

The Community Economic Resilience Fund Program (CERF) PY 22-24 grant focus is to address the development of the High Road Transition Collaboratives (HRTCs). The applicant should demonstrate in the Proposal Narrative how the applicant’s approach will form their respective regional HRTC to engage in strategic planning for economic resilience and equitable pathways to high road opportunities. HRTCs will work across industries, agencies, and communities to encourage engagement from all stakeholder groups, create inclusive and equitable economic plans, build capacity, break down silos to maximize the effectiveness of planning and implementation projects, and generate systemic changes to advance equity, sustainability, job quality, and economic competitiveness and resilience.

<b>Applicant Name: Arcata Economic Development Corporation</b>
<b>Project Name: Redwood Region RISE (Resilient Inclusive Sustainable Economy)</b>

**Section I: Project Planning**

**I.1. Concept Proposal** (Score Range 0-35 points)

Vision and Goals: The vision of the Redwood Coast Economic Collaborative (REC) is over the next decade, the Redwood Coast Region (Region) will become a vibrant, regenerative economy catalyzed by the implementation of community-driven innovations and collaborative governance. The REC’s purpose is to guide and support an equitable, comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive regional planning process generating policies, projects and funding that will advance long-term prosperity, carbon neutrality, economic resilience and pathways to high road industry initiatives and employment opportunities. REC goals are: Build economic development capacity to maximize opportunities for growth and effective implementation of projects across industries, agencies, and disinvested/BIPOC communities; Create an inclusive and equitable regional economic plan aligned with existing plans and informed by data, community participation and community priorities; Increase diversity of the regional workforce employed in high road occupations by ensuring training and pathways to flourishing-wage careers for people historically under-represented in growth sectors; Identify funding opportunities driven by stakeholder participation in decision-making for priority projects. The California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP) at CalPoly Humboldt, as Regional Convener, will facilitate a participatory planning process accounting for shifting dynamics in intra- and inter-regional industries and talent pools. The REC will use a High Road approach centering voices of disinvested communities and impacted workers in creating quality jobs and equitable access to those jobs. Community- and worker-centered inclusive economic planning will be at the center of CCRP’s approach. Capacitating traditionally disinvested communities will be critical to achieving equitable outcomes and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the REC.

Fiscal Agent and Regional Convener: Arcata Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) is the Fiscal Agent. AEDC is a regional Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), Small Business Lending Center (CDC), and Economic Development Corporation serving Humboldt, Del Norte, Mendocino and Lake, as well as Trinity and

Siskiyou counties. AEDC works with partners across the Region to administer approximately \$27 million in loan funds from a variety of private and government sources and provides training and technical assistance to build individual, small business and community wealth. Each funder requires unique and specific reporting requirements. AEDC staff has experience making accurate and timely payments and tracking and reporting to funders and partners in an accurate and timely manner. AEDC has a long-standing reputation as a trusted financial partner in the Region.

CCRP is a research and evaluation center committed to informing policy, building community, and promoting the health and well-being of people living in rural California. Founded in 2005 by a diverse group of community members from Del Norte, Humboldt, Trinity and Mendocino Counties, CCRP collaborates with numerous organizations and partners throughout rural Northern CA and has managed over 150 projects, conducting research and evaluation that can be easily understood and used to inform policy, program development and system change. CCRP's active portfolio includes contracts with county governments, city governments, tribal organizations, non-profit organizations, private foundations and health care providers.

CCRP utilizes a community-based participatory research approach to involve stakeholders in all phases of the research process. CCRP works directly with public entities and non-profit organizations on a variety of issues: economic development, access to broadband, health care workforce expansion, health promotion, housing & homelessness, access to childcare and education, social equity, and other issues affecting the health and well-being of rural populations. To strengthen CERF outreach and engagement across the region, and particularly to disinvested communities, CCRP will partner with North Coast Opportunities (NCO, Mendocino and Lake), Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA, Humboldt County), and True North Organizing Network (TNON, Del Norte and Humboldt County), trusted local outreach providers.

CCRP currently has ten full-time staff and engages students and academic expertise from the Cal Poly community. This effort will be led by CCRP's Executive Director, and staffed full time by a Project Director, Analyst, Outreach and Communications Coordinator and Administrative staff. This team will work closely with AEDC and NCO project leads to ensure smooth implementation. Fiscal management is conducted through Cal Poly Humboldt Sponsored Programs Foundation (SPF), an auxiliary organization to Cal Poly Humboldt under the direction and control of a Board of Directors. SPF is a California not-for-profit, public benefit corporation incorporated in 1952. SPF manages an active portfolio of over 605 individual projects worth approximately \$110 million, and ensures accountability, efficiency, and transparency of its fiscal stewardship through annual audits in compliance with federal requirements.

Experience with Diverse Stakeholders: CCRP has recent work in all four of the Region's counties, a 17-year history in engaged community planning and long record of working with diverse stakeholders to create data-informed action plans. Experience includes:

- Development, administration and analysis of a comprehensive community survey to accompany the CEDS in Humboldt County that included a broad focus on social determinants of health.
- Development of cannabis social equity assessments and local equity program manuals for Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake and ten other counties and jurisdictions,

ensuring their eligibility for Type 2 cannabis equity funds from Go-Biz. This resulted in \$10 million in additional funding to implement equity programming.

- Convened the Community Food Council in Humboldt County and supported the Community Food Council in Del Norte County; prepared two community food assessments for Del Norte County.
- Provided evaluation, research, and technical assistance on Del Norte and Tribal Lands Building Healthy Communities Initiative with the CA Endowment for 10 years.
- Played a lead role on workforce development and creation of health career pathways in Humboldt & Del Norte Counties.
- Completed an analysis of workforce development efforts in Humboldt County for the Economic Development Office.

Region's Economic Background. The Region's economic engine has historically been natural resource use and agriculture. Orchards and viticulture characterize Lake and Mendocino counties, shifting in the north to timber harvesting, a cannabis industry once poised to gross 3.5 billion annually<sup>1</sup>, and coastal fisheries, particularly important to Humboldt and Del Norte's development. The economy has shifted from extractive to productive (agriculture) and, more recently, consumptive industries, with an increased focus on tourism, conservation, and recreation (Kelly, et. al. 2016). The timber industry has been very instrumental in shaping labor and community dynamics in the Region. While overharvesting once led to a 90% decline in regional redwood forest, many timber companies operating today are locally owned and committed to sustainable practices.

Given the Region's dependence on land-based commodities and related boom and bust cycles, there is concern local economies must diversify to become resilient. Prior regional economic development efforts focused mainly on attracting businesses and investment but did not adequately leverage existing and emerging industry clusters to expand opportunities. Previous initiatives often grouped rural northern CA counties with those in the greater San Francisco area, despite their unique needs, characteristics and connectivity challenges due to the Region's remote character. Since the 1998 recession, more work has been done to convene partnerships and enact policies better suited to the Region's existing comparative advantages, diversifying services and firm types within supply chains that have a strong existing foundation in the Region. Despite this, organizations working with disinvested communities in the Region cite as challenges the lack of adequate workforce development initiatives, technical support for entrepreneurs-particularly for new Americans and entrepreneurs of color-and regional coordination on economic strategies; rising costs; missed opportunities to grow firms capable of accessing lucrative markets in nearby urban areas; and failure to adapt to changing regulations<sup>2</sup> and market conditions for key sectors.

