

Final Report

Northwest Colorado Resiliency and Recovery Roadmap

The Economics of Land Use



Prepared for:

Northwest Community Development Council (NWCDC)
and
Colorado Department of Local Affairs

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1. Background and Process Overview

Roadmap Program Background

Acknowledgments

The “Colorado COVID-19 Regional Resiliency and Recovery Roadmaps Program” (henceforth “Roadmaps Program”) has been funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration and administered by the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Colorado Resiliency Office in partnership with the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), and Community Builders. Economic & Planning Systems (EPS), supported by MIG, Inc., was hired to lead the Northwest Colorado Regional Community Team through the Roadmap process, which has resulted in this Recovery and Resiliency Roadmap Plan. See Appendix A for a full list of jurisdictions and partners that were a part of the Northwest Colorado Regional Community Team.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic caused one of the greatest disruptions of our lifetimes, requiring our communities to partner across jurisdictional boundaries to effectively respond to change and elevate community assets to solve shared problems.

The Roadmaps Program has provided 16 Regional Community Teams in rural Colorado with the opportunity to work together through a two-year planning and implementation process to support diversifying and strengthening their economies while also building regional resiliency. The planning process has taken a holistic economic and community development approach, which has equipped communities to not only better recover from COVID, but also to be more resilient to future shocks and stressors.

This Resiliency and Recovery Roadmap Plan documents the prioritized and regionally aligned objectives, actionable strategies, and implementation plan for Northwest Colorado. Additional information, including an archive of the other Regional Community Teams’ final Roadmaps, is available at:

www.coresiliency.com/roadmap-program.

Northwest Colorado Overview

The Northwest Colorado Regional Community Team (RCT) includes representatives from the counties, municipalities, and local economic development entities in the region. The region includes Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt Counties. The region has a diverse mixture of communities that have common and unique economic challenges. There are common economic anchors and threats that have generated the need and potential benefit of working regionally to address economic changes.

Common Attributes

The region began conversations and efforts to explore addressing regional economic issues because of the announcement of future closure of two coal power plants located in the region. These coal power plants and nearby coal mines that fuel the plants have been a consistent economic and fiscal engine for the region. The announced closure of these plants generated the need for the communities in the region to plan for transition of the workforce and economic base. The existing Yampa Valley Economic Development Council (formed in 1991) was renamed the Northwest Colorado Development Council and expanded to include the towns of Rangely, Meeker, Oak Creek, and Yampa to regionally address economic growth in the region.

The region's communities also share other economic engines that drive economic growth including outdoor recreation and related tourism and agriculture. Outdoor recreation amenities, most prominent of which is the Steamboat Ski Resort, drive millions of visitors to the region annually. The City of Steamboat Springs alone attracted over 1.1 million visitor days in 2019. This does not include visitors to other outdoor recreation amenities in the region such as off-road vehicle visitors to Rio Blanco County and visitors to Dinosaur National Monument in Moffat County. There is opportunity to expand and diversify visitation to the region for outdoor recreation.

Lastly, agriculture has been the historical economic driver in the region predating outdoor recreation activity and the power plants. The 2017 US census of Agriculture estimated there are 887 active farms in the region that generate a market value of products sold of over \$83 million. Most sales are for livestock and related products. The Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) estimates that there are 1,940 basic employment jobs in agribusiness within the region, which accounts for 7 percent of employment alone. Agriculture remains a vital and growing industry in the region and a major component of the region's cultural heritage.

Common Threats

Given the common economic attributes of the region, the region also faces many common threats to economic health. The closure of the Craig and Hayden power plants and related impact on coal mining will generate substantial change in the economic and fiscal makeup of the region. This shift away from power generation from coal is coupled with the boom-and-bust cycle of oil and gas extraction in portions of the region as well. Energy generation will continue to be an opportunity for the region, but the volatility of this industry is a threat to ongoing economic stability.

The other major economic drivers in the region are impacted significantly by threats related to climate change. Warming weather and dryer winters have been identified as trends that significantly impact the ski industry in Routt County. Agriculture activity is also impacted by dryer conditions, which will impact the availability of water for irrigation. Warmer weather may generate some positive impacts on the growing season in the region, however, the volatility of weather patterns may offset any of the potential benefit and create greater risks for farmers.

Lastly, communities are interested in growing and diversifying the base of visitors coming to their communities. However, the tourism industry can be volatile as well as economic conditions nationally can impact spending and visitation patterns. Economic shocks, such as a global pandemic, can also leave the region vulnerable to drops in visitation that are outside of the control of regional partners.

Economic Vision and Goals

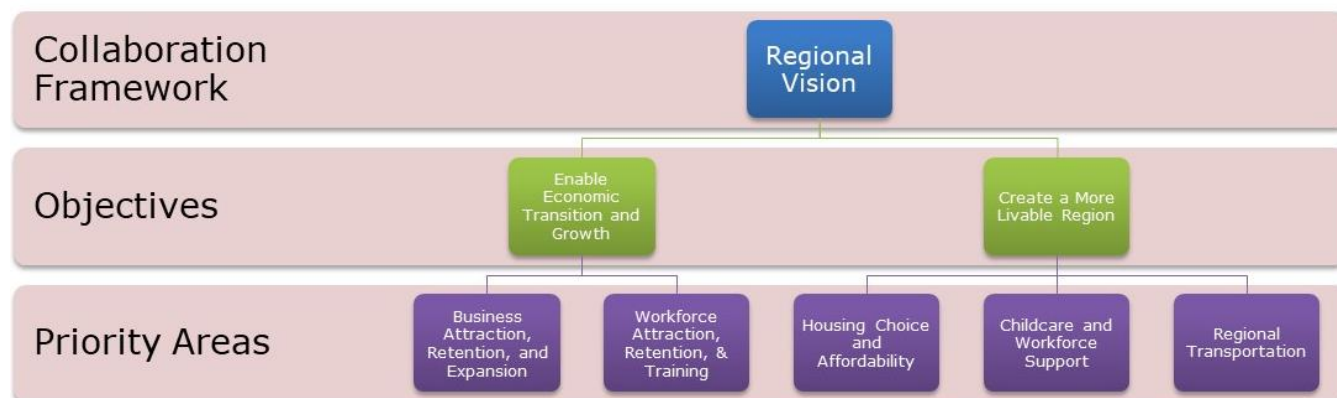
The members of the Regional Community Team (RCT) provided input into the development of a regional economic vision. This is articulated below to serve as a guiding statement for efforts by the team.

VISION: NORTHWEST COLORADO WILL BE A THRIVING ECONOMIC CENTER WITH A DIVERSE ECONOMY ANCHORED BY **NUMEROUS OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES** THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, **GENERATION OF POWER** TO FUEL THE WESTERN US, DIVERSE **AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD ECONOMIC ACTIVITY**, AND **MANUFACTURING**.



The two main goals/objectives were developed to organize the focus topics that the RCT identified. These two goals are to enable economic transition and growth and to create a more livable region. Beneath these two goals are five priority areas, which include: Economic Diversification and Transition, Workforce Development, Housing, Childcare, and Transportation. Strategies and related actions are organized within each of the five priority areas. Each priority area also has its own summarized action plan matrix that identifies the associated task force, potential lead and partner agencies, and resource or funding options. The region’s collaboration framework is provided below in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 Northwest Colorado Collaboration Framework



Roadmap Components

This Roadmap document lists needs and issues in the region to allow state partners to better connect the region to funding and resources. The Roadmap is also intended to guide local economic development efforts of the newly formed Northwest Colorado Development Council to address short- and long-term opportunities and challenges. This Roadmap contains six major sections, which are described below.

- **Economic Conditions Assessment** – Building on the Groundwork Phase data collection, EPS developed an economic conditions assessment to document trends in the region to provide a basis of understanding for economic opportunities and challenges.
- **Priority Areas (5)** – The RCT identified five priority areas for regional collaboration. Each area has its own section that contains the following items:
 - **Major Initiatives** – For each focus area major initiatives were identified to guide efforts on this topic.
 - **SWOT Analysis** – A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis was developed using input from separate Task Forces that were formed for each of the five priority areas.
 - **Access to Opportunity** – Issues related to economic inclusiveness and equity were identified for each of the priority areas to highlight issues related to underserved and underrepresented populations in economic development activities and communities that are/may be disproportionately impacted by economic trends.
 - **Strategies and Actions** – The last section contains the strategies for each priority area and a summary matrix.

Outreach Approach

Four main types of outreach efforts were used as the primary tools in the Northwest Colorado roadmap effort: RCT meetings/workshops, participation in the Northwest Colorado Development Council monthly meetings, stakeholder interviews, and priority area task force meetings. The EPS Team was supported in outreach by Christine Rambo of Upsize Marketing Strategies, who was hired on a short-term basis to provide capacity support for the NWCDC and assist in the implementation of the roadmap.

Regional Community Team

The Regional Community Team began as the primary steering committee for the roadmap effort. The RCT met five times from December 2021 to August 2022. Two of these meetings were in-person workshops hosted by the Colorado Northwest Community College in January and August.

Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

The EPS Team completed stakeholder interviews throughout the process with groups that included elected officials (e.g., Town mayors, city administrators), economic/community development professionals, community service providers, state staff members, and community college representatives. In addition, Christine Rambo completed several dozen interviews with members of the NWCDC and broad cross section of stakeholders throughout the region. Input and notes from these interviews were utilized to develop the roadmap plan.

Priority Area Task Forces

Midway in the process the RCT split into five “Task Forces” to focus specifically on the five priority area topics. Each Task Force met monthly from April to August holding between 3 and 6 meetings depending on the priority area, with over 15 individual task force meetings being held. The meetings were facilitated by EPS and Christine Rambo with support from MIG and Upsize Marketing Strategies. The Task Forces included regional community team members, state representatives from various departments and agencies, and subject matter stakeholder experts. The meetings also included occasional guest speaker presentations to provide insight from experts active inside and outside the region in the focus area. Efforts were also made to include underrepresented groups in the stakeholders including the inclusion of Integrated Community. Integrated Community is a non-profit based on Steamboat Springs that assists and supports immigrants as they integrate into the northwest Colorado community.

Northwest Colorado Development Council

Lastly, EPS participated in monthly NWCDC meetings to provide input, listen, and learn about NWCDC efforts, and to gain direction from the council on the roadmap effort.

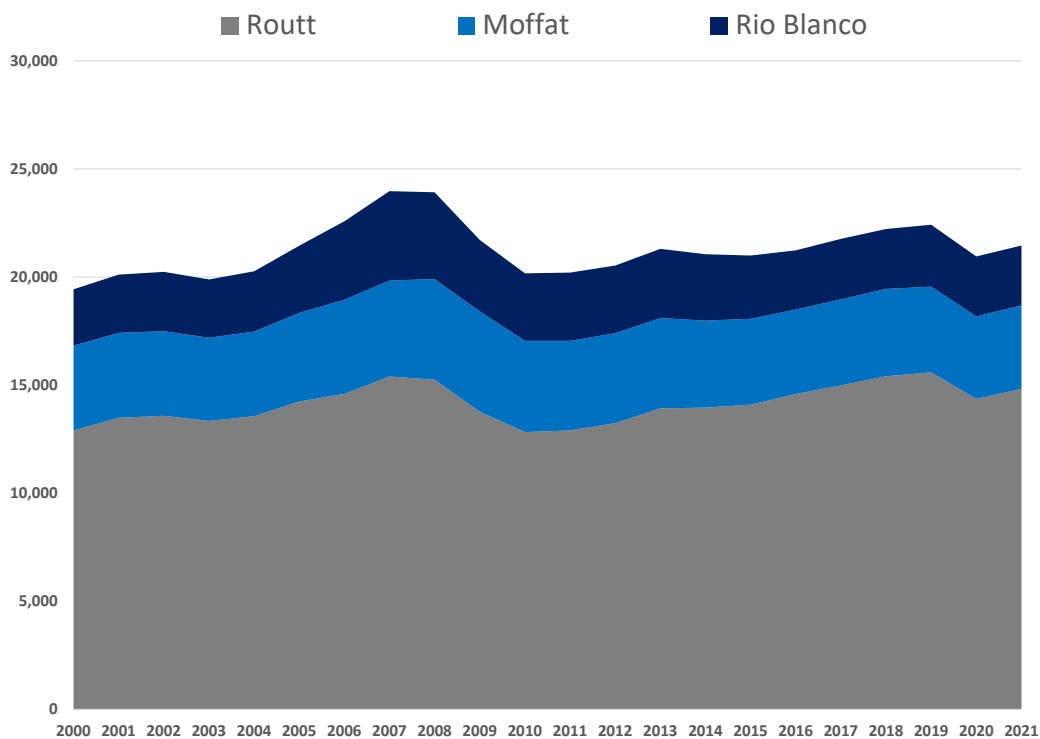
2. Economic Conditions Assessment

This chapter provides a summary of the economic and demographic conditions in the Northwest Colorado region and contains data relating to employment and population trends.

Economic and Demographic Trends

The total wage and salary employment in the Northwest Colorado region was 21,458 in 2021. The number of jobs in the region has grown by 2,025 jobs from 2000 to 2021, as shown in **Figure 2**. All three counties experienced a boom in employment from 2004 to 2008 driven largely by extraction activity (e.g., coal mining, oil, and gas extraction). Employment in the region decreased significantly from 2008 to 2010 because of both the decline in extraction activity and the impacts of the Great Recession.

