2026-2031
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

ELBERT, LINCOLN, KIT CARSON AND CHEYENNE COUNTIES

COLORADO'S CENTRAL PLAINS

East Central Council of Governments

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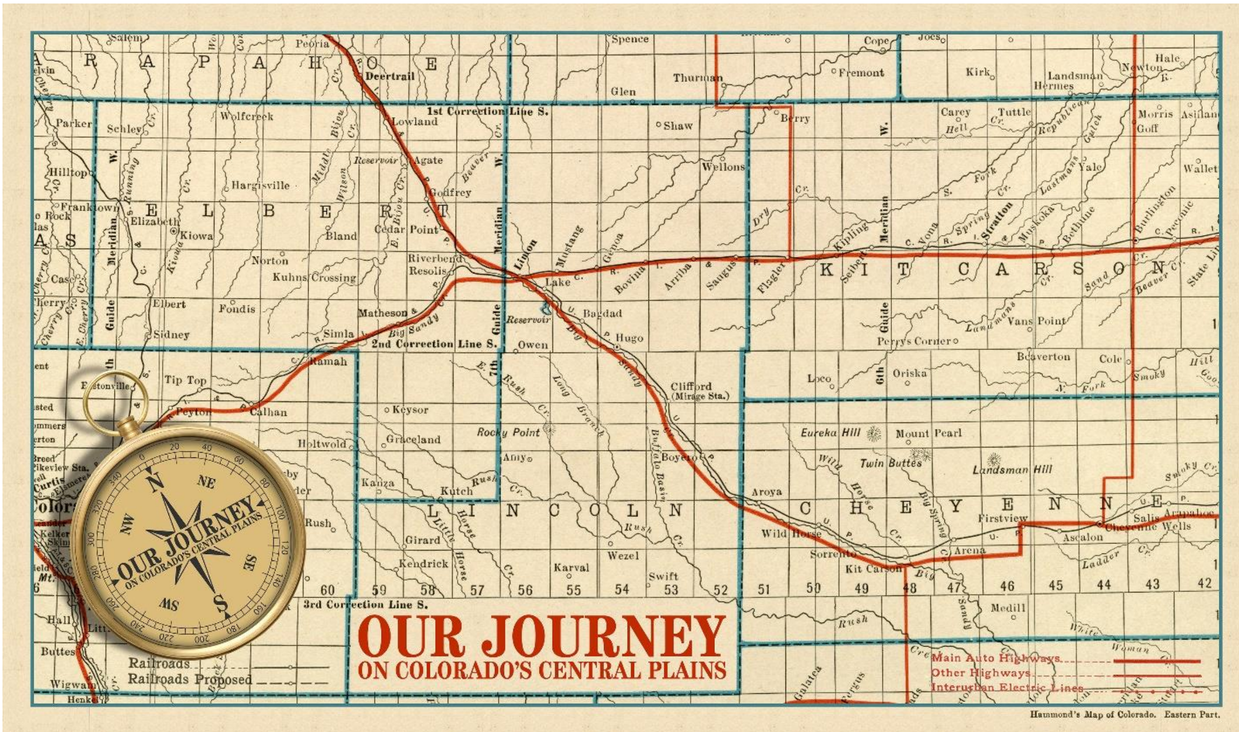


A recent tourism map displays the railroad water stops on the route from the Kansas state line west to Arapahoe County. Many towns along Interstate 70 are non-existent today.

Executive Summary:

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the result of a local planning process designed to guide the economic stabilization and growth of an area. The original five-year CEDS for Elbert, Lincoln, Kit Carson and Cheyenne Counties was adopted in December of 2009. This 2026 - 2031 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy builds on earlier plans. The purpose of the CEDS is to construct a plan for retaining and creating jobs, encouraging a stable and more diversified economy, and maintaining and improving the quality of life. This CEDS covers East Central Colorado or a region also known as Colorado's Central Plains.

This CEDS for East Central Colorado:

- Summarizes the economic conditions of the region
- Guides and coordinates local economic development interests and efforts region-wide
- Facilitates eligibility for various federal and state economic/community development funding at both the local and regional levels
- Develops goals and strategies for implementing economic development projects
- Identifies viable economic development projects and initiatives
- Outlines the standards for the evaluation of the program
- Sets forth an economic resiliency plan as a "plan within a plan"

This CEDS process was guided by an officially designated CEDS/EDD (Economic Development District) Committee. The CEDS Committee members also served (along with others) as the region's Blueprint Committee to further the Governor's Office of Economic Development and International Trade's (OEDIT) Blueprint Program. It was further guided by the governing boards of both East Central Council of Governments (ECCOG) and Prairie Development Corporation (PDC). These three guiding forces are comprised of individuals representing many diverse groups including, but not limited to, business, industry, civic organizations, economic development organizations, and the education community, as well as county and municipal governments. The CEDS/Blueprint Committee continues to meet to discuss economic development issues. The Committee will recommend additional or modified priorities and action items to the ECCOG Board as updates to the CEDS strategies and priorities are indicated.

While the document is a product of the East Central Council of Governments (and is required to qualify for Economic Development Administration assistance), the CEDS document is meant to be a working plan for all local governments, community entities and respective economic development organizations. The Council also works to disseminate the CEDS information to state, local, and regional organizations. It is useful for all area residents desiring to understand their local economies and working to improve the communities in which they live.

Future CEDS may be developed into a digital CEDS with graphics, maps and data with interactive modules to further enhance the story of Colorado's eastern plains and the inspiring development based on the region. Offering this new online version is expected to engage more partners of multiple age groups, inspire businesses to establish operations here, and tell a colorful story of growth, resilience and development from data and the people.

As Colorado now has a Statewide CEDS adopted in 2026, ECCOG's regional CEDS is incorporated into this statewide CEDS to guide the state as they develop programs and plans that assist with the implementation of our CEDS goals and objectives.

Chapter 1-Introduction and Region

A. PURPOSE

The ECCOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) will develop a framework to support and enhance regional economic development opportunities in east central Colorado: Elbert, Lincoln, Kit Carson and Cheyenne Counties. The CEDS has three objectives:

- Develop a database to better understand and describe Colorado's Central Plains in terms of its geographic, economic and social relationships,
- Identify and prioritize regional development issues/challenges/opportunities; and
- Develop strategies to address selected issues.

B. VISION STATEMENT

Colorado's Central Plains provides a quality of life, which will be enhanced and preserved for future generations. As these communities continue to grow, so will cutting-edge jobs in agriculture, energy, education and health. Existing business and industry will strengthen and expand.

C. MISSION STATEMENT

Mission:

In collaboration with public and private partners, the East Central Council of Local Governments Economic Development District will encourage and facilitate the success of entrepreneurship, agriculture, business, industry and innovation in Colorado's Central Plains…Elbert, Lincoln, Kit Carson and Cheyenne counties. We will strive to assist with the needed resources, financial incentives, collaboration, and creation of additional opportunities for startups, expansions, or relocation to this area. The success of this mission will be measured by sustained stability and economic growth in the Colorado's Central Plains.

Goals/Strategies:

1. Build a Business-Friendly Environment

- Support development of Broadband to a high standard throughout the Region
- Encourage dialogue among local governments to examine existing regulations on impacts on business retention, expansion, and attraction
- Educate elected officials and citizens on the value of energy development
- Develop affordable workforce housing

2. Recruit, Grow and Retain Business

- Maintain the current Enterprise Zone Boundaries
- Work with the Small Business Development Center to assist existing businesses with the challenges of today's economy

- Continue marketing resources to promote Colorado's Central Plains for investment and business growth
- Market state and local incentives including the Enterprise Zone Program to prospective, new, existing and expanding businesses
- Encourage and support community and downtown improvement efforts
- Promote the 2015 established Foreign-Trade Zone
- Encourage the development of home-based businesses within the region
- Develop Business Resiliency Plan/mitigation alternatives to address natural, manmade or economic disasters

3. Increase Access to Capital

Bridge the gap for businesses to qualify for bank financing by continuing to expand use of Prairie Development Corporation Loan Funds and their programs

4. Create and Market a Stronger Colorado Central Plains/Colorado Brand/Promote and expand tourism/travel industry within the Region with emphasis on historical, cultural, recreational, agricultural and eco-tourism resources and events

- Promote eco-tourism, agri-tourism, signature community events, and the cultural heritage of the Colorado Central Plains through joint branding and promotional marketing
- Encourage local business and industry to promote the state business image and branding
- Create a Colorado Central Plains brand by building on the *Our Journey* and *Here It's Easier to See What's Important* logos and tag lines

5. Educate and Train the Future Workforce

- Encourage partnerships and cooperative efforts between the business community and education
- Advocate for continued existence of the Community College "mini-campuses" for the Colorado Central Plains
- Champion the "Colorado Sectors" process and develop private business driven Sectors as appropriate

6. Cultivate Innovation and Technology

Explore opportunities in innovation and technology that can be applied to economic development efforts within Colorado's Central Plains

- Educate and explore opportunities related to Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Educate opportunities associated with data centers and their impacts

7. Plan for Energy Opportunities:

- Promote the energy resources, both traditional and new, of the area which will invigorate the economy, create new jobs and protect natural resources
- Promote rural leadership for sustainable energy by educating local governments and

economic development groups about the potential benefits of the renewable energy sector
- Support development of alternative energies from agricultural products and by-products

8. Plan and Be Ready for Transportation Corridors Development and Expansion:

- Participate with local government and other groups in providing guidance to the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration regarding the importance of highway maintenance and expansion, public transit and the continuation and maintenance of Short Line and Class 1 railroad operations in the region
- Educate local governments, community leaders and economic development groups on the potential economic benefits of the transportation system and its connection to urban and global markets
- Develop regional public private partnerships to expand economic opportunities provided by interregional transportation corridors
- Develop the necessary public private partnerships to expand opportunities for local and regional bicycle and pedestrian "trails"

9. Offer Technical Assistance:

- Maintain an active CEDS advisory committee to identify and address regional economic development issues
- Assist local/county governments and economic development groups in identifying and securing financial and other resources that enable positive results for their respective programs as well as on the entire region
- Help local governing officials locate resources necessary to deal with unexpected economic issues
- Assist local/county governments and economic development groups in identifying and securing resources for mitigation of local Brownfield sites and blight
- Assist local/county governments in identifying and securing resources for the development/expansion of a geographic information system (GIS) throughout the region
- Disseminate information on emerging opportunities as they arise and be positioned to take action

D. HISTORY OF REGION

For more than a century, an 8,400 square mile patch of high prairie just east of the Rocky Mountains has been known by its political names, Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson and Lincoln counties, Colorado. For the casual observer, this large parcel of land appears to be a homogeneous mass.

And it's true, these counties have a great deal in common. Even after thousands of get-rich-quick gold miners somehow crossed the plains to set up mining communities with local governments in the mountains, this high prairie land remained, for the most part, unpopulated. It was saddled in 1820 with the name "The Great American Desert," and Horace Greeley, on his way to see the gold rush for himself in the 1860s, told the folks on the east coast that this area "is a land of sterility and thirst."

However, it wasn't long before cattlemen arrived to establish huge ranches, and entrepreneurs in the East pushed through stagecoach routes and sent coaches full of passengers and mail through this wild land. And around this time, the "permanent" residents of this new bonanza realized it was time to set up housekeeping on their own. The area was removed from Kansas Territory and became Colorado Territory in 1861.

The new territory created its own counties. Some of them, especially those furthest from the Rocky Mountains, were immense in size because of their limited populations. The 8,400 square miles in East Central Colorado made up one-half, or less, of two large counties: Douglas and Huerfano, both extending from the Front Range to the Kansas state line, and Huerfano extending south to the New Mexico-Oklahoma line. A large area in the middle of these two counties was reserved for the use of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian tribes.

The tribal reservation was short-lived; it was gone by 1870 and newly created Greenwood and Bent counties replaced it and part of Huerfano County. In fact, another new county was in place, also, Las Animas County, and except for a small island of land to the southwest of Pueblo County, Huerfano County was gone, as well.

There were high hopes for Greenwood County, named for a Kansas Pacific railroad official. The new road pushed through Greenwood and Douglas counties to Denver, and eager businessmen who settled along the new line had visions of big cities dotting the plains. The town of Kit Carson already was fairly large by Colorado Territorial standards; it was the new county's seat of government and more train tracks were run south from Kit Carson to Las Animas.

But the track moved on west, with all the railroad construction employees and all the saloons, grocers, and other businesses that came to serve those employees moving west also. Soon, Kit Carson was very quiet, indeed, and all the other stops along the line were…just stops. It became apparent in Greenwood County that its citizens now numbered too few to support a county government, and in 1874, Greenwood County became the only Colorado county to go from whence it came.

Into the void stepped another new county, Elbert County, which took over most of Douglas County to the state line, along with about half of Greenwood County. Bent County expanded north to absorb the rest of Greenwood County. Kiowa and Hugo, the oldest communities in their respective areas, both began where stage stations were established around 1859. Later, for a few years, both were the primary towns in Elbert County, and a few Hugo citizens were elected to Elbert County offices, working from the county seat at Kiowa. A couple of these officials were appointed to office in the new Lincoln County, when it was created with Hugo as the county seat.

Lincoln County, along with Kit Carson and Cheyenne counties, was carved out of Elbert and Bent counties in 1889. This arrangement of counties in East Central Colorado has remained unchanged to the present day in spite of occasional efforts to further divide them.

Regardless of stage stations and cattle ranches, this area really was a negligible entity until the railroads came. In 1914, Elisha Talbot (a publicist for the Rock Island Railroad) had this to say about the early days: "Not long ago this entire region was a vast cattle range and considered valueless for any other purpose. The homesteader and the speculator alike turned it down as unworthy of consideration. It was too unpromising for the theorist and too big for the rainmaker. In other words, it had no friends."

But the railroads proved to be the area's friends. The Kansas Pacific (later Union Pacific) and the Rock Island lines sunk wells and platted towns at regular intervals as the tracks were laid. It might be said that the town locations were dictated by the needs of steam locomotives as much as by any other factor. These towns, then, caused the current counties to be created.

Elbert County was different. Its communities arrived before the railroads and were located more because of the availability of water than for any other reason. And unlike the other three counties, Elbert County was blessed with trees, and an early timber and sawmill industry thrived there.

The first communities were hardly settled when the first schools were established. In the early 1870s, most of this region still was in Elbert County, and the first school in that large land area was at the unlikely community of Tuttle. In those days, Tuttle stood alone, nearer to Kansas than to Denver, with a store, post office and school. This school is believed to be the first in Elbert County, with a Hugo woman as teacher. In the course of time, Tuttle ended up in Kit Carson County, its location now described as 20+ miles “northwest of Burlington.”

Latter day historians use the present county boundaries to determine “firsts,” and therefore, Rock Butte School southeast of Elizabeth, opened in 1874, is now considered the first school in Elbert County. Elbert County also had a school at Hugo around this same time. Hugo’s school district, Number 7 in Elbert County, was District Number 1 when Lincoln County was created in the Spring of 1889.

Not counting Tuttle, there seems to be agreement that Kit Carson County’s first school was in Burlington in 1886. The community was small, then, as the railroad had not yet arrived.

Cheyenne County’s situation is not as clear-cut. In spite of numerous histories and tales surrounding the early days in Cheyenne County, very few writers discuss schools there in the 19th Century. One writer said the first school in Cheyenne Wells opened in a rented building in 1888, and until other evidence comes forward, this must be considered the first school in the county. Kit Carson was a larger town in 1870, boasting 510 citizens when the federal census was taken. At the time, the community had 31 children of school age (6 through 16), but the census taker found no teachers, which may mean there was no school yet. There was no minister, either, but the town had 134 railroad employees and 14 saloonkeepers!

In all of the counties, the earliest fiscal bases (timber and railroads) were replaced over the years by a strong agricultural economy. Much of rural Elbert County is devoted to the raising of livestock. Cheyenne and Lincoln counties sustain both livestock and dryland farming, while Kit Carson County is best known for its irrigated farms, watered from deep wells served by the Ogallala aquifer.

