

**VALENCIA COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
RESOLUTION № 2019-24**

**ADOPTION OF MIDDLE RIO GRANDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the Valencia County Commission met upon notice of meeting duly published on April 17, 2019, at 5:00 P.M. in the Valencia County Administration Building, 444 Luna Avenue, Los Lunas, New Mexico 87031; and,

**WHEREAS**, NMSA 1978, Section 4-37-1 (1995) provides that Counties have the power to, “provide for the safety, preserve the health, promote the prosperity and improve the morals, order, comfort and convenience of any county or its inhabitants”; and,

**WHEREAS**, NMSA, 1978, Section 4-38-18 (1976) provides that a Board of County Commissioner has the duty and authority “[t]o represent the county and have the care of the county property and the management of the interest of the county in all cases where no other provision is made by law; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association was formed amongst the members of Catron, Sierra, Socorro and Valencia Counties to develop the region into one that is both state and nationally competitive; and,

**WHEREAS**, the MRGEDA identified those industries that are anticipated to provide the region with a competitive economic advantage, including (1) agriculture, (2) arts, entertainment, recreation, and visitor industries, (3) health care, (4) renewable energy and forest products, and (5) technology; and,

**WHEREAS**, in addition to articulating goals with respect to each of these sectors, the MRGEDA identified both detailed strategies and specific, target outcomes with respect to each sector that are designed to promote the prosperity of the region.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Valencia by the authority granted the Board by the laws of the State of New Mexico and people of Valencia County, that the Board hereby adopts the 2016 Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association’s 2016 Economic Development Plan.

**APPROVED, ADOPTED, AND PASSED** on this 17<sup>th</sup> day of April 2019.



Jhonathan Aragon  
Chair, District V



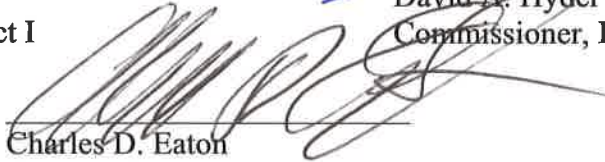
David Carlberg  
Vice-Chair, District II



Gerard Saiz  
Commissioner, District I



David A. Hyder  
Commissioner, District III



Charles D. Eaton  
Commissioner, District IV



Peggy Carabajal  
Valencia County Clerk

*New Mexico*

**Stronger Economies Together**

Strategies for building economic opportunities together

# Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Plan 2016

MRGEDA: helping create, attract, retain, expand and innovate



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## **Program Overview**

The Stronger Economies Together Initiative (SET) was launched in 2010 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development office in collaboration with four Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and their land-grant University partners. The purpose of SET is to strengthen the capacity of rural communities to work collaboratively in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Important elements of the SET program will:

- build collaboration between resident communities in the region,
- provide economic analysis of various data sets that is tailored to capture the region's current and emerging clusters,
- provide economic analysis of various data sets that is tailored to capture the region's comparative economic advantages, and
- be supported with technical assistance provided by land-grant University extension services throughout the process.

The afforded technical assistance offers planning, coaching, the development of various tools that can be used to identify the region's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. Several modules were identified and presented to the community members over a nine-month period. They include:

- Civic Forum
- SET Overview and Exploration of Regional Data
- Identifying Priorities Connecting Capitals
- Recognizing Potential Barriers • Building Regional Goals: A Start Finalizing the Plan
- Measures to Support the Regional Plan Tailored Sessions

The benefits of the SET process are many and varied, ranging from step-by-step coaching on design and implementation of a practical regional plan to providing current data on emerging industry clusters, comparative economic advantages and challenges, and detailed, regional demographic and socio-economic trends and information. Additionally, tools were provided that assisted in identifying local assets and resources that have the potential to advance the region's economic strategies. Technical assistance from Extension educators, USDA state staff, New Mexico Economic Development Department staff, and the Purdue University Center for Regional Development was invaluable in guiding the community through the process.

## **Middle Rio Grande Region**

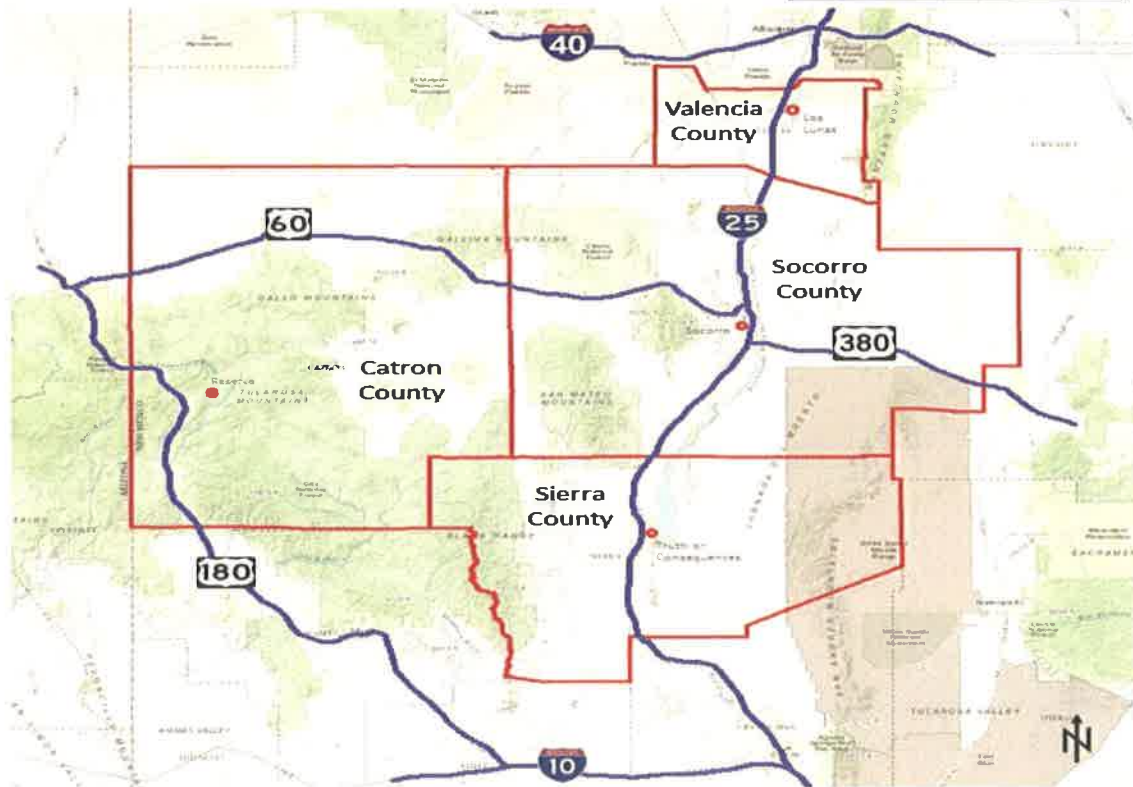
The Middle Rio Grande Region is comprised of four counties in rural New Mexico

☐ Catron      ☐ Sierra      ☐ Socorro      ☐ Valencia

Interstate 25 and the Rio Grande River run North-South through the region while US Highways 60 and 380 run East-West.

## **Middle Rio Grande Region**

**Sierra Socorro Valencia and Catron  
Counties  
New Mexico, USA**



### **Executive Summary**

The Regional Economic Development Plan serves as the guide for future economic development efforts for the Middle Rio Grande region. Critical to success is the spirit of regionalism shared by key stakeholders. Their vision is to implement the identified goals and strategies of this document to improve the economy and quality of life in the Middle Rio Grande region, to position itself as a competitive region within the state and the country. There has been active participation and discussion from business, civic, non-profit, and government leaders, each committing time and research efforts towards the development of this plan.

The Middle Rio Grande region SET Initiative application, which was submitted by the Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association (MRGEDA), includes the rural communities and areas of Catron, Sierra, Socorro, and Valencia counties, New Mexico. The application is a collaborative effort between USDA RD national and state offices, New Mexico Economic Development Department, and New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service. The plan is a product of some 90 dedicated community members across the four-county region, meeting monthly between



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October 2015 and August 2016 to complete SET's training curriculum and planning process. A master list of meeting invitees is found in Appendix A.



