REGION I PDC

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

FY2025

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REGIONONEPDC.ORG

I. Introduction and Purpose

Acknowledgement

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Region I Planning & Development Council's
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Introduction and Purpose

The Region I Planning & Development Council is a coalition of local governments representing six counties in Southern West Virginia—McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming—along with twenty-five municipalities within these counties. The Council's Board of Directors, which serves as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee, includes twenty-five mayors, six county commissioners, and private sector appointees. The Council collaborates closely with local Economic Development Authorities, Public Service Districts, and various other organizations across the region.

Each year, the Regional Council is tasked with preparing or updating a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for submission to its members, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Economic Development Administration, the West Virginia Department of Economic Development, and the broader public.

This document serves as an annual update to the region's 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The plan provides a strategic framework, focusing on critical factors for the economic advancement of the region. Economic and community development is fundamentally local, occurring within towns, cities, and counties. Local governments are responsible for providing the essential infrastructure and amenities—such as development sites, water and sewer facilities, solid waste disposal, fire and police protection, as well as recreational and cultural opportunities—that make an area competitive and attractive for development. These elements are crucial prerequisites for attracting employment opportunities.

Economic development planning requires assessing and leveraging local resources, minimizing deficiencies, and coordinating efforts to address economic distress. Local, state, and federal governments agree that this process is most effectively developed at the regional level.

This localized planning approach addresses the region's needs, developing a strategic plan for this Council of local governments, while simultaneously meeting the planning requirements of the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the West Virginia Department of Economic Development.

In summary, the CEDS is a regional planning and implementation process aimed at creating jobs, fostering more stable and diversified economies, improving living conditions, and providing a framework for coordinating the efforts of individuals and organizations concerned with economic development. This document outlines the region's challenges, needs, and resources, identifies the goals and objectives of the development program, presents strategies and action plans to achieve these goals, and establishes criteria for evaluating program outcomes.

The Regional Council

WHAT? WHO? WHY? WHERE? HOW?

REGION I PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

What? A public agency created by West Virginia law to provide comprehensive planning of all types for the region; coordination of federal and state funding in the region; a means of technical assistance to and cooperation between units of local government.

Who? All units of government in McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming Counties, plus up to 49% private sector appointees.

Why? Because the interdependence and relationships between neighboring communities and counties cover areas of employment, industry, housing, health, recreation, and environmental protection.

Where? The Region I Planning & Development Council office is located at 241 Mercer Springs Road, Suite 21, Princeton, WV 24740; Telephone (304) 431-7225; Fax (304) 431-7235; or E-mail us at regionone@regiononepdc.org.

How? By the development of overall regional planning, continually updated to meet changing needs and conditions.

Through the review, comment, and assistance in formulation of plans or proposals which involve public funding, governmental action, public property, intergovernmental cooperation, and regional development.

With the involvement of local governments, citizens advisory councils, special interest representation, and task forces.

REGION I PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
241 Mercer Springs Road, Suite 21
Princeton WV 24740
Telephone: (304) 431-7225 / Fax: (304) 431-7235
E-Mail: regionone@regiononepdc.org Website: www.regiononepdc.org

Executive Officers

Chairperson
Charles Saunders, Summers County Commission
120 Ballengee Street
Hinton, WV 25951

Vice Chair
Bruce Mutter, Private Sector
P.O. Box 2182
Bluefield, WV 24701

Treasurer
Tim Pike, Town of Athens
P.O. Box 458
Athens, WV 24712

Secretary
Bill Shiflet, Private Sector
P.O. Box 560
Union, WV 24983

Council Staff

Eric Combs
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Ben Haring
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Sheldon LeMay
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Lisa Miller
Financial Assistant

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Kim Odle
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Project Manager

