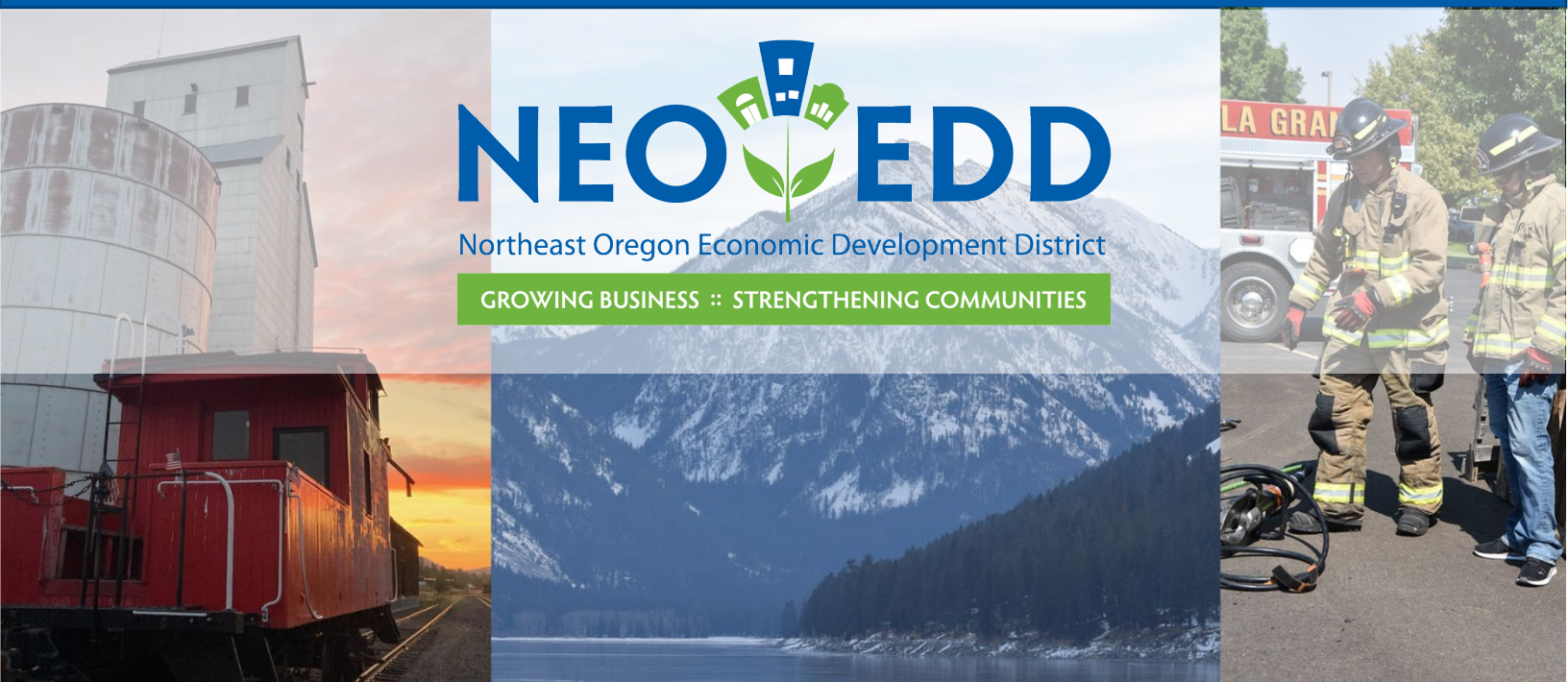
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2023-2028



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The Institute for Policy Research & Engagement (IPRE) is a research center affiliated with the School of Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon. It is an interdisciplinary organization that assists Oregon communities by providing planning and technical assistance to help solve local issues and improve the quality of life for Oregon residents. The role of IPRE is to link the skills, expertise, and innovation of higher education with the transportation, economic development, and environmental needs of communities and regions in the State of Oregon, thereby providing service to Oregon and learning opportunities to the students involved.

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U.S. Economic Development Administration

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Photo Credits

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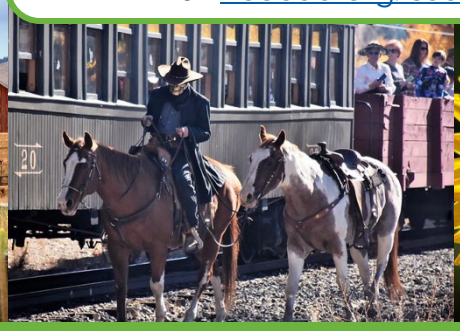
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Visit neoedd.org/ceds or call 541-426-3598 to stay involved



WHAT IS A CEDS?

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) describes the ecnonomic development priorities for a federally-designated region (in this case Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties) over a five-year period.

The CEDS helps partners at the local and regional levels align their work around shared priorities.

WHAT IS NEOEDD?

The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) is designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to work on economic development efforts in Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties. NEOEDD advocates for, supports, and coordinates regionally significant economic development activities in the region. Every five years, it is responsible for updating the CEDS.

Strengths

- Human capital
- Institutional assets
- Physical assets
- Cultural assets

Weaknesses

- Affordability and income
- Infrastructure
- Regulatory environment
- Skills, education, and opportunity

Opportunities

- Innovations in building, manufacturing, and agriculture
- Abundant natural resources
- Changing demographics
- Collaborative spirit

Threats

- State and federal policies that are not designed for rural
- Long-term trends like a changing climate, population decline, online shopping, and recreation overuse
- Capacity-constrained, siloed, and disjointed economic development efforts

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

WORKFORCE

HOUSING

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE

2023-38 CEDS | TOP PRIORITY ACTIONS

WORKFORCE	Project/Initiative	Lead	Partners
	Youth Development: Promote expansive vision of education pathways via a career planning program	Eastern Oregon Workforce Board or WorkSource Oregon	Baker Technical Institute, community colleges, trade schools, high schools/school districts
	Adult Preparation & Growth: Encourage employers to offer more on-the-job training	Eastern Oregon Workforce Board or WorkSource Oregon	Baker Technical Institute, community colleges, trade schools
	Coordination, Leadership, and Policy: Encourage employee retention; work to expand childcare	Eastern Oregon Workforce Board or WorkSource; Early Learning Hubs	City Economic Development leads, employers; Schools, employers, NEOEDD

HOUSING	Project/Initiative	Lead	Partners
	Coordinated Housing Strategy: Establish a regional housing resource center	NEOEDD (pending funding)	REV at EOU, Wallowa Resources, DLCD, cities and counties, housing authority, foundations, Dept of Housing and Community Services

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	Project/Initiative	Lead	Partners
	Funding: Develop a financing program for small loans and grants ($25k or less)	NEOEDD (pending funding)	Public/nonprofit + private partnership, CRA funds (banks)
	General Coordination and Advocacy: Convene annual business development summits to ensure better alignment of strategy	Business Oregon	NEOEDD, cities, counties, economic development corporations, nonprofits, EOU, BMCC, BTI, Regional Solutions Team, InREV
	General Coordination and Advocacy: Pursue a responsible tourism strategy	Eastern Oregon Visitors Association	Tourism businesses, DMOs, nonprofits, local groups, non-tourism businesses, cities, counties, Regional Solutions Team, Travel Oregon, NEOEDD

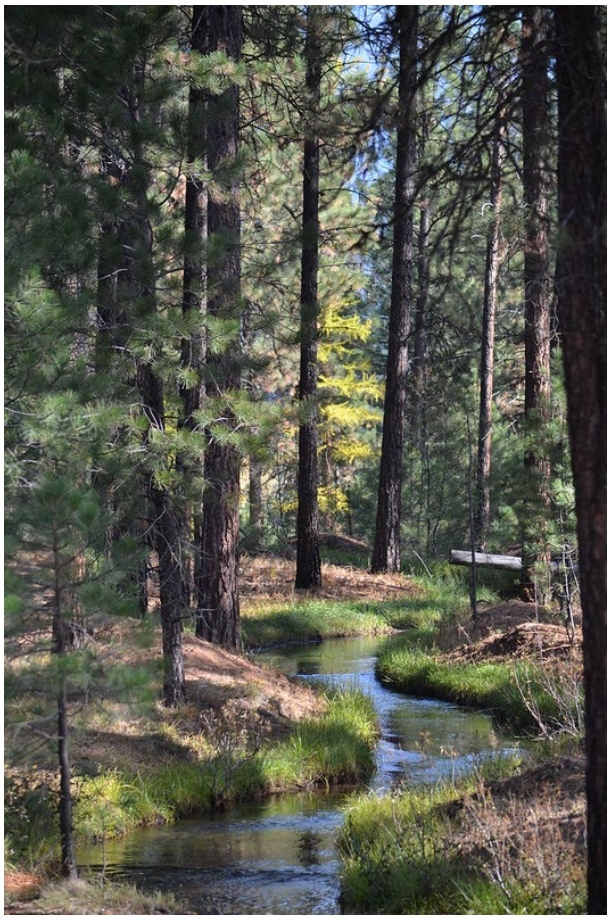
INFRASTRUCTURE	Project/Initiative	Lead	Partners
	Sector Strategies: Increase broadband connections in rural areas	Oregon Broadband Office	NEOEDD, Broadband Action Team, providers/ISPs, Regional Solutions Team, counties, health care organizations, educators
	Development Strategy: Increase grantwriting capacity via a pilot resource-sharing collaboration between jurisdictions	NEOEDD (pending funding)	Participating jurisdictions

1 | INTRODUCTION

Every five years, the Northeast Oregon region, comprised of Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties, comes together to articulate our economic development priorities. Through this process, we create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, or CEDS, that we agree will guide our efforts around economic development for the next five years.

The CEDS is an important planning tool that helps coordinate efforts to strengthen our economy. It relies on the input of community members and economic development partners, thereby ensuring that its priorities reflect the wisdom of the community.

This document presents our region's 2023-2028 CEDS.



WHAT IS A CEDS?

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) contributes to effective economic development in America's communities and regions through a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning process.

The CEDS provides the capacity-building foundation by which the public sector, working in conjunction with other economic actors (individuals, firms, industries), creates the environment for regional economic prosperity.

-US Economic Development Administration

WHAT IS NEOEDD?

The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) is designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) to work on economic development efforts in Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties. NEOEDD advocates for, supports, and coordinates regionally significant economic development activities in the region. The NEOEDD Board and their economic development partners play lead roles in defining regional community and economic development issues, opportunities, vision, goals, and work programs.

Throughout the development of the CEDS, we centered our efforts on the four core factors the U.S. Economic Development Administration highlights as critical for a successful economic development strategy:

Economic Resilience - This is the ability to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock or disruption. We began the planning process by identifying areas of stronger and weaker resilience, then targeted actions towards addressing weaker areas.

Climate Resilience - Recognizing the increasing severity of climate-related impacts on our community, we tailored infrastructure and other actions to mitigate risk and increase the resilience of the resources we rely on for daily life and economic activity.

Workforce Development - While economic development efforts often center around support for businesses and employers, our economy is nothing without the people driving those enterprises. This strategy draws on the expertise and activities of the Eastern Oregon Workforce Board, WorkSource Oregon, and our educational institutions. Those involved with the CEDS development process agreed that attention to developing and properly supporting our workforce is key to the region's success, and this strategy therefore highlights Workforce as one of four main strategic priority areas.

