

Chapter 7: Regional Implementation Strategies

Introduction

In an Economic Development District (EDD) that is geographically two to three times the size of most national EDDs, and which is typified by three sub-regions or spokes (Southeastern Plains, Upper Ark, South Central) that radiate from a hub (Pueblo and Pueblo County), the description of Economic Implementation Strategies requires some detailed exploration.

As an EDD, SCEDD has chosen to concentrate on three economic development strategies that are regional and critical local economic prosperity drivers. These include Access to Capital, Broadband, and Workforce Housing. With the exception of dealing with aging infrastructure, such as roads, water, and wastewater infrastructure that operates as a weakness or a threat to economic development, these three drivers are the critical issues to ensure economic resiliency over the next five years as identified throughout the public process. Whatever economic development strategy is under discussion, there exists a lack of capacity to deal with it in all but our largest communities. For that reason, SCEDD is seeking to increase its ability to deliver technical assistance not only in the three areas identified above, but more generally across the spectrum. Specifically, we are working to provide access to planning, engineering, and grant assistance for ALL economic development strategies.

The definition of “regional planning” is also flexible. In different communities across the SCEDD region, it can mean different things:

1. In responding to a Build Back Better initiative or implementing an SBA Community Navigator model, it can mean a regional hub and spoke approach with a regional goal having a specific geographic center based in Pueblo.
2. In the case of planning workforce housing, SCEDD can operate as a regional consultant in service to a sub-region solution. That is the case with our current workforce housing initiative on the Southeastern Plains, where we have designed a project tailored to the circumstances of a new construction market that has collapsed. In this case, we partner with a sub-region EDD (Southeast Colorado Enterprise Development/SECED) to attract a regional or national developer to build homes WITHIN that sub-region. SCEDD designs the program, secures the developer, negotiates with lenders, and sells the homes. SECED works with the counties and municipalities, as well as the developer.
3. In the case of Broadband, SCEDD seeks to function as the regional expert and coordinator to orchestrate the planning, funding, and execution of projects. Those projects may be at the municipal level, county, sub-region, or region—or even some combination.

As an EDD, SCEDD has been largely dormant until recently, and the habits and rhythms of regional cooperation have fallen into disuse. With the adoption of this CEDS, SCEDD seeks to re-engage its stakeholders in regional efforts.

The Economic Implementation Strategies (EIS) contained in this chapter were vetted through various and rigorous public comment and by conducting 59 public meetings across the entire 13-county region. The strategies below are discussed in overview -- first from a region-wide perspective, then within the sub-region, and finally in this section at the county level. A more granular look at specific projects, programs, and policies as they relate to each county within SCEDD can be found in the Appendix A in order to determine potential funding sources, lead organizations, project cost estimates, or where the project stands in implementation.

Access to Capital

The Access to Capital sector is decidedly mixed throughout the district. SCEDD is fortunate to have a number of revolving loan funds, but there isn't an SBA 504 packager in the district, and startup equity is available only through informal networks, although small angel groups are starting to emerge.

It is beyond the scope of the CEDs to fully assess specific opportunities within this sector. Public meetings, consultations with the EDA-funded tech accelerator, and the ED community have led to the conclusion that this sector needs some attention. SCEDD is putting together a consulting project to assess the revolving loan fund space, and to see how a SCEDD-sponsored fund(s) can assist. Part of that study will involve a review of equity options. The need is to increase access to equity capital in the region and develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports startups in the tech sector and the intellectual property sector. (The transportation sector for both freight and passenger transportation are expressing interest in a seed capital project as part of a potential Build Back Better EDA application.)

In the wake of the pandemic, the traditional focus of assisting with startups and expansions has given way to focus on survival and recovery. Our region's downtowns are suffering and SCEDD has stepped up as an applicant for the SBA Community Navigator Program. The immediate access to capital, extending through 2022, is capital to survive, whether through the limited number of grant programs of government loans, such as the Economic Impact Disaster Loans. SCEDD stands ready to assist both the local EDs and the sub-region to access COVID-19 relief funding as it becomes available.

Broadband

By board action, SCEDD has assumed a leadership role in broadband. The discussion here is not divided into sub-regions. While terrain, population density, and technology all argue for localized solutions, broadband planning is best conceived at a regional level. The overarching goal is ubiquitous, reliable broadband, with speeds ranging from 100 Mbps up and down in some areas and fiber gig to the home in others. More broadly, the goal is broadband that is available, abundant, affordable, reliable, and sustainable. We call this regional implementation strategy the SoCo Broadband Project.

Southern Colorado Economic Development District * 2021 CEDS

SCEDD has five major goals for the region for the next five years: 1. All areas of region have access to minimum federal internet broadband standards. 2. Eighty percent of addresses in region have access to 100 up/100 down service 3. 80 percent of population in towns and cities with more than 2000 population has fiber connection providing a gig to the home 3. Broadband infrastructure is robust and redundant, providing high reliability.

SCEDD’s primary role is to assist with the implementation of broadband projects. We envision a staff of 2-3 FTE employees who will live and breathe broadband. “Assist” is a blanket term that describes a project-centered planning role that includes being a regional cheerleader that identifies projects, assembles coalitions across county borders, manages the planning and engineering process, assists in procuring city, county, state, federal, and philanthropic resources, develops and shares in the ownership of publicly owned broadband assets, administers the grants related to broadband, and assists in the management of planning and construction projects. This project is to build capacity to effectively execute projects.

This expenditure will not finish the job; it will get us to the starting line to effectively compete for money and attention from policymakers.

The implementation strategy will likely involve SCEDD owning, or having a financial interest in, some middle mile assets and some lesser revenue participation in final mile assets.

There is an unprecedented amount of federal and state money being deployed for broadband infrastructure, and the experience over the last five years has shown that communities who cooperate regionally with a clear focus and vision are the communities that are the most successful. The SCEDD project is modeled after a successful initiative in Region 10, where nearly 500 miles of fiber have been deployed in the last five years. SCEDD’s SoCo Broadband project has been designed in collaboration with DOLA, Colorado Broadband Office, two electric cooperatives, internet service providers such as Colorado Central Telecom and SECOM, broadband consultants, city and county officials, and economic development organizations in the region.

