

Partner Mapping

This chapter assesses the Redwood Region's readiness for the California Jobs First initiative by examining the landscape of existing organizations, partnerships, and strategic plans aimed at fostering inclusive and sustainable growth in the region. Highlighted are opportunities for strategic partnerships and capacity-building to unlock the region's potential equitably and sustainably. The chapter also provides an overview of the initiative's first-year outreach efforts to engage key partners and communities in the Collaborative and describes how ongoing partner-mapping informs outreach and engagement activities. Finally, it outlines the next steps needed to strengthen the Collaborative's capacity to pursue its vision of shared prosperity in the region.

Key Takeaways

- ◆ **Capacity Constraints:** Economic development in the region is diffuse and characterized by low capacity, with few orthodox development organizations. That leaders often wear many hats due to funding and person-hour constraints hinders the region from pursuing opportunities and expending program funds. The region has few community organizing, identity-based human dignity groups, or environmental justice-specific organizations. Capacity constraints are the primary factor limiting coordination with disinvested communities and creation of an effective California Jobs First Collaborative.
- ◆ **Tribal Involvement and Priorities:** The region's 33 federally and non-federally recognized Tribes are leaders in creating opportunities for disinvested communities, sustainable natural resource management, green industries, renewable energy, housing, and in the Arts, Culture, and Tourism sectors. However, Tribal rights holders are often not consulted sufficiently early in key planning decisions, hampering collaboration.
- ◆ **Strong Alignment of Strategies and Focal Areas:** Across counties and Tribes, plans emphasize traditional industries like agriculture, forestry, fishing, and manufacturing as well as emerging areas such as tourism, renewable energy, and specialty foods. Plans also highlight critical (physical) infrastructure gaps like those in broadband, water, and transportation that require investment to support further economic growth. Developing a skilled workforce is a common priority across economic development plans.
- ◆ **Need for Funding and Technical Support:** Organizations and leaders in the region would benefit greatly from structured, accessible mechanisms for identifying funding opportunities, as well as technical and grant writing support. Partners also recommend creation of a regional economic development entity.

Key Metrics

- ◆ **Number of Cross-Sectoral and Regional Partnerships:** Track the formation of new working groups, partnerships, and initiatives that bring together diverse partners from across the region and monitoring the retention of partners over time and the development of long-term collaborations or agreements that demonstrate the resilience of partnerships.
- ◆ **Number of New Organizations, Advocacy Groups, and Regional Initiatives:** Assess the creation of new entities that seek to address gaps in representation and support inclusive, sustainable economic development in the region.
- ◆ **Formation of EDA Economic Development Districts:** Monitor the establishment of new Economic Development Districts (EDDs) in the region, thereby enhancing access to funding opportunities and supporting regional planning efforts.
- ◆ **Self-Reported Assessment of Barriers to Collaboration:** Regularly obtain feedback from partners describing the challenges they face in engaging with the Collaborative, such as capacity constraints, resource limitations, and competing priorities.

Community Readiness for California Jobs First

Consistent with the experiences of rural areas nationwide, systematic economic-development efforts in the region are diffuse and characterized by low capacity and few orthodox development organizations. No regional economic-development organizations and few initiatives cover the California Jobs First-designated region Tribal Lands and the counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino. Leaders often wear many hats, and funding and person-hour constraints have created capacity traps that hinder the region from pursuing opportunities and expending program funds even when they have been successfully secured.²⁰

To adequately assess community readiness to participate in a regional effort, engage with potential partners, and assemble the Collaborative, partner mapping was the essential first step in building RRRISE. Alongside the listening campaign, researchers conducted an initial survey to understand: 1) the current work of public-sector and community-based organizations in the region, 2) communities' desire and capacity to engage in a regional and inclusive economic development planning endeavor, 3) members' perceptions of opportunities and challenges in their areas of focus, and 4) existing partnerships. Through this and the work of the North Coast Opportunities (NCO) and the True North Organizing Network (TNON) Outreach and Engagement teams to identify organizations at the local level, the convening team assembled a comprehensive Partner Directory of interest holders within the partner categories named as essential by the California Jobs First program:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 California Native American Tribes</p> | <p>2 Community organizers and community members</p> |
| <p>3 Disinvested communities</p> | <p>4 Economic development agencies</p> |

²⁰ This was a persistent theme voiced by participants in the RRRISE listening campaign.

- 5 Education and training providers

7 Environmental justice organizations

9 Grassroots and community-based organizations

11 Philanthropic organizations

13 Other regional interest holders capable of contributing to the success of the project.
- 6 Employers, businesses, and business associations

8 Government agencies

10 Labor organizations

12 Worker centers and workforce development entities

Members can opt into a public Partner Directory which is updated and shared monthly through RRRISE’s various newsletters and is publicly available on RRRISE’s website.

Attributes of Collaborative Partners

Following its official launch in February 2023, the RRRISE Convening Team administered the first of two surveys (open until August 2023). The 93 respondents who participated in the first survey represents the initiative’s core support in Year One. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents in that initial survey indicated that their work was directly related to economic development. Forty-five percent (45%) of all respondents identified as a community member as opposed to a representative of an organization.

When asked why they were interested in participating in RRRISE, most respondents (71%) cited “concern about economic development, business opportunities, and the future of the region.” Sixty-eight percent (68%) indicated that their work was directly related to economic development. A majority (60%) described themselves as “concerned about equity,” and 52% reported that they were “concerned about the environment.” About half of all respondents expressed interest in playing an active role in the Collaborative, and Figure 2.1 lists the specific types of roles. Another 30% offered to provide input if asked or other types of support during the Collaborative’s launch.

Figure 2.1 Desired Role in Collaborative (First Partner Survey Results)

Type of Participation	Percentage
Help the group fairly identify projects/initiatives for funding	57%
Help make sure the process is aligned with existing plans/initiatives	47%
Help reach out to communities and groups often overlooked in planning	47%
Help make sure plans/projects are beneficial to the environment	36%
Help make sure plans/projects are beneficial to workers	35%
Help the Collaborative function as a group	30%
Help with data collection and analysis	23%

N = 88 for all percentages

The initiative’s membership is representative considering the populations of each sub region. Continuous emphasis on outreach is necessary, however, particularly in the two smaller counties of Lake and Del Norte, to ensure them an equal voice within the Collaborative (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3). Nonetheless, Humboldt County contains far more organizations in each of the partner categories than do Lake and Del Norte, and harnessing the much-needed people power of these organizations while ensuring equity for smaller counties and Tribal communities constitutes an ongoing challenge.

