

Introduction

Redwood Region Resilient Inclusive Sustainable Economy (RRRISE) is the Redwood Region's California Jobs First Regional Investment Initiative.¹ Home to 33 Tribal Nations and comprising four counties- Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino- the region boasts many natural and cultural assets including breathtaking coastline, the globally important redwood forests that give it its name, and diverse cultures including Indigenous peoples who continue to reside on their ancestral lands. Historically, the region has suffered commodity boom and bust cycles, and lack of economic diversification creates vulnerability for its communities.



Redwood Region RISE ("the Collaborative"), is a coalition of over 130 organizations and counting, coming together to pursue the California Jobs First goal of embracing a new approach to economic development that seeks to center disadvantaged communities as part of California's transition to a clean energy, carbon neutral economy, creating good-paying jobs and prosperous communities for all. Governed collaboratively and driven by participatory design and research, the Collaborative is completing its planning phase, during which it accomplished two major goals:

1

Constituted the Collaborative- Created five governing bodies- a regionally and sectorally balanced executive body (the Voting Member Block), an Equity Council to guide design and action on inclusivity, a Tribal Planning Table to ensure Tribal representation and priorities are centered, Local Tables surfacing and elevating subregional priorities, and Sector Tables, who crafted the strategies reported on here.

2

Crafted a Regional Roadmap to guide action- Part one of this Roadmap ("Regional Plan Part 1") released in June of 2024, provides a comprehensive data portrait of the region- its economic and social characteristics, current state of public health, workforce, and industries, and its anticipated climate impacts and challenges. In this report, Regional Plan Part 2, this data is used to inform development strategies, which the Region will look to enact over the next decade.

¹ The goal of the California Jobs First Regional Investment Initiative, is to ensure that as California's economy grows and adapts to climate change and other challenges, that good-paying jobs and prosperous communities are created for the benefit of all Californians. Key to the program is empowering the state's diverse regions and residents to meaningfully participate as leaders in this process. More information can be found [here](#).

This report contains two primary sections. First, sector strategies are detailed for each of the region's four target sectors: (1) Arts, Culture, and Tourism; (2) Health and Caregiving; (3) Renewable and Resilient Energy; and (4) Working Lands and Blue Economy. Then the report delves into the actions and investments needed to enable growth in those industry sectors and maximize benefits to priority communities,² via cross-cutting sector strategies. These include strategies for Broadband, Entrepreneurship, Food Security and Access, Housing, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Workforce Development.

The report closes with an overview of how these strategies will be carried forward by the Collaborative, and the steps needed to institutionalize RISE, carry forward its vision for systems change and deliver well-being for its communities.