SCEDD has pushed this collaboration with the purpose of assuming regional responsibility for meeting goals within the context of a role best described as “coordination leadership.”

SCEDD is assembling between \$1.8M and \$2.1M to increase the regional capacity. (Note: Of this, approximately \$300k will be used to support other infrastructure strategies. That amount is indicated in yellow, but is left here to document these efforts as part of the CEDS.) The chart below details the source and use of that money. These numbers are current as of late September of 2020.

Sources and use of funds for SoCo Broadband Project				
	Funding sources—Estimated total admin and planning costs--\$1.8M-\$2.1M			
Use of money	ARPA -- \$800k - 1.1M	DOLA-- \$175k	EDA--\$459k	Philanthropic--\$360k
Administrative costs for broadband coordinator and staff	Yes, for first six months (estimated)		Two to three year funding	Match for EDA grant

Southern Colorado Economic Development District * 2021 CEDS

Creation of a broadband implementation plan that identifies specific projects and preliminary engineering cost estimates	50 percent paid by ARPA funds	50 percent paid by DOLA grant		
Consulting help to assist broadband coordinator to create public/private partnerships in towns and cities where there are providers seeking to partner to provide improved broadband	50 percent paid by ARPA funds	50 percent paid by DOLA grant		
Grant administration, grant technical assistance, and technical assistance for broadband, other infrastructure, and affordable housing projects that are ARPA eligible. These costs are chargeable to specific projects	Yes. Approximately \$300k of total ARPA funds are set aside for this purpose.			
Match for state project funds, preliminary engineering, and consulting not fundable with federal funds. These are tied to specific projects.	Yes. Depending upon size of ARPA contributions, this is the largest share of ARPA funds			

Middle mile and final mile strategies

The SoCo Broadband Project can be described succinctly as “planning the work and then working the plan.” SCEDD will aggressively promote middle mile projects and choose final mile projects as targets of opportunity, depending upon the nature of the funding being sought for a specific project.

Specific projects will be identified through the broadband implementation blueprint, which we imagine to be jointly funded by ARPA and DOLA. That said, any delineation of projects will need to reckon with the reality that the details of specific projects can be affected by funder priorities. This will especially be the case on last mile projects, where some funders may prioritize serving the most homes while others may prioritize reaching the most underserved areas or providing the most equity in the cost of broadband. For that reason, we don’t think that a catalog of last mile needs will shed much light at this preliminary stage. That said, one of the major projects in Pueblo County will be getting reliable broadband to Pueblo West. A second project of high importance will be ensuring that Pueblo has the consulting help it needs to negotiate a public/private partnership from those providers who believe that building fiber to the home is a near term project.

With these caveats in mind, then, let us try to illustrate the range of projects that might be undertaken. In contrast to the extremely large number of last mile projects that can be sliced and diced in many ways, the need for middle mile projects is relatively finite. Middle mile describes the

network infrastructure that connects last mile (i.e. local) networks to other network service providers, major telecom centers, and the greater internet.

Here is a list of likely middle mile projects that will need to be addressed. Counties addressed are bracketed. (The list is courtesy of SECOM and includes areas outside of their service region.)

Hwy 69-- Walsenburg to Westcliffe to Hwy 50 along Hwy 69, then East on Hwy 50 back to Canon City. [Huerfano/Custer/Fremont]

Chaffee to Leadville – needs two fiber routes to Leadville, Buena Vista, Salida [Lake, Chaffee]

Hwy 12-- Trinidad to La Veta via Hwy 12, then back to Walsenburg on Hwy 160 [Huerfano, Las Animas]

Branson--Build from Kim to Branson to Hoehne to Trinidad along 160, 389 and some county roads. [Las Animas]

Holly-Bristol-Hartman Granada-- [Prowers]

Cheraw to Las Animas to Wiley--includes piece from La Junta to Cheraw/Las Animas meet point [Otero, Bent, Prowers]

Towner-- (New construction from Sheridan Lake to Towner, upgrade line from Eads to Sheridan Lake) [Kiowa]

Two Buttes--[Baca]

Salt Creek to Boone-- [Pueblo]

Florence – dual routes in and out [Fremont]

Ordway-Sugar City-Cheraw [Crowley, Otero]

Some of the above add significant indirect benefit to other counties not listed. For example, “Branson” benefits Pueblo, Crowley, Otero, Bent, Prowers, Baca and Huerfano by adding a redundant path for traffic in/out of those counties.

Agriculture/Ranching

Agriculture is the largest geographical industry in the region. Generally, most of the economic development strategies discussed during the process were aimed at filling specific needs rather than re-imagining the role of agriculture as a transformative catalyst of economic development. The pandemic saw disruptions to supply chains and loss of traditional migrant workforce. Since the CEDS is both an iterative and living document, future revisions might be well-advised to look at agriculture from a higher and more strategic altitude. The various communities recognize that agriculture conservation, adapting to drought, and filling holes in needed services (e.g. meat processing) are key elements to the maintenance and development of this sector. The more specific

strategies discussed below illustrate the different emphasis experienced by different sub-regions within SCEDD.

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

There are two major issues on the Southeastern Plains—one chronic and systemic and the other acute and solvable. One is a critical need for drought assistance support. More broadly, this is not just an agricultural need, but is important to maintain adequate water supplies for all uses, and a variation of this need shows up on critical infrastructure assessments as well. The State of Colorado Drought Task Force is taking the lead on this issue. The second issue is an urgent need for one or more USDA Certified meat processing facility. Farmers and ranchers are experiencing extended wait times for meat processing. The pandemic has shown how this can cause disruptions to supply chains and food prices across the nation.

There is a general sense of need for value-added agriculture, as well as development of crops such as hemp that require less water. Prowers County is seeking to recruit additional dairy processing, and Crowley County identified a need for a certified industrial scale.