Figure 2.2 Regional balance of RRRISE Partners, 11/2023

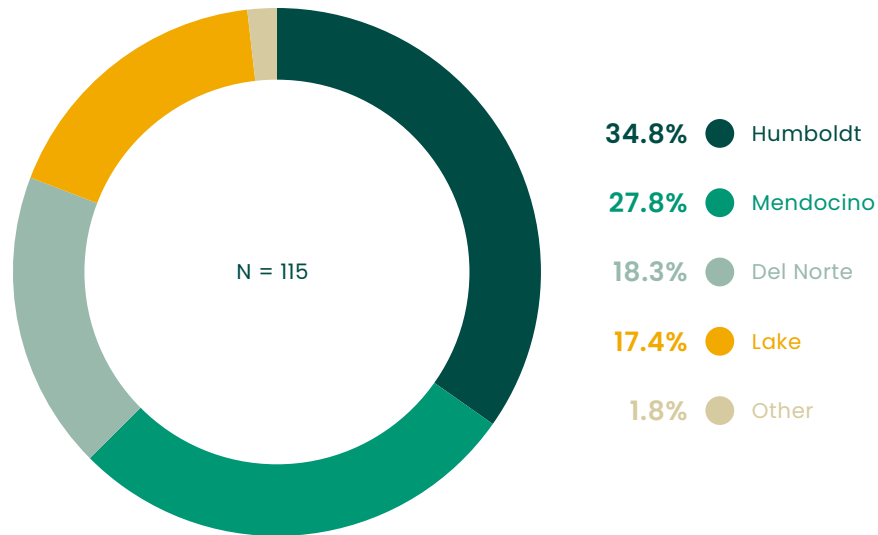
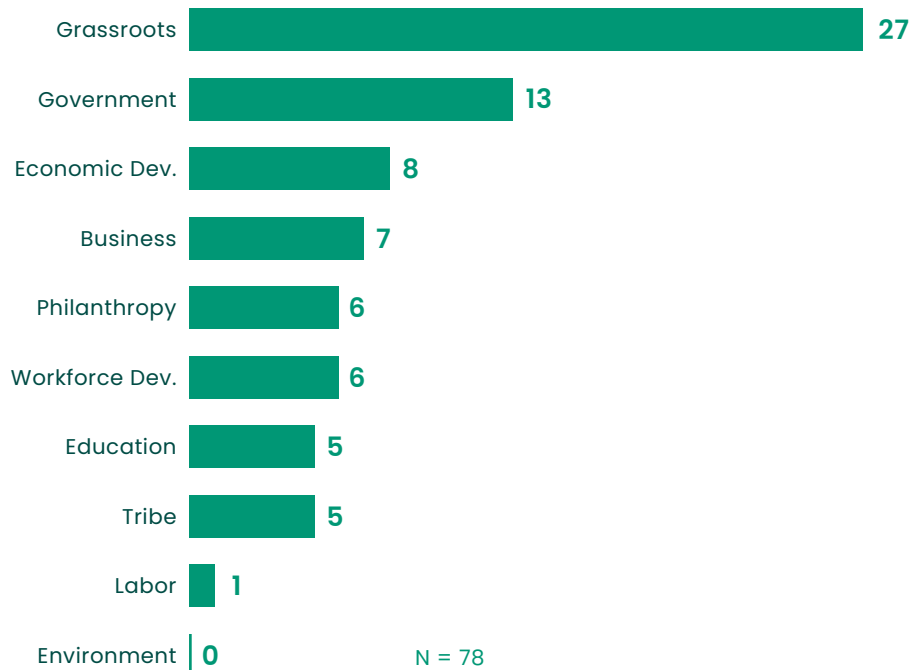
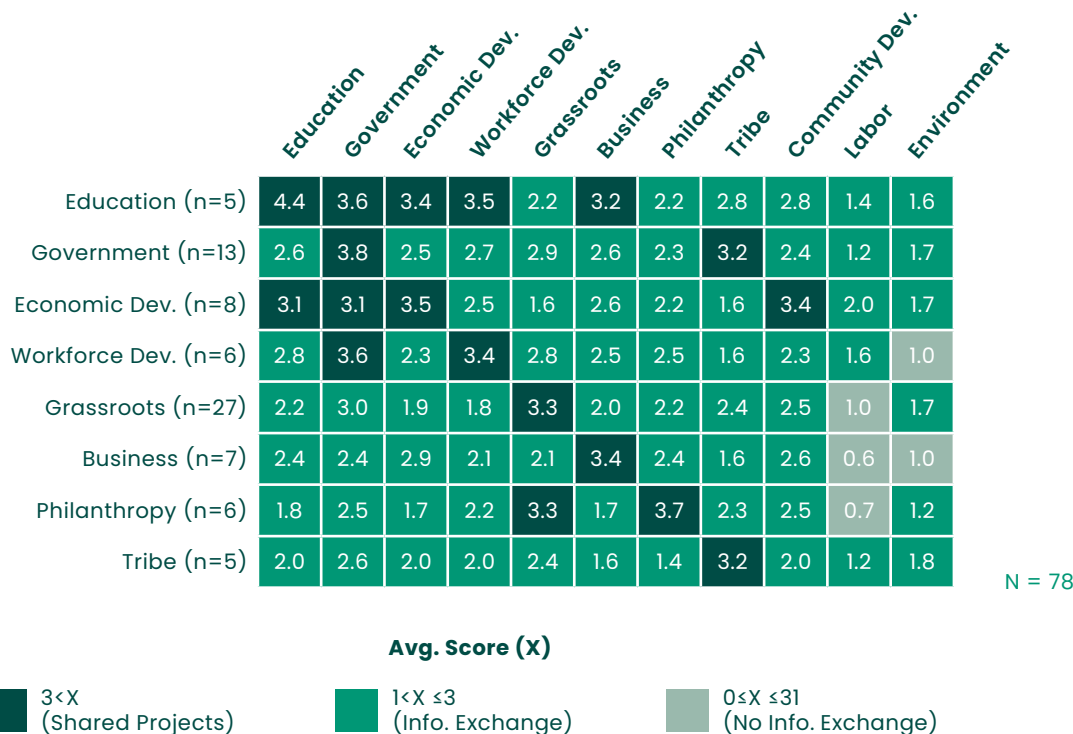


Figure 2.3 Sectoral Balance of RISE Partners, 11/2023



Launched in September of 2023 and garnering 124 responses, a second survey focused specifically on the existing partnerships in the region and the capacity of partners to engage in RRRISE and regional economic development efforts. Figure 2.4 shows the level of cross-sector activity and connectedness amongst the region’s organization types. Those in government, workforce development, education, and economic development had high reported levels of partnering activity.