Watch Redwood Region RISE's Strategy Video



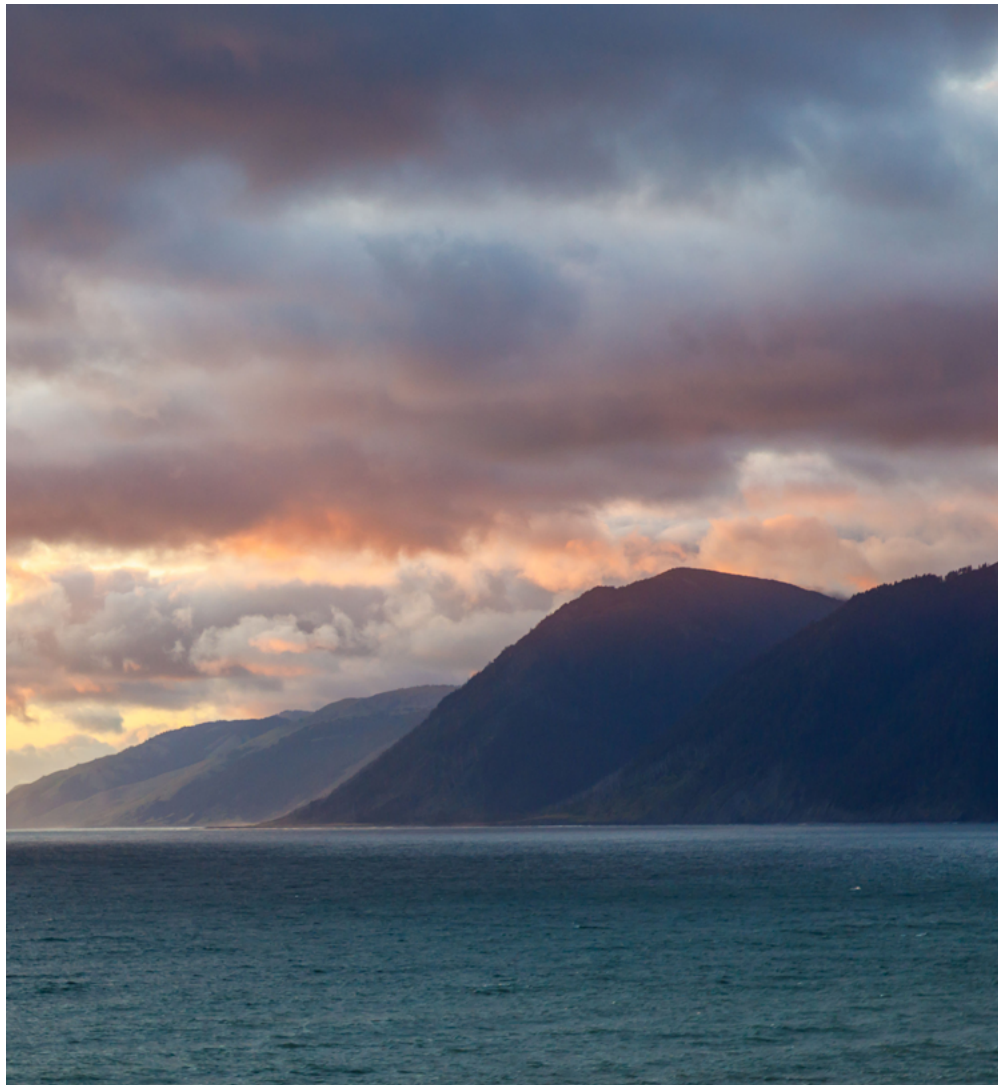
² More information on how Redwood Region RISE defines Priority Communities can be found [here](#).

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Redwood Region RISE's Vision and Goals

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“We envision the Redwood Region a healing place where everyone belongs, with stable jobs, accessible healthcare, and a flourishing natural environment. Together, we work towards a future where anyone can thrive.”

- Redwood Region Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable, Economy Collaborative Vision Statement

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Figure 1 Redwood Region RISE Theory of Change

Redwood Region RISE Theory of Change			
	Current State	RISE's Role	Desired State
Economic Development	<p>Few organizations with capacity to secure and expend funds, volatile funding and budgets, siloing, limited regional cooperation on shared goals.</p> <p>Lack of traded sectors and low investment from outside the region. Private sector union membership declined over previous decades.</p> <p>Marginalization and alienation of groups in the workplace, high attrition from the workforce in prime age.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shared agenda setting. ◆ Networking, trust, and relationship building across the region. ◆ Unlocking the potential of new and/or “unlikely” partnerships. ◆ Investing in developing concepts and moving them towards funding proposals. ◆ Helping organizations seed investment in promising industries, connect industries to trained workers, promote inclusion and support of priority communities to enter and complete training opportunities and onto careers. 	<p>Creating critical mass helps the Region pursue and secure more state, federal, and private funding and investment.</p> <p>CBOs serving priority communities and valued (and funded) partners in Workforce and Economic Development initiatives.</p> <p>Projects desired by communities are designed and executed at an accelerated pace.</p>

Redwood Region RISE Theory of Change			
	Current State	RISE's Role	Desired State
Equity	<p>Dearth of well-funded advocacy and human dignity organizations, relative lack of leaders of color or young people in leadership positions, rampant and severe economic marginalization of Priority Communities.</p> <p>Generational trauma inflicted on Indigenous communities, funding processes and consultation mechanisms that are not conducive to meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships with Tribal partners and other groups.</p> <p>History of extractive or exploitative relationships in public and private sectors between privileged and underprivileged groups. Lack of support for initiatives brought forward from Priority Communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in leadership and capacity building initiatives for priority communities, including BIPOC, Tribal, and youth leaders. Name and begin to dismantle barriers to meaningful partnership. Create conditions for human dignity and affinity groups and leaders to receive project funding, as leads, collaborators, and/or experts on their communities' needs. Build allyship and supportive relationships around BIPOC and Priority Community conceived and led initiatives. 	<p>Priority communities in the Redwood Region are empowered advocates and leaders in the community.</p> <p>Organizations are culturally competent and prepared to partner with diverse groups and leaders to execute initiatives benefiting the community.</p>
Climate	<p>Region is unprepared for ever increasing risks from fire and sea level rise.</p> <p>Priority communities particularly impacted by the climate crisis.</p> <p>Traditional Ecological Knowledge and local innovation drive climate solutions, but are inadequately resourced and scaled.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help direct investment into initiatives that promote low-carbon investment, increase resilience of the landscape and communities, and help shift CA towards its climate goals. 	<p>The region has reliable infrastructure, adequate resources, and social capital to address increasing both emergent and long-term climate risks associated with heat, drought, flooding, sea level rise, and wildfires.</p> <p>Traditional Ecological Knowledge is recognized and supported across the region, creating more resilient landscapes and improving ecosystem health.</p>

