

2022

# ESSBRC Business Plan



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# Executive Summary

Inyo County contracted with AccompanyCo LLC in June 2021 through a competitive bid process to prepare a business plan for the Eastern Sierra Small Business Resource Center (BRC). This business plan has gone through several revisions based on feedback from the Working Group, Inyo County Board of Supervisors, City Council for the City of Bishop, and the Public Presentation. It is critical that the community treat this plan as a living document and adapt it as conditions and opportunities change and are realized.

The goals and scope of the project beyond accomplishing the completion of the business plan itself include, “Define strategies and tactics for developing and/or supporting the development of existing and startup businesses in the Eastern Sierra to tap into the full business and economic development potential of the Eastern Sierra.” AccompanyCo employs an ecosystem approach when considering tactics to support business and regional economies. Through observations and recommendations packaged in the entrepreneurship domain conditions and identified market opportunities, this business plan offers general recommendations and specific deliverables – the BRC business plan. AccompanyCo’s approach includes primary and secondary research including metastudy of existing reports. The basis of knowledge from existing data sources is augmented and given flavor through extensive on-the-ground interviews.

Ultimately, there are many models and examples to choose from but what works in a community will differ based on its unique attributes, institutions, and people. experimentation is a key component of innovation and especially important in rural areas where critical mass is a challenge. Through developing proposed solutions aided by primary and secondary research and iterating with experimentation, these lean principles help us to test key assumptions to achieve realistic actionable plans and program-market-fit.

The market opportunity analysis highlights key business categories that show promise in Inyo County given regional conditions. The market opportunity analysis was informed by the interviews conducted as part of the ecosystem assessment and by local, state, and national economic data and studies. These market opportunities for Inyo County include expanding and diversifying tourism, resident-oriented retail and resident services, housing and commercial development, environmental science and consulting services, and an expansion of base industries. The market analysis also outlines a cluster of opportunities around climate innovations and viewing these components as a cluster reveals their interconnectivity and the opportunity for economic impact.

Secondary research including published reports and online resources along with the Market Opportunity Analysis provides context for the Team to consider the area’s challenges and opportunities. In evaluating the entrepreneurship ecosystem, interviews are the primary source of information, and observations are based on the interviewee’s opinions. Understandably an inexact science, the process is both iterative and insightful. The Team looks for patterns and similarities of opinion to aggregate observations and facilitate recommendations for the ecosystem analysis. These patterns or areas of thought were categorized, and assessed with observations and recommendations, within the following domains: Policy, Finance, Culture, Supports, Human Capital, and Markets.

The extensive primary and secondary research of the County supplied the outline of the Business Resource Center (BRC) Business Plan, and how this center could enhance and encourage entrepreneurship in Inyo County. This BRC Business Plan includes general core activities and proposes special initiatives that will specifically enhance and activate key segments in the region.

**BRC Vision:** The Eastern Sierra Small Business Resource Center (BRC) is a welcome center for the region’s businesses and entrepreneurs. Its vision is to directly support the business through access to knowledge and resources, networking, collaboration space, and enhancement of the region’s entrepreneurship ecosystems.

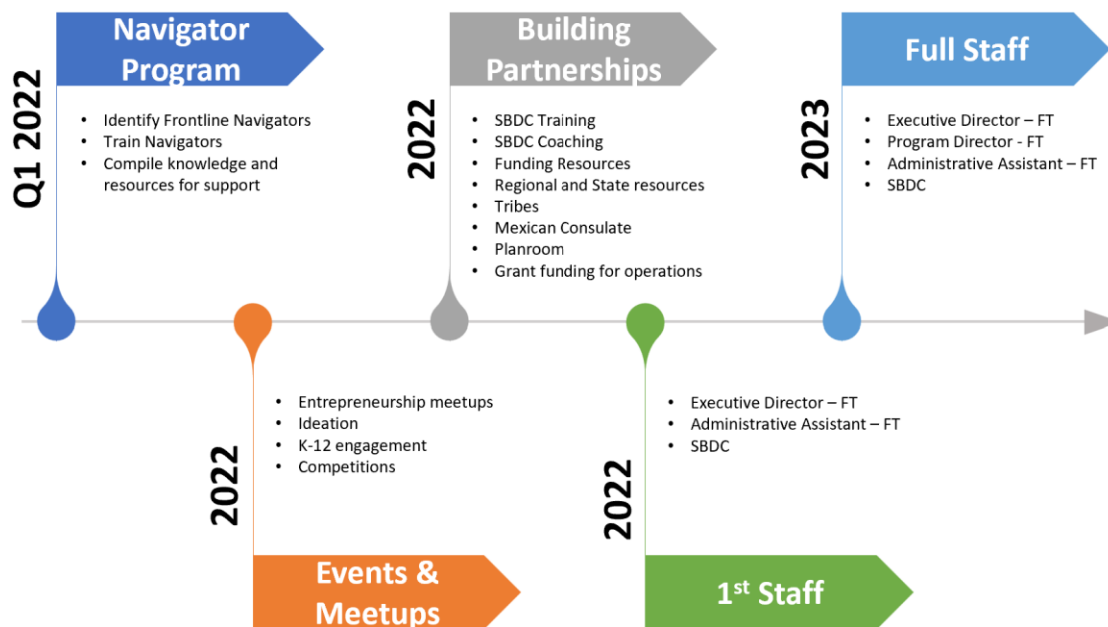


The BRC’s direct services and core activities include the navigator program, events and meetups, and business development services. These tools are essentially used to Capture, Activate, and Engage the Entrepreneurs of the region. Events and meetups cast a wide net of attention and capture a wide group while the navigator program refines this and connects needs to resources, activating the entrepreneur. Business Development Services refines this even further, providing training and education, to engage the Entrepreneurship Community in the region. This approach is referred to as the funnel strategy, a well-accepted method to build culture and economic development results over time.

The initiatives and special projects proposed for the BRC represent the initial list and are encouraged to be expanded on as collaboration and outreach continue. The initial initiatives include Capital Resource Development Initiative, the Climate Innovations Cluster Initiative, and the AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan) Initiative. The initial special projects include the Internships and Apprenticeships Program and the Bishop Airport Expansion.

The BRC’s facility is acquired and in the process of being renovated and designed to meet the center’s needs. There will be three full-time staff at the BRC at capacity. The Executive Director and Administrative Assistant will be hired at mid-year 2022, the Program Director in 2023.

Activities Timeline:



## Market Opportunity Analysis

The market opportunity analysis is meant to highlight key business categories that show promise in Inyo County given regional conditions. The market opportunity analysis was informed by the interviews conducted as part of



the ecosystem assessment and by local, state, and national economic data and studies. The key opportunities covered in this section of the report include:

- ❖ **Expand and Diversify Tourism.** This includes an overview of regional tourism growth and describes opportunities in key subsectors including, ground transportation, tourist shopping, and recreation and activities.
- ❖ **Resident-Oriented Retail and Resident Services.** This section focuses on retail leakage and the retail categories that could be potentially further developed to capture tens of millions of dollars in retail sales leaking to other communities or online.
- ❖ **Housing, Commercial, and Civic Construction and Development.** The scarcity of housing, commercial space, and developable vacant land are constraints to the business overall, but this scarcity is an opportunity for the development and construction industry.
- ❖ **Environmental Science and Consulting Services.** The incredible biodiversity and range of climate zones and the predominance of publicly owned lands in Inyo County suggest an opportunity for establishing local environmental science and consulting businesses.
- ❖ **Base Industries.** The county is home to a few base industries, which are industries that export goods or services outside of the region. These existing operations may or may not have the potential to expand or diversify, but it is always less difficult to build on an existing industry versus starting anew.

## Expand and Diversify Tourism

The Inyo County tourism markets are regional and multifaceted. Markets include Death Valley visitors, skiers passing through to Mammoth, rock climbing, mountain wilderness expeditions/outings, and drive touring. Several interviewees noted that Bishop and Lone Pine primarily serve pass-through traffic, including those who stay the night on their way to other destinations. Some interviewees see the potential for further developing Inyo County as its own destination and to market it as such and to encourage passers-through to stop and explore. This portion of the market opportunity analysis identifies opportunities to capture more sales from the established markets. Additionally, with over 400 films shot in Inyo County, its natural beauty continues to be a draw for the industry.

Up to the onset of COVID 19, tourism had been growing in the region. Inyo County spans two of the state's tourism regions, the Deserts region and the High Sierra region, both of which exhibited strong growth through 2019. Interviewees reported that visitation rebounded in 2021, although numbers were not available at the time of writing this report.



Figure 1 – Direct Travel Spending by Tourism Region

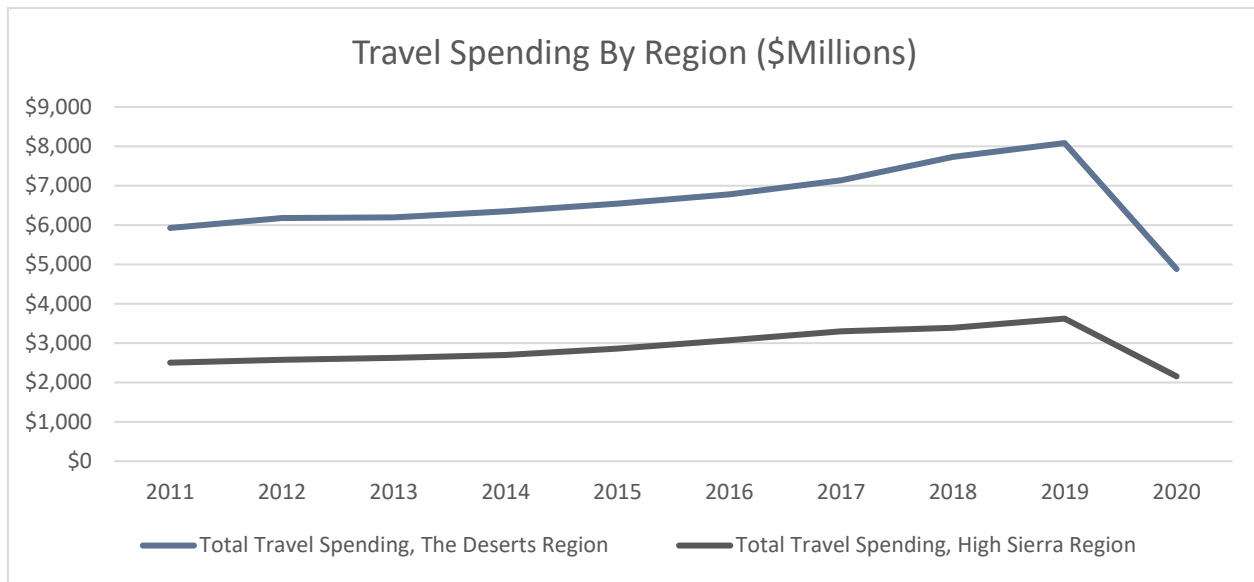


Figure 1 Source: "The Economic Impact of Travel" Visit California, Dean Runyan Associates, 2021

Although California is a major destination for domestic and international visitors, well over half of the leisure travel in the state are Californians. In-state visitation is growing on pace with out-of-state and international visitation.

Figure 2 – Annual Visits to California (Millions of Person-Trips)

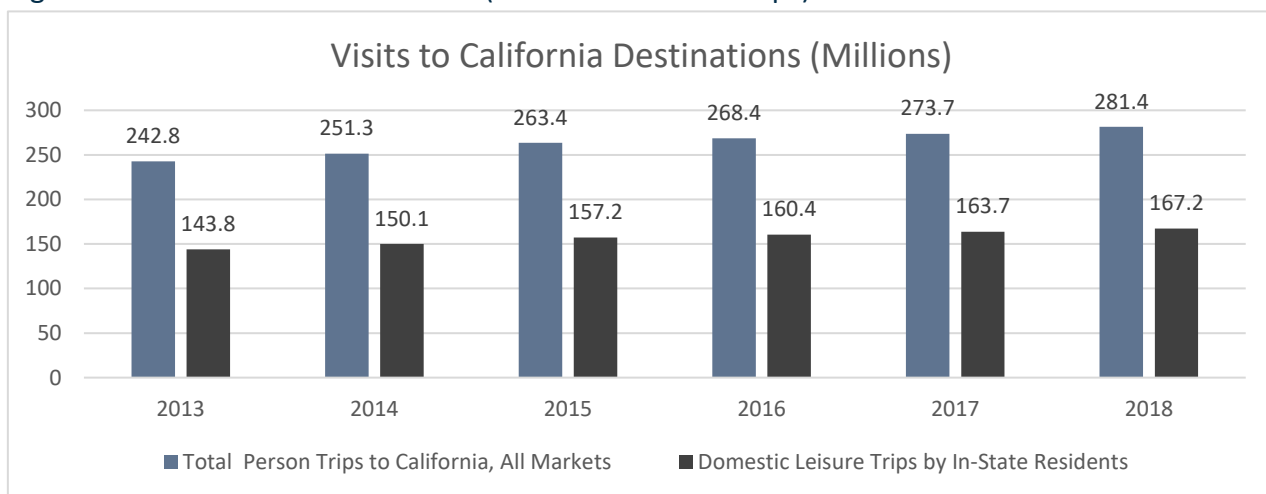


Figure 2 Source: "California travel and tourism overview of key drivers and outlook" Tourism Economics an Oxford Economic Company, 2019



In-state visitors from Southern California are the largest visitor segment in the Eastern Sierra. A survey-based study referenced in the air passenger study for the Bishop Airport showed that at least 93% of the visitors to the Eastern Sierra area live in California. While the largest portion of visitors come during ski season, visitation is well distributed throughout four seasons. The combination of a large, reliable customer base within a day's drive and consistent visitation across four seasons are advantageous market traits.

Figure 3 – Origin of Visitors to Eastern Sierra Region and Seasonality, 2017

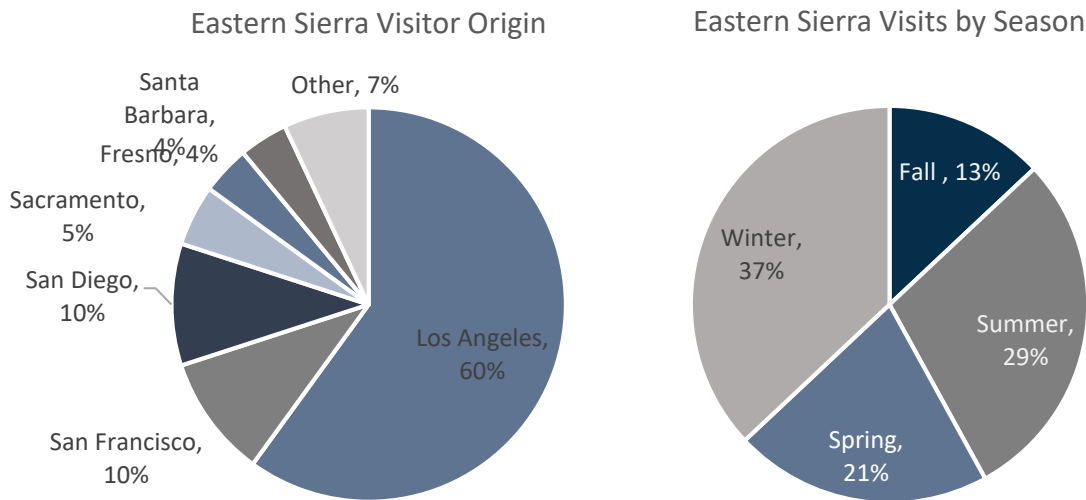


Figure 3 Source: "Bishop Airport Passenger Traffic Study", Leigh/Fisher, 2017

Modest growth in jobs and earnings in the accommodations and food service sector and arts and entertainment sector generally reflect the regional growth in visitor spending at the local level. Retail jobs and earnings, which serve resident and visitor markets alike have not kept pace.





