



***Southwestern NC Economic
Development District
A Comprehensive Economic
Development Strategy (CEDS)***

Southwestern NC Economic Development District
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SUMMARY BACKGROUND

WHY A REGIONAL STRATEGY?

Historically, public and private investment has been a key component for economic development; it is now a fundamental imperative in order to ensure a region remains competitive in today's global economy. The focus of these investments has shifted during the past half century from *The Era of Industrial Recruiting—Focused on financially incentivized infrastructure investments to attract factories*; *The Era of Cost Competition—With roots in the 80's, as globalization of production operations created a necessity to further deepen and incentivize*; and our current *Era of Regional Competitiveness—beginning in the late 90's, with an emphasis of identifying a region's competitive advantages, then prioritizing public/private investments to exploit those advantages.* (Drabbest 2005) This paradigm shift in the way local development organizations conduct development strategies presents many challenges, primarily the need to reach beyond jurisdictional boundaries for true regional collaboration, willing to prioritize and guide investments. It is becoming increasingly critical that a region promote its competitive advantages to its state and federal government to ensure the development of sound state and national strategies. This in turn ensures that a region with unique assets can compete in the global economy. The Economic Development Administration cites two common traps that regional leaders often fall victim to: fragmentation and insularity. Fragmentation occurs when regional leaders lose site of the strategy in favor of pursuing their own localized agenda or individual project. Insularity occurs when leaders revert to traditional “incentive shopping” without understanding global competition.

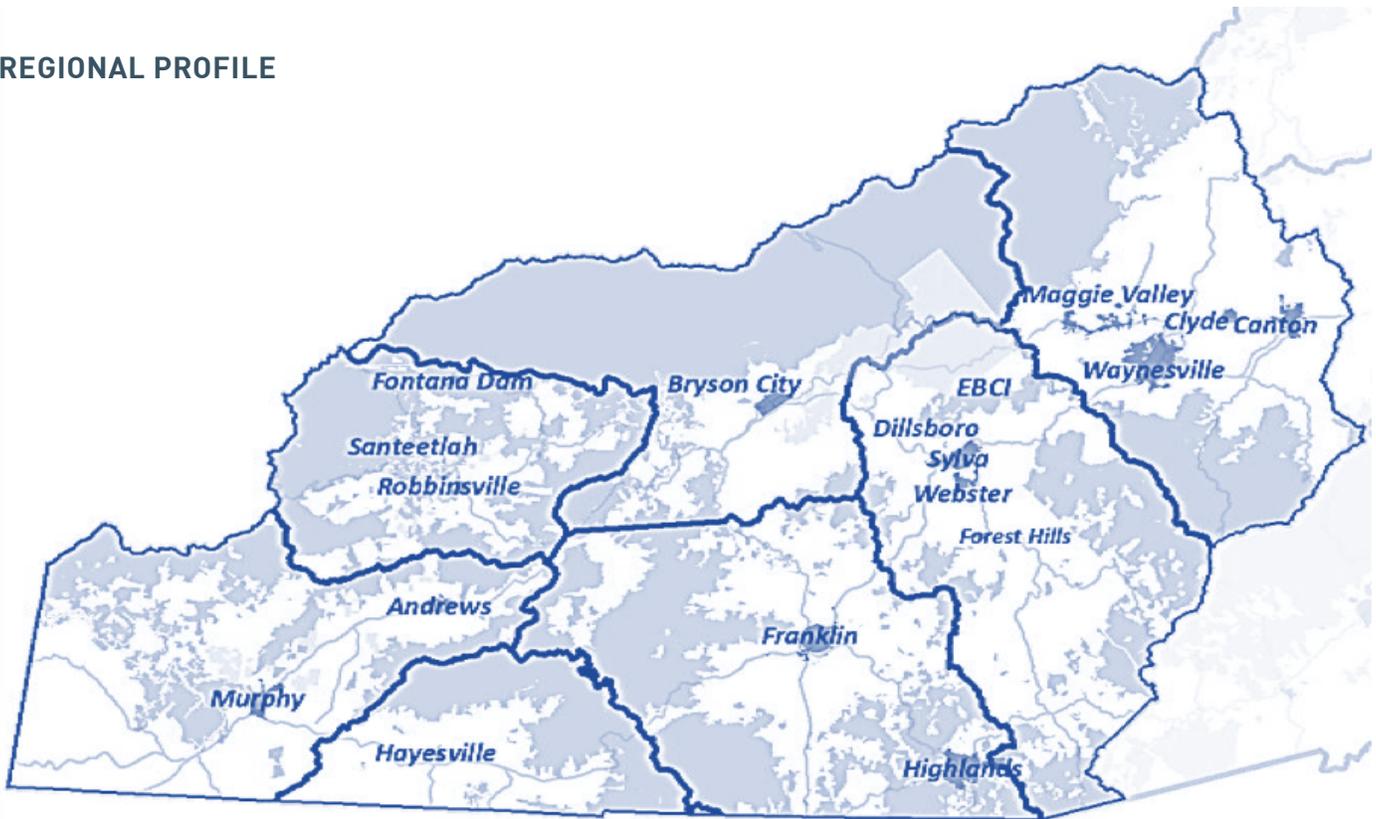
THE PROCESS



STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Josh Carpenter	<i>Regional Industry Manager, NC Economic Development Partnership</i>
Terry Martin	<i>General Manager, Moog Components Division</i>
Mark Clasby	<i>Director, Haywood County Economic Development Commission</i>
Jack Debnam	<i>Board Member, NC Board of Transportation</i>
Tommy Jenkins	<i>Director, Macon County Economic Development Commission</i>
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David Garrett	<i>Services Representative, Southwestern Commission</i>
Lisa Leatherman	<i>District Manager, Duke Energy</i>
Mike Byers	<i>Vice Chancellor, Western Carolina University</i>
Sarajane Melton	<i>Area Agency on Aging Director, Southwestern Commission</i>
Russ Seagle	<i>Executive Director, The Sequoyah Fund</i>
Mitchell Bishop	<i>Staff Construction Engineer, NCDOT</i>
Sharon Taylor	<i>Executive Director, Mainspring Conservation Trust</i>
Cal Stiles	<i>County Commissioner, Cherokee County</i>
Rich Price	<i>Director, Jackson County Economic Development Commission</i>
Sandra Dennison	<i>Director, Small Business and Technology Development Center at Western Carolina University</i>
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Thomas Yang	<i>Student, Smoky Mountain High School</i>
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Sophia Paulos	<i>Director, Graham County Economic Development Commission</i>
Rose Bauguess	<i>RPO Coordinator, Southwestern Commission</i>
Tyler Long	<i>Student, Robbinsville High School</i>
Aaron Patton	<i>Clay County Economic Development/ Tri-County Community College</i>
Sarah Thompson	<i>Executive Director, Southwestern Commission</i>
Paige Dowling	<i>Town Manager, Town of Sylva</i>

REGIONAL PROFILE



GEOGRAPHY

The Southwestern Commission, also known as Region A, is a local development district comprised of seven counties (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain) in the westernmost portion of North Carolina. The region is mostly rural and forested, with a total land area of 3,098 square miles. More than 70% of the region is public land, which is substantial, compared to other areas in the eastern US. This public land includes two National Parks (The Great Smokies and the Blue Ridge Parkway), two National Forests (Nantahala and Pisgah), four TVA lakes (Appalachia, Chatuge, Fontana, and Hiwassee) and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The Blue Ridge Mountain Range on the east and the Unaka Mountains on the west form the north-south boundaries of the Southern Highlands with various ranges, including Balsam, Snowbird, Nantahala, and Cowee ranges forming the cross bars.

Between these transverse ranges are valleys of varying length and width, each with its own river system. The more mature valleys have fairly broad floors and gently rolling to hilly slopes. The gently sloping river plains have supported the majority of the District's population in the past, and they can be expected to do so in the future. Although all but the most severe of topographic limitations can be overcome, the expense of overcoming them can be prohibitive. The problems of development on slopes in excess of 30% limit any major construction. Approximately 66% of the District's land (both public and private) have slopes over 30%.

Region A is located within the geographic center of an immensely growing region. New York, Chicago, Tampa, New Orleans, the Mississippi River, the Great Lakes, and the Gulf of Mexico are all within 500 miles. The Economic Development District (EDD) is also within a day's drive of 75% of the nation's population.



POPULATION

In 2014, approximately 201,703 people, or 2% of North Carolina’s total population resided within the 7-county region. The EDD’s population experienced a growth of 1.4% since 2010 (Table 1). Jackson County led the way with a 2.2% increase. Table 1 shows the actual growth rates of each county in the EDD using the 2010 and 2016 Census Data.

According to the U.S. Census, the EDD has a 2014 estimated population of 201,703. 77% of the region is rural, compared with 41% of the state population. The region’s density is roughly 64 people per square mile. Because the EDD is mostly restricted public land, the adjusted population density for the region is 216 people per square mile; much higher than the statewide population density. 51% of the region is female. The median age varies by county. Clay (51) tops the list, followed by Cherokee (50) at fifth, and Macon (49) at tenth. With a median age of 37, only Jackson County has a median age equal to or lower than the state’s median age of 37 and this number is skewed by the presence of Western Carolina University. 30% of the region’s population is over the age of 60. Over 90% of Region A were identified as white by the North Carolina Department of Commerce in 2014. American Indians, who represent 4.7% of the population, are the largest minority group. African Americans represent 2.08% of the population. Roughly .74% of the region reported themselves as Asians. Multi-racial residents comprised the remaining 1.78% of the population. Hispanics, which constitute 4% of the population, have increased by almost 230 percent from 2000 to 2014 and is expected to increase another 65% by 2019; mainly due to the rise of service and labor-intensive industries (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the region’s historic population from 1950 to 2010, as well as the projected population increase through 2030. Analysis shows that after a slight decrease in population from 1950 to 1960, the region has experienced steady growth over the past half century. In Region A, more people die every year, than there are babies born, causing a negative rate of natural increase. Much of the population increase is due to the migration of retirees, college students, and Hispanics to the area.

