



Sierra Jobs First Collaborative

Highlights & Insights | Where We Are Today

April 2024

Greetings to All!

This resource offers the most up-to-date information about what is going on with the Sierra Jobs First Collaborative for stakeholders in Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne Counties. This document was created to lay the foundation for the Strategic Planning Phase of Sierra Jobs First. We are transitioning from the data collection and collaborative-building process that took place from October 2022 through December 2023 to the current task of goal and strategy development. The Strategic Planning Phase report is due to the state in August 2024.

Information in this document was pulled from the Regional Summary, published in December of 2023, and feedback from regional partners. To review the full Regional Summary document, please go to sierrajobsfirst.org/regional-summary_.

Thank you for helping the Sierra Jobs First region create jobs and wealth in ways that center our communities, improve social and natural environments and economic prosperity now, and for the future.



“I just think that California Jobs First is an excellent opportunity to invest in the beautiful area we live. To work collaboratively with so many diverse people from the Sierra Nevada Mountain area is informative and rewarding. I look forward to where this adventure is leading.”

- Steve Christensen, Amador County

California Jobs First Overview

The goal of the state’s California Jobs First program (formerly known as the Community Economic Resilience Fund or CERF) is to create pathways for investment in regionally developed economic plans that will lead to an increase in high-quality jobs, prosperous communities, and climate resilience.

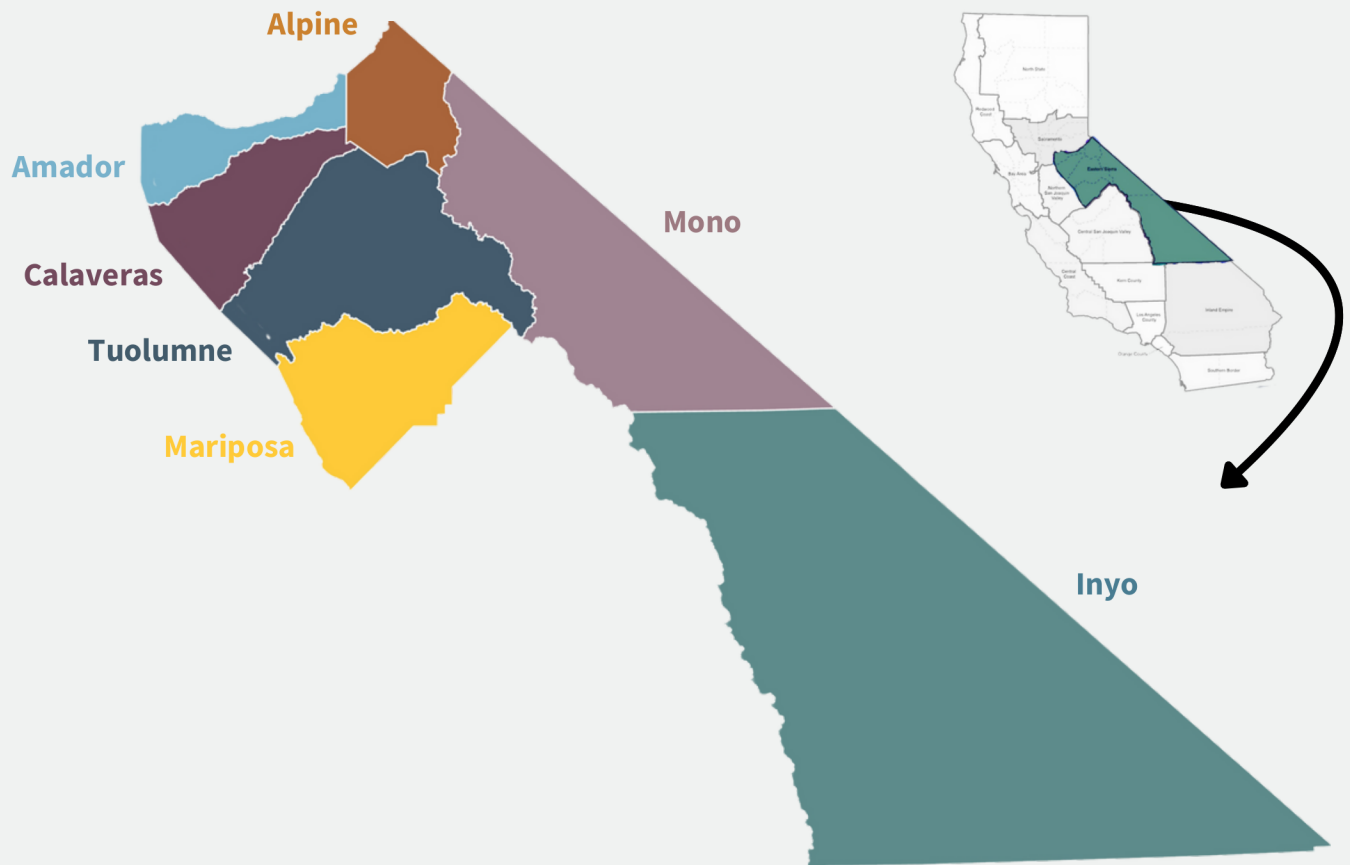
Through the state’s portfolio of California Jobs First investments, 13 regions across the state are building community-led, climate-forward economies that work for the community members that live and work in each region with a particular focus on inclusive strategies for historically disadvantaged communities.