After distilling a great deal of information through discussion and socio-economic and economic data, five industry clusters were identified as having the greatest opportunity for economic success. Each has a solid economic foundation from which to grow and develop emerging related industries. The regional group synthesized the information, using the industry cluster development approach (see page 22). As MRGEDA's vision is to develop the region into one that is both state and nationally competitive, this model served to identify industries in three of the four quadrants; star, mature, and transforming to identify those industries that would provide the region with a competitive economic advantage.

- Agriculture (Agribusiness, Food Processing and Related Technology)
- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Industries
- Health Care (Health Care and Social Assistance)
- Renewable Energy and Forest Products
- Technology (Information Technology and Telecommunications, Workforce, Defense and Security)

A detailed discussion of the economic benefits that these five industry clusters can bring to the Middle Rio Grande region is provided in the regional economic goals section of this plan.

In reviewing the opportunities that these five industry sectors can bring to our region, the following trends emerged:

1. Workforce development is critical at the K-12, post-secondary, apprenticeship, and currently-employed levels. It is also critical to the continued success of strengthening our region's economy.
2. The regulatory and political culture of the region and state must be addressed to create an environment friendly to not only these industry clusters, but also to all industry if we are to grow economically and become competitive with other regions inside and out of the state.

An over-arching consideration is that of community development. Community development is about building community assets, institutions, and capacity, by improving residents' quality of life. Critical to the success of economic development is an established standard for quality of life, which includes reliable and accessible transportation, telecommunications and utility networks, health services, qualified labor, and affordable and safe housing and infrastructure. Sustainable "community development" is a regional economic opportunity not identified as an industry cluster in this process. However, it should be considered of high importance throughout the region. Community economic

development implies a system where communities become more economically viable and grow from within, where social equity, ecological and economic issues are seen as mutually reinforcing and important. Every effort will be made in the execution of this plan to be cognizant of sustainable community development and to work to ensure that the MRGEDA region residents have the highest quality of life possible as economic development strategies are implemented. (For a more in-depth look at sustainability issues please see Appendix B.)



## **Regional Description**

The Middle Rio Grande region is a four-county, predominantly rural area with a population of 122,345 people, 13.3% of the state of New Mexico's population. Given the rural nature of the region, the population density is only 6.45 persons/square mile, compared to the state population density of 17 persons/square mile. A significant percentage of jobs and gross receipts come from key common economic sectors, including agriculture, tourism, retail, and hunting. Each sector has suffered significant performance declines starting in 2008, due to the recession, but appears to have stabilized over the past two years. None of these sectors has grown since before the 2008 recession. In comparison to overall numbers in New Mexico and the U.S., income tends to be low and poverty high in the region. Sierra, Socorro, Catron, and Valencia counties encompass a single large economic region, rural in nature. The economic region is located between two large metropolitan economic regions; 60-120 miles north of the Las Cruces metropolitan area and 40 miles south of the Albuquerque metropolitan area. No economic region exists to the west, while the closest region to the east is located east of the White Sands Missile Range, which is essentially out of the region.

The commonalities of trade across these sectors are the predominant characteristics of this emerging economic region. The mixed performance of the region's key economic sectors is heavily dependent on state and federal funding and the overall national economy. Although performance is mixed, there are substantial economic assets on which the region can build. It is clear that a well-developed and collaborative regional strategy will, over time, bring about positive economic change.

On the far western part of the region lies Catron County. Rich in natural resources, the county is home to the Gila National and Apache forests, many ranches, and a recent designation as a dark skies sanctuary. Catron County also recently re-opened the famous Catwalk in May of 2016. Catron County is the largest county in land size in the State of New Mexico, but has the third smallest population of any New Mexico County. The county covers almost 7,000 square miles and is comprised of mostly rugged mountainous terrain. Less than 20% of the land in Catron County is privately owned with the balance of the land being public. Approximately 3,500 people make up the



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population of the county, with a population density of two (2) persons/square mile. Reserve is the County seat, the largest town in the county with a population of about 400. Other communities located in Catron County include Datil, Pie Town, Quemado, Luna, and Glenwood Springs.

To the east of Catron County and in the central Rio Grande Valley lies Socorro County (population estimated at 17,800) covering 6,649 square miles, the second largest land mass county in the state. Home to New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, more generally called New Mexico Tech (NMT), and known nationwide as one of the top publicly-funded technical universities in this country, Socorro offers an eclectic combination of academic scientific research and the arts, mixed with an agrarian lifestyle. Steeped in history, the area's storied past merges almost seamlessly with high-tech and 'big science,' including the Very Large Array (VLA), Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology: Portable Array Seismic Studies of Continental Lithosphere (IRIS Pascal- a National Science Foundation Center), Energetic Materials Research Testing Center (EMRTC), and the Magdalena Ridge Observatory (MRO). The county seat is the City of Socorro (estimated population 9,000). Two national wildlife refuges, Bosque del Apache in the south and Sevilleta in the north, draw nearly \$20 million in tourism per year and over 250,000 visitors. The county is ranked 9th in the state for total farm commodities and has the 6th highest milk production in the state. The county is home to the Village of Magdalena and Alamo Navajo Reservation, as well as several small communities such as San Antonio, Veguita, Las Nutrias, Lemitar and Abeyta.

Following the Rio Grande River south, lies the adjacent county of Sierra (population 11,282) with a land mass of 4,179 square miles. The population density is three (3) persons/square mile. The county is home to Elephant Butte Dam, not only a critical infrastructure asset for water storage and delivery, but also one of the state's largest and most frequented water recreational resources. Truth or Consequences serves as the county seat, boasting some of the state's finest hot springs enjoyed both for recreational and medicinal purposes. In 2008, voters approved funding for America's Spaceport, which is in the final development stages for commercial space flight. The county has, in addition to the incorporated cities of Truth or Consequences, Elephant Butte, and the Village of Williamsburg, the unincorporated communities of Caballo, Kingston, and Winston.

Valencia County (population 75,737) is the most northern and populated county in the region, flanked to the east by the Manzano Mountains and to the west by rolling mesas with occasional volcanic hills. The county has become increasingly diversified, while maintaining its strong agricultural base, with many commuting the 40 miles to the Albuquerque, NM metro area for employment. The county has the 5th largest number of farms in the state, as well as the 10th highest farm cash receipts. The Village of Los Lunas (population 14,835), the county seat, has developed into the county's commercial center as well as a growing satellite community for the Albuquerque metro area. The City of Belen, farther south, maintains its identity as a transportation (primarily rail) center, site of the famous Harvey House museum, and a growing industrial park. Belen has been successful in drawing the movie industry to film several popular movies in their community. Residents cherish a quality of life that's both country and cool in Valencia County, with access to big-city amenities but rural in character. Besides Los Lunas and Belen, the county includes Tomé, site of the University of New Mexico-Valencia campus; Peralta; Isleta Pueblo, one of the state's largest pueblos; and the State's newest incorporated community, Rio Communities.

The region has a 57% high school graduation and some college credits attainment rate. The unemployment rate is 4.4%. Economically, the region has existing industry (agriculture, tourism, and technology) and resources that can be built upon to improve our wage rates. Offering more opportunities in our region can result in reducing the percentage of residents who live in the region (66%) and work outside the region.

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By tapping the region's rich culture, history, outdoor recreation, natural history, and technical environment, such as the El Camino Real Historic Trail Site, Bosque del Apache and Seville National Wildlife Refuges, White Sands Missile Range, the Very Large Array, the Socorro Historical District, the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway, Quebradas and the Backcountry Byway, Belen's Harvey House Museum, the Lightning Field in Catron County, New Mexico Tech's Mineral Museum, Elephant Butte Lake, hot springs, Gila Wilderness, the several golf courses within the region, the developing art community (visual, music, performance), and the strong technical environment (New Mexico Tech, the VLA, Magdalena Ridge Observatory, White Sands Missile Range), opportunities present themselves for the type of economic vigor the region envisions.

### **Regional Vision**

The Middle Rio Grande SET partnership envisions implementing the identified goals and strategies to improve the economy and quality of life for people of the region and to position itself as an economically competitive region within the state and the country.



### **Regional Collaboration**

#### **Drafting the Plan**

Public input and support for the Middle Rio Grande SET region economic development plan was ongoing throughout the process and achieved through a series of 9 meetings from October 2015 through August 2016 (see SET Training session schedule, Appendix C, page 19). Over 90 persons participated directly in the process, with another 50-100 indirectly participating through presentations and reports of progress made to boards, city and county councilors and commissioners, and community association groups (Appendix C).

