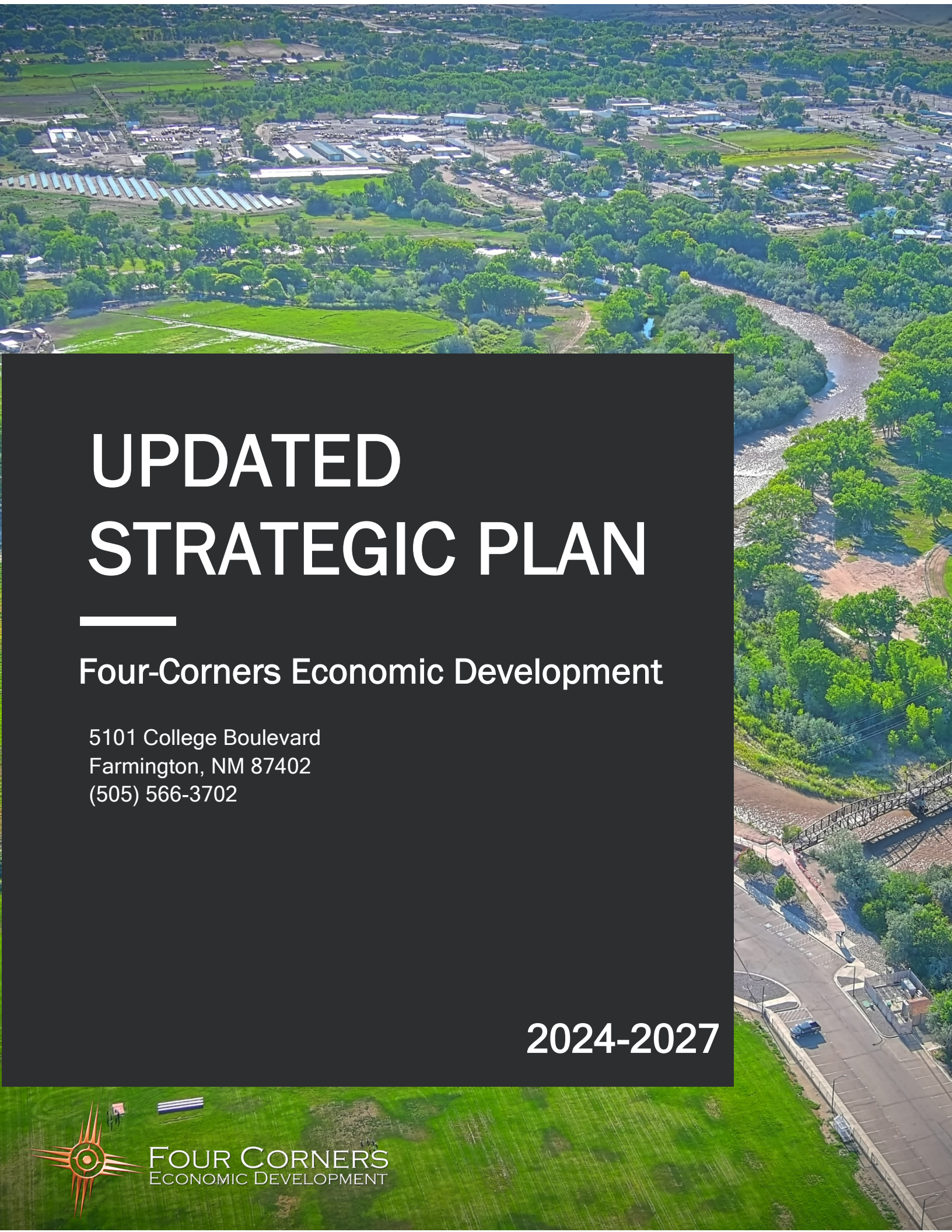




UPDATED STRATEGIC PLAN

Four-Corners Economic Development

5101 College Boulevard
Farmington, NM 87402
(505) 566-3702

2024-2027



INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Most people that visit our community sense that there is something special about this little corner of the world. We have the sunshine of the southwest, the rich colors of the northeast, mountains, lakes, rivers, and the high desert air that invites healing and adventure all at once. We have the amenities and comforts of a big city, but the intimacy, simplicity, and values of a small community.