Population and Growth Rate by County		
County	Population	Growth Rate (%)
Cherokee	27,444	1.3
Clay	10,587	2.1
Graham	8,861	1.1
Haywood	59,036	0.9
Jackson	40,271	2.2
Macon	33,922	1.4
Swain	13,981	0.8

Source: United States Census, 2010–2014
Table 1

Ethnic Breakdown		
	Region A	(%)
White	186,877	90.7
American Indian	9,679	4.7
Black	4,292	2.1
Asian	1,533	0.7
Other/Two or more races	3,676	1.8

Source: NC Commerce, Access NC
Table 2

Historic Populations & Predictions: 1950–2030									
Census year	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Cherokee	18,294	16,335	16,330	18,933	20,170	24,298	27,444	30,989	34,379
Clay	6,006	5,526	5,180	6,619	7,155	8,775	10,587	12,172	13,718
Graham	6,886	6,432	6,563	7,217	7,196	7,993	8,861	10,053	11,219
Haywood	37,631	39,711	41,710	46,495	46,942	54,033	59,036	64,243	69,337
Jackson	19,261	17,780	21,593	25,811	26,846	33,121	40,271	46,915	53,347
Macon	16,174	14,935	15,788	20,178	23,499	29,811	33,922	35,045	36,145
Swain	9,921	11,268	10,283	7,861	8,387	12,968	13,981	15,584	17,147
Total	114,173	109,106	115,024	135,536	143,076	170,999	194,102	215,001	235,292
%+/-	—	-4.43%	5.42%	17.8%	5.56%	19.5%	13.5%		

Source: US Census 1950–2010, NC OSBM
Table 3



INCOME AND POVERTY

The all-persons poverty rate across the EDD is higher than the state average and the percentage of children living in poverty in the region dwarfs that of the state and nation. The median household income of region continues to lag behind the state and nation. The table below shows the poverty rate and median household income for the region. According to the North Carolina Department of Commerce, 19.5% of all persons and 30.4% of the children in Region A live in poverty (Table 4).

	Poverty Rate		Median Household Income
	All persons	Under 18	
Region A	19.5%	30.4%	\$37,019
North Carolina	17.2%	24.1%	\$46,596
United States	15.5%	21.7%	\$53,657

Source: NC Commerce, Access NC

Table 4

EDUCATION

K-12

North Carolina has a centrally controlled public education system, with the state bearing most of the operations costs of schools. Local boards are charged with providing capital facilities, most maintenance and utilities, and operating supplements to enhance local education. In the realm of local government expenditures for public schools, the district remains well behind the state average.

HIGHER EDUCATION

There are about 18,000 students enrolled in institutions of higher education throughout the district. Approximately 34.5% of these students are enrolled in one of the region's three community colleges. Haywood Community College, Southwestern Community College and Tri-County Community College offer Associate, Vocational and Continuing Education programs and coordinate efforts with the local Workforce Development Board to meet the needs of the workforce.

Additionally, Western Carolina University, a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina system, is located in the physical heart of Region A. The university offers undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degree programs. It is integrally connected to the region as an educational and economic resource, while bringing cultural opportunities to Region A through theater, music and events which are open to the public.



ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

INDUSTRY CLUSTERING

In 2016, the Southwestern Commission contracted with Syneva Economics to conduct an Economic Analysis of Region A. Part of this report focused on industry clusters. Industry clusters refer to groups of interconnected industries that typically purchase from one another or otherwise benefit from being in close proximity to each other. Clusters imply the presence of distinct economic ecosystems which support the identified group of participant industries (including suppliers, the educational system, incumbent worker skills, etc.). Industries may belong to several clusters. For economic development, industry clusters can help pinpoint unique areas of strength and economic drivers. Building on an existing industry cluster is considered less risky than looking to develop un-networked economic activities.

Nineteen industry clusters were identified in Region A. In terms of total employment, the largest is *Health Services* which employs 8,491. *Education (Public & Private)* is second largest at 6,196. The smallest cluster, *Glass & Ceramics*, only employs 29, yet comprises nine firms. Over the last five years, eleven industry sectors have added employment in Region A (Table 5). However, two have contributed 65 percent of all gains; *Arts, Entertainment & Recreation* and *Accommodation & Food Services*. And among sectors losing employment, two have experienced 69 percent of all losses; *Health Care* and *Construction*.

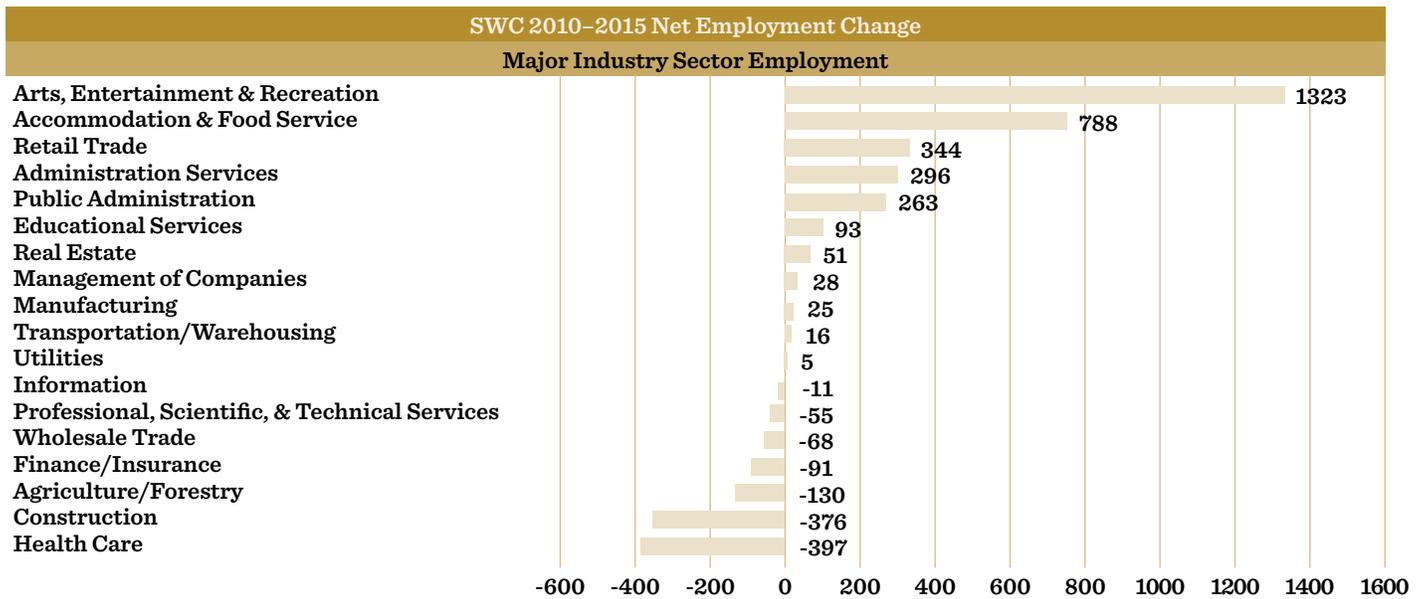


Table 5

To examine local uniqueness and recent trends, the region’s clusters were organized into four major groups; combinations of expanding or declining and specialized or unspecialized. The region has three industry clusters in the Expanding & Specialized group (typically the most promising); *Arts, Entertainment, Recreation & Visitor Industries, Plastics & Chemicals* and *Education*.

The most locally specialized industry cluster is *Forest & Wood Products* with over twice the level of employment concentration than in the nation. Following next is the *Electrical Equip, Appliance & Component Mfg.* cluster, with a degree of specialization at 1.9. Both of these highly specialized clusters have experienced recent employment declines (Table 6).

When average annual earnings of each cluster are considered; seven clusters with earnings above the regional average of \$39,945 experienced growth over the 2010-2015 period (Figure 1 and Table 6). The two with the most growth are *Plastics & Chemicals* and *Industrial Materials*. The largest cluster with earnings greater than the Region A average and positive growth is *Education (Public & Private)*.

