



Southern Colorado Economic Development District
121 West City Center Drive, Suite 200, Room 200B
Pueblo CO 81003 • (719) 545-8680

December 28, 2023

Board of County Commissioners for Huerfano County
401 Main Street
Walsenburg, Colorado 81089

Dear County Commissioners:

This past year has been one of change for our organization, but our commitment of service to each of our county members has not altered. We are asking for your support in 2023 as a dues-paying county in SCEDD. The following is a summary of what we have planned for the upcoming year.

Community Navigator Program: The SBA-funded program is designed to reduce barriers that underrepresented and underserved entrepreneurs often face in accessing the programs they need to recover, grow, or start their businesses. Community partners, also known as Spokes, provide training and counseling with a wide range of services including bookkeeping and accounting guidance, business plan development, e-commerce platforms, and access to capital.

As of November 30, 2022, 169 Unique Clients have received individual counseling from one or more of the program Spokes. Spokes have hosted 19 training sessions reaching 156 Community Navigator clients.

SCEDD will usher in 2023 by expanding the reach of the Community Navigator Program. This will be accomplished in part by sponsoring Community Navigator Expos in underserved areas. It is also important to highlight our successes, so Pop-up events are planned to showcase our participating clients. SCEDD is committed to the goal of increasing client participation in all 13 counties.

Broadband: SCEDD has been working diligently, in collaboration with its Broadband Consultant, in developing a Middle Mile Broadband Implementation Plan. This Plan, funded by grants from the Economic Development Administration and the Colorado Trust, will help guide our work in the broadband arena over the next several years. Through several state and federal initiatives, unprecedented funds will be granted to ensure accessibility and affordability of broadband. SCEDD, on behalf of five of our counties submitted Letters of Intent to apply for projects that totaled \$49 million.

SCEDD's Community Development Specialists will continue to work in the 13-county region to identify potential projects and build teams of stakeholders to develop fundable projects. Ditesco, SCEDD's Broadband Consultant, should have the bulk of the Plan completed by the time funding applications are made available. Data and action plans in the Plan will be critical tools in building successful projects.

SCEDD helps Southern Colorado prosper.



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Planning and Community Development: Planning efforts continued to bear fruit in 2022. In April 2022, SCEDD assisted seven counties in the region with Congressionally Directed Spending requests in the amount of \$9.4 million. Several grant requests were funded for projects throughout the region. Nearly \$1.4 million was awarded by the Economic Development Administration, Department of Local Affairs, the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, and Great Outdoors Colorado. Work continues on the Southeast Plains Workforce Housing Initiative and SCEDD staff is exploring ways to carry a similar model into other areas of the region.

The Community Development Specialist positions are new to SCEDD. A gap was identified early in the days of Broadband Program implementation and general service delivery throughout the region. The Community Development Specialist are tasked with several goals:

- Build relationships within their assigned counties to include county commissioners, county economic development professionals, council of governments leaders, and other stakeholders relevant to a specific project.
- Using the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as a baseline, facilitate discussions with relevant county stakeholders to prioritize CEDS action plans and identify other critical projects for development.
- Establish relationships with state and federal funders, including DOLA, OEDIT, CBO, Rural Development, and EDA.
- Develop funding plans for priority projects.

The two Community Development Specialists work in assigned portions of the SCEDD region. However, they will work as a team and county boundaries will not prevent one from helping the other as particular skills sets emerge.

We are working hard to be a partner worthy of your support. I have included a supplement in this correspondence that lists accomplishments for your county in 2022.

We encourage you to reach out to our staff to discuss potential partnerships or other creative ways to help our region prosper. Come help us make Southern Colorado the premier place to live, work, and play.

We look forward to working with you!

Leslie Mastroianni
Interim Executive Director

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