



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

**2021 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 serves the six counties of Colorado’s San Luis Valley – Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Rio Grande, Mineral, and Saguache – located in South-Central Colorado, in the 3rd Congressional District.

COVID-19

As indicated by significant increases in consumer spending over the last two years, the San Luis Valley has, so far, weathered the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to data from the Colorado Department of Revenue, a comparison of the first nine months of the years 2019, 2020, and 2021 shows retail sales in the region grew by 164.5 percent. This increase indicates residents of the San Luis Valley spent the stimulus dollars they received from direct payments to individuals, increased unemployment benefits, unemployment benefits for self-employed and farmers, as well as business support programs like PPE. The massive influx of income boosted spending, preventing the region from falling into recession and decreased unemployment rates from 2020 to 2021.

Also insulating the region from the full impact of the pandemic was an increase in tourism spending and a shift toward outdoor recreation. Lodging tax receipts for Alamosa County, the region’s economic center, increased 38 percent from 2019 to 2021, according to the Alamos County Marketing District.

The economist for the Colorado State Demography Office called the increase in tax receipts a “sign of some ‘green shoots’ in the economic recovery” for the San Luis Valley. However, he cautioned there is still a long way to go before full recovery.

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. Production and crop values for 2020 are unavailable at this writing.

The Valley remains under severe drought conditions. Surface and ground water for crop irrigation is in short supply, affecting crop yields and further depleting the Valley’s underground aquifer. During the 2021 irrigation season, ag producers used less water than any time since the creation of a special water conservation sub-district in 2006. However, in the month following the end of the irrigation season, the aquifer dropped further surprising water managers. More declines in November and December measurements, when the aquifer should begin to recharge, could mean a very difficult irrigation season in 2022.

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.

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 increased only slightly from the 2010 Census to the 2020 Census; 46,027 to 46,108. 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>2020</u>
Alamosa	15,445	16,376
Conejos	8,256	7,461
Costilla	3,524	3,499
Mineral	712	865
Rio Grande	11,982	11,539
Saguache	6,108	6,368

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 and Employment

The early impacts of the pandemic are reflected in a decline in the number of jobs from 26,895 in 2019 to 26,073 in 2020. It is expected the number of jobs in 2021 will have increased by year’s end to near pre-pandemic levels. By June of 2021, the Valley had regained 94.4 percent of pre-pandemic jobs.

Unemployment rates have fallen from October of 2020 to October 2021, another positive sign of economic recovery.

<u>County</u>	<u>Oct. 2020</u>	<u>Oct. 2021</u>
Alamosa	5.3%	4.3%
Conejos	4.3%	3.6%
Costilla	6.6%	4.6%
Mineral	4.8%	3.5%
Rio Grande	5.2%	4.5%
Saguache	5.6%	4.4%

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	
Tom McCracken	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	
Robert Espinoza	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	
Tom McCracken	Saguache County Commissioner
Ramona Weber	Mineral County Commissioner
John Noffske	Rio Grande County Commissioner
Michael Carson	Alamosa City Councilor
Ty Coleman	Alamosa Mayor
Kairina Danforth	Crestone Mayor
Community Leader	
Karla Shriver	Farmer, Non-Profit
Dan Hicks	South Fork Town Manager
Tom Monaco	Upper Rio Grande Economic Development
Melinda Myers	Saguache County Sustainable Environment & Economic Development
Kathy Woods	City of Alamosa Economic Development Director
Liza Marron	San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition
Barry Van Sant	Businessman
Workforce Development	
Michael Yohn, Chairman	Colorado Workforce Consortium, Alamosa County Commissioner

Minority	
Jason Medina	San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center
Robert Espinoza	Costilla County Commissioner
Bernadette Martinez	Del Norte Town Manager
Larry Zaragoza	La Jara Town Manager
Higher Education	
Jack Wiley	Dean of Instruction, Trinidad State Junior College

Section IV: Staff

Staff	Title	Email Address
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Staffing Notes:

1. Andreas Oakes-Jaramillo joined the staff of SLVDRG in August, taking over from Sarah Stoeber who left SLVDRG to become San Luis Valley Development Director of Care and Share Food Bank of Southern Colorado.
2. Also leaving SLVDRG was Tonya Owsley, director of SLV Community Action Agency. Tonya resigned to pursue other interests.