Industry Clusters. When compared to many southern CA counties that have diversified into service sectors like health, technical, and financial services, the Region remains

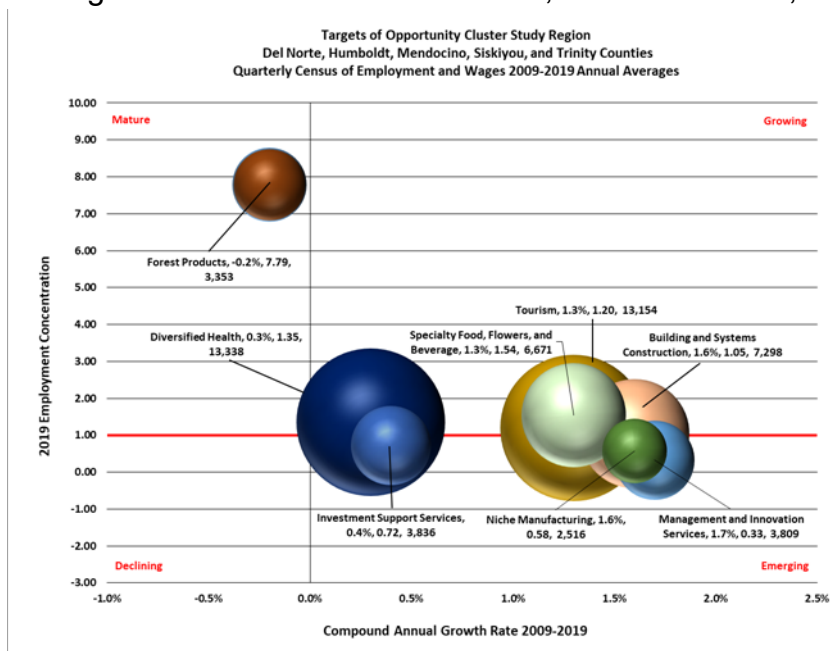
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<sup>1</sup> The "Emerald Triangle" is estimated to grow 60% of CA's cannabis, a 5.8-billion-dollar industry. Price fluctuations in the wake of legalization are rapidly changing opportunities for growers in the region, however. <https://grist.org/article/california-emerald-triangle-cheap-marijuana-economics-prop-64/>

<sup>2</sup> For example, the region lost transporters in the logging industry after new diesel regulations made much of the existing trucks and infrastructure obsolete. This section of the supply chain never fully recovered, creating a bottleneck for operators (interview with US Forest Service rep 7/2022).

more dependent on agriculture and forestry<sup>3</sup> employers (10% of employment) and has not kept pace with the state’s average wage growth. As more urban counties grew high-wage occupations, the Region lost higher paid manufacturing jobs (Kelly et al 2016). Rural economic dynamics reported across the nation affect the Region’s communities: decreased need for labor in natural resource-based industries and volatile commodity prices suppress earning potential for workers in those industries who tend to have less formal education, while high-growth, better-paid jobs in sectors like technology and finance continue to cluster near or in urban areas, driving differential development.

The 2021 Targets of Opportunity Industry Cluster Study of Humboldt, Del Norte, Mendocino and two other northern counties<sup>4</sup> identified industry cluster changing dynamics expanding opportunity over time. Analysts identified eight predominant clusters in the Region: Diversified Health Care; Tourism; Building and Systems Construction; Specialty Food, Flowers, and Beverage; Investment Support Services; Management and Innovation Services; Forest Products; and Niche Manufacturing.



Further, the public sector, specifically state and local governments, are major employers in the Region (especially Lake County, where self-employment is also more prevalent at 38%). Forest Products, heavily concentrated in the Region, report the highest employment multiplier of all the clusters<sup>5</sup>. Certain target industries fulfill growth criteria in other respects but are less concentrated than in the state - like Investment Support

Services. Diversified Health Care remains the Region’s primary employer, with Tourism second. Regionally, health careers deliver higher wages, and have been growing their revenue and employment concentration. Despite this, most counties in the Region are characterized as medically underserved, and workforce development initiatives and training programs often focus on creating career pipelines for local residents to seek occupations in this field<sup>6</sup>.

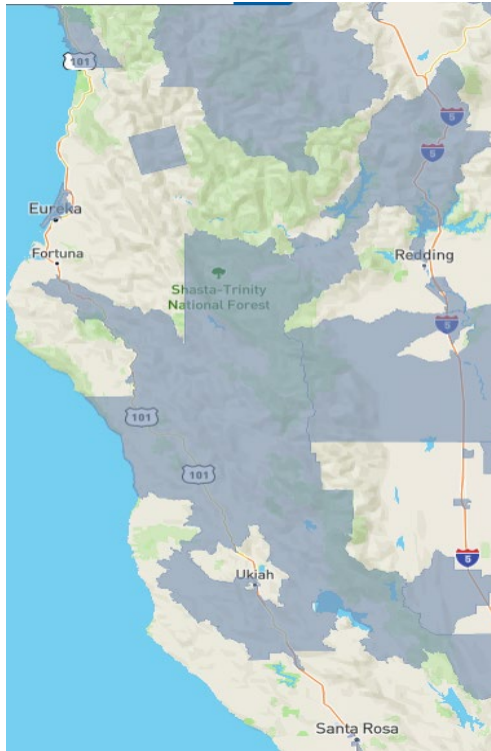
<sup>3</sup> [https://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw\\_gtr258/psw\\_gtr258\\_345.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr258/psw_gtr258_345.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Report prepared by the Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division for the County of Humboldt Economic Development Division, November 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Walrod 2020, for MOVE2030 <https://www.move2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Industry-Cluster-Study-July-2020.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> CCRP (*forthcoming*) Building Healthy Communities Case Study: Health Career Pathways in Del Norte

Disinvested Communities. Disinvested communities as defined in the SFP are shown in this image from the California Healthy Places Index and comprise a large extent of the



Region. While there are many census tracts with poverty rates above the national and state average, some are particularly acute, as high as 34%<sup>7</sup>. Some communities of particular concern include:

**Seniors:** An aging population is straining services not adequately capacitated to serve their needs, an issue exacerbated by inherent challenges to health care and service provision across rural and remote geographies. This demographic trend also impacts the competitiveness of the region's workforce<sup>8</sup>.

**Opportunity Youth:** Disparate efforts to engage young people aged 16-24 who are disengaged from educational or employment activities have been ongoing. Little data exist on this population and other vulnerable groups (including system-involved youth) but preliminary surveying suggests a high rate of disengaged young people in the Region, particularly Del Norte County, and that disengagement grew during the COVID 19 pandemic with youth programming and job readiness programs only reaching a small subset of these youth<sup>9</sup>.