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

The agricultural community is the #1 reason visitors enjoy the scenic vistas in this region. However, continued development pressures make conservation easements and water conservation are among the top ag priorities for the sub-region. Chaffee County identified a need to acquire conservation easements to provide working capital to ranchers and farmers funded through a county .25% sales tax. Lake County has identified a conceptual need for boosting agri-tourism and providing conservation assistance to protect land and water resources. Fremont County has identified a need for a USDA certified meat processing facility, a need echoed on the Southeastern Plains. There is also some interest in a regional livestock sale barn facility for the county to service the sub-region due to closures of regional facilities around an urban center in the region.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Huerfano County has identified several key agricultural economic priorities, ranging from the conceptual to the preconstruction phase. At the conceptual stage, the county seeks to expand access to produce through farmers markets. There is a strategy to analyze the effect of invasive species and plants on water levels.

A mixed-use commercial space is a county concept that would include a gas station, housing, commercial space, and school greenhouses in unincorporated Gardner. Finally, Las Animas County sees itself as a regional distribution hub for rail access to allow agricultural users to bring goods to market.

Pueblo County

Pueblo county has an abundance of market farms and a thriving farm stand/farmer's market culture. Pueblo Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO) and the Pueblo Food Project are working to develop local food systems that make it easier for purchasing agents in the community to buy from local food producers. Bay's Meat Market is pursuing the development of a regional meat processing plant that would be capable of handling domestic livestock as well as game animals. PEDCO is in talks with an unnamed developer interested in building a processing plant able to

handle 10,000 + animals a year, with a focus on domestic livestock. Springside Cheese in Pueblo currently brings in all cheeses from outside Colorado. They are laying the groundwork to build a local production facility to make cheese in Pueblo. The effort would make use of regional dairy animal herds and would train and employ a small workforce in artisanal skills. The Pueblo Food Project's goals over the next five years are to develop infrastructure to support medium scale food process production, and to develop an entrepreneurial pipeline of food production startups. In addition to identifying and recruiting food and beverage productions to relocate to Pueblo, PEDCO is working in the area of industrial hemp production and companies production clothing and other fiber products.

Business Development

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

The Southeastern Plains has an abundance of structures and properties that can be redeveloped including a former military post near Las Animas (Ft. Lyons), numerous blighted properties in La Junta, and the regional airport in Lamar. This availability has resulted in a strategic focus on several large projects; four are estimated to cost more than \$3 million. In Bent County, officials seek to transform the Ft. Lyons property into a business incubator. In Lamar, there is a \$3 million project in the planning stages for a warehouse for distribution operations at the Southeast Colorado Regional Airport. Officials in La Junta have placed a \$5 million price tag on efforts to redevelop more than 15 properties in the historic downtown termed as “blighted properties inventory.” Another project in that community is to turn an iconic former church building into a commercial space, at an estimated cost of \$3 million. La Junta also has a concept for a program to build out an economic development and educational ecosystem. This has a cost estimate of \$5 million. These are the foundations to allow the region to rebuild the existing assets with access to utilities to bring new businesses to the region.

Other strategies detailed in the Appendix A include: *Prowers*—Downtown redevelopment (Holly) and Data Center (Lamar); *Bent*—Industrial park (Las Animas) and incubator at historic high school; *Crowley*—Main Street sidewalk improvements; *Kiowa*—\$1.7 million cultural center renovation; and *Otero*—Downtown beautification and revitalization (La Junta), convert CORE building to mixed use space (La Junta), downtown roof replacement (La Junta), mixed use office/industrial building (La Junta), downtown façade project (Rocky Ford), co-working space (Rocky Ford), and a public safety downtown camera system (La Junta).

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

All the local municipal areas throughout the region have seen reinvestment in their historic downtowns. Local business redevelopment remains a high priority. Across the region, available developable land is scarce. Both Lake and Chaffee have areas in enterprise zones with infrastructure needs. Local airports are positioned to take advantage of high-altitude testing in the aerospace arena.

The business development priorities in Fremont County largely reflect the ambitions of Cañon City, a community that held steady in population from 2010 to 2020 (16,403 to 16,581) but is poised for brisk growth in the next decade as nearby Colorado Springs experiences an unprecedented real estate boom that is pushing the limits of affordability. For a list of specific projects contemplated, see Appendix A. In summary, however, Cañon City and the City of Florence are seeking to

redevelop vacant and underused spaces, re-energize the downtown, and develop an industrial/business park to assist with the diversification of their local economies.

The 4 Mile Metro District is seeking to complete a buildout of commercial and residential space, and the City of Florence is seeking to extend infrastructure for an industrial park on U.S. Hwy 50 and S.H. 67, including access to rail for the movement of goods from industrial production.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

In both counties, railway access is cited as keys to business development. In Las Animas County, Allegiance Coal has reopened the New Elk Mine and a spur will increase production, and perhaps open the way for other closed mines to reopen. Huerfano County seeks to develop an industrial park, innovation spaces and downtown revitalization.

Pueblo County

Pueblo city and county governments have joined to develop the Pueblo Means Business program. The local governments jointly purchased a building and are locating all licensing and permitting offices on one floor. In addition, they are looking at ways to streamline licensing and permitting processes to make establishing business in Pueblo simpler. Pueblo's Creative Corridor and historic district should continue to be a focal point for specialty retail development. Pueblo's Main Street lags in its redevelopment and has room for additional business development. PEDCO, in conjunction with city and county government brought a new long rail line to the Everaz steel mill in Pueblo. PEDCO has identified six sub clusters of industries they are working to attract to Pueblo. Food and beverage, in the areas of fruit and vegetable canning as well as meat processing; chemical, specifically focusing on needs related to the toilet industry, as well as soil preparation; aero-space, looking at mill production of parts needed in aero-space construction; construction, looking at ceramics/pottery and plumbing needs; hemp, primarily focused on industrial hemp and manufacturing related to hemp fiber production. PEDCO has also identified professional and scientific services associated with the drawdown of the Pueblo Chemical Depot. As this military facility comes to the end of its life decommissioning chemical munitions, PEDCO and PuebloPlex anticipate a trained and experienced workforce being available to potential employers within a range of science and engineering specialties. Related to food and beverage production, Rocky Mountain Whole Foods is on record wanting to source products produced in Pueblo county and build the Pueblo food story in Rocky Mountain region stores.