SWC INDUSTRY CLUSTERS ANNUAL EARNINGS & CHANGE

Bubble size reflects total employment; industries may be in more than one cluster. Source SYNEVA Economics, EMSI, Center for Region Development Purdue University

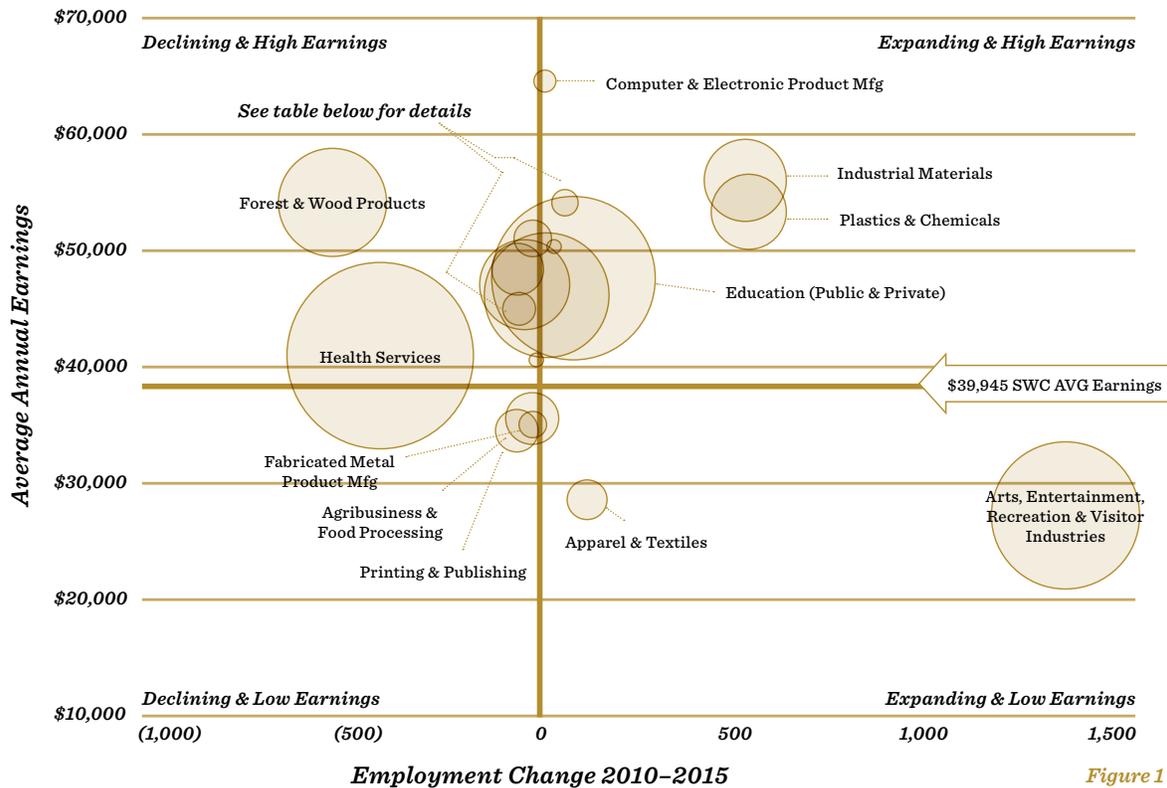


Figure 1

SWC Industry Clusters Specialization & Change				
Cluster	2015 Employment	2010-2015 Employment Change	Degree of Specialization	Business Establishments
Expanding & Specialized				
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation & Visitor Industries	5,004	1,323	1.4	269
Plastics & Chemicals	1,367	524	1.4	31
Education (Public & Private)	6,196	93	1.6	111
Declining & Specialized				
Forest & Wood Products	2,723	(522)	2.6	106
Electrical Equip, Appliance, Component Mfg.	334	(15)	1.9	6
Health Services	8,491	(397)	1.1	165
Emerging & Unspecialized				
Business & Financial Services	3,584	29	0.5	606
Industrial Materials	1,684	520	0.7	43
Apparel & Textiles	320	123	0.6	33
Transportation Equip Mfg.	143	67	0.2	4
Computer & Electronic Product Mfg.	88	15	0.2	3
Primary Metal Mfg.	45	38	0.3	2
Declining & Unspecialized				
Information Technology & Telecom	1,930	(36)	0.6	171
Transportation & Logistics	628	(54)	0.3	78
Agribusiness & Food Processing	607	(19)	0.3	67
Printing & Publishing	418	(55)	0.4	65
Machinery Mfg.	271	(52)	0.5	9
Fabricated Metal Product Mfg.	171	(17)	0.3	10
Glass & Ceramics	29	(3)	0.2	9

Industries may be in more than one cluster. Source: SYNEVA Economics, EMSI, Center for Regional Development Purdue University

Table 6

ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS & OPPORTUNITIES

Creation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Region A included considerable public input. The process began with a survey sent to regional stakeholders in July of 2016 that received 113 responses. The second phase of public input involved forming a steering committee of 29 regional stakeholders from the public and private sector. This committee met three times as a group and four times in smaller workgroups that focused on particular elements of the action plan. During the first meeting, the steering committee, participants were presented the results of the survey and relevant demographic and economic information. They then participated in a SWOT Analysis of the region to determine the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Southwestern Commission staff also used input gathered from regional plans to add another layer of information. In 2014, the Southwestern Commission completed the Opt-in Regional Vision with input from over 1,000 residents. In 2015, the Southwestern Commission began working with the Economic Development Directors of Region A to create an economic development partnership for the region called the MountainWest Partnership. To support that effort, the Commission helped create the MountainWest Community Revitalization Plan as a strategic document which had a 12-person steering committee. The CEDS survey and steering committee input confirmed that many of the issues that surfaced in the Opt-in Regional Vision and the MountainWest Community Revitalization Plan were still important issues in the region.



COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

The survey shows 113 responses from a mixture of public and private sector stakeholders in Region A. The respondents reside in Jackson (29.2%), Macon (25.66%), Haywood (11.5%), Cherokee (10.62%), Graham (9.73%), Clay (7.96%), and Swain (5.31%) counties. The survey results are summarized and presented below:

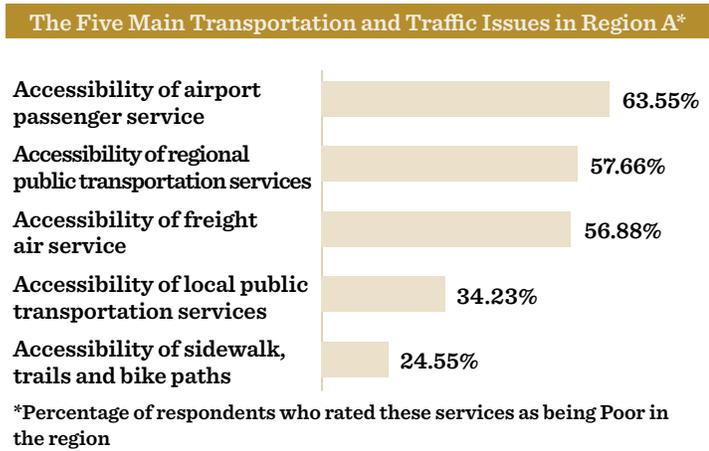


Table 7a

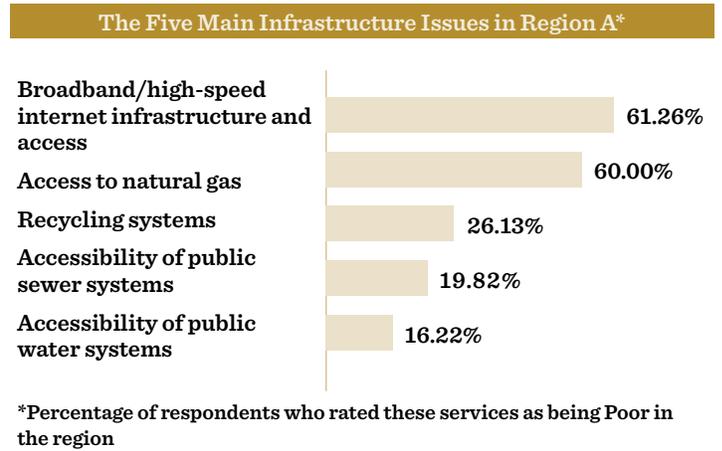


Table 7b



Important factors for having a strong and productive workforce

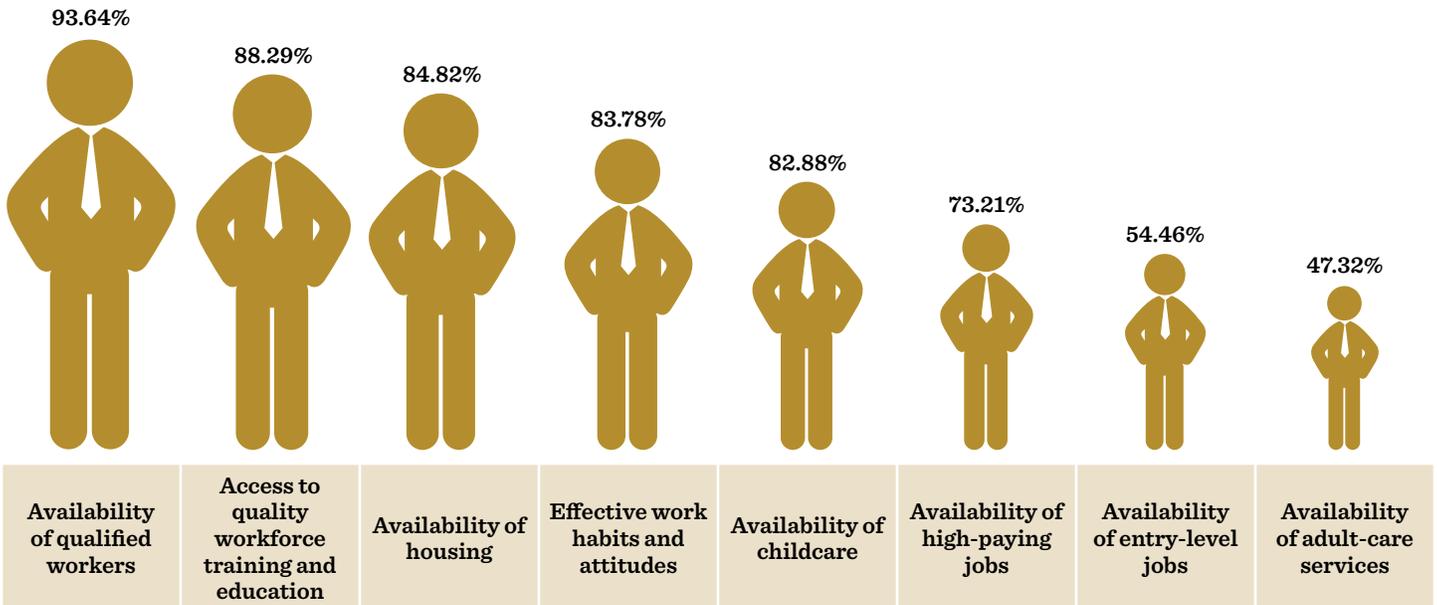
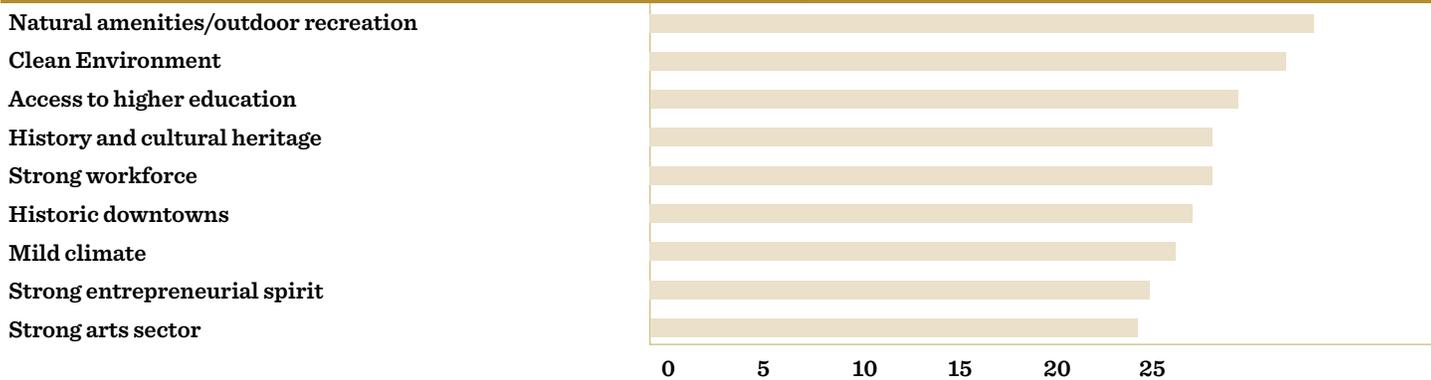