Figure 4 – Inyo County Jobs and Earnings in Sectors that Include Tourism

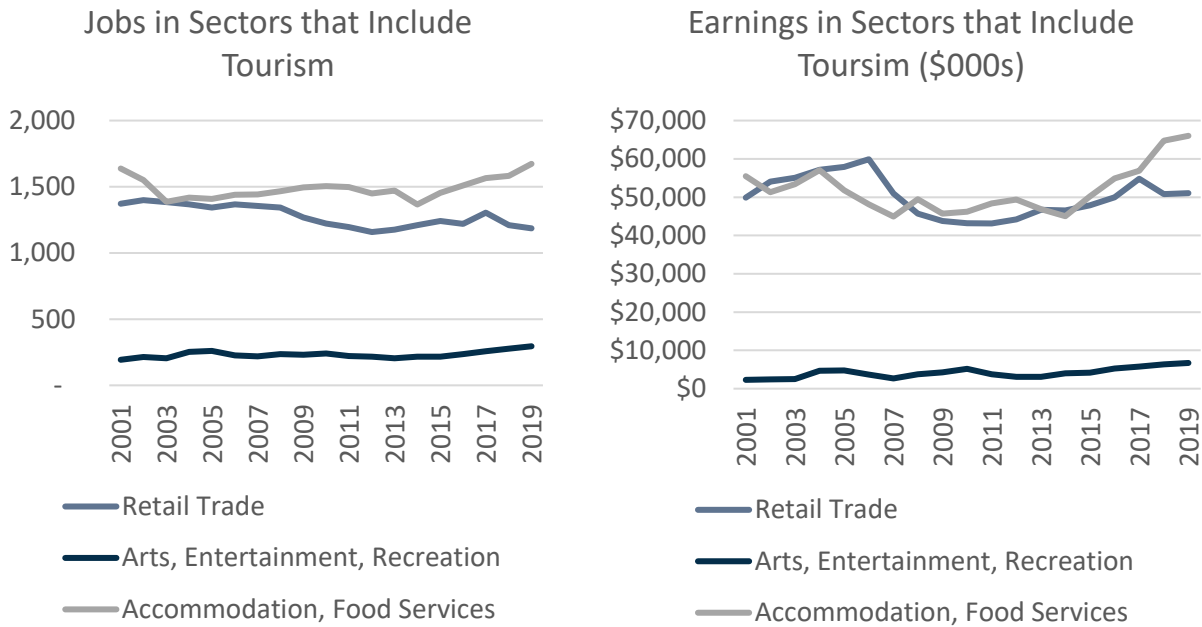


Figure 4 Source: "Economic Profile System", Headwaters Economics, 2021

The

forthcoming activation of commercial passenger service at Bishop Airport will bring additional visitors into Inyo County, especially during ski season which draws the highest number of passengers. Those who fly to their destinations are a coveted customer segment because they tend to spend more money across all sectors. Inyo County has long been a stop or a layover for drivers, now it will be on the route of air travelers as well.

Figure 5 – Commercial Enplanements Forecast at Bishop Airport

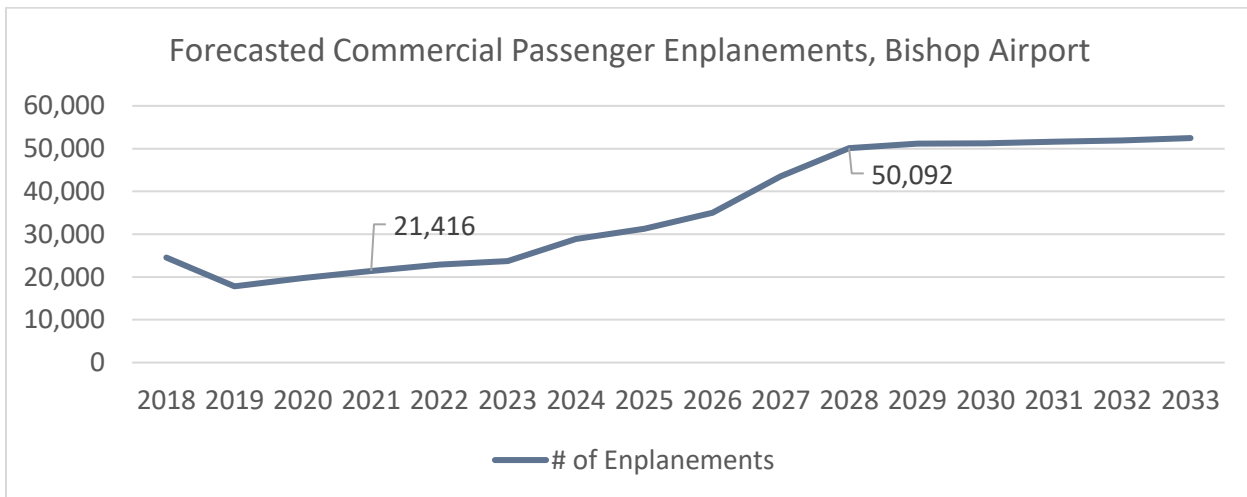


Figure 5 Source: "Proposed Commercial Airline Service at Bishop Airport Draft Environmental Assessment", ESA, 2021; "Bishop Airport Passenger Traffic Study", Leigh|Fisher, 2017



## Opportunity: Ground Transportation

The establishment of commercial air service will generate demand for ground transportation. Most ground transportation services in the region are based in Mammoth Lakes. There are no group and transportation businesses in Inyo County except for a car rental company in Bishop and a jeep rental company in Death Valley.

Figure 6 – Inventory of Transportation Businesses in Inyo and Mono Counties

	Transportation Businesses	Categories Represented
Bishop	1	Passenger Car Rental
Death Valley	1	Jeep Rental
Mammoth Lakes	6	Taxi Service, Ground Transportation, Passenger Car Rental
Regional	1	Transit System

Figure 6 Source: State of California Employment Development Department

## Opportunity: Tourist Shopping

The retail sector in Lone Pine and Bishop is serving as a supply hub for visitors, but there is an opportunity to diversify to offer more leisure/recreational shopping for visitors and locals alike. There are nine categories with more sales in the market area than demand, resulting in \$165 million in surplus sales annually as shown in Figure x. The likely explanation for this is spending by tourists and passers-through as well as residents from outside the market area who travel to businesses in Inyo County to make purchases. The surplus sales in the food services and drinking places retail category, sporting goods, used merchandise, and gift stores categories are tourism-related. The communities serve as supply hubs for leisure travelers, which contribute to the surplus sales in food and beverage stores and gas stations categories. A good portion of surplus sales in the food and beverage store categories such as auto parts and tire stores are likely driven by regional residents who live outside of Inyo County.

Figure 7 – Retail categories showing more Inyo County sales than residents spend, 2021

The well-established sporting goods retail category in both Bishop and Lone Pine also reflects these communities’ roles as supply hubs for visitors and passers-through.

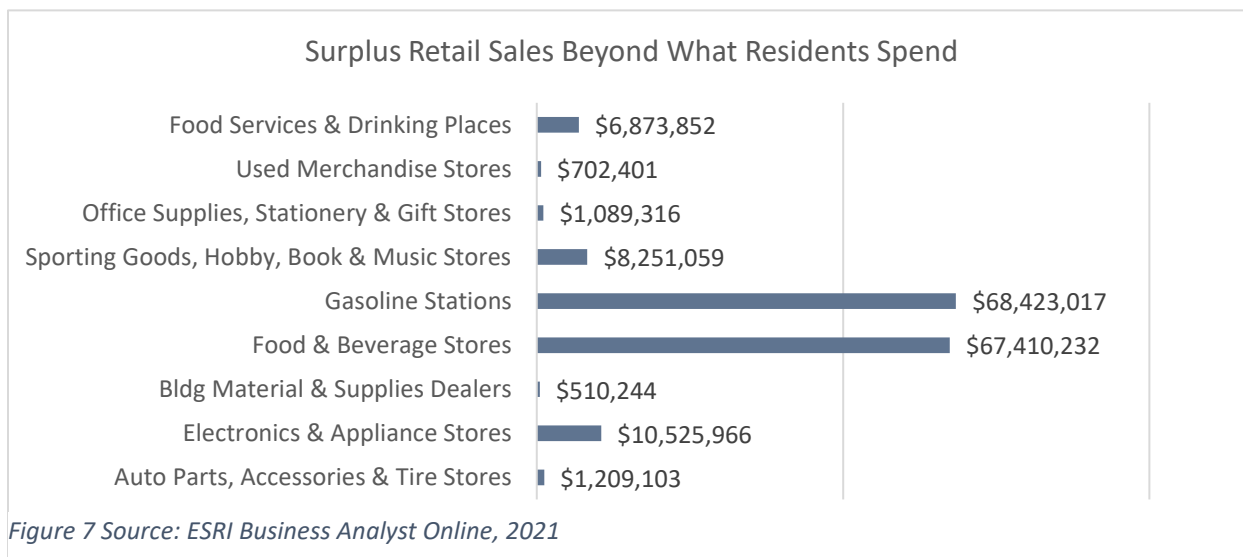


Figure 7 Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2021



Figure 8 – Count of Sporting Goods Retail Establishments, Inyo County, 2021

	Sporting Goods Establishments	Categories Represented
Bishop	9	Clothing Stores, Sporting Goods
Lone Pine	3	Sporting Goods

Figure 8 Source: State of California Employment Development Department

While sporting goods stores can contribute to a leisure shopping experience, there are very few leisure shopping opportunities beyond this. For example, there is just one store in Lone Pine classified as a gift/novelty store. In Bishop, there are a few bookstores, used goods stores, and clothing stores, but it is not clear that these are focused on the visitor market. Shopping is among the most popular vacation activities and is a way to attract passers-through to stop and explore.

Figure 9 – Count of Leisure Shopping Establishments, Inyo County, 2021

	Leisure Shopping Establishments	Categories Represented
Bishop	7	Book Stores; Used Merchandise Stores, Art Dealers, Home Furnishings Stores, Clothing Stores
Lone Pine	1	Gift, Novelty, and Souvenir Stores

Figure 9 Source: State of California Employment Development Department

## Opportunity: Recreation and Activities

Appealing and easily accessible recreational offerings and activities are key components of destination development. The area offers challenging outdoor recreational opportunities including rock climbing and multi-day wilderness expeditions but there is a gap in outdoor activities for beginners and easier, non-athletic activities for visitors. Most of the outdoor recreation establishments in the area are outfitters for mule or packhorse-supported expeditions or are lodges or outposts to support mountain expeditions and day trips. The area would benefit by offering activities and recreation that are closer to town and appeals to a broader market. Investments in trails, paved pathways, and other outdoor recreation infrastructure may need to be a component of developing this opportunity.

Figure 10 – Count of Outdoor Recreation Establishments, Inyo County, 2021

	Outdoor Recreation Establishments	Categories Represented
Bishop	8	Outdoor Recreation Outfitters, Marinas, Resorts and Lodges
Independence	1	Outdoor Recreation Outfitters

Figure 10 Source: State of California Employment Development Department

## Resident-Oriented Retail and Resident Services

The 8,121 households in Inyo County have a median household income of \$57,316, and a per capita income of \$32,590 compared to a state per capita income of \$36,955. The Retail Market Profile for Inyo County by ESRI Business Analyst shows that Inyo County households spend \$249.3 million each year on retail shopping and food and drink services.



Figure 11 –Number of Households by Income, Inyo County, 2019

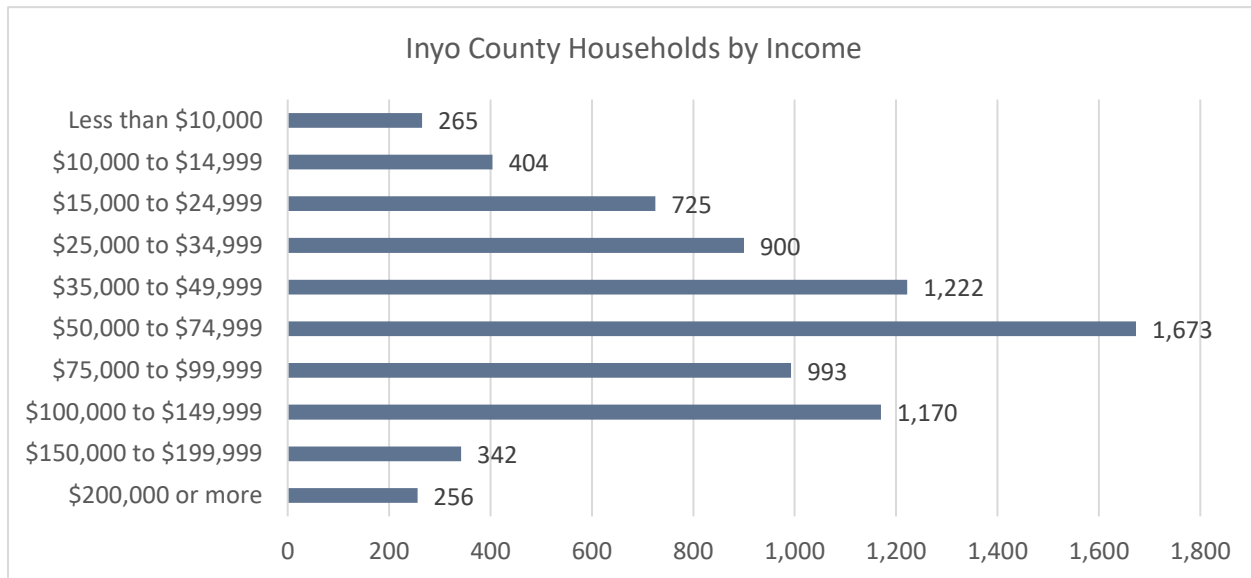


Figure 11 Source: “Economic Profile System”, Headwaters Economics, 2021

Leakage indicates that resident needs are being met elsewhere, that residents living in the market area are shopping outside of Inyo County or online. Leakage represents an opportunity for expanding/diversifying existing businesses or starting new businesses. Seven retail categories contribute to the \$76.9 million in retail sales leakage from the county annually. For instance, there is \$6.45 million in leakage in the health and personal care stores category, meaning that county residents are spending \$6.45 million outside of Inyo County for health and personal care store needs.

Figure 12 – Retail Sales Leakage from Inyo County, 2019

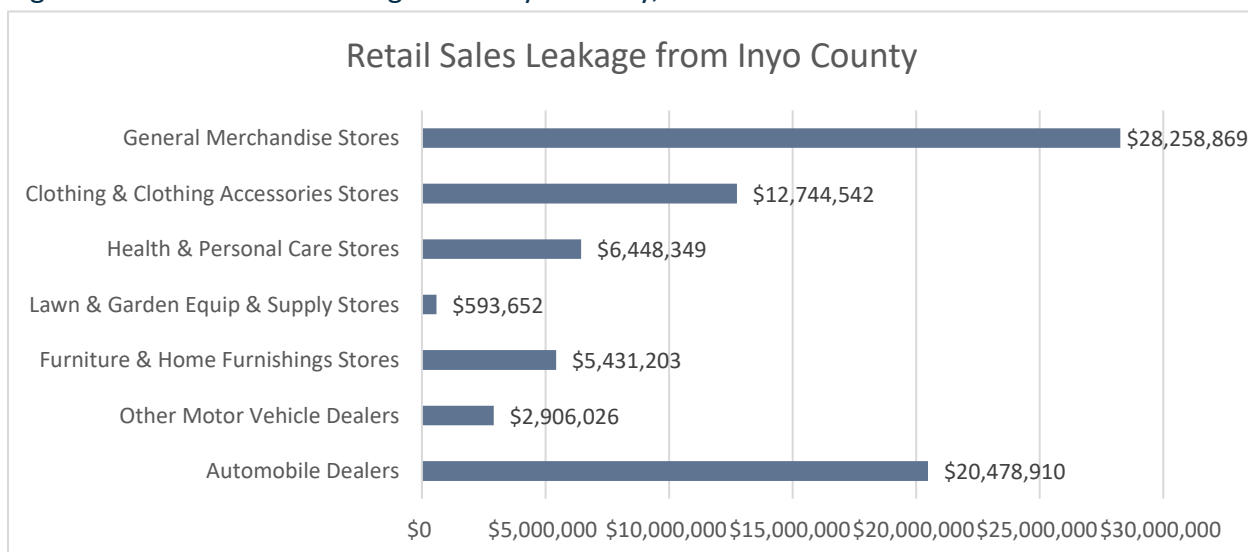


Figure 12 Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2021



## Housing, Commercial, and Civic Construction and Development

According to the California Division of Housing Policy, there was a minimum regional housing need of 323 total units among four income categories as of April 2020. Interviewees remarked that housing is difficult across all income levels in the Bishop area and lack of housing options was cited as a limitation for businesses seeking to expand.