SET sessions, minutes, materials, and products were posted on the Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association (MRGEDA) website ([www.mrgeda.com](http://www.mrgeda.com)) under "About" Document Repository. The MRGEDA website includes information about each of the four counties that constitute the Middle Rio Grande region.

#### **Review and Comment on the Plan**

The Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association plan was discussed, edited, and revised based on received comments throughout its development. The entire list of invitees, Appendix A, was emailed an invitation to attend and participate in each of the 9 meetings. The minutes from previous meetings were included in the emails. As comments were received, they were noted and

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included in the written plan. Prior to the August 2016 meeting, the draft plan was emailed to the Invitee list. A PowerPoint presentation was made at the August 2016 meeting, where Don Boyd, facilitator, solicited discussion of the plan. Additionally, three writing team meetings were held (see Appendix C, pp. 19-20), where the representatives provided additional comments to the plan.

The open comment period provided yet another opportunity for persons to provide input. Appendix D notes those persons who provided additional comments during that period. Overall, 95 persons/company representatives/government provided input and comments in the development of this regional plan.

A fifteen-minute overview presentation was developed and delivered to several organizations. The regional newspapers were supplied a press release in early August, 2016 concerning the public comment solicitation period (Appendix D, page 22). Letters of support for the plan were solicited after a 30-day review and comment period (Appendix E). The draft was also placed on the MRGEDA and Facebook websites ([www.mrgeda.com](http://www.mrgeda.com), [facebook.com/mrgeda](https://facebook.com/mrgeda)).

The following chart illustrates the presentations that were delivered by members of the SET group. Presentations were conducted as early as the 3-4 month of the process to ensure that public comments were both solicited and used.

### Scheduled Presentations for Comment

<b>Group</b>	<b>Presentation Date</b>
Socorro County, Sierra County, City of Socorro	Feb 2016
Socorro Rotary	Apr 2016
T or C Rotary	Aug 2016
President, New Mexico Tech	Sept 2016

Letters of support were solicited from stakeholders. A submitted letter of support implies that no further comments to the plan were suggested by that person/government entity/association/business (see Appendix E).

## **Acknowledgements**

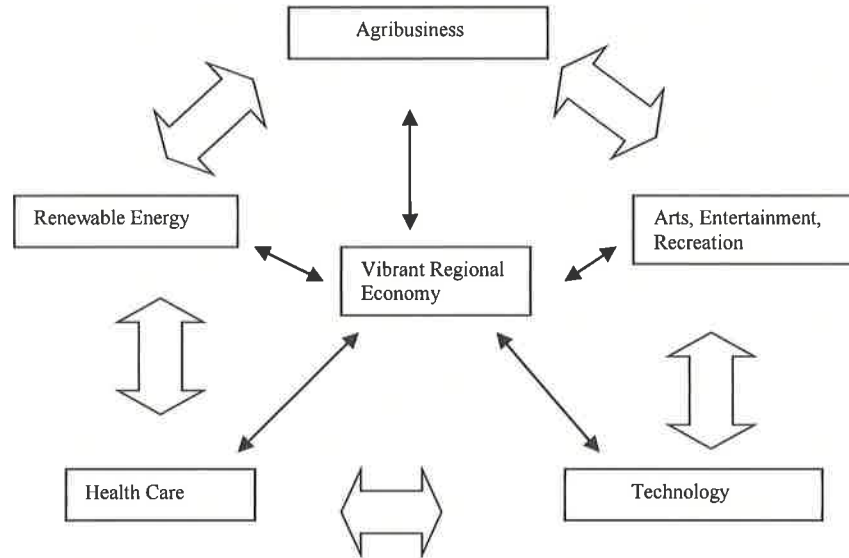
The SET grant was submitted by MRGEDA on behalf of the region to provide opportunities for increased economic development in the region. The planning process was facilitated by NMSU Extension Specialist, Dr. Michael Patrick, and supported by USDA RD State Director, Mr. Terry Brunner, and Community and Economic Development Coordinator, Mr. Terry McDermott.

The Middle Rio Grande region would like to thank the staff from USDA Rural Development, New Mexico Economic Development Department, and New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service for their support throughout the course of this project. We would also like to show our appreciation to all attendees and those who submitted letters of support.

## Regional Economic Goals

Based on the insights and knowledge of our Middle Rio Grande region community members, we determined five strategic economic development industry clusters rooted in the region's culture, tradition, resources, and perceived opportunities.

## Strategic Goal Industry Clusters



## Regional Economic Development Plan

Listed below each industry cluster is one fully developed goal and the actions necessary to successfully execute that goal. Additional goals are found in Appendix F.

### Group 1: Agribusiness, Food Processing, and Related Technology



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**Goal:** Historically, Agriculture has been a strong economic employer and producer in the region. Supporting existing Ag businesses and growing new businesses in the region is important for the economic sustainability of the region and is directly tied to the workforce skill sets, which are necessary for retention.

**Strategy 1A:** Support existing agricultural businesses in the region.

**Objective:** Retain at least 95% of agricultural and agricultural-related businesses in the region by December 2017 while growing the value of products sold.

### **Regional Economic Benefit**

Agriculture is one of the core industries in the region. By working to ensure the retention of 75% of agricultural business and agricultural-related businesses, the region will have an opportunity for expansion of existing businesses, resulting in economic growth.

### **Actions to Achieve Strategy A for Group 1**

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1A.1	Identify existing ag businesses	Ag chair, Holly Woelber	County managers, tax rolls	Mar 2017-Apr 2017
1A.2	Develop and survey businesses; Identify issues and challenges	Ag chair, Holly Woelber	University, public policy and community programs that allow students to conduct surveys; FFA; and Industry Groups	Mar 2017-May 2017
1A.3	Disseminate results	Ag chair, Holly Woelber	Businesses, industry groups, elected officials, Chambers of Commerce, extension agencies	May 2017- Dec 2017
1A.4	Link businesses with resources that can affect a positive outcome for the business	Ag chair, Holly Woelber	MRGEDA, Small Business Dev Center (SBDC), Service Core of Retired Execs (SCORE), Chambers, County Extension	Dec 2017-ongoing

### **Target Outcomes**

#### **Short Term (Year 1)**

- Identify agriculture businesses.
- Conduct survey designed to identify businesses at risk and do a needs assessment.
- Obtain 25% return of surveys.
- Employ various accepted economic development strategies to retain businesses.



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- Compile results and disseminate to Extension, Chambers of Commerce, City and County-elected officials and staff, NM Cattle Growers Assoc, and NM Farm and Livestock Bureau
- Work with Ag extension agents and NMSU to employ appropriate mitigation and growth strategies.

### **Intermediate (Year 2-3)**

- Identify existing agriculture businesses and determine retention rate from previous year.
- Begin responding to identified deficiencies and capitalizing on opportunities for Ag industry growth.

### **Long Term (Year 4 and beyond)**

- Continue identifying new ag production opportunities.
- Identify existing agriculture businesses and determine retention rates from previous year .
- Assist potential business owners in acquiring capital.
- Identify new markets outside the region for regional products.

## **Evaluation Plan**

### **Progress indicators:**

- Maintain at least 95% of agriculture (ag) and ag-related businesses year over year.
- Increase the Value of Products sold from \$185,101,000 by 5% in 5 years. (2012 data)
- Increase the average regional net farm income of \$15,934 (2012 data) by 10% within 5 years

## Group 2: Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Industries



*“From the Cowboy Way to the Milky Way”*

**Goal:** Improve the economy and quality of life of the region via Arts, Recreation and Visitors Industries. This cluster holds opportunities for significant growth in our region. Cities, counties, chambers of commerce, and recreation and tourism businesses can easily collaborate on regional resource and skill development. The growth of visitor, recreation and tourism industries will provide jobs and revenue opportunities for the region. The synergetic affect of this collaboration allows the region to leverage existing resources for exponential growth.

**Strategy 2A:** Increase recreational opportunities for tourists.

**Objective:** Increase visitors in the region by 5% over the next 5 years.

### Regional Economic Benefit

Increased tourism and recreational visitors will contribute to economic development in the region through the growth of business activities [shopping, tourism, overnight lodging, fuel, dining and recreating], jobs, and incomes, and will increase total lodgers tax and gross receipts tax dollars. Further, increased marketing that distinguishes our region from other tourist destinations in the American Southwest provides opportunities for people to make emotional and intellectual connections to our region and provokes their desire not only to visit, but also perhaps to relocate or create business here.