Table 7c

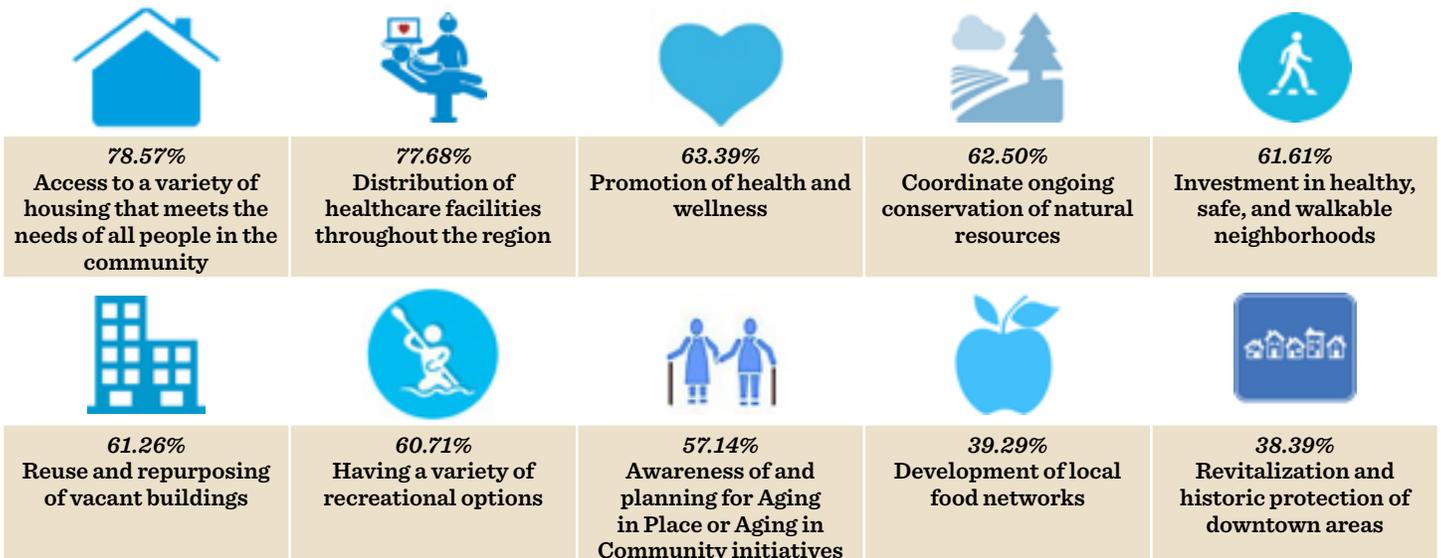
The Main Assets of Region A*



*Respondents ranked these factors in terms of their importance. The results represent the total score for each factor.

Table 7d

Opportunities for creating healthy revitalized, and vibrant communities*



*Percentage of respondents who marked these factors as being Extremely Important for creating revitalized, healthy, and vibrant communities in Region A.

Table 7e

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis is a method to assess region's advantages, challenges, and future opportunities. Strengths are the factors that give the region a competitive edge. Weaknesses are the factors that hinder economic development of the area and that need to be overcome. Opportunities are conditions that make future economic development plausible. Threats are unfavorable conditions that may lead to the economic decline of the region. The SWOT analysis reflects the ideas and beliefs of multiple stakeholders, including public administrators, elected officials, educators, business owners, and citizens, about what is important in Region A.

STRENGTHS

- Highway system
- Climate/outdoor recreational opportunities
- Substantial public lands
- Dependable/community engaged utility providers
- Available manufacturing & agricultural sites
- Rail (GSMT) for tourism and freight
- Access to regional airports
- Rich historic & cultural heritage
- Strong downtowns & vibrant tourism economy
- Southwestern Workforce Development Board
- NC Works Career Center employment, recruiting, & business services for job seekers and businesses
- WNC Regional Livestock Market
- Strong higher education system
- Healthcare system
- Safe neighborhoods/low crime rates
- Business/entrepreneur support
- Strong arts sector

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of access to broadband- last mile
- Job diversity/overall small workforce/skills gap
- Lack of opportunity for professional careers
- Low wages
- Limited childcare capacity
- Proximity to major airport
- Lack of higher education attainment for residents
- Developable property
- Stress on aging infrastructure
- Lack of rail & diversity of transportation routes
- Lack of long-range planning as a region
- Natural gas
- Affordable housing for all income levels
- Lack of senior housing
- Substance abuse
- Low population density
- Financial education of younger population
- High cost of expanding utilities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Downtowns as lifestyle & cultural centers
- Real estate development
- Young professional groups/engaging youth
- Expanding small-scale agriculture
- Trend in rural lifestyle
- Developing heritage tourism
- Arts and culture
- Cross-county collaboration for business & industry
- Mountain West Partnership
- Growth of Western Carolina University, Cherokee, & Waynesville
- Promoting public lands
- Entrepreneurship/empowering small businesses
- Broadband potential/data centers
- Natural amenities to expand outdoor manufacturing
- Western corridor highway expansion (Corridor K)
- Growing senior population: volunteers & business
- Millennial Campus- Western Carolina University

THREATS

- Aging population workforce & healthcare
- Aging population
- Emergency management/natural disaster
- Stereotypes
- Brain drain
- Reliance on tourism
- Increased instances of substance abuse
- Loss of funding for non-profits, support entities, economic development, etc.
- Lack of planning
- Online retailing
- Lack of leadership vision
- Gaming expansion in Atlanta
- Overdevelopment
- Poverty
- Destruction/overuse of natural resources
- Lack of access to state of the art technology
- Failure to invest in maintenance of infrastructure

ACTION PLAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Resiliency has been defined by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) as “the ability of a region or community to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from shocks and disruptions including natural disasters/hazards, climate change impacts, the closure of a large employer, the decline of an important industry, and changes in workforce.” One of the points of emphasis during the CEDS process has been to identify vulnerabilities and to increase resiliency of the region. This issue was addressed repeatedly by the CEDS Steering Committee, first through the identification of weaknesses and threats during the SWOT analysis and then through the workgroups created to address particular issues

Through the CEDS process, the three areas of vulnerability that were identified as most significantly threatening the resiliency of the region were natural disasters and hazards, closure of a large employer, and changes in workforce. In terms of disasters and hazards, the three that came up during discussions were drought, forest fires, and the threat of isolation posed by road closures resulting from rock slides or forest fires. In 2016, Region A experienced extreme drought and subsequently a rash of forest fires that burned over 80,000 acres west of Asheville which cost \$40 million to fight. Furthermore, three counties in the region were classified as in extreme drought and the remaining four were considered to be in severe drought which had an adverse effect on the agricultural sector and stressed the region’s water and sewer systems.

In the past few years, Region A has experienced the loss of several big employers. Graham County lost 400 jobs when Stanley Furniture moved operations, Swain County will lose about 230 workers when Consolidated Metco relocates in February of 2018, and Franklin lost 150 jobs when Caterpillar moved in 2015. Existing employers that employ large percentages of the workforce are Harrah’s Casino with close to 7,000 employees, Evergreen Packaging that employs over 1,200 people, and Western Carolina University with over 1,000 employees.

A subsequent effect of economic diversification is resiliency. The region under leadership of the Southwestern Commission serving as the Lead Development District (LDD) is embarking on a collaborative marketing and recruitment strategy called the MountainWest Partnership that connects all of the actors that play a role in economic growth with the goal of developing emerging and new industries. This increased diversification will prevent disruptions the district has experienced with manufacturing plant closures and national economic impacts to tourism and second home market trends.

