**2021 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**

**And Progress Report**

**Grantee:** Beartooth RC&D Area, Inc.

**Project Number:** ED18DEN3020030

**Period covered by the report:** Jan. 1, 2021 – Dec. 31, 2021

**Adjustments:**

No significant adjustments were made to the strategy, program delivery, or service area during this reporting period. However, there were significant staffing changes: Economic Development Director Steve Simonson left in June, and Jacy Head was hired for this position in late August. Finance Director Jillann Knutson left in October, and Nan Knight became our new Finance Director in November. Anytime there are staffing changes, it takes time to hire someone and get them acquainted with all the programs. Both Jacy and Nan have proven to be incredibly hard workers who are already well-versed in their job responsibilities.

Beartooth staff made quite a few changes to the website ([www.beartooth.org](http://www.beartooth.org)) in 2021 and feel those changes will serve the region more effectively in the future. Beartooth staff are posting regular updates to the Facebook page, and a LinkedIn account was added this year. We continue efforts to be more proactive in marketing the organization and program areas.

We feel that our overall strategy is sound and aligned with the needs of the region. The additional funding from the EDA CARES Act has enabled us to bolster the resiliency piece of the CEDS. Beartooth RC&D will continue to explore additional trends such as the increase of online sales vs. brick and mortar stores. Also, with remote work becoming such a key issue, there is an even greater need for better internet access and speed. Other adjustments are being made as we look ahead to our five-year CEDS update.

**Board/CEDS Committee List:**

**EDD BOARD MEMBERSHIP ROSTER**

*Updated 4/4/2022*

EDA Board Guidelines: “The District Organization must demonstrate that its governing body is broadly representative of the principal economic interests of the Region, which may include the private sector, public officials, community leaders, representatives of workforce development boards, institutions of higher education, minority and labor groups, and private individuals."

1. **GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES**

*Elected officials and/or employees of a general purpose unit of state, local or Indian tribal government who have been appointed to represent the government.*

| Name | Government | Position |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Page Dringman  Melanie Roe  Chris Mehus  Frank Ewalt  Dan Lowe  Don Jones  Steve Riveland  Vacant  Stephanie Ray  Barb Wagner  Clinton Giesick  Scott Miller  Bill Foisy  Clayton Greer  Sidney Fitzpatrick  Bob VanOosten  Marvin Carter | City of Big Timber  Sweet Grass County  Sweet Grass Conservation Dist.  City of Billings  Big Horn Conservation Dist.  Yellowstone County  Stillwater County  Crow (Apsaalooke) Nation  Stillwater County  Yellowstone Conservation District  Carbon Conservation District  Carbon County  City of Red Lodge  City of Hardin  Bighorn County  Stillwater Conservation District  City of Laurel | City Planner/Appointed by Big Timber City Council  County Commissioner  District Appointee  City Council member  Board Member-elected county position  County Commissioner  County Commissioner  Economic Dev. Coor.-employee of Stillwater County  Board Member-elected County position  Board Member-elected County position  County Commissioner  City Council member  City Council member  County Commissioner  Board Member - elected County position  City Council member |

1. **NON-GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES**
2. **Private Sector Representatives:** *Any senior management official or executive, holding a key decision-making position, with respect to any for-profit enterprise. (At least one required)*

| Name | Company / Enterprise | Position |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Liz Ching  Randy Weimer  Holly Higgins  Marissa Hauge | MT Dept. of Labor  Sibanye-Stillwater Mine  First Interstate Bank of Hardin  Stillwater IGA | POWER grant administrator  Environmental & Public Affairs Manager  Branch Manager  Manager of pharmaceutical sales |

1. **Stakeholder Organization Representatives:***Executive directors of chambers of commerce, or representatives of institutions of postsecondary education, workforce development groups or labor groups. (At least one required)*

| Name | Organization | Position |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Genna Southworth  Ryan Van Ballegooyen  Raymond Porter  Jeffrey McDowell | MSU-Billings City College  Billings Job Service  Sweet Grass County Chamber  Hardin Chamber of Commerce  /Two Rivers Authority | Director, Workforce & Resource Development  Region 4 Director  Chamber of Commerce Director  Past President / Executive Director |

1. **AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVES:** *Interested individuals qualified to provide input on behalf of their respective communities.*

| Name | Company / Enterprise | Position |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Patty Sundberg  Heidi Sparks  Lorene Hintz  Emily Ringer | City of Columbus  City of Laurel area  Big Sky EDA  Town of Joliet | Appointed Representative for City of Columbus  Appointed Representative for Laurel area  Small Business Development Center  Appointed by the Town of Joliet |

**CALCULATIONS**

Number Percent

1. Government Representatives (51-65%) 17 58%
2. Non- Government Representatives (35-49%) 8 28%
3. Private Sector Representatives (at least 1) 4
4. Stakeholder Organization Representatives (at least 1) 4
5. At Large Representatives 4 14%

**Total Board Membership 29 100%**

**EDD STRATEGY COMMITTEE ROSTER**

*Updated 3/17/2022*

NOTE: This committee structure has been utilized by the organization since 1997 as a subset of the Board of Directors to discuss important issues and provide a representative perspective of the regional economy.