Lucas Pettus
Project Manager

Marie Price
Administrative Assistant

Jason Roberts
Executive Director

Debbie Sarver
Financial Assistant

Lori Shrewsbury
Financial Manager

Justin Watkins
GIS Specialist

Private Sector Membership Ratified on July 29, 2025

Public Sector Membership Updated as Changes Occur

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

*	**Michael Brooks**	(304) 436-8548	McDowell County Commission	Commission President
*	**Greg Puckett**	(304) 487-8306	Mercer County Commission	Commissioner
*	**Kenny Mann**	(304) 772-3096	Monroe County Commission	Commissioner
/	**Daniel Hall**	(304) 255-9146	Raleigh County Commission	Commissioner
/	**Charles W. Saunders**	(304) 466-7100	Summers County Commission	Commission President
*	**Jason Mullins**	(304) 732-0007	Wyoming County Commission	Commission President
**	Dorothy Wilson	(304) 383-2993	Town of Anawalt	Businessperson - Mayor
	Brian Harrison	(304) 967-7370	Town of Bradshaw	Acting Mayor
	Kenneth Gentry	(304) 656-7145	Town of Davy	Miner - Mayor
	Robert Little	(304) 448-2209	City of Gary	Mayor
**	Joe Ford	(304) 938-3035	Town of Iaeger	Businessperson - Mayor
**	Holly Maben	(304) 862-2239	City of Keystone	Acting Mayor
**	Adam Gianato	(304) 585-7913	Town of Kimball	Mayor
**	Robert White	(304) 862-3414	Town of Northfork	Mayor
	David Deel	(304) 875-3111	City of War	Businessperson - Mayor
*	**Harold McBride**	(304) 436-3113	City of Welch	Businessperson - Mayor
/	**Timothy Pike**	(304) 384-3525	Town of Athens	Businessperson - Mayor
*	**Sam Wolford**	(304) 327-2401	City of Bluefield	Community & Economic Development Director
	Grant Bennett	681-284-2061	Town of Bramwell	Mayor
	c/o Mercer Co. Commission	---	Town of Matoaka	---
**	Deborah Rachel	(304) 898-2287	Town of Oakvale	Mayor
	Dewey Russell	(304) 487-5024	City of Princeton	Council Member
	Michael Lively	(304) 753-9509	Town of Peterstown	Businessperson - Mayor
***	**Caroline S. Sparks**	(304) 772-5522	Town of Union	Business Owner - Mayor
*	**Philip Jarrell**	(304) 256-1750	City of Beckley	Interim City Manager
**	Kenneth Allen	(304) 934-6301	Town of Lester	Businessperson - Mayor
	Wayne Houck	(304) 253-5654	Town of Mabscott	Businessperson - Mayor
	c/o Raleigh Co. Commission	---	Town of Rhodell	---
	Ralph Sallie	(304) 683-4456	Town of Sophia	Mayor
*	**Jackson L. Scott** "Jackie"	(304) 466-3255	City of Hinton	Mayor
*	**Alan Mills**	(304) 294-7132	City of Mullens	Mayor
	T. H. Evans Jr. (Tom)	(304) 682-6231	Town of Oceana	Retired Businessperson - Mayor
	Aaron Hatfield	(304) 732-6255	Town of Pineville	Mayor
	PRIVATE SECTOR MEMBERS			
	Dr. Donald R. Reed, Jr.	(304) 436-6588 ext. 101	McDowell	Executive Director, McDowell Co Commission on Aging
/	**Bruce Mutter**	(304) 425-6946	Mercer	Director, CART, Inc.
**	Lisa Jones	(304) 952-4264	Mercer	Chief Executive Officer, So. Highlands Mental Health Clinic
	Duane Miller	(304) 646-1575	Monroe	Business Owner
/	**Bill Shiflet**	(304) 646-3398	Monroe	Insurance Agent
	Donald Evans	(304) 646-3397	Monroe	Retired County Clerk
	Jim Nelson	(304) 646-6242	Monroe	CEO, Monroe Health Center
***	**Manuel Cartelle**	(304) 255-4914	Raleigh	Retired Executive Director Housing Authority
**	Judy Radford	(304) 252-0233	Raleigh	Retired EDA Director
*	**Norman L. Kirkham**	(304) 647-0364	Summers	Retired Regional Council Director
	Dr. Steve Richman	(304) 466-3943	Summers	Semi-Retired, Physician
**	Peni Adams	(304) 890-6526	Wyoming	Retired Entrepreneur
**	Christy Laxton	(304) 732-6707	Wyoming	Executive Director, Wyoming County EDA