Equity - Economic development efforts should benefit and improve the lives of all residents, regardless of their identities or situation in life, yet we continue to see disparities between demographic groups in economic outcomes. While the phrase "a rising tide lifts all boats" is commonly deployed in the economic development field, we know that some boats are at structural disadvantages that prevent them from rising along with their fellows. We focused planning conversations around the needs of identity groups that tend to experience worse economic outcomes compared to their peers. This led to a focus on actions that holistically support our workforce and aim to make basic needs like housing more accessible.

Our action plans highlight which of these four key factors are supported by each action.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CEDS

The 2023-2028 NEOEDD CEDS is organized into the Comprehensive Strategy and the Appendices.

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

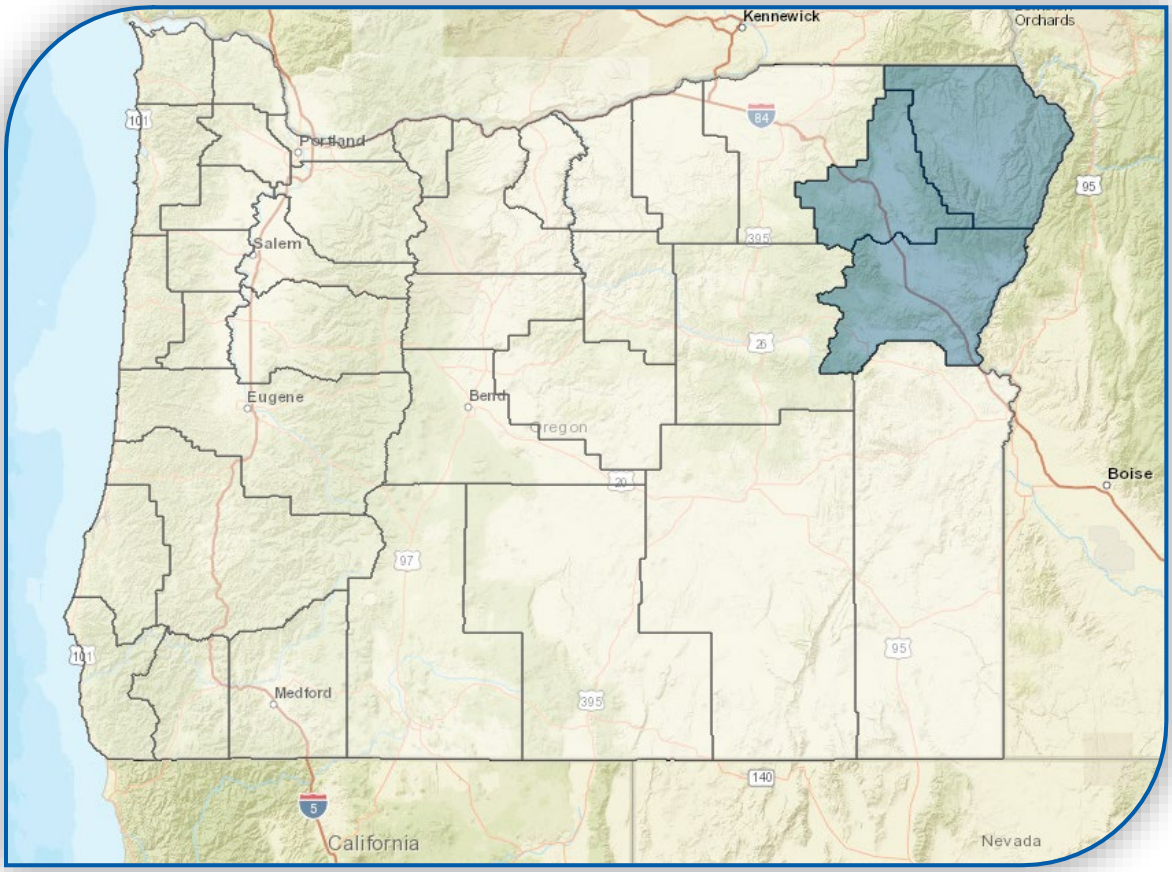
- **Our Region** - Presents a summary of the region's economic development conditions, including an assessment of the strength of our economic resilience, and a summary of the region's strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats (SWOT).
- **Strategic Priorities** - Outlines the four strategic priorities identified for our region and some strategies to move those priorities forward.
- **Action Plans** - Provides a set of the most important actions for each strategic priority area that will help us address issues and leverage opportunities. It also includes a set of metrics that will help us track progress over time.
- **Working Together** - Describes the roles and responsibilities for implementing the CEDS over the next five years, as well as suggestions for how to keep the strategy current and present in the work of our regional partners.

APPENDICES (SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT)

- **Appendix A: Additional Projects** - During the CEDS development, we identified projects/initiatives that are already happening and ongoing, as well as projects/initiatives that partners would like to pursue, but didn't set as a top priority. This appendix describes existing and ongoing efforts and lists additional actions to consider that were not top or middle priority.
- **Appendix B: Current Condition Details** - The "Our Region" chapter summarizes some key characteristics of our region. This appendix provides detailed data tables for demographics, the economy, and infrastructure.
- **Appendix C: Economic Resilience Assessment** - Building economic resilience was a foundational value when developing this strategy. This appendix provides a detailed assessment of the "signal strength" of various factors that contribute to economic resilience.
- **Appendix D: CEDS Development and Input** - We built this strategy with input from hundreds of community members and dozens of economic development partners. This appendix describes the process of developing the CEDS and includes data from various surveys.

2 | OUR REGION

This chapter provides an overview of our three-county region, including geographic characteristics, major industries, and a snapshot of current demographic and economic conditions. Understanding the region's current economic conditions establishes a foundation for the Strategic Priorities and Action Plans that follow. The chapter also includes the results of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis that summarizes the extensive feedback gathered from various community stakeholders, and which guided the process of identifying the strategic priorities for the 2023-2028 CEDS.



Our District occupies the northeastern-most corner of Oregon. Washington State lies to the North and Idaho to the East.

REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

GEOGRAPHY

Our region covers Baker, Wallowa, and Union Counties; combined, this area encompasses roughly 8,000 square miles of land and a population of over 50,000. Located in the upper northeast corner of Oregon, the District borders Washington State to the north and Idaho to the east. About half of the total land area is publicly owned, including the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Umatilla National Forest, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, Hells Canyon Wilderness Area, and the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, all of which fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service.

Northeast Oregon is known for its diverse and breathtaking landscapes, which draw over a million visitors to the area each year. The region's topography consists of fertile valleys, high mountain ranges, pristine lakes, deep river canyons, forests, and rangelands; these features endow the region with a wealth of cultural, recreational, and agricultural resources.

The region is rural throughout, with fewer than 10 residents per square mile. Interstate 84 and the Union Pacific Railroad connect Union and Baker Counties to other parts of Oregon, while Wallowa County is served by state highways. The Wallowa-Union Railroad Authority (WURA) hosts a seasonal tourist train on a portion of the corridor between Elgin and Joseph. The region is connected by three general aviation airports: a state airport (Joseph), two municipal airports (Enterprise, Baker City), and one county airport (Union). For regularly-scheduled commercial air service, residents must travel outside the region.

DEMOGRAPHIC MAKEUP

Northeast Oregon's population is less racially diverse, older, and has slower population growth than the state as a whole. Forecasts predict long-term population decline beginning in 2025, which poses a threat to the region's workforce: labor shortages are expected unless more residents enter the workforce. On average, the region has a

higher high school graduation rate than the state, but has fewer residents with advanced degrees.

In this chapter, we provide demographic and economic profiles for the **three-county region** and **each individual county**. Additional data relating to current regional and county-level conditions can be found in Appendix B.

ECONOMIC BASE

Northeast Oregon's economy continues to rely heavily on natural resources, agriculture, and timber. Manufacturing and tourism also represent key sources of economic activity for the area. The region has a high number of small business establishments and self-employed residents, which provide a key link in the circulation of capital within the region. All three counties have seasonal economies: tourism activities and employment are reduced significantly during the winter months.

This chapter highlights four prominent sectors within the three-county region: **Leisure, Hospitality, & Travel**, **Agriculture & Timber**, **Manufacturing**, and **Small Business & Self-Employment**. All data, unless otherwise specified, represents values for Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties *combined*. Additional statistical information relating to these industries can be found in Appendix B.

THREE-COUNTY REGION

Total Population (2021)	Land Area	Population per Sq. Mile
50,588	**8,248 sq. mi.**	**6.1**
0.4% increase from 2016	5% of Oregon's land area	1.2% of Oregon's population

Age

Slight Growth in Younger and Older Populations. The under-18 and over-55 demographics each grew by about 5% between 2016 and 2021. Combined, the two age groups comprise **59%** of the region's total population – a 4% increase in a five-year period.

Education

Few Advanced Degrees. In 2021, only **25%** of residents held an advanced degree. For comparison, 35% of all Oregonians hold advanced degrees. Notably, in 2022, the region's high school graduation rate was **86%**, five percentage points higher than the statewide rate.

Cost-Burdened Households

High Cost of Living. Roughly **25%** of all households in the region were cost-burdened in 2021, meaning that they spent 30% or more of their income on housing. While statistics indicate that the proportion of cost-burdened residents has declined by 7% since 2016, high living costs remain a serious concern for many households. This five-year decline may be the result of an increase in average income among all residnts, possibly due to an influx in retirees to the area.

Race & Ethnicity

Increasing Racial Diversity. The number of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) residents grew by **34%** from 2016 to 2021, now comprising **13%** of the region's total population. 19% of all Oregonians are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.

Population Forecast

Long-Term Decline. Portland State University predicts that population counts for the three-county district will fall by nearly **2%** between 2025 and 2045. While decline poses a threat to economic resilience, these projections rely on demographic assumptions about the future that may not hold true; recent years have seen minor population growth, which may continue.

Source: American Community Survey; PSU Population Research Center

THREE-COUNTY REGION

Economic Activity *(2021)*

Average Annual Wage	Labor Force	Unemployment
$43,393	**18,437**	**4.7%**
67% of statewide average	1% of the state's workforce	Down from 5.6% in 2016

Top Industries *(by employment)*

Government Sector	**21%** of total employment	**125%** of region's average annual wage	**29%** wage growth*
Education & Health Services	**17%** of total employment	**106%** of region's average annual wage	**14%** wage *decline**
Retail Trade	**14%** of total employment	**72%** of region's average annual wage	**26%** wage growth*
Manufacturing	**11%** of total employment	**103%** of region's average annual wage	**13%** wage *decline**
Leisure & Hospitality	**10%** of total employment	**48%** of region's average annual wage	**30%** wage growth*

*Percent change over a five-year period (2016-2021)

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (2021)

The Northeast Economic Development District, comprised of Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties, saw average wages increase by **24%** between 2016 and 2021. Total wages for the region also grew by **27%** during this period, though the size of the overall labor force remained relatively unchanged. The Education & Health Services and Manufacturing industries saw a noticeable decline in wages, while other top sectors experienced considerable wage growth. To contextualize this growth (or decline), cumulative inflation rates rose nationwide by 15% between 2016 and 2021.

BAKER COUNTY

Total Population (2021)	Land Area	Population per Sq. Mile
16,539	**3,067 sq. mi.**	**5.5**
3.2% increase from 2016	37% of region's land area	33% of region's population

Age

Growing Younger and Older Populations. Baker County's share of under-18 and over-55 residents grew collectively by **5%** between 2016 and 2021. Combined, these age groups make up **62%** of the county's population. Such changes increase the county's dependence on its working population, who care for its youngest and oldest members.