Critical Infrastructure

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

Infrastructure needs in the Upper Ark are largely focused on water and wastewater projects. While many are envisioned to deal with threats ("upgrade or development stops"), some are also opportunities, such as expansion of capacity that would result in a proposed trunk line project from Poncha Springs to Salida to allow for much need industrial and commercial production space. Additional Strategies to foster skilled and high paying job development are detailed in Appendix A. *Custer*—Numerous projects for Westcliffe and Silver Cliff, including lead service line and well replacement, a water reservoir, water storage, new treatment plant, and a move to net-zero waste processing. The landfill seeks to expand its recycling program to meet waste reduction goals.

Fremont—Cañon City has identified a need for a water line to support future development of numerous public uses; commercial and industrial lands need infrastructure upgrades to facilitate development to diversify the county's economy. The City of Florence and Town of Penrose have each identified sanitation, water, and water/wastewater projects to ensure economic development can continue over the next five years.

Chaffee—The municipalities and districts that serve Poncha Springs, Buena Vista, Salida, and unincorporated Garfield have each identified critical infrastructure projects. Poncha Springs needs two new wells, water tank repairs and upgrades, and the need for trunk line expansion from the City of Salida wastewater treatment plant to ensure continued economic growth. Buena Vista has identified a need for a new well, improvements to collection system, acquisition of water rights, looping upper and lower zones to facilitate economic growth, update stormwater system, and upgrades and revised master plan for water system. The Buena Vista Sanitation District has a potential need for a secondary trunk line under the Arkansas River and upgrades to the plant. Salida needs to replace its trunk water main to the main plant, to expand capacity of the Pasquale Springs site, to improve the efficiency of the Harrington Ditch, and to upgrade and expand the city's wastewater plant. The Town of Garfield needs to upgrade its water system for additional commercial capacity.

Lake—Both the water and wastewater district have significant upgrades to their facilities planned in Lake County. Additional water storage is being discussed throughout the county. There are multiple bridge and culvert replacement project on high impact county roads that need attention in the next five years. Lake County would also like to work towards expansion of the Airborne Snow Observatory (ASO). The ASO program uses remote sensing lasers on airplanes to precisely measure snow depth and density used to predict seasonal runoff, which is the headwaters for the entire district. Also on the drawing board is a plan to expand and acquire the landfill and make provisions for containing industrial waste.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

In Las Animas County, Trinidad is considering a water treatment plan for Trinidad Lake. Neighboring Huerfano County has an ambitious slate of strategies to address critical infrastructure. The City of Walsenburg seeks to repave U.S. highways, replace aging water and sewer lines, move some government assets out of a flood plain (county project), replace a natural gas transmission line from Trinidad to Walsenburg, consider a new water line to serve the Northlands Area, and widen part of HWY 85/87 to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles. Huerfano County seeks to replace two aging raw water lines from La Veta to Walsenburg and upgrade and repair the Gardner Water and Wastewater System.

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

The Arkansas Valley Conduit (AVC) is the most critical infrastructure project on the Southeastern Plains, and perhaps all of SCEDD. The AVC is a 130-mile pipeline with spurs that would serve as many as 40 communities and 50,000 people east of Pueblo. It will deliver filtered water ready for treatment from Pueblo Reservoir. The AVC will supplement existing water supplies, which face state compliance issues because of salinity or radionuclide contamination. Most of the participants rely on groundwater and need a reliable supply of fresh water.

The cities of the Lower Arkansas Valley have awaited the construction of the AVC for decades. The AVC was authorized by Congress as part of the Fryngpan-Arkansas Project in 1962. It never was built largely because of the inability of participants to repay construction costs. In 2009, Congress amended the original Fry-Ark legislation. The amendment featured a cost-sharing plan with 65 percent federal and 35 percent local funding. The locally funded portion will be repaid by the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District (District) to the federal government over a period of 50 years.

<https://www.secwcd.org/content/arkansas-valley-conduit>

Fort Lyon Canal Company Infrastructure (Bent)—This company and its antecedents have been providing irrigation on the Southeastern Plains since 1860. The largest project that would have multiple benefits for additional users includes a \$10.9 million project to enlarge the Adobe Creek Reservoir, and \$7.4 million project to replace the Upper-Dam, and a \$4.4 million project for phase two earth removal for left bank expansion at Blue Lake.



Other major projects above \$5 million: There are an additional eight projects with a total cost estimate of \$71.5 million to complete. They include water and sewer, power, and bridge programs in this region.

Baca—Springfield has water treatment/distribution needs, including work at the plant, replacement of cast iron pipe, and distribution system looping (\$5.5 million).

Bent—Las Animas Light & Power seeks a 6.23 MW standby generation system (\$5.8 million) and seeks to rebuild the 50-year-old main feed (\$5 million).

Otero—The City of La Junta needs to replace its water main and pump, which have exceeded useful service life expectancy (\$15 million). La Junta seeks to install 4MW worth of natural gas generators at its Industrial Park substation (\$5 million). Otero County is eyeing a \$15 million bridge replacement program. Rocky Ford needs to repair and upgrade its Wastewater Treatment Facility (\$10 million).

Prowers—Lamar is considering a new wastewater treatment facility to allow for expansion of residential and commercial development (\$10 million). Town of Holly is looking at a water treatment facility (\$6 million).

Other projects (includes less than \$5 million and/ or cost estimate to date)—These are detailed in Appendix A.

Baca—Radium remediation (Pritchett), new cell for landfill (Springfield), and wastewater improvements (brick manhole and lamp pole replacement in Springfield),

Bent—flood mitigation (Las Animas), wastewater treatment improvements (Las Animas), Best Management Practice improvements in irrigated fields in Bent and Otero Counties upstream to Las Animas wastewater treatment facility, and water main and line replacements in City of Las Animas water system,

Crowley—200,000-gallon water storage north of Crowley and 300,000-gallon tank north of Ordway, installation of 8” county water line to bypass Ordway, wastewater lift station repair (Town of Crowley), and Ordway Reservoir and non-potable pipeline improvements (Ordway).