Figure 13 – Inyo County Housing Need Determination

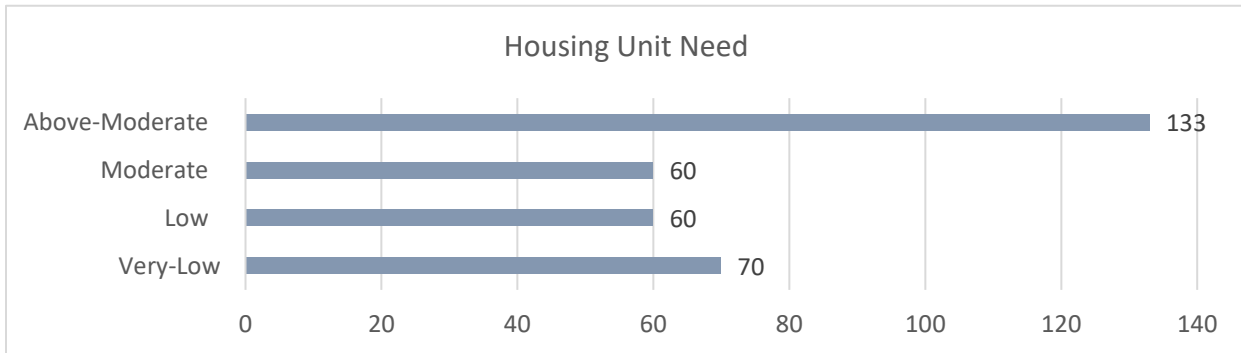


Figure 13 Source: California Division of Housing Policy, April 2020

Interviewees indicated that in the Bishop area, a very limited supply of developable commercial property may be acting as a constraint on economic growth. Land supply is discussed in more detail below. Some interviewees cited further constraints arising from a set of commercial building owners who seem unwilling to update or redevelop older structures.

Inyo County has an active construction industry that has not returned to the levels seen in the early 2000s, but it has held steady over the past decade. Mono County construction employment has been somewhat higher than Inyo County, although construction businesses are mobile and regularly perform work across county lines.

Figure 14 – Construction Jobs Trend 2001-2019, Inyo and Mono Counties

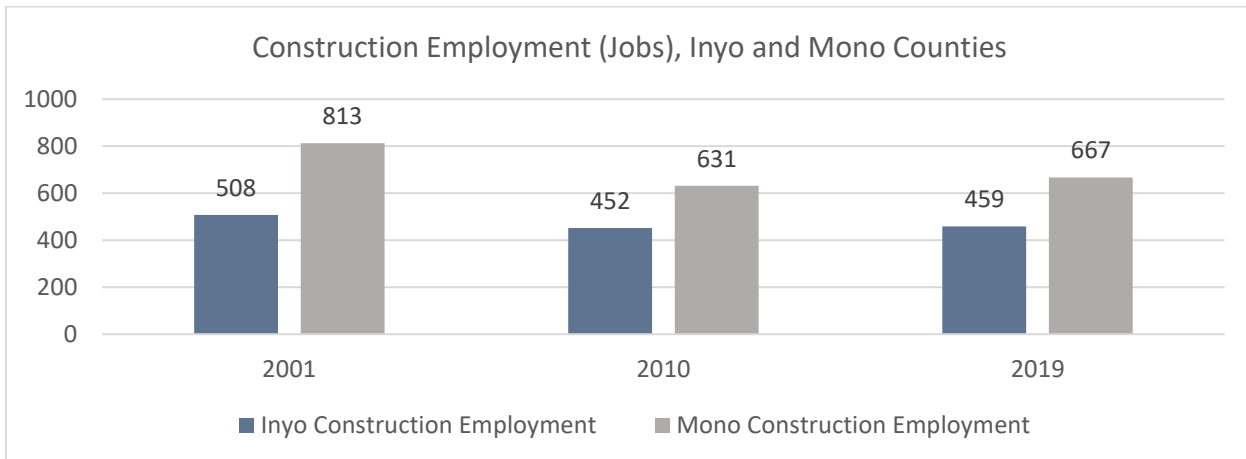


Figure 14 Source: "Economic Profile System", Headwaters Economics, 2021

The construction sector in Inyo and Mono Counties is well diversified with 55 firms covering 17 different types of construction services. The vast majority of these businesses are small operations with four or fewer employees. Although the construction industry is diverse and capable, the limited size of local companies means that few



can take on large projects. Inyo is like other rural areas in that there are only so many companies and so many employees, so the rate of construction is somewhat slower than in a metro area, and wait times can be longer.

Figure 15 – Inventory of Construction Contractor Businesses by Type, 2021

	<b>Mono County Businesses</b>	<b>Inyo County Businesses</b>
Specialty Construction	1	3
Commercial Building	15	9
Drywall and Insulation	1	1
Electrical	5	7
Finish Carpentry	2	1
Flooring	3	1
Glass and Glazing	1	0
Land Subdivision	4	0
Masonry	1	3
New-single family general contractors	3	14
Painting and Wall Covering	5	1
Plumbing and HVAC	8	8
Poured Concrete Structure	3	3
Roofing	2	4
Site Preparation	1	1
Tile and Terrazzo	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>

Figure 15 Source: State of California Employment Development Department

Figure 16 – Inventory of Construction Contractor Businesses by Size, 2021

<b>Size of Firm</b>	<b>Mono County Companies</b>	<b>Inyo County Companies</b>
1-4 employees	50	47
5-9 employees	12	5
10-19 employees	3	3

Figure 16 Source: State of California Employment Development Department

Interviewees and working group members stated that land ownership status and availability is an underlying constraint on developing new housing and on new commercial development, especially near Bishop where demand is highest. The majority of vacant land is owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). Negotiating to open parcels of LADWP land for development has proven to be a lengthy challenge for local governments.

The inventory of commercial and industrial lots has been dropping significantly in Mono County, presumably as lots are built. The inventory of commercial lots in Inyo County has been increasing slowly but remains below 100 lots. Some of these commercially assessed and/or commercially zoned vacant properties are owned by LADWP and so are not readily available.

There are over 3,000 vacant residential parcels in Inyo County, but the supply has been slowly dropping presumably because lots have been built on. According to Inyo County’s 2016 Charleston View Specific Plan, 2,059 of these vacant parcels are located in this rural and remote sub-area.



Figure 17 - Vacant Lot Inventory 2021

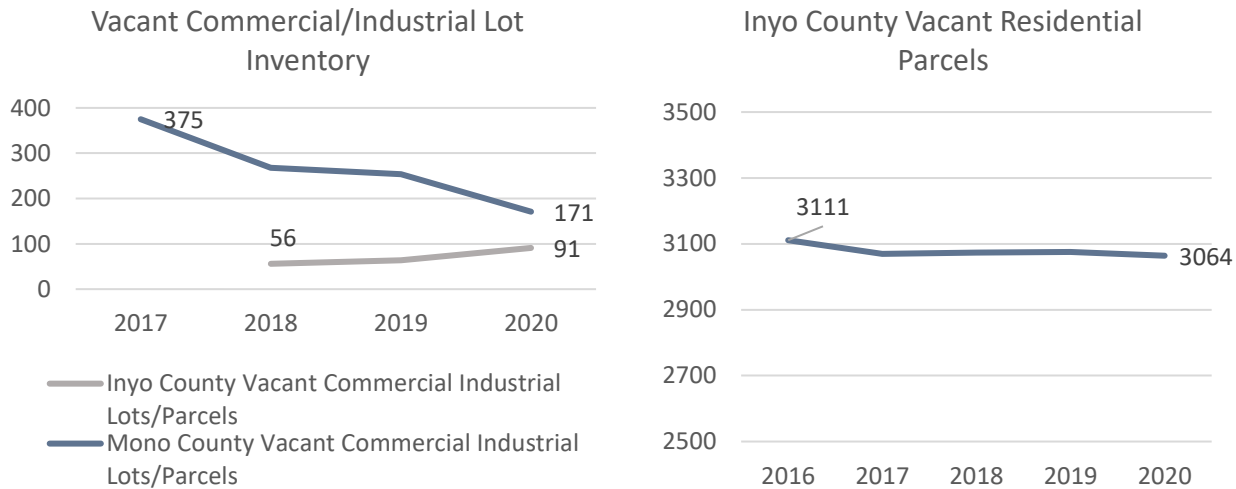


Figure 17 Source: State of California Board of Equalization Open Data Portal, 2021

Inyo County has seen just 18 lots created via conventional subdivisions while subdivisions have been more active in Mono County with 233 new lots created. Each county registered around 100 properties that have been consolidated or been split into two lots. In Inyo County, the development of new subdivision lots does not appear to be increasing commensurately with the demand for housing and commercial development.

Figure 18 – New Subdivision Lots Created

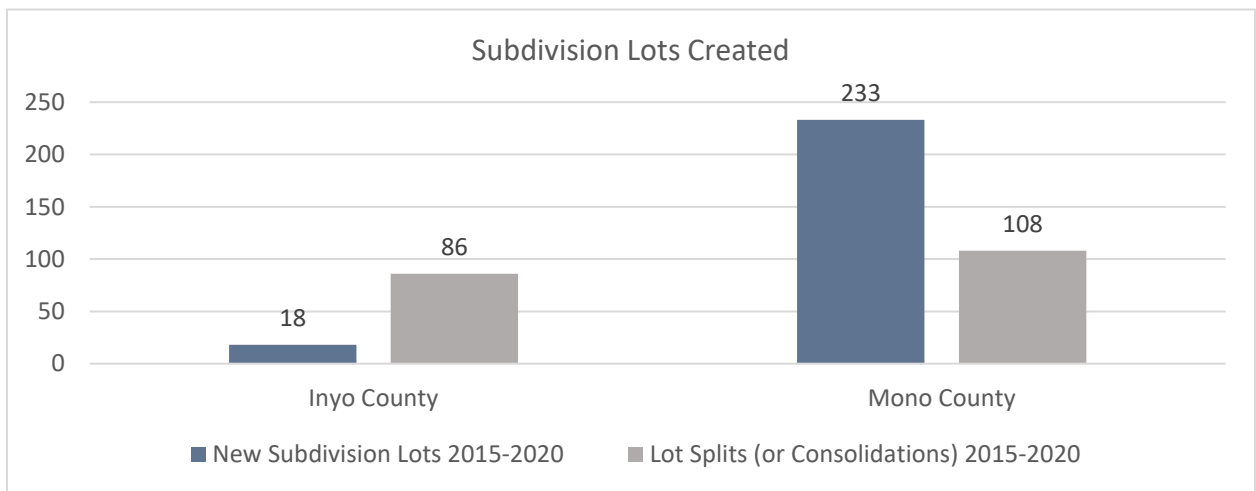


Figure 18 Source: State of California Board of Equalization Open Data Portal, 2021

Interviewees described a challenging set of conditions that have constrained commercial and residential development. Some of the land supply issues will require intervention by the local government, such as activation of LAWPD land. Between Bishop and Mammoth Lakes, there are 20 development and design businesses, most of which provide architecturally, engineering, and/or surveying services. The complex supply-side issues like those in the Bishop area suggest that there is a role for professional land development consulting.



Figure 19 - Inventory of Development and Design Businesses, 2021

	Development and Design Businesses	Categories Represented
Bishop	9	Architecture, Engineering, Building Inspection, Surveying
Mammoth Lakes	11	Architecture, Engineering, Land Subdivision, Surveying
Death Valley	1	Engineering

Figure 19 Source: State of California Employment Development Department

As the Eastern Sierra Recreation Partnership progresses and gains funding, additional opportunities will arise for local construction contractors who are prepared to bid on publicly funded projects. The partnership identified and ranked 183 project ideas for Inyo and Mono Counties including new restrooms, multi-use paths, campground rehabilitation, signage/wayfinding, visitor centers, wildlife crossings, ADA accessible outdoor facilities, roads, and other projects that would require construction companies (essrp.org). Local construction companies would likely need to ramp up their operations to qualify for most of the projects that would come out of this regional effort.

## Environmental Science and Consulting Services

The incredible biodiversity and range of climate zones and the predominance of publicly owned lands in Inyo County suggest an opportunity for establishing local environmental science and consulting businesses. Forest restoration, stream/riparian restoration, and certain elements of sustainable recreation development most often require permits and approvals under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Achieving the level of compliance required by NEPA and by land management agencies requires environmental planning, design, and best practices that environmental consultants are uniquely qualified to provide.

There are just a few business entities in the environmental consulting space today, and none are environmental consultants for hire: Eastern Sierra Foundation, Owens Valley Indian Water, Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation, White Mountain Research Station (State of California Employment Development Department). The professional and technical services industry earnings suffered as a result of the 2008 financial crisis and recession but have rebounded somewhat in recent years. Developing local environmental science and consulting firms instead of hiring firms from other communities would boost this important sector.





Figure 20 – Professional and Technical Services Earnings, Inyo County, 2021

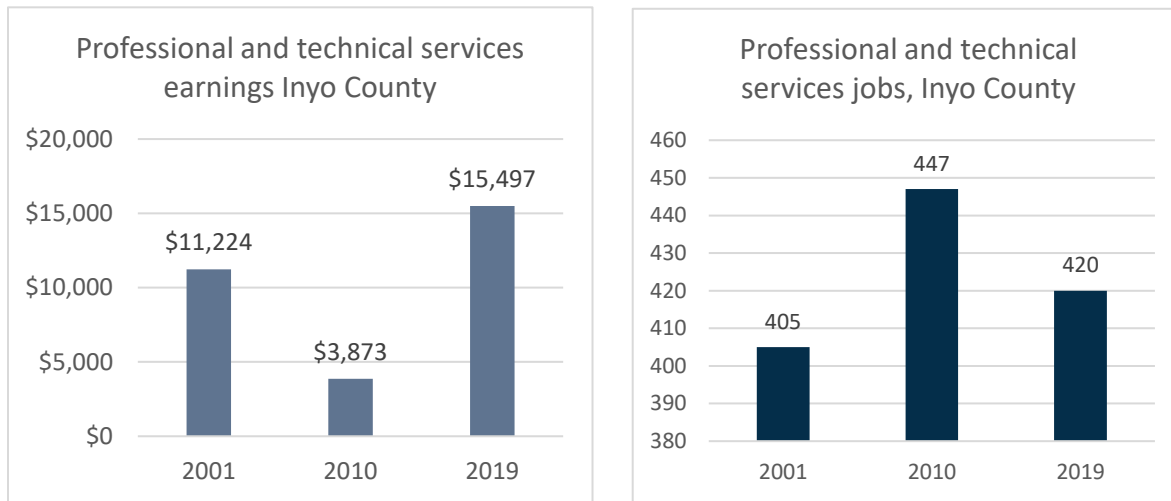


Figure 20 Source: “Economic Profile System”, Headwaters Economics, 2021

## Base Industries

The county is home to a few base industries, which are industries that export goods or services outside of the region. Power generation and distribution is an established base industry that has the potential to expand. In the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, BLM designates 388,000 acres for renewable energy development from the U.S./Mexico Border to Owens Valley (BLM Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Record of Decision, 2016). Solar, wind, geothermal are allowable uses in these “designated focus areas” (DFAs). These plan amendments cover the Bishop Resource Management Plan because there are DFAs in southern Inyo County/northern San Bernardino County.

There are currently six business entities producing/distributing electrical power in Inyo County. These existing operations may or may not have the potential to expand or diversify, but it is always less difficult to build on an existing industry versus starting anew.

Figure 21 – Power Generation and Distribution Business Entities

	2020 Establishments
Hydroelectric power generation	3
Fossil fuel electric power generation	1
Geothermal electric power generation	1
Electric power transmission and distribution	1

Figure 21 Source: “Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages”, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Manufacturing has been a growth industry for over two decades in Inyo County, growing from \$66.8 million in earnings in 2000 to \$117.8 million in 2019, while gaining 133 jobs.



Figure 22 – Manufacturing Earnings and Jobs Trends, Inyo County

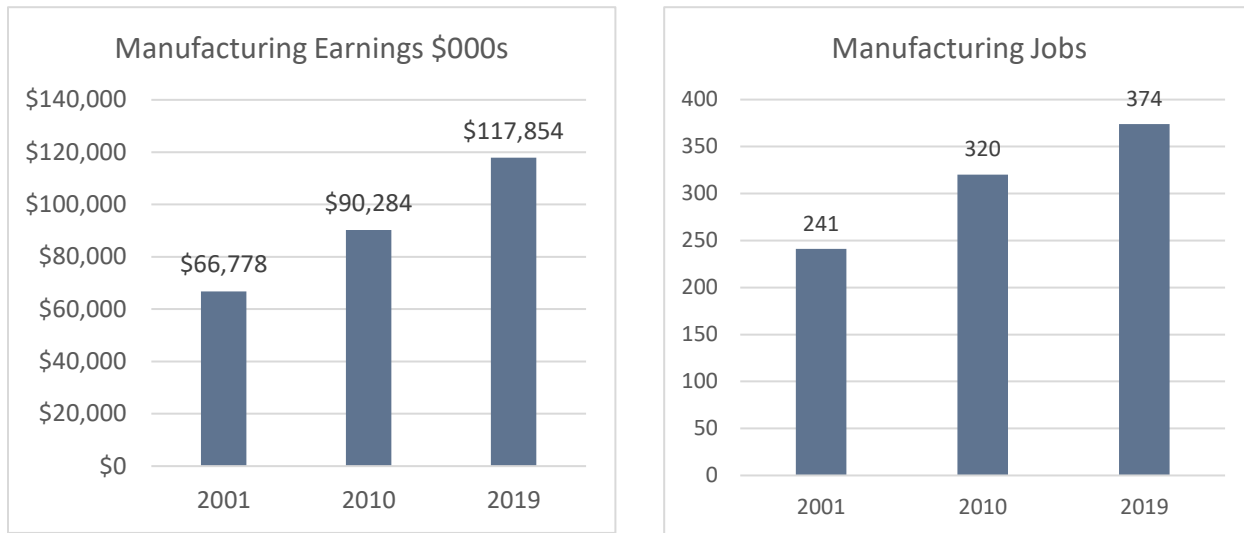


Figure 22 Source: “Economic Profile System”, Headwaters Economics, 2021

Manufacturing is an established and diverse sector in Inyo County that includes 25 businesses producing a wide variety of niche products. The state business classification system includes some local servings businesses such as printing, but most manufacturers make niche products for export. Although active, the manufacturing sector does not have a formal advocacy group and has low visibility in general.