Education

Few Advanced Degrees. In 2021, only **24%** of residents held an advanced degree. For comparison, 35% of all Oregonians hold advanced degrees. Notably, in 2022, the county's high school graduation rate was **90%**, nine percentage points higher than the statewide rate.

Cost-Burdened Households

High Cost of Living. Financial insecurity and unaffordable housing remain significant concerns for Baker County; in 2021, **nearly one-third** of all households were cost-burdened, meaning that they spend at least 30% of their income on homeownership or rental costs. For comparison, 14% of all Oregonians were cost-burdened in 2021.

Race & Ethnicity

Increasing Racial Diversity. Baker County's BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) population nearly **doubled** between 2016 and 2021, now comprising **13.4%** of all residents. 19% of all Oregonians are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.

Population Forecast

Long-Term Decline. Though the county grew by 2% between 2016 and 2021, its population is expected to shrink over time, with a forecasted **3% decrease** between 2025 and 2045. However, these projections rely on demographic assumptions about the future that may not hold true; recent years have seen minor population growth, which may continue.

Source: American Community Survey; PSU Population Research Center

BAKER COUNTY

Economic Activity *(2021)*

Average Annual Wage	Labor Force	Unemployment
$42,430	**5,652**	**4.5%**
66% of statewide average	31% of the region's workforce	Down from 5.6% in 2016

Top Industries *(by employment)*

	Government Sector	**20%** of total employment	**125%** of county average annual wage	**27%** wage growth*
	Education & Health Services	**18%** of total employment	**113%** of county average annual wage	**12%** wage *decline**
	Retail Trade	**15%** of total employment	**72%** of county average annual wage	**29%** wage growth*
	Manufacturing	**11%** of total employment	**120%** of county average annual wage	**10%** wage *decline**
	Leisure & Hospitality	**10%** of total employment	**46%** of county average annual wage	**16%** wage growth*

*Percent change over a five-year period (2016-2021)

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (2021)

Baker County's total workforce increased by **5%** between 2016 and 2021, and average wages increased by **21%**. (For reference, cumulative inflation grew by 15% during this time.) Such growth is an encouraging sign for the county, which faces projected long-run population decreases. However, both the Education & Health Services and Manufacturing industries suffered from a decline in wages, and Lesiure & Hospitality saw a **7%** *decrease* in employment. Government employment also fell by **4%** over this five-year period.

UNION COUNTY

Total Population (2021)	Land Area	Population per Sq. Mile
26,295	**2,036 sq. mi.**	**12.9**
1.7% decrease from 2016	25% of region's land area	52% of region's population

Age

Growing Younger and Older Populations. Union County's share of under-18 and over-55 residents grew collectively by 3% between 2016 and 2021. Combined, these age groups make up 56% of the county's population.

Education

Few Advanced Degrees. In 2021, only **24%** of residents held an advanced degree. For comparison, 35% of all Oregonians hold advanced degrees. Notably, the share of residents with advanced degrees grew by 9% between 2016 and 2021. In 2022, the county had a high school graduation rate of **80%**, one percentage point below the statewide rate.

Cost-Burdened Households

High Cost of Living. Financial insecurity and unaffordable housing remain significant concerns for Union County; in 2021, an estimated **27%** of all households were cost-burdened, meaning that they spent at least 30% of their income on homeownership or rental costs. An increase in average income may be further underestimating the actual percent of cost-burdened residents. For comparison, 14% of all Oregonians were cost-burdened in 2021.

Race & Ethnicity

Increasing Racial Diversity. Union County's BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) population grew by nearly **20%** between 2016 and 2021. As of 2021, residents of color made up **14%** of the county's total population. 19% of all Oregonians are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.

Population Forecast

Long-Term Stability Expected. Though the county's population shrank by 1.7% between 2016 and 2021, long-run projections predict a **1.6% *increase*** overall between 2025 and 2045. However, these long-term forecasts contain a high margin of error and should be reevaluated periodically based on demographic changes.

Source: American Community Survey; PSU Population Research Center

UNION COUNTY

Economic Activity *(2021)*

Average Annual Wage	Labor Force	Unemployment
$45,411	**10,097**	**4.6%**
71% of statewide average	55% of the region's workforce	Down from 5.4% in 2016

Top Industries *(by employment)*

Government Sector	**21%** of total employment	**119%** of county average annual wage	**29%** wage growth*
Education & Health Services	**17%** of total employment	**117%** of county average annual wage	**16%** wage growth *
Retail Trade	**14%** of total employment	**72%** of county average annual wage	**25%** wage growth*
Manufacturing	**13%** of total employment	**120%** of county average annual wage	**13%** wage *decline**
Leisure & Hospitality	**9%** of total employment	**42%** of county average annual wage	**41%** wage growth*

*Percent change over a five-year period (2016-2021)

Source: Quartrly Census of Employment and Wage (2021)

Union County's workforce has remained quite stable over a five-year period. Indeed, **4 of its top 5** industry sectors have seen substantial growth in average wages; only the manufacturing industry experienced a decline in pay between 2016 and 2021. Many of the county's highest-employing sectors offer above-average wages. Notably, however, while Retail Trade and Leisure & Hospitality employ a combined **23%** of the county's workforce, these industries pay well below the county's average annual rate. Employment for these top sectors has remained relatively stable over time; only the government sector has seen a significant loss of workers, with a **4%** *decline* from 2016 to 2021.

WALLOWA COUNTY

Total Population	Land Area	Population per Sq. Mile
7,433	**3,145 sq. mi.**	**2.4**
4.1% increase, 2016-2021	38% of region's land area	15% of region's population

Age

Growing Younger and Older Populations. The number of under-18 and over-55 residents grew by a combined **9%** between 2016 and 2021. Together, these groups comprise **67%** of the county's population, giving Wallowa County the largest amount of "dependent" (young and old) residents per working-age residents compared to the rest of the region.

Education

Few Advanced Degrees. In 2021, nearly **28%** of all county residents held an advanced degree, 7 percentage points below the state's average. Despite this, the number of residents with advanced degrees has grown by 15% since 2016. In 2022, the county had a **90%** high school graduation rate, nine percentage points higher than the statewide rate.

Cost-Burdened Households

Improved Conditions. Statistics indicate that **18%** of the county's households were cost-burdened in 2021, 28% fewer households than in 2016.This five-year decline may be the result of an increase in average income among all residents, possibly due to an influx in retirees to the area. Cost-burdened residents spend at least 30% of their income on homeownership of rental costs.

Race & Ethnicity

Increasing Racial Diversity. From 2016 to 2021, Wallowa County's BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) population grew by **84%** and now comprises 11% of the county's total population. Wallowa County remains the least racially diverse in the three-county region.

Population Forecast

Long-Term Decline. While the county's population grew by 4% between 2016 and 2021, long-run projections predict an overall **9% decrease** in residency between 2025 and 2045. However, these predictions rely on demographic assumptions that may not hold true and should be periodically reevaluated.

WALLOWA COUNTY

Economic Activity *(2021)*

Average Annual Wage	Labor Force	Unemployment
$42,339	**2,688**	**5.1%**
66% of statewide average	15% of the region's workforce	Down from 5.9% in 2016

Top Industries *(by employment)*

Government Sector	**24%** of total employment	**130%** of county average annual wage	**31%** wage growth*
Education & Health Services	**15%** of total employment	**88%** of county average annual wage	**13%** wage *decline* *
Leisure & Hospitality	**10%** of total employment	**54%** of county average annual wage	**37%** wage growth*
Retail Trade	**10%** of total employment	**72%** of county average annual wage	**25%** wage growth*
Natural Resources & Mining	**7%** of total employment	**103%** of county average annual wage	**20%** wage growth*
Construction	**7%** of total employment	**117%** of county average annual wage	**37%** wage growth*

*Percent change over a five-year period (2016-2021)

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (2021)

Most of Wallowa County's top industries have experienced meaningful growth in average annual wages between 2016 and 2021, keeping up with a 15% cumulative inflation rate during this period. The Education & Health Services sector is an exception, having grown in employment by **34%** but *declined* in average annual wages by **13%**. The sector's wages now lie significantly below comparable sector wages for Baker and Union Counties.

Leisure, Hospitality, & Travel

The tourism sector is a prominent industry for the three-county region, employing 10% of all workers. Residents of Northeast Oregon take great pride in the region's natural splendor, outdoor recreation opportunities, and historic attractions.

Industry Overview

1,825,110 overnight visitors (by person-night)

1,776 residents employed annually; **4th**-most employed sector

12% of the region's private workforce

$82,852,000 in GDP each year; **7th**-highest sector by GDP

4.5% of total annual GDP among all private industries

Source: U.S. Census QuickFacts Data (2021); Travel Oregon (2022)

Average Annual Wage

2017	2022	Change
$15,409	**$22,023**	**43%**

76% of statewide industry average (2022)

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage

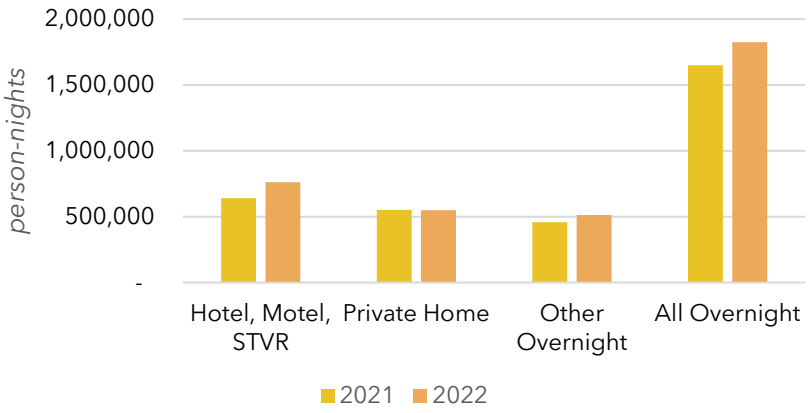
While wages for Northeast Oregon's leisure & hospitality sector have kept pace with and exceeded inflation (which was 20% cumulatively from 2017-2022), they remain relatively low: on average, workers in this region earn **$6,281** *less per year* than the statewide average.

Leisure, Hospitality, & Travel

Annual Visitors

The region has seen considerable growth in overall visitor volume and a **57%** increase in spending since 2014. Between 2021 and 2022, the use of hotels, motels, and short-term vacation rentals (STVRs) increased by **19%**, while the use of private homes by visitors has remained relatively unchanged over time; in fact, private home visits dropped by 0.4%.

Annual Growth in Overnight Visitor Volume



Visitor Spending by Accommodation Type (in millions)

Accommodation Type	2017 Spending	2022 Spending	% Change, 2017-2022
Hotel, Motel, STVR	$44.8	$81.1	81%
Private Home	$13.5	$15.8	17%
Campground	$19.1	$18.6	-2.6%
Second Home	$5.0	$5.1	2%
Day Travel	$24.7	$31.2	26%
Total	$107.1	$152.0	42%

Source: Travel Oregon (2022)

Spending by visitors who stay in hotels, motels, and short-term vacation rentals has grown rapidly in the last five years, far more than any other accommodation type. Transient occupancy taxes for all accommodations increased by 47% between 2017 and 2022.

