



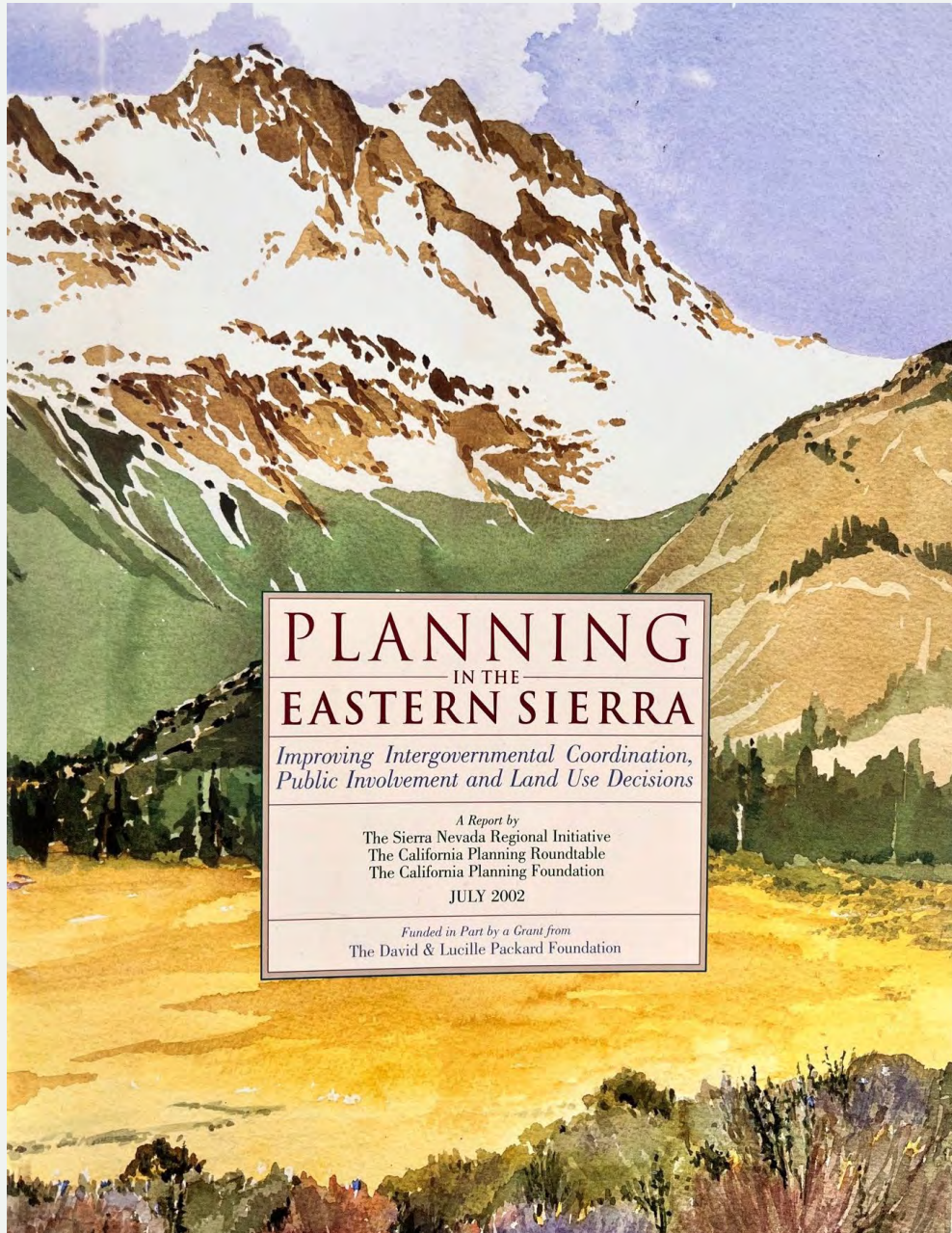
# *ESCOG Strategic Plan Overview*

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Eastern Sierra Council of Governments  
February 26, 2025

