

SIERRA JOBS FIRST
COLLABORATIVE

2024 Strategic Plan

Regional Plan: Part II



Governing Council Approved August 23, 2024

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An Open Letter To Our Region

Uniting for Sustainable Prosperity

A holistic regional plan for economic growth, environmental stewardship, and inclusive development

In the heart of the Sierra, where majestic peaks meet vast landscapes, we embark on a pivotal journey to shape a brighter future for all. The Sierra Jobs First (SJF) Collaborative aims to harmonize community vitality, economic growth, and climate resilience, creating a future where opportunities thrive, public health flourishes, and our natural environment is preserved.

Our approach is deeply rooted in the understanding that a resilient economy and a healthy environment are not mutually exclusive but deeply interconnected. By integrating climate action into every aspect of the 2024 Strategic Plan (SJF Regional Plan Part 2) we aim to align with the California climate initiative, drive economic prosperity, and ensure equity. This holistic approach, linking climate resilience, economic development, and promoting sustainability, builds a framework for growth that is both enlightening and inspiring.

Inclusivity is central to our strategy. We prioritize investing in the most vulnerable communities—those historically marginalized, including, but not limited to, tribes and tribal communities, and communities of racial and ethnic diversity. Prioritizing their needs will spark broader regional success.

The second part of the SJF Regional Plan provides a path forward and sets up for the Catalyst phase, where we dive into implementation and project development with the assistance of the Industry Sector Navigators. Together, we will build a region with sustainable jobs and strong communities that can prosper. Our efforts will ensure that environmental stewardship and economic growth are mutually reinforcing. SJF is our chance to create a legacy of resilience, equity, and enduring prosperity for the Sierra. We are unwaveringly committed to making this vision a reality.

Sierra Business Council (SBC) is the regional convener and fiscal agent for SJF.



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Executive Summary



About This Plan

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

The SJF Regional Plan is designed in two distinct phases, each building off the other to create a comprehensive and actionable framework. The Regional Summary (SJF Regional Plan Part 1), published in 2023, is an analysis of economic, demographic and population level data. This report is where vision transitions into action.

This phase focuses on developing a forward-looking economic development model and transition roadmap. It transforms the insights and data gathered from the Regional Summary (SJF Regional Plan Part 1) into co-created practical strategies and initiatives aimed at shaping the future social, economic, and environmental landscape of the Sierra. In the next phase, Catalyst, we will dive deep into implementation and project development fueled by Catalyst funds and the assistance of Industry Sector Navigators.

CRITICAL PILLARS OF PROGRAM

COMMUNITY-LED

This plan is not just for the community—it's by the community. Input from our region's communities, disinvested communities, businesses, tribal representatives, local

governments, and organizations drives the strategies and actions and is integral to its success.

CLIMATE FORWARD

The plan focuses on creating and sustaining high-quality jobs that meet community needs and regional workforce capacities in a world where economic growth and environmental responsibility are not mutually exclusive.

SHARED REGIONAL VISION AND ALIGNED ACTION

This plan embodies a shared regional vision, translating into coordinated actions at regional and local levels, enabling communities to collaborate toward common objectives.

PARTNERSHIP CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

Regional collaboration is vital, enhancing resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and collective problem-solving to address complex challenges and seize opportunities.

PROCESSES DATA AND INPUT

DATA

This report uses the best available economic, demographic, and population-level data for the seven county SJF region,

Executive Summary

including but not limited to United States Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and State of California data.

Data collection is limited since the SJF region primarily comprises smaller counties and rural communities. Data is often incomplete and restricts the disclosure of potentially private information about individual employment. Throughout this report, industry, employment, and population data are often referred to as percentages of regional totals, and it is assumed that the data available generally represents the broader community. Additional state- and local-level data collection efforts should be included in subsequent implementation plans to strengthen data confidence and provide more opportunities for data-driven decision-making.

Data regarding tribal communities has been historically incomplete and/or inaccurate. The U.S. Census Bureau uses Native American to refer to American Indians and/or Alaskan Natives. The term American Indian refers to the Indigenous people of the contiguous U.S.

Conversations, research, feedback, and writing from the following groups contributed to the findings in this report and in Regional Plan Part 1, which was sourced extensively for this document:

- › 2023-2024 California Jobs First Focus Group Attendees
- › California Center for Rural Policy at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt
- › Central Sierra Economic Development District
- › Desert Research Institute: Dr. Daniel McEvoy
- › Eastern Sierra Council of Governments: Elaine Kabala
- › Economic Forensics and Analytics, Inc: Dr. Robert Eyler
- › GIS Mapping and Analysis: Hayley Pippin
- › SJF Governing Council (Formerly known as HRTC) Members
- › SJF Subcommittee Members
- › Mother Lode Job Training Center: Amy Frost, James Hanson
- › National Economic Education Delegation: Dr. Jon Haveman
- › North State Planning and Development Collective
- › California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, CalEnviroScreen: Laura August, Andrew Slocombe
- › University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources
- › SBC team members provided additional analysis and data synthesis

SBC would also like to credit and thank our editorial team, Flanz Media, our strategic planning facilitation and content management team, Agnew::Beck, and our strategy consultant, Egon Terplan.

ENGAGEMENT

The active involvement of various collaborators shaped SJF's strategies and plans. Over the past two years, SBC staff have engaged with hundreds of community members in English and Spanish through focus groups, regional events, surveys, and

Collaborative meetings, including:

- › **14** disinvested communities focus groups
- › **7** Governing Council meetings
- › **4** subcommittees, including Business, Workforce and Education, Local Government, Project Identification and Tribal, totaling **30** meetings
- › **11** community workshops
- › **4** Industry Sector meetings, bringing together experts across natural and working lands, sustainable agriculture and ranching, community health, and sustainable recreation and tourism

To maximize the community's opportunity to provide input into the final Strategic Plan, two public comment periods, totaling over three weeks, were included in the process to finalize and adopt this regional Strategic Plan. Close to 600 public comments on the Draft Strategies Packet ultimately informed the creation of the Strategic Plan.

FORMAT AND STATE REQUIREMENTS

This document addresses State requirements for Regional Plan Part 2. It is organized to promote ease of use and implementation among collaborators. For a matrix of content fulfilling State requirements, see the appendix.

KEY TERMS

This Strategic Plan includes specific terms, including:

- › Disinvested Community
- › Foundational Elements
- › High-Quality Jobs
- › Target Industries

Please consult the glossary on page 126 to review the definitions of all terms and their specific meanings in this context.

KEY FINDINGS

REGIONAL SUMMARY

The Sierra region's unique geography and rurality, natural resources, aging population, struggling economy, and climate change challenges create opportunities and hurdles for its communities.

GEOGRAPHY

About 72% of the lands in the seven-county region are managed by federal agencies.¹ In some cases, for example, in Inyo County, 91% of the available land is publicly owned and managed. The remaining 8% of available lands are primarily owned and managed by private and public utility providers.² This leaves less than 2% of private land holdings in Inyo County to be used for housing and economic development, limiting

Executive Summary

local taxes and complicating land use and acquisition. The Sierra Nevada mountain range, foothills, and Death Valley define the region's geography. These natural features pose significant challenges for transportation and infrastructure development.

RESOURCES

The region's natural resources are crucial to the area's economy and lifestyle. However, activities focused on resource extraction have led to ecological changes and historical power disparities. The snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada range provides significant water resources, but freshwater exports and excessive groundwater pumping have caused desertification in some areas. The forests are vital in combating climate change but have suffered from deforestation, extensive tree mortality, and habitat loss. Mining has historically shaped the region's economies and led to economic volatility and environmental challenges. Tourism is the region's primary economic force but can strain natural resources and regional infrastructure.

POPULATION

The region has faced historical power disparities and the exclusion of disinvested community members from positions of influence. Acknowledging historical injustices and working to rectify them is crucial for creating a more equitable and inclusive approach to economic and environmental stewardship in the region.

The region has a small, predominantly white population living in rural areas. The population has slightly decreased over the last decade, leading to a smaller tax base and less political power for these rural communities. The region's Native American population is significantly higher than the State average.³ More than a quarter of the region's population is older than 65, and fewer than a quarter is younger than 18.⁴

ECONOMY

The Sierra region's economy is limited because there are no interstate highways, major rail lines, international airports, or shipping ports from which to prosper from traditional tradeable sectors. These factors are critical barriers to economic diversification and require a creative approach. The vast majority of the area's nearly 70,000 jobs are held in the low-wage tourism sector or non-tradeable public administration, healthcare, and construction. The cost of living is high. To live alone (e.g., without roommates or multiple incomes) and afford the current and available rental market, workers must earn between \$58,000 and \$167,000.⁵ However, 45% of workers in the region are employed in industries paying less than \$50,000 in average annual wages.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

The region's economy depends mainly on tourism, recreation, natural resources, and agriculture, which are significantly impacted by the region's climate and

environmental conditions. Climate change threatens the ecological and geographical diversity that draws people to the region. Wildfires pose a significant threat, with tree mortality and mismanaged forests worsening the risk. Changes in precipitation patterns can also affect the Sierra Crest, which stores snowpack during the winter and spring months. Climate change-driven wildfires, extreme weather events, droughts, and other natural disasters significantly impact the region's most vulnerable populations.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Plan is organized around a framework that adopts a dual approach to address regional challenges and build a prosperous economy: improving Foundational Elements while developing Target Industries. These strategies are interconnected, meaning progress in one area supports and enhances outcomes in others.

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

The region's strategy begins with fortifying the region's economic foundations. These core areas must be addressed to enable sustainable growth in industry sectors:

- › Housing and Placemaking
- › Land Use and Tenure
- › Physical Infrastructure
- › Small Business and Entrepreneurship
- › Social and Civic Infrastructure
- › Workforce Development and Education

TARGET INDUSTRIES

With foundational elements in place, the Plan focuses on growing key industry sectors in five areas:

- › Sustainable Recreation and Tourism
- › Natural and Working Lands
- › Clean Energy and Energy Resilience
- › Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
- › Community Healthcare

CONCLUSION

SJF is a dynamic and evolving initiative that aims to foster community-led, climate-forward planning and economic development in the Sierra region. During the SJF process, valuable lessons were learned, which allowed the SJF Collaborative to pivot as it continued evolving and growing. The Collaborative's structure, designed to be inclusive and supportive of regional efforts, has proven effective in developing a unified regional voice, vision, and strategies. As it evolves, it will continue to provide engagement opportunities for community members, partners, and governing bodies, ensuring a wide range of voices are included in the planning process.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

Empowering the Sierra's Communities

Trusted Local Leaders Partner for a Better Future

Launched in 2023, Sierra Jobs First region (SJF), formerly California Jobs First Eastern Sierra, is an exciting opportunity for the historically disinvested Sierra region to build momentum to achieve economic, social, and sustainability goals.

A UNIFIED APPROACH

As one of the 13 California Jobs First Program regions, the SJF area is a new planning configuration unifying the counties on the Sierra western slope (Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa, and Tuolumne) and the eastern slope (Alpine, Mono, and Inyo). While many counties and local entities in our region have partnered in the past, this is the first time the entire region has been designated as a whole. SJF offers the geographically and culturally distinct communities in two unique subregions of the Sierra an unprecedented opportunity to build new working relationships, share resources, strategies, and capacity, and advocate as a unified voice at the state level.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

EQUITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND INCLUSION

The SJF Collaborative addresses historical power imbalances, and prioritizes equity and social justice in all planning and implementation stages. To amplify marginalized voices, we engage with tribal governmental entities, government agencies, local businesses, educational institutions, and residents.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRUST-BUILDING

The SJF Collaborative focuses on building genuine relationships and working together to make meaningful changes. We support communities that have been left out in the past.

FUTURE FOCUS GUIDED BY EXPERIENCE

SJF applies the valuable lessons from past partnerships to refine our strategies and seek effective engagement and better outcomes for all involved.

COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY AND OPENNESS

The SJF Collaborative communicates openly and consistently through various channels to keep the community informed and engaged. We actively seek and incorporate input through surveys, meetings, social media, and public forums, ensuring that everyone is part of the conversation.

COLLABORATION WITH TRUSTED LEADERS

Our SJF Collaborative works with respected local leaders and incorporate their experiences and input to ensure our efforts can be trusted within our community.

WHO IS IN THE SJF COLLABORATIVE?

We are a collection of hundreds of community members—local leaders, small business owners, ranchers, bakers, public agency employees, healthcare workers, and tribal and Latino representatives—working together to advance economic solutions in our region that build prosperity for all.



Governing Council
(Formerly the HRTC)



Tribal Subcommittee



Project Identification
Subcommittee



Local Government
Subcommittee



Business, Workforce &
Education Subcommittee



Sierra Business Council
(Regional Convener/Administrator)

CALIFORNIA JOBS FIRST

STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC CAPACITY AND RESILIENCE

SJF is one of the 13 regional bodies known as California Jobs First Collaboratives established by California Jobs First, a statewide program focused on these key objectives:

Equity: Consider diverse community needs across the region, especially those historically excluded from planning and economic development processes.

Sustainability: Focus on self-sustaining economic development to create a carbon-neutral, climate-resilient economy that serves the region's communities.

Job quality and access: Prioritize stable jobs that offer family-sustaining wages, health benefits, pensions, advancement opportunities, predictable schedules, safe conditions, and worker input.

Economic competitiveness and resilience: Develop strategies to navigate economic shocks, ensure each region can compete in the global economy, and bring prosperity to its communities.



SIERRA JOBS FIRST COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Business, Workforce & Education Subcommittee

Local Government Subcommittee

Project Identification Subcommittee

Tribal Subcommittee

Governing Council

- › Minimum of 21 voting members
- › Three from each county (or cities within counties)
- › “At large” members representing disinvested communities
- › One Non-voting Chair

Subcommittee Structure

- › There is no limit on voting members
- › Open ex-officio membership
- › When voting is necessary, counties must vote as a block
- › Subcommittee decisions matriculate to the Governing Council

Consensus Decision-Making Process

- › Decision-making in subcommittees and Governing Council based on a modified consensus model:
 - › Support, Can Live With, Abstain, Oppose
 - › Straw Poll
 - › Discussion
 - › Poll-No consensus triggers vote
- › Operational decisions require a majority vote of the subcommittee and Governing Council members.
- › Project decisions require a two-thirds vote of the subcommittee and Governing Council members.

Chapter 2

Planning Process

Planning Process



From Insight to Action

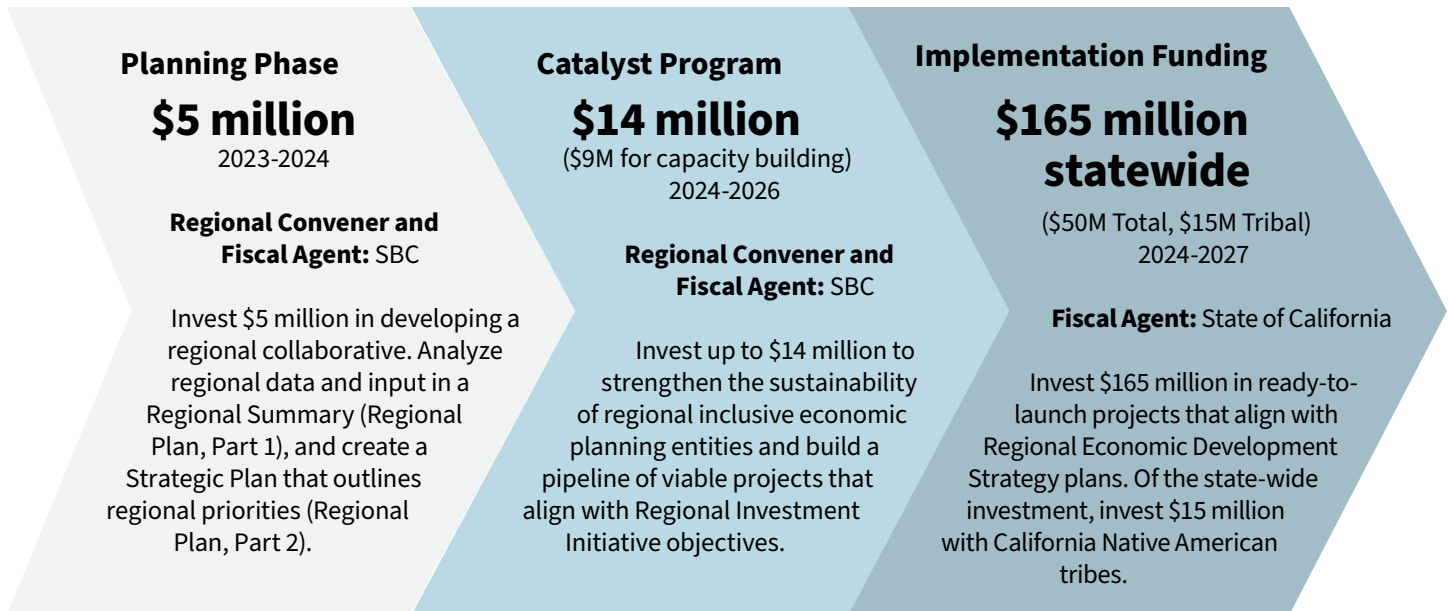
Diverse Community Engagement Shapes Strategic Plan

This isn't just a Plan for the community—it's built by the community. Since its inception in 2022, SJF has prioritized community engagement and rigorous data analysis to capture and act on local insights. SJF thrives on local input and collaboration to shape a brighter economic future for everyone, from the initial planning discovery phase to the next phase of implementation, project development, and funding.



LOCAL FOCUS, STATEWIDE IMPACT

Like each of the 13 California Jobs First collaboratives, SJF's strategic and systematic approach to economic development is structured into three phases, each with specific financial allocations, timelines, and objectives. The State will work to combine key strategies from each of the 13 regions into a statewide set of strategic investments in 2025.





Discovery July-Dec 2023

We focused on understanding the current conditions in the Sierra region. This effort created the Regional Summary (Regional Plan, Part 1), which includes a comprehensive look of the region's population, economy, economic opportunities, environment, public health, and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.



Define Priorities Jan-April 2024

In a collaborative effort, we defined the framework and priorities for the Strategic Plan. This involved sharing findings and building the Strategic Plan framework guided by a clearly defined SWOT analysis. We also established the vision, goals, strategies, and actions and began to look at projects that align with regional priorities and State criteria.



Community Engagement May-Aug 2024

We co-created goals, strategies, actions, and project ideas with the community. This phase involved drafting the Plan with input from the Governing Council, subcommittees, county cohorts, industry-specific working groups, community-based organizations, and the broader community.



Finalize and Adopt a Regional Strategic Plan

July-Aug 2024

In this phase, we presented the draft plan for public and community review. The Governing Council, the final decision-making body, voted to move the final draft to the State for approval.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders has shaped the SJF's strategies and plans. SBC staff have engaged with the community through events, meetings in rural areas, tribal subcommittee meetings, and bilingual surveys.

To maximize the community's opportunity to provide input into the final Strategic Plan, two public comment periods, totaling three weeks, were included in the process to finalize and adopt the Plan.



Community Engagement By the Numbers



14

Disinvested communities focus groups held in 2023, four on the east side and four on the west side, attended by 110 participants.

7

Governing Council meetings attended by 35-45 participants at each meeting.

6

Original subcommittees.

144

Tenured and emerging community leaders involved in project subcommittees.

570+

Public comments on the Draft Strategies Packet that informed the creation of the Strategic Plan.

4

Current subcommittees, including Business, Workforce & Education, Local Government, Project Identification, and Tribal.

11

Community workshops hosted.

20

Community-based organizations.

59

Organizations and nonprofits connected with the 2023 Community-Based Organization Impact Survey.

200+

Community members engaged throughout the Sierra region in May and June of 2024.

4

Industry sector meetings, bringing together experts across natural and working lands, sustainable agriculture and ranching, community health, sustainable recreation and tourism, and clean energy.



Chapter 3

Our Region

Our Region



Mount Whitney in Inyo county is the tallest mountain in the contiguous United States, with an elevation of 14,505 feet.

Peaks and Valleys of Contrasts

Sierra Provides Economic Benefits to State

The Sierra region is a place with a wide diversity of natural landscapes, natural systems, and natural resources that are enjoyed and experienced by people across California and the world.

But, California faces risks if these natural systems are not well managed. If the watersheds are polluted, the water that millions drink is threatened. If the forests are sick, they will burn, and the state skies will fill with smoke. If habitats are not restored, they will die. If the land is degraded, what will attract people to our great foothill, mountain, high Sierra, and desert landscapes?

In other words, our greatest assets are also a threat — both to our population and to the rest of the state.

At the same time, many of our challenges are comparable to those of other rural regions. We have low population density, a declining population, limited funding and capacity in our local governments and institutions, low levels of philanthropic investment, and more. This means we struggle with both small issues like applying for grants and big issues like negotiating with federal agencies over land.

We also have some unique challenges as a Sierra region. The snow on our mountain passes can isolate communities for months each year. Federal land ownership means we have little to no local control — some counties are 90% federal government-owned.

Tackling these issues together — and focusing on the long-term impacts of climate and the long-term challenges of inequities — is key to improving our overall standard of living.

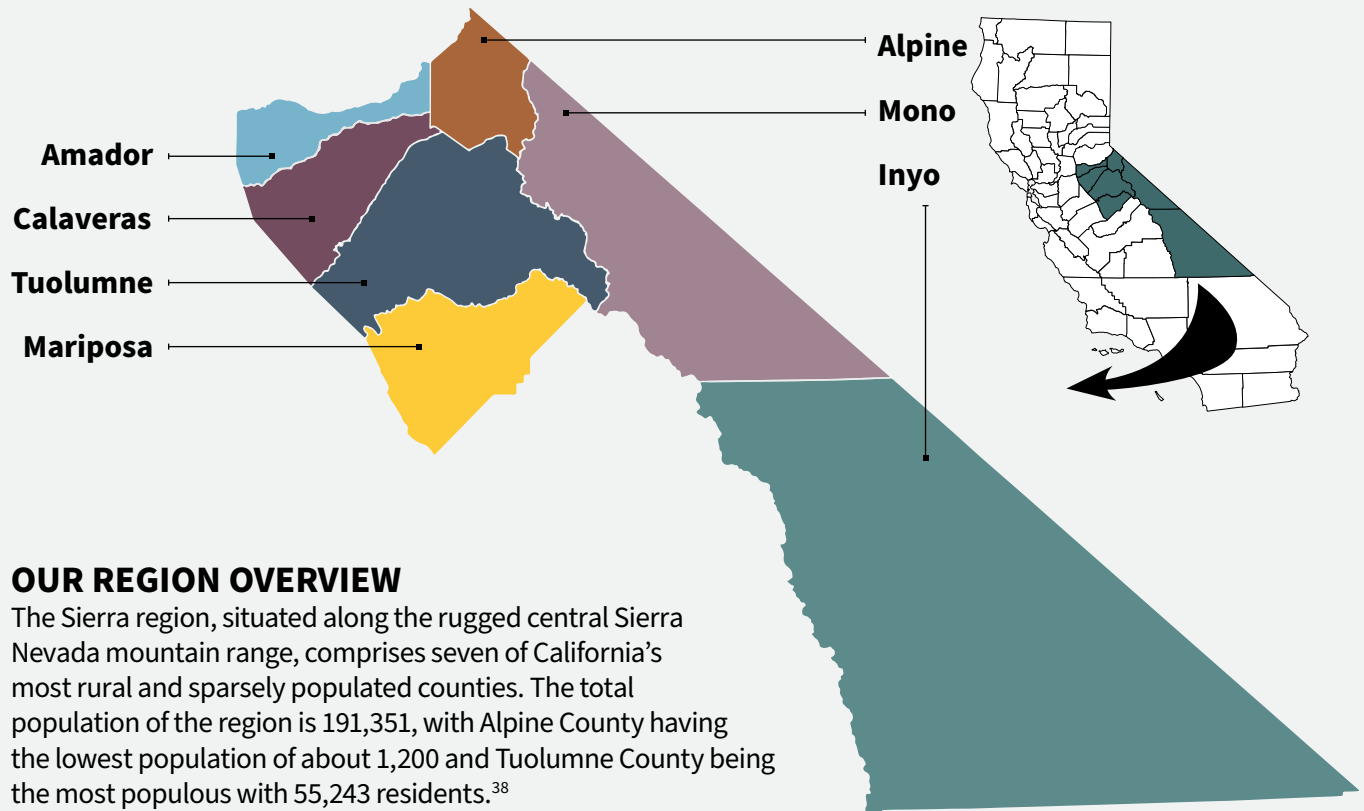
Working together is key for the Sierra region—and is necessary for the state.

A NOTE ON DATA

This report uses the best available economic, demographic, and population-level data for the seven counties and the broader SJF region. It includes information from many sources, including the United States Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the State of California.

Data collection is limited since the SJF region primarily comprises smaller counties and rural communities. Data has often been suppressed to preserve employers' identities and restrict the disclosure of information about individuals in a given geography. Throughout this report, industry, employment, and population data are often referred to as percentages of regional totals, and it is assumed that the data available generally represents the broader community. Additional state- and local-level data collection efforts should be included in subsequent implementation plans to strengthen data confidence and provide more opportunities for data-driven decision-making.

Data regarding tribal communities has been historically incomplete and/or inaccurate. The U.S. Census Bureau uses Native American to refer to American Indians and/or Alaskan Natives. The term American Indian refers to the Indigenous people of the contiguous U.S.



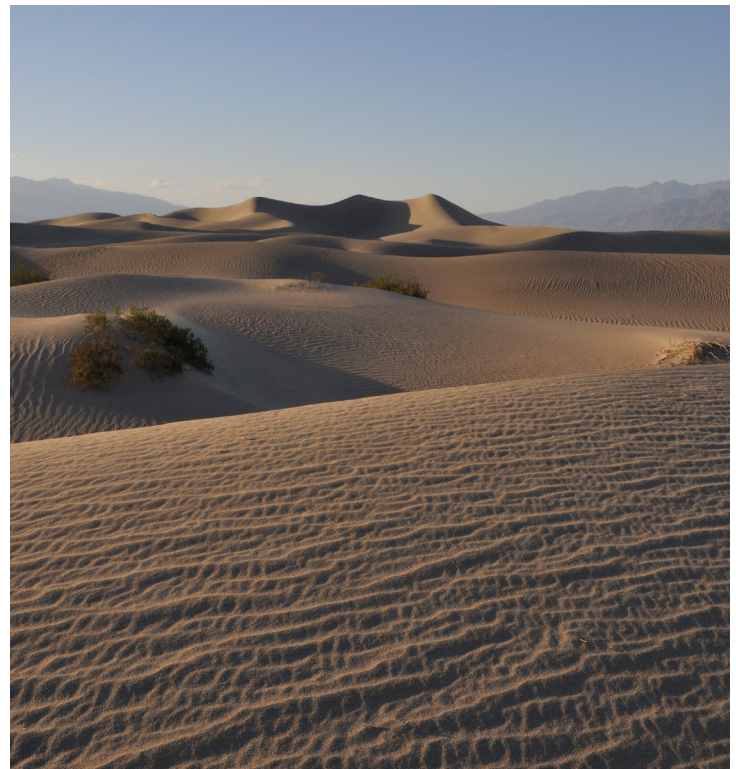
OUR COMPLEX GEOGRAPHY

Home to the highest peak in the contiguous United States, Mount Whitney, and the lowest point in North America, Badwater Basin in Death Valley, the contrasts of the region's geography define it visually and shape its economy, climate, and way of life.

The Sierra Nevada mountain range creates a stark shift in the landscape from east to west. On the eastern slope, alpine meadows, forests of Jeffrey and lodgepole pine, sage-covered high desert, the million-year-old saline Mono Lake, ancient bristlecone pine trees, and a long chain of valleys, including Owens Valley, punctuate expansive deserts.

To the west, rivers like the Calaveras and Tuolumne have carved out picturesque landscapes over rolling foothills and rugged mountains. Landmarks like El Capitan, the largest granite monolith in the world, and Yosemite Falls, the tallest waterfall in North America, dominate Yosemite Valley, located to the south of the world's largest contiguous stand of giant sequoias in Calaveras Big Trees State Park. In Alpine County, Kirkwood Mountain and Bear Valley attract visitors to one of the snowiest places in California for recreation in all seasons.

While natural features such as the Sierra Nevada mountain range and Death Valley define the region's geography, scenic beauty, and outdoor recreational opportunities, they pose significant transportation and infrastructure development challenges.



The Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes are located in Death Valley, which is also home to Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America with a depth of 282 feet below sea level.



▲ Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve is part of one of the oldest lakes in North America.

◀ Calaveras Big Trees State Park holds two groves of giant sequoias.



Rough terrain and severe weather often block the mountain highways for five to eight months each year, making it even harder for the sparsely populated communities to access services and jobs, connect with the rest of the region, and develop economically.

More than 72% of the region's 19,253 square miles are public lands federally owned by agencies such as the United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Parks Service.⁶ Public utilities and the State of California largely own the remaining lands. These public lands are exempt from local taxes, curtailing funding for essential services. For example, in Inyo County, more than 91% of the available land is federally owned public lands, with another 8% owned by public utilities and the State.⁷ This leaves close to 2% of the land in Inyo County to be used by the private sector for housing and economic development, further limiting local taxes and complicating land use and acquisition.

SIERRA GEOGRAPHY

19,253 sq mi

The SJF region spans 19,253 square miles, with just under 10 people per square mile.

**5 to 8 months
out of the
year**

Snow closes mountain highway passes in the Sierra Nevada range for five to eight months of the year, isolating communities and hindering the local economy.

2 National Parks

The region's counties cover two national parks (Yosemite and Death Valley) and five national forests.

72%

About 72% of the land in the SJF region is publicly owned.⁸



Hetch Hetchy is dammed by the 430-foot-tall O'Shaughnessy Dam and is the primary water source for about 2.7 million residents of the San Francisco Bay Area.

OUR ABUNDANT RESOURCES

The Sierra's natural resources are vital to the region's economy and lifestyle. However, extraction-focused activities have altered the ecology and led to historical power disparities, impacting today's social and economic dynamics.

The snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada range is a crucial water source for California. For example, 85% of the Hetch Hetchy reservoir serves 2.7 million customers in the San Francisco Bay Area.⁹ The Owens Valley provides about 73% of Los Angeles' water.¹⁰ The Sierra snowmelt also directly replenishes 10% of the Central Valley Aquifers used by agriculture and ranching.¹¹ California's dependency on the Sierra region for water supply has led to significant social, economic, and environmental consequences within the region.

The forests in the SJF region play a crucial role in our ecosystems, providing not only biodiversity and abundant recreation resources but also sequestering carbon and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Forests trap moisture and cool the earth's surface, storing the equivalent annual emissions of more than 400 coal-fired power plants or more than 420 million tons of carbon.¹² These forests also provide wood products, jobs, and revenue for the industries. However, extraction and a shift away from cultural burning have led to deforestation

and habitat loss, impacting tree health and increasing the risk of wildfires.

Historically, mining significantly shaped the region's economies and communities from the 19th-century Gold Rush. Today, mining represents less than 1% of all regional jobs and is projected to further decline over the next 10 years. This historical reliance on mining has led to pervasive environmental challenges. Disinvested populations often bear disproportionate effects, and Indigenous communities have seen their ancestral territories degraded and polluted.

In the late twentieth century, tourism surpassed natural extraction as the top economic driver in the region, and it remains a primary economic force that has led to the development of hotels, restaurants, and other services. Recreation activities, such as hiking, skiing, fishing, cycling, mountain biking, camping, climbing, horseback riding, and OHV use, are highly valuable and contribute significantly to the local economy. However, the influx of visitors can strain natural resources and regional infrastructure, leading to potential social and economic disparities. Additionally, tourism growth has led to gentrification and displacement of the local workforce in some areas, making it difficult for long-standing residents to afford to live in the region.

SIERRA RESOURCES

160 miles

Water from Sierra snowmelt travels 160 miles from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir on the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park to 2.7 million people in San Francisco, Santa Clara, Alameda, and San Mateo counties.¹³

2.7 million

Each year, when the fire season is not too extreme, forests in the Sierra sequester enough carbon to offset the annual carbon dioxide emissions of about 2.7 million cars.¹⁴

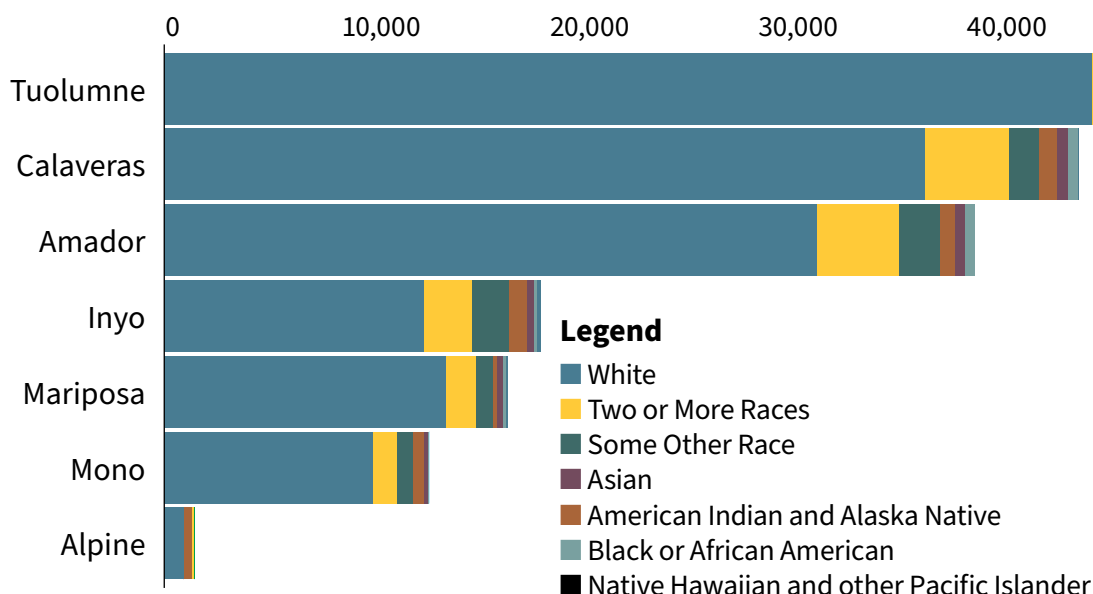
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Inyo County has the second-most active mining claims in California, at 4,722. The other six counties have 1,844 active claims combined, for a total of more than 155,236 active acres across the entire region.¹⁵

\$2.18 billion

From 2014 through 2023, the seven counties in the region generated more than \$2 billion in travel-related spending.¹⁶

REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS



SIERRA POPULATION

200,000

About 200,000 people live in the SJF region's seven counties.

2.1% to 23.0%

Native American population ranges in the SJF region, but all of its counties have a higher ratio representation of Native Americans than California's 1.7%.²⁴

65+

More than 25% of the region's population is older than 65.²⁵

25%

Less than 25% of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher.²⁶

8.2%

8.2% of the population receives support from Federal and State assistance programs, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, 2.3% receives Cash Public Assistance Income (i.e., welfare programs), and 5.5% receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI).²⁷

OUR HARDY PEOPLE

The SJF region is characterized by its engaged and passionate communities who care deeply about the land on which they live. The people of the Sierra Nevada are its backbone.

The region's relatively small population impacts its ability to attract investments and shapes its socioeconomic landscape. With a population density of under 10 people per square mile, residents primarily live in smaller towns and unincorporated county areas. Over the last decade, the population in the region has averaged about 200,000, with some decreasing fluctuations of 1,000. Rural regions struggle with a smaller tax base, less political power, and challenges such as lower-than-average incomes, limited opportunities, lack of affordable housing, inadequate healthcare access, and insufficient infrastructure.

The region's population is predominantly white, with almost four out of five people identifying as such. More than 15% of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino.¹⁷ Around 10% of the population speaks a language other than English at home.¹⁸ In rural areas on the western slope, the Latino community plays a significant role in agriculture, while in more urban areas, they are involved in a broader range of industries. On both sides of the region, especially on the east slope, Latinos fill many service and tourism-related roles in the hospitality industry.

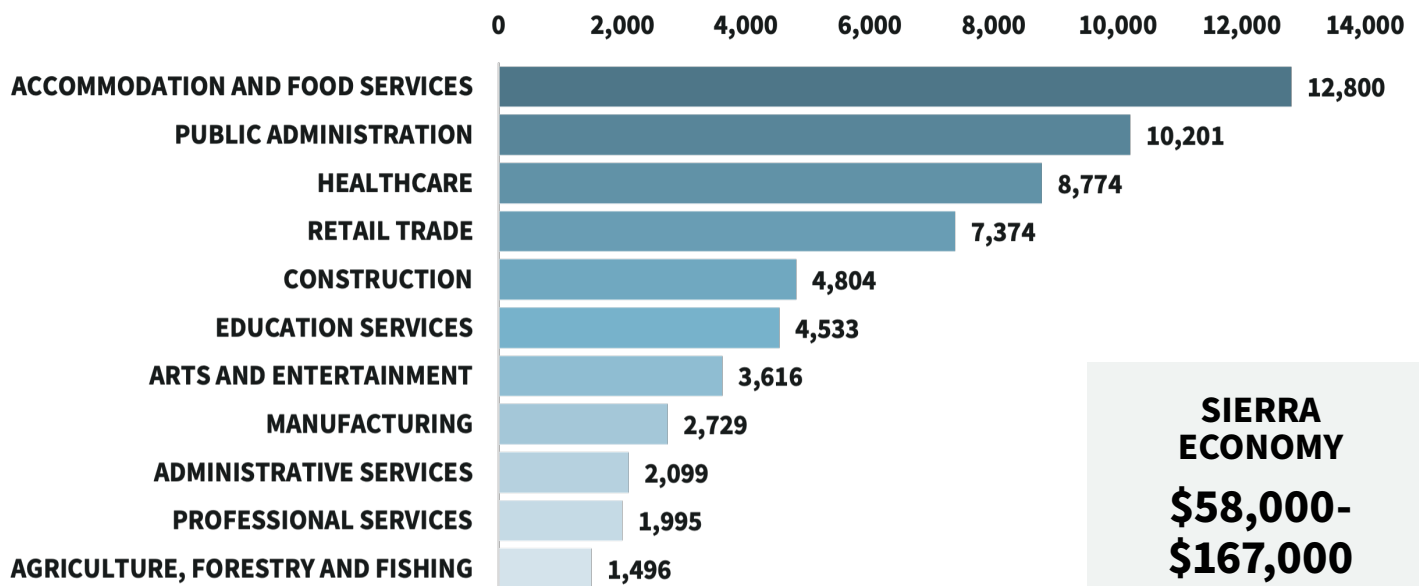
The region's Native American population

ranges by county from 2.1% to up to 23% in Alpine County. The regional average is significantly higher than the California state average of 1.7%.¹⁹ Indigenous people have lived in the high Sierra and surrounding foothills for thousands of years. Historical events, such as the Spanish occupation, westward expansion via the California Trail, the Russian fur trade, the California Gold Rush, and others, led to disease, genocide, relocation, and enslavement of the Sierra Nevada's Native peoples.²⁰ Today, Indigenous populations face century-old policies that underrepresent them in decision-making processes, resulting in inadequate consideration of their needs. In spite of the many historical challenges, the indigenous peoples of this region are still present with their respective federally recognized and non-federally tribes throughout all seven counties.

The average median age in this region is 47, with a majority of the population aged 50 to 74, making it the oldest California Jobs First region.²¹ The aging population further complicates economic stability, as older residents often have fixed incomes and more healthcare needs.

The region's demographics directly connect to its socioeconomic qualities. While most adults have graduated from high school, less than a quarter have a bachelor's degree or higher.²² More than one out of ten people live below the poverty level in the SJF region, and close to half of homeowners and renters spend more than 30% on housing each month.²³

TOTAL JOBS IN REGION BY INDUSTRY



OUR STRUGGLING ECONOMY

An intractable issue for the Sierra's economy is the remote location of the entire region. There are no interstate highways, major rail lines, international airports, or shipping ports from which to trade and transport goods efficiently. This is a critical point to consider when identifying strategies for economic growth.

The vast majority of the area's nearly 70,000 jobs are held in the low-wage tourism sector or non-tradeable public administration and healthcare. This heavy reliance on low-wage industries coupled with high cost of living and economic disparities characterizes the contrasts in the region's economy. Close to half of all workers in the region are in tourism-related sectors and earn an average annual wage below \$50,000. Fewer than one in five workers earn more than \$65,000 annually, nearly \$10,000 less than the State median income.²⁸ The public administration sector reflects the preponderance of local, state, and federal government jobs, which offer high-wage jobs but struggle to fill roles despite the higher-than-average wages and opportunities for advancement. Management and non-management positions at federal land management agencies often remain unfilled for long periods, and recruiting outside of the region poses hiring barriers due to the high cost of living and low housing stock.