Another resiliency issue addressed in CEDS meetings was changes to the workforce and the nature of work. An aging population poses a threat as the workforce ages at a rate that outpaces the growth of population in the 0-17 age range (Table 8). Cherokee, Clay, and Macon counties are among the top counties in North Carolina with the highest population of adults over the age of 65. Projections show that 33% of the population of Region A will be over the age of 60 by the year 2034.

There is also the threat of job loss due to automation as advances in technology lead to an increase in jobs that can be performed by robots. The Institute of Emerging Issues at NC State University has focused on this issue and studies the jobs most likely to be lost to automation in the future. Included below is a list of the top 10 jobs expected to be lost to automation (Table 9).

This list is significant because four of the top 10 employment sectors in Region A are included on this list (Retail Trade, Food Service, Manufacturing, Administration).

Age Breakdown		
Age	Region A	(%)
0-19	43,041	21.3
20-29	23,756	11.8
30-39	20,752	10.3
40-49	24,193	12.0
50-59	29,449	14.6
60+	60,512	30.0

Source: NC Commerce, Access NC

Table 8

Projected Job Loss to Automation		
Rank	Job Category	Average Annual Wage
1	Combined Food Prep & Serving Workers, Incl Fast Food	\$17,950
2	Retail Salespersons	\$25,050
3	Cashiers	\$19,170
4	Waiters & Waitresses	\$19,520
5	Office Clerks, General	\$27,410
6	Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	\$25,680
7	Secretaries & Administration Assistants (Except Legal, Medical)	\$33,410
8	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$38,620
9	Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks	\$35,790
10	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing (Except Technical & Scientific Products)	\$65,150

Source: Institute for Emerging Issues

Table 9

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1	Build on the Region’s Competitive Advantages and Leverage the Market Place
Objective 1	<i>Establish the “MountainWest Partnership” as a recognized regional brand to support existing business and recruit new business to the region (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>
Strategy 1	Use the MountainWest Partnership to communicate and convey the economic story of Region A to businesses and entrepreneurs
Strategy 2	Further develop and promote the on-line portal to serve as a data and resource directory for entrepreneurs and businesses and a one-stop location for all economic development data, resources and events for the region
Strategy 3	Standardize local efforts into an integrated business retention and expansion (BRE) call program
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a regional listing of economic development product (buildings, sites, etc.) • Continue to formalize the MountainWest Partnership by creating bylaws and governing structure • Create a plan for sustaining the MountainWest Partnership by identifying and pursuing public and private opportunities for funding
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of presentations per year to civic, government, and business support organizations • Increase in inquiries to Small Business Centers and other business service providers • Number of inquiries generated by social media and other advertising
Lead Agency Partners	The Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Local Economic Development Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, NC Economic Development Partnership (NCEDP), Western Carolina University, Community Colleges, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI)

Objective 2	<i>Support the Region’s Clusters of Economic Development that offer Competitive Advantage (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>
Strategy 1	Leverage the region’s history, cultural heritage and natural assets to extend the visitor’s stay in Region A
Strategy 2	Promote and support agriculture as a viable economic practice
Strategy 3	Promote and support industry clusters of strength as identified in the Economic Analysis of the Southwestern Region
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a wayfinding system to the region’s cultural and historic sites. • Look for opportunities to connect existing asset maps into larger regional efforts (Graham County Asset Mapping, Franklin-Cherokee Heritage Corridor, Smoky Mountain Blueways, etc.) • Incorporate the regional brand into regional tourism marketing efforts and encourage Tourism Development Authorities to take a more regional approach to this effort • Develop a marketing effort to highlight the region’s towns as centers for healthy lifestyles featuring local foods and outdoor amenities • Identify areas of competitive advantage in the agricultural sector such as viticulture and forestry • Integrate data from Regional Economic Analysis into economic development activities and marketing strategies
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of communities that receive access to funding or technical assistance to help with wayfinding • Number of jobs created in the agriculture sector • Number of jobs created in targeted industry sectors
Lead Agency Partners	The Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Local Economic Development Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, NC EDP, Western Carolina University, Community Colleges, Tourism Development Authorities, NC Department of Agriculture, Southwestern Resource Conservation and Development, Smoky Mountain Host, EBCI, The Western Carolina University Rapid Center

Objective 3	Facilitate Success of Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)
Strategy 1	Continue to operate and adequately capitalize the Southwestern Commission Revolving Loan Fund
Strategy 2	Facilitate sharing of information among resource providers to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystem
Strategy 3	Expand the quantity and quality of networking opportunities throughout region in order to increase the interaction between and among entrepreneurs, service providers and others
Strategy 3	Create awareness among businesses owners, government officials and resource providers of the MountainWest Partnership website as a one-stop location where entrepreneurs and small businesses can access information about support services, technical assistance, financing, and up to date listings of educational and networking events
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market and promote the Revolving Loan Fund to entrepreneurs and businesses as well as service providers who work with them. • Market and publicize the MountainWest Partnership on-line portal to entrepreneurs and small business owners • Inventory the networking opportunities in the region and identify gaps • Work with organizers of current networking opportunities to grow and expand appropriately • Based on identified gaps, develop new networking event • Work with schools to teach entrepreneurship
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new businesses started • Number of new jobs added • Number of networking events for entrepreneurs • Increase in usage of MWP data portal • Increase in inquiries to Small Business Centers and other service providers • Number of businesses that receive credit financing through Revolving Loan Fund and other small business lenders
Lead Agency Partners	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Sequoyah Fund, Local Economic Development Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Development Authorities, Community College Small Business Centers, Local School Districts, Western Carolina University, Small Business Technology Development Center at Western Carolina University (SBTDC), The Western Carolina University Rapid Center



GOAL 2	Establish and Maintain a Robust Regional Infrastructure
Objective 1	<i>Create a comprehensive inventory of the region's infrastructure and infrastructure capacity in order to identify whether water, sewer, and natural gas, etc. can accommodate future growth</i>
Strategy 1	Identify and maintain an inventory of the region's infrastructure assets
Strategy 2	Establish a public-private coalition to advocate for increased state and federal infrastructure in the region
Strategy 3	Coordinate planning to ensure needed infrastructure investment
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage water and sewer management to conduct Asset Inventories using available state funds • Create and continuously update GIS based maps of water, sewer, gas, broadband, commercial and industrial sites, housing, etc. infrastructure, including age, state-of-repair, capacity and occupancy • Maintain current understanding of available public-sector funding sources for infrastructure investments and communicate funding opportunities to local governments • Recruit and organize members for the public-private coalition • Begin advocacy activities for priority projects
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have public and private sector participation from each county in the region on task force • Amount of funding secured for priority projects • Percentage of infrastructure assets data mapped in regional geo-database • Systems will maintain sufficient capacity to meet current and future demands
Lead Agency Partners	Water and sewer system owners, NC permitting and regulatory agencies; professional engineers, PSNC Gas Co, Toccoa Natural Gas Co., NC Public Utilities Commission, Counties and municipalities, Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, State Broadband Infrastructure Office
Objective 2	<i>Make low-cost, clean-burning natural gas accessible to communities throughout the region (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>
Strategy 1	Conduct feasibility study for providing natural gas to communities that currently lack service
Strategy 2	Facilitate collaboration between private natural gas providers and local and regional planners and economic developers
Strategy 3	Incentivize investment in the development of appropriate natural gas infrastructure and related facilities
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop inventory of natural gas pipelines and planned future pipelines in the region • Develop incentives to increase use and access to natural gas
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of residences and industries with access to natural gas
Lead Agency Partners	NC permitting and regulatory agencies; professional engineers, PSNC Gas Co, Toccoa Natural Gas Co., NC Public Utilities Commission, Counties and Municipalities, Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership



Objective 3	<i>Expand reliable and affordable broadband service throughout the region (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>
Strategy 1	Establish public-private partnerships to expand broadband services in underserved and difficult to reach areas of the region
Strategy 2	Continue to support the deployment of high speed wireless access in the region's downtown areas
Strategy 3	Leverage the Region A Broadband Assessment to attract service providers to the region
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize initial projects based on need and opportunity and begin implementation • Bring together public and private sector providers, Chambers of Commerce and Main Street organizations to discuss potential solutions and partnerships • Determine the feasibility, cost and potential funding sources for deployment in each downtown • Advocate for change in state legislation allowing municipalities to provide broadband service • Convene meetings between stakeholders involved in expansion of infrastructure (i.e. NCDOT and NC Broadband Infrastructure Office)
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of residences and industries with access to quality, affordable broadband service
Lead Agency Partners	Counties and Municipalities, Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, NC Broadband Infrastructure Office, Private Providers

Objective 4	<i>Develop multi-modal transportation plans that address existing and future year capacity deficiencies (Resiliency- Transportation Access)</i>
Strategy 1	Continue to strengthen the partnership with NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch and the Southwestern Rural Planning Organization
Strategy 2	Expand connectivity with a safe and reliable regional road network
Strategy 3	Develop alternatives to driving within existing communities
Strategy 4	Develop freight mobility plan designed to reinforce the importance of moving goods and people
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue improvements to primary and secondary roads • Plan creation of complete streets • Prioritize pedestrian and bikeway projects with the Rural Planning Organization for NCDOT funding • Expand transit options and service frequency • Complete mobility plan and implement its recommendations • Work with NCDOT and rail operators to increase freight rail service in the region and expand tourism-based passenger rail • Plan for the future of the region's airports • Coordinate with Tennessee, South Carolina, and Georgia to identify regional issues and opportunities
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects providing alternatives to driving • Number of new roads constructed • Number of projects for road improvement and modernization • Completed mobility plan
Lead Agency Partners	NCDOT, Southwestern RPO, local governments within the RPO