Figure 2.4 Strength of Connections Among Organizational Types



As Figures 2.5 and 2.6 show, many survey respondents in the second survey represented small organizations. While one-quarter of these respondents stated that they did not know their organization’s annual operating budget, nearly a third (31.6 %) reported their organization’s annual budget as less than \$500,000. More than half (57%) of respondents worked in organizations with 10 or fewer staff, and nearly three-quarters (73%) in organizations with 25 or fewer staff.

Figure 2.5 Annual Budget of Organizations

	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)
\$0 - \$100,000	14	10
\$100,000 - \$500,000	18	14
\$500,000 - \$2 million	18	14
\$2 million - \$5 million	9	7
\$5 million - \$10 million	4	3
Over \$10 million	12	9
Respondent unsure	25	19

N = 76

Figure 2.6 Employed Full Time Staff

	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)
0 - 5 staff members	42	32
6 - 10 staff members	16	12
11 - 25 staff members	16	12
26 - 100 staff members	13	10
More than 100 staff members	13	11

N = 77

Consistent with findings from the listening campaign, organizations involved with RRRISE report struggling with capacity to participate in economic planning initiatives, among other challenges. Training, staffing, and funding are the primary obstacles to full involvement in such initiatives.

Figure 2.7 Capacity of Partner Organizations

	Economic Dev.	Government	Education	Business	Grassroots	Philanthropy	Tribe	Workforce Dev.
Commitment to build on community strengths and opportunities	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.0	1.6
Commitment to address community problems	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4
Partners/relationships	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.3
Organizational leadership	1.5	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.0	1.2
Knowledge/awareness of plans or funding opportunities	1.5	1.4	1.0	1.3	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.2
Skills (in-house)	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.5
Specialized Expertise (in-house or access to consultants)	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.3	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.8
Tools/Infrastructure (broadband, office space, equipment, etc.)	1.2	1.1	1.2	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.4
Training/professional development	1.4	1.0	1.2	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.8	1.0
Staff	1.1	1.3	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8
Funding	1.2	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.2

Avg. Score (X)

1.5 < X ≤ 2
(Adequate or High Capacity)

1 < X ≤ 1.5
(Some Capacity)

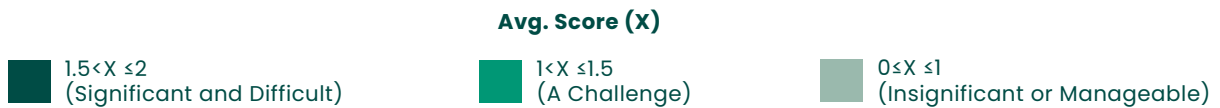
0 ≤ X ≤ 1
(Little or No Capacity)

N = 78. Scoring is based on the average score based on the following point system: Little or No Capacity = 0 points; Some Capacity = 1 point; and Adequate or High Capacity = 2 points.

Unsurprisingly, respondents cited lack of time and capacity as the largest barriers for organizations to take part in such efforts as RISE and local economic planning, tribes and Government organizations both reported experiencing the highest numbers of barriers (see Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8 Barriers Experienced by Partner Organizations

	Tribe	Government	Business	Workforce Dev.	Philanthropy	Grassroots	Economic Dev.	Education
Geographic/transportation	1.4	1.0	0.8	1.2	1.3	1.2	0.9	1.0
Lack of time to participate	1.2	1.1	1.8	0.8	1.0	1.2	0.8	0.6
Other organizational capacity constraints (staffing, resources)	1.4	1.1	1.2	0.5	1.3	1.2	0.9	0.3
Difficulties increasing awareness/understanding	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.8
Lack of cultural connectivity	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.7	1.0	1.0
Digital inequity (lack of access to broadband or devices)	1.2	0.8	0.6	1.2	1.3	0.7	0.5	1.0
General disinterest	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.2
Language barriers	0.4	0.7	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6
Community distrust	1.2	0.8	0.4	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6



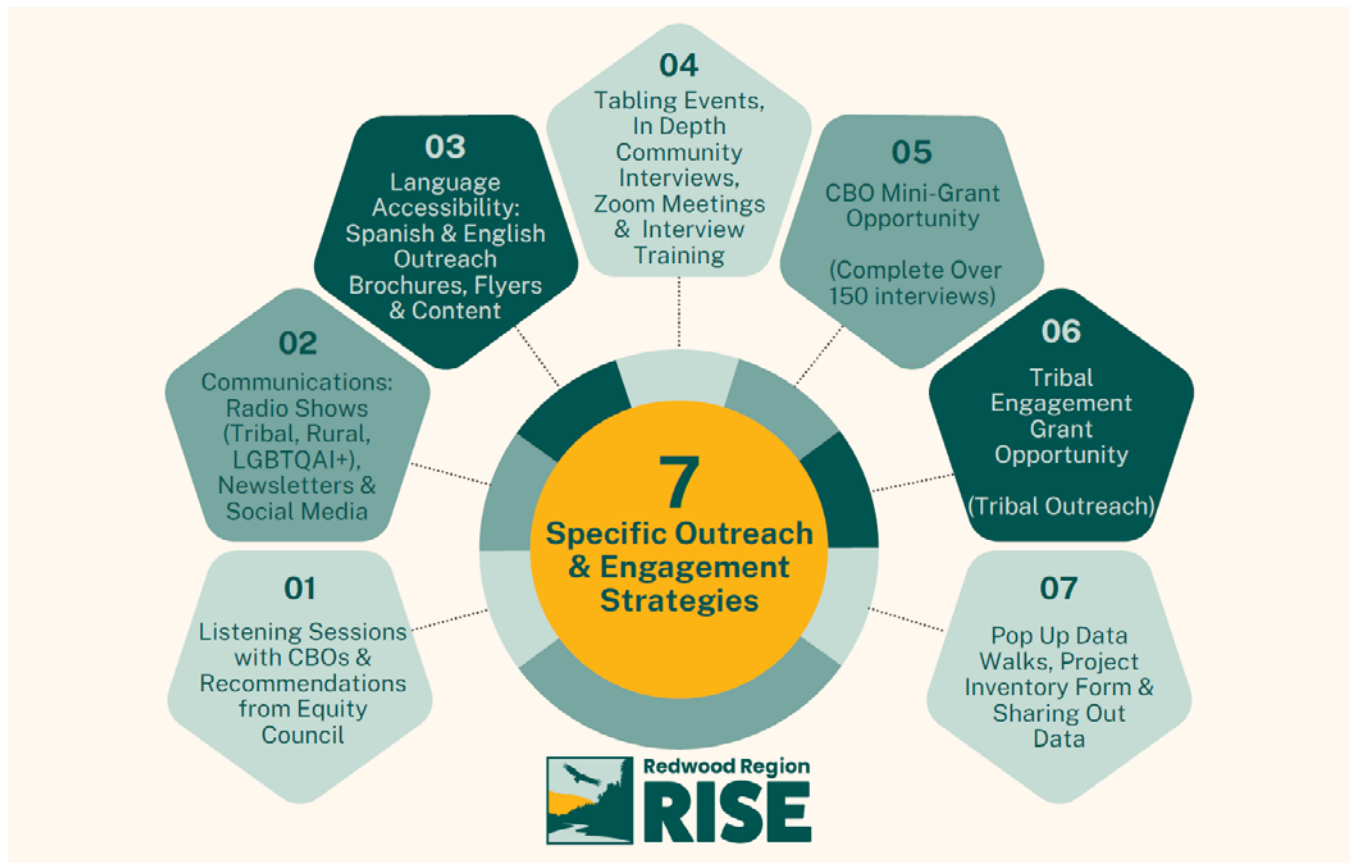
N = 78. Scoring based on the average score based on the following point system: Insignificant or Manageable = 0 points; A Challenge (but manageable) = 1 point; Significant and Difficult = 2 points.