# Agenda

1. History of Regional Collaborative Planning in the Eastern Sierra
  2. ESCOG Successes in the First Five Years
  3. Overview of Board Priorities from 2024 Strategic Retreat
  4. Goals for 2025-2026 / Capacity Needs
  5. Overview of Inyo County Project Management Office
  6. Board Discussion Regarding 2025-2026 Priorities and Capacity
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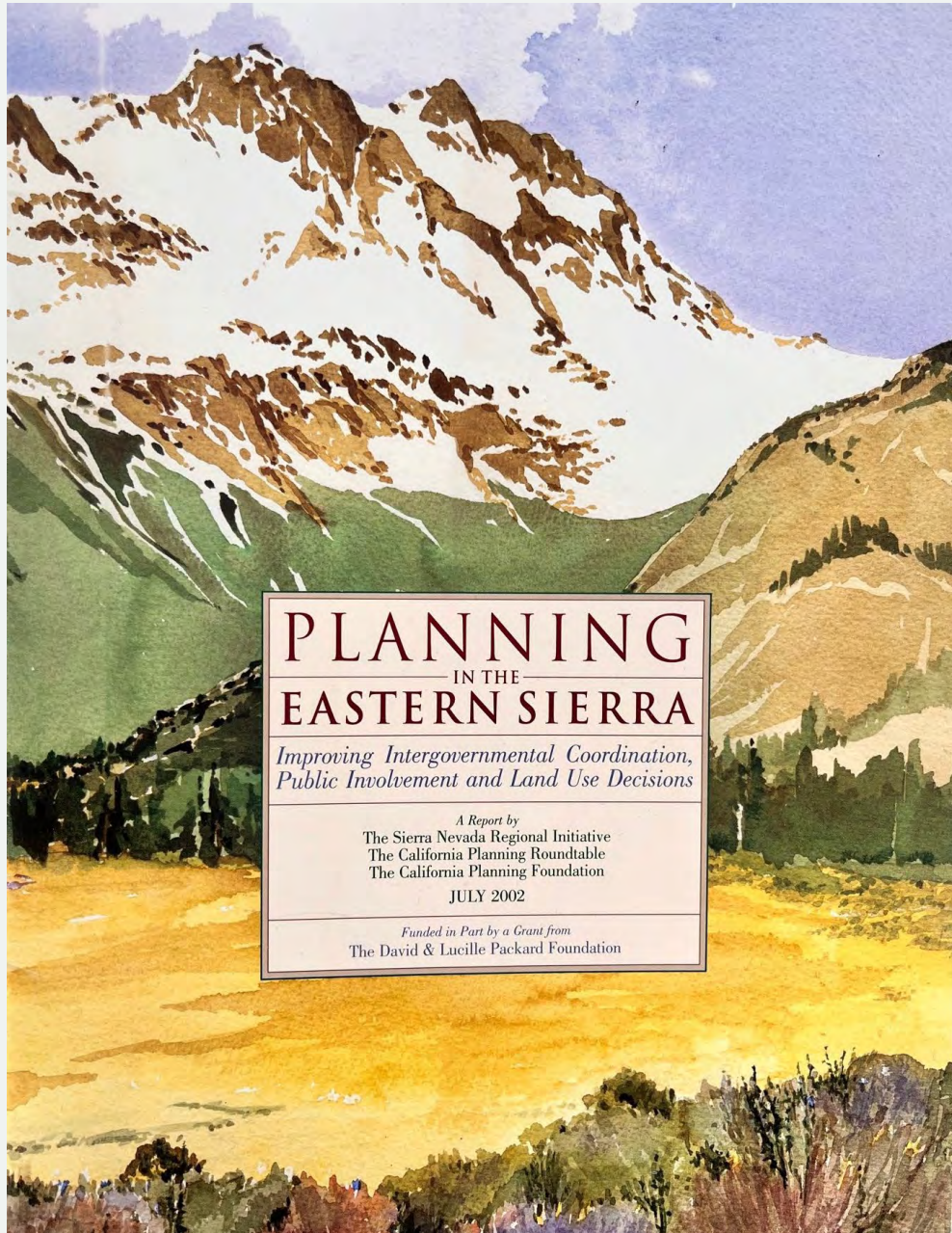


Artwork by Linda McNeill

## ***PLANNING IN THE EASTERN SIERRA (2002)***

“In the Eastern Sierra, there is no Council of Governments or other regional governmental infrastructure to provide the institutional support and coordination needed by the decision-makers and land planners of the different jurisdictions.