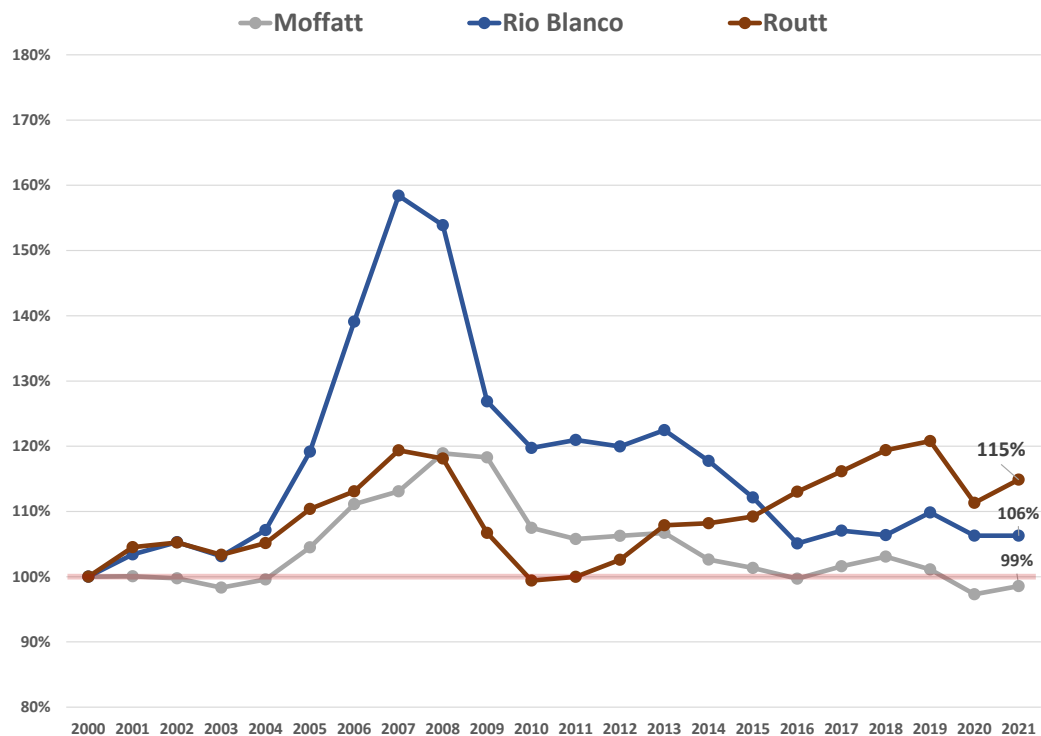
Figure 2 Northwest Colorado Region Employment, 2000-2021



Source: BLS QCEW; Economic & Planning Systems

The percent change in employment in each county from 2000 to 2021 (**Figure 3**) illustrates the diverging employment patterns of Routt County versus the other two counties. Since 2010, employment has been growing steadily in Routt County but has been in decline or flat in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties. Routt County employment had increased by over 20 percent from 2000 to 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant drop in employment in Routt County, which has started to rebound. Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties also experienced declines in employment in 2020, however these declines were less severe and in line with longer growth trends. The loss of mining, extraction, and power generation jobs in the region has had a bigger impact on Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties.

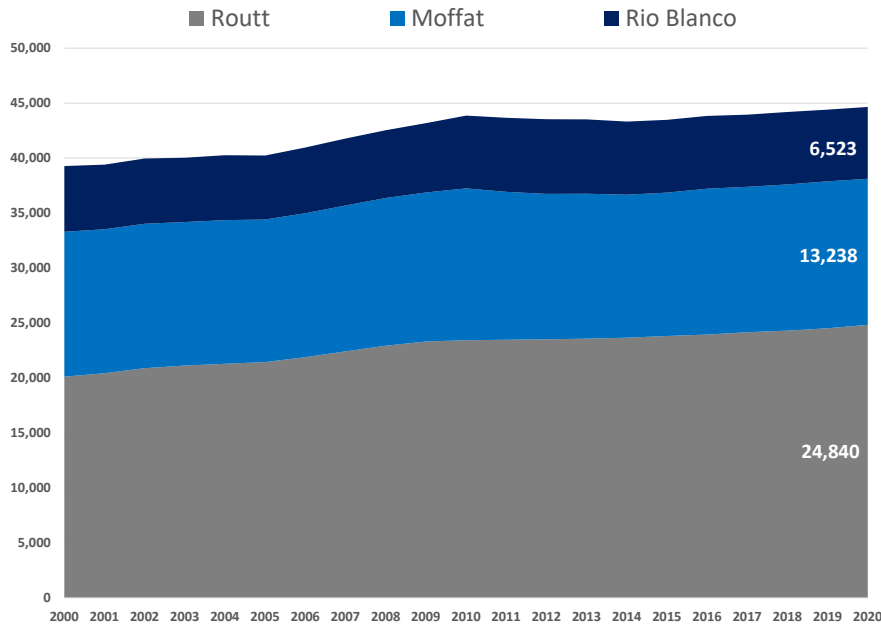
Figure 3 Northwest Colorado Region % Employment Change, 2000-2021



Source: BLS QCEW; Economic & Planning Systems

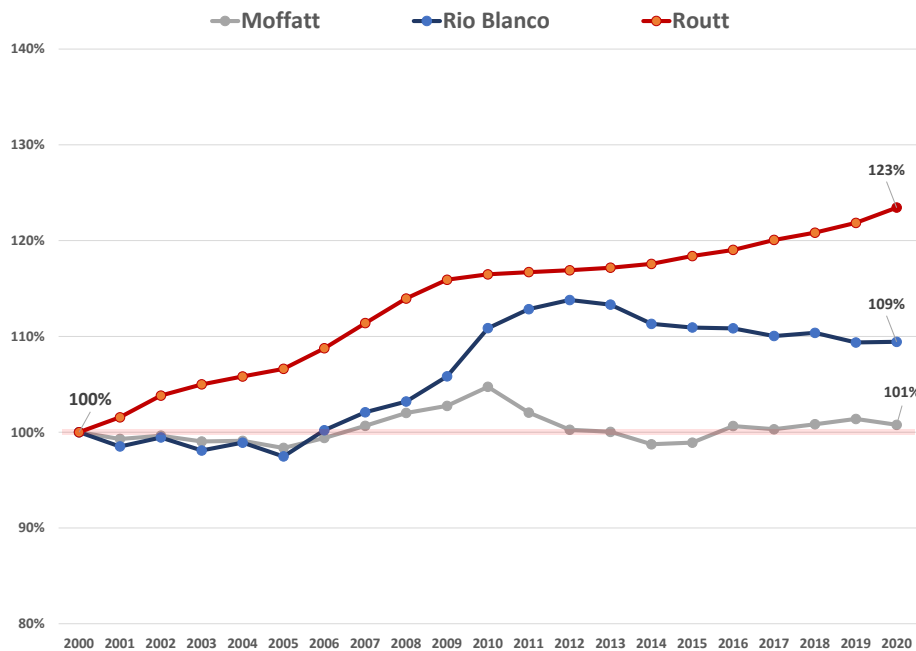
Population growth has outpaced employment growth in the region. The population of the three-county region grew from 39,274 in 2000 to 44,655 residents in 2020, as shown in **Figure 4**. All three counties increased in population over the 20-year period. Routt County accounted for the vast majority (88 percent) of the growth, while Rio Blanco captured 10 percent of the new residents, and Moffat County only 2 percent.

Figure 4 Northwest Colorado Region Population, 2000-2020



Source: Colorado State Demographer; Economic & Planning Systems

Figure 5 Northwest Colorado Region % Population Change, 2000-2020

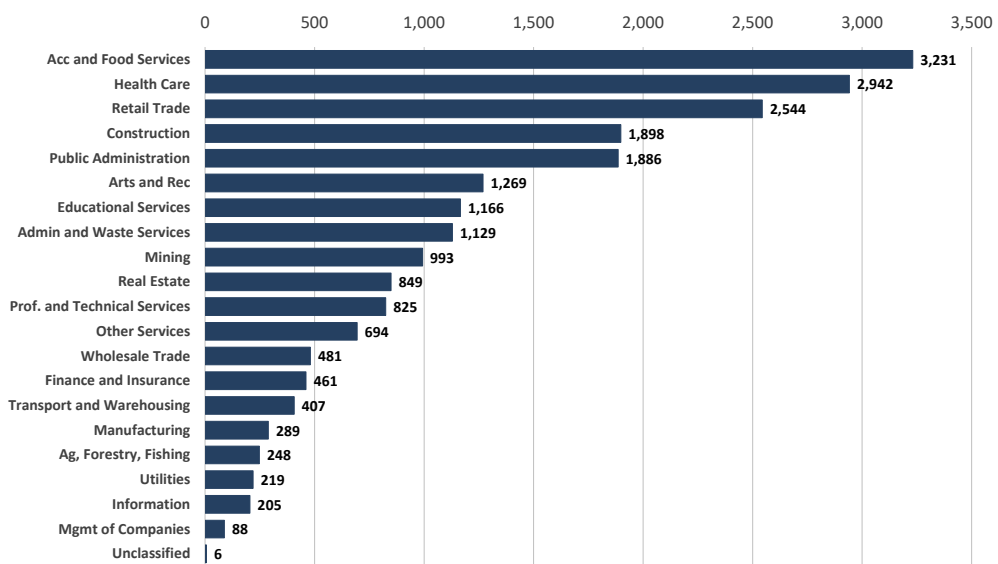


Source: Colorado State Demographer; Economic & Planning Systems

Economic Base Analysis

Accommodation and Food Services is the largest industry in the region, which reflects the importance of tourism to the regional economy. Health Care is the second largest industry and has grown into a major contributor to the regional economy. Other larger industries, based on employment, include Retail Trade, Construction, Public Administration, Arts and Recreation, and Education, as shown in **Figure 6**.

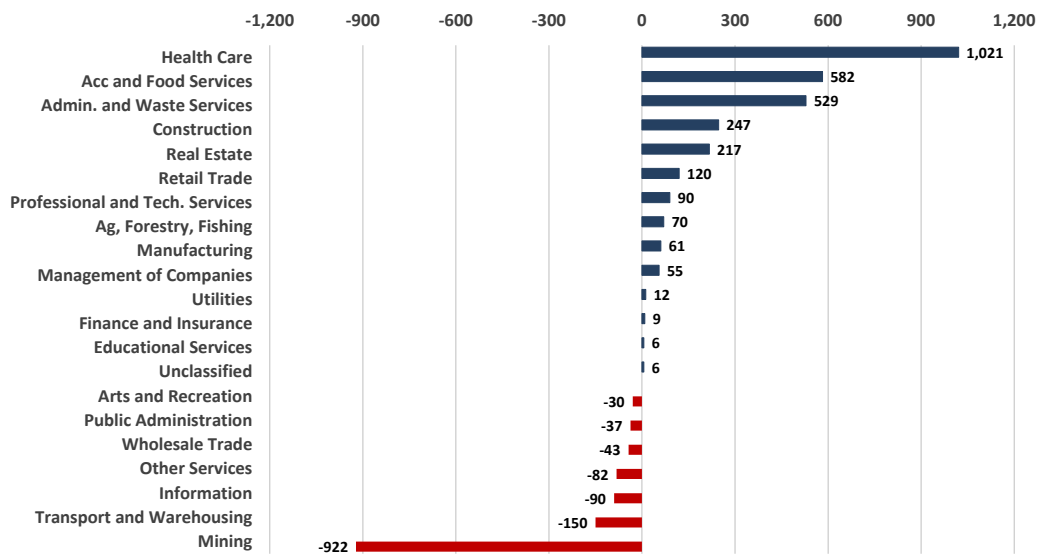
Figure 6 Northwest Colorado Employment by Industry, 2021



Source: BLS; Economic & Planning Systems

The change in employment in the industry over the past decade illustrates the changes in the economy that are occurring in Northwest Colorado. The Health Care industry grew by the most jobs (1,021) of any industry, followed by Accommodation and Food Services and Administrative Services. This growth represents the continued growth of tourism in the region along with the emergence of health care. The change in employment shown in **Figure 7** also illustrates the significant decline in mining and related transportation services. The mining and extraction industry declined by 921 jobs.

Figure 7 Northwest Colorado Change in Employment by Industry, 2010-2021



Source: BLS QCEW; Economic & Planning Systems

The economic drivers in Northwest Colorado are illustrated by a comparison of the concentration of jobs by industry in each county compared to statewide (i.e., location quotient). The location quotient for each industry is shown in **Table 1**. Northwest Colorado has a 6.31 location quotient in the Mining industry, which means mining jobs are six times more prevalent in the region than compared to the state. Other industries with a high location quotient include Agriculture, Utilities, Real Estate, Arts/Entertainment/Recreation, Accommodations/Food Services, and Public Administration. These industries reflect the economic anchors of agriculture, tourism, outdoor recreation, and power generation in the region.