Sierra Jobs First

The seven-county Sierra Jobs First region is defined as one of the 13 regions of the California Jobs First Program. It is a predominantly rural and sparsely populated area of California with an abundance of natural resources that benefit the entire state. Today, just under 200,000 people live in the Sierra Jobs First region, in both smaller towns and unincorporated county areas. Nearly 75% of the land in this region is publicly owned.



Sierra Jobs First's communities are strong, with vibrant downtowns and local economies built around the incredible natural features and ecosystem services of the region, including the National Parks, forests, deserts, and watersheds. There are immense opportunities and enthusiasm for empowering this region's economies, workforce, indigenous cultures, land, and people through California Jobs First investments.



Who is in the Sierra Jobs First Collaborative?



Governing Council
(Formerly the HRTC)



Tribal
Round Table



Project
Identification
Subcommittee



Business, Workforce,
& Education
Subcommittee



Local
Government
Subcommittee



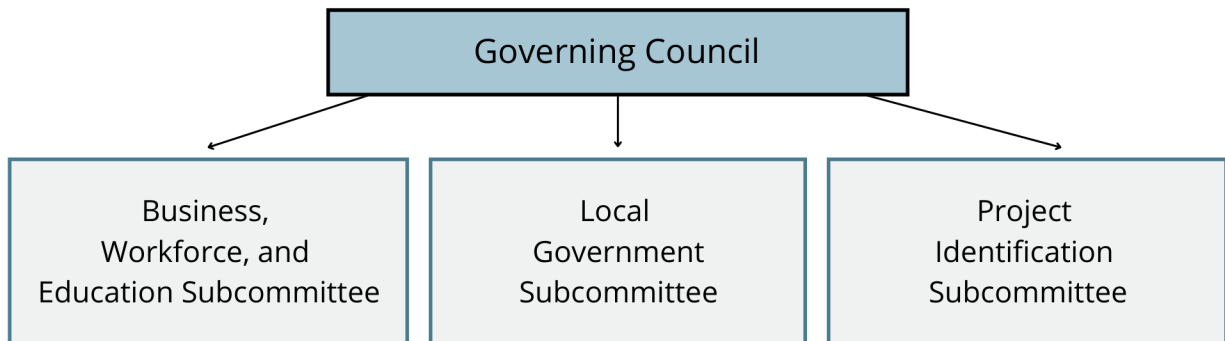
Sierra Business Council
(Regional Convener/
Administrator)

For more information about the collaborative, including past meeting materials please visit:
sierrajobsfirst.org/council-subcommittees

How we work together:

We are a collection of over 100 community members, local leaders, ranchers, bakers, public agency employees, health care workers, Tribal and Latino, young and old, working together to advance economic solutions in our region that build prosperity for all.

Governance and Decision-Making Structure (updated April 2024)



GOVERNING COUNCIL

- Minimum of 21 voting members
- Three from each county (or cities within counties)
- "At large" members representing disinvested communities
- One Non-voting Chair

SUBCOMMITTEE STRUCTURE

- No limit on "voting members"
- Open ex-officio membership
- When voting is necessary, counties must vote as block
- Subcommittee decisions matriculate to Governing Council

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Decision making in subcommittees and HRTC based on modified consensus model (Support, Can Live With, Abstain, Oppose)

- Straw Poll
- Discussion
- Poll-No consensus triggers vote

Operational decisions require a majority vote of subcommittee and Governing Council members. Project decisions require a two-thirds vote of subcommittee and Governing Council members.

On March 1, 2024, the Governing Council provided feedback on the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Core Values statements that will be published in the Strategic Plan.