Section V: 2021 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 included in the Enhanced Rural Enterprise Zone.
 - ii. Promoted six designated Opportunity Zones under the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.
 - iii. Made five loans from the \$968,000 grant received 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. The five loans totaled \$296,000.
 - iv. The Disaster Recovery Coordinator, funded by the CARES Act through EDA, continued under the scope of work established between SLVDRG and EDA, which focuses on identifying potential resiliency, mitigation, and economic recovery projects in the disaster-impacted six-county area served by SLVDRG.
 - v. Two loans to businesses in the hemp industry are pending adoption of Colorado’s hemp plan. The loans will come from \$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. When finalized, the loans are expected to create or retain 45 jobs.
 - vi. Distributed \$100,000 in business loans through a partnership with the Energize Colorado Gap Fund, a hybrid grant and loan program for small businesses and non-profits impacted by COVID-19.
 - vii. Partnered with the San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center, of which SLVDRG is the sponsoring agency, developing an aggressive outreach program focusing on providing technical assistance for businesses to access the increase in capital available through SLVDRG lending programs.
 - viii. Disaster Recovery Coordinator initiated a business retention and expansion effort with a business-call program to contact regional businesses and survey their potential for future expansion or retention, and gauge any barriers or opportunities.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables:
 - i. The EZ tax credit program returned \$2.27 million in tax credits to 489 businesses in the region for investments in their businesses and in training of 251 employees. In 2020, \$2.4 million in tax credits were granted to 540 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. Response to the OZ investment program has been limited, however. The program is available until 2026.
 - iii. Following the resignation of Sarah Stoeber as Disaster Relief Coordinator, quickly hired Andrea Oaks-Jaramillo as the new Disaster Relief Coordinator.
 - 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 a 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.
 - ii. Transitioned administration of the San Luis Valley Regional Transit Council to Neighbor to Neighbor/Chaffee Shuttle, a transit agency located in Salida that operates three shuttle routes in the San Luis Valley.
 - iii. With funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Agency HOPE Grant, the Chaffee Shuttle began the planning process for growing transit services in the counties within the San Luis Valley Transportation Planning Region – Alamosa, Chaffee, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande and Saguache. The firm developing the plan began the planning process in early summer with outreach meetings throughout the region. The process will continue into mid-2022. The grant application was initiated by, written, and submitted by Sophia Maes, the Americorps/VISTA, in 2020. The grant award was \$172,000.
 - 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:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. Organized the first Southern Colorado Economic Development Summit in April. The summit was attended by over 40 economic development partners from South-Central Colorado. The focus of the meeting was to explore potential opportunities for regional cooperation and partnerships for economic development.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. The economic summit served to establish professional ties and contacts.
 - 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 11 loans to ten businesses totaling \$931,863, leveraged \$1,530,235 in private funds, and created or retained 33 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: One loan client, still in operation, closed out a loan with SLVDRG and now can be considered “bankable” with traditional lenders.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: One loan totaling \$92,000 at origination was closed out in 2021. Conventional financing for their businesses was not possible at the time the loan made. The business continues to operate providing four jobs.
 - c. Difficulties Encountered: None
2. Provide risk mitigation for local lenders.
- a. Accomplishments Achieved: Originated two loans in 2021 with participation by regional lenders.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Of the 11 new loans made in 2021, two were done in participation with regional lenders, mitigating their risk. The two loans totaled \$809,582 (\$123,502 from SLVDRG and \$686,000 from regional lenders).
Closed one loan in the amount of \$10,000 from the 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 region.
- a. Accomplishments Achieved: SLV GO! maintained a full-time staff of four that include an executive director, director of operations, coordinator of SLV Generation Wild Coalition, and a development coordinator. 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 six miles of new trail built in three SLV communities; seven weeks of trail maintenance work on Rio Grande National Forest lands; successful Colorado Health Foundation award to fund a full-time health and wellness coordinator position and two to three part-time outdoor embajadores, or ambassadors, to conduct accessible and inclusive outdoor trips for community members; partnered with nine organizations across the San Luis Valley to receive a GOCO Generation Wild Colorado grant to sustain and expand outdoor and conservation programs for youth and families; continued progress on expanding partnerships with municipalities and community groups toward creating the Sangre de Cristo Dark Sky Reserve.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Six miles of new trails built in San Luis, Alamosa, and Monte Vista. Additional funding obtained to fund a full-time Sangre de Cristo Dark Sky Reserve Project Manager. Co-led the achievement, on behalf of Alamosa County, to receive one of

ten nation-wide awards from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Culture of the Health Prize for 2020 and 2021.