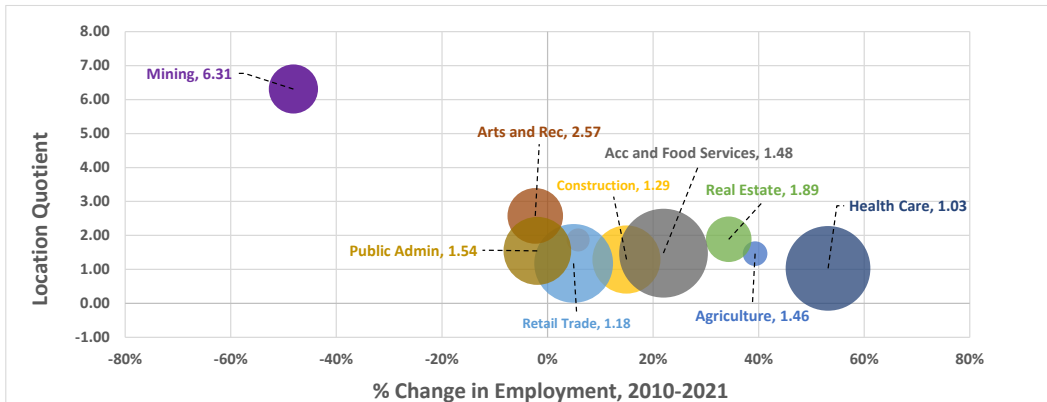
Table 1 Northwest Colorado Industry Location Quotient

Description	Moffat County	Rio Blanco County	Routt County	Combined NW Colorado
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	1.40	2.22	1.34	1.46
Mining	13.10	22.01	1.55	6.31
Utilities	0.00	2.81	2.18	1.87
Construction	1.05	0.81	1.45	1.29
Manufacturing	0.28	0.31	0.22	0.24
Wholesale Trade	0.93	0.14	0.52	0.55
Retail Trade	1.95	0.71	1.06	1.18
Transportation and Warehousing	0.55	0.62	0.45	0.49
Information	0.23	0.29	0.35	0.32
Finance and Insurance	0.45	0.35	0.54	0.50
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.44	0.36	2.56	1.89
Professional and Technical Services	0.26	0.12	0.49	0.40
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.00	0.00	0.37	0.25
Administrative and Waste Services	0.62	1.12	0.90	0.88
Educational Services	0.00	1.30	0.76	0.69
Health Care and Social Assistance	1.11	1.04	1.01	1.03
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.92	2.33	3.06	2.57
Accommodation and Food Services	1.26	0.78	1.67	1.48
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	1.16	0.82	1.05	1.04
Public Administration	2.41	2.46	1.14	1.54
Unclassified	0.00	0.00	0.47	0.32

Source: BLS QCEW; Economic & Planning Systems

The industries with a greater concentration than the state (LQ > 1.0) is shown in **Figure 8** (Y axis) compared to the percent change in employment over the past 11 years (X axis). Hospitality and Health Care industries have continued to grow while employment in Mining, Arts/Entertainment/Recreation, and Public Administration have declined in employment.

Figure 8 Northwest Colorado Industry Performance, 2010-2021



Source: BLS QCEW; Economic & Planning Systems

The industry clusters present in each county were identified using the U.S. Economic Development Administration Cluster Mapping Project. The industry cluster linkages and economic diversity for each county are shown in **Figure 9** based on 2016 data. These linkages and specialization are still largely present today despite the age of the data.

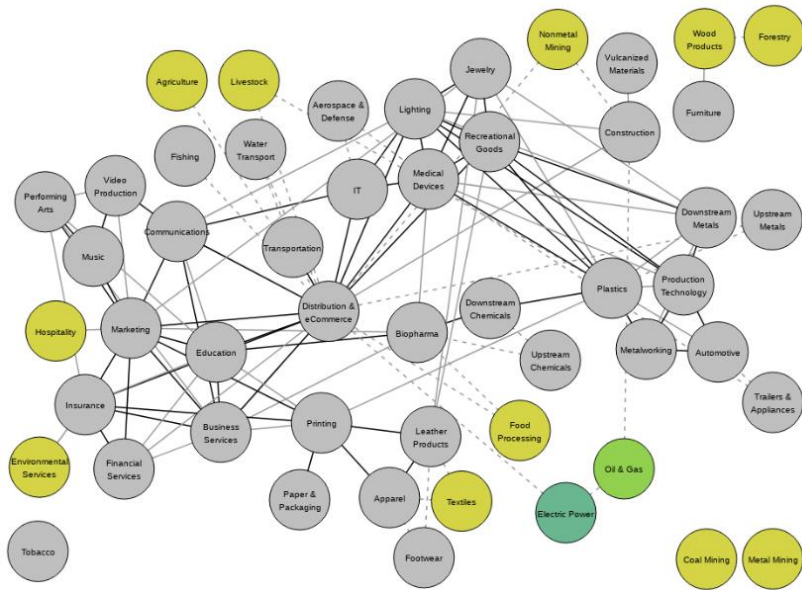
Moffat County has strong specializations in electric power generation, oil and gas, and mining, however these industry clusters have limited linkages to other industries. Other specialized clusters include agriculture, livestock, hospitality, wood products, and forestry.

Rio Blanco County's cluster specializations are similar to Moffat County's. Mining, oil and gas, agriculture, hospitality, and livestock are specialized clusters. Construction and recreational goods are two clusters that are more specialized in Rio Blanco compared to Moffat.

Routt County is highly specialized in hospitality and construction. Routt County also shares specialization in electric power generation, mining, and recreational goods.

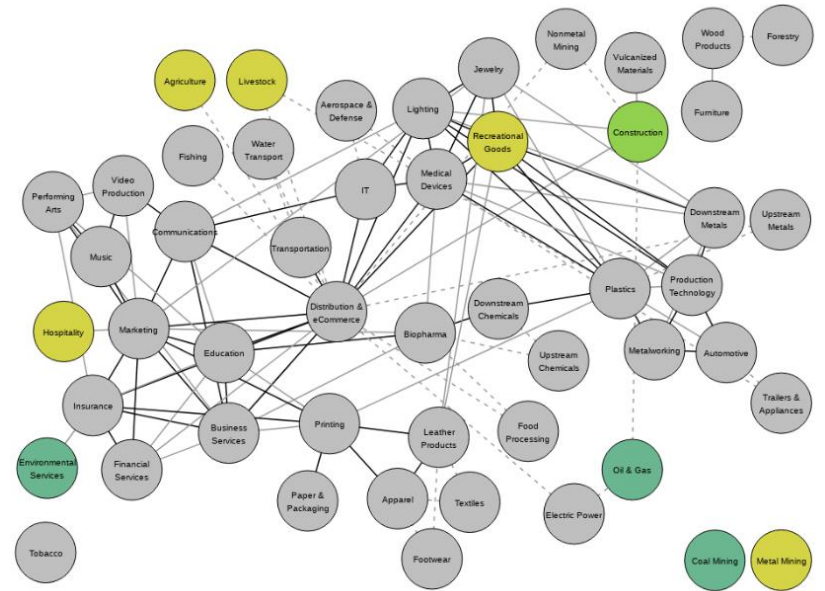
Cluster Linkages and Economic Diversification

Moffat County, CO, 2016



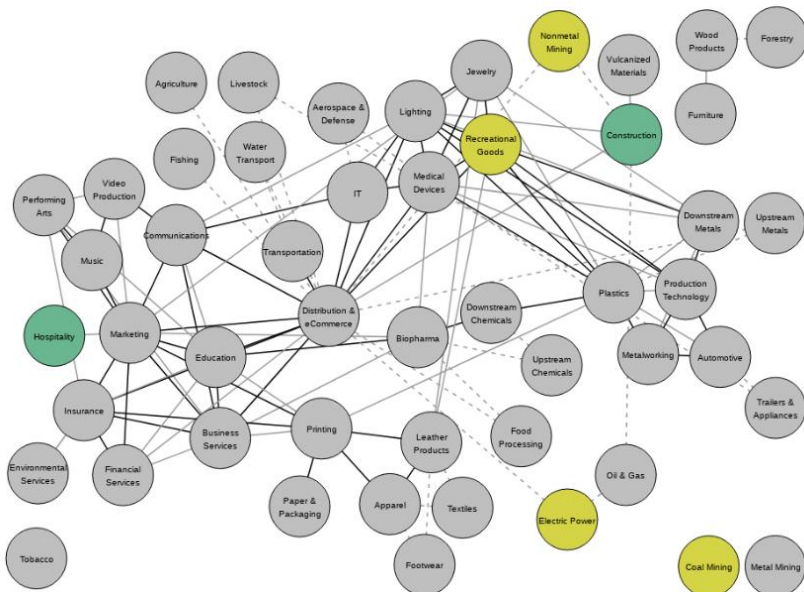
Cluster Linkages and Economic Diversification

Rio Blanco County, CO, 2016



Cluster Linkages and Economic Diversification

Routt County, CO, 2016



Cluster Specialization

- Strong clusters above 90th percentile specialization
- Strong clusters above 75th percentile specialization
- Other specialized clusters (LQ > 1.0)

— BCR >= 95th ptile & RI >= 20%

— BCR 90th-94th ptile & RI >= 20%

- - Next closest clusters not meeting above criteria

Figure 9
Industry Cluster Specializations

3. Northwest Colorado Development Council

The Northwest Colorado Development Council (NWCDC) is a regional collaboration to guide regional economic development efforts in Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt counties. Currently the NWCDC consists of members of the counties and cities/towns in the region with administrative support from Routt County and the City of Steamboat Springs. The region leveraged the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) program to gain funding for staffing for the NWCDC through June 2023 to help guide and implement this roadmap strategy. After June 2023, the NWCDC will lack human capacity and dedicated staff to support the organization. Capacity to implement this roadmap is an essential element for ensuring the smaller communities in the region can realize meaningful change.

Addressing creating human capacity for the NWCDC is the top priority. Below are recommendations for the NWCDC and its implementation of this strategy including securing long-term staffing

Strategies

1. Identify short-term grant funding to support implementation of the Roadmap and help work toward standing up the NWCDC as a self-sustaining entity.

The NWCDC and other Roadmap partners should work to identify additional funding for the extension of staffing capacity currently put in place to support the NWCDC in implementation. Explore applying for additional REDI grant funding or other state funding programs to support short-term capacity. Use the additional capacity to fully define and implement a self-sustainability strategy for the NWCDC.

2. Identify funding sources to provide a full-time staff in support of the NWCDC.

The NWCDC will need a fully funded director and additional administrative capacity to implement the Roadmap. Funding sources that can be established to fund the NWCDC staff need to be secured in the next two years to sustain the collaboration. Explore the viability of funding sources including membership dues, dedicated property tax levy, expansion of lodging tax, excise/use tax on tourism tickets/attractions, and/or a regulatory or impact fee.

3. Create working groups to focus on implementation of specific strategies identified in the Roadmap.

Transition the task forces formed for the Roadmap development into working groups focused on implementing specific strategies in the Roadmap.

4. Create an advisory committee to help ensure that implementation of initiatives the regional community team pursues integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion. (EDI recommendation)

Potential partners were identified during the Roadmap development to help consider how the RCT's work might support outcomes related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Integrated Community, faith leaders, and education institutions were identified as entities with connections to and understanding of issues facing underrepresented populations. As the RCT creates initiatives to implement the strategies it pursues, additional attention is needed to identify community members and organizations that should be engaged. While economic and other inequalities, including COVID impacts, often run along racial lines, they also run along other demographic lines depending on the outcomes and opportunities under examination. For example, in certain circumstances, barriers associated with age, ability status, gender, educational attainment, household income, and stability regarding things like housing and transportation may feature prominently. If opportunities the team creates are accessible to all community members in the region, people are better able to access what they need to thrive, and the region is strengthened.

To ensure that the team's work supports outcomes that further equity, diversity, and inclusion, an EDI Advisory Committee should be formed to support the NWCDC's efforts. The Advisory Committee should include representation that includes perspectives of demographic communities impacted as well as the geographic diversity represented within the RCT. Lastly, explore hiring a dedicated EDI specialist to support the Advisory Committee and the NWCDC in outreach to communities experiencing disparities in opportunities, outcomes, and representation along with the integration of EDI strategies within the Roadmap projects.

Additional sources of funding will be needed for implementation of DEI strategies and to support the engagement of a DEI specialist. The NWCDC should explore state and federal funding to support DEI integration.

4. Economic Diversification and Transition

This chapter provides the major initiatives, SWOT analysis, access to opportunity analysis, and strategies for the Economic Diversification and Transition priority focus area.

Major Initiatives

The Regional Community Team, with support from the members of each project focus area Task Force, identified six target industries to focus economic development efforts on, which are described below. Strategies were identified during the process for four of the target industries and the strategies are organized by target industry. Two additional industries were added to the target list, technology and business services and health care, based on feedback gathered through the overall effort. Additional studies have been identified that can further help define and understand the opportunities for each of these industries.

Target Industries

- Clean Energy Generation
- Light Manufacturing
- Agriculture/Value Added Agriculture
- Outdoor Recreation/Cultural Heritage Tourism
- Technology and Business Services
- Health Care

SWOT Analysis

A strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats discussions were held with the economic diversification and transition task force for each of the five target industries. A summary of each discussion is provided below.

