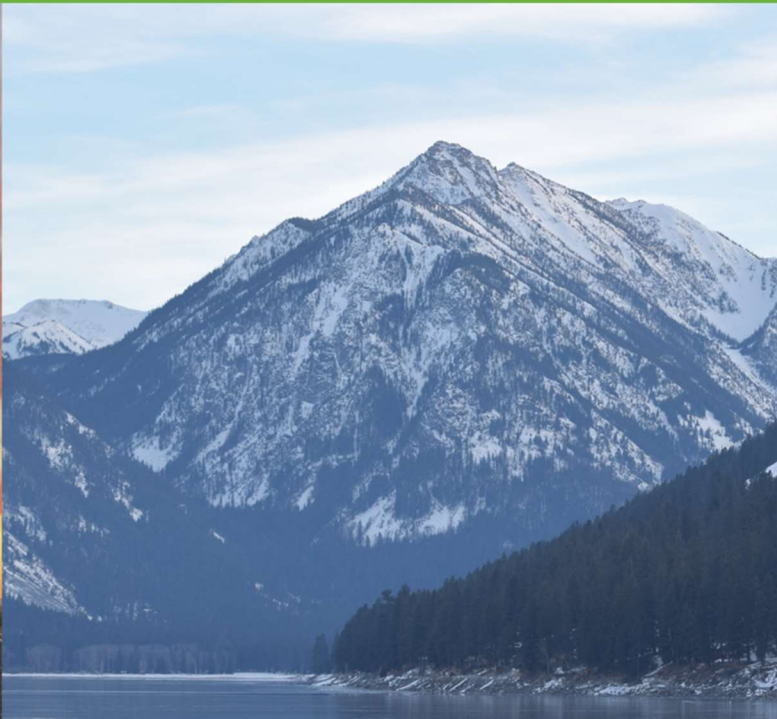


**NEOEDD**



**Comprehensive Economic  
Development Strategy  
Update 2024**



The 2024 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update & Performance Report is prepared in the spring each year. The update highlights key changes to the Northeast Oregon regional economy (Union, Baker and Wallowa counties), and priorities and strategies articulated in the CEDS years following a full 5 Year CEDS revision.

**Adjustment to the Strategy**

The CEDS is meant to be a flexible document and may be adjusted to respond to changing economic conditions. The [Northeast Oregon 2023-2028 CEDS](#) was adopted in September of 2023. There were no adjustments to the CEDS in the seven months since its adoption, and no changes to the CEDS committee or NEOEDD staff.

**Report on Economic Development Activities.**

This section provides a brief description of the activities undertaken to help support the development or implementation of the CEDS. Additional activities may have taken place in support of the CEDS as many grassroots and other organizations are active in the region and not yet aware of or involved in sharing their activities with NEOEDD or the CEDS committee. NEOEDD continues to reach out and connect to cities, non-profits and economic/community development organizations in the region to further understand the diverse efforts to improve the region’s economy and quality of life.

Top Priority Workforce Initiatives			
Workforce	Project/Initiative	Lead	Partners
	<b>Youth Development:</b> 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
	<b>Adult Preparation &amp; Growth:</b> Encourage employers to offer more on-the-job training	Eastern Oregon Workforce Board or WorkSource Oregon	Baker Technical Institute, community colleges, trade schools
	<b>Coordination, Leadership, and Policy:</b> Encourage employee retention; work to expand childcare	Eastern Oregon Workforce Board or WorkSource; Early Learning Hubs	City Economic Development leads, employers; Schools, employers, NEOEDD


Strategy: Wrap-Around Workforce Supports - Ensure employees and job-seekers have access to services that support success in their lives and careers.

- Childcare
  - Business development and financing support supported one childcare provider in Wallowa County
  - Information about Oregon Housing & Community Services (OHCS) grants
  - available for constructing childcare or preschool/head start classroom spaces on site at affordable housing developments was shared with Regional Workforce Housing Partners and Wallowa Resources/ Working Homes LLC.

- NEOEDD assisted the Wallowa Education Services District with a technical assistance grant request to study the feasibility of starting a new childcare program in Wallowa County. The grant was awarded, and the feasibility study is underway.