Redwood Region RISE Theory of Change			
	Current State	RISE's Role	Desired State
Climate (continued)			<p>The region is recognized as a leader in sustainable technologies and industries.</p> <p>The region relies on 100% clean, reliable electricity and renewable fuels as its primary sources of energy.</p>
Overall Impact	Exciting economic initiatives occurring, but benefits restricted to a few. Gross disparities in well being and wealth across communities. Challenges finding housing and career opportunities drives away younger generations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Data-driven, results based accountability on shared goals via MEL. ♦ RISE Collaborative holds a collective vision and impact model to drive change. 	Delivering on goals- More capacity, more integration amongst groups across the region, more investment and development, reduction in income and health disparities. Greater opportunities and thriving for younger generations.

The goals of California Jobs First's Regional Investment Initiative, and therefore RISE's goals, are complex and layered. At the heart of the RISE's vision is recognition that creating stronger working relationships across the region and between traditional and non-traditional economic development players is the catalytic ingredient to move the needle on the goals we share. RISE will enable its vision and goals through capacity building, strengthening collaboration and partnering, and facilitating inclusive and long-term investment to realize a future of shared prosperity and ecological health.

Regional Snapshot and SWOT

The following section summarizes the key findings of Regional Plan Part 1, which informed the strategies in this plan.



Summary of the Region's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

S trengths

- ◆ The remaining stands of globally significant, old-growth redwood forest are predominantly located in their namesake region—sequestering millions of tons of carbon while drawing over a million visitors to the region each year.
- ◆ The original inhabitants of the region still live on their ancestral lands, preserving thousands of years of traditional knowledge and best ecological practice with respect to land and forest management.
- ◆ Land ethic: The region's unique social history continues to foster a culture of deep connection to and reverence for its lands and waters. The region excels at eco-innovation and has a strong sustainability ethos.
- ◆ The region possesses two- and four-year universities that are proactively engaged in creating pathways for young residents to realize career aspirations and in providing re-training initiatives.



W eaknesses

- ◆ An economy composed largely of non-tradable sectors, not (yet) driven by major, globally competitive industries. Historic reliance on sale of primary commodities.
- ◆ Small private sector (esp. Del Norte).
- ◆ Low diversification makes the region vulnerable to boom-and-bust cycles.
- ◆ Prevalence of historic and childhood trauma, high incidence of mental health issues and related disabilities, insufficient care facilities, and behavioral health workforce. Social isolation and alienation, remote and disconnected communities. Poor mental health outcomes disproportionately impacting disinvested communities.
- ◆ High attrition rate from the workforce at prime age; high disability rate at prime age, likely related to the above.
- ◆ The region experiences high levels of poverty, driven in part by low labor force participation and low wages. Exacerbating poverty is the region's high cost of living and scarcity of critical, enabling services (e.g., healthcare and housing). High rates of poverty disproportionately impact disinvested communities, including people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA2S+ individuals.
- ◆ Institutions exhibit chronic low capacity, lack of key institutional partners to advance economic development initiatives, and nascent or absent collaboration on key issues facing the region due to lack of capacity.
- ◆ Aging, obsolete infrastructure creates vulnerabilities in water delivery, transportation, energy, communications, and other crucial systems. Degraded waste sites jeopardize drinking water and fisheries.
- ◆ The housing crisis is severe on the North Coast. Outdated stock is associated with high incidences of lead poisoning in children.