But it is our people that give life to this land. From the ancient traditions of our indigenous cultures, to the young families just settling in to raise their kids - no other place on earth can boast the incredible blend of culture, geography, weather, and tradition that we are blessed with in the 4-Corners. This place is a treasure of the best kind.

If we are to steward this treasure well, we must lead with intention. Like the rest of the world, we are faced with adapting to rapid change, evolving economies, and the ever-increasing complexity of socio-economic challenges. It will require engagement if we want to give ourselves and the next generation opportunities to live rich and full lives right here in the 4-Corners. It will require foresight, intelligent decision-making, good-old-fashioned hard work, and no small amount of sacrifice.

Four-Corners Economic Development (4CED) is poised to play a significant role in our region's evolution and resiliency. In cooperation with a myriad of other institutions who love this community and want to see it thrive, 4CED is playing a leading role in realizing the vision of economic prosperity for every family.

This strategic plan charts a path to make meaningful contributions toward this vision in one of the most important periods of our area's history. The solutions and initiatives offered here are the result of years of study, scores of community voices, and hundreds-of-thousands of dollars invested in evidence-based research. In the end, it will come down to the individual - to contribute or not; to standby and do nothing, or dive in and engage our world for the betterment of all.

Here's to a bright future, and a wonderful journey creating it!



Jeremiah Hayes
Chairman of the Board, 2024

Contents

Four-Corners Economic Development.....	1
INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN	2
MISSION VISION VALUES	4
ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE	5
STRATEGIC PLAN.....	6
STAFFING STRATEGY.....	10
FINANCIAL STRATEGY.....	11
TACTICAL EXECUTION	12
SUCCESS METRICS	14
APPENDIX A: SHARED VIEW OF SUCCESS.....	15
APPENDIX B: DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES.....	16

MISSION | VISION | VALUES

In 2019 4CED gathered board members, community leaders, business professionals, and representatives from various educational institutions to cast a vision, craft a mission, and articulate the core values of its members. Since then, 4CED's efforts have been aligned toward furthering its mission and it is still used as our most important tool to measure our progress.

VISION: Leading regional collaboration for a future of economic prosperity.

Our region is filled with diverse cultures, political views, worldviews, and perspectives. 4CED is a leader in building cooperation, trust, and respect across all our region's communities and stakeholders while championing a collective vision toward economic prosperity. We want to see families thrive and have access to vibrant economic opportunities.

MISSION: Building economically vibrant businesses and communities in the Four Corners Region through effective partnerships.

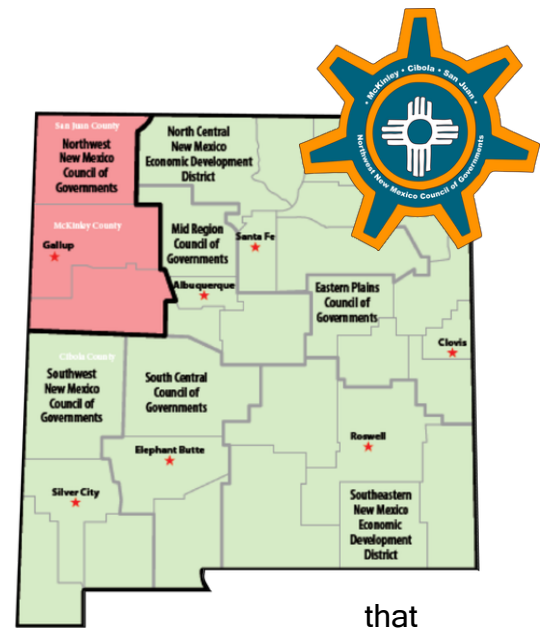
As an economic development organization, 4CED seeks to realize our vision through attracting, retaining, and expanding organizations that are actively bettering our world, our community, and the lives of their employees. Businesses, new and old, that provide goods and services that add to the quality of our lives and innovate for a better tomorrow are our most important stakeholders and we will do everything we can to help them grow and thrive.