**1. PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES**

*Any senior management official or executive holding a key decision-making position, with respect to any for-profit enterprise.*

| Name | Company | Position |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Randy Weimer  Raymond Porter  Holly Higgins  Marissa Hauge  Charlene Johnson | Sibanye/Stillwater Mine  Sweet Grass Chamber  First Interstate Bank  Montana Family Pharmacies  Plenty Doors CDC | Environmental & Public Affairs Manager  Director  Branch Manager  Executive Director  Executive Director |

1. **REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER ECONOMIC INTERESTS**

*Persons who provide additional representation of the main economic interests of the region. These may include, but are not limited to: public officials, community leaders, and representatives of workforce development boards, institutions of higher education, minority and labor groups, and private individuals.*

| Name | Area of Interest | Position |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dianne Lehm  Lorene Hintz  Stephanie Ray  Ryan VanBallegooyen  Genna Southworth | BSEDA-Yellowstone County ED  Small Bus. Development Ctr (SBDC)  Stillwater County ED  Billings Job Service  MSUB City College | Community Outreach Director  SBDC Regional Director  Economic Development Director  Region 4 Director  Director of Workforce & Resource Development |

**CALCULATIONS** Number Percent

Private Sector Representatives 5 50%

Representatives of Other Economic Interests 5 50%

**Total Committee Membership 10 100%**

**Staff:**

Beartooth RC&D / Economic Development District is a 52-year-old organization professionally staffed through funding provided by our local communities, counties, Conservation Districts, Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Department of Commerce, and the US Dept. of Commerce EDA. By virtue of our time in business we provide excellent stability, continuity and capacity to the communities we serve. Our current staff includes three full-time positions and one part-time position.

Joel Bertolino serves as Executive Director and was hired in October 2007. He is the full-time Food and Ag Center Director. Prior to his time at Beartooth, he spent 7 years with USDA Farm Services Agency administering a variety of price support and emergency disaster programs, as well as 6 years with Carbon County Historical Society as a Historic Preservation Officer. Joel holds a B.A. in Political Science/Public Administration from Montana State University – Bozeman and has spent his life assisting with the family cattle ranch north of Red Lodge, MT that he now operates.

Nan Knight serves the organization as the full-time Finance Director providing organizational finance support, financial assistance to small businesses, and staff support to our Revolving Loan Fund Committee. She began working for Beartooth RC&D in November 2021 but has several years of experience with lending and bookkeeping.

Jacy Head serves as the full-time Economic Development Director and began employment with Beartooth in August 2021. Jacy has several years of experience in retail, real estate, administration, and teaching. She is the lead staff person for both the EDA program and Montana’s Certified Regional Development program. Jacy holds a B.S. degree in History and Psychology from Texas Tech University.

Myrna Lastusky serves Beartooth as a part-time Administrative Assistant and joined the team in September 2020. Myrna has a B.S. in Secondary Education and a Masters degree in Curriculum & Instruction from Concordia University. With 25 years of experience as an educator and four years as an administrative assistant, Myrna supports the three directors with meeting minutes, reporting requirements, communications, and other miscellaneous tasks.

**Report:**

In the section below, we outline our specific scope of work items for 2021 derived from our CEDS Goals and Objectives, as well as the level to which each objective was achieved. The Scope of Work and Implementation FY 2021 listed below provide a summary of our project activity and are intended to be used as a reference to this report. The Black text is from our CEDS, and the pink text covers how we implemented and achieved the outcomes in 2021.

**Scope of Work and Implementation Methodology FY 2021 from CEDS 2019-2023**

**Goal Area: Maintain Eligibility with EDA.** Supply the EDA with timely information on plant and large business closures and the number of employees affected.

1. Submit semi-annual and year-end financial reports as required.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** We submitted a timely semi-annual SF-425 document and a timely year-end SF-425 document.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES**: We submitted a timely GPRA report before January 30, 2022.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** None

1. Monitor and report positive or negative economic trends impacting growth and development, grant writing, and public meeting facilitation, as appropriate.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Beartooth staff facilitated workforce housing meetings across the region. Beartooth also facilitated regional discussions related to a three-county detention center. Staff monitored and reported out on economic trends.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* Final annual CEDS and progress report was submitted in January 2021.
* Annual updates have been submitted for 2021 and 2022.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** The vast amount of reporting time required by grant funders reduces our effective time in the field to conduct our work. Our limited staff of 3 FTEs and one part-time assistant also creates issues for project completion. On top of that, we had turnover in 2 director positions this year, so transitions and training have been a challenge.

**Goal Area: Policy – Leadership – Capacity Building**

**Goal 1: Support the creation and timely revision of public policy planning.**

Strategy: Understand and be able to communicate to value and overall goals of public policy documents including, but not limited to the following:

* Downtown Master Plans
* Capital Improvement Plans
* Overall Economic Development Plan
* Zoning Ordinances
* Annexation Policies
* Housing Assessments

Strategy: Promote assistance with citizen education and public meeting facilitation for the purpose of creation and/or revision of public policy documents, as appropriate.

Strategy: Promote the integration of economic development activities with all appropriate local and regional plans, including sustainability, transportation, land use, housing, trails, etc.

Strategy: Provide assistance to local governments in order to secure funding for the creation and/or revision of public policy documents, including grant writing as appropriate.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** MOU and annual report meetings were held with all five counties in our service area plus Cities of Laurel, Billings and Hardin. EDA CARES ACT funding was used for a regional housing assessment, economic recovery, and a targeted industry specialist to help more severely impacted sectors with recovery efforts such as those associated with travel, entertainment, and food service. BRCD staff assisted Big Horn County and Red Lodge Area Community Foundation with housing issues. Partnerships continue with community leaders on Bozeman Trail development.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* 17 City Council and County Commissioners meetings were attended.
* 1 BSTF grant application was successful in the region.
* Received USDA RCDI Grant application on behalf of Big Horn County to hire and train an Economic Development Director/Housing Coordinator.
* 10 Red Lodge Workforce Housing meetings were attended.
* May & Dec 2021: Downtown Billings Alliance Priority Planning Meetings attended.
* 8 meetings were held with the Bozeman Trail regional planning group plus 6 other dates for mapping meetings & legislation discussions.
* Cushing Terrell Regional Housing Study presentation was delivered at the Billings Housing Summit and to a group of regional stakeholders.
* Attended & helped facilitate 10 detention center planning committee meetings.
* 9 Big Horn County housing meetings were attended & minutes taken.
* Letter of support written for a feasibility study by the National Park Service that will assist with the designation of the Historic Bozeman Trail.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED**: None

**Goal 2: Encourage the development and delivery of leadership initiatives, including volunteer-based programs.**

Strategy: Support local and regional initiatives that nurture future community leaders in business, government, education, and nonprofit organizations.