The **following drafts** are a **first attempt** to compile the Governing Council's excellent feedback into cohesive statements. We plan to discuss these further on April 25th at the Strategy Workshop in North Lake Tahoe. *See page 16 for details on this event.*

Our Vision **DRAFT**

We build strong communities, protect healthy ecosystems, and invest in a resilient economy that supports equitable opportunities for generations to come.

Our Guiding Principles **DRAFT**

- **Equity & Inclusion:** Focus on strategies that build economic prosperity for disinvested communities. Ensure all voices are part of the process.
- **Job quality and access:** Focus on identifying and promoting jobs that offer a better quality of life — higher pay, benefits, advancement, worker input, stability, and safety.
- **Sustainable:** Prioritize self-sustaining economic development that aims for a carbon-neutral and climate-resilient economy that benefits all the region's communities.
- **Pragmatic:** Build actions that are practical, realistic, and achievable.

Our Core Values **DRAFT**

We hope to condense these to five Core Values over the next month.

- Economic Prosperity
- Equity
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Community
- Collaboration
- Sustainable
- Stewardship
- Resilience
- Growth

Community Engagement

2023 Community Engagement Summary

Planning Part 1: Discovery

Disinvested Communities Focus Groups

18 total: 14 on the eastside, 4 on the westside, 110 total participants

Website
launched

Branding

13

Newsletters
Sent

400+

Reached Through
the Listserv

Summary Plan
Submitted
(Dec 2023)

Governing Council Meetings

Total: 4
Total Participants: 235

Focus Groups

Total: 18
Total Participants: 110

SUBCOMMITTEES

August, October, December 2023

- **Workforce, Education & Training Subcommittee**
3 total: 34 total participants
- **Project Identification Subcommittee**
3 total: 26+ total participants
- **Local Government Subcommittee**
3 total: 53 total participants
- **Equity, Climate & Labor Subcommittee**
3 total
- **Business Subcommittee**
3 total: 31+ total participants

**Subcommittees were merged from five groups to three in 2023. Please see previous pages for current subcommittee titles.*

For a schedule of 2024 Engagement Opportunities, please go to sierrajobsfirst.org/strategy-workshops

2023 Outreach Highlights

- CBO Impact Survey reached **59** organizations and nonprofits
- Over **50** long-standing and emerging community leaders formed five subcommittees
- Formal partnership with **the Inter-Tribal Council of California (ITCC)** to support tribal collaboration
- SBC staff shared program information at multiple community events like Board of Supervisors', ESCOG, MLTPA, and ITCC meetings

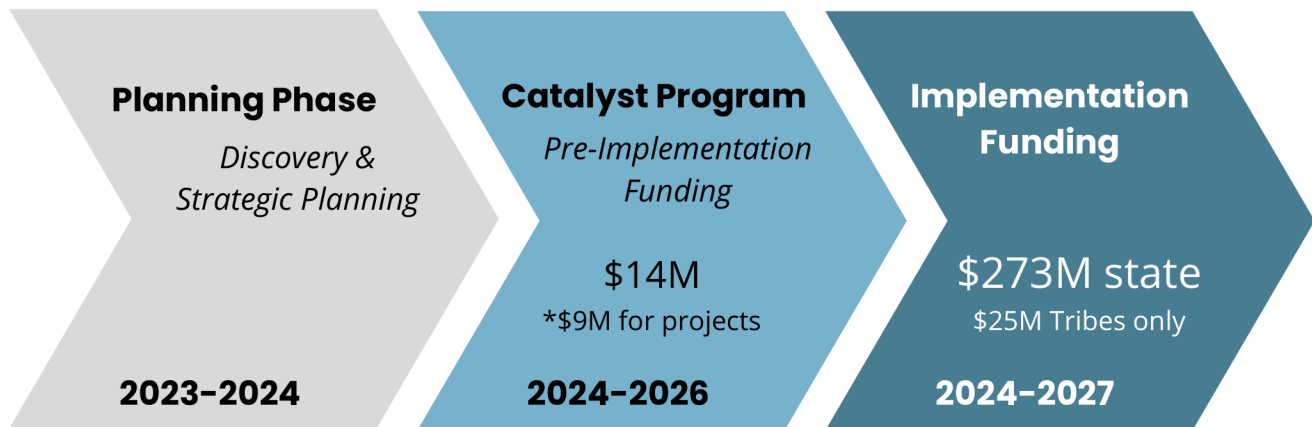


Sierra Jobs First Planning Process

Part 1: Discovery

Understanding Current Conditions in the Sierra Region

Part 2: Strategic Planning Phase



“California Jobs First can support our region by improving awareness and engagement in regional projects, helping prioritize regional projects and activities, building regional relationships, advocating for the Eastern Sierra at the State level, and providing funding for economic drivers in the region.”