Now, 140 years later, the four counties sit astride major highway systems heading all directions, and both the trucking industry and the tourism industry continue to increase their contributions to the regional economy.

All four counties have benefited from oil and gas production and in more recent years, renewable energy development of wind and solar energy. Taxes paid by these producers did much to help counties keep pace with their infrastructure needs.

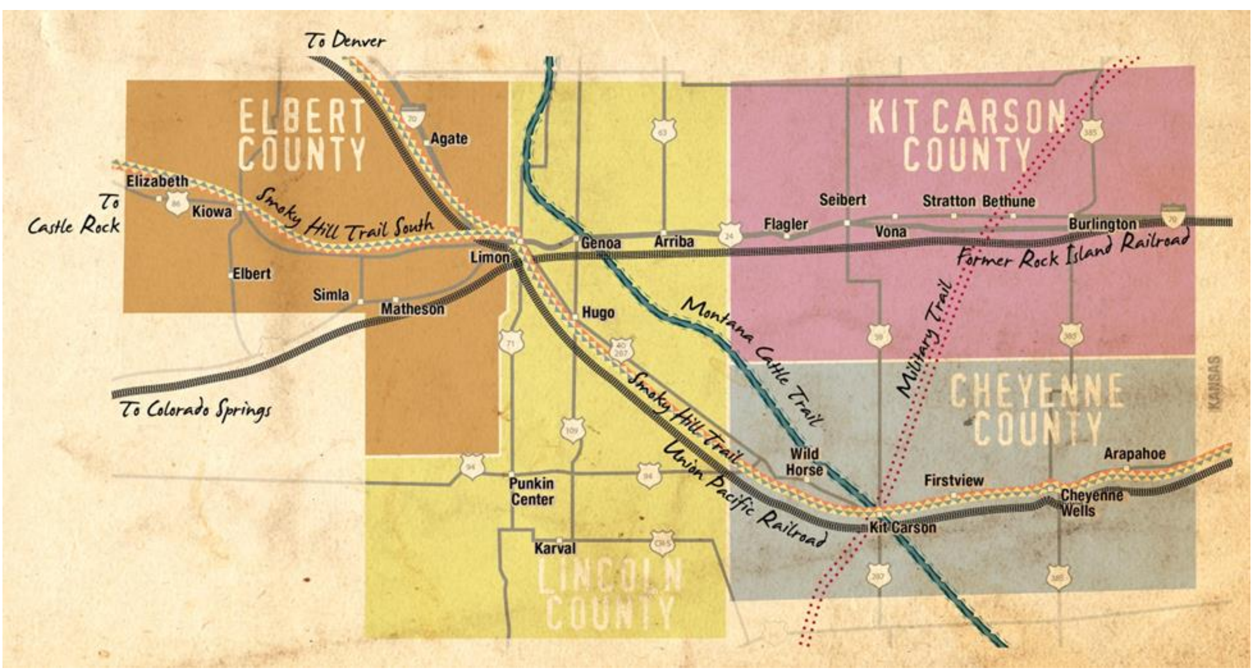
Also in Cheyenne County is the second largest helium production facility in the nation. Not currently operating at capacity, this business could easily increase production and employment in this county.

Wind and solar projects are other types of natural energy sources being harnessed in this region. Across the four counties over 1,200 wind turbines are in operation and as many as 16 solar and wind projects plan to submit proposals. Three solar farms to produce 772 megawatts of power and 350 MW of battery storage are in development now in Elbert County with.

Thanks to its proximity to the Colorado Springs and Denver metropolitan areas, and to its intrinsic scenic attractions, Elbert County became the residential choice of many city workers who wanted to escape the hectic hustle of city life and perhaps keep a horse or two at home. Subdivisions sprouted across western Elbert County, to the delight of local merchants but causing local elected officials to burn the midnight oil to provide expected county services. Elbert County continues to experience growth and development in 2026 and into the future as is seen every day in their communities.

Now, wireless technologies have made urban professionals realize they can do their work from any location, and many are escaping to the rural communities where they join the ranks of the "lone eagles." Unfortunately, broadband service is minimal in parts of the region; a Broadband analysis and plan to address these deficiencies has been completed for the region. Due to COVID-19, connectivity speeds and reliability have been in high demand since Spring of 2020.

There are centennial farms and ranches in this region, owned by the same families for 100 years or more. The families stay on their land because they can, and because they love it. Hopefully, current planning for the future will result in other families remaining in the region, regardless of their careers or lifestyles, because they can…and because they love it, as well.



E. 2026 OVERVIEW of the REGION

Colorado's Central Plains region (Colorado Planning and Management Region 5) is comprised of Lincoln, Elbert, Kit Carson and Cheyenne counties. Agriculture is the base economic driver in each of the four counties, but the 8,400 square-mile region with a very diverse geography. The population of the region in 1980 was 21,265. The US Census Bureau population estimate for 2024 in the region was 43,712, almost 100% growth. However, most of that net growth was concentrated in 3% of the geographical area within the region (the very northwest corner of Elbert County continues to experience high residential growth, with much of that population commuting to jobs in Denver).

Throughout the region opportunities exist to capitalize on renewable energy resources; value-added agriculture, oil and gas development/production, transportation, tourism, and entrepreneurial business expansion/attraction services.

From 2010 and 2013, the population of the overall region remained virtually unchanged with an increase of 379 or 0.98%. Population reports for 2018 show Kit Carson County's population decreased from years 2015 to 2018 while Lincoln, Cheyenne, and Elbert counties each posted slight gains. The decrease for Kit Carson County is attributed to the prison closure in 2016, which remains closed in July 2026.

Most of the Elbert County's growth takes place in the northwest corner of that county, within commuting distance of metro Denver. Colorado is increasing in population which exacerbates the housing demand.

Jobs and the Economy
The principal employers in all four counties are public: schools, health services, local and county governments. The Limon Correctional Facility is also public. The Kit Carson County Correctional Facility is the largest private employer in the region with 175-200 full time employees depending on the inmate count closed in 2016 and remains an empty structure in 2026. Today in 2026, the prison remains closed and the jobs have not been recovered elsewhere. The tax base throughout the region is predicated on agriculture. Farming is preeminent in Kit Carson County, whereas ranching is primary in the other three; nevertheless, all four counties exhibit a mixture of both farms and ranches. Like rural plains communities throughout the Midwest, many of Colorado's Central Plains towns have main streets with vacant storefronts. Households are often single elderly people whose grocery and basic needs are less. As small "Mom and Pop" stores that have provided basic services for years come up for sale, there are few interested buyers. While such a business may still have cash flow under the original owner, that owner probably also has limited debt. Added debt for the new buyer plus the impact of an ever-declining market means the continued existence of the small hardware stores and grocery stores in towns with a population under 1,000 becomes doubtful. The current economy makes this even more unlikely as people during COVID-19 in spring 2020 were buying products online as fear and executive orders forced businesses to close and people to stay home; online purchasing has not decreased as is noted by the delivery trucks on the roads. Oil and gas valuations (impacting Cheyenne, Lincoln and Elbert counties) are unstable but drilling activity was improving until the Coronavirus effected that industry.

Housing
Demand for housing continues its upward climb and remains a focus for this region. As home prices in the metropolitan areas increase more families are moving to the outlying areas and may

commute into the cities for work. Home prices are increasing in rural settings also, but the prices started lower so the families may be able to purchase a rural home. Increased home building also causes infrastructure demand to increase, which is another challenge in rural communities. Other critical infrastructure ranging from water supply to schools may have adequate surplus capacity to absorb this level of growth but not always in every location. Such development could significantly enhance tax bases, workforce availability and domestic markets. Real estate developers have projects in Elbert, Lincoln and Kit Carson counties but access to materials and delivery delays are impacting their progress. Workforce availability is an opportunity also as skills or trades are in high demand for this region.

Affordable Housing

Home Sweet Prairies (***www.homesweetprairies.com***) has been migrated to the Prairie Development Corporation website in 2025. The four counties are promoting the availability of affordable housing units throughout Colorado's Central Plains. This grass roots economic development effort capitalizes on the homes and the area's traditional and valued rural lifestyle. The target audiences are retirees and "lone eagles" wanting to work from home. Thanks in part to the coronavirus, remote working has become the newest way to work while living where one may afford a home, have children attend in person learning and enjoy a more relaxed lifestyle in rural settings. In the region, an increase in home ownership is realized by those fleeing the urban setting of a more expensive housing scenario. We aim to help them find their home on the sweet prairies!

Agriculture

The agricultural economy throughout the region was severely impacted by the 2011-2012 drought and continues today. Current reports show 97% of Colorado is now in a drought pattern including our region. Only 3% of the state is not considered in a drought by the U.S. Drought Monitor website today. The 2014 wheat crop (planted in the fall of 2013) was one of the best in recent history. However, the impacts of the drought will continue. Cattle herds that were liquidated due to lack of (or high cost of) feed will continue to take several years to build back up. Crop prices are fluctuating now with the drought and high input costs while COVID-19 challenges stir the market as livestock processing was compromised and food supply was disrupted. The future of the farmer/rancher remain an unknown with or without COVID-19 influences.

Clean Energy

Development of renewable energy sources on Colorado's Central Plains in 2021 was slowing but not stopped. Comparing today's construction projects, there is no slowdown for the region currently. Wind turbines dot the landscape across all four counties and the transmission line was installed in 2021. Each county's portion of revenue from each wind farm has been very beneficial as the county has made road improvements, created new jobs tied to economic development, and replenished depleted coffers from years past. Gas & oil remains an untapped source for energy development while electric vehicles charging stations are popping up within the region.

Helium Production

Another unusual source of natural gas is the second largest helium production facility in the nation is located west of Cheyenne Wells in Cheyenne County. The Tumbleweed Midstream helium plant is not operating at full capacity however an increase in production was seen in the last two years. The plant operates round the clock and brings great salaries to the employees.

The greatest economic development need remains within the region to stabilize the economy and diversify. Each area within the region needs to capitalize on its assets. Retention and expansion of existing businesses are the primary goals. Growing from within has a greater chance of success than bringing new business and industry to the area, but efforts to attract new jobs from outside the region also must be continued. Broadband service is minimal in parts of the region, and if business and industry are to be retained and public safety needs met, broadband services must be upgraded. In light of COVID-19, this effort has gained strong support as schools closed and education was performed remotely while parents stayed home to work their own job and took on teaching their children for the final three months of the 2020 school year.

The Region completed the Region 5 Broadband Strategic Plan in 2019 which included a Broadband analysis and development of an overall plan to address Broadband deficiencies. The area CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) includes the Broadband Strategic Plan.

The area, through its various economic development organizations, continues work today to simplify the access to capital for businesses. Closing the financial gap with a diverse capital stack is strongly supported by lenders and partners in the rural area. Most notable from the broadband survey of needs was that people couldn't afford both smart phone data plans and home internet services so many people used their smart phone as their computer although the screen size was terribly small in comparison to a computer screen. That tells us the cost needs to decrease and the number of users must increase.

Partnerships play a vital role among communities. Some of the smaller towns must consider becoming great neighborhoods to the larger communities down the road. Standing and working together is even more important in areas of limited population and services.

F. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT DESIGNATION

The four counties comprising the East Central Council of Local Governments' service area were designated a Planning and Management Region under executive order of the Governor of Colorado in 1972. ECCOG was officially incorporated in 1973 under Chapter 88 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. This Region sought and was granted designation from the Economic Development Administration as an Economic Development District in 2009. To meet the criteria for this designation, the make-up of the East Central Council of Local Governments Board of Directors was changed to meet EDD criteria. The Articles of Association were amended by Resolution on April 1, 2009, to add five non-governmental member seats. The ECCOG Board is now comprised of 13 directors: eight local government representatives and five non-government representatives.

2026 ECCOG/EDD Board Membership Roster

1. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES **(51 – 65%)**

Elected officials and/or employees of a general-purpose unit of state, local or Indian tribal government who have been appointed to represent the government.

Name	Government	Position
Ron Smith	Cheyenne County	Commissioner

Mike Buck	Elbert County	Commissioner
Dave Hornung	Kit Carson County	Commissioner
Terry Jaques	Lincoln County	Commissioner
Ryan Fulmer	Town of Simla	Trustee
Vacant	Municipal in Lincoln CO	Trustee
Sherry Jones	Town of Cheyenne Wells	Town Council Member
Hal McNerney	City of Burlington	Town Council Member

2. NON-GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES (35 – 49%)

A. **Private Sector Representatives:** *Any senior management official or executive holding key decision-making position, with respect to any for-profit enterprise. (At least one required)*

Name	Company/Business	Position
Megan Gardner	Means Insurance	Manager
Rhonda Brown	Farmers Insurance	Owner
Derek Isom	Town & Country Hardware	Co-Owner

B. **Stakeholder Organization Representatives:** *Executive directors of chambers of commerce, or representatives of institutions of post-secondary education, workforce development groups or labor groups. (At least one required)*

Name	Organization	Position
Valerie Rhoades	Morgan Comm. College, Burlington	Ret. Director

3. AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVES: *Other individuals who represent the principal economic interests of the region. (No minimum required)*

Name	Area of Interest	Background
Ben Ferree	Healthcare-Pharmacist	PDC Appointed–Healthcare

2026 Strategy Committee Roster

1. PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES **(at least 51%)**

Any senior management official or executive holding a key decision-making position with respect to any for-profit enterprise.

Name	Company	Position
Troy Schultz	Eastern Colorado Technology	Owner
Brad Welp	Eastern Slope Rural Telephone	General Manager
Joni Mitchek	Mitchek Consulting	Owner
Troy McCue	Limon Veterinary Services	Owner
Vacant	*Vacant*	*Vacant*

2. REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER ECONOMIC INTERESTS **(No more than 49%)**

Persons who provide additional representation of the main economic interests of the region. These may include, but are not limited to: public officials, community leaders, representatives of workforce development boards, institutions of higher education, minority and labor groups, and private individuals.

Name	Area of Interest	Position
John Mitchek	Kit Carson Rural Development	Members
Jennifer Beck	Limon Workforce Center	Director
Robbin Schincke	Morgan Comm. College	Higher Education
Jennifer Jones	Elbert County	Econ. Developer

ECCOG Staffing/Management Structure

The management objectives of the ECCOG are to:

1. Develop and maintain adequate staff capacity
2. Build staff technical capabilities
3. Stabilize long-term agency financing

ECCOG relies on a variety of sources to support its staff and/or work plan, including membership dues, grant and loan administration funds, service contracts, etc. An organizational chart is located as *Attachment A* to the CEDS.

G. Regional Relationships

During the past four decades, the East Central Council of Local Governments staff, Board of Directors and various advisory groups have established relationships with numerous state and federal agencies, including but not limited to the Colorado's Office of Economic Development and International Trade, Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Colorado Division of Housing, USDA Rural Development, CSU Regional Technical Assistance, Colorado Division of Aging and Adult Services, Colorado Department of Transportation, Eastern Transportation Planning Region, Eastern Colorado Work Force Region, Colorado Tourism Office, History Colorado, Ports to Plains Alliance, High Plains Highway, and Colorado Division of Local Government. ECCOG and its divisions (i.e. partners) including the East Central Area Agency on Aging, Outback Express Transit System, East Central Enterprise Zone, and Prairie Development Corporation Business Loan Fund meet several times annually with their counterparts throughout the State for information exchange and training.

The Prairie Development Corporation was created in 1986 as a public-private partnership but with its own board of directors and 501(c) (3) designation. ECCOG staffs the Prairie Development Corporation through a Professional Services Agreement. PDC is the development counterpart of the ECCOG and operates a business loan fund that emphasizes job creation and retention in cooperation with the ECCOG and the four counties. The loan fund utilizes federal CDBG grant funds awarded to the State of Colorado and then subcontracted to Lincoln County on behalf of the region. PDC also operates a smaller housing loan fund for rehabilitation and home buyer assistance and takes the lead in the region in development of Our Journey, the multi-jurisdictional heritage and marketing program.