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)

- Experiential learning - Expand opportunities for students to gain job skills through applied courses by investing in connections between instructors and local/regional governments and employers.
  - In 2023 Rural Engagement and Vitality Center (REV) at Eastern Oregon University provided 15 paid student internships working on 19 projects with 37 partners

Top Priority Housing Initiative			
Housing	Project/Initiative	Lead	Partners
	<b>Coordinated Housing Strategy:</b> 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

Strategy: Coordinated Housing - Develop a coordinated approach to identifying housing needs, barriers and solutions.

- NEOEDD applied for a national Economic Recovery Corps fellow to engage housing partners in the region in setting up a collaborative structure to support a regional clearinghouse for housing development. NEOEDD was not awarded a fellow but was included as a collaborator in a fellow matched with Wallowa Resources. The fellow is providing 10% of their time to assist with research and connections to housing support resources and is also coordinating this work with the needs of several other states through the Rural Voices for Conservation network.

### Middle Priority Housing Initiatives

Strategy: Housing Production - Support activities that enable more housing production

- December 2023, federal and state agencies came to Enterprise to learn about the three projects that Working Homes LLC (subsidiary of nonprofit Wallowa Resources) is working on and offered technical assistance and funding resources to help develop and finance the projects.
- Working Homes LLC secured state and philanthropic funding for project development work on three housing projects in Wallowa County.

- NEOEDD serves on the Advisory Committee for Working Homes and helped facilitate two community meetings with Working Homes LLC, to inform conceptual design for phased middle income housing development on a 20-acre parcel in Joseph.
- The City of Joseph is working with the REV Center to update their Buildable Lands Inventory that could lead to an update of the city's comprehensive plan. Funding provided by the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development and supported by ECONorthwest.
- La Grande School District received \$515,000 in federal funding to launch Tiger Homes, a Career Technical Education program that has begun construction of two town homes.

Alternative development method - Publicize successes of emerging local housing development models

- A variety of alternative housing models were highlighted in the Eastern Oregon Economic Summit, including a veterans village housing cluster, small modular home manufacturing, student-built housing for medical staff, and affordable housing with wrap-around services.

Strategy: Policy - Draft, advocate, and enact policy changes that will support increased access to quality, affordable housing options for residents of all income levels

- NEOEDD staff is serving on the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis Rulemaking Advisory Committee (RAC) through fall of 2025, participating in broad, high-level, and policy-oriented discussions about how best to implement Legislative direction to improve housing production, affordability and choice in Oregon.
- NEOEDD staff assisted the City of Enterprise in researching ADU incentive programs.
- REV Center hosted three online webinars for regional partners engaged in workforce housing development. Topics focused on workforce housing models, public engagement to inform housing planning, and policy updates.

Top Priority Business Development Initiatives			
Business Development	Project/Initiative	Lead	Partners
	<b>Funding:</b> Develop a financing program for small loans and grants (\$25k or less)	NEOEDD (pending funding)	Public/nonprofit + private partnership, CRA funds (banks)
	<b>General Coordination and Advocacy:</b> 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
	<b>General Coordination and Advocacy:</b> 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

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

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

- NEOEDD secured funding through the Business Oregon Economic Equity Investment program to launch two new business funding programs, a matched savings program and small grant program.
- NEOEDD helped one entrepreneur to secure a no-interest KIVA loan that did not require collateral.



### Medium Priority Business Development Initiatives

Main Street - Publicize the work of existing Main Street organizations and encourage other jurisdictions without a Main Street organization to develop one (or to develop a regional shared Main Street organization to serve multiple small towns). Provide technical assistance and pursue funding to help new organizations get started.

- Three Wallowa County Regional Main Street communities worked on their downtown strategic plan and planning events for 2024. NEOEDD applied for and received six grants from the Main Street Revitalization Fund which are being passed through to improve five properties within the city of Wallowa's Main Street district and one property with Enterprise's Main Street district.

Business climate - Survey (formally or informally) businesses to understand the main barriers they face. Research strategies and policies that would address these barriers. Develop a report documenting ideas and resources for the region.

- NEOEDD conducted a survey, focus groups, and interviews that informed the [Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Report](#) for Wallowa County. The report is being used to inform business development programs and services.