Residents must earn between \$58,000 and \$167,000 to live alone (e.g., without roommates or a multi-income living situation) and afford the current and available rental market.²⁹

The region's workforce faces challenges due to an abundance of non-benefited seasonal positions, an aging population, low workforce participation, and outmigration. Just over half of the region's residents are within the working age bracket of 16 to 64, but a significant portion did not participate in the workforce in 2021.³⁰

In the region, workers 65 and older comprise almost 10% of the workforce in every occupation, while workers aged 16 to 34 represent only one-third.³¹ This difference may be due to "brain drain," a phenomenon known for the loss of human capital in terms of knowledge, skills, creativity, or innovation. It could also be because the region struggles to attract and retain younger workers, possibly due to the high cost of living and the absence of local higher education institutions that could attract workers for education and keep them in high-quality local jobs.

Combined, limiting factors on the workforce can exacerbate economic issues as existing businesses struggle to find skilled workers and hinder economic development due to concerns from new or relocating employers.

SIERRA
ECONOMY

**\$58,000-
\$167,000**

Residents must earn between \$58,000 and \$167,000 to live alone (e.g., without roommates or a multi-income living situation) and afford the current and available rental market.³²

10%

Workers 65 and older comprise almost 10% of the workforce in every occupation, while workers aged 16 to 34 represent only one-third.³³

\$50,000

Close to half of all workers in the region are in tourism-related sectors and earn an average annual wage below \$50,000.³⁴

70,000

The majority of the area's nearly 70,000 jobs are held in the low-wage tourism sector or non-tradeable public administration and healthcare.



Sierra Nevada snowpack is an important water source for California, however studies have shown that in the future, climate change is expected to shrink it.

OUR CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

The region's economy depends mainly on tourism, recreation, natural resources, and agriculture and is significantly impacted by its climate and environmental conditions. However, in the coming years, climate change will likely threaten the ecological and geographical diversity that draws people to the region.

Scientists predict the region will gradually experience more extreme heat and warm nights in the next three decades – directly influencing overall snowpack, forest health — leading to increased wildfire risk, and limited/changed recreational opportunities. These changes threaten the region's people, lifestyle, and economies. Wildfires will continue to pose a significant threat due to tree mortality and mismanaged forests. Fires can result in extreme economic losses, damage to natural resources, increased (or loss of) insurance costs, and unhealthy levels of air pollution.

Wildfires, extreme weather events,

droughts, and other natural disasters impact the region's vulnerable populations. Older adults, individuals with language barriers, people living in poverty, people impacted by a lack of broadband, and those who are housing-burdened are less likely to receive or understand evacuation orders. Additionally, without planning, education, and evacuation-dedicated areas, many people experience nowhere to go and don't leave their homes.

In the SJF region, fossil fuels used in transportation generate the majority of emissions, followed by residential and commercial activities.³⁵ Reducing transportation emissions in particular is challenging for rural regions due to lack of public transportation, limited capacity, and access to scaled renewable energy projects and energy efficient infrastructure. This plan considers achievable greenhouse gas mitigation measures consistent with the state's climate goals.

SIERRA CLIMATE FACTS

600%

By 2040-2054, the number of extreme heat days in the SJF region is projected to increase by 600% in some areas³⁶.

**Average
range of
8-20%**

The SJF region rates of disability exceed the state of California averages. This population is at a higher risk of climate change impacts due to reduced mobility and reliance on caregivers and medical equipment.³⁷

Summary of Regional Perspectives

OUR STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

During the 2023 process to create the Regional Summary (SJF Regional Plan, Part 1), SJF reviewed quantitative and qualitative data to identify the region's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). The qualitative data was collected through conversations with hundreds of Sierra community members living, working, and raising families in the

region. These conversations included surveys in English and Spanish, focus groups in remote locations in the area, community meetings, formal meetings, and one-on-one chats to ensure the inclusion and consideration of a diverse range of perspectives. The synthesized information served as the basis for the 2024 Strategic Plan (SJF Regional Plan Part 2).

STRENGTHS

- › Natural assets, lands, and resources
- › Strong tourism and recreation industries
- › Entrepreneurship
- › Strong collaboration
- › Regional pride and culture
- › Vibrant tribal communities
- › Historic appeal in downtowns
- › Low average crime rate

WEAKNESSES

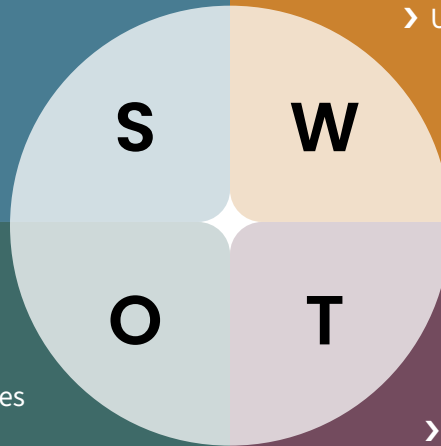
- › High relative cost of living
- › Lack of education and workforce training opportunities
- › Inadequate social support systems (childcare, etc.)
- › Lack of reliable broadband
- › Failing/aging infrastructure
- › Lack of affordable housing
- › Under-represented at the State level
- › Economic reliance on visitors
- › Low racial and ethnic diversity
 - › Lack of healthcare services
 - › Unreliable utilities

OPPORTUNITIES

- › Build cross-sector partnerships
- › Renewable energy
- › Build capacity in tribal communities
- › Natural resources and ecosystem services
- › Expand the Community College system
- › Diversify the economy and increase traded sectors
- › Improve visitor experience
- › Investment in regional healthcare

THREATS

- › Natural disasters (fire and flood)
- › Lack of capacity and funding
- › Aging population
- › Increasing insurance costs
- › Vulnerable roads and infrastructure
- › Climate change impacts
- › Lack of housing
- › Unreliable electric grid
- › Poor cell service and connectivity
- › Declining rural healthcare system
- › Land tenure - ownership limits local control



OUR STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO LEVERAGE

NATURAL ASSETS, LANDS, AND RESOURCES

The Sierra range, its foothills, and deserts inspire their residents, who treasure the landscapes and natural resources they contain. While the region's resource industries have dwindled significantly since California gained statehood, opportunities exist to sustainably utilize the forested landscapes and water resources that create ecosystem resilience, high-paying jobs, renewable energy, and mitigation of the impacts of climate change and resulting natural disasters.

STRONG TOURISM AND RECREATION INDUSTRIES

The area's recreation options are significant strengths, and the tourism and recreation sectors are the region's largest private employers. There is excellent potential for growth and improvement, including enhancing support for the arts and culture, empowering specific disinvested communities to benefit from tourism in their areas, and ensuring that existing tourism and recreation activities are environmentally sustainable and provide high-quality jobs.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Entrepreneurs and small business owners, including the region's small farmers and ranchers, were consistently cited as the region's strengths and as an opportunity for growth. Possibilities included development and educational opportunities like those provided by a Small Business Development Center (SBDC), expanded food-processing infrastructure to support basic and value-added animal and crop products, and the expansion of the arts and culture sector.

COMMUNITY VIBRANCY AND COHESION

Focus groups and existing SWOT analyses frequently mentioned the region's community spirit and engagement, demonstrated by neighbors coming together to assist in natural disasters or to address deficiencies in services and infrastructure. Some stakeholders highlighted strong organizational partnerships and a willingness to cooperate as strengths. However, some tribal respondents considered this an area for improvement.

WORKFORCE TRAINING AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE OFFERINGS

A key theme across multiple industry sectors is the need for a skilled workforce to support the creation of new, high-quality jobs. Opportunities for workforce development exist in healthcare, forestry, biomass, renewable energy, and technology services. The region can significantly enhance its workforce and job opportunities by partnering with institutions like Columbia College and the K-16 initiative and working with Cerro Coso Community College to expand the curriculum in these needed sectors.

OUR WEAKNESSES AND THREATS TO MANAGE AND MITIGATE

INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

As in California, the SJF region struggles more broadly with a severe shortage of affordable housing while also dealing with other infrastructure challenges stemming from its rural nature. Utilities, roads, and broadband infrastructure are more expensive to implement and maintain. At the same time, different types of services like childcare or certain types of specialized healthcare are nearly nonexistent within the region.

LAND TENURE: LIMITATION OF LOCAL CONTROL

Most of the region's land is owned by the government or utility companies, protecting ecosystems and providing recreational opportunities but limiting land use. This is particularly significant in the eastern slope, where public utilities like the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and Pacific Gas and Electric Company own a large percentage of land and water rights. Land tenure and ownership problems pose significant challenges for addressing rural issues such as housing, small business development, and infrastructure updates. Urgent action and increased cooperation from state and federal entities are necessary to resolve these issues.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND DISASTER RISK

Climate-driven disasters, including wildfires and extreme precipitation, can damage or destroy the region's already expensive basic infrastructure, severely impact air and water quality, or completely displace or isolate remote communities. Given the region's heavy reliance on tourism, the economic impacts of these disasters are devastating. In the face of these challenges, immediate action and increased adaptation and mitigation measures are not just important, they are essential.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONCERNS AND SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES

The SJF population is quite different from that of the state, being both older and less racially diverse. Despite the generally strong sense of community within towns and counties in the region, a general lack of investment, resources, and services means that certain groups struggle, such as older adults, youth, tribal, LGBTQ+, Hispanic/Latino, people with disabilities, and others.

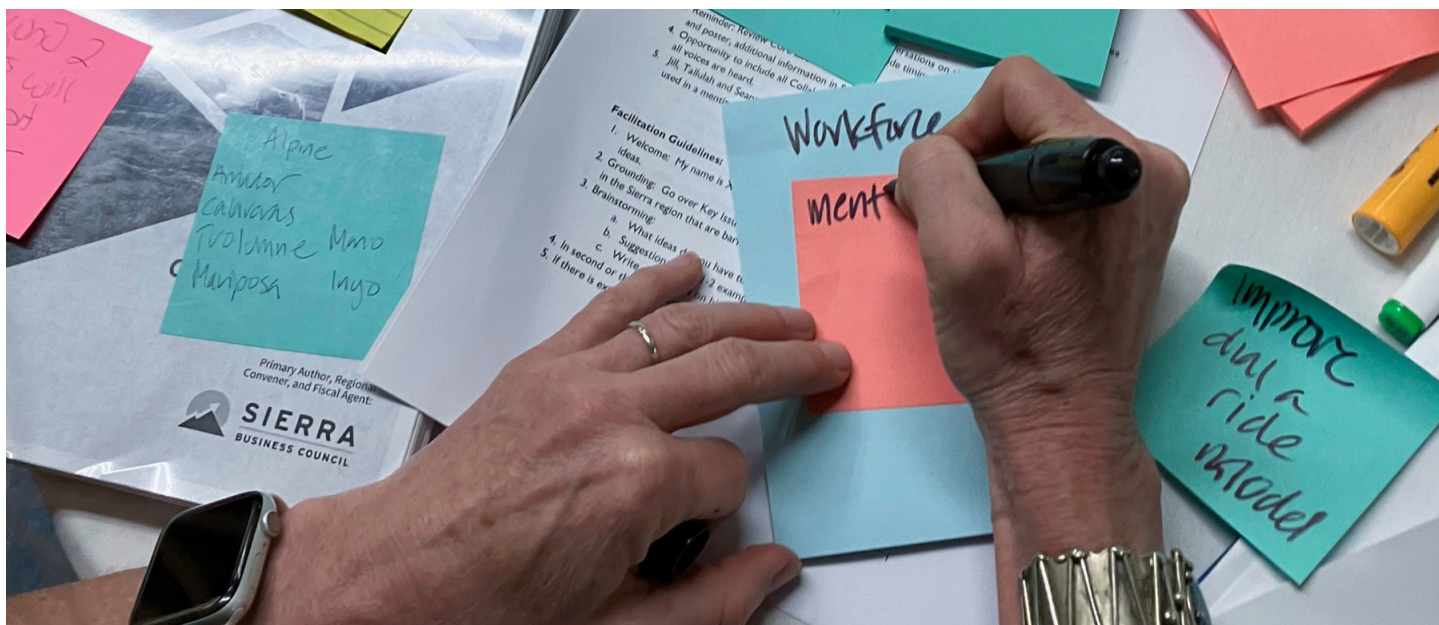
LACK OF WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

While the recreation and tourism sectors provide significant employment to the region, much comes from non-benefited seasonal jobs. The region's other largest employment sector is government positions, which, while high-paying, often have a higher barrier to entry than regional education systems can address. Greater virtual and in-person educational and training opportunities and ways to connect workers dependent on seasonal jobs to other opportunities are needed.

Chapter 4

Our Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan



A participant writes key issues facing the region during a community workshop hosted by SJF.

An Opportunity to Sustain the Sierra

The strategic opportunity for the Sierra region is to manage land over which it has jurisdiction and especially its natural systems toward long-term environmental sustainability while leveraging the economic value of natural beauty and these natural systems toward shared economic prosperity.

Today, millions come to the region to enjoy its natural beauty and use it as a playground. The mountains, rivers, foothills, historic towns, and open space are a globally competitive tourism product. However, too many people working to serve the visitors struggle to make enough to get by, especially given the shortage of affordable housing.

Today, millions of residents throughout the state benefit from the pristine water flowing from the east and west slopes of the Sierra, but the region generates little economic benefit from managing these watersheds as a precious resource.

Today, the health of the forests benefits everyone, as better-managed forests will not produce devastating wildfires. The management of these forests towards better health can not only become a major source of high-quality jobs and new business formation but also benefit the entire state through reduced wildfire and the creation of needed energy and forest products from woody biomass.

Today, the open spaces, wild landscapes, ranch lands, and accessible parks throughout the region are a sight to behold and

REALITIES IN THE REGION

The Sierra region's economy is limited because there are no interstate highways, major rail lines, international airports, or shipping ports from which to prosper from traditional tradeable sectors. These factors are critical barriers to economic diversification, which require a creative approach. Most of the area's nearly 70,000 jobs are in the low-wage tourism sector or non-tradeable public administration, healthcare, and construction. The cost of living is high. To live alone (e.g., without roommates or multiple incomes) and afford the current and available rental market, workers must earn between \$58,000 and \$167,000. However, 45% of workers in the region are employed in industries paying less than \$50,000 in average annual wages.

respite for the eyes of the traveler so accustomed to a nation's metropolitan landscape with spread out and undifferentiated development patterns. However, the control of land by external entities limits the Sierra region from imagining different scenarios for its own future. Small changes in land tenure could then yield big changes in economic opportunity.

In sum, our care for the land and its natural systems will sustain our region, its people, and its habitats and provide the foundation for an inclusive and sustainable economy.

Strategic Plan Framework

The Strategic Plan is organized around a framework that adopts a dual approach to addressing regional challenges and build a prosperous economy: improving foundational elements while developing priority industry sectors. These strategies are interconnected, meaning progress in one area supports and enhances outcomes in others.

WHAT IS A REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN?

A Regional Strategic Plan provides a road map for collective action and investments in the seven-county Sierra region. This plan encapsulates our vision, mission, goals, and strategies, laying the groundwork for a vibrant future where everyone can thrive. The plan is flexible, reflecting the input of hundreds of community members, and intended to be adaptable to changing circumstances.

VISION

A resilient economy that supports equitable opportunities for generations to come.

MISSION

Overcome obstacles to build strong, diverse communities where everyone has a voice.

Advance projects and policies to protect our ecosystems and reach a climate-forward future.

Support sustainable economic solutions that create good-paying jobs and prosperity.

GOALS

- Increase the number of quality jobs with equitable access
- Attract investment into disinvested communities
- Build climate-resilient communities
- Grow equitable opportunities for the emerging workforce

TARGET INDUSTRIES

Sustainable Recreation and Tourism • Natural and Working Lands
• Clean Energy and Energy Resilience • Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems • Community Healthcare

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

Housing and Placemaking • Land Use and Tenure • Physical Infrastructure • Small Business and Entrepreneurship • Social and Civic Infrastructure • Workforce Development and Education

Interconnected Strategies

Laying a Foundation for Resilience, Inclusivity, and Prosperity

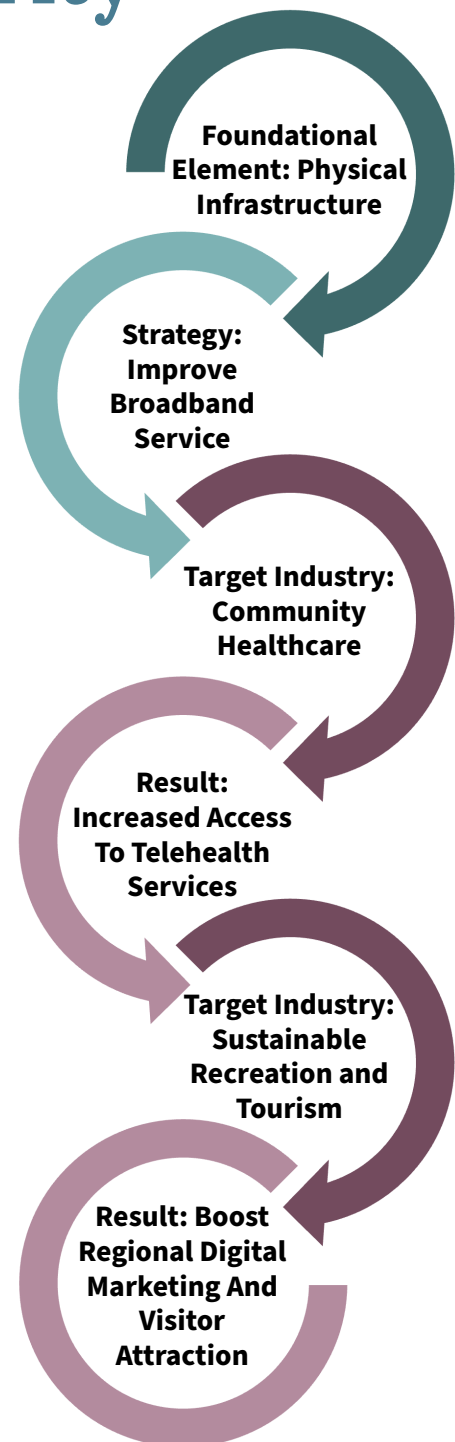
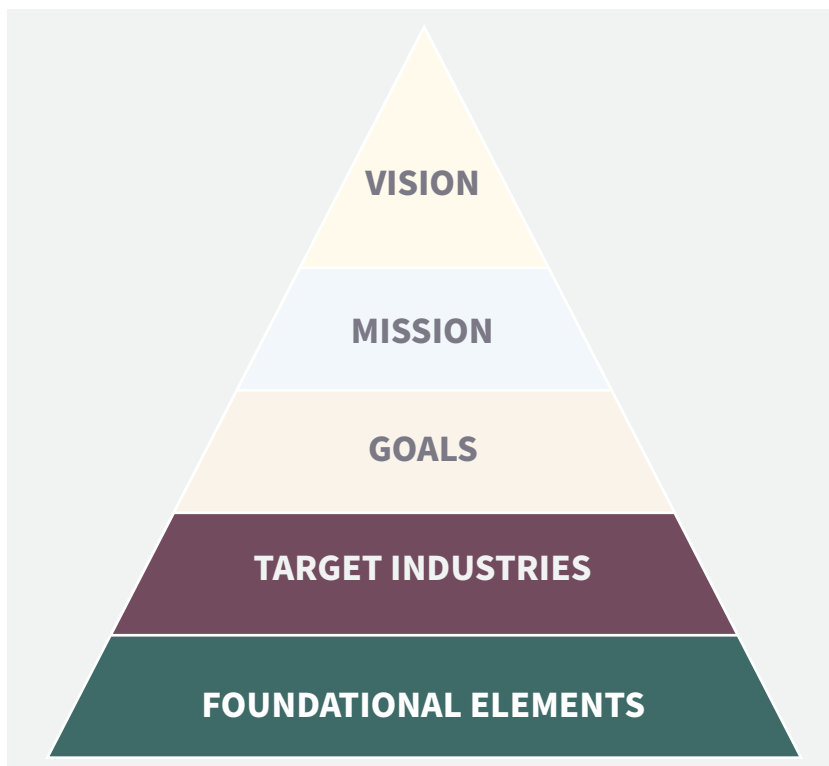
The layered strategies in foundational elements and target industries create a comprehensive framework for sustainable growth.

For example, improving broadband connectivity supports local businesses, enhances educational opportunities, and provides access to telehealth services while supporting sustainable recreation and tourism through digital marketing and enhanced safety.

Expanding access to education and workforce training in renewable energy prepares locals for clean energy jobs, and increasing housing supply and affordability supports a stable workforce, making the region more attractive to businesses.

By addressing these interconnected strategies simultaneously, the region can achieve comprehensive and sustainable development that aligns with the community's long-term vision and goals.

This comprehensive approach ensures that progress in one area supports overall regional goals, fostering a stable and thriving community for years to come.



Foundational Elements

This section of the Strategic Plan focuses on Foundational Elements—the inherent conditions in the region that must be addressed if economic prosperity for all is to be realized.

The foundational economic elements supporting the region's competitiveness include workforce development and skills, physical infrastructure, social and civic infrastructure, community health, placemaking, housing, and land tenure and land use.

Our strategic approach focuses on fortifying the region's economic foundations through targeted initiatives. This involves addressing critical areas such as enhancing access to capital, advancing workforce development, and creating a conducive environment to diversify and drive sustainable growth across diverse, under-represented industry sectors, including manufacturing, technology, and services.

HOUSING AND PLACEMAKING PAGES 30-34

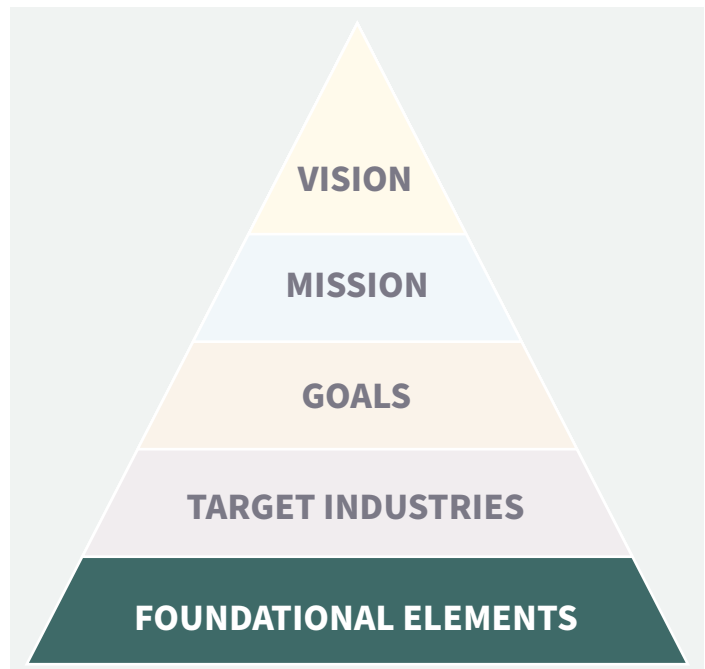
Housing encompasses the building, usage, ownership, and management of homes, which is critical in shaping quality of life. Placemaking, a process that involves engaging community residents in planning, designing, and managing public areas, is a key element in creating spaces people love and feel connected.

LAND USE AND TENURE PAGES 35-41

Effective land use and tenure involve managing property rights and usage to benefit local priorities and improve quality of life. Collaborative efforts among local communities, including federal, state, tribal, and utility land managers, will achieve mutual goals supported by a land exchange or divestiture roadmap. This cooperation will drive local prosperity and resource stewardship.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PAGES 42-47

Modernized physical infrastructure, including water, sewer, telecommunications, broadband, and transportation, is essential for a sustainable economy.



SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP PAGES 48-53

Supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs is crucial for economic diversification and job creation. Providing technical assistance, access to capital, and fostering vibrant downtown cores will promote local ventures and create a sense of place.

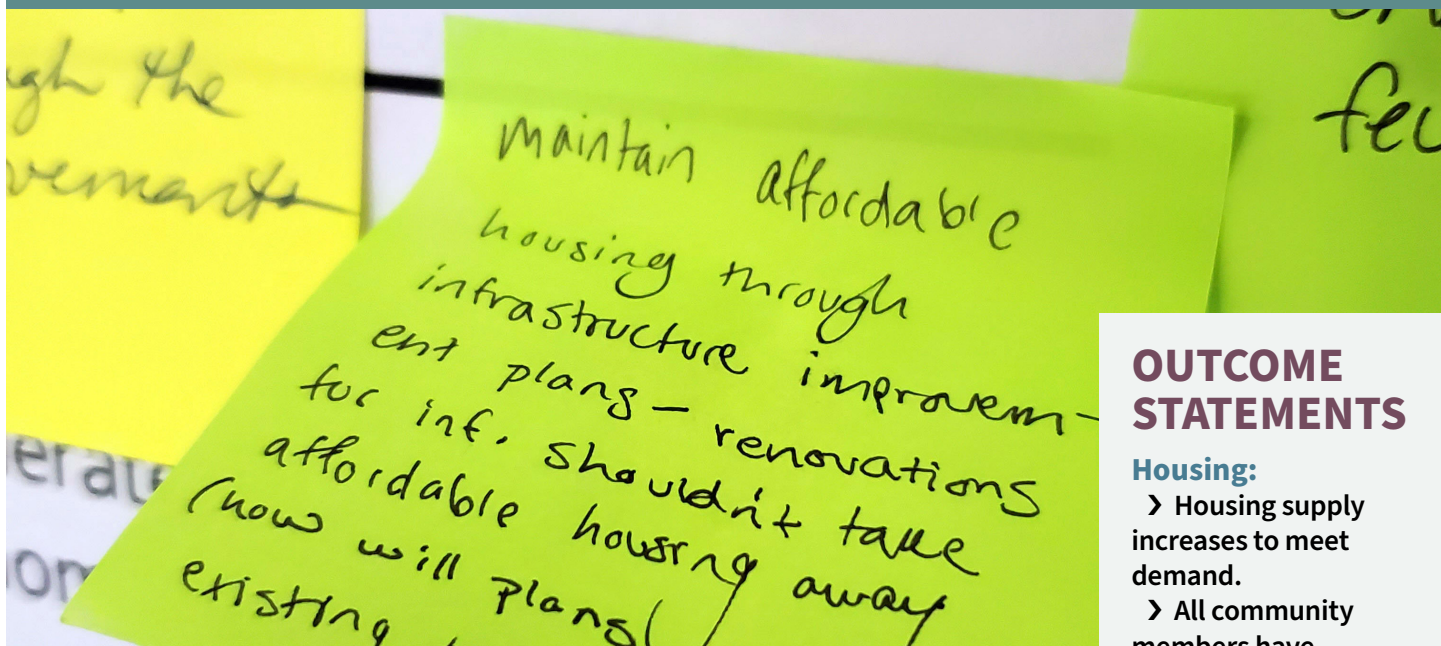
SOCIAL AND CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE PAGES 54-59

A strong social and civic infrastructure network, including childcare, transportation, food security, and general social services, is the backbone of our communities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION PAGES 60-66

A cradle to career approach ensures equitable access to education and training for all community members from primary, secondary, higher, and vocational education to employment.

Housing & Placemaking



A note about housing gathered during a community workshop hosted by SJF.

Building Belonging in the Region

Housing and Placemaking are crucial for the SJF region's growth and community well-being. Housing encompasses building, using, owning, and managing homes, ensuring quality of life, and fulfilling basic human needs. Placemaking, on the other hand, is more than just creating high-quality public spaces. It's about fostering a sense of connection and community, a feeling of belonging that is essential for the region's residents.

The region's natural beauty is complemented by vibrant town centers and neighborhoods that reflect its rich history. However, limited affordable housing and a high cost of living challenge economic resilience. Addressing these issues through strategic planning and community engagement can enhance the region's livability, support workforce retention, and promote economic development.

By coordinating regional housing efforts, conducting comprehensive needs assessments, introducing new financial tools, and investing in infrastructure, the region can increase housing affordability and availability, enhance placemaking, support economic growth, and improve quality of life.

BY THE NUMBERS

42% and 45%

42% of owner-occupied and 45% of renter-occupied households are housing-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing-related costs.³⁹

\$58,000-\$167,000

Workers must earn between \$58,000 and \$167,000 to live alone without roommates or a multi-income living situation and afford the current and available rental market.⁴⁰

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

Housing:

- › Housing supply increases to meet demand.
- › All community members have quality and affordable housing options in their area regardless of income level.
- › Employers can better retain and attract staff because of the availability of high-quality, affordable housing options in their communities.

Placemaking:

- › The Sierra region's historic downtowns and town centers are locally owned, have high occupancy, and have healthy businesses. Residents and visitors benefit from increased local attractions and foot traffic and report a stronger sense of place.

OPPORTUNITIES

Investing in housing and placemaking offers significant growth, diversification, and resilience potential for the Sierra region. Key opportunities include:

- › **Workforce Housing Plans:** Develop plans that address housing needs across income levels, attracting and retaining employees.
- › **Downtown Revitalization:** Enhance historic community character through adaptive reuse strategies and green infrastructure, making downtown areas vibrant and appealing.

› **Collaborations:** Partner with large employers and land management agencies to develop housing solutions and leverage resources.

› **Alternative Housing Solutions:** Encourage tiny homes and ADUs to increase affordable housing options.

› **Policy Support:** Advocate for State policies that support rural housing development and flexible income metrics.

› **Financial Tools:** Establish regional housing trusts, finance authorities, and sustainable funding models for housing NGOs.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

Addressing housing and placemaking in the Sierra region presents challenges and risks, including high costs, historical injustices, funding, regulatory barriers, and economic constraints.

- › **High Cost of Living:** Persistent high costs could limit affordable housing development.
- › **High Cost of Insurance:** Home insurance challenges continue to present more barriers to homeownership, especially for middle and lower-income residents.

› **Land Tenure Issues:** Historical land grabs and limited land availability constrain housing projects.

› **Funding Limitations:** Funding and financial tools are needed to ensure project implementation.

› **Regulatory Barriers:** Complex zoning and building codes can delay development and increase costs.

› **Climate Risks:** Wildfires and other climate-related issues threaten housing stability and public safety.

› **Community Resistance:** Opposition to new development and changes in land use could slow progress.

REGIONAL ASSETS

The Sierra region possesses several assets to support Housing and Placemaking initiatives:

- › **Natural Beauty:** The region's landscapes attract residents and tourists, providing a solid foundation for placemaking.
- › **Community Organizations:** Local NGOs and community groups are vital to the success of the Sierra region's housing and economic development efforts. Their support and engagement are crucial in addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities that lie ahead.

› **Skilled Workforce:** The existing workforce has the potential for growth through apprenticeship programs in construction and related trades.

› **Historic Downtowns:** Vibrant town centers with rich history are ideal for revitalization and placemaking projects.

› **Collaborative Networks:** Strong partnerships with regional employers, land management agencies, and local governments.

› **Policy Support:** Alignment with State strategies and support from State legislators and agencies.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

More available and affordable housing can support recruitment efforts to bring skilled workers, meeting the needs of local employers. Construction apprenticeship programs develop local skills, match talent with job opportunities, and support regional economic growth.

CLIMATE

Green infrastructure, sustainable building practices, and efficient land use can reduce environmental impact, mitigate climate effects, and enhance public health.

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Investments in housing and placemaking can bring more high-quality jobs in construction, planning, and maintenance.

EQUITY

Prioritizing affordable housing and inclusive placemaking while targeting and addressing homeownership and economic mobility barriers can improve access to housing for disinvested communities and reduce disparities.

Housing Capacity

Strategy 1: Establish a new regional housing entity that improves the region's capacity to address housing by gathering leaders and disseminating best practices in policy and development across the Sierra region.

ACTION STEP 1

Identify and convene existing regional housing organizations and local government housing staff, as well as tribal organizations and major employers who are engaged in housing policy and development, as potential members in a new regional housing coordination entity. These partners should do the following:

- a. Build a regional framework for understanding and agreement about the regional housing assets, opportunities, and challenges, adjusting for unique community qualities.
- b. Define a process and collaborative/coordinating structure for working together to design fast-track solutions for new housing or improvements to existing housing stock.
- c. Identify the specific roles and opportunities for the new housing coordination entity.

ACTION STEP 2

Commission a region-wide housing needs assessment and action plan. This action plan will leverage each community's adopted Housing Element and the existing Regional Housing Needs Allocation processes to identify needs and gaps in the region's housing system, including:

- a. Examine baseline conditions, current opportunities, and challenges related to regional housing, leveraging existing Housing Elements, studies, and plans.
- b. Research models in housing planning development from other rural regions.
- c. Share best practices among members of the housing coordination entity to foster a learning culture and continuous improvement in our efforts to address the housing needs of the Sierra region and California.

ACTION STEP 3

Disseminate and implement model policies and programs identified through the housing assessment and action plan process that increase housing production. These include:

- a. Unlock identified funding streams via collaborative efforts and local, state, and federal engagement.
- b. Implement new financial tools and capacity models to support housing development, including tax increment financing, property tax exemptions, developer incentives, sustainable funding models, and regional housing programs.
- c. Work with local, tribal, state, and federal land management agencies to develop land exchange and divestiture plans.
- d. Explore the establishment of a region-wide housing authority that can provide developers with technical assistance, funding solutions, and policy recommendations.
- e. Invest in engineering plans and environmental permitting to develop a pipeline of shovel-ready projects to support community housing development.
- f. Collaborate with other rural regions on advocacy to change State policy, such as modifying State policies and metrics and establishing more flexible Area Median Income standards that increase rural areas' access to State funds for affordable and missing-middle housing.
- g. Identify and disseminate regulations and initiatives that ensure housing remains available and affordable to the local workforce, including regulations to limit short-term rentals and incentives for making housing stock available for long-term rentals.
- h. Share and disseminate resources to assist developers, businesses, property owners, and homeowners in bringing aging buildings up to code and address deferred maintenance.
- i. Share and promote policies and opportunities that encourage accessory dwelling units, including creating pre-approved plans and providing educational resources to make building ADUs more accessible.

Main Street & Downtown

Strategy 2: Revitalize main streets and downtowns to strengthen town centers and concentrate development and economic activity in climate-friendly walkable areas.

ACTION STEP 1

Examine best practices and barriers to downtown growth and create or expand upon localized plans for main street revitalization and investment.

- a.** Identify existing efforts and share best practices in downtown streetscape planning and design, supporting walkability/bike-ability and increasing multi-modal connections between downtowns and surrounding neighborhoods or communities.
- b.** Review all existing zoning to identify limits to redevelopment and infill in downtown areas, including restrictions on mixed-use or limits to height and density.
- c.** Identify opportunities to improve existing public facilities in or near downtown attractions, such as expanding clean and safe public restrooms, establishing new or larger zero-emission vehicle charging stations, and ensuring access to safe drinking water.
- d.** Identify opportunities and secure investment in key placemaking initiatives that preserve the region's rich history, such as upgrading historic buildings, creating new public art, building additional public space, and increasing access to natural features (e.g., rivers and streams) adjacent to downtowns.
- e.** Increase support for core drivers of cultural tourism, such as the arts, Indigenous history preservation, and locally sourced products.
- f.** Support multi-use venue creations for music, arts, culture, and farmers markets.

Potential Collaborators

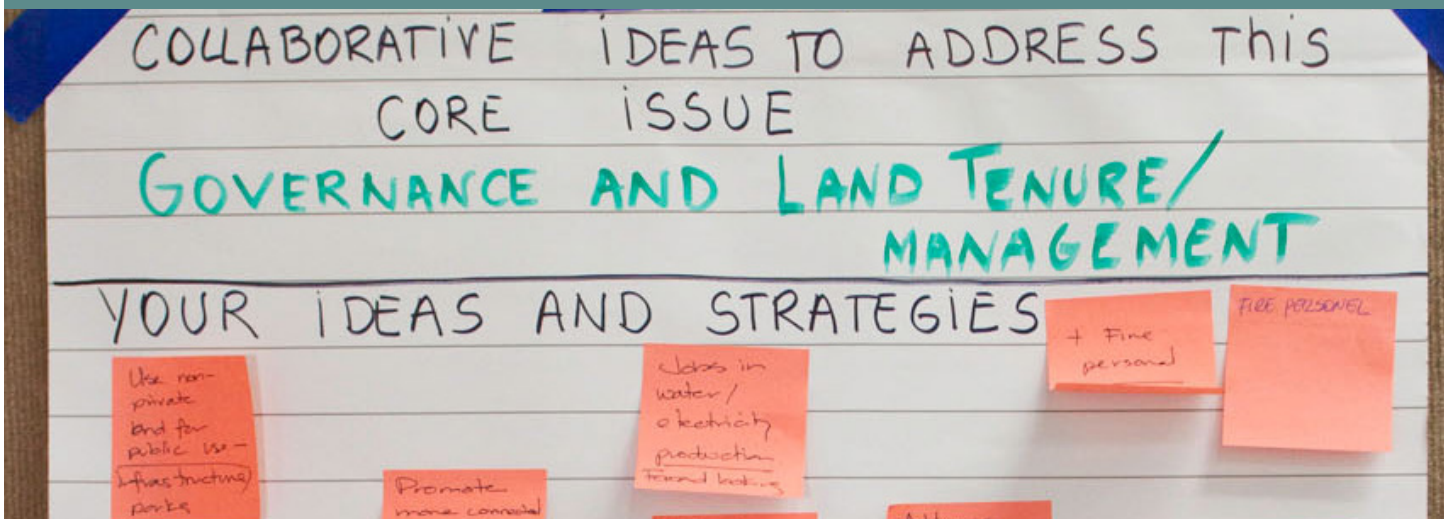
STRATEGY	1			2
ACTION STEP	1	2	3	1
Organization Name				
California Department of Housing and Community Development		PC		
California Department of Transportation				PC
Chambers of Commerce				PC
City Community Development and Planning Departments				PC
City Community Development Departments	PC	PC	PC	
City Housing Staff	PC	PC	PC	
Community Banks				PC
Community Development and Planning Agencies				PC
Community Development Departments				PC
Community Foundations	PC	PC	PC	PC
County and Local Governments				PC
County Community Development Departments	PC	PC	PC	
County Housing Staff	PC	PC	PC	
Destination Marketing/management Organizations				PC
Employers			PC	
Existing Main Street Programs				PC
Historical Societies				PC
Housing Authorities			PC	
Local Government Economic Development Agencies				PC
Local Government Officials	PC	PC		
Main Street Businesses and Communities				PC
Major Employers	PC	PC		
Non-governmental Organizations	PC	PC		
Non-governmental Organizations Partners				PC
Regional Planning Organizations				PC
Tribal Entities	PC	PC		PC
Visit California				PC

Legend

- L** Lead
- PC** Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Land Use & Tenure



SJF gathered community feedback about land governance and other regional concerns during one of many workshops.

Improving Land Management in the Region

The region's land use and land tenure are crucial for its economic and community development, and improving both is essential.

Almost three-quarters of the region's land is managed by federal government agencies such as the National Park Service, United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and others. While the protection of ecosystems is important, extensive federal management significantly limits development opportunities. Furthermore, the majority of the region's non-federally managed land is owned and managed by public/private utility companies, including water rights. This ownership structure disproportionately affects marginalized communities, hindering their access to resources and opportunities. For instance, non-federally recognized tribes struggle to acquire land for housing and food production or to address water rights issues. To address these challenges, it is essential to improve land tenure agreements and partnerships, and foster collaboration between local governments, federal agencies, public-private entities, and incorporated cities within counties. This will ensure fair access to the region's land resources and promote sustainable economic opportunities that align with state priorities and environmental conservation.

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

➤ Federal land agreements support specific land uses to benefit tribes, local priority sectors, and improve quality of life.

➤ Local communities, as well as federal, state, tribal, and utility land managers, collaborate to achieve mutual goals.

➤ A clear roadmap exists to guide land exchange, divestiture and repurposing of underused facilities to maximize land use potential.

➤ Primary beneficiary agencies and corporations partner to invest in local prosperity and resource stewardship.

BY THE NUMBERS

50%

Land in five of the region's seven counties is more than 50% publicly managed, including, Mono at 94%, Inyo at 91.6%, Alpine at 90%, Tuolumne at 77%, and Mariposa at 57%.⁴¹

\$0

Land owned by public entities is not subject to local taxes that support mandated education, emergency services, infrastructure, law enforcement, and healthcare services.

40%

Between 1998 and 2015, the U.S. Forest Service cut staffing for restoration, watershed, and recreation by almost 40%, reducing maintenance and access as visitation increased.⁴²

OPPORTUNITIES

- › **Recreation Economy:** Expanding recreational infrastructure through partnership agreements and capacity building – attract more visitors and boost the local economy.
- › **Sustainable Agriculture:** Growing land use agreements to develop climate-adaptive agricultural practices will enhance food security and create new job opportunities.
- › **Forestry Management:** Investing in regional capacity to support sustainable forestry practices and workforce training to mitigate wildfire risks and create stable jobs.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

- › **Limited Private Land:** The scarcity of privately owned land, including the predominance of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power-owned lands in the east side counties, restricts traditional economic development opportunities and impacts opportunities across all industry sectors and foundational elements.
- › **Funding Misalignment:** State and federal funding priorities may need to align with local needs, hindering effective partnerships.
- › **Geographic Isolation:** The region's remote geography limits access to goods and services available in urban areas.