There are two formal local Economic Development groups within the four counties today. Lincoln County Economic Development Corp and Elbert County Community & Economic Development offices are staffed today. Kit Carson Rural Development promotes community economic development for the town of Kit Carson and has been very successful in developing several housing and blight removal projects. The Hugo Improvement disbanded in 2025. The City of Burlington employs a part-time Economic Development Director. Duties for many people involved in the CEDS are considered spread over many facets of the communities they serve.

A longstanding partner, Small Business Development Center formerly of Greeley, has provided business counseling services across the four counties for more than 24 years. In 2026, their office was moved to Denver, and services are currently reduced to one hour per week per client as funding is limited but hopefully that funding will be restored soon. SBDC also provides a newsletter with resources and guidance to enrolled clients and partners. Their training services have been limited in 2026.

The historic nature of the working relationships among the local governments and economic development groups is real and genuine. These relationships didn't need to be created for this CEDS effort; they have been sustained for more than 45 years. These long-standing relationships brought great strength to the CEDS process, and this strong partnership, "To Do Together What We Can't Do Alone," will assure a quality implementation of the CEDS in the years to come.

H. PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Much has been accomplished in the Region since the adoption of the initial CEDS (December 2009). A sampling of those accomplishments follows:

ECCOG continues to promote several small housing loan programs overseen by the Prairie Development Corporation.

When the Community Development Block Grant for the regional Business Loan Fund ended January 31, 2014. ECCOG staff drafted a new four-county application to the Governor's Office of Economic Development and International Trade for $300,000 in new capital for PDC Business loans. This was awarded and then amended in 2015 to add another $250,000. The fund was re-capitalized in 2020 for $250,000 and then amendment to increase the fund to $690,000 to accommodate a loan in the region. As of June 2020, an additional $80,874 business assistance funds were added to help local businesses with COVID-19 related financial needs. In the fall of 2020, an amendment to extend the contract for two years with an additional $406,000 for business loans and administrative costs was approved. In 2023, a new contract was executed for $350,000 which has $140,000 available for loans. We have become a community-based economic development organization formally to provide better mechanisms for lending and serving the rural communities. CDBG funds is still a major funding source in Colorado and help us re-capitalize our loan fund.

The Prairie Development Corporation Board is very adaptive and creative to meet the lending needs of businesses and families in the four counties. In 2015, the "drought impacted business" (DIB) loan program initiated by ECCOG and PDC staff resulted to date in 38 loans totaling $485,000. As of 2021, all loans have been paid in full except one that was charged off. The Drought Impacted Business loan program was suspended when the rains came but as we head back into dry conditions, the board may reinstate the program if needed as drought conditions now impact the state of Colorado.

PDC also approved an Agricultural Business Entrepreneurs (ABE) program to help agricultural producers diversify to other ag-related businesses for supplementary income. Two loans totaling $69,000 were made in 2014 and subsequently paid off. Then PDC created the Local Economic Downturn (LED) loan policy in response to the 2016 Burlington prison closure. The board may declare a local economic downturn to authorize use of the funds in a county or area. In 2019, large damaging hail stones hit our region and the board declared the program available to help impacted businesses. When COVID-19 impacted the region in March 2020 the board declared this event as a qualifying use for LED. Leveraging resources is a primary goal of the loan while partnering with local lenders to meet the needs of borrowers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Prairie Development Corporation, our lending arm of ECCOG, and Energize Colorado Gap Funds, processed over 30 grant applications and passed along over $175,000 in grant funds to sixteen qualified businesses in Elbert, Lincoln, Kit Carson, and Cheyenne Counties. Low to no interest loans with no collateral are being offered now with modified repayment terms. PDC also participated in a new statewide loan fund providing higher risk borrowers or character loans to startup companies. To date, PDC has used the pool of funds to assist six businesses with over $200,000 which may require 50% match from Revolving loan funds.

The Home Sweet Prairies project was developed to promote opportunities for "lone eagles" to come to the Central Plains region and work from their "affordable homes" that were marketed by linking to the realtors in the four-county area. The web address: www.homesweetprairies.com is now incorporated into the www.prairiedevelopment.com website. A new emphasis on working remotely and home purchases outside the metro areas thanks in part to the pandemic is being seen and felt in rural areas. Each community in ECCOG's service area works collaboratively to mitigate the challenges of material availability and pricing for housing development today.

Over 2,500 printed "Fun, Fairs, Festivals" brochures and "Places" brochures (historic registered sites, specialty/boutique shops, coffee shops and wineries) promoting the summer heritage tourism season throughout the EDD are printed and distributed May through September. Printed materials have declined as people use smart phone technology to find activities and events. Heritage tourism received a boost during the pandemic when we added TravelStorys, a digital storytelling app using technology devices to keep tourists coming into our region and encouraged them to visit the museums and other local attractions. TravelStorys uses geotags to tell the stories as one drives the highways covering Colorado's Central Plains. Additions to the stories or tours are developing during this time. During June 2021, video shorts to aid in marketing the Our Journey Heritage Tourism program were created for each museum. These videos are featured on social media, websites and in television interviews now and into the future. Because of these videos, ECCOG added a "You Tube" channel to our marketing efforts and promoted the region and museums in a new method.

ECCOG contracts annually with a public relations firm in Denver to obtain television, radio and print media coverage of events, attractions and economic development opportunities in the four-county area. Promoting the Central Plains to the Front Range is a realistic target for economic development/expansion. Public relations coverage by media is a much less expensive option that purchasing "often unread or unseen paid advertising". The PR firm handles many of these details for ECCOG. This PR firm also facilitated the production of the twelve museum video shorts mentioned herein.

ECCOG has been the driving force behind the original Region 5 Colorado Blueprint initially in

Elbert, Lincoln, Kit Carson and Cheyenne Counties. With the change of the governor, the program has changed names and initiatives, but the overall purpose to provide technical assistance and education to businesses continues. Staff develop the agenda, notifies interested parties of upcoming meetings. ECCOG was asked to serve as the fiscal agent for SECTORS Summit II held in 2014 in Denver and to coordinate a team from the Region to participate in the conference. SECTORS was an agenda item at each Blueprint meeting. New efforts are being rekindled for SECTORS for fall 2021. ECCOG initiated the major health care providers after the SECTORS conference to determine if those hospitals/clinics could create a working group to coordinate and share best practices. We are seeing a resurrection of SECTORS in 2025 and 2026.

In previous years, ECCOG assisted several entities by writing private and public grant requests. But thanks to the new Colorado Common Grant Application, organizations may easily apply for grants themselves. A license to Colorado Grants Guide was purchased in 2019 and ECCOG staff uses that platform in 2026 to research grant funding opportunities for the four counties. ECCOG staff circulates grant announcements and workshop information while researching funding opportunities and shares that information within the region. This facilitates capacity building and makes each organization more resilient by developing their staff.

East Central COG staff has provided one-on-one business consulting services as cash and in-kind match toward the Small Business Development Center program that serves the ECCOG area out of the University of Northern Colorado until 2017. At that time, the Greeley SBDC office provided services to Kit Carson and Cheyenne counties. The regional office moved to Denver from Greeley in 2026 as was mentioned earlier in the CEDS. Under a new contract, SBDC counseling services are offered regularly in all four counties. Office space in Stratton has also been provided for counseling appointments when needed.

The PDC Board accepted ECCOG staff's recommendation and provided $6,900 to provide a live webinar series for area business owners. The series featured Jon Schallert, small business strategist. Three webinars were held for small businesses…April 10, May 1 and June 5 in 2014. Each session had over 30 attendees. In 2019, another event with Jon Schallert was discussed but his schedule did not allow for the course until later in 2020. Schallert is scheduled to offer his expertise again in September 2021 for the whole region. A local lender and Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation sponsored this event with SBDC staff.

The Prairie Development website that provides business financing, startup and consulting information to new and expanding businesses was completely overhauled in 2019.

ECCOG conducted a Broadband Planning Initiative which was completed in the fall of 2019. The Broadband Plan is available online at www.ccpbroadband.com . Broadband activity in 2021 is increasing as new partners like Mountain View Electric Association and East Central Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) are working independently across the region to provide better access to higher speeds. This offers more options to residents and keeps the cost low via competition and leveraging existing resources. Barriers to market entry are dissolving through the strong desire to help rural residents. Broadband access leads to business attraction while providing remote or teleworking jobs.

Promotion of the East Central Enterprise Zone and the various tax credits continues annually. ECCOG, the Enterprise Zone administrative agency for this Region, developed extensive educational/promotional materials to make area taxpayers aware of new rules requiring pre-certification. A boundary amendment was received in 2019 to allow Cheyenne County as a whole region eligible for tax credits. Region 5 has been approved for re-designation through 2026.

Currently, five contribution projects are active in the region meaning they are supported with cash or in-kind donations for their operation. Two new projects are submitting applications in 2026 for contribution project status including East Central COG.

An application was submitted in 2014 to the Foreign Trade Zones (FTZ) Board by the Town of Limon and Lincoln County to establish a foreign-trade zone under the Alternative Site Framework (ASF) at sites in Limon, Colorado, including a service area covering major portions of Elbert and Lincoln counties, and the ability to create subzone in the rest of the Region. It was approved by the U. S. Secretary of Commerce on June 11, 2015. In 2021, a business application is being considered for FTZ approval, which may lead to more interest and approvals.

I. The Colorado Blueprint and Central Plains Regional Blueprint and RTAP

The Colorado Blueprint was a statewide effort to create jobs and expand companies across the state. The key strategy, built on the foundation of the Colorado Blueprint, was developed through the "Bottom-Up" process initiated by the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade in early 2011…centering on growth in Colorado's key industries across all regions in the state. The Blueprint is the statewide plan to spur Colorado's economy, help businesses grow and attract new jobs to the state. The Blueprint has given the State of Colorado a framework to build a comprehensive economic development plan that aligns existing effort and identifies opportunities for growth and focused investments/efforts.

As Blueprint was developing, it became apparent to the East Central Council of Governments staff that the CEDS process and the Blueprint process needed to work in partnership so as to assure that the regional Blueprint Goals and the CEDS Goals were in sync. Thus by 2013, the Blueprint Committee was a working group within the official CEDS Committee with some participants officially serving on both groups. The 2015 Blueprint vision, mission and goals developed for the Colorado's Central Plains Region (East Central Council of Governments) mirror the vision, mission and goals of this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Colorado's governor has reinvented the Blueprint program into Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) with more support from the state partners. We have a new regional manager to aid in our project development and grow the economy. Our working group developed goals which coincide with the Enterprise Zone goals for economic growth and development, as follows:

RTAP/Blueprint Goals

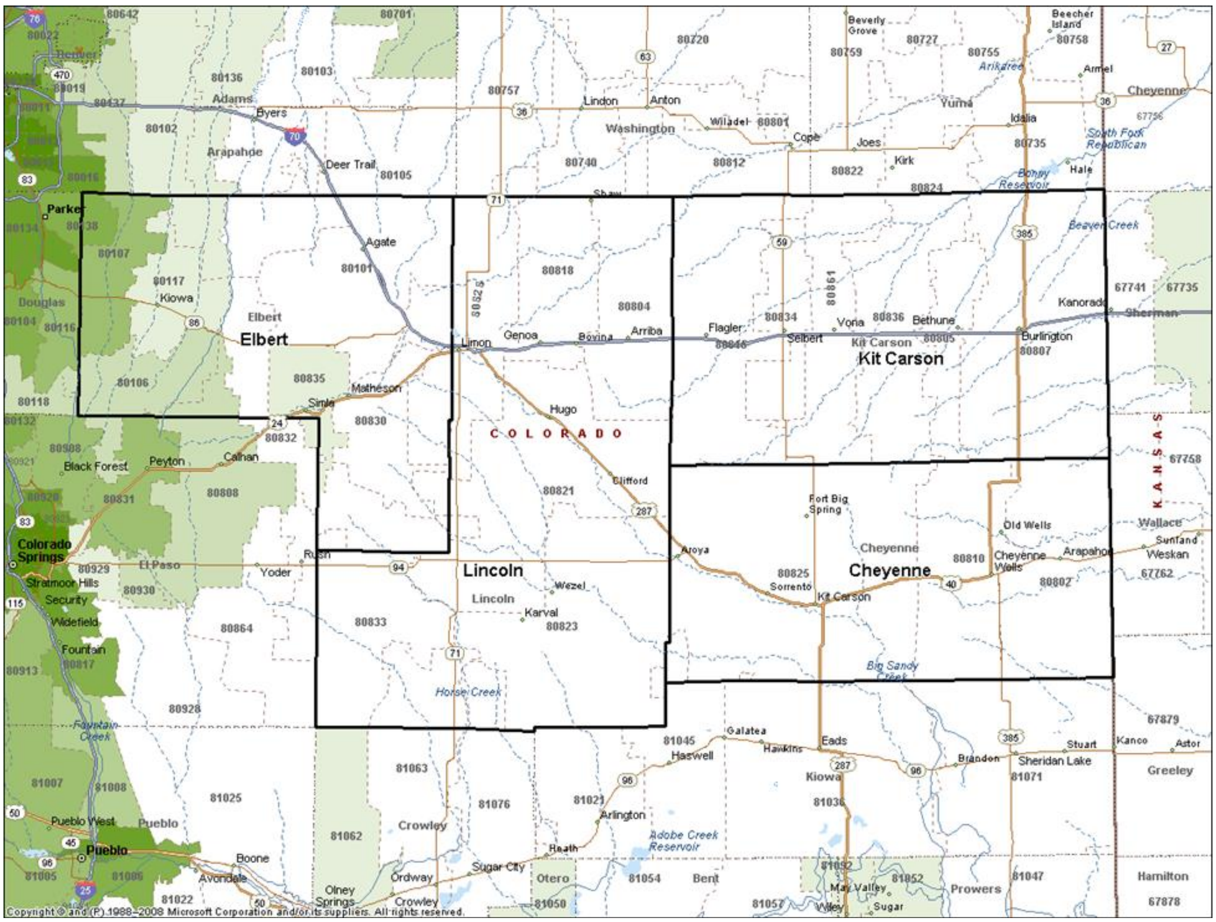
1. Support a diverse economy including support for agriculture, tourism, healthcare and manufacturing to increase or maintain employment levels.
2. Establish/grow/promote regional tourism that attracts visitors to the region.
3. Develop infrastructure that expands multi-modal transportation, enhances commercial corridors, creates healthy communities, and advances modern communication networks.
4. Improve/enhance workforce skills and assist businesses with obtaining qualified skilled/trained employees with emphasis on remote work or location neutral positions.
5. Improve housing inventory focusing on affordability and safety.

Chapter II – The Region and Its Economy

A. GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATIC DATA

Colorado's Central Plains region is commonly referred to as Colorado Planning and Management Region 5 located on the eastern central plains near the Kansas border. Agriculture is the base economic driver in each of the four counties, but the 8,400 square-mile region with a very diverse geography. The population of the region in 1980 was 21,265. The US Census Bureau population estimate for 2024 in the region was 43,712. Most of that net growth was concentrated in 3% of the geographical area within the region (the very northwest corner of Elbert County continues to experience high residential growth, with much of that population commuting to jobs in Denver).

Map of East Central Colorado by Zip Code



East Central Colorado consists of four counties (Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson and Lincoln) and 15 incorporated communities (Cheyenne Wells and Kit Carson in Cheyenne County; Elizabeth, Kiowa and Simla in Elbert County; Bethune, Burlington, Flagler, Seibert, Stratton and Vona in Kit Carson County; and Arriba, Genoa, Hugo and Limon in Lincoln County). The Western portions of this region, particularly in Elbert County, are greatly impacted by the Denver/Colorado Springs Metropolitan Areas.

The four counties comprising the East Central Council of Local Governments' service area were designated a Planning and Management Region under executive order of the Governor of Colorado in 1972. ECCOG was officially incorporated in 1973 under Chapter 88 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. The region sought and was granted designation from the Economic

Development Administration as an Economic Development District in 2009. To meet the criteria for this designation, the make-up of the East Central Council of Governments Board of Directors was changed to meet EDD criteria. The Articles of Association were amended by Resolution on April 1, 2009 to add five non-governmental member seats. The ECCOG Board now consists of thirteen directors: eight local government representatives and five non-government representatives.