Strategy: Encourage and support community participation in MEDA’s community review program.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Promoted Leadership Montana program and MEDA activities and programs on Facebook. Assisted RLACF on renovations to the Roosevelt Center. BRCD continues to advertise SBDC webinars and other trainings.Cooperative development and outreach meetings were held with Tribal members and also the Billings Southside Grocery Store project team. Beartooth staff collaborated with others throughout the region on a Bozeman Trail project, and a partnership has begun with Dr. Luke Ward of Rocky Mountain College and his GIS students to assist in these efforts. Deb Brown with SaveYour.Town is a consultant Beartooth hired with grant funds, and she held monthly Watch Parties to discuss ways to train business owners and revitalize rural communities; anyone is welcome to attend these.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* A client, Bryan Elliot of 406 Bovine, was selected by Blackfoot/CM2 to present to the Accelerate Montana Rural Ag Initiative.
* BRCD staff attended 12 RLACF housing meetings.
* Wrote a letter of support for the BSTF grant for energy efficiency.
* 1 new position in Big Horn County - Economic Development Director.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** None

**Goal 3: Develop and promote programs that lead to capacity-building activities throughout the service region.**

Strategy: Strengthen and enhance our ability to provide programs and services on a regional basis which augment local community efforts through coordination, facilitation and education in the following areas:

* + Revolving Loan Fund
  + Montana Certified Regional Development Corporation
  + Montana Food and Ag Center / Montana Cooperative Development Program
  + Montana Main Street Program
  + Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) Program
  + Business Planning/Technical Assistance (with SBA and SBDC)

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** These programs and funding sources provide our organization with operating expenses and funding resources for clients. We utilize these programs on an ongoing basis and we rely on these areas to accomplish our work plan and carry out our CEDS activities. Beartooth staff continue to be actively engaged throughout the region and 2021 was an extremely busy year in all areas. We are actively serving on committees and assisting with projects of our partner organizations including: Big Sky EDA, Stillwater County Economic Development Committee, Crow Tribal Economic Development, Red Lodge Area Community Foundation, Montana Economic Developers Association Working Groups (Resource Assessment, Renewable Energy, CRDC, Peer Learning Network, Remote Work, Economic Development Committee, Office Hour, and Broadband), and the Coal Country Coalition.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:** As in previous reports, this scope of work item is listed to reflect the various state and federal programs, as well as committees and boards, that we successfully participate on during the course of any given year. Thus, the results in this section are brief and refer to our continued eligibility, while the actual projects are referenced below in individual scope of work items.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** None

Strategy: Continue to promote regional communication and awareness of economic development-related issues through bi-monthly Board of Directors meetings, press releases, regular updates of our website and Facebook page, Board/community reports, success stories, etc.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Beartooth RC&D regularly updates its website ([www.beartooth.org](http://www.beartooth.org)). We continue to utilize a variety of ways to deliver information throughout the district. Board of Directors meetings are held bi-monthly and each staff member provides project updates and each board member provides an update from their respective organization and community. Regular postings are made to the Beartooth Facebook page. A Beartooth LinkedIn page was created in 2021, and we are gradually utilizing that platform more as well.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* Beartooth staff made annual presentations in November and December to 5 service counties and 3 larger cities. These presentations included written and verbal updates for projects in their respective jurisdictions as well as organizational funding requests.
* 452 Facebook postings were created with increased followers throughout the year.
* 6 BRCD Board meetings and 6 BRCD Executive Committee meetings were held.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** None

Strategy:Provide facilitation assistance to community projects through services offered such as project coordination, community organizing, and working as a liaison between stakeholder groups.

Strategy: Assist economic development partners, as appropriate, with the completion of their projects through collaboration and leveraging resources.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Clients assisted and referred to SBDC as needed. Weekly CRDC meetings were attended to share resources and ideas. Improved partnerships in all five counties. Increased activity with several Carbon County community organizations. CARES Act EDA funding continued throughout all five counties of the region, and a USDA RCDI grant application was submitted on behalf of Big Horn County.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* Held 8 meetings with the Town of Joliet Beautification Committee and several new projects have been completed, including newly painted Main Street benches, placemaking outside of Town Hall, a Christmas Stroll, and plans for some green space projects in the works.
* Tours of the region occurred in May and October 2021 with Deb Brown of SaveYour.Town, who is assisting with the CARES Act funding. She holds monthly Watch Parties to help with community and business development and sends out a monthly newsletter focusing on economic recovery and diversification.
* USDA RCDI grant application was submitted and received on behalf of Big Horn County to hire an Economic Development Director/Housing Coordinator.
* 16 RLF clients were managed during 2021; 2 clients paid off their loans.
* FADC monthly meetings were attended.
* Continued assistance to Bridger Senior Center. Structural renovations were completed.
* CDBG public hearings were held in 4 of the 5 counties (Yellowstone held their own).
* Attended monthly meetings with the Red Lodge Workforce Housing Committee and the Big Horn County Housing Committee.
* Partnered with Stillwater County Economic Development on a BSTF grant application that was funded.
* Attended meetings to discuss the Remote Workers Program that was being discussed in conjunction with MSU Extension and the Montana Department of Labor.
* Staff attended the SBDC Advisory Meeting in June and the Big Sky EDA Annual Conference as well as their Edge of the Plains documentary showing in the fall.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** The RCDI grant process has proven to be filled with obstacles, and there have been very few qualified applicants for the position as of the end of 2021.