*... The following approaches may be worthy of additional consideration and discussion....*



# PLANNING IN THE EASTERN SIERRA

*Improving Intergovernmental Coordination,  
Public Involvement and Land Use Decisions*

*A Report by*  
The Sierra Nevada Regional Initiative  
The California Planning Roundtable  
The California Planning Foundation

JULY 2002

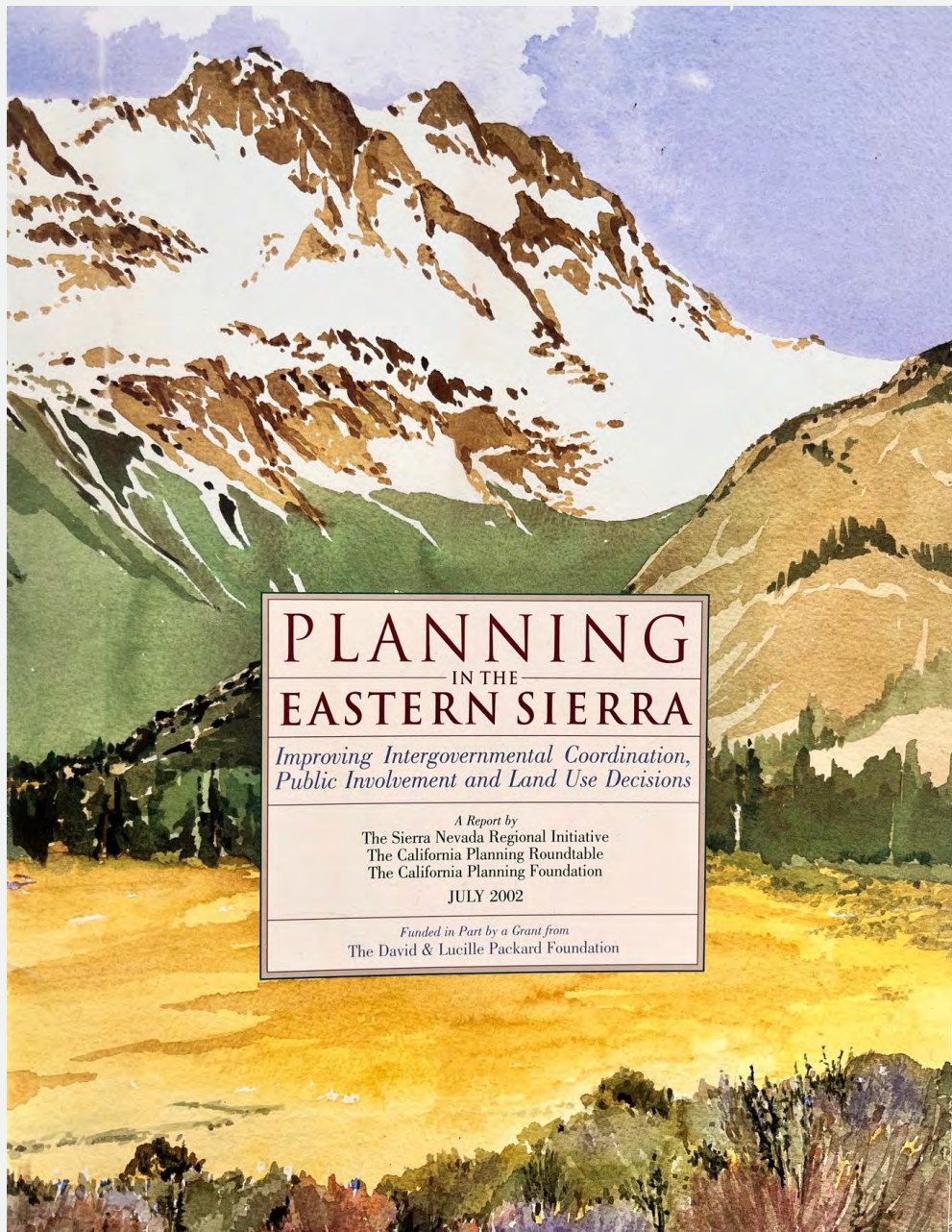
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**Regional Collaboration:** Convene regional forums, workshops and other means to maintain dialogue and collaboration on critical issues, such as transportation, housing, air quality, airports, infrastructure financing, economics, open space, water supply and quality, watershed protection, and public investment.

**Intergovernmental Collaboration:** Consideration establishing one or more governmental entities charged with addressing matters of regional concern. This might take a variety of forms, such as a single purpose agency, a traditional Council of Governments with a non-traditional mission, or others.

**Availability of Comprehensive Data:** Develop, maintain, and disseminate regional geographic information system databases, imagery and applications, including the publication of maps.