REGIONAL ASSETS

- › **Natural Resources:** Abundant public lands provide recreation, forestry, and sustainable agriculture opportunities.
- › **Community Colleges:** Educational institutions, such as the Cerro Coso Sustainable Outdoor Leadership program, offer training programs and partnerships.
- › **Local Governments:** Municipalities are crucial in implementing land use strategies and fostering community engagement.
- › **Federal Agencies:** Collaboration with National Parks, USFS, BLM, and other federal entities is essential for aligning land management priorities.
- › **Land Trusts:** Organizations like the Eastern Sierra Land Trust and Sierra Foothill

- › **Collaborative Partnerships:** Strengthening partnerships with federal agencies, local governments, and private sectors will align priorities and resources for mutual benefits.
- › **Infrastructure Improvements:** Investing in infrastructure on public lands can enhance access to essential services and support economic development.
- › **Land Exchanges:** Creating a roadmap for land exchanges or divestiture of properties not necessary for agency operations, or repurpose underutilized facilities.

- › **Agency Control:** Federal and external agencies' control over land management can limit local decision-making and responsiveness to community needs.
- › **Environmental Risks:** Wildfires, drought, and other natural disasters threaten the region's economic stability and public health.
- › **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Inadequate infrastructure, including transportation and broadband, limits economic growth and access to essential services.
- › **Wealth Disparity:** Historical land grabs and systemic inequities contribute to ongoing economic disparities.

Conservancy support conservation and sustainable land use.

- › **Industry Partners:** Private sector involvement, including major employers and utility companies, is critical to developing infrastructure and economic opportunities.
- › **Nonprofits:** Community-based organizations facilitate local initiatives and provide support services to residents.
- › **Tourism Sector:** The region's natural beauty and recreational opportunities attract visitors, boosting the local economy and creating jobs.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Improved land use and tenure agreements will promote higher-quality jobs and equitable employment opportunities in forestry, recreation, and sustainable agriculture. Programs and apprenticeship initiatives will open access to industry-recognized skills and certifications.

EQUITY

Focused education and communication initiatives can promote inclusive land use, especially among disinvested communities.

CLIMATE

Building partnerships in the region to improve land management can increase climate resilience, mitigate drought and tree mortality crisis, and decrease fire danger.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Collaborations with educational institutions and industry partners, such as the forestry corps and heavy equipment operations training, can ensure skill-job matching and develop a skilled workforce.

Strengthen Regional Partnerships

Strategy 1: Cultivate regional partnerships with local governments, large land management agencies, and major area employers to co-develop Strategic Plans addressing mutual needs and capacity gaps in land use and tenure management.

ACTION STEP 1

Establish long-term land-use and shared-use agreements, which are collaborative agreements between land management agencies and other stakeholders, to align priorities and share resources.

- a. Convene partners to establish local priorities, capacity and infrastructure gaps, and opportunities for collaboration.
- b. Identify appropriate agreement vehicles to collaborate on achieving mutual goals and strategies.
- c. Identify funding strategies for implementing inter-jurisdictional projects.

ACTION STEP 2

Identify opportunities for local small businesses and NGOs to provide third-party contract staff capacity to support gaps in agency funding (plan, environmental permitting, and project implementation).

- a. Work with local governments, tribes, land management agencies, and utility providers to identify a portfolio of project priorities and capacity gaps supporting targeted industry sectors, such as sustainable recreation development and management, wildfire resiliency, and clean energy projects.
- b. Work with workforce development organizations, including higher education institutions, to develop a curriculum that trains residents in the skill sets needed to support capacity gaps in public agencies.

ACTION STEP 3

Research and identify funding mechanisms to invest in infrastructure improvements on public lands.

- a. Identify policies and processes for land management agencies to make lands available for local community and economic development needs.
- b. Develop collaborative plans and agreements for project implementation to make projects shovel-ready for various potential funding sources.

ACTION STEP 4

Develop transparent, community-led land-use, land exchange, and potentially divestiture plans to transfer infill and other opportunity sites to private ownership or shared-use agreements.

- a. Convene local and tribal governments and land management/water and power utility agencies to identify lands within and surrounding existing communities suitable for land exchanges and divestitures that are not needed for agency mandates. Model after existing land-use agreements and shared-use agreements that have already been implemented between tribes in Mono and Inyo counties.
- b. Identify methodologies for land transfer or other mechanisms to achieve mutual land use needs, such as direct government-to-government transfers or other public/private partnership vehicles.

ACTION STEP 5

Engage water and power utility agencies to prepare for potential land transfer if the land's water resource management is no longer needed and to fulfill agency obligations for land divestment.

- a. Convene regional partners to discuss extended-range land use management and planning for utility-owned lands.

Develop Collaborative Plans

Strategy 2: Work with federal and other public land management agencies to develop collaborative plans to address local community and economic development needs.

ACTION STEP 1

Encourage Federal and State agency plans and projects to incorporate local priorities.

- a.** Establish Formal Partnerships, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), or Interagency Agreements that facilitate resource sharing, joint initiatives, and coordinated planning efforts.
- b.** Develop and implement joint projects.

ACTION STEP 2

Develop partnerships and work with land management agencies to improve and expand community land use.

- a.** Develop regional trail network plans to connect communities through improved partnerships with land agencies.
- b.** Leverage existing infrastructure as modeled by the Sustainable Recreation Tourism Initiative Towns-to-Trails project.
- c.** Identify agency approvals or easements required for implementation.
- d.** Identify and apply for aligned funding sources for implementation, such as federal grants, state infrastructure programs, and private sector investments, by conducting thorough research on available funding opportunities, collaborating with financial experts and grant writers, and submitting well-prepared applications that demonstrate the alignment of projects with funding criteria and regional priorities.

ACTION STEP 3

Work with land management agencies, including water and power utility agencies, to develop environmentally and economically sustainable agriculture plans.

- a.** Convene regional partners to identify agricultural products, technologies, and land and water requirements for shifting to climate-adaptive practices.

Environmental Justice

Strategy 3: Advocate as a region to establish regional environmental justice plans and policies that retain the benefits of resource exportation in the communities of origin.

ACTION STEP 1

Advocate as a region for State policies recognizing future carbon credits for fuel mitigation projects.

- a. Utilize existing metrics for the value of ecosystem services provided by watershed management, including carbon sequestration.
- b. Develop a regional coalition of Counties, including representation from tribal communities to advocate on behalf of the region.

ACTION STEP 2

Collaborate with metropolitan utility providers to be partners and financial stakeholders in watershed management, wildfire resiliency, and local community development needs.

- a. Establish regional collaboration that focuses on co-stewardship opportunities.
- b. Establish MOUs or Stewardship Agreements to implement mutually identified goals.
- c. Establish the value of ecosystem and community services provided by local counties and cities that support downstream beneficiaries.
- d. Establish educational programming for downstream beneficiaries about the value of ecosystem services to encourage stewardship.
- e. Develop projects for co-stewardship opportunities.

ACTION STEP 3

Develop an impact fee system for resort corporations (Vail Resorts and Alterra) that benefit from local services such as law enforcement, healthcare, and public transportation.

- a. Establish the value of services provided.
- b. Establish a Regional/Subregional Tourism Improvement District or similar model that captures tax revenues from tourists' impacts with nexus to regional impacts on public services, including communities that serve along major transportation corridors to regional resort destinations.

ACTION STEP 4

- a. Encourage Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and other financial compensations to be commensurate with the value of ecosystem services provided to out-of-area users.

ACTION STEP 5

- a. Identify State and Federal resources for technological innovations in ecosystem services and climate resilience.

ACTION STEP 6

- a. Integrate California 30x30 plan in land use planning. Engage tribal communities in 30x30 planning.

ACTION STEP 7

- a. Investigate the feasibility of partnering with conservation finance organizations to fund ecosystem management projects leveraging downstream beneficiaries.

Localize Workforce Development

Strategy 4: Collaborate with and incentivize municipal utility providers to tap into the local workforce's potential.

ACTION STEP 1

Establish career training programs in forward-looking jobs in water management and electricity production (including biomass, hydroelectric, and geothermal), land management, and ecosystem services, including land use and environmental planning, engineering, sustainable recreation, agriculture, technology, and clean energy.

- a.** Work with land managers/utilities to identify job training needs and trends.
- b.** Collaborate with and support community colleges to develop curriculum, certification programs, etc., that lead to jobs in this industry.
- c.** Identify opportunities to partner for apprenticeship and internship programs.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1					2			3			4	
ACTION STEP	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	
Organization Name													
Alterra Mountain Company												PC	
Blue Mountain Electric													PC
Bureau of Land Management	PC		PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC	PC			
California Association of Local Economic Developers	PC					PC							
California Community Colleges		L											
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection	PC		PC			PC							
California Department of Transportation						PC	PC						
California Farm Bureau								PC					
California Natural Resources Agency							PC						
California Student Aid Commission									PC				
Chambers of Commerce		PC											
Community Colleges	PC		PC			PC							
Community-Based Organizations		PC											
Downstream Beneficiary Counties and Metropolitan Areas									PC				
Eastern Sierra Council of Governments	PC	L	PC	PC		PC	PC		PC	PC		PC	
Eastern Sierra Land Trust	PC		PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC	PC			
Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership	PC		PC			PC	PC						
Southern California Edison													PC
Local Governments	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC		
Local Planning Departments	PC					PC	PC						
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power			PC			PC							PC
Mother Lode Land Trust	PC		PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC	PC			
Mother Lode Job Training Center		L											PC
Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation (MLTPA)													
National Park Service	PC		PC			PC	PC		PC	PC			
San Francisco Water Power Sewer													PC
SBC									PC	PC			
Special Districts	PC		PC			PC	PC	PC		PC			
Tribal Entities	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC		
Tuolumne River Trust		PC											
University of California Cooperative Extension								PC					
U.S. Forest Service	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC				
U.S. Forest Service - Irrigation Districts						PC							
Vail Resorts												PC	
Whitebark Institute	PC	PC									PC		PC
Water and Power Utility Agencies	PC			PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC			
Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions	PC	PC	PC	PC		PC	PC		PC	PC			

Legend

L Lead **PC** Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Physical Infrastructure



OUTCOME STATEMENTS

➤ All residents, businesses, and visitors can access sustainable, efficient, modernized infrastructure and utilities to serve their needs.

➤ Integrated, reliable, high-speed, last-mile broadband connections provide equitable access for residents, businesses, and visitors throughout the region.

➤ Modernized wastewater and water management systems and infrastructure mitigate drought-related water shortages and support economic and population growth over the next 20 years.

➤ Roads and streets throughout the Sierra region are maintained in good repair and support all users, focusing on expanding access to bicycles, pedestrians, and electric vehicles.

Outdated and poorly maintained infrastructure is a concern for many community members, as evident by the many comments and ideas shared during SJF community workshops.

Upgrading Essential Regional Systems

Insufficient infrastructure across various systems is a significant obstacle to regional development, quality of life, and economic progress. Physical infrastructure includes the vital systems necessary for a community's operation and survival, such as water, wastewater, sewer, telecommunications, broadband, utilities, and transportation. It also encompasses the availability and quality of public facilities, amenities, resources, and distribution needed to meet the population's health needs.

When these systems are compromised or fail, the impacts are widespread, affecting public health, safety, and the economy. For instance, limited broadband hinders daily communication, particularly during emergencies, and impedes business innovation. Inadequate and faulty water, wastewater, and sewer systems can compromise safe drinking water and threaten public health. Inaccessible roads and outdated transportation infrastructure create public safety risks, limit access to essential services, restrict market access, threaten business operations, and lead to employee absences or job loss.

The region must invest in modernizing efforts to upgrade roads, bridges, and transportation networks, expand high-speed broadband coverage, and improve water and wastewater systems to enhance accessibility, increase business efficiency, and attract new investments.

OPPORTUNITIES

- › **Collaborative Initiatives:** Local governments are already collaborating on regional air service and broadband expansion projects, such as those led by ESCOG, 395 Broadband Consortium, and Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) Broadband Consortium.
- › **State Programs:** California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (IBank) and the California Energy Commission's Clean Transportation Program offer opportunities for climate-smart upgrades.
- › **Transportation Enhancements:** Upgrading Highways 49 and 395 and expanding public transportation options

can improve workforce mobility, especially for marginalized communities with limited transportation.

- › **Broadband Access:** Expanding reliable broadband will enhance remote work and online education, giving residents a competitive edge in the workforce.
- › **Tourism Infrastructure:** Upgrades to rural infrastructure and ADA-compliant facilities can enhance visitor experiences and support tourism-related businesses.
- › **Parks and Greenspaces:** Developing and improving parks will enrich community life and attract visitors.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

- › **Underfunding:** Transportation, water, wastewater, and broadband systems are chronically underfunded and need more resources.
- › **Complex Water Systems:** Improved coordination and increased workforce capacity are needed to manage and monitor water and wastewater systems more effectively.
- › **Limited Broadband Access:** Broadband access is only available along main corridors, and above-ground infrastructure is vulnerable to damage.

- › **Utilities and Transportation:** Existing utilities and transportation networks are stretched thin and cannot fully support current needs or future population growth.
- › **Geographic Challenges:** The region's mountainous terrain and rural geography increase construction and maintenance costs for infrastructure systems.
- › **Capacity Issues:** Current infrastructure is at capacity and cannot accommodate anticipated population growth and economic development.

REGIONAL ASSETS

- › **Community Engagement:** Strong community networks facilitate collaborative planning and support for infrastructure initiatives.

- › **Funding Opportunities:** Access to State and federal funding programs supports large-scale infrastructure projects.

BY THE NUMBERS

13%

More than a quarter of region workers commute across county lines, and 13% travel over an hour.⁴³

49/395

Highways 49 and 395 are crucial for intra-state commerce in the Sierra region.

5-10 miles

Tecopa Shoshone community members cannot drink the local tap water and must drive 5-10 miles to access a \$0.25/gallon water kiosk.⁴⁴

13.4%

In the seven-county region, 13.4% of households do not have an internet subscription—5% more than the State's average of 8%⁴⁵.

62%

Almost 62% of households in the region have broadband, 15% fewer than the State's average.⁴⁶

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

CLIMATE

Upgrading infrastructure with energy-efficient technologies and sustainable practices reduces environmental impacts, cuts emissions, and improves public health.

EQUITY

Targeting underserved areas with infrastructure investments improves access to essential services, bridging gaps and fostering inclusive economic growth.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Collaboration between employers and training programs can foster a workforce skilled in construction and technology in a way that aligns with market demands.

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Investments in physical infrastructure can create high-quality jobs. Improved facilities will support business operations and increase job retention and creation.

Climate Smart Collaborative

Strategy 1: Leverage existing partnerships and develop a collaborative, where needed, that expands on high-impact partnerships to lead a comprehensive climate-smart infrastructure strategy for the region in a way that prepares for climate impacts and creates quality jobs.

ACTION STEP 1

SJF Local Government Committee to convene Collaborative partners to identify and convene partners for a regional collaborative to conduct the climate-smart infrastructure strategy by:

- a. Identifying the region's physical infrastructure baseline conditions.
- b. Defining a planning process.
- c. Determining the gaps and needs across each core infrastructure system.
- d. Preparing for actions to improve the region's physical infrastructure to a consistent state of good repair.

ACTION STEP 2

Convene SJF Collaborative to manage and track regional physical infrastructure planning and investments by:

- a. Providing ongoing direction for physical infrastructure improvement planning and investment.
- b. Identify funding to support the ongoing work of SJF.

ACTION STEP 3

Convene SJF Collaborative to focus on significant needs in the following order:

- a. Broadband and water/wastewater infrastructure needs.
- b. Public buildings and facilities.
- c. Transportation systems and roadways.
- d. Telecommunication networks.
- e. Energy and utility systems.

Broadband Access Strategy

Strategy 2: Expand region-wide broadband baseline analysis and needs assessment and develop and implement a strategy to ensure the Sierra region is connected and has reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband connections.

ACTION STEP 1

Work with existing broadband consortia and broadband coordinators (local, regional, State) to update broadband service maps and identify regional funding gaps.

- a.** Participate in the Broadband, Equity Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program to evaluate the quality of existing broadband networks.
- b.** Leverage existing plans, such as county broadband road maps and broadband planning and feasibility studies, to identify gaps and potential areas for improvement.
- c.** Plan for robust satellite broadband and mesh network systems for last-mile service to mountainous communities.
- d.** Identify fiber locations and map potential for low-cost, high-efficiency wireless mesh networks.
- e.** Support redundancy of service to withstand natural disasters and Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events.

ACTION STEP 2

Conduct a comprehensive review of available programs, apply for relevant grants, and advocate for policy changes to remove barriers to investment for broadband and utility infrastructure improvements.

- a.** Provide incentives to homeowners and property owners to establish easements for broadband and utility companies to install continuous networks of underground utility lines.

Water and Wastewater

Strategy 3: Prepare a region-wide water and wastewater system baseline analysis and needs assessment, as well as prepare and implement a strategy that creates incentives for water conservation while also enabling economic growth.

ACTION STEP 1

Conduct a regional water and wastewater system infrastructure assessment and mapping inventory study to identify regional and local needs, gaps, and opportunities, leveraging existing infrastructure improvement plans. The study will:

- a. Analyze and address water and wastewater infrastructure capacity, gaps, and needs.
- b. Define goals and prioritize the communities most impacted.
- c. Encourage each county to update its capital improvement priorities based on the regional plan and priorities.

ACTION STEP 2

Develop a public and private plan to identify and fund water and wastewater infrastructure improvement priorities. This plan is designed to benefit and serve the community, ensuring their needs and voices are heard.

- a. Identify innovative approaches to funding, such as offering tax-based incentives/savings for water conservation efforts to property owners.
- b. Identify vulnerable infrastructure and develop capital replacement plans.
- c. Invest in developing preliminary engineering reports, environmental and regulatory compliance documents, and engineering plans and designs for new facilities to be eligible for funding.

ACTION STEP 3

Conduct a comprehensive community engagement and outreach process to give community members tools to better implement the climate-smart infrastructure strategy.

- a. Create region-wide initiatives to address landscape water usage and provide incentives for installing drought-tolerant landscapes requiring little to no water.
- b. Provide free well water evaluations and recommendations to communities who rely on well water for drinking and sanitation efforts on properties.

ACTION STEP 4

Invest in replacing aging critical water, wastewater, and storm drainage infrastructure to support economic resiliency and growth.

- a. Identify vulnerable infrastructure and develop capital replacement plans.
- b. Invest in the development of preliminary engineering reports, environmental and regulatory compliance documents, and engineering plans and designs for new facilities to be eligible for funding."

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1		2		3		
ACTION STEP	1	2	1	2	1	2	3
Organization Name							
Broadband Coalitions			PC				
Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD)			PC				
Bureau of Land Management					PC	PC	PC
California Department of Transportation	PC	PC					
California Public Utilities Commission	PC	PC					
City Councils					PC	PC	PC
City Public Works Agencies and Departments	PC	PC					
Digital 395 Initiative			PC	PC			
East Bay Municipality District					PC	PC	PC
Eastern Sierra Council of Governments	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership	PC	PC	PC				
Edison Electric					PC	PC	PC
Broadband and Cell Phone Service Providers			PC				
Liberty Utilities	PC	PC					
Local and Regional Water Agencies					PC	PC	PC
Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation	PC						
Mother Lode Workforce Development Board	PC	PC	PC	PC			
Pacific Gas and Electric Company	PC	PC					
Public and Private Landowners			PC				
Public Access Foundation	PC						
Representatives from Each County and City Across All Sectors, Including Tribal and Disinvested Communities		PC				PC	PC
Rural County Representatives of California	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
San Diego Gas and Electric	PC	PC					
Sewage and Water Districts	PC	PC					
SJF Local Government Committee	PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC
SoCalREN Public Agency							
Statewide Middle Mile Network Projects			PC				
Tribal Entities	PC	PC					
U.S. Forest Service			PC		PC	PC	PC
Watershed Conservation Organizations					PC	PC	PC

Legend

L Lead

PC Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Small Business & Entrepreneurship



Community workshop participants highlighted the importance of supporting small businesses.

Enhancing Resource Access for Sustainable Growth

Small businesses, entrepreneurs, and non-profits are the primary employers in the region outside of the government. In this context, an entrepreneur takes the risk of starting a new business, while a small business includes any organization, including nonprofits, with 500 or fewer employees. Both small businesses and entrepreneurs face significant challenges, such as limited access to capital, technical assistance, and community support. Despite these challenges, small businesses are a crucial economic driver with growth potential. Supporting these enterprises is a proven strategy to create more quality jobs for underserved communities and increase economic stability.

Effective ways to help small businesses, entrepreneurs, and non-profits include strengthening support networks such as Small Business Development Centers, creating new opportunities in emerging industries, improving technical assistance, incentivizing investment, and enhancing broadband access to facilitate business operations in rural communities. The region must pursue strategies that increase equitable access to capital, educate and train the workforce, and create an active community support network to promote and sustain a thriving small business sector and build a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem.

BY THE NUMBERS

3x

Locally owned businesses circulate three times more money back into the local economy than absentee-owned firms or corporate chains.⁴⁷

\$3.9 billion

Total annual payroll for businesses in the SJF region as of 2022.⁴⁸

3

UC Merced, CSU Bakersfield, and San Joaquin Delta College are SBDCs that serve this region. However, none have headquarters in the area.

9,151

Total businesses with 500 or fewer employees in the SJF region as of 2022.⁴⁹

59%

The total number of jobs in the region that come from small businesses.⁵⁰

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

➤ Small businesses can access capital to launch and grow.

➤ Economic diversification creates new jobs in high-wage/high-growth sectors.

➤ Downtown cores, business districts, and town centers are vibrant, accessible, populated by locally owned ventures, and promote a strong and unique sense of place.

➤ Expanded services provide technical assistance to support entrepreneurs and nonprofits as significant regional employers.

OPPORTUNITIES

- › **Develop Catalytic Assets:** Establish and expand business resource centers, co-working spaces, commercial kitchens, and maker spaces to provide essential infrastructure and support for local entrepreneurs.
- › **Expand Access:** Create and collaborate on initiatives to improve access to these facilities, enabling more small businesses to thrive.
- › **Leverage Small Business Ownership:** Capitalize on small businesses' role as primary job creators to stimulate regional economic activity and job opportunities.

- › **Grow Industry Clusters:** Attract and support new, emerging industry clusters, particularly next-economy, carbon-neutral growth sectors.
- › **Technical Assistance:** Support a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem by collaborating with organizations that provide direct technical assistance.
- › **Diversify Commerce:** Expand non-tourism-related commerce to bolster the region's resilience to economic downturns and extreme weather events.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

- › **Limited Technical Assistance:** Technical assistance providers need more financial support due to remote access, budget limitations, and difficulties in hiring skilled personnel.
- › **Seasonal Operational Feasibility:** Low population densities and the seasonality of tourism-based businesses make it challenging for brick-and-mortar establishments to remain operational year-round.
- › **Broadband Access:** Insufficient high-speed broadband restricts small businesses from processing transactions, sharing large files, and communicating effectively.

- › **Rising Costs:** Increased labor, raw materials, and insurance costs pressure small businesses, especially in low-margin industries like tourism, restaurants, and retail.
- › **Economic Dependence:** The region is heavily reliant on low-wage, tourism-dependent jobs, which limits economic diversification and exposes businesses to seasonal and climate-related changes.

REGIONAL ASSETS

- › **Local Expertise:** Knowledgeable community members and local business networks provide valuable insights and support.
- › **Existing Infrastructure:** Although limited, facilities like commercial kitchens and co-working spaces offer foundational resources for business development.
- › **Government Support:** Local economic development agencies and chambers of commerce can help implement and scale business support initiatives.

- › **Educational Institutions:** Partnerships with California Community Colleges and training programs enhance workforce skills and match them with local business needs.
- › **Community Engagement:** Strong community ties and collaborative initiatives are beneficial and essential to driving entrepreneurial growth and resilience.
- › **Business-Focused Programs:** Regional SBDCs and other programs such as Community College Entrepreneurship Programs and Sierra Commons Forest Entrepreneurship.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

CLIMATE

Supporting small businesses includes integrating sustainable practices and fostering green industries. Investments in climate-resilient sectors, such as eco-tourism and sustainable agriculture, will mitigate environmental impacts and promote public health.

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Investments will improve job quality by providing technical assistance to growth industries and high-wage sectors, enhancing training. Increased access to capital can help small businesses expand, creating more quality jobs.

EQUITY

Prioritize investments and small business support in underserved communities, including minority groups and women, by improving access to resources and technical assistance can help dismantle barriers.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Providing the necessary support to ensure the long-term viability of the region's largest aggregate employers invests in and expands existing, high-impact technical assistance while increasing access to capital so small businesses can offer training opportunities.

Grow Entrepreneurial Opportunities

Strategy 1: Increase the impact of small business development and technical assistance providers to grow entrepreneurial opportunities.

ACTION STEP 1

Enhance, invest in, and expand the existing entrepreneurial ecosystem, such as SBDCs, micro-lenders, and workforce development boards, to support small business development and foster economic growth and job creation, particularly in underserved communities.

- a.** Work with Mother Lode Job Training Center, Kern, Inyo, Mono Workforce Development Board, California State University Bakersfield SBDC, Valley Sierra SBDC, and San Joaquin Delta SBDC to increase in-person training and consulting in the region, understand needs, and pursue funding to support expansion.
- b.** Provide technical assistance for business startups, business expansion, permit assistance, site selection, finance, marketing, human resources, and business management.
- c.** Partner with SBDCs, chambers of commerce, and other entrepreneurial educators to expand outreach on existing virtual business training and certification courses.

ACTION STEP 2

Explicitly prioritize economic gardening, a strategy that focuses on growing the local economy from within by supporting existing businesses and providing pathways for prosperity for all businesses, including:

- a.** Offer entrepreneurship and business basics courses to high school students and create a youth pitch event.
- b.** Provide Etsy Entrepreneurship Workshop to advance opportunities for the creative economy and arts and culture entrepreneurs.
- c.** Engage the State's Employment Training Panel (ETP) program to provide no-cost training for qualified small businesses.
- d.** Expand employee-owned and cooperative business offerings by partnering with Project Equity to bring employee-owned business structure training to the region.

New Industry Clusters

Strategy 2: Drive economic diversification to bolster the region's resilience by attracting and supporting emerging industry clusters, carbon-neutral growth sector businesses, value-added manufacturing, and tourism-support businesses.

ACTION STEP 1

Support innovation hubs with high-speed broadband and local manufacturing to boost export business growth. Hubs may include food processing, wood products, building materials, cannabis, advanced manufacturing, and artisan goods.

- a. Conduct a feasibility study to determine market demand, projected facility utilization, and economic practicality.
- b. Identify resources, potential locations, and funding opportunities; consider repurposing abandoned or under-utilized facilities.
- c. Align technical assistance resources for new entrepreneurs, including shared administrative support, e-commerce, marketing, branding, shipping, and financing.
- d. Ensure hubs provide high-speed broadband to grow the capacity for e-commerce and remote work opportunities.

ACTION STEP 2

Identify opportunities to leverage natural resources, ecosystem services, and forest resiliency projects for tourism activities such as trail building, transportation, and ecological education.

- a. Develop and nurture relationships with contractors.
- b. Engage tribal labor force for training in these industries.
- c. Advocate to elevate the significance of ecosystem service jobs at the State and Federal level.

ACTION STEP 3

Leverage national and State programs (e.g., USDA, California Climate and Agriculture Network, UC ANR) to increase technical assistance, funding opportunities, and impact of cooperative networks to help small agricultural businesses.

ACTION STEP 4

Identify potential receiver sites and explore incentive programs for business and industry relocation.

- a. Create a marketing campaign to attract new businesses.
- b. Contract with relocation consultant for further reach.

Access to Capital

Strategy 3: Expand access to capital for startup and existing businesses.

ACTION STEP 1

Connect entrepreneurs with mentors and investors.

- a.** Host a roundtable of potential investors and founders to understand interests and needs.
- b.** Formalize a plan to nurture continued involvement and recruitment of founders and investors.
- c.** Design process to match investor network with rural and tribal entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations.
- d.** Host events such as pitch boot camps and showcases in collaboration with SBDCs and Chambers where entrepreneurs can share their ideas with the investor community.

ACTION STEP 2

Explore the efficacy of incentives, creative financing, and procurement mechanisms to drive economic growth and diversification.

- a.** Provide incentives such as tax breaks, grants, and low-interest loans to attract new businesses and investors.
- b.** Conduct a feasibility study on tax increment financing to drive investment.
- c.** Promote California Competes Tax Credits and Hiring Credits; work with SBDC to provide technical assistance for implementation.
- d.** Implement inclusive procurement policies that encourage or require purchasing from local, tribal, and disadvantaged enterprises.

ACTION STEP 3

Establish a regional community investment fund, revolving loan fund, or leverage existing CDFI to target place-based investments in small businesses and downtown properties.

- a.** Contact regional CDFIs to encourage additional regional investment; understand and address current barriers.
- b.** Explore the possibility of establishing a Main Street land trust to invest in prioritized business districts to preserve generational business interests.
- c.** Identify cross-jurisdictional funding opportunities for priority economic development projects around sustainable tourism, agriculture, forest health, and transportation.
- d.** Leverage national and State programs to increase funding and impact of cooperative networks to help small agricultural businesses.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1	2			2	3		
ACTION STEP	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
Organization Name								
Arts and Culture Community-Based Organizations	PC	PC			PC			
California Community Colleges	PC	PC	PC					
California Office of the Small Business Advocate	PC	PC	PC			PC		PC
CalRecycle	PC	PC	PC					
Central Sierra Economic Development District		L			L	L	L	L
Chambers of Commerce	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Community-Based Organizations	PC	PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC
Eastern Sierra Council of Governments		L	PC		L	L	L	L
Economic Development Agencies	PC	PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC
Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development	PC	PC	PC			PC		PC
Local Banks and CDFIs	PC	PC	PC			PC	PC	PC
Local Governments	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Maker Spaces	PC	PC			PC			
Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation			L					
Mother Lode Workforce Development Board	PC	PC	PC		PC			
Public Agencies	PC	PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC
Recycling Market Development Zone	PC	PC	PC					
Regional Small Business Development Centers	L							
University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources				L				

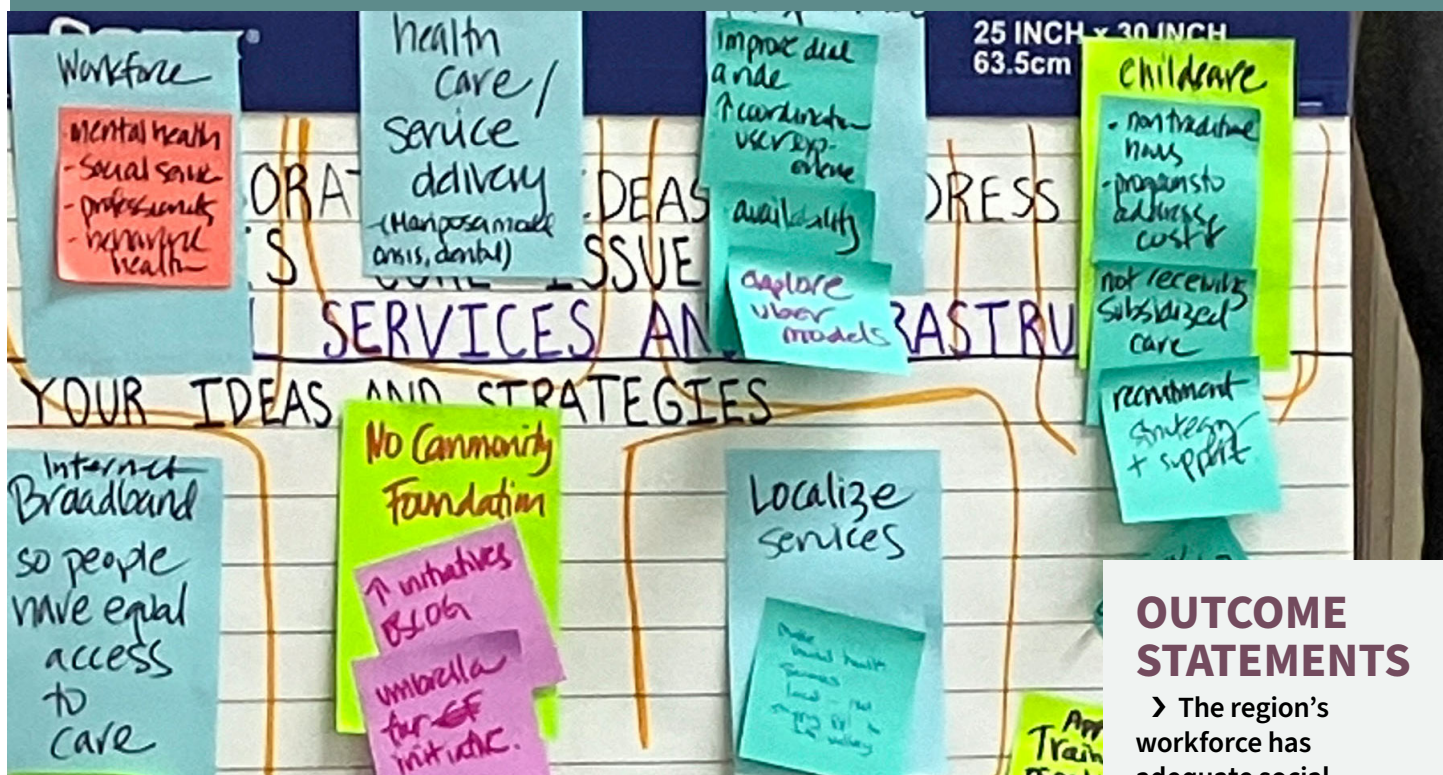
Legend

L Lead

PC Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Social & Civic Infrastructure



Improving the region's social and civic services was a key issue discussed during workshops.

Addressing Geographic Isolation

The Sierra region's low population density of fewer than ten people per square mile and geographic isolation result in limited public funding and a lack of institutional representation, ultimately restricting access to essential social and civic services and facilities.

A robust social and civic infrastructure that provides equitable access to reliable and safe childcare, transportation, food security, and healthcare is crucial for improving the region's quality of life, supporting economic growth, and enhancing community well-being.

The region must strengthen community partnerships, promote collaboration with local governments and social service agencies, and bolster philanthropic investments to broaden access to essential services while promoting economic resilience and community cohesion.

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

› The region's workforce has adequate social infrastructure programs that support acquiring and retaining high-quality jobs.

› Local organizations are coordinated and aligned to best meet the needs of Sierra communities, including through multi-collaborator public-private partnerships.

› Healthy philanthropic organizations in the region invest in critical social and civic infrastructure programs and essential human services.

BY THE NUMBERS

14%

A family of four living in the region spends about 14% of its budget on food. The same family's budget in San Francisco County accounts for only 8%.⁵¹

47.2

The median age in the region is almost 10 years older than the state's, putting additional strain on the region's limited healthcare resources.⁵²

\$39

The region received less than \$12.5 million in philanthropic dollars in 2018, about \$39 per capita.⁵³

OPPORTUNITIES

Social and civic infrastructure presents significant opportunities for growth and resilience in the Sierra region. Investing in these areas can build a stronger, more resilient community for the future, instilling optimism and hope.

- › **Enhanced Services:** Expanding childcare, healthcare, and transportation services will improve community well-being and economic stability.
- › **Economic Growth:** Community health and social service investments create jobs and support local businesses.
- › **Philanthropic Partnerships:** Increasing philanthropic investments can provide crucial funding for infrastructure projects.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

Implementing social and civic infrastructure improvements involves several challenges and risks.

- › **Funding Limitations:** Securing adequate funding from public and private sources is a significant challenge.
- › **Geographic Barriers:** The region's isolation complicates service delivery and infrastructure development.
- › **Institutional Capacity:** Local organizations need more capacity to manage and sustain projects.
- › **Community Engagement:** Ensuring meaningful participation from all

REGIONAL ASSETS

The Sierra region has several assets to support the development of social and civic infrastructure:

- › **Community Organizations:** Strong presence of local nonprofits and community-based organizations.
- › **Educational Institutions:** Partnerships with community colleges for workforce training and education.
- › **Healthcare Providers:** Existing healthcare facilities and networks can expand despite limitations.
- › **Natural Resources:** Opportunities for sustainable practices leveraging the region's natural environment.

› **Sustainable Practices:** Implementing renewable energy and weatherization initiatives will enhance environmental sustainability.

› **Community Engagement:** Building partnerships with local organizations ensure inclusive and effective service delivery.

› **Education and Training:** Developing workforce training programs will create skilled job opportunities and support economic resilience.

› **Technology Integration:** Expanding broadband access enables telehealth services, improving healthcare availability in remote areas.

community members, especially marginalized groups, can be challenging.

› **Regulatory Hurdles:** Navigating complex regulations and securing necessary approvals may delay projects.

› **Economic Disparities:** Addressing the needs of disinvested communities while balancing regional development is challenging.

› **Climate Impacts:** Extreme weather events and climate change threaten infrastructure and service delivery.

› **Local Expertise:** Knowledge and experience within local organizations and government agencies.

› **Philanthropic Support:** Potential for increased investments from philanthropic organizations.

› **Cultural Heritage:** Rich cultural heritage and strong community ties can drive engagement and support for initiatives.

› **Existing Networks:** Established networks like chambers of commerce and regional planning committees facilitate coordination and resource sharing.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Social and civic infrastructure investments will create and retain high-quality jobs and ensure they are accessible to all community members.

EQUITY

Improving social and civic infrastructure benefits disinvested communities by creating equitable access to essential services such as childcare, healthcare, and transportation.

CLIMATE

Increased access to healthcare and mental health services helps communities cope with climate-related stressors, improving overall health outcomes and preparedness for climate emergencies.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Training programs and talent recruitment will enhance job readiness and create clear career pathways in healthcare, childcare, and community services to ensure a skilled workforce that meets the region's evolving needs.

Support an Inclusive Workforce

Strategy 1: Develop and enhance the region's social infrastructure to ensure an inclusive workforce that can participate in productive economic activities and secure high-quality jobs.

ACTION STEP 1

Expand providers and partnerships to create affordable childcare options for working parents.

- a. Leverage expertise and expand the reach of local child care and development planning councils and other similar providers to provide training and professional development resources for new enterprises.
- b. Incubate a like-kind organization on the east side.
- c. Expand the ability of local child care and development planning councils and other similar providers to provide essential support services to childcare providers, including regulatory compliance, best practice resources, and business management.
- d. Collaborate with local childcare and development planning councils and similar providers to advance policy and advocacy efforts related to affordable childcare.
- e. Partner with SBDCs and Family Child Care Homes to provide business training and funding for in-home child care businesses.
- f. Engage in outreach efforts with community colleges, high schools, and workforce development agencies to promote sites that offer free childcare for students.
- g. Explore models for developing a funding pool to subsidize childcare costs based on a sliding scale.
- h. Invest in permanent after-school facilities and programs and non-volunteer staffing for after-school sports, recreation, arts, culture, and enrichment programs.

ACTION STEP 2

To address barriers to success, ensure equitable access to support services, including language translation, transportation, tools/clothing, food security, and housing.

- a. Expand marketing of under-used social programs via community partners to disinvested communities.
- b. Improve transportation systems (including organized carpools and micro-transit) between disinvested areas and essential services, training, and job opportunities.
- c. Promote affordable options for fresh food in disinvested communities with CSA delivery and farmers markets.
- d. Coordinate with the expansion of broadband to enable telehealth services in remote areas.
- e. Identify funding sources to expand access to specialized services such as mental health support, housing security, healthcare, urgent care, and preventive programs.

ACTION STEP 3

Ensure access to necessary resources such as high-speed broadband, computers, translation services, resume building, enrollment assistance, and financial aid support to facilitate access to employment.

- a. Expand and enhance workforce development board coverage with satellite sites, particularly on the east side.
- b. To drive service utilization, increase outreach and funding for existing providers such as Community Colleges, Chambers, and CBOs.

ACTION STEP 4

Provide technical assistance to ensure equitable tribal representation for policy development, funding, contracting, and scholarship opportunities.

- a. Provide matching resources for non-federally recognized tribes that do not qualify for federal programs.
- b. Provide technical assistance to help tribal organizations pursue government contracts and grants.
- c. Provide support for tribal students and workers to obtain GEDs and vocational licenses.
- d. Build and expand tribal health networks to serve tribal and non-tribal community members.
- e. Establish programs for tribal youth to build leadership, foster community connection, and retain talent.

Build Philanthropic Organizations

Strategy 2: Support NGOs and CBOs in the region and build philanthropic organizations that can secure funding to build civic capacity and infrastructure equitably.

ACTION STEP 1

Form a virtual technical assistance hub to support the fiscal and administrative health of NGOs, CBOs, and other philanthropic organizations.

- a.** Identify a lead agency with the capacity, funding, and ability to provide grant writing and administrative support to a formalized network of CBOs.
- b.** Ensure that the technical assistance hub can help build skills and capacity for NGOs and CBOs by offering workshops, one-on-one assistance, and administrative support.
- c.** Identify grant opportunities from federal, state, and private organizations and match them to community needs.
- d.** Ensure equitable representation of smaller organizations and tribal entities.
- e.** Collaboratively determine metrics of success and monitoring process.

