



S A N ▲ L U I S ▲ V A L L E Y
DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES GROUP
&
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

**2020 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
(CEDS) and Progress Report**

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Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) And Progress Report

Section I: Adjustments

The San Luis Valley Development Resources Group's serves the six counties of Colorado's San Luis Valley – Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Rio Grande/Mineral, and Saguache – located in the south central part of Colorado in the 3rd Congressional District.

COVID-19

As with the entire country, COVID-19 has had an effect on the economy of the San Luis Valley this year. Unemployment in the Valley, and Colorado, is running higher than in 2019. Alamosa (5.8%) and Conejos (5.2%) counties have unemployment rates lower than the state of Colorado (6.2%). Rates for other counties in the Valley run above the state's unemployment rate from 6.9% in Saguache County: 6.7% in Mineral County, the region's least populous; 6.5 % in Rio Grande County.

Higher unemployment indicates the regional economy is under stress from the effects of the corona virus. In a survey of area businesses conducted by SLVDRG, 30 percent of those responding said impacts from the virus were "medium" and would be significant to their financial condition. About 12 percent replied that the effects might put them out of business.

Most businesses surveyed received financial assistance from federal or local programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program, the Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, or local grants and loan. The business situation improved for 75 percent of respondents after stay-at-home order were lifted. Despite the economic hardship, nearly 75 percent were optimistic that things would improve, but half thought the recovery would be long-term.

Agriculture

Agriculture remains is the Valley's main economic driver, accounting for about one-third of the region's base economy. The primary crops are potatoes, alfalfa, barley, as well as cattle. According to production and crop values from USDA and the Colorado Department of Agriculture, the 2019 estimated cash value of the Valley's top three crops – potatoes, alfalfa and barley – was around \$350 million.

However, in 2020, the Valley was under drought conditions. Surface and ground water for crop irrigation was in short supply, affecting crops yields and risking further depletion of the Valley's underground aquifer.

The availability of irrigation water is critical to the viability of agriculture as the major economic contributor to the Valley's regional economy. Potatoes and barley, particularly, rely upon groundwater irrigation from the Valley's 6,000 high capacity wells, which tap underground aquifers. The aquifers depend on recharge from a natural system, as well as leakage from ditches and canals located throughout the Valley.

Drought conditions in the last decade have reduced the recharge that occurs with natural runoff, and have reduced the diversions from the Rio Grande that provides additional recharge. Drought, coupled with increased groundwater use, has led to a decline in levels of the aquifers, a condition that will only worsen unless total consumption of groundwater is reduced.

Rules from the Colorado Division of Water Resources govern the withdrawal of groundwater in the Valley and require those withdrawals can only continue if the aquifer is sustainable and adequate recharge occurs. Special water improvement districts (or sub-districts) with an approved groundwater management plan have been created to regulate depletions and encourage recharge. Should irrigators continue to “mine” the aquifer, the State Water Engineer has the authority to shut down irrigation wells in order halt the depletion. This would be a necessary last ditch measure to save the aquifer but, it holds drastic consequences for agriculture in the Valley.

Population Change

The Valley’s estimated population has only increased slightly since the 2010 Census from 46,027 in 2010 to 46,701 in 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In an area of 8,192 sq. miles, the population density is about 5.7 persons per square mile. Population growth has not been uniform across the region. Here’s how each county’s population compares to 2010:

<u>County</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2019</u>
Alamosa	15,445	16,107
Conejos	8,256	8,128
Costilla	3,524	3,745
Mineral	712	824
Rio Grande	11,982	11,305
Saguache	6,108	6,592

Income

During the five-year period of 2014 to 2019 Median Household Income in Colorado rose 21.6 percent from \$59,448 to \$72,331. In the San Luis Valley, Median Household Income in all six counties lagged far behind the state’s figure, ranging from a low of \$30,965 to \$62,188. In two counties, Conejos and Costilla, MHI fell during this period. The chart below compares MHI for 2014 with 2019 in each county and Colorado.