Clean Energy Generation

Figure 10 Clean Energy Generation SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing power plants • Transmission lines • Existing energy workforce • Railroad access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of existing alternative power generation • Distance to population center and major power users
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molten Salt Energy Storage • Biomass energy generation • Solar power generation • Alternative uses of coal • Nuclear and hydrogen power generation positioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land uses not accommodating power projects • Loss of workforce as mines and plants transition from coal • Competitiveness of alternative power generation methods • Volatility of energy market

Light Manufacturing

Figure 11 Light Manufacturing SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 technical education pathways programs • Strong work ethic of workforce • History of new business creation in outdoor recreation and natural products manufacturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of transportation of goods to market and needed components in manufacturing process • Lack of interstate access or western rail service • Shortage of truck drivers • Lack of construction trades workers
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting students to opportunities through fairs, internships, and work-based education programs • Skilled workforce transitioning from coal mining and power generation • Community college infrastructure to train workers and provide certificates (e.g., welding) • Light weight and low cost to ship items • Tourist exposure to local products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of workforce to support growth of businesses • Cost of transportation may lead companies to relocate • Distance from major distribution hubs and population centers

Value-Added Agriculture

Figure 12 Agriculture SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heritage of agriculture and ranching ● Fiber mill in region ● Meat processors in region ● Reputation for quality products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temperamental weather and length of growing season ● Cost of finishing livestock is higher ● Lack of value-add processing ● Competition from large farms/ranches and processing capacity
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growing interest in locally/ sustainably grown food ● Emergence of greenhouses and hydroponics ● Partnerships with schools to train new farmers/ranchers/entrepreneurs ● Cooperative approaches to processing and selling products ● Specialize in exotic meat products (e.g., lamb, goat meat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to processing ● Regulations and barriers to selling products (e.g., certifications of meat, access to farmers markets and grocery stores) ● Predators to livestock ● Workforce growth and stability ● Cost of transportation ● Water access ● Climate Change / Drought

Outdoor Recreation and Cultural Heritage Tourism

Figure 13 Outdoor Recreation/Tourism SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public land and access to lands • Natural resources (rivers, mountains) • Cultural heritage • Yampa Valley Airport and other nearby regional airports • Abundant wildlife • Major attractions (e.g., Steamboat Resort) • Mature/sophisticated hospitality industry in Routt County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited tourism support uses and services outside of Steamboat (e.g., hotels, restaurants, etc.) • Lack of public awareness of amenities and attractions outside of Steamboat • Regional transportation to connect tourist to attractions • Workforce to support growth and lower wages of tourism related jobs
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage Steamboat brand to increase awareness of regional attractions • Focus on regional tourism through collective marketing and efforts • Highlight existing assets • Invest in improving access to natural resources (e.g., river access) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change impacts on snowfall, river levels, and weather patterns • Impact of tourist on existing infrastructure and culture • Reliance on US 40

Health Care

Figure 14 Health Care SWOT

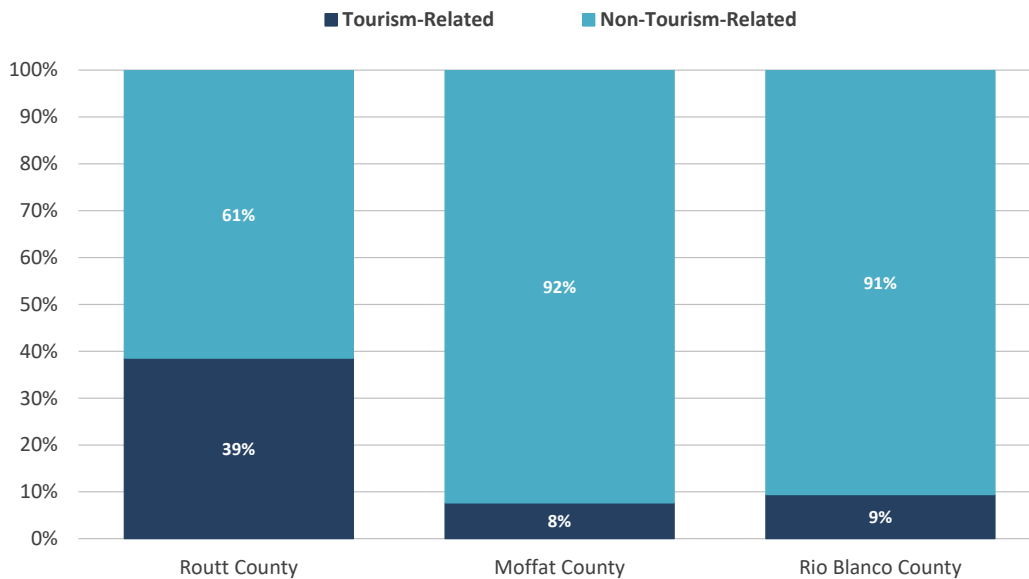
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second largest industry in the region and fastest growing over past decade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote and rural nature of the region makes health care service and access challenging
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care providers can be potential partners in addressing issues identified in the roadmap process such as childcare • Medical tourism opportunities • Expansion efforts of local health care facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring and retaining workforce because of the cost and availability of housing

Access to Opportunity

The most pressing economic resiliency concern in the region is the ability of the region to reduce its dependence on major industries and diversify the economic opportunities present.

For Routt County, the tourism economy accounts for an immense portion of the overall economy. Nearly 40 percent of the jobs in Routt County are in tourism related industries, as shown in **Figure 15**. The percentage is much lower in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties.

Figure 15 Tourism Industries Employment as % of Total Employment



Source: DOLA; Economic & Planning Systems

Mining and power generation are substantial drivers of the economy in all three counties. There are four coal mines in the region with each county having at least one mine. These mines employ between 148 and 186 workers. There are two coal-fueled power plants in the region: the Hayden Station in Routt County and the Craig Station in Moffat County. Xcel Energy is the majority owner and operator of the Hayden Station, while Tri-State Energy is the majority owner and operator of the Craig Station (Xcel is a minority owner). The power plants employ over 325 workers. While the employment impacts resulting in the closure of these plants—and the impact on mining jobs—will be substantial, there are opportunities for reassignment and/or transition of these workers. A major pressing issue is the loss of property tax revenue to the counties of these operations. This is especially pronounced in Moffat County where the Craig Station power plant accounts for 37 percent of the county’s property tax revenue, as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2 Coal Mine and Power Plant Impact

Description	County	Closure Year	Employees	% of County Property Tax
Mines				
Foidel Creek Mine	Routt		172	
Trapper Mine	Moffat		148	
Colowyo Coal Mine	Moffat		186	
Deserado Mine	Rio Blanco		157	
Coal-Fueled Power Plants				
Hayden Station Unit 1	Routt	2031		
Hayden Station Unit 2	Routt	2037	74	6.89%
Craig Station Unit 1	Moffat	2025		
Craig Station Unit 2	Moffat	2028	253	36.92%
Craig Station Unit 3	Moffat	2029		

Source: Colorado OJT; Economic & Planning Systems

Strategies

Clean Energy Generation

1. Support and invest in alternative energy generation projects that can supplement the loss of the coal power plants.

A broad approach to supporting energy development is encouraged by the regional partners, especially given the opportunity to leverage existing infrastructure and workforce assets. The following action items were identified to support the expansion of energy production.

- Identify opportunities that leverage existing infrastructure in partnership with Xcel Energy and Tri-State Energy.
- Support the reuse of the coal power plants for molten salt battery storage and use of biomass for energy creation.
- Support the development of solar, wind, and geothermal power generation in the region.
- Explore potential alternative use of coal mined in the region.
- Explore the potential for other energy generation technologies including nuclear and hydrogen power generation.
- Actively seek funding opportunities to support projects.
- Modify land use plans and regulations as needed to support the growth of energy development, specifically modifying regulations to support emerging project types such as solar farms to ensure they are in areas that are desirable, that negative impacts are mitigated, and barriers to development are reduced.

Light Manufacturing

1. Work to expand the availability of industrial space in the region to support the growth of new and expanding manufacturing businesses.

Identify lands best suited for industrial uses in land use plans. Identify and fund infrastructure improvements that can make industrial sites more development ready.

2. Identify manufacturing niches that are best suited and/or exist in the region and promote the growth of these types of businesses.

Use the cluster analysis to identify sub-industries of strength that can be successful in the region. Potential industries include aerospace, food manufacturing, natural health/beauty product manufacturing, and outdoor recreation product manufacturing.

Value-Added Agriculture

1. Support and encourage the creation of a Northwest Colorado Ranching Alliance.

Support the formation of a formal alliance among active ranchers and farmers in Northwest Colorado. Work with existing alliances or groups to create a region wide effort. The alliance can help ranchers and farmers with data sharing, developing cost sharing solutions for employees and facilities, enhance networks, and collaboration on creating market awareness of products grown and processed locally.

2. Explore the development of a cooperative agriculture production and storage facility that can support multiple farms and ranches.

Explore development of a cooperative, shared facility that has equipment and space for product creation and processing of raw food. Include elements such as cold storage, meat processing capabilities, and other needed assets that are more affordable/cost effective if shared. Explore ways to sell products directly at the facility and hold events to support businesses.

3. Explore the creation of a food innovation center in the region.

Work with Colorado State University and other partners to explore ways to locate research and development activities in food and agricultural sciences in the region. Explore locating a central location for activities in concert with the effort to create a cooperative facility.

4. Foster opportunities to establish a market niche with high-quality agricultural products.

Identify specific products grown or created locally that serve a specific market niche or command a premium. Work to establish a brand and expand the market for these products through marketing, promotion, and branding support. Identify technical support funding and resources to support businesses in establishing and expanding their market.

Outdoor Recreation and Cultural Heritage Tourism

1. Create a regional economic development/tourism website.

Consolidate location for information on economic development opportunities and area attractions/amenities.

2. Explore creation of a regionally oriented tourism promotion and destination management plan.

Create a collaboration of local municipalities, tourism destinations, and businesses to develop a strategy to collectively promote the region for tourism and identify needed investment to support long-term management of assets.

Small Business Development/Entrepreneurship

1. Expand capacity and services provided by Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) serving the region.

Two existing SBDCs serve the Northwest Colorado region. One center hosted by Eagle County is in the Town of Eagle. This center provides services to Routt and Moffat Counties. The other center is in Mesa County and provides service to Rio Blanco County. The region would benefit from greater exposure to these centers and the expansion of the service capacity they have. The region should identify ways to partner with the existing SBDCs and expand services to the region. Alternatively, the region could explore holding its own SBDC, which will require a local government(s) to host the center with office space and funding support.

Health Care

1. Support the growth of the healthcare sector which creates good-paying jobs using business expansion and retention.

Health care is the second largest industry and has grown into a major contributor to the regional economy. This sector grew by the most jobs (1,021) of any industry, creating high-wage employment opportunities. Use business expansion and retention visits to identify challenges and support expansion opportunities for healthcare employers.

2. Support workforce recruitment for the healthcare sector.

The growth of the healthcare sector in the region is hampered by labor shortages and challenges of recruiting healthcare professionals to more remote areas of Colorado. The high cost and shortage of housing have also created challenges in recruiting healthcare workers. To support the expansion of the healthcare workforce, the region and communities need to address the housing crisis, access to childcare, provide talent recruitment support, and encourage healthcare academic programs.

3. Support Medical Tourism

Some of our communities have identified medical tourism as a business attraction strategy. NWCDC should support local efforts to attract patients seeking medical specialty treatments to bring in external dollars.

Additional Studies/Analysis

These additional studies were identified to support economic diversification.

- **Target Industry Cluster Analysis**

Comprehensive analysis to identify specific sub-industry clusters and document their characteristics, opportunities, and challenges to support development of more specific actions for economic diversification.

- ***Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact Analysis***

An inventory of outdoor recreation attractions and businesses in the region is needed to help with identifying gaps and opportunities. This inventory is an essential element to estimating the economic impact of the sector. The economic impact analysis can be used to illustrate the value of the industry to investors, public grant opportunities, and aid in promotion and attraction of visitors.

- ***Coal Mines and Power Plants Longitudinal Economic Impact Analysis***

This economic and fiscal impact analysis will document the impact of the coal mines and power plants over time to illustrate how impactful the loss of the industry is and to identify the induced and indirect job impacts that need to be targeted in transition efforts.

5. Workforce Development

This chapter provides the major initiatives, SWOT analysis, access to opportunity analysis, and strategies for the Workforce Development priority focus area.

Major Initiatives

The discussion held by the Workforce Development Task Force led to the establishment of four primary areas of focus for workforce development. The strategies identified are organized within the four categories summarized below:

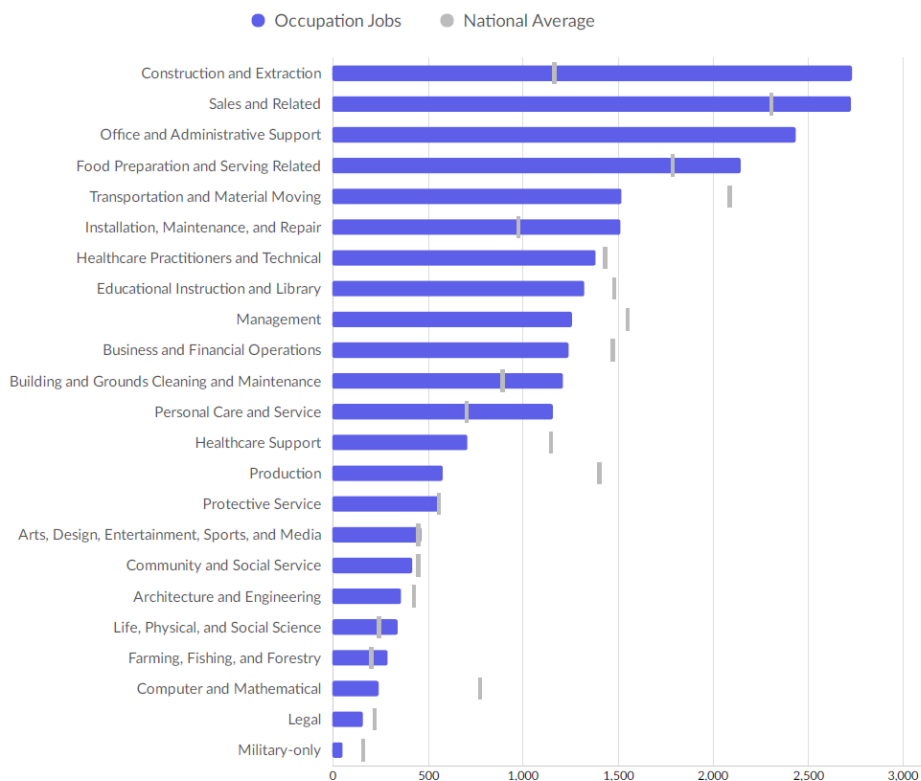
- 1. Workforce Transition** – These strategies focus on supporting the transition of the coal mining and power generation workforce.
- 2. Entrepreneurship Support** – These strategies focus on supporting the growth of new and small businesses within the region.
- 3. Education/Skill Training** – These strategies focus on aligning and expanding workforce resources in the region in coordination with the school districts and two community colleges (Colorado Mountain College and Colorado Northwest Community College).
- 4. Workforce Support** – These strategies focus on nontraditional issues related to supporting the workforces' quality of life and ability to remain employed.

