



**Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority**

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Executive Director
Subject: 1) Approve Subaward Agreements between the Sierra Business Council and the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments for Sierra Jobs First Catalyst Funding Awards and Authorize the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute the Agreements:

- a) Subaward Agreement No. SBC-2025202 "Business Resource Center Catalyst Program"
- b) Subaward Agreement No. SBC-2025203 "Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis"
- c) Subaward Agreement No. SBC2025204 "Eastern Sierra Regional Collaborative Capacity Incubator"

2) Authorize the Executive Director to Prepare and Issue Requests for Proposals for Consultants and Contractors to Execute the Scope of Work for the Subaward Agreements

Meeting date: April 30, 2025

Prepared on: April 24, 2025

Attachments:

- A) Subaward Agreement No. SBC-2025202 "Business Resource Center Catalyst Program"
 - B) Subaward Agreement No. SBC-2025203 "Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis"
 - C) Subaward Agreement No. SBC2025204 "Eastern Sierra Regional Collaborative Capacity Incubator"
 - D) Press Release for Sierra Jobs First Project Awards
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BACKGROUND:

At the December 13, 2025 ESCOG Board meeting, your Board provided direction for staff to submit three California Jobs First Catalyst grant applications to the Sierra Jobs First Governing Council:

1. Programming Funding for the Eastern Sierra Small Business Resource Center
2. The Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis
3. The Eastern Sierra Regional Collaborative Capacity Incubator

All three applications were provided partial awards. The Governing Council did not award any funding for personnel costs, however the awards include 10% overhead for project administration.

ANALYSIS:**Start-up Programming Funding for Eastern Sierra Small Business Resource Center**

The Eastern Sierra Small Business Resource Center (SBRC) vision is to directly support local businesses through access to knowledge and resources, one-on-one technical assistance, networking, collaboration space, and enhancement of the region's entrepreneurship ecosystem. The catalyst funding will support the launch of high-quality programming and business development services as the SBRC opens its doors, providing support for the initial 18 months of services while the SBRC builds capacity and long term financial sustainability. The program will be implemented by the Eastern Sierra Small Business Development Center's Executive Director (employed by the Sierra Business Council (SBC)). ESCOG will provide grant administration and programmatic oversight to align business and workforce development with other regional economic development activities, specifically focusing in forestry, sustainable recreation, environmental planning, and sustainable agriculture. Staff has prepared a Memorandum of Understanding between the ESCOG and the SBC defining roles and responsibilities.

Programming objectives include:

- 2 Youth Entrepreneur Pitch Camps
- 60 hours per month of 1:1 Technical Assistance for small businesses and entrepreneurs
- 2 live workshops per month, aimed at small business or specific industries
- Capacity to develop a construction trades mentorship program
- Capacity to begin development of an Angel Investor Network
- The development of a financial sustainability plan

Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis

Chipmunk Canyon is an informal trail network spanning Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Inyo National Forest (INF) and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) lands located southwest of Bishop, CA. The area receives an estimated 6,000 visits per year; however, the network has not undergone any formalized NEPA or CEQA analysis allowing agencies to permit recreational use in the area. Budget and capacity constraints have prevented agencies from being able to conduct legally required trail planning and environmental review to permit Chipmunk Canyon's use and development as a recreation destination. Chipmunk Canyon is a segment of the ESCOG Towns-to-Trails regional trail plan.

The project will develop an existing conditions analysis of the informal trail network to inform required environmental review to formalize appropriate trails, identify and plan for appropriate recreation amenities, engage with Tribes and interested communities parties to inform the project area and desired outcomes. Staff has met with BLM, USFS, and LADWP representatives to ensure support and interjurisdictional collaboration for the scope of the project.

Specifically, project objectives include:

- Define project area
- "Groundtruth" existing data on use trails
- Conduct use analysis and establish traffic data
- Conduct Tribal and public engagement
- Identify funding mechanisms for implementation

This project will be completed through a combination of specialist consultants and contract staff support to the ESCOG. The ESCOG would like to request a budget increase from the Sierra Jobs First Governing Council to provide funding to support federal staff participation. Staff is finalizing a specific scope of work in partnership with land management agencies.

Eastern Sierra Regional Collaborative (ESRC) Capacity Incubator

The ESRC capacity incubator project intends to expand the existing ESCOG SREMP program in the Eastern Sierra region to build collaboratives to facilitate strategic planning and implementation capacity in the areas of land tenure management, sustainable recreation, climate, and agriculture. The project intends to build better interjurisdictional and cross-sector collaboration to increase coordination for regional project funding and implementation.

Objectives include:

- Developing a shared vision for recreation, forestry and wildfire, sustainable agriculture and other intersecting economic sectors.

- Strengthening regional capacity through organizational mapping and assessing organizational readiness, capacity and partnership opportunities.
- Facilitating Cross-Sector Collaboration between recreation, forestry and agricultural agencies, organizations and stakeholders.
- Identifying and prioritizing implementable, high-impact initiatives aligned with regional needs and strengths.
- Exploring governance and funding frameworks, including development of a project prioritization framework and consideration of public / non-profit partnerships
- Integrate workforce development strategies to build local career pathways in sustainable recreation, conservation, agriculture, and cultural tourism.

This project also includes dedicated funding to activate the strategies presented in the 2017 Agriculture in Inyo and Mono Counties Economic Profile, including identifying strategies for diversifying beef and alfalfa production (including value added products), identifying barriers and opportunities for agriculture tourism, and quantifying ecosystem services provided through agriculture in the Eastern Sierra

This project will be strengthened through the inter-jurisdictional collaboration and project planning under the Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis, as well as collaboration with the Small Business Resource Center for strengthening regional partnerships and collaboration in key economic sectors.

This project will be completed through a combination of specialist consultants and contract staff support to the ESCOG.

Funding Awards

The full budgets are included in attachments A, B and C, respectively.

Application	Total Award	ESCOG Administration
Business Resource Center Programming	\$201,850	\$18,350
Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis	\$171,500	\$17,150
ESRC Capacity Incubator	\$253,000	\$23,000

BUDGET IMPACTS:

All work completed under these agreements will be reimbursed by the corresponding grant funding.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel John-Carl Vallejo has reviewed this item and found that it complies with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

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