Strategy: General Coordination and Advocacy - Align efforts to pursue business development strategies and support business resilience

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.

- Two economic summits were convened in the region, Power Eastern Oregon (organized by Oregon Trail Electric Coop) and the Eastern Oregon Economic Summit (organized by Eastern Oregon Women’s Coalition).

Strategy - Provide resources and consultations to entrepreneurs and small business owners to support the success of their enterprises.

- NEOEDD delivered Co.Starters CORE 10-week business development classes in Baker City, La Grande and Enterprise. Thirty people graduated from these classes in April.
- NEOEDD also offered the 6-session Destination Creation class to participants in La Grande. Eight individuals completed this business positioning and marketing workshop series.
- Four people attended the Entrepreneurship Mindset workshop in Enterprise.
- NEOEDD provided an average of 2.75 hours of one-on-one consulting services to 36 entrepreneurs.



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

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.

Broadband: Connections to rural areas - Identify and fundraise for projects that build out high-speed connections to rural areas and farms

- NEOEDD organized and hosted meetings of the Regional Broadband Action Team with providers/ISPs, Regional Solutions Team, county representatives, health care organizations, educators and Statewide Broadband staff. Together they organized speed testing/mapping activities to help assess the region’s needs, shared updates on funding opportunities and applied for funding, but we were not awarded funds.
- NEOEDD participated in meetings of the statewide Broadband Action Team.

Development Strategy: Increase grantwriting capacity via a pilot resource-sharing collaboration between jurisdictions

- NEOEDD received funding through state and philanthropic funding to write grants to support municipal and nonprofit projects. Among other grants, NEOEDD submitted a \$15 million proposal to US Department of Energy to fund implementation of the CEDS in Union and Baker counties which were eligible for USDOE funding.

### Medium Priority Infrastructure Initiatives

Energy: Develop energy plans for each county, focusing on expanding access to renewable, resilient energy sources that support energy independence.

- A Wallowa County Community Energy Sustainability Plan(CESP) process was led by Wallowa Resources. A final plan was adopted by Wallowa County in December. <https://www.communityenergyprogram.org/energy-plan>
- In April, Wallowa County Commissioners selected 7 members to the CESP Community Review Panel. Recruitment is underway for volunteers to serve on the CESP



## Implementation Advisory Group.

Resilience Building: Participate in Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning process and advocate for strategies and funding allocation that support resilient infrastructure retrofitting and development.

- NEOEDD applied to the University of Oregon Institute of Policy, Research and Engagement about opportunity to access a fully-funded RARE AmeriCorps volunteer as part of a pilot to support planning and development of resiliency projects.

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.

- The City of Richland is upgrading their water system to serve both the city and the unincorporated area of New Bridge. NEOEDD is assisting with grant administration and labor standards monitoring
- The City of Joseph is updating their water system master plan and making improvements to their water distribution system with funding from the Oregon Special Public Works fund.

## Strategy: Recreation

Build out visitor services (restrooms, signage, trails, etc.) to support a sustainable tourism economy that prioritizes stewardship and preserves access for locals.

- Eastern Oregon Visitors Association and Wallowa County Chamber received a Travel Oregon Competitive Grant to provide brick and mortar business owners in Baker, Union and Wallowa County workshops and one-on-one consultations that cover ADA accessibility, layout, display, and lighting.
- Wallowa Mountains Hells Canyon Trails Association completed 29 trail and recreation improvement projects in the Hells Canyon and the Wallowa Mountains areas in 2023.
- Joseph Branch Trail Consortium secured state parks funding to design and construct a trailhead /pocket park and one mile of ADA trail along the Wallowa Union Railroad Authority rail corridor in the town of Elgin. Transportation Growth Management (TGM) grants from the Oregon Dept. of Transportation were secured for planning a 15-mile trail section out of Elgin and another 13 miles of trail between the City of Wallowa and Minam, including a 1-mile, ADA-compliant path within the city limits of Wallowa.