GOAL 3	Create Revitalized, Healthy, and Resilient Communities
Objective 1	<i>Encourage investment in downtown corridors and communities in order to make them more attractive to tourists and residents</i>
Strategy 1	Increase the revitalization and historic preservation efforts in the downtown areas of communities in the region
Strategy 2	Increase investments in the maintenance and development of trails and greenways, pedestrian infrastructure, and public gathering spaces to promote healthy living and attract visitors
Strategy 3	Encourage and support communities in reviewing and updating their existing codes and regulations which impact development issues
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with NC Department of Commerce to assist towns with developing an economic development plan • Identify potential funding sources for specific projects • Develop funding programs which incent property owners to make property improvements, such as a façade improvement grant program • Assist municipalities to develop or update bike and pedestrian plans • Assist each local government with review of existing codes and regulations to determine their impacts on development activities; develop potential revisions • Encourage local governments to effectively utilize their code enforcement, nuisance, and other regulations to improve appearance of their communities • Develop and house a plan repository where those engaging in community planning can quickly access previous plans
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development Plans Completed • Number of downtown buildings re-redeveloped • Number of bike and pedestrian plans completed
Lead Agency Partners	Southwestern Commission, Municipalities, NC Department of Commerce, Appalachian Regional Commission

Objective 2	<i>Increase housing opportunities for all who wish to live in the region</i>
Strategy 1	Complete a housing analysis and assessment to better understand the region’s housing market and current and future housing needs
Strategy 2	Develop strategies and incentives to encourage housing development which meets the region’s identified housing needs
Strategy 3	Maintain existing housing stock by reinvesting in existing communities
Strategy 4	Raise awareness of and encourage Aging in Place Initiatives
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline project scope and select consultant for housing analysis • Work with consultant to complete the analysis and assessment • Review results and develop appropriate next steps for housing development in the region based on the assessment • Identify existing financing and incentive programs which match with the housing needs • Work with developers and builders to develop housing projects which help to address each community’s identified housing needs • Develop and maintain a resource of best practices for addressing community housing needs • Advocate for funding sources such as NC Department of Commerce to offer incentives for second floor housing in downtown buildings
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing analysis and assessment completed • Number of new housing units • Number of new second floor housing units in downtown areas
Lead Agency Partners	Southwestern Commission, NC Department of Commerce, Appalachian Regional Commission, Counties and Municipalities, MountainWest Partnership, Mountain Projects

Objective 3	<i>Provide the facilities necessary to support entrepreneurs in targeted industries (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>
Strategy 1	Determine the feasibility of establishing co-working spaces in the region’s downtowns or other appropriate areas
Strategy 2	Determine the feasibility of establishing additional incubator space in the region
Strategy 3	Determine the feasibility of creating at least one makerspace in the region
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential locations for co-working, incubators, and maker spaces in each county • Work with property owners to determine the feasibility of creating a co-working, incubator, or makerspace • If feasible, move forward with development of co-working, incubator, or makerspace
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed feasibility studies • Number of co-working, incubator, or makerspaces in the region
Lead Agency Partners	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Western Carolina University, Local Economic Development Commissions, The Western Carolina University Rapid Center

GOAL 4	Develop Talented and Innovative People
Objective 1	<i>Improve Development, Retention, Attraction of Skilled Workforce to support the region’s key driver industries (e.g., information technology, light manufacturing) (Resiliency- Workforce)</i>
Strategy 1	Establish consortia among smaller companies with similar workforce training needs to enable them to access customized training
Strategy 2	Continue workforce initiatives to align training and education with target industries
Strategy 3	Facilitate collaboration between different agencies in workforce development (Southwestern Commission Workforce Development, Community Colleges, Mental Health providers)
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop customized training proposals for companies with common needs and meet with employers • Hold customized training and obtain employer and worker feedback • Continue to develop career pathways that meet the needs of employers in the region • Continue to encourage those entering the workforce to obtain Career Readiness Certification (CRC) and local employers to recognize the value of CRCs • Work with public schools to increase STEM course offerings and extracurricular activities
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of companies accessing customized training • Number of workforce service provider meetings • Number of participants receiving CRC’s
Lead Agency Partners	Southwestern Workforce Development Board and Department, MountainWest Partnership, Community Colleges, K-12 school systems, Western Carolina University, Local Economic Development Commissions

Objective 2	<i>Increase quality, affordable childcare across the region</i>
Strategy 1	Work with the MountainWest Partnership to increase awareness of childcare as an economic development issue
Strategy 2	Conduct analysis to identify gaps in provision of quality, affordable childcare
Strategy 3	Collaborate with partners to provide technical assistance to childcare providers
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding sources for analysis of childcare in the region • Engage consultant to complete analysis • Identify areas of high-need areas through analysis
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in childcare slots in priority areas identified in study
Lead Agency Partners	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Southwestern Child Development Commission, Region A Partnership for Children

Objective 3	<i>Expand community capacity in Region A by continuing to foster, encourage and support the region's leaders</i>
Strategy 1	Grow the impact and reach of the Millennial Campus at Western Carolina University as an initiative for university faculty and students, businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies to work together in applied research, projects, and programming that benefits the region
Strategy 2	Continue to work toward the formation of a Regional Rural Leadership Institute that prepares future leaders for the region
Strategy 3	Encourage nonprofits and civic organizations in the region to include youth and young adult representatives on their board of directors
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull together on-campus constituencies and regional partners to identify potential priority projects in collaboration with Western Carolina University • For each priority project, establish a project team, develop a project scope of work and implementation timeline and launch the project • Upon completion of initial projects, review results, evaluate efforts and make appropriate adjustments and initiate new round of projects • Develop the Rural Leadership Institute's core mission, primary fields of activities, governance structure (free-standing organization or part of a larger organization), operations structure and funding model • Secure multi-year funding commitment from stakeholder investors and partners • Develop an inventory of non-profits and civic organizations in the region and identify any which have designated youth or young adult board positions • Assist interested nonprofits and civic organizations to recruit youths and young adults
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of collaborative projects completed with Western Carolina University • Number of participants completing Rural Leadership Institute • Number of youth serving on government and non-profit boards
Lead Agency Partners	Southwestern Commission, Western Carolina University, Non-profit Pathways, The North Carolina Rural Center, MountainWest Partnership, Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 1 Build on the Region’s Competitive Advantages and Leverage the Market Place		
Objective 1 <i>Establish the “MountainWest Partnership” as a recognized regional brand to support existing business and recruit new business to the region (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>		
Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 Years) Medium (3-5 Years) Long (5+ Years)
Develop a regional listing of economic development product (buildings, sites, etc.)	The Southwestern Commission (SWC), MountainWest Partnership (MWP), Local Economic Development Commissions, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (EBCI), Western Carolina University, Community Colleges	Short
Continue to formalize the MountainWest Partnership by creating bylaws and governing structure	The Southwestern Commission (SWC), MountainWest Partnership (MWP), Local Economic Development Commissions, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (EBCI), Western Carolina University, Community Colleges	Short
Create a plan for sustaining the MountainWest Partnership by identifying and pursuing public and private opportunities for funding	The Southwestern Commission (SWC), MountainWest Partnership (MWP), Local Economic Development Commissions, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (EBCI), Western Carolina University, Community Colleges	Short
Objective 2 <i>Support the Region’s Clusters of Economic Development that offer Competitive Advantage (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>		
Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 Years) Medium (3-5 Years) Long (5+ Years)
Develop a wayfinding system to the region’s cultural and historic sites.	The Southwestern Commission, Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Development Authorities, Smoky Mountain Host, Appalachian Regional Commission	Medium
Look for opportunities to connect existing asset maps into larger regional efforts (Graham County Asset Mapping, Franklin-Cherokee Heritage Corridor, Smoky Mountain Blueways, etc.)	Tourism Development Authorities, Smoky Mountain Host, Southwestern Commission, Appalachian Regional Commission	Medium
Incorporate the regional brand into regional tourism marketing efforts and encourage Tourism Development Authority’s to take a more regional approach to this effort.	Tourism Development Authorities, Smoky Mountain Host, Southwestern Commission	Medium
Develop a marketing effort to highlight the quality of life in the region’s towns(healthy lifestyles, local food, outdoor amenities, etc.)	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Local Economic Development Commissions, NC Department of Agriculture, Southwestern Resource Conservation and Development, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (EBCI)	Short
Identify areas of competitive advantage in the agricultural sector (viticulture and forestry)	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Local Economic Development Commissions, NC Department of Agriculture, Southwestern Resource Conservation and Development, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (EBCI)	Medium
Integrate data from Regional Economic Analysis into economic development activities and marketing strategies	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Local Economic Development Commissions, NC Department of Agriculture, Southwestern Resource Conservation and Development	Short

Objective 3 Facilitate Success of Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)