- c. Difficulties Encountered: The COVID pandemic continued to present challenges with public meetings and funding. In-person meetings with partners at project sites were difficult, 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 moved away from funding the administration of projects and organizations.
2. Assist in the development of local trails for greater outdoor activities.
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved: Expanded projects for our 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. Work was done on a variety of projects on federal land, county open space, municipal open space, and privately-owned conservation easements ensuring that some of the most heavily used trails had maintenance.
 - b. Quantifiable Deliverables: Twenty-six miles of trails 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 continues to be 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: Continued 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, 2020. 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. Continued to work on an 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. Completed the 2021 San Luis Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
 - iii. Responded to over 60 requests from local governments, economic development organizations, individuals, and businesses for demographic and economic data on the region.
 - iv. Compiled annual statistical profile of the region for distribution to local governments, human service organizations, and general public. The statistical profile is also available for download or viewing on the SLVDRG web site.
 - v. Authored numerous new stories related to the regional economy and SLVDRG programs and resources.
- c. Difficulties Encountered: None encountered.

G. Opportunity Zones

- 1. Implement and promote the results of the Opportunity Zone Prospectus.
 - a. Accomplishments Achieved:
 - i. Continued promotion and marketing of six Opportunity Zones in the San Luis Valley.
 - ii. Encouraging applicants for federal grants to use and leverage the location of Opportunity Zones in their service area in their grant applications.
 - 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 2021, at least \$105.8M in capital investment was made by 489 businesses in the San Luis Valley.
 - The top investments by sector were:
 - i. Agriculture - \$56.4M
 - ii. Real Estate & Rental & Leasing - \$15M
 - iii. Construction - \$8.7M
 - iv. Transportation - \$5.2M
 - v. Wholesale Trade \$4.1M
 - Through the Colorado Enterprise Zone Investment Tax Credit, \$2.27M 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 50.55 jobs were created as a result of Enterprise Zone-qualified capital investments of \$105,810,965 made in 2021.
3. Total jobs created or retained as a direct result of SLVDRG activities.
 - A total of 33 jobs were retained or created through lending by the SLVDRG Business Loan Fund. Eleven new loans were made to 10 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 2021 as business investments and growth were very cautious because of tenuous economic conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Amount of private sector investment in the region as a result of CEDS implementation.
 - SLVDRG continues to work 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.
 - SLVDRG realized a significant increase in capital available to new and existing businesses in 2020, which availability continued in 2021.
 - 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 of \$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.
- Agriculture remains 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 as evidenced by SLV Health now employing over 650 people, making it the largest single employer in the region.

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

- The SLVDRG Business Loan Fund made 11 new loans to ten business in 2021. Those loans totaled \$931,683 and leveraged \$1,530,235 in private funds, and created or retained 33 FTE jobs. The businesses ranged from a trout farm to an appliance store to a distillery.

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

- Lending is the primary tool used by SLVDRG to encourage economic growth and advance our economic strategy for the region. The SLVDRG Business Loan Fund maintains a loan portfolio of \$9.3 million and 48 loans. The SLVDRG BLF is a critical component for funding small businesses as local lending institutions continue to tighten their policies. We continue to work with CHFA using Colorado Credit Reserve program to assist lenders with collateral shortfalls.
- Funding from USDA in 2020 is still available to identify and finance agricultural value-added projects that will enhance the Agriculture sector.
- The region continues to “grow” its tourism economy. As the hospitality sector indicated strong growth during the 2021 tourist season. A primary indicator has historically been the number of visitors to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, which this year, despite the continued pandemic, saw the highest number of visitors in history; over 530,000.
- 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.
- With funding received in 2020 through the Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program from the U.S. Department of Transportation, The Chaffee Shuttle began work in spring 2021 on a regional transit plan. The funding came from a grant initiated by, written, and submitted by Sophia Maes, the Americorps/VISTA in 2020.
- In cooperation with human service non-profit organizations in the region, SLVDRG acts as the coordinating agency of the San Luis Valley Broadband Collaborative with the goal of identifying potential broadband projects and initiatives that would improve broadband accessibility to underserved communities in the San Luis Valley.

Section VII: Schedule

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

<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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