
I. INTRODUCTION

A. CEDS Definition and Purpose

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) refers to the planning process and document generated from it which sets forth the San Luis Valley's economic development vision, goals, strategies, and priorities for the next 5 years. CEDS work for the Valley is being carried out by the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group (DRG), with many agencies and organizations in addition to the DRG participating in varying degrees on project implementation.

The 2002 CEDS represents the fourth major update, with previous documents (formerly referred to as the Overall Economic Development Program) completed in 1979, 1984, and 1992 by DRG's predecessor agency --- the San Luis Valley Regional Development and Planning Commission.

The CEDS could be viewed as the economic development master plan for the Valley, with desired outcomes and action steps aimed at:

- Creating better jobs and incomes.
- Diversifying the economy and strengthening economic sectors.
- Exposing new market potentials and business opportunities.
- Protecting resources and environment.
- Increasing local capacities for development.
- Developing and improving infrastructure.
- Enhancing the quality of life.

Considerable effort was made in this process to choose the strategies and priorities most likely to produce these outcomes and offering the best returns on investment of time, money, and staff resources. Priorities reflect the input provided by individual counties in our region concerning their goals and concerns, and are also based on in-depth analysis of the industry and social fabric of all six and how they tie together as a regional economy and entity.

On another level, the CEDS reflects input from all corners of the Valley and is a book about **us** --- what **we** envision; what **we** want to accomplish; and the general action framework **we** are committed to follow in pursuing the goals we have chosen.

B. CEDS Background and Requirements

Guidelines followed in preparing the CEDS were established by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). Responsibility for the CEDS is assigned to DRG by virtue of its designation as a funded Economic Development District, of which there are about 300 across the Nation. EDA programs in Colorado are administered by the Denver Regional Office, which includes 10 states in the central Rockies and Great Plains.

Districts who qualify on the basis of an approved CEDS and other performance criteria receive annual planning grants, and development of the 2002 CEDS document is included as an element in our current work program.

Consistency of local projects with the CEDS is a primary factor in consideration for EDA funding from Public Works and Economic Adjustment grants, and the amount awarded for Valley projects in recent years has been exceeding \$1 million. Counties and cities with membership in the District are also eligible for an additional 10% Federal funding for their projects.

Goals and priorities in the CEDS also provide the framework for DRG in determining its annual work programs focused on portions of the full plan which can be accomplished or advanced within a 12-month period. Annual CEDS reports are also prepared at mid-year in order to keep current on changing conditions, describe what is working, and revise selected strategies and priorities as may be appropriate.

C. Products and Benefits

Besides its obvious advantages for funding and guarantee of a continuous and updated planning effort, the CEDS is a one-of-a-kind document which is truly regional and comprehensive in subject scope and content. Colorado's Smart Growth planning efforts of 5 or more years ago are also noted, and were included as part of our review in scoping the existing resource base of planning documents.

Due to its convenience as a central index for data, the CEDS Analysis Section has value within its own right, and is probably one of the Valley's most frequently referenced documents for grantwriting and other study. Based on past experience, we anticipate a wide range of use represented by governments; land use and planning departments; feasibility studies; demographers; program administrators; banks; existing and prospective businesses; farmers and farm service agencies; tourists and tourist organizations; chambers of commerce; downtown developers; emergency services; job training and employment agencies; hospitals and clinics; health professionals; news media; non-profits; development practitioners; consultants of all types; real estate agents; private foundations; transportation planners; accountants; appraisers; target group advocates; lawyers and courts; nature-based organizations; industry prospects; conservation groups; law enforcement; community service agencies; senior organizations; social researchers; market

researchers; authors and writers; students; schools; libraries; educators; churches; newcomers and prospective residents; RLF clients; and many more.

Over the years, the CEDS and its predecessor documents has also proven to be an invaluable resource for opening up new partnerships and sources of support. This imparts a marketing quality to the process which has potential to stimulate new opportunities and benefits for the Valley beyond those already apparent.

Along these same lines, the DRG is planning to incorporate the CEDS on its webpage for an even wider audience. Internet access will also provide greater convenience in reviewing the content, and potential for additional input to the planning process.