The leisure, hospitality, and travel sector is a vital part of Northeast Oregon's economy; while it generates just **4.5%** of the region's annual GDP, it employs a significant portion of the working population and brings countless visitors to the area in pursuit of its natural beauty and historic landmarks. Though the industry suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, overall visitor volume has recovered and continues to grow each year. With no new hotels or motels in the region, this growth may have been driven by the increased presence of short-term vacation rentals. Wage levels for this industry, however, are merely **51%** of the region's average wages across all private industries, and only **76%** of statewide average wages within the tourism industry. Combined with a projected population decline, low wages pose a long-term threat to economic stability for this industry and the region at large.

Agriculture & Timber

The agriculture and timber industry has a strong presence in the three-county region, where forests, pastures, cropland, and rangeland are abundant. Most farms in the region are family-run, and about one in four farms use hired laborers. According to the USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture, farmland makes up 31% of Northeast Oregon's total land area, and forestland makes up 47%.

Industry Overview

833 residents employed annually; **5.7%** of region's workforce

$38,935 in average annual wages

96% of average annual wages across all private sectors

$82,104,000 in GDP each year; **8th**-highest sector by GDP

2,064 total farms (2017); **96%** are family-owned

Source: U.S. Census QuickFacts data (2021); USDA Census of Agriculture (2017)

Agricultural Census Summary			
	2012	**2017**	**Percent Change**
Net cash farm income	$35,412,000	$27,625,000	-22%
Market value of products sold	$208,246,000	$175,253,000	-16%
Total government payments	$7,342,000	$9,403,000	28%
Per-farm average farm-related income	$14,281	$18,238	28%
Per-farm average market value of products sold	$105,455	$84,742	-20%

Source: United States Department of Agriculture

Agriculture & Timber

Agricultural Sales by Product Type

2017 Census of Agriculture (*sales in millions*)		
	3-County Region	**Share of Oregon's Total Agricultural Sales**
Total Agricultural Sales	$175.3	3.5%
Crops	$90.8	2.8%
Other crops and hay	$37.4	4.8%
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	$22.6	6.6%
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes	$18.2	3.4%
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	$0.41	0.07%
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod	$0.21	0.02%
Livestock & Poultry	$84.4	4.9%
Cattle and calves	$80.8	8.3%
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk	$1.2	5.4%
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	$1.1	7.7%
All other animals and animal products	$0.55	7.3%

Source: United States Department of Agriculture

Timber & Forestland

Historically, the timber industry was the largest supplier of above-average-wage jobs in the area, but the industry began to decline sharply in the 1980s.

Total forestland area: **2,486,000 acres**

Private forestland ownership: **567,000 acres**

Federal timber harvest: **19,683,000 board-feet**

Private timber harvest: **81,937,000 board-feet**

Average annual wages: **$49,789**

Percent of regional average annual wages: **115%**

Source: Oregon Forest Resources Institute (2019)

Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector occupies a large swath of the region's economic activity: of the working population, more than one in ten individuals are employed in this sector. While the average industry wage fell by 8% between 2016 and 2021, wages remain relatively high when compared to other sectors in the region. Businesses in this industry encompass a wide range of commodities, from concrete, farm machinery, and cabinetry production to commercial printing and retail bakeries.

Industry Overview

2,028 residents employed annually

11% of region's workforce

111% of average annual wages across all private sectors

$234,851,000 in GDP each year

3rd-highest sector by GDP

12.7% of total annual GDP among all private industries

Source: U.S. Census QuickFacts data (2021)

Five-Year Industry Growth Trends			
	2017	**2022**	**Percent Change**
Average Annual Establishments Count	72	77	6.9%
Annual Total Wages	$94,415,164	$114,521,098	0.6%
Average Annual Wage	$39,746	$48,086	21%

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage

Small Business & Self-Employment

In sparsely-populated areas, self-employment and small businesses generate a substantial portion of overall economic activity. **31.6%** of residents in the three-county region were self-employed in 2021. For comparison, about 24% of all Oregonians are self-employed. Despite the economic stressors that COVID-19 placed on many small businesses nationwide, the pandemic appears to have had a minimal impact on overall income levels and establishment counts in Northeast Oregon. The table below shows a slight overall increase in self-employed residents between 2016 and 2021.

Self-Employment in Northeast Oregon

Self-Employment as Share of Total Workforce					
	2016		**2021**		**2016-2021**
	Self-Employed Residents	**Percent of Total Workforce**	**Self-Employed Residents**	**Percent of Total Workforce**	**% Change in Self-Employed Residents**
3-County Region	8,929	32.2%	9,055	31.6%	1.4%
Baker County	2,846	33.5%	2,771	31.6%	-2.6%
Union County	3,952	27.5%	4,051	27.3%	2.5%
Wallowa County	2,131	44.2%	2,233	43.7%	4.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Narrative Trends: Small Business in Oregon

Examining statewide industry trends can help to contextualize this sector within the broader landscape of small business in Oregon. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration's 2022 Small Business Profile,

- **99.5%** of all businesses in Oregon are small businesses.*
- **54.4%** of Oregon's workforce are employed by small businesses.
- In recent years, small business **employment** has **decreased** across the state due to closing and contracting establishments.
- Between 2020 and 2021, the total number of small business **establishments increased** across the state.

*The U.S. Small Business Administration defines a "small business" as having fewer than 500 employees

Small Business & Self-Employment

Growth of Small Business Establishments in 3-County Region			
	2016	**2021**	**Percent Change**
All establishments	1,632	1,643	0.7%
Establishments with <5 employees	1,001	992	-0.9%
Establishments with 5-9 employees	330	329	-0.3%
Establishments with 10-19 employees	184	192	4.3%
Establishments with 20-49 employees	77	91	18.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau County Business Patterns

The number of very small business establishments (fewer than 10 employees) in Northeast Oregon remained stable between 2016 and 2021, despite the possibility of COVID-19-related economic stressors. The number of businesses with 10-49 employees grew by 8% in the same period. In 2021, 60% of all business establishments in the region had fewer than five employees.

Five-Year Change in Proprietors' Income			
	2016	**2021**	**Percent Change**
3-County Region	$117,474,000	$131,721,000	12.1%
Oregon Statewide	$16,287,978,000	$21,992,324,000	35.0%
Baker County	$36,125,000	$37,374,000	3.5%
Union County	$61,349,000	$60,010,000	-2.2%
Wallowa County	$20,000,000	$34,337,000	71.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; not adjusted for inflation

In 2021, combined income for all owner-operated businesses in Northeast Oregon comprised about 0.6% of total proprietors' income across the state. While proprietors' income has grown by 12.1% in this region, it has failed to keep pace with a cumulative inflation rate of 15%, nor has it matched statewide growth in owner-operated business income. Notably, Wallowa County saw a significant increase in proprietors' income between 2016 and 2021, likely due to an influx of short-term vacation rentals, while Baker County experienced minimal growth and Union County suffered a minor decline over the same time period.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

What is Economic Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock or disruption. Shocks can include nature-based events (fires, floods, droughts, etc.) and the impacts of a changing climate, but also human-caused economic disruptions such as the closure of a region's large employer, the decline of an important industry, changes in the workforce, and population shifts. Economic resilience determines how quickly a community can recover following a disruption and how prepared a community is to withstand or avoid potential economic threats. By assessing different factors that contribute to economic resilience, we can better understand how to direct resources to help build resilience in our communities.

INDICATORS OF RESILIENCE: *8 KEY QUESTIONS*

Based on a framework developed by the University of Oregon's Institute for Policy Research and Engagement, this CEDS uses **eight** questions to determine relative levels of economic resilience in the region. This framework is designed to be user-friendly, allowing economic development staff to evaluate resilience metrics with ease and consistency over time. Using a combination of Census, Oregon Employment Department, and other publicly available data sources, these questions highlight economic strengths and weaknesses across all three counties. This process allows us to identify, prioritize, and target major sources of economic vulnerability. Each question examines a different facet of resilience; together, they provide a holistic assessment of the region's ability to withstand shocks and disruptions.

A comprehensive description of the methods, metrics, and data used in this framework, as well as county-level profiles of economic resilience, can be found in Appendix C. Here, we present the eight questions and summarize top strengths and weaknesses.

Listed below are the eight key questions that inform our resilience metrics framework.

8 Indicators of Economic Resilience		
1	**Does the economy have diverse and well-paid jobs?**	Diversified economies are more resilient.
2	**What is the projected future of major employment sectors, both in the region and nationally?**	Sectors that are less subject to volatility are more resilient.
3	**What is the age breakdown of residents?**	A mix of young, working, and older populations is indicative of a more resilient economy.
4	**Do people live and work in the community?**	In communities where people live and work, the local economy is more active and independent, and therefore more resilient.
5	**How has the population shifted in the last decade and what is predicted for the next 30 years?**	Growing populations indicate economic opportunities and resilience.
6	**Is the built infrastructure able to withstand natural hazards or weather incidents?**	Infrastructure that can continue functioning after a major disruption will help a region continue to function normally despite the disruption.
7	**What level of educational attainment and earnings are residents reaching?**	Residents with advanced or specialized degrees have higher earning potential. Regions that have choices for advanced education are better positioned to support the training of local residents.
8	**Do residents have access to health and wellness facilities?**	Communities with health and wellness facilities are more resilient than communities that lack these facilities. People with health insurance contribute to a more resilient economy by reserving scarce public health resources for those most in need.

TOP RESILIENCE STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

Regional *strengths* indicate facets of the economy most likely to withstand shocks or unexpected downturns, while *weaknesses* indicate areas of the economy in which community partners should focus their efforts and resources. A more detailed assessment of each county's economic status can be found in Appendix C.

STRONGER SIGNALS OF RESILIENCE

+ Hazard Resilience. All three counties score highly on FEMA's National Risk Index scale, meaning they are relatively unlikely to suffer damages caused by natural hazards.

+ Health Insurance Coverage. Roughly 93% of all residents in Northeast Oregon have health insurance coverage, which can often be a challenge for rural areas. Adequate health insurance helps keep the region healthy and reduces the financial burdens associated with healthcare expenses, particularly for low-income households.

+ Economic Diversity. The region scores moderately to highly on the Hachman Index, an indicator of economic diversity based on GDP, industry employment, and the mix of local industries present in the region. A well-diversified industry profile protects against potential market downturns and prevents an over-reliance on a single sector for jobs and output.

WEAKER SIGNALS OF RESILIENCE

– Poor Housing Quality. Nearly 17% of all housing units in the District are mobile homes, which are less resilient to natural disasters than other housing types and are often associated with financial insecurity.

– Cost-Burdened Residents. Compared to both statewide and nationwide statistics, the region has a significantly lower percentage of cost-burdened individuals (i.e., those who pay at least 30% of income towards rental or homeownership costs). However, roughly one-third of all renters in the region are cost-burdened, suggesting that wages struggle to keep pace with regional living costs.

– Aging and Declining Population. The median age for all three counties is well above the state's median age, and the population is expected to decline as younger residents move away and older populations continue to age out. The region's population has grown by just 2% between 2010 and 2020 and is projected to decline by 1.6%. The area also has a high age-dependency ratio, which means that the working-age population may feel extra pressure to support younger and older residents financially and with caregiving.