**Goal Area: Infrastructure Development**

**Goal 1: Support public and private sector entities in the completion of infrastructure projects, including broadband.**

Strategy: Provide assistance with citizen education, communication and public meeting facilitation for the purpose of the completion of infrastructure projects.

Strategy: Provide assistance to public and private sector entities in order to help them secure funding for the completion of infrastructure projects.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Discussions and assistance took place with infrastructure projects, broadband, Opportunity Zones, and TIF Districts. A BSTF grant was received for Stillwater County to conduct a feasibility study for an Industrial/Business Park.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* During MOUpresentations in November & December, all counties and communities were informed of projects and funding available to help them with infrastructure development.
* Discussed broadband with MEDA and BRCD Board.
* Met with Laurel elected officials and planner on BSTF for west interchange.
* BRCD staff spoke about Opportunity Zones with RLACF, Ecostrat Bio-Energy, and a company wanting to do oil seed processing.
* Discussions held with local and state leaders regarding a proposed affordable housing factory in the region.
* Discussions & meetings held for potential Carbon County Detention Facility.
* Wrote a successful BSTF grant for a Stillwater County Industrial Park feasibility study.
* Working with the Joliet Beautification Committee to plan and fund a Main Street pocket park.
* Coordinated with the Montana Community Foundation to grant Big Timber’s Sheepherder Square some funding to complete an outdoor meeting space.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** Costs to renovate or build are staggering right now due to inflation and lack of available supplies and workforce.

**Goal 2: Support public and private sector entities in the development of commercial infrastructure. Continue participation in MEDA broadband committee.**

Strategy: Assist in the assessment of commercial infrastructure needs, including industrial parks, downtown revitalization, commercial district revitalization, and shovel-ready sites.

Strategy: Assist with the development, including feasibility, and potential implementation funding for identified commercial infrastructure needs.

Strategy: When requested, assist in the identification, evaluation, and potential cleanup of Brownfields sites for the purpose of appropriate reuse.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** AttendedMEDA calls on proposed broadband legislation. Held discussions on possible Brownfields developments. BRCD staff wrote an AARP grant for expanding broadband service on the Crow Reservation using Starlink; however, Plenty Doors CDC asked to submit the grant application themselves.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* MEDA broadband committee members met with State officials on proposed legislation and alternative solutions such as Starlink and WISP.
* Work continues on a BSTF project with the Red Lodge pea cannery building, which includes a Brownfields grant.
* Staff attended 9 ARPA trainings and educated clients on funding opportunities.
* Cushing Terrell Regional Housing Study was near completion in December 2021 and gave recommendations for necessary developments in several parts of our region.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** Rapid changes in the housing market and supply chains have created ever-changing dynamics in housing, which created some delays with the housing study.

**Goal 3: Support public and private sector entities in the assessment and development of workforce housing.**

Strategy: Continue to work with the Red Lodge Housing Committee to develop appropriate workforce housing solutions.

Strategy: Provide technical assistance and facilitate planning efforts for other areas of the region who are exploring workforce housing options to assess needs, identify gaps, and develop a plan of action that encourages private investment in the development of new housing or redevelopment of existing housing stock to fill gaps in workforce housing.

Strategy: Continue to build relationships with housing resource partners and stay informed as to workforce housing activities taking place in Montana and other rural areas, including potential sources of funding for planning and project implementation.

Strategy: Remain aware of the Montana Cooperative Development Center’s activities involving housing cooperatives as a potential option.

Strategy: Monitor information from NaCo regarding affordable housing options being leveraged in other parts of the country, including “Housing as Part of a County’s ED Strategy” report.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Cushing Terrell’s thorough and thoughtful housing study for the region will be done in spring 2022. Talks continue about S2A, a modular housing building company that is being recruited to the region.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* A USDA RCDI grant application was submitted & received to help Big Horn County build capacity in economic and housing development.
* Attended 12 Red Lodge Workforce Housing meetings.
* Multiple meetings were held with a potential housing developer in Big Timber; it is uncertain whether this will move forward.
* 9 meetings were held with Big Horn County and MT DOC regarding housing for the county.
* The USDA RD RCDI grant that Beartooth wrote on behalf of Big Horn County was received, and this will provide funding for them to hire an Economic Development/Housing Director.
* A CDBG-CV grant application to assist Big Horn County with affordable housing was submitted but not received.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** The housing shortage is reaching critical levels across the region, especially in workforce housing. The RCDI grant has involved many hurdles.

**Goal Area: Workforce Development**

**Goal 1: Learn, understand, and address the needs of area employers and employees, including attraction and retention.**

Strategy: Learn and stay informed as to the activities, priorities, and tools available from BillingsWorks, DOL, and assist employers throughout the region, especially Yellowstone County.

Strategy: Determine the capacity for rural areas to support the creation of local workforce council, committee or program with local leadership, utilizing BillingsWorks as a model.

Strategy: Continue to work with Sweet Grass County Chamber of Commerce’s volunteer-based economic development committee to develop their capacity and knowledge, especially in the area of workforce development.

Strategy: Understand and incorporate underlying factors influencing workforce development, such as housing options and shortage of reliable, affordable childcare into planning and implementation activities.

NOTE: Accomplishments Achieved/Quantify Deliverables for this goal are combined with Goal 2 below.

**Goal 2: Collaborate with regional stakeholders to increase the alignment of education, industry, and workforce development.**

Strategy: Participate in working groups, meetings, and training opportunities to increase this alignment throughout the region, as appropriate.