<u>County/State</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Alamosa	\$31,400	\$37,515	19.4
Conejos	37,357	36,084	-3.4
Costilla	33,594	30,965	-7.8
Mineral	47,986	62,188	29.5
Rio Grande	38,973	39,123	.3
Saguache	33,398	38,571	15.4
Colorado	59,448	72,331	21.6

Jobs

The estimated number of jobs in the Valley has grown from 22,398 in 2010 to 23,919. The top five sectors and their respective job numbers are:

<u>Sector</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2019</u>
Government	5,049	5,001
Agriculture	4,006	3,871
Health Services	2,485	3,030
Retail	2,157	2,222
Accommodation/Food	1,513	1854

Section II: 2020 Governing Board

13 CFR Part 304.2(c)(2): *The District Organization must demonstrate that its governing body is broadly representative of the principal economic interests of the Region, including the private sector, public officials, community leaders, representatives of workforce development boards, institutions of higher education, minority and labor groups, and private individuals. In addition, the governing body must demonstrate the capacity to implement the EDA-approved CEDS.*

San Luis Valley Development Resources Group Executive Board

SECTOR	AFFILIATION
Private	
Kent Curtis	CEO, First Southwest Bank
Ashley Valdez, Sec./Treas.	Xcel Energy
Public Officials	
Ken Anderson	Saguache County Commissioner
Ramona Weber	Mineral County Commissioner
John Noffske	Rio Grande County Commissioner
Michael Carson	Alamosa City Councilor
Community Leader	
Karla Shriver	Farmer, Non-Profit
Workforce Development	
Michael Yohn, Chairman	Colorado Workforce Consortium, Alamosa County Commissioner
Minority	
Lawrence Pacheco	Costilla County Commissioner
Larry Zaragoza	La Jara Town Manager
Higher Education	
Jack Wiley	Dean of Instruction, Trinidad State Junior College

Section III: 2018 CEDS Strategy Committee

13 CFR Part 303.6 (b) (1): *The Planning Organization must appoint a Strategy Committee. The Strategy Committee must represent the main economic interests of the Region, including the private sector, public officials, community leaders, private individuals, representatives of workforce development boards, institutions of higher education, minority and labor groups, and others who can contribute to and benefit from improved economic development in the Region. In addition, the Strategy Committee must demonstrate the capacity to undertake a collaborative and effective planning process. The Strategy Committee representing Indian Tribes or States may vary.*

SECTOR	AFFILIATION
Private	
Kent Curtis	CEO, First Southwest Bank
Ashley Valdez, Sec./Treas.	Xcel Energy
Public Officials	
Ken Anderson	Saguache County Commissioner
Ramona Weber	Mineral County Commissioner
John Noffske	Rio Grande County Commissioner
Michael Carson	Alamosa City Councilor
Ty Coleman	Alamosa Mayor
Jeff Larson	Creede Mayor
Darius Allen	Alamosa County Commissioner
Kairina Danforth	Crestone Mayor
Larry Kawanabe	Blanca Town Trustee
Community Leader	
Karla Shriver	Farmer, Non-Profit
Forrest Neuerburg	Monte Vista City Manager
Dan Hicks	South Fork Town Manager
Tom Monaco	Small Business Development Center
Bonnie Asplin	Upper Rio Grande Economic Development
Marty Asplin	Upper Rio Grande Economic Development
Kathy Rogers	City of Alamosa Economic Development Director
Jeremy Elliott	Costilla County Economic Development
Liza Marron	San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition
Barry Van Sant	Saguache Chamber of Commerce

Workforce Development	
Michael Yohn, Chairman	Colorado Workforce Consortium, Alamosa County Commissioner
Minority	
Lawrence Pacheco	Costilla County Commissioner
Larry Zaragoza	La Jara Town Manager
Higher Education	
Jack Wiley	Dean of Instruction, Trinidad State Junior College

Section IV: Staff

Staff	Title	Email Address
Kevin Wilkins	Executive Director	kwilkins@slvdr.org
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Sarah Stoeber	Disaster Recovery Coordinator	sstoeber@slvdr.org
Marc Bellantoni	Business Development & Enterprise Zone Manager	mbellantoni@slvdr.org
Travis Stoker	Americorps/VISTA Volunteer	tstoker@slvdr.org
Sophia Maes	Americorps/VISTA Volunteer	n/a

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Staffing Notes:

1. Marc Bellantoni joined staff in October 2020 as Business Development & Enterprise Zone Manager. Marc's position is dual function. He has responsibility for servicing and making loans to business clients, as well as responsibility for administering the San Luis Valley Enterprise Zone. Sarah Stoeber previously held the position as Business Development Director with some responsibility for the Enterprise Zone.
2. Travis Stoker has served the past year as an EDA Americorps/VISTA volunteer assisting with business surveys, reviewing Energize Colorado Gap Fund applications, initiating and administering the Business Utility Support Fund. His service ends January 2021.
3. Sophia Maes served for about five months as an EDA Americorps/VISTA volunteer with SLVDRG under the sponsorship of Downtown Colorado, Inc. and the cooperation and financial support of the Colorado Department of Transportation. Sophia's duties included transit planning in the San Luis Valley and working with the San Luis Valley Transit Council. She chose to end her service early to pursue further education and to be nearer her family during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section V: 2020 Scope of Work

A. Build a Business-Friendly Environment

1. Market federal, state and local programs that assist local businesses.
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved:
 - i. Residents and businesses of all six counties of the region are eligible for Colorado Enterprise Zone state income tax credits, and all six counties are now included in the Enhanced Rural Enterprise Zone.
 - ii. Promoted six designated Opportunity Zones under the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.
 - iii. Received \$968,000 grant in 2020 from the U. S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration to capitalize and administer our revolving loan fund and provide critical gap financing to small businesses and entrepreneurs adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant funding came from the CARES Act.
 - iv. Created and filled the position of Disaster Recovery Coordinator, a two-year period to serve the six-county region of Colorado’s San Luis Valley. The Disaster Recovery Coordinator will identify potential resiliency, mitigation, and economic recovery projects in the disaster-impacted areas. The position is funded by the CARES Act through EDA.
 - v. Received \$750,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Intermediary Relending Program to build on local interest in value-added agricultural processing opportunities that result in indirect and induced business development. The employment goals are to create one FTE for every \$50,000 loaned.
 - vi. Partnered with Energize Colorado Gap Fund to administer a new hybrid grant and loan program for small businesses and non-profits impacted by COVID-19
 - vii. The San Luis Valley Business Utility Support Fund was initiated by our Americorps/VISTA volunteer, Travis Stoker, offered financial support to local businesses impacted by COVID-19 for utility costs. The funding for the program came from a grant of \$25,000 from the Colorado COVID relief Fund.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables:
 - i. The EZ tax credit program returned \$2.4 million in tax credits to 540 businesses in the region for investments in their businesses and in training of 295 employees. In 2019, \$2.3 million in tax credits were granted to 509 businesses.
 - ii. Continued to market the San Luis Valley Opportunity Zone to encourage investment in the region and continue to track federal programs that provide program preferences for OZ investments. Also participated in several meeting and symposia regarding marketing and implementation of OZ program. Response to the OZ investment program has been limited however, two potential projects are still in active consideration. The program is available until 2026.
 - iii. Hired Sarah Stoeber, formerly Business Development Director with SLVDRG, as Disaster Relief Coordinator.
 - iv. Hired Marc Bellantoni as Business Development and Enterprise Zone Manager, filling the position formerly held by Sarah Stoeber.
 - v. Granted \$25,000 to over 50 businesses giving them assistance with their utility bills in the early stages of the COVID pandemic.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None.
2. Provide conduit for State Department of Transportation to meet regularly with local officials and citizens to discuss and improve the San Luis Valley regional highway network.