Figure 23 – Inventory of Manufacturing Businesses

Inyo County Businesses	
Food and beverage manufacturing	5
Plastics manufacturing	3
Wood product manufacturing	5
Local/regional serving	7
Specialty manufacturing	5

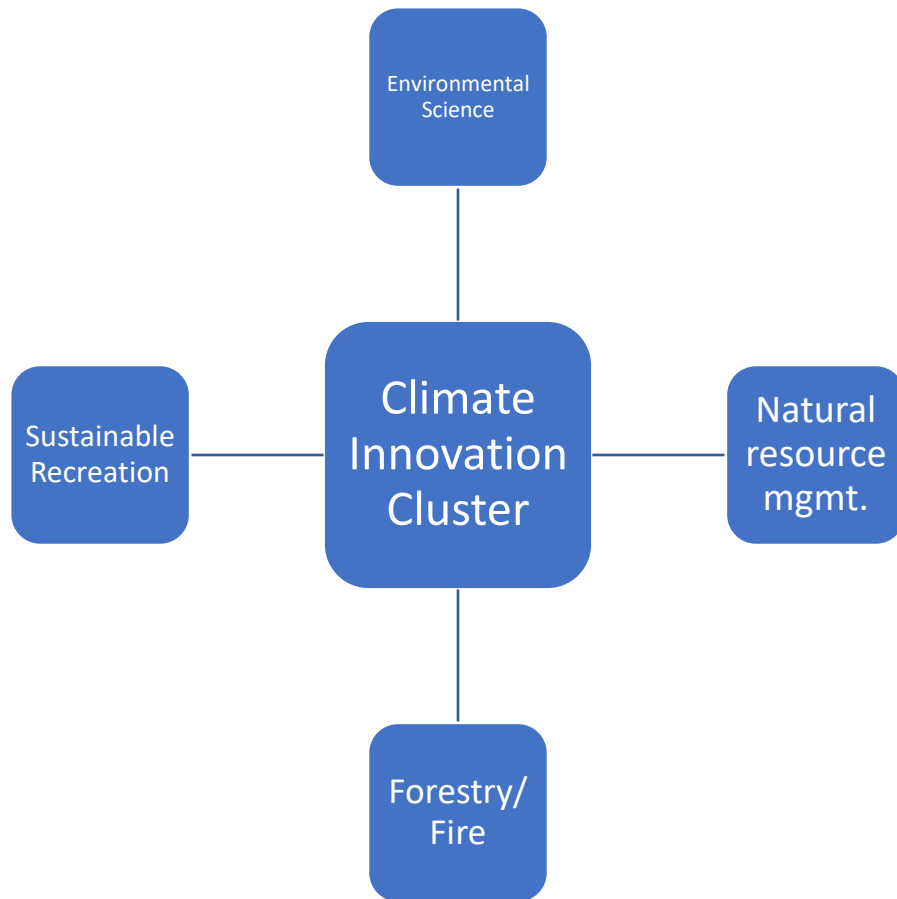
Figure 23 Source: State of California Employment Development Department

## Climate Innovations Cluster

Inyo County’s unique topography and location produce opportunities that cluster around climate innovations. There is a preponderance of government and non-profit activity in the region and investment into innovation and services carried out by the private sector. The cluster is a cross-section of many of the opportunities discussed above and include:

- Forestry and Fire – restoration, mitigation, and fuels treatment
- Natural Resource management – alternative energy solutions and desert ecosystem preservation
- Sustainable Recreation – construction and tourism
- Environmental Science – planning, problem-solving, and consulting



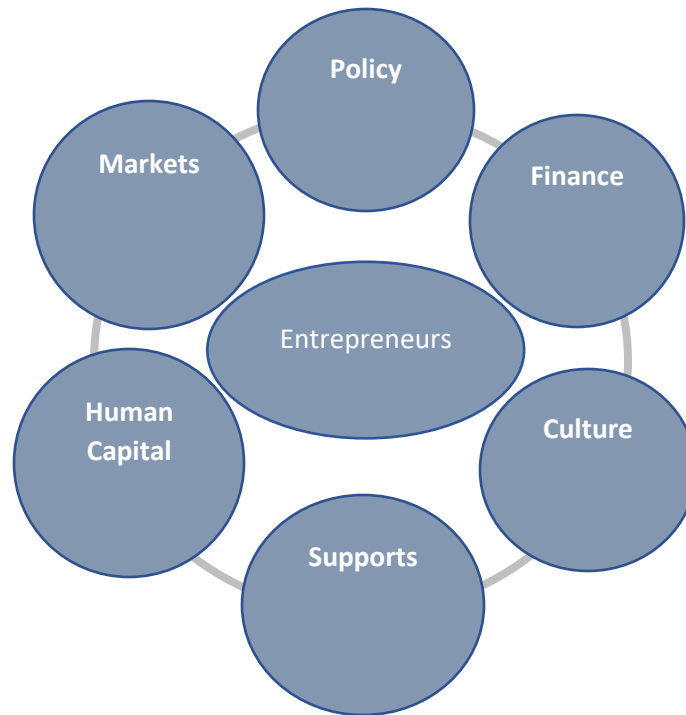


Clusters are geographically based and contain interrelated business elements for example; talent, knowledge, suppliers, etc. Viewing these components as a cluster reveals their interconnectivity and the opportunity for economic impact through job creation, company formation growth, and investment.

## Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Assessment

The following section organizes the review and recommendations around the domains of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem. This framework was originally developed by Daniel Isenberg at Babson College and provides an excellent tool to map current conditions of the ecosystem to support business and dive deeper into areas where communities can proactively impact the attractiveness of the region for business startup and growth.





People are at the center of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Ecosystems surround entrepreneurs and help them thrive. There are no silver bullets inherent to a thriving ecosystem; instead, the interaction of the parts affects the efficacy of the entire system. The analogy of a living and ever-changing system is an intentional way to emphasize a critical paradigm shift in how we think about helping entrepreneurs. Just as the complex biological system of soil, water, sunlight, flora, and fauna in a rainforest allows individual plants to flourish, the ecosystem for entrepreneurs is essential to their success. Healthy, diverse, and inclusive ecosystems allow talent, information, and resources to flow quickly to entrepreneurs as they need them.<sup>1</sup>

## Methodology

The process of ecosystem assessment is heavily dependent on talking with people that possess the knowledge and relevant insights regarding the various domains. At the center are discussions with current and prospective business owners. Inyo County formed a “Working Group” (WG) for the SBRC project. The WG provided background perspective, reports, contacts, and continual feedback during the ecosystem assessment process. Critical to this process is being “on the ground” in communities. The AccompanyCo Team had three trips to the region and is participating in ongoing efforts related to the BRC and Inyo County’s economic planning.

Secondary research including published reports and online resources along with the Market Opportunity Analysis provides context for the Team to consider the area’s challenges and opportunities. In evaluating the entrepreneurship ecosystem, interviews are the primary source of information, and observations are based on the interviewee’s opinions. Understandably an inexact science, the process is both iterative and insightful. The Team looks for patterns and similarities of opinion to aggregate observations and facilitate recommendations for the ecosystem analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kauffman.org/ecosystem-playbook-draft-3/glossary-and-resources/>



30+ interviews were conducted over six months and included individuals representing a broad range of business sectors and organizations:

- ❖ Retail Businesses Sector
- ❖ Outdoor Industry Sector
- ❖ Food/Beverage Service Sector
- ❖ Office Rentals and Coworking Sector
- ❖ Manufacturing Sector
- ❖ Space and Technology Sector
- ❖ State and Federal Business Development
- ❖ Cerro Coso Community College
- ❖ Eastern Sierra Community Bank
- ❖ City of Bishop
- ❖ Inyo County Government
- ❖ Mono County Government
- ❖ Tribal Government
- ❖ Sierra Business Council
- ❖ Eastern Sierra Council of Governments
- ❖ Workforce Development
- ❖ Inyo County Public Works

## Policy

The Policy section describes efforts by government and leadership to clear the pathway for businesses to operate successfully. It includes evaluating overall business friendliness, incentives, and the degree to which leadership represents and champions businesses and entrepreneurship.

### Observations:

County support Inyo County is taking a leadership role in developing the Business Resource Center including providing funds and leadership for this business plan as well as committing funds to support initial operational costs.

City of Bishop leadership is evident in code revisions, infrastructure improvements, and a business-friendly culture.

Regional collaboration with Mono County and Mammoth Lakes is evident, examples include the formation of ESCOG (Eastern Sierra Council of Governments) which houses numerous regional programs and initiatives and improvements to the Bishop Airport including the move of commercial routes and subsidies from Mammoth to Bishop Airport.

Other regional initiatives include:

- Joint planning effort for preparation of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that includes Inyo, Mono and Alpine counties, and the cities of Bishop and Mammoth Lakes,
- Request for CA Community Economic Resilience Fund's (CERF) region modification to establish Eastern Sierra region - Inyo, Mono, and Alpine and allow government entities to apply for planning grants,
- Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership (ESSRP), and
- Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative (SRTI) which presents opportunities for future recreation and environmental planning projects as a regional collaborative effort. SRTI will be folding into ESCOG in the future and has identified 8 projects for the region:
  - Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreation Planning Initiative



- Visitor Connection Program
- Regional Recreation Capacity
- Eastern Sierra Campground Improvements
- Towns to Trails Plan
- Dispersed Camping Mitigation
- Vulnerability in California’s Eastern Sierra and GAP Analysis
- Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway Analysis

GO-Biz, the State of CA business development agency, recently established rural capacity positions with Derek Kirk as the regional representative for the Eastern Sierra, with more presence has come more potential funding and assistance for rural initiatives.

Tribal government initiatives include impending construction of a retail strip attached to a new gas station by the Bishop Tribe with dedicated space for four American Indian businesses; Tribes history of providing small loans to startups and alliance with statewide and national entrepreneurial support programs serving tribal members.

Coordination with the Mexican Consulate in providing support to Hispanic and Latinx communities for immigration and work permit compliance.

\$35 million for the California Dream Fund, which will provide micro-grants of up to \$10,000 to seed entrepreneurship and small business creation in underserved small business groups that are facing opportunity gaps, including communities of color, immigrant Californians, and Californians that speak limited English.

The City of Bishop is the Eastern Sierra regional hub of federal and state resources, staff, and offices.

## **Recommendations:**

Formalize Connector culture. Much progress has been made (and should be celebrated!) over the past year and accelerated through the process of the SBRC business planning to connect the economic development efforts of the region. Strategies should be explored to sustain and build momentum. This can include expansion/or modification of the Working Group as an ad hoc Economic Development Partners Regional Working Group, establishing an Advisory Board for the SBRC with a broader regional mission, incorporating the activity into the ESCOG, or another.

Compile resources for regions’ Latinx and Hispanic Communities including assistance to access the California Dream fund. Ensure resources and navigators are available to BIPOC residents.

Forge ahead to complete CEDS. Funding is available through EDA and potentially through CERF (if approved for the application and regional designation) to prepare a CEDS. The Sierra Business Council has performed CEDS plans in nearby regions and is a potential option for preparing this plan.

Position SBRC and other regional efforts for CERF implementation funds.

Support other regional initiatives. Along with the numerous current initiatives in the region, there are opportunities to expand the Eastern Sierra’s role in innovation and business development in global priorities such as climate change and environmental protection and stewardship.



## Finance

Having a robust offering of a variety of financial capital instruments in the region as well as technical assistance to guide and help secure funding for businesses provides key fuel for business startup and growth. To support a robust entrepreneurship ecosystem, communities want to see diverse and plentiful options that provide support from the idea stage through business, start, growth, and maturity. This is especially challenging in remote rural areas. However, regional partnerships and collaborations can supplement what is available locally.

### Observations:

Regional Capital Summits are held annually in the region, organized by the regional SBDC based in Bakersfield. They are well attended and rotate between Inyo and Mono (virtual last 2 years).

A large number of PPP loans with diversity. Close to 300 Payroll Protection Loans were granted to businesses in Inyo County during the pandemic. These loans were processed for the largest and the smallest businesses in Inyo County - employment of 500 to sole proprietors. The volume and diversity assisted are reflective of a good connection with traditional lending institutions. Eastern Sierra Community Bank was noted through interviews as very active in the community.

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI). Several CDFIs are serving the area including - Accion Opportunity Fund based in San Jose and Access Plus Capital based in Fresno and Bakersfield. CDFIs provide flexible funding including microloans. Although CDFIs are technically serving the area, they do not appear to be “present” or involved in the community and as a result not known.

Appears to be a dearth or void of Microloans and access to alternative sources of capital in the region.

The region has a cluster of high net worth individuals, both residents and 2nd homeowners that could be a foundation for an angel investment pool. Regionally, there are active angel groups in Fresno, Truckee, and Sacramento. There is some interest locally in activating a group.

Financial acumen or readiness is low within some existing businesses. Training and mentorship could greatly improve this. If existing businesses have a better understanding of their financials, they would be more likely to qualify for traditional funding.

### Recommendations:

Financial Readiness training and 1-1 assistance should be a major focus for any entrepreneurship effort including the SBRC.

Explore the establishment of a regional Microloan fund. Explore and evaluate the various options for starting a microloan program - EDA, CDBG, CERF implementation funds, Foundation Program Related Investment (PRI), etc. Interest was expressed in small amounts - \$10-100k with flexible terms for collateral and repayment.

Competitions and Incentive grants. To generate interest and buzz, competitions and competitive incentives can be used to encourage “ideation” in general and specifically to solve problems in specific sectors and be open to the general public or demographics for example, youth and/or American Indian.

Formation of Regional Angel Group. There has been interest expressed to explore the formation of an Angel group and/or Fund. Critical mass is important for both investors and deals. A regional approach including Mono County and perhaps Alpine as well is recommended. To start, connect with regional established groups and invite them into an organizational meeting for an Inyo/Mono group. From there explore co-investment opportunities, sponsor local competitions, encourage new investors to attend regional pitch competitions and angel training, and possible formation of a regional fund.



Cultivate relationships with current funding sources. Part of the navigator role is the cultivation of relationships and not necessarily duplication. There are resources for funding already technically serving the area. In some cases, it is about getting their attention to the opportunities in the region.

## Culture

A culture that supports and celebrates small businesses and entrepreneurship is self-perpetuating. It is characterized by visible successes and encouragement of risk-taking and innovation. The essence of an entrepreneurial ecosystem is its people and the culture of trust and collaboration that allows them to interact successfully. An ecosystem that allows for the fast flow of talent, information, and resources helps entrepreneurs quickly find what they need at each stage of growth. As a result, the whole is greater than the sum of its separate parts.

### Observations:

The region is overshadowed by LADWP land and water control. Even though the region is creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial, much of the conversation comes back to the realities which limit choices and opportunities.

Collaborative environment. “We’re in this together” mentality in the community and region, based on a history of geographic isolation and challenges.

Entrepreneurs helping entrepreneurs. Established and new business owners give of their time and expertise to new businesses and people exploring ideas.

An engaged community of “activists” working together to improve conditions for residents

Pride of the region and landscape, people visit, and they stay.

High percent American Indian population and fast-growing Hispanic/Latinx.

The American Indian population does not have a strong history in entrepreneurship and some barriers to small business ownership exist.

Hispanic/Latinx community is reluctant to utilize “traditional” business support services.