VALUES:

- **Transparent accountability** - We will be honest, open and ethical in all our economic development transactions, showing our investors the value they receive for their investments and being held accountable to meet our stated goals.
- **Clear communication** - We will clearly share our intentions about economic development, the work we accomplish, the need for involvement by others and our appreciation for the organizations and people who are our stakeholders.
- **Uncompromising collaboration** - We will build common ground for economic development, help create a sense of togetherness and strive always for success by promoting a sense of "regional community".
- **Innovative leadership** - We will be known as a flexible, proactive, pioneering organization that leads the way in searching for and rewarding new ideas for economic development.

ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

One of the most unique aspects of our geographical position is the many borders - physical and cultural - that our organization serves. The economy of our region is intimately connected to and dependent on the State of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona. The Sovereign Nations of the Navajo, Ute Mountain, Jicarilla, and Southern Ute have a profound influence on the prosperity of our region. Communities such as Durango, Cortez, and Pagosa Springs CO also have a voice in our collective success. It is truly a multi-cultural, multi-jurisdictional, and interconnected web making up our metropolitan statistical area (MSA).



that

Four Corners Economic Development is based in San Juan County and is an active participant in the NW New Mexico Council of Governments which serves as region one in the greater New Mexico Association of Regional Councils.

Traditionally this region's economy has been dependent on the energy extraction and production industry - coal, gas, and oil. While these roots have provided seasons of great prosperity, our region is in a season of economic transition. Diversifying our economy toward productive enterprises in addition to our strong energy economy will provide resiliency and stability to the economic base.

For over a decade community and business leaders have invested heavily in research to understand our area's unique strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. To effectively expand an economy requires careful study and evidence-based action.

This strategic update is the synthesis of this research and the various community events that have prioritized the findings.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Over the last four years, 4CED has invested heavily in three significant research projects aimed at giving the organization evidence-based guidance on how to invest its resources to provide the greatest return on our resources.

ONE: 2020-2022: University of Minnesota Extension Business Retention & Expansion Study:

In 2020 five of 4CED's staff and board membership completed the UMN's Community Development BR&E model certification course. The culmination of this effort was a survey of 100 local businesses wherein economic development priorities were cultivated and distilled into 4 core strategies and 7 unique projects to improve the economic environment for regional businesses. The full 72-page report can be accessed here: [UMN BRE Program](#). The four strategies were:



Build & Expand workforce training responsive to local business needs



Beautify and market San Juan County



Provide local businesses owners access to business education



Develop & Expand Critical Infrastructure

TWO: 2022-2023 Lupke & Associates Competitive Asset Assessment & Diversification Strategy:

In 2022 4CED hired Diane Lupke & Associates, a nationally recognized ED expert, to conduct a detailed analysis of our region's competitive assets. The purpose was to "create immediate and long-term strategies to build and diversify the economy of the Four Corners Region." (Lupke Report). These strategies were recommended as the top economic sectors to invest in based on local assets, infrastructure, and economic potential. The full 31 page summary can be found here: [Lupke Report](#). The strategies were:



Expand the Energy Economy



Expand Manufacturing in key Sectors



Capitalize on strong Ag Industry



Continue Outdoor Rec Investments



Increase Remote Worker & Retiree Attraction



Grow Healthcare Industry

THREE: 2023-2024 National Association of Counties BRECC Grant

In 2023 4CED was awarded a grant through the National Association of Counties which provided expert guidance and counsel for economies who have been impacted by the socio-political shift away from coal extraction and power generation. The year-long process included a detailed review of the regions economic strength's, interviews with stakeholders, and suggestions for focused initiatives. The findings are summarized below and can be found here: **BRECC report.** asdfd

Strategies + Initiatives



Infrastructure Enhancement

Coordinate and support broadband development.

Develop the San Juan County freight rail connection.
Expand regional air service.



Energy Development

Invite all types of energy development.

Catalyze regional hydrogen projects.

Offer community education about energy alternatives.

Train an evolving energy workforce.



Target Industry Expansion

Promote sites and incentives.

Create ready-to-build industrial sites.

Improve the San Juan County Industrial Park.