* **Member of Executive Committee**

** Minority / Female

*** Minority / Female and Member of Executive Committee

/ Officer/Executive Committee

CHANGES IN THE REGION

CHANGES IN THE REGION (Updated for 2025)

A. Changes within the Regional Council

In Fiscal Year 2024–2025, the Region I Planning & Development Council has seen changes in membership and staffing, continuing to reflect the evolving priorities and capacities of the region. Notably, private sector membership was ratified on July 24, 2024, and public sector membership is being updated on an ongoing basis. The Council continues to maintain active participation from all six counties—McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming—and numerous municipalities, ensuring regional collaboration on economic and infrastructure initiatives.

B. Changes within the Regional Economy

Region I continues to stabilize from the long-term economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, while adapting to broader structural changes in employment and industry.

Unemployment Trends

As of May 2025, the unemployment rate for the Region I PDC area was 5.3%, an increase from 5.0% in May 2024. This trend mirrors broader national and state-level patterns. The following table provides updated comparative unemployment rates:

Region	May 2024	May 2025	Change
Region I PDC	5.0%	5.3%	+0.3%
West Virginia	4.2%	4.6%	+0.4%
United States	4.3%	4.0%	-0.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), accessed July 2025.

Employment and Payroll

According to the West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs, total non-farm payroll employment in Region I increased from 64,100 in May 2024 to 65,700 in May 2025—an addition of 1,600 jobs. Key growth sectors include:

- Health Care & Social Assistance
- Construction (largely driven by infrastructure investment)
- Professional & Technical Services

Non-Farm Payroll (Region I)	May 2024	May 2025	Change
Total Employment	64,100	65,700	+1,600

Source: West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs, 2025 Regional Employment Summary.

Economic Recovery and Resiliency

Region I continues to leverage federal and state recovery programs to address long-standing economic challenges and foster resilience. Programs supported by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) have catalyzed improvements in:

- Water and wastewater systems
- Transportation planning
- Broadband and digital inclusion
- Energy efficiency and conservation

The number of funded projects increased significantly in FY-24, with 210 grant applications submitted representing over $456 million in proposed investments—up from $267 million in FY-23.

Assessment of Progress in FY-25

In order to determine and assess the progress made during the planning year on an ongoing basis, the evaluation will show the relationship of funded projects to the planning goals and objectives of the CEDS. This will result in reports which will document the progress of the CEDS.

The review of this will be used as an evaluation of the effectiveness in meeting the goals and will be used to adjust the CEDS, as needed. This report will be made available to the public and Board of the Regional Council for decision making adjustments.

Progress for FY-25: During this period, the Regional Council prepared and submitted 178 applications representing $414,083,064.20 in funding. See the following assessment for recent program evaluation. This is up from FY-23 when staff prepared 159 applications representing $267,729,462.20 in funding.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Community Facilities and Services

(Neighborhood Improvements, Libraries, Public Safety, Sewer, Water, Solid Waste and Recreational)

Goal

-To provide, where financially and physically feasible in the most effective period possible, adequate sanitary sewer, water, and solid waste facilities to meet both the existing needs and the future growth and development needs of the Region I area.

-To provide adequate community facilities and services for each community within the region.

-Ensure that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy the open space and adequate recreation facilities and services.

Objectives

-Provide technical assistance and procure investments for development of traditional land innovative sanitary water and sewage systems and solid waste collection and disposal systems where there exists and imminent threat to public health as a result of untreated waste and/or contaminated water, or there is a designated growth area, special development opportunity, or rural service center that can feasibly support growth.

-To assist local governments in developing their abilities for planning and development through creation of planning commissions and development authorities.

-To upgrade existing municipal streets and sidewalks and county orphan roads.

-To provide fire and police protection to adequately protect all residents and their property.

-Preserve and reserve land for open space purposes.

-Maintain the existing public recreational facilities and services.

-To develop a Geographic Information System.

-To increase economic resiliency.

-To increase resiliency to natural disasters.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal

-To encourage industrial/commercial development, tourism and travel growth, which enhance employment opportunities and diversity, resulting in a large tax base needed to support the existing and future community.

Objectives

-