Workforce Analysis

A data analysis of the region's workforce was completed to understand strengths and weaknesses. The analysis relied on occupation data provided by ESMI through the State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

Figure 16 shows the number of jobs by occupation in the three-county region and compares the presence of those occupations to the national average. The Northwest Colorado region has a greater presence of construction and extraction jobs, which is also the most prevalent occupation. The region also has higher than average presence of sales jobs, food preparation and serving jobs, installation/maintenance/repair jobs, building and grounds management jobs, and personal care services jobs.

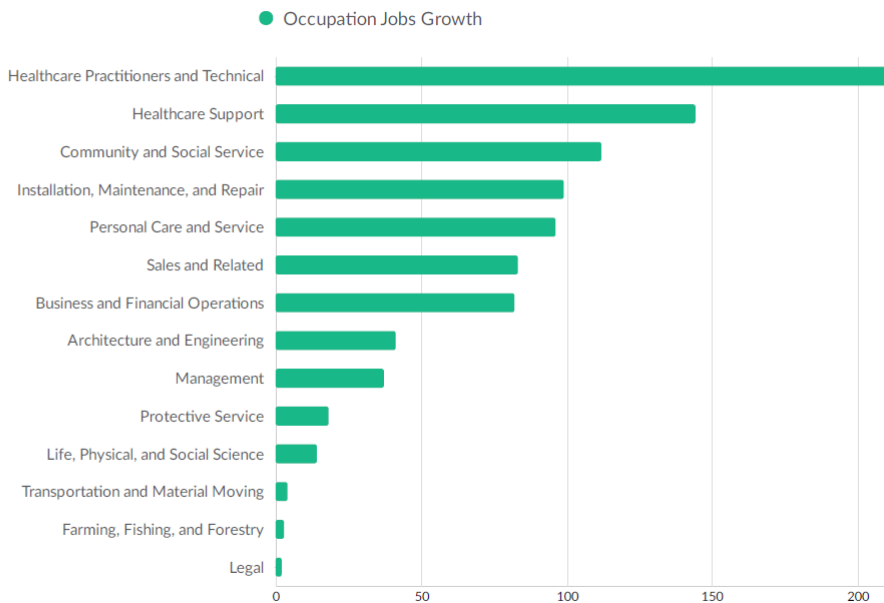
Figure 16 Northwest Colorado Jobs by Occupation vs National Average, 2019



Source: ESMI

The occupations that have experienced the most job growth in recent years are shown in **Figure 17**. Health practitioners and technical occupations had the largest job growth in the region. This is followed by healthcare support jobs. Jobs in community/social services, installation/maintenance/repair, and personal care services occupations also are experiencing growth.

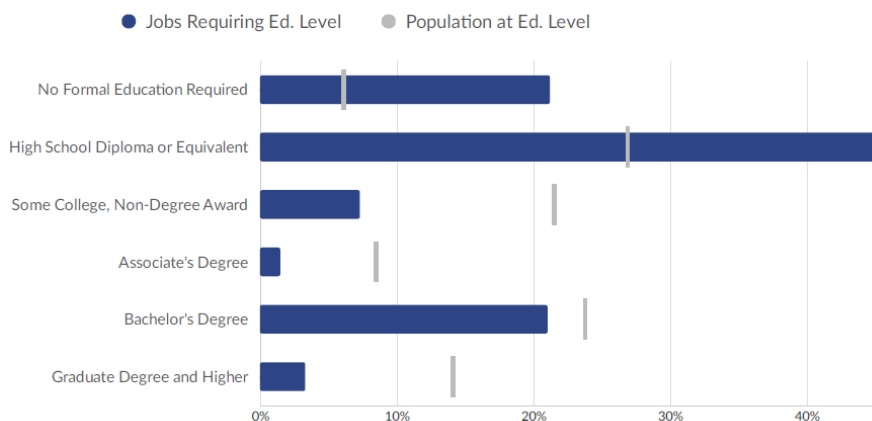
Figure 17 Job Growth by Occupation



Source: ESMI

Figure 18 compares the educational attainment of the region’s workforce population with the number of jobs requiring that level of education. The region has many workers that have at least some college education while most jobs do not require formal education or at least a high school diploma. The analysis shows that the workforce is highly educated and that most workers have the basic education needs for most jobs in the region. The barriers for workers to jobs in the region are more often related to specific job training needs or certifications than level of education completed.

Figure 18 Job Education Requirements and Workforce Education Attainment



Source: ESMI

SWOT Analysis

The workforce development task force completed a SWOT analysis to support the development of strategies. A summary of the analysis is provided below.

Figure 19 Workforce Development SWOT

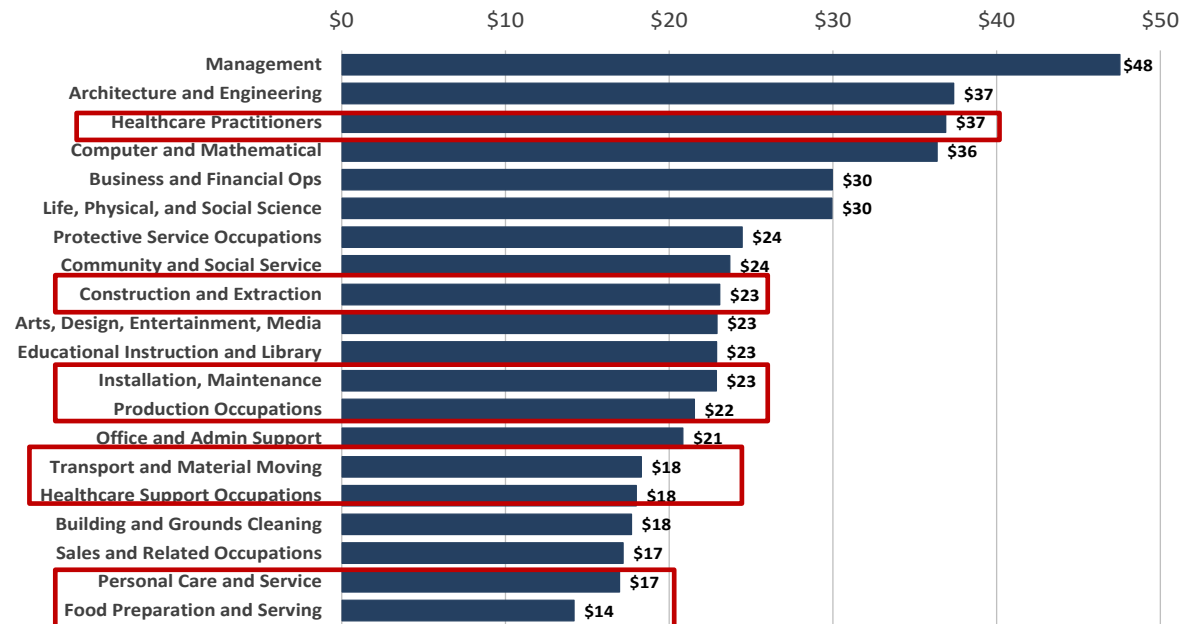
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highly education workforce ● Robust regional education network ● Specialized education and career pathways provided by colleges and high schools ● Quality of life and community pride ● Strong work ethic of workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Higher cost of living ● Lack of housing ● Skill gap for industrial trades ● Lack of mental health support ● Access to training programs
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creation of a construction trades program ● Build endowments to fund training programs ● Increase adult education training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attraction/retention of workforce ● Workforce turnover ● Providing jobs with desired wage levels ● Lack of workforce support (housing, transportation, childcare)

Access to Opportunity

Wage levels and the cost of living in Northwest Colorado is a major concern. Tourism is a major economic driver for the region and there is opportunity to grow this industry. However, the average wage levels in the tourism industry are low and the cost of living in Northwest Colorado is rising. Furthermore, the loss of extraction industry and energy jobs from the power plant closures will also impact wage levels.

Figure 20 shows the average hourly wage of occupation in the region. Outlined in red are occupations that are more prevalent in the region or more prevalent in the target industries identified for the region. Many of the occupations highlighted pay lower than average wages, except for health care practitioners.

Figure 20 Hourly Wage by Occupation



Source: BLS OES; Economic & Planning Systems

The transition of the energy workforce will also present challenges, especially related to wages. **Figure 21** provides a summary of the attributes and opportunities for two prevalent energy sector jobs. A power plant operator has a median salary (\$85,950) that is higher than region and state averages, but similar jobs this worker can transition into are typically lower paying. These operator jobs also have lower education barriers to entry but do require a high level of on-the-job training. Material moving machine operators are also a prevalent job. This job has low education barriers to entry, requires licensing, and can transition into several similar jobs in other industries. However, this job—and similar jobs to transition to—are low paying.

Figure 21 Energy Sector Worker Profile

Power Plant Operator

- Education/Quality
 - Don't need college degree
 - Math and science background
 - Detail oriented
 - Mechanical Skills
 - Problem Solving
- Pay
 - Median Salary – \$85,950
- Similar Jobs
 - Construction equipment operator
 - Electrician
 - Line installer
 - Stationary engineer

Material Moving Machine Operator

- Education/Quality
 - High school diploma
 - License to operate equipment
 - Alertness
 - Mechanical Skills
- Pay
 - Median Salary – \$35,850
- Similar Jobs
 - Delivery truck driver
 - Heavy tractor driver
 - Hard laborer/material mover
 - Construction equipment operator

Strategies

Workforce Transition

Strategies focused specifically on the transitioning workforce from the energy and mining sectors.

1. Career navigation services for transitioning workers.

There are a variety of career services that can be provided to transitioning workers. The Colorado State Office of Just Transition and local partners including Colorado Northwestern Community College are developing a strategic plan for providing services to transitioning workers. Potential services to include in these efforts are:

- Identify and target services to workers not employed by primary sector employers (i.e., Xcel Energy, Tri-State Energy, mines) who will be impacted by the closure of the power plants.
- Provide workers with individual career service counseling including connecting workers with existing training course programs.
- Use of peer workers to provide counseling services.
- Provide case management for workers between grant programs and education programs.
- Identify approaches and funding to allow counseling to start prior to loss of job.
- Explore funding and program support through WIOA Grants, SBDC, community colleges, and large employers connected to the energy industry.

2. Provide financial planning and retirement planning services.

Provide access to financial planning services to help aid transition from career to retirement or encore career. Include education on financial needs to support retirement and/or career changes.

3. Target education programs towards adult learners to support transition. (EDI recommendation)

Expand education options for computer/digital literacy and other skills that younger workers typically have. Explore use of AmeriCorps grants to support these efforts.

Entrepreneurship Support

Strategies focused on supporting new business formation and existing small businesses.

1. Create entrepreneur support centers in Northwest Colorado.

Create central physical locations and digital locations for access to resources and information. These centers can serve as locations for education/training programs, facilitation of networking opportunities, and inclusion of coworking and/or maker spaces in centers. Support the transition of the Yampa Valley Entrepreneurship Center to being hosted by the Routt County Economic Development Partnership by helping to identify and operate physical locations. Support the creation or expansion of other support centers in the region.

2. Expand access to entrepreneurship training courses/curriculum.

Expand programming by the community colleges to provide business formation education. Use these education programs to create a pipeline to connect to program/service providers. Support efforts by CMC and CNCC to provide entrepreneurship programming.

3. Develop funding sources and investor network for entrepreneurship.

Identify business seed capital resource opportunities from public and nonprofit funders. Seek to build a network of business investment entities and individuals active in the region.

4. Provide support to help immigrant, differently abled, undocumented workers, and workers for whom English is their second language to obtain business support services, professional licensing, and ability to operate as independent contractors. (EDI recommendation)

Explore how existing programs and services can be expanded to be more inclusive of groups that have traditionally lacked access to resources to support professional growth and business support services. Specifically, work with Colorado Northwest Community College and Colorado Mountain College to provide education offerings to support workers for whom English is a second language.

Education/Skill Training

Strategies focused on education of youth to support workforce and providing workforce with skills needed in the local economy

1. Align existing education offerings with target industries

Work with education providers to create courses specific to target industries that do not currently exist. Expand CTE Programming as needed to match target industries in alignment with Colorado's six industry sector programs.

2. Create a Local Commercial Driver's License Training and Certification Program

Identify funding and a host for the program. Identify ways to involve local employers to provide real life training opportunities. Explore partnerships to build an inventory of vehicles that can be used for training purposes, especially for vehicles that are not being used in down periods/off-season reasons.

Targeting disproportionately impact / underrepresented groups for training and certification could be a successful strategy for increasing employment opportunities for these populations. Outreach and engagement are needed to underrepresented groups to increase awareness of the benefits of the certification, training opportunities, and career pathways.

3. Collaborate to Continue to Expand Programs for Trades Careers Pathways for Local Youth

Connect existing and future high school curriculum with Community College Degrees. Expand on-going apprenticeship and internship positions for high school and community college students in partnership with local businesses. Identify applied learning course opportunities to support the construction industry. Expand certificate and pre-certificate learning and work opportunities. Develop an inventory of local businesses that have or will offer internship or apprenticeship positions.

Targeting disproportionately impact / underrepresented groups for participation in programs could be a successful strategy for increasing employment opportunities for these populations. Outreach and engagement are needed to underrepresented groups to increase awareness of programs and career pathways.