Support start-ups and entrepreneurs.

Expand health care research and development.

Support agricultural industry growth.



Community Quality

Market area to retirees and remote workers.

Redevelop dilapidated properties.

Champion corridor beautification.

Develop outdoor recreation assets.



Transition Capacity

Increase coal transition capacity.

Ensure CEDS alignment.

Invite stronger Navajo Nation relationships.

Promote aligned, partner-led initiatives.

The findings of these three research projects provides an architecture to organize 4CED's time, energy, and resources toward those initiatives that will provide the greatest return on investment and align our regional priorities. We have organized this into four strategic pillars, each underpinned by two key ideas.

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

Cultivate relationships and knowledge of existing businesses and use this intelligence to drive initiatives, add products, services, and programs that enrich the economic environment.

Catalyze, market, and encourage initiatives aimed at skilling up the workforce to increase business performance and connect businesses to education and resources that benefit them.

NEW INDUSTRY ATTRACTION

Support/Develop/Collaborate Site Development and Infrastructure Projects to increase our region's attraction for new enterprises. Maintain database to market these assets.

Invest in programs, systems, educational initiatives to promote Entrepreneurship in the region.

REGIONAL ALIGNMENT

Understand and connect the various economic development interests of other regional EDO's, build common ground, and forge unprecedented opportunities through shared resources.

Educate the public and advocate for economic development opportunities and perspectives in public/private forums. Represent our communities' ED interests legislatively.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Grow our knowledge, influence, and financial strength through economic development educational opportunities, networking, and business development.

Strengthen the organization through effective governance, financial stewardship, strategic planning, collaboration, and marketing.

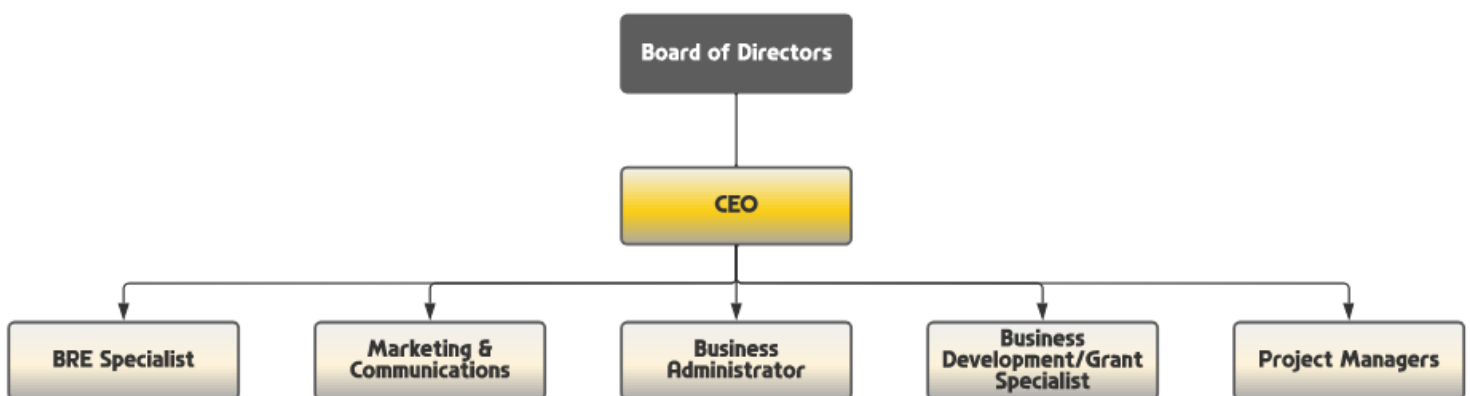
STAFFING STRATEGY

4CED's staffing plan is arranged around the board and community's priorities of business retention and expansion programs, new industry attraction, special economic development projects, and fostering regional relationships with other EDO's. The staffing plan has been aligned with a budget strategy determined by the board's research on available and potential funding.

4CED's CEO is directly responsible for the operations of the organization and utilizes a strategy of direct employees and consultant-led initiatives and functions.

Grant opportunities are one of the primary vehicles for project development and implementing economic development diversification strategies.