– Low Educational Attainment. Only 1 in 4 residents hold a bachelor's degree or above. Individuals with a bachelor's degree tend to earn higher wages than those without an advanced degree.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES OPPORTUNITIES, & THREATS (SWOT)

We asked the community and economic development partners to identify opportunities and challenges facing our region. This SWOT outlines key factors about our region that shaped our identification of strategic priorities and actions for this CEDS.

Strengths

Human capital

+ Dedicated small business owners and innovative entrepreneurs
+ Passionate volunteers

Institutional assets

+ Educational institutions: career and technical education (high school CTE programs, Baker Technical Institute), post-secondary education (Blue Mountain Community College, Eastern Oregon University)
+ Well-established nonprofits that empower community members and steward the landscape

Physical assets

+ Productive farm and ranch land
+ Stunning wilderness areas
+ Access to I-84, a critical artery between urban hubs

Cultural assets

+ Heritage sites
+ Historic theaters
+ Cultural events and festivals

Weaknesses

Affordability and income

– Lack of affordable housing
– Lack of living wage jobs

Skills, education, and opportunity

– Mismatch between employer needs and employee skills
– Low post-secondary educational attainment
– Employees often lack pathways to growth within their organization

Regulatory environment

– Lack of access to childcare and early childhood education (caused by policies that make operating facilities costly and burdensome)
– Policies that make it challenging to develop land and operate businesses

Infrastructure

– Aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance, and lack of infrastructure capacity
– Lack of high-speed Internet for underserved areas
– Lack of buildable and/or appropriately zoned land

Opportunities

Innovations to harness

+ Access to new building techniques (mass timber, 3D printing, modular development, etc.) and support for creative housing solutions
+ Innovations in the strategically important sectors of agriculture/timber and manufacturing that will increase the efficiency and reduce consumption of scarce resources like water
+ Strong educational and skill-training resources that can be leveraged to better align employee skills with employer needs
+ The rise of remote work creates the possibility of attaching new workers to the area

Abundant natural resources

+ Natural assets (particularly wind, solar, and natural beauty) that will help us build an independent and resilient future

Changing demographics

+ Increasing diversity of the population creates opportunities for increasing representation in governing bodies and expanding cultural programming

Collaborative spirit

+ Desire among economic development partners to collaborate more

Threats

External policies

– State and federal policies that are not designed well for rural communities

Long-term trends

– Uncertainties of a rapidly changing climate and increasing intensity of weather events
– Population decline
– The rise of online shopping making it difficult for local retail to remain competitive
– Unintended consequences of increased tourism: a new robust market for short-term rentals taking housing off the market for locals and increased visitation to natural and cultural areas causing overcrowding and degradation

Capacity-constrained, siloed, and disjointed economic development efforts

– Ongoing capacity constraints in economic development organizations that make collaboration difficult
– Ongoing funding uncertainty for economic development organizations that make long-term strategy-building difficult (because efforts must constantly be dedicated to fundraising)
– Lack of capacity to engage in long-term infrastructure planning

3 | STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Based on engagement with residents and economic development practitioners in the region, we have identified four main areas to emphasize work over the next five years.

WORKFORCE

HOUSING

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE

ENGAGEMENT *(SEE APPENDIX D FOR DETAILS)*

SWOT Surveys (to public & economic developers) *What are our region's challenges and opportunities?*	**Initial list of issues and opportunities**
Workshop 1 (with regional partners) *What are the most pressing issues? What are you currently doing and what would you like to do?*	**Preliminary list of actions**
Workshop 2 Series (with regional partners) *Where should we focus our efforts?*	**Updated list of actions + priorities**
Workshop 3 (with regional partners) *How should we collaborate?*	**Final list of actions + priorities** **Implementation structure**

KEY STRATEGIES

For each strategic priority, regional partners identified a set of strategies to guide areas of action. Below, we outline the set of strategies identified for each of the four strategic priorities. Shaded strategies are priorities for the region.

Note: We identify specific actions for each strategy in the Action Plans chapter.

Strategic Priority	Strategy
Workforce	**Youth Development *(Priority)*** Prepare young people for careers by offering opportunities to build job skills while they are still school-age (secondary and post-secondary)
	Adult Preparation and Growth *(Priority)* Ensure adults have the skills and resources they need to enter and thrive in the local job market
	Coordination, Leadership, and Policy *(Priority)* Align workforce development providers' efforts to minimize confusion on the part of those seeking resources and maximize the efficiency of resources and strategies deployed by providers
	Wrap-Around Workforce Supports *(Priority)* Ensure employees and job-seekers have access to services that support success in their lives and careers *(Note: housing and transportation are covered in the Housing and Infrastructure Priority Areas)*
Housing	**Coordinated Housing Strategy *(Priority)*** Develop a coordinated approach to identifying housing needs, barriers, and solutions
	Housing Production *(Priority)* Support activities that enable more housing production
	Policy Draft, advocate, and enact policy changes that will support increased access to quality, affordable housing options for residents of all income levels
	People Seeking Housing Expand activities that connect people with housing and mitigate landlord concerns over tenant quality

Strategic Priority	Strategy
Business Development	**Funding *(Priority)*** Provide loans and grants to fill the gap for small businesses and entrepreneurs who don't qualify for traditional funding
	Infrastructure/Space *(Priority)* Ensure businesses and nonprofit cultural organizations have access to the space and amenities they need to thrive
	General Coordination and Advocacy *(Priority)* Align efforts to pursue business development strategies and support business resilience
	Technical Support Provide resources and consultations to entrepreneurs and small business owners to support the success of their enterprises
Infrastructure	**Infrastructure Sector Strategies *(Priority)*** Build resilient infrastructure that meets current needs, has the ability to withstand or quickly bounce-back from human-caused or natural disruptions, and minimizes negative impacts on the environment **Sectors:** Broadband, Water & Wastewater, Energy, Transportation
	Development Strategy *(Priority)* Develop, maintain, and fund long-term infrastructure plans
	Recreation Build out visitor services (restrooms, signage, trails, etc.) to support a sustainable tourism economy that prioritizes stewardship and preserves access for locals

4 | ACTION PLANS

How will we move forward on our region's four strategic priorities? The action plans included here introduce projects and initiatives that provide some specific direction about what we want to do to make progress over the next five years.

We provide one action plan for each of the four strategic priority areas:

- **Workforce**
- **Housing**
- **Business Development**
- **Infrastructure**

For each action plan, we include four components:

- **Areas of need –** A brief overview of the issues or challenges our region experiences in this area
- **Top priorities –** A list of the top priority projects/initiatives that emerged through input from regional partners; top priority projects/initiatives include details about how collaboration should occur to carry out the project/initiative
- **Middle priorities –** A list of middle priority projects/initiatives that regional partners deemed slightly less important or urgent
- **Metrics –** Measures we can track to understand our progress in a strategic priority area over time; some simple metrics will be tracked annually and others will be collected at the beginning and end of this CEDS timeframe (2023-2028)

Many of the organizations in our region who work on economic development are capacity-constrained. This means it's unlikely we can make large amounts of progress on every action listed. We've highlighted top priority projects/initiatives because we believe these activities are foundational for progress. When organizations have limited resources to spare, we hope they direct them towards these top priorities. If we can all align our efforts around just a few of these ideas, we believe we're offering our region the best chance at addressing some of the intractable challenges we face.

During the CEDS planning process, partners identified additional project/initiative ideas that did not rise to the level of a top or middle priority. In many cases, partners were unable to identify a lead for these actions, so they will require more discussion to create a viable implementation strategy. A list of these additional projects/initiatives is in Appendix A.

LIFECYCLE STAGE

Many strategic plans assign a timeframe for each project/initiative (short-term, mid-term, long-term) to indicate how long it might take to work on the action, or when the action should begin. While timeframes can give some indication of an action's trajectory, they are often so vague and imprecise that they do not particularly aid with implementation.

Rather than using timeframes, we have elected to identify the "lifecycle" stage of each project/initiative we include in this CEDS.

LIFECYCLE STAGES

Stage	Definition
Feasibility	Project/initiative is in its very initial stages of development. It is a seed of an idea that we are figuring out where to plant and how to care for.
Start-up	Project/initiative is in the beginning stages of development. We've planted the seed and now we're watering and tending to its growth.
Active	Project/initiative is underway and evolving. The seed is now a growing plant that requires care and attention to keep it healthy.
Mature/Closing	Project/initiative has run its course. Thanks to our efforts, the plant has bloomed and we can enjoy its fruits.

Lifecycle stages acknowledge that, just like a business, a project/initiative will cycle through different stages of development along a somewhat unpredictable timeline. Regardless of how much time it takes to move from one stage to the next, we know what kinds of resources and approaches are most useful to supporting the project/initiative in any given stage. This understanding helps us take a realistic approach to developing the project/initiative.

In this plan, we only identify projects/initiatives that are in the feasibility through active stages. We celebrate and learn from mature and closing projects, but this CEDS focuses on actions that require more immediate attention and resources.

COLLABORATION

Economic development is a collaborative endeavor. While much work occurs at a local level, efforts are more successful when they happen in coordination with a broader region. As a regional strategy, this CEDS relies on buy-in and participation from partners across the region and beyond.

As we moved through the process of refining and prioritizing actions, we asked our partners to consider a spectrum of collaboration to help determine how we would like to work together on priority projects/initiatives.

COLLABORATION SPECTRUM

Parameter	Spectrum			
Scale of Focus	Project	Topic/Sector	Full Economic Development Strategy	
Purpose	Info sharing (just a report-out, not much interaction)	Learning and networking (report-out plus interaction)	Action-planning/ executing (discussing how to move forward)	
Geography	A few jurisdictions	Within one County	3-County Region	Beyond 3-County Region
Frequency	Monthly	Quarterly	Twice per year	Once per year

For top priority projects/initiatives listed in each action plan, we provide details about where along the collaboration spectrum different parameters of the project/initiative fall. This should help leads understand how they should engage partners in moving the project/initiative forward.

CORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The EDA defines four core factors that are critical for a successful economic development strategy. For each action, we highlight which of these factors that action supports.

Economic Resilience **Climate Resilience** **Workforce Development** **Equity**

WORKFORCE

People are the core of our economy. Our region thrives because of the success of those who live here, contributing their time, expertise, and energy to activities that bolster quality of life and opportunities to lead a fulfilling life. This Workforce Action Plan provides strategies to address challenges that currently hold our workforce back. We offer a roadmap to greater resilience and more equitable growth of our workforce.