### Actions to Achieve Strategy A for Group 2

	Actions	Responsible	Resources	Timeline
2A.1	Develop a “brand” / region-wide central theme and marketing plan to provide quality products and services that forge connections between visitor interests and our natural and cultural resources.	Arts, Rec Industry chairs, Deb Caldwell and Earl Greer, SW Regional Tourism Board, NMT	NM True, VLA, Spaceport, NM Game and Fish, National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs), BLM, Catron County Health Council, Forest Service, El	By year-end 2017

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		Performing Arts Series (PAS)	Camino Real, MRGEDA, Save Our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF), NMT PAS	
2A.2	Develop a regional calendar and directory of events, attractions, and possible itineraries.	Same as 2A.1	Same as 2A.1	Jan 2018
2A.3	Collaborate with the New Mexico True program, and other regional tourism- related programs (i.e., Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway, El Camino Real Historic Trail Site, Dark Skies) to develop regional advertising and promotional materials and develop experiential tourism opportunities (outdoor activities, bus tours with themes such as chile or art tours, etc.).	Same as 2A.1	Same as 2A.1	March 2018
2A.4	Develop a plan (and at least partially implement it) for regional hiking and biking paths that tie in with the Rio Grande Trail.	Don Boyd, Gina Dellorusso, Gabriel Boyle	MRGEDA, SOBTF, Rio Grande Trail Commission, NMT, NWRs, El Camino Real Historic Trail Site, regional cities, towns, and counties, NM True, NM Speaker of the House Don Tripp, NMDFA, NMDOT, CDBG.	June 2019
2A.5	Pursue the National Heritage Area designation by the National Park Service.	Arts, Rec Industry chairs, Deb Caldwell and Earl Greer	Counties, MRGEDA, SW Regional Tourism Board. Ted Turner foundation (Armendaris Ranch).	June 2019
2A.6	Develop experiential tourism opportunities.	Arts, Rec Industry chairs, Deb Caldwell and Earl Greer	Counties, MRGEDA, SW Regional Tourism Board.	June 2019
2A.7	Create a video & conduct presentations and workshops (i.e., customer service, hospitality, business development & capacity building) to each business group, and follow up as necessary.	Arts, Rec Industry chairs, Deb Caldwell and Earl Greer	USDA RD Business Grants – for training; Rural Community Development Initiative Grant - for implementing Tourism Boards, NM True.	YE 2019

## **Target Outcomes**

### **Short Term (Year 1)**

- Create branded icon, regional theme, marketing plan, and clear messaging.
- Create regional calendar and directory of events, attractions, and itineraries; make these available via MRGEDA website and Facebook page.
- Ensure one branded food item in region via New Mexico True Program.
- Create stakeholder group for hiking and biking plan development.
- Investigate National Heritage Area distinction
- Engage birding specialists to investigate a coordinated effort in the region to run specialized birding tours.
- Determine number of sales/bookings by art galleries/ performance venues in the region.
- Determine baseline for experiential tourism opportunities.

### **Intermediate (Year 2-3)**

- Create 3 Branded MRG foods and other products with a tag that can be easily recognized beyond the state of NM.
- Write grants for hiking and biking plan development by early 2018.
- Create NM True and other videos of Middle Rio Grande region.
- Develop regional advertising and promotional materials (printed media, audiovisual programs, webpages, social media, exhibits, self-guided tours, etc).
- Hold presentations and workshops (i.e., customer service, hospitality, business development, and capacity building) with each business group. Follow up as necessary.
- Develop 2 experiential tourism opportunities (outdoor activities, jeep tours, birding tours, bus tours with themes -- like chile tours, art tours, etc). Consider 1-5 day tours, seasonal themes, and services/festivals/tours already running.
- Hold at least two training and workshops.
- Increase sales of Art galleries/ performance venues in our area by at least 1%.
- Ensure that regional representatives/ MRGEDA attend out-of-region events that serve as excellent venues to deliver targeted communications.
- Build MRGEDA's capability as a significant lobbying force for our region regarding such things as protecting our dark skies and other natural resources that enhance our quality of life and attract tourists.

### **Long Term (Year 4 and beyond)**

- The program of experiential tourism opportunities created are in operation by 2020.
- Five (5) branded MRG foods and other products with a tag that can be easily recognized beyond the state of NM by 2020-2021 (NM True program).
- Market the Middle Rio Grande region as a National Heritage Area.
- Increase by 10% the number of tourists and tourism dollars spent in the region.
- Create hiking and biking paths plan for each county that tie regional cities and towns to each other via the Rio Grande Trail.

## Evaluation Plan

### Progress indicators:

- Net increase in visitors to the region of 6% over 5 years from 32.9 million.
- Net increase in visitor spending of 6% above \$212.5 million in 5 years
- Net increase of 5% in experiential tourism opportunities (outdoor activities, jeep tours, birding tours, bus tours with themes -- like chile tours, art tours, etc.).
- Net increase of 5% in sales/bookings by art galleries/ performance venues in the region in 5 years.
- Biking and hiking trail paths created that tie into the 2017 New Mexico Rio Grande Trail Plan.

## Group 3: Health Care and Social Assistance Services



**Goal:** Grow healthcare industry in MRGEDA region.

**Strategy 3A:** Grow healthcare services as strategy to grow high paying healthcare jobs in the region.

**Objective:** Increase the region's health care and social assistance industry cluster by adding five service providers by December 2020.

## Regional Economic Benefit

Increased healthcare and social assistance services in the region will provide professional high paying jobs that will contribute to economic development in the region, provide needed health care and mental health services to residents, and improve the quality of life for regional residents.

## Actions to Achieve Strategy A for Group 3

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
3A.1	Collaborate with healthcare and social assistance providers.	Health care chairs, Bruce Swingle and Michael Zimmerman	Health care and social assistance professionals and associations NM HSD, Rural Healthcare Services-Hidalgo Medical Services	Current-Dec 2020
3A.2	Review public health data.	Health care chairs, Bruce Swingle and	Health care and social assistance professionals and associations NM HSD,	Oct 2017-Dec 2020



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		Michael Zimmerman	NM Hospital Association, local hospitals, NM Public Health Office (Susan Acosta), Health Council Data Plan	
3A.3	Identify which services are used by our residents.	Health care chairs as above	Local hospitals, NM Public Health Office (Susan Acosta), local health clinics	Oct 2017-Dec 2017
3A.4	Prioritize results and target services most needed and likely to succeed in the region.	Health care chairs, Bruce Swingle and Michael Zimmerman	NM and US Colonia Funding, foundations, Rodney McNease (UNM behavioral health services)	Oct 2017-Dec 2017
3A.5	Develop a plan to recruit and solicit needed services.	Health care chairs, Bruce Swingle and Michael Zimmerman	NMHSD, NMFA, state colonia funding, federal colonia funding, Region governmental agencies, USDA, NM Eco Dev Dept, NMFA, financial institutions, Dr David Pitcher (UNM Director of Telemedicine)	Jan 2017-Dec 2020

## **Target Outcomes**

### **Short term (Year 1)**

- Identify health care and social assistance services used by the residents that are accessed out of the region and would be likely to succeed if offered within the region.
- Development of a recruitment plan for identified gap services.

### **Intermediate (Year 2-3)**

- Based on data analysis and findings, develop a business plan to recruit and solicit needed services (Each business plan will be modeled for each needed specific service).
- Partner with NM Partnership and NM associations to recruit prioritized services to the region, to include telemedicine resources.

### **Long Term (Year 4 and beyond)**

- Needed services within the region are offered to residents in the region.

## **Evaluation Plan**

### **Progress indicators:**

- Net increase of 2% in employment in Health Care and Social Assistance Industry.
- Data that clearly identifies the targeted health care and social assistance services likely to be used by region residents.
- Net increase of 5 providers in Health Care and Social Assistance Industries physically located in the region.
- Development of Sustainability Plan for the new industries.

## **Group 4: Renewable Energy and Forest Products**



**Goal:** Although this is a transforming industry, forest products present an opportunity for economic growth in our region, both for niche lumber and bio mass energy production. The region has tremendous potential for solar and wind energy production. The region has never taken full advantage of its potential resources. The region experiences approximately 310 days of sunshine annually and is identified as a primary location for wind energy, thus supporting existing and growing new renewable energy businesses is an attractive opportunity. The region has made limited efforts to harvest forest products in recent years, but the region does contain two large National Forests.