In summary, the results of the surveys and also the listening sessions indicate that partners see high value in regional cooperation and efforts to break down silos but view low capacity and other resource constraints as limiting their participation in these.

Overview of Outreach and Engagement Efforts

RISE’s Outreach and Engagement Team, comprised of North Coast Opportunities (a community action agency based in Mendocino) and True North Organizing Network (a community organizing group based in Del Norte and Humboldt) used a variety of methods to identify and build relationships with interest holders in the required partner categories, priority populations, and the public at large (see Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9 Outreach and Engagement Strategies



In addition to the two surveys, RRRISE’s listening campaign was its primary method of identifying partners, hearing their concerns, connecting them to roles in the Collaborative, and identifying the barriers, workforce and other, and the opportunities facing disinvested communities. These are shown in Figure 2.10 below.

Figure 2.10 Redwood Region RISE Planning Phase: Breakdown of Outreach and Engagement Activities

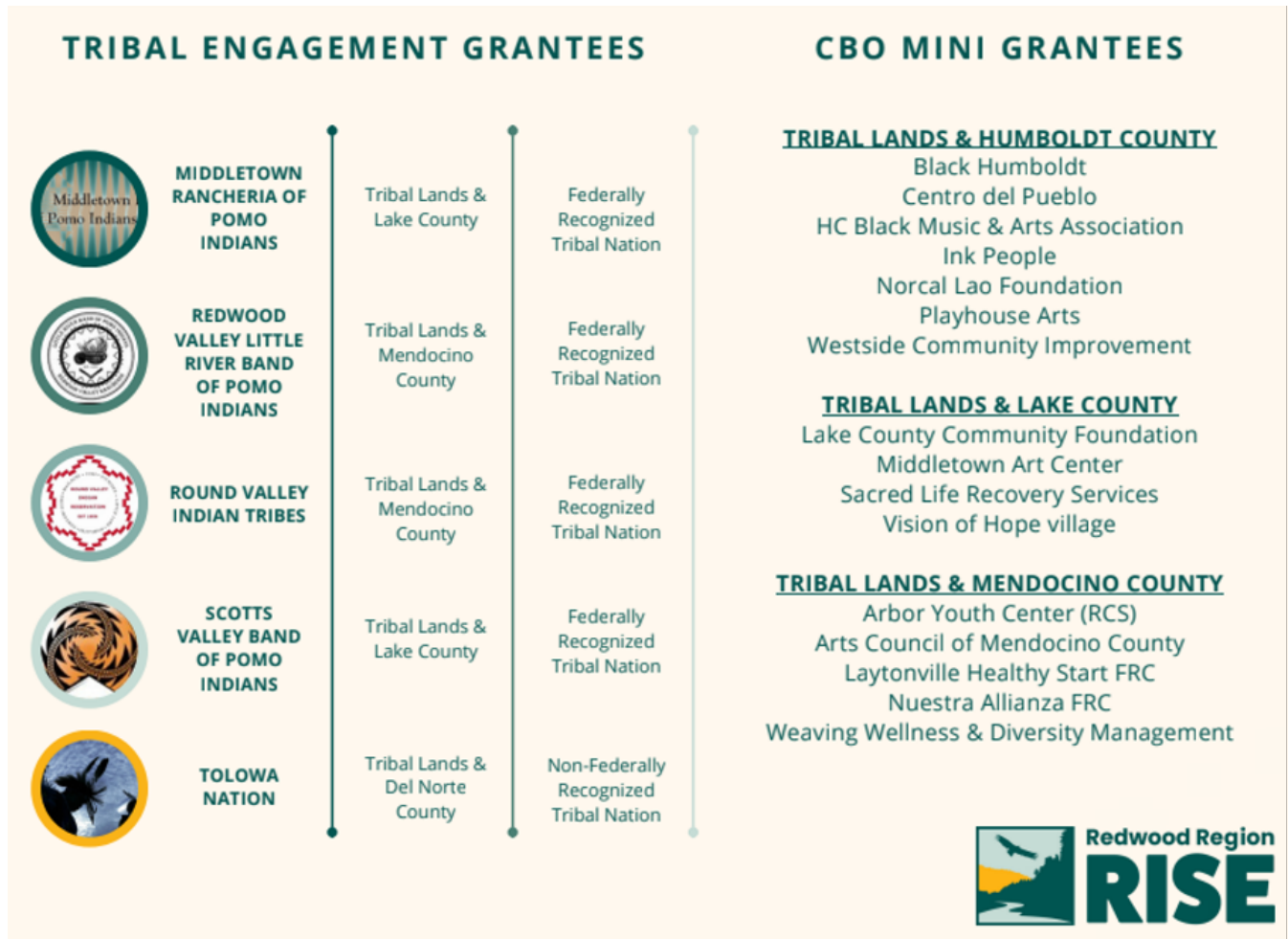
Outreach/Engagement Activity	Interest Holder Representatives	Level of Engagement to Date <i>(please note that some groups are represented in multiple categories)</i>
Listening Sessions	Business/Workforce Agencies, CBOs, Economic Development Agencies, Environmental Justice Organizations, Government Agencies, Labor, Workforce partners, Tribal Nations.	144
	Priority Communities	355
	Total Listening Sessions:	499