- a. Accomplishments Achieved: SLVDRG serves as the planning agency for the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region’s regional coordinating council, which includes county and local governments in the seven-county planning area. SLVDRG organized the San Luis Valley Regional Transit Council bringing together local governments, transit agencies, non-profit human service organizations, and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to monitor and share transit issues in the region.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables:
 - i. SLV TPR met quarterly to review progress on CDOT highway construction projects and receive updates on transportation and agency issues throughout the region and state. SLVDRG was awarded an annual planning grant from CDOT to continue serving as the regional transportation planning agency. The SLV TPR provided direction for development of CDOT’s 2045 Regional Transportation Plan through regular and special meetings with agency planners. The plan was adopted by the SLV TPR in November and forwarded to the Colorado Transportation Commission for adoption.
 - ii. The San Luis Valley Regional Transit Council continued its transit planning efforts with the second year of financial assistance from CDOT, which provided two years of funding to seed transit efforts in the region and initiate a planning process for transit development. SLV RTC hosted a VISTA volunteer to assist with transit planning. As a result, the SLV RTC has developed into an independent organization and now includes transit planning for the entire San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region that includes all six counties of the San Luis Valley and Chaffee County.
 - iii. The West SLV Transit Committee, a consortium of counties and municipalities, formed to assess potential ridership for intercity bus service commissioned and completed the West San Luis Valley Transit Study, continued to work with the Chaffee Shuttle providing shuttle bus service once weekly from Del Norte to Monte Vista, Center, Saguache, Villa Grove to Salida and returning. A second route, once weekly, begins in Saguache, goes to Center, Del Norte, Monte Vista, and ends in Alamosa. A third weekly route is being planned. With the primary mission of the West SLV Transit Committee completed, the committee has dissolved and full responsibility for the Eagle Line Shuttle is with the Chaffee Shuttle.
 - iv. The Chaffee Shuttle received funding through the Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program from the U.S. Department of Transportation, through the FTA. The grant application was initiated by, written, and submitted by Sophia Maes, the Americorps/VISTA. The grant award was \$172,000. The HOPE Program is intended to help areas of persistent poverty increase access to jobs and healthcare through enhanced transit options and improved facilities. The grant was one of 25 HOPE grants awarded nationally and will be used to plan and finance expansion of transit services between and within the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region, which includes Alamosa, Chaffee, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache counties.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None
3. Assist in the development of sector (cluster) strategies for agricultural and health industries
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved: None at this time.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: None at this time.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None.

B. Retain, Grow, and Recruit Companies

1. Assist businesses develop a relationship with regional markets.

- a. Accomplishments Achieved: Very limited activity. The San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition continues its lead role in promoting and marketing regionally grown natural and organic foods to other regions of Colorado through the SLV Local Foods Hub. The Local Foods Hub provides produce, meat, and other food products to individual, family and commercial customers through a statewide collective of food hubs.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Continued support and collaboration with the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition to provide a local food marketing outlet for food produced in the region.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None.
2. Focus on businesses which diversify the economy and provide lasting community benefits.
- a. Accomplishments Achieved: Provided loan counseling to 10 businesses in the region.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Made ten loans to nine businesses totaling \$730,350, leveraged \$835,000 in private funds, and created or retained 36 FTE jobs.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None.
3. Assist businesses facing prolonged road construction.
- a. Accomplishments Achieved: No activity as no communities faced long construction projects this year.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: None as no communities in the region had prolonged road construction during the past year.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None

C. Increase Access to Capital

1. Bridge the gap for businesses to eventually qualify for bank financing and prepare them for traditional bank relationships.
- a. Accomplishments Achieved: Six loan clients, still in operation, closed out loans with SLVDRG and now can be considered “bankable” with traditional lenders.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Six loans totaling \$685,670 at origination were closed out in 2020. Conventional financing for their businesses was not possible at the time the loans made. Those businesses continue to operate providing 38 jobs.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None
2. Provide risk mitigation for local lenders.
- a. Accomplishments Achieved: Originated two loans in 2020 with participation by regional lenders.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Of the six new loans made in 2020, two were done in participation with regional lenders, mitigating their risk. The two loans totaled \$752,150 (\$127,150 from SLVDRG and \$625,000 for regional lenders).
Closed two loans in an amount of \$30,000 each from a new State of Colorado character based loan program.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None

D. Create and Market a Stronger San Luis Valley/Colorado brand

1. Promote tourism through SLV Great Outdoors for the San Luis Valley that highlights the uniqueness and authenticity of the county.
- a. Accomplishments Achieved: SLV GO! grew to a staff of four that include an executive director, director of operations, coordinator of SLV Generation Wild Coalition, and a development coordinator. SLVDRG continued to provide office space and support and serve as the group’s fiscal agent. SLV GO! became an independent, non-profit organization by gaining 501 (c)(3) in 2019 and continues to build programs and partners. Among SLV GO!