**Strategy 4A:** Support existing renewable energy and forest products businesses.

**Objective:** Share information about all major existing businesses and government entities engaged in renewable energy and forest products in the Middle Rio Grande region by year-end 2019.

### **Regional Economic Benefit**

Improve efficiency of renewable energy and forest product companies, along with supporting companies along with collateral companies in the region due to availability of information with fewer obstacles. Local businesses could be more profitable which can lead to expansion and increased investment and jobs.

### **Actions to Achieve Strategy A for Group 4**

<b>Actions</b>		<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
4A.1	Identify government, educational, business and non-profits.	Renewable Energy (RE) group chair, Christine Logan	NM data center, SW Region Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Plan, Utility companies	Summer 2017
4A.2	Design a survey document.	Kuan Tikkun	MRGEDA working group	Summer 2017
4A.3	Contact/Outreach/Promotion.	Dave Wheelock	MRGEDA working group	Summer 2017
4A.4	Conduct survey, collect, collate data.	Frank Logan	MRGEDA working group, University students	Fall 2017

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4A.5	Report and analysis of data.	RE group chair, Christine Logan	MRGEDA working group	Winter 2017
4A.6	Determine how to disseminate and share data.	RE group chair, Christine Logan	MRGEDA working group	Spring 2017
4A.7	Maintain data.	RE group chair, Christine Logan	MRGEDA working group	On going

### **Target Outcomes**

#### **Short term (Year 1)**

- Identify public and private sector partners in Renewable Industries.

#### **Intermediate (Year 2-3)**

- Connect resources in Renewable Industries to one another.
- Connect businesses to regulators and to technical and business assistance providers.
- Define scope of resources and opportunities in Renewable industries.

#### **Long Term (Year 4 and beyond)**

- Promote opportunities related to Renewable industrials in the Region.
- Create or attract businesses to meet regional needs.
- Help existing businesses to expand use of Renewable assets or provide more related services.

### **Evaluation Plan**

- Collaborate with area energy providers on a long term plan for integration of solar and wind renewable resources.
- Collected data on renewable resources shared with decision-makers in the region.
- Share data on assessed need for Electric Vehicle charging stations within the region.
- Determine the viability of use for bio-mass power plants for peak energy use periods and for time when renewable energy is not available.

## **Group 5: Technology** **(Information Technology, Telecommunications, Workforce, Defense and Security)**



**Goal:** Grow technology and workforce industries in the region. The region is rural, possessing limited broadband infrastructure. Improving access to broadband is critical to attract industry and high tech businesses. High-speed access is also important to attract and retain residents who work remotely or who are retired but desire to stay current in the technology field. Attracting technology industries requires an available trained technical and vocational workforce. Expanding broadband services in the region will enhance existing technology businesses and universities and support entrepreneur startups.

**Strategy 5A:** Improve the technology infrastructure in the region.

**Objective:** Determine broadband requirements in the region by July 30, 2017 and write/submit applicable grants by March 31, 2018. Have Broadband region wide in place by December 2020.

### **Regional Economic Benefit**

High-speed internet access is essential for economic development, be it home-based businesses or large retail enterprises. Broadband will support our rural area home-based businesses by giving them high-speed access to clients and vendors. Boasting one of the most highly regarded public STEM universities in the country - New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology - broadband will help retain and support technology start-ups that have their infancy in the region. Broadband will allow technology companies to maintain a mutually beneficial research and incubation relationship with regional colleges. This includes internships, fellowships and on-the-job experience for both undergraduate and graduate students, thus making regional colleges more attractive to potential students and garnering the region a STEM “college of choice” reputation.

Residential broadband helps retain residents who retire from the many tech companies affiliated with NMT (NRAO, IRIS/PASSCAL, EMRTC, Magdalena Ridge Observatory) but desire an active Emeriti relationship that allows them to continue doing part-time research. It also allows them to use their technical skills on behalf of their local communities as well as generating consulting fees and

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post-retirement incomes. Broadband will help attract new immigrants, who expect to stay connected to the broader world in numerous ways.

High-speed broadband allows the public school systems and colleges to use SMART classroom technology to reach more students and help prepare students for a more *plugged-in* world. Students at public schools will be able to download assignments as they are posted and stay abreast of classroom requirements in the event of weather-related or local event disruptions.

### **Actions to Achieve Strategy A for Group 5**

<b>Actions</b>		<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
5A.1	Inventory all existing and projected broadband services in the region.	Tech cluster co-chairs	City and County administrators. This activity has already been completed by Catron County.	By July 15, 2017
5A.2	Interview providers to determine broadband service plans and potential for the region.	Tech cluster co-chairs	TDS, Century Link, SDC, Plateau, others. This activity has already been completed by Catron County.	Concurrent with 5A.1
5A.3	Research legislative and legal issues regarding deployment of broadband in the region.	Tech cluster co-chairs	Region legislative leaders, NM Office of Broadband and Geospatial Initiatives. Catron County Regional Broadband Plan. NM Do IT	Concurrent with 5A.1
5A.4	Explore the possibility of creating a regional broadband cooperative along the lines of UTOPIA (see appendix I). Integrate into Action 5A.4. if appropriate.	Tech cluster co-chairs, Michael Olguin	New Mexico Tech, New Mexico Public Regulation Commission. Catron County Regional Broadband Plan	December 2017
5A.5	Determine what grant funding is available to build infrastructure. Write grants.	Tech cluster co-chairs	USDA, National Telecommunications and Information Administration	March 2018

### **Target Outcomes**

#### **Short term (Year 1)**

- Determine existing and planned-for broadband status in the region.
- Meet with NM State House Rep, Gail Armstrong, to understand legislative constraints and encourage support for broadband delivery.



### **Intermediate (Year 2-3)**

- Identify grant and area funding opportunities for broadband.
- Write grants for funding as appropriate.
- Advocate at state and region level for increasing rural area broadband accessibility.

### **Long Term (Year 4 and beyond)**

- Have broadband services available and accessible across entire region.
- Encourage competition among service providers if appropriate to lower cost to subscribers.

## **Evaluation Plan**

- Identification of providers.
- Identification of existing broadband infrastructure in the region
- Current percentage of businesses receiving broadband service.
- Current percentage of residents receiving broadband service.
- Amount of grant dollars obtained by the region for broadband.
- Amount of private sector dollars invested in the region for broadband over the designated time period.
- Broadband available to anyone within the region at a *reasonable* price.

Note: A more in-depth analysis of Broadband issues is located in Appendix I.

## **Regional Team**

The SET Initiative will transition to the Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association (MRGEDA, [www.mrgeda.com](http://www.mrgeda.com)) for sustainability of and action on the goals and strategies that have been determined. MRGEDA will meet monthly to:

1. Prioritize goals and allocate funding to support defined targeted outcomes.
2. Identify and apply for funding to support and sustain the strategic plan and associated personnel to staff activities.

## **MRGEDA Working Groups**

Led by co-chairs, within the MRGEDA organization, each working group will be responsible for managing and implementing strategies and activities to achieve the intended outcomes.

### **Group 1. Agribusiness, Food Processing, and Related Technology**

**Chair:** Holly Woelber, Partner HAW Farms

**Members will include, but not be limited to representatives from:**

- New Mexico Department of Agriculture
- Dairy Farmers of America Cooperative
- New Mexico Hay Association
- Regional Workforce Board

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- New Mexico Partnership
- New Mexico Farmers' Market Association
- New Mexico Chile Growers
- New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service
- Local government
- NEWMARC (Council of Governments)
- New Mexico Economic Development Department
- USDA FSA, Rural Development, Natural Resources and Conservation Service

### **Group 2. Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Industries**

**Co-Chairs:** Deb Caldwell, Executive Director, Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, and Earl Greer, President Sierra Board of Realtors

**Members will include, but not be limited to representatives from:**

- New Mexico Department of Tourism
- Main Street Programs
- Regional Workforce Board
- Visitor Centers
- Tourism Boards
- South West, South Central, and Mid-region Council of Government Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- USDA Rural Development
- NEWMARC (Council of Governments Association)
- New Mexico and Regional Film Industries
- Local governments