ACTION STEP 2

Develop a comprehensive strategy to attract philanthropic support and investment in the Sierra region. This strategy will involve identifying potential funders, crafting compelling proposals, establishing partnerships with existing foundations, and establishing new programs focused on Sierra-based needs.

- a.** Formalize a partnership to create a collaborative network to streamline social service delivery, incorporating initiatives like 211, Community House, and community wellness events.

Collaborate with Civic Organizations

Strategy 3: Formalize a collaboration with the region’s existing civic organizations to collectively and effectively form a strategic approach to address specific social and civic infrastructure gaps, such as lack of access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.

ACTION STEP 1

Improve information access, ensure culturally appropriate services, and address the most pressing need by formalizing collaborations between tribes, disinvested communities, and government agencies.

- a.** Ensure all community members have a voice in planning and decision-making processes and that bi-lateral communication channels are established.
- b.** Co-create Community Benefits Agreements, ensuring representation from tribes, disinvested communities, small businesses, CBOs, and labor for economic development and infrastructure projects. This will ensure everyone has a voice and decision-making power, making them feel included and valued.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1				2		3
ACTION STEP	1	2	3	4	1	2	1
Organization Name							
Adopt-a-Senior	PC						
Big Brothers Big Sisters	PC						
Boys and Girls Clubs	PC						
Broadband Consortia		PC					
Calaveras Child Care Planning Council	L						
Chambers of Commerce			PC				
Community Colleges	PC		PC				
Community Foundations					PC	PC	
Employers							PC
Family Child Care Homes	PC						
First 5 California County Offices	PC						
Health and Human Services	PC	PC		PC			
Health Foundations					PC	PC	
Healthcare Providers							PC
Large Employers					PC	PC	
Local Governments	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Local School Districts	PC						
Non-governmental Organizations					PC	PC	
Mother Lode Job Training Center	PC		PC				
Parks and Recreation Districts	PC						
School Districts				PC			PC
Small Business Development Centers	PC						
Transportation Districts		PC					
Tribal Collaborative				L			L
Tribal Organizations				PC	PC	PC	

Legend

- L** Lead
- PC** Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Workforce Development & Education



Workshop participants brainstormed a variety of ways to improve education in the region.

Opportunities from Cradle to Career

Workforce development and education are essential to improving lives, supporting businesses, and meeting regional economic needs. However, limited educational institutions, training programs, and skill development programs create a significant barrier in the region.

A "cradle-to-career" education approach establishes a clear path from primary, secondary, higher, and vocational education to employment opportunities and beyond, offering younger generations more opportunities to stay local as they begin their careers.

Through programs and services, workforce development programs can help individuals advance in their careers and increase earning potential through acquiring new skills, specialized education, or industry-specific certifications.

The region should invest in expanding post-secondary educational opportunities, new vocational training, and additional industry-led on-the-job training and apprenticeships, enabling more people to pursue high-quality jobs in the Sierra region. Improved programs can also help ensure disinvested communities in the region have increased access to targeted education and training opportunities,

This approach will better align education and industry while reducing training and education gaps that affect job readiness and economic growth.

BY THE NUMBERS

0

No four-year colleges exist in or near the Sierra region. The closest public universities, University of California schools and California State Universities, are in the Central Valley, several hours outside the region.

2

Columbia College and Cerro Coso Community College have campuses within driving distance from some parts of the region.

10%

Workers older than 65 make up nearly 10% of every occupation in the region.⁵⁴

Less than 25%

While most adults in the region have graduated high school, less than 25% have a bachelor's or higher degree.⁵⁵

\$20,000

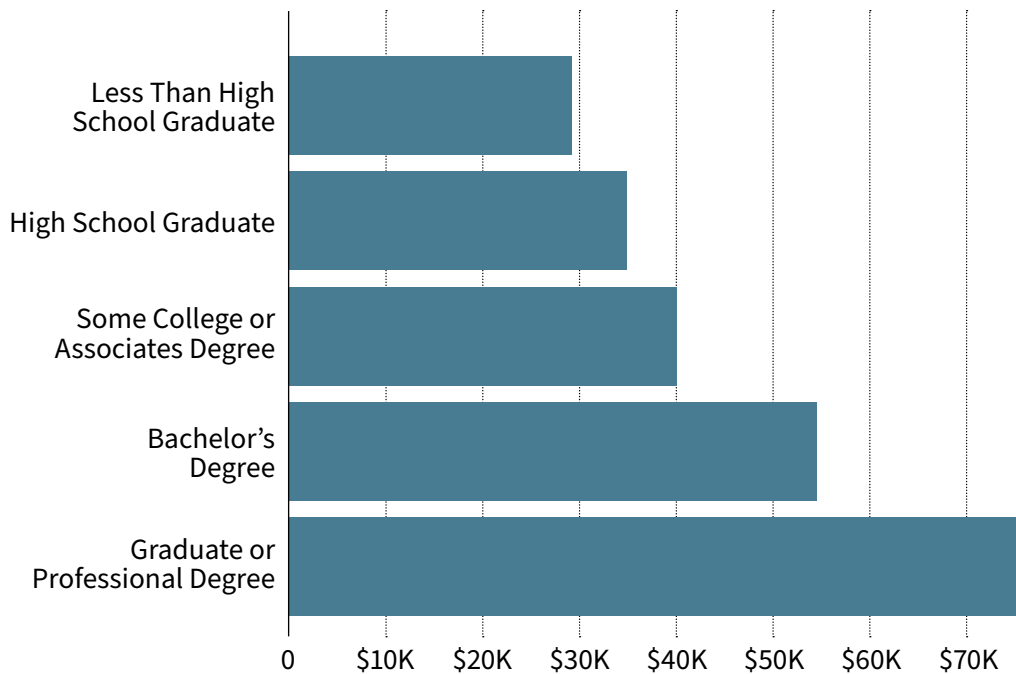
Over the last 20 years, local wages have increased but still lag behind the national annual average by nearly \$20,000.⁵⁶

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

- › Sierra region residents can access and are employed in high-quality jobs.
- › Increase enrollment and completion of post-secondary and vocational training programs and opportunities.

- › All community members have equitable access to the education they need to support themselves and their families and contribute to the region's economy and well-being.

REGIONAL MEDIAN EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Expanding Educational Pathways:** Partnering with Columbia College and Cerro Coso Community College to broaden curriculum and training options.
- **Developing High-Demand Skills:** Tailoring programs for target industries.
- **Strengthening Regional Collaboration:** Enhancing partnerships

between educational institutions, businesses, and workforce organizations.

- **Promoting Economic Diversification:** Supporting industry sectors, including green jobs and advanced manufacturing, to boost regional resilience.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

- **Limited Resources:** Insufficient funding and capacity for expanding training programs and educational opportunities.
- **Access Issues:** Geographic and broadband limitations affect access to education and training.

- **Skill Gaps:** Difficulty aligning educational programs with rapidly evolving industry needs.

- **Equity Concerns:** Ensuring that disinvested and marginalized communities benefit equitably from new programs.

REGIONAL ASSETS

- **Columbia College and Cerro Coso Community College:** Institutions offering a range of degrees and training programs.
- **Mother Lode Job Training Center:** Provides industry-specific training and workforce development initiatives.
- **Amador College Connect:** Offers online education and career support, enhancing access to higher education.

- **Local Industry Partners:** Collaborations with businesses and industry leaders to align training with job market needs.
- **Tribal Workforce Programs:** Initiatives like the Inter-Tribal Council of California's workforce development program support tribal communities in gaining specialized skills.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Investing in education and workforce development can create and retain high-quality jobs by aligning training with industry needs and promoting skill development.

EQUITY

Specialized training programs and clear pathways for career advancement can ensure the specific needs of disinvested groups are met through inclusive recruitment and support services.

CLIMATE

Education and training programs incorporating sustainable practices can prepare the workforce to address environmental concerns, mitigate climate change impacts, and enhance public health while supporting eco-friendly industries.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Aligning curricula with industry needs and promoting partnerships between businesses, educational institutions, and labor organizations can create industry-specific programs and career pathways that match the skills and education of the regional workforce with high-quality jobs.

Regional Workforce Collaborative

Strategy 1: Establish and convene a regional collaborative to build and enhance vocational, certificate, and two- and four-year college opportunities that are aligned with workforce opportunities for Sierra region community members.

ACTION STEP 1

Audit partners, create recruitment materials detailing goals and structure, and recruit members for collaboration.

- a.** Conduct an audit of existing agency and coalition partners, including industry leaders, to include in the collaborative.
- b.** Develop collaborative collateral and materials to recruit members, including, but not limited to, collaborative goals, structure, proposed tasks, estimated partner time commitment, and proposed meeting schedule.
- c.** Recruit collaborative members.

ACTION STEP 2

Analyze collaborative regional vocational, training, and other educational assets, gaps, and opportunities.

- a.** Analyze the following: training/certificate program type and reach; inventory of current apprenticeships, internships, and educational programs for current workers, including funding sources and partnerships; and skills gap analysis.
- b.** Develop a collaborative plan based on this analysis to deepen regional vocational and workforce education offerings, including partnerships, co-location, and satellite location opportunities.
- c.** Leverage industry sector-specific advisory boards, comprising industry leaders and educators, to guide vocational and training curriculum development and program offerings.
- d.** Align cradle-to-career strategies, CERF Sierra K16 programs, education partners, industry, and workforce development programs to engage the youth to grow our own, positioning students to graduate with vocational certification in quality careers.

Vocational Education & Training

Strategy 2: Promote and enhance in-person and virtual post-secondary, vocational opportunities, and career education training to support the workforce across various industries.

ACTION STEP 1

Market existing career pipeline programs via partner networks.

- a. Identify existing networks.
- b. Ensure all materials are translated and distributed through culturally relevant channels.

ACTION STEP 2

- a. Identify and expand upon successful work-based learning, work experience, and intern/externships.
- b. Identify outcomes and structure of partnerships, including funding sources and models.

ACTION STEP 3

Provide remote workers with employment support such as hot spots and shared working spaces with high-speed broadband.

- a. Identify potential funding for on-the-job support services.
- b. Market available support to targeted audiences.

ACTION STEP 4

Expand community college offerings to include nursing and healthcare certification programs to meet the growing demand for healthcare workers (Reference Community Healthcare section for further details).

- a. Audit existing community college offerings.
- b. Identify partnerships between community colleges and healthcare partners to develop new certificate programs.
- c. Market existing certificate programs across the region.

ACTION STEP 5

- a. Expand funding for on-campus housing at community colleges to support regional training needs to provide access to those requiring more reliable transportation or are too far from the campus to attend daily.

Upskill Workforce

Strategy 3: Upskill the Sierra region's workforce by creating and funding employer incentive programs for incumbent workers to complete earn-as-you-learn programs.

ACTION STEP 1

Identify funding to work with private trainers to provide workplace training (incumbent worker training).

- a. Identify industry areas and skill areas.
- b. Conduct cost analysis to determine funding needs.

ACTION STEP 2

Leverage and implement existing underutilized funding and training resources like ETP (Employment Training Panel) to support incumbent worker training.

ACTION STEP 3

Meet with local employers to support upskilling into career pathways that will meet industry demand.

- a. Focus on high-needs areas such as the construction industry, upskilling for energy efficiency and weatherization, and support for small business construction entrepreneurs.

Hands-On Training

Strategy 4: Establish and build upon apprenticeships, internship programs, and job shadowing opportunities to provide hands-on training and job experience.

ACTION STEP 1

Support employee advancement to higher-wage positions.

- a. Identify skills necessary for career and job growth based on region-wide industry sector analysis.

ACTION STEP 2

Research apprenticeship, internship, and job shadowing best practice models from within or outside the region to replicate, including models for rural areas with low occupancy industries (with few hands-on opportunities).

- a. Collaborate with other rural regional and statewide workforce development agencies to understand other effective models in similar regions.

ACTION STEP 3

Embed State and federal guidance and standards to ensure apprenticeships and internships include equitable wages, hours, working conditions, and skill alignment.

- a. Participate in training on apprenticeship and internship standards.
- b. Determine the application of standards.

ACTION STEP 4

Create apprenticeships for in-demand industries, including, but not limited to, the trades and the public sector, including healthcare, forestry, construction, education, and government.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1	2	2			3	3			4	
ACTION STEP	1	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2
Organization Name											
Amador College Connect	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
California Community Colleges						PC					
California Higher Education Organizations	PC	PC	PC								
California State University				PC							
California State University Stanislaus	PC	PC	PC								
Cerro Coso Community College	PC	PC	PC			PC				L	
Certification Program Providers						PC					
Chambers of Commerce	PC	PC								L	
Columbia Community College	PC	PC	PC			PC				L	
Community Colleges	PC	PC	PC	PC							
Eastern Sierra Council of Governments	L	L	L			L	L	L	L		
Eastern Sierra K16 Program	PC	PC									
Educators											PC
Golden Sierra Workforce Development Board		PC									
Healthcare Partners				PC		PC					
Healthcare, Hospitality, Construction, and Climate Resiliency Industry Partners							PC	PC	PC		
High Schools						PC					
Industry Partners										L	
Industry Specific Advisory Boards	PC	PC									
K-12 System, Middle and High Schools	PC	PC									
Kern/Inyo/Mono Workforce Development Board	PC	PC									
Labor and Trade Unions	PC	PC									
Lake Tahoe Community College	PC	PC	PC			PC					
Modesto College	PC	PC	PC			PC					
Mother Lode Job Training Center	L	L	L/PC	L/PC	L/PC	L/PC	L	L	L	L	L/PC
Professional Associations										L	
Regional High Schools										L	
San Joaquin College	PC	PC	PC			PC					
Secondary Schools						PC					
Shasta College	PC	PC	PC			PC					
Sierra College	PC	PC	PC			PC					
Strong Workforce Program	PC	PC									
Targeted Industry Partners from Five Priority Sectors	PC	PC									
Trainers											PC
Tribal Healthcare Organizations						PC					
University of California				PC							
University of California Merced	PC	PC	PC								
University of California Research Stations	PC	PC									
Vocational Training Institutions	PC	PC									
Western Nevada College	PC	PC	PC			PC					
Workforce Development Agencies				L	L						
RuralREN North/Central California REN											

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Target Industries

Fostering Economic Growth In 5 Key Industry Sectors

After establishing the foundational elements that must be addressed to realize economic prosperity for all, the Plan progresses to strategies focused on diversifying and expanding key economic segments.

DEFINING INDUSTRIES AND SECTORS

An industry is a group of businesses that offer similar goods or services. It is part of a general segment of the economy—a sector—that includes other industries that share many characteristics, such as production processes, customer demographics, and market dynamics. For example, the recreation and tourism sector includes accommodation, food and beverage, attractions, and certain retail industries.

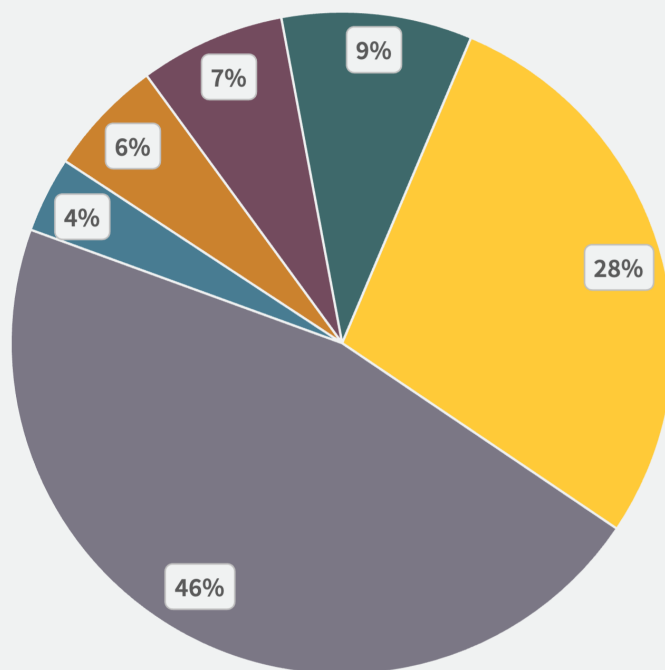
MEASURING COMPETITIVENESS WITH LOCATION QUOTIENT

One measure of the strength of an industry or sector in a region is employment concentration. The greater the concentration of jobs in a particular sector in a specific area, the greater the chance the region has some specialization in that industry, and growing it is a competitive advantage.

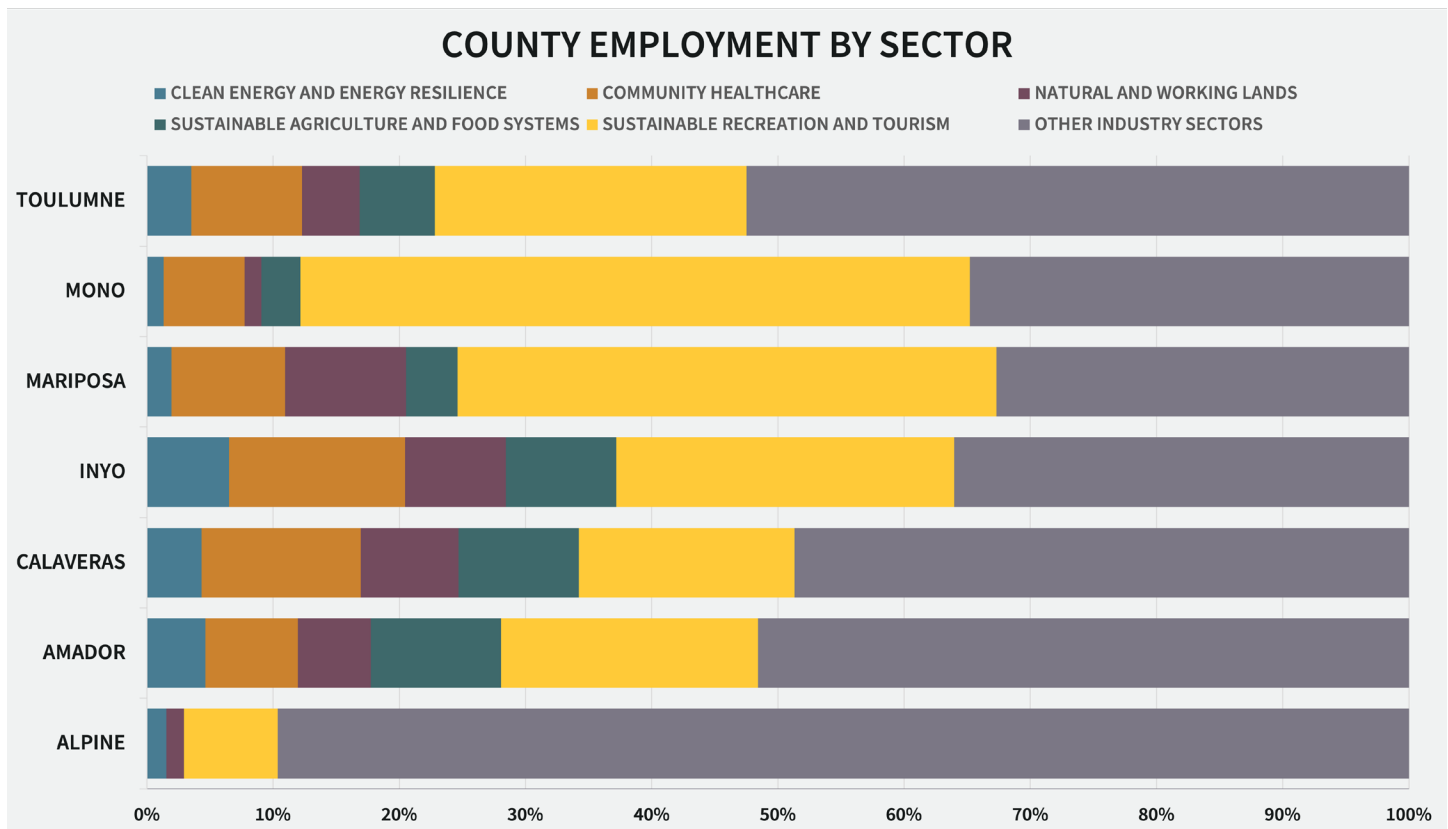
A location quotient (LQ) measures competitiveness by comparing the concentration of an industry within a specific area, such as the Sierra region, to that industry's concentration in a larger geography, such as the State. If an industry has an LQ greater than one for the region, it employs a more significant percentage of people than the State. For example, if an industry or sector has a location quotient of 1.2 in the Sierra region, it has a 20% higher employment concentration than the State average. A location quotient of greater than one also likely reflects that the industry or sector is selling goods or services beyond the region and requires a higher concentration of workforce relative to the State.

SECTOR PERCENTAGE OF REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- CLEAN ENERGY AND ENERGY RESILIENCE
- NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS
- SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
- COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE
- SUSTAINABLE RECREATION AND TOURISM
- OTHER INDUSTRY SECTORS



This graph shows the percentage of employment in each priority industry sector in the region and its associated location quotient compared to California.



This graph shows the percentage of employment in each priority industry sector by county in the SJF region.

TRADEOFFS OF LOCAL-SERVING VS. TRADED INDUSTRIES

Industries are classified as either local-serving, traded, or sometimes both. Local-serving industries, such as retail, education, health care, construction, and utilities, serve customers who primarily live and work in the region. In contrast, traded sectors, also called export or essential sectors, work with customers primarily from outside the area, such as forest products, manufacturing, tourism, and hospitality, such as hotels. Some industries can be local-serving and traded in regions with significant tourism activity, such as the Sierra. For example, restaurants serve visitors to the region and locals.

Traded sectors are essential for regional economies because they bring in new revenue and wealth from outside the region and offer a broader market of opportunities.

However, while the potential economic growth trajectory of traded sectors makes them an essential part of a region's economics, pursuing them without mitigating environmental and equity impacts can be problematic, especially in rural areas. For example, resource extraction industries such as mining, traditional logging practices, and many forms of agriculture have a long history of being pursued as traded sectors. However, some practices associated with those industries can irrevocably damage the natural landscapes that created economic interest in the region.

ECONOMIC REALITIES OF THE REGION

In the Sierra, traditional tradeable sectors face a critical barrier: the lack of interstate highways, major rail lines, international airports, or shipping ports. As a result, most of the area's high-quality jobs are not in the low-wage tourism sector but in non-tradeable public administration, healthcare, and construction industries. In addition, seasonality of jobs due to weather is an inconvenient truth that must be considered.

Almost half of the region's workers are employed in industries paying less than \$50,000 in average annual wages, which is incompatible with the region's high cost of living, where workers must earn between \$58,000 and \$167,000 to afford to live alone in the current and available rental market.

In the Sierra region, the main competitive advantages are centered around land and nature. Therefore, most traded or local-serving industries are based on and revolve around these natural ecosystems. To strike a balance between the two and create jobs and wealth in the region, this Plan includes strategies to develop industries such as technology, healthcare, manufacturing, and renewable energy while reinforcing the ubiquitous tourism sector.

Key Sectors with Key Opportunities

Based on feedback and initial analysis, the Collaborative identified five key industry sectors, i.e., economic segments, in the Sierra region with the most significant potential for quality job growth during the 2023 planning phase, including Sustainable Recreation and Tourism, Natural and Working Lands, Clean Energy and Energy Resilience, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, and Community Healthcare. The five selected industry sectors combined represent that roughly three out of every five employed individuals work within and are directly impacted by these sectors.

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION AND TOURISM

PAGES 70-80

The Sierra Jobs First region can boost revenue and job opportunities by promoting artistic, cultural, and sports events. This can also support communities and create skilled, quality jobs.

NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS

PAGES 81-90

Focusing on natural and working lands can increase the region's biodiversity and economic opportunities while reducing wildfire risks and improving ecosystems.

CLEAN ENERGY AND ENERGY RESILIENCE

PAGES 91-101

Enhancing energy resilience, adopting energy efficiency strategies, and transitioning to renewable energy can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lower energy costs, and create high-quality local jobs in the region.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

PAGES 102-111

Building a local and regional food supply through sustainable practices supports regenerative agriculture, efficient land use, and access to locally grown, sustainably raised food.

COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

PAGES 112-120

Improving population health through increased access to high-quality healthcare jobs and resources ensures quality healthcare for the region's diverse population and can strengthen the local economy.



A NOTE ON DATA

See employment methodology, page 131.

The next section of the SJF Strategic Plan includes an overview and set of community-developed strategies in the following five key industry sectors. It also includes initial data about the five industry sectors that will serve as the starting point for future additional analysis better to understand each sector's specific opportunities and challenges.

It's important to note that the summary tables represent industry sector totals using the three-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes as proxies for industry subsectors. Subsector placement into these industry categories was informed by methodologies used in other California regions and State economic summary reports. Because of data suppression challenges in small rural counties, it should be incumbent upon the state government to properly identify NAICS codes for industry clusters – which in the future should create a collective statewide effort to streamline further and refine regional economic profiles and summary information.

This Strategic Plan and these initial data are the starting points.

Sustainable Recreation & Tourism

Building a Sustainable Tourism Economy

SECTOR DEFINITION

The Sustainable Tourism Industry Sector includes natural and cultural attractions, arts, outdoor activities, events, and historic sites. Sustainable tourism is focused on current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts and addresses the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. Data and feedback indicate the region's robust recreation and tourism sector is a critical economic driver. Leveraging the region's natural assets, arts, historic sites, and community events has significant potential for developing quality jobs.

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

Sustainable recreation and tourism dominate the regional economy and represent nearly 25% of all employment.

This industry sector is broad in scope and includes everything from accommodations and lodging to outdoor recreation, arts and cultural attractions, food service, and some retail operations.

The location quotient is 1.64, indicating that 64% more tourism jobs exist in the region than the employment average in California for this sector. The highest number of jobs exist in food service and accommodations for this sector, as listed on the next page. Jobs in these two industries tend to be low-wage jobs. This industry sector represents one of the most significant areas for wage improvement to achieve region-wide income goals, as many jobs in this sector today pay under \$50,000 annually.

Strategies in this sector will need to work to find creative ways to build opportunities for high-quality job growth in these specific industry areas.

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

- Sierra employees, especially those in the food service and accommodations, can access high-quality jobs in the recreation and tourism sector.
- Local, state, tribal, federal, and private landowners work together to unlock regional opportunities.
- Significant regional public and private investments support new opportunities and ongoing maintenance needs in the arts, history, and recreational opportunities.
- A climate-resilient, environmentally responsible recreation and tourism economy exists in the region.

BY THE NUMBERS

SECTOR LOCATION QUOTIENT

1.64

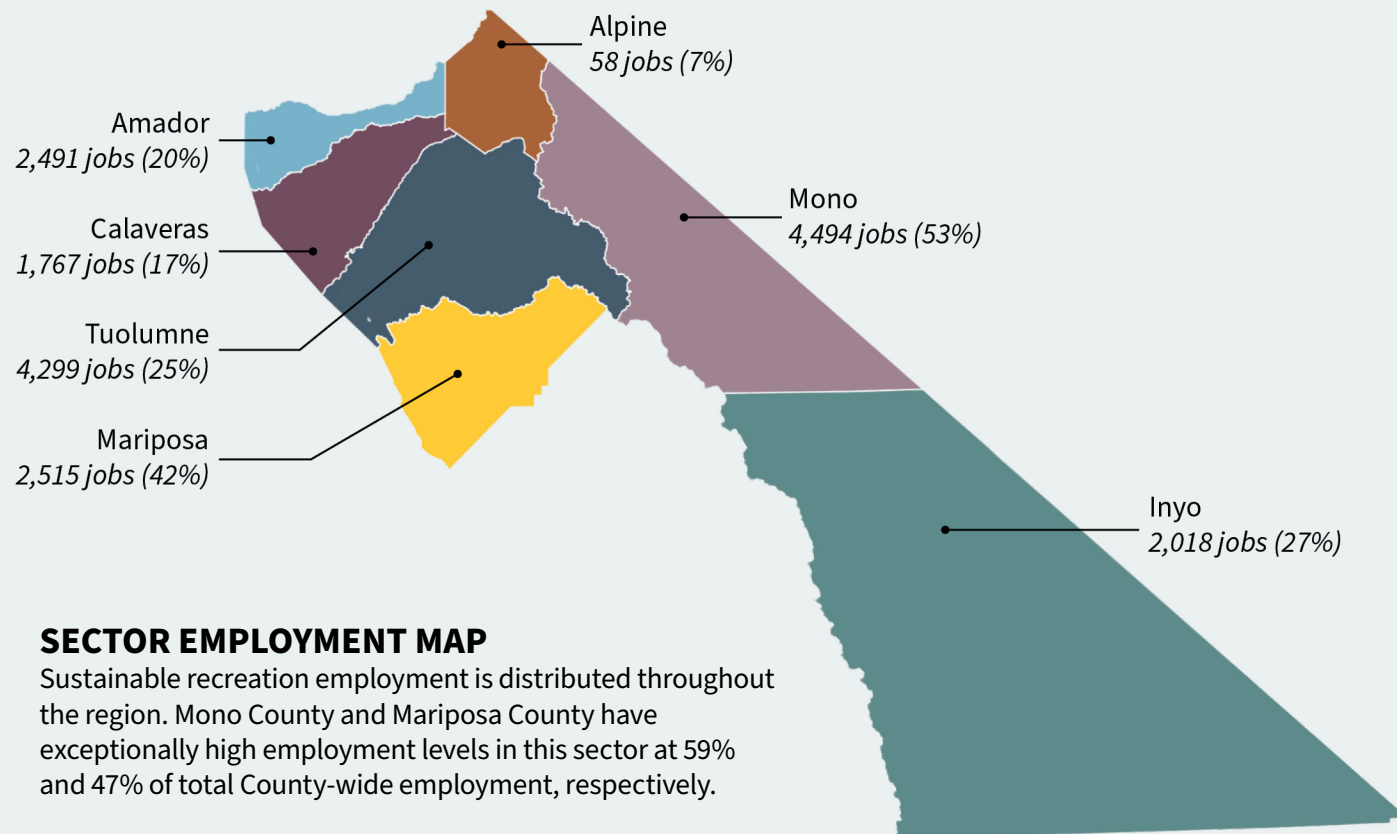
Sustainable recreation represents an area of economic specialization for the region, with an occupation rate 64% higher than statewide averages across this economic sector. With its high employment numbers, this is an important regional investment area.

TOTAL SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN REGION 2023

17,642 jobs

28.1% of region employment

Regionally, about three of every 10 jobs fall within the sustainable recreation sector, indicating that these economies are heavily tied to the continuation and advancement of the local workforce.



SECTOR INDUSTRY LOCATION QUOTIENT AND EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

▼ The graph below shows regional employment numbers and location quotients for the five industries with the most employment. The LQ compares the concentration of an industry within a specific area, such as the Sierra, to the concentration of that industry in a larger geography, such as the State. These numbers help identify the specifics of the regional economy and provide essential data for strategy development and long-term investment. Food services and accommodations reflect the majority of current employment across this sector regionally.

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT AND LOCATION QUOTIENT SUSTAINABLE RECREATION AND TOURISM



SECTOR RATIONALE

VALUE CHAIN AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Investing in sustainable recreation and tourism can attract tourists, support new and existing business owners, infuse the local economy with revenue, and provide a climate-resilient path toward regional prosperity. Essential investments include sustainable lodging and transportation, renewable energy systems, waste management facilities, restrooms, safety infrastructure, and local conservation projects.

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Through technology and innovation, the private and public sectors can work separately or collaborate to pursue economic development projects that improve the region's recreation activities and attractions. Some examples of innovations that could improve the sector and increase revenues include expanding sustainable transportation options or creating ways to adapt outdoor activities based on conditions such as snow or smoke conditions.

OCCUPATIONS AND WAGES

Specific occupations often do not fall into any specific industry sector, necessitating analysis around a sampling of occupations that primarily fall into this industry sector. This process highlighted the following key findings:

- Occupations in the Sustainable Recreation and Tourism sector show the most significant projected growth across the five sectors identified in this report, with a 26% projected increase across the region by 2030.
- While some higher-paying and higher-quality jobs exist in this employment sector, most occupations show median

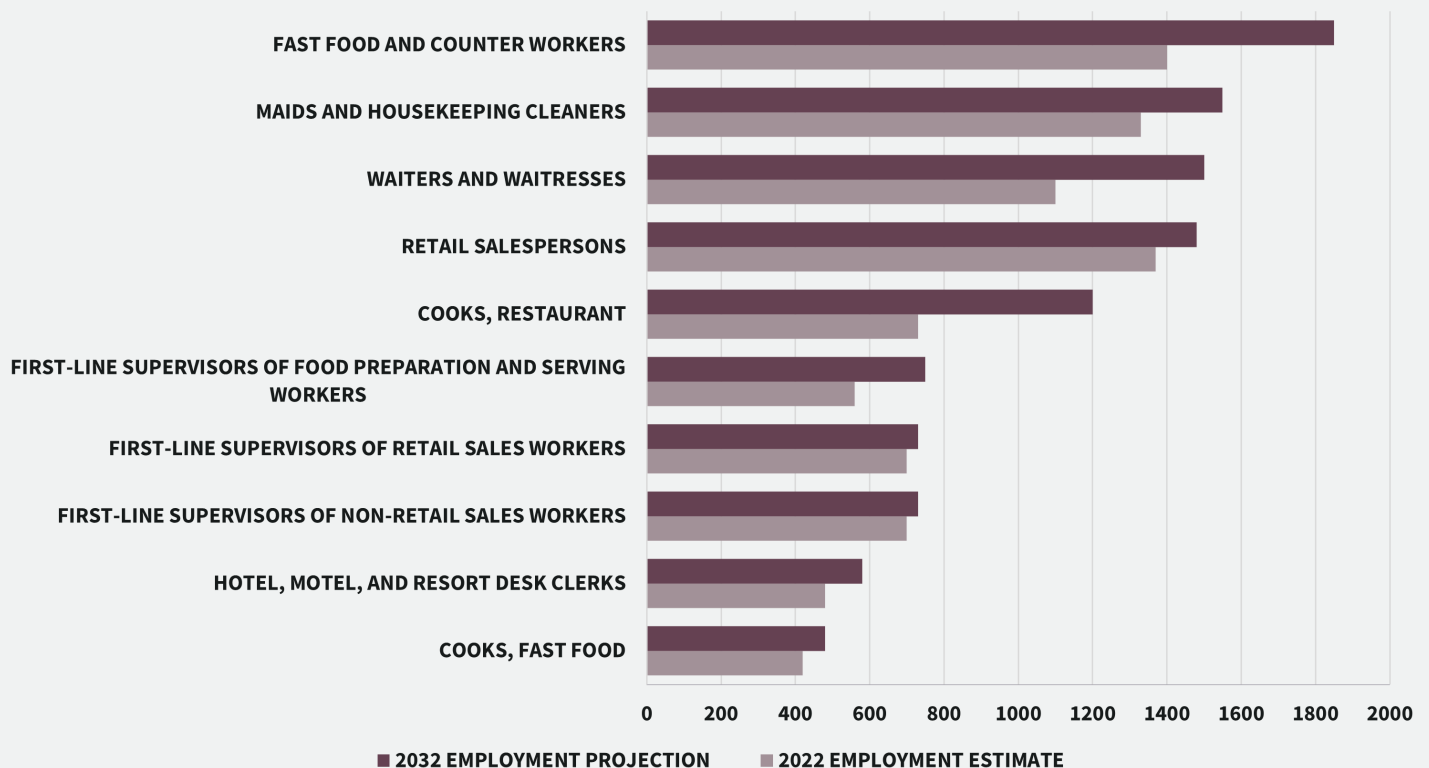
annual wages of under \$40,000, indicating a lack of quality jobs throughout this dominant sector.

➤ Occupation in this sector shows relatively little need for formal education and long-term work experience as a prerequisite to employment, indicating that jobs are more accessible in this industry sector.

➤ Short-term on-the-job training is expected in many occupations in this sector.

OCCUPATION ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS

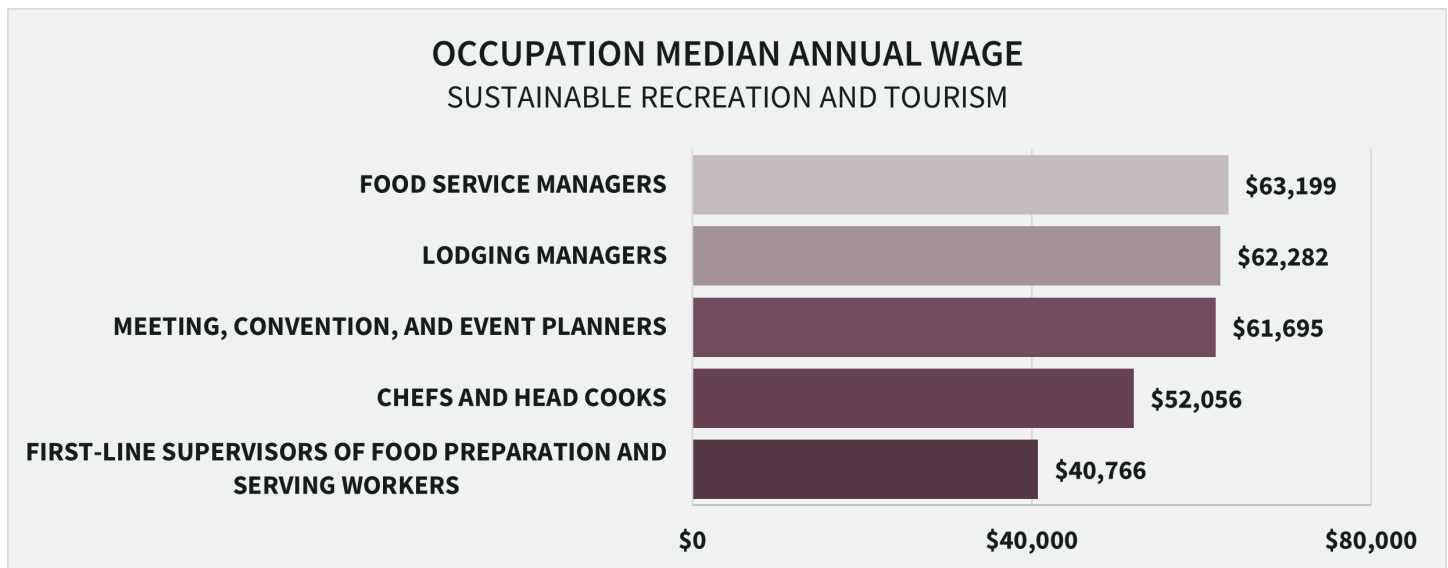
SUSTAINABLE RECREATION AND TOURISM



▲ The graph above shows the occupations projected to have the most employment by 2032 in the sector.

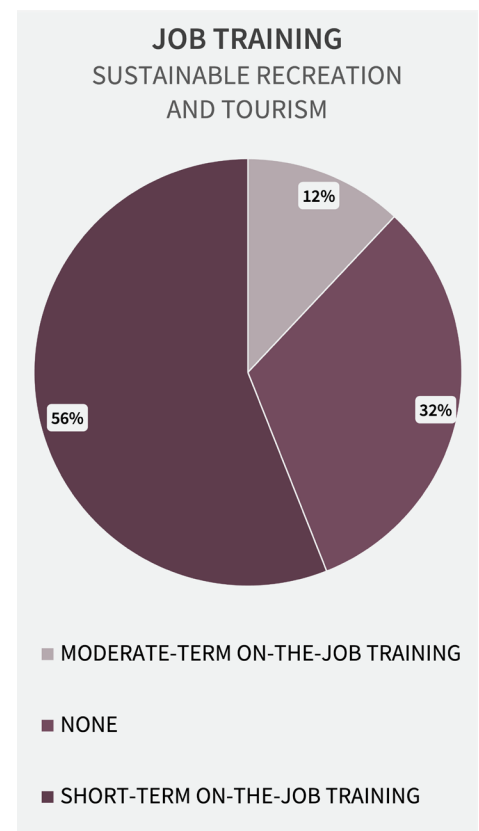
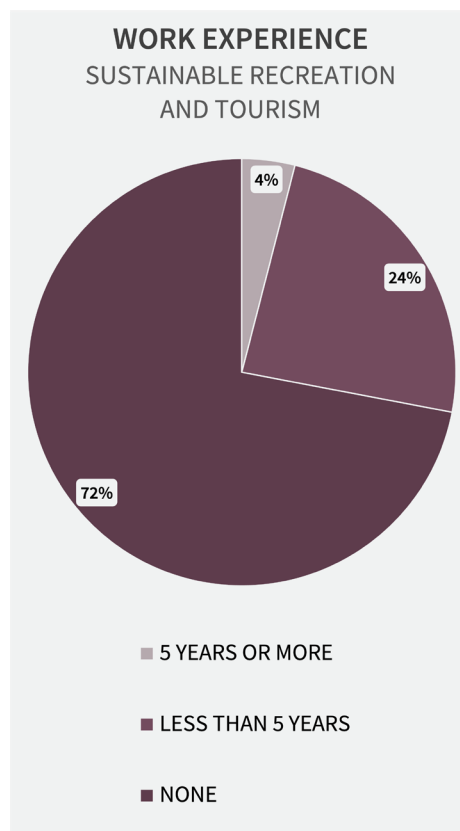
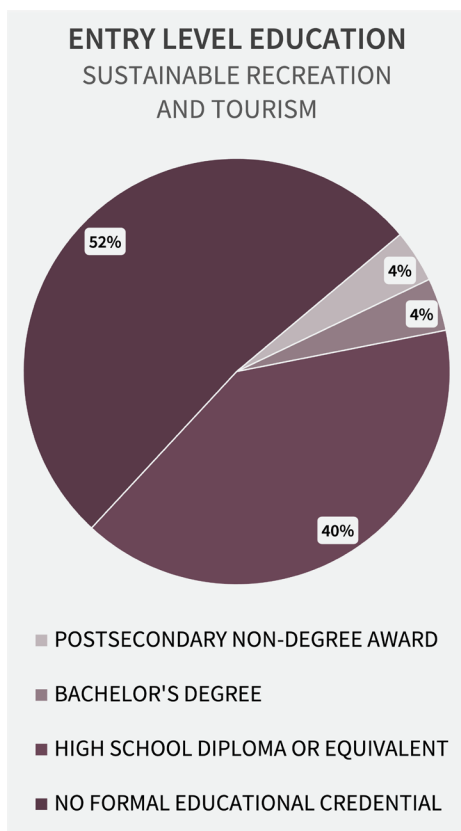
MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE

▼ The graph below shows the top-earning occupations in the sustainable recreation and tourism sector based on median annual wage.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

▼ The three graphs below show what percentage of occupations connected to the sustainable recreation and tourism industry sector require specific levels of professional development or education.