New people are coming, bringing \$\$, talent, and fresh perspective to the region:

- For recreation
- Small town atmosphere
- Trailing spouse - coming when a spouse is hired, often well-educated and experienced, and excellent prospects for starting businesses.
- Some conflict with the old families and the new people coming to the area

### Recommendations:

Amplify success stories. Utilize all forms of media radio, paper, social media, websites, and blogs to amplify the successes of local businesses and human-interest stories. Highlight businesses and entrepreneurs located throughout the county (potentially region), large and small, well established and startups, culturally diverse from all sectors.





Engage a group of content creators for success stories. Gather individuals and organizations already doing some of this work and encourage sharing and collaboration. Funding for content creation or advertising dollars for media buys is important for a sustained effort.

Hold “cool” events and meetups. There is a strength to be found when business owners learn from each other and share challenges and wins. This type of sharing doesn’t appear to be happening within the region. Business owners shared an eagerness to meet with other business owners either one-on-one or in small groups. Being creative in the types of events, structure, participants, etc. will help draw out the trailing spouses and gig workers hiding in the community.

K-12 entrepreneurship and innovation activities and competitions. Organize and amplify activities in the schools that encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. Bring these into the SBRC, utilizing mentors and business owners to provide judging and support. Attract HS students to internship and apprenticeship programs with startups.

Solicit participation of leadership from the Tribe and Hispanic/Latinx Communities into SBRC and related activities to ensure maximum impact across the greater community.

## Supports

The Supports domain encompasses the infrastructure needed to support business startup and growth including broadband, utilities, professional services, non-governmental organizations, networking, and support functions needed to support a healthy business sector, including people and institutions with knowledge and resources to help entrepreneurs.

## Observations:

Limited professional service providers in the region including bookkeeping, accountants, and legal. Businesses go without and/or hire out of the area.

The SBDC based in Bakersfield is the primary go-to for people interested in starting or expanding businesses. They have a part-time consultant based in Mono County serving Inyo. Other consultants and training classes are offered online.

The Bishop Chamber of Commerce has over 300 members offers member mixers and has an active Board. They also manage the tourism efforts and have an active online presence.

There do not appear to be entrepreneur-orientated meetups or events in the region. There is a lack of basic training courses in business start, finance, marketing, planning.

Regionally, the Sierra Business Council is very active but is not providing direct services in Inyo County.

Owens Valley Career Development has linkages with regional entrepreneurship and business support initiatives serving tribal members based in Fresno and Sacramento. They have provided small loans along with the Tribe’s Economic Development Board to startup businesses. Access to this resource requires the completion of a business plan.

The Tribe is building a 4-unit strip mall connected to a new gas station for tribal member-owned and operated businesses.

Bishop Coworking is full of primarily permanent members and has suspended events through the pandemic.

Cerro Coso Community College offers a Certificate program in Entrepreneurship, however, does not appear to be recommended by SBDC or in high demand - an opportunity here.



Extensive potential mentor pool and a plethora of institutional knowledge amongst the retired population.

Inyo County is an epic landscape however, its remote location leads to distribution and supply chain challenges and access to basic services requires significant travel.

Bishop Airport is going through a major expansion with opportunities for ancillary business as well as improved access for business and movement of goods.

Digital 395 was a huge investment and promised transformative internet speeds, however, last-mile strategies are needed to get high-speed access to businesses and residents.

Cerro Coso Community College has a new campus with excellent facilities and an underutilized event center.

Commercial building stock has issues - old buildings, not up to code. There are extremely limited appropriately zoned properties for additional commercial development.

Housing is a huge issue with vacancy rates estimated at 0%.

K-12 Shark Tank was done currently inactive.

## **Recommendations:**

Build Navigator program. Especially in rural communities where resources are scarce, it is critical to have a central point to collect, distribute and cultivate resources available to businesses. The central point in a community can then distribute and train other first points of contact.

Ombudsman/Navigator specifically trained to help small construction companies navigate the regulatory requirements to secure government contracts.

Intentionally engage regional entrepreneurs, business owners, and the retired community. Even though informal connections show tenacity and passion, they are often out of reach for people starting out. Establishing a pathway to have a conversation and expectations for both sides in a mentoring environment is advised.

Petition SBDC for staff and consultant resources. In the spirit of “build it and they will come”, SBDCs have been provided additional federal resources and responsibility to assist communities in pandemic recovery. They do respond to demand for services. It can be a primary role of the navigator point to drum up demand for SBDC services - in-person consulting and training - as restrictions permit.

Establish a relationship with PTAC for assistance in securing government contracts.

Work with business owners to prepare businesses for sale.

Create programs to tease out ideas and interests for the Tribe’s 4-unit strip mall. Operates as a mini incubator providing training, mentoring, and peer networking for support.

Promote Airport expansion to the business community for startup and expansion of ancillary services directly tied to increased traffic and the opportunity to move goods and people.

Support zoning to move businesses out of homes and provide incentives to improve commercial real estate.

## **Human Capital**

The Human Capital domain looks at the composition of the labor force as well as the presence and alignment of the education systems to the entrepreneurial ecosystem - k-12, vocational and trades, community colleges, and 4-year institutions. We look to the labor force for talent that can help companies grow and leaders to start and grow companies.



## Observations:

Job Spot, Education, and Job Resource Center recently opened its office, 3 doors down from the proposed home from the SBRC, and is a partnership with Cerro Coso Community College, Inyo County Office of Education, and Kern Adult Education Consortium. They offer English as a Second Language Program, High School Diploma, GED, and Adult Basic Education Programs. The office is staffed with extended hours and offers computer literacy and job posting services as well.

Cerro Coso Community College offers regular programming in areas such as Construction trades, Wildland Fire Certification, and business management and can try new programs.

Owens Valley Career Development Center offers access to Tribal members interested in construction trades and Solar Institute training in partnership with Cerro Coso Community College.

There is a lack of Management training and a desire to advance from within companies especially because of the housing shortages.

Business succession is a challenge but also an opportunity.

Evidence of underemployment. Example through the Bishop Climber Association showing a high level of advanced degrees and experience choosing to live in Inyo County for the lifestyle.

K-12 no apparent programming in Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

PACE Accelerator has priority to hire local contractors and/or employees.

Owens Valley Career Development funds a summer youth employment program where qualifying students' wages are paid.

## Recommendations:

Use of Navigator role to maximize the use of what is already available, for example, job posting through Job Spot, training through Cerro Coso.

EDD/America's Job Center of California presence/located at the BRC. Consider using existing funding that comes to Inyo County through EDD specifically for this position so Inyo County citizens can have a fully functioning America's Job Center.

Combine efforts to create a comprehensive Internship and Apprenticeship program. OVDCDC, CCCC, and the Pace Accelerator initiatives. Could bring in interns from 4-year institutions if housing could be secured.

Incorporate business principles training for Construction trades education within the existing programs and as a stand-alone.

Catalyze K-12 Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programming. Could include speakers from the mentor pool in classes, inviting students to community networking events, supporting a pitch competition, internship opportunities with startups, etc.

Promote financial literacy training through Job Spot and OVDCDC.

Develop Management Training resources. Recruiting top talent for management positions within the region is difficult. Most businesses have chosen to combat this by growing their talent. Several business owners expressed a desire to outsource some of that training.

Post businesses for sale and provide wrap-around services to help individuals get trained and financed to take over successful regional existing businesses.



Leverage the resources of Cerro Coso Community College through promoting programs, adding value through access to regional mentors and business owners, holding events at the school, promoting dual enrollment with High School, etc.

## Markets

The Markets domain includes early customers and networks that facilitate intersections for the interaction of people, ideas, and resources. Early customers provide sales opportunities and feedback for product and service improvement. Networks act as diasporas or think tanks for entrepreneurs where informal connections can lead to great things. Accessible onramps (or access points) to the Markets domain of the ecosystem are key so that anyone and everyone can participate.

### Observations:

Entrepreneur networks are present but are informal.

Tourism is the historical emphasis for economic development.

Presence of base industry employers in manufacturing, energy, and some technology.

The area is a remote worker destination.

The preponderance of Mom and Pop businesses with the willingness to carry local and new products.

Mammoth Mountain and the region are major drivers for economic development.

Inyo County is a world-renowned climbing destination.

Significant investment and attention are being placed on Sustainable Recreation and focuses on:

- increase public lands experience in Eastern California,
- ecosystem health and fire resiliency,
- forest health and fuel reduction, and
- increase the resilience of National Forests and surrounding lands, including campground upgrades.

Opportunity for tourism-related merchandise: startup products around the outdoor industry, cool local swag, art, crafts, etc.

Opportunity for resident-oriented retail: General merchandise, furniture, and clothes.

Significant internet buying.

Airport-inspired business opportunities (e.g. ground transportation and other ancillary business).

The Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Accelerator project is primarily to conduct NEPA for the Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP). A 2<sup>nd</sup> goal of the Pace and Scale Accelerator is to build regional environmental planning capacity in partnerships with the Inyo National Forest. The ESCCRP is to implement fire resiliency efforts across 55,000 acres of the Inyo National Forest. This project presents workforce development opportunities for contractors to complete the work on the ground, as well as establish local biomass facilities to process the product coming off the forest.

The Whitebark Institute is in collaboration with ESCOG and the Pace and Scale Accelerator, with the vision to “facilitate applied research and education that enables and informs multidisciplinary environmental problem-solving.”

Opportunity in Construction, development, redevelopment, adaptive reuse industry sectors.



## Recommendations:

Communicate what is already available. As discussed in the Culture section, locals and tourists need and want to know what is already available in communities. Highlight local products and services and where they can be found bringing attention to the retail stores carrying locally made products.

Bring in the “cool factor.” Entrepreneurs, students, and remote workers rarely respond to traditional events and marketing. Edgy, experimental content is the recommended path and there must be a willingness to try and fail.

Events should:

- Be intentional networking for organic connections
- Bring attention to cool stuff happening in the region
- Instigate and test nontraditional structures

Connect with Base industry companies for opportunities to grow businesses and sectors, which may result in:

- Navigators connect businesses to regional, state, and federal resources and opportunities (capital, technical assistance, contracts)
- Workforce development initiatives
- Events and meetups
- Success stories

Post Business opportunities. Expanding on what was discussed in the Human Capital section for existing businesses interested in selling, add brainstorming sections that are fueled with data to focus on business opportunities in:

- Resident retail and internet leakage
- Airport expansion
- Construction, Sustainable Recreation, and Environmental Services sectors
  - Could have a virtual “Planroom” that aggregates opportunities from regional projects - local public sector, Tribe, federal, nonprofit, etc.
  - For larger projects such as the Pace Accelerator, explore inviting interested individuals and firms to meet up to discuss the project and make connections
  - Explore matchmaking with larger regional firms to add capacity to local firms to bid on projects

Partner with Bishop Tribe for 4-unit strip:

- Have ideation exercise that may involve maker faire activity to tease out talent and interest
- Conduct intensive short program to ferret out feasibility
- Have finalists compete for a spot in Strip
- Provide ongoing incubation services for selected companies
- May consider 1 of 4 spaces as shared
- Have individuals not selected plugin with SBRC for ongoing support
- Work with Bishop Tribe to construct additional retail space



# Business Plan ESSBRC

## Vision: Grow Economy and Opportunities

The Eastern Sierra Small Business Resource Center (BRC) is a welcome center for the region’s businesses and entrepreneurs. Its vision is to directly support the business through access to knowledge and resources, networking, collaboration space, and enhancement of the region’s entrepreneurship ecosystems.

## Goals & Objectives

**Goal 1** – Improve opportunity for living wage employment in Inyo County and Eastern Sierra by developing new and existing businesses.

**Goal 2** – Be a catalyst for the augmentation of the region’s entrepreneurship ecosystem.

**Goal 3** – Establish a robust Navigator program and supplement existing Business Development Services to support entrepreneurs’ desire for knowledge and access to resources.

**Goal 4** – Secure access to sufficient capital resources to fuel business startup and growth.

**Goal 5** – Celebrate the region’s diversity and uniqueness through collaboration with the Tribes, Hispanic and Latinx communities.

**Goal 6** – Advocate for all businesses and targeted market opportunities.

**Goal 7** – Be an exemplary Partner, Collaborator, Leader, and Instigator on behalf of the Small Business and Entrepreneurial Community.

## Facility



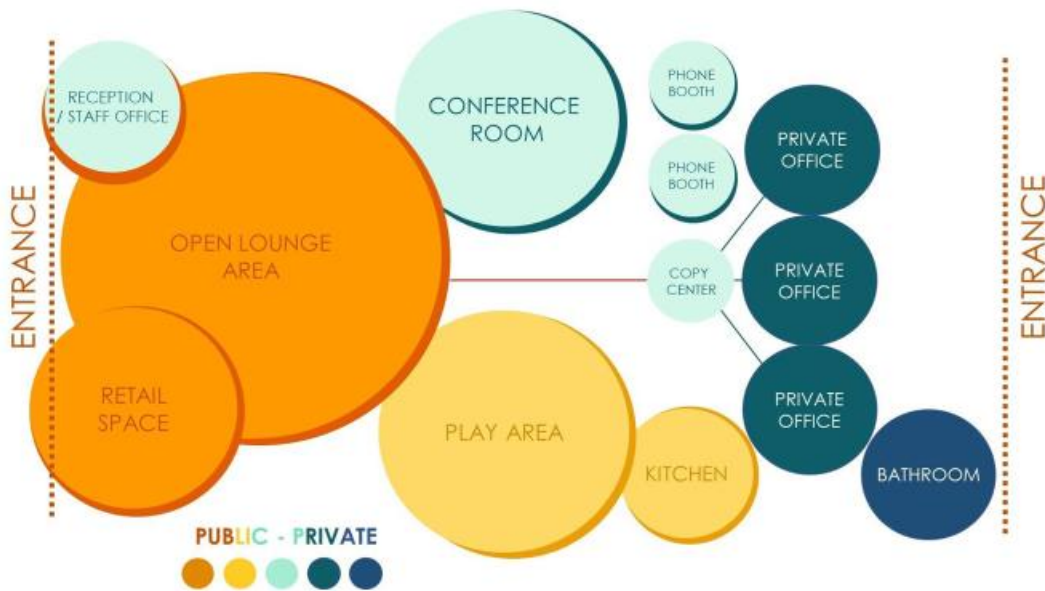
The location of the BRC is 269 N Main St. in Bishop, CA, former home of The Crafters Mall. The location is in an Opportunity Zone and was purchased by an investor who is making extensive renovations to the building.



A sub-committee of the Working Group is working with the Architect to craft the interior to accommodate the various desired uses for the building. Below is an early version of the “bubble diagram” with some initial space considerations. Inyo County has requested a Federal Budget Earmark for broadband connection to the Digital 395 backbone to service the building, high-quality technical equipment, and furniture and fixtures. Renovations are expected to be completed in 2022.



### SIERRA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER Adjacency Diagram



## Overall Strategy + BRC Core

The BRC will serve as Inyo County’s Hub for business development, building regional collaborations, acting as an advocate and catalyst, and providing direct services.





Regional Collaborations	Advocate and Catalyst	Direct Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring together local interested parties; municipalities, counties, Tribes, Chamber, businesses, Education, workforce, industry, federal and state offices etc. through strategic collaboration.</li> <li>• Cultivate relationships with resource providers beneficial to businesses and BRC.</li> <li>• Leverage resources to enhance services to locals - SBDC, Microloans, PTAC, Investors, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate and celebrate areas success stories and entrepreneurial trials.</li> <li>• Create consistent and visible presence.</li> <li>• Tackle initiatives to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem.</li> <li>• Launch initiatives to grow economic sectors.</li> <li>• Participate in special projects that positively impact the region's economy.</li> <li>• Create formal partnerships with the Tribe and Mexican Consulate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navigator Program</li> <li>• Events &amp; Meetups</li> <li>• Business Development Services</li> </ul>

## Funnel Strategy

To realize the vision and goals of the BRC, one of the most effective strategies is to focus on creating a robust and healthy funnel of entrepreneurs. The funnel strategy in building entrepreneurial ecosystems is a well-accepted method to build culture and economic development results over time.

