County's~~ The La Junta Regional Airport ~~regional airport~~ has seen ~~growth and the establishment of this industry~~ through partnerships with ~~the Doss Aviation, U.S. Air Force, crop dusters~~ and ~~small~~ businesses located ~~at the regional airport and within the~~ industrial park. The Southeast Colorado Regional Airport has available, developable space in order to expand in the aerospace industry.

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

The regional airports in this ~~sub~~ region have attracted high ~~altitude~~ testing. Several small businesses, ~~offering that offer~~ high paying jobs, have been established because of access to these regional airports ~~such as in~~ Chaffee, Lake and Fremont ~~Counties~~. Continued investment and promotion of these airports ~~is are~~ critical ~~to additional~~ for industry growth in this ~~sub~~ region.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

The Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site, in Las Animas County, has brought ~~some~~ some welcomed economic activity to the area. However, the creation of the site was done by the Army taking over large sections of private land (mainly ranches), which has proved controversial. ~~Proposed expansion of the site has met with some strong local and regional opposition, and the idea is now on hold.~~

The Walsenburg Regional airport has recent investments for upgraded facilities and plans are being made for an air festival.

Pueblo County

As noted above, Pueblo has had and still has a small aerospace and defense industry. Most of ~~this~~ is it found at the Pueblo Airport Industrial Park and/or the U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot/PuebloPlex. Both locations have buildings, facilities, and infrastructures, which can readily accommodate aerospace and defense work. Local steel manufacturing is also an asset. There are some opportunities for expansion for developing aerospace and defense projects in Pueblo County.

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Nearby Colorado Springs has a large defense-related business presence. ~~This, which~~ could benefit Pueblo ~~should that if those~~ businesses grow and ~~begin to seek be seeking~~ the benefits of Pueblo's workforce, facilities, and lower costs.

Chemical Manufacturing

Chemical plant facilities (manufacturing and storage) are specialized industries with specific needs; ~~which that~~ are expensive to develop and maintain. Therefore, such businesses would likely be ~~primarily~~ confined to Pueblo, where ~~such~~ facilities and infrastructure ~~area~~ already in place.

Southeastern Plains (Otero, Prowers)

Currently, there ~~isn't any chemical or fertilizers no~~ manufacturing ~~of chemical or fertilizers in the sub-region. I. However,~~ in Prowers County there is an individual who has leased a defunct power plant and is converting it ~~into~~ a grain and fertilizer storage facility. ~~Also, t~~There ~~also~~ are large coal "domes" in the area ~~and those that~~ have been or will be repurposed ~~to store for~~ grain and fertilizer ~~storage.s~~.

South Central (Huerfano and Las Animas)

~~One of~~ Huerfano's largest ~~private~~ employers is an organic chemical manufacturer. ~~Additional growth~~ Growth in ~~supply chain partner this industry with support~~ could be realized ~~to assist with growth and production of the existing facility with additional labor for the existing facility or and new~~ ~~new~~ businesses that support this industry.

Pueblo County

This industry does exist in Pueblo. Currently, chemical plant facilities (manufacturing and storage) exist at the Pueblo Memorial Airport. Additionally, there is potential to utilize land and facilities at the U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot/PuebloPlex, for manufacturing or processing certain chemicals. Pueblo has the workforce, water, and other resources needed to expand or develop new related chemical businesses. Chemicals and products extracted from hemp could boost this business in Pueblo. However, the major markets for this industry are not located close to this region.

Hemp

The hemp industry is beginning to gain traction in the district. With passage of the 2018 Farm Bill and the legalization of commercial hemp, farmers are now integrating husbandry of the crop into their production operations and commercial production facilities are open for business. Hemp requires less water than most other crops in the ~~sub-regions~~ and has a large, ~~and~~ expanding variety of uses. Hemp production and processing could be a significant set of industries in the ~~SCEDD~~ district, ~~especially Pueblo~~. Recently, hemp producers saw a bill passed that allows them to expand their production without having to notify regulators.