- accomplishments are: more than eight miles of new trail built in three SLV communities; successful strategic planning process for the SLV Generation Wild Coalition resulting in a new position; continued work toward the Sangre de Cristo Dark Sky Reserve.
- b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Eight-and-a-half miles of new trail built in Crestone, San Luis, and Alamosa. Fifteen thousand dollars raised to hire a contractor to work on the Dark Sky Application.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: Considerable amount of challenges with public meetings and funding. In-person meetings with partners at project sites was difficult due to the COVID pandemic, as were organizational meetings. The pandemic also caused much of formerly available foundation and other funding sources to be directed away from projects other than COVID response projects. Also, as much of the work of SLV GO! is considered administrative, many funders have move away from funding the administration of projects and organizations.
2. Assist in the development of local trails for greater outdoor activities.
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved: We developed a professional trail building and stewardship team. Six to eight paid employees work seasonably to build trails on SLV GO! projects throughout the San Luis Valley. We worked on a variety of projects on federal public land as well ensuring that some of our most heavily used trails had maintenance.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Eight-and-a-half miles of trail built and maintained.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: Securing funding for programs, promotion, and trail development. This is the same situation as explained above in D. 1. c. – COVID response has been a priority for many funders and administrative costs are not funded by many sources.

E. Educate and Train the Workforce

1. Develop strategies to support stronger communication among partners who provide employment education including Workforce, WIOA, TANF, and Adult Education.
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved: Renewed cooperation with Trinidad State Junior College developing work training programs appropriate to the region.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables:
 - i. TSJC’s Dean of Instruction continues to serve as a member of SLVDRG’s Executive Board and CEDS Strategy Committee; SLVDRG’s Chairman of the Executive Board is a member of the Colorado Workforce Consortium; and SLVDRG’s Executive Director was named to the Colorado Workforce Development Council in November. These “cross memberships” provide opportunities to learn about or implement workforce programs that may benefit the region.
 - ii. Working with Colorado Attorney General’s Office to attain authorization of construction skills training at TSJC Valley Campus in Alamosa.
 - iii. Working to initiate unmanned aircraft training at TSJC.
 - iv. Facilitated discussion to identify a location dental hygienist training in Monte Vista.
 - v. Integrated jobs program at La Puente Homeless Center for homeless or at-risk workers with the Community Action Agency, part of SLVDRG programming.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None.
2. Assist organizations to develop mechanisms to assist businesses to meet their need for quality, trained, and skilled workforce.
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved: None
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: None
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: Identifying specific existing businesses, rather than sectors, with workforce needs.

F. Cultivate Innovation and Technology

1. Promote SLVDRG as the repository for research, demographic information, federal, and state economic development programs for the San Luis Valley.
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved: SLVDRG continues to provide pertinent and up-to-date information on demographics, state and federal government programs, and funding opportunities to local government, non-profits and individuals.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables:
 - i. Attended annual virtual State Demography Conference.
 - ii. Continue to distribute CEDS to local governments, individuals, and businesses. We constantly promote our CEDS as the definitive resource on the San Luis Valley and refer inquiries to the document.
 - iii. Responded to over 50 requests from local governments, economic development organizations, individuals, and businesses for demographic and economic data on the region.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None encountered.

G. Opportunity Zones

1. Implement and promote the results of the Opportunity Zone Prospectus.
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved: Continued promotion and marketing of six Opportunity Zones in the San Luis Valley.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables:
 - i. Attended and participated meetings and programs focused on marketing and marketing Opportunity Zones.
 - ii. Although there has been very limited interest from investors in SLV Opportunity Zones, there are two proposals still pending that may come to fruition.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: Lack interest among potential financial backers in committing to a region in a rural area that is geographically isolated and has a limited labor pool.

Section VI: Evaluate

We have chosen eight performance measures against which to review our accomplishments and judge the effectiveness in meeting our goals:

1. Capital investment by new and existing businesses in the San Luis Valley.
 - During 2020, at least \$92.3M in capital investment was made by 540 businesses in the San Luis Valley.
 - The top investments by sector were:
 - i. Agriculture - \$47.1M
 - ii. Accommodation & Food Service - \$14.4M
 - iii. Retail - \$5.4M
 - iv. Construction - \$4.7M
 - v. Real Estate & Rental & Leasing - \$4.7M
 - Through the Colorado Enterprise Zone Investment Tax Credit, \$2.2M was returned to businesses in the form of state income tax credits to be reinvested in those businesses and their communities.
2. New jobs created in the San Luis Valley.
 - A total of 72 jobs were created as a result of Enterprise Zone-qualified capital investments of \$92,323,866, made in 2020.
3. Total jobs created or retained as a direct result of SLVDRG activities.
 - A total of 36 jobs were retained or created through lending by the SLVDRG business loan fund. Ten new loans were made to nine new or existing businesses.
4. Quality of jobs created or retained in terms of wages, occupation, skills, benefits, and other factors.
 - Less expansion of “quality” jobs in 2020 as business investments and growth were very cautious because of weaker economy due to COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Amount of private sector investment in the region as a result of CEDS implementation.
 - SLVDRG is working closely with the Colorado Mushroom Farm to explore value-added potential products from mushrooms, such as dehydrated mushrooms, and packaging made from mushrooms. Colorado Mushroom Farm is one of the region’s largest private employers and loan client of SLVDRG’s Business Loan Fund.
6. Notable changes in economic environment of the region attributed to the programs, projects, and activities being carried out.
 - A significant increase in capital available to new and existing businesses through SLVDRG lending programs.
 - A grant of \$986,000 from EDA through the CARES Act provided additional capital to our Business Loan Fund to assist businesses impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Included in the EDA grant is funding for a Disaster Recovery Coordinator to identify economic recovery projects for area enterprises.
 - Additional funds \$750,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Intermediary Relending Program will help to identify potential value-added agricultural projects for

regional businesses. The employment goals are to create one FTE for every \$50,000 loaned.

- SLVDRG’s work with the Energize Colorado Gap Fund reviewing applications for a grant and loan program for small businesses and non-profits brought needed financial resources to the region during the pandemic.
- The San Luis Valley Business Utility Support Fund also aided local businesses impacted by COVID-19 by providing financial assistance for utility expenses.
- While Agriculture is still the driving economic force in the San Luis Valley, accounting for nearly one-third of the Valley’s base employment, jobs in the Health Services sector have grown significantly.

7. Number and types of investments undertaken in the region.

- The SLVDRG business loan fund made six new loans to six business in 2020. Those loans totaled \$730,350 and leveraged \$835,000 in private funds, and created or retained 36 FTE jobs. The businesses ranged from a bread bakery to an electrical business and an organic grocery store.

8. Accomplishments or advancements made in achieving project objectives, and/or successful implementation of strategies and elements listed in the plan of action.

- Financial Assistance continues to be a very important component of our strategies for economic development in the SLV. The SLVDRG maintains a loan portfolio of \$6.6 million and 53 loans. The loan fund is a critical component for funding small businesses as local lending institutions continue to tighten their policies. We are also working with CHFA to use the Collateral Support program to assist lenders with collateral shortfalls.
- Funding received from USDA in 2020 help identify and finance agricultural value-added projects that will enhance the Agriculture sector.
- The region continues to “grow” its tourism economy. The number of visitors to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is one indicator of that growth, now with over half-a-million visitors, according to Park sources.
- As an affiliate of the Colorado State Demography Office, we attend trainings and annual meetings in order to keep our demographic information up-to-date. Throughout the year SLVDRG provided demographic and economic data to local governments, businesses and non-profits.
- SLVDRG serves as the coordinating agency for the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region, which includes all of the six counties in the region and Chaffee County. We provide local governments and other interests with information from the Colorado Department of Transportation regarding transportation issues. In 2020, the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region completed the 2045 San Luis Valley Regional Transportation Plan, providing CDOT with transportation priorities for the planning region.
- Secured funding through the Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program from the U.S. Department of Transportation for The Chaffee Shuttle to plan and finance expansion of transit services between and within the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region The grant application was initiated by, written, and submitted by Sophia Maes, the Americorps/VISTA. and improved facilities.