Major transportation corridors provide ready access to Elbert County via Interstate 70, Colorado 86 and U.S. 24. Significant acreage and subdivision development have occurred and is likely to continue once the current recession has passed. The region's geographic location relative to the Front Range is a significant development consideration including both opportunities and challenges.

This region is part of the high plains grasslands ecosystem and it is semi-arid where climate and water are central development issues. The region's climate is continental in nature with four distinct seasons. Major weather systems moving across the Continental Divide can create rapidly changing weather illustrated by spring blizzards and summertime thunderstorms. From a development standpoint, the East Central High Plains of Colorado does have a relatively favorable climate from a people attraction standpoint. Summers can be hot but typically are moderate. Winters can be cold with snow, but there are extended periods of sunshine and Indian summer temperatures.

The region has a history of natural disasters primarily related to drought, winter storms, summer tornados and thunderstorms, with flash flooding during high precipitation periods.

Land use patterns vary across this region. Large farms, ranches and numerous small towns dominate the eastern areas. Industrial and commercial development is relatively limited. Major transportation corridors with associated highway and rail development cross the region. The western portions of the region are experiencing increasing urbanization as the Denver and Colorado Springs Metropolitan Areas are pushing out, resulting in acreages, subdivisions, associated commercial development and an increasing number of hobby and niche farms/ranches.

B. Environmental & Natural Resource Profile

There are no wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers or national grasslands within this region. However, a new initiative to bring awareness of the grasslands began in earnest in 2025. Easter Colorado Grasslands Coalition (ECGC) began their formation with landowners, local government, and tourism partners to host the first gravel bike ride in eastern Colorado for Region 5. Shrikes and Bikes was held in May 2026 with a resounding plea for another ride on the plains. The Coalition partnered with local landowners, The World's Wonder View Tower of Genoa, towns of Genoa, Limon and Hugo and Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation and many state partners to host a one-day bike ride with birding options. The ride was deemed a great success and plans for a ride in 2027 are in the works! East Central COG would like to see more tourism tied to such an event as people appreciate the outdoors and new experiences so we'll stay involved in the actions of ECGC.

Agricultural lands are addressed in other sections of this report. This region has productive land, but they are vulnerable to deterioration due to the arid climate and light soils. Wind erosion can be a problem. Soil development and renewal require strong stewardship and aggressive fertilizer inputs when intensively cropped for feed grains.

There are limited State recreational areas within the region. State wildlife areas are located east of Flagler and north of Burlington. However, this region does offer extensive seasonal hunting opportunities for selected species.

The region has important archeological, historic, and cultural resources associated with both historic Native American and contemporary western settlements. Colorado's Central Plains has several State and National Register historic sites. Heritage and cultural tourism are a priority for the region, and these assets are addressed in greater depth in other sections of this report.

There are no superfund sites, officially designated brownfield sites or significant hazardous materials challenges within the region.

Groundwater is critically important to the region and drinking water supplies are tied to individual and public well fields. An inventory of these resources is available.

The region has extremely limited year-round flowing waterways and these are primarily associated with the Republican River Basin. Due to over-appropriation within this basin, there is a legal settlement requiring fundamental changes in its use and that of associated aquifers. The Region has numerous seasonal riverbeds that flow only during periods of intense rain often associated with warmer weather thunderstorms. Flash flooding associated with these dry river and streambeds can pose seasonal challenges. These challenges are mitigated by the relatively small population base and level of urbanization.

Clean Energy - Opportunities for the development of renewable energy sources on Colorado's Central Plains has seen steady activity in every direction. Farmers or ranchers who own the parcels on which the turbines are placed benefit annually. The counties' tax bases have increased. Construction jobs related to development of wind farms come and go with each farm developed but there will be far fewer permanent jobs once the wind farms are in operation. Where lack of transmission lines was once a problem, you could say that has gone with the wind. Bronco Plains constructed south of Flagler will provide 300MW of power while Crossing Trails stretching across Kit Carson and Cheyenne counties will provide 104MW of energy. Another 108 turbines producing 500MW called Cheyenne Ridge has been placed into operation in 2021. The Arriba Wind Farm was approved in 2021 by Lincoln County commissioners for 150MW of power. The wind farms have provided some needed revenue increases for the farmers and ranchers while changing the landscape in this EDD region. At the current time of this writing, there are over 1,200 wind turbines in operation providing power to Colorado and other states. Of the thirty-fur wind farms in Colorado, according to Clearview, thirteen of them are located in East Central COG's region. Solar farms in Elbert County are being planned or in construction now. Bio-diesel plants also are realistic to capture and develop in the coming years. Ethanol has never been a target industry due to its dependence on corn. As alternatives to corn are developed for ethanol, it may become an emerging industry, but that is still doubtful due to the high demand for water.

East Central Council of Governments and their directors are participating in a study called Renewable Energy Impact Study funded in part by local cash match and Colorado's Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). A consultant company was hired after proposals were reviewed and work began in earnest in 2025. A final report of the impacts on energy projects on the eighteen counties included in the study is due by December 2026. The study, a collaborative partnership with the regions north and south of Region, demonstrated our ability to bring rural Colorado together for mutual benefit of all.

Data Centers – On the Clearview website, one sees nineteen Data Centers (DC) are to be located in Colorado with thirteen already operating. Educating the local people and business owners on the different tiers or operation types is paramount as future development of DCs are a hot topic for places that have water. Research shows water cooled facilities are not ideal in rural areas which are already in drought conditions. Other facility types may suit the rural locations as air-cooled buildings are more appealing and create a few good paying jobs.

Helium Production - The second largest Helium production facility in the nation is located near Cheyenne Wells. The DCP Midstream Ladder Creek helium plant was acquired and now carries the name of Tumbleweed Midstream. Though not operating at capacity, there still exists the strong possibility that additional helium supplies will be developed, increasing the plant's production.

C. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Population is an important indicator for a region. The Region saw important population growth between 1980 and 2020, from slightly more than 21,000 in 1980 to nearly 42,000 residents. Most of the population growth is on 3% of the land in western Elbert County.

	1980	***1990***	***2000***	***2010***	***2020***	***2025 est.***
Cheyenne	2,153	2,395	2,205	1,836	1,795	1,713
Elbert	6,850	9,761	20,063	23,086	27,313	30,534
Kit Carson	7,599	7,117	7,947	8,270	7,121	7,069
Lincoln	4,663	4,516	6,065	5,457	5,680	5,645
Region 5 - Whole	21,265	23,789	36,280	38,659	41,909	42,188
Colorado	2,889,735	3,303,862	4,328,277	5,029,196	5,807,719	6,012,561

U.S. Census Bureau / StatsAmerica 07/24/2026 estimates

Population

Due to various resources and retrieval dates, we accept that all information may vary slightly but in general is accurate at the time retrieved. This includes population data which is shown below.

The total population has increased from 36,201 in 2000 to 40,572 in 2020. This 13% increase is not evenly distributed across the region. Elbert County has a population grown of 31% concentrated on the western edge of the county. All other counties show a reduction in population overall between 2000 and 2020: Cheyenne -22%, Kit Carson – 12% and Lincoln -7%. He population of Age 0 to 17 has decreased but is in line with the rest of the state. This may also indicate an aging and nearing retirement group, but the specific age breakdowns are not available at this time. There is opportunity to recapture the population loss and room to expand housing options.

The population by race and ethnicity absolute change indicates a growth of 1,913. Self-identified Non-Hispanic/Latino White Alone, Black/African American Alone, and American Indian & Alaska Native Alone show a net decrease. While self-identified Non-Hispanic/Latino Asian/Pacific Islander Alone, Some Other Race Alone and Two or More Races Total along with Hispanic/Latino Origin (of any race) showed a net increase.

Group quarters are defined as either Institutional or Non-institutional. In the Intuitional definition is included Correctional Facilities for Adults and Nursing Facilities / Skilled Nursing Facilities. With an ageing population the nursing facility numbers are anticipated to rise. Non-institutional Group quarters include miscellaneous properties that are utilized for long term directed housing.

	Total Population by Group Quarters Type: 2020						
		Institutional Group Quarters				Non-Institutional Group Quarters	
County	Total GQ Population	Institutionalized population	Correctional facilities for adults	Nursing facilities/Skilled-nursing facilities	Other institutional facilities	Non-institutionalized populations	Other noninstitutional facilities
Colorado	126,848	55,851	32,307	21,379	640	70,997	19,179
Cheyenne	27	27	0	27	0	0	0
Elbert	70	46	26	20	0	24	24
Kit Carson	93	78	13	65	0	15	15
Lincoln	978	978	918	60	0	0	0
Total	1,168	1,129	957	172	0	39	39

Sources:
U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File
Compiled by the Colorado State Demography Office. Date Produced: 08/13/2021

Population by Age: 2020					
		Number		Percent	
County	Total Population	Age 0 to 17	Age 18 and Older	Age 0 to 17	Age 18 and Older
Colorado	5,773,714	1,264,138	4,509,576	21.9%	78.1%
Cheyenne	1,748	410	1,338	23.5%	76.5%
Elbert	26,062	5,667	20,395	21.7%	78.3%
Kit Carson	7,087	1,782	5,305	25.1%	74.9%
Lincoln	5,675	1,190	4,485	21.0%	79.0%
Total	40,572	9,049	31,523		

	Total Population Change by Age: 2000 to 2010			
	Total Population			
			Change, 2000 to 2010	
County	2000	2010	Number	Percent
Colorado	4,301,261	5,029,196	727,935	16.9%
Cheyenne	2,231	1,836	-395	-17.7%
Elbert	19,872	23,086	3,214	16.2%
Kit Carson	8,011	8,270	259	3.2%
Lincoln	6,087	5,467	-620	-10.2%
Total	36,201	38,659	2,458	

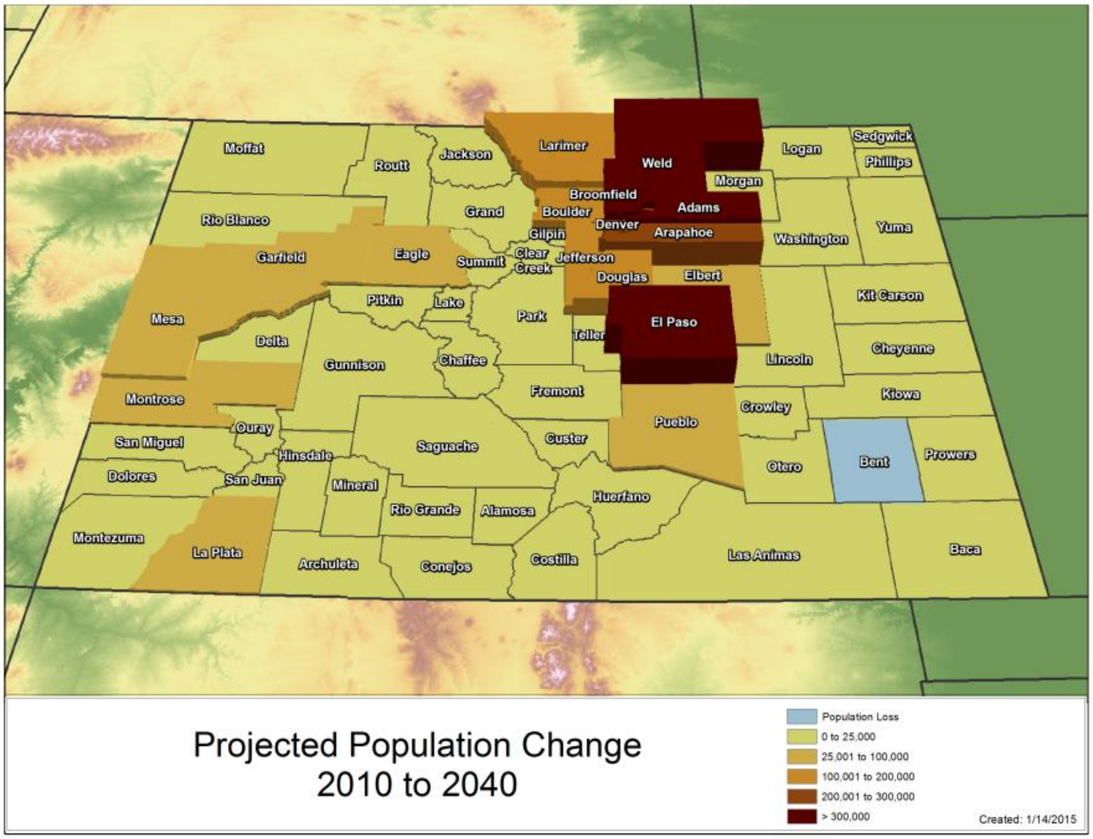
	Total Population Change by Age: 2010 to 2020			
	Total Population			
			Change, 2010 to 2020	
County	2010	2020	Number	Percent
Colorado	5,029,196	5,773,714	744,518	14.8%
Cheyenne	1,836	1,748	-88	-4.8%
Elbert	23,086	26,062	2,976	12.9%
Kit Carson	8,270	7,087	-1,183	-14.3%
Lincoln	5,467	5,675	208	3.8%
Total	38,659	40,572	1,913	

County	Population by Race and Ethnicity: 2010							
		Non-Hispanic/Latino						
	Total Population	White Alone	Black/African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian/Pacific Islander Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races Total	Hispanic/Latino Origin (of any race)
Colorado	5,029,196	3,520,793	188,778	31,244	141,225	7,622	100,847	1,038,687
Cheyenne	1,836	1,617	7	11	11	0	12	178
Elbert	23,086	21,005	159	126	187	17	358	1,234
Kit Carson	8,270	6,320	217	48	40	3	68	1,574
Lincoln	5,467	4,345	280	38	41	3	77	683
Total	38,659	33,287	663	223	279	23	515	3,669

County	Population by Race and Ethnicity: 2020							
		Non-Hispanic/Latino						
	Total Population	White Alone	Black/African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian/Pacific Islander Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races Total	Hispanic/Latino Origin (of any race)
Colorado	5,773,714	3,760,663	221,310	33,768	204,225	29,560	260,798	1,263,390
Cheyenne	1,748	1,470	1	5	3	3	60	206
Elbert	26,062	22,185	123	116	205	123	1,243	2,067
Kit Carson	7,087	5,306	21	24	35	32	260	1,409
Lincoln	5,675	4,252	275	61	62	21	195	809
Tital	40,572	33,213	420	206	305	179	1,758	4,491

County	Population by Race and Ethnicity: 2010-2020 Absolute Change							
		Non-Hispanic/Latino						
	Total Population	White Alone	Black/African American Alone	American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	Asian/Pacific Islander Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races Total	Hispanic/Latino Origin (of any race)
Colorado	744,518	239,870	32,532	2,524	63,000	21,938	159,951	224,703
Cheyenne	-88	-147	-6	-6	-8	3	48	28
Elbert	2,976	1,180	-36	-10	18	106	885	833
Kit Carson	-1,183	-1,014	-196	-24	-5	29	192	-165
Lincoln	208	-93	-5	23	21	18	118	126
Total	1,913	-74	-243	-17	26	156	1,243	822

Sources:
U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File
Compiled by the Colorado State Demography Office. Date Produced: 08/13/2021
Differences between 2010 and 2020 reflect both population change and questionnaire changes.