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Prowers)

Hemp ~~producers and processors need additional investments to reduce costs to grow the industry. Since hemp requires less water, there is potential for growth. is a potential industry but production and processing to assist the industry need additional growth and investment to reduce costs. As~~

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~~water becomes more scarce across the region there is potential growth. However, as the supply of hemp grows nationally, prices are driven down, making the agricultural product. With additional growth in the industry nationally the supply has also driven down prices, making this a less profitable agricultural product.~~

Upper Arkansas (Custer)

~~There are s~~Some hemp ~~grows exist~~producers in Custer County, but ~~they are~~ not significant at this time.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Some hemp ~~is grow~~~~ns exist~~ in Huerfano, and Las Animas Counties. Again, hemp grows ~~leads~~ ~~itself~~are better suited for ~~to~~ dryer areas ~~as~~ found in ~~western~~~~the southeastern~~ portions of Huerfano ~~and~~ Las Animas, ~~and other nearby counties~~Counties. Strategically placed processing plants would encourage and add to the expansion of ~~grow~~ hemp operations.

Pueblo County

~~The county's~~ largest hemp processing facility in Pueblo County was under development in Colorado City. ~~However, but~~ the developers/owners failed to finalize the project. The large warehouse space still has the potential for a similar operation, ~~as~~ a distribution center, and/or manufacturing plant. Other smaller hemp facilities, as well as growers, are also found in Pueblo County. There is strong potential for this industry to expand in Pueblo, ~~both with grows and processing/manufacturing.~~ The ~~Pueblo region~~sub-region is well-positioned to capitalize on opportunities within the hemp cluster. This includes opportunities in hemp products, such as paper products, composites for automobiles, food, building materials, nanomaterials, 3-D printing filament and ~~bio-plastics~~bioplastics, ~~nutraceutical~~nutraceutical, and nutritional products, etc. It will be important for efforts to be directed at R&D applications for cannabis/hemp to avoid further market saturation and to increase the value of the products produced. Hemp-~~r~~Related ~~i~~Industries present significant opportunity~~ies~~ and potential, but also some degree of risk as European businesses look towards expansion in Colorado and the U.S.

Professional and Scientific Services

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, Prowers)

Most of the professional services work force in the ~~county~~sub-region is getting near retirement age. Planning is critical to ensur~~ing~~ these services continue to provide benefits to ~~these~~ these communities.

Upper Arkansas (Custer)

This ~~sub~~region is well serv~~ie~~ed by this sector. Custer County is seeing additional professionals moving into the ~~c~~County.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

There is a growing need for surveyors, attorneys, engineers, and other professional services as the region continues to grow and develop. Trinidad ~~and Walsenburg have~~has strong potential to be a regional destinations ~~to~~to attract these highly-~~paid~~ing skilled professionals. ~~labor.~~

Pueblo County

The City of Pueblo has the human, infrastructure, and institutional resources needed for expanding this industry, making it the primary candidate for expanding this business in the SCEDD service area. The ability to work remotely plays an important role to this industry, which means broadband is needed. The City of Pueblo has broadband. ~~However, but~~ it is less consistent in the county and needs improvement ~~to~~ attract employees in this sector, these workers. With CSU-P and PCC ~~being located in~~ being in Pueblo, along with Parkview and St. Mary Corwin hospitals, the city has the foundation to grow and expand the professional and scientific services industries.

Regional Distribution

The SCEDD area has an abundance of rail lines and freight rail operators, along with several U.S. Highways (285, 50, 10, 71, 350, 160, 287) plus I-25. Pueblo, La Junta, and Trinidad all have direct access to rail freight lines and existing support facilities. Overall, this existing infrastructure ~~of road and rail~~ access in the within SCEDD ~~region~~ provides opportunities for commercial and small-scale business development.