Four Corners Economic Development Organization Chart



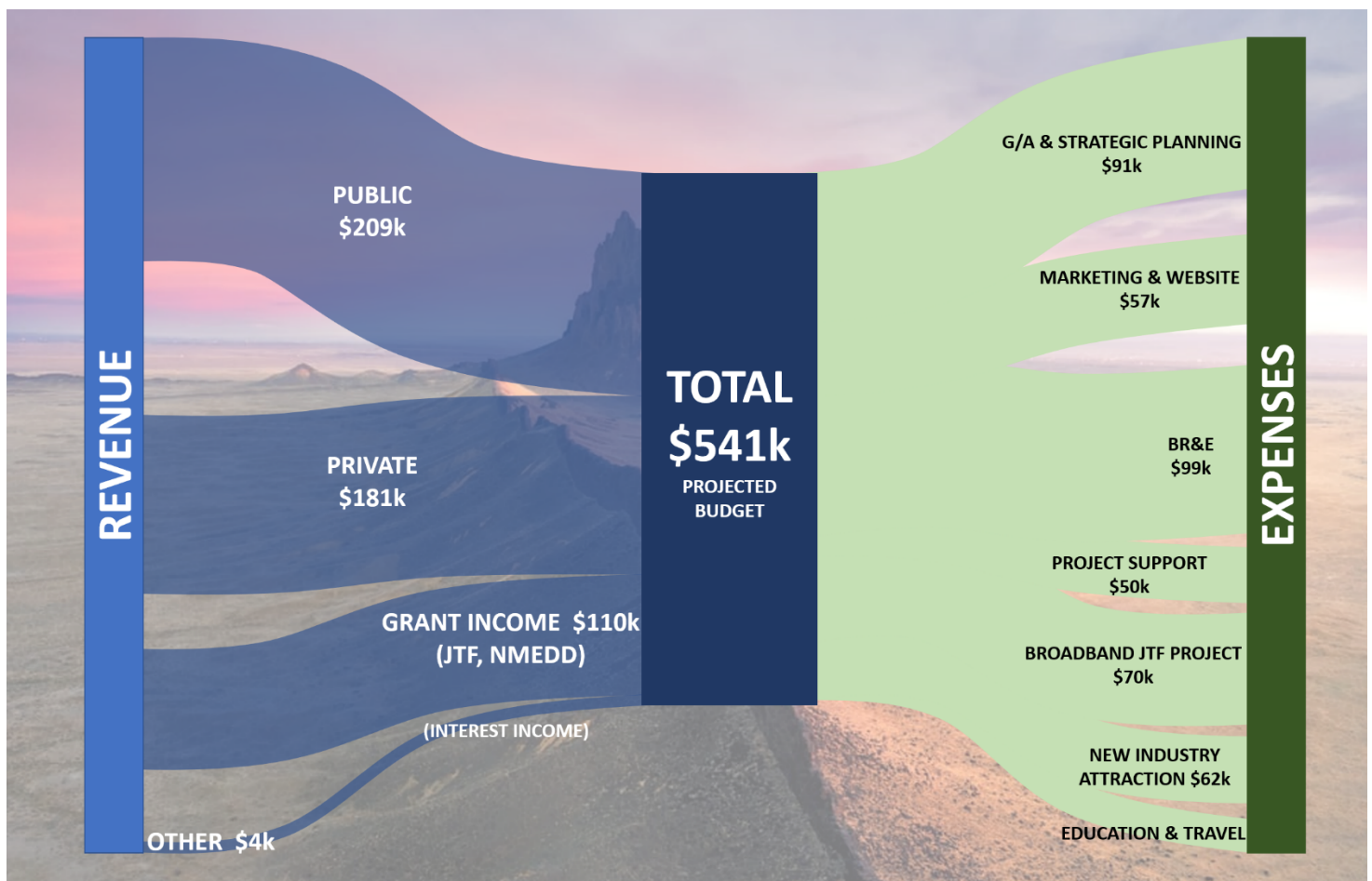
FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The organization has three primary legs of funding:

Private Member Businesses: 4CED currently has 102 dues-paying member organizations of which 95 are private businesses. 4CED has a business development program and routinely engages in new business recruitment. Member companies and associated dues are targeted to increase 10% year over year for the next several years.