AREAS OF NEED

Our partners and community members identified several issues that impact the success of our workforce which require attention:

Issue	Details
Housing – residents struggle to find housing that is available and affordable, making it difficult to attract and retain employees	**Current Conditions:** 25% of households in the region are cost-burdened (paying 30% or more of their income on housing)[1] **SWOT Survey:** 74% of respondents—the most—indicated lack of affordable housing is a major challenge for the region
Living wage jobs – on average, employees earn about 60% of the amount estimated to constitute a "living wage" for the region[2]	**Current Conditions:** MIT Living Wage calculator estimates workers would need to make around $76k per year, but the average wage is currently only about $43k[3] **SWOT Survey:** 58% of respondents—2nd most—indicated lack of jobs paying a living wage is a major challenge for the region
Employee-retention and job training – employees need to see opportunities for growth in their jobs, and employers qualified employees; employers need support to provide the training necessary to build the skills of the available pool of employees	**SWOT Survey:** 52% of respondents—3rd most—indicated lack of qualified employees to fill jobs is a major challenge for the region

[1] American Community Survey via Social Explorer: Tables SE A10060, B18002, and B10040. 2021 (5-year estimates).
[2] See Appendix B and C for detailed information about this data
[3] See Appendix C for detailed information about this data

Issue	Detail
Regional workforce retention – youth and young adults do not always see opportunities to stay in the region, while employers simultaneously are experiencing a shortage of people to take entry-level jobs; by providing our young people with skills relevant to local employers' needs, we can create more incentives to stay	**SWOT Survey:** 41% of respondents—4th most—indicated investing in job training/workforce development for youth and adults as a major opportunity for the region
Childcare – residents lack access to childcare (both because of availability and cost), making it difficult for adults with families to work as much as they would like	**SWOT Survey:** 36% of respondents—5th most—indicated lack of access to childcare is a major challenge for the region

The Northeast Oregon region already has many organizations, including the Eastern Oregon Workforce Board, WorkSource Oregon, school districts, and post-secondary educational institutions (including Eastern Oregon University, Blue Mountain Community College, and Baker Technical Institute) that cultivate workforce development through their core programming. We include a list of existing activities in Appendix A.

The strategies and actions outlined in this section build upon the core programming of workforce development organizations. We present a set of tailored strategies that regional partners believe will address the identified areas of need.

TOP PRIORITY INITIATIVES

STRATEGY: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Prepare young people for careers by offering opportunities to build job skills while they are still school-age (secondary and post-secondary)

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience and Workforce Development*			
Promote expansive vision of education pathways Develop a career planning program for young adults who are no longer in high school to provide coaching about career pathways.			
Lead	**Partners**		**Lifecycle Stage**
Eastern Oregon Workforce Board or WorkSource Oregon	Baker Technical Institute, community colleges, trade schools, high schools/ school districts		Feasibility
Collaboration Details			
Scale of Focus	**Purpose**	**Geography**	**Frequency**
Project	*For each County and 3-County Region:* Learning and networking (report-out plus interaction)	Each County	*For each County:* Quarterly or twice per year
	For Eastern Oregon Region: Action-planning/ executing (discussing how to move forward)	3-County Region & Eastern Oregon Region	*For 3-County Region:* Once per year

STRATEGY: ADULT PREPARATION & GROWTH

Ensure adults have the skills and resources they need to enter and thrive in the local job market

Project/Initiative - *Supports Workforce Development*			
On-the-job training Secure funding for capacity and participant stipends, then develop a campaign to encourage employers to offer more on-the-job training; provide examples of successful on-the-job training initiatives and help employers identify partners to provide training.			
Lead	**Partners**		**Lifecycle Stage**
Eastern Oregon Workforce Board or WorkSource Oregon	Baker Technical Institute, community colleges, trade schools		Feasibility
Collaboration Details			
Scale of Focus	**Purpose**	**Geography**	**Frequency**
Project	*For each County and 3-County Region:* Learning and networking (report-out plus interaction)	Each County	*For each County:* Quarterly or twice per year
	For Eastern Oregon Region: Action-planning/ executing (discussing how to move forward)	3-County Region & Eastern Oregon Region	*For 3-County Region:* Once per year

STRATEGY: COORDINATION, LEADERSHIP, AND POLICY

Align workforce development providers' efforts to minimize confusion on the part of those seeking resources and maximize the efficiency of resources and strategies deployed by providers

Project/Initiative - *Supports Workforce Development and Equity*

Employee retention

Compile examples of non-traditional models of employment and compensation; share examples with employers to help them reimagine the value proposition for employees (for example, raising awareness among employers about Employee Assistance Programs) and support employer's efforts to restructure employment.

Lead	Partners	Lifecycle Stage
Eastern Oregon Workforce Board or WorkSource	City Economic Development leads, employers	Start-up

Collaboration Details

Scale of Focus	Purpose	Geography	Frequency
Topic/Sector (Projects are happening at the agency/organization level, but efforts are siloed)	Info sharing (just a report-out, not much interaction) Learning and networking (report-out plus interaction)	County, expand to 3-County Region if it makes sense once everyone is more on the same page	Twice per year, then drop to once per year

Project/Initiative - *Supports Workforce Development and Equity*

Childcare

Conduct a scan of which organizations are working on what childcare issues; convene key actors to identify more unified approaches to developing clear needs and solutions across the region. Explore the possibility of Union County joining the Eastern Oregon ELH.

Lead	Partners	Lifecycle Stage
Early Learning Hubs	Schools, employers, NEOEDD	Start-up

Collaboration Details

Scale of Focus	Purpose	Geography	Frequency
Topic/Sector (Projects are happening at the agency/organization level, but efforts are siloed)	Info sharing (just a report-out, not much interaction) Learning and networking (report-out plus interaction)	County, expand to 3-County Region if it makes sense once everyone is more on the same page	Twice per year, then drop to once per year

MIDDLE PRIORITY INITIATIVES

STRATEGY: COORDINATION, LEADERSHIP, AND POLICY

Align workforce development providers' efforts to minimize confusion on the part of those seeking resources and maximize the efficiency of resources and strategies deployed by providers

Project/Initiative - *Supports Workforce Development*	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Lifecycle Stage**
Sector strategies Identify key sectors that have specialized needs for employees; develop a set of sector-specific resources to support workforce development and readiness for these jobs. EOWB has a current sector focus on health care, manufacturing, and technology and is pursuing paid internships and on-the-job training. See *On-the-Job Training Action*	Eastern Oregon Workforce Board	Employers	Active

STRATEGY: WRAP-AROUND WORKFORCE SUPPORTS

Ensure employees and job-seekers have access to services that support success in their lives and careers (Note: housing and transportation are covered in the Housing and Infrastructure Action Plans)

Project/Initiative - *Supports Workforce Development & Equity*	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Lifecycle Stage**
Childcare Convene employers and childcare providers to identify ways to increase local availability of childcare; efforts might include lobbying for decreased state regulations.	Early Learning Hubs	Employers	Active

METRICS

Annual Metrics: Unemployment rate

Strategy	Metrics: Year 1 and Year 5
Youth Development *(Priority)* Prepare young people for careers by offering opportunities to build job skills while they are still in school (secondary and post-secondary)	# of internship programs: steady or growing % educational attainment (high school/GED, associates degrees, bachelors degrees): steady or increasing
Adult Preparation and Growth *(Priority)* Ensure adults have the skills and resources they need to enter and thrive in the local job market	# of on-the-job training programs offered: steady or growing *Qualitative:* Economic developers report employees have increased opportunities for internal advancement within their organization
Coordination, Leadership, and Policy *(Priority)* Align workforce development providers' efforts to minimize confusion on the part of those seeking resources and maximize the efficiency of resources and strategies deployed by providers	*Qualitative:* Economic development folks regularly participate in workforce (EOWB, WorkSource) meetings/ strategy and vice versa
Wrap-Around Workforce Supports *(Priority)* Ensure employees and job-seekers have access to services that support success in their lives and careers *(Note: housing and transportation are covered in the Housing and Infrastructure Priority Areas)*	# of childcare providers: steady or growing

HOUSING

Without adequate housing, a workforce cannot thrive. In 2021, NEOEDD helped host the region's first Housing Solutions webinars and Housing Action Workshop. These events responded to increasing concern from employers and residents over the availability and cost of housing. A wide range of representatives from the region's major employers, building developers, nonprofits, and the public sector came together to identify challenges for housing and opportunities to work together on innovative solutions. This work yielded many initiatives across the region which are slowly beginning to change the housing landscape. Housing is a complex topic that will require sustained collaboration. This Housing Action Plan describes activities partners need to continue moving forward over the next five years.

AREAS OF NEED

Despite significant work on housing in the region over the past few years, new challenges arise and old challenges persist. Our partners and community members identified several issues that continue to make housing an important focus for the region (also see Workforce):

Issue	Details
Affordability – housing prices have increased significantly, making it difficult for residents to attain homeownership, or even find rentals	**Current Conditions:** 25% of households in the region are cost-burdened (paying 30% or more of their income on housing)[4] **Current Conditions:** Between 2000 and 2022, the Housing Price Index has increased 188% in Baker Co, 162% in Union Co, and 206% in Wallowa Co. From 2021 to 2022, the increase was 15-22% alone, higher than other Oregon counties.[5]
Short-term rentals – as property owners see opportunities to capture spending from the increasing number of visitors to the region, they are converting their properties to short-term rentals which makes long-term housing increasingly scarce	**Current Conditions:** According to Travel Oregon's data, spending on hotels, motels, and short-term vacation rentals increased 81% from 2017 to 2022. **Workshop 1:** While companies like Airbnb do not readily share data, observers in the region know anecdotally that the number of vacation rentals has significantly increased.

[4] American Community Survey via Social Explorer: Tables SE A10060, B18002, and B10040. 2021 (5-yr est).
[5] Federal Housing Finance Agency. FHFA Housing Price Index County Map: Gains from 2000 to 2022 and Gains from 2021 to 2022. https://www.fhfa.gov/DataTools/Tools/Pages/HPI-County-Map.aspx

Issue	Details
Infrastructure and land – developing new housing can be a challenge because some areas require significant street, water, and wastewater upgrades to make development viable, and some areas simply don't have enough buildable land zoned for residential to support larger developments	**Workshop 1:** Participants identified lack of infrastructure to support housing and lack of buildable land as key barriers to new development.

Organizations throughout the region are already working hard to mitigate the region's housing crisis. We include a list of existing activities in Appendix A. Notably, Wallowa Resources and its partners have formed a nonprofit, Working Homes LLC, to explore alternatives for housing development (e.g. a land trust model) in the absence of significant private investment in housing. Many of the larger cities have, or are in the process of completing, housing needs analyses. At a state policy level, the Department of Land Conservation and Development is working to ensure land use laws aren't an impediment to development. Finally, as they have been for decades, housing and community service nonprofits continue their work of supporting renters, those aspiring to homeownership, and those struggling to meet basic needs like shelter.

The strategies and actions outlined in this section build upon the great work already happening around our region. We focus the projects/initiatives in this action plan on opportunities to improve coordination of efforts and advance creative building solutions.

TOP PRIORITY INITIATIVES

STRATEGY: COORDINATED HOUSING STRATEGY

Develop a coordinated approach to identifying housing needs, barriers, and solutions

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience and Equity*

Regional housing resource center

Establish a regional housing resource center with at least one staff person and a board or membership comprised of jurisdictions and organizations working in the housing space; the center will act as a clearinghouse for information related to housing and provide a convening space for those working on housing.