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, Prowers)

La Junta, ~~in Otero County,~~ has an historic, operational airport adjacent to the southeastern plains' most an active ~~and flourishing~~ industrial park. ~~The city~~ is on a major truck route (Hwy 50) and has a grain elevator located next to the Burlington Northern ~~rail and~~ rail yard. ~~Many of the highways and rail noted above run through this subregion.~~ Access to rail in key cities, like Lamar and La Junta, add strength to those cities and counties. ~~The region has access to rail and only~~ Crowley and Kiowa Counties ~~currently~~ lack rail service. Many of the highways and rails noted above run through this sub-region, which makes freight a major industry. Several of the major trucking routes in the region make freight a major industry and serve these counties.

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

Only Custer County lacks rail access. However, for meaningful regional distribution, the dormant rail lines through both Lake and Chaffee would need major reinvestment. Fremont's existing rail line services the mining industry. ~~However, but~~ the existing infrastructure could be expanded to allow additional rail service to other sectors.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Although this sub-region is wWell served by rail, as well as and both state and federal highways, these counties have expressed a desire to reopen and expand rail facilities, including such as sidings. With the reopening of the New Elk Mine near Trinidad, expanded rail service is planned to get the coal to Asian markets via ports in Houston and other southern locations. This is seen as a viable means of expanding rail transport of goods to and from the region. New rail access on the periphery of Walsenburg would provided additional freight opportunities.

Pueblo County

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Large distribution centers, such as the one owned by Target at the Pueblo Memorial Airport, already exist in the ~~SCEDD service area, primarily in Pueblo sub-region~~. The U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot/PuebloPlex ~~also~~ has igloos, warehouses, and other space available for rent/lease. I-25 runs through Pueblo, Huerfano, and Las Animas ~~C~~eounties and is readily accessible to Fremont County. Pueblo is a railroad hub of sorts with two major freight railroad firms operating ~~the here --~~ Union Pacific (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Rail (BNSF); Pueblo is well served by rail. U.S. Highway 50 provides an east-west route and I-25 ~~provides~~ a major north-south route.

Wood Processing

Recent forest fires in parts of ~~the~~ SCEDD ~~region~~ could provide base materials for wood processing, such as bio-char ~~and/or~~ other wood products. Large areas of beetle-killed forests exist in the ~~more~~ mountainous areas of ~~SCEDD's region~~ ~~the district~~. With some government assistance and the right companies, wood processing could flourish. Additionally, a similar concept is proposed for processing yucca plants (an abundant, ~~and~~ replenishable resource in the ~~region~~ ~~district~~) for bio-char in eastern Huerfano County.

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

Timber and other resources are plentiful throughout ~~this sub-e~~ region. As lumber ~~prices~~ ~~ing~~ continues to rise, this is a vital industry ~~for in~~ the ~~sub~~-region to ensure ~~the~~ ~~success~~ ~~of~~ growth and ~~d~~development.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

~~Wood processing is limited in Las Animas County. The "Spring Fire" of 2018 in Public lands in Huerfano County scorched over 100,00 acres of forest land. offer over 100,000 acres of timber production. Some wood processing, such as sawmills and wood furniture, is already underway. is already underway.~~

Pueblo County

Pueblo has limited forested lands, but processing facilities could be located in Pueblo to serve the ~~region~~ ~~district~~.

Craft Industries

Craft industries, creative districts, maker spaces, historic districts, etc., all go hand-in-hand. They help to facilitate retail shops and small-scale ~~"backbone"~~ industries. ~~They are also a that are backbone industries, and they are~~ good fit for most rural communities.

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Otero, Prowers)

There are multiple craft industries throughout the ~~sub~~-region. ~~The~~ ~~is~~ ~~sub~~-region is well equipped ~~with~~ ~~to continue~~ working on providing goods and services ~~as needed~~ for its residents. Several well-known ~~n~~ craft industries exist in ~~many some~~ of the ~~small rural~~ downtown ~~areas~~. Passing on these trades is essential to ensuring vibrant downtowns and cultural centers throughout the ~~sub~~-region.