Kiowa—Municipal water line upgrades (Haswell) and Wastewater lines and manhole replacements (Eads).

Otero—Replace .25-million-gallon water tank with 1.1-million-gallon elevated tank (La Junta), replacement of north tank transmission line which crosses a canal and the Arkansas River (La Junta), new or rehabbed south booster pump station (La Junta), replacement of sanitary sewer main in historic downtown (Rocky Ford), and water main replacement in downtown (Rocky Ford).

Prowers—Removal of sewer lagoon and replacement with three lagoons (Wiley), wastewater rehabilitation (Holly), and water upgrades (Granada).

Pueblo

Pueblo County is working on capacity building projects to improve sanitation and wastewater in Pueblo West. The city of Pueblo has also identified sanitation, wastewater, and storm water capacity projects across the city.

Workforce Housing Strategies

Housing is one of those issues for which it is not possible to design a single strategy that will serve every sub-region. The Upper Ark has areas with a run-away real estate market so hot that available supply is on the market for days, not months. Yet high land costs and restrictive building costs drive up costs, making affordability the largest hurdle to workforce housing development. With that problem comes how to keep housing affordable. In the absence of deed restrictions and/or land banking, homes built with subsidy achieve instant equity upon changing hands. In contrast, the problem on the Southeastern Plains is a collapse in the new home market. Appraisals are weak with a lack of appraisal comps and economic challenges, and the lack of population makes building a project at scale nearly impossible.

The South Central sub-region has many of the same problems as the Southeastern Plains, though Las Animas County adds a certain extra problem with high demand for workforce housing combined with available land being tied up in tax liens and ownership disputes. Huerfano County has a high demand for starter-home workforce housing and a need for rehabilitation of existing housing stock.

The public process of the CEDS has suggested that SCEDD and its stakeholders be nimble and creative. The nimbleness implies a need for custom-tailored solutions and an emphasis on the 80% and above AMI niche. Creativity is called for due to current state and federal programs geared for a lower target market. In order for SCEDD to implement other strategies that would bring additional high paying, skilled workforces to the district, housing must be addressed.

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

Every county in the public process expressed a need for more affordable housing. Most comments and projects were largely aspirational or in the early stages of conception and planning. In Chaffee County, the Salida Housing Development and Town of Poncha Springs are working on a project for 50 units on the north side of Poncha Springs targeted at 60% of AMI or less. The county housing authority and the community foundation are looking at a \$4.1 million project for 17 units of workforce housing. They are also working on a Collegiate Commons project. The Chaffee County

Economic Development Corporation and Chaffee County Community Foundation are collaborating on a concept in Buena Vista to develop two lots. Lot one would have 30-40 apartments and the second lot would have some townhome units.

In Lake County discussions are underway between the Regional Housing Authority, a local housing coalition, the county, and the City of Leadville on a path forward. The county and the city are considering cost incentives to build workforce housing and rentals. Both the county and City of Leadville are seeking to implement the county housing action plan.

In Fremont County, Cañon City describes housing as an “immediate, pressing need.” There are plans to create a city-wide grant program to fund neighborhood and city-wide beautification housing projects.

Custer County is actively working on the development of a 12-lot attainable housing project. They have recently formalized a County Housing Board and are working with CHFA’s Small Scale Affordable Housing Technical assistance program to assist with helping this project move forward.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Both Huerfano and Las Animas Counties recognized the urgent need for workforce housing. Huerfano Economic Development is working to develop seven lots for workforce housing. Las Animas County has assembled a planning group, and the City of Trinidad recently hired a full-time planner, who will work with SCEDD.

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

Under the leadership of SCEDD and SECED, the six counties and nine municipalities in the sub-region have adopted a workforce housing strategy that is based on a mix of incentives and building to scale. The gist of the incentive strategy is (1) subsidizing horizontal development costs, including tap fees, land, engineering, architecture, entitlement processes, surveying, and title costs, (2) commit to cover these costs for 40 to 70 units. With a project of this scale, and assurances that only presold homes can be built, we can attract a regional developer willing to bear construction loan risks. Between incentives and economies of scale, the developer can drive costs down. The goal is for a retail price point between \$150k and \$200k- per unit that is attainable to the workforce. As the CEDS is being finalized, counties and municipalities are committing to the project using their ARPA funds, a request for qualifications (RFQ) is out to identify several developer finalists. The goal of the program aims to “*Build Stronger Communities through Investments in Housing and Neighborhoods*” by building new workforce housing in qualified census tracts. If 70 units are built, there will be an injection of nearly \$12 million in new workforce housing across the region. While the program is not replicable it represents SCEDD’s commitment to tackling and rebuilding a foundation of economic recovery using federal dollars to make a local difference.

Other housing initiatives uncovered during the CEDs process include:

Otero—A mixed-use commercial and apartment space in the Plaza Block building (La Junta), conversion of a 30-unit motel to 15 two-bedroom apartments (Rocky Ford);

Crowley—create a revolving loan fund to cover appraisal gaps;

Prowers—convert an old motel into college housing by the college foundation to accommodate future growth.

Pueblo County

One of the biggest projects addressing workforce housing in Pueblo is the North Vista Development, projected to add up to 5,000 single family homes to the Pueblo area. The Commission on Housing and Homelessness is working with the city of Pueblo to update zoning to allow for smaller footprint homes, as well as accessory dwelling units built on properties with existing single-family homes. Additionally, this group is working to identify buildings that can be rehabilitated to offer new housing.

NeighborWorks, a non-profit organization, and a for-profit developer are collaborating on a nearly 1,000-unit development on the west side that would include a mix of market rate and, affordable housing. They have requested ARPA assistance from the City of Pueblo.

Education/Work Force Development

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

A variety of strategies are under consideration in this sub-region:

Chaffee—Salida School District expects there will be a need for a new elementary school within the city limits of Poncha Springs. *Custer*—Pueblo Community College and local schools are discussing college offerings at the high school and vocational opportunities for the non-college bound.