Moffat
Routt
Jackson
Larimer
Weld
Logan
Sedgwick
Phillips
Morgan
Rio Blanco
Grand
Broomfield
Boulder
Adams
Denver
Arapahoe
Washington
Yuma
Gilpin
Garfield
Eagle
Summit
Clear Creek
Jefferson
Douglas
Elbert
Kit Carson
Mesa
Pitkin
Lake
Park
El Paso
Delta
Teller
Lincoln
Cheyenne
Gunnison
Chaffee
Fremont
Kiowa
Montrose
Crowley
Ouray
Pueblo
San Miguel
Hinsdale
Saguache
Custer
Bent
Prowers
Dolores
San Juan
Mineral
Otero
Huerfano
Rio Grande
Alamosa
Montezuma
La Plata
Archuleta
Conejos
Costilla
Las Animas
Baca
Projected Population Change
2010 to 2040
Population Loss
0 to 25,000
25,001 to 100,000
100,001 to 200,000
200,001 to 300,000
> 300,000
Created: 1/14/2015

D. HOUSING

In 2025, the regional Housing Needs Assessment was completed and adopted with approval received from Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) as a next step to address housing needs. This regional project was funded by many local partners, Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA), local businesses, Prairie Development Corporation, and DOLA. The HNA formulated next steps to address housing demand and shortfalls which are under consideration and evaluation in mid-2026. We also sponsored a local training day for housing partners to connect communities and developers to funding partners which was well attended.

Housing Units in 2019	**Cheyenne**	**Elbert**	**Kit Carson**	**Lincoln**
Total Housing Units (ACS estimate)	989	9,614	3,568	1,988
Occupied	774	9,280	3,004	1,518
Owner Occupied	553	8,354	1,995	1,071
Renter Occupied	221	926	1,009	447
Vacant	215	334	564	470
For Seasonal or Recreational Use	36	117	70	62
Source: U.S. Census Bureau				
Residential Building Permits in 2020	**Cheyenne**	**Elbert**	**Kit Carson**	**Lincoln**
	Units	**Units**	**Units**	**Units**
Total Permits Filed	6	296	11	9
Single Family	6	296	9	9
Two Family	0	0	2	0
Three and Four Family	0	0	0	0
Five Families and More	0	0	0	0
Source: U.S. Census Bureau				

The total number of housing units has increased from 14,054 in 2000 to 16,498 in 2020. This 17% increase is not evenly distributed across the region. Elbert County has a housing growth of 38%, again concentrated on the western edge of the county. All other counties show a reduction in population overall between 2000 and 2020: Cheyenne -16%, Kit Carson – 1% and Lincoln - 2%. Occupied housing units rose from 12,698 in 2000 to 14,994 in 2020 a net increase of 18%. Vacant housing increased by a net 11% during the same period. This increased availability is not enough to meet demand for either affordable or available housing. There is significant opportunity to expand housing options. This opportunity is two-fold 1) the need/demand/ request for housing is there today and would most likely be consumed if available 2) increased business/commercial/industrial would be looking to house their employees.

Suburban development in western Elbert County is changing the overall housing profile for the region. For the balance of Elbert County and the other counties within this region, housing stock is moving to less affordable but generally older. This available and attainable housing is a leading asset for the region’s proposed people attraction strategy. Fair market rental housing continues to be limited and when available more expensive than the market can justify. The availability of work-force housing stock is a principal objective of the Region. Even adjusting for substandard housing there is still significant room to attract new population with existing housing stock. Other critical infrastructure ranging from water supply to schools has adequate surplus capacity to absorb this level of growth. Such development could significantly enhance tax bases, workforce availability and domestic markets. Developers have recently begun their own projects in several communities in Lincoln and Kit Carson counties. Housing continues to be is short supply. There are factors that include insufficient water supply, lack of sanitary facilities, and lack of new construction due to limited number of jobs available to attract talent to the area. There were a limited number of new building permits issued in 2020. Many towns don't require permits, which also makes tracking more challenging.

	Total Housing Units: 2020				
	Number			Percent	
County	Total Housing Units	Occupied Housing Units	Vacant Housing Units	Occupied Housing Units	Vacant Housing Units
Colorado	2,491,404	2,257,815	233,589	90.6%	9.4%
Cheyenne	925	745	180	80.5%	19.5%
Elbert	9,805	9,376	429	95.6%	4.4%
Kit Carson	3,410	2,893	517	84.8%	15.2%
Lincoln	2,358	1,980	378	84.0%	16.0%
Total	16,498	14,994	1,504		

	Total Housing Unit Change: 2000 to 2010			
	Total Housing Units			
			Change, 2000 to 2010	
County	2000	2010	Number	Percent
Colorado	1,808,037	2,212,898	404,861	22.4%
Cheyenne	1,105	975	-130	-11.8%
Elbert	7,113	8,939	1,826	25.7%
Kit Carson	3,430	3,527	97	2.8%
Lincoln	2,406	2,420	14	0.6%
Total	14,054	15,861	1,807	

	Total Housing Unit Change: 2010 to 2020			
	Total Housing Units			
			Change, 2010 to 2020	
County	2010	2020	Number	Percent
Colorado	2,212,898	2,491,404	278,506	12.6%
Cheyenne	975	925	-50	-5.1%
Elbert	8,939	9,805	866	9.7%
Kit Carson	3,527	3,410	-117	-3.3%
Lincoln	2,420	2,358	-62	-2.6%
Total	15,861	16,498	637	0

	Total Housing Unit Change: 2000 to 2010			
	Occupied Housing Units			
			Change, 2000 to 2010	
County	2000	2010	Number	Percent
Colorado	1,658,238	1,972,868	314,630	19.0%
Cheyenne	880	786	-94	-10.7%
Elbert	6,770	8,380	1,610	23.8%
Kit Carson	2,990	3,038	48	1.6%
Lincoln	2,058	1,948	-110	-5.3%
Total	12,698	14,152	1,454	

County	Total Housing Unit Change: 2010 to 2020 Occupied Housing Units			
			Change, 2010 to 2020	
	2010	2020	Number	Percent
Colorado	1,972,868	2,257,815	284,947	14.4%
Cheyenne	786	745	-41	-5.2%
Elbert	8,380	9,376	996	11.9%
Kit Carson	3,038	2,893	-145	-4.8%
Lincoln	1,948	1,980	32	1.6%
Total	14,152	14,994	842	0

County	Total Housing Unit Change: 2000 to 2010 Vacant Housing Units			
			Change, 2000 to 2010	
	2000	2010	Number	Percent
Colorado	149,799	240,030	90,231	60.2%
Cheyenne	225	189	-36	-16.0%
Elbert	343	559	216	63.0%
Kit Carson	440	489	49	11.1%
Lincoln	348	472	124	35.6%
Total	1,356	1,709	353	

County	Total Housing Unit Change: 2010 to 2020 Vacant Housing Units			
			Change, 2010 to 2020	
	2010	2020	Number	Percent
Colorado	240,030	233,589	-6,441	-2.7%
Cheyenne	189	180	-9	-4.8%
Elbert	559	429	-130	-23.3%
Kit Carson	489	517	28	5.7%
Lincoln	472	378	-94	-19.9%
Total	1,709	1,504	-205	0

Sources:
U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Decennial Census Summary File
U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File
Compiled by the Colorado State Demography Office. Date Produced: 08/12/2021

E. INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER SERVICES

Transportation Systems - The region has a significant highway system with Interstate 70 running 115 miles east to west through the region. Additionally, there are State and Federal highways that handle traffic north to south as well as parallel to I-70 and east west to Colorado Springs and the Denver Metro area.

There is detailed information, developed by the Colorado Department of Transportation, for all regional transportation modes. These include layered maps and data bases. This information can be found at: https://dtdapps.coloradodot.info/otis/

The Council's due diligence considered a wide range of infrastructure and other services considerations. These are listed below. Not all of these considerations are relevant to this Region and were not explored in further depth (e.g., National Parks or Wilderness Areas).

Infrastructure includes:

Highways	Paved	Bladed	Gravel
Congested	Railroads	Rivers/Streams	City Limits
County Lines	Township Lines	Lakes	Public Lands
State Lands	Forests and Parks	Wilderness Area	Wildlife Area
National Parks	Indian Reservations	Military Bases	

Regional Utilities and Services - The Council has identified and assessed available information for the Region's electric utilities, natural gas services, rural water systems and regional landfills.

Comprehensive information exists on current electric, natural gas and land fill services. The following summarizes the major providers:

<u>Electricity</u>

K.C. Electric Association
CORE Electric Cooperative
Southeast Colorado Power Association
Eastern Colorado Utility Company
Mountain View Electric Association
Public Service of Colorado

<u>Natural Gas</u>

Black Hills Energy

Natural gas services are available primarily in incorporated areas. Rural areas have access to LPG, propane and bottled gas through private for-profit suppliers.

<u>Rural Water Systems</u>

This Region is serviced by a combination of municipal and private water supply and wastewater systems. Additional information on these systems is available through the Council office.

Landfills

Lincoln County Landfill - Lincoln County
Kit Carson County Burlington Landfill - Kit Carson County
Kit Carson County Transfer Stations at Flagler, Seibert & Stratton
Firstview Landfill - Cheyenne County

Telecommunications - The Region is serviced by multiple national, regional and local telephone, cable, cellular phone and Internet service providers. Information on those services that are regulated by either the federal or state governments is readily available. However, given the rural nature of this area, information on Internet, cell phone and cable television services is less available. As a general rule these services are available at reasonable costs and levels in the more populated areas of the Region. However, access, quality and competitive options are concerns existing in the less populated and more rural areas. There is a need for a more comprehensive assessment of this critical infrastructure in the future (particularly given the Region's strategy focus on people attraction).

Childcare – Childcare services were provided by over thirty locations in the service area of ECCOG through either in licensed home care or daycare facilities in previous years. Now, families are experiencing a shortfall of childcare providers. The pandemic brought to light that childcare is severely lacking in our region. Lincoln County continues its work to open a full daycare facility while Kit Carson County has one center under construction in Stratton, which plans to open in fall 2026 to serve 61 children potentially. This construction project started from vacant bare ground known as a blighted property.

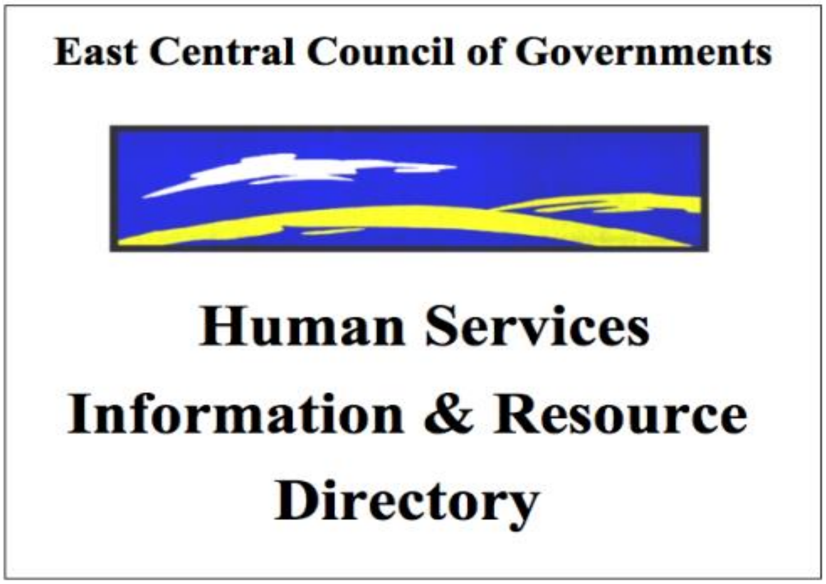
Health and Social Services - The following table summarizes the primary health and social service institutions within the Region.

Table of Health Care/ Assisted Living Services

County	Community	Type	Name
Cheyenne	Cheyenne Wells	Hospital	Keefe Memorial Hospital
Cheyenne	Cheyenne Wells	Nursing Home	Cheyenne Manor
Elbert	Elizabeth	Assisted Living	Goodwin Manor
Kit Carson	Burlington	Hospital	Kit Carson County Memorial Hospital
Kit Carson	Burlington	Nursing Home	Grace Manor Care Center
Kit Carson	Burlington	Assisted Living	Burlington Care Center, Inc.
Kit Carson	Burlington	Assisted Living	The Legacy at Burlington
Kit Carson	Flagler	Assisted Living	Aspen Leaf Assisted Living
Kit Carson	Stratton	Assisted Living	Aspen Leaf Assisted Living
Lincoln	Hugo	Hospital	Lincoln Community Hospital
Lincoln	Hugo	Nursing Home	Lincoln Community Nursing Home
Lincoln	Limon	Assisted Living	Aspen Leaf Assisted Living

The Region is served by the standard State (Federal) supported public social services. Because of the Region's relatively small market size, the incidence of private and for-profit social services is limited. There are comprehensive private and for-profit social services available in both the Colorado Springs and Denver Metropolitan Areas.

All three hospitals offer specialty clinics on a regular basis. Specialty physicians come from Denver or Colorado Springs. In-patient health care services are also available in communities adjacent to this Region, including La Junta and Lamar to the south, selected communities in Western Kansas, Sterling and Fort Morgan to the North and a complete range of high-end health care services in both Denver and Colorado Springs. Travel distances to these services from some locations in the Region could be an issue, but there is excellent and diverse care availability.



The ECCOG's Information and Resource Directory is available online as often contact information changes and new services are added. Please see our website: https://www.eccog.com/ecaaa/.

F. LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS/BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

The Region, despite its relatively small population base, has been able to create significant new employment. Since this data is measuring both wage and salary jobs as well as proprietor jobs, this is an important consideration. Mainly, it is the number of jobs being measured, not the number of people. A common economic strategy in rural areas is multiple job holding. It is believed there is a mix of new job creation coupled with increases in multiple job holdings.

Commuting Patterns - Colorado's Central Plains, like other Great Plains regions, has large geographic workforce regions. Given economic needs and the right opportunities, rural workers will travel relatively long distances to access work. When compared to urban commuting times, these commutes are not unrealistic due to uncongested highways.

Many workers in Elbert County must travel outside of the county to find employment. This is a function of residential development in western Elbert County and residents traveling back into the Denver and Colorado Springs Metropolitan Areas for work.

Commuting patterns for Kit Carson County balance out with a near equal in and out flow of commuting related income.

Lincoln County, because of its prison and transportation corridor related services, is an employment hub attracting workers from the larger region resulting in the net outflow of earnings to other communities.

Production Agriculture - This region is supported by a historic and traditional production agriculture sector dominated by cattle, wheat, corn for grain and livestock forages.

The eastern portion of the region tends to have larger farms and ranches. However, suburbanization of the Western portions of Elbert County provides a different profile with increasing numbers of smaller operations in the 10 to 49 acre and 50 to 179-acre ranges. This urbanization is creating additional smaller farms and also resulting in traditional farm and ranch land being converted to urban uses.

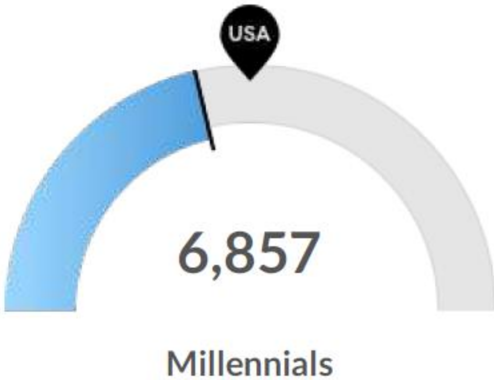
Irrigation is particularly important to some producers of corn for grain and forages. Current and future restrictions on ground water pumping adversely impacts the irrigated ground productivity, corresponding producer incomes and total area economic activity. Movement to production methods requiring less or no irrigation water will be an important development challenge.

Cattle	Cheyenne	Elbert	Kit Carson	Lincoln	Total
Farms	140	815	207	252	1414
Cattle/Caves	34,782	40,779	173,384	42,645	291,590

USDA NASS AG Census 2017
Colorado Cattleman's Assoc.

Heritage and Cultural Tourism - The Region has prioritized "heritage and cultural tourism" as a development priority. Funds were secured to enable the development of a comprehensive heritage tourism program strategy and associated marketing materials in partnership with the Prairie Development Corporation.

An estimated 6.3 million consumers live within a 250-mile radius of the region. The population in the region is concentrated in the Denver and Colorado Springs Metropolitan Areas. Additionally, travelers in the hundreds of thousands pass through the Region via Interstate 70 and other transportation corridors. A small percentage of these residents and travelers attracted to the Region for tourism can greatly increase the size and impact of this potential industry on the Region.