4. Transition the Workforce Task Force to serve as a Workforce Education Advisory Board supporting renewal of workforce programs strategic planning and implementation for the community colleges and local school districts.

The community colleges need advisory boards to provide guidance on workforce education programs. The Workforce Task Force could evolve into an advisory board serving both colleges and the school districts to guide changes to workforce programs. Greater participation from private business leaders is

needed to augment the current Task Force. A focus on equity, inclusion, and diversity can allow the workforce programs to expand its reach to underrepresented groups.

Workforce Support

Strategies focused on supporting workers by addressing non-job specific challenges.

1. Explore development of worker longevity incentive benefits in essential industries with high turnover or low retention rates

Consider providing local pay or benefit incentives for workers in critical occupations. Work with large businesses and local philanthropic organizations to create a critical worker endowment fund. Identify occupations that have high turnover and are of critical need in the community to target.

2. Expand networking and resource outreach to young professionals

Work with local businesses to support events and programming for their workforce. Create networks or expand the existing Steamboat network to other communities in the region through partnership with local chambers and other ED organizations.

3. Workforce Housing Access

When/where possible provide priority placement of residents in workforce/affordable housing that are employed locally in critical need occupations.

Additional Studies/Analysis

• **Target Industry and Education Program Gaps Analysis**

Identify skills needed within each target industry and compare them to existing education programs to identify missing education needs and or lack of capacity to support growth

• **Target Industry Skills Gap Analysis**

Identify skills needed for the region's target industries and evaluate the presence of these skills in the local workforce. Identify skills with the highest deficiencies to target program interventions.

6. Housing Access and Affordability

This chapter provides the major initiatives, SWOT analysis, access to opportunity analysis, and strategies for the Housing Access and Affordability priority focus area.

Major Initiatives

The communities in Northwest Colorado have varying housing needs and opportunities, but there are common challenges that they all face. Larger communities have had the ability to analyze their housing needs and have started major actions towards addressing challenges. For instance, Steamboat Springs has been addressing housing access and affordability issues for several years and the City—along with the Yampa Valley Housing Authority—are knowledge and experience resources for the rest of the region. There are some communities that lack a firm understanding of housing needs by product type and development barriers to new housing.

The housing needs for the regional communities are summarized below in **Table 3**. The table provides a high-level assessment based on existing housing plans and discussions with the task force. All communities are challenged with a lack of production of housing in the region. Additionally, there is a common lack of affordable/accessible for-sale housing and new rental housing options. The higher cost communities and large cities are also in need of affordable rental products to support the workforce. The common needs present the opportunity for regional collaboration to address issues.

Table 3 Regional Housing Needs

Description	Lack of Production	Low-Income Rentals	Market Rate Rentals	Entry-Level For-Sale	Attached / Multifamily Options	Lack of Land/Sites
Craig	X	X	X	X	X	
Rest of Moffat County	X			X		X
Meeker	X		X	X		
Rangley	X		X	X		
Rest of Rio Blanco	X			X		
Hayden	X	X	X	X	X	
Yampa	X		X	X		
Steamboat Springs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rest of Routt County	X			X		X

Source: Economic & Planning Systems

SWOT Analysis

The housing access task force completed a SWOT analysis to support the development of strategies. A summary of the analysis is provided below.

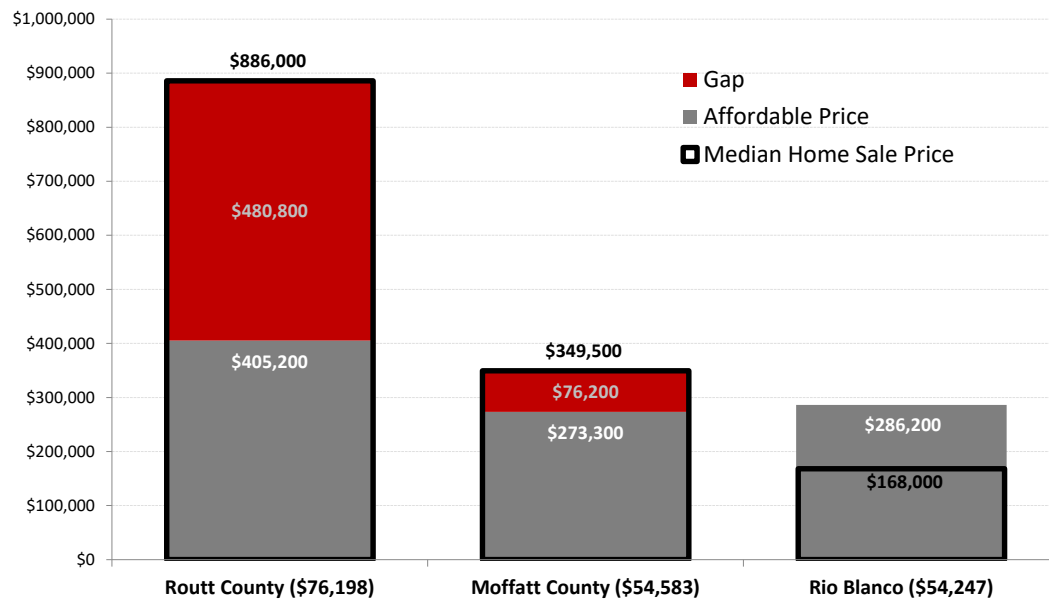
Figure 22 Housing SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recent housing strategies and initiatives ● Employer involvement in finding solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High cost of development ● Construction workforce shortage ● Older homes disinvestment ● Remoteness of communities
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manufactured home options ● Regional solicitation of developers ● Brown Ranch to influx workforce housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attraction of developers and contractors ● Small scale of projects in smaller communities ● Cost of land and competition from second home/tourist market ● Lack of tools and capacity to support projects

Access to Opportunity

The cost of housing is a major issue for most of the Northwest Colorado region, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the increase of remote workers, and use of homes as short-term rentals. The median home price in each county was compared to the affordable home price for a household earning the county-median income to illustrate the challenges with housing affordability in the region. This comparison is summarized in **Figure 23**. Housing affordability challenges are most pronounced in Routt County. The median home sale price in the county was \$886,000 in 2021, while a household earning the median county household income can only afford a home worth \$405,000. This results in an affordability gap that is more than double the affordable home price. The gap in Moffatt County is much smaller but still exists. The median sale price for a home was \$349,500 in 2021 while the median household can afford a home valued at \$273,300. There is no gap in Rio Blanco County, but the county lacks new and existing housing options for new residents.

Figure 23 Median Home Price vs Affordable Home Price for Median HH Income



Source: MLS, US Census Bureau; Economic & Planning Systems

Strategies

1. Implement a workforce housing developer solicitation strategy.

Package multiple sites and projects in the region to attract one or more developers through an RFP or RFI. The major steps needed to develop the solicitation are provided below.

A. Complete a Regional Workforce Housing Needs Study. (Additional analysis)

A regional workforce housing needs analysis is needed to consolidate all existing/recent study findings into one location. The study should identify short- and long-term needs/opportunities and address the following items:

- Consolidate findings from completed studies
- Identify needs for communities without a recent study
- Identify needs of underserved/underrepresented communities (**EDI recommendation**)
- Document specific housing types needed in each community
- Identify barriers to affordable housing
- Identify innovative ideas for providing housing
- Explore a partnership with CHFA to fund the study. Other funding sources include the DOLA IHOP and REDI grant program.

B. Regional Housing Feasibility and Technical Assistance Study (Additional study)

Completed a housing feasibility study that helps generate sites to be used in the developer solicitation. The following tasks are envisioned in this effort:

- Invite and solidify a set of communities wanting to participate in the RFQ/RFI.
- Identify the target housing project for each community including type of housing, construction approach, price points, and affordability requirements.
- Complete a market demand study to illustrate feasibility and potential gaps for target projects for each area identified in the housing needs study.
- Solidify locations lots/locations for workforce housing units and the specific housing types and affordability parameters desired by each community. Use this information to develop the scattered site RFP. Explore publicly owned sites (e.g., city/town land, school district excess property) to use for housing sites.
- Identify incentives and investments that the local municipalities and/or counties can provide for each project and site. Document barriers to development of each site and identify strategies to mitigate impacts outside of the developer's participation.

C. Develop and release an RFQ/RFI for a developer(s) to build the scattered sites in the region.

Prior to submission of the RFI/RFQ, generate a list of potential developers to raise awareness of the opportunity including soliciting feedback on projects prior to finishing the request. Create a framework for tracking responses and nonresponses to gain feedback on challenges with the solicitation. Package multiple sites under the single solicitation using a centralized manager/host of the project.

2. Form a Regional Housing Consortium

Create a regional entity that provides housing services to the entire region or areas not covered by the Yampa Valley Housing Authority. The organization will create a better connection to funding and programs for underserved communities. The housing consortium could seek to provide the following services, which are organized by near-term and longer-term services.

Near-Term

1. Regional resource and knowledge sharing
2. Service coordination to avoid duplications and identify gaps in services
3. Manage regional efforts/partnerships such as the developer RFQ/RFI
4. Provide capacity and support for community specific projects
5. Provide housing navigator services

Longer-Term

1. Own/manage develop affordable housing
2. Develop or partner in development of affordable housing
3. Leverage existing housing authorities for partnerships to facilitate projects that can benefit from housing authority powers
4. Provide gap financing/funding for projects
5. Create/manage a housing land bank
6. Provide rental assistance to low-income households
7. Purchase deed restrictions on existing market rate units to expand the inventory of affordable units
8. Provide down payment assistance to first-time, low-income, and target population buyers.
9. Provide existing home repair/weatherization grants and support
10. Fund preservation of existing affordable housing units

3. Establish a dedicated housing funding source.

Explore the creation of a dedicated funding source to fund housing programs including Redirection/Expansion of Lodging Tax, STR Mitigation Fee or Tax, Development Linkage Fees, Dedicated Property Tax/Sales Tax, and a Real Estate Transfer Fee.

4. Collaborate on accessory dwelling units (ADU) initiatives.

Localized solution rules and programs are needed to create more ADUs in the region. Collaborate to help communities without zoning regulations that allow ADUs to modify code and support the creation of other programmatic efforts to support ADU creation.

5. Attract nonprofit affordable and workforce housing developers and organizations.

Identify active developers or nonprofit organizations active in building workforce housing in other communities. Solicit their interest in operating in the region. Identify projects that may increase interest for the organization(s). Prioritize organizations that utilize workforce training or sweat equity strategies.

7. Childcare

This chapter provides the major initiatives, SWOT analysis, access to opportunity analysis, and strategies for the Childcare priority focus area.

Major Initiatives

The childcare task force identified three areas of focus for efforts. These three areas are shown below, and the strategies are organized within these three areas. Childcare was identified as a major barrier to supporting the workforce and expanding the number of people who can work.

Figure 24 Childcare Focus Areas

Funding/Financial Support

Workforce Support

Expanding Capacity

SWOT Analysis

The childcare task force completed a SWOT analysis to support the development of strategies. A summary of the analysis is provided below.

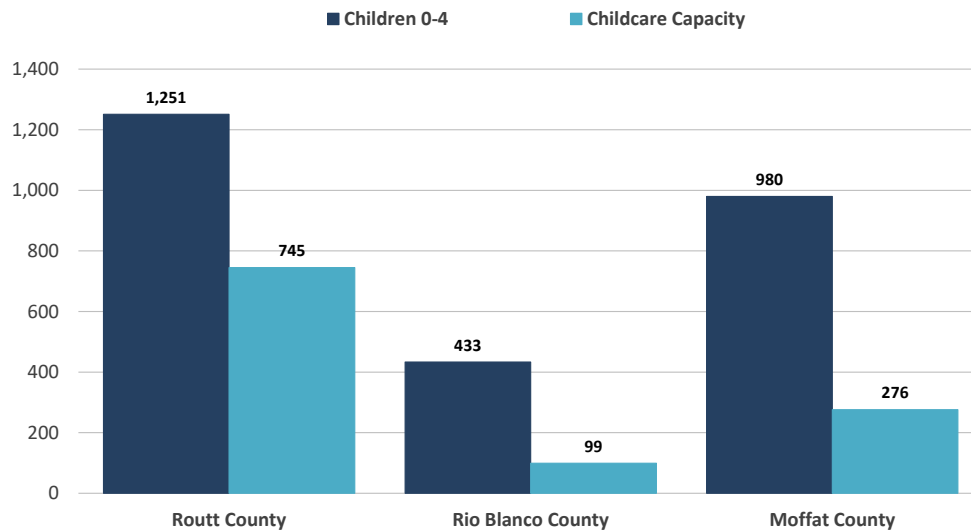
Figure 25 Childcare SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing advocacy and support service providers in region Existing funding and incentive programs in some cities and counties Collective focus on issue Growing number of partnerships with large employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High cost of operations Lack of capacity: Both lack of available childcare spots for kids and lack of workers to expand the number of spots
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting more licensed and family/friends/neighbors in-home childcare Cooperative operator/facility childcare approaches Greater regional coordination and efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive pay for workforce Licensing requirements and restrictions Lack of funding or sustainable business model for facilities due to raising costs

Access to Opportunity

Access to childcare is a major issue for parents. In many cases, the lack of childcare options limits or prevents parents from working. The region has a total of 1,120 licensed childcare positions available, as shown in **Figure 26**. This capacity for childcare was compared to the number of children aged 0 to 4 in the region to illustrate the gap in capacity. There are over 2,600 children aged 0 to 4 in the region. The childcare capacity accounts for 42 percent of the potential demand (i.e., number of children). Each count has a gap, so this is a common concern for the entire region.