Fremont—Fremont Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) is seeking to redevelop a downtown building to accommodate its expanding tech startup incubator and the city of Cañon City is looking to develop a manufacturing incubator and a makerspace. The city's Main Street Project is working on a community kitchen/restaurant incubator.

Lake—School district is considering building a new intermediate school at a cost between \$10M and \$14M.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

In Huerfano County, the school districts and the county plan to launch workforce training strategies. La Veta's RE2 School District is planning a greenhouse/gardening project. Huerfano RE1 School District is planning an early childhood development and childcare facility. The districts are looking to cooperate with a regional trade school. The county is seeking to develop apprenticeship, internship, and mentoring programs, as well as seeking the ACT Work-Ready Community designation.

In Las Animas County, the state college is interested in a building trades program and the county would like to re-establish a Colorado Law Enforcement Training Academy. Trinidad State College is working with the New Elk Mine to train high school graduates for job openings as this newly reopened coal mine steps up production.

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

SEBREA is the fiscal agent for a sub-region wide strategy—the Southeast Colorado Regional Entrepreneurship program for grades five through twelve. The program has been implemented, but there is a need for continued programming potentially funded by a variety of regional philanthropic organizations.

Other strategies include:

Baca—Southeast Colorado Hospital intends to continue its annual CNA training with the community college to create a nursing pipeline. The hospital also operates training programs for staff.

Bent—The County along with the Bent County Economic Development Foundation are seeking to cooperate in order to develop a regional hazardous materials testing lab at Fort Lyon and will partner with the Small Business Incubator (SBI) for workforce development. They are also looking to develop a community co-working space, children’s learning museum, and perhaps an office location for remote work. Elsie Goines and Leana Gardner are leads for an early childhood center expansion, and CDL Training at Fort Lyon is under consideration.

Crowley—The county school district has an aging high school to replace and a desire to put K-6 students under one roof.

Otero—The City of Rocky Ford, SBDC, local businesses, and other non-profits are pursuing a job certification program for those re-entering the workforce, who do not want to pursue a college track. The Rocky Ford School District has a need for \$47.5 million for a project to replace two aging elementary schools and add a Pre-K through 8th grade addition to the junior-senior high school.

Prowers—Lamar Community College has four projects under consideration: An adult transition program that assists ELL/Adult Basic Ed/GED graduates with vocational or college studies; an employer demand program to provide low-cost training through Lamar Community College; expand the mission of the Makerspace program into a small business incubator; and develop apprenticeships in partnership with local business and industry.

Pueblo County

PEDCO is working with PCC on talent readiness programs targeting industrial arts and manufacturing. PEDCO would like to expand talent readiness on the CSU-Pueblo campus as well. Additionally, PEDCO works with the Pueblo County high school’s academy of manufacturing, agriculture, and construction on workforce knowledge, skills, and readiness. PEDCO would like to expand similar programs into District 60, covering the city of Pueblo. In 2020, the Pueblo Food Project worked with Roncalli Middle School in Pueblo to develop a 7th grade STEM curriculum around hydroponic farming techniques. They had a successful pilot program at Roncalli in early 2021. In the 2021-2022 school year, the Pueblo Food Project is running the program at Roncalli, as well as at Pueblo Academy of Arts. The Food Project hopes to expand to reach all public school 7th grade students in Pueblo, at four middle schools.

The Pueblo Food Project is a partner with the Boys and Girls Club and I Will in a NASA grant the Boys and Girls Club and I Will received to bring technology and agriculture skills and knowledge to underserved youth in the community.

Renewable Energy

In 2010, Colorado passed the Community Solar Gardens Act (HB 1342), which enabled the statewide, shared renewable pilot program. The Community Solar Gardens Act encourages creation of community solar gardens by investor-owned utilities (IOUs), with a 5% low-income carve-out. A number of these projects are described below.

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

A handful of smaller projects are under consideration. In Chaffee County, Greenshine New Energy is considering expansion for the Poncha Springs North Solar Farm. In Custer County, Lead Solutions is in the conception stage for a solar garden coop to create energy credits for locally connected utilities. Lake County is also pursuing a solar garden, where Xcel is in the lead. In Fremont County, the 4 Mile Special District is planning a community solar array.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Las Animas County is the site for two potential projects. San Isabel Electric Association and Las Animas County are cooperating to complete a second solar farm project—Spanish Peaks. Trinidad Community College is expanding on-site solar. Huerfano County is seeking to complete an energy performance contracting program and a possible community solar garden.

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

Transmission lines across the sub-region are needed for growth in the renewable energy industry sector. Projects are being considered in three of the six counties, with the largest project a City of La Junta 10 MW solar generation and 5 MW natural gas generation project (estimated cost: \$10 million). In Bent County, there are plans for a two solar fields onsite at the Ft. Lyon Campus. City of Las Animas Electric is seeking to add solar as part of a project to replace generators. In Prowers County government is leading a project to secure electric transmission lines. Kiowa, Prowers, and Baca are all seeing development of wind and solar projects in the next five years. A regional transmission line is the first phase of the expansion of these projects.

Pueblo County

The EVRAZ steel mill in Pueblo built a solar farm to power their new long rail line. This project gave PEDCO insight into ways to support and develop renewable energy projects in Pueblo while continuing to prioritize their high skill, high pay manufacturing jobs mandate, by encouraging incoming manufacture companies to include wind or solar power in their site development. The eastern and southeastern plains of Colorado are one of the nation's best areas for wind and solar generation.

Xcel Energy is in the process of building new transmission lines to encourage construction of wind and solar power plants, in order to bring more low-cost electricity to the region, to help meet the needs of the state. They are in the beginning phases of a six-phase construction and expansion effort. The Tundra substation is an existing substation in eastern Pueblo County that has been earmarked to connect renewable energy resources to communities to the east in Crowley and Kiowa counties, and north into unincorporated El Paso County.