## Evaluation of Progress on Action Plan and Goals

Workforce Strategy	Metrics: Year 1 and Year 5
<p><b>Youth Development (Priority)</b></p> <p>Prepare young people for careers by offering opportunities to build job skills while they are still in school (secondary and post-secondary)</p>	<p># of internship programs: steady or growing <i>To be collected at the end of summer 2024</i></p> <p>% educational attainment: steady or increasing <i>2023 Data high school/GED 30%, associates degrees 9%, bachelor degrees 17%</i></p>
<p><b>Adult Preparation and Growth (Priority)</b></p> <p>Ensure adults have the skills and resources they need to enter and thrive in the local job market</p>	<p># of on-the-job training programs offered: steady or growing <i>To be collected at the end of summer 2024</i></p> <p><i>Qualitative:</i> Economic developers report employees have increased opportunities for internal advancement within their organization <i>2024 Data: 38.5% report there is a small amount of opportunity for advancement and 61.5% report a moderate amount of opportunity for advancement</i></p>
<p><b>Coordination, Leadership, and Policy (Priority)</b></p> <p>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</p>	<p><i>Qualitative:</i> Economic developers report how weak or strong they feel the relationship is between economic development staff and workforce development staff</p> <p><i>2024 Data: 30% report the relationships are weak, 53% report the relationships are moderately strong, and 15% report the relationships are strong</i></p>
<p><b>Wrap-Around Workforce Supports (Priority)</b></p> <p>Ensure employees and job-seekers have access to services that support success in their lives and careers <i>(Note: housing and transportation are covered in the Housing and Infrastructure Priority Areas)</i></p>	<p># of childcare providers: steady or growing <i>2023 Data – 55</i></p>
<b>Annual Metrics</b>	
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	<i>2023 – 4%</i>

Housing Strategy	Metrics: Year 1 and Year 5
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<p><b>Coordinated Housing Strategy (Priority)</b></p> <p>Develop a coordinated approach to identifying housing needs, barriers, and solutions</p>	<p># of housing-related convenings since last count: steady or growing</p> <p><u>2023-2024 Data: 4</u></p>
<p><b>Housing Production (Priority)</b></p> <p>Support activities that enable more housing production</p>	<p># of "non-traditional" (downtown, dormitory-style, employer-sponsored, etc.) housing units added since last count: steady or growing</p> <p><u>2023 Data: 0</u></p> <p># of developments using innovative building techniques (mass timber, 3D printing, etc.) since last count: steady or growing</p> <p><u>2023 Data: 0</u></p>
<p><b>Policy</b></p> <p>Draft, advocate, and enact policy changes that will support increased access to quality, affordable housing options for residents of all income levels</p>	<p># of jurisdictions who make zoning and development code updates: growing until 100% have made updates</p> <p>% cost-burdened households: steady or decreasing</p> <p><u>2023 Data: 25.02%</u></p>
<p><b>People Seeking Housing</b></p> <p>Expand activities that connect people with housing and mitigate landlord concerns over tenant quality</p>	<p><i>Qualitative:</i> Economic developers report employers have fewer people turning down or struggling to keep jobs because of housing-related challenges</p> <p><u>2024 Update: 62% of economic development partners believe that many employees are turning down employment offers or struggling to keep jobs because of housing-related challenges and 38% believe that a moderate amount are facing housing-related challenges.</u></p>
<p><b>Annual Metrics</b></p>	
<p><b>Housing Price Index</b></p>	<p><u>2023 Data: 3.55% increase</u></p>
<p><b>Unhoused Residents (based on point-in-time counts)</b></p>	<p><u>2023 Data: 20</u></p>
<p><b>New Housing Units Permitted</b></p>	<p><u>2023 Data: 181</u></p>