Figure 26 Childcare Capacity vs Potential Demand

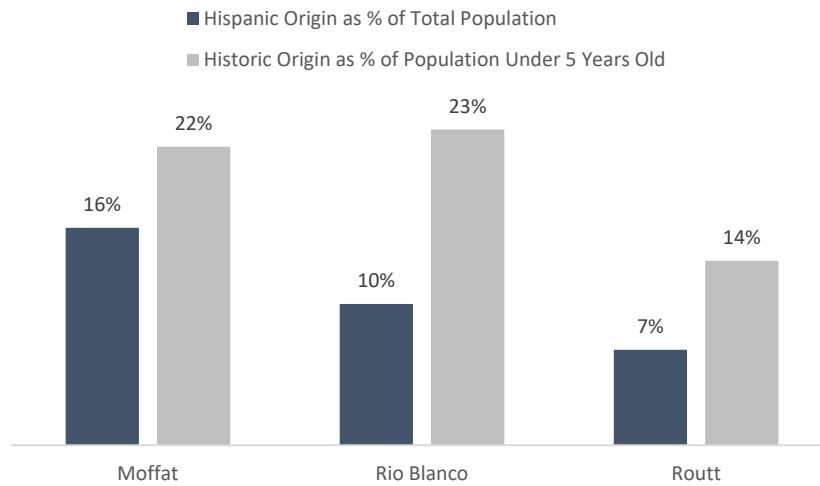


Source: Colorado Dept of Education; U.S. Census; Economic & Planning Systems

The lack of childcare services can be especially burdensome on certain populations, especially those where English may be a second language. The U.S. Census estimates that 6 percent of the population in the region is foreign-born, and half of these foreign-born residents come from Latin-America. An estimated 3 percent of the population are not U.S. citizens, according to the U.S. Census. It is highly likely that the percentage of non-U.S. citizens is much higher as it is often difficult to accurately count these residents in the census. Multiple languages are spoken within 10 percent of households in the region, with 7 percent being Spanish speaking households.

In terms of the impact on childcare, there is a greater concentration of children that are of Hispanic origin. Residents of Hispanic origin account for 10 percent of the regional population, however 18 percent of the children under the age of 5 are of Hispanic origin, as shown in **Figure 27**. Access to childcare may be more difficult for this population due to language barriers and citizenship status.

Figure 27 Proportion of Hispanic-Origin Residents by Age



Source: US Census Bureau; Economic & Planning Systems

Strategies

Workforce Support

1. Expand and support a network of in-home childcare providers.

Expand funding and training resources to support in-home childcare providers throughout the region including licensed and non-licensed, friends/family/neighbors' providers. Identify funding and capital grants that can help homeowners make improvements to support childcare. Identify incentives, such as property tax rebates, for residents that provide in-home care. Connect providers with ease to access resources and training courses. Explore the creation of a simple, low-cost registration program that can generate an inventory of licensed in-home providers. Utilize the network to increase opportunities for existing in-home care providers to give education and mentoring to aspiring in-home providers. Recruit in-home providers in all geographies and within diverse population groups.

2. Create a regional database and network of childcare providers.

Work with regional childcare centers, early childhood councils, local coordinating organizations, and in-home providers to generate an inventory of childcare spots in the region. Provide an online platform to promote centers and providers, share information on space availability, and to allow for collaboration between providers, families, and individual caregivers. Explore low-cost platforms, such as Facebook and Nextdoor, to create the network. Ensure that the database is available and navigable in both English and Spanish. Identify additional funding to expand the current database/network in Routt County.

3. Expand childcare education programs and childcare worker support programs.

Continue to provide and look for opportunities to increase participation in childcare education and training programs. Identify certificate programs that can support childcare options such as in-home. Explore the creation of salary supplements, recruitment incentives, and benefit enhancements for childcare workers in childcare centers to support retention of these workers. Explore creation of programs that give college course credit, certification, and other incentives to workers to consider working in childcare. Increase the number of opportunities for in-person education, mentorship, and apprenticeship programs to grow the pipeline of workers for existing centers. Recruit childcare workers in all geographies and from all population groups.

Capacity Expansion

- 1. Explore ways to open access to state grant programs and identify and push for eliminating regulatory hurdles that don't impact child safety but limit access to disadvantaged populations from becoming childcare entrepreneurs.**

The attraction of workers for childcare facilities is a major challenge. Sometimes the barriers are funding related while some are due to existing state laws. These regulations are good to ensure child safety but can be duplicative for workers who want to work for multiple centers or under multiple licenses. Work with State of Colorado departments and state representatives to identify changes to current regulations to increase opportunities for childcare workers.

- 2. Establish a community cooperative between government, school districts, large employers, and community partners to create county based Childcare Cooperative Care Centers.**

Develop new or expand existing childcare centers in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties, and rural Routt County through partnerships. Work with large employers and the local municipalities to identify potential locations for a center and pursue grant opportunities to fund the creation of the center. Structure partnerships to best position the collaborative effort for various grant programs. Explore supporting an employer created/run facility that is backed by support from local governments and other community partners. Seek technical assistance opportunities to help construct a center. Leverage employment benefits provided by large employers and institutions to supplement benefits for workers.

- 3. Encourage and support employer provided opportunities.**

Encourage employers to support childcare centers by becoming partners in hosting, operating, funding, and supporting centers in the region. Encourage and support the creation of on-site childcare centers. Work with employers to create secured childcare slots funded by the employer at local centers. Encourage employers to provide subsidies to employees for childcare that can be directed to centers to reduce operation burdens.

Funding Availability

1. *Identify potential sources of funding to support growth of childcare network and services.*

Explore the creation of a dedicated funding source for childcare. Explore the support and feasibility of passing a local sales tax or dedicated property tax levy for childcare countywide or through a special district. Explore increasing lodging taxes to fund childcare. Seek available grant funding from state and federal sources and grant funding opportunities from community partners and foundations, such as the Colorado Health Foundation.

Additional Studies/Analysis

- ***Create a Regional Childcare Needs and Resources Guide.***

Create a Northwest Colorado Childcare Needs and Resources Guide that documents existing childcare availability and gaps, inventories local, state, and federal resources, and provides information to support childcare providers, workers, families, and organizations.

8. Transportation

This chapter provides the major initiatives, SWOT analysis, access to opportunity analysis, and strategies for the transportation priority focus area.

Major Initiatives

The transportation task force identified two focus areas for its efforts. First is expanding and providing regional transportation connections and the second is supporting employment opportunities through transportation. The task force is intended to supplement/support existing efforts being taken by a similar transportation working group focused on Routt and Moffat Counties (specifically eastern Moffat County). This existing group is a partnership among entities in Routt County, Steamboat Springs, and Craig. It has issued an RFP to solicit a consulting team to examine the viability of a regional transportation authority (RTA) to support commuter solutions. This effort is the highest priority of the transportation efforts in the region and has the potential to address many of the issues identified by the task force.

SWOT Analysis

The transportation task force completed a SWOT analysis to support the development of strategies. A summary of the discussion is provided below.

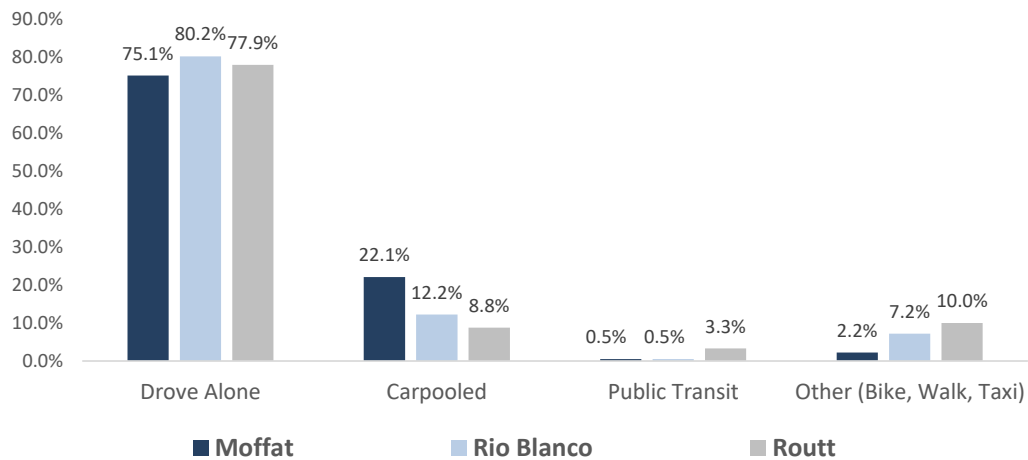
Figure 28 Transportation SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional bus systems (Routt County and Craig) ● Existing Bustang connections ● Regional airports ● Existing rail infrastructure ● Growing EV charging network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connectivity for western communities (Rio Blanco County, western Moffat County) ● Service for elderly population ● US 40 capacity and rail crossing constraints between Craig and Steamboat Springs
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better connecting Rio Blanco County to the regional network (e.g., transit and improvements to Highway 13) ● Increasing freight support infrastructure ● Use of existing rail line to support industry ● EV Chargers in smaller communities ● Greater connectivity to I-70 and I-80 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Closure of I-70 increasing traffic ● Capital to expand services and make improvements ● Hours of service of transit operations can limit employment support ● Cost of transportation for moving materials ● Shortage of licensed commercial drivers

Access to Opportunity

Much of the region relies on personal vehicles to commute to work. This is due to the more rural nature of the region. However, the concentration of jobs in specific locations, such as Steamboat Springs, power plants, etc., and the reliance on a few major connecting roads (i.e., US 40), creates the potential for regional commute solutions. The use of carpooling in Moffat County is an example. U.S. Census data estimates 22 percent of workers commute via carpool in Moffat County, as shown in **Figure 29**. While this percentage is much higher than other counties, carpooling has a relatively high prevalence in all counties. The use of public transit is low throughout the region but given the number of shared trips (via carpooling) there is potential to expand use.

Figure 29 Commute Mode to Work



Source: US Census Bureau ACS; Economic & Planning Systems

Strategies

- 1. Support the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority to address transportation and commuting issues in Routt County and eastern Moffat County. Explore potential inclusion of Rio Blanco County based on the scope and services identified for the RTA.**

Communities in Routt and Moffat Counties are exploring the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority that will provide potential funding and the ability to provide regional transportation and transit services. This project will identify several potential service needs, which may be funded by the RTA funding sources (i.e., dedicated property tax). The initial focus is Routt County and eastern Moffat County/City of Craig. However, depending on the services identified, the inclusion of the rest of Moffat County and Rio Blanco County may be warranted.

- 2. Work with CDOT to create connections to main Bustang routes using the Outrider program.**

Identify routes and communities that can be accessed via the Outrider service that can connect to the I-70 Bustang route. Also, explore the extension of the Denver to Craig Bustang route.

- 3. Work with CDOT to get State Highway 13 designated as an Electric Travel Corridor.**

Seek designation of State Highway 13 as an Electric Travel Corridor, which will increase access to funding for electric vehicle travel support improvements, promotion of the route, and roadway improvements. The designation should be supported given the use of Highway 13 as an alternative route during I-70 closures.

- 4. Identify centralized locations for electric vehicle charging stations in smaller communities in the region.**

The State of Colorado has funding available to build electric vehicle charging stations throughout the state. The creation of a station in smaller communities in the region can help drive tourism traffic. Additional placement of these stations near existing businesses, tourism resource offices, school district facilities, and local attractions can enhance the impact of the station.

- 5. Engage with Union Pacific to maintain rail service and infrastructure. Identify opportunities to increase access to the rail line via existing and new rail spurs serving industrial parks or major employers.**

The Union Pacific rail line that provides access to the existing power plants and coal mines in Routt and Moffat Counties will have less utilization once the plants close. However, the rail line is a major economic asset that can be leveraged and less usage from current users may present opportunities for new users and expanded access.

6. Explore the development of a transloading facility in Hayden at or near the Craig Station Power Plant.

The Town of Hayden is developing an industrial park near the Hayden Station Power Plant, which is a suitable location to explore the construction of a transloading facility that will support rail to truck transfer of goods.

7. Identify and pursue funding opportunities for capacity and safety improvements to US 40 and State Highway 13 to accelerate planned improvements identified in CDOT's long range plans.

There are several improvements along US 40 and Highway 13 that can increase capacity along the routes and address safety issues (i.e., rail crossings). Identify the most impactful projects and explore grant applications to facilitate construction of the improvements in advance of CDOTs long term funding plans. Explore Federal programs such as BUILD where projects with significant time savings or safety reduction will be competitive for Federal funding.



