



STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority

From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Executive Director

Subject: Receive an Update Regarding the California Jobs First from Stacy Corless, Sierra Business Council Government and Community Affairs Director and Discuss ESCOG Project Priorities for Submission for Catalyst Funding

Meeting date: February 28, 2024

Prepared on: February 19, 2024

Attachments: A) None

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

The California Jobs First (CaJF, formerly the Community Economic Resilience Fund Program (CERF)) was established by the Governor's Office of Economic Development, Employment Development Department and Office of Planning and Research to support communities and regional groups in producing regional plans for economic recovery and transition that prioritize the creation of accessible, high-quality jobs in sustainable industries.

This program is being administered for the Eastern Sierra region by the Sierra Business Council (SBC) with support from the ESCOG for identifying regional economic development priorities. SBC has created an online submission portal to identify synergies between agencies and project priorities across the Eastern Sierra subregion.

Staff recommends the ESCOG Board identify projects supporting regional economic development partnerships and priorities, and direct staff to submit these regional priorities to the SBC portal including:

- Wildfire mitigation capacity for project planning and development, environmental permitting, workforce development, and biofuels infrastructure

- Investments in sustainable recreation, specifically for projects identified in the Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative, including:
 - Implementation of the Towns-to-Trails Planning Project (wayfinding, website design, environmental permitting, trail construction)
 - Establishing the regional Visitor Connection Package to coordinate regional sustainable recreation communications
 - Modernizing the Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway project, including implementation of a regional, branded wayfinding program
 - Investing in campground improvements by performing necessary technical and financial analysis, stakeholder and public outreach, including visuals, and funder engagement to finance construction
 - Securing funding for additional ESCOG capacity to support regional initiatives
- Support for planning initiatives for downtown revitalization improvement projects, such as land use and environmental planning, revolving loan fund programs, and small business development support.
- Identification of and funding for regional partnerships to establish or expand workforce development opportunities, such as programs for wildfire, sustainable recreation certification, construction trades, and early childhood education.

The ESCOG would not be obligated to implement these projects. This should be considered an opportunity to advocate for and support regional economic development priorities.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

None.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel Grace Chuchla has reviewed this item and found that it complies with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff requests the Board received an update on California Jobs First from Stacy Corless, Sierra Business Council Government and Community Affairs Director, and discuss economic development projects and priorities for submission by ESCOG to inform regional priorities.