Opportunities

- ◆ Restoring forest health is a major job-creation opportunity for the region, climate-adaptation opportunity for the state, and carbon-sequestration opportunity for the world. Natural resource and ecosystem restoration careers are thus a major opportunity.
- ◆ A recent feasibility study found three call areas along the Redwood Region to be viable for offshore wind development, which is already underway in Humboldt Bay.
- ◆ Regionally, a unified focus on four key areas for economic development and diversification: Arts, Culture, and Tourism; Health and Caregiving; Renewable and Resilient Energy; and Working Lands and Blue Economy. Construction needs in these sectors coupled with urgent needs for infrastructure updates and housing development drive the promise of building- and trades-based industries in the priority clusters.
- ◆ The region's need for medical professionals presents an economic development opportunity with the promise to deliver thriving wage careers for Redwood Region residents.

Threats

- ◆ Catastrophic wildfires have enormous economic, health, and social impacts with impacted inland jurisdictions perpetually in "recovery mode." Wildfires play a major role in and are potentially the leading regional source of greenhouse gas emissions.
- ◆ Sea level rise puts key coastal assets at risk. Extreme heat events are predicted to become more frequent and severe in inland areas. The area's fog belt may decline.
- ◆ Natural disasters: Communities in the region are also frequently recovering from earthquakes and tsunamis. Flooding is an issue.
- ◆ The rising cost of essentials and rising incomes in urban areas push young people and skilled workers out of the region.
- ◆ A shifting regulatory environment and burdensome regulations hinder infrastructure development. Public funding opportunities are delivered inaccessibly, perpetuating cycles of disinvestment.
- ◆ Artificial intelligence and automation put lower wage workers in various fields at risk of displacement.

Key Takeaways from Regional Plan Part 1: Highlights from the report's seven primary chapters.

Economic History and Social Overview

- ◆ The Redwood Region's economy has faced boom-and-bust cycles, heavily reliant on natural resources. Diversification is needed, but the region's comparative advantage remains its natural assets.
- ◆ The region is rural, remote, and culturally diverse, home to California's largest Indigenous communities. Population is aging, and despite a regional decline, town centers are growing, stressing housing availability.
- ◆ Over 95% of the region is classified as "disinvested" by the California Jobs First definition.
- ◆ The region has potential in sustainable development sectors, including offshore wind, sustainable forestry, and local food production.

- ◆ Economic development is hindered by capacity constraints, with few dedicated organizations, and many leaders juggling multiple roles. Tribal involvement is crucial but often occurs too late in planning processes.
- ◆ The region lags in GDP growth and suffers from low median incomes and high poverty rates, especially among residents of color. The cost of living is high relative to wages.

Climate and Public Health

- ◆ Environmental risks include water contamination, wildfires, and sea-level rise, with Humboldt Bay being particularly vulnerable. Wildfires also threaten the working lands sector.
- ◆ Investment in water infrastructure and waste disposal is a critical environmental justice issue.
- ◆ The region faces high mortality rates from various causes, with significant health disparities linked to smoking, substance use, and poor mental health.

Industries and Labor Market

Four key industry clusters are identified:



Arts, Culture, and Tourism

Resilient with growth potential, but challenges in translating this into thriving wage jobs.



Health and Caregiving

Expected to grow but faces challenges in attracting and retaining skilled professionals.



Renewable and Resilient Energy

High potential for economic growth, especially in wind energy, but requires workforce development.



Working Lands and Blue Economy

Strong in diversified industries but needing higher wages and increasing regenerative and sustainable practices.

- ◆ Legacy industries have seen job losses, and workers struggle with low wages and career stagnation.
- ◆ Family-sustaining jobs are growing in healthcare, teaching, and skilled trades, but local training programs often fail to meet demand.
- ◆ High school graduates are less prepared for secondary training, creating a barrier to workforce development.

Specific data highlights from Regional Plan Part 1 are provided throughout this report, providing rationale for the chosen strategies and tactics.