<i>Tactics</i>	<i>Responsible Entity</i>	<i>Timeframe Short (1-3 Years) Medium (3-5 Years) Long (5+ Years)</i>
Market and promote the Revolving Loan Fund to entrepreneurs and businesses as well as service providers who work with them.	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Sequoyah Fund, Local Economic Development Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Development Authorities, Community College Small Business Centers, Small Business and Technology Design Center at Western Carolina University	Short
Market and publicize the MountainWest Partnership on-line portal to entrepreneurs and small business owners	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Sequoyah Fund, Local Economic Development Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Development Authorities, Community College Small Business Centers, Small Business and Technology Design Center at Western Carolina University	Short
Inventory the networking opportunities in the region and identify gaps	MountainWest Partnership, Southwestern Commission, Chambers of Commerce	Medium
Work with organizers of current networking opportunities to grow and expand appropriately	MountainWest Partnership, Southwestern Commission, Chambers of Commerce	Medium
Based on identified gaps, develop new networking event	MountainWest Partnership, Southwestern Commission, Chambers of Commerce	Long
Work with schools to teach entrepreneurship	Local School Districts, Southwestern Commission, Community Colleges, Western Carolina University, Sequoyah Fund	Long

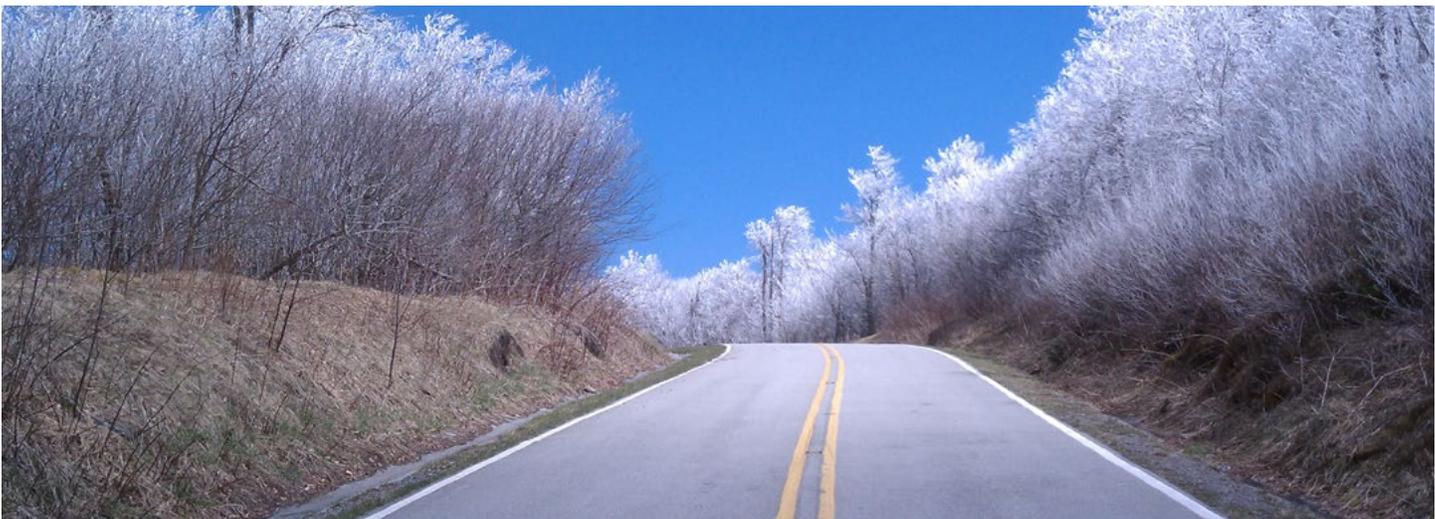
GOAL 2 Establish and Maintain a Robust Regional Infrastructure

Objective 1 Create a comprehensive inventory of the region’s infrastructure and infrastructure capacity in order to identify whether water, sewer, and natural gas, etc. can accommodate future growth

<i>Tactics</i>	<i>Responsible Entity</i>	<i>Timeframe Short (1-3 Years) Medium (3-5 Years) Long (5+ Years)</i>
Encourage water and sewer management to conduct Asset Inventories using available state funds.	Water and sewer system owners, NC Permitting and regulatory agencies; professional engineers, NC Public Utilities Commission, Counties and Municipalities, Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership	Medium
Create and continuously update GIS based maps of water, sewer, gas, broadband, commercial and industrial sites, housing, etc. infrastructure, including age, state-of-repair, capacity and occupancy.	Water and sewer system owners, PSNC Gas Co, Toccoa Natural Gas Co., NC Public Utilities Commission, Counties and Municipalities, Southwestern Commission	Long
Maintain current understanding of available public sector funding sources for infrastructure investments and communicate funding opportunities to local governments.	Southwestern Commission	Short
Recruit and organize members for the public-private coalition.	Southwestern Commission, Counties and Municipalities	Medium
Begin advocacy activities for priority projects.	Southwestern Commission, Counties and Municipalities	Medium

Objective 2 <i>Make low-cost, clean-burning natural gas accessible to communities throughout the region (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>		
Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe <i>Short (1–3 Years)</i> <i>Medium (3–5 Years)</i> <i>Long (5+ Years)</i>
Develop inventory of natural gas pipelines and planned future pipelines in the region	NC Permitting and regulatory agencies; professional engineers, PSNC Gas Co, Toccoa Natural Gas Co., NC Public Utilities Commission, Counties and Municipalities, Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership	Long
Develop incentives to increase use and access to natural gas	Southwestern Commission, Counties and Municipalities, Local Economic Development Commissions	Long

Objective 3 <i>Expand reliable and affordable broadband service throughout the region (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)</i>		
Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe <i>Short (1–3 Years)</i> <i>Medium (3–5 Years)</i> <i>Long (5+ Years)</i>
Prioritize initial projects based on need and opportunity and begin implementation	Counties and Municipalities, Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, NC Broadband Infrastructure Office, Private Providers	Medium
Bring together public and private sector providers, Chambers of Commerce and Main Street organizations to discuss potential solutions and partnerships	Counties and Municipalities, Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, NC Broadband Infrastructure Office, Private Providers	Short
Determine the feasibility, cost and potential funding sources for deployment in each downtown	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, NC Broadband Infrastructure Office	Medium
Advocate for change in state legislation allowing municipalities to provide broadband service	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Local elected officials, NC Broadband Infrastructure Office	Short
Convene meetings between stakeholders involved in expansion of infrastructure (i.e. NCDOT and NC Broadband Infrastructure Office)	Southwestern Commission	Short



Objective 4 <i>Develop multi-modal transportation plans that address existing and future year capacity deficiencies (Resiliency- Transportation Access)</i>		
Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe <i>Short (1-3 Years)</i> <i>Medium (3-5 Years)</i> <i>Long (5+ Years)</i>
Continue improvements to primary and secondary roads	NCDOT, Southwestern RPO, local governments within the RPO	Short
Plan creation of complete streets	NCDOT, Southwestern RPO, local governments within the RPO	Short
Prioritize pedestrian and bikeway projects with Rural Planning Organization for NCDOT funding	NCDOT, Southwestern RPO, local governments within the RPO	Short
Expand transit options and service frequency	NCDOT, Southwestern RPO, local governments within the RPO	Medium
Complete mobility plan and implement its recommendations	Southwestern RPO	Medium
Work with NCDOT and rail operators to increase freight rail service in the region and expand tourism-based passenger rail	NCDOT, Southwestern RPO, local governments within the RPO	Long
Plan for future of the region's airports	NCDOT, Southwestern RPO, local governments within the RPO	Medium
Coordinate with Tennessee, South Carolina, and Georgia to identify regional issues and opportunities	Southwestern RPO	Medium



GOAL 3 Create Revitalized, Healthy, and Resilient Communities

Objective 1 Encourage investment in downtown corridors and communities in order to make them more attractive to tourists and residents

Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 Years) Medium (3-5 Years) Long (5+ Years)
Partner with NC Department of Commerce to assist towns with developing an economic development plan	Southwestern Commission, Municipalities, NC Department of Commerce, Appalachian Regional Commission	Short
Identify potential funding sources for specific projects	Southwestern Commission, Municipalities, NC Department of Commerce, Appalachian Regional Commission	Short
Develop funding programs which incent property owners to make property improvements, such as a façade improvement grant program	Southwestern Commission, Municipalities	Short
Assist municipalities to develop or update bike and pedestrian plans	Southwestern Commission, Municipalities	Medium
Assist each local government with review of existing codes and regulations to determine their impacts on development activities; develop potential revisions	Southwestern Commission, Municipalities, NC Department of Commerce	Medium
Encourage local governments to effectively utilize their code enforcement, nuisance and other regulations to improve appearance of their communities	Southwestern Commission, Municipalities, NC Department of Commerce	Medium
Develop and house a plan repository where those engaging in community planning can quickly access previous plans	Southwestern Commission	Short



Objective 2 *Increase housing opportunities for all who wish to live in the region*

Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe <i>Short (1-3 Years)</i> <i>Medium (3-5 Years)</i> <i>Long (5+ Years)</i>
Outline project scope and select consultant for housing analysis	Southwestern Commission, NC Department of Commerce, Appalachian Regional Commission, Local counties and municipalities, MountainWest Partnership, Mountain Projects	Medium
Work with consultant to complete the analysis and assessment	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Counties and Municipalities	Medium
Review results and develop appropriate next steps for housing development in the region based on the assessment	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Counties and Municipalities	Medium
Identify existing financing and incentive programs which match with the housing needs and where there are gaps with the housing needs	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Counties and Municipalities	Medium
Work with developers and builders to develop housing projects which help to address each community's identified housing needs	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Counties and Municipalities	Long
Develop and maintain a resource of best practices for addressing community housing needs	Southwestern Commission	Medium
Advocate for funding sources such as NC Department of Commerce to offer incentives for second floor housing in downtown buildings	Southwestern Commission elected officials	Medium

Objective 3 *Provide the facilities necessary to support entrepreneurs in targeted industries (Resiliency- Economic Diversification)*

Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe <i>Short (1-3 Years)</i> <i>Medium (3-5 Years)</i> <i>Long (5+ Years)</i>
Determine the feasibility of establishing co-working spaces in the region's downtowns or other appropriate areas	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership Western Carolina University, Local Economic Development Commissions	Medium
Work with property owners to determine the feasibility of creating a co-working, incubator, or maker space	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership Western Carolina University, Local Economic Development Commissions	Medium
If feasible, move forward with development of co-working, incubator, or maker space	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership Western Carolina University, Local Economic Development Commissions	Medium

GOAL 4 **Develop Talented and Innovative People**

Objective 1 *Improve Development, Retention, Attraction of Skilled Workforce to support the region’s key driver industries (e.g., information technology, light manufacturing) (Resiliency- Workforce)*

Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 Years) Medium (3-5 Years) Long (5+ Years)
Develop customized training proposals for companies with common needs and meet with employers	Southwestern Commission Workforce Development Board, Community Colleges, Western Carolina University, Local Economic Development Commissions	Medium
Hold customized training and obtain employer and worker feedback	Community Colleges	Medium
Continue to develop career pathways that meet the needs of employers in the region	Southwestern Commission Workforce Development Board, Community Colleges	Short
Continue to encourage those entering the workforce to obtain Career Readiness Certification (CRC) and local employers to recognize the value of CRCs	Southwestern Commission Workforce Development Board, Community Colleges	Short
Work with public schools to increase STEM course offerings and extracurricular activities	Southwestern Commission Workforce Development Board, MountainWest Partnership, Community Colleges, K-12 school systems, Western Carolina University	Short

Objective 2 *Increase quality, affordable childcare across the region*

Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 Years) Medium (3-5 Years) Long (5+ Years)
Identify funding sources for analysis of childcare in the region	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Southwestern Child Development Commission, Region A Partnership for Children	Medium
Engage consultant to complete analysis	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, Southwestern Child Development Commission, Region A Partnership for Children	Medium
Identify areas of high-need areas through analysis	Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership	Medium



Objective 3 *Expand community capacity in Region A by continuing to foster, encourage and support the region's leaders*

Tactics	Responsible Entity	Timeframe <i>Short (1-3 Years)</i> <i>Medium (3-5 Years)</i> <i>Long (5+ Years)</i>
Pull together on-campus constituencies and regional partners to identify potential priority projects in collaboration with Western Carolina University	Southwestern Commission, Western Carolina University, The North Carolina Rural Center, Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration	Short
For each priority project, establish a project team, develop a project scope of work and implementation timeline and launch the project	Southwestern Commission, Western Carolina University, The North Carolina Rural Center, Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration, MountainWest Partnership	Medium
Upon completion of initial projects, review results, evaluate efforts and make appropriate adjustments and initiate new round of projects	Southwestern Commission, Western Carolina University, The North Carolina Rural Center, Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration, MountainWest Partnership	Medium
Develop the Rural Leadership Institute's core mission, primary fields of activities, governance structure (free-standing organization or part of a larger organization), operations structure and funding model	Southwestern Commission, Western Carolina University, The North Carolina Rural Center, Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration, MountainWest Partnership	Medium
Secure multi-year funding commitment from stakeholder investors and partners	Southwestern Commission, Western Carolina University, The North Carolina Rural Center, Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration, MountainWest Partnership	Medium
Develop an inventory of non-profits and civic organizations in the region and identify any which have designated youth or young adult board positions	Southwestern Commission, Western Carolina University, Non-profit Pathways	Medium
Assist interested nonprofits and civic organizations recruit youths and young adults	Southwestern Commission, Non-profit Pathways	Medium



APPENDIX

FULL SURVEY RESULTS

In what county do you reside?		
County	Responses	
Cherokee	7.96%	9
Clay	10.62%	12
Graham	9.73%	11
Haywood	11.50%	13
Jackson	29.20%	33
Macon	25.66%	29
Swain	5.31%	6
		113

With regard to transportation and traffic, how would you rate the following in your community?					
	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Weighted Average
Accessibility of local public transportation services	24.32% 27	41.44% 46	34.23% 38	111	2.10
Accessibility of regional public transportation services	6.31% 7	36.04% 40	57.66% 64	111	2.51
Accessibility of sidewalks, trails, and bike paths	21.82% 24	53.64% 59	24.55% 27	110	2.03
Local Streets and Local Roads	43.24% 48	49.55% 55	7.21% 8	111	1.64
Accessibility of airport passenger service	8.41% 9	28.04% 30	63.55% 68	107	2.55
Traffic congestion- interstate	50.00% 54	37.96% 41	12.04% 13	108	1.62
Accessibility of freight air service	11.01% 12	32.11% 35	56.88% 62	109	2.46

The Southwest region has many assets. Please rank the following in terms of their importance to the region with 1 being the most important.										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Score
History and Cultural Heritage	5.77% 6	5.77% 6	5.77% 6	12.50% 13	6.73% 7	5.77% 6	6.73% 7	6.73% 7	2.88% 3	18.38
Natural Amenities/ Outdoor Recreation	23.15% 25	12.04% 13	7.41% 8	2.78% 3	3.70% 4	5.56% 6	3.70% 4	1.85% 2	0.00% 0	20.63
Access to Higher Education	7.77% 8	7.77% 8	9.71% 10	9.71% 10	4.85% 5	4.85% 5	6.80% 7	6.80% 7	0.97% 1	18.74
Strong Arts Sector	0.00% 0	0.91% 1	3.64% 4	1.82% 2	5.45% 6	6.36% 7	8.18% 9	11.82% 13	20.91% 23	16.48
Quaint, Historic Downtowns	2.78% 3	5.56% 6	5.56% 6	4.63% 5	8.33% 9	5.56% 6	12.96% 14	10.19% 11	4.63% 5	18.06
Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit	0.00% 0	4.72% 5	9.43% 10	10.38% 11	10.38% 11	8.49% 9	7.55% 8	7.55% 8	1.89% 2	17.88
Strong Workforce	16.67% 18	4.63% 5	2.78% 3	2.78% 3	6.48% 7	10.19% 11	1.85% 2	6.48% 7	8.33% 9	18.38
Mild Climate	4.50% 5	7.21% 8	9.01% 10	3.60% 4	7.21% 8	7.21% 8	5.41% 6	4.50% 5	12.61% 14	17.99
Clean Environment	3.60% 4	14.41% 16	9.91% 11	11.71% 13	7.21% 8	5.41% 6	3.60% 4	2.70% 3	2.70% 3	19.34

With regard to infrastructure in your community, how would you rate the following services?					
	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Weighted Average
Accessibility of public water systems	38.74% 43	45.05% 50	16.22% 18	111	1.77
Accessibility of public sewer systems	38.74% 42	42.34% 47	19.82% 22	111	1.82
Recycling systems	39.64% 44	34.23% 38	26.13% 29	111	1.86
Solid waste systems	47.75% 53	36.94% 41	15.32% 17	111	1.68
Broadband/High-speed internet infrastructure and access	6.31% 7	32.43% 36	61.26% 68	111	2.55
Access to natural gas	10.91% 12	29.09% 32	60.00% 66	110	2.49
Maintenance of Water and Sewer	31.53% 35	54.05% 60	14.41% 16	111	1.83

Please rate the following with regards to their importance in creating revitalized, healthy, and vibrant communities.					
	Extremely Important	Moderately Important	Extremely Unimportant	Total	Weighted Average
Access to a variety of housing that meets the needs of all people in the community	78.57% 88	21.43% 24	0.00% 0	112	1.21
Revitalization and historic protection of downtown areas	38.39% 43	57.14% 64	4.46% 5	112	1.66
Having a variety of recreational options	60.71% 68	37.50% 42	1.79% 2	112	1.41
Promotion of health and wellness	63.39% 71	34.82% 39	1.79% 2	112	1.38
Development of local food networks	39.29% 44	54.46% 61	6.25% 7	112	1.67
Investment in healthy, safe, and walk-able neighborhoods	61.61% 69	34.82% 39	3.57% 4	112	1.42
Reuse and repurposing of vacant buildings	61.26% 68	34.23% 38	4.50% 5	111	1.43
Distribution of healthcare facilities throughout the region	77.68% 87	20.54% 23	1.79% 2	112	1.24
Support and expand the region's arts and crafts	15.32% 17	65.77% 73	18.92% 21	111	2.04
Awareness of and planning for Aging in Place or Aging in Community initiatives	57.14% 64	37.50% 42	5.36% 6	112	1.48
Coordinate on-going conservation of natural resources identified through land use planning- farmland, steep slopes, watersheds	62.50% 70	33.93% 38	3.57% 4	112	1.41

Please rate the following in terms of their importance for having a strong and productive workforce.

	Extremely Important	Moderately Important	Extremely Unimportant	Total	Weighted Average
Availability of adult care services	47.32% 53	49.11% 55	3.54% 4	112	1.56
Availability of child care	82.88% 92	15.32% 17	1.80% 2	111	1.19
Availability of qualified workers	93.64% 103	6.36% 7	0.00% 0	110	1.06
Availability of housing	84.82% 95	14.29% 16	0.89% 1	112	1.16
Availability of high-paying jobs	73.21% 82	25.00% 28	1.79% 2	112	1.29
Availability of seasonal agricultural workers	18.18% 20	71.82% 79	10.00% 11	110	1.92
Availability of multilingual communication in the workplace	13.39% 15	65.18% 73	21.43% 24	112	2.08
Availability of entry-level jobs	54.46% 61	40.18% 45	5.36% 6	112	1.51
Effective work habits and attitudes	83.78% 93	16.22% 18	0.00% 0	111	1.16
Access to quality workforce training and education	88.29% 98	11.71% 13	0.00% 0	111	1.12



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