Section VII: Schedule

Objective Strategy				
<p>A. Build a Business Friendly Environment</p> <p>1. Improve redundancy, reliability & resources utilization of electrical & gas transmission</p> <p>a. Support planning & development by energy providers to improve energy distribution & redundancy</p> <p>b. Assess regional renewable energy resources.</p> <p>2. Inventory brownfields locations in the San Luis Valley.</p> <p>a. Seek grant funding for mapping of brownfields sites.</p> <p>b. Create loan fund to address needs of sites.</p> <p>3. Improve the San Luis Valley regional highway network.</p> <p>a. Continue coordination of regional transportation planning through San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region.</p> <p>b. Provide input to next regional transportation plan.</p> <p>4. Develop affordable workforce housing.</p> <p>a. Support community initiated housing studies.</p> <p>b. Use federal Opportunity Zones to attract private investment in housing.</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SLVDRG*, Xcel, SLVREC, Tri-State</p> <p>SLVDRG*, Xcel, SLVREC, Counties</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*, CDOT</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*, Municipalities, Counties</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p>	<p>Energy transmission improvements proposed by energy providers.</p> <p>Assessment done following commitment from local governments & energy companies.</p> <p>Survey of available funding sources.</p> <p>Assess loan needs following mapping.</p> <p>Coordination of SLV TPR meetings held & information shared.</p> <p>Plan approved by SLV TPR & Colorado Transportation Commission.</p> <p>Housing studies initiated.</p> <p>Investments made.</p>

<p>5. Improve & develop transit & mobility services in the region.</p> <p>a. Continue convening San Luis Valley Regional Transit Council.</p> <p>b. Implement SLV Transit Action Plan.</p> <p>6. Continue broadband deployment.</p> <p>a. Support current broadband deployment by San Luis Valley REC.</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*, SLVREC</p>	<p>Transit Council now coordinated by Chaffee Shuttle.</p> <p>Many action items completed. Transit Council now coordinated by Chaffee Shuttle.</p> <p>Deployment underway.</p>
<p>B. Retain, Grow & Recruit Companies</p> <p>1. Market state & local programs that assess local business.</p> <p>a. Continue to administer Colorado Enterprise Zone Tax Credit program.</p> <p>b. Continue to provide gap financing through San Luis Valley Business Loan Fund.</p> <p>c. Support San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center.</p> <p>2. Market state & local programs that assist local business.</p> <p>a. Continue to provide demographic & other data services to local government, businesses & non-profits.</p> <p>3. Develop alliances with southern Colorado regional markets.</p> <p>a. Continue leadership role in Action 22.</p> <p>4. Develop basic business information, which could include regulations, assistance, marketing, incentives, & access to capital.</p> <p>a. Support & promote San Luis Valley SBDC business education curriculum.</p> <p>b. Implement federal Opportunity Zone prospectus.</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*, OEDIT</p> <p>SLVDRG*, DOLA</p> <p>SLVDRG*, Action 22</p> <p>SLVDRG*, SLVSBDC</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p>	<p>Amount of credits, jobs created/retained & amount contributed.</p> <p>Number of loans & jobs created/retained.</p> <p>Clients served by SBDC.</p> <p>Number of inquiries & responses.</p> <p>Participation & leadership in Action 22.</p> <p>Number of clients served by SCDC.</p> <p>Number of projects proposed.</p>

<p>5. Focus on businesses that diversify the economy and provide lasting community</p> <p>a. Seek & support businesses that develop infrastructure for hemp industry.</p> <p>6. Create development sites that are easily marketed, ready to be developed, & located on appropriate development websites.</p> <p>a. Inventory potential development sites & assess potential for shovel-ready designation.</p> <p>7. Assist agricultural businesses that incorporate locally-grown products into value-added products.</p> <p>a. Assess value-added agriculture opportunities.</p> <p>b. Cooperate with Adams St. Univ. Value-Added Ag Sector Partnership.</p> <p>8. Advance alternative energy opportunities throughout the region.</p> <p>a. Support expansion of current renewable energy projects.</p> <p>b. Assess region's renewable energy assets & potential for development.</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Low</p> <p>High</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>2021-23</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SLVDRG*, CDA, USDA</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p>	<p>Contacts initiated & requests for assistance.</p> <p>Economic development organizations initiated inventory.</p> <p>Completion of assessment.</p> <p>Participation in meetings & planning.</p> <p>Responses to requests for support.</p> <p>Funding source identified.</p>
<p>C. Increase Access to Capital</p> <p>1. Bridge the gap for businesses to eventually qualify for bank financing & prepare them for traditional bank relationships.</p> <p>a. Provide lending through San Luis Valley Business Loan Fund & state or federal loan programs.</p> <p>b. Continue cooperation & participation with area lenders on business loans.</p> <p>2. Provide risk mitigation for local lenders.</p> <p>a. Utilize government loan guarantee programs.</p>	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SLVDRG*, OEDIT, EDA</p> <p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*, OEDIT, SBA</p>	<p>Loans & jobs created/retained.</p> <p>Loans with lender participation.</p> <p>Number of loans.</p>