Labor Force Annual Averages in 2020	Cheyenne	Elbert	Kit Carson	Lincoln	Total
Total Labor Force	1,103	14,961	4,249	2,375	22,688
5-Year % Change	9.10%	12.80%	-1.70%	9.50%	
10-Year % Change	5.90%	17.70%	-2.70%	10.80%	
Employed	1,076	14,264	4,130	2,269	21,739
5-Year % Change	9.20%	10.90%	-2.20%	8.20%	
10-Year % Change	8.00%	22.60%	-0.70%	12.90%	
Unemployed	27	697	119	106	949
5-Year % Change	3.80%	73.40%	19.00%	49.30%	
10-Year % Change	-41.30%	-35.30%	-43.30%	-21.50%	
Unemployment Rate	2.4	4.7	2.8	4.5	
5-Year % Change	-7.70%	56.70%	21.70%	36.40%	
10-Year % Change	-45.50%	-44.70%	-41.70%	-28.60%	

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Annual Industry Distribution of Jobs in 2020 (NAICS)	Cheyenne Est.	Cheyenne Jobs	Elbert Est.	Elbert Jobs	Kit Carson Est.	Kit Carson Jobs	Lincoln Est.	Lincoln Jobs
Total	98	698	731	3,743	303	2,855	171	2,180
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	13	56	22	76	27	0	7	0
Mining	11	70	4	6	3	0	0	0
Utilities	1	0	2	0	4	29	4	44
Construction	6	0	177	814	30	150	14	90
Manufacturing	2	0	23	113	10	121	3	0
Wholesale Trade	5	52	48	116	27	330	6	14
Retail Trade	9	35	39	494	33	307	27	304
Transportation & Warehousing	10	6	25	22	14	88	14	42
Information	3	0	13	33	8	33	3	0
Finance and Insurance	9	0	26	64	25	118	7	62
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2	0	29	26	7	15	5	21
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2	0	117	275	18	37	11	28
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	0	5	3	1	0	1	0
Admin. & Support & Waste Mgt. & Rem. Services	4	0	58	181	6	0	4	0
Educational Services	2	0	13	647	6	0	4	0
Health Care and Social Services	4	0	26	85	25	192	12	118
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	9	69	3	5	0	0
Accommodation and Food Services	3	11	26	177	23	275	24	0
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	3	0	53	169	14	37	8	0
Public Administration	8	72	18	305	21	34	17	261

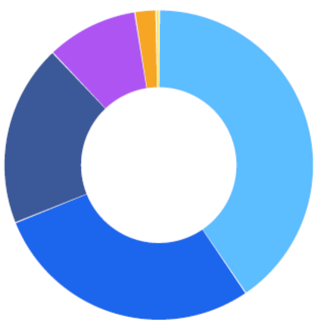
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
D = Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information.
N/A = This item is not available.

Place of Work vs Place of Residence

Where Talent Works		Where Talent Lives	
Name	Year 2020	**Name**	Year 2020
Elizabeth, CO (Elbert County)	3,753	Elizabeth, CO (Elbert County)	9,259
Burlington, CO (Kit Carson County)	1,842	Kiowa, CO (Elbert County)	2,461
Limon, CO (Lincoln County)	1,757	Burlington, CO (Kit Carson County)	1,928
Flagler, CO (Kit Carson County)	1,001	Limon, CO (Lincoln County)	1,600
Kiowa, CO (Elbert County)	967	Flagler, CO (Kit Carson County)	813

Emsi Q2 2021 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com

Business Size



	Percentage	Business Count
1 to 4 employees	40.4%	663
5 to 9 employees	28.5%	467
10 to 19 employees	19.0%	312
20 to 49 employees	9.6%	157
50 to 99 employees	2.2%	36
100 to 249 employees	0.4%	6

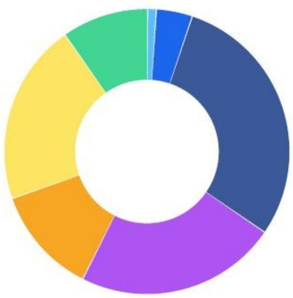
**Business Data by DatabaseUSA.com is third-party data provided by Emsi to its customers as a convenience, and Emsi does not endorse or warrant its accuracy or consistency with other published Emsi data. In most cases, the Business Count will not match total companies with profiles on the summary tab.*

Emsi Q2 2021 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com

Education - The region has an educated population. Almost 95% of the population having at least a High School diploma. Completed degree programs show 42.6%. There are also several trades that do not require a degree but do require advanced training and education.

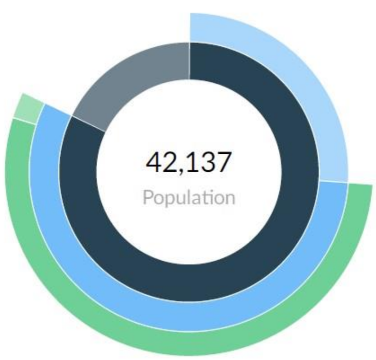
Educational Attainment

Concerning educational attainment, **20.6% of the selected regions' residents possess a Bachelor's Degree** (0.6% above the national average), and **12.2% hold an Associate's Degree** (3.6% above the national average).



	% of Population	Population
Less Than 9th Grade	1.0%	295
9th Grade to 12th Grade	4.1%	1,221
High School Diploma	29.4%	8,781
Some College	22.9%	6,822
Associate's Degree	12.2%	3,650
Bachelor's Degree	20.6%	6,149
Graduate Degree and Higher	9.8%	2,930

2020 Labor Force Breakdown



	Population
Total Working Age Population	34,584
Not in Labor Force (15+)	10,948
Labor Force	23,636
Employed	22,642
Unemployed	994
Under 15	7,554

G. PUBLIC SAFETY

The Region's detailed information on both public safety infrastructure and performance statistics may be found at https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/publicsafety/about-department-public-safety. The Region is served by county, municipal and state law enforcement. Primary emergency medical and fire services are organized by community and areas with availability throughout the region. In the realm of volunteer fire and ambulance services, volunteers are declining to serve for several reasons which could create a different type of crisis in the future. Recruitment of volunteers is often ongoing in several communities of the eastern plains due to retirement and age of volunteers. Fires in recent months has led to a resurgence of volunteer fire departments which are common in our rural communities.

When compared to Colorado or the United States, crime rates in this Region are relatively low primarily related to theft, burglaries, and auto thefts. Violent crime is relatively rare. However, a single violent crime event can create a distorted picture when benchmarked against the relatively small regional or community population.

Summary crime statistics are available through the State of Colorado or *www.city-data.com*.

Chapter III - Regional Goals & Implementation

A. Regional Process

As the four counties have a long history of working together, the process for developing this CEDS for Colorado's Central Plains was immediately able to capitalize on the on-going working relationships among all of the local governments, various advisory committees and the economic development groups throughout the Region. Input on how best to develop a truly regional plan was obtained from Board members of the Prairie Development Corporation and the East Central Council of Governments as well as from representatives of the member entities making up each Council/Corporation. It was determined that utilizing the Blueprint committee members as active participants in or with the ECCOG appointed CEDS Committee brought the needed expertise and continuity to the CEDS process. As this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy would be built using the previous CEDS and the former Blueprint work, due to the complexity of the resiliency plan and its importance following the recent pandemic, a consultant was hired in 2021 to conduct community meetings and update the CEDS. ECCOG staff would be involved in discussions and meetings along with COG's numerous partners and committees. For this current update, ECCOG staff and resources were used to update activities and projects as reported by the towns, counties, economic development organizations and other partners. A Google survey was also prepared and released to gain insight from our region to help identify new strategies and glean important updates from the locals to be incorporated into the SWOT analysis below.

The draft CEDS was posted online and offered for review for a thirty-day period. The CEDS was posted on the ECCOG web site as of July 29, 2026 and a public notice was made in local newspapers. Draft copies were emailed to the CEDS Committee Members and the Board of Directors of ECCOG with an offer of a printed hard copy for anyone who selected print materials. Digital and print copies were also available to any town or county. East Central Council of Governments' board adopted the CEDS and recommended submittal to EDA at their board meeting held on September 2, 2026.

B. Development Opportunities & Challenges

A substantial amount of data was collected from municipal and county leaders, business owners, interested parties and members of the economic development organizations. Data collection was conducted thru a series of one-on-one interviews and phone calls, email responses, four Zoom meetings and a distributed online survey in 2021 with a new survey conducted in 2026. The 2026 survey had a 21% return rate with good input to update our focus for the next five years.

The questions were: **What are the Strengths of our region? What are the Weaknesses of our region? What are some Opportunities for our region?** and **What are the Threats for our region?** Participants were encouraged to include as much or little information as they wished. They were also encouraged to include their name and/or organization.

An interesting outcome of the SWOT analysis was that many issues appeared in multiple categories. Some issues that were mentioned often had both positive and negative sides.

For example, the topic may appear to be housing and a lack of housing generally in the work areas. When the responses were reviewed it was not just housing, but water and sanitary facility capability to support the housing units. Without the housing there is a lack of population to fill jobs. There are positions open that could be filled if there was housing for employees. With a lack of housing, new commercial investment is reluctant to come to the area due to a lack of potential employees.

Transportation and infrastructure overall. While the highway system gets high marks from many respondents, the maintenance of those highways is a major concern. While existing highways are in place and in reasonably good repair there is a concern that Federal and State money will go to larger population areas and the caliber of the roadways will decrease. This could cause commercial and leisure traffic to take alternative routes outside of the region.

Municipal and County governments get many comments in the strengths section with the ability to enact rules and regulations to meet the local and regional needs. There is a significant amount of cross boundary collaboration. Consistency of the application of codes has been raised. Making this even more contentious is the fact that some areas do not have certain codes (building as an example). There are also concerns that forces from outside the region will legislate or pass measures at the ballot box that may be contrary to current practice.

Strengths

Strong Leaders (No change in 2026)

Rural Lifestyle/Community Focused (No change in 2026)

Transportation (No change in 2026)

Agriculture (No change in 2026)

Renewable Energy (No longer listed in 2026)

Healthcare, Schools & Churches (New in 2026)

Strong community leaders that are aware of the challenges in our area and are willing to search and work hard finding a solution. These same people are common sense, think outside the box individuals that actually know one size fits all does not apply very often. Community leaders who work for the betterment of the region while striving to retain local/regional control. Visible community leaders with a strong work ethic, conservative values and a sense of community identity.

People that live in the region do so in part because of the rural lifestyle. There is often a lower cost of doing business and it is less expensive to live in the region. Many do not like the big city life. During the pandemic a number of people could practice social distancing just through the separation of properties. The region has good schools where students are in relatively small classes where they can receive attention for their needs. Broadband capability has been expanded but is not yet available at all locations. Cellular service has improved but is still spotty.

I-70 traverses the region and is the gateway from the Kansas border to the greater Denver area. There is a feeling of larger regional support due to the multiple transportation systems, highways, roads and rail. The proximity to major metropolitan areas; Colorado Springs, Denver and Denver International Airport makes the area attractive for companies considering expansion or relocation, individual commuting from high density work areas to a rural lifestyle and a retirement location. I-70 in Limon is a hub for diverse Federal and State highways going in all directions.

A strong agriculture base adapted to the environment. Significant open spaces allow for large scale cattle grazing and appropriate crop production. It seems this is a given area that was not mentioned in 2026's survey. The industry is still relevant but may be taken for granted in the survey.

The open space allows for the implementation of solar capability due to the high number of days with full sun. Similarly, the open space and winds allow for turbine-based power generation without impacting residential areas. The multiple wind turbines on the prairie demonstrate renewable energy is not anything new so maybe that's why it was not listed this time.

New in the 2026 survey responses were the statements of importance of healthcare, schools and churches. Keeping these amenities well supported and active was paramount to the responders.

Weaknesses

Housing (No change in 2026)

Broadband Access (No longer listed in 2026)

Transportation Infrastructure (No change in 2026)

Workforce/Daycare (No change in 2026)

Resistance to Change (No change in 2026)

Healthcare (New in 2026)

Lack of Communication Methods as Newspapers Closed (New in 2026)

Cost of Living (New in 2026)

Food Insecurity (New in 2026)

Housing was listed by more people than any other item in this category. The general lack of housing followed by the lack of affordable housing. For the area to grow a business environment, there must be places for people to live. The rural wages paid by rural businesses (in general) will not support inward migration of a workforce. Housing of all types; single and multi-family across all price spectrums are in short supply. Completion of the regional Housing Needs Assessment at the end of 2025 should help address the housing crisis.

Consistent broadband access across the area. To encourage work from home or location neutral business opportunities there has to be virtually universal accessibility. Home schooling and remote education at any level also requires consistent access.

While the proximity to I-70 and Federal and State highways is a strength mention by many, there is a downside. The constant traffic flow without sufficient maintenance is a high concern. With the distances between residences cities and town roadways need to be taken care of. Additionally, for those that lack their own transportation, even with the highways, they may not be able to go to doctors' appointments, groceries or shopping in general.

Many were concerned that the lack of available workforce would make it difficult to have businesses move to the area. A lack of daycare, especially during the Pandemic, has shown a weakness when a parent or responsible party cannot go to work. Lack of childcare can significantly reduce the household income or put children at risk.

Collaborative spirit was a high comment item by many on the Strengths section. Many also expressed concern that there is often a great deal of talk but a reluctance to move forward. There is some amount of resistance to change and a concern that the rural lifestyle will change. Change adoption is slow, but with limited new residents the need to change continues to be questioned.

Healthcare has never been "off the table" but it is receiving more attention as rural hospitals and clinics are threatened with closure and lack of staff. We acknowledge that without proper healthcare our aging population must leave the rural areas and often leave friends behind which causes more health issues. Mental health and substance abuse was also mentioned in one survey as a need.

Local newspapers have closed in an alarming rate and left many aging adults without a way to know the happenings of their hometown. Businesses find advertising a challenge and advertising for jobs is very difficult. A new method of community information sharing is needed and wanted!

Opportunities

Energy (No change in 2026)

Agriculture (No change in 2026)

Available Land (No change in 2026)

Broadband (No longer listed in 2026)

Downtown Improvements (New in 2026)

Housing (New in 2026)

Education (New in 2026)

Senior Services Programs (New in 2026)

Green Energy: solar, wind, geothermal, also potentially carbon storage. There is significant open space that could be utilized for renewable energy with transmission lines to a larger grid. There were some comments about using a type of battery storage that would allow for continued electrical production in times of reduced demand. Establishing an energy storage option for produced but not yet needed energy would be ideal and would provide a redundant system if a failure occurs outside our region.

Agriculture that requires low water usage is often mentioned as a significant opportunity. The current available land could be studied by universities and commercial producers for the addition of potential cropping. This would also expose more people to the rural lifestyle. There is available nonproducing land that could be placed into service with minimal disruption to other ongoing activities.

There are significant amounts of land available for commercial development with highway or rail access. As land becomes more expensive and less available in major metropolitan areas, the region is an excellent location. Warehousing, distribution, break bulk and cross dock supply chain operations could be considered for the open space with buildings configured to suit.

There is plenty of land available for housing. Density and location would depend on available water and sanitary considerations. Attracting new residents will increase the opportunity for childcare, additional small businesses, grocery stores and potentially medical clinics.

Leveraging broadband capabilities would allow for increased connectivity for remote education and telemedicine. This could also attract telecommuters, work from home individuals and small businesses.

New in 2026 were opportunities that identified home-based businesses like soap making, food prep, and handyman services for potential business and job creation. Jobs for teens were also mentioned as well as keeping them in the rural areas for jobs.

Interest in providing jobs to young people and then retaining them locally after school came up a few times in the 2026 survey. Improving downtowns and supporting local business was an area of opportunity this year. Training unemployed people was one suggestion to help fill open jobs.