Strategy: Assist in identifying resources, including funding resources and existing programs that would allow for implementation of partnering agency’s work in this area.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Beartooth has worked with FADC network partners to promote training opportunities and develop new training opportunities for Food and Agricultural businesses. Attended Better off in Billings, workforce housing meetings, Billings Housing Summit, and other meetings to understand the issues facing our region. Work began to create the updated version of our 5-year CEDS, including creating a CEDS committee that will continue working into 2022. Beartooth ED staff continued discussions with Billings Job Service staff and resource providers.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* Beartooth ED staff discussed affordable housing and childcare at various meetings in the region including co-op models.
* BRCD staff assisted the newly formed electricians and carpenter program at Little Big Horn College.
* 18 newly enrolled students at LBH College signed up for the trades program.
* Three outreach ‘connect’ meetings with the Billings Chamber contractor members were held.
* Cushing Terrell presented to regional stakeholders the results of their Regional Housing Study.
* Discussions held with the Workforce and Resources Development Director at City College in Billings.
* Beartooth worked with Stillwater County to develop and administer county-wide Covid-relief grants for county businesses.
* Big Sky EDA has sponsored trainings with BRCD EDA grant money that include Women in Government Contracting, Startup Roadmap, and Business Model Canvas, and many others.
* Beartooth staff took part in a Community Leaders Joint Planning Session in collaboration with Big Sky EDA in May. Priorities created revolved around a public safety initiative, workforce demands, and affordable housing.
* Trainings attended include:
  + Montana Housing Partnership Virtual Conference in May
  + GNAR webinars on affordable housing
  + Wisconsin Rural Summit for Broadband
  + ARPA training webinars
  + USDA RCIP grants webinar
  + Rural Rise Broadband Summit
  + Better off in Billings sessions
  + DBA Priority Planning sessions
  + Billings Housing Summit in August
  + USDA Collaboration with Montana Small Business Partners
  + DOC training
  + Rural Economic Development webinars.
  + SBDC Trainings
  + MEDA Drought Management
  + RDBG Workshop
  + MCDC Housing & Childcare Cooperative Webinar
  + WY EDA Economic Development 101 Webinar
  + Ask An Expert-Employer’s COVID-19 Educational Forum

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** The LBH College program has struggled with students dropping out of the program.

**Goal 3: Support training and retraining programs to further develop and retain the existing and future regional workforce.**

Strategy: Assist Crow Tribe Housing Authority in the development of workforce training programs that would provide skilled trades’ workers to build, update and rehabilitate housing within their jurisdiction.

Strategy: Understand and educate local stakeholders as to the benefits of internship programs and work-based learning options to increase workforce development options.

Strategy: Continue to participate in the Business Expansion and Retention Initiatives, including the current BEAR program.

Strategy: Continue to collaborate with the Department of Labor’s POWER grant to assist in the retraining and retention of coal-impacted workers, especially in Big Horn County and the Crow Reservation.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** BRCD was approached by POWER grant personnel to assist with a Northern Cheyenne mobile meat processing plant. We assisted in Big Horn County workforce housing calls, which Crow Tribal Housing participated in. Crow Tribal Housing supported a USDA RCDI grant application BRCD submitted. Staff also met with Mayor Quincy Dabney to discuss struggles with his USDA Small Business Incubator.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* Met with Sweet Grass County Commissioners and representatives of the Sibanye/Stillwater Mine. Additional jobs, housing, and local procurement were discussed.
* BRCD staff reported at Rock 31 meetings.
* Crow Tribal Housing and Big Horn County commissioners worked closely with Beartooth staff on the USDA RCDI grant and a CDBG-CV application.
* Through Beartooth’s EDA CARES Act funding, Big Sky EDA training webinars and SaveYour.Town watch parties have been held.
* Provided letter of support for Apsaalooke Hybrid Apprenticeship Program proposed by Little Big Horn College.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** Sibanye-Stillwater Mine needs 200 new employees but has no housing to offer them. All counties are struggling with lack of workers, due in part to a shortage of workforce housing.

**Goal Area: Quality of Life**

**Goal 1: Assist public and private sector entities in the planning and completion of strategic placemaking projects.**

Strategy: Assist communities and organizations in understanding the importance of placemaking, including generational priority factors, and facilitate planning meetings, as appropriate.

Strategy: Assist communities and organizations with the identification of resources to complete placemaking projects.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Big Sky EDA, City of Billings administrator, Downtown Billings Alliance, and Chamber presidents regularly met to align planning and economic recovery goals. Beartooth staff held meetings with a group of business owners in Joliet, the Joliet Beautification Committee, who are working to revitalize Main Street with various projects and events. Staff continue to partner with regional leaders on efforts to develop economic and recreational activities along the historic Bozeman Trail.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* BRCD staff took part in a Community Leaders Joint Planning Session in collaboration with Big Sky EDA in spring and fall.
* The Joliet Beautification Committee has completed several projects, including painting murals on all the benches on Main Street, putting in some new landscaping, cleaning up an area along the highway, a Christmas Stroll, and more plans for the coming year.
* Staff toured the region in May and October to visit with partners, businesses, chambers, and ongoing project locations.
* Assistance with meetings and marketing CART (Carbon County Area Ride & Transit) in their service of providing rides for elderly or disabled people to get to doctor’s appointments and other essential services.
* Beartooth staff met with Mayor Quincy Dabney in October to discuss placemaking for Lodge Grass and potential funding sources.
* Staff attended the “Ask an Expert” seminar to discuss ongoing difficulties related to the pandemic.
* BRCD and Montana Community Foundation collaborated to help fund 2 projects: The Stillwater Legacy Trails project that will create a walking/biking path for the community of Columbus and the Sheepherder Square project to create an outdoor meeting space in Big Timber.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** None.

**Goal 2: Assist public and private sector entities to achieve mutually beneficial natural resource development.**

Strategy: Continue to support the development of renewable energy projects and monitor activity and progress in the region.

Strategy: Continue to learn and understand concerns by units of government regarding development of renewable energy projects, especially view-shed concerns.

Strategy: Continue to provide technical assistance and support to fuels mitigation initiatives, as appropriate.