STRATEGY MATRICES

Implementation

Strategy/Action	Lead/Host Entity	Status/Timing	Progress Metric	Resources/Funding
NWCDC and Roadmap Implementation				
Addressing creating human capacity for the NWCDC is the top priority. Below are recommendations for the NWCDC and its implementation of this strategy including securing long-term staffing				
Actions:				
Identify short-term grant funding to support implementation of the Roadmap and help work toward standing up the NWCDC as a self-sustaining entity	NWCDC Participating Communities, NWCDC	Short-Term		DOLA REDI Grant Program
Identify funding sources to provide a full-time staff in support of the NWCDC	NWCDC Participating Communities, NWCDC	Short-Term		Membership dues, dedicated property tax, expansion of lodging tax, excise/use tax, regulatory/impact fee
Create working groups to focus on implementation of specific strategies identified in the Roadmap	NWCDC Participating Communities, NWCDC	Ongoing		
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion				
First step implementation actions to integrate EDI into implementation of the plan				
Actions:				
Create an advisory committee to help ensure that implementation of initiatives the regional community team pursues integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion	NWCDC Participating Communities, NWCDC	Ongoing		

Economic Diversification

Strategy/Action	Lead/Host Entity	Status/Timing	Progress Metric	Resources/Funding
Clean Energy				
Support and invest in alternative energy generation projects that can supplement the loss of the coal power plants. A broad approach to supporting energy development is supported by regional partners, especially given the opportunity to leverage existing infrastructure and workforce assets. The following action items were identified to support expansion of energy production.				
Actions:				
Support the reuse of the coal power plants for molten salt battery storage and use of biomass for energy creation.	Xcel Energy, Tri-State Generation, NWCDC, Moffat County, Routt County	Long-Term	Change of employment at power plants	
Support the development of solar, wind, and geothermal power generation in the region.	Moffat County, Rio Blanco County, Routt County, NWCDC	Short-Term	Power capacity from renewable energy produced in the region	
Explore potential alternative use of coal mined in the region.	Xcel Energy, Tri-State Generation, NWCDC, Moffat County, Routt County	Long-Term	Change in tons of coal mined	
Explore potential for other energy generation technologies including nuclear and hydrogen power generation.	NWCDC, Routt County EDP	Long-Term		
Actively seek funding opportunities to support projects.	NWCDC, Routt County EDP	Ongoing	One project funded per year	
Identify opportunities that leverage existing infrastructure in partnership with Xcel Energy and Tri-State Energy.	NWCDC, Tri-State Generation, Xcel Energy	Long-Term		
Modify land use plans and regulations as needed to support the growth of energy development, specifically modifying regulations to support emerging project types such as solar farms to ensure they locate in areas that are desirable, that negative impacts are mitigated, and barriers to development are reduced.	Moffat County, Rio Blanco County, Routt County, Local Municipalities	Short-Term	Number of communities updating regulations	
Light Manufacturing				
Expand light manufacturing businesses in the region.				
Actions:				
Work to expand the availability of industrial space in the region to support the growth of new and expanding manufacturing businesses.	NWCDC, Routt County EDP, Town of Hayden, City of Craig, City of Steamboat Springs	Ongoing	Industrial building space inventory	
Identify manufacturing niches that are best suited and/or existing in the region and promote the growth of these types of businesses.	NWCDC, Routt County EDP, Chambers of Commerce, CNCC, CMC	Short-Term		

Economic Diversification (continued)

Strategy/Action	Lead/Host Entity	Status/Timing	Progress Metric	Resources/Funding
Value-Added Agriculture				
Provide support to the agribusiness community to increase opportunities for value-added agriculture				
Actions:				
Support and encourage the creation of a Northwest Colorado Ranching Alliance.	Community Agriculture Alliance, NWCDC, Private ranches and farms	Short-Term		
Explore the development of a cooperative agriculture production and storage facility that can support multiple farms and ranches.	Community Agriculture Alliance, NWCDC, Private ranches and farms	Long-Term		
Explore the creation of a food innovation center in the region.	Community Agriculture Alliance, NWCDC, Colorado State University, CNCC, CMC	Long-Term	Agriculture research programs in the region	
Foster opportunities to establish a market niche with high-quality agricultural products.	NWCDC, Community Agriculture Alliance, Private ranches and farms	Ongoing		
Outdoor Recreation and Cultural Heritage Tourism				
Take a regional approach to outdoor recreation and tourism to help expand and diversify the tourist attractions and support services throughout the region.				
Actions:				
Create a Regional Economic Development/Tourism website.	NWCDC, Steamboat Chamber, Meeker Chamber, Craig & Moffat Chamber	Short-Term	Website complete	Funding Applied For
Explore creation of a regionally-oriented tourism promotion and destination management plan.	NWCDC, Steamboat Chamber, Meeker Chamber, Craig & Moffat Chamber	Short-Term	Plan complete	Colorado State Outdoor Recreation Grant
Small Business and Entrepreneurship				
Provide support to the formation and stability of small businesses.				
Actions:				
Expand capacity and services provided by the Small Business Development Centers serving the region.	Colorado SBDCs, Routt County EDP, CNCC, CMC	Short-Term	Number of small business centers in region	
Health Care				
Support the growth of the health care industry in the region as an emerging economic driver.				
Actions:				
Support the growth of the healthcare sector which creates good-paying jobs using business expansion and retention.	NWCDC	Ongoing	Jobs in health care industry	
Support workforce recruitment for the healthcare sector	NWCDC, CMC, CNCC, Health Care providers	Ongoing		
Support Medical Tourism	NWCDC, Health Care providers, Chambers of Commerce	Long-term		

Workforce Development

Strategy/Action	Lead/Host Entity	Status/Timing	Progress Metric	Resources/Funding
Workforce Transition				
Career Navigation Services for Transitioning Workers: There are a variety of career services that can be provided to transitioning workers. The Colorado State Office of Just Transition and local partners including Colorado Northwestern Community College are developing a strategic plan for providing services to transitioning workers. Potential services to include in these efforts are:				
Actions:				
Identify and target services to workers not employed by primary sector employers (i.e., Xcel Energy, Tri-State Energy, mines) who will be impacted by the closure of the power plants.	NWCDC, Office of Just Transition (OJT)	Short-Term	# of workers supported	Partnership with Office of Just Transition (OJT)
Provide workers with individual career service counseling including connecting workers with existing training courses programs.	OJT, CMC, CNCC	Short-Term	# of workers supported	
Use peer workers to provide counseling services.	OJT	Short-Term		
Provide case management for workers between grant programs and education programs.	OJT, CMC, CNCC	Short-Term	# of workers supported	
Identify approaches and funding to allow counseling to start prior to loss of job.	OJT	Short-Term		
Explore funding and program support through WIOA Grants, SBDC, community colleges, and large employers connected to the energy industry.	OJT, CMC, CNCC	Short-Term		
Provide financial planning and retirement planning services.	OJT	Short-Term	# of workers supported	
Target education programs towards adult learners to support transition. (EDI Recommendation)	OJT, CMC, CNCC	Short-Term	# of workers enrolled	

Workforce Development (continued)

Strategy/Action	Lead/Host Entity	Status/Timing	Progress Metric	Resources/Funding
Entrepreneurship Support				
Strategies focused on supporting new business formation and existing small businesses.				
Actions:				
Create entrepreneur support centers in Northwest Colorado.	Routt County EDP, Town of Meeker, City of Craig	Short-Term	At least one center per county	
Expand access to entrepreneurship training courses/curriculum.	CMC, CNCC	Short-Term		
Develop funding sources and investor network for entrepreneurship.	NWCDC, Routt County EDP	Long-Term		
Provide support to help immigrant, differently abled, undocumented workers, and workers for whom English is their second language to obtain business support services, professional licensing, and ability to operate as independent contractors. (EDI Recommendation)	Integrated Community, Workforce Development Center	Ongoing	# number of workers supported	
Education/Skill Training				
Strategies focused on youth education to support workforce and provide workforce with skills needed in the local economy.				
Actions:				
Align existing education offerings with target industries.	NWCDC, CMC, CNCC	Short-Term		
Create a local commercial driver's license training and certification program.	CNCC	Short-Term		
Collaborate to continue to expand programs for trades careers pathways for local youth.	School Districts, CMC, CNCC	Ongoing		
Transition the Workforce Task Force to serve as a Workforce Education Advisory Board supporting renewal of workforce program strategic planning and implementation for the community colleges and local school districts.	School Districts, CMC, CNCC, NWCDC	Short-Term		
Workforce Support				
Strategies focused on supporting workers by addressing non-job specific challenges.				
Actions:				
Explore development of worker longevity incentive benefits in essential industries with high turnover or low retention rates.	Moffat County, Rio Blanco County, Routt County	Long-Term		
Expand networking and resource outreach to young professionals.	Chambers of Commerce, Routt County EDP	Ongoing	# of young professional events	
Increase workforce housing access.	Yampa Valley Housing Authority, City of Craig, Future Regional Housing Consortium	Ongoing		

Housing

Strategy/Action	Lead/Host Entity	Status/Timing	Progress Metric	Resources/Funding
Create a Workforce Housing Developer Solicitation Strategy				
Package multiple sites and projects in the region to attract one or more developers through an RFP or RFI. The major steps needed to develop the solicitation are provided below.				
Actions:				
Complete a regional workforce housing needs study to document housing products in each community.	NWCDC, CHFA, DOLA	Short-Term		CHFA, DOLA
Regional housing feasibility and technical assistance study to help identify development sites and barriers to development prior to solicitation.	NWCDC, CHFA, DOLA	Short-Term		Membership dues, dedicated property tax, expansion of lodging tax, excise/use tax, regulatory/impact fee
Issue an RFQ/RFI for a developer(s) to build scattered sites in the region.	NWCDC, Regional Housing Consortium	Long-Term	# of workforce housing units built	
Form a Regional Housing Consortium				
Create a regional entity that provides housing services to the entire region or areas not covered by the Yampa Valley Housing Authority. The organization will create a better connection to funding and programs for underserved communities.				
Actions:				
Near-Term responsibilities for the consortium include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional resource and knowledge sharing • Service coordination to avoid duplications and identify gaps in services • Manage regional efforts/partnerships such as the developer RFQ/RFI • Provide capacity and support for community specific projects • Provide housing navigator services 	NWCDC	Short-Term		
Potential long-term responsibilities for the consortium include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own/manage affordable housing • Develop or partner in development of affordable housing • Leverage existing housing authorities for partnerships to facilitate projects that can benefit from housing authority powers • Provide gap financing/funding for projects • Create/manage a housing lank bank • Provide rental assistance to low-income households • Purchase deed restrictions on existing market rate units to expand the inventory of affordable units • Provide down payment assistance to first-time, low-income, and target population buyers • Provide existing home repair/weatherization grants and support • Fund preservation of existing affordable housing units 	NWCDC	Long-Term		
Additional Housing Strategies				
The following strategies were identified to support the primary two strategies above.				
Actions:				
Establish a dedicated housing funding source(s).	Moffat County, Rio Blanco County, Routt County	Long-Term		Redirection/Expansion of Lodging Tax, STR Mitigation Fee or Tax, Development Linkage Fees, Dedicated Property Tax/Sales Tax, and a Real Estate Transfer Fee
Collaborate on accessory dwelling unit initiatives.	Towns/Cities	Ongoing		
Attract nonprofit affordable and workforce housing developers and organizations to the region.	NWCDC, Yampa Valley Housing Authority, City of Craig	Short-Term	# of affordable/workforce housing developers active in region	

Childcare

Strategy/Action	Lead/Host Entity	Status/Timing	Progress Metric	Resources/Funding
Workforce Support				
These actions focus on supporting the existing and potential future care providers in the region.				
Actions:				
Expand and support a network of in-home childcare providers.	Family Development Center, Integrated Community	Short-Term		Funding through SB22-213 (CDEC)
Create a regional database and network of childcare providers.	Family Development Center, Integrated Community	Short-Term	Number of counties within database	Membership dues, dedicated property tax, expansion of lodging tax, excise/use tax, regulatory/impact fee
Expand childcare education programs and childcare worker support programs.	NWCDC Childcare Task Force, First Impressions of Routt County, CMC, CNCC	Long-Term		Funding through SB22-213 (CDEC); Emerging and Expanding Grants (CDEC)
Capacity Expansion				
Strategies focused on expanding the childcare availability in the region.				
Actions:				
Explore ways to open access to state grant programs and identify and push for eliminating regulatory hurdles that don't impact child safety but limit access to disadvantaged populations from becoming childcare entrepreneurs	NWCDC Childcare Task Force, First Impressions of Routt County	Long-Term		
Establish a community cooperative between government, school districts, large employers, and community partners to create county-based Childcare Cooperative Care Centers.	Rio Blanco County	Short-Term		
Encourage and support employer provided opportunities.	NWCDC, Routt County, Rio Blanco County, Moffat County	Long-Term		
Funding Availability				
Strategies focused on expanding the available financial resources to support childcare.				
Actions:				
Identify potential sources of funding to support growth of childcare network and services.	NWCDC, Routt County, Rio Blanco County, Moffat County	Long-Term		Funding through SB22-213 (CDEC); Emerging and Expanding Grants (CDEC)

Transportation

Strategy/Action	Lead/Host Entity	Status/Timing	Progress Metric	Resources/Funding
Regional Transportation				
These actions focus on expanding and providing regional transportation connections.				
Actions:				
Support the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority to address transportation and commuting issues in Routt County and eastern Moffat County. Explore potential inclusion of Rio Blanco County based on the scope and services identified for the RTA.	Innovative Transportation Task Force, City of Steamboat Springs, City of Craig, and Routt County	Ongoing		Funded
Work with CDOT to create connections to main Bustang routes using the Outrider program.	NWCDC, CDOT	Long-Term		Membership dues, dedicated property tax, expansion of lodging tax, excise/use tax, regulatory/impact fee
Work with CDOT to get State Highway 13 designated as an Electric Travel Corridor.	NWCDC, CDOT	Long-Term		
Identify centralized locations for electric vehicle charging stations in smaller communities in the region.	NWCDC, Transportation Task Force	Short-Term	# of EV Stations Installed	
Industry Supportive Transportation Infrastructure				
Strategies focused on supporting employment opportunities through transportation.				
Actions:				
Engage with Union Pacific to maintain rail service and infrastructure. Identify opportunities to increase access to the rail line via existing and new rail spurs serving industrial parks or major employers.	Town of Hayden, City of Steamboat Springs, City of Craig, NWCDC, Union Pacific	Long-term		
Explore development of a transloading facility in Hayden at or near the Craig Station Power Plant.	Town of Hayden, NWCDC	Short-term		
Identify and pursue funding opportunities for capacity and safety improvements to US 40 and State Highway 13 to accelerate planned improvements identified in CDOT's long range plans.	NWCDC, Transportation Task Force, CDOT	Long-term		