

Economic Development Council

Scope of Work

2020-2022

Northern Arizona Council of Governments Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Focus Areas

The success of any plan or planning effort is measured by how it's implemented. The 2020-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) serves as the blueprint for the District's Economic Development Annual CEDS Action Plan. **The NACOG 2020-2025 CEDS demonstrates a dedicated section to economic resilience and will be incorporated throughout the Focus Areas as well.**

The NACOG EDD joined the nation and the world in early 2020 in the fight against the invisible enemy known as COVID-19. The district has experience the challenge of the shut-down of its economy as an effort to slow the spread of the deadly virus, which put a strain on business and industry, healthcare facilities and resources. As a result, the district saw an unprecedented period of decline in the workforce as schools and businesses closed in early March, resulting in the filing of historical numbers of unemployment claims, affecting large and small businesses, non-profits and industries, such as the tourism sector.

The 2020-2022 Economic Development Council Scope of Work will focus on these economic challenges.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

- **2020-2022**
 1. Implementation of the 2020-2025 CEDS.

- **2020**
 2. Re-develop the NACOG Economic Development Council Bylaws.
 3. Convene regional economic recovery leadership to align a collaboration on economic recovery – post COVID-19 pandemic.

- **2021-2022**
 4. Negotiate community assessments for FY2021-2022.

FOCUS AREA #1: Workforce and Education

Identify appropriate target sectors based on existing assets and support, and partner with the many reputable post-secondary education institutions across the region to build the next-generation talent pool that meets the needs of the target industry sectors in Northern Arizona.

GOAL: Assist and support economic recovery through the coordination of efforts between industry and educational institutions, ranging from K-12 to joint technical education, to four-year degree programs and beyond, in order to prepare a

skilled, high-growth, next-generation workforce. Promote a flexible rapid response for district and tribal employers and dislocated workers through information sharing, recovery and resilience best practice.

- **2020**

1. Facilitate workforce development efforts within the EDD by developing and identifying resources, providing outreach, fostering and promoting collaboration and addressing workforce development barriers.

- **2021-2022**

2. Provide resources and opportunities for upskilling and reskilling as talent needs evolve, to support sector strategy development and retention of displaced workers.

- **2020-2022**

3. Promote non-traditional delivery methods for education (such as online and distance learning).

FOCUS AREA #2: Economic and Community Health

Support Northern Arizona's small businesses and entrepreneurs, and promote the strengthening of our healthcare sector through collaboration with national and state efforts in education and prevention of the spread of disease.

GOAL: Align workforce training with reskilling and upskilling opportunities to connect displaced workers, and collaborate with local economic development organizations on transitioning new business expansions into existing, recently vacated facilities.

- **2020**

1. Minimize the impacts to displaced workers in the region, whose jobs were lost due to declining industry activity, by connecting workers to new training opportunities and resources for retaining talent in Northern Arizona.
2. Expand business retention efforts to include assessments of industry decline in the region.
3. Be the Northern Arizona voice for economic development initiatives in the state by inviting statewide partners for collaboration.

- **2021**

4. Support economic development-related policy and legislation.

- **2022**

5. Work with transportation and transit partners in the district to connect displaced workers to workforce opportunities in neighboring communities.

GOAL: Expand access to healthcare and raise awareness for community health initiatives that support the improvement of health and wellbeing for residents in Northern Arizona.

- **2020**

6. Convene regional partners, including NAU, to discuss health risks.

- **2021-2022**

7. Develop a health risk assessment report and begin dialogue on possible solutions to address critical areas of need.

FOCUS AREA #3: Infrastructure

Infrastructure is the backbone of our communities, and our region's preparedness for infrastructure enhancements is fundamental to growing strong, economically sound communities. The NACOG EDD's target opportunities include broadband, transportation, physical infrastructure and development readiness, to include an emphasis on Opportunity Zone development.

GOAL: Improve Northern Arizona's access to internet broadband capacity and support infrastructure improvements to enhance future communications technology.

- **2020**

1. Establish a regional, collaborative approach in applying for broadband grants, including a review of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to existing conditions that support broadband.

GOAL: Assist in the promotion of available land assets, and in the redevelopment of existing assets, to further propel business development and expansion within Northern Arizona.

- **2021-2022**

2. Align regional planning and strategic development, and strengthen partnerships with the EDD, for community and economic development.

FOCUS AREA #4: Maximize Available Assets and Support Existing Businesses

Business attraction is widely featured as a key economic indicator, when the support and growth of existing companies account for the most economic activity for communities and regions. Tourism is a Northern Arizona trademark, another major contributor to our economy. The EDD will actively promote the availability of resources to businesses and support the improvement of the quality of life for residents and visitors through tourism and experience.

GOAL: Actively promote the availability of resources to businesses and solicit feedback on how best to improve support for businesses to grow in the region.

- **2020**

1. Survey existing organizations to determine what assets would help their companies grow, and identify programs that respond to their needs.

- **2020-2022**

2. Support local and regional organizations to secure grants through programs at the USDA and EDA, for example, that support business growth for rural communities.

GOAL: Improve the quality of life for residents and visitors, and the unique natural and cultural amenities as well as outdoor recreational activities that make Northern Arizona a great place to live and visit.

- **2020**

3. Support access and development of recreational activities and tourism amenities that will continue to expand tourism opportunities throughout the EDD.

- **2021**

4. Continue to strengthen sub-regional tourism development efforts through the sharing of best practices and promotions.

- **2022**

5. Provide “Lunch and Learn” training opportunities for regional tourism practitioners and local tourism-based businesses.

FOCUS AREA #5: Natural Resources As An Economic Driver

The natural resource ecosystem within the EDD is a compelling reason that people choose to live and companies decide to locate within the region. Serving as the region’s most valuable asset, the environment is a major component of the region’s history and quality of life. The EDD will focus on the protection of our natural resources, not only for the residents and visitors to the region, but for sound business reasons.

GOAL: Develop and expand the resource-based economy and product development that is compatible with the values and goals of the communities within the EDD.

- **2020-2021**

1. Support NAU and other water study centers in assisting economic development opportunities with research related to water resources.

- **2022**

2. Support local and regional entities in their efforts to address water management and adequacy issues.

GOAL: Actively support the expansion and retention of the renewable, sustainable and efficient energy industry within Northern Arizona.

- **2020**

3. Support research and development tied to the development of biomass technologies.

- **2021**

4. Conduct research in alternative energy solutions.

- **2022**

5. Collaborate with higher educational institutions in recruiting and training skilled individuals to work in biomass-related industries.