### **Group 3. Health Care**

**Co-Chairs:** Bruce Swingle, County Manager, Sierra County, and Michael Zimmerman, Sierra Vista Hospital CEO

**Members will include, but not be limited to representatives from:**

- New Mexico Department of Health
- Presbyterian Hospital, Socorro
- Sierra Vista Hospital
- Gila Regional Medical Center
- Hidalgo Medical Services
- UNM Behavioral Health Services
- WNMU Nursing Program
- NEWMARC (Council of Governments Association)
- New Mexico Hospital Association
- USDA Rural Development
- County Health Councils
- Ben Archer
- Local government agencies
- UNM Telemedicine
- Financial institutions
- New Mexico Child, Youth , and Family Department

### **Group 4. Renewable Energy and Forest Products**

**Chair:** Christine Logan, NMEDD

**Members will include, but not be limited to representatives from:**

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- Bureau of Land Management
- NEWMARC (Council of Governments Association)
- UNM, NMT, Western NM Universities and UNM-Valencia/Central NM
- USDA Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, Natural Resources and Conservation Service
- US Forest Service
- New Mexico State Land Office
- New Mexico Partnership
- Local government
- Industry representatives
- New Mexico Economic Development Department

### **Group 5. Information Technology**

**Co-Chairs:** Prescott Grey, Vertu Fine Art Gallery, and Don Boyd, Facilitator/Consultant

**Members will include, but not be limited to representatives from:**

- New Mexico Partnership
- NEWMARC (Council of Governments Association)
- UNM, NMT, Western NM Universities and UNM-Valencia/Central NM
- USDA Rural Development
- NM Do IT – Office of Information Technology
- School Districts
- Regional Workforce Board
- Local government
- New Mexico Economic Development Department
- Small Business Development Center

## **Evidence Base for Middle Rio Grande Plan**

### **Demographic Data**

This data is provided to the Middle Rio Grande SET community by Purdue University Center for Regional Development. Additional illustrative demographic information is available in Appendix G.

#### **Population**

The total population of the four-county region in 2000 was 101,231. In 2010, the population had increased some 9% to 110,402. From 2010 to 2014, the population of the region decreased by 2,394 persons, or a 2.2% decline. The total population of veterans is 17,698; a potential source of skilled labor.

#### **Age**

The population in the Middle Rio Grande region is projected to exceed state growth by 0.6% for the years 2014-2020. In 2000, over 50% of the population for the region is between the ages of 20-59 as compared with the state's population of 43%. In 2014, the percentage of the population between the

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ages of 20-59 had fallen to 49%. In 2000, 17.5% of the region's population was over the age of 60 and 31% below the age of 20. In 2014, 25% of the population was over the age of 60 and 26% was below the age of 20. This shows an aging population in the region and an assumed low birth rate. These numbers are not as favorable as in 2000, as the percentage of persons moving into the workforce will be smaller. As the number of those moving out of the workforce concurrently shrinks, this may result in a smaller pool of available working age residents.

### Ethnicity

The percentage of self-reported white residents in the region increased from 69.3% in 2000 to 89% in 2014. A subset of the white ethnicity declaration is that of Hispanics, of which the percentage increased from 48.8% in 2000 to 53.4% in 2014. In the self-declaration of other, in 2000, 10.2 % of the population was identified in that manner while in 2014, 11% identified as other. The subsets in that category include the black population increase slightly from 1% in 2000 to 1.5% in 2014, the American Indian or Alaska Native population increased by 2 percentage points over the same time period from 4.4% to 6.4%. Those declaring their ethnicity as "two or more races" decreased from 4.2% to 2.3% from 2000 to 2014. Note that in 2000, 20.5% of the population was identified as some other race. That category was no longer used in 2014.

### Health Care

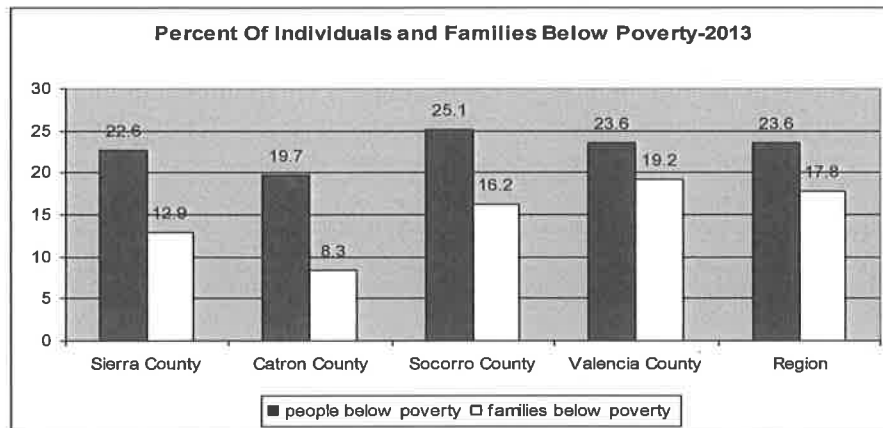
The health care and social assistance sector comprises establishments providing health care and social assistance for individuals. The sector includes both health care and social assistance because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the boundaries of these two activities. The industries in this sector are arranged on a continuum starting with those establishments providing medical care exclusively, continuing with those providing health care and social assistance, and finally finishing with those providing only social assistance.

Census data for the region shows that Socorro County has the highest percentage of persons under age 65 with a disability and also the highest percentage of persons under age 65 with no health insurance. Valencia County has the highest number of health care and social assistance companies in the region and the greatest number of employees. As a region, over 3,200 persons are employed in this industry sector.

### Income and Poverty

Over the period 2003 to 2013, an additional 6% of the population has fallen into poverty, with one-quarter of the total population in the region being classified as living in poverty. Over one-third of the region's population, 34.5%, who are classified as living in poverty, are below the age of 17. Although the region experienced a slight increase in real median household income from 2003 (\$39,957) to 2008 (\$41,944), it experienced a decline in 2013 to \$38,377, for a net loss from 2003 of \$1580. Between 2010 and 2014 there were a total of 38,115 households in the region with 2.74 persons per household.

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Data Sources: US Dept. of Commerce. 2014. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, DC.

### Educational Attainment

Educational attainment (at least a high school graduate) of the population in the region was 81% compared to the state at 84% and US at 86%, in 2013. In the 2009-2013 period, Valencia County had the lowest percentage of persons with a Bachelor's degree (16.6%) and Socorro County had the highest percentage of persons over the age of 25 with no high school diploma (21.3%). Clearly, over 50% of the population over the age of 25 in the region (56.9%) possesses only a high school diploma. This last data point would indicate a need for skill training, coupled with basic education, to ensure employability at above living wage.

### Housing

Housing in the region has an interesting variant in that the two counties, Sierra and Catron, that have large recreational areas (Elephant Butte Dam and the Gila and Apache National forests) also have the largest percentage of vacant homes due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, 33.0% and 40.8% respectively. Socorro County has 16.8% vacancy for this same category. Total vacancy is 47.7% for Sierra County, 56.9% Catron County, 33.3% Socorro County, and 10.3% Valencia County. The median gross rent for the region is \$660 per month compared to the state's \$774. There were 76 building permits in the region for 2014, with 75 being in Valencia County.

### Labor Force

Working residents in our region displayed the following characteristics in 2013:

Population	Jobs
Employed in Region	21,432
Employed in Region but Living Outside (In-Commuters)	8,803
Employed and Living in Region (Same Work/Home)	12,629
Living in Region but Employed Outside (Out-commuters)	24,838



## **Economic Data**

Additional illustrative regional economic data can be found in Appendix H.

### **Industry**

Unemployment rates in the Middle Rio Grande region increased from 2.4% in 2007 (pre-recession) to 4.4% in 2014, as compared to the state's unemployment rate of 3.8% pre-recession and 6.6% in 2014. Average earnings per worker in the region were almost \$10,000 lower than the state's average, \$35,515 and \$45,359, respectively. Over 66% (24,838) of our regional residents work outside the region, as compared with 41% (8,803) who work in our region, but reside outside the region. This data point should be explored further to understand the rationale for those 8,800 persons residing outside our region, but finding employment in our region.

For civilian employment in our region, the top five industry clusters for employment are 1) Education, healthcare, and social assistance, 2) Retail trade, 3) Construction, 4) Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management, and 5) Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food. Note that the industry clusters that are listed in the top five for a County, and also listed in the top five for three or more counties are: 1) Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining, 2) Retail trade, 3) Education, healthcare, and social assistance, 4) Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food, and 5) Public administration. It should also be noted that total government employment exceeds private employment in three of the four counties in the region, with only Valencia County having more private employment.