The funnel strategy focuses on developing a suite of resources and programs that:

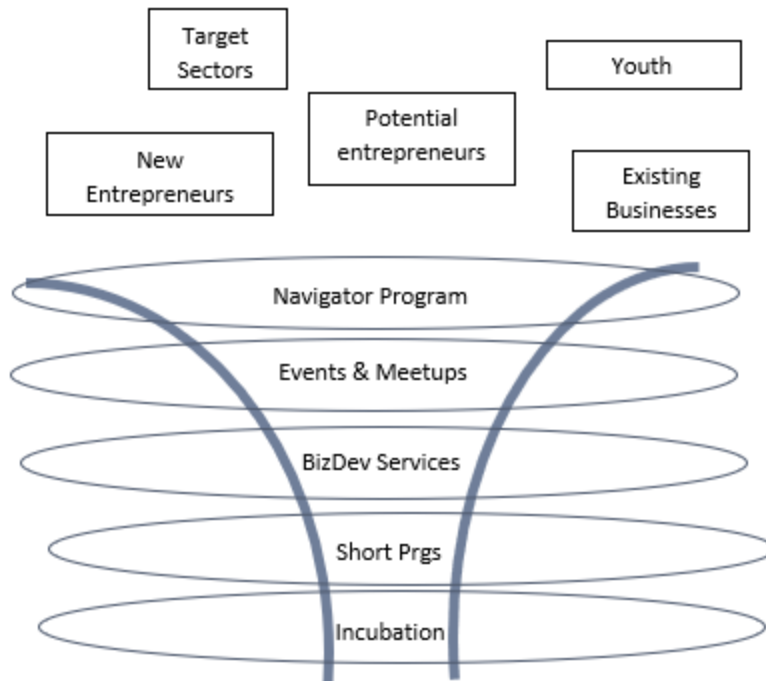
- ❖ Inspires and introduces community members to innovation & entrepreneurship
- ❖ Attracts entrepreneurial individuals to the Business Resource Center and retains their engagement
- ❖ Builds a culture driven by the region's entrepreneurs

The BRC should attract a wide variety of individuals committed to the success of the region's entrepreneurs, including educators, community builders, investors, and more. The funnel itself focuses on how to attract entrepreneurs and support them along their journey, ultimately to business success and positive economic growth outcomes.

Ultimately, the funnel should provide programs to inspire, ideate, support and grow entrepreneurial ventures, from non-existent to the idea to seed to growth-stage ventures. A typical funnel might be comprised of the following programs:







Just like a sales funnel, the strategy is to bring aligned “leads” into the funnel and nourish them along their journey (with community, programs, and resources). A successful funnel creates community driven by its members and results in successful business launches and growth over time.

It often takes years to see robust results from programs launched to support entrepreneurs. By nature, entrepreneurship is a risky business. However, employing a funnel strategy ensures that the programs bring enough people in to:

1. build a robust, self-sustaining community and
2. create business launches and success stories

This proposed plan for the Business Resource Center leans heavily on the funnel strategy and references it often.

## Navigator Program

Small businesses and entrepreneurs struggle to find access to knowledge and resources in a digestible and timely manner. As mentioned previously, people are at the center of a thriving ecosystem and Navigators are also people. They provide directions and suggestions along the way which unblock the flow for entrepreneurs into the funnel creating unimpeded onramps to the ecosystem. The Navigator program will:

- ❖ Identify Frontline Navigators
- ❖ Train Navigators
- ❖ Compile knowledge and resources for support
- ❖ Ensure outreach to underserved communities and offer resources in Spanish
- ❖ Track effectiveness and improve
- ❖ Remain current and visible



Key partners for this effort include the Frontline Navigators, regional, state, and federal resources (private, public and nonprofit). The Frontline Navigators represent the portal or frontline. These are the people, organizations, and agencies that entrepreneurs and small businesses approach for knowledge and access to resources. Although communities differ, the common local first points of contact include Chambers of Commerce, City and County governments (planning, zoning, business license, economic development), Banks, Accountants, Attorneys, Higher education, Workforce centers, Tribal economic development, Small Business Development Centers, Entrepreneurship support platforms, Coworking spaces, Incubators, Accelerators, etc.

The BRC will act as the lead to convene and support the Navigator program. Initial convenings of Frontline Navigators will inventory the knowledge and resources needed to support the ecosystem, for example, inventory of businesses in Inyo County, descriptions, and businesses for sale. The BRC can then focus on establishing tools for the Frontline Navigators such as contact lists, resource lists, descriptions and establish processes to disseminate information. Frontline Navigators must also be bilingual or have language resources on-hand to stay relevant with the community and promote equality and inclusivity. Both entrepreneurs' needs and Community resources continually evolve, and the Navigator program culture and systems should embrace this dynamic foundation.

Entrepreneurs are the innovators, the creators, and the doers of a community. In a symbiotic relationship, an entrepreneur's vision and determination can help shape a community, and an entrepreneur's success can be a vitality indicator of the community's entrepreneurial ecosystem. As for rural communities, this relationship between entrepreneurs and their communities needs to be even stronger to overcome the shortfalls in resources, talents, and accessible information they experience in comparison to urban communities. The Kaufmann Foundation, the premier think tank on entrepreneurship and communities, describes the necessary elements of an ecosystem in the following manner.

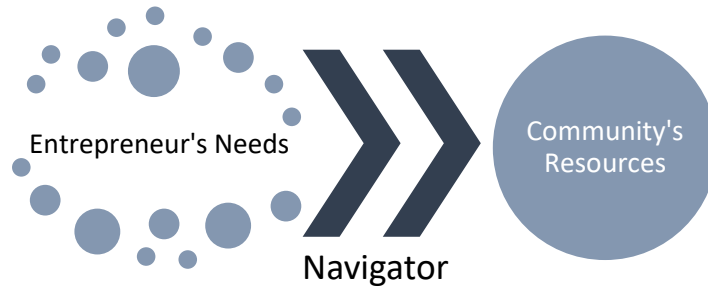
"A thriving ecosystem includes these key elements:

- **Entrepreneurs** who aspire to start and grow new businesses, and the people who support entrepreneurs.
- **Talent** that can help companies grow.
- People and institutions with **knowledge and resources** to help entrepreneurs.
- Individuals and institutions that serve as **champions and conveners** of entrepreneurs and the ecosystem.
- **Onramps** (or access points) to the ecosystem so that anyone and everyone can participate.
- **Intersections** that facilitate the interaction of people, ideas, and resources.
- **Stories** that people tell about themselves and their ecosystem.
- **Culture** that is rich in social capital – collaboration, cooperation, trust, reciprocity, and a focus on the common good – makes the ecosystem come alive by connecting all the elements."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building Playbook 3.0, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2019, <https://www.kauffman.org/ecosystem-playbook-draft-3/ecosystems/>.





Vibrant and healthy entrepreneurial ecosystems include key elements such as culture, success stories, applicable resources, funding opportunities, but most importantly, navigators. Navigators are the bridge between communities and their entrepreneurs.

Communities have long understood the challenge of information flow and use a variety of strategies to address this problem. Common tools include comprehensive websites and State-supported hotlines. Where these efforts fall short is generally in the digestibility, completeness, and accuracy of information. The Small Business Administration recently established the Community Navigator Program (2-year program) and awarded 1-5M to 51 grantees to deploy the model, “The program, established by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, will use a community navigator approach to help small businesses, with a focus on those owned by veterans, women, and socially and economically disadvantaged individuals - including in rural and urban communities. The program is comprised of a lead “Hub” at the center of a network of “Spoke” organizations that deploy community advocates to work with small businesses during the economic recovery.”<sup>3</sup> The SBA Pilot program will yield valuable learning and impact.

Establishing a robust, local program with a long-term commitment to learn and evolve will help ensure the BRC’s success. Ultimately, the program’s effectiveness is measured by the experience of entrepreneurs and the evolution of the ecosystem.

*Activities Timeline*

Key Activities	2022				2023				2024	2025	2026	Long Term
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
<b>Navigator</b>	Identify Frontline Navigators											
	Convene											
	Build support resources											
	Promotion											
	Measure effectiveness											
	Continuous Improvement											

<sup>3</sup> Community Navigator Pilot Program Frequently Asked Questions 10/28/21, U.S. Small Business Administration, <https://www.sba.gov/document/support-frequently-asked-questions-about-community-navigator-pilot-program>



Key Performance Indicators and Outcomes

		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
<b>KPIs</b>							
<b>Navigator Program</b>	Frontline Navigators Trained						
	Resources compiled						
	Online portal established						
	System for updates established						
	Utilization measured						
	Client satisfaction measured						
<b>Outcomes</b>							
<b>Navigator Program</b>	# of Navigators	6-8	9-12	13-15	>15	>15	>15
	# of connections and referrals	~20	~100	~150	~200	~200	~200
	Client satisfaction ratings	65%	75%	85%	>90%	>90%	>90%

## Events and Meetups

Events and Meetups are much what they sound like. They can take many forms, but in essence, they are a place for people to gather, meet new people, be inspired, and create culture organically. Events and Meetups are crucial to the top of the funnel, and therefore the funnel strategy as a whole. This is how communities attract new members, grow, and build an ecosystem capable of sustaining itself.

Events and Meetups should be targeted to a wide audience. Individuals in that audience can include aspiring and established entrepreneurs, technologists, support industries (legal, accounting, etc.), educators, community builders, investors, and more. The defining characteristic of those groups is that they are all interested in supporting the success and growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Key partners will include other local organizations like local co-working spaces, the SBDC, the Chamber of Commerce, and Cerro Coso Community College.

The resources required for running events and meetups are straightforward and include:

- An organizer (or team)
- A marketing plan & budget
- Physical space, and sometimes food and drink (especially delicious local treats!)
- Prize money to pitch competitions.

The types of events and meetups that we recommend hosting include:



Networking Events	Targeted Meetups	Competitions or Pitch Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Audience: wide audience of all the archetypes that make up an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Including entrepreneurs, inventors, investors, service providers, educators and community builders.</li> <li>•Strategy: Attract entrepreneurial individuals to the BRC, build a culture of innovation and interaction.</li> <li>•How to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Plan exciting speakers, events and activities that appeal to your target audience.</li> <li>•Market events to the wider community.</li> <li>•Build in plenty of time for facilitated mingling and interaction.</li> <li>•Provide clear ways to engage with the BRC.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Audience: a targeted group of people interested in a subject matter area or particular industry. These individuals can be actively involved in said subject, in a support role, or just curious.</li> <li>•Strategy: Reach out into a segment of interest in the region. (space exploration? sustainable recreation?) Attract individuals that aren't typically attracted to "entrepreneurship" but would be rich additives to the ecosystem.</li> <li>•How to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Bring in leaders in the selected space as speakers, or informal meet and greets</li> <li>•Weave in themes of innovation &amp; entrepreneurship among the larger theme.</li> <li>•Encourage interaction between guests and BRC members.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Audience: engaged members of the entrepreneurial community, many early in their journey. Also, members of the wider ecosystem interested in learning about and supporting the new entrants into the community.</li> <li>•Strategy: Engage entrepreneurs and inspire competition with the end goal of helping everyone move their ideas and businesses forward.</li> <li>•How to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Pitch events provide an opportunity for fledgling entrepreneurs to get their feet wet, practice sharing their story and interacting, and introduce them to the larger community.</li> <li>•Market to innovators &amp; entrepreneurs. Run workshops and consulting sessions to help them prepare and bring them into the BRC.</li> <li>•Host a big event and give prize money!</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Examples of Events & Meetups in other communities:

- Examples of Networking Events:
  - Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship Forums
    - Example of networking event
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U435jujD4IE>
    - <https://cie.calpoly.edu/event/may-forum-2022/>
  - Sacramento's Startup Happy Hour:
    - <https://startupsac.com/startupsac-happy-hour/>
- Example of a Targeted Meetup
  - Cal Poly MedTech Speaker Series
    - <https://cie.calpoly.edu/medtech-speaker-series/>
    - <https://youtu.be/i7U2hoGm94g>
    - <https://youtu.be/5NvnGG5AiU0>
- Example of a pitch events
  - Cal Poly Elevator Pitch Competition
    - <https://cie.calpoly.edu/prepare/elevator-pitch-competition/>
  - Sac State Spark Pitch Event
    - <https://www.csus.edu/center/carlsen/center-spotlights/spark-venture-competition.html>



### Activities Timeline

		2022				2023				2024	2025	2026	Long Term
Key Activities		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
Events and Meetups	Networking Events												
	Targeted Meetups												
	Competitions and Pitch Events												

### Key Performance Indicators and Outcomes

		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
<b>KPIs</b>							
Events & Meetups	Networking Events Held						
	Partner organizations or businesses engaged						
	Competition Prize Money Established						
	Long term event sponsors established						
	Targeted industries established						
<b>Outcomes</b>							
Events & Meetups	# of Events	3-6	7-12	13-15	>15	>15	>15
	# of Attendees	~20	~100	~150	~200	~200	~200
	Partner organizations or businesses engaged	2-4	6-8	8-10	>10	>10	>10

## Business Development Services

Business Development Services is an incredibly important piece of the overall strategy in launching a successful BRC. These services can vary widely, but all are in place to teach entrepreneurs basic business skills and support the growth of their businesses, often in a targeted or one-to-one manner. In the context of the funnel strategy, these services and programs are key in helping the entrepreneurs that make it into your funnel learn, grow and continue to build their businesses.

The audience for these programs is primarily entrepreneurs, from the beginning to later stages of launching their businesses. This is part of the core value of the Business Resource Center and what will ultimately keep entrepreneurs engaged and coming back to be a part of the community. The Small Business Development Center will be a critical partner in providing worthwhile services. A robust mentorship network will also be crucial.

The resources required for these services include:

- SBDC expansion
- BRC staffing to:
  - manage programs
  - build & manage mentorship network
  - aggregate opportunities



The types of business development services that will be crucial to the Business Resource Center include:

Financial Readiness Training	Business Basics Workshops	SBDC Consulting Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FRT includes Training and 1-1 support to entrepreneurs and small businesses to assist in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of realistic financial projections,</li> <li>• Educate on types of funding, pros and cons of various options, and</li> <li>• Financial management</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Audience: Idea stage to startup and existing business owners.</li> <li>• Strategy: Ensure that new businesses in the region have the knowledge and tools for financial success.</li> <li>• How to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host workshops</li> <li>• One on one training (via SBDC)</li> <li>• Partnerships with local banking institutions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Basics Workshops cover common topics that most new or small business owners face.</li> <li>• Audience: Idea stage to startup and existing business owners.</li> <li>• Strategy: Provides learning opportunities via information presentation from experts AND peer to peer learning with the audience sharing their experiences and strategies</li> <li>• How to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host small group workshops</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In partnership with the SBDC, the BRC can provide one on one consulting and assistance on an ad hoc basis.</li> <li>• Audience: Startup and existing business owners.</li> <li>• Strategy: Provide direct, personalized assistance for the businesses in the community.</li> <li>• How to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engage with startups and existing businesses that are beyond the idea stage.</li> <li>• engage with the SBDC to create a client relationship with the business owners</li> <li>• SBDC consultants work one on one with businesses to support in the areas they need it the most.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Examples of Business Development Services in other communities:

- Financial Readiness Training
  - SLO SBDC's QuickBooks 101 Workshop
    - (scroll down) <https://sbdc.calpoly.edu/workshopsandwebinars/>
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD-v-LJfIKQ>
- Business Basics Workshops:
  - SLO SBDC Coffee & Conversation
    - <https://sbdc.calpoly.edu/coffee-conversation/>
    - <https://sbdc.calpoly.edu/event/coffee-and-conversation-12/>
  - Sac State's Virtual Entrepreneurship Toolkit Series
    - <https://www.csus.edu/center/carlsen/build-with-carlsen-center/virtual-toolkit-series.html>
- SBDC Consulting Services:
  - <https://sbdc.calpoly.edu/>
  - <https://sbdc.calpoly.edu/consulting/>



## Activities Timeline

		2022				2023				2024	2025	2026	Long Term
Key Activities		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
Business Development Services	Financial Readiness Training												
	Business Basics Workshops												
	SBDC Consulting Services												

## Key Performance Indicators and Outcomes

		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
KPIs							
Business Development Resources	Financial Trainers Engaged						
	Local Speakers Engaged						
	SBDC Services fully established						
	Mentor network established						
	Client satisfaction measured						
Outcomes							
Business Development Resources	# of coaching sessions	baseline SBDC +15%	baseline + 20%	baseline + 30%	baseline + 30%	baseline + 30%	baseline + 30%
	# of connections and referrals	~20	~100	~150	~200	~200	~200
	Client satisfaction ratings	65%	75%	85%	>90%	>90%	>90%

## Initiatives and Special Projects

Beyond the core functions of the BRC, initiatives and special projects will be pursued based on priority, opportunity, and capacity. Priority refers to the importance of the health of the ecosystem is providing a fertile ground for company launch and growth. Opportunity refers to the likelihood of success based on many factors including potential funding, the interest of partners, complexity, etc. Capacity refers to the capacity of the BRC, which is to be determined (TBD) at this point until resources are identified. Several initiatives and special projects surfaced during the study. They are evaluated here based on these key considerations.