Outreach/Engagement Activity	Interest Holder Representatives	Level of Engagement to Date <i>(please note that some groups are represented in multiple categories)</i>
Surveys	1 - Initiative Launch Survey	93
	2 - Partner Mapping Survey	124
Data Walks (virtual)	Collaborative, public at large	11 virtual Data Walks 1,102 total attendance
Pop-Up Data Walks (in-person)	Priority Communities in Tribal Lands and Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties; public at large	12 pop-up Data Walks 250 total attendance
Collaborative Meetings	All- Collaborative Meetings	14 meetings (including 2 in-person gatherings) 1,448 total attendance
	Equity Council Meetings	11 meetings 139 total attendance
	Tribal Planning Table Meetings in Tribal Lands and Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties	5 meetings, 1 webinar 62 total attendance
	Local Table Meetings/Webinars in Tribal Lands and Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties; public at large	25 meetings/webinars 296 total attendance
	Sector Planning Tables	21 meetings 343 total attendance
	Voting Member Block	All Collaborative meetings + 2 working sessions Total attendance in working sessions: 67
	Economic Development Finance Working Group	7 meetings/webinars 146 total attendance
Community Events	Priority Communities, Community-Based Organizations, Grassroots Organizations in Tribal Lands and Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties; public at large	30 events 600 total attendance

**Total attendance= duplicated counts of participants.*

In order to better reach priority communities, amplify their voices, and secure their participation in the Collaborative, the outreach and engagement team recruited CBOs to administer listening sessions. Tribes received grants to support their participation in RISE (see Figure 2.11)

Figure 2.11 Tribal Recipients of Grants for RISE Participation



Themes from these sessions with priority communities emphasized the need for stable employment, challenges with transportation and childcare and general cost of living in the region. A summary of these findings is published in a separate report, the RRRISE Community Insights Report.

Environmental Scan: Organizations and Assets Serving Economic and Community Development Interests

This section provides a brief characterization of each partner group’s presence in the region and its current level of engagement with the project based on RRRISE’s database of organizations and businesses and listening-session findings. Figure 2.12 below shows the number of existing entities within each of the key partner categories, their engagement via digital communication, and their level of involvement in Redwood Region RISE’s Collaborative.

Figure 2.12 Redwood Region RISE: Existing Entities and Engagement to Date

Partner Category	Number of existing entities	Collaborative Participation
California Native American Tribes	33 Federally and non-federally recognized Tribal Nations have been identified.	Eight Tribes serve as voting members at the time of writing. Thirteen Tribal Nations engage with and serve on our Tribal Planning Table, and two are actively engaged on our Equity Council.
Community Leaders and Members	323,952 residents	Approx. 600 community members and leaders have engaged with Redwood Region RISE's efforts through 30 community events. A cumulative number of 1,448 residents participated in at least one Collaborative meeting, 296 attended local (county-level) meetings, and 250 community members and leaders participated in pop-up Data Walks.
Disinvested ("Priority") Communities	The Collaborative has identified these priority communities. ²¹	27 members of the Equity Council represent priority communities and four seats on the Voting Member Block.
Economic Development Districts (EDDs) and Economic Development Agencies (EDAs)	One EDD (SMEDD, in Mendocino). One EDA in each county, one Tribal EDA identified. Two additional CDFIs play significant roles.	One CDFI (AEDC) serves as RISE's Fiscal Agent. The other organizations—RREDC, EDFC, Lake EDC, Del Norte Economic Development Corp.—are all voting members.
Education and Training Providers	Three Community Colleges (Mendocino, College of the Redwoods) and one four-year college (Cal Poly Humboldt).	Mendocino Community College (MCC) College of the Redwoods (CR), and Cal Poly Humboldt (CPH) have seats on the Voting Block.
Employers, businesses, and business associations	19 Chambers of Commerce active in the region, two SBDCs, numerous trade associations.	Five Small Business Association-funded partners are seated on the RRRISE Voting Member Block. Three other business organizations have signed partnership agreement letters and are actively engaged as advisors and outreach partners.
Environmental justice organizations	No organizations identify as explicitly environmental justice oriented. However, two—EPIC and Northcoast Environmental Center—frequently serve in that capacity.	The Grassroots Institute and Tribal EcoRestoration Alliance (TERA) both serve on the Voting Block. Both EPIC and Northcoast Environmental Center have signed partnership letters. Climate Action Mendocino serves on the Renewable and Resilient Energy table.
Government agencies	Two councils of governments, two county economic development leads involved, representatives from 14 incorporated municipalities and other county level staff also participate.	Four government agencies serve as voting members, and several sit on (or lead) Sector Planning Tables.
Grassroots and community-based organizations	Unknown	Sixteen community-based organizations received mini grants to conduct proposed outreach activities to further engage priority communities especially difficult to reach in the region. Four designated seats for CBOs are filled on the Voting Block, and others also represent priority communities there.

²¹ [REF]

Partner Category	Number of existing entities	Collaborative Participation
Labor organizations	The three key labor organizations in the economic development space in the region are: LiUNA, Machine Operators 3, and the North Bay Labor Council.	All three federated labor organizations have signed partnership agreements with Redwood Region RISE, LiUNA is a voting member.
Philanthropic organizations	Two: Humboldt Area Foundation/ Wild Rivers Community Foundation; Community Foundation of Mendocino	Both HAF+WRCF and the Community Foundation of Mendocino (CFM) are voting members.
Worker centers and workforce development entities	The Region has three workforce development boards: NoRTEC, HCWDB, and WANB.	All three entities are voting members. Three corresponding worker centers (SMART, the Job Market, and CareerPoint) have participated in Collaborative discussions.

1 California Native American Tribes

The Redwood Region’s 33 Federally and non-Federally recognized Tribes are leaders on economic development, investment, and innovation within the region, particularly with respect to creating opportunities for disinvested communities in natural-resource management, green industries, renewable energy, and housing and in the Arts, Culture, and Tourism sectors. All are invited to become voting members of the Collaborative. At the time of writing, eight nations are voting members of RRRISE,²² and thirteen are involved with the Collaborative’s Tribal Planning Table and Sector Tables. Additionally, NCO released a Tribal Engagement Grant Opportunity that offered up to \$28,000 to the region’s Tribal governments to enable their participation in the California Jobs First Planning Phase. Five Tribal Governments received a total of \$140,000 in these grants.

Economic development capacity and the strategies available to Tribes are highly dependent on their specific histories of land struggles and long-fought battles for sovereignty and recognition. For instance, the inability to collateralize Tribally held land is a frequent barrier to accessing conventional financing, one of the many barriers Tribes contend with. Landless Tribes have also had to work creatively to create economic development initiatives, one example being the energy sovereignty program currently under development by the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians. Cultural resurgence movements have helped federally unrecognized Tribes like the Wailaki establish themselves as key interest holders in, for example, expanding the use of beneficial cultural burning practices for forest management in southern Humboldt and Northern Mendocino Counties.