**Tribal Communities:** Tribal members are collectively 7% of the Region's population. EDD data show they are disproportionately out of the workforce or likely to engage in lower-wage occupations. Tribal economic initiatives are important drivers of development and create wider community opportunities, beyond Tribal members<sup>10</sup>.

**Farmworkers:** Agriculture timber industries depend predominantly on Latinx labor. In the northern agrarian communities along Smith River which produce Easter Lilies, dairy, and some row crops, workers are often county residents. In the vineyards, orchards, and row crop farms in the Region's south migrant farm labor may be employed.

**People of Color:** Beyond Tribes and Latinx workers, the Region has a small but growing population of peoples of color. Even where their representation is strong, these communities are often left out of development conversations. Because the population is relatively small across the Region, it is critical that the REC make a concerted effort to engage them as important members of the workforce and as entrepreneurs operating businesses that help these communities to feel more welcomed to the Region.

COVID-19 exacerbated several aspects of community well-being in the Region.

<sup>7</sup> From Census estimates- Tract 102 in Mendocino, Tract 12 in Humboldt, the Hoopa Nation, and Tract 7 in Lake county all have poverty rates at or above 28%.

<sup>8</sup> Wallrod 2022; Interview with Mendocino-based community organization.

<sup>9</sup> CCRP- Aspen Opportunity Youth Survey, forthcoming (2022)

<sup>10</sup> Interview with EDD labor consultant, highlighting Blue Lake microgrid and Native-owned businesses as sources of innovation and growth in the Region's economy at large.

Rising fuel costs and housing scarcity are associated with rising mortality and what public health researchers call “deaths of despair.” Lake County has the second highest rate of suicide in the state, according to data from Let’s Get Healthy California (2019), with Humboldt and Mendocino ranked 9th and 10th worst counties by the same measure. These Counties also rank 3rd and 4th in state on rates of overdoses<sup>11</sup>.

Labor Market Dynamics.

	Del Norte	Humboldt	Lake	Mendocino	CA State	USA
<b>Unemployment</b>	4%	2.9%	3.8%	2.9%	4.3%	3.6%
<b>Median Income</b>	47,442	56,071	52,345	53,176	65,895	44,225
<b>% Poverty</b>	24%	20%	21%	19%	14%	14%

Sources: BLS, US Census. Median income for one earner reported in 2022. Unemployment figures from June 2022

According to Bureau of Economic Analysis data, real average earnings for workers in Mendocino and Del Norte did not keep pace with CA state (1.4% average/year) or the nation (1% average /year), while Humboldt and Lake Counties matched state growth over the past decade. As the Region contains no metropolitan statistical areas<sup>12</sup>, unionization rates are not reported; however, community leaders believe it to be lower than the CA average of 16%<sup>13</sup>, particularly for the private sector. Regional experts believe this is due partially to the economy being driven by smaller firms which are less likely to have a unionized workforce. A recent report found nearly 60% of firms in the Region had four employees or fewer; however, nearly as high a percentage of the workforce is employed by firms with 15-30 employees. Overall, unemployment in the region is relatively low, yet wage growth is not keeping pace with the cost of living for working families and more lucrative sectors are not established in the region, which limits opportunities for wage upgrading.

Low wages and underemployment are acutely felt in the Region’s disinvested communities, particularly by BIPOC residents. According to the National Equity Atlas, Humboldt County has double the rate of residents of color who work full time but are still below the poverty line when compared to the nation at large (8%, vs 4%). Nine percent of the county’s Latino full-time workers subsist below the poverty line, compared to 5% for the nation. Data is not available for Native Americans or other counties in the region. Inclusive and Sustainable Development Opportunities. With its coastline, forests, scenic landscapes, and committed leadership from county, municipal, and Tribal governments, the Region is well positioned to transition to a sustainable economy. Recent projects including offshore wind leases with community benefits agreements, land trust based affordable housing, blue economy projects and cooperative models for small land holders in timber operations demonstrate the Region’s readiness to embrace emerging and innovative sustainable development models and build inclusive industry clusters.

While the climate crisis threatens communities, particularly through extreme wildfire events, the Region is blessed by its original indigenous communities who have shown leadership and elevated the traditional ecological knowledge needed to create

<sup>11</sup><https://kymkemp.com/2022/06/23/suicides-overdoses-and-economic-anxiety-key-metrics-signal-an-undercurrent-of-despair-on-the-north-coast/>

<sup>12</sup> The Region is comparatively data poor, with missing or aggregated data that doesn’t reflect local communities. CCRP was incorporated to help address this.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/unionmembership\\_california.htm](https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/unionmembership_california.htm)

resilience. Native American expertise on fire management is creating workforce opportunities for Tribal communities and others, for example with a new partnership between Cal Poly Humboldt's Native American Studies and Forestry Departments. Inter-regionally, Shasta College has increased its enrollment for fire technicians, and even incorporated its own timber company which creates opportunities for students to get hands-on experience prior to degree conferral. A US Forest service initiative in Humboldt County identifies opportunities to partner with the private sector and create commercial products from marginal timber, an adaptation reducing risk of wildfire.

Socioeconomic Factors. In many of the Region's communities affordable housing development has not kept pace with demand<sup>14</sup>. Del Norte and Mendocino Counties have some of the worst outcomes in the state on indicators like housing development, housing availability, overcrowding, unavailability of housing and affordable units per 1000 people.<sup>15</sup> Humboldt and Lake Counties are not far behind, particularly for availability of housing. In the last year alone, the percentage of families who could afford a median priced home in Humboldt County fell from 39% to 30%.<sup>16</sup> Recent projects to create affordable housing and help working families build equity include the Wiyot Dishgamu land trust<sup>17</sup> incorporated in 2020.

The Region has a high percentage of residents who survive on or under a subsistence wage calculated at \$40,000 a year, with recent inflation adding nearly \$6,000 to the sum required to meet basic needs.<sup>18</sup> Lack of managerial and skilled labor in certain sectors is exacerbated by lower wages when compared to urban areas, rising cost of living and housing scarcity. More must be done to facilitate the local workforce to fill this gap, enabling businesses with those needs to locate to the Region.

Other socio-economic indicators reveal areas where the Region is struggling to deliver well-being for working families. A full 80% of Del Norte residents are eligible for Federal Nutrition Assistance programs<sup>19</sup>, for example. Cannabis tax revenues have become increasingly important contributors to county and municipal budgets, especially as aging populations put a strain on retirement and health insurance costs. Due in part to a difficult regulatory environment, cannabis production is expected to shrink, which threatens this tax revenue and livelihoods throughout the Region.