### Capital Resource Development initiative

**Priority:** High

**Opportunity:** Medium to low short-term; Medium to high long-term

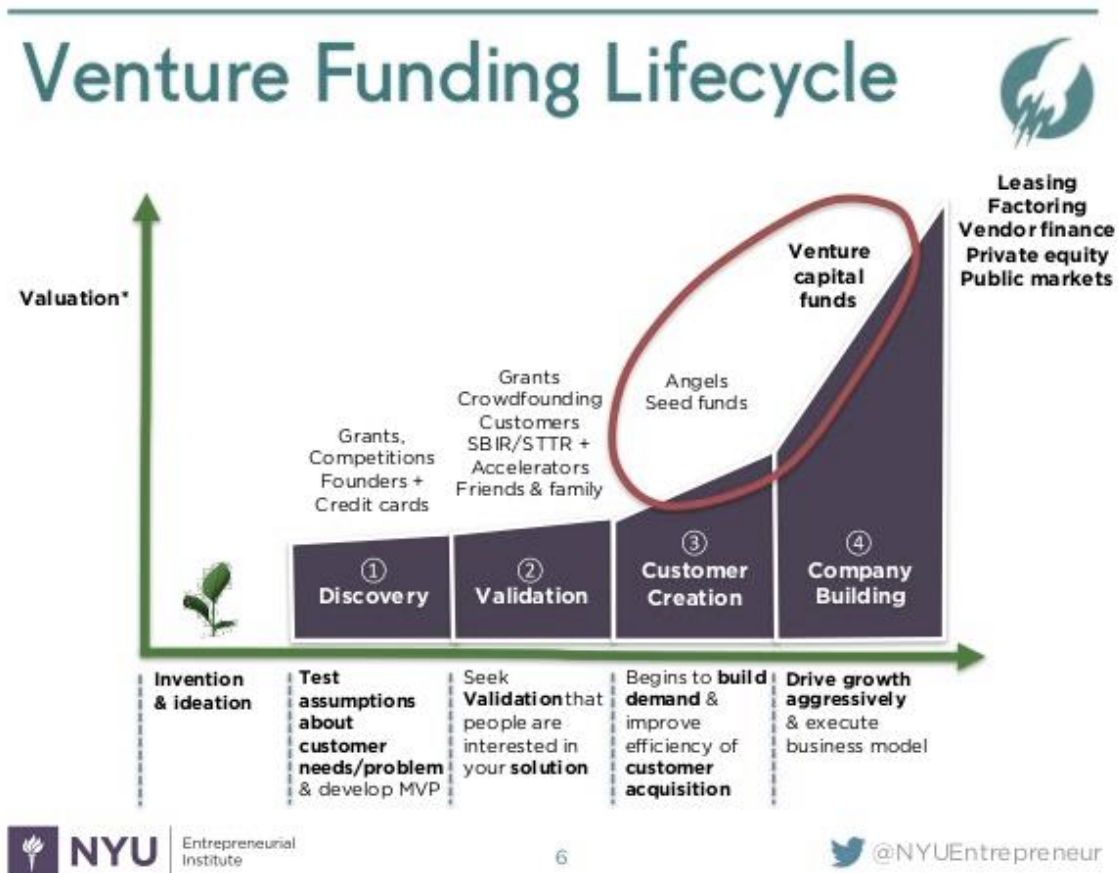
**Capacity:** TBD

Capital is the lifeblood of small businesses. Access to a variety of capital instruments from microloans to traditional banking instruments to investment capital all serves to fuel companies at various stages of their





lifecycle.



Rural areas have a special challenge presenting the necessary financing choices within their ecosystems. For that reason, it is important to cultivate relationships with regional providers and look for opportunities to build or enhance offerings locally, for example, SBC managed microloan pool serving Tahoe. The BRC will serve in the role of the connector to regional resources and advance knowledge of the breadth and utility of resources available for Inyo County businesses. For entrepreneurs and small businesses, this means access to the right capital at the right time with the right conditions. The foundation of this effort is to make available financial readiness preparation which is a core component of the BRC Core Business Development Services. Fostering relationships with regional providers is a BRC Core Regional Hub function. Capital Resource Development as a BRC initiative will initially focus on cultivating the local investment community and microloan fund.

### ***Development of Angel Network***

Inyo and Mono County are home to many high net worth individuals both as full-time and part-time residents. “Resort rural” communities have a special chance to engage successful professionals, entrepreneurs, and high net worth families who come to the area to enjoy the natural beauty and recreation opportunities in the entrepreneurship ecosystem. These individuals generally have experience in larger markets and are familiar with investment activities and structures, pitch events, and mentoring. They enjoy the opportunity to get involved in their communities, meet people with similar interests and backgrounds, and be involved with building the local ecosystem. They also have invaluable networks that can provide benefits to the region’s



entrepreneurs. The Angel Capital Association describes the value of Angels to the entrepreneurship ecosystem in several ways:

Economic factors:

- “Prolific: Angel investors support up to 90% of outside equity raised by startups (after friends and family)
- High Impact: estimated \$25B in 70,000 companies each year
- Jobs: Over a 25-year period, firms younger than five years accounted for all the net new jobs in the U.S.
- Economic growth: Research shows that the largest growth comes from high-growth, innovative startups, the kind angels fund

Entrepreneurs Count on Angels for:

- Business mentoring, monitoring, and guidance
- Critical connections for customers, additional funders, and acquirers
- Beyond funding, exit experience and strategies”<sup>4</sup>

Angel Networks start with a core group of interested individuals gathering to look at deals. Angel Networks are operating in nearby communities – Fresno, Bakersfield, Sacramento, and the Tahoe region. An initial meeting will be held with a group assembled by local businessperson and philanthropist Sam Walker with representatives from Regional Angel Groups to provide insights into their lessons learned and explore collaboration. If the group decides to move forward decisions on the process will be made. Possible options include:

- BRC can assist with vetting regional “deals” to bring forward to the Inyo/Mono group in a private pitch event
- Group can set up the intake and regular vetting process including social pitch events
- BRC and the SBDC can host an AngelCon event – provides deal structure and due diligence training for investors as well as cultivates entrepreneurs for presentation
- Group can partner with SBDC and BRC for regional Capital Conference to include a pitch event and entrepreneurs training in investment preparedness
- Group can co-sponsor idea stage competitions
- Group can co-invest with other regional Angel groups
- Group can establish an investment and/or microloan fund
- Group can engage with Angel Capital Network for support

Investment capital is a part of the “capital stack” critical for entrepreneurs of a certain type or industry and stage of growth. Also known as risk capital, the availability of an organized local group of investors will fuel company start and growth and greatly strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Examples:

- San Luis Obispo started the Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in 2010-11. These efforts served to organize and ignite the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Angel investors lived in and visited the area but were not organized until these efforts were spawned. Shortly after CIE and SBDC started, SLO Seeds was formed as an Angel

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.angelcapitalassociation.org/about-aca/>



Group. SLO Seeds has been an active group since that time. The addition of AngelCon (<https://sbd.c.calpoly.edu/angelcon/>) within the past five years has further amplified the options for entrepreneurs.

- Telluride, Co is home to many high net worth individuals whose value as mentors and investors lead to the start of the Telluride Venture Accelerator (TVA) in 2012. TVA was formed to activate the regional ecosystem and served as a vetting tool for local investors. Concurrently, several investors and the Telluride foundation formed the Telluride Venture Fund (<https://tellurideventurefund.com/>). TVF funds TVA companies, regional companies, and those outside the area in industry sectors consistent with the partner’s experience and interest, for example, the outdoor industry. TVF created a microloan fund and supports other capital formation activities in the region.

*Angel Network Activities Timeline*

Key Activities	2022				2023				2024	2025	2026	Long-term
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
Initial Meeting		■	■									
Pitch event				■				■	■	■	■	■
Competitions for idea stage					■	■			■	■	■	■
Establish intake, vetting process and regular meetings				■	■							
Annual Capital Conference/AngelCon event			■		■		■		■	■	■	■
Regional fund										■		

**Microloan Fund**

Microloans and microfinance have their history in developing countries and were used as a tool to help alleviate poverty through entrepreneurship. Over time and especially in the US microloans have become a vital element to the capital stack. Generally, they are small amounts <50k, with flexible terms – often payments deferred for an initial period, low-interest rates, and relaxed collateral requirements. Microloan programs are offered through CDFIs and similar nonprofit lending institutions and economic and community development-orientated nonprofit organizations. The federal government has seed funds available to support Microloan programs through USDA, EDA, SBA, and CDBG (Dept of Commerce). Seed funds are also available through private donors, foundations, and in some cases state legislatures. Microloans can be open to all types of businesses and individuals or utilized to target specific groups or industries.

Regional and statewide CDFIs include Inyo County in their geography for Microloan products, however, there does not appear to be activity or awareness among the small business community. As a first step, the BRC will cultivate relationships with existing providers (part of BRC Core activities) and attempt to fill the gap. Over time any gaps and opportunities will become evident and the BRC may elect to establish a regional fund. This fund is initially recommended to provide small loans of 10-50k (may go higher based on discovery) and be a generalized fund to support business launch and growth. The region the BRC will serve is small in population and pursuing



any federal funds to seed this effort is not advised at first. Starting with a privately funded PRI (program-related investment) with Foundation, Corporate or individual funding is advised. As demand develops, federal seed funds may be sought.

*Microloan Fund Activities Timeline*

	Key Activities	2022				2023				2024	2025	2026	Long-term
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
<b>Capital Resource Development - Microloan fund</b>	Activate relationship with current providers of Microloans												
	Establish PRI funded regional Microloan program												

Doubling down on filling out the capital stack is paramount to the condition of the ecosystem. Angel or investment capital and Microlending are two key components the BRC can impact.

*Key Performance Indicators and Outcomes*

		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
	<b>KPIs</b>						
<b>Capital Resource Development</b>	Group formalized with regular meetings, intake and due diligence						
	Private and public pitch events are held						
	Investments made						
	Regional Fund established						
	Existing Microloan providers active in community						
	Regional Microloan program established						
	<b>Outcomes</b>						
<b>Capital Resource Development</b>	#investor meetings w/businesses	1-10	11-20	21-30	>30	>30	>30
	\$ Investments made	50,000	100,000	200,000	>200,000	>200,000	~300,000+
	#connections to existing microloan providers	1-10	11-20	21-30	>30	>30	>30
	\$ Microloans existing and new fund	25,000	50,000	150,000	>150,000	>150,000	>150,000

## Climate Innovations Cluster Initiative

**Priority:** Medium to start because of capacity; High long-term

**Opportunity:** High

**Capacity:** TBD

Public and private investment to slow Climate change and mitigate anticipated or realized impacts is exploding. Projects and dollars are flowing in from all sectors – public, corporate, foundations, and individuals. Alex Daniels of The Chronicle of Philanthropy recently reported in connection with the UN meeting in Glasgow on Climate change that Foundation investment in climate change-related investments is soaring. Investment focuses include; securing land rights and conserving forest land, food-system transformation, and landscape restoration,



entrepreneurs working on technologies to remove or reduce carbon emissions, reducing methane emissions, and developing renewable energy.<sup>5</sup>

Inyo and Mono counties are seeing this investment trend and are poised to attract more. The Climate Innovations initiative intends to maximize the long-term impact of these dollars flowing into the community through encouraging company formation and increasing the capacity of existing companies to win contracts. The cluster was described in the market opportunities section and includes the following:

- Forestry and Fire – restoration, mitigation, and fuels treatment
- Natural Resource management – alternative energy solutions and desert ecosystem preservation
- Sustainable Recreation – construction and tourism
- Environmental Science – planning, problem-solving, and consulting

The initiative can be launched through the following actions and resources;

- Information, Communication, Networking, and Collaboration – The BRC will serve as an aggregator and promoter of regional opportunities including;
  - Establishment of Advisory Committee for the effort to include relevant federal and state agency representatives, municipalities, county governments, nonprofits, and private sector representatives.
  - Central Repository or “planroom” - a “library” where businesses can view bidding documents for projects seeking project proposals or bids. Expanding on the [CAL FIRE Forest Health Online Project Map](#).
  - Networking events for people interested in opportunities for jobs, partnerships, or bidding.
  - Promote and support convenings and meetups for Industry groups.
- Technical Assistance – partnering with Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC), SBDC, and Cerro Coso Community College to provide training in regulatory and business areas such as NEPA, Bid proposals, costing, management of federal and state contracts, etc.
- Advocacy – Along with the Advisory Committee, advocate for the region’s relevance and capacity to be a think tank for climate innovation.
- Specialized Platforms – Bootcamps and Accelerators to attract, fund and build companies in the cluster.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/climate-technology-business-united-nations-philanthropy-1bd5462022f094472f61cef51adab3b9>



Activities Timeline

	Key Activities	2022				2023				2024	2025	2026	Long Term
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
Climate Innovations Cluster	Establish Advisory Committee												
	Advocacy												
	Technical Assistance												
	Industry meet-ups and convenings												
	Bootcamps and Accelerators												

Key Performance Indicators and Outcomes

	KPIs	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
Climate Innovations Cluster	Advisory Committee formed						
	Central Repository created						
	Industry meetups and convenings held						
	Robust technical assistance resources available						
	Bootcamps and Accelerators offered						
	<b>Outcomes</b>						
Climate Innovations Cluster	# jobs increase in focus areas	6-8	9-12	13-15	>15	>15	>15
	# of connections and referrals	~10	~15	~20	>20	>20	>20
	# companies increase in focus areas	1	2	2	2	2	2
	Increased sales in focus industry over base year	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	10%/year over 2026

## AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan) Initiative

**Priority:** High

**Opportunity:** High

**Capacity:** BRC and Tribe TBD

The initiative recognizes the opportunity to work with the regions’ Tribes to bolster entrepreneurship. Inyo County has a concentration of AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan) population and an opening to forge a unique partnership to accomplish Tribal and regional economic goals. The plan described in this section should be regarded as a proposal to be discussed and adapted in partnership with the Bishop Paiute Tribe (“The Tribe”).





### Population by Race/Ethnicity, Inyo County

Race/Ethnicity	2010	2016	Percent of Total in 2016		2010 to 2016 7-year Change	
			County	California	County	California
White alone	12,442	11,733	64.0%	38.4%	-5.7%	-1.8%
Hispanic or Latino	3,310	3,867	21.1%	38.6%	16.8%	10.8%
American Indian alone	1,855	1,969	10.7%	0.4%	6.1%	-11.0%
Black or African American alone	176	179	1.0%	5.6%	1.7%	-0.3%
Asian alone	255	222	1.2%	13.7%	-12.9%	12.7%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0	34	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%	5.7%
Other/Multiple	267	322	1.8%	3.1%	20.6%	53.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates

Source Credit: The Center for Economic Development at CSU, Chico, and the Rural County Representatives of California

The Tribe has recently completed construction of a new gas station and convenience store on the 395 Corridor and plans to build a 4-unit commercial strip. These units are designated for Tribal businesses and the BRC can play an important role in working with the Tribe to inspire members to develop their ideas, business plans and establish a vetting system to choose then support new companies.

Starting with ideation exercises in both the High School and community, then applying the funnel strategy, the Bishop Tribe and BRC can arrive at 4 quality business opportunities to local in the commercial strip. The events and programs can be open to people outside the Tribe which provides a double benefit to the community, builds critical mass for the programs, and provides networking for team formation, mentoring, and collaboration. The elements in the funnel strategy recommended include:

Ideas and Business Models	Selection	Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have ideation exercise(s) and Design Thinking workshops. These can involve maker activity - prototyping, use of 3D printers, laser cutters. Objective is to inspire ideas and develop prototypes.</li> <li>• Conduct intensive short program(s) to ferret out business models and determine feasibility. (Bootcamps, Startup Weekends, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through the short programming individuals will be encourage to compete for a spot in the Strip.</li> <li>• Selection should include presentation to a committee of entrepreneurs and business developers that can add value.</li> <li>• May want to consider 1 of 4 spaces as shared and rotate many companies into a "popup" space.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing incubation services for selected companies comprised of milestone driven intensive business development coaching and monitoring.</li> <li>• Have individuals not selected plugin with BRC for ongoing support</li> <li>• Work with Tribe to construct additional retail space</li> </ul>



This same model can be replicated for other competitions the Partners (Tribes and BRC) may want to consider, the addition of new space and/or considering the 4 unit space as an Incubator model with a Graduation component where successful companies “graduate” out into other space leaving room for the next crop of entrepreneurs.