REGIONAL ASSETS

The following resources will be leveraged to strengthen the development of the target sector. This is a partial list of the region's extensive recreation and tourism assets.

➤ **Natural Resources:** The national and State parks, forests, and recreation sites offer diverse ecosystems and scenic beauty, attracting millions of visitors annually. The varied climates support year-round tourism activities such as skiing, hiking, rock climbing, and more.

➤ **National Parks, Monuments, and Scenic Areas:** Yosemite, Death Valley, Devils Postpile, Manzanar, and Alabama Hills.

➤ **U.S. National Forests:** Inyo, Stanislaus, Sierra, Humboldt-Toiyabe, Eldorado, and Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

➤ **State Historic Parks:** Bodie, Columbia, Indian Grinding Rock, Calaveras Big Trees, Railtown 1897, California State Mining and Mineral Museum, Mono Lake Tufa, and Grover Hot Springs.

➤ **Trails:** Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, John Muir Trail, and countless others.

➤ **Attractions:** Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, Bishop rock-climbing destinations, Buttermilk Bouldering Area, hot springs, Mt. Whitney

➤ **Ski Areas:** Mammoth Mountain, June Mountain, Kirkwood Ski Area and Bear Valley.

➤ **Expertise:** Local experts specialize in hospitality, tourism management, outdoor recreation, and environmental conservation. Artisans and cultural practitioners contribute to artistic and cultural events.

➤ **Community Relationships/Connections:** The SJF region is not just a collection of individuals but a community with strong ties and established relationships among local businesses, tourism boards, and event organizers.

➤ **Infrastructure:** Developed infrastructure supports tourism and recreation, including transportation networks, lodging facilities, and recreational amenities.

➤ **Artistic and Cultural Events:** Opportunities for investment and expansion to enhance revenue and job creation within the region.

➤ **Annual Events (including but not limited to):** Alpine Club Craggin' Classic, Blake Jones Trout Derby, Calaveras County Fair, Death Ride, Jumping Frog Jubilee, Mammoth Bluesapalooza, Mammoth Gran Fondo, Millpond Music Festival, Mule Days, Tri-County Fair.



► Images to left from top to right. 1) Four hikers at Dantes View in Death Valley. Photo by John D Hallett 2) Climber ascends a rope early morning at Yosemite National Park in with Half Dome in the background. Photo by H. Kajitani

OPPORTUNITIES

The following is a start to a list of opportunities that can be built upon to increase quality jobs in the sustainable recreation and tourism sector.

- › **Attraction Promotion:** Successful promotions demonstrate the potential of focusing on wine, outdoor activities, and historical and artistic attractions.
- › **Collaborative Support:** Regional private/public partnerships provide sustainable support.
- › **Economic Impact:** The tourism and recreation industries are the largest private-sector employers and generate significant revenue.
- › **Event Expansion:** Well-established events and growing artistic, cultural, and sports-related activities can attract visitors and attention.

- › **Guided Projects:** Sustainable recreation projects guided by principles of ecosystem stewardship offer economic benefits.
- › **Historic Charm:** Historic downtowns and communities can be standalone tourist destinations.
- › **Marketing Effectiveness:** Tourism Marketing Districts can directly fund attraction efforts.
- › **Natural Beauty:** Surrounding national parks, national forests, and public lands offer abundant natural scenic beauty and access to open space.
- › **Sustainability Push:** Initiatives and plans focus on increasing access to outdoor activities and promoting economic development.
- › **Varied Visitors:** Millions of annual visitors to national and State parks, forests, ski resorts, and historic small towns.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

The below challenges have impacted quality job development in this sector.

- › **Climate Risks:** Extreme weather events and varying snow levels impact access and infrastructure, limiting visitation.
- › **Destination Marketing Capacity:** Limited funding for tourism marketing leads to inconsistent development of plans and strategies.
- › **Disconnection with the Arts:** Limited programs result in a need for more artists and prioritization of public art.
- › **Economic Diversification:** Over-reliance on outdoor recreation creates economic vulnerability, especially during seasonal fluctuations.
- › **Housing:** The growth of second homeowners and remote workers in a housing-constrained environment impacts the tourism workforce.

- › **Infrastructure and Environmental Impacts:** Unmanaged tourism leads to environmental degradation and damage to recreation facilities.
- › **Land Management Capacity:** Budget and capacity constraints, along with institutional resistance, limit the ability of federal agencies and public land managers to promote recreational initiatives.
- › **Land Tenure:** Most recreation destinations and activities are on public lands that local communities cannot control.
- › **Limited Accessibility:** Many trails and hiking opportunities are inaccessible to people of all abilities.
- › **Stagnant jobs:** Tourism and recreation industry jobs are primarily service-related, low-wage, or seasonal.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

The region must invest in sustainable infrastructure, develop tailored workforce training programs, and promote inclusive community engagement in the recreation and tourism sectors to build a resilient, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable recreation and tourism economy.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Partnering with vocational programs, educational institutions, and businesses ensures that the region's training programs align with the skills needed for available jobs in tourism and recreation.

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Creative approaches to bridging seasons, off-season training, and inclusive recruitment to creating new year-round, high-quality jobs can improve current employment opportunities, and support the region's workforce.

EQUITY

Year-round employment opportunities, workforce development and targeted outreach can improve equitable access to quality jobs, engage disinvested communities, and empower people to create stable livelihoods.

CLIMATE

Promoting existing responsible and sustainable tourism practices can limit economic development's impact on the natural environment and increase climate resilience.

Public Lands Partnership Agreements

Strategy 1: Enhance access to sustainable recreation and tourism on public lands to expand economic opportunities by creating partnership agreements between local authorities and federal, state, and utility land managers.

ACTION STEP 1

Develop a regional governance structure consistent with partnership agreements to regularly convene land managers and regional partners to identify recreation and tourism needs and opportunities and serve as a forum for information sharing.

- a. Identify potential members and recruit for founding collaborative.
- b. Set meetings, draft charter, goals, and priorities.

ACTION STEP 2

Through a regional collaborative governance structure consistent with partnership agreements, identify efficient pathways to create plans and establish policies to reflect regional priorities.

- a. Create regional sustainable recreation plans by identifying assets, gaps, partners, and implementation strategies with land managers.
- b. Prioritize tribal engagement.
- c. Attract and develop partnerships with recreation/entertainment/resort organizations, including the California Outdoor Recreation Partnership.
- d. Work with the film industry and local film commissioners/visitor bureaus.

ACTION STEP 3

Identify efficient pathways to implement regional plans and priorities through a regional collaborative governance structure consistent with partnership agreements.

- a. Establish agreements between land managers and the full suite of regional capacities in anticipation of implementation efforts.
- b. Identify implementation opportunities for recreation infrastructure and service gaps that will increase capacity through business expansion and job training in sustainable recreation, ecosystem services, and agritourism. This includes project planning and permitting and implementation of recreation infrastructure, including trails, restrooms, trash collection, campsites, permittees, outfitters, guides, etc.

ACTION STEP 4

Identify and leverage innovative financing structures to diversify revenue streams for project implementation consistent with partnership agreements to create local jobs in sustainable recreation.

- a. Monitor federal, tribal, state, and philanthropic funding resources for opportunities consistent with the partnership agreements to access capital and maintenance resources for the region's collaborative, sustainable outdoor recreation economy.
- b. Consider private investment in public lands where Transit Occupancy Tax is applicable—RV Parks, campgrounds, boating infrastructure, rentals, etc.
- c. Explore micro-loan programs for entrepreneurs and local businesses for projects that impact the local economy.

See Small Business and Entrepreneurship foundational element for more information.

Values-Based Tourism Promotion

Strategy 2: Promote sustainable tourism for the region's recreation economy based on the agreed-upon values of partners.

ACTION STEP 1

Develop visitor management plans, including regional branding and marketing. Work with regional destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and regional collaborative governance partners to develop visitor management, branding, and marketing strategies.

- a.** Perform regional gap analysis on needs to advance strategy and identify strengths to leverage and weaknesses to address.
- b.** Leverage TakeCareSierra.org's efforts for communications and education.
- c.** Work with regional DMOs and collaborative governance partners to develop and promote regional tourism, including establishing regional branding, tourism itineraries, and destination and event promotion.

ACTION STEP 2

Coordinate tourism with federal, tribal, state, and utility land managers and engage them in new partnerships that result in appropriate increases in visitations to attractions on their landscapes.

- a.** Leverage the region's current visibility as the state's premier mountain playground to expand experiential and cultural tourism opportunities consistent with current and future land manager policies.
- b.** Working with land managers, develop a Winter Recreation Needs Assessment for the entire region that supports growth, conflict resolution, and visitor returns for resort skiing, backcountry skiing, snowmobiling, and snow play.

ACTION STEP 3

- a.** Build regional lifestyle and business brand identity.
- b.** Identify opportunities to expand, attract, and retain recreation and tourism-supporting businesses that align with regional lifestyle/business branding, including gear and clothing manufacturers, outdoor guides, cultural tourism, agricultural companies, artists, resort operations, gear shops, and high-altitude training centers, in coordination with regional collaborative governance as needed.

Diversify Regional Recreation Economy

Strategy 3: Diversify and leverage the region's recreation economy with tourism events, amenities, and attractions focused on the unique histories, arts, and cultures of the region's communities and establish new business opportunities in related industries.

ACTION STEP 1

Invest in tourism assets and amenities beyond outdoor recreation that increase the region's overall attractiveness and identity as a destination, especially small businesses, arts/culture institutions and events, and local food systems and agritourism, in coordination with regional collaborative governance as needed.

- a.** Assess capital investment plans for local governments, recreation districts, and the private sector and prioritize investment projects.
- b.** Determine the potential for regional, collaborative investments to strengthen funding applications and determine if a regional master plan is necessary.
- c.** Conduct feasibility studies on prioritized projects, identify potential funding sources, and plan for implementation.
- d.** Ensure long-term sustainable funding is considered for the ongoing maintenance of assets, support for management, and preparation of communities for greater visitation.

ACTION STEP 2

Discourage over-tourism by marketing principles and values of sustainable recreation, such as visitation to underused areas.

- a.** Collaborate with the Sierra Nevada Alliance to leverage the TakeCareSierra.org platform for education, outreach, and impact.

ACTION STEP 3

Reinforce regional connection through visitor infrastructure. Develop regionally consistent locally branded wayfinding programs to direct visitors to recreation and tourism amenities in coordination with regional collaborative governance as needed.

- a.** Inventory wayfinding needs and prioritize installation locations.
- b.** Identify a designer to work on branding.
- c.** Source funding to support the project.

ACTION STEP 4

Develop infrastructure to support regional events. Invest in traditional recreation infrastructure that supports attraction for regional sporting events and tournaments in coordination with regional collaborative governance as needed. Leverage these events to create year-round, high-quality employment for the tourist industry workers, many of whom have seasonal employment without benefits.

- a.** Assess capital investment plans related to traditional recreation infrastructure (local governments, tribal governments, recreation districts, and private sector) and prioritize investment projects.
- b.** Conduct economic impact analysis and feasibility studies on prioritized projects, identify potential funding sources, and plan for implementation.

Recreation and Tourism Resiliency

Strategy 4: Build resiliency in the recreation and tourism industries to withstand climate impacts and catastrophic events.

ACTION STEP 1

Create an implementation plan to mitigate the impacts of climate change on recreation and tourism industries by leveraging SRTI's A Changing Climate Vulnerability in California's Eastern Sierra and SBC's Sierra Nevada Vulnerability Assessment to inform policy, governance, and investment priorities. Determine available data and existing plans, update as necessary

- a. Create an implementation plan for climate mitigation based on existing plans.
- b. Build capacity for implementation and environmental monitoring of climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives.
- c. Identify agency needs and budget with respect to environmental monitoring of climate adaptation initiatives.
- d. Perform workforce assessment to address agency needs.
- e. Identify lead contractors to pursue work and collaborate on work proposals.
- f. Support on-the-ground fire hardening for local communities by investing in and expanding local resource conservation districts, fire-safe councils, and fire departments.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1				2			3				4
ACTION STEP	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	1
Organization Name												
Agriculture and Food Organizations								PC				
Alpine Trails Association	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Arts and Culture Community-Based Organizations								PC				
Bureau of Land Management	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
California Farm Bureau								PC				
Chambers of Commerce					PC		PC	PC				
Destination Marketing/management Organizations	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC			PC		PC	PC	
Eastern Sierra Council of Governments	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
LADWP	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Local Governments	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Main Street Programs								PC				
Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Markleeville Disc Golf Association	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
National Parks Service	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Other Public and Utility Land Managers	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC				PC		
Public Agencies		PC			PC							
Resorts							PC					
SBC												PC
Sierra Nevada Alliance	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC				PC			
Small Businesses							PC	PC				
State Government						PC				PC	PC	PC
Tribal Organizations	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
U.S. Forest Service	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Visit California				PC	PC							
Winter Wildlands	PC	PC	PC	PC		L		PC	PC	PC		PC
Yosemite Gateway Partnership	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC

Legend

- L** Lead
- PC** Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Natural & Working Lands

Boosting Biodiversity and Workforce

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

Natural and working lands are a critical industry sector in the region. The sector has a location quotient of 2.27, indicating it has more than twice the expected employment compared to statewide numbers. Forestry, mining, and environmental quality programs have higher location quotients, indicating these positions have higher representation ratios than the rest of the State. However, to align with State initiatives and work toward a more sustainable economy, industries like forestry, agriculture, waste management, and environmental quality programs must attract new education and training opportunities. Mining represents less than 1% of jobs in the region and shows a projected 10-year decline.



A National Parks Service ranger observes a prescribed burn in Yosemite National Park.

SECTOR DEFINITION

The Natural and Working Lands sector includes forest management practices like ecological restoration, forest thinning, prescribed fire, cultural burning, grazing, non-industrial timber harvest, watershed management, and reforestation. It also involves developing supply chains, such as environmental planning, licensed timber operators, logistics, and wood utilization facilities. Prioritizing natural and working lands reduces wildfire risk and improves water and air quality while emphasizing tribal engagement and traditional ecological knowledge.

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

- › Natural ecosystems are restored and protected.
- › Removing excess biomass from the region's forests and other natural and working lands restores forest and watershed ecological function and improves air, soil, and water quality.
- › Resilient landscapes improve climate resilience, support a productive economy, and create high-quality jobs in the region and surrounding regions.
- › There is broad acceptance of the economic and social value of restoring ecological ecosystems and that appropriate management and use of the region's natural resources have environmental benefits while growing jobs and securing investment into natural and working lands have both ecological and economic benefits.

BY THE NUMBERS

SECTOR LOCATION QUOTIENT

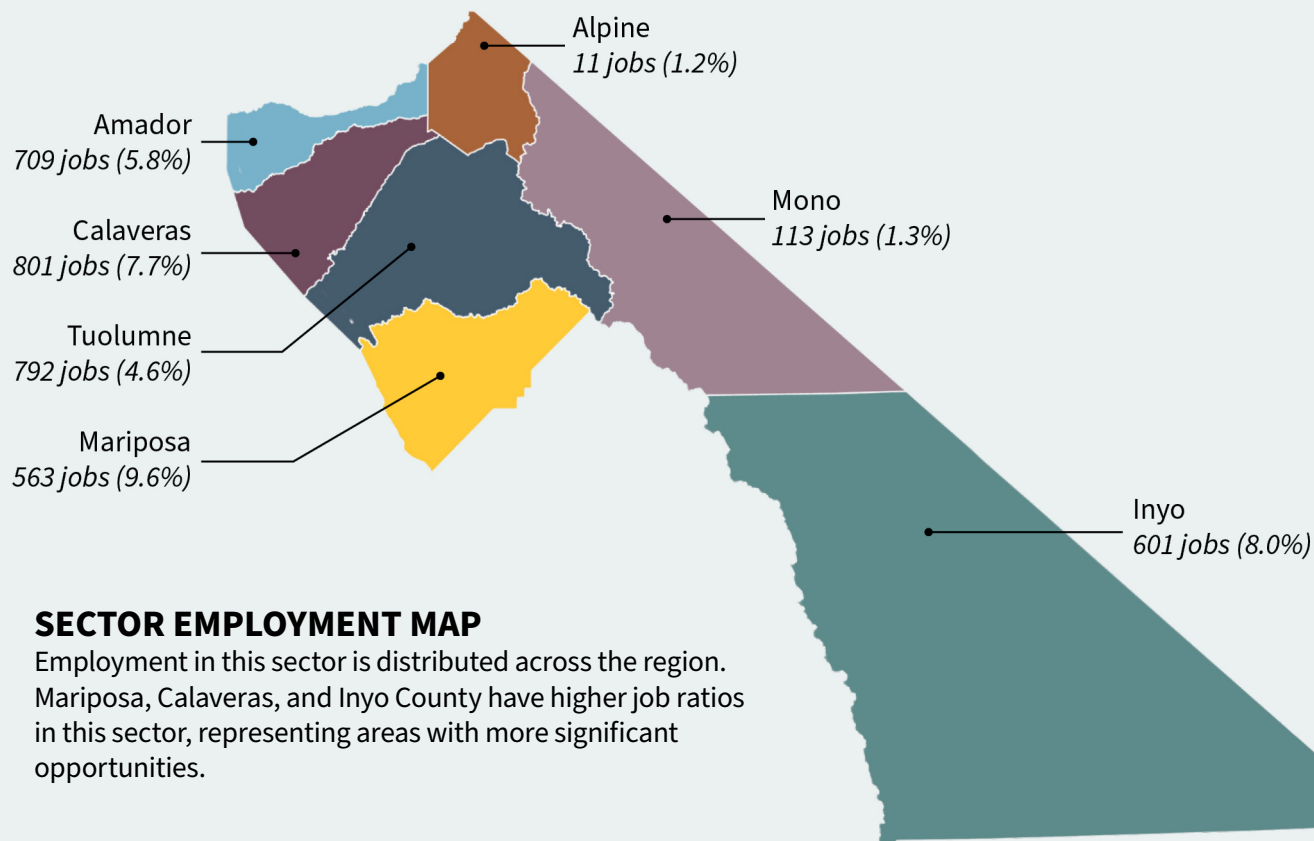
2.27

An LQ of 2.27 indicates that this sector is an area of specialization for the region, with employment in this sector being over twice as represented in the region compared to statewide numbers.

TOTAL SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN REGION 2023

3,590 jobs representing 6% of all regional employment

Natural and Working Lands represent a critical industry sector, representing 5.7% of the total jobs region-wide. Employment in this sector also represents a need to transition employment from potentially environmentally impactful practices such as mining to more sustainable employment opportunities in renewable parts of this sector.



SECTOR EMPLOYMENT MAP

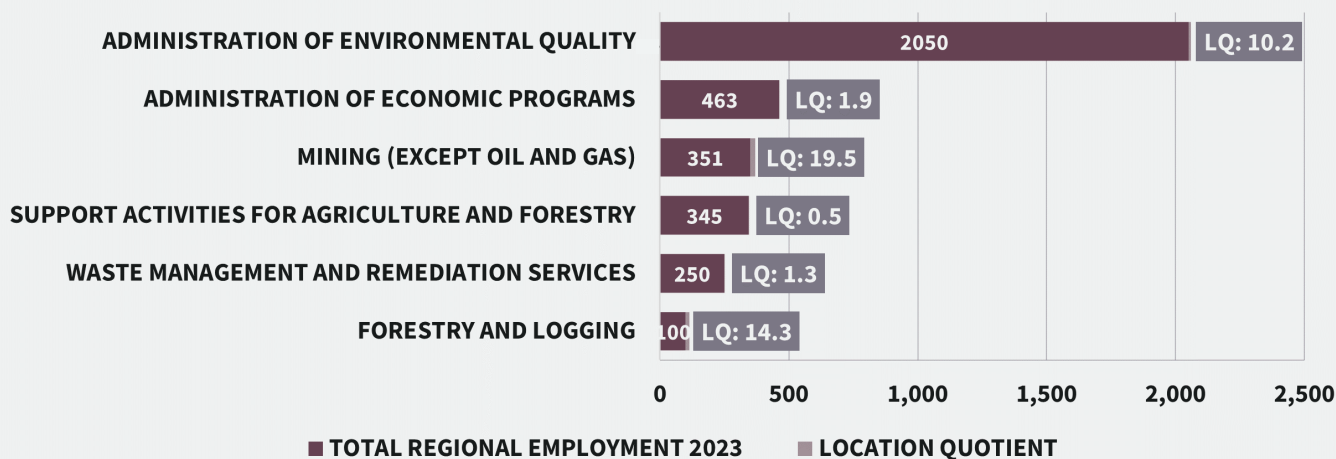
Employment in this sector is distributed across the region. Mariposa, Calaveras, and Inyo County have higher job ratios in this sector, representing areas with more significant opportunities.

SECTOR INDUSTRY LOCATION QUOTIENT AND EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

▼ This graph shows regional employment numbers and location quotients for six industries in the natural and working lands sector, sorted by highest total employment. The LQ compares the concentration of an industry within a specific area, such as the Sierra, to the concentration of that industry in a larger geography, such as the State. These numbers help identify the specifics of the regional economy and provide essential data for strategy development and long-term investment. The administration of environmental quality programs represents over half of the jobs in this sector, which aligns with regional sustainability goals.

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT AND LOCATION QUOTIENT

NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS



SECTOR RATIONALE

VALUE CHAIN AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Investments in value chain infrastructure will strengthen the natural and working lands sector by establishing a baseline of conditions to grow jobs in this sector. Specific infrastructure investments required to develop this sector include improving transportation networks, improving supply chain integration, establishing financial mechanisms, and creating new markets that drive innovation.

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Successes in the natural working lands sector will be signaled by the growth of technologies (such as GIS and drone mapping), new small businesses and entrepreneurs providing innovative solutions in the forestry space, projects funding at least in part by state and federal natural and working lands grants, and successful collaborations and resource sharing between government agencies, private companies, and nonprofits.

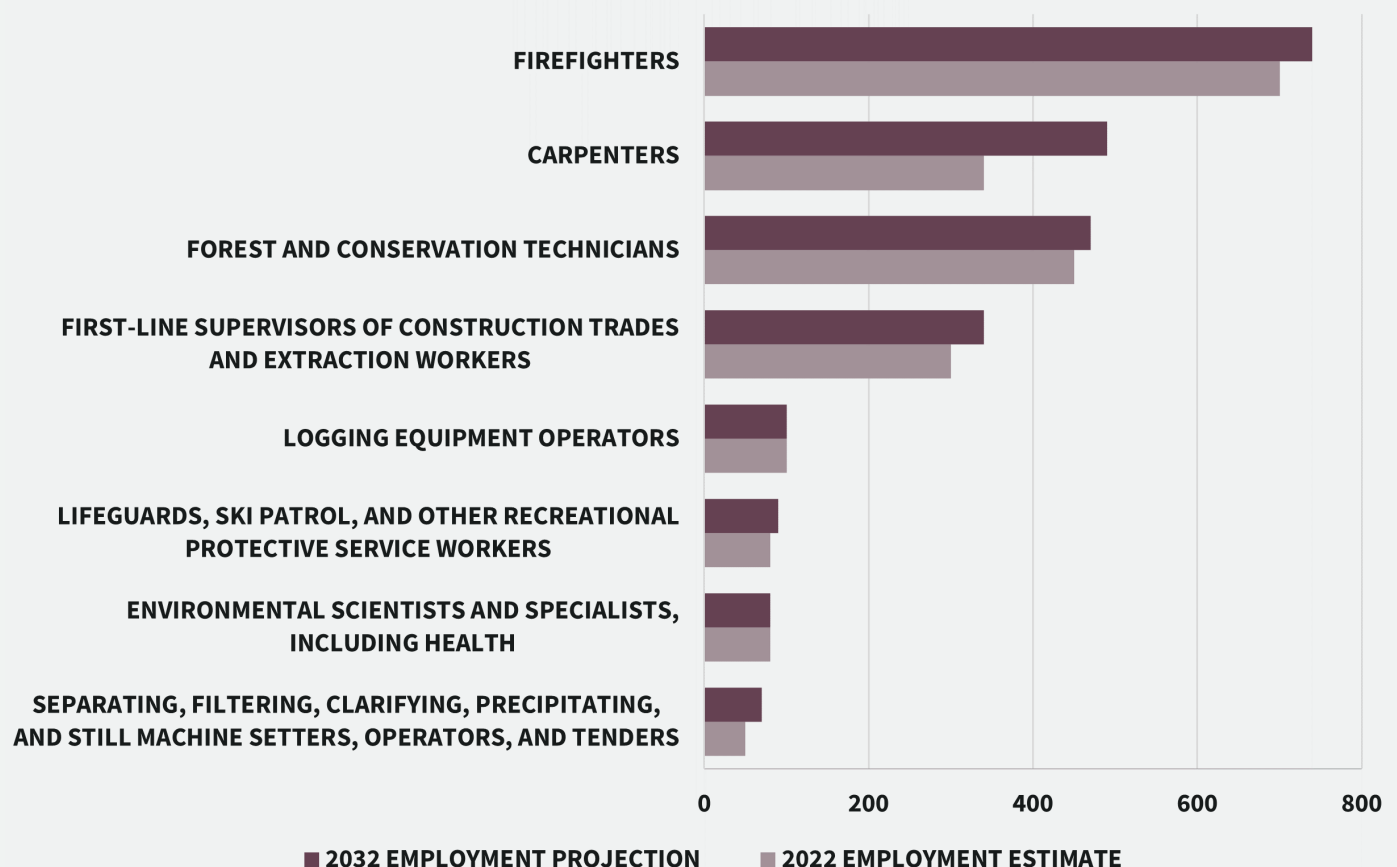
OCCUPATIONS AND WAGES

Specific occupations often do not fall into any specific industry sector, necessitating analysis around a sampling of occupations that primarily fall into this industry sector. This process highlighted the following key findings:

- Jobs across these occupations are expected to grow approximately 10% between 2020 and 2030.
- Median annual wages in this sector generally fall within the mid-income band, somewhere between \$32,000 to \$79,000.
- Natural and working lands management positions are likely not captured in this data and represent higher potential wage opportunities within the sector.
- Environmental and conservation sciences offer some of the highest median annual wages in the sector.
- Entry-level education requirements in this sector are likely to be lower, with many positions only requiring high school equivalents or associate-level degrees.
- Many positions will provide short and long-term on-the-job training.

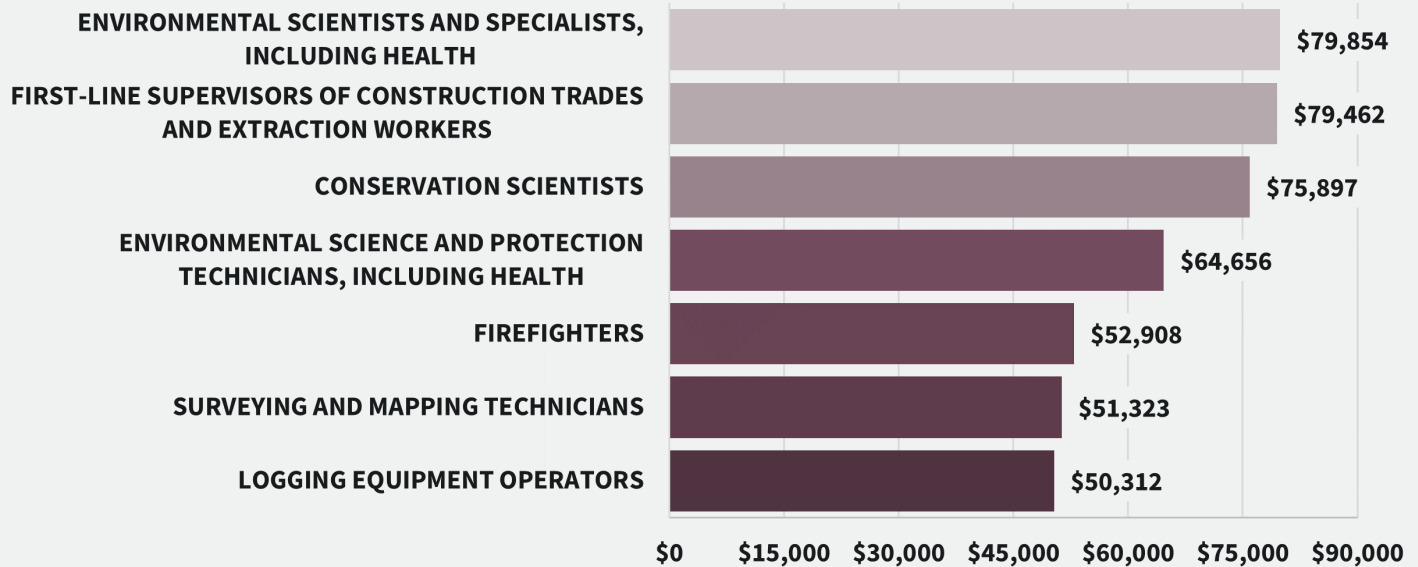
OCCUPATION ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS

NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS



▲ The graph above shows the occupations projected to have the most employment by 2032 in the sector.

OCCUPATION MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS

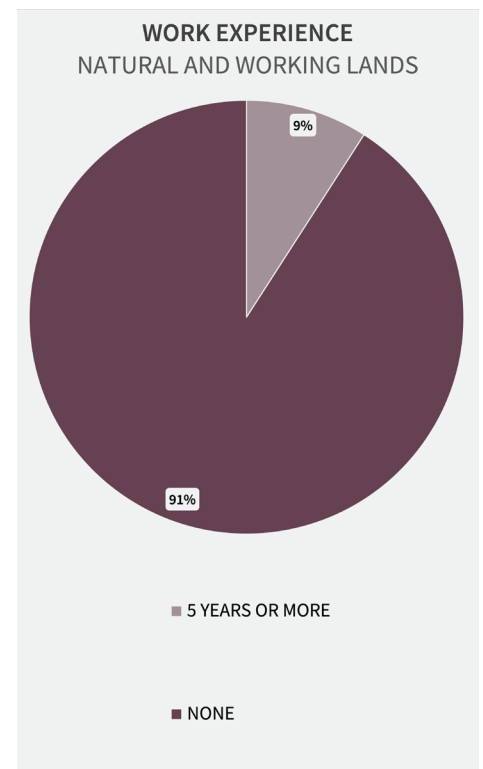
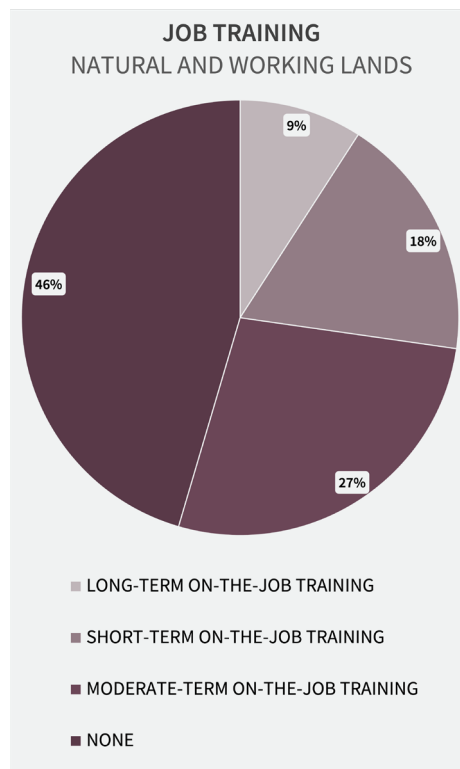
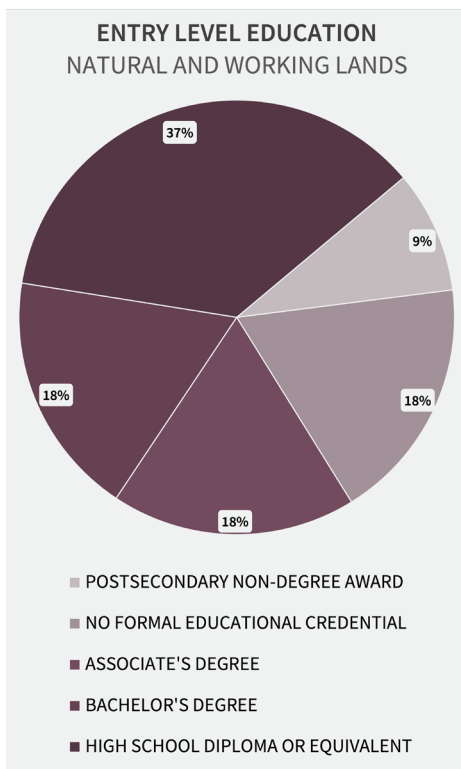


MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE

▲ The graph above shows the top-earning occupations in the sector based on median annual wage.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

▼ The three circle graphs below show the percentage of occupations connected to the sector that require common professional development and education.





Watershed management in places like Owens Valley, shown above, is important to maintaining natural and working lands.

REGIONAL ASSETS

The region possesses numerous assets that support the development of the natural and working lands sector.

- **Vast Natural Resources:** Over 19,000 square miles of federally managed lands provide significant sustainable resource management, conservation, and recreation opportunities.
- **Educational Institutions:** Colleges like Cerro Coso and Columbia College offer specialized programs in forestry, conservation, and environmental planning, fostering a skilled local workforce.
- **Tribal Expertise:** Leveraging the traditional ecological knowledge and stewardship practices of regional tribes enhances conservation efforts and promotes inclusive growth.
- **Existing Organizations:** Entities like the Whitebark Institute and Resource Conservation Districts provide

critical support for environmental planning, permitting, and implementing resilience projects.

- **State and Federal Initiatives:** Programs like the California Million Acre Strategy and State climate resilience goals align with regional efforts to enhance forest health, reduce wildfire risks, and promote sustainable development.
- **Collaborative Networks:** Partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as industry stakeholders, facilitate coordinated action and resource sharing to achieve common goals.
- The region's natural beauty and abundant resources support thriving tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy sectors. Through sustainable management and restoration practices, the natural and working lands sector contributes to preserving these resources, thereby driving economic growth and sustainability.

OPPORTUNITIES

The following is a start to a list of opportunities that can be built upon to increase quality jobs in the sustainable recreation and tourism sector.

- **Forest Health and Wildfire Resiliency:** Implementing forest thinning, prescribed fires, and watershed restoration improves ecosystem health, reduces wildfire risks, and supports the forest resiliency.
- **Carbon Sequestration and Climate Mitigation:** Enhancing carbon storage through reforestation and sustainable land management aligns with State climate goals, creating new carbon credits and climate resilience bonds markets.
- **Job Creation and Workforce Development:** Developing training programs and partnerships with educational institutions fosters a skilled workforce in the forestry, conservation, and renewable energy sectors. These programs focus on local talent, emphasizing traditional ecological

knowledge and modern conservation practices. They are also designed to be inclusive, ensuring all community members have equal access to high-quality jobs and career pathways.

- **Renewable Energy and Biomass Utilization:** Investing in biomass facilities and renewable energy projects supports clean energy goals, creates jobs, and promotes sustainable resource use.
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Coordinating with clean energy, sustainable agriculture, recreation, and tourism sectors to maximize resource efficiency, enhance climate resilience, and drive economic growth through innovative projects and partnerships, such as CA Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience.
- **Community Engagement and Equity:** Involving local communities, particularly disinvested and tribal groups, in land stewardship ensures equitable access to economic opportunities and promotes inclusive growth.



CHALLENGES/RISKS

The below challenges have impacted quality job development in this sector.

› **Climate Change and Extreme Weather:** Increasing temperatures, declining snowpack, and extreme weather events threaten ecosystem health and community stability.

› **Wildfire Risks:** Frequent and intense wildfires pose significant risks to lives, property, and the environment. To address this, robust mitigation strategies, such as controlled burns and firebreaks, and comprehensive emergency response plans, including early warning systems and evacuation procedures, are in place to ensure the safety and stability of the community.

› **Funding and Administrative Capacity:** Limited grant funding and administrative capacity constrain local organizations' ability to implement large-scale projects and compete for resources.

› **Market Constraints:** Fluctuating market demand for forest products, high extraction, transportation and construction costs, and global competition hinder the viability of the timber and biomass industries.

› **Workforce Gaps:** A shortage of skilled workers and training programs limits the region's capacity to meet industry needs and achieve forest health goals.

› **Land Management and Coordination:** The predominance of federal land ownership complicates local land management efforts and requires effective collaboration with federal agencies to align priorities and resources.

› **Equity and Inclusion:** Ensuring equitable participation of disinvested communities and integrating traditional ecological knowledge into land management practices are critical for long-term success.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

The region must implement sustainable management and restoration practices for natural and working lands, including forest thinning, prescribed fires, and watershed restoration to enhance ecosystem health and resilience, increase carbon sequestration, reduce wildfire risks, and create high-quality jobs.

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Investments in natural and working lands create high-quality jobs in forestry, conservation, and land management. These jobs include ecosystem services, forest stewardship, and watershed management, providing equitable access to high-quality, sustainable careers.

EQUITY

Programs focused on traditional ecological knowledge, tribal collaboration, and inclusive training ensure equitable participation and can enhance economic opportunities, improve community resilience, and address historical disparities by empowering underrepresented groups.

CLIMATE

Enhancing carbon sequestration, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving air and water quality can mitigate environmental impacts. Sustainable practices like forest thinning, prescribed fire, and watershed restoration increase climate resilience.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Developing a skilled workforce in natural and working lands involves targeted training programs, partnerships with educational institutions, and industry collaboration. These programs focus on local talent and emphasize traditional ecological knowledge and modern conservation practices.

Convert Low-Value Biomass

Strategy 1: Convert low-value biomass materials such as wood chips, sawdust, and agricultural residues from the region's forests and other natural and working lands efficiently and sustainably. Increase their economic utilization within the region.

ACTION STEP 1

Create targeted infrastructure and equipment purchasing to enable value-added biomass utilization within the region.

- a.** Support the development of biomass transportation infrastructure, including improved service roads into the forest to remove biomass.
- b.** Develop processing, storage, and multimodal transportation hubs to support both local use and the export of materials for more extensive bioeconomy uses.
- c.** Secure equipment for contracted agencies completing forest management projects.

ACTION STEP 2

Identify and conduct preliminary pre-project development analysis on likely sites within the Sierra region to develop wood utilization facilities.

ACTION STEP 3

Develop the regional capacity to deliver and participate in planning and deploying debt and equity financing to support more significant private sector investments in wood utilization facilities and infrastructure.

- a.** Provide additional funding opportunities for equipment purchase and business development to increase the capacity of private businesses operating in the natural and working lands sector.

ACTION STEP 4

Partner with surrounding regions to develop value-added products from biomass sourced from the Sierra region. This will enable the Sierra region to become a feedstock source for the surrounding regions for value-added wood products that cannot be produced within the Sierra region.

- a.** Look at partnerships with the Northern San Joaquin Valley to help bring biomass material to market.
- b.** Partner with other rural forested and agricultural regions on a multi-region circular bioeconomy strategy that promotes forest restoration and sustainable use of biomass resources and fosters innovation in bio-based products, wood utilization, and the larger bioeconomy.

ACTION STEP 5

Support and participate in regional and statewide biomass efforts, including State policy changes that develop and incentivize new markets for woody biomass, including market intervention to drive the pace and scale of forest treatment.

- a.** Encourage land management agencies to facilitate long-term (20-year) biomass supply agreements.
- b.** Encourage beneficiaries of the ecosystem benefits derived from the development of healthy and resilient forests to contribute to the cost of biomass utilization.
- c.** Advocate for expanding the State definition of clean energy to include biomass, thereby incentivizing investment in biomass facilities and utilization of woody biomass for energy production.
- d.** Advocate for Statewide tracking and monitoring of employment in the bioeconomy by establishing consistent definitions of industries and occupations across regions.