Strategy: Continue to collaborate on projects involving natural resource development and provide facilitation and liaison services, as appropriate.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Work wrapped up for the Pryor Mountain Wind Farm near Bridger. Additional wind farms are under discussion with Stillwater County. Beartooth is the fiscal agent for the Custer-Gallatin Working Group, who meets regularly.

**QUALIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* BRCD staff attended Beartooth Front Range planning meetings held with the RLACF to discuss impacts on the front range in our region. Infrastructure and Housing were part of these discussions.
* Beartooth staff toured Black Butte Copper mine to learn more about economic and environmental impacts of mines.
* BRCD Board includes leadership from the Sibanye-Stillwater Mine, and this representative is also part of our CEDS committee. This rep is a valuable resource as we analyze natural resource conservation in our region.
* Pryor Mountain Wind Farm project, years in the making, is now concluded with the wind farm up and running.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED**: The curriculum for training wind farm techs at Billings City College does not exist anymore. Previous efforts to try to restart it are ongoing.

**Goal Area:** **Business Development**

**Goal 1: Provide technical assistance and mentorship to new and existing businesses.**

Strategy: Continue partnerships with local SBDC, MT Dept. of Commerce, MMEC, local economic development specialists, the BEAR program, Job Service personnel, and local institutions of higher education.

Strategy: Continue to support and enhance existing industry clusters through technical assistance, research, and leveraging available resources.

Strategy: Continue to support and enhance existing primary industries, including tourism through technical assistance, research, and leveraging available resources.

Strategy: Continue to serve agricultural-related businesses, and value-added processing opportunities for locally grown crops, as one of the Montana Food and Ag Centers.

Strategy: Continue to support cooperative business development in the region, including housing cooperative development.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Attended meetings with SBDC, Montana Dept. of Commerce, MMEC, Big Sky EDA, College of Technology, Rock31/BEAR, and MSU-Billings. Businesses were assisted and referred as needed to appropriate partner service providers. Our CARES ACT targeted industry contractor worked with tourism-related businesses impacted by Covid. Value-added ag businesses were assisted.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* Beartooth ED staff assisted 46 + new and existing businesses.
* Assisted 7 Value-Added Ag Businesses
  + Yellowstone County
    - Primitive Meats
    - Blue Creek Marbled Meats
    - Mill Creek Farms
  + Sweet Grass County: Pioneer Meats/Meats of Montana
  + Carbon County: Carbon County Meats
  + Big Horn County:
    - Aaron Toews
    - JWK
* 2 startup meat plants we have assisted have invested $1.2 million in private funding, and one business expansion has invested $600,000 in private capital.
* 7 Growth Through Ag grants submitted
  + 2 from Yellowstone County
  + 2 from Big Horn County
  + 2 from Sweet Grass County
  + 1 from Carbon County
* 3 clients were assisted with USDA MPIRG grant applications.
* New ARPA funding opportunities are being sent out to clients and being posted on social media as updates arise.
* Conducted face-to-face outreach with clients & toured their facilities with representatives of regional MMEC and SBDC. Businesses toured include:
  + Stillwater Packing
  + Pioneer Meats / Meats of Montana
  + Ranch House Meats / Pure Montana Meats
  + Blue Creek Marbled Meats
  + Yellowstone Valley Farms
  + Crazy Peak Brewing
  + Primitive Meats
  + F Bar 3 Vineyard
* BRCD worked with Stillwater County to develop and administer county-wide COVID-relief grants for county businesses.
* Beartooth submitted letters of support for 2 ARPA proposals.
* Attended MEDA Fall Conference, where the Montana Cooperative Development Center presented.
* Regional trainings are promoted on our Facebook and LinkedIn pages, including those through SBDC, Big Sky EDA, Montana DOC, Rock31, Montana FADC, City College, and more.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** None

**Goal 2: Provide access to capital and funding mechanisms, including a regional RLF, to qualified existing and new businesses.**

Strategy: Continue to provide assistance that would lead to funding from the Beartooth RLF.

Strategy: Continue to promote and market the RLF while making technical assistance visits and providing planning assistance to business clients.

Strategy: Continue to expand the RLF by marketing its services to and cooperating with commercial bankers and chambers of commerce throughout the region.

Strategy: Support partner initiatives, including the Rock 31 program, which would provide access to capital and funding mechanisms, including venture capital and angel network funding.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Attended partner meetings, Chamber of Commerce meetings, and met with potential loan clients and Rock 31 presenters at One Million Cups presentations. The RLF manager has been working with EDA to de-federalize the funds, which will allow for new funding opportunities when the process is completed

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* Beartooth ED staff supported partner organizations in all five counties in the region.
* Explained RLF financing options to 94 existing and potential clients.
* RLF activity was reported in annual meetings with all 5 counties and 3 cities.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** Our long-time Finance Director left in October, so there has been a transition period. However, the new director is doing fantastic work. 1 potential client had no possible collateral to secure a loan.

**Goal 3: Support local and regional business recruitment and outreach activities.**

Strategy: Collaborate and assist local economic development partners to recruit and develop businesses that want to locate in our region, as requested.

Strategy: Assist partners in the development and distribution of recruitment materials, as appropriate.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Beartooth ED staff partnered with local economic developers on business recruitment. An affordable housing modular construction company is being recruited for the region.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* S2A modular housing builders are actively being recruited to the region. Four possible locations in the region are under consideration.
* BRCD distributed flyers and advertised for Big Sky EDA’s *Edge of the Plains* documentary.
* Beartooth staff are working with a business wanting to open a camelina-processing plant that would create 100-200 new jobs.
* Staff met with Big Sky Beef and Restoration Beef to discuss the need for investment for their proposed large meat processing plants.
* BRCD staff had meetings with potential entrepreneurs including:
  + Creation of a hot springs resort in Fort Rockvale (Mount Aqua)
  + New restaurant in Red Lodge
  + Microbreweries in Laurel, Columbus, and Bridger
  + Car wash in Bridger
  + Duck Decoy museum in Edgar.
  + Salon in Columbus
  + Robin Whalen
  + Stone Creek Farms
  + Kathy Bauer
  + Blue Creek Marbled Meats
  + Miller’s Custom Meats

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** Need $20 million to build an S2A factory plus additional funding for infrastructure buildout.