Lead	Partners	Lifecycle Stage
NEOEDD (pending funding)	REV at EOU, Wallowa Resources, DLCD, cities and counties, housing authority, foundations, Dept of Housing and Community Services	Feasibility

Collaboration Details

Scale of Focus	Purpose	Geography	Frequency
Topic/Sector; Full ED Strategy	Learning and networking: creating momentum, having monthly meeting goals and achieving them, building from one meeting to the next	*3-County Region*: Communities at different levels can learn from those who are further along - what are they doing, how are they doing it?	Monthly or quarterly (more frequently at the beginning and then could shift over time)
	Action-planning/ executing: establishing a clear roadmap and game plan driven by a sense of urgency		

MIDDLE PRIORITY INITIATIVES

STRATEGY: COORDINATED HOUSING STRATEGY

Develop a coordinated approach to identifying housing needs, barriers, and solutions

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience*	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Lifecycle Stage**
Housing needs analysis and housing production strategies Assist communities who feel they need an updated housing needs analysis and/or housing production strategies to apply for funding to hire a consultant to complete the analysis and planning. Could be done at County level and include assessments of individual smaller communities, and wrap in recent analyses already completed by larger communities. Include analysis of housing for middle-income (60%-120% of Area Median Income) needs and short-term rental strategies.	NEOEDD (pending funding)	Cities and counties, DCLD, OHCS, residents, nonprofits, employers, workers, planning consultants	Varies by community: Feasibility or Start-up

STRATEGY: HOUSING PRODUCTION

Support activities that enable more housing production

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience*	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Lifecycle Stage**
Alternative development methods Publicize successes of emerging local housing development models like Working Homes LLC, the La Grande High School housing development project, and the Elgin School, City, and landowner partnership. Identify funding to help these initiatives expand or be replicated in other communities.	NEOEDD (pending funding)	Partners identified as part of the project	Feasibility

METRICS

Annual Metrics: Housing Price Index, # of unhoused residents (based on point-in-time counts), # of new housing units permitted per year

Strategy	Metrics: Year 1 and Year 5
Coordinated Housing Strategy *(Priority)* Develop a coordinated approach to identifying housing needs, barriers, and solutions	# of housing-related convenings since last count: steady or growing
Housing Production *(Priority)* Support activities that enable more housing production	# of "non-traditional" (downtown, dormitory-style, employer-sponsored, etc.) housing units added since last count: steady or growing # of developments using innovative building techniques (mass timber, 3D printing, etc.) since last count: steady or growing
Policy Draft, advocate, and enact policy changes that will support increased access to quality, affordable housing options for residents of all income levels	# of jurisdictions who make zoning and development code updates: growing until 100% have made updates % cost-burdened households: steady or decreasing
People Seeking Housing Expand activities that connect people with housing and mitigate landlord concerns over tenant quality	*Qualitative:* Economic developers report employers have fewer people turning down or struggling to keep jobs because of housing-related challenges

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

If people are at the core of our economy, then businesses are the structure through which they enable innovation and prosperity. Small businesses in particular are the beating heart of economic activity in our area. In 2021, establishments with fewer than five employees made up 60% of all establishments.[6] It isn't easy being a small business owner or entrepreneur. Getting started and scaling up require upfront investment, countless hours of hard work, and a conducive business climate. This Business Development Action Plan aims to ensure our businesses have what they need to grow and thrive.

AREAS OF NEED

Investing in businesses is a priority for our region. When asked to identify top opportunities for the region, the second highest percentage of SWOT survey respondents (61%) identified supporting and encouraging businesses that provide family-wage jobs, and the third highest percentage (58%) identified supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs. Our businesses, however, face some significant challenges that our partners and community members would like to see addressed:

Issue	Details
Smaller-scale financing – there is a notable gap in funding options for the smaller-scale needs of many entrepreneurs and small businesses	**Workshop 1:** Businesses that need a small amount of support (for example, $25k or less) only have options that place a large administrative burden on the borrower or require significant collateral that are untenable for most businesses. Many lending institutions won't even consider financing start-ups and small businesses with little collateral as it is deemed too risky.
Communication and coordination – many business support agencies offer a wide variety of resources, training, and individualized support for business owners and entrepreneurs, but accessing these resources can be daunting and confusing from the business owner perspective	**Workshop 1:** The agencies who provide support need to better coordinate to communicate and market clear pathways through support systems. Packaging services across agencies and aligning messaging would help minimize confusion and feelings of overwhelm for businesses.

[6] U.S. Census Bureau. County Business Patterns, Table CB2100CBP. 2021.

Issue	Details
Space – entrepreneurs and scaling businesses often have particular space and equipment needs that incubators and real estate in the region may not be offering	**Workshop 2:** While there are a few shared office spaces currently available, the operators of those spaces are not sure whether they are meeting the needs of all possible clientele. We need to better understand businesses' needs in order to build out these space and equipment opportunities.

Business development services and advocacy has been the core of NEOEDD's services for decades. Many other organizations, like the Small Business Development Center, chambers of commerce, downtown associations, incubators/accelerators, and educational institutions have also provided key services and advocated for businesses' needs. We include a list of existing activities these organizations currently perform in Appendix A.

The strategies and actions outlined in this section build upon the core programming of these organizations, encouraging them to fill gaps, better coordinate, and rise to meet the particular challenges of certain business sectors.

TOP PRIORITY INITIATIVES

STRATEGY: FUNDING

Provide loans and grants to fill the gap for small businesses and entrepreneurs who don't qualify for traditional funding

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience, Workforce Development, and Equity*			
Entrepreneur/small business financing Seek funding sources to develop a program to provide small ($25k or less) loans or grants that don't require any collateral (modeled after the Entrepreneurial Opportunity Loan Program that is a partnership between Oregon City, Clackamas Federal Credit Union, and Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon).			
Lead	**Partners**		**Lifecycle Stage**
NEOEDD (pending funding)	public/nonprofit + private partnership, CRA funds (banks)		Feasibility
Collaboration Details			
Scale of Focus	**Purpose**	**Geography**	**Frequency**
Project	Action-planning/ executing (discussing how to move forward)	3- County Region, but some projects may be county-specific	Quarterly

STRATEGY: GENERAL COORDINATION AND ADVOCACY

Align efforts to pursue business development strategies and support business resilience

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience*

Strategy Alignment
Convene annual business development strategy summits in each county to allow business developers from government, nonprofits, and educational institutions to share resources and increase alignment around their efforts.

Lead	Partners	Lifecycle Stage
Business Oregon	NEOEDD, cities, counties, economic development corporations, nonprofits, EOU, BMCC, BTI, Regional Solutions Team, InREV	Feasibility

Collaboration Details

Scale of Focus	Purpose	Geography	Frequency
Topic/Sector (business development sector)	Learning and networking, moving to action planning/ executing	Each County, then building to 3-County Region: start with a summit at each county, build up to a full region strategy	Once per year in each county, then transitioning to once per year for region

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience and Climate Resilience*

Responsible tourism strategy
Pursue locally-owned, locally-driven tourism options in ways that include voices of tourism businesses and local residents and consider primary and secondary tourism impacts; develop strategies to mitigate and manage negative impacts (including impacts on municipal infrastructure) and identify areas that should not be promoted for tourism use.

Lead	Partners	Lifecycle Stage
Eastern Oregon Visitors Association	Tourism businesses, destination management organizations, nonprofits, local residents and community groups, non-tourism businesses, cities, counties, Regional Solutions Team, Travel Oregon, NEOEDD	Start-up

Collaboration Details

Scale of Focus	Purpose	Geography	Frequency
Topic/Sector	Info sharing and learning and networking, moving to action planning/ executing	3-County Region, but some projects may be county-specific	Quarterly

MIDDLE PRIORITY INITIATIVES

STRATEGY: FUNDING

Provide loans and grants to fill the gap for small businesses and entrepreneurs who don't qualify for traditional funding

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience, Workforce Development, and Equity*	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Lifecycle Stage**
Expanding access Promote the Kiva loan program and support businesses with preparing applications.	NEOEDD (pending funding)	Reinventing Rural, Rural Community Assistance Corp., Business Oregon	Start-up

STRATEGY: INFRASTRUCTURE / SPACE

Ensure businesses and nonprofit cultural organizations have access to the space and amenities they need to thrive

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience and Workforce Development*	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Lifecycle Stage**
Entrepreneur incubator space Survey (formally or informally) entrepreneurs to understand their space needs. Develop a database of properties that could host incubators and/or single entrepreneurs. Pursue properties that could be used as scalable incubator spaces and connect entrepreneurs with properties that meet their needs.	Varies depending on location	Main Street, planning departments, state-level (DLCD, Business Oregon), City of La Grande, InREV	Varies - Feasibility to Active

METRICS

Annual Metrics: # of businesses receiving small amounts ($25k or less) of financial support: steady or increasing
Year 5 Metrics: # of business establishments (total, fewer than 5 employees, 5-19 employees, 20+ employees – *only available every 5 years from Census*)

Strategy	Metrics: Year 1 and Year 5
Funding *(Priority)* Provide loans and grants to fill the gap for small businesses and entrepreneurs who don't qualify for traditional funding	(See Annual Metrics)
Infrastructure/Space *(Priority)* Ensure businesses and nonprofit cultural organizations have access to the space and amenities they need to thrive	# of incubator and/or special-equipment-providing spaces: steady or growing # of jurisdictions who complete or update a buildable lands inventory: growing until 100% have current BLIs # of historic and/or cultural sites that receive funding: steady or growing
General Coordination and Advocacy *(Priority)* Align efforts to pursue business development strategies and support business resilience in our most important sectors	# of active (affiliated, designated, or accredited) Main Street programs: growing until 100% have active programs *Qualitative:* Business development service providers report they are improving their ability to share resources from different agencies and provide effective referrals *Qualitative:* Workshops/meetings for businesses provide continuity of operations planning and business resilience resources
Technical Support Provide resources and consultations to entrepreneurs and small business owners to support the success of their enterprises	# of businesses accessing technical assistance: steady or increasing

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure, including water, wastewater, electricity, transportation, and now broadband, is essential to modern life. These are the foundational elements that allow us to live comfortably, transport ourselves and our economy's goods and service from place to place, and tap into the resources of an increasingly digitally-based world. Our infrastructure is routinely threatened by deferred maintenance and natural hazards. As we anticipate increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events,[7] it becomes imperative to focus on upgrading and building infrastructure for resilience.

AREAS OF NEED

While infrastructure may not always be top of mind for the average resident, our partners are keenly aware of the limitations and needs of the region's infrastructure. In particular, partners identified the following challenges:

Issue	Details
Long-term infrastructure planning and financing – most jurisdictions, particularly the smallest ones, only have capacity to deal with immediate infrastructure needs, and therefore struggle to plan for long-term upgrades, let alone find the time to apply for and manage funding for large scale projects	**Workshop 1:** In addition to highlighting capacity issues, partners identified several key challenges to accessing funding and completing projects, including the difficulty of finding grants, the organizational capacity to apply for and administer grants, the onerous and/or restrictive qualifications and requirements of grants, and the limited supply of skilled technicians (contractors, plumbers, electricians, etc.) to actually do the work.
Infrastructure resilience – acknowledging the damaging impacts of many recent weather events, regional partners are anxious to focus on infrastructure upgrades and developments that will withstand and quickly recover from hazard impacts	**Workshop 1:** Partners would like to prioritize green and resilient infrastructure, including the development of more solar and wind microgrid options for power. **SWOT Survey:** 25% of respondents said uncertainties of a rapidly changing climate and natural disasters were a key challenge.

[7] State of Oregon. "Oregon Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan." Risk Assessment: Introduction to Climate Change In Oregon. September 2020.