– ESCOG, Economic Development Partner Meeting

Roadmap for Economic Success in the Sierra Jobs First Region

Outcomes We Hope to Achieve

- Increase the number of quality jobs with equitable access
- Attract investment into disinvested communities, key industries, & infrastructure
- Build climate-resilient communities
- Grow opportunities for the emerging workforce

Priority Industry Sectors to Drive Our Work

- Sustainable Recreation and Tourism
- Natural and Working Lands
- Clean Energy and Energy Resilience
- Sustainable Agriculture, Ranching, and Food Systems
- Community Healthcare

Our Core Issues and Opportunities

- Workforce Development & Career Readiness
- Physical Infrastructure
- Social Services and Infrastructure
- Governance and Land Tenure/Management
- Housing Affordability and Placemaking

Strategic Actions to Get Us There

Collaboration | Strategic Investments/Actions | Inclusionary Pathways

Outcomes We Hope to Achieve

- **Increase the number of quality jobs with equitable access:** Job growth is a critical marker of success in our region. There are opportunities to expand quality job markets in each of the five priority industry sectors in an inclusive way.
- **Attract investment into disinvested communities, key industries, & infrastructure:** Our region is rich with cultural diversity and untapped potential. We have a unique opportunity to engage community members historically left behind to develop an equitable and sustainable economy.
- **Build climate-resilient communities:** Readyng our communities for natural disasters and the economic shocks that result means preparing for the impacts of climate change and working to maintain healthy ecosystems and resilient local economies.
- **Grow opportunities for the emerging workforce:** Creating career development and job training pathways will retain the upcoming generations' talent in our communities.

Priority Industry Sectors to Drive Our Work

Economic development opportunities in the region build on the existing economic drivers and support emerging industries that can provide high-wage, sustainable career pathways. Using existing planning documents and convening discussions with community partners in 2023, the following priority sectors were identified for the Sierra region.

Community Healthcare	Sustainable Recreation & Tourism	Natural & Working Lands	Clean Energy & Energy Resilience	Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Access to Quality Care • Specialty Services • Mental Health • Medical Facilities • Workforce Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced Visitation & Tourism • Higher Wage Jobs & Pathways • Climate Change Readiness/Pivots • Entrepreneurs & Main Streets • Events & Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildfire Adaptation • Wood Utilization • Watershed Restoration • Tribal Stewardship Adaptation and Restoration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Efficiency & Decarbonization • Energy Resilience and Readability • EV Readiness • GHG Mitigation • Hydrogen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Food Systems/Security • Climate-Ready Crops • Value Added Products • Agricultural Tourism • Meat Processing • Manufacturing

Core Issues & Opportunities



**Workforce
Development &
Career Readiness**



**Physical
Infrastructure**



**Social
Services and
Infrastructure**



**Governance and
Land Tenure/
Management**



**Housing
Affordability and
Placemaking**

The following is a summary of key issues that emerged from the 2023 Sierra Jobs First Regional Summary Part 1 Report. These key issues will help the Collaborative define strategies as we work together to draft a Regional Strategic Plan.



Core Issues & Opportunities

Workforce Development and Career Readiness

There are limited opportunities for post-secondary education and workforce training programs across the region. K12 school districts, community colleges, workforce training programs, and industry leaders can work together to align standards and outcomes with industry needs that will expand workforce development programs and adequately prepare future employees with the skills and knowledge needed for high-paying jobs within our regional priority sectors.

These challenges begin in the K-12 school districts. The percentage of students who are math or reading proficient is lower than the state average in all six counties in our region. Despite high school graduation rates nearing or exceeding the state average, less than a third of graduates meet A-G requirements for admission criteria in the UC/CSU systems. As a result, the share of adults with a college degree or higher is well below the state average of 35% in every county (except Alpine). The range is from under 20% of adults in Calaveras and Amador County having college degrees to just under 30% in Mono and Mariposa Counties. Barriers to high-quality jobs include limited access to higher education and lack of educational institutions, limited workforce training opportunities, and funding challenges for higher education. This is a significant barrier for potential employees to enter the workforce in regional industries. There are only two community colleges (Columbia Community College in Sonora and Cerro Coso in Mammoth and Bishop) where high school graduates can continue a workforce development pathway after high school. These programs are located great distances away from the majority of Eastern Sierra populations. No four-year college or university exists within the region. The labor market highly depends on natural resources, tourism, government sector jobs, and supportive social services. There is a high need for career education and workforce development pathways and training, especially in emerging industries.