**Goal Area: Innovation & Entrepreneurship**

**Goal 1: Support local and regional activities that elevate entrepreneurship and innovation.**

Strategy: Participate in and leverage resources available to Big Sky Economic Development’s Rock 31 program operated by the SBDC that provides concept to commercialization services for new and existing businesses in the region.

Strategy: Support and promote activities that lead to economic diversification.

Strategy: Support and participate in local and regional activities that enhance the Innovate Montana initiative during Innovate Week.

**Goal 2: Support local and regional activities, including incentives, that increase growth rate and revenue of area businesses.**

Strategy: Continue to provide technical assistance that would lead to funding for clients engaging in planning activities such as feasibility studies, building expansion, and industrial growth.

Strategy: Support local incentives designed to increase the growth rate and revenue of local and regional businesses, as appropriate.

Strategy: Support industry focused on education and training developed by Beartooth or partner entities, including institutes of higher education and Rock 31.

**Goal 3: Support job creation, private investment attraction, and advances in technology that strengthen existing trade sectors.**

Strategy: Support the Billings Library in the possible formation of a patent and trademark center to assist innovators and entrepreneurs in researching potential opportunities.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Beartooth ED staff participated in Rock31 programs and 1 Million Cups. Meetings with regional businesses to help diversify the economy were held. Beartooth ED staff participated in Downtown Billings Priority Planning discussions. Beartooth ED staff held meetings with potential clients on feasibility studies, industrial growth, and training.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* 4 meetings were held with Zoot and local data centers.
* A remote worker training program was discussed with Montana Department of Labor and MSU Extension that is similar to the USU program currently underway. Beartooth ED successfully was certified through the remote worker program.
* Ongoing assistance to a client with innovative technology, Brian Elliot and 406 Bovine. He has received a commitment of venture capital and is seeking Series A Capital Investment.
* Client Tony Seesing has developed and patented a product for the fencing industry that mechanically puts clips on steel posts. He is working with MT Manufacturing Extension to refine his design.
* Kara Joyce, a client interested in agriculture occupational therapy, is currently making a business plan with SBDC.
* BRCD concluded the final year of a 5-year USDA RCPP grant that assisted producers in adopting more efficient natural resource conservation practices.
* Assisted Stillwater County ED with a BSTF application (which was received) for a feasibility study for a business/industrial park.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** None

**Goal Area: Economic Growth & Resiliency**

**Goal 1: Support and generate activities that will lead to an increase in the capacity and diversity of the regional economy to produce goods and services.**

Strategy: Assist communities with the assessment, facilitation and planning efforts that would lead to the development of an economic diversification plan, especially in those areas with heavy reliance on a single industry. See below.

Strategy: Assist communities in the implementation of an economic diversification plan, including the identification and securing of resources.

**Goal 2: Engage the region in Steady-State incentives to bolster long-term economic durability.**

Strategy: Encourage and participate in comprehensive planning efforts that include extensive community participation to define and embrace a collective vision for resilience.

Strategy: Assist communities and partners with business planning initiatives that address resiliency and post-disruption recovery.

Strategy: Assist communities with planning efforts to employ safe development practices in business districts, including awareness and mitigation strategies for floodplain-designated areas.

**Goal 3: Engage the region’s networks in Responsive initiatives to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges.**

Strategy: Support and assist communities and counties in their adoption or update of hazard mitigation plans, utilizing tools such as those found at <http://readyand>safe.mt.gov/Emergency

Strategy: Assist in establishing a process for regular communication and updating of business community needs as they relate to disaster recovery, as appropriate.

Strategy: Communicate with elected officials as to their disaster response plans and potential gaps that should be addressed as part of their overall recovery plan.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACHIEVED:** Beartooth RC&D continues work on a targeted industry study, a regional economic recovery specialist, and a housing study, all contracted through CARES Act funding. Weekly Yellowstone County Economic Response and Recovery team meetings took place for most of the year.

**QUANTIFY DELIVERABLES:**

* Staff were involved in the possible creation of a TIF District that was addressed in Red Lodge planning meetings. If created, the TIF District would strengthen economic development efforts in the industrial zone of Red Lodge.
* $2.3 million was received by Stillwater County through our efforts under a recent disaster declaration. An engineering firm has been hired and work continues on the roads project.
* Attended the Annual Governor’s Conference on Tourism and Recreation in April.
* Beartooth staff participated in monthly Regional Housing meetings with Big Horn County and Red Lodge.
* Beartooth staff attended the Billings Housing Summit, where Cushing Terrell (hired with our EDA Cares Act money) presented their findings.
* Beartooth’s work on a Regional Bozeman Trail group is leading to more economic development opportunities and great partnerships with leaders in both Montana and Wyoming. These inter-state efforts increase the ability to withstand shock by developing a new economic corridor.
* Big Sky EDA (with use of EDA Cares Act money) held 68 online trainings in 2021 to assist entrepreneurs and business owners.
* Beartooth staff attended The Path Ahead webinar series and the Housing Strategy Summit, both of which gave great tools and resources for bolstering resiliency.
* The new Big Horn County EDD (provided by USDA RCDI funding) will be able to advocate for a previously silent population.

**DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED:** Community opposition, especially from school district officials, has hampered progress with establishing a TIF District in Red Lodge.