Impacts of Climate Change. Drought, wildfire, and sea level rise due to climate change are the impacts of chief concern in the Region, already costing communities millions of dollars. The Region's east, particularly Mendocino and Lake Counties, is currently affected by Severe to Extreme Drought, while northern coastal areas in Humboldt and

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<sup>14</sup> <https://lostcoastoutpost.com/2022/mar/30/state-lawmakers-rally-abolish-article-34-californi/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.auditor.ca.gov/reports/2020-108/accessible/affordable-housing-production-need.html>

<sup>16</sup> Times Standard, May 16, 2022: "according to data released earlier this month by the California Association of Realtors... A household has to make at least \$85,200 to qualify for a \$430,000 home; the median household income in Humboldt County is \$49,235". <https://www.times-standard.com/2022/05/16/only-30-of-households-can-afford-homes-in-humboldt-county>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.wiyot.us/350/Dishgamu-Humboldt-Community-Land-Trust>

<sup>18</sup> Estimates from interview with EDD labor consultant. 50% of the North Coast employed in personal service professions which have an average annual income of 27,000 dollars, 13,000 dollars below the subsistence level when factoring cost of living.

<sup>19</sup> <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/child/california/county/del-norte>



Del Norte are classed as Abnormally Dry to Moderate Drought<sup>20</sup>. The economic impacts of drought and wildfire are devastating land and resource-based clusters; for example, in Mendocino and Lake counties where even on lands not directly burned, wine grape harvests were compromised by smoke taint.<sup>21</sup> Agriculture, logging, tourism and hospitality industries which are important sources of growth and employment in the Region experience higher exposure to climate risk as operations close. The sea level rise threatens many sites of both economic and cultural significance located within the tsunami zone of the coastal counties, including parts of Redwoods National Park.<sup>22</sup>

Education and Workforce Development. Increasing the percentage of residents with secondary education and technical skills will be crucial to creating opportunities for marginalized communities in a green transition. The California Healthy Places Index reports the Region lags the state in education, with many census tracts in the bottom quartile for bachelor's degree attainment. Preschool enrollment is very low, often in or below 16th percentile, resulting in low levels of kindergarten readiness and later challenges reading at grade that follow students throughout their academic careers<sup>23</sup>. Analysis on workforce needs of emerging Green and Blue Industries revealed critical occupations that will be in demand across a broad range of firm types in order to attract and grow these businesses, for example, electricians and other technical and trades workers. To fully benefit from upcoming opportunities in Wind, Aquaculture and Broadband, an estimated 1,300 new construction trades positions will need to be filled. Existing technical training, entrepreneurship, and workforce development support includes technical assistance providing non-profits,<sup>24</sup> college-based career pathway programs, business incubators and assistance from Workforce Development Boards, Small Business Development Centers and Woman's Business Centers (WBC) supporting employment and entrepreneurship through technical assistance, one-on-one counseling, and business trainings, as well as WIOA funded programs for Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Rapid Response/ Layoff aversion training<sup>25</sup>.

Managing Sub- and Interregional Efforts. CCRP will manage sub- and interregional efforts by facilitating the work of County Leadership Teams and REC Teams as described in the Outreach and Engagement Plan and Partnership Agreement Letter. Teams will review each county's relevant economic and sustainability plans to identify regional priorities, opportunities, and gaps, within and beyond the region. The REC will review analysis and recommendations developed through the team structure and from subject matter experts and facilitate sub- and interregional communications and/or

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.savetheredwoods.org/blog/nearly-all-of-giant-sequoia-range-in-highest-drought-category/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.grazianofamilyofwines.com/stories/california-wild-fires-of-2017-2018-2019-2020-and-the-wine-industry>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/redw/learn/nature/climate-change.htm>

<sup>23</sup> California Healthy Places Index, Building Healthy Communities in Del Norte Literacy Case Study (forthcoming, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> Includes West Business Center in Mendocino, Lake EDC, county programs in Humboldt and Del Norte.

<sup>25</sup> Humboldt is a standalone local Workforce Development Board(WDB) in the Redwood region. Lake and Mendocino are part of the Workforce alliance of the North Bay, and Del Norte is part of the Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC). Each WDB or region has required partners and optional partners- in Humboldt for example services include 19 partner agencies.



convenings each quarter, including hosting virtual summits that build on an existing successful Regional Economic Development Summit. The REC will engage state-wide partners, such as Rural Consortium of Rural Counties' economic development experts, CA State Association of Counties, and County Board members, to identify synergies and opportunities to leverage interregional work. Efforts will be informed by the needs of disinvested communities. To center these needs, CCRP will work with partners NCO in the south and RCAA and TNON in the north, who are well positioned to deliver outreach to important and often marginalized community voices. REC members, partners and stakeholders who serve multiple subregions or work in consortia will be empowered to help bridge these communities and facilitate communication and joint decision making. The planning process will better solidify shared priorities, synergies shared in key industry clusters and workforce mobility across counties and CERF regions. Efforts will support collaboration and reduce transaction costs associated with new partnerships. Complementary Processes and Opportunities. All four counties, Eureka and Crescent City, and the Karuk, Yurok, Wiyot, and Hoopa Nations have recent Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) documents identifying key sectors and priorities for growth; many that overlap will be strengthened by greater regional collaboration. Climate strategies like the Yurok, Karuk, Blue Lake, and Hoopa Nations' Climate Adaptation/Energy Transition Plans and the Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan focus on economics of adaptation and sustainability. Shared content across plans addresses preserving aquatic resources and traditional diets, promoting the use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) particularly for wildfire management, engaging in emergency planning, focusing on transitioning to renewable energy, and more.

Important local and Regional projects and partnerships include:

**Blue Economy:** Major investments to diversify traditional maritime activity towards climate resilience and adaptation, including restoring fisheries, are occurring in Fort Bragg, Mendocino County. The Noyo Harbor Ocean Science Center and Multi-modal project includes an aquaculture demonstration project, world-class marine science and education facility, research laboratories, and other assets to support a transition to a restorative blue economy. Other investments include a Seawater Intake Project with potential to support desalination, Community Sustainability Plan addressing zoning, investment and infrastructure for commercial and recreational fishing, and marina redevelopment. The Georgia Pacific Mill Site is in planning to be redeveloped into a mixed-use site with opportunities for blue economy projects. Another major investment in the Region redevelops a coastal mill site: Nordic Aquafarms, an aquaculture firm, has been approved to redevelop a pulp mill in Humboldt Bay into a land-based finfish recirculating aquaculture system (RAS), the first of its kind permitted in the Region. The Klamath Dam removal and habitat restoration project in Del Norte is the world's largest.

**Green/Regenerative Economy:** The award-winning Blue Lake Rancheria microgrid allows the Rancheria campus to operate in tandem with or islanded from the main utility grid. It generates renewable energy and provides approximately \$150,000 in annual electricity savings and has served as the inspiration for similar microgrid projects now launching in the Region. The California Energy Commission recently announced a 10.5-million-dollar grant to prepare Humboldt Bay for off-shore wind development. The Humboldt Wind Energy Area environmental assessment (federal approval by Bureau of

Ocean Energy Management) was found to have no significant impact, moving the Region closer to launching investments in this area. The CORE Hub was incubated by the Humboldt Area + Wild Rivers Foundation in partnership with Schatz Energy Lab at Cal Poly Humboldt, Redwood Coast Energy Authority, and Blue Lake Rancheria with a goal of making the Region “the first proven carbon sequestering rural area by 2030.” Further, the Region submitted two letters of intent to the CA Strategic Growth Council to form Regional Climate Collaboratives which could bolster work in this sector.