Tribal planning stresses the intersection of traditional knowledge and cultural values with meeting the needs of Tribal residents/relatives and landscapes and with adapting and responding to the climate crisis. Tribal plans therefore incorporate threats to traditional foods, livelihoods, and important cultural practices and the need to protect fish, game, wild and cultivated crops, and the landscapes that nurture them (see, for example, Hoopa Valley Tribe CEDS). Commonly held goals therefore include updating critical infrastructure (particularly for water); expanding clean energy programs; stabilizing and

²² Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Elk Valley Rancheria, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Middletown Rancheria of the Pomo Indians, Round Valley Tribes, and Yurok Tribe.

expanding key services, including assistance to families and housing; and protecting the Tribe’s financial position. Plans also highlight workforce development and Tribes’ priority sectors. For example, tourism development is a strong area of investment for the Yurok Tribe.

2 Community Members, The Public at Large

RRRISE has, from its inception, prioritized broad-based participation, including community members and investing in informing the general public as its efforts evolved. From February 2023–May 2024, over 1,000 community members signed up to receive RRRISE newsletters, which have an average open rate and click rates of 57% and 15%, respectively. The Spanish language newsletters have an open rate of 90% and a click rate of 6.5%. In February 2023–May 2024, over 2,350 unique visitors visited the RRRISE homepage to obtain information and identify resources. Between its launch in March 2024 and May 2024, RRRISE’s Spanish language homepage was visited 104 times, with an average engagement time of 5 minutes and 36 seconds.

3 Disinvested (“Priority”) Communities

In January 2024, RISE announced the Community-Based Organization (CBO) Outreach Mini Grant Opportunity, which offers up to \$10,000 to CBOs in the Redwood Region to support outreach activities. The Equity Council selected 16 CBOs to engage members of priority communities including those of communities of color, Tribal citizens, individuals with disabilities, monolingual Spanish and Hmong speakers, unhoused individuals, and youth. The True North Organizing Network focused its outreach efforts on Hmong, Latinx and monolingual Spanish-speaking, youth, and LGBTQIA2S+ community leaders. In the time period January 2024–May 2024, the focus of outreach and engagement activities throughout the region was identification of communities’ local priorities, which were then used to inform SWOT analyses.

4 Economic Development Districts (EDDs) and Economic Development Agencies

Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) active in the region are the Redwood Region Economic Development Commission (RREDC, which serves Del Norte and Humboldt; the Arcata Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), which is RRRISE’s fiscal agent; Lake EDC; and the Mendocino-based EDFC.

Mendocino and Sonoma Counties formed the Sonoma Mendocino Economic Development District (SMEDD), the only EDD district in the region, which prepares a CEDS document for the two-county district. Interest holders from “SMEDD” sit on the Equity Council and also assist in administering the Economic Development Finance Working Group.²³

²³ The Economic Development Finance (EDF) Working Group is embarking on an education- and capacity-building process aimed at empowering its participants by: 1) enhancing their existing expertise in EDF and 2) equipping them with the tools to more effectively pursue state and federal funds, philanthropy, and other sources of revenue so as to increase project viability. The EDF Working Group’s main deliverables include: 1) assessment of existing levels of use of EDF tools within the region, 2) development of a partner engagement and training plan, 3) creation of a regional EDF database and funding matrix, and 4) development of a cross-sector capital analysis plan to further enhance the integration and utilization of EDF tools within the region. The EDF Working Group has two phases, with Phase 1 running from January to June 2024 and Phase 2 from July to December 2024.

5 Education and Training Providers

The Redwood Region has three community colleges and one campus of the California State University system: Mendocino Community College (MCC, serving Mendocino and Lake Counties), College of the Redwoods (CR, serving Humboldt and Del Norte counties), and Cal Poly Humboldt. A voting member, MCC is actively involved in RRRISE. CR and Cal Poly Humboldt are actively engaged with each other and with RRRISE. The Regional Convener, the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP), is a part of the Cal Poly Humboldt campus.

6 Employers, Businesses, and Business Associations

Small Business Association-funded partners represented on RRRISE's Voting Member Block (representing the needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs within the region) include: North Coast SBDC (serving Del Norte and Humboldt), West Business Development Center, and Lake County Economic Development Corporation. A total of 19 chambers of commerce are active in the region, two of which, those of Del Norte and Lake County, serve on the Voting Member Block. In addition, advocates from the Small Business Majority, the Eureka Chamber Foundation, and Rotary District 5130 have signed partnership agreement letters and are actively engaged as advisors and in reaching out to businesses.

Major employers engaged with RRRISE include, among others, representatives from clinics and hospitals in the Health and Caregiving sector, and Tribal Nations, who participate in multiple target sectors. Private firms involved in offshore wind development and energy generation have been engaged via the Renewable and Resilient Energy table. The sector most represented amongst businesses engaged is the Working Lands and Blue Economy Table, to which 38 businesses actively contribute and which represents dairy and livestock farms, major timber producers, family fishing operations, and others.

Outreach and engagement efforts with local chambers of commerce and Rotary Clubs have helped expand the reach of the initiative in the local business community. In total, 10 businesses are receiving communications or are involved in some way with the Collaborative. The convening team distributed succinct outreach materials tailored to businesses and employers that included a QR code to a short online survey aimed at better understanding their needs as employers and identifying how RRRISE could prioritize those needs in its planning processes. As noted in Chapter 3, the vast majority of business activity in the region is driven by small and micro businesses and self-employment. However, since active engagement in long-term visioning and planning processes is typically not compatible with the schedules of busy entrepreneurs, the initiative relies on partnerships with business advocates and outreach events to engage them.

Other notable characteristics of the region's business environment include limited foreign direct investment when compared to that of the state overall (GO-Biz 2023), particularly for greenfield investments. Exceptions include activities in the Port of Humboldt Bay, which will host the forthcoming Nordic Aquafarms project (still in the permitting stage, which is expected to be completed in 2024) and which has courted foreign and multinational companies interested in developing a land base for offshore wind industry activities. Also located in the Arcata Bottom near Humboldt Bay, Sun Valley Floral Farms is one of the region's major employers. At the time of writing, this anchor institution is at risk of closure.

7 Environmental Justice Organizations

“What is Environmental Justice?” Collaborative members frequently ask. According to the EPA:

Environmental justice means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people:

are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and

have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.

Whereas this term appears to have more resonance in urban areas, communities on the North Coast tend to focus on environmental issues at large, about which the region has a long and storied history (see Climate Analysis chapter). That said, several environmental organizations are involved in environmental justice work, including the Environmental Protection Information Center and the Northcoast Environmental Resource Center (NERC), both based in Humboldt. Both organizations have furnished partnership agreement letters to the Collaborative, and NERC serves in its Voting Block. Grassroots Inc in Mendocino and Climate Action Mendocino serve on the Voting Block and Renewable and Resilient Energy Sector Table, respectively. From Lake County, the Tribal EcoRestoration Alliance also serves as a Collaborative voting member.