### **Occupations**

The top three occupations in the region for 2013 were 1) Management professional, related, 2) Service, and 3) Sales and office.

Employment by Occupation-Central Middle Rio Grande Corridor  
Civilian Employed Population > 16 Percent of Total

Occupation *	Sierra County	Catron County	Socorro County	Valencia County	Region
Management, Professional, related	28%	28.7%	37.6%	28.0%	29.6%
Service	30.7%	20.8%	22.8%	21.0%	22.2%
Sales and office	19.5%	19.2%	15.7%	26.1%	23.7%
Farming, fishing, forestry	3.5%	3.6%	2.4%	1.7%	2.0%
Construction, extraction, maintenance, repair	5.6%	17.8%	5.1%	8.0%	7.6%
Production, transportation, material moving	10.4%	6.2%	10.4%	10.7%	10.5%

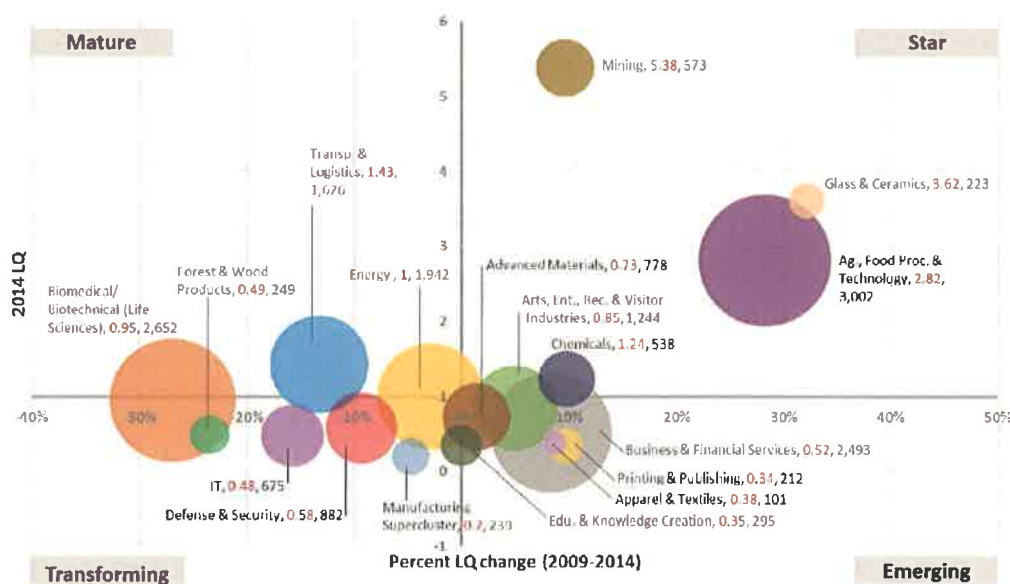
\*Per NAICS code

### **Regional Industry Clusters**

An industry cluster is a geographic concentration of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions in a particular area. Specifically, industry clusters are groups of similar and

related firms in a defined geographic area that share common markets, technologies, worker skill needs, and that are often linked in seller-buyer relationships.

An industry cluster development approach can help firms achieve a competitive advantage by promoting their common interests and can make the public sector more effective in supporting the economy. Working with industry clusters can enable regions to identify the most promising opportunities to encourage further innovation, develop particular worker skills, and address issues that affect productivity, all critical factors in contributing to business growth and job creation. According to data provided by Purdue University Center for Regional Development, the industry clusters that show the greatest economic strength for the region are Mining; Glass and Ceramics; Agriculture, Food Production and Technology; Advanced Materials; Chemicals; and Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries.



Source: EMSI Class of Worker 2014.4 (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors).  
Label: cluster name, LQ 2014, and Employment 2014

Based on the knowledge of industry persons, with input from public sector representatives, the following industry sectors were selected.

- Ag, Food Production and Technology, which shows a 2.82 LQ indicating more employment than the US and 3,002 jobs. This sector has a strong foundation in the region with opportunities for expansion and organic growth.
- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Visitor Industries has an LQ of 0.85 (fewer jobs than the US in that industry sector) and 1,244 jobs. This is also a strong foundation sector which continues to build upon the natural resources in the region, promoting it as both a destination for experiences and a stopping point for those traveling through.
- Health Care, depicted as Biomedical with an LQ of 0.95. A mature sector, with over 2,600 persons employed in the region. As our own regional population ages, the demand will increase for services. Given the very rural nature of our region, it is also imperative that residents not have to drive two or more hours to receive those necessary services for treatment and well-being.
- Energy with an LQ of 1.0 (same employment as US) and 1,942 jobs. Forest and Wood Products sector with a factor of 0.49 (fewer employed than in the US), with 249 employed in

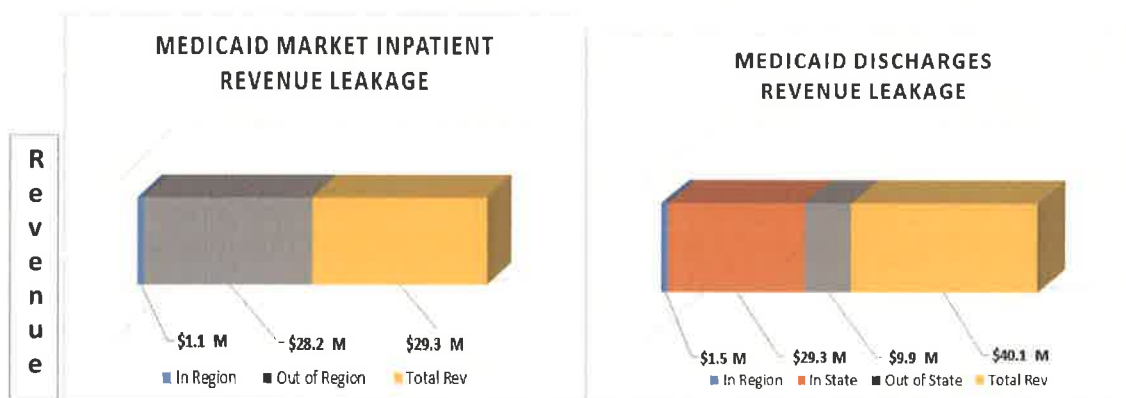
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this sector in the region. Both of these sectors have a basis in the region. With ample sunshine and wind there is opportunity for energy growth and export. The location of forests in the region also provides a niche opportunity for value-added products.

- Information Technology with an LQ of 0.48 and current regional employment of 675 and Defense and Security with an LQ of 0.58 and 882 regionally employed. These are sectors which are transforming at a rapid rate and with the current emphasis on Homeland and First Responder training in the region along with regional Universities' research and the subsequent spin-off opportunities for business creation; these sectors have much opportunity for economic development within the region.

Information derived from the provided leakage analysis can lead to insight on sectors in the regional economy where more money is spent on these goods and services from outside the region, than from within. An example from Agriculture, shown below, is that the region spends \$42.9 million of the \$48.2 million spent outside the region on animal production and aquaculture products. So, we as consumers buy chicken, lamb, and salmon that are produced outside our region and likely buy milk, beef, and some grains that are produced within our region. This could provide an opportunity to develop businesses that produce some of these commodities.

There are numerous examples within the provided data, a select few are graphed and found in Appendix H that illustrate each of the Middle Rio Grande region selected industry sectors and opportunities based on the leakage analysis. Of interest are the following healthcare related leakage charts.



Shift-Share analysis by top industry sectors in the region for the Biomedical and Biotechnical (Life Science) Cluster are illustrated below. Additional analysis of the region's healthcare data reflects significant leakage of services and revenue. Health care providers/services (such as cardiology, dermatology, oncology, ENT, OB/GYN, pediatrics, psychiatry, substance abuse treatment, etc.) are essential to diminish the leakage from the region. It is important to note that Catron and Valencia Counties do not have hospitals or emergency health care services in their communities.

In 2013, Medicaid discharges for Sierra and Socorro County residents equated to \$40,893,215 in revenue. Of this revenue, \$29,387,589 leaked to out-of-region New Mexico providers, \$9,958,281 leaked to out-of-state providers, while a small amount, \$1,547,345 (3.8%), remained in the region.