**Regional Partnerships:** The Covid Economic Resilience Consortium (CERC) is a community of 35 leaders from economic and business development fields who quickly assembled an emergency response for the Region’s businesses at the onset of the pandemic, including a loan fund. Since then, the group has moved into recovery efforts and hosts working groups on a host of topics including debt assistance, arts and culture, worker safety, rural advocacy, Broadband expansion and more, with a network of 150 individuals and organizations involved. The Prosperity Network, supported by Humboldt County’s Department of Economic Development, connects economic development practitioners across jurisdictional boundaries to improve community well-being.

**Community well-being, education, workforce development:** Building Healthy Communities is a 10-plus year investment in Del Norte County by the California Endowment to create system-level change in human development. It helped incubate TNON, the only regional community organizing institution on the North Coast and fostered a shift towards organizational cultures based in deep democracy. It also sparked uptake in Human Centered Design, systems thinking, and Participatory Appraisal and Budgeting. Building on this, the Yurok Nation won a \$30-million federal Promise Neighborhood grant to invest in early childhood development, education, health and well-being, and workforce development for youth across Del Norte County.

**Broadband:** Lake County is currently advancing its Broadband Master Plan which identifies and costs strategic expansion projects. The world’s longest subsea cable to expand broadband in Humboldt County is planned for 2023. In Mendocino County, Fort Bragg has municipal broadband, and is planning more projects to expand access.

**Arts, Leisure, Tourism:** Lake County developed a Tourism Improvement District, joint Recreation District between Clearlake and Lakeport and several new park facilities across the county. The Great Redwood Trail is a 320-mile multi-use rail-to-trail project connecting California’s San Francisco and Humboldt Bays and creates opportunities across the Region. Mendocino County has proposed several arts-related projects, including a Fort Bragg Performing Arts Center and Industrial Arts Center.

**Public/Private Partnerships:** While community leaders emphasize a relative dearth of these initiatives, PG&E supported workforce development work in the past. Currently, the US Forest Service is working with timber companies in the Region to innovate and resolve bottlenecks in the value chain limiting opportunities for sustainability and the participation of a disinvested workforce. Mendocino Opportunities for building a Vibrant Economy (MOVE2030) was created to lay the groundwork for a more resilient economy created through public and private partnerships. Its research identified key Industry clusters and strategic opportunities towards this goal.

Preliminary Metrics of CERF Planning Phase Success

- Identify key investment areas and workforce development needs to prepare for green transitions and emerging sustainable industries.
- Identify underutilized synergies within the region and to outside markets, and opportunities for cooperation to maximize regional benefit.
- Regional roadmap produced includes tangible high quality job creation targets in sustainable industries, informed of the needs of disinvested communities.
- Investments identified have multipliers and benefits across the Region.
- Investments identified leverage state, federal, and philanthropic dollars to maximize development benefits.
- Produce a well-supported, inclusive vision and plan for regional economic vitality.
- Establish a functional, inclusive regional economic planning process and network to continue advancing, implementing, and realizing economic vitality opportunities.
- Identify key project investments and workforce training needs to increase economic vitality, meet near term and strategic industry and public sector work force demands, and create a more resilient regional economy.
- Establish awareness of public, private and philanthropic funders and programs, as well as an implementation structure for a Regional pursuit of project funding.

Sustainability Strategy. Conducting an inclusive planning process to build trust, center disinvested community participation, and create a common vision for action toward regional economic vitality will be the foundation of Redwood Region RISE long-term process sustainability. By creating robust, inclusive, productive planning tables and providing regional capacity-building supports, the proposed process will lift new leadership, empower participation and sustain engagement directly from disinvested communities into the implementation phase. Compelling, consensus-based economic recovery and resiliency projects emerging from the planning phase will provide a tangible basis for optimism and continued engagement. Leveraging CERF funding to attract other public, private and philanthropic investments to realize planned outcomes will be critical to long-term sustainability during and after the implementation phase.

CBOs have long recognized the need to work regionally. Redwood Coast Rural Action has existed for 20 years as a regional network of community leaders working on issues that cannot be addressed adequately by individual counties. This partnership incubated CCRP out of a need to address data and research paucity in rural northern CA, the rural broadband initiative Redwood Coast Connect<sup>26</sup>, and the development of industry cluster data specifically targeting regional synergies. Economic development professionals<sup>27</sup> agree a unified regional strategy to connect disparate efforts and capacitate local organizations is needed to transcend current challenges and seize upcoming opportunities to develop the green and blue economy. This has already created strong commitment and investment in the CERF process, even at this nascent stage, and implementation funding will build on this foundation. Opportunities to leverage CERF funding to address issues in the enabling environment for sustainable

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<sup>26</sup> <https://redwoodcoastruralaction.org/the-work/redwood-coast-connect/>

<sup>27</sup> Interviews and informal discussions with seven practitioners and stakeholder meetings to develop this proposal, Partnership Agreement Letter and budget were held to gauge perspectives on regional development, collect data, and create an inventory of notable projects and initiatives featured here.

development have already been identified, which indicates infrastructure can be built to carry regional strategies for sustainable development forward into the future.

Equity, Participation, and Collaborative Decision-making. The inclusive planning effort will use participatory approaches to allocate CERF resources in ways that most benefit disinvested communities. Several CBOs that serve disinvested populations, like TNON and Cooperation Humboldt, have advocated for and facilitated training and technical assistance to carry out participatory budgeting processes for school districts and others. Human centered design has also grown increasingly popular among northern CBOs as a way of strengthening responsiveness to disinvested communities and ensuring their needs drive program development. These competencies in creating deeply inclusive processes will be harnessed in visioning sessions which will inform strategies and projects for implementation funding. One proposed strategy will engage communities to create a rubric for evaluating investments.

Other strategies advancing inclusivity the REC has used and will employ include:

- a) Empirically assess areas of underinvestment using both the metrics identified in this proposal and other measures advocated by social justice organizations, and “ground truth” findings from this exercise with advocates, residents, and organizations that serve marginalized, disinvested, BIPOC and Native communities.
- b) Representatives to the REC were selected by recommendation of their peers with an eye towards geographic representation, meaning every County is represented in every stakeholder/rightsholder category specified by the CERF Solicitation. In some cases, organizations working in multiple counties were selected, which aids participatory governance by managing the number of participants in the REC.
- c) A sociocratic governance structure has been proposed that honors collaborative decision-making processes derived from deeply democratic models of community work holding space for marginalized voices, lowering barriers to participation.
- d) Using equity driven data analysis and visualization techniques to ensure that resource allocation fulfills stated goals for priority investment sectors and communities. CCRP has in-house capability of generating spatial and economic analyses to best inform decision making.