**Evaluation:**

1. **Number of jobs created after implementation of CEDS:**

Thirty (30) FTE jobs in the region were created as a direct result of services provided through BRCD within the fiscal year. Two jobs were related to a meat processing operation in Carbon County. The other twenty-eight jobs created were through BRCD’s Revolving Loan Fund.

1. **Number and types of investments undertaken in the region:**

Investments have been made in businesses throughout the region, but the exact amount of those investments are unknown. Private development activity in the region had slowed at the beginning of the year due to the ongoing pandemic. As the year progressed, the interest in new businesses increased steadily. Public infrastructure investment continues to be a huge part of the region’s activity and BRCD’s activity as well.

1. **Number of jobs retained in the region:**

Sixty-one (61) jobs in the region were retained as a direct result of services provided by BRCD within the fiscal year. Twenty-six (26) jobs were retained in Yellowstone County; Six (6) jobs were retained in Carbon County. Nine (9) jobs were retained in Stillwater County; five (5) jobs were retained in Big Horn County. Fifteen (15) jobs were retained in Sweet Grass County.

1. **Amount of private sector investments in the region after implementation of the CEDS:**

Within the BRCD region, we have seen enormous growth from our many private sector investments but specific data is very difficult to obtain in rural areas. BRCD’s Food and Ag has been directly involved with over $6,745,000 of projects in the region; $4,365,000 of the funds utilized in the projects were private.

1. **Changes in the economic environment of the region:**

Economic conditions in the region are diverse. Billings and Yellowstone County are considered the most healthy in terms of opportunity and innovation, while the Crow Reservation is still struggling with basic needs. The decrease in coal severance revenue has affected tribal employment through job furloughs and the employees remain unsure if they will return to work. Sweet Grass and Stillwater Counties are largely dependent upon the Sibanye-Stillwater Mine for County Revenue and jobs; the mine continues to grow but faces challenges from supply chains and a limited supply of available workforce. Carbon County’s economy tends to be dependent upon tourism, which also faces many challenges. The main concerns throughout all five counties are the lack of access to: childcare, housing, broadband, mental health, and available workforce.

**Unemployment:**

Montana’s unemployment rate hit a 14-year low, dropping to 3.5% in August 2021. The national unemployment rate for August 2021 was 5.2%. Governor Greg Gianforte announced Montana’s unemployment rate dropped to an all-time low of 2.7% in January 2022 which demonstrates the workforce is steadily returning to work. Four out of our five counties have followed the state’s unemployment trend (Sweet Grass, Stillwater, Carbon, Yellowstone); Big Horn County’s unemployment rate continued to diminish to 6.7% in September 2021. The Crow Reservation is located in Big Horn County, and it possessed an unemployment rate of 10% in September 2021. The Northern Cheyenne Reservation is also located in Big Horn County, and their unemployment rate was 10.3% in September 2021.

**Median Household Income:**

According to SAIPE\* (based on US Census Bureau information), Montana as a state reported MHI at $57,730 which has increased $482 from 2019. Median Household Income in the region is as follows through 2020: Big Horn County $42,823 (down $895 from 2019), Carbon County $62,465 (up $4,880 from 2019), Stillwater County $73,044 (up $4,858 from 2019), Sweet Grass County $58,746 (up $3,487 from 2019), and Yellowstone $58,374 (down $3,061 from 2019).

**Changing Demographics:**

Demographic change manifests in different ways across the state – certain counties are projected to grow older faster than other counties. The state’s labor force participation rate (LFPR) has been declining since about 2001, characteristic of a population that is aging. Along with aging, migration is another population process that will continue to shape Montana’s demographic characteristics.

| **County** | **2010 Population** | **2020 Population** | **% Change** | **Under 18: % of Population** | **Over 65:% of Population** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Big Horn | 12,865 | 13,124 | 2% | 33.50% | 13.30% |
| Carbon | 10,078 | 10,473 | 4% | 17% | 26.80% |
| Stillwater | 9,117 | 8,963 | -2% | 21.10% | 23.50% |
| Sweet Grass | 3,651 | 3,678 | 1% | 20.50% | 27.40% |
| Yellowstone | 147,972 | 164,731 | 11% | 23.30% | 17.40% |

**\*Source: US Census Bureau**

**\*\*% Change compares 2010 to 2020**

**Diversity Index:**

According to the Great Falls Tribune Data Central (based on the US Census Bureau data), this tool analyzes the variety of ethnicities present in a community. Big Horn County has decreased their diversity by 1. The other counties in BRCD’s region have increased their diversity: Carbon up by 9, Stillwater up by 9, Sweet Grass up by 11, and Yellowstone up by 11.

\*SAIPE: [Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe.html)- www.census.gov

**Schedule:**

**Please see Attachment A for the Schedule.**

**Acronym List for Schedule:**

| **Implementation Partners** |
| --- |
| BSED- Big Sky Economic Development |
| BHC- Big Horn County |
| EIG- Economic Innovation Group |
| FADC-Food and Ag Development Center |
| GOED-Governor's Office of Economic Development |
| LDO-Local Development Organization |
| LWCF- Montana Land Water Conservation Fund |
| MBOH- Montana Board of Housing |
| MCDC- Montana Cooperative Development Center |
| MDOA-Montana Development of Agriculture |
| MDOC- Montana Department of Commerce |
| MEDA-Montana Economic Developers Association |
| MFFA- Montana Facility Finance Authority |
| MTCF- Montana Community Foundation |
| NaCo-National Association of Counties |
| NADC- Native American Development Corporation |
| NADO- National Association Development Corporation |
| RLACF-Red Lodge Area Community Foundation |
| SBDC- Small Business Development Center |
| SCED- Stillwater County Economic Development |
| SGC- Sweet Grass Chamber of Commerce |
| TEDD- Tribal Economic Development |