## **PLANNING IN THE EASTERN SIERRA (2002)**

“The panel concluded by agreeing that we are in the infant stages of collaboration. We need to learn to collaborate on large scales, like the Sierra, but we don’t have the tools yet to do this. We are in the process to develop those tools. Sometime collaborative planning will not lead to a solution, which should not view it as a tool that will work in every situation. There are some issues that don’t lend themselves to collaborative planning, but [the panel] would like to see collaboration carried beyond what it is today. Beyond partisan politics, political philosophies, to try and make land use decisions on local needs integrated into the state and national land use policies. [The panel] would like to see opportunities for more public participation in the planning process. And [they] would like to see the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments reestablished. [They] would like to see the counties start to think regionally rather than locally, and this would be a good opportunity to do that. ”

Artwork by Linda McNeill

**JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THE EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
AS A SEPARATE LEGAL ENTITY FROM ITS MEMBER AGENCIES**

This agreement, made and entered into this 7<sup>th</sup> day of January 2020, by and among the County of Mono, a political subdivision of the State of California ("Mono"), the County of Inyo, a political subdivision of the State of California ("Inyo"), the Town of Mammoth Lakes, a municipal corporation ("Town") and the City of Bishop, a municipal corporation ("City") (collectively "Member Agencies" or "Members"), shall supersede and replace, in its entirety, that Amended Joint Powers Agreement Eastern Sierra Council of Government Entities (COG) entered into by and among the Parties on or about February 26, 1999.

**II. Purposes**

- 2.01 The ESCOG shall continue to be organized to: (1) provide a forum for discussion and study of regional issues of interest to the Member Agencies; (2) identify and plan for the solution of selected regional issues requiring multi-governmental cooperation; (3) facilitate actions and agreements among the Member Agencies for specific project development; (4) conduct other region wide functions as the Members deem appropriate.
- 2.02 In addition to the above, the ESCOG shall be organized to identify funding sources and to apply for and receive funding for the planning and implementation of programs of regional impact or significance, and to implement such programs, upon approval of the governing bodies of each Member Agency.
- 1.03 The Member Agencies acknowledge and agree that there are circumstances where it is necessary or desirable for the Member Agencies to function collectively on a regional basis, such as where regionalization enhances funding opportunities, provides resources and capabilities that would not otherwise be available, or improves the delivery of services to benefit the interests of the Members' constituents.
- 1.04 The Member Agencies further agree that the creation of a regional joint powers authority that is a separate legal entity from the Members would position the ESCOG to maximize and take advantage of these opportunities.

# EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## Organization

Eastern Sierra Council of Governments Board of Directors

Executive Director

### SREMP (activated by reso.)

<u>Sustainable Recreation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ BIRPI</li><li>✓ Towns to Trails</li><li>• Regional Rec. Capacity*</li><li>• Climate Adaptation</li></ul>	<u>Eco. Management</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ CDFW / Pace and Scale Accelerator*</li><li>• Climate Adaptation</li><li>• Wildfire Task Force</li></ul>
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### Econ. Dev.

- ✓ CEDS Development
- ✓ CAJF Development
- ✓ Phase 1: Planning
- ✓ Phase 2: Implementation

### Housing (no reso.)

- ✓ Housing Roundtable / Partnership meetings
- ✓ Regional Housing Plan

### Outreach and Advocacy

- ✓ Regional coordination with local partners
- ✓ building
  - USFS / BLM / NPS / LADWP
- Regional advocacy w/ State/Fed agencies
- ✓ Branding / Outreach / Website

### Funding

- Member agency contributions
- CDFW Prop 1 grant
- NFWF BIRPI grant
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant

### Funding

- Member agency contributions
- Inyo Co. RCRC CEDS grant
- CAJF funding

### Funding

- Member agency contributions

### Funding

- Member agency contributions

## ESCOG Successes in the First Five Years

- **Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Accelerator**

- \$3.8 million CDFW Grant Awarded to build capacity in ESCOG and in regional wildfire resiliency partners
- NEPA completed / Notice of Decision executed allowing for 58,000 acre landscape scale mitigation project surrounding TOML to proceed
- Supports capacity building for implementation workforce development throughout region
- Strengthened inter-jurisdictional collaboration to expand mitigation planning efforts

- **Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreation Planning Initiative**

- \$247,000 National Fish and Wildlife grant
- Completed community-led collaborative planning process to establish consensus on desired conditions for key Bishop recreation *destination, implemented placement of pit-vault toilet*