Issue	Details
Broadband – the economy now depends on the Internet to function, so it is therefore imperative to ensure reliable, affordable access to high-speed Internet connections	**Current Conditions:** NEOEDD is currently working on gathering better data about Internet connections and speed, but data from 2017 suggests that in Baker and Wallowa Counties, less than 20% of residents have access to a high-speed internet connection, with 60-80% having access in Union County.[8] **SWOT Survey:** 21% of respondents said lack of affordable high-speed internet for underserved areas was a key challenge.
Water/wastewater – access to sufficient capacity and quality of water and wastewater infrastructure can be an issue in some communities given a dryer climate and competition between residential, tourism, industrial, and agricultural uses of water also creates scarcity	**Workshop 2:** Partners identified needs to upgrade infrastructure for many communities, including Sumpter, Haines, Richland, and Union, and throughout Baker County. Wallowa Dam is also in need of significant upgrades. **SWOT Survey:** 23% of respondents said lack of/quality of municipal infrastructure (water, wastewater, energy, roads) was a key challenge.
Tourism impacts – increased visitation to the region has put a strain on infrastructure, particularly at recreation sites	**Current Conditions:** Between 2021 and 2022, Travel Oregon reports that overnight visitation increased about 10% from 1.6 to 1.8 million "person-nights" per year. **Workshop 1:** Partners raised concerns about the negatives impacts of increased tourism to the region and noted a need for better wayfinding to guide visitors to appropriate locations for recreation and leisure.

Infrastructure is primarily the responsibility of Cities, Counties, State agencies like ODOT, and municipal utility providers. We include a list of existing activities these organization are pursuing in Appendix A.

The projects/initiatives included in this action plan seek to address some of the top concerns around infrastructure financing, broadband build-out, and specific needs for various infrastructure sectors.

[8] See Appendix C for detailed information about this data

TOP PRIORITY INITIATIVES

STRATEGY: INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR STRATEGIES

Build resilient infrastructure that meets current needs, has the ability to withstand or quickly bounce-back from human-caused or natural disruptions, and minimizes negative impacts on the environment

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience*			
***Broadband*: Connections to rural areas** Identify and fundraise for projects that build-out high-speed connections to rural areas and farms.			
Lead	**Partners**		**Lifecycle Stage**
Oregon Broadband Office	NEOEDD, Broadband Action Team, providers/ISPs, Regional Solutions Team, counties, health care organizations, educators (Identify champions in each county - could be an individual, group, or organization - to be pipelines between NEOEDD and the communities. Probably wouldn't want to designate a specific provider as a champion to avoid conflicts of interest.)		Feasibility
Collaboration Details			
Scale of Focus	**Purpose**	**Geography**	**Frequency**
Sector/Topic, but also Full ED Strategy: try to engage all levels of stakeholders (consumers, business sector, public sector - schools, libraries, first responders). Potentially have local conversations, led locally, that feed into regional conversations with NEOEDD	Learning and networking, moving towards action-planning/ executing: have specific data or questions to cover at each meeting	3-County Region	Quarterly

STRATEGY: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Develop, maintain, and fund long-term infrastructure plans

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience, Climate Resilience, and Workforce Development*

Increase grantwriting capacity

Develop a pilot resource pooling/ cost-sharing program to hire one or multiple grantwriters that would support the grantwriting needs of multiple jurisdictions. The pilot could begin with a few municipalities creating an MOU outlining the roles, cost-sharing responsibilities, and expectations of the program. Based on learning from the pilot, the program could expand to include more partners or another cluster of partners.

Lead	Partners	Lifecycle Stage
NEOEDD (pending funding)	Participating jurisdictions	Feasibility

Collaboration Details

Scale of Focus	Purpose	Geography	Frequency
Project	Action planning/ executing: the purpose is to help communities that don't have capacity to identify project and don't have a grant writer. Begin by identifying top priority projects, then assist with obtaining grants. *Note:* It may be hard to get support for a grant writing program without having data to show need. We'd need a clear needs statement with data.	County or 3-County Region: depends based on needs identified by data and needs statement.	Regularly while identifying jurisdictions that want to participate, then dropping down to twice or once per year once pilot project is up and running (to check in about how it's working)

MIDDLE PRIORITY INITIATIVES

STRATEGY: INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR STRATEGIES

Build resilient infrastructure that meets current needs, has the ability to withstand or quickly bounce-back from human-caused or natural disruptions, and minimizes negative impacts on the environment

Project/Initiative - *Supports Economic Resilience and Climate Resilience*	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Lifecycle Stage**
Resilience building Participate in Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning process and advocate for strategies and funding allocation that support resilient infrastructure retrofitting and development.	County Emergency Managers	NEOEDD, cities, Regional Solutions Team, Business Oregon	Active
***Water and Wastewater:* Upgrades and expansions** Work to assemble resources to support water and wastewater projects in Baker City, Sumpter, Haines, Richland, and Union, and other jurisdictions.	Cities and counties	NEOEDD, Business Oregon, Water Resources Department, DEQ	Active
***Energy:* Microgrids** Secure support and funding to develop microgrids in Wallowa County with battery storage powered by renewable energy sources like solar and hydropower.	Wallowa Resources	NEOEDD, Wallowa County, cities, ODOE, nonprofits	Active
***Transportation:* Gas tax** Use expanded gas tax to improve the quality of roads and to install more pedestrian and bike-centered infrastructure (current traction for this exists in Union County, and other counties could also explore the possibility).	Cities and counties	Residents, nonprofits, ODOT	Feasibility
***Transportation:* Public transportation** Identify large workplaces or cluster of workplaces where employees struggle to find reliable transportation to get to work. Prioritize these areas for expanded public transportation options.	Community Connection of Northeast Oregon	EOWB	Feasibility

METRICS

Annual Metrics: # of projects receiving funding through Business Oregon

Strategy	Metrics: Year 1 and Year 5
Infrastructure Sector Strategies *(Priority)* Build resilient infrastructure that meets current needs, has the ability to withstand or quickly bounce-back from human-caused or natural disruptions, and minimizes negative impacts on the environment **Sectors:** Broadband, Water & Wastewater, Energy, Transportation	**Resilience:** # of Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan updates with an economic development representative on the steering committee: growing until all update processes include economic development representation **Broadband:** # of broadband projects that receive funding: steady or growing until build-out is complete **Water & Wastewater:** # of started and/or completed upgrade projects: growing until all jurisdictions have updated systems **Energy:** # of started and/or completed microgrid and renewable energy developments: steady or growing **Transportation:** # of EV charging stations: steady or growing until build-out is complete
Development Strategy *(Priority)* Develop, maintain, and fund long-term infrastructure plans	% of jurisdictions with long-term infrastructure plans (even as simple as a list of needed upgrades): increasing until 100% have captured needs in writing
Recreation Build out visitor services (restrooms, signage, trails, etc.) to support a sustainable tourism economy that prioritizes stewardship and preserves access for locals	# of visitor infrastructure upgrades (including signage, trails, accessibility measures, etc.) completed each year: steady or growing

5 | WORKING TOGETHER

Moving this regional economic development strategy forward requires a group effort. Throughout the development of the CEDS, many of our region's economic development leaders met to share about their work and how it fits with other initiatives. Our partners affirmed the importance of coordination and collaboration repeatedly in workshops and interviews. There is a clear desire to align efforts to foster prosperity in our region and beyond.

Working together, however, can be difficult. We also repeatedly heard from our partners that they have limited capacity to take on leadership of new projects and initiatives. This means that rather than approaching the action plans in the CEDS as an entirely new, additional body of work, we have to think smarter about how we adapt our existing work to align with the regionally agreed upon strategy the CEDS presents.

Photo courtesy of Grace Donovan

This may require some adaptations and adjustments on the part of all those identified as leads or partners in the action plans. For those whose work more regularly focuses on local level, community-specific initiatives, it will be important to consider how these efforts tie into broader-scale strategies that can benefit the entire region. For those whose work more regularly focuses at a sector-wide or regional scale, it will be important to consider how to better connect and integrate localized activities. All this requires strong communication and a collaborative, rather than competitive, mindset.

ROLES IN REGIONAL COLLABORATION

This strategy covers Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties, but we recognize the multiple other organizations of geography that intersect and do not always align with these boundaries. We also recognize that there is no official governing body in charge of policy for the region. The CEDS is a non-regulatory strategy: it can't force anyone to follow its

guidelines. We hope, however, that by building buy-in for the priorities it describes throughout its development and by defining some roles in its implementation, we will reinvigorate regional partners' commitment to working together.

NEOEDD: CONVENING, REPORTING, & FUNDING

The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) is the closest thing to a regional governing body for economic development that exists, but it has no authority beyond the buy-in it receives from economic development partners in the region. It is designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration as the official Economic Development District, which means it is responsible for developing a CEDS every five years, but this does not mean that NEOEDD alone is responsible for implementing the CEDS.

Instead, the organization is best suited to convening, coordinating, and facilitating regional economic development efforts, in addition to its direct service functions. Beyond its role as a lead for some of the project/initiatives in the action plans, NEOEDD has four additional roles:

- **Convening** partners from across the region to ensure open lines of communication about progress on the CEDS action plans.
- **Reporting** on the metrics listed in the action plans to track and communicate progress back out to partners.
- **Seeking funding** for CEDS priorities and supporting others seeking funding for projects consistent with the CEDS. NEOEDD may be the appropriate agency to seek funding when a project reaches across multiple jurisdictions and agencies, but other organizations may be better suited to lead particular regional projects.
- **Updating the CEDS** as conditions, strategies, or projects change.

LEADS: CONVENING, MANAGING, & REPORTING

The CEDS action plans identify leads for each project/initiative. This role comes with a responsibility to coordinate the efforts described in the action plan:

- **Convening** the partners listed for the project/initiative and any additional stakeholders needed to move the project/initiative forward.
- **Managing**, and when needed, completing the steps needed to move the project/initiative forward. This will involve continued engagement with partners and stakeholders and reporting back to NEOEDD on progress.
- **Reporting** progress and metrics to NEOEDD.

PARTNERS: SUPPORTING

The CEDS action plans identify partners for each project/initiative. These are the organizations whose work already touches the project/initiative and who would therefore contribute to its progress. Partners are critical for ensuring the work happens:

- **Supporting** implementation by taking on tasks that align with work they are already doing. This will involve continued engagement and reporting to the leads and any other partners working on the project/initiative.

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

The CEDS is most useful when it is regularly deployed as a guiding vision for the region. To ensure the strategies described here remain present and relevant in the minds of partners throughout the region, it is important to keep it front and center during economic development conversations at any level.

To ensure this, the CEDS should be engaged with in the following ways:

- Create an annual report to be hosted on NEOEDD's website that captures progress on the top and middle priority projects/initiatives and presents updates to annual metrics. **(NEOEDD)**
- Create a baseline and final report of Year 1 and Year 5 metrics at the beginning and end of the CEDS cycle to be hosted on NEOEDD's website. The Year 5 report will demonstrate overarching progress on CEDS priorities prior to the next CEDS update. **(NEOEDD, with assistance from partners)**

- Present the executive summary of the CEDS to every City Council and County Commission within one year of the plan's adoption and provide suggestions for how local-level initiatives can be integrated with the regional strategy, including a reminder to always review the CEDS ahead of major planning processes to ensure alignment. **(NEOEDD)**

- Host a gathering or workshop every year or every few years around each of the strategic priority areas where a regional gathering makes sense. Use these gatherings as opportunities to revisit the priority projects/initiatives and update them as needed based on progress and new information. **(NEOEDD, regional partners including EOWB and Business Oregon)**

- Review the CEDS ahead of and as part of any major planning process - strategic planning, economic development planning, infrastructure planning, hazard mitigation planning, energy planning, etc. Ensure that any new plans and strategies created align with the regionally agreed upon strategy presented in the CEDS. **(Jurisdictions, Nonprofit Service Providers)**