Market-Based Mechanism

Strategy 2: Encourage state and federal governments to create policies and incentives to develop and expand market-based mechanisms to pay for protecting or restoring natural resources.

ACTION STEP 1

Develop a region-wide climate-smart working lands industry strategy with dedicated funding for each region. This strategy would transform existing industries into market drivers that manage natural and working lands, restore their ecological health, and create high-quality jobs.

ACTION STEP 2

Develop policies and new market-based incentives to attract investments to pay for natural resource restoration and ecological functioning.

- a.** Expand on existing mitigation and conservation banking systems to further enable restoration and preservation of key habitats.
- b.** Establish a water quality trading system for water quality credits.
- c.** Utilize carbon credits to facilitate forest restoration, increasing soil and above-ground carbon sequestration.
- d.** Engage in voluntary carbon markets, where corporations pay for carbon sequestration to offset emissions and support voluntary climate resilience activities.
- e.** Implement payment programs for best management practices, such as the federal equip program and conservation reserve program (targeting grazers and farmers to improve conservation practices).
- f.** Introduce forest resilience bonds as a financial mechanism (e.g., Blue Forest), allowing downstream users who benefit from improved quality to pay for upstream restoration.
- g.** Expand voluntary climate resilience activities, building on the voluntary carbon market concept, to respond to emerging markets around corporate entities identifying in environmental, social, and governance policies how they impact climate and pay to offset elsewhere.

Lands-Focused Workforce

Strategy 3: Develop a workforce development plan focused on forest, desert, and grassland ecosystem management, including forest health, watershed health, and biodiversity in the Sierra region.

ACTION STEP 1

Develop partnerships between tribal organizations and existing workforce and educational organizations to ensure that traditional ecological knowledge is valued and to provide the opportunity to develop land management careers that do not require a four-year post-secondary degree.

ACTION STEP 2

Identify and catalog all existing programs focused on training and workforce development. As appropriate, reduce redundancy by creating centers of excellence within key subregions of the Sierra region.

ACTION STEP 3

Establish centralized hubs for training in natural and working lands management occupations.

- a. Leverage existing community college programs, California Conservation Corp, and tribal workforce programs.
- b. Understand gaps in funding, instructors, equipment, and wraparound services and develop a strategy to bridge those gaps for effective recruitment.

ACTION STEP 4

Align workforce and training programs with industry needs. Engage industry stakeholders in curriculum development and facilitate work-based learning opportunities.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1		3	3	3
ACTION STEP	2	4	1	2	3
Organization Name					
American Logging Council			PC	PC	PC
BEAM Circular		PC			
Biomass and Wood Products Industry Partners	PC				
Biomass Industry Partners	PC				
Bureau of Land Management			PC	PC	PC
California Associate Loggers			PC	PC	PC
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection			PC	PC	PC
Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS)	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC
Community Colleges With Forestry Programs			PC	PC	PC
Community Groups			PC	PC	PC
Educational Institutions Offering Forestry and Business Programs			PC	PC	PC
Energy Companies and Utilities	PC				
Environmental Organizations	PC				
Golden Sierra Workforce Development Board			PC	PC	PC
Government Agencies Responsible for Energy Policy and Regulation	PC				
High Schools With Forestry Programs			PC	PC	PC
Kern/Inyo/Mono Workforce Development Board			PC	PC	PC
Labor	PC				
Labor Organizations			PC	PC	PC
Mother Lode Job Training Center	PC		PC	PC	PC
National Park Service			PC	PC	PC
North Valley Thrive		PC			
Private Forest Landowners			PC	PC	PC
Private Investors	PC				
Small Business Development Centers			PC	PC	PC
Trade Schools With Forestry Programs			PC	PC	PC
Tribal Entities			PC	PC	PC
Tu Care			PC	PC	PC
U.S. Forest Service			PC	PC	PC
Whitebark Institute					

Legend

- L** Lead
- PC** Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Clean Energy & Energy Resilience

Energizing the Economy with Sustainable Solutions

SECTOR DEFINITION

The Clean Energy and Energy Resilience sector encompasses energy efficiency, weatherization, building electrification, microgrids, energy storage, electric vehicle infrastructure, and maintenance. Additionally, it includes local renewable energy generation from sources such as biomass, hydrogen, solar, geothermal, and biofuels. It presents an opportunity to improve the region's energy infrastructure and resilience to power outages, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and create high-quality jobs.

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

Clean energy and energy resilience represent a significant potential growth industry cluster for the region, with approximately 8% of all regional employment, including installation contractors, engineers, utility workers, and technical support. The regional location quotient of 0.52 shows a lower percentage of total employment compared to the rest of California, this emphasizes the potential for job growth given California's stated focus on investing in clean energy and related industries. The clean energy and energy resilience sector includes sub-industry sectors that are not directly tied to energy production and transmission but are interconnected with the industry, such as computer and electronic product manufacturing and commodity investments.



BY THE NUMBERS

SECTOR LOCATION QUOTIENT

0.20

The Clean Energy and Energy Resilience sector represents about 80% less employment as a percentage of regional totals compared to statewide averages.

2023 TOTAL SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN REGION

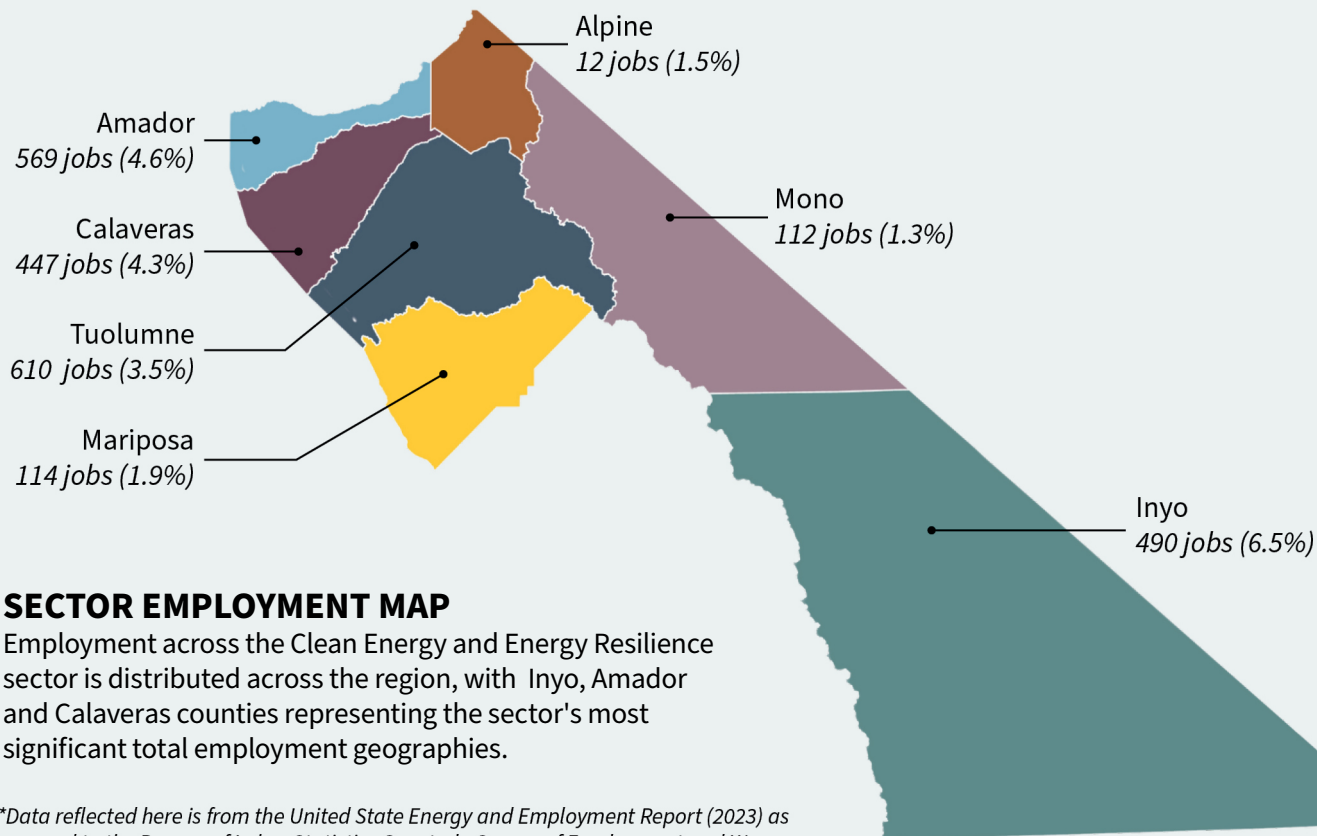
**2,354 jobs,
representing
3.8% of
regional
employment**

Clean Energy and Energy Resilience represent a vital industry cluster for the Sierra region, with approximately 3.8% of all regional employment.

This sector utilized Department of Energy employment numbers to more accurately reflect regional employment in this sector, and is reflective of employment in clean energy transmission, distribution, and generation.

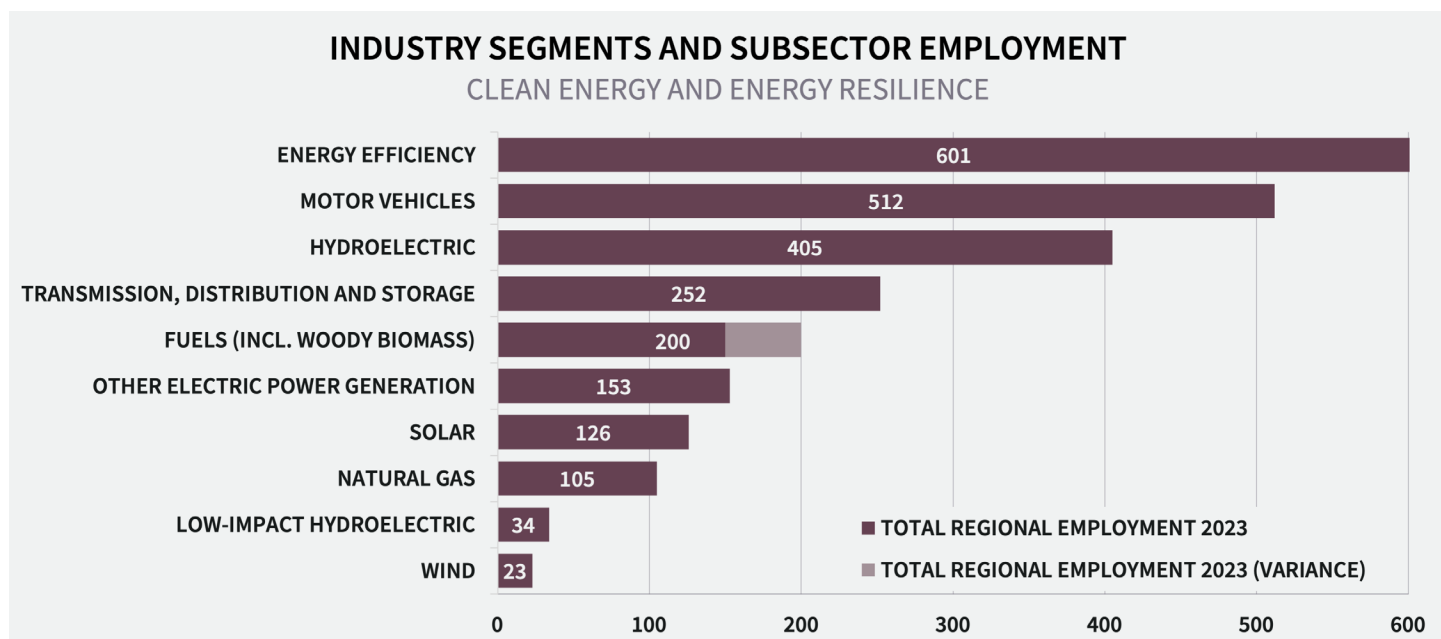
OUTCOME STATEMENTS

- › The region has adopted a loading order-based energy strategy that improves resilience by incorporating energy efficiency, demand response, renewables, and energy storage.
- › Reliance on fossil fuel energy generation is reduced, and the region uses more locally sourced clean, low-carbon, renewable, or carbon-free energy, which creates quality jobs and increases energy resilience.
- › Local backup solutions reduce exposure to power shutdowns.



SECTOR INDUSTRY LOCATION QUOTIENT AND EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

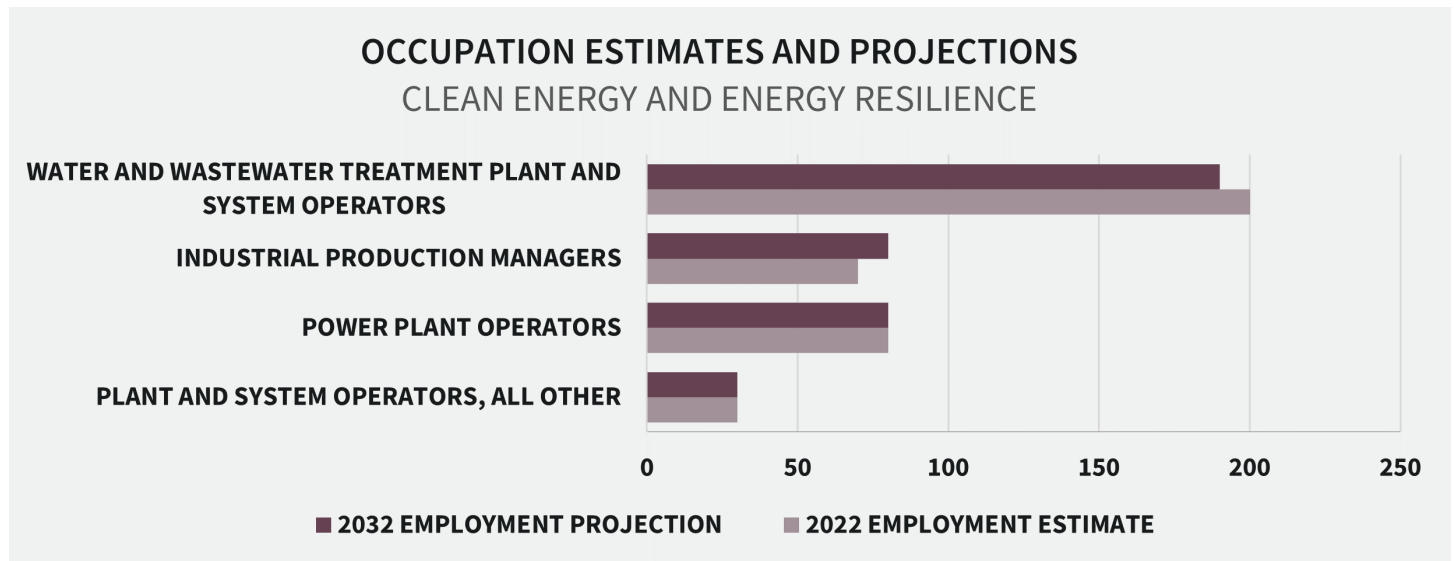
▼ This graph shows regional employment numbers and location quotients, sorted by highest total employment. The LQ compares the concentration of an industry within a specific area, such as the Sierra, to the concentration of that industry in a larger geography, such as the State. These numbers help identify the regional economy's specifics and provide important data for strategy development and long-term investment. Specialty trades, fuel dealers, and related construction jobs represent the sector's most significant employment areas.



OCCUPATIONS AND WAGES

An analysis of these occupational codes highlighted the following key findings:

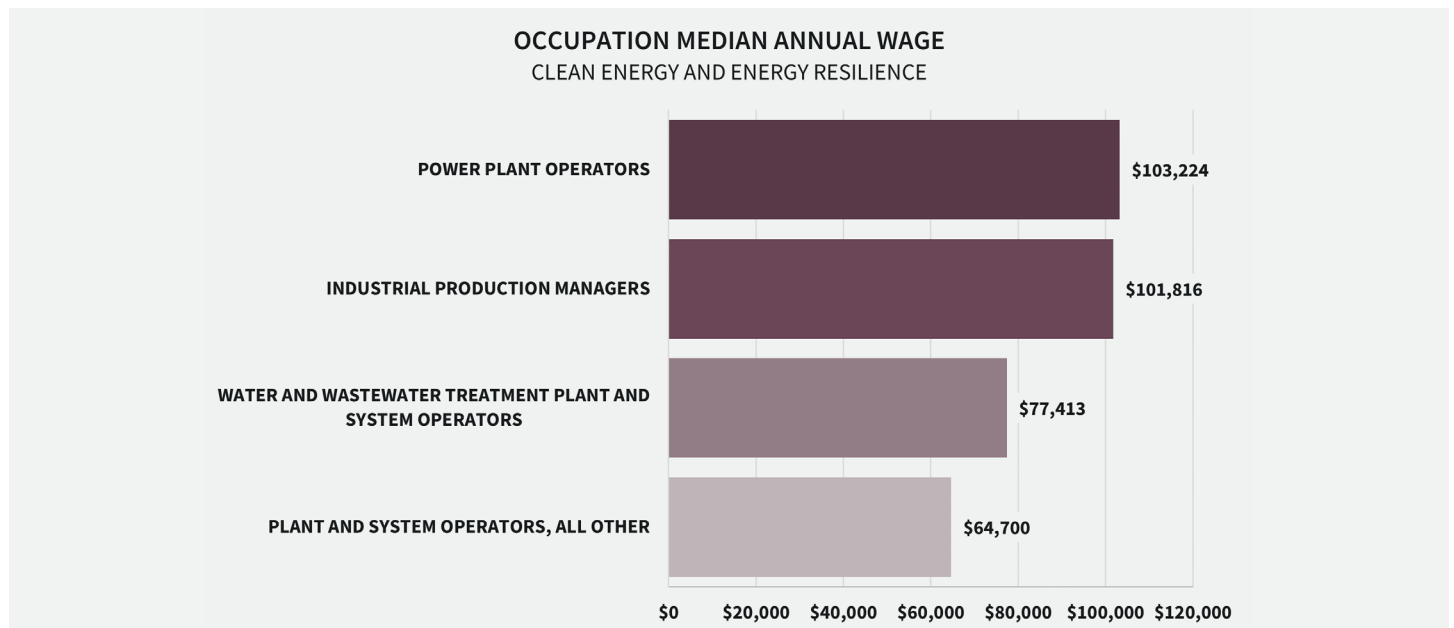
- Clean Energy and Energy Resilience sector jobs are likely to be high-paying, high-quality jobs, with occupational wages falling in the mid-to-high end of the income band, between \$64,000 and \$103,000 annually.
- Compared to employment sectors like community health, this sector requires less formal education and more on-the-job or vocational training.
- Employment growth in this sector will likely be tied to significant infrastructure investments such as developing new energy production facilities, transmission lines, or energy efficiency upgrades/retrofitting.

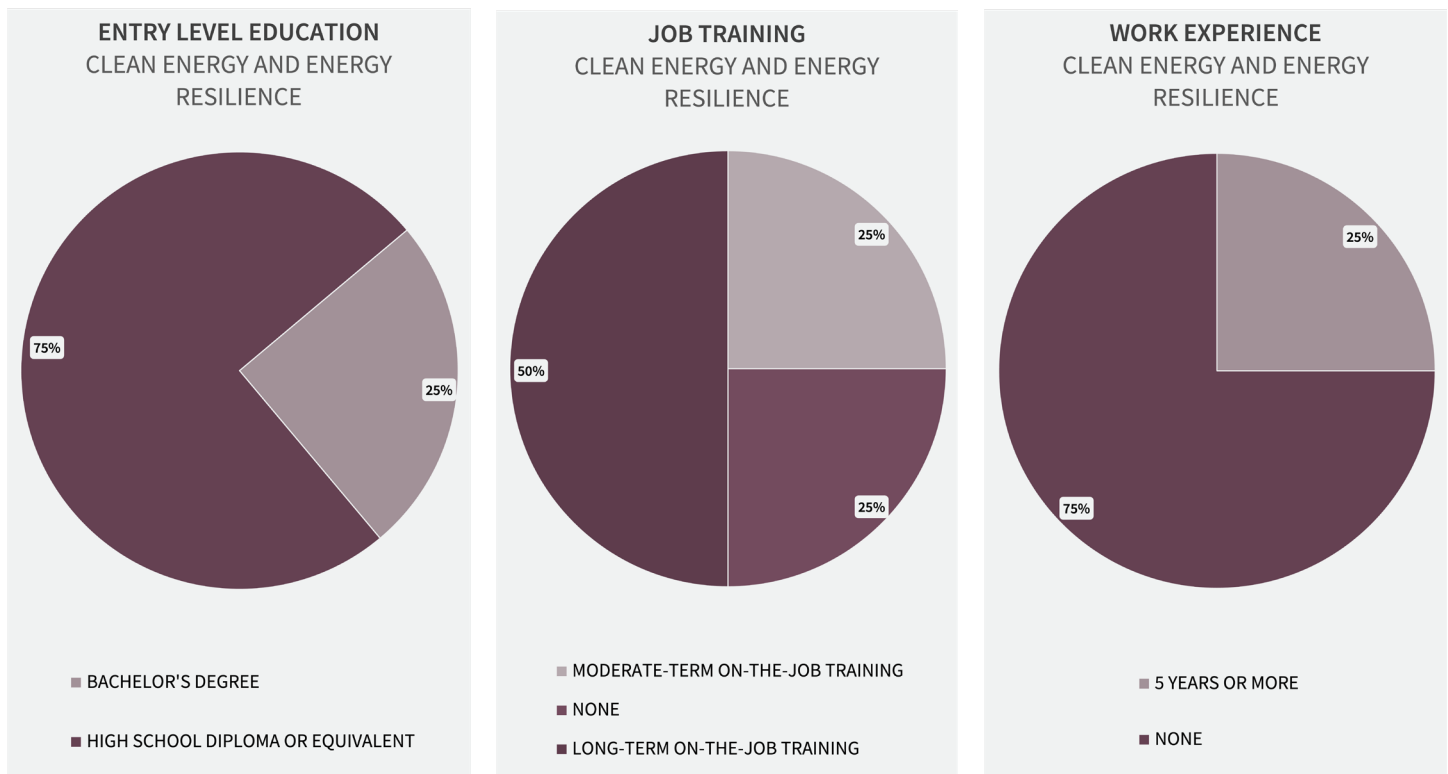


▲ The graph above shows the occupations projected to have the most employment by 2032 in the sector.

MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE

▼ The graph below shows the top-earning occupations in the sector based on median annual wage.





WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

▲ The three circle graphs above show the percentage of occupations connected to the sector that require common professional development and education.

SECTOR RATIONALE

VALUE CHAIN AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Investments in the clean energy and resilience sector will strengthen the region by increasing green jobs and creating more resilience and energy independence in the Sierras. Specific infrastructure investments required to grow this sector include implementing energy storage solutions and microgrids, expanding electric vehicle charging stations and maintenance facilities, electrifying homes and businesses, strengthening local supply chains, upskilling and expanding the local workforce, and advancing state and regional policies that promote clean energy investments and innovation.

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Investments in the clean energy sector will foster an innovation ecosystem and signal success in this field by establishing collaborative partnerships between service providers and researchers to promote the transfer of leading technologies into the market, investing in research and new technology, supporting small business owners and entrepreneurs to foster innovation and drive the market forward, developing training programs, and securing new funding sources.

REGIONAL ASSETS

The region has several assets supporting the Clean energy and energy resilience sector.

- **Natural Resources:** Abundant renewable energy sources, including geothermal, hydro, biomass, and solar, provide a strong foundation for clean energy projects.
- **Educational Institutions:** Community colleges and training programs offer valuable resources for workforce development and skill training.
- **Utility Providers:** Major utilities, like Pacific Gas & Electric Company and Southern California Edison, provide infrastructure and support for energy projects.
- **Workforce Development Organizations:** Partnerships with the Rural Regional Energy Network (REN) and other organizations enhance talent recruitment and training efforts.
- **Funding Opportunities:** State and federal funding, including CPUC and the Inflation Reduction Act, provide financial resources for clean energy initiatives.
- **Research and Development:** Collaboration with research institutions and private companies fosters innovation and technological advancements in clean energy solutions.

OPPORTUNITIES

The clean energy and energy resilience sector presents significant growth opportunities.

- **Hydroelectric Relicensing:** The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing of hydroelectric reservoirs represents a billion-dollar investment, creating new high-wage jobs.
- **State and Federal Funding:** Leveraging funding from the California Public Utilities Commission, Office of Planning and Research, and the Inflation Reduction Act positions the region for new clean energy projects.
- **High-Paid Job Opportunities:** The clean energy sector offers the potential for the highest-paid jobs, including (but not limited to) roles in microgrid management, renewable energy generation, building weatherization, and EV infrastructure development. Additional criteria and research on the highest-paid job opportunities are needed to define priority investments better.
- **Community Protection:** Developing localized energy grids and renewable energy sources increases community resilience to power outages, such as public service power shutoff (PSPS) events.
- **Climate Action Plans:** Local governments, including but not limited to the City of Sonoma and Calaveras Council of Governments, are developing climate action plans and greenhouse gas inventories to guide sustainable growth.
- **Biomass Utilization:** Expanding biomass projects to include renewable energy generation from woody biomass aligns with State climate goals and wildfire mitigation efforts.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

The clean energy and energy resilience sector faces several challenges.

- **Fragmented Biomass Utilization:** The biomass system needs coordination among diverse suppliers to ensure long-term feedstock supply and fire resilience.
- **Workforce Shortages:** The region needs more energy-efficient auditors, installers, and retrofitters, leading to project delays and high costs. Additionally, there is a lack of local contractors with the knowledge to electrify buildings, so upskilling the existing workforce will be necessary.
- **Dependence on Fossil Fuels:** Reliance on natural gas and propane and an inadequate electrical grid necessitate developing a dedicated green energy workforce to meet carbon-zero mandates.
- **Funding Gaps:** Implementing the Climate Vulnerability Assessment recommendations requires additional capacity and funding.
- **Administrative Capacity:** Local organizations and businesses need more capacity to compete for and manage funding opportunities.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

The region must prioritize localized energy grids to ensure energy security and renewable energy projects consistent with the principles of the SJF and the California Jobs First programs. This focus on energy efficiency, weatherization, and building electrification will result in increased energy resilience, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and the creation of high-quality jobs. Investing in clean energy infrastructure aligns with State mandates and ensures the region's sustainable, prosperous future.

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Investments in clean energy create high-paying jobs in sectors like microgrid management, renewable energy generation, and EV infrastructure. These jobs, including energy analysts, renewable energy engineers, and EV technicians, are accessible with investment in training, promoting equitable workforce development. Localized energy projects ensure community members benefit from stable, high-quality employment opportunities, enhancing overall job quality and economic stability.

EQUITY

Clean energy investments benefit disinvested communities, ensuring equitable access to job opportunities and energy resources. The region addresses historical inequities and promotes inclusive growth by engaging these communities in planning and development. Strategies include targeted workforce development programs that provide training and job placement services specifically for residents of these communities and community benefit agreements that ensure a portion of the project's benefits directly benefit the local community, fostering local economic resilience and social equity.

CLIMATE

The clean energy sector mitigates environmental impacts by reducing reliance on fossil fuels and lowering greenhouse gas emissions. Investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and electric vehicle infrastructure support regional sustainability goals. These efforts enhance public health, reduce pollution, and help the region mitigate the effects of climate change.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Talent recruitment and skill-job matching are critical in developing a green energy workforce. Collaboration with community colleges and training programs ensures workers gain the necessary skills. Initiatives include apprenticeships and certification programs, aligning workforce capabilities with industry needs. These strategies help mitigate talent shortages and support the region's transition to a sustainable energy future.

Expand Implementation Programs

Strategy 1: Expand building decarbonization and energy efficiency implementation programs.

ACTION STEP 1

Adopt policies to ensure attractive, stable, and affordable electricity rates at the local level.

ACTION STEP 2

To promote building decarbonization, create a network of local governments, utilities, industry, consumers, and community-based organizations.

- a. Leverage the Rural Regional Energy Network (RuralREN) governance model and work plan in the seven-county region.
- b. Implement a marketing and public relations campaign to speed the adoption of energy efficiency and building decarbonization strategies.
- c. Expand opportunities for training on codes and standards at the local level utilizing RuralREN resources.
- d. Develop locally focused workforce education and training programs to expand the contractor base for energy efficiency and building decarbonization efforts.
- e. Implement specific programs to scale up the direct installation of energy efficiency and building decarbonization measures in the region with separate programs focusing on residential, small, and medium-sized business and public sector buildings.

ACTION STEP 3

Create local opportunities for clean energy financing in the residential, commercial, and public sectors.

- a. Expand the use of investor-owned utility on-bill financing programs.
- b. Implement a revolving bridge loan program utilizing CPUC funding to finance deeper building retrofits.
- c. Expand applications to State and federal entities (DOE, USDA, CEC, CPUC, CARB) to build a funding pool for financing programs.

ACTION STEP 4

Expand existing and create new energy efficiency programs to upgrade homes, businesses, and public sector buildings utilizing the building decarbonization loading order (building envelope, energy efficiency, space, water heating, appliances, and storage).

ACTION STEP 5

Identify and pilot community-scale network microgrid systems on a priority basis based on critical infrastructure needs to generate, store, and supply renewable electricity to enable decarbonization, improve resilience, and reduce costs to residents and businesses.

Zero Emissions Vehicle Infrastructure

Strategy 2: Establish a local zero-emission and hydrogen-fueled vehicle infrastructure (including e-bike infrastructure) to enhance the region's resilience.

ACTION STEP 1

Conduct a workforce needs assessment among employers in industries that support the zero-emission and hydrogen-fueled vehicle market. Use the results to build on existing career pathways and workforce education programs to meet the identified needs across sectors.

- a. Expand or create new workforce education and training programs at Columbia College and Cerro Coso College.
- b. Partner with labor workforce education programs such as MC3 to expand regional offerings.
- c. Partner with private sector developers to expand workforce opportunities through private training programs.

ACTION STEP 2

Create a comprehensive charging and fueling strategy for a regional system, including infrastructure for both residential and fleet vehicles.

- a. Assess current zero-emission and hydrogen-fueled vehicle deployment plans.
- b. Assess infrastructure needs and challenges.
- c. Access State funding to expand planning to portions of the region not covered.

ACTION STEP 3

Develop a region-wide zero-emission vehicle readiness plan covering electric and hydrogen-fueled vehicles. The plan should anticipate infrastructure needs (power, restrooms, amenities) and the strategic placement of charging and fueling stations to complement existing and future land uses.

ACTION STEP 4

Expand capacity to secure public and private funding to implement regional infrastructure.

ACTION STEP 5

Integrate electric zero-emission vehicle charging and discharging opportunities into local microgrids.

ACTION STEP 6

Streamline permitting, inspection, and licensing processes for zero-emission and hydrogen-fueled vehicles.

ACTION STEP 7

Update building codes to accommodate zero-emission and hydrogen-fueled vehicles.

Hydrogen Manufacturing Facilities

Strategy 3: Explore the feasibility of developing hydrogen storage and manufacturing facilities.

ACTION STEP 1

Coordinate the development of hydrogen storage and manufacturing facilities with the Alliance for Renewable and Clean Hydrogen Energy Systems, a Statewide hydrogen storage and manufacturing effort funded by the U.S. Department of Energy.

ACTION STEP 2

Coordinate the following tactics with Strategy 5 in the Natural and Working Lands Sector to take advantage of the woody biomass-to-hydrogen value chain.

ACTION STEP 3

Coordinate processing materials for export to more extensive hydrogen manufacturing facilities with access to rail and port networks as part of a cross-regional bioeconomy strategy.

ACTION STEP 4

Develop a public policy that incentivizes hydrogen manufacturing and enables early markets to facilitate scaling manufacturing to future needs.

ACTION STEP 5

Pursue the development of small hydrogen manufacturing facilities utilizing biomass pyrolysis to accommodate local medium and heavy vehicle fleet conversion and deploying hydrogen fuel cells for deployment as part of local microgrids.

Leverage Existing Hydro Infrastructure

Strategy 4: Leverage existing water infrastructure, including hydropower facilities, for community benefit and high-quality employment opportunities.

ACTION STEP 1

Establish Community Benefit Agreements for relicensing larger-scale hydro facilities such as San Pedro and New Melones, which have a capacity greater than 30MW.

ACTION STEP 2

Further study of and investment in installing new micro-hydro facilities on existing water infrastructure is needed.

- a.** Micro-hydro allows electricity generation from local water infrastructure, creating a new revenue source for water districts. The generated funds, potentially several million dollars annually, can be used for land restoration projects.
- b.** Utilize the current flumes on the west slope, transporting water downstream for agricultural use.

ACTION STEP 3

Retrofitting existing facilities and upgrading equipment, such as turbines, to enhance earthquake safety and increase storage capacity.

- a.** Remove sediment from the facilities to increase yield and water quality while reducing overall sediment. This method also leverages natural and working lands in the energy sector by improving forest health and conducting meadow restoration.

ACTION STEP 4

Develop a multi-county readiness report on hydropower facilities to identify opportunities to remove or expand storage capacity.

Sell Reliable Electricity

Strategy 5: Expand access to the region's Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) and energy storage facilities to sell reliable electricity for economic development or store it for Public Safety Power Shut Off (PSPS) purposes.

ACTION STEP 1

Study the feasibility of creating local community choice aggregation programs covering the 7-county region.

ACTION STEP 2

Use community choice aggregation power purchase agreements to incentivize local power generation and storage.

ACTION STEP 3

Utilize the community choice aggregation business model to capture additional funding for energy efficiency through the CPUC election to administer public goods charge funding.

ACTION STEP 4

Consider selling excess power to external markets through the California Independent System Operator.

ACTION STEP 5

Link community choice aggregation to the existing and future local power supply by capturing existing power sources such as excess hydroelectric generation or linking new power sources such as bioenergy, micro-hydro, geothermal, and hydrogen fuel cells.

ACTION STEP 6

Study the costs and benefits of joining community choice aggregation programs to serve a portion of the region.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1			2	3	4	5
ACTION STEP	1	2	3	1	1	1	1
Organization Name							
Arches H2					PC		
California Air Resources Board				PC			
California Department of Transportation				PC			
California Energy Commission	PC			PC	PC		
California Public Utilities Commission	PC			PC	PC		
California State Building and Construction Trades Council					PC		
Community Choice Aggregators				PC			
Community Colleges	PC						
County Governments							PC
East Bay Municipal Utility District							PC
Employment Development Department-employment Training Panel					PC		
Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development				PC	PC		
High Sierra Energy Foundation		L	L				
Liberty Utilities	PC	PC	PC	PC			
Local Air Districts				PC			
Local Governments							PC
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power	PC			PC			PC
Modesto Irrigation District							PC
Organized Labor Training and Apprenticeship Programs	PC			PC			
Other California Jobs First Regions						PC	
Pacific Gas and Electric Company	PC			PC			PC
Private-sector Hydrogen Manufacturing Companies					PC		
Regional Workforce Development Organizations	PC			PC			
Rural Regional Energy Networks	PC			PC			PC
Sierra Nevada Energy Watch (SBC)		L	L				
Southern California Edison	PC			PC			PC
Special Districts	PC						
Turlock Irrigation District							PC
University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources					PC		
U.S. Department of Energy					PC		
Western Power Administration							PC

Legend

L Lead

PC Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems

Empowering Local Food Systems

SECTOR DEFINITION

The Sustainable Agriculture sector includes building local and regional food supplies, expanding regenerative agriculture, and maximizing limited land resources to create an integrated system that benefits both people and the land. A key initiative of this sector is also promoting food sovereignty, specifically for Indigenous community members in our region. Food sovereignty refers to the right to healthy, culturally appropriate, and ecologically produced food. Components of this sector include production, processing, distribution, retail, consumption, and waste recovery.

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

The high level of employment in food and beverage retail operations underscores the importance of building connections with other sectors, such as sustainable tourism, to generate a more significant regional impact. Most agricultural employment in the region is concentrated in food and beverage retail and beverage and tobacco product manufacturing. There is limited employment in traditional crop and animal production, possibly due to the influence of the climate and topography of the Sierra region. However, on-site research indicates a growing interest in expanding this sector through collaborative efforts on tribal land use, non-profit food hub ventures, and establishing value-added processing facilities.



A vineyard in Amador County is one example of the region's agriculture assets.

BY THE NUMBERS

SECTOR LOCATION QUOTIENT

1.48

While the LQ shows that agriculture is about 50% more represented as a percentage of the regional economy than sustainable agriculture is at the statewide level, the data may be skewed slightly higher due to the inclusion of food and beverage retailers.

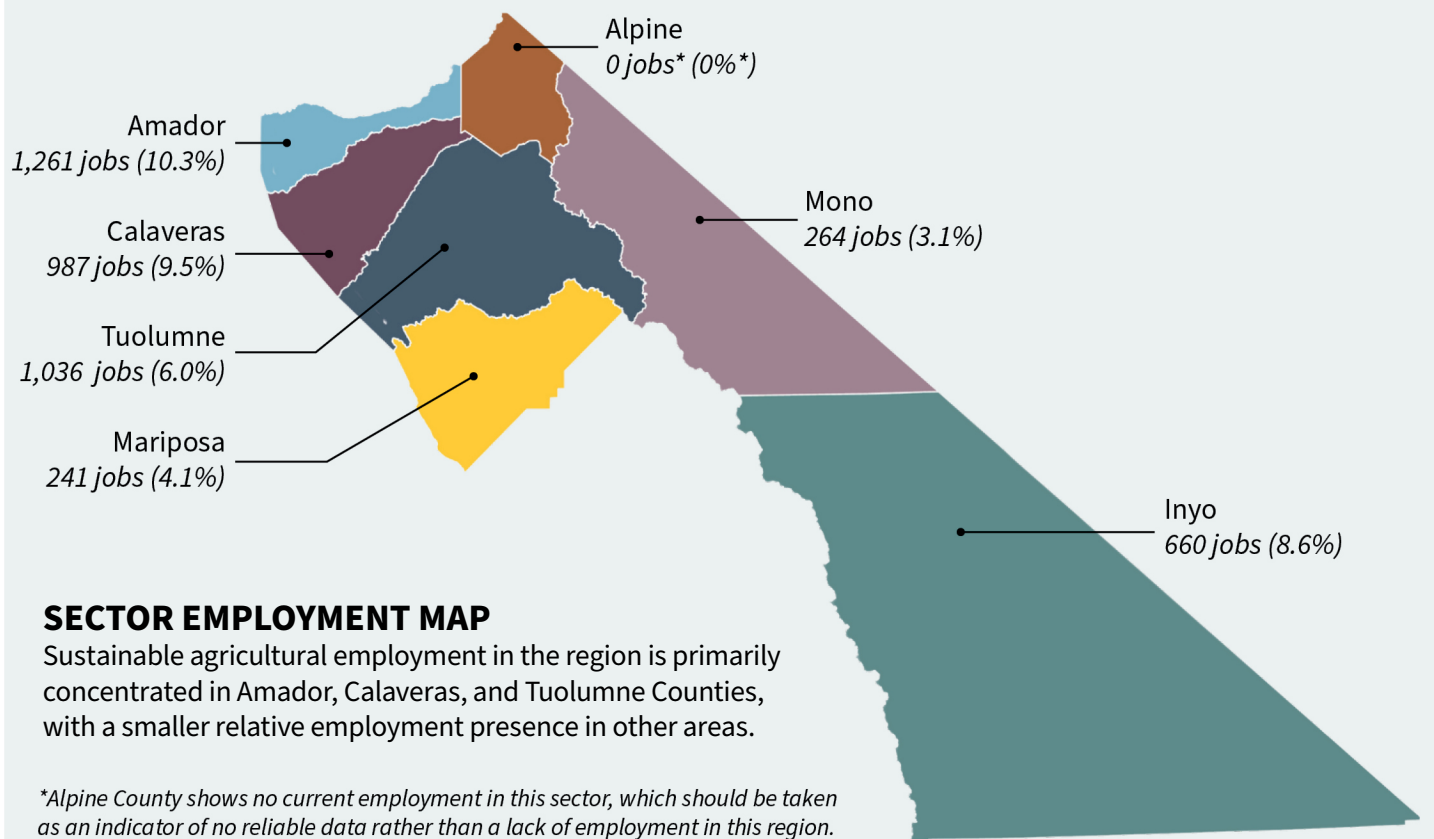
2023 TOTAL SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN REGION

4,449 jobs, representing 7% of regional employment

This sector represents approximately 8% of regional jobs. Amador and Tuolumne County represent roughly half of agricultural employment in the region.