- **Towns-to-Trails Feasibility Analysis**

- \$370,000 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant
- Finalizing a feasibility analysis for a route to connect Eastern Sierra community through Inyo, Mono and Alpine Counties



## **ESCOG Successes in the First Five Years**

- **California Jobs First**
  - Ensured Eastern Sierra representative in data gathering and policy development
  - Organized regional agency and community input to inform regional data and economic strategies
  - Prepared grant applications with potential awards ~\$1 million to support regional economic development initiatives, provided technical assistant to partner organizations
- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**
  - Adopted first CEDS for Eastern Sierra region, providing ongoing administration and staff coordination
- Facilitated collaboration to initiate regional housing needs study to catalyze regional workforce housing solution
- Member agency contributions have remained at initial \$25,000 while ESCOG has expanded capacity and scope
  - Per the FY 2023-2024 Financial Report, ESCOG has ~\$80,000 fund balance to support operations in case of economic uncertainty

Eastern Sierra Council of Governments

# STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT REPORT

Completed by the Institute for Local Government

February 2025

## Priority Setting from Strategic Retreat

The Board affirmed the following priorities and authorized programs for the COG:

- Ecosystem Management and Sustainable Recreation Program
- Community Economic Resiliency Pilot Program
- Inyo Mono Broadband Coalition



# STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT REPORT

Completed by the Institute for Local Government

February 2025



## Priority Setting from Strategic Retreat

Suggested following core functions to support programs of work

- Develop **legislative platform** based on member agency priorities
  - State advocacy for priority regional issues
- **Convene regional groups** to foster collaborations & improve efficient deploy resources
  - Economic development activities (activated by resolution)
  - Climate/ecosystem management (activated by resolution)
  - Wildfire (activated by resolution)
  - Sustainable recreation and tourism (activated by resolution)
  - *Housing*
  - *Agriculture and land tenure*
  - *Arts and culture*
- **Engage Federal and tribal partners**
- Engage in **transportation planning** conversations

# STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT REPORT

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The Board cautioned about the need to balance the action items from convenings with ESCOG's **capacity** and **authority** to implement these actions. **Funding remains a challenge.**

## FINANCE

- Cash flow, financial capacity, and stability remain ongoing challenges for the organization. To address these financial issues, the Board suggested considering identifying additional partners to rely on for support.
- The **Board suggested** the following:
  - Explore potential partnerships with organizations that can provide additional financial support
  - Initiate conversations with regional managers about the extra capacity that member agencies can offer in response to unexpected challenges with pursued projects.
  - Explore opportunities to share staff in key roles between member agencies and ESCOG.
  - Share more information with the board to better understand financial capacity for reimbursement.
  - Engage in conversations with member agencies to determine if they can provide additional support – either financially or in-kind

Eastern Sierra Council of Governments

# STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT REPORT

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## EXPANDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The following ideas were proposed to help ESCOG increase its capacity:

- Leverage the staff, skill sets, and expertise of ESCOG's member agencies to enhance capacity.
- Leverage grant writing technical assistance.
- Explore the possibility of hiring grant writing consultants.
- Consider contractors who can assist with specific aspects of organizational management, such as communications, project implementation, convenings, and/or board administration.
- Explore additional discretionary funds available through member agencies.
- **Board members:** Communicate with their respective executives about the benefits of "sharing" staff when needed to expand ESCOG's capacity.
- **Board members:** Direct respective agencies to engage with ESCOG and support its initiatives.

## COMMUNICATING VALUE

Improve branded communication and effectively convey COG's value:

- Develop a branded communication engage the public
- Provide quarterly updates to member agencies on ESCOG activities.
- Identify additional opportunities to communicate value to member agencies
- **Board members:** Report member agency boards to articulate ESCOG's value during meetings.
- **Board members:** Act as ambassadors to agencies, communities, and partner organizations by sharing opportunities with staff and leveraging unique leadership opportunities to change the narrative.