Medicaid market inpatient data suggests similar leakages in services and revenues. In 2013, Medicaid market inpatient revenue equated to \$29,369,850. Out-migration or leakage equated to

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\$28,237,067, while only \$1,132,783 (3.9%) remained in the region. Attracting specialized healthcare providers/services to the region will reduce leakage, enhance economic development efforts by shoring up many quality of life shortcomings, provide high paying professional jobs, and ensure the availability of meaningful healthcare services in the region.

## Community Capital – Regional Assets

### Assets by Industry Sector- Middle Rio Grande region

Regional Assets	Agriculture	Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Industries	Renewable Energy and Forest Products	Health Care	Technology
Natural	Recreation and park facilities, open land for ranching, private lease of state and federal land, good water sources, rich and fertile land, climate and sunshine.	Open land, good climate, sunshine, wildlife, hot springs, rivers, mountain scenery, Cibola and Gila National Forests, Bosque del Apache & Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuges, Quebradas, Geronimo Scenic Byway, scenic beauty, dark skies.	Wind, solar energy, forests, hydroelectric power at Elephant Butte, EPA, NM Environmental Dept, NRCS, resource referrals.	Many educated professionals we need in health care will find the region attractive due to its natural beauty and natural resources.	Natural resources like hot springs, lake, open land, parks, mountains, forest, rivers will attract employers and employees to the region.
Cultural	Fiestas, fairs, rodeos, ag history, harvest festivals, farmers markets, cross-generational producers, world's largest matanza.	History, respect for cultural traditions and art, museums such as El Camino Real Historic Trail site and Geronimo Springs, festivals, pow wows.	History, artists, respect for cultural beliefs and traditions	Same comment as with Natural.	Same comment as with Natural.
Human	Eco-tourism and hunting, farmers markets, community kitchens, national wildlife refuges, existing farmers (mentorship, production, market development,) NM Dept of Ag, Chambers of Commerce, NMSU extension service, USDA, Econ Dev	Eco-tourism, Rotary clubs, Board of Realtors, Chambers of Commerce, Southwest Regional Tourism Board, Econ Dev orgs, NM Workforce board, AmeriCorps, college scholarships for adult learners, loan forgiveness for non-profit service, positive youth	Rotary clubs, Chambers of Commerce, Econ Dev orgs, training, Econ Dev classes, woodworkers, artists, 4H, Girl and Boy Scouts, Astronomical Societies, VLA, and MRO Educational Outreach.	Viable workforce wanting to work in the area.	Our residents, UNM Valencia, NM Tech, Western NM State University, State University System, VLA, Workforce Solutions, Tech Entrepreneurship Center, NM Schools, on the job training, Small Business Dev Center, Career and Tech

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	organizations, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, state agencies, incarcerated workforce, business mentors, literacy and substance abuse help, county admin, membership organizations.	development, service learning Boys and Girls clubs, mentoring, home visiting, early childhood education, Pre-Kindergarten/ Early Pre-K after school programs, private education.			outreach at schools.
Social	Same as Human assets.	Overlaps with Human assets – Community associations, fiestas, community theaters and music, church communities, network of volunteers and events.	Volunteer, business networks, information fairs, community organizing, networking groups.	Number of positive linkages, civic orgs, civic-minded residents, annual and individual events.	Strong perceived need /support for youth training in vocational and technical skills as a route to employment.
Political	Cattle groups, ag legislators, NMSU, municipal league, US congressional delegation, Councils of Government, NM association of counties, governors' agricultural roots.	City councils, LEDA, State and Federal representatives' ability to influence rules, policy and regulations, government incentives, access to elected officials.	Campaign work, political process knowledge, strategic plans, relationships with local gov'ts, Federal, State, County, Municipal, entities, congressional reps.	All the local governments are in support of growing health care services and economic development initiatives in the region.	NM Speaker of the House ( who is a State Rep for 3 of the 4 counties, and is accessible and a tech/education advocate).
Financial	USDA, natural resources, disaster relief programs, NM capital outlay, CBDG, Colonias infrastructure fund, USDA community facilities, USDA Farm Service, Kellogg and General Mills grants, Forest Service, Title III funding, venture capital, private loans and investors.	Grant writing, donor development, financial assistance, USDA loans, Main Street program, banks.	Polluters (carbon offset), access to banks and investors, angel investors, Community Dev Corps, banks, NM Finance Authority, LEDA, grant writing and administration, USDA, EPA, EDA.	Financial resources are available in the communities and through state and federal grant programs.	NM State and USDA RD funds available.

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Built	Sale barns, dairies, community kitchens, wineries, fairgrounds, farmers markets, ranches, community facilities, farms, feed lots, stockyards, roads, rural trash collection, ag retail suppliers, arenas, sewer & irrigation systems.	Art galleries, chile farms, wineries, Performing Art Center.			Spaceport, VLA, MRO, EMRTC, fiber optic cable (at least in Socorro Co).
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## Regional Challenges

### Challenges by Industry Sector- Middle Rio Grande region

Regional Challenge	Ag	Arts, Entertain, Recreation , and Visitor Industries	Renewable Energy and Forest Products	Health Care	Tech
Natural	Climate change; Lack/change in natural resources such as water, etc.	Climate change, shortage of water.	Fire hazards and drought.	The region is rural geographically; therefore, it's difficult to recruit and retain doctors and skilled health care professionals.	Geographical distances and low-population densities make broadband unattractive to commercial interests.
Cultural		Mindset/ Insufficient appreciation for attractive communities (dumped trailers at edges of towns, shuttered businesses, litter,		The region has a unique culture and is not for everyone. Recruitment and retention efforts need to target the appropriate population of professionals.	Little awareness of the value of broadband and technology in the minds of most area inhabitants. Lack of vocational and tech



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		overgrown weeds, etc.).			education in public school environment.
Human	Challenges with human capital – insufficient trained and motivated workforce; Lack of succession planning, mentoring, training.	Insufficient quantity and quality in workforce.	Insufficient quantity and quality in workforce.	Developing a well-trained and educated workforce, as the region workforce lacks significant training, particularly in the health care field.	Vocational and Tech. Training across a large geographical area is difficult.
Social	Apathy & resistance to change – by existing farmers, small producers, and Next Generation.	Apathy: insufficient sense of community across the region so that we can work together to create needed change.		The region has a number of positive social linkages, e.g., doctors and educators, but, quality of life linkages are weak.	Lack of interest/ inadequate level of interest.
Regulatory and political	Regulatory changes; Shortage of leadership at all levels.	Political pushback, federal land closures and control.	Environmental regulations. Federal land closures and control.	Policy decision to support and garner support for health care services in the region.	Some political and regulatory impediments. Lack of political leadership in some communities.
Financial	Lack of financial resources.	Limited funding.	Low energy prices/value. Decreased market for wood in construction industry.	The region is indigent, having limited funding for economic development initiatives.	Limited funding. NM State financial downturn and cost cutting measures.
Built (technology )		Limited broadband.	Lack of power transmission capacity, transportation network in and out of forests.	The region has limited broadband availability and limited office and technical facilities.	Some communities have no broadband infrastructure . ICIP plans not linked to tech or vocational education.
Built (utilities)	Limited utilities.		Office and technical facilities.	Limited utilities.	Lack of power transmission capacity.

Other			Decreased market for wood in construction.		Time.
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Having identified these challenges, the region developed the strategies contained within this plan to monitor and address, in some cases, these important issues.

## **Evaluation Plan**

Progress indicators:

### **Group 1 - Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology**

- Number of agriculture (ag) and ag-related businesses year over year.
- Retention of ag and ag-related businesses.
- Net increase in ag and ag-related business.

### **Group 2 - Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Industries**

- Net increase in visitors to the region.
- Net increase in experiential tourism opportunities (outdoor activities, jeep tours, birding tours, bus tours with themes -- like chile tours, art tours, etc.).
- Net increase in sales/bookings by art galleries/ performance venues in the region.
- Biking and hiking trail paths created that tie into the Rio Grande Trail.

### **Group 3 - Renewable Energy and Forest Products**

- Net increase in employment.

### **Group 4 - Health Care**

- Net increase in services.
- Net increase in providers.

### **Group 5 – Technology**

- Identification of providers.
- Identification of existing broadband infrastructure.
- Percent of businesses receiving broadband service.
- Percent of residents receiving broadband service.
- Amount of grant dollars obtained by the region for broadband.
- Amount of private sector dollars invested in the region for broadband over the designated time period.

*Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association*

Note: Analysis of Broadband is located in Appendix I.