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

This region already has a stable craft industry business sector, but there is room for growth. Salida's creative district, like others around the state, ~~is proved to be~~ successful and continues to provide the

foundation for continued interest and prosperity in the craft industry realm. Antique shops are plentiful in this sub-region ~~and complimented and are complimented~~ by craft industries, ~~and~~ they promote retail shopping.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Trinidad has a Colorado Creative District, which is booming. La Veta is an emerging Creative Arts District. ~~Opportunities in community and pursuing a creative district for its Historic District.~~ Walsenburg for redevelopment of its downtown include additional craft-industry businesses for adaptive reuse. ~~is also looking at such for its downtown.~~ Similar revitalization is happening in Aguilar, located in Las Animas County.

Pueblo County

Pueblo has its creative corridor located along the Union Avenue Historic District and into parts of its downtown. Considering ~~both of these~~ both areas were once blighted with numerous empty and dilapidated buildings, they can now boast being the heart of Pueblo's arts/crafts shopping district. Even housing has improved with many lofts and apartments found above retail shops being renovated.

Manufacturing

Manufacturers in Colorado account for 6.82% of the total output in the state ~~and~~, ~~employing~~ 5.38% of the workforce. Total output from manufacturing was \$25.15 billion in 2018. In addition, there were an average of 149,000 manufacturing employees in Colorado in 201~~8~~9, with an average annual compensation of \$79,051.09 ~~in 2018~~. Small scale manufacturing already exists in many parts of ~~the~~ SCEDD, ~~region~~, with some currently planning on expanding. In many ways small-~~to~~-medium scale manufacturing is a very good match for SCEDD counties-sub-regions and their workforces. Area community colleges and high schools could serve as institutions for training such workers. Easy access to rail and roadways is in place.

Southeastern Plains (Bent, Crowley, Custer, Kiowa, Otero) and Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

Although manufacturing is present in these two sub-regions, ~~Again,~~ area ~~community~~ colleges ~~and~~ training centers could play an important role in providing needed skills and job training to accommodate manufacturing businesses.

South Central (Huerfano and Las Animas)

Chae ~~Manufacturing Organics~~ in Huerfano County is one of the largest private employers in the county. It produces organic body care and household products like lotions, balms, and laundry soaps for several large national brands, as well as its own product line. This successful business is in the process of expanding and sees room for more growth. It can serve as a model for small-scale manufacturing in rural communities. Additional manufacturing industries include numerous small-scale welding shops and Sangre de Cristo Tiny Homes.

Pueblo County

Being a regional hub and the largest city in southeastern Colorado, Pueblo has a long history of successful manufacturing businesses. The bulk of this industry is located at the Airport Industrial Park but there are numerous other locations in and around the city of Pueblo and in the county. Considering the training resources and Pueblo's workforce, manufacturing should be seen as an area ripe for expansion and even attracting new firms.

Metal Recycling

Commercial/industrial level scrap metal recycling is already in place ~~in~~ on a large scale in Pueblo (see below*). Several counties ~~in the~~within SCEDD ~~region~~ have household metal recycling programs in place and new services are coming online as this document is being produced. It is expected that, at least household and metal recycling will reach ~~their other~~ communities. With Pueblo being close to the other SCEDD ~~counties sub-regions~~, it serves as a regional hub for scrap metal recycling. This should be seen as a growth industry for Pueblo.

Southeastern Plains (Bent, Otero, Prowers)

Prowers County is ~~already~~ home to Southeast & East Central Recycling and Clean Valley Recycling serves Otero County; Both of these entities which provides a regional, community-based recycling services ~~of for~~ household items such as steel/aluminum ~~cans~~, cardboard, glass, and paper. Otero County is also home to a large, industrial metal manufacturer that has a portion of its operation and is adjacent to rail service. ~~This organization serves most of the SCEDD region.~~

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Lake)

Fremont and Lake Counties ~~both~~ have metal manufacturing. This industry is serviced by freight, but access to rail service could significantly expand operations.