Questions to start thinking about:

- What are the priority issues to tackle now? How about 3-5 years from now?
- What are the goals, strategies, actions, policies, project ideas, or funding streams that can address this issue?



Core Issues & Opportunities

Physical Infrastructure

Inadequate infrastructure across multiple systems limits regional communities' prosperity and opportunities for securing and sustaining quality lifestyles as well as economic advancement. Addressing physical infrastructures and planning for long-term sustainable growth creates opportunities for communities to develop a unified vision. This vision will include standards of living for all populations and will support an economy that provides a high quality of life for future generations.

Rural communities often face a range of disadvantages and challenges including inadequate physical infrastructure, such as transportation systems and broadband connectivity. These and other infrastructure systems are also chronically underfunded and under-resourced. These challenges are exacerbated by the region's climate and mountainous rural geography, which directly impacts costs for construction and maintenance of transportation, energy, broadband, water and wastewater, and housing infrastructure systems. These systems are at capacity to meet the needs of our current communities, much less any anticipated or projected population growth and economic adjustments. When these systems are compromised or fail, the economic impacts are widespread affecting business operations, communications, access to safe drinking water, transportation, and community support services. This further results in employee absences or loss of jobs because employees must prioritize their basic needs before they can pursue work (i.e., child care, animal care, water, and food security). These outdated, under-prioritized systems are a significant barrier to economic progress and resiliency in our communities.

Questions to start thinking about:

- What are the priority issues to tackle now? How about 3-5 years from now?
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Core Issues & Opportunities

Social Services and Infrastructure

Limited population and geographic isolation restrict access to basic and essential services. These are “everyday” problems. By developing social services and programs with enhanced regional access, the health and wellness of our communities, particularly disinvested and more vulnerable populations, will improve. This promotes a strong standard of living and supports economic prosperity and security for families and communities.

The Sierra Jobs First region spans 19,253 square miles, with under 10 people per square mile. Many communities are isolated by geography, physical distance, and/or a lack of institutional representation. This is a significant barrier to an adequate and effective social and service infrastructure including healthcare facilities, elder care services, and childcare programs. The region also experiences adverse disparities in access to healthcare, which appears to disproportionately impact those with lower incomes and people with mental health challenges. Populations that require specialized healthcare or social services often travel to other counties to access programs and receive services that are not locally available. Services that are available in the region are often not easily accessible due to long travel distances, language barriers, and limited access to broadband networks. These are services and infrastructures that support day-to-day living and contribute to a high quality of life and social stability.

Questions to start thinking about:

- What are the priority issues to tackle now? How about 3-5 years from now?
- What are the goals, strategies, actions, policies, project ideas, or funding streams that can address this issue?



Core Issues & Opportunities

Governance and Land Tenure/Management

Nearly 75% of the region's land is owned and controlled by the federal government and agencies external to the region. This constrains growth and limits local communities' ability to shape their community's future. Integrating land management entities into the regional planning process creates a shared and working vision for sustainable land tenure and management practices that incorporate the needs and vision of local communities, resulting in new opportunities for economic development.

The region is characterized by its large, rural geography and high percentage of public lands. The land and its natural beauty have supported rich economic booms throughout history and today forms the basis for opportunities in a growing recreation economy. However, the region's limited non-federal land availability limits access to resources, services, and opportunities. Agencies have historically held power in the region benefit from resource extraction and exports, limiting commercial and industrial potential in local communities. Small populations and tax bases limit local investment in community economic planning and development capacity. Land management by large, out-of-area agencies limits local control over community and economic development initiatives and implementation. Federal land ownership is significant in eastern slope counties (Alpine, Inyo, and Mono Counties) where more than 90% of land is federally managed. In Inyo and Mono Counties, the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is the largest non-federal landowner. There is limited land for traditional economic development and most of the region's land base is in preserved natural and working lands, primarily National Forests and National Parks. Land tenure constraints limit local revenues to support government services. The region's remote geography limits access to goods and services available in more urban areas such as groceries and durable goods. Land use tenure limits local community and economic development decision-making. State and federal funding priorities may not align with local opportunities and constraints, creating barriers to effective public/public partnerships.