## **I.2. Proposed Work Plan** (Score Range 0-15 points)

**Start-up.** Activities in Q1-2 will build an inclusive planning table, launching outreach and engagement, stakeholder mapping, a partnership assessment and regional process alignment, and establishing a collaborative governance structure for the REC. Activities will build shared knowledge, develop a regional baseline from which to measure progress and lay the foundation for activities during the regional planning process.

**Launch Outreach and Engagement:** CCRP and the Outreach Team (NCO, TNON and RCAA) will develop an interactive website, prepare outreach materials and, with the REC, identify County Leadership Teams. Leadership Teams will facilitate connections to local CBOs working in and on behalf of members of disinvested/BIPOC communities. Local CBOs will be contracted to co-lead Leadership Teams and outreach.

**Identify and Map Stakeholders:** CCRP, the Outreach Team and REC will create a stakeholder roster mapped to disinvested communities. The map will be updated with data gathered from local CBOs and guide outreach strategy and planning activities.

*Prepare Partnership Assessment:* CCRP will develop or adapt a tool to assess diversity and strength of partnerships across the region over time. The tool will track change in the nature/number of partnerships, accounting for sectors, subject matter, lived experience, generational, BIPOC and other relevant perspectives to ensure the diversity of partnerships serving the CERF planning process are representative of the region.

*Coordinate Aligned Processes:* CCRP will update an existing roster and create an interactive map of aligned planning processes as a resource for the general public to track intersecting and aligned work to avoid duplication, identify opportunities to leverage resources and inform the Regional Plan and future proposed projects.

*Establish Collaborative Governance Structure:* CCRP and the Outreach Team will use data gathered as described above to continue recruiting entities and communities historically excluded from economic development processes to the REC. They will provide initial REC members technical support/training to build capacity in skills including, but not limited to, sociocracy; consensus decisions; justice, equity, diversity and inclusion; and participatory budgeting as a foundation to help establish the collaborative governance structure outlined in the Partnership Agreement Letter below, create a common fund of knowledge among existing and future members and build shared language and understanding around strategies to shift power and decision-making responsibility to historically excluded and disinvested communities.

**High Road Transition Collaborative and Reporting.** REC members will support and participate in local outreach activities planned in collaboration with the Outreach Team, and information will be collected and communicated between REC, its work groups, county Leadership Teams, local CBOs and community members in an effort coordinated by the Outreach Team. REC reports will be produced monthly to document the evolution of REC membership and governance structure, provide details on growth and sustainability of formal and informal regional and local partnerships and coalitions, and updates on progress and changes in outreach and engagement opportunities. Reports will frame how planning activities are responding to needs of diverse stakeholders with an emphasis on disinvested communities and frame results in terms of CERF objectives as thematic content. Reports will draw from the partnership tracking tool, meeting agendas and minutes, and other information provided by partners. CCRP's reports are available to the public and will be posted to the project website.

*Potential Challenges and Solutions:* Stakeholders and disinvested communities in the region are geographically remote, often in mountainous terrain distant from town or city centers, with limited services, facilities or wireless connectivity. Language barriers, low levels of digital literacy and high poverty levels prevent residents from accessing community supports. High levels of distrust, inexperience with and disconnection from civic processes and the region's history of genocide, discrimination and extractive practices also deter and hamper engagement. Outreach by trusted local organizations will identify and respond to specific support needs. Regional capacity-building programs in leadership development, financial/fiscal literacy and participatory budgeting will be offered to ensure local entities and community members are supported to lead or join actively in planning discussions and in membership on REC. REC members and local county Leadership Teams will participate in training on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion to create a welcoming environment and facilitate productive engagement.

**Regional Planning.** Activities will start in Q1 and continue through the grant term. All planning activities will be conducted by and through REC, its workgroups, county Leadership Teams and CBOs working with BIPOC/disinvested communities. Participation of BIPOC and disinvested communities will be facilitated by the REC, Outreach Team, local county Leadership Teams and local CBOs through interactive surveys, polling and in-person and online meetings.

**Part 1:** CCRP will complete all required deliverables in Q1-4, as noted below.

Quarter	Activities	Deliverables
1. Oct. 2022-Dec. 2023	Support development of working groups, inventory of actors across key sectors;	Stakeholder mapping
2. Jan. 2023- Mar. 2023	Compile secondary data on industries, labor markets, climate impacts, and environmental health; identify additional data needs.	Fact Sheets, Briefs
3. April 2023- June 2023	Collect primary data if needed, conduct analysis, prepare report	Regional Summary
4. July 2023-Sep. 2023	Data analysis Primary research with HRTC and community members to identify strategies, compile best practice examples	Labor market, Industry cluster, SWOT analysis, Roadmap
5. Oct. 2023-Dec. 2023	Data analysis and participatory visioning process; project identification*	Summary of priorities, project ideas
6. Jan 2024 – Mar. 2024	Project selection, participatory budgeting sessions for implementation funds**	Budget for community priority investments and projects.

**Part 2:** Q5-6 will focus on activities to support community participation in a visioning process to identify priorities and project ideas. Activities in Q6 will engage communities in participatory budgeting to winnow projects to assist the REC in identifying strategic investments and projects that meet criteria specified in the SFP.

**Section II: Community Engagement and Governance Structure**

**II.1. Outreach and Engagement Plan** (Score range 0-20 points)

The REC will approach engagement on a broad scale, which means intensive outreach to the widest audience possible so voices of diverse peoples, groups and stakeholders will be considered in planning, outcome, and implementation strategies. Community engagement on a broad scale requires significant budgetary support, particularly in a geographically large and rural Region where transportation, broadband access and digital literacy present major challenges. CCRP will refine the outreach and engagement plan to meet the conditions of the finalized CERF award and the available budget. While strategies may be refined, the following strategies are proposed to inform, engage, and empower diverse stakeholders throughout CERF plan development.

CCRP will provide oversight and leadership to ensure comprehensive outreach and engagement throughout the Region. To deliver an equity-centered CERF Plan, CCRP will collaborate with trusted CBOs to coordinate local outreach and engagement activities. Representatives from these trusted CBOs will also co-lead Leadership Teams in each County to ensure balanced representation and build capacity to empower leaders from disinvested communities to ensure sustainability.

CCRP's outreach and communication coordinator will oversee outreach efforts and assure sub-regional information sharing is consistent with regional messaging. CCRP will partner with NCO to develop regional outreach and engagement strategies, particularly in disinvested communities, including non-English speakers, Native American Tribal Nations, older adults, youth, people of color and people with disabilities. Established as a nonprofit in 1968, NCO's mission is to strengthen communities through responsive advocacy, engagement, and services. As the Community Action Agency for Lake and Mendocino Counties, NCO has a strong history of local leadership, community organizing, and collaboration. NCO has worked with local and regional partners to strengthen the safety net through programs that range from food security and food system development to job skill training and employment support, Head Start programs, senior caregiver services, volunteer programs, and disaster response.