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

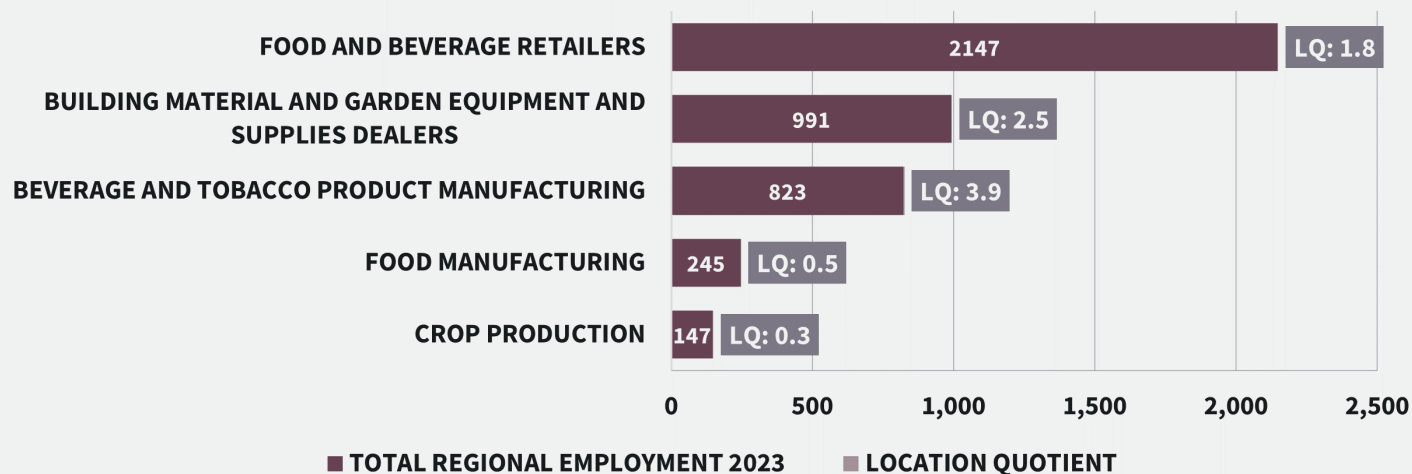
- › Every community in the region has affordable, locally grown, sustainably raised food.
- › Agricultural and ranch lands are operated and managed sustainably and profitably.
- › Nonrenewable resources, on-farm resources, and natural biological cycles and controls are integrated where appropriate.



SECTOR INDUSTRY LOCATION QUOTIENT AND EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

▼ This graph shows regional employment numbers and location quotients, sorted by highest total employment. The LQ compares the concentration of an industry within a specific area, such as the Sierra, to the concentration of that industry in a larger geography, such as the State. These numbers help identify the regional economy's specifics and provide important data for strategy development and long-term investment. High employment in food and beverage retail operations showcases the necessity of creating interfaces with other sectors, such as sustainable tourism, to enhance regional impact.

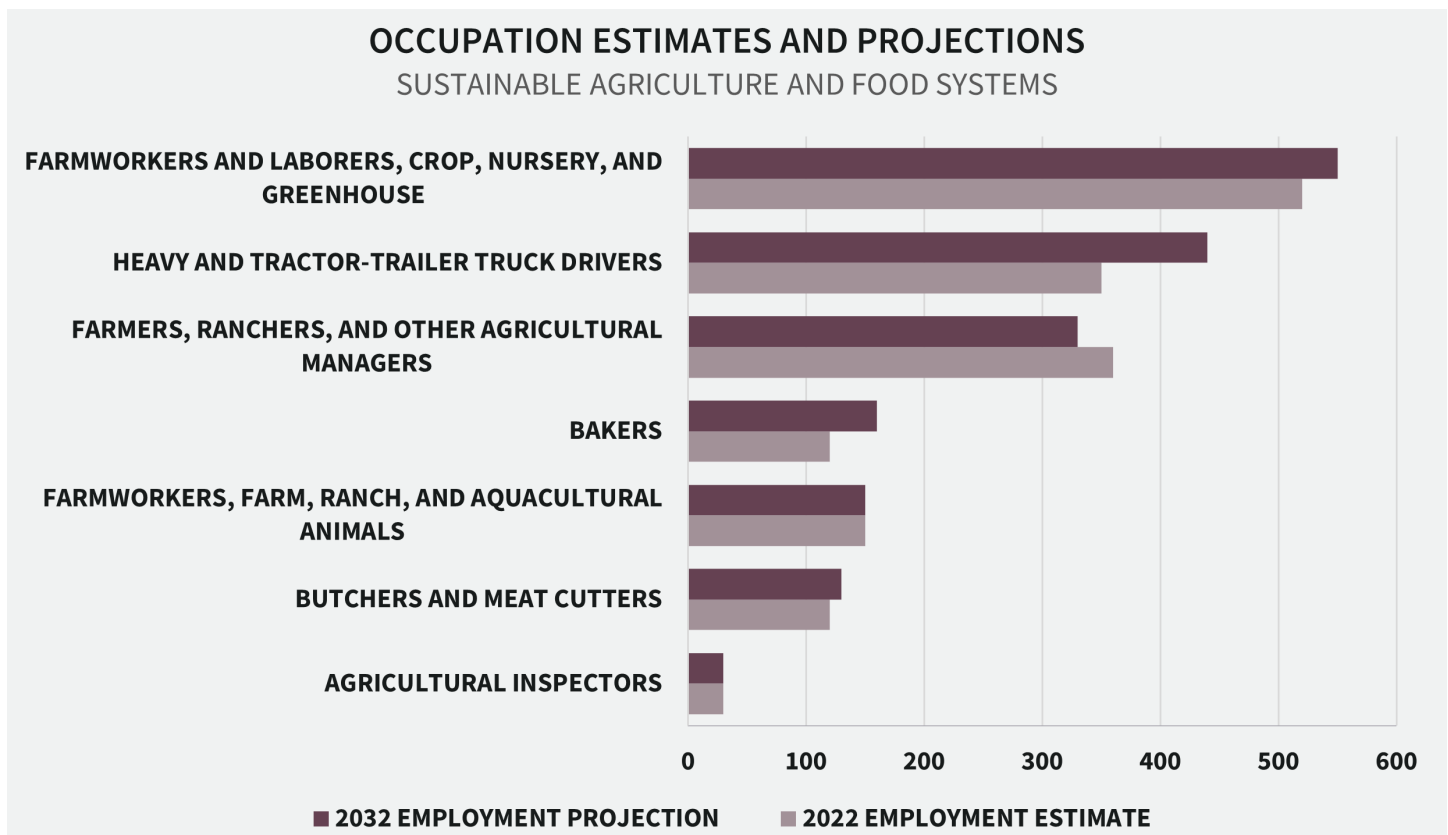
INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT AND LOCATION QUOTIENT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS



OCCUPATIONS AND WAGES

Specific occupations often do not fall into any particular industry sector, necessitating analysis around a sampling of occupations that primarily fall into this industry sector. This process highlighted the following key findings:

- Occupations in the sustainable agricultural sector report low median annual wages, and many do not meet the definition of quality jobs. Nearly all occupations identified in this analysis have a median average wage of under \$50,000.
- Educational and work experience requirements are low in this industry sector, with many employment opportunities requiring little to no education, training, or previous on-the-job experience.
- Short and long-term on-the-job training is expected in most jobs within the sector, which balances out the reported lack of more formal education and experience requirements.
- Occupational wages in this sector represent the importance of strategy and policy implementation that aims to raise wages and provide additional economic opportunity throughout this sector.



▲ The graph shows the occupations projected to have the most employment by 2032 in the sector.

SECTOR RATIONALE

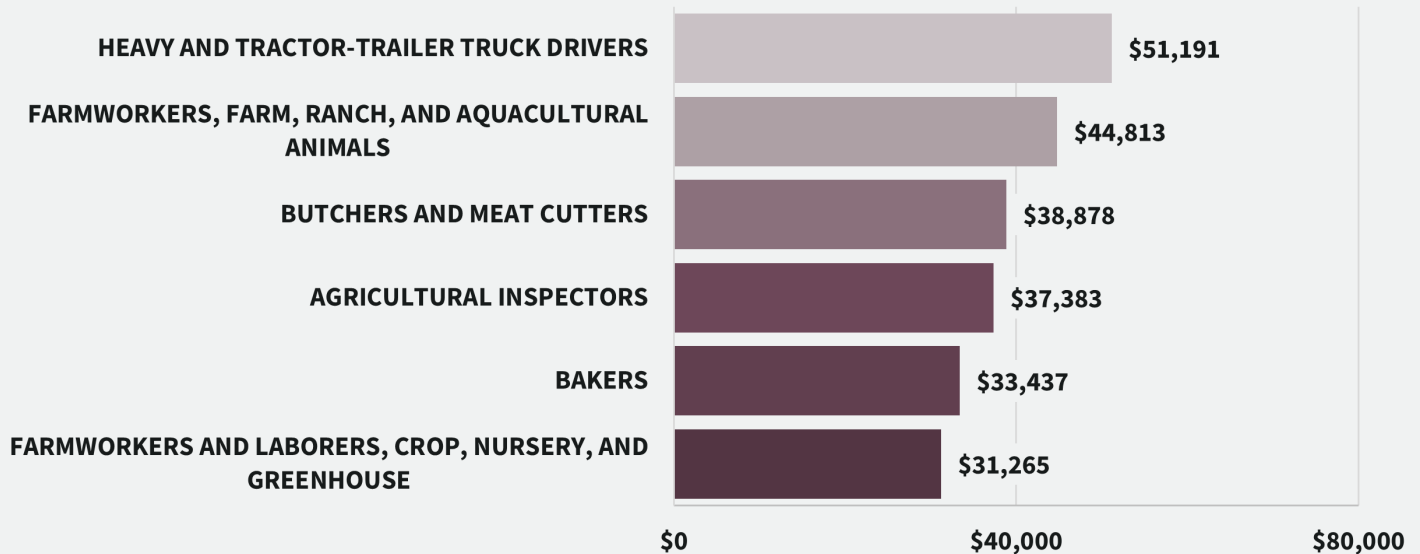
VALUE CHAIN AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Investments in the sustainable agriculture sector will bring jobs to the region by promoting regenerative, climate-resilient, and equitable food systems. Specific infrastructure investments required to grow this sector include establishing local processing facilities such as mobile meat processing units, enhancing distribution networks, establishing strong regional branding to promote Sierra-grown products, investing in agricultural technologies, and providing farmers with financial and business development support.

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

The innovation ecosystem and success in this sector will include establishing collaborative partnerships between service providers and researchers to promote the transfer of leading technologies into the market, investing in research, supporting small business owners and entrepreneurs to foster innovation and drive the market forward, developing training programs, and securing new funding sources.

OCCUPATION MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

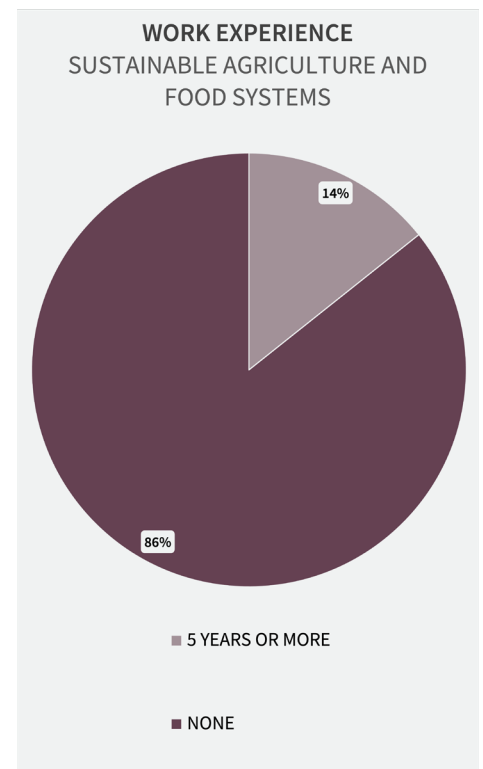
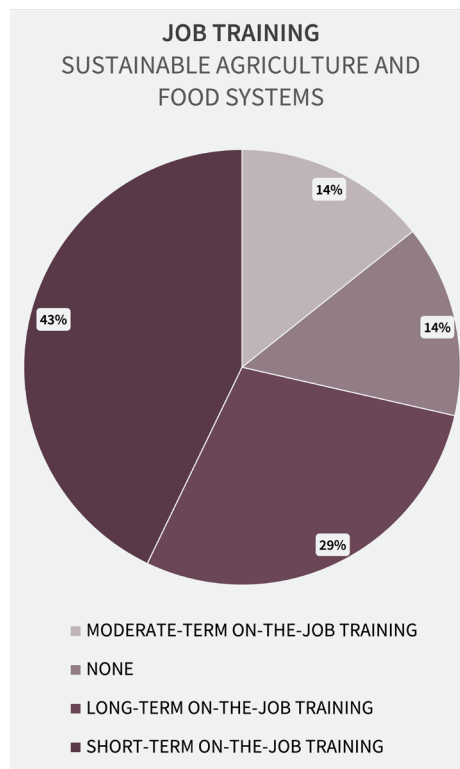
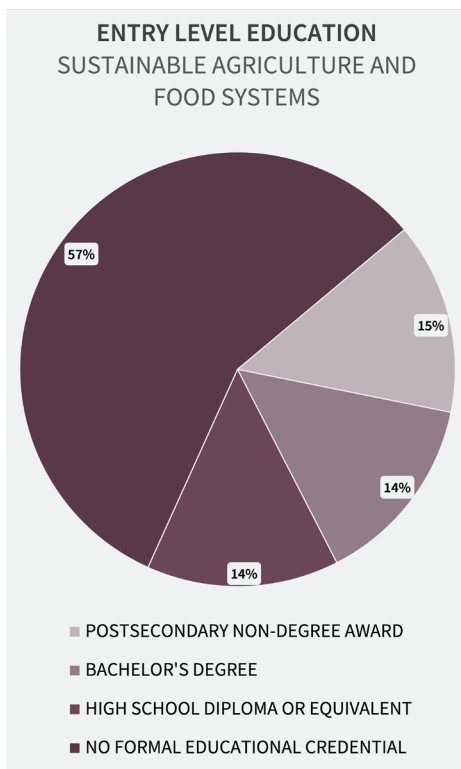


MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE

▲ The graph above shows the top-earning occupations in the sector based on median annual wage.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

▼ The three circle graphs below show the percentage of occupations connected to the sector that require common professional development and education activities.





A 4-H participant presents a bull at the Calaveras County Fair. Photo by Frank Schulenburg.

REGIONAL ASSETS

The region's assets collectively enhance capacity to support and expand the sustainable agriculture and food systems sector.

- › **Natural Resources:** Rich soil and diverse microclimates conducive to various crops and livestock.
- › **Educational Institutions:** Local universities and colleges, such as the UC Davis Extension Program, offer agricultural training and research support.
- › **Tribal Organizations:** Partnerships with tribal organizations enhance food sovereignty and access to traditional foods.
- › **Land Trusts:** Existing land trusts help preserve agricultural lands and promote sustainable farming practices.

› **Agritourism Potential:** Scenic landscapes and a solid cultural heritage make the region ideal for developing agritourism initiatives.

› **Local Markets:** Farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture programs provide direct-to-consumer sales channels.

› **Infrastructure:** Existing infrastructure for water and waste management supports agricultural activities.

› **Government Support:** Local and State government programs and policies support sustainable agriculture and climate resilience initiatives.

OPPORTUNITIES

Sustainable agriculture offers numerous growth and diversification opportunities, enhancing resilience and supporting the local economy. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts, policy changes, and investment in sustainable practices to ensure the sector's long-term viability and growth.

- › **Local Supply Chains:** Expand local food production and processing capabilities. Create regional branding to promote Sierra-grown products and capture agritourism opportunities.
- › **Value-added Products:** Support manufacturing value-added food products like artisanal cheeses, preserves, and specialty crops.

› **Agritourism:** Develop initiatives to attract visitors and generate additional farmer income streams. Promote farm tours, farm-to-table dining experiences, and agricultural festivals.

› **Workforce and Education:** Establish educational pathways and workforce development programs to build interest and skills in agriculture. Partner with local schools and universities to provide practical training and internships.

These opportunities collectively enhance food security, create jobs, and support the region's resilient and sustainable agricultural economy.



A vegan supreme is on the menu at Priest Station Cafe & Store in Tuolumne County, a restaurant that is now in its sixth generation of family ownership.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

Sustainable agriculture faces several challenges and risks that must be addressed to ensure sector growth and resilience.

- › **Climate Change:** Rising temperatures, increased wildfire risk, and changing precipitation patterns threaten crop yields and water supply.
- › **Land Access:** Limited availability of arable land and restrictive land tenure policies hinder new farming operations.
- › **Market Access:** Low population density and geographical barriers restrict access to tradeable retail markets, impacting sales and profitability.
- › **Economic Shocks:** The region's dependence on tourism makes it vulnerable to economic downturns and natural disasters, which can affect agricultural income.
- › **Regulatory Barriers:** Stringent regulations and certification processes for local food products and meat can impede market entry and expansion.
- › **Resource Constraints:** Limited nonrenewable resources and water availability necessitate efficient and innovative farming practices.
- › **Export Transportation:** Another major constraint is the need for export opportunities, such as central rail, air, or roadway transport, to export products at an affordable cost.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

To grow jobs in this sector and ensure the principles of the SJF program, the region must invest in regenerative agriculture, develop local supply chains, and promote agritourism. This investment will expand access to locally grown food, create jobs, and increase food security. By integrating sustainable practices and fostering entrepreneurship, the region will enhance economic stability, resilience to climate impacts, and community well-being.

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Investments will create and retain high-quality agricultural jobs, enhancing job security and income for local communities. Programs like apprenticeships, internships, and educational pathways will ensure equitable access to these opportunities, empowering and engaging youth and marginalized communities in the promising field of sustainable agriculture.

EQUITY

Sustainable agriculture initiatives benefit disinvested communities by increasing access to healthy, locally produced food and creating job opportunities in farming and agritourism. Engagement strategies include partnerships with tribal organizations and support for local food sovereignty programs, ensuring that marginalized groups are integral to the region's food system.

CLIMATE

The sector mitigates environmental impacts by implementing regenerative farming practices that enhance soil health, reduce carbon emissions, and conserve water. Sustainable agriculture also addresses climate-related needs by promoting crop diversity and resilience, supporting public health, and ensuring long-term food security for the community. Value-added food processing facilities are expanded to extend the value chain.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable agriculture fosters talent recruitment through education and training programs, apprenticeships, and internships. Collaborations with educational institutions and industry partners ensure skill-job matching and mitigate workforce gaps. These efforts support the development of a skilled labor force capable of advancing the agricultural sector's sustainability goals.

Promote and Grow

Strategy 1: Work with Federal, State, tribes, and local agriculture partners to promote and grow sustainable agriculture and ranching in the Sierra region.

ACTION STEP 1

Establish the SJF Agriculture and Food Systems Industry Sector Working Group. SJF Industry Sector Navigator staff will provide support.

- a. Recruit local government representatives, technical advisors, farmers, land owners, and policymakers to participate in the working group.

ACTION STEP 2

Develop a regional baseline understanding of the region's existing ranch and agricultural operations.

- a. Identify specific data on existing sustainable agriculture/ranching operations.
- b. Explore ways to measure positive climate mitigation co-benefits for landscape restoration from agriculture.
- c. Collect input from existing operators on barriers and opportunities. Inventory and gaps exist in distribution, processing, and marketing-related services.

ACTION STEP 3

Create a regional implementation plan to sustain and expand agriculture and food systems in the region.

- a. Identify accessible funding opportunities for new farmers and ranchers.
- b. Support and Expand Processing, Distribution, and Marketing of Sierra-Grown items.
- c. Explore options to reduce impediments to regulatory approval of local food products and meat, including FDA and USDA certifications.
- d. Conduct State advocacy to reduce regulations for local food producers and partner with regulatory and landholding agencies to minimize policy and regulatory barriers to diversified agricultural production and ranching. For example — Streamline the procedures for establishing sublease agreements with public landowners and current leaseholders to foster efficient land utilization and resource management.
- e. Partner with willing farmers and ranchers to protect existing agricultural and ranch lands at risk. Explore the use of conservation easements to ensure long-term land use.
- f. Implement grazing management plans that include monitoring and enforcement to protect ecosystems.

ACTION STEP 4

Establish a food sovereignty program to utilize more land for sustainable food production, enhancing food security and resiliency within the community.

- a. Collaborate with tribal governments, farmers, and grassroots organizations dedicated to food security to identify potential plots of publicly owned land that can be used for farming.

Increasing Consumption

Strategy 2: Increase consumption and export potential of locally produced food and agricultural branded products.

ACTION STEP 1

Create a strong and consistent brand identity for Sierra-based products in and out of market that builds on the region's unique aspects and supports local producers.

ACTION STEP 2

Work with existing State and local visitor marketing agencies and chambers to promote and showcase agriculture, local food production, farmers markets, and businesses supporting agriculture.

ACTION STEP 3

Support existing efforts to promote local farmers' markets.

ACTION STEP 4

Promote and support events focused on celebrating agriculture and ranching in the region.

ACTION STEP 5

Launch agritourism initiatives that showcase local farms and agricultural practices and develop new and innovative agricultural products.

- a. Partner with community kitchen concepts to support food system microenterprises.
- b. Conduct a feasibility study for a 'Food Hub' model to expand access to locally produced food and agricultural products and ensure grocery stores and restaurants have increased availability.
- c. Research partnering with National food education organizations to increase consumption of locally grown foods via schools, e.g., Charlie Cart (see Small Business section).

Cultivate the Next Generation

Strategy 3: Develop strategies to cultivate the next generation of place-based sustainable agriculture businesses, food producers, Sierra farmers, and ranchers.

ACTION STEP 1

Identify and develop educational and workforce development pathways through regional programs, apprenticeships, and internships to provide practical training and experience to individuals interested in agricultural careers.

- a.** Work with partners to highlight and celebrate existing ranchers and farmers in the Sierra (part of marketing work).
- b.** Increase training and workforce development investment to build a robust pipeline of skilled labor to support the agricultural industry's evolving needs.
- c.** Work with partners to create accessible training programs that offer: Place-based agroecology principles.
- d.** Support entrepreneurs in starting and managing agricultural operations.
- e.** Leverage existing state and regional programs.
- f.** Integrate advanced agricultural technologies within high schools and community colleges, with the long-term goal of fostering collaboration with the UC/Cal State system (e.g., Center for Excellence).
- g.** Partner with local organizations to provide hands-on learning experiences in agriculture-related fields.
- h.** Work with school districts to add the 'Ag in the Classroom' program.
- i.** Identify accessible funding opportunities for new farmers and ranchers.

ACTION STEP 2

Develop an implementation plan for regional composting systems and facilities to supply farmers and ranchers with local compost to support regenerative agriculture.

- a.** Create an inventory, needs assessment, and gap analysis of regional food waste processing sites, collection and management businesses, and end-user demand.
- b.** Work with local governments to plan for the expiration of SB1383 exemption on December 31, 2026, the State mandate that requires a reduction of food waste heading to the landfill and requires it to be recovered as part of an Edible Food Recovery System, fed to animals, or composted.
- c.** Determine the strategy, investment, infrastructure, workforce, and capacity needed to comply with SB1363 and avoid passing on additional fees to ratepayers.
- d.** Work with local governments, small business technical assistance providers, Community Colleges, California Alliance for Community Composting, and Workforce Development Boards to ensure support for an emerging composting sector.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY	1	2	3
ACTION STEP	1	2	1
Organization Name			
4-H			PC
Bishop Paiute Tribe's Food Sovereignty Program		PC	
Cattle Council	PC		
Conservation Organizations	PC		
County Agricultural Commissioners	PC		
Eastern Sierra Council of Governments	PC		
Farmers	PC		
Farmers Markets	PC		
Federal Land Management Agencies	PC		
Future Farmers of America			PC
Land Trusts	PC		
Local and Tribal Food Sovereignty Programs	PC		
Local Government Agencies	PC		
Local Land Management Agencies	PC		
Public and Private Landowners	PC		
Ranchers	PC		
Resource Conservation District	PC		
Sacramento State Agriculture Departments	PC		
SJF Agriculture and Food System Industry Sector Working Group	L		
Slow Food Network	PC		
State Land Management Agencies	PC		
Tribal Organizations	PC		
University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources	PC		

Legend

- L** Lead
- PC** Potential Collaborator

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Community Healthcare



The Post-Acute Care Unit of the Northern Inyo Healthcare District is one of the facilities available in the Region to individuals needing medical care.

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

- › Residents can access training and enter high-quality healthcare jobs in the region via established pathways.
- › All residents have comprehensive, affordable, quality healthcare.
- › The healthcare industry can source local skilled talent, minimizing reliance on out-of-region contract workers.

A Healthier Future for the Sierra

SECTOR DEFINITION

The Community Healthcare sector focuses on ensuring the region's residents' access to high-quality jobs in a stable or growing healthcare sector while breaking down healthcare barriers and addressing access challenges in our rural, remote region. It ensures the region has sufficient healthcare resources, including facilities, providers, and services. Investing in healthcare infrastructure, expanding workforce development programs, and enhancing services can ensure equitable healthcare for all, including tribal members, isolated communities, and disinvested youth.

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

While healthcare represents approximately 9.3% of regional employment, the SFJ region employs roughly 40% fewer healthcare workers as a percentage of total workers than statewide averages. This indicates a need and opportunity to grow high-road jobs in the region with suitable investment, training, and support. In addition to training, the region needs investment in new treatment facilities, medical transportation, and long-term resident care options.

BY THE NUMBERS

SECTOR LOCATION QUOTIENT

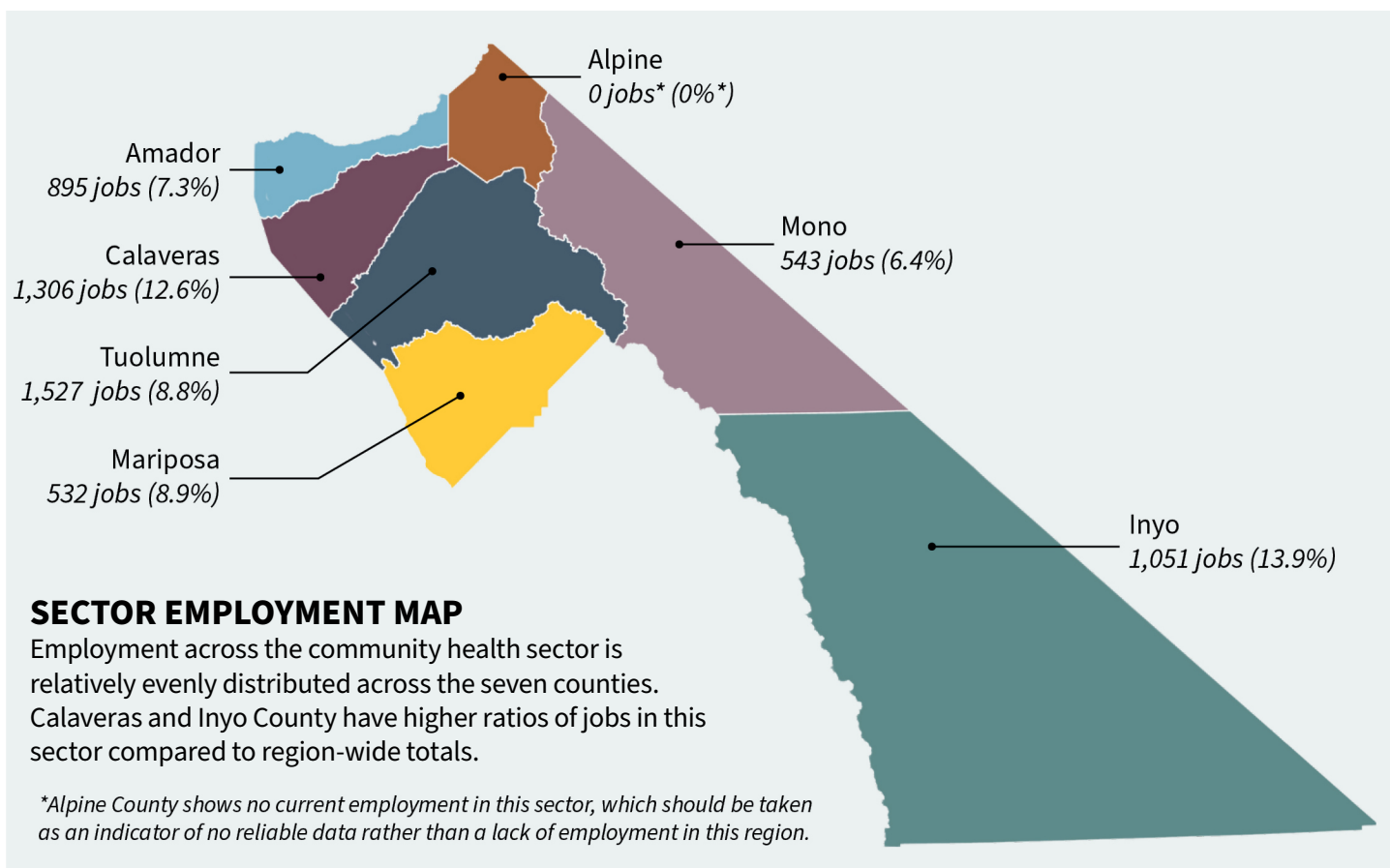
0.66

An LQ of 0.66 shows that the region employs fewer healthcare sector workers than the Statewide average, indicating additional growth opportunities to support rural healthcare needs.

2023 TOTAL SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN REGION

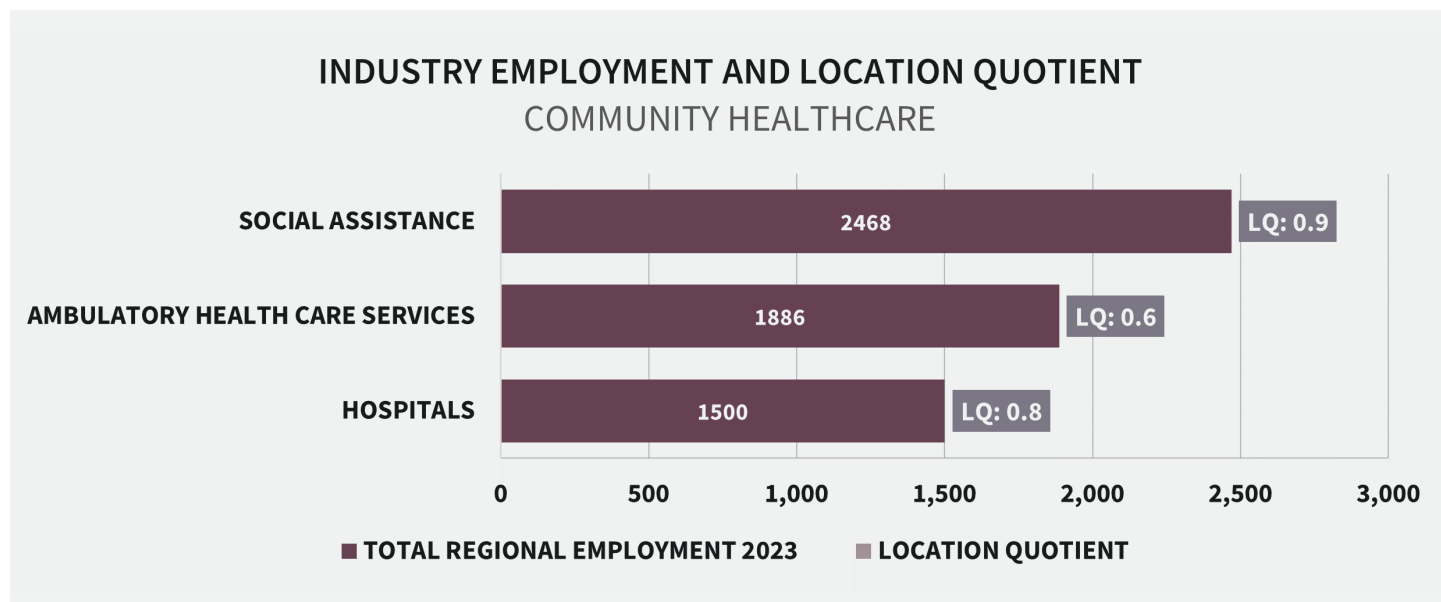
5,854 jobs and 9.3%

The demand for healthcare services is generally more consistent with population numbers and demographics, so employment numbers should fluctuate with regional growth and existing service needs.



SECTOR INDUSTRY LOCATION QUOTIENT AND EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

▼ This graph shows regional employment numbers and location quotients, sorted by highest total employment. The LQ compares the concentration of an industry within a specific area, such as the Sierra, to the concentration of that industry in a larger geography, such as the State. These numbers help identify the regional economy's specifics and provide essential data for strategy development and long-term investment. Employment distributed across hospital workers, ambulatory healthcare, and social assistance services reflects the need and where existing infrastructure exists throughout the region.



SECTOR RATIONALE

VALUE CHAIN AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Investments in this sector will strengthen the community's well-being, create high-quality jobs, and address rural healthcare needs, particularly the lack of services presented by the region's rurality. Specific infrastructure investments to grow this sector include facility improvements, transportation enhancements, technology investments, training programs, and workforce housing.

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Investments in the community healthcare sector promote collaboration between academic institutions for healthcare research and innovation (including sharing/transferring technology), incubating healthcare businesses, encouraging public-private partnerships to drive healthcare innovation and investment, expanding telehealth services, engaging communities in healthcare innovation initiatives to ensure relevance and impact, and securing funding for innovative healthcare projects.

OCCUPATIONS AND WAGES

Unlike other industry sectors, occupational codes are more defined for healthcare services, so the data and analysis represented here are likely more reflective of on-the-ground wages and specific occupations. An analysis of this data highlights the following key findings:

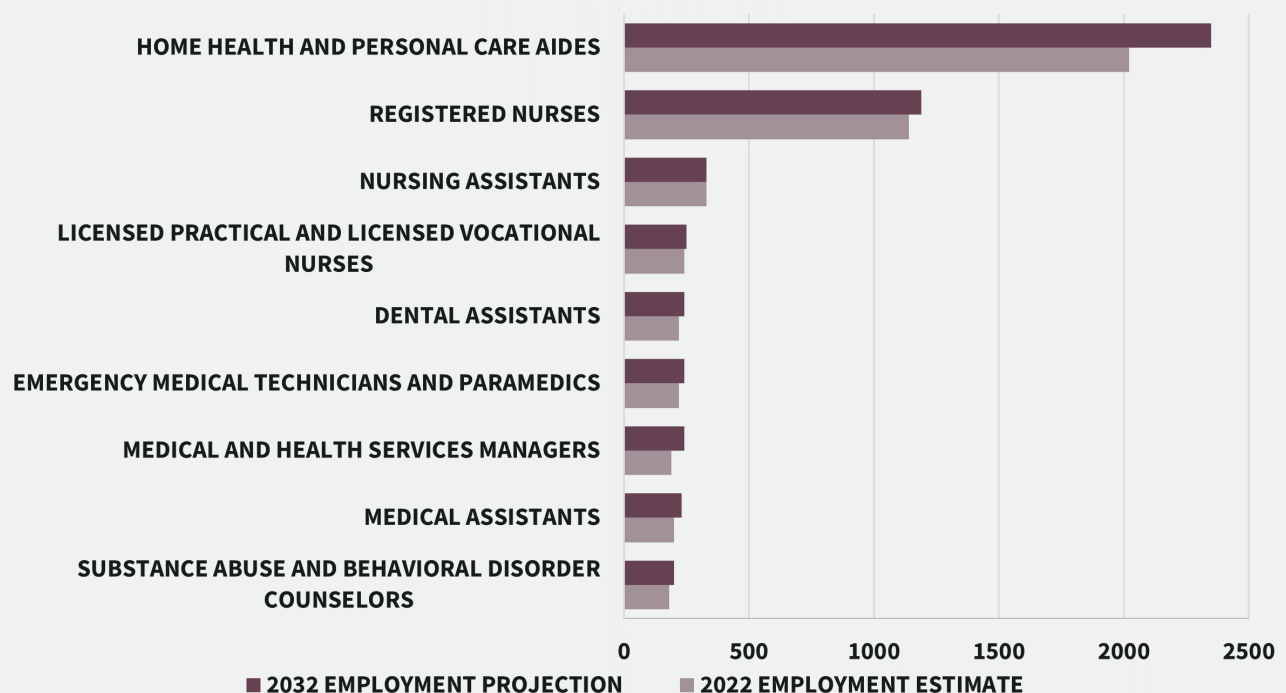
- This industry sector represents a wide range of median annual wages, with salaries ranging from the low \$30,000 range to upward of \$150,000, indicating a variety of jobs within this industry sector, many of which are quality jobs for the region.
- The industry is projected to grow by approximately 9.6 percent by 2030, representing an increase of 650 jobs

region-wide.

- Employment opportunities in the community health sector range from minimally trained home healthcare workers to jobs requiring a bachelor's, graduate, or post-secondary degree. Providing additional education and training opportunities throughout the region could enable more people to work in this sector and support higher wage opportunities.
- Top-paying jobs in this sector require internships or residencies before entering various occupational roles.

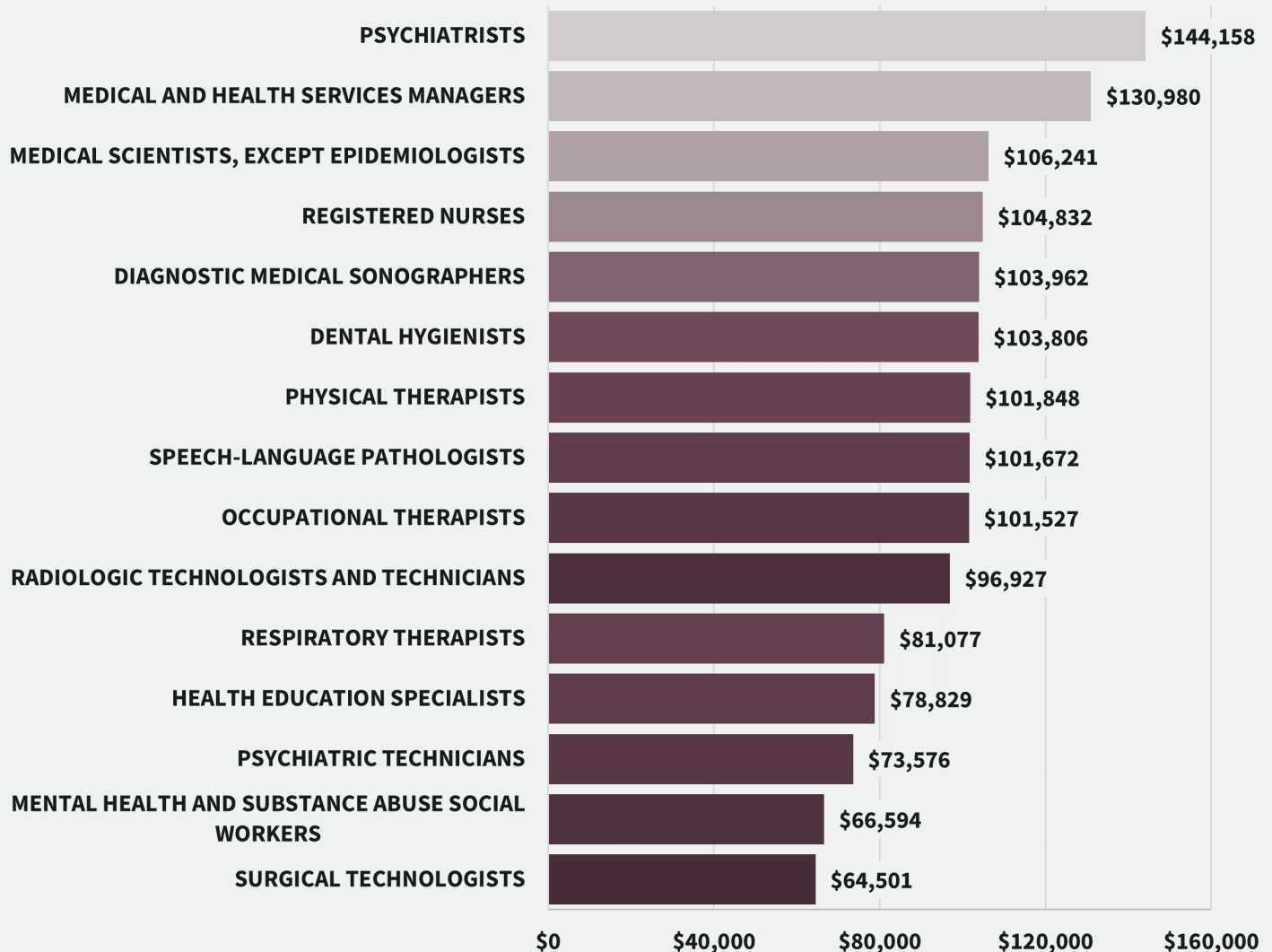
OCCUPATION ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS

COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE



▲ The graph above shows the occupations projected to have the most employment by 2032 in the sector.

OCCUPATION MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE



▲ The graph above shows the top-earning occupations in the sector based on median annual wage.

REGIONAL ASSETS

The region boasts several assets that support the community healthcare sector:

- **Educational Institutions:** Community colleges like Columbia College offer healthcare training programs.
- **Healthcare Facilities:** Seven hospitals, including Level III and IV Trauma Centers, provide various services.
- **Telehealth Providers:** Existing telehealth infrastructure supports remote care delivery.
- **Community Organizations:** Organizations like Mother Lode Job Training collaborate to address healthcare workforce needs.