8 Government Agencies

Many of the region’s jurisdictions struggle to consistently fund and retain capacity for economic development planning;(the primary focus of planning departments is often such daily tasks as permitting. For instance, not until 2023 did Mendocino County create its first dedicated position for an economic development manager, and many economic development activities in Del Norte County are led by the city manager’s office of Crescent City. Figure 3.12 describes the major players in economic development planning in the region, their capacities and roles, and their current engagement in the RRRISE process. Among the 14 incorporated municipalities in the region, 11 have some economic development capacity.

As seen in Figure 2.12, RRRISE engages Tribal, county, municipal, and special jurisdictions and works closely with county entities and municipal staff on economic development issues within and beyond their municipal borders. For example, staff from Crescent City and the City of Fort Bragg hold leadership roles as RRRISE voting members and Sector Table Coordinators.

9

Grassroots and community-based organizations

Community-based organizations are represented in RRRISE’s Voting Member Block, Sector Tables, and Equity Council and are involved locally or more peripherally through monthly check-in meetings and receipt of updates from the Collaborative. Currently, two CBO seats on the voting block belonging to organizations that declined to participate are vacant, and two seats are filled by representatives of True North Organizing Network (representing Del Norte County) and North Coast Indian Development Corporation, a regional, Tribal-serving organization, occupy two other seats.

10

Labor Organizations

The regional narratives on unionization that emerged from the listening campaign are complex. As government services are a primary sector of the economy, public sector unions are more prevalent in the region. Some of the largest public sector unions subscribing to RRRISE are the California Teachers Association (CTA); California Nurses Association (CNA); SEIU Local 1021; AFSCME Council 57 (Local 1684); the Building and Construction Trades Council along with fourteen union affiliates; and various local police, sheriff, and firefighter unions.

Organization of private sector unions is often characterized as having declined along with the decline of the logging industry. Within the region, the most prominent participants in discussions concerning large-scale projects eligible for Project Labor Agreements are federated union representatives. The three most prominent in the region’s economic development are LiUNA, Machine Operators 3, and the North Bay Labor Council, and all have signed partnership agreements with Redwood Region RISE. The Collaborative is committed to strengthening labor representation in the area in the future.

11

Philanthropic Organizations

Community foundations active in the Redwood Region include (but are not limited to) HAF+WRCF, the result of the merger of the Wild Rivers Community Foundation and the Humboldt Area Foundation, and the Community Foundation of Mendocino. HAF+WRCF, which serves Del Norte, Humboldt, Siskiyou, Trinity, and parts of Curry County (Oregon), plays a key role in building capacity across the region through such initiatives as the 10-year Building Healthy Communities initiative. Funded by the California Endowment, the initiative was convened by HAF+WRCF and helped incubate a key RRRISE partner, the True North Organizing Network. The foundation’s current project portfolio includes the Climate and Community Resilience (CORE) Hub (convening parties around offshore wind development and the creation of community benefits agreements), the Native Cultures Fund, and other regrating programs. In total, the merged foundation manages \$106 million in assets.

The Community Foundation of Mendocino funds an array of activities related to economic development, disaster preparedness and relief, poverty alleviation, and youth development, among other areas, and manages \$46 million in assets. Both HAF+WRCF and the Community Foundation of Mendocino are voting members of the Collaborative.

12

Worker Centers and Workforce Development Entities

Workforce development planning entities in the Redwood Region include: 1) the Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC), which serves Del Norte County (along with Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity Counties). NoRTEC is a special district organized under a joint powers agreement to provide workforce development services across an 11-county region, 2) the Humboldt County Workforce Development Board (HCWDB), an independent board appointed by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors responsible for strategic planning, policy development, and oversight of the county’s workforce innovation system, and 3) the Workforce Alliance of the North Bay (WANB), which serves Lake, Marin, Mendocino, and Napa Counties. WANB is a joint powers agency formed by the four counties to coordinate regional workforce development activities and administer Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds. Regional Job Centers include: NoRTEC’s SMART workforce center, HCWDB’s Job Market, and WANB’s CareerPoint. All of these organizations have been involved in the Collaborative, particularly in conversations about regional job quality and job access.

13

Regional Initiatives

In May 2022, the California Regional K-16 Education Collaboratives Grant Program provided an \$18 million grant (out of \$108 million provided statewide) for the Redwood Coast K-16 Education Collaborative, convened by Cal Poly Humboldt. This program is part of a statewide strategy to enhance regional economies by strengthening education-to-career pathways and ensuring that education, vocational, and workforce programs work in partnership to provide broader access for all to educational and employment opportunities in their own communities. The Redwood Coast program seeks to develop a robust college-going culture in the region by building career pathways for education and health care, increasing participation in and completion of A-G courses, and improving retention rates in higher education, especially for Native American and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.²⁴

Another regional initiative, the North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP), covers the Redwood Coast Region and parts of key watersheds extending into surrounding counties. NCRP is a “coalition of Tribes and counties working together on integrated regional planning and project implementation to enhance working and natural lands, build infrastructure, local economies, and community health in the north coast of California.” Growing from the North Coast Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (NCIRWMP) and beginning in 2004, NCRP’s focus is clean drinking water, watershed health, energy independence, climate adaptation, and economic vitality, with a special emphasis on disinvested communities.²⁵

²⁴ 1) <https://now.humboldt.edu/news/18-million-cradle-career-collaborative-north-coast>; 2) <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2022/05/26/california-distributes-108-6-million-to-create-regional-education-to-career-pipelines/>

²⁵ <https://northcoastresourcepartnership.org/about/>

Although the California Jobs First initiative cites the High Road Training (HRT) Partnerships initiative as a priority, only a few active partnerships were recognized by Collaborative members, all in Humboldt County. During listening sessions, except for those from workforce development organizations, few understood the concept “high road”. The initiative’s key activities, such as industry-led workforce efforts, are present in the region but not consolidated within the framework provided by HRT Partnerships as prescribed.²⁶ Given that many of the region’s key employment sectors are public or are thinly traded, industry-led workforce development initiatives located there may receive less emphasis compared to those in other regions of the state that host globally competitive industries. These other regions therefore often attract high levels of investment, both foreign and domestic, and have large workforce needs. As a result, industry-driven workforce development efforts may be less prevalent in the Redwood Region than in these other regions.

Overview of Current Economic Development Plans and Strategies

To further inform the analysis of existing plans, the RRRISE Convening Team invited economic development planners to participate in listening sessions, which identified challenges the planners experienced in completing, updating, and implementing CEDS and other plans. Many precipitated and/or exacerbated by the pandemic continue to negatively impact progress. These challenges include:

- A historical lack of planning with respect to infrastructure and/or the consequent impact on resources (staff, time, financial resources) characteristic of rural, remote areas.