NCO anticipates coordinating with two other regional CBOs: RCAA serving Humboldt County and TNON based in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties to effectively conduct subregional outreach and leadership team development. This Outreach Team (NCO, RCAA, and TNON) will develop a cadre of regional outreach partners in collaboration with CCRP and the REC. The Outreach Team will present to the REC no less than once per quarter to ensure that the REC is supporting implementation of all elements of the Outreach and Engagement Plan, below.

**Strategy 1: Communicate a cohesive, transparent regional message.**

In Q1-Q2, NCO will meet bi-monthly with the Outreach Team lead entities. NCO will support initial implementation work while CCRP hires and trains its team, focuses on facilitating the initial REC and building the regional information sharing infrastructure.

Objective 1.1. Create an interactive web-based platform that is ADA accessible and culturally and linguistically responsive. In Q1, CCRP will create and host a dedicated project webpage to support accurate and transparent information about the planning process, including basic project information, scheduled engagement opportunities, iterative deliverables, and an interactive map of the Region that can communicate where users live and solicit other demographics as they provide comments and other input. The website will also track performance and other indicators, including progress on the implementation of the Outreach and Engagement Plan. CCRP will ensure information is accessible and relevant for community stakeholders who may not have knowledge of the project but will be impacted by CERF plan outcomes. Materials will be suitable for sharing across multiple stakeholder websites, social media distribution and posting, and downloadable for flyers, brochures, and other printed outreach materials. By Q5, CCRP will develop a stand-alone multilingual project website that can promote the final plan and ready the region for Phase II Implementation. CCRP is equipped to manage online and in-person engagement and will work with trusted partners and contracted support services to produce print and digital multilingual outreach materials that recognize the constraints of digital literacy and broadband access in the region.

Objective 1.2. Develop a transparent feedback loop between the REC and community. The Region's CERF planning process defines engagement as two-way communication between the REC and the public, enhanced by opportunities for deeper engagement among stakeholders at the local and Regional levels. CCRP will work with the REC and Outreach Team and other stakeholders to develop a transparent feedback loop



centered on exchanging information between the REC and communities in each county in the Region. Positive communication feedback loops build confidence in stakeholders by documenting how their input impacts planning decisions. Information sharing will incorporate stakeholders' geographic and socio-demographic response rates and will incorporate continuous quality improvement to adjust information sharing strategies and reflect the needs of disinvested communities and a broad range of stakeholders.

NCO, RCAA, and TNON will support family resource centers, senior centers, libraries, adult schools and other local organizations to build community capacity to access and participate in the REC's web-based communication infrastructure, focusing on geographically diverse partners who can address digital literacy across all languages and abilities. Information will also be provided through social media designed to reach specific community populations, email, and in-person door-to-door outreach and meetings that are ADA accessible, provide Spanish translation, and are scheduled at times that work best for the community and are family-friendly or offer childcare.

Objective 1.3. Develop a multilingual survey to inform community members and solicit information to improve participation. In Q1-Q2, CCRP will develop a multilingual survey that will be graphic and easy to understand to solicit initial feedback about the communication platforms and planning process. All surveys will track geographic and socio-demographic response rates and address communication strategies with the goal of receiving survey responses that reflect the ethnic, racial and economic make-up of the region with particular attention to disinvested communities and stakeholders who have not yet participated in CERF planning activities. The Outreach Team will present this information to the REC in tandem with initial stakeholder mapping data. CCRP and the Outreach Team will adjust participation and planning processes based on this initial data to assure the meaningful involvement of disinvested communities in the earliest stages of the planning processes based on these analyses. Surveys will be conducted regularly and as outreach expands participation across the Region to support sustainable development of the REC and planning infrastructure.

**Strategy 2: Develop sub-regional Leadership Teams that promote collective impact in each County and across the Region.** Building on the REC governance structure and "team of teams" approach, outreach and engagement throughout the planning process will leverage the expertise, existing communication channels and relationships in each county in the Region. While the four counties have many opportunities to build upon, they have not functioned as an economic development region in the way the REC is proposing. County Leadership Teams will mirror REC participation by labor organizations, businesses, grassroots and community-based organizations, government agencies, economic development agencies, philanthropic organizations, education and training providers, workforce entities, environmental justice organizations, worker centers, disinvested communities, California Native American tribes, and other stakeholders capable of contributing to success of the project. The REC, CCRP and the Outreach Team will help form these local County Leadership Teams so that they include and build on the relationships demonstrated in the Collective Partnership Agreement Letter and fully support the implementation of the Outreach and Engagement Plan. Foci will include measuring and tracking meaningful leadership and engagement in local teams by disinvested community members,

organizations that serve local disinvested communities, and other lower capacity organizations defined using criteria established by REC technical assistance providers.

A successful planning process must include thoughtful community engagement strategies that center the needs of disinvested communities and reflect those of traditional economic development partners and local municipalities. CCRP will help each county Leadership Team authentically engage traditional and nontraditional economic development stakeholders. As they coordinate information sharing and communication across the Region, CCRP will utilize existing networks where possible to build a shared vision and responsive Regional Plan.

Objective 2.1. Mirror the REC communication infrastructure in each County. Strategic communication infrastructure coordinated by local leaders who are members and participants in REC processes will strengthen the development of a fully inclusive plan that recognizes the strengths and challenges of the entire Region. County Leadership Teams will designate specific lead entities to engage residents through traditional public workshops and meetings, leveraging existing community meetings and communication channels, such as economic development boards, local farm bureaus, conservation districts, municipal advisory councils, small business workshops, Head Start parent meetings, cradle to career collaborations and healthy community roundtables. To ensure consistent Regional messaging, CCRP will provide Leadership Teams with communication support. Each Leadership Team will assign a communication lead to serve as a conduit to CCRP and the REC supports described in Strategy 1 above. CCRP will equip local Leadership Team leaders with information sharing tools, including website linking features, pre-drafted social media content, email and PowerPoint templates, and frameworks and training for in-person outreach strategies.

Each County Leadership Team will be funded to provide sub-regional support to disperse regional communication messages to local stakeholders and connect authentic, local voices to regional REC processes. In person activities and meetings will be funded through the county Leadership Teams and will be ADA accessible, provide Spanish translation, and scheduled at times that work best for local stakeholders, including family-friendly meeting strategies that reach all segments of the community.

Objective 2.2. Acknowledge and overcome traditional power imbalances. As CCRP oversees engagement and leads this effort in collaboration with the Outreach Team, they will facilitate a shared orientation and understanding of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI). Training and capacity building tools will be provided for traditional and nontraditional economic development stakeholders through a multicultural training platform. CCRP will build communication tools and provide quality assurance so that JEDI language and the importance of JEDI practices are incorporated throughout regional and sub-regional planning activities. CCRP and the Outreach Team will also facilitate participation of traditional and non-traditional economic development planning participants in regional capacity-building programming on leadership development and topics like Human Centered Design, Participatory Budgeting and fiscal literacy.