Eastern Sierra Council of Governments

# STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT REPORT

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February 2025



## Key Recommendations

- Develop legislative platform based on member agency priorities.
- Build capacity by:
  - Leveraging member agency staff to enhance capacity in specific program areas
  - Leverage grant writing technical assistance.
  - Considering contractors who can assist with specific aspects of organizational management, such as communications, project implementation, convenings, and/or board administration.
  - Exploring additional discretionary funds available through member agencies.
- Spearhead collaboration efforts by:
  - Convening regional interest groups. Areas for convening include: climate/ecosystem management, wildfire, sustainable recreation and tourism, economic development activities, housing, agriculture and land tenure, and arts and culture.
  - Creating a space for member agencies to share best practices and address challenges that go beyond the capacity of individual organizations.
  - Bringing additional capacity for accessing funding and implementing projects that would be difficult for individual agencies to achieve alone (regional economic development initiatives, broadband, climate initiatives, opportunities for housing and transportation funding).
  - Amplifying the visibility of regional issues that impact all member agencies.
  - Sharing a common story and fostering a region of shared community.

## Input from Regional Partners:

- Desire to increase Tribal Nation collaboration in regional discussions / convene collaboratives
- Request to have collaborative conversations that provide better coordination on climate and recreation projects and priorities
  - Between federal agencies, NGO partners, and workforce development partners
- Staff roundtables on economic development and housing have been beneficial for information sharing, skill building and mutual project support (e.g. California Jobs First Catalyst projects)

## 2025-2026 Project Priorities:

Focus on existing programs of work & projects:

Program	Proposed Capacity
Sustainable Recreation & Ecosystem Management Program	Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Towns-to-Trails Project</li> </ul>	Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Accelerator Expansion</li> </ul>	Executive Director / Wildfire Coordinator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inyo National Forest Liaison Position</li> </ul>	Wildfire Coordinator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Wildfire Defense Program*</li> </ul>	Wildfire Coordinators
Community Economic Development Pilot Program	Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEDS Administration</li> </ul>	Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Jobs First Catalyst Phase</li> </ul>	Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity Funding / Collaborative Support (secured)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Executive Director / PMO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Resource Center Program Development*</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Executive Director / PMO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eastern Sierra Regional Collaborative*</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Executive Director / PMO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis*</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Executive Director / PMO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in Regional Housing Needs Assessment</li> </ul>	Executive Director

\* Funding applications in progress/not awarded



## 2025-2026 Project Priorities:

- Areas to expand:

Program	Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop legislative platform based on member agency priorities / regional advocacy</li></ul>	Executive Director / PMO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Convene regional groups to foster collaborations &amp; improve efficient deployment resources</li></ul>	Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide quarterly updates to member agencies on ESCOG activities</li></ul>	Executive Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop regional project priorities and identify funding opportunities</li></ul>	Executive Director / PMO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen communications</li></ul>	Executive Director / PMO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish regional data (housing, demographics, etc)</li></ul>	Executive Director / Member Agency Staff / UC ANR



