

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDs)

2017 PERFORMANCE REPORT



High Country Council of Governments

December 18, 2017

High Country Council of Governments
468 New Market Boulevard
Boone, NC 28607
828-265-5434

Introduction

The most recent CEDS developed by HCCOG was adopted on August 15, 2016. The next full CEDS update is planned for 2021. The High Country Workforce Development Board (HCWDB) serves as the Strategy Committee to assist HCCOG staff in developing the CEDS. The HCWDB is comprised primarily of private-sector representatives.

The CEDS analyzes regional demographics, infrastructure, economic sectors, and economic development efforts. It also identifies economic development goals and objectives, local economic development projects, projects deemed vital to the region, and performance measures by which to gauge implementation of the CEDS.

This Performance Report discusses changes to the CEDS document and process, and provides update on the CEDS implementation.

Adjustment to the Strategy

There are no adjustments to the 2016 High Country Council of Governments CEDS.

There are 10 new members on the CEDS Strategy Committee (High Country Workforce Development Board). Changes are due member term expirations and new appointments.

There are no changes to the capacity of the EDD to implement the CEDS.

Since adoption of the CEDS in 2016, two new positions have been filled in the region that will be partners in the CEDS implementation. NC formed Prosperity Zones to coordinate efforts of various state departments. NC's Northwest Prosperity Zone includes all seven High Country counties. There currently is a Regional Industry Manager for the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, and an ARC Community Development Planner for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, working in the Northwest Prosperity Zone. EDD staff will continue to work with these individuals on community and economic development in the district.

Report on Economic Development Activities

Activities undertaken in 2017 to support implementation of the CEDS include:

- Completed Expanding Small Business Access to Capital in the High Country project (14 small business loans made)
- Facilitated retreat of Yancey EDC, County Commissioners, and Burnsville Town Council
- Completed Wilkes County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
- Developed three Zoning Ordinance amendments for Town of Sparta
- Utilized funding of the Region D Development Corporation for small business loan capital

- Began work on High Country Business and Industrial Site Marketing Web App project
- Began administration of Mayland Community College’s Welding Training Facility project
- Began administration of West Jefferson Mtn. Outfitters Downtown Redevelopment project
- Secured CWSRF loan for Burnsville for water and sewer system improvements
- Developed CDBG-I grant applications for the following projects:
 - Town of Lansing WWTP
 - Town of Elk Park WWTP
- Developed ARC grant applications for the following projects:
 - Avery County Broadband Expansion
 - Town of Beech Mountain Streetscape
 - East Yancey Sewer District Sewerline
 - Town of Boone Southgate Sewer Bypass
 - Doughton Park Bluffs Restaurant Renovation
- Developed USDA grant applications for the following projects:
 - Wilkesboro Local Foods
 - Wilkesboro Farmers Market
 - Alleghany Farmers Market

Evaluation of Progress on Action Plan and Goals

The 2016 High Country Council of Governments CEDS contains the following goals:

1. Connect employers to a skilled workforce
2. Maintain and improve the district’s infrastructure to meet future demand
3. Increase tourist visitation to the district
4. Increase industrial and commercial activity in the district
5. Expand entrepreneurial activity in the district
6. Increase agricultural output

The EDD’s work in 2017 directly addressed each of the six goals.

The 2016 High Country Council of Governments CEDS contains the following performance measures:

- Announced job creation
- Announced private-sector investment
- Increases in average household wages and income
- Number of new businesses
- Federal, state, and local investment in the district
- Educational attainment
- Work Ready Community designations
- Number of self-employed

- Retail sales
- Tourism revenue
- Agricultural impact
- Number of CEDS strategies advanced or accomplished

Based on data from NC Commerce and US Census, between 2015 and 2016:

- Median household income increased in all counties in the District
- Retail sales increased in all counties in the District
- Tourism expenditures and employment increased in all counties in the District

During 2016, there were 375 new jobs and \$42,716,000 in private investment announced in the District (figures from Economic Development Partnership of NC).

There is currently one Work Ready Community designated in the District (Wilkes County), and two Counties in the District (Ashe, Watauga) are actively pursuing designation.

The 2016 High Country Council of Governments CEDS contains **146** individual projects and strategies. During 2017, there was active progress on **48** of the projects/strategies.

Schedule of Goals for the Next Year

Specific activities anticipated for the EDD in 2018 include:

- Develop mapping the Town of West Jefferson's stormwater infrastructure
- Continue work on Mitchell County Comprehensive Transportation Plan
- Provide ongoing technical assistance to local governments and NCDOT on two highway projects in the planning and design phase
- Develop Land-Use Plan for Town of Lansing
- Develop Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Development Plan for Ashe County
- Facilitate retreat of the Yancey County Commissioners, Burnsville Town Council, and Yancey County Economic Development Commission
- Continue management of the Region D Development Corporation, a non-profit established to assist businesses in the High Country district
- Develop Park and Recreation Plan for Town of Wilkesboro
- Develop Land-Use Inventory for Town of North Wilkesboro
- Complete administration of CDBG and EDA grants for Town of Spruce Pine's PRC Industries project
- Administer CDBG grant for Town of Bakersville's water system improvements project
- Administer EDA grant for Town of Wilkesboro's Browns Ford Loop project
- Administer EDA grant for Mayland Community College's Welding Training Facility Expansion project
- Administer grants for Town of Burnsville's Micaville waterline project
- Develop various NC Commerce grant applications (Building Reuse, Economic Infrastructure Programs) as requested by local governments