Questions to start thinking about:

- What are the priority issues to tackle now? How about 3-5 years from now?
- What are the goals, strategies, actions, policies, project ideas, or funding streams that can address this issue?



Core Issues & Opportunities

Housing Affordability and Placemaking

Residents face a high cost of living driven by limited housing supply and high share of low-wage jobs with few opportunities for upward mobility. As wages have grown in California and the nation overall, wages in the Eastern Sierra region have seen much smaller increases. This is particularly true since 2010 when wage growth increased for the state and country. Further, over half the households in the region earn less than \$75,000, nearly \$10,000 less than California's median household income (MHI) of \$84,000.

This impedes the ability to capitalize on local assets, inspiration, and potential to create public spaces that improve community vitality. Communities-based programs that align with regional needs and visions can create opportunities to improve the sense of community and placemaking across our region.

The cost of living and affordable housing continues to be a significant threat and barrier to economic development and resiliency. Housing challenges have been exacerbated by a combination of longstanding undersupply in housing statewide and increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. This increased remote workers living in the region, and second homes in previously remote areas. This impedes peoples' abilities to benefit from local assets. When combined with limited affordable housing and low regional wages, many people living and desiring to live and work in the region are often unable to secure housing within a reasonable distance from their jobs and/or face significant and growing housing burden. This impacts the ability to support, grow, and sustain a thriving workforce geared towards regional industry needs. Among homeowners, the share of housing-burdened residents exceeds the state average in nearly all counties. Building intergenerational wealth in the region is difficult for the majority of disinvested communities. Nearly half of the households are housing burdened, and many of the barriers to homeownership are the result of historical land grabs (e.g., the forcible removal of tribes from their native homeland), mortgage discrimination, and high housing costs due to the strong second-home market in the region. The limited housing supply fails to meet the growing demand, exacerbating affordability issues and housing shortages, therefore straining the efforts of community leaders and organizations to promote placemaking and community integration.

Questions to start thinking about:

- What are the priority issues to tackle now? How about 3-5 years from now?
- What are the goals, strategies, actions, policies, project ideas, or funding streams that can address this issue?

Ways to Stay Informed and Involved:

The Sierra Jobs First initiative is a marathon, not a sprint. We will be working together for years to come to strengthen our regional collaboration, bring diverse funding streams to the table, and work together to implement the vision, goals, strategies and projects that will come out of the final Sierra Jobs First Strategy Plan this fall.

Here are a few ways to stay involved over the next few months

- Join the Sierra Jobs First mailing list and receive monthly newsletters.
- Attend upcoming collaboration and engagement forums offered on-line or in-person
- Reach out to us directly. We would love to hear from you!



sierrajobsfirst.org/get-involved

Eastside Navigator: Magnolia Barra, mbarra@sierrabusiness.org

Westside Navigator: Kara Bechtle, kbechtle@sierrabusiness.org

Gratitude

THANK YOU for being a part of the
Sierra Jobs First Collaborative.

This work is challenging and time-consuming, and together
we're working towards a brighter future for our region.

"This is a once in a blue moon opportunity to bring significant resources to our remote, rural mountain communities to reimagine our historically extractive economy. To reimagine our future, our economy and how we grow prosperity for everyone, for generations to come. Now is the time for us to come together, elevate voices, and take action."

~Steve Frisch, President, Sierra Business Council

What's Next?

On April 25th and 26th, you will have an opportunity to meet in person for a day and a half with regional leaders to help draft goals, strategies, and project ideas for the Sierra Jobs First Strategy Plan.

Here is what you can do to prepare for the April Strategy Workshops:

- Review this packet and other background materials on the Sierra Jobs First website: sierrajobsfirst.org
 - Eastern Sierra Regional Summary, Part 1, December 29, 2023: sierrajobsfirst.org/regional-summary
 - Video Summaries: sierrajobsfirst.org/regional-summary
- Make sure you are registered for the Strategy Session. [Register](#)
- Review the agenda for the April Strategy Session. sierrajobsfirst.org/strategy-workshops
- Review the upcoming schedule of meetings and other opportunities for engagement planned over the next few months. Save the date in your calendar for a session you would like to attend. (link below)
- New to the process? Contact SBC to set up an orientation: jobsfirst@sierrabusiness.org

Be a part of the process!

The Sierra Jobs First team invites you to attend a workshop with us this summer.

Learn more: sierrajobsfirst.org/2024-summer-workshops