- **Natural Resources:** The region's natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities attract healthcare professionals seeking a high quality of life.
- **Public Health Agencies:** County health departments and organizations provide essential services and support.
- **Tribal Health Services:** Partnerships with tribal health organizations enhance healthcare access for Native American communities.
- **Innovation Partnerships:** Collaboration with entities like the Toiyabe Indian Health Project fosters innovative healthcare solutions.

OPPORTUNITIES

The community healthcare sector offers numerous growth opportunities, focusing on improving access, training, and infrastructure:

- **Expand Training Programs:** Collaborate with community colleges to offer healthcare certifications and degrees, increasing local talent.
- **Telehealth Expansion:** Enhance telehealth services to reach remote areas, ensuring all residents can access specialist care.
- **Facility Upgrades:** Invest in upgrading existing healthcare facilities to provide comprehensive services, including mental health and long-term care.
- **Public Health Campaigns:** Implement health promotion and disease prevention programs to educate the community and reduce healthcare costs.
- **Mobile Health Services:** Develop mobile health units to serve isolated and underserved populations, improving access to essential care.
- **Partnerships:** Strengthen partnerships between healthcare providers, educational institutions, and community organizations to align resources and improve service delivery.
- **Innovative Care Models:** Explore shared resource models and collaborative agreements to maximize healthcare delivery efficiency.
- **Workforce Housing:** Invest in affordable housing for healthcare workers to attract and retain talent in the region.

CHALLENGES/RISKS

The community healthcare sector faces several core challenges and risks:

- **Workforce Shortages:** Address the shortage of healthcare professionals through targeted recruitment and training programs.
- **Funding Constraints:** Secure sustainable funding for facility upgrades, training programs, and public health initiatives.
- **Geographic Barriers:** Overcome geographic isolation and transportation issues that limit access to healthcare services.
- **Healthcare Disparities:** Address disparities in healthcare access and outcomes, particularly for low-income and minority populations.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Ensure compliance with healthcare regulations and standards to maintain service quality and safety.
- **Technological Barriers:** Invest in technology infrastructure to support telehealth and electronic health records.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage communities in healthcare planning and decision-making to ensure services meet their needs.
- **Environmental Risks:** Mitigate the impact of climate change and natural disasters on healthcare infrastructure and service delivery.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS

The region must invest in healthcare infrastructure, expand workforce development programs, and enhance access to healthcare services to create high-quality jobs, reduce reliance on out-of-region workers, and improve community health.

JOB QUALITY AND ACCESS

Investments in community healthcare can create new high-quality jobs by expanding healthcare facilities and services, retaining existing jobs through improved working conditions and training, and enhancing job quality with career advancement opportunities. Tailored training programs and inclusive recruitment practices can create equitable access to quality jobs, promoting regional economic stability.

EQUITY

Community healthcare investments directly benefit disinvested communities by improving access to essential healthcare services and creating job opportunities. By focusing on historically marginalized groups, such as tribal members and low-income residents, these investments ensure that healthcare improvements address these communities' unique needs and interests, fostering inclusion and engagement in economic development initiatives.

CLIMATE

The community healthcare industry can mitigate environmental impacts by adopting sustainable practices and facilities, reducing the carbon footprint of healthcare operations. Additionally, enhancing healthcare services addresses climate-related health needs, such as respiratory issues from wildfire smoke, ensuring disinvested communities are resilient to climate change effects. Sustainable infrastructure investments also support long-term environmental and public health.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Community healthcare will address talent recruitment through partnerships with local educational institutions and training programs. Strategic collaborations between businesses, schools, and workforce boards will align skills with job opportunities, ensuring a well-trained healthcare workforce. Mitigation efforts will include retraining programs for incumbent workers and ensuring high-road jobs are maintained, supporting workers' transitions, and preventing job displacement.

Advocacy Campaign

Strategy 1: Develop a shared rural California advocacy campaign to increase funding and access to rural healthcare (particularly for low-income and disinvested communities) and increase region-wide awareness of local health needs and wellness initiatives.

ACTION STEP 1

Establish the SJF Community Healthcare Industry Sector Working Group. SJF Industry Sector Navigator staff will provide support.

- a. Collaborate with partners to raise awareness and provide education within communities about disease prevention, wellness initiatives, and outdoor exercise activities.
- b. Evaluate students' mental health challenges in schools and work with educators, counselors, and mental health professionals to develop comprehensive strategies for addressing these needs within the school environment.
- c. Identify gaps in healthcare needs by county and subregion, such as limited access to long-term care facilities, comprehensive reproductive health, and behavioral health services.
- d. Plan and implement a public health campaign to enhance healthcare accessibility in the region.

ACTION STEP 2

Identify gaps in healthcare needs for the Sierra region, such as limited access to long-term care facilities, comprehensive reproductive health, and behavioral health services.

- a. Summarize existing healthcare challenges and assets in the Sierra region.

ACTION STEP 3

Align with other California rural regions to develop a shared understanding of rural healthcare challenges and opportunities.

- a. Reach out to other rural regions through existing networks and relationships.
- b. Develop shared rural healthcare issues and share them with essential partners.
- c. Engage RCRC and UCSF for follow-up implementation steps related to their Rural Healthcare study.

ACTION STEP 4

Market existing and new public health, awareness, and education campaigns, including wellness initiative.

- a. Identify partners who provide health and wellness education in the region.
- b. Identify regional mass media, organizational, and other communication channels to distribute health awareness information and champions to lead efforts.
- c. Ensure all materials are translated and distributed through culturally appropriate channels.

ACTION STEP 5

Evaluate students' mental health challenges in schools and work with educators, counselors, and mental health professionals to develop comprehensive strategies for addressing these needs within the school environment.

- a. Create an early intervention action plan for at-risk youth.

Upskilling and Upward Mobility

Strategy 2: Create upskilling and upward mobility pathways for local workers to move into high-wage healthcare jobs, lowering dependency on out-of-area workers.

ACTION STEP 1

Expand community college offerings to include nursing and healthcare certification programs to meet the growing demand for healthcare workers.

- a. Audit existing community college offerings.
- b. Identify partnerships between community colleges and healthcare partners to develop new certificate programs.
- c. Market existing certificate programs across the region.
- d. Expand funding for on-campus housing at community colleges to support regional training needs to provide access to those requiring more reliable transportation or are too far from the campus to attend daily.
- e. Consider boot camp or residency-style training to reduce the housing burden on students and faculty.

ACTION STEP 2

Expand and expedite educational offerings related to a broad spectrum of healthcare careers.

- a. Focus educational offerings on existing workforce gaps.
- b. Expand funding for supportive services to ensure student success in training completion and subsequent employment (tools, clothing, books, childcare, etc.). (See social infrastructure foundational element section.)

ACTION STEP 3

Enhance and expand high school career technical education pathways focusing on healthcare professions to provide early exposure and training opportunities.

- a. Audit existing high school career technical education pathways across the region.
- b. Develop partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and healthcare institutions to identify career technical education pathways and certificate opportunities for high school students.

ACTION STEP 4

Identify and develop talent pipelines and foster partnerships between the healthcare industry and secondary schools.

- a. Convene healthcare and postsecondary partners
- b. Audit existing higher education healthcare offerings.
- c. Audit existing job shadowing/internships and other on-the-job learning opportunities at healthcare agencies and institutions.
- d. Amplify career outreach to recruit interested students.

ACTION STEP 5

Incentivize healthcare worker certification programs to attract more individuals to pursue careers in healthcare.

- a. Identify funding sources to support the completion of certificate programs.

Cost Saving Models

Strategy 3: Address facility shortages using cost-saving models like shared resources, collaborative agreements between healthcare providers, mobile health promoting co-location, or creative facility use, such as using a high school at night for a community college training program.

ACTION STEP 1

Develop specific partnerships for access to highly specialized care needs, such as cancer and behavioral health.

- a. Convene healthcare partners to review data findings in gaps in specialized services.
- b. Explore models to provide shared healthcare services to meet regional gaps.

ACTION STEP 2

Establishing Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs) and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) will promote collaboration between counties and healthcare facilities. This collective effort will improve mental health services and share resources for regional specialty care, ensuring all patients have access to necessary care.

- a. Convene local governments to explore the JPA model.
- b. Research best practices for shared governance healthcare models.
- c. Research best practices for collaborative health models, including co-location of services, shared funding models, and creative shared facility use (such as using a high school at night for a community college training program).

ACTION STEP 3

Expand mobile health and support services to reach underserved rural areas and populations with limited access to healthcare facilities, particularly on the East side.

- a. Identify high-priority areas of need where mobile services would be most beneficial.
- b. Identify partners and funding sources to provide mobile services.
- c. Market mobile service offerings and ensure all materials are translated and shared through culturally competent communication channels.

ACTION STEP 4

Identify and develop talent pipelines and foster partnerships between the healthcare industry and secondary schools.

- a. Convene healthcare and postsecondary partners.
- b. Audit existing community colleges, the University of California, and California State University healthcare offerings.
- c. Audit existing job shadowing/internships and other on-the-job learning opportunities at healthcare agencies and institutions.
- d. Amplify career outreach to recruit interested students.

ACTION STEP 5

Explore the benefits and challenges of integrating tribal cultural practices into modern healthcare and how traditional knowledge can best serve diverse community needs in mainstream healthcare.

- a. Convene tribal organizations and healthcare providers to identify partnership opportunities.
- b. Build and expand tribal health networks to serve tribal and non-tribal community members.

ACTION STEP 6

Identify philanthropic or public funding to build and sustain innovative collaboration amongst service providers.

- a. Collaborate with local government and healthcare institutions to understand funding opportunities and gaps.

Potential Collaborators

STRATEGY
ACTION STEP
Organization Name

	1	3	1				2					3		
	5	2	1	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3
California Community Colleges											PC			
California Higher Education Organizations										PC	PC			
Cerro Coso Community College							PC							
Certification Program Providers							PC							
Chambers of Commerce					PC									
Child Care Coordinating Councils								PC						
Columbia Community College							PC							
Community Colleges							PC	PC	PC	PC				
Community Health Organizations			PC		PC	PC								
Community-Based Organizations					PC									PC
County Behavioral Health Organizations						PC								
County Offices of Education									PC	PC				
Eastern Sierra Council of Governments		PC					L	L						
Family Resource Centers														PC
Healthcare Agencies									PC	PC	PC			
Healthcare Organizations														
Healthcare Partners							PC	PC					PC	
Healthcare Providers												PC		PC
Healthcare Providers and Facilities			PC	PC		PC								
High Schools							PC	PC						
Lake Tahoe Community College							PC							
Local Government Agencies Responsible for Healthcare Access			PC			PC								
Local Government Public Health					L									
Local Governments	PC	PC		PC									PC	
Local Health and Human Service Departments				PC										
Local Media Partners					PC									
Mobile Health Service Providers			PC			PC								
Modesto College							PC							
Mother Lode Job Training Center							LPC	L						
Planned Parenthood National			PC			PC								
Regional Healthcare Associations												PC		
Rural County Representatives of California				PC										
San Joaquin College							PC							
School Districts					PC									
Secondary Schools							PC							
Service Clubs					PC									
Shasta College							PC							
Sierra College							PC							
SJF Community Healthcare Industry Sector Working Group				L										
Specialty Care Clinics												PC		
Telehealth Service Providers			PC			PC								
Tribal Healthcare Organizations			PC	PC		PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC		
Tribal Organizations													PC	
University of California San Francisco Rural Health				PC										
Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority	PC	PC												
Western Nevada College							PC							
Workforce Development Agencies									PC	PC	PC			

Potential collaborator suggestions were identified through community outreach sessions and public review of this document and will be codified and/or expanded upon during the implementation of action steps.

Chapter 5

Next Steps

A Path Forward



Workshop participants, including Uriah Martinez, Miss Bishop Paiute Tribe, review key issues to the region.

The Sierra region is poised to sustain the partnerships and governance structure of the SJF Collaborative beyond the California Jobs First initiative. This continuity is crucial for fostering community-led, climate-forward planning and economic development. The plan emphasizes building on the capacity developed over the past two years, applying lessons learned, and evolving the collaborative structure to oversee and implement the Strategic Plan's strategies. The goal is to maintain readiness to leverage and attract resources that create high-quality jobs.

BUILD UPON CURRENT COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE

The initial two years of the SJF Collaborative aimed to support a broad-based, inclusive planning process. This

structure was designed to involve communities traditionally excluded from planning processes, support existing regional efforts, and develop a unified regional voice, vision, and strategies. Key efforts included:

- › **Community Champions and Partners:** Identifying and convening community champions and partners to develop high-quality jobs.
- › **Inclusive Collaborative Structure:** Creating a multi-layered collaborative structure to gather voices from across the Sierra region, fostering information sharing, relationship building, issue understanding, and solution identification for resilient economies.
- › **Governance Codification:** Establishing a collaborative governance structure through membership agreements, shared values, and guiding principles. The structure includes a Governance Council (formerly HRTC) and subcommittees.



Continued community engagement will be a key part of the region's progress toward a sustainable, prosperous future.

APPLY LESSONS LEARNED

The SJF Collaborative marked the first time many partners across the Sierra region came together for a shared planning process. Key lessons learned include:

- › **Geographic and Infrastructure Challenges:** The region's broad geography, impassable roads, and broadband issues impact virtual collaboration.
- › **Time Investment:** Building a collective voice and strong collaboration takes time.

› **Localized Strategies:** Some strategies work better locally; what works on the east side may not work on the west side, and vice versa.

› **Inclusion of Diverse Voices:** Subcommittees ensure a wide range of voices, including tribal organizations, businesses, and local governments, are included in the planning process.

EVOLVE THE COLLABORATIVE

As the Collaborative evolves, it will continue to provide engagement opportunities for community members, partners, and governing bodies. In addition, it will provide tools, resources, and capacity to support collaborative efforts and partnerships, including facilitation support, MOUs, and partner agreements. To leverage current and future opportunities to create community-led, climate-forward economies, the Collaborative will also continue to develop the capacity to mobilize quickly.

Driving and overseeing strategies to create high-quality jobs will remain critical to the Collaborative's success, as will applying a regional collective vision and voice for the Sierra region to advocate for its needs. By providing an inclusive space for diverse voices, the Collaborative can ensure that efforts on flagship projects propel the region forward, attract talent, and expand the workforce.



During a workshop, participants brainstorm ideas related to the clean energy and energy resiliency sector.

SUSTAIN THE COLLABORATIVE

To sustain the Collaborative, initial resources include backbone support for convening, coordinating, and organizing all meetings, including the Governance Council, Regional Steering Committees, and subcommittees. Compensation to build collaborative capacity, including stipends for participants with lived experience expertise, is also necessary.

The Collaborative's vision includes developing engagement opportunities for communities and stakeholders during and beyond the Catalyst Pre-Development and Implementation Phases. Meetings are already scheduled with industry partners,

subcommittees, and governing entities to continue these engagement opportunities through the summer of 2026.

Standing agenda items in future meetings will solicit input and feedback and identify collaborative opportunities.

Through these efforts, the SJF Collaborative aims to institutionalize community-led, climate-forward planning, ensuring that the Sierra region thrives with high-quality jobs, resilient economies, and a collective vision for a sustainable future.

EMERGING NEXT STEPS

CREATE AN ENDURING SYSTEM OF COLLABORATION WITHIN THE REGION

- Identify regional champions and bring on Industry Sector Coordinators who can help implement these strategies and develop projects.
- Establish new partnerships within the Collaborative to strengthen project competitiveness.
- Empower the Governing Council to lead the region by codifying governance structure and taking ownership of initiatives.
- Recruit more local leaders to the process and educate the community on workforce needs.

EXPLORE FUNDING SYNERGIES

- Identify existing and new funding opportunities to complement upcoming Catalyst and Implementation dollars.

IDEATE AND REVISIT

- Update the region's strategies and priorities on an ongoing and as-needed basis.
- Proceed with a nimble and dynamic approach to reassess and address the region's changing needs.

Appendices

The background of the page is composed of several large, overlapping geometric shapes defined by white diagonal lines. The top-left area is a medium blue triangle. The top-right area is a greyish-purple triangle. The middle-right area is a dark teal triangle. The bottom-left area is a large yellow triangle. The bottom-right area is a light grey triangle. The bottom-most area is a tan triangle.

Glossary

The following terms are commonly used in this Plan and in the California Jobs First program.

BIOECONOMY

While it has many definitions, the bioeconomy uses renewable, nature-based resources — like plants, micro-organisms, and even certain types of waste — to produce food, materials, energy, and more. The bioeconomy aims to create a more sustainable ecosystem that can address some of our world's biggest challenges. This includes food security, climate change, sustainable development, and natural resource use.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The process of strengthening local coordination, leadership, knowledge, skills, expertise, and access to resources in communities to help develop or increase the ability of that community to organize or access inclusive economic planning efforts, access funds, or implement projects in the future. Capacity-building activities include but are not limited to, identifying and planning for economic transitions in a given region and the tools and resources to plan inclusively for a region's economic future.

CARBON NEUTRALITY

The point at which the removal of carbon pollution from the atmosphere meets or exceeds emissions.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION (CBO)

A public or private nonprofit organization of demonstrated effectiveness that represents a community or significant segments of a community and provides educational or related services to individuals in the community.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC RESILIENCE FUND (CERF)

Now known as California Jobs First, CERF was created to promote a

sustainable and equitable recovery from the economic distress of COVID-19 by supporting new plans and strategies to diversify local economies and develop sustainable and resilient industries that create high-quality, broadly accessible jobs for all Californians.

FISCAL AGENT

The organization responsible for the disbursement of funds from the State. The Fiscal Agent prepares and submits the California Jobs First Solicitation for Proposal and ensures compliance with program guidelines.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The 2007 Declaration of Nyéléni defines food sovereignty as “the right to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound methods, prioritizing the needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food over market demands.”

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (CDFI)

CDFIs are mission-driven financial institutions that create economic opportunities for individuals and small businesses, provide quality affordable housing, and provide essential community services in the United States. CDFIs can be registered as a federal or State agency and operate within the boundaries of their charter. Source: Office of the Comptroller of the Currency

COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION (CCA)

CCA—also known as municipal aggregation—programs allow local governments to procure power on behalf of their residents, businesses, and municipal accounts from an alternative supplier while still receiving transmission and distribution services from their existing utility provider. CCAs are an attractive option for communities that want more local control over their electricity sources,

more green power than the default utility offers, and/or lower electricity prices. By aggregating demand, communities gain leverage to negotiate better rates with competitive suppliers and choose greener power sources. Source: U.S. EPA

DISINVESTED COMMUNITY

To view a copy of the Sierra Region Disinvested Community Map go here: <https://sierrajobsfirst.org/disinvested-communities/>

A disinvested community is defined at the State level by the California Jobs First program according to the following criteria:

- › Census tracts identified as disadvantaged by the California Environmental Protection Agency.
- › Census tracts with median household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with the median household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development's list of State income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093 of the California Health and Safety Code.
- › A high poverty area and a high unemployment area as designated by the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, California Competes Tax Credit Program.
- › California Native American Tribes, as defined by the Native American Heritage
- › Commission (NAHC) Tribal Consultation Policy.

While the SJF Collaborative has contributed additional factors that determine disinvestment and challenges presented by communities in this region, the above parameters set by the State of California determine the scope of this project and the minimum criteria that will be used for the Catalyst project identification process moving forward.

EQUITY

Prioritizing equity requires identifying how the benefits and burdens of economic development, regional planning, and other relevant processes are distributed in and across communities. Equity includes “leveling the playing field” by identifying and remediating systemic barriers facing specific groups. It requires identifying present-day disparities and confronting the planning, development, and decision-making processes that keep existing barriers in place and perpetuate historical injustices. For California Jobs First, equity means that California Jobs First Regions share the benefits and burdens of the California Jobs First Phase 1 process across all affected urban and rural communities, with targeted efforts to reach historically excluded populations and members of disinvested communities. Identifying constituent aspects of equity can help focus efforts to achieve better outcomes.

- **Economic Equity:** All people of the State, regardless of race, gender, or nativity, can contribute to and access the opportunities for a strong, resilient economy.
- **Environmental Equity:** All people of the State have equal protection from the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change impacts and equal access to natural resources and recreation opportunities in a clean, healthy environment.
- **Health Equity:** All people of the State have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives. Focusing efforts on achieving health equity can lead to significant progress in addressing the impacts of climate change, economic disruptions, and other aspects of economic recovery and transition.

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

These elements were determined by the Collaborative and through the analysis in the Regional Summary Plan: Part I. Foundational Elements are systemic challenges facing the Sierra region that must be addressed to move strategies forward. The Foundation Elements identified

include:

- Workforce Development and Education
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship
- Physical Infrastructure
- Land Use and Tenure
- Social and Civic Infrastructure
- Housing and Placemaking

HIGH ROAD

The term “High Road” is defined at the State level by the California Jobs First program as a set of economic and workforce development strategies to achieve economic growth, economic equity, shared prosperity, and a clean environment. The strategies include, but are not limited to, interventions that: (1) improve job quality and job access, including for women and people from underserved and underrepresented populations; (2) meet the skill and profitability needs of employers; (3) meet the economic, social, and environmental needs of the community. Source: California Unemployment Insurance Code

HIGH-QUALITY JOBS

Job quality varies across industries, occupations, and regions. Indicators of high-quality jobs include family-sustaining wages, clearly defined routes to advancement into higher wage jobs, benefits (like paid sick and vacation), adequate hours and predictable schedules, access to training, occupational health and safety, worker representation or right to organize, and no employer or subcontractor record of wage theft or other violations of labor law. High-quality jobs bring sustainable income to the region.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

An inclusive economy offers expanded opportunities for more broadly shared prosperity, especially for those facing the greatest barriers to improving well-being. Inclusive economies are equitable, participatory, growing, sustainable, and stable. Inclusive practices expand opportunities for historically underrepresented or disinvested groups to participate in, consult on, and make decisions about the California Jobs First planning process and share in

California Jobs First's outcomes.

INDUSTRY SECTOR

An industry sector is a geographic concentration or emerging concentration of interdependent industries with direct service, supplier, research relationships, or independent sectors that share common resources in a given regional economy or labor market.

LOCATION QUOTIENT

Location quotients compare the concentration of an industry within a specific area to the concentration of that industry nationwide (or, in the case of this report, to California statewide). If an LQ is equal to 1, then the industry has the same share of its area employment as it does in the State. An LQ greater than 1 indicates an industry with a more significant share of the local area employment than statewide. For example, Las Vegas will have an LQ greater than 1 in the leisure and hospitality industry because this industry makes up a larger share of the total employment of Las Vegas than it does for the nation as a whole. Regional industry sector location quotients were calculated against California statewide employment numbers.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

A Memorandum of Understanding is a legally binding agreement between two or more parties that outlines each party's responsibilities under the agreement.

REGIONAL CONVENER

The lead organization is tasked with organizing an inclusive group of regional stakeholders to form the Collaboratives and, with the Fiscal Agent, implement the planning grant in its region. The regional convener is responsible for compliance with state program guidelines.

RESILIENCE

Through a triple-bottom-line approach that simultaneously elevates this region's economic, environmental, and community needs, SJF prioritizes supporting strong local economies and small businesses, increasing regional resilience to

the consequences of climate change, and addressing rural issues in the Sierra.

SIERRA JOBS FIRST COLLABORATIVE (SJF)

To ensure regional representation in the California Jobs First process, the State was divided into thirteen separate regions, each with its own process and governance. SJF is the Collaborative representing the Sierra region, comprising the seven counties of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne. The SJF Collaborative process is led by the appointed convener SBC, a Sierra-based nonprofit organization with a mission to catalyze and demonstrate innovative

approaches and solutions to increase community vitality, economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social fairness in the Sierra Nevada.

SUSTAINABILITY

A concept that emphasizes three pillars: equity, environment, and economy. It focuses on equitable economic development that is self-sustaining and aims at a carbon-neutral economy that addresses the needs of diverse communities, including disinvested communities. Sustainable approaches should decrease reliance on fossil fuels and increase water and/or energy efficiency, aiming to ensure prosperity for generations to come.

TARGET INDUSTRIES

The 2023 SJF Regional Plan Summary looked at data and community input to determine which of the existing industries in the Sierra region are best positioned to create quality, high-paying jobs. The five key industry sectors listed below were determined to drive the Sierra economy and offer the strongest pathway to equitable job creation.

- › Sustainable Recreation and Tourism
- › Natural and Working Lands
- › Clean Energy and Energy Resilience
- › Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
- › Community Healthcare



Appendix		Alignment with State Strategies																		
		Foundational Element Strategies:																		
		Housing & Placemaking		Land Use & Tenure			Physical Infrastructure			Small Business & Entrepreneurship			Social & Civic Infrastructure			Workforce Development & Education				
		Strategy Number.																		
CATEGORY OF STATE PROGRAM	STATE PROGRAM ALIGNMENT:	1	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
Workforce Development	California Workforce Development Board: High Road Training Partnerships (HRTPS)																			
	California School Dashboard - College/Career Indicators (CCI) - Work-Based Learning Measures																			
	State of California K-16 Collaborative																			
Apprenticeships and Community Colleges	Road to 500,000 Apprentices																			
	California Apprenticeship Initiative																			
	Vision 2030: California Community Colleges																			
Small Business	Future of Work Commission																			
	California Small Business Loan Match																			
	CalOBSA Inclusive Innovation Hub																			
Health	Master Plan for Early Learning and Care																			
	CalHHS: Healthy California for All																			
Emergency Management	2024 State Emergency Plan																			
	Disaster Relief: I-Bank, Treasurer's Office, SBA																			
	State of California Middle Mile Broadband Initiative																			
Climate	30 x 30 Strategy (EO N-82-20) + 2022 - Assembly Bill 1757 (García, Cristina)																			
	California's Nature-Based Solutions - Climate Targets Plan																			
	2022 California's Natural and Working Lands (NWL) Climate Smart Strategy																			
	Water Resilience Portfolio																			
	2022 CARB Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality																			
	2021 Climate Adaptation Strategy																			
Transportation	Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI)																			
	CEQA SB 743: Transportation Impacts																			
	Strategic Growth Council's programs (such as Transformative Climate Communities)																			
Housing	Statewide Housing Plan																			
	Prohousing Designation Program																			

Appendix		Alignment with State Strategies																	
		Target Industry Strategies																	
		Sustainable Recreation & Tourism				Natural & Working Lands		Clean Energy & Energy Resilience					Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems			Community Healthcare			
		Strategy Number.																	
CATEGORY OF STATE PROGRAM	STATE PROGRAM ALIGNMENT:	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	1	2	3
Workforce Development	California Workforce Development Board: High Road Training Partnerships (HRTPS)																		
	California School Dashboard - College/Career Indicators (CCI) - Work-Based Learning Measures																		
	State of California K-16 Collaborative																		
Apprenticeships and Community Colleges	Road to 500,000 Apprentices																		
	California Apprenticeship Initiative																		
	Vision 2030: California Community Colleges																		
Small Business	Future of Work Commission																		
	California Small Business Loan Match																		
	CalOBSA Inclusive Innovation Hub																		
Health	Master Plan for Early Learning and Care																		
	CalHHS: Healthy California for All																		
Emergency Management	2024 State Emergency Plan																		
	Disaster Relief: I-Bank, Treasurer's Office, SBA																		
	State of California Middle Mile Broadband Initiative																		
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	CEQA SB 743: Transportation Impacts																		
	Strategic Growth Council's programs (such as Transformative Climate Communities)																		
Housing	Statewide Housing Plan																		
	Prohousing Designation Program																		

Data Methodology

Industry Sector Employment and Occupation Data Methodology

This appendix explains the background of and describes the methodology used to determine the employment and occupation data for the five industry sectors of the SJF 2024 Strategic Plan, starting on page 67

Understanding the current regional and county-specific distribution of employment, occupation, and wages is, and will continue to be, an important tool for the SJF Collaborative as it defines policies and strategies that increase quality job growth in the five target industry sectors. The data contained in the 2024 Strategic Plan for the industry sectors and other data in the Plan will continue to be reviewed and updated as part of the ongoing implementation process.

INDUSTRY SECTOR EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATION DATA METHODOLOGY

The data included in the 2024 Strategic Plan for the five industry sectors utilizes an aggregation of statistics from several sources to develop employment estimates across the target industries and identify occupation and wage data as it exists today and projected out to 2030. It is important to note that these five industry sectors are emerging sectors that do not fit traditional sector boundaries and thus require custom analytics and unique ways of identifying employment distribution. New data may become available for this region, highlighting the importance of continued data tracking and conversations with the State and key partners to determine the future of these priority industry sectors.

The following sources were utilized and referenced for industry sector data summaries:

- Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Annual Averages
- Bureau of Labor Statistics 2023, May 2023 National, Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area Occupation Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS)
- U.S. Department of Energy, United States Energy and Employment Report (2023)
- California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division
- Occupational Employment (May 2022 and Wage 2023 – 1st Quarter data, published July 2023)
- JobsEQ Labor Market software, a private data aggregator

FAQ ABOUT NAICS DIGITS

Federal statistical agencies use the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to group businesses into industries based on similarities in how they produce goods or services. It uses a hierarchical system with codes from 2 to 6 digits, providing five levels of detail. The first two digits designate the economic sector, the third digit is the subsector, the fourth is the industry group, the fifth is the specific NAICS industry, and the sixth allows the United States, Canada, and Mexico to provide country-specific details.

REGIONAL AND TARGET INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT TOTALS

The total employment in the Sierra region, representing all private, federal, state, and local jobs across a wide range of industry sectors, is estimated to be between 62,000 and 68,000, depending on the source and additional model assumptions made by the reporting agency. This estimate includes all employment, not only the five highlighted in the SJF Strategic Plan.

For this Strategic Plan, the Strategic Planning team downloaded and combined the 2023 annual average QCEW data for each of the seven counties in the Sierra region into a larger summary table to represent regional employment. When calculated using the highest level of reporting from the NAICS (two-digit level), employment across the region totals 62,655. This NAICS two-digit total is used throughout the 2024 Strategic Plan as a reference for total employment, except for the graph on page 21, which shows the higher projected number of approximately 68,000. The more conservative employment level was used for industry-specific employment percentages.

The SJF Regional Plan Part 1 (Regional Summary), completed in December 2023, identified five target industry sectors through qualitative and quantitative methods to have the greatest opportunity to grow quality jobs in the region. These

DIGGING INTO NAICS CODE DIGITS AND INDUSTRY SECTORS

In an ideal scenario, the Strategic Plan would report industry employment at the six-digit NAICS code level, showing a clearer picture of employment sectors and where jobs might interface with these target sectors.

The Strategic Planning team initially assigned the six-digit codes across the target sectors. However, this analysis returned a total employment of 36,325, representing 58% of estimated regional employment, which was not significant enough to represent employment reliably and descriptively.

Data suppression and the use of three-digit NAICS codes to craft industry subsectors resulted in the need to represent regional and county employment at the three-digit NAICS code level against the two-digit NAICS estimated totals, resulting in slightly lower county and regional percentages than what is likely happening across the region. For instance, Mariposa County likely has jobs in sustainable recreation excluded due to data suppression. However, the county's potentially lower sustainable recreation employment total is still calculated against the more significant regional total to generate percentages. This distinction is important for data integrity but does not influence the regional strategies and recommendations identified in the Strategic Plan.

Based on the experience of analysis for the Sierra regions where data suppression is impacting industry analysis, it should be incumbent upon the State government to properly identify NAICS codes for industry clusters, which in the future should create a collective Statewide effort to streamline further and refine regional economic profiles and summary information.

target industry sectors are included in SJF Regional Plan Part 2 (2024 Strategic Plan):

- Natural and Working Lands
- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
- Community Healthcare
- Clean Energy and Energy Resilience
- Sustainable Recreation and Tourism

These sectors reflect the economic strengths and strategic direction of the Sierra region. However, they also reflect industry groupings with some overlap (e.g., biofuels are both Clean Energy and Natural and Working Lands) and industry

groupings that are not easily isolated from overall employment data. This required the Strategic Plan development team to create a custom approach to assigning employment data across these industry sectors.

Typically, industry analysis of unique and/or emerging industries at the regional level requires analysis at the six-digit NAICS level, as this allows for the greatest amount of specificity in assigning job figures. However, for rural regions like the Sierra, there is significant data suppression at the more detailed level of analysis, so six-digit NAICS code analysis is not possible. Data suppression refers to withholding or removing selected information to protect individual identities, privacy, and personal information.

The total number of jobs reported across the three-digit NAICS codes used as a proxy for industry subsectors shows 55,671 jobs, about 89% of the total regional employment estimate of 62,655 from three-digit codes. This difference of 6,984 jobs in the conversion between two- and three-digit NAICS codes shows the severity of data suppression throughout the region, which is even more severe in the smaller counties such as Alpine County, which has an average two-digit NAICS employment of 782 and an average three-digit NAICS employment of 309.

The Strategic Planning team assigned employment data across the industry sectors at the three-digit NAICS codes to move forward with data analysis despite data suppression issues. These three-digit codes were the best and most accurate approximation for employment for industry subsectors. Methodologies used in other State Economic Summary reports, other Department of Energy reports, and other California regions informed subsector placement into these industry categories. Once assigned three-digit NAICS codes, the data was aggregated at the county and regional level for reporting purposes, as shown in the Target Industries section of the Strategic Plan (pages 67-120).

CLEAN ENERGY AND ENERGY RESILIENCE EMPLOYMENT DATA

Employment numbers represented in the Clean Energy and Energy Resilience industry subsector (pages 91-101) utilize a different data source for showcasing total employment in the target sector. For this area, data published at the County level by the U.S. Department of Energy in the U.S. Energy and Employment Report (2023) were utilized instead of three-digit NAICS codes. The team conducted an analysis using the three-digit NAICS and assigned ratios of those NAICS as not all the employment at the three-digit NAICS is wholly in the energy and resilience sector, nor are all those workers involved in clean energy specifically. The resulting employment picture through this analysis was approximately half of what was identified in the DOE analysis, which utilizes a proprietary and hidden methodology for assigning shares of NAICS.

The Strategic Planning team believes that this U.S.

Department of Energy data is much more representative of actual employment in this subsector compared to the data downloaded from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, primarily because the three-digit NAICS codes that fall into this industry subsector represent many jobs that are not representative of clean energy and energy resilience. In contrast, the Department of Energy data is much more targeted and reflective of employment in energy efficiency-related jobs and clean energy transmission, distribution, and generation-related jobs.

INDUSTRY SECTOR AND SUBSECTOR AND THREE-DIGIT NAICS CODES

The following three-digit NAICS Codes were used to create industry sector employment estimates. These three-digit codes do not perfectly align with the SJF industry sectors, and additional analysis should be conducted using different methodologies to create more specific industry employment estimates for the region. Clean Energy employment data was assessed using a different method, so codes are not listed for that industry subsector. Thirty-four of the 96 three-digit NAICS codes were assigned to the industry sectors, not including clean energy.

NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS

- › 113, Forestry and Logging
- › 114, Fishing, Hunting and Trapping
- › 115, Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry
- › 212, Mining (except Oil and Gas)
- › 321, Wood Product Manufacturing
- › 322, Paper Manufacturing
- › 337, Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing
- › 562, Waste Management and Remediation Services
- › 924, Administration of Environmental Quality Programs
- › 926, Administration of Economic Programs

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

- › 111, Crop Production
- › 112, Animal Production and Aquaculture
- › 311, Food Manufacturing
- › 312, Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing
- › 313, Textile Mills
- › 314, Textile Product Mills
- › 315, Apparel Manufacturing
- › 316, Leather and Allied Product Manufacturing
- › 444, Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers
- › 445, Food and Beverage Retailers

COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

- › 621, Ambulatory Health Care Services

- › 622, Hospitals
- › 623, Nursing and Residential Care Facilities
- › 624, Social Assistance

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION AND TOURISM

- › 458, Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, and Jewelry Retailers
- › 459, Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers
- › 483, Water Transportation
- › 487, Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation
- › 561, Administrative and Support Services
- › 711, Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries
- › 712, Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions
- › 713, Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries
- › 721, Accommodation
- › 722, Food Services and Drinking Places

OCCUPATION AND WAGE DATA FOR INDUSTRY SECTORS

It is difficult to accurately assign occupation and wage data across the five target industry subsectors identified in the Strategic Plan, necessitating the strategic sampling of occupations that primarily fall within each industry category. This sampling does not reflect all employment, so annual wage data is reported as income bands rather than median or average annual incomes for the region.

Occupational titles are reported broadly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as many occupations exist across more than one sector or do not fit within any sector identified in this report. For example, some percentage of the civil engineer occupational title may fall into the clean energy and energy resilience subsector. However, the Strategic Planning team did not feel confident assigning this occupational code to this specific sector for analysis. Because of this data limitation, additional wage and salary market data assessments should be conducted to determine economic development efforts around the target industries.

Some industries, particularly Community Health, have a more extensive sampling of occupational data that falls primarily within the industry subsector. This can be taken as a more representative sample than Natural and Working Lands, which has a much smaller sampling of industry-specific occupational titles.

California's Economic Development Department (EDD) conducts projected occupation growth. The data is updated every two years with an analysis that includes factors such as historical trends and expert knowledge of local economies. More information about how occupational projections are conducted can be found on EDD's Industry Employment Projections Methodology website.

Sources

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State Content Requirements

REGIONAL PLAN PART 2, STATE REQUIREMENTS	LOCATION IN THE SIERRA JOBS FIRST STRATEGIC PLAN (RP2)
1. Vision and Goals Including: Relationship to Regional Plan Part 1, Summary of community input (Required)	Included: See Chapter 1, Chapter 4, Executive Summary
2. Regional Snapshot and SWOT (Recommended)	Included: See Chapter 3
3. Regional Strategies 3a. Target Sector Strategies	Included: See Chapter 4
3a.i Define Sector and Justify Prioritization (Required) 1. Sector Development (trends and projected growth that support quality jobs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clear Local Market Signals b. Value Chain and Infrastructure c. Innovative Ecosystem d. Regional Assets 2. Increasing Economic Diversification and Resilience	Included: See Chapter 4
3a.ii Alignment with Job Quality & Access, Equity, and Climate (Required)	See Chapter 4
3a.iii Workforce Development (Required) Include: How strategies match skills to jobs, address talent and recruitment, and facilitate strategic collaborations, etc.	See Chapter 4
3a.iv Alignment with State Strategies (Required) Includes: How Target Sector Strategies align with state strategies.	See Appendix
3a.v Strategy Implementation (Recommended)	Included: Each of the listed strategies in the Sierra Jobs First Plan includes a set of initial action plan steps.
3b. Sector-Neutral and Economic Mobility Strategies	Included: In the Sierra Jobs First Strategic Plan, we called Sector-Neutral Strategies Foundational Elements. Pages 29-66 outline the Foundational Element Strategies.
3b.i and 3b.i Identify Problem and Opportunity and Assets (Required)	Included: The six Foundational Elements in the Plan include the key challenges, opportunities and assets for each strategy area.
3b.ii Increase Economic Diversification and Resilience (Required)	Included: in each Foundational Element strategy area.

REGIONAL PLAN PART 2, STATE REQUIREMENTS	LOCATION IN THE SIERRA JOBS FIRST STRATEGIC PLAN (RP2)
3b.iii (1-3) Alignment with Job Quality & Access, Equity, and Climate (Required)	Included: In each Foundational Element strategy area.
3b.iv Workforce Development (Required)	Included: In each Foundational Element strategy area.
3b.vi (1) Strategy Implementation (Recommended)	Included: Each of the listed strategies in the Sierra Jobs First Plan includes a set of initial action plan steps.
3c Additional Regional and Community Development Strategies (Recommended) Include: Descriptions of strategies that are critical to building resilient regions and communities but are outside of the scope such as: Housing, Transportation, Food Access and Security, Mental Health Services	Included: The Sierra Jobs First Strategic Plan includes strategies to address Housing, Food Systems and Community Health in the Foundational Elements section of the Plan.
4. A Path Forward: Institutionalizing Community-Led, Climate Forward Planning (Recommended)	Included: See Chapter 5, page 122



About Sierra Business Council

Catalyzing Change in Our Region

SBC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit established in 1994 and has dedicated 30 years to enhancing the Sierra Nevada region through community empowerment, economic development, and environmental stewardship.

As the Regional Convener for the SJF seven-county area, SBC brings collaborators from various sectors to discuss and address key issues. SBC also manages and distributes funds for projects and initiatives that align with the mission of improving community vitality, economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity as the program's Fiscal Agent.

Headquartered in Truckee, California, the organization promotes sustainable regional growth by supporting businesses, tackling rural issues, and addressing climate change. SBC's initiatives include economic empowerment through direct technical assistance and development strategies, climate action programs that enhance energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, and regional advocacy to elevate Sierra's interests in policy discussions.

Notable achievements include collaboration on establishing the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, launching the Sierra Small Business Development Center, and promoting energy resilience and climate planning via the Sierra Nevada Energy Watch.

By integrating economic, environmental, and social impacts, SBC works towards a thriving, resilient Sierra Nevada with diverse economies and restored ecosystems.