**Improve Project Prioritization and Governance**

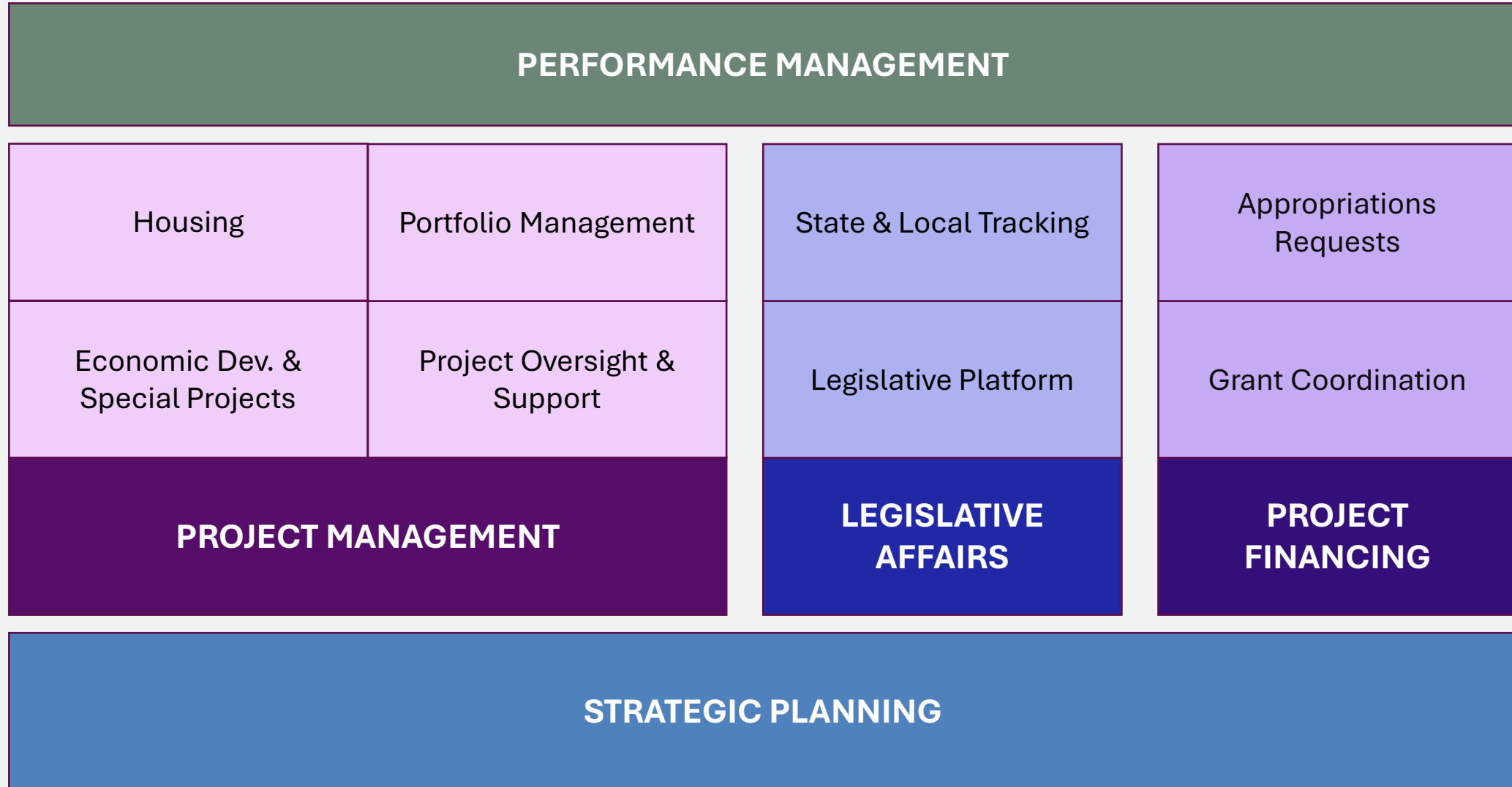
**Support Countywide/Multi-Departmental/Special Projects**

**Lead Strategic Planning Efforts**

**Coordinate Legislative Affairs**

**Address Strategic Funding Needs**

# PMO CORE COMPETENCIES



## 2025-2026 Capacity Budget:

- There is sufficient revenue in the CDFW and INF Liaison grants to support a wildfire coordinator position for 12-18 mos
- There is sufficient funding in Catalyst funds to support administrative support through a collaboration with the Inyo County Project Management Office

Revenues				
	Projects			
		Member Agency Contributions	\$100,000	\$100,000
		SNC/ Towns-to-Trails	\$14,000	
		CA Dept of Fish & Wildlife Grant	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000
		Inyo National Forest Liaison Grant	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000
		CERF Funding (SBC)	\$ 100,000	\$100,000
	<b>Sum</b>		\$329,000	\$315,000
Expenditures				
	HR			
		Executive Director (fully loaded)	\$119,184	\$119,184
		Overhead @ 15 %	\$17,878	\$17,878
		Wildfire Coordinator (fully loaded)	\$105,959	\$105,959
		CAJF / COO / PMO	\$40,000	\$40,000
		<b>HR Total</b>	<b>\$283,021</b>	<b>\$283,020</b>
		<b>Member Agency Services</b>		
		Clerical	\$20,000	\$20,000
		Financial	\$5,000	\$5,000
		Legal	\$10,000	\$10,000
		<b>Member Agency Totals</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>
		<b>Office + Management Costs</b>		
		email, cyber security	\$2,500	\$2,500
		Website Design Services	\$1,000	\$1,000
		Professional Services (audit)	--	\$0
		Insurance	\$3,500	\$3,500
		Other Services		
		<b>O+M Total</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>
	<b>Sum</b>		<b>\$325,021</b>	<b>\$325,020</b>
		<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$3,979</b>	<b>-\$10,020</b>

## **Staff Requests the Board provide feedback on:**

1. 2025 – 2026 Project Priorities
2. 2025-2026 Areas to Expand ESCOG Programs
3. Increasing staff capacity leveraging member agency staff, specifically:
  1. Inyo County Wildfire Coordinator
  2. Inyo County Project Management Office