Business Development Strategy	Metrics: Year 1 and Year 5
<p><b>Funding (Priority)</b></p> <p>Provide loans and grants to fill the gap for small businesses and entrepreneurs who don't qualify for traditional funding</p>	<p><i>1 KIVA loan, 8 IDA business clients made first withdrawal</i></p>
<p><b>Infrastructure/Space (Priority)</b></p> <p>Ensure businesses and nonprofit cultural organizations have access to the space and amenities they need to thrive</p>	<p># of incubator and/or special-equipment-providing spaces: steady or growing</p> <p><i>2023 Data: 0</i></p> <p># of jurisdictions who complete or update a buildable lands inventory: growing until 100% have current BLIs</p> <p># of historic and/or cultural sites that receive funding: steady or growing</p>
<p><b>General Coordination and Advocacy (Priority)</b></p> <p>Align efforts to pursue business development strategies and support business resilience in our most important sectors</p>	<p># of active (affiliated, designated, or accredited) Main Street programs: growing until 100% have active programs</p> <p><i>2024 Data: 6</i></p> <p><i>Qualitative: Business development service providers report they are improving their ability to share resources from different agencies and provide effective referrals</i></p> <p><i>2024 Data: 8% report that they infrequently refer clients to others service providers, 31% report that they sometimes refer clients and 61% report that they often refer clients</i></p> <p><i>2024 Data: 23% report that it is generally easier to refer and 77% report that it varies quite a bit</i></p> <p><i>Qualitative: Workshops/meetings for businesses provide continuity of operations planning and business resilience resources</i></p> <p><i>2024 Data: 77% report that less than 1/3 of workshops provide continuity of operations planning and business resilience resources, 15% report that it is between 1/3 and 2/3 and 8% report that it is more than 2/3.</i></p>
<p><b>Technical Support</b></p> <p>Provide resources and consultations to entrepreneurs and small business owners to support the success of their enterprises</p>	<p># of businesses accessing technical assistance: steady or increasing</p> <p><i>2023 Data: NEOEDD 47 people attended classes, 36 received one-on-one TA support, BMCC SBDC served 229 clients in their service area</i></p>

	Annual Metrics
# of businesses receiving small amounts (\$25k or less) of financial support	<i>1 KIVA loan, 8 IDA business clients made first withdrawal</i>

Infrastructure Strategy	Metrics: Year 1 and Year 5
<p><b>Infrastructure Sector Strategies (Priority)</b></p> <p>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</p> <p><b>Sectors:</b> Broadband, Water &amp; Wastewater, Energy, Transportation</p>	<p><b>Resilience:</b> # of Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan updates with an economic development representative on the steering committee: growing until all update processes include economic development representation</p> <p><b>Broadband:</b> # of broadband projects that receive funding: steady or growing until build-out is complete</p> <p><i>2024 Update – 1 Broadband Technical Assistance project funded through Oregon Broadband Office</i></p> <p><b>Water &amp; Wastewater:</b> # of started and/or completed upgrade projects: growing until all jurisdictions have updated systems</p> <p><i>2024 Update – Richland and Joseph Water System Upgrades in Progress, Huntington Water System Master Plan Funded</i></p> <p><b>Energy:</b> # of started and/or completed microgrid and renewable energy developments: steady or growing</p> <p><b>Transportation:</b> # of EV charging stations: steady or growing until build-out is complete</p> <p><i>2024 Update – 26 charging station locations in region</i></p>
<p><b>Development Strategy (Priority)</b></p> <p>Develop, maintain, and fund long-term infrastructure plans</p>	<p>% of jurisdictions with long-term infrastructure plans (even as simple as a list of needed upgrades): increasing until 100% have captured needs in writing</p>
<p><b>Recreation</b></p> <p>Build out visitor services (restrooms, signage, trails, etc.) to support a sustainable tourism economy that prioritizes stewardship and preserves access for locals</p>	<p># of visitor infrastructure upgrades (including signage, trails, accessibility measures, etc.) completed each year: steady or growing</p>
Annual Metrics	
Number of projects receiving funding through Business Oregon	7

## **Schedule of Goals for the Next Year**

NEOEDD staff plan to visit each city in the District to share the CEDS and ask them about their infrastructure, housing and community development priorities. One desired outcome of this outreach will be an increased understanding about the CEDS and how we can best deploy our resources to support workforce housing development in the region.

NEOEDD staff plan to increase our engagement with workforce development partners so that we can provide better referrals and have a better understanding of the projects and programs our workforce partners are implementing. This may include recruiting a workforce partner to NEOEDD's governing board.

If we receive the USDOE grant to implement the CEDS, we will form a grant advisory committee comprised of municipal and environmental justice community residents to develop subrecipient and grant criteria.

NEOEDD staff will participate in the Regional Engagement and Vitality Center's Recharge Our Community's Economy workshops to see how this new engagement and planning effort could lead to implementation of projects and initiatives identified in the CEDS planning process.