Recreation and Tourism

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

Chaffee—Specific projects under consideration include:

Poncha Springs -- Poncha Meadows pocket park , CR 127/Hwy 50 pedestrian trail crossing, Monarch Crest Trail Connector or mountain bikes; Buena Vista -- Parks and Rec Intergenerational River Park Complex, including pickleball and a trail, Arizona Street Trail and Bridge, Whipple Trail Reconstruction, freshening of rodeo grounds, and Forest Square Park rehabilitation;

Salida—Centennial Park Skatepark construction, Hot Springs outdoor soaking pool, and Salida Mountain/SPOT Trail Highway Crossings;

Chaffee County—a fairground renovation.

Custer—Trails For All will be working their master plan to improve area trails, including priorities such as Around-The-Town Trails and the Silver Cliff Ranch Trail. All Aboard Westcliffe has a \$3.5 million conceptual plan for their non-profit railroad museum. *Other*—Westcliffe is considering tennis courts, and there are plans in Wetmore for a playground.

Fremont—Cañon City—The city is continuing to develop its trails and recreation amenities, seeks to provide camping and boat ramp amenities in the Black Hills Open Space, build a pedestrian overpass at Third Street across Highway 50 and a related connection, improve signage for downtown directory and historic walking tour, and relocate the parks facility to consolidate services, and open a property for commercial development. Cañon City Recreation District—They have a concept to construct a public amenity to attract and retain families. Fremont County CSU Extension—They are seeking to make upgrades to Pathfinder Park. *Other*—Florence Mountain Park is in the planning stage for the expansion of its trail system on public lands.

Lake—A consortium of outdoor recreation organizations and Lake County Recreation are seeking to enhance trailheads and connections for ATV, cross-country skiing, and snowmobile use on neighboring public lands. The county and city are working collaboratively to fix or rebuild the existing pool complex. The county would like to replace its recreational center/swimming pool.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

The largest regional project is building out a set of pedestrian and bike lanes that will unlock the outdoor recreational potential of the Highway of Legends. This \$110 million project is a joint effort with South Central Council of Government and the two counties.

Huerfano County—Repair/upgrade community center and improve Fiesta Park; expand conservation of land as open space; increase the quality and quantity of festivals and community events; upgrade train depot for visitors center; purchase San Luis/Rio Grande Railroad; assessment of Wild Waters Aquatic Park; develop an integrated systems of parks, trails and open spaces; create a Riverwalk along the Cuchara River from Fiesta Park to Bear Creek Road; redevelop Cuchara Mountain Park into a regional attraction; expand the Gardner Community Center; expand child care; develop a destination shooting range; and implement Southern Mountain Loop Trail System. One of the major projects for Huerfano County is to restore and reimagine the Fox Theatre in Walsenburg.

Las Animas – Provide access to Bureau of Land Management and state lands, which are landlocked near Fisher’s Peak State Park; City of Trinidad—improvements at Simpson’s Rest; building a water park in the city; establishing a Riverwalk in Trinidad; and remodel the Trinidad Water Works Building into an Outdoor Recreation Center; Las Animas County—Las Animas Fairground improvements - including grandstand, playing fields, camping, events center, commercial kitchen, and more.

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

Baca—Baca County considering \$700,000 in fairground improvements in Springfield; Town of Springfield - \$300k project for a new pool liner,; design and construct a miniature golf course.

Bent—Bent County and DOLA—The Southeastern Plains Arkansas River Trail from Fort Lyon to John Martin and municipalities is at the concept and planning stage. Colorado Parks and Wildlife—They are seeking to install and maintain a fish screen on Adobe Creek Reservoir—Blue Lake. Bent County and BCDF—Seeking to install a paved bike path from Bent County Courthouse in Las Animas to Boggsville. Other—Las Animas Recreation Area, multi-use county fairground, and John Martin Boat Ramp.

Crowley—Crowley County and Ordway— Considering formation of a recreation district. Crowley County Schools— Considering an all-weather track and upgrades to football field, as well as recreation facility and bathroom upgrades. Crowley County—Considering upgrades to Crowley County Fairgrounds and a Lake Meredith boat ramp upgrade. Ordway is considering a dog park, renovation/rehabilitation of North Park, and a new playground at South Park.

Kiowa—Multiple projects for the fairgrounds and their lead project is an effort to create a Great Plains Reservoir Recreation Area.

Otero—La Junta has several projects under consideration, including the conversion of two city blocks into a soccer field; providing needed equipment upgrades for restaurant at golf course; upgrades and repairs to the Koshare Indian Museum/Kiva—a 75-year-old facility; and upgrade equipment at the Armory. Arkansas Valley Fair Board—They seek an estimated \$2.3 million in repairs and renovations for the fairgrounds in Rocky Ford. The county is eying public access to Bent’s Fort via Highway 50 with a walking bridge across the Arkansas River, with walking paths, picnicking, and birding opportunities

Prowers—Lamar is working on several projects, including adding a soccer field to Escondido Park, making improvements at North Gateway Park, including an additional campground, rehabilitate WPA structures at historic Willow Creek Park, and rehabilitate historic locomotive at visitor center. Granada would like to convert an abandon ditch alignment into a walking trail.

Pueblo

Pueblo County is uniquely situated at a transportation crossroads, within a two-hour drive of outdoor recreation highlights. The county is known for its year-around mild climate, frequently

showcased in billboards highlighting their 300 days of sunshine a year. The Greater Chamber of Commerce would like to conduct a marketing campaign highlighting Pueblo's position as a home base from which to enjoy all the outdoor activities for which Colorado is known.

Similarly, PEDCO is working to attract manufacturers of outdoor recreation products, such as recreational vehicles, paddleboards, and similar, highlighting the ease of transporting materials into Pueblo and finished products out, as well as having access to ideal environments in which to test and demonstrate outdoor recreational equipment. PEDCO is also exploring the possibility of developing or attracting outdoors clothing manufacturers interested in exploring the possibilities of manufacturing such clothing from hemp.

Health Care/Public Health/ Mental Health

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

Sol Vista Mental Health is looking to expand services in the Upper Arkansas, including expanding their office in Leadville and campus improvements/additions in other counties. Projects specific to other counties include:

There are projects in Appendix A that need more details.

