



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

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Staff
Subject: Receive Sierra Jobs First Project Implementation Update and Provide Direction on Board Engagement
Meeting date: April 22, 2026
Prepared on: April 15, 2026
Attachments: A) None

BACKGROUND

In 2025, the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) received Sierra Jobs First Catalyst funding to support the development of a regional collaborative implementation framework focused on four Core Areas: (1) Sustainable Recreation, (2) Working Lands/Agriculture, (3) Wildfire Resiliency, and (4) Economic Development.

Over the past decade, ESCOG and regional partners have completed numerous high-quality plans across these Core Areas. Despite this progress, stakeholders have consistently identified the need for a shared regional governance and implementation model to align efforts, clarify roles, and position the Eastern Sierra to pursue long-term, multi-benefit investment opportunities.

To advance this work, ESCOG contracted with Agnew Beck Consulting to design and facilitate a structured collaborative planning process—referred to as the Eastern Sierra Collaborative Incubator—culminating in a regional Implementation Plan and recommended governance framework.

ANALYSIS

Agnew Beck Consulting will lead an eight-month planning effort organized into four phases:

- **Phase 1: Project Start-Up, Design, and Management:** Establish project structure, refine scope, and create coordination systems.
Phase 2: Discovery and Joint Fact-Finding: Conduct partner interviews, review existing plans, assess regional capacity, and identify alignment and gaps.
Phase 3: Develop Collaborative Implementation Plan: Facilitate regional convenings, evaluate governance model options, and define shared priorities and partnership roles.

Phase 4: Finalize Implementation Plan: Deliver a refined plan outlining recommended governance structure, priority initiatives, and potential funding pathways.

A key component of Phase 1 is formation of an Eastern Sierra Collaborative Steering Committee, which will provide strategic guidance, review interim materials, and support development of the Implementation Plan. Staff and consultants are working to outline a balanced committee structure reflecting the four Core Areas and key institutional partners.

As the project launches, staff seeks direction from the Board regarding its preferred level and style of engagement. Options for Board involvement include:

- Direct the existing Recreation Subcommittee members to participate as part of the Steering Committee
- Regular updates at ESCOG Board meetings
- Dedicated Board workshops at major project milestones
- Review and comment on draft work products prior to finalization

Clear direction from the Board at this early stage will ensure alignment with project expectations and support informed decision-making as the Implementation Plan is developed.

BUDGET IMPACT

There is no additional budget impact at this time. The Sierra Jobs First Catalyst grant fully funds the consultant work and associated project activities. ESCOG staff time is already included in the adopted FY 2024–25 Work Program and Budget.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the ESCOG Board:

1. Receive and file the update on Sierra Jobs First project implementation, including scope development for the Eastern Sierra Collaborative Incubator and steering committee formation.
2. Provide direction to staff on how the Board wishes to be engaged throughout the development of the Implementation Plan.