Public Entities: 4CED's membership includes most municipalities in San Juan County, as well as the county government itself. As the organization expands its influence and credibility, we anticipate increases in public investment.

Grant Funding: Many of our most significant initiatives are funded by grants aimed at economic development interests. 4CED will continue pursuing grant funding for projects that are aligned with our strategic priorities. Currently, grant funding accounts for approximately 1/3 of our total budget.



TACTICAL EXECUTION

4CED integrates the collective strengthening of its staff, and contract specialist along with private and public sector Board of Directors to advance the four strategic initiatives outlined below.

Goal #1: BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

Objective #1: Cultivate relationships and knowledge of existing businesses and use this intelligence to drive initiatives, add products, services, and programs that enrich the economic environment.

- Interview/assist/ connect businesses to services and opportunities
- Host Annual Edge Awards Banquet
- Host Quarterly Special-Topic Breakfast Meetings
- Weekly Business Visits & Survey (4/week)

Objective #2: Catalyze, market, and encourage initiatives aimed at skilling up the workforce to increase business performance and connect businesses to education and resources that benefit them.

- Success Skills Certification Course (in collaboration with San Juan College)
- Highway Beautification (priority identified by the business community)
- Workforce & Business Trainings

Goal #2: TARGET INDUSTRY ATTRACTION

Objective #1: Support/Develop/Collaborate Site Development and Infrastructure Projects to increase our region's attraction for new enterprises. Maintain database to market these assets.

- Partner with Public and Private Groups on Site Development-Shovel Ready Site/Buildings-Infrastructure
- Respond to PRO's-Develop Sector Specific Marketing-Site Selector Focused
- Participate in Targeted Industry events and trade shows
- Focus on major infrastructure and energy projects within San Juan County: broadband, all forms of energy, freight rail spur.

Objective #2: Identify and support the entrepreneurial work being undertaken as a component of economic development.

- Enterprise Center
- Makers Space
- Small Business Development Center
- SCAPE

Goal #3: REGIONAL ALIGNMENT

Objective #1: Collaborate with local, regional and state economic development entities on legislative issues, grant opportunities, etc.

- Work with Navajo Nation in collaboration with their ED Priorities
- Regularly Engage with NWNM COG to advocate for regional funding opportunities
- Reach out to SW Colorado EDO's to identify shared MSA ED opportunities
- Participate & Support Partner Municipality ED priorities

Goal #4: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY & OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Objective #1: Grow our knowledge, influence, and financial strength through economic development educational opportunities, networking, and business development.

- Participate in state and international training opportunities
- Require at least one training per board member
- Develop other sources of funding (grants, increased membership, etc.)

Objective #2: Strengthen the organization through effective governance, financial stewardship, strategic planning, collaboration, and marketing.

- Develop and implement board recruitment plan
- Continually invest in strategic planning priorities
- Implement effective marketing plan
- Strengthen 4CED's branding profile and presence
- Strengthen digital record keeping and organizational knowledge database

SUCCESS METRICS

On October 12, 2022 local government leaders, 4CED board members, and key community business leaders met to forge a vision of a “**shared view of success**” in regards to economic development activities. The following is how our organization defines and measures our efficacy in the eyes of our stakeholders.

*(see **Appendix A** for picture of our brainstorm session).*

JOBS

Increase in Average Wages

Increase Total Private Sector Jobs

Number of Jobs Added/Aligned with Educational Strategies/Programs

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Increase in Restaurant & Retail Sales

New Businesses within Target Sectors

New Capital Investment

New Businesses/Jobs Within Existing Clusters

Population Growth

Increase Tax Base (GRT, Property)

QUALITY OF LIFE

Beautification of Region

Placemaking Projects

Visibility

Reputation as Positive & Desired Place to Live

Nice People (Customer Service, Experience of Visitors)