<p>3. Improve access to capital for agriculture.</p> <p>a. Investigate need for additional ag lending source, with potential development of a revolving loan fund for agricultural projects.</p>	Low	Ongoing	SLVDRG*, USDA, EDA, OEDIT	Completion of need analysis.
<p>D. Create & Maintain a Stronger San Luis Valley/Colorado Brand</p> <p>1. Grow outdoor recreation infrastructure & promote outdoor recreational opportunities.</p> <p>a. Continue support of San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (SLV GO!) in developing trails & outdoor recreation opportunities, as well as fostering the growth of outdoor recreation businesses, with community partners, conservation organizations and the State of Colorado.</p> <p>2. Promote tourism for the San Luis Valley that highlights the uniqueness & authenticity of each county.</p> <p>a. Support San Luis Valley visitor industry groups in marketing & promotion of region as a tourist destination.</p> <p>b. Support communities initiating downtown revitalization efforts that encourage tourist visits.</p> <p>3. Develop a strategy to emphasize hospitality and customer service with front line employees.</p> <p>a. Utilize San Luis Valley SBDC education curriculum to train hospitality employees.</p>	High	Ongoing	SLVDRG, SLV GO!*	Visitors to region & tax revenues.
<p>a. Support San Luis Valley visitor industry groups in marketing & promotion of region as a tourist destination.</p>	Low	Ongoing	SLVDRG*, ACVB, CTO	Assistance provided.
<p>b. Support communities initiating downtown revitalization efforts that encourage tourist visits.</p>	Low	Ongoing	SLVDRG*, Municipalities	Downtown projects initiated & requests for assistance.
<p>a. Utilize San Luis Valley SBDC education curriculum to train hospitality employees.</p>	Low	Ongoing	SLVDRG*, SLVSBDC	Trainings provided.

<p>E. Educate & Train the Workforce</p> <p>1. Determine workforce needs of region businesses.</p> <p>a. Survey businesses to assess workforce needs.</p> <p>2. Develop strategies to support worker transition from education into the workforce.</p> <p>a. Develop a "Career Pathways" program for core academic, technical, & employability skills.</p> <p>3. Develop strategies to assist all businesses to meet their need for quality, trained, & skilled workforce.</p> <p>a. Develop a business services program through Colorado Workforce Centers.</p> <p>4. Ensure that the workforce needs of the ag sector & farm workers are met.</p> <p>a. Institute Common Career Technical Core standards to define what students should know & be able to do.</p> <p>5. Develop additional educational opportunities for the healthcare industry.</p> <p>a. Create curriculum & training facilities to meet needs of healthcare workforce.</p> <p>6. Collaborate with secondary and post-secondary education to address workforce needs.</p> <p>a. Enhance concurrent enrollment with colleges & high schools for technical education.</p> <p>b. Open TSJC satellite campus in Rio Grande County for technical skills.</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SLVDRG*</p> <p>SLVDRG*, TSJC, ASU, Workforce</p> <p>SLVDRG*, Workforce</p> <p>SLVDRG*, TSJC, ASU, Workforce</p> <p>SLVDRG*, TSJC, SLV Health, ASU, Workforce</p> <p>SLVDRG, TSJC*</p> <p>SLVDRG, TSJC*</p>	<p>Survey completed.</p> <p>Program developed.</p> <p>Program developed.</p> <p>Standards implemented.</p> <p>Curriculum created & facilities provided.</p> <p>Enrollment numbers.</p> <p>Campus opened.</p>
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F. Cultivate Innovation & Technology 1. Promote SLVDRG as the repository for research, demographics, & federal & state economic development programs for the San Luis Valley. a. Continue to produce annual statistical profile of the region. b. Respond to requests for economic & demographic information from individuals, businesses, non-profits, local & state government.	Medium	Annually	SLVDRG*	Profile compiled.
	High	Ongoing	SLVDRG*	Number of responses to inquiries.
* Denotes lead organization for task.				