To help REC members and county Leadership Teams acknowledge and overcome traditional power imbalances, each county Leadership Team must be directed or co-led by an individual and/or organization that serves disinvested communities in that County. Each Leadership team will include populations historically

excluded from planning and economic development processes and will be developed to fully include traditional and non-traditional economic development stakeholders. This will help ensure that equity remains central throughout the planning process, and support communications and reporting about engagement successes and challenges. The local Outreach Team lead agency - NCO, RCAA, or TNON - will report on the Outreach and Engagement Plan progress at each local Leadership Team meeting and will help facilitate difficult conversations that must take place to ensure that Leadership Teams and the REC are representative of the disinvested communities in the region and provide accessible means for participation for stakeholders who have not been involved in planning and development activities to date.

### **Strategy 3. Reach and Empower Historically Disinvested Communities**

The Region's history of genocide, discrimination, extractive practices and disinvestment has resulted in distrust of government and related services and excluded many distinct groups from participation in traditional economic development and climate change strategies. Outreach and engagement opportunities must be thoughtful and culturally responsive to these most disenfranchised and disinvested community stakeholders.

Objective 3.1. Outreach to every independent Tribal Government in the region and offer culturally responsive opportunities for meaningful engagement. The Region includes 26 Sovereign Tribal Nations and many other tribal organizations. The Outreach Team will provide personal one-on-one outreach to each tribal chairperson/president and tribal administrator to build understanding of opportunities under the regional REC structure as well as their opportunities to independently apply for CERF funds. CCRP and each Outreach Team organization will include Native American expertise and their outreach efforts will build on existing collaborations and trusted local partnerships. CCRP and the Outreach Team will build local capacity to understand and respect the importance and significance of traditional and Tribal knowledges and provide information and training about the role and protection of traditional knowledges in climate initiatives.

Objective 3.2. Ensure multi-lingual, accessible communication materials and outreach and engagement activities. The Region includes distinct disinvested communities where Spanish is the primary language and community members often feel excluded and face real barriers to meaningful participation. Each Outreach Team entity includes bilingual, bicultural members who will help assure that information is translated and interpreted in appropriate ways that support the Collective Partnership Agreement Letter and ensure transparent decision-making processes for non-English speakers. During Q1, CCRP and the Outreach Team will identify any other non-English languages to be incorporated in the Outreach and Engagement Plan through exploring more in-depth data analyses, engaging more local expertise, and participating in initial REC processes.

Objective 3.3. Distribute funding in meaningful ways to ensure engagement on a broad scale. Partnership with trusted voices in the community will solicit meaningful engagement throughout the project. With oversight provided by NCO, RCAA, and TNON, County Leadership Teams will propose a shortlist of geographically diverse CBOs—a minimum of 20 throughout the region – to provide targeted outreach and engagement throughout the region that is relevant for distinct populations and communities. CBOs that can support and promote the community engagement aspects of this plan will be selected so that more feedback is incorporated from under-

represented groups that have experienced recent and historical disinvestment. Funding will be provided in the form of mini-grants or stipends based on the number of community members each CBO engages and involves in outreach and planning processes. These organizations will help spread the word about the CERF initiative, encourage participation with the REC, facilitate input throughout the planning process, and identify engagement formats that will appeal to diverse audiences, including immigrant workers, non-native English speakers, communities of color, members of Native American Tribes, youth, older adults, and people with disabilities.

To develop an equitable and sustainable economic development framework for the region, local leaders will bridge the education and engagement needs of local communities to the regional concepts and opportunities. Utilizing a team of dedicated staff organizers, involved community members, and youth organizers, each local lead entity can effectively engage and inform stakeholders and residents in each county of the work of the REC and how to become active and involved in regional and local work.

## **II.2. Collective Partnership Agreement Letter** (Score range 0-30 points)

The organizations forming the Initial Redwood Coast Economic Collaborative (REC) are committed to working in partnership with CCRP, the Regional Convener, to ensure disinvested communities participate in regional planning and economic development. This process will help ensure that, over the next decade, our Redwood Region will become a vibrant, regenerative economy catalyzed by the implementation of community-driven innovations and collaborative governance. Our purpose is to guide and support a comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive regional planning process generating policies, projects and funding that will advance long-term prosperity, economic resilience and equitable pathways to high road industry initiatives and employment opportunities. Our measurable goals are to:

- **Build economic development capacity** to maximize opportunities for economic growth and effective implementation of planned projects as we work across industries, agencies, and BIPOC and other disinvested communities.
- **Create an inclusive and equitable regional economic plan** aligned with existing County plans, and informed by data, community participation and community priorities.
- **Increase diversity of the regional workforce** employed in high road occupations by ensuring training and pathways to living-wage careers for people historically under-represented in growing and emerging industry sectors.
- **Identify funding opportunities** driven by stakeholder participation in decision-making for priority projects.

The REC will be structured as a team of teams leading planning discussions and supporting community participation. Four teams will organize the REC's work and help maintain a sharp focus on equitable participation and outcomes, inclusive economic development, environmental resilience and sustainability and thriving families and communities. Teams may break into smaller working groups and will be coordinated by members of Local Leadership Teams and the REC with support from CCRP. REC teams will gather and interpret local data, provide input and develop recommendations

throughout the planning process, including recommendations for priority projects. Along with local Leadership Teams, REC teams will function as a conduit that ensures information is shared across all counties in the Region and that local voices, leadership and the experience of disinvested communities are at the center of the regional planning process.

The REC will be coordinated by a Steering Committee comprised of two members nominated from each REC team. The Steering Committee will review and approve all analyses, plans and proposed projects. A Review Caucus open to those on the REC who identify in whole or in part as BIPOC or a member of a disinvested community or impacted worker will, as a group, review and offer guidance on policies; strategic directions; and inclusivity.

The REC will make decisions using a participatory consensus model. Any recommendation with 75-100% consensus approval from the Caucus will be adopted or negotiated towards adoption by the Steering Committee and the Caucus. Recommendations falling short of consensus will be revised or held for serious future consideration. Members of the REC understand the governance and participation model may change as the planning process evolves and are committed to moving the process forward in collaboration with the Regional Convener to achieve CERF objectives.

The initial members of the REC who have signed letters in support of this agreement have a history of working effectively and collaboratively within and across counties that comprise our Region, as well as with organizations in neighboring CERF regions. Members have been recruited through nominations by their peers and are prepared to engage in activities proposed in this application. Letters of support continue to come in and new collaborative opportunities are expected to continue throughout the coming months as the Redwood Coast Region continues to lay a foundation for collective work in anticipation of CERF funding.

Upon proposal acceptance, the REC will meet regularly for the first three months to ensure smooth start up. Initial meetings will be virtual. REC members will serve as ambassadors representing interests of the entire Redwood Coast Region and its constituent stakeholders and facilitate connections that leverage existing aligned efforts. Members will rely on research-based frameworks (e.g., High Road Training Collaboratives, Transformative Climate Communities, Workforce Equity Framework and others) as well as local knowledge and experience to guide strategy. Members will protect the confidentiality of Tribal Data and Traditional Ecological Knowledge collected and/or shared as part of the planning process.