Safety

Night Life

Median Household Income

POLITICAL WILL

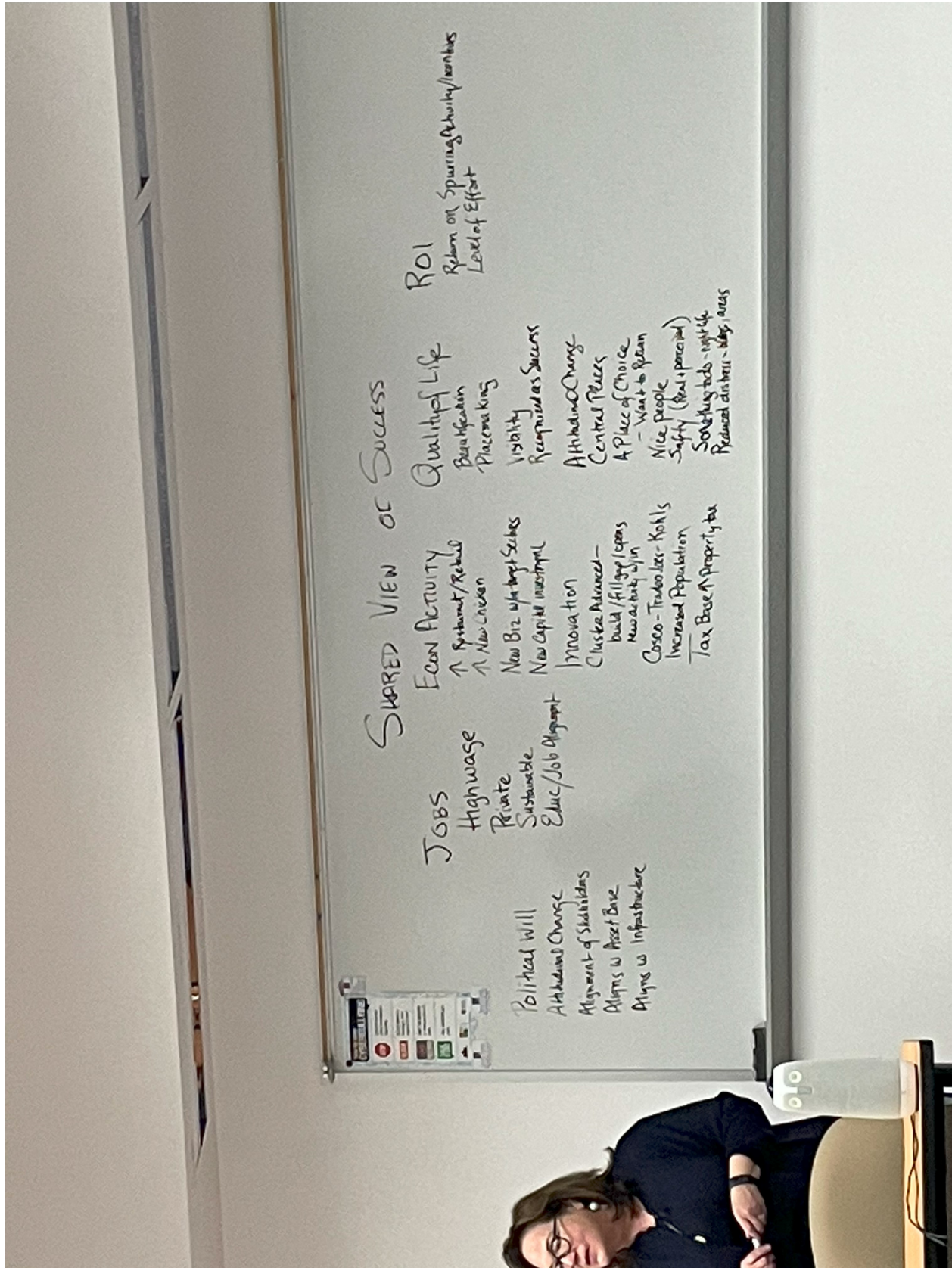
Attitudinal Change

Alignment of Stakeholders

Alignment of Asset Base

Alignment on Infrastructure Projects

APPENDIX A: SHARED VIEW OF SUCCESS



APPENDIX B: DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