Regional Strategies

Introducing Target Sectors

The RRRISE convening team worked closely with the Collaborative to identify key sectors to prioritize in the region's economic development and diversification strategies. The process used to do so was as follows:

- 1** Review previous Industry Cluster analyses, such as the EDD's "Targets of Opportunity" report (November 2021), exploring industry clusters in Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Siskiyou, and Trinity Counties. The RRRISE convening team consulted the authors of that report to understand the methodology and any challenges that arose during report preparation.
- 2** Receive qualitative input from the Collaborative during listening sessions during which participants identified opportunities and threats on the horizon from the perspective of key drivers in the region and industry strengths. A qualitative data coding software program was used to identify themes and nodes of regional interest in different sectors.
- 3** Map and survey partners to identify key industries by the "people power" needed to develop them. Collaborative members (107 in total) responded to a survey querying them as to the key issues needed for economic development. What emerged were 10 priority areas that received strong agreement and corresponded with previous assessments.
- 4** Analyze publicly available quantitative data to obtain the findings reported in Regional Plan Part 1, Chapter 6.

The result was the ultimate articulation of RISE focus sectors, which are as follows:

Figure 2 Priority Sectors in the Redwood Region

Sector	Related Industries
Arts, Culture, and Tourism	Performing Arts; Museum, Historical Sites, etc.; Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation; Food Services and Drinking Places; Accommodation; Transit and Transportation; Motion Picture and Sound Recording; Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation.
Health and Caregiving	Hospitals; Social Assistance; Ambulatory Health Care Services; Nursery and Residential Care Facilities; Health and Personal Care Stores.
Renewable and Resilient Energy	Construction; Repair and Maintenance; Utilities.
Working Lands and Blue Economy	Leather and Allied Products Manufacturing; Beverage Manufacturing; Fishing, Hunting, Trapping; Animal Production and Aquaculture; Food Manufacturing; Textile Mills; Crop Production; Wood Products Manufacturing; Support Activities for Agriculture; Furniture and Related Products Manufacturing; Forestry and Logging; Building Materials and Garden Equipment.

Cross-Cutting Issues and Sector Enablers

Broadband
 Entrepreneurship
 Food Security and Access
 Housing
 Infrastructure and Transportation
 Workforce Development

Beginning in December 2023, RISE assembled tables of sector-involved organizations and individuals to collaboratively design the target sector strategies reported on below. Over the course of six months, each sector table met regularly—analyzing data from the region, identifying priorities, crafting strategies and timelines, and beginning to identify transformative investments and initiatives that could advance those strategies. Those are reported first in this plan, in the section entitled “Target Sector Strategies”.

Redwood Region RISE’s Listening Campaign and Priority Communities

As part of RISE’s Listening Campaign, 20 Community Based Organizations were recruited to hold deep listening conversations with members of [Priority Communities](#) to understand their challenges and enablers. The results of this work are reported on in the Insights Report, which informed the work of the Sector Tables in formulating their strategies. The insights report is available [here](#).

RISE thanks the following organizations for their work connecting crucial community voices to our initiative:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ◆ True North Organizing Network | ◆ Laytonville Healthy Start FRC |
| ◆ North Coast Opportunities | ◆ Middletown Art Center |
| ◆ Arts Council of Mendocino County | ◆ Norcal Lao Foundation |
| ◆ Arbor Youth Center (RCS) | ◆ Nuestra Alianza FRC |
| ◆ Black Humboldt | ◆ Playhouse Arts |
| ◆ Centro del Pueblo | ◆ Sacred Life Recovery Services |
| ◆ HC Black Music & Arts Association | ◆ Vision of Hope village |
| ◆ Ink People | ◆ Weaving Wellness & Diversity Management |
| ◆ Lake County Community Foundation | ◆ Westside Community Improvement Association |

Throughout the Planning Phase RISE conducted a Listening Campaign; holding over 400 conversations with community leaders, organizations, and residents. This, along with data analyzed for Regional Plan Part 1, identified the key enabling sectors which require investment and support for the region to be successful in its plans. These are the “cross cutting sectors” which comprise the second half of this plan. Additionally, strategies highlighted in the Health and Caregiving target sector strategies are also key enablers for the economy as a whole.

Target Sector Strategies

This following section details the Redwood Region RISE target sector strategies, crafted collaboratively over a six month period (January-June 2024), then ground truthed in local communities via five feedback sessions held in July 2024. Tables created sector specific SWOT analyses, identified key investments and a 10 year timeline for implementing their strategies. Example project concepts, drawn from the Redwood Region RISE project inventory and reviewed by the tables, provide concrete examples of beneficial social, environmental, and economic investments in the region. Please note that example projects have not been awarded funding or endorsed by the RISE voting members- funding awards will be decided in early 2025.