- Reallocation of personnel and funds during and following natural disasters and the pandemic, which contributed to a lack of continuity and an inability to carry out long-term planning, which is therefore always in recovery mode.

- Staff and committee/board member turnover, leaving key positions vacant and thereby stalling progress and limiting outreach and community engagement.

- Lack of funding.

- Lack of data.

- The need to prioritize mandates to complete plans covering different topics and jurisdictional boundaries to maintain funding.

- Community resistance to planned strategies and projects, which result in project challenges, delays, and cancellations.

- Rapid shifts in the economic development landscape due to policy changes, climate impacts, and emerging new opportunities (e.g., legalization of cannabis, wildfires, storm and flooding devastation, and offshore wind).

²⁶ See <https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>

More recent plans (2018 and onwards) show a sharper focus on blue-economy, green-economy, and creative-economy opportunities compared to older plans (see Figure 2.13). Emerging opportunities like offshore wind energy development and cannabis legalization are shaping new economic priorities. Climate impacts like wildfires and storms have caused climate adaptation and resilience strategies to figure more prominently in recent Tribal and regional plans. More recent plans highlight strategies for building capacity and resilience of rural and Tribal communities through direct investment in regional partners. Positively, collaborations seem to be increasing over time; e.g., counties are working together on trial projects and other regional initiatives.

Figure 2.13 Redwood Region Strategic Economic Development Plans, 2014–2023

Document Type	Plan Title	Approximate Date Produced
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs)	County of Del Norte	2019
	Crescent City Economic Development Strategic Action Plan	2021
	Humboldt County CEDs	2018–2023
	Lake County CEDs	2016
	Mendocino and Sonoma Counties CEDs	2022
	MOVE2030: Community plan	March 2021
	MOVE2030: Economic Resiliency plan	March 2021
Tribal CEDs	Blue Lake Rancheria CEDs	2019
	Hoopa Valley Tribe	2016–2020
	Karuk Tribe Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	2021
	Wiyot Tribe Strategic Plan 2020-2024	2019
	Yurok CEDs	2017
Transportation Plans	Caltrans District 1	2021
	Del Norte Regional Transportation Plan	2020
	GHD-County of Humboldt, Planning Department	2021
	Humboldt County Transit Development Plan (2023-2028)	2023
	Lake County Regional Transportation plan/Active Transportation Plan	2022
	Lake County Transit Development Plan - 2023 Update	2023
	Mendocino County Transit Development Plan	2022

Document Type	Plan Title	Approximate Date Produced
Climate Strategy Documents	Blue Lake Rancheria Climate Adaptation Plan	2023
	Hoopla Valley Tribe Strategic Energy Plan	2016
	Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan	2021 (draft)
	Karuk Climate Adaptation Plan	2019
	Yurok Tribe Climate Change Adaptation Plan	2014
Workforce Development Reports	Del Norte County Labor Market Profile and Industry Sector Analysis	2019
	Lake County Labor Market Analysis & Strategy	2023
	Mendocino County Labor Market Analysis & Strategy	2023

County CEDS documents reviewed for this study offer a snapshot of current economic development priorities. As Figure 2.14 shows, RRRISE counties share a focus on industries with deep, historical roots across the region, including arts and culture, tourism, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and manufacturing. Recent updates to plans sharpen their focus on these traditional areas of industry under the banners of Blue, Green, and Creative economies. Counties also share a focus on education, research and development, and small business innovation and entrepreneurship. Climate adaptation plans were identified for four Tribes in the northern part of the region, and 10 Tribes from the southern half of the region participated in a listening session with the CalEPA Office of Environmental Hazard Assessment on climate impacts and priorities for their cultures which were also reviewed.

Figure 2.14 Redwood Region Industries in County Plans 2018-2025

Industries in County Plans			
Del Norte CEDS 2019-2024	Humboldt CEDS 2018-2023	Lake EDS 2019-2025	Mendocino CEDS 2022-2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Transportation, Technology, Tourism ◆ Agriculture, including Forestry and Fishing ◆ Manufacturing, Medicine ◆ Education, Environment ◆ Small Business and Sovereign Nation (DNATL) Success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tourism/Arts, Culture ◆ Alternative Agriculture/ Forest Products ◆ Specialty Food, Flowers & Beverages ◆ Niche Manufacturing ◆ Diversified Health Care ◆ Construction ◆ Investment Support Services ◆ Management & Innovation Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tourism ◆ Agricultural Supply Chain ◆ University & Research Institution Science ◆ Advanced Entrepreneurs: Engineering, Aerospace, Graphic Design/ Arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tourism, Arts ◆ Creatives (tech) ◆ Green Economy: specialty food and beverage, biomass, water storage ◆ Blue Economy: ocean-related fisheries and food production

In summary, there is a high degree of alignment across plans and strategies in the region. Tribes and counties' goals speak to expanding and growing business opportunities, jobs, and development projects in the Blue Economy, Green Economy, Tourism, and Renewable Energy sectors. All plans emphasize support for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Plans recently completed in Del Norte and Mendocino Counties also focus on building the capacity and resilience of rural and Tribal communities, through investments in broadband and transportation in particular. While core industries continue to be important, economic priorities are also evolving to adapt to emerging opportunities and challenges, and recurring themes of these priorities are overcoming capacity constraints through collaboration and strategic investment.

Projects

Some projects in the CEDS and other plans are no longer current or are not described in sufficient detail to support meaningful comparisons/analyses. During the proposal development phase (July 2022) and through the first partner survey (March–April 2023), the RRRISE Convening Team invited partners to share important and promising projects. Listening sessions and local planning table meetings have also involved discussion of projects .

Recognizing that an analysis of existing plans would be unlikely to generate actionable information and responding to RRRISE partners' eagerness to learn about projects across the region, CCRP launched an online form to create an inventory of projects ranging in maturity from early-stage ideas to those close to or ready for implementation. The intent was to capture and share information that could help seed partnerships and to begin categorization of projects for regional consideration. During the November 28, 2023, meeting, CCRP gathered input from the RRRISE Collaborative to improve the online form, and the project inventory began sharing information in January 2024. RRRISE Sector Tables are in place to catalyze partnerships, develop regional strategies, and propose regional projects.

A comparison of counties' CEDS shows strong alignment across goals and strategies. Plans embrace new and emerging industry areas. Some counties are collaborating on trails and recreation projects, and all four are currently participating in the recently awarded K–16 Education Collaborative focused on education and health career pathways. Plans cite critical infrastructure and talent needs as areas for economic development. Proposed projects are scaled and tailored to local areas, and budgets and significant policy and funding challenges hamper implementation of plans and projects.