Senior services like public transportation and meal programs were expressed as needs in the area. In Home Help was also stated as a need for growing number of aging adults. In order to age in place among friends and family where they want to be, seniors need improved or added services that allow them to stay in their homes. Meals, chore services, transportation to shopping and medical appointments are clearly top of their minds. In 202,6 the East Central COG Area Agency on Aging conducted a survey of over 1,000 people over age 60. The most stated need was meals provided to them and a ride to appointments as they no longer are safe drivers. Seniors sometimes don't have the strength or will to make three meals per day for themselves and cleaning it up is also a burden. Some live on very low income and can't even afford food for two meals per day if they must buy prescriptions too. At a time they should be worrying less, they are worrying more.

Threats

Lack of Housing (No change in 2026)

Forced Change (No change in 2026)

Population (No change in 2026)

Large Scale Farming/Absentee Landowners (No change in 2026)

Distance/Rural (No longer listed in 2026)

Churches Reduced Congregation (New in 2026)

Law Enforcement/Safety (New in 2026)

Drug Abuse (New in 2026)

Water (New in 2026)

The lack of housing and the current high cost of construction or rental may deter people from moving to the area. The lack of potential for growth may cause some people to not come to the area. If the population continues to decline, new and existing businesses may find it cost prohibitive to be in the region.

There is significant concern that people outside the area will attempt to continue to force additional regulations in the region. Oil and gas regulation changes, legal changes to agricultural methods, both crops and cattle, and 'city based' rules may have a negative impact on the region. Government overreach, negative attitudes from urban areas are a concern. *Government overreach is growing in 2026 responses as government regulations impact rural Colorado more than ever. The policies and rules for businesses make Colorado unattractive for growth and sustainability.*

The aging population and declining workforce may further reduce the declining customer base of local businesses. The potential for a larger operation that has the capability or equivalent product of existing businesses may cause them to retire or close.

Larger scale farming that may be able to take advantage of economies of scale may reduce the number of family farms. With the reduction of workers needed the potential for increased population decreases. Additional nonlocal influence may threaten the rural lifestyle.

For some people the distance to major metropolitan areas, seen by others as an opportunity, causes a feeling of isolation. There is a concern that there will not be the people or infrastructure needs to sustain the communities in the region.

Law enforcement or lack of their presence has residents concerned about safety and expanded drug abuse. Both of these threats were stated by a couple respondents in 2026.

Water is constantly under threat and being considered a limited resource for residents and industry. Those who have a supply don't want to lose it and those without water are searching for ways to obtain it. Since we can't make water, conservation or watering restrictions has become the normal spring and summer mantra while green grass turns brown and crunchy. Towns have been burdened with water and waste water regulations that they can't afford to improve so that threatens the region also.

The Statewide CEDS formed five pillars or strategies that the regional CEDS demonstrated were consistently identified in our individual regions. Those 5 pillars are: 1) Housing, 2) Job Creation, 3) Growth of Key Industries, 4) Quality of Life/Tourism, and 5) Community Infrastructure and Resources. ECCOG believes these pillars summarize much of our own challenges and opportunities.

C. Goals & Strategies

Based on the SWOT analysis survey responses and the East Central Enterprise Zone strategies for economic development, five overarching goals were identified from the goals and objectives from Page 6 of this

CEDS. East Central Council of Governments and the communities served by ECCOG will focus on these to address the recovery and resiliency needs. By mitigating the service disruptions caused by natural and man-made disasters or economic downturns, the region becomes more resilient to sustain their businesses and communities. See Attachment B for the Implementation or Action Plan with its timeframe, partners and steps.

ECCOG Goals
Support a diverse economy including support for agriculture, tourism, healthcare and manufacturing to increase or maintain employment levels.
Establish/grow/promote regional tourism that attracts visitors to the region.
Develop infrastructure that expands multi-modal transportation, enhances commercial corridors, creates healthy communities and advances modern communication networks.
Improve/enhance workforce skills and assist businesses with obtaining skilled/trained employees with an emphasis on remote work or location neutral positions.
Improve housing inventory focusing on affordability and safety.

Chapter IV – Economic Resiliency

A. Mitigation and Recovery

Risks

In recent years the concept of Economic Development has been expanded to include many additional factors. In 2017 a decision was made to create a data set and index of National Risks at multiple levels down to the census tracks. This tool has now been released and provides additional information that may be included in decision making and grant applications. Being proactive in mitigating issues, including weather, allows for easier and more successful economic growth through acquisition, retention, and expansion.

The National Risk Index is a dataset and online tool to help illustrate the United States communities most at risk for 18 natural hazards: Avalanche, Coastal Flooding, Cold Wave, Drought, Earthquake, Hail, Heat Wave, Hurricane, Ice Storm, Landslide, Lightning, Riverine Flooding, Strong Wind, Tornado, Tsunami, Volcanic Activity, Wildfire, and Winter Weather.

The following are not profiled in the dataset and online tool as they do not pertain to the reporting area: Avalanche, Coastal Flooding, Hurricane, Tsunami, and Volcanic Activity. Heat Wave is included but indicates a No Rating.

The number derived are statistical in nature and do not precisely indicate an event or a loss.

All information in this section is from The National Risk Index https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/ an Official website of the Department of Homeland Security.

Calculating the Risk Index

Risk Index scores are calculated using an equation that combines scores for Expected Annual Loss due to natural hazards, Social Vulnerability and Community Resilience:

Risk Index = Expected Annual Loss × Social Vulnerability ÷ Community Resilience

Calculating Expected Annual Loss

Expected Annual Loss scores are calculated using an equation that combines values for exposure, annualized frequency, and historic loss ratios for 18 hazard types:

Expected Annual Loss = Exposure × Annualized Frequency × Historic Loss Ratio

Calculating Social Vulnerability

Social Vulnerability is measured using the Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI) published by the University of South Carolina's Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute (HVRI).

For more information, visit: hazards.fema.gov/nri/social-vulnerability

Calculating Community Resilience

Community Resilience is measured using the Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities (HVRI BRIC) published by the University of South Carolina's Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute (HVRI).

	Hazard Type Risk Index											
	Cheyenne			Elbert			Kit Carson			Lincoln		
	Score	Rank	Rating	Score	Rank	Rating	Score	Rank	Rating	Score	Rank	Rating
Overall	4.02	3	VL	2.42	4	VL	7.11	1	VL	4.41	2	VL
Cold Wave	16.57	3	RL	5.64	4	VL	37.24	1	RH	16.89	2	RL
Drought	8.60	1	RL	2.20	4	VL	7.58	2	RL	4.44	3	VL
Earthquake	0.32	4	VL	0.64	3	VL	0.69	2	VL	0.74	1	VL
Hail	8.42	3	RL	2.93	4	VL	16.30	1	RM	11.50	2	RL
Heat Wave	0.00		NR	0.00		NR	0.00		NR	0.00		NR
Ice Storm	1.76	4	VL	2.30	3	VL	4.99	1	VL	4.66	2	VL
Landslide	2.24	4	VL	3.47	3	VL	4.25	1	VL	4.07	2	VL
Lightning	4.22	4	VL	5.45	3	VL	7.15	2	VL	7.70	1	VL
Riverine Flooding	2.22	2	VL	1.76	3	VL	0.00		NR	4.15	1	VL
Strong Wind	5.82	3	VL	3.99	4	VL	10.92	1	RL	8.88	2	RL
Tornado	5.54	3	VL	5.07	4	VL	11.63	1	RL	8.74	2	VL
Wildfire	0.96	4	VL	4.07	1	VL	1.05	3	VL	2.57	2	VL
Winter Weather	9.60	2	RL	4.91	4	VL	15.72	1	RL	7.83	3	VL

Rating Key:	VL	Very Low
	RL	Relatively Low
	RM	Relatively Moderate
	RH	Relatively High
	NR	No Rating

Source National Risk Index, Risk Comparison Report August 18, 2021

Social Vulnerability											
Cheyenne			Elbert			Kit Carson			Lincoln		
Score	Rank	Rating	Score	Rank	Rating	Score	Rank	Rating	Score	Rank	Rating
27.24	3	RL	11.79	4	VL	31.26	2	RL	32.87	1	RL

Rating Key:	VL	Very Low
	RL	Relatively Low

Source National Risk Index, Risk Comparison Report August 18, 2021

Community Resilience							
Cheyenne		Elbert		Kit Carson		Lincoln	
Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating
54.11	RM	54.03	RM	51.98	RL	51.38	RL

Rating Key:	RL	Relatively Low
	RM	Relatively Moderate

Source National Risk Index, Risk Comparison Report August 18, 2021

Expected Annual Loss							
Cheyenne		Elbert		Kit Carson		Lincoln	
Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating
6.92	VL	9.62	VL	10.23	VL	5.97	VL

Rating Key:	VL	Very Low

Source National Risk Index, Risk Comparison Report August 18, 2021

For more information, visit: hazards.fema.gov/nri/community-resilience. There was a parallel effort to revisit and enhance the safety, security of the extended region through mitigation and recovery. These efforts have been completed and agreed to. The ***Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan*** information is included, in a reduced form, so that efforts would not be duplicated.

The five-year update of the ***Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan*** is a collaborative effort of nine counties and their local partners, including municipalities, fire protection districts, hospitals, schools and other special districts and stakeholders. The counties of **Cheyenne, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington** and **Yuma** and their partners participated in the 2020 update of this document. This allows for regional participation in the identification of incident types, mitigation prior to incidents and recovery methodology post incident. All incidents are reviewed for actions and potential next steps for mitigation.

"Over the years through cooperative efforts, dozens of preparedness and mitigation projects have been completed in communities across the region, resulting in improved public safety and greater awareness of protective measures that can be taken by individuals, families, schools, businesses and local governments.

Formal approval of this plan by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) also assures that participating jurisdictions in the region will remain eligible for federal grant funding under FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) program to include the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program. Participation in the multi-hazard mitigation planning process also allows jurisdictions to earn planning credits for the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System (CRS).

In Colorado and across the U.S., proactive mitigation planning has proven to help reduce the costs of disaster response and recovery to communities and property owners by protecting critical community facilities, reducing liability exposure, and minimizing overall community impacts and disruption. The mitigation actions recommended in this plan are based on an assessment of hazards and risks and a planning process that engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including the public. Natural hazards were evaluated with respect to probability (based on historical frequency), magnitude (estimated severity of consequences) and priority (significance for future planning and mitigation).

This updated version of the Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan brings the history of recorded hazard events up to date, including the pandemic hazard and the coronavirus COVID-19 crisis that broke out during the process of updating this plan and will continue to cause impacts and yield lessons long after this document is formally adopted. The plan also reassesses risks from other natural hazards, identifies vulnerable community assets, updates goals and objectives, and proposes a mitigation strategy for achieving goals based on a range of distinct mitigation actions." ***Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan***

County	Participating Jurisdictions	
Cheyenne	Cheyenne County	
Kit Carson	Kit Carson County	Town of Flagler
	City of Burlington	Town of Stratton
Lincoln	Lincoln County	Town of Hugo
Logan	Logan County	City of Sterling
Morgan	Morgan County	City of Fort Morgan
	City of Brush	Quality Water District
Phillips	Phillips County	Town of Haxtun
	City of Holyoke	
Sedgwick	Sedgwick County	
Washington	Washington County	
Yuma	Yuma County	

Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan – Elbert County aligns with counties to the west.

Natural Hazard Category	Natural Hazard
Meteorological Hazards	**Blizzards and Severe Winter Storms**
	Dam Failures and levee Failures*
	Drought
	Dust Storms
	Flooding
	Fog
	Hailstorms
	Lightning
	Noxious Weeds/Tumbleweeds
	Straight-Line Winds
	Temperature Extremes
	Tornadoes
	Wildland and Grassland Fires*
Geologic Hazards	**Earthquakes**
	Landslides
Biological Hazards	**Pandemic**
	Pestilence
	Zoonotic Diseases

** Dam/levee failures and wildland/grassland events may be human caused, but generally have a natural hazard component that trigger of expand the event (i.e., flooding for dam/levee failures and lightning or wind for wildland/grassland fires).* ***Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan***

"At the regional level (for Regional Base Plan), the only natural hazard that was added to the list of hazards addressed in the plan was the **Pandemic** hazard, due to the outbreak of the ***coronavirus COVID-19*** crisis during the updates to this plan. The pandemic hazard is profiled in the Regional Base Plan and is also addressed in the County Plan Elements, including its significance for planning/mitigation, vulnerable community assets, and local mitigation actions. No hazards were deleted from the regional analysis." ***Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan***

Mitigation Actions 2020 -2025 Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

The following charts are from the current approved Mitigation Plan. Each of these activities has a direct impact on individuals, families, schools, businesses and local governments. The activities of this CEDS will support the ultimate completion of these goals by the respective parties. The implementation of these actions will reduce the impact and enhance all parties. *The charts were reviewed and modified by the local organizations which including removing some strategies. An update of the Plan were not found online during this update.*

Kit Carson County		
1	Purchase and install emergency generators in the following facilities: • Burlington Community Center (designated public shelter) • Burlington Wastewater Treatment Plant • Blending Plant, Well 11, Well 12 and Well 13 • Aspen Leaf Assisted Living Center in Flagler Wheatland Conference Center in Flagler (designated public shelter).	City of Burlington, Town of Flagler, OEM
2	Purchase new transformer for substation or build new substation on north side of town to service critical infrastructure.	City of Burlington, OEM
3	Establish emergency public shelter for the Town of Stratton at the Church of God.	Town of Stratton, OEM
4	Update building codes in the City of Burlington.	Burlington City Manager
5	Update City of Burlington Comprehensive Plan and incorporate goals, concepts and recommended mitigation actions from the Kit Carson County Hazard Mitigation Plan Element.	Burlington City Manager
6	Continue to coordinate a countywide emergency management public education program, including the use of social media to inform citizens of Red Flag warnings, severe weather alerts, and detours/road closures.	OEM
7	Promote benefits of tornado shelters and safe rooms and foster their construction.	OEM, Municipalities
8	Evaluate the capacity of two bridges in the Flagler area to convey high-water flows following heavy rainfall events and determine if improvements (e.g., new bridges or culverts) are needed: (1) bridge on County Road 4 approximately 3 miles north of Flagler (Duck Creek) and (2) bridge on County Road 5 approximately 5 miles south of Flagler (S. Fork Republican River).	Kit Carson County Road and Bridge Department
9	Develop a comprehensive After-Action Report that documents COVID-19 impacts and captures lessons learned related to government services, public safety, education, agriculture, health care and the economy.	OEM with EMS, Public Health and Medical Services Partners
10	Develop a countywide mitigation strategy that outlines recommended actions that can be taken at different stages of a pandemic by individuals/families at home, schools and childcare facilities, assisted living facilities, workplaces, health care facilities, and community- and faith-based organizations.	OEM with EMS, Public Health and Medical Services Partners
11	Develop a medical surge capacity plan, in cooperation with local, regional and state partners, to improve capabilities for scaling up the coordinated delivery of health interventions during a pandemic event, including vaccinations, patient transport and care, medical staffing, and critical medical and personal protective equipment.	OEM with EMS, Public Health and Medical Services Partners
12	Develop a plan for acquiring, maintaining and refreshing a local stockpile of vaccines, medicines (including antibiotics and antivirals), and equipment (such as masks, gowns, and ventilators) and identify reliable vendors and other external sources to supplement local stockpiles.	OEM with EMS, Public Health and Medical Services Partners
13	Develop public education guidelines for communicating with the public during a pandemic that: (1) ensures information is timely, accurate and coordinated, (2) addresses the needs of non-English speaking residents, and (3) includes provisions for addressing rumors, misinformation and public perceptions of risk.	OEM with EMS, Public Health and Medical Services Partners