South Central (Las Animas)

Las Animas County has industrial ~~level~~ metal recycling, as well as household programs.

Pueblo County

With Everaz North America Steel located in Pueblo, along with related businesses, several metal recycling facilities are found near the steel mill. These facilities supply the mill with scrap metal to be made into products, such as rail. Once again, needed infrastructure is already in place as is access to rail and roadways for transportation to and from the area. Thus, the possibility to grow this industry ~~is would be~~ easily attainable in ~~certain~~ counties along I-25 or those with freight rail service.

Small Business Retail/Main Street

Every county ~~in the region~~within SCEDD is supported by numerous Main Street Business Districts. Many of these are historic downtowns with storefronts. COVID-19 has been particularly tough to ~~these~~ retail and ~~other service~~ businesses. SCEDD has applied for a \$1 million SBA Community Navigator grant to provide technical assistance to businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. SBA loans and recovery efforts over the next five years should promote growth ~~in~~ within these existing districts. Further, mixed ~~use~~ financing continues to ~~lack be~~ "missing" when it comes to supporting the redevelopment of many of these properties. The infrastructure and other

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services are existing to these spaces. So, business capital and other resources are essential to the growth and development of these areas, ~~as well as and~~ for continued COVID-19 recovery efforts to the service sectors these areas provide their communities.

Many downtown areas still have blighted buildings or high vacancy rates. There are several resources to addressing and abating these structures ~~to to~~ ensure that they are ~~both~~ safe and viable spaces for future businesses. Property maintenance codes, enforcement, and incentives are important tools to spur downtown redevelopment across the region district. Making use of existing space inside the downtowns and Main Streets, adds vitality to communities across the region district.

Outdoor Recreation Industries

Opportunities for the industries surrounding outdoor recreation abound in Southern Colorado. The region district boasts vast acreages of open space, public lands, an abundance of nature, and a very favorable climate. Much of this part of Colorado, especially the public lands, is widely considered the most unknown and untouched part of Colorado's recreational lands. Uncrowded national forests/grasslands, wilderness areas, state wildlife areas, and the more remote state parks are resources. Guide services, outdoor gear rental shops, and specialty retail stores should consider this area as fertile ground for capitalizing on the booming outdoor recreation industry. The numerous scenic highways in the region district serve as calling cards to the outdoor enthusiast.

Southeastern Plains (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, Prowers)

This area is known for plentiful and high-quality hunting ranging from small game to waterfowl, to upland game birds, and big game – all are available in this sub-region. Additionally, fishing, boating, and camping opportunities are in good supply and often not crowded. The warmer off-season weather allows for an extended recreational tourist season here.



Eads Golf Course, Eads, Kiowa County

Upper Arkansas (Custer, Fremont, Chaffee, Lake)

Cycling, mMountain bBiking, and gGraveler rides are all popular and growing in this sub-region. In some cases, recreational resources are already at or near maximum capacity. The Arkansas River is the most heavily used river in the country. Yet, demands and needs are still present for more commercial camping, glamping, instruction, and guide services. Abundant public lands and mild climates in the lower sections of this sub-region mean cycling, fishing, and rock climbing are available year-round.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Tourism organizations in Bboth Huerfano and Las Animas Counties have identified the promotion and further development of outdoor recreation as one of their top two areas for expansion.

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[priority. Cuchara Mountain Park and Fisher Peak State Park are regional destinations for additional outdoor recreation opportunities.](#)

Pueblo County

Like the Lower Arkansas River area, Pueblo's mild climate means a longer season for many outdoor activities, especially fishing, rock climbing, water sports, cycling, and hiking. The nearby Wet Mountains provide an accessible playground for many of these activities.