*Activities Timeline*

Key Activities	2022				2023				2024	2025	2026	Long-term
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
<b>AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan)</b>	Ideation and Design Thinking activities			■	■			■	■	■	■	■
	Business Model short programs				■	■		■	■	■	■	■
	Competition/Selection					■		■		■	■	■
	Incubation						■	■	■	■	■	■
	Additional Space and/or competitions								■	■	■	■

*Key Performance Indicators and Outcomes*

KPIs		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
<b>AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan)</b>	Ideation and Design Thinking workshops conducted	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Business model short programs conducted	■	■	■	■	■	■
	4 Businesses selected (could be greater if shared space offered)		■				
	Incubation services provided		■	■	■	■	■
	More competitions are held			■	■	■	■
<b>Outcomes</b>							
<b>AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan)</b>	#participants in DT and Ideation workshops	30	40	50	>50	>50	>50
	#participants in short programs	10	15	20	>20	>20	>20
	#NA business starts		4	4	4	4	4
	#jobs created		6	8	>8	>8	>8

**Special projects**

The BRC can participate in or spearhead special projects that fit into the mission from time to time as capacity permits. Two projects discussed during the Study were an Internship and Apprenticeship program and the Bishop Airport expansion.

**Internship & Apprenticeship Program**

Discussions regarding the preference and need to grow your own workforce led to an interest in creating an Internship and Apprenticeship project. The participants would be both youth and adults looking to start or change career paths and would also apply to succession planning, which is an escalating challenge for the





region. The key partners on the project are; Job Spot; Cerro Coso Community College, Inyo County Office of Education Adult Ed program, School Districts, and the Tribe. The project would differ from corporate and government programs by allowing participants to gain experience with startup and growth companies, focus industries, and companies looking to transition ownership. In turn, employers can test out the fit of a potential hire. This is especially important when the employee pool is limited, and employers are looking to hire based more on personal traits rather than experience. While an important project, the BRC may not be the right fit to lead it, potentially acting as an intermediary with companies it is actively working with.

### ***Bishop Airport expansion***

Expansion of the Bishop airport to accommodate commercial air service for the region and replace the Mammoth Airport for flights with seat guarantees is a clear opening for economic growth in Inyo County. United Airlines relocated in the fall of '21, temporary structures are being erected for passenger accommodation and transportation companies and a new terminal is slated for 2026. The BRC can work with the County Airport authority and the SBDC to identify and communicate business opportunities while cultivating locals to respond.

## **Economics**

### **Activities Timeline**

The Activities Timeline compilation shows activity starting in Q1 2022 prior to completion of the building;

- Begin to identify the Frontline Navigators
- Start talking about the BRC with introductory Meetup
- Start cultivating relationships with Resource providers
- Capture information needs from Frontline Navigators and information on resources
- Hold SBDC Training

Staff is expected to be hired at mid-year and activities ramp up at that point with full staff in place at the beginning of 2023 with the anticipation of grant funding.



	Key Activities	2022				2023				2024	2025	2026	Long Term
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
<b>Navigator</b>	Identify Frontline Navigators												
	Convene												
	Build support resources												
	Promotion												
	Measure effectiveness												
	Continuous Improvement												
<b>Events and Meetups</b>	Networking Events												
	Targeted Meetups												
	Competitions and Pitch Events												
<b>Business Development Services</b>	Financial Readiness												
	Business Basics Workshops												
	SBDC Consulting Services												
<b>Capital Resource Development - Angel Network</b>	Initial Meeting												
	Pitch event												
	Competitions - idea stage												
	Establish intake, vetting process, and regular meetings												
	Annual Capital Conference/AngelCon												
	Regional fund												
<b>Capital Resource Development - Microloan fund</b>	Activate relationship with current providers of Microloans												
	Establish PRI funded regional Microloan program												
<b>Climate Innovations Cluster</b>	Establish Advisory Committee												
	Advocacy												
	Technical Assistance												
	Industry meetups and convenings												
	Bootcamps and Accelerators												
<b>AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan)</b>	Ideation and Design Thinking activities												
	Business Model short programs												
	Competition/Selection												
	Incubation												
	Additional Space and/or competitions												



## KPIs and outcome measurements

Key Performance Indicators and outcome measures have been estimated for the BRC Core activities and Initiatives. They are 5-year and long-term estimates. The outcome measures are based on the experience of other startups BRC similar efforts. It will be important to modify, adjust, monitor, and track these outcomes to suit the needs of the Community, Governing body, and Funders.

		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
<b>Navigator Program</b>	<b>KPIs</b>						
	Frontline Navigators Trained						
	Resources compiled						
	Online portal established						
	System for updates established						
	Utilization measured						
	Client satisfaction measured						
	<b>Outcomes</b>						
<b>Navigator Program</b>	# of Navigators	6-8	9-12	13-15	>15	>15	>15
	# of connections and referrals	~20	~100	~150	~200	~200	~200
	Client satisfaction ratings	65%	75%	85%	>90%	>90%	>90%
		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
<b>Events &amp; Meetups</b>	<b>KPIs</b>						
	Networking Events Held						
	Partner organizations or businesses engaged						
	Competition Prize Money Established						
	Long term event sponsors established						
	Targeted industries established						
	<b>Outcomes</b>						
<b>Events &amp; Meetups</b>	# of Events	6-8	9-12	13-15	>15	>15	>15
	# of Attendees	~20	~100	~150	~200	~200	~200
	Partner organizations or businesses engaged	2-4	6-8	8-10	>10	>10	>10
		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
<b>Business Development Resources</b>	<b>KPIs</b>						
	Financial Trainers Engaged						
	Local Speakers Engaged						
	SBDC Services fully established						
	Mentor network established						
	Client satisfaction measured						
	<b>Outcomes</b>						
<b>Business Development Resources</b>	# of coaching sessions	baseline SBDC +15%	baseline + 20%	baseline + 30%	baseline + 30%	baseline + 30%	baseline + 30%
	# of connections and referrals	~20	~100	~150	~200	~200	~200
	Client satisfaction ratings	65%	75%	85%	>90%	>90%	>90%



		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
	<b>KPIs</b>						
<b>Capital Resource Development</b>	Group formalized with regular meetings, intake, and due diligence						
	Private and public pitch events are held						
	Investments made						
	Regional Fund established						
	Existing Microloan providers active in the community						
	Regional Microloan program established						
	<b>Outcomes</b>						
<b>Capital Resource Development</b>	#investor meetings w/businesses	1-10	11-20	21-30	>30	>30	>30
	\$ Investments made	50,000	100,000	200,000	>200,000	>200,000	~300,000+
	#connections to existing microloan providers	1-10	11-20	21-30	>30	>30	>30
	\$ Microloans existing and new fund	25,000	50,000	150,000	>150,000	>150,000	>150,000

		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
	<b>KPIs</b>						
<b>Climate Innovations Cluster</b>	Advisory Committee formed						
	Central Repository created						
	Industry meetups and convenings held						
	Robust technical assistance resources are available						
	Bootcamps and Accelerators offered						
	<b>Outcomes</b>						
<b>Climate Innovations Cluster</b>	# jobs increase in focus areas	6-8	9-12	13-15	>15	>15	>15
	# of connections and referrals	~10	~15	~20	>20	>20	>20
	# companies increase in focus areas	1	2	2	2	2	2
	Increased sales in focus industry over the base year	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	10%/year over 2026

		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Long Term Annual
	<b>KPIs</b>						
<b>AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan)</b>	Ideation and Design Thinking workshops conducted						
	Business model short programs conducted						
	4 Businesses selected (could be greater if shared space offered)						
	Incubation services provided						
	More competitions are held						
	<b>Outcomes</b>						
<b>AINA (American Indian/Native Alaskan)</b>	#participants in DT and Ideation workshops	30	40	50	>50	>50	>50
	#participants in short programs	10	15	20	>20	>20	>20
	#NA business starts		4	4	4	4	4
	#jobs created		6	8	>8	>8	>8



## Staffing

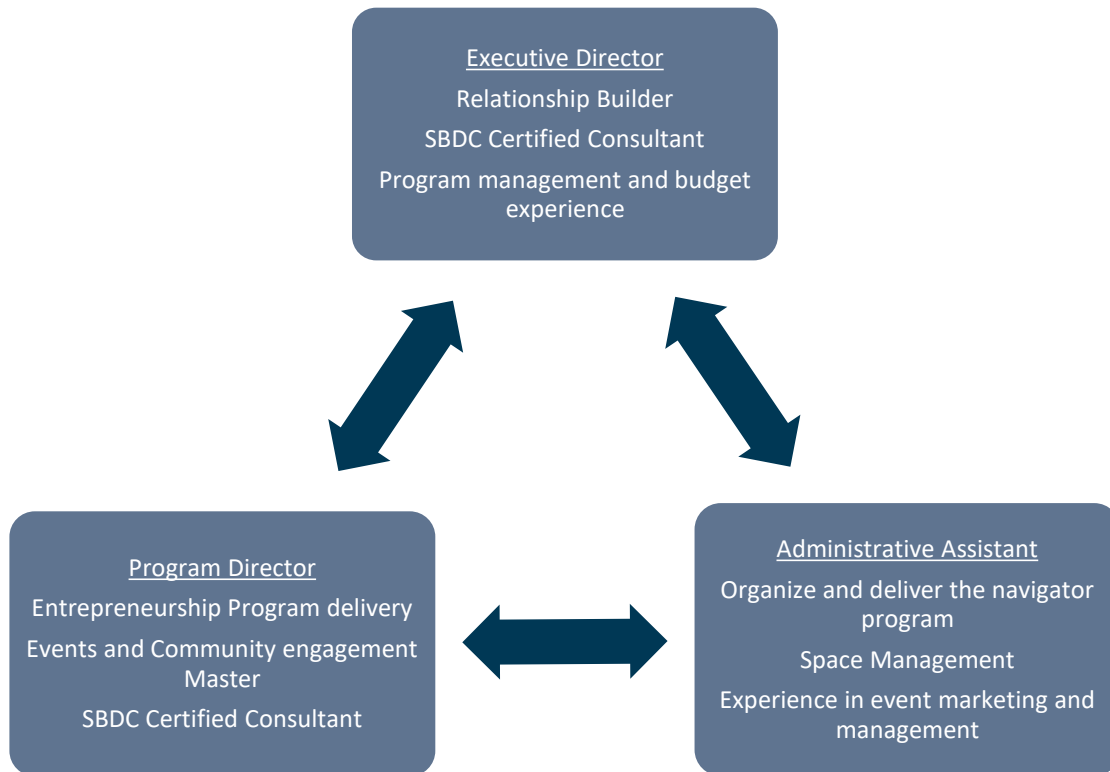
It is assumed the staff will be employed by the county through the first 1.5 years until 2023 in anticipation of CERF funding availability. There will be three full-time staff at the BRC at capacity. The Executive Director and Administrative Assistant will be hired at mid-year 2022, the Program Director in 2023.

The Executive Director (ED) as the lead for the organization will be Chief Relationship Builder focusing on building relationships with the existing business community, startup community, community at large, Cerro Coso Community College, The Tribe, School Districts, Focus Industries regionally and beyond, local, regional, state and federal governments and organizations, etc. It is critical that this leader is authentic and passionate and is driven to instigate the entrepreneurship ecosystem with the long view to positively impact the region's economy and improve citizens' standard of living. The ED must embrace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles and practice a leadership style of collaboration and empowerment.

The Program Director is the Chief of Delivery. It is their role to offer fun and exciting events that engage the broader community as well as high-intensity business development programming. They should exemplify creativity and courageous risk-taking - an out-of-the-box thinker. At the same time, the PD needs to deliver reliability and consistency within budgets.

The Administrative Assistant in Chief of Organization, managing expectations for the BRC users and embodying principles of Customer Service. They will manage the space and all that goes on there, and with the PM manage social media and promotions.

Also, to note, regarding equity and inclusion, staffing at the BRC should keep in mind the needs of their residents and provide adequate language services and bilingual navigators.



## Financial Plan

Income for the BRC includes:

- Rental of a dedicated desk and drop-in memberships for Partner organizations and is priced similar to Bishop Coworking. Regional resource partners should be encouraged to obtain memberships to support the BRC and provide them with a space to operate and network from in Bishop.
- Sponsorships for events and operations
- Government support including Inyo County support of building and SBDC support of some staffing. Funding will be pursued from USDA to cover the 2022-23 deficit and other government and philanthropic funding for 2024 and beyond.

Expenses for the BRC include:

- Staffing – 3 positions
- Professional services assume the County would cover accounting and insurance requirements through 2023. Beyond 2023 the budget assumes the BRC may operate independently and contract out accounting and be required to have an audit. Some legal fees are budgeted for legal entity establishment if required.
- Events assume 3 events in 2022 and 1 per month starting in 2023 and beyond
- IT assumes website development in 2022 and a revamp in 2024. Other expenses such as software, phone, and IT support are contained in this category.
- Consumables assume a limited need for photocopying, postage, and similar.
- Travel and Meetings recognizes the need to have facetime for the staff with regional, state, and national connections and peers.
- Building Services contains the costs associated with the building much of which are undetermined at this time.



## BRC 5-Year Financials

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
<b>Income</b>					
<i>Rental Income</i>	\$ 11,022	\$ 20,023	\$ 24,824	\$ 24,825	\$ 24,826
<i>Sponsorship Income</i>	\$ 5,000	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,000
<i>Government Grants and Contributions</i>	\$ 15,550	\$ 31,638	\$ 32,739	\$ 33,896	\$ 35,111
<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 31,572	\$ 64,661	\$ 70,563	\$ 71,721	\$ 72,937
<b>Expenses</b>					
<i>Staffing</i>	\$ 62,500	\$ 188,125	\$ 197,531	\$ 207,408	\$ 217,778
<i>Professional Services</i>	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 15,700	\$ 10,700	\$ 10,700
<i>Events &amp; Marketing</i>	\$ 2,700	\$ 3,600	\$ 3,600	\$ 3,600	\$ 3,600
<i>IT</i>	\$ 8,000	\$ 7,200	\$ 12,200	\$ 7,200	\$ 7,200
<i>Consumables</i>	\$ 900	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,800
<i>Travel &amp; Meetings</i>	\$ 2,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 5,750	\$ 5,750	\$ 5,750
<i>Building Services*</i>	\$ 4,800	\$ 9,600	\$ 9,600	\$ 9,600	\$ 9,600
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$ 81,900	\$ 213,325	\$ 246,181	\$ 246,058	\$ 256,428
<i>Income minus expenses</i>	\$ (50,328)	\$ (148,665)	\$ (175,618)	\$ (174,336)	\$ (183,491)

*\*Rent and maintenance not included*

The Working Group explored sustainability options among those are; establishing a county-wide business license and charging for services and space rental. The priority for the next steps in pursuing grant funding is to sustain the operation for the first three years while developing expertise and refinement of the business model.

## Plan for Long Term Expansion

The BRC will be fully staffed and operational in 2023. This plan laid out activities as part of the core function and initiatives. It should be expected that actual activities will sway, and pivot based on what the BRC discovers as it activates in the community as well as how the larger world changes. Being flexible and adaptive is key. For the BRC core, the long term looks much the same as the first 5-years, just better and experimental. For the initiatives, it is expected that momentum will be gained and the BRC will be poised to go deeper and drive bigger impacts, described below.

Capital Resource Development consists of Angel Networks and Microloan. As the Angel Network forms and gains momentum investors may consider establishing a Fund with priorities complementary to the economic development goals of the region. The BRC may be very involved in the establishment and management of a Fund or just benefit from it. Shorter-term, the BRC can choose to play an active role in vetting deals for the Angel group. There are benefits, challenges, and implications to these levels of engagement which the BRC and the Angel group will consider as this initiative moves forward.

The Focus Industries initiative doubles down on the location of the BRC being the economic and governmental hub of the Eastern Sierra region. The investment in Climate change and continued impacts necessitates an explosion in innovation. For the first 5-years, the BRC plan attempts to capture more of this activity for the economic benefit of the community. Long-term, the region can become a living think tank in this sector. The



BRC should consider a special focus on Acceleration and follow-on Incubation programs to capture and nurture innovations and business opportunities.

The AINA initiative has the opportunity to be an exciting ongoing robust program. The goals and resources of the 2 Partners – The Bishop Tribe and BRC, appear to be right in alignment. Starting with the 4-unit strip will allow the Partners to “date” and to test the market’s interest in the proposed programming. If all goes well, this collaboration can lead to more startups and growth AINA companies, utilizing the funnel approach to nurture companies through into business incubation and successful graduation.