Lincoln County		
1	Obtain generators for schools in the county and for the events building at the fairgrounds.	Lincoln County Commissioners, Lincoln County OEM, Schools
2	Continue hazard awareness and outreach efforts to educate the public about natural hazards; conduct an annual Awareness Week in conjunction with the County Fair to inform citizens about current preparedness and mitigation efforts in Lincoln County.	Lincoln County OEM, Public Health, Schools
3	Evaluate feasibility and requirements for installing back-up generator power for new and existing sirens in all communities.	Lincoln County OEM, Town Managers
4	Improve communications interoperability and emergency fire response by supporting existing and expanded Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group operations.	Lincoln County Sheriff, Lincoln County OEM, Fire Protection Districts
5	Improve regional communications and public notification by increasing 911 capabilities through CenturyLink, integrating the use of Text-to-911, and expanding use of the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS).	Lincoln County Sheriff, Lincoln County OEM, Towns
6	Conduct a public awareness and education campaign to promote the installation of tornado safe rooms in new and existing construction. Provide educational materials and construction specifications through multiple media about the life-saving benefits of safe rooms.	Lincoln County OEM
7	Reduce repetitive minor flood events in the Town of Hugo: (1) evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing efforts to improve stormwater runoff in the drainage ditch that runs through town (including previous sediment control efforts), (2) remove sediment that has collected between 5th St. and 6th St. from 7th Ave. to 10th Ave., and (3) develop a long-term strategy for addressing any remaining stormwater management issues.	Hugo Town Clerk, Public Works, Chief Marshal
8	Continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) by enforcing local floodplain regulations and implementing or improving upon effective floodplain and stormwater management practices.	Lincoln County, Town of Limon
9	Develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), to include an assessment of wildfire risks throughout Lincoln County and recommendations for reducing fuel loads, coordinating open burns and creating defensible spaces.	OEM with local Fire Protection Districts and CO Division of Fire Prevention and Control
10	In cooperation with agriculture experts and practitioners, evaluate strategies and mitigation measures that can be established to address risks created by the movement and accumulation of tumbleweeds along transportation routes and around improved property (i.e., buffers, keeping current plants from producing seed, removing tumbleweeds from fence lines and other measures to decrease the spread of seeds).	OEM with CSU Extension Services
11	Develop a plan for acquiring, maintaining and refreshing a local stockpile of vaccines, medicines (including antibiotics and antivirals), and equipment (such as masks, gowns, and ventilators) and identify reliable vendors and other external sources to supplement local stockpiles.	OEM with EMS, Public Health and Medical Services Partners
12	Develop public education guidelines for communicating with the public during a pandemic that: (1) ensures information is timely, accurate and coordinated, (2) addresses the needs of non-English speaking residents, and (3) includes provisions for addressing rumors, misinformation and public perceptions of risk.	OEM with EMS, Public Health and Medical Services Partners

Cheyenne County		
#	Proposed Mitigation Actions	Responsible Agency
1	Determine feasibility and costs of installing community safe room in two facilities: (1) Cheyenne Manor Nursing Facility and (2) Housing Authority of the Town of Cheyenne Wells public housing community for families and senior/disabled individuals.	OEM, Cheyenne Manor Nursing Facility, Cheyenne Wells Housing Authority
2	Conduct evacuation planning and community education and involvement activities for the Town of Cheyenne Wells -- reimplement call-tree notification system.	Cheyenne Wells Town Manager
3	Take steps to qualify for and maintain participation in the National Flood Insurance Program for the Town of Kit Carson.	Kit Carson Town Manager/Council
4	Implement Countywide emergency management public education program.	OEM
5	Conduct evacuation planning and community education and involvement activities for the Town of Kit Carson.	Kit Carson Town Manager, OEM
6	Reach out to public and business community to promote tornado safe rooms.	OEM

Northeast Colorado Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

CHAPTER V - Evaluation Plan

A. Measuring the Goals and Objectives

Assessing the implementation of the CEDS and resiliency plan begins with communication between ECCOG staff and the municipalities and counties staff on what efforts are in process related to the five goals. Knowing what progress is being made and what obstacles are prohibiting progress and action is beneficial to partners locally and regionally. Engaging the CEDS Committee on a quarterly basis to gain feedback and insight with peer interaction helps problem solve and avoids replication of work which increases the odds of success.

Monitoring jobs created or retained, new business startups or closures will bring attention to industry sectors or projects that need attention or assistance. East Central Council of Governments will actively seek feedback from the ECCOG board members, Prairie Development board members and the regional partners each spring through either a survey, on site visits, phone calls or in person meetings as weather and time allows.

The yearly evaluation reports will be shared with the CEDS Blueprint Committee, the ECCOG Board and the Prairie Development Corporation Board. At least once annually, the ECCOG Board will include in its Board's agenda, a specific agenda item(s) to discuss general regional economic development successes, needs, and to outline any needed amendments/adjustments to the project list and/or to the CEDS.

For each of the five economic development goals, ECCOG will monitor and report on the region's progress to reach the goals. Detailed actions, expected outcomes (with measurable results) and a timeline are used in the EDA Performance Progress Reports. Performance factors are subject to refinement and revisions as part of the on-going CEDS process. These performance factors will include:

- Number of jobs created or retained as a result of CEDS implementation
- Number of new businesses in the region; new emerging industries in the region
- Amount of capital that existing businesses have accessed/acquired as a result of the CEDS program implementation
- New capital-accessing programs implemented Amount of private sector investment in the

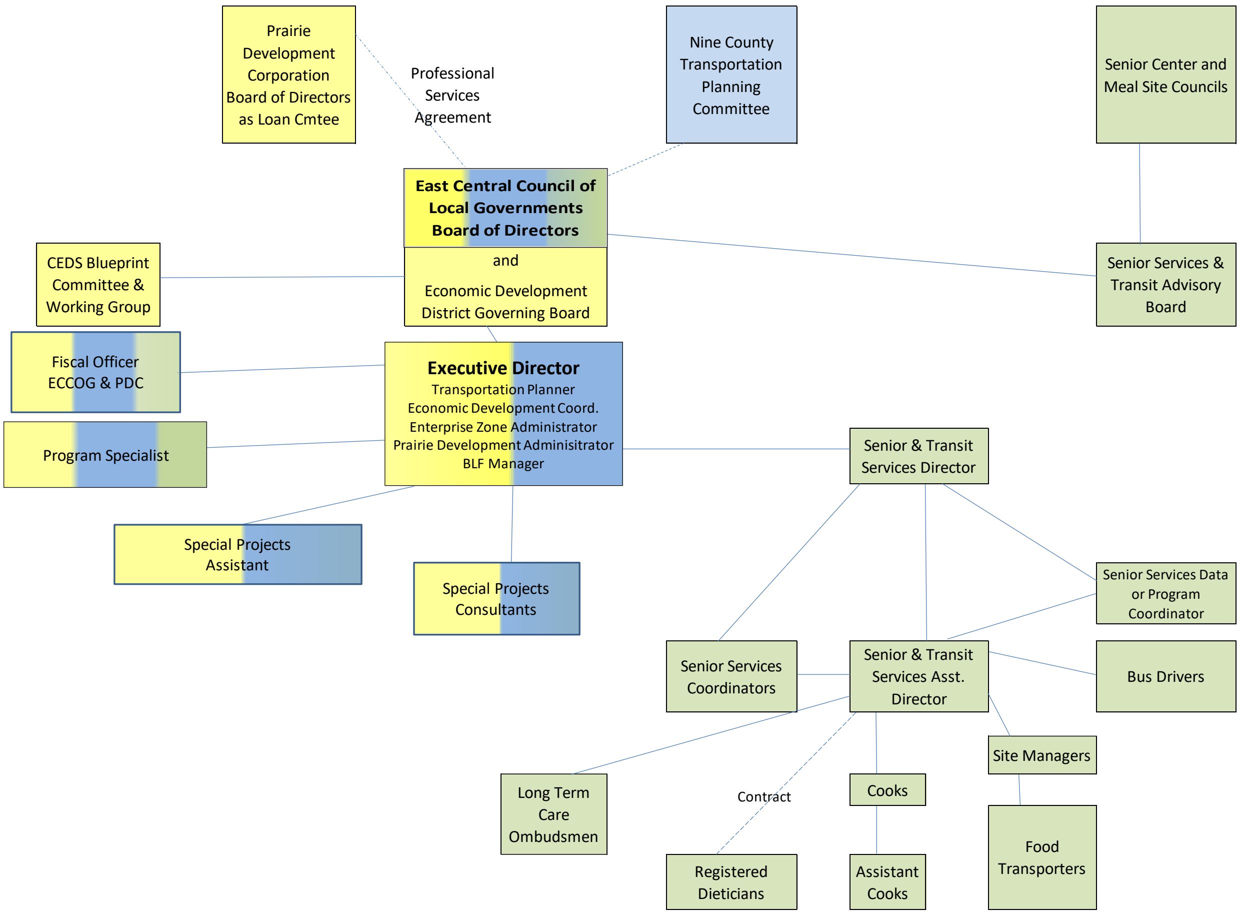
region as a result of CEDS implementation
- Amount of jobs/businesses created in the renewable energy industry
- Amount/value of new infrastructure built in the region as a result of CEDS implementation
- New workforce development/training programs initiated in the region as a result of CEDS implementation
- Changes in the economic environment of the region
- Recommendations concerning changes, revisions, deletions needed for goals, objectives, and strategies that are not producing the desired level of outcomes or are no longer relevant
- Recommendations regarding new goals, objectives, and strategies needed to pursue new opportunities
- Economic development staff may collect, monitor, analyze and present data and information on economic conditions in the region in an on-going manner and share this information as a resource to stakeholders in the region. This data and information will include economic indicators such as labor force, jobs, unemployment, wages, changes in industries, retail sales, population, real estate activity, as well as national and state trends.

Through collaboration and leveraging of assets, the CEDS evaluation plan identifies time and cost savings that benefit not only our region but the state of Colorado. Therefore, reviewing the plan throughout the five years is necessary and can be a tool for planning and focus.

Attachment A – ECCOG Organization Chart

East Central Council of Local Governments

2019 Organization Chart



ECCOG Organizational Divisions	
(blue)	**Division 1** Adminstration and Community Development
(yellow)	**Division 2** Economic/Business/Housing Development
(green)	**Division 3** Area Agency on Aging/Outback Express

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Attachment B: Implementation or Action Plan

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	TASKS/PROJECTS	LEAD AGENCY	FUNDING SOURCE	TIME FRAME	PRIORITY	JOBS CREATED
Build a Business-Friendly Environment	Development Broadband to the highest standards throughout the Region	Participate in Colorado Broadband Office meetings to understand grant funding and learn the process to award funds. Review funding applications and write LOS.	ECCOG	ECCOG/DOLA	10/26-9/31 Ongoing	Medium Low	1 PT
	Develop affordable workforce housing	Work with regional partners to develop affordable housing in all four counties. Market the housing loan programs at senior centers and organizational meetings. Incorporate HomeSweetPrairies on PDC's website for ease of use.	Prairie Development Corporation (PDC)	PDC	10/26-9/31 Ongoing Done 1/26	High Medium Low	1 PT 1 PT 1 PT
Expand tourism/travel industry within the Region with emphasis on historical, cultural, recreational, agricultural, and eco-tourism resources and events	Promote eco-tourism, signature community events, and the cultural heritage of the Colorado Central Plains through joint branding and promotional marketing	Produce & distribute Events Guide. Print 2,500 copies Produce & distribute Places Guide. Print 2,500 copies Produce & distribute Museum brochure. Print 1,000 copies Our Journey Website in Word Press to be updated locally at ECCOG or other businesses. Continue social media posts to promote Our Journey destinations – IG, FB, YouTube	ECCOG ECCOG ECCOG ECCOG ECCOG	ECCOG ECCOG ECCOG ECCOG PR firm	Annually Annually Annually Ongoing Ongoing	High High High High High	2 PT 1 PT 1 PT 1 PT 1 PT
	Create a Colorado's Central Plains brand by building on the *Our Journey* and *Here It's Easier to See What's Important* logos and tag lines	Work with graphic designers to develop a new logo/brand that combines Our Journey heritage and the economic development logo Implement TravelStorys Phase 2 digital option for the four counties. Manage the Our Journey.info website locally monthly	ECCOG ECCOG/PDC ECCOG/PDC	ECCOG/PDC ECCOG/PDC ECCOG/PDC	10/26-9/31 Done Ongoing	Low High High	N/A Two One
Recruit, Grow and Retain Business	Work with the Small Business Development Center to assist existing and startup businesses with the challenges of today's economy	Provide up to $5,000 cash match to overall SBDC program thru 2031. Initiate monthly workshops in the region to start and grow businesses thru SBDC and other resources.	PDC PDC	PDC PDC	10/26 10/26-9/31	Medium High	1 PT 1 PT

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	TASKS/PROJECTS	LEAD AGENCY	FUNDING SOURCE	TIME FRAME	PRIORITY	JOBS CREATED
	Market state and local incentives including the Enterprise Zone and Opportunity Zone programs and Business Loan Fund to prospective new, existing and expanding businesses	Update Business Loan Fund Policies and market those across the area	PDC	OEDIT/ECCOG/ & PDC	10/26-9/31	High	1 PT
		Market OZ materials for marketing/promoting.	ECCOG/PDC	ECCOG/OEDIT	10/26-9/31	High	1 PT
		Develop new EZ materials for promoting program.	ECCOG/PDC	ECCOG/OEDIT	Ongoing	High	1 PT
		Continue distribution of promotional materials on EZ and loan fund throughout the four counties with mailing campaign.	ECCOG/PDC	ECCOG/PDC/	Ongoing	High	1 PT
		Conduct regional Contribution Project meetings for new applicants and maintaining existing Project.	ECCOG	ECCOG/OEDIT	10/26-9/31	High	1 PT
	Encourage the development of home-based businesses within the region and gig workers	Develop a minimum of one home-based business or gig workers workshops for each county thru SBDC partners.	PDC	PDC	11/26-9/31	Medium	NA
Plan and Be Ready for Transportation Corridors Development and Expansion	Participate with local government and other groups in providing guidance to the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Administration regarding the importance of highway maintenance and expansion, public transit and the continuation and maintenance of Short Line and Class 1 railroad operations in the region	Attend Eastern Plains Transportation Planning Region joint meetings with NECALG counties. Review any draft transportation plans or transit plans developed by the Colorado Department of Transportation and submit any needed changes, additions, deletions that would make the documents more relevant and useable to the four county ECCOG region.	ECCOG	ECCOG	10/26-9/31	Medium	NA
Offer Technical Assistance	Maintain an active CEDS Strategy committee to identify and address regional economic development issues	Develop calendar, agendas and speakers for a minimum of three CEDS Strategy Committee meetings during the next 12 months. Update CEDS	ECCOG	ECCOG	10/26-9/31	High	1 PT

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	TASKS/PROJECTS	LEAD AGENCY	FUNDING SOURCE	TIME FRAME	PRIORITY	JOBS CREATED
	Learn the online program from ESRI to enhance our CEDS and regional story	to implement new ideas for community diversification. Train and maintain ESRI StoryMaps. Implement StoryMaps	ECCOG/PDC ECCOG/PDC	ECCOG/PDC ECCOG/PDC	Done Ongoing	High High	1 PT 1 PT
	Assist local/county governments and economic development groups in identifying and securing financial and other resources that enable positive results for their respective programs as well as on the entire region	Maintain mailing lists of local government and ED contacts. Provide information announced Colorado grant programs and deadlines. Provide contacts with scheduled workshops on specific grants. Research on a continued basis, grants and other financial resources that are available for the Region as a whole. Offer access to Colorado Grants Guide online service in our office.	ECCOG	ECCOG	10/26-9/31	High	NA
	Have staff attend pertinent economic development training as time and funds allow to better enable the offering of technical assistance	Attend and actively participate in meetings and calls offered by EDA, IEDC, NADO, Enterprise Zone, Opportunity Zone, Business Loan Fund and Economic Development Council of Colorado and any other meetings/training that may be deemed beneficial to enable staff to offer better technical assistance.	ECCOG	ECCOG	10/26-9/31	High	NA
	Participate in the Colorado Association of Regional Organizations (CARO)	Recommend agenda items and speakers as CARO meetings are being planned to develop meaningful discussions. Attend at least 75% of the meetings held in person or teleconference.	Colorado Association of Regional Organizations	ECCOG	10/26-9/31	Medium	NA