Chaffee—expansion of Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center; and

Lake—26,000 square foot expansion of office space in Leadville for St. Vincent
Custer-

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

Both counties would like to see a mental health/substance abuse and treatment facility. One of the likely locations is the Lathrop Park Youth Camp. The Bi-County Health Department is pursuing discussions.

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

Three projects have been identified on the Southeastern Plains. In the public meetings, a commenter suggested that Bent County needed an urgent care center. Crowley County schools are looking to find a partner to provide better mental health for their students. Springfield Hospital in Baca is looking at a \$12 million to \$15 million remodel/rehab of a building addition.

Pueblo

No specific projects were identified in Pueblo County.

Transportation

Federal and state road and bridge projects fall under the purview of the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Each of the counties in SCEDD participate in CDOT Transportation Planning Regions (TPR). The TPRs have detailed plans on major infrastructure and road improvement projects. This process is heavily vetted both by the elected officials in the region as

well as the public. This CEDS excludes these projects because CDOT, working with its federal and local TPRs, have detailed plans for the entire district. Therefore, this CEDS update focuses on local road and bridge projects, airports, regional transportation, and infrastructure, such as EV charging stations.

If any conflicts exist between the TPR regional plans and this CEDS update, the TPR recommendations shall prevail and should be relied on for planning and future implementation.

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

Airport, highway, and rail projects predominate in the Upper Ark sub-region.

Chaffee—Central Colorado Regional Airport—They are several proposed improvements, including fence line and security gate relocation, rehab of apron tie-down areas, and a \$3 million taxiway rehabilitation project. The Salida Airport has several runway and taxiway projects on the horizon, as well as an update to their Master Plan. Chaffee County—The county seeks to improve the road access to Browns Canyon National Monument, replace the Granite Bridge, and move forward with the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) project. Highway 50—In both Poncha Springs and Salida, there is a need for streetscaping improvements, including trail crossing to federal public lands, which are championed by the respective communities.

Custer—CCEDC—They are taking the lead on a regional van/bus service study to lead to meeting limited medical transport needs. Strategies identified include airport improvements, including a helipad at a location to be determined. The county is also interested in securing EV charging stations along the Frontier Scenic byway. Trails for All—Their master plan has a component to improve bike lanes on Hwy 96 and 69.

Fremont—Fremont County -- Two airport projects were cited, including security and storage, water upgrades and hangar redevelopment. Two additional projects including the need for county, medical transportation and rail access for freight in Florence.

Lake—The Airport Advisory Board seeks some expansion of the Lake Airport, EV charging stations, and Lake County transit needs medical transportation and regional bus connections, as well as a Bustang connection from Chaffee County.

South Central (Huerfano, Las Animas)

The statewide effort to develop passenger rail from Wyoming to Pueblo and Trinidad is on the list of top priorities. The Southwest Chief already runs through the area, but may be rerouted.

Las Animas County—They are seeking funds to do a re-paving project at the airport.

Huerfano—South Central COG—Seeks to expand intercity bus services to Walsenburg and La Veta, expand paratransit and on-demand service to Cuchara and Gardner, and complete a regional transportation assessment for rail and bus; Huerfano County—Seeks bike lanes on HWY 69, locate a passenger rail station in Walsenburg, restore scenic railroad service via the San Luis and Rio

Grande Railroad, and make improvements at Spanish Peaks Airport; State Highway of Legends—Seeks to install EV charging stations; and Walsenburg—Seeks additional turn lanes off of HWY 85/87 to accommodate traffic turning into businesses.

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

One of the common elements of several of the counties is a need to increase access to rail for agricultural uses. It is not reflected in a specific project but suggests this is an avenue that will take some planning to examine.

Kiowa—The county seeks to improve transit services for medical transportation and food delivery.

Otero—City of La Junta is looking to do three projects at the airport and a fourth to create a transit center to serve Amtrak and bus service into La Junta. The airport projects include additional airport hangars, the rehabilitation of a WWII hangar for a museum, and \$4.1 million to mill and rebuild two runways.

Prowers—Lamar/Prowers County has a continuing priority to create an alternative truck route around the city for US 287. Lamar is considering a \$2 million project for converting hangar space to living quarters for medics and seeks to add required security and infrastructure to the airport.

Pueblo

The Front Range Passenger Rail Project (FRPR) aims to develop passenger rail service for Front Range communities from Fort Collins to Pueblo. FRPR will provide a safe, efficient, and reliable transportation option for travel between major population centers and destinations along the Colorado Front Range. Additionally, the project envisions this rail system will become the backbone for connecting and expanding rail and transit options across the state.

PEDCO is aggressively marketing Pueblo as a rail industry community and would like to attract manufacturers associated with this industry to Pueblo. Pueblo has the benefit of a up to date rail yard with capacity, as well as sitting on a major highway crossroads (I-25 running north-south, and state Hwy 50 running east-west).

PuebloPlex, located on the Pueblo Chemical Depot, is working with Transportation Technology Center, Inc to bring new concepts in rail transportation to the table.

Institutional/ Local Government Facility Infrastructure

Upper Arkansas (Fremont, Chaffee, Custer, Lake)

Chaffee—There is a need for a satellite library in Poncha Springs and local developers are trying to interest the post office there in relocating. Buena Vista seeks a new town hall and police station, while the county would like to add an administration addition to the courthouse and a new EMS public safety building.

Custer—Fremont County Department of Health and Human Services seeks improvements on its building to improve safety and provide transitional housing for homeless people. The county is considering a new facility for the coroner and needs update to the Cotopaxi shop.

Lake County—The county needs either a new or retrofitted justice center complex at a cost upwards of \$20 million.

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

Baca—The nearly 50-year-old Baca County jail needs replacement and Southeast Colorado Hospital needs to remodel or replace on the current building site.

Otero—The largest project here is a District Court building that a feasibility study has revealed to cost \$38 million. The current space currently at the Sheriff's Department is in bad repair. Also, the La Junta Police Department needs a cover for an overhead cover for a training facility.

Pueblo

Pueblo Transit would like to put in place a free transportation program for school age children (K-12). The Pueblo Zoo, owned by the city of Pueblo, needs to upgrade and update their security system, which will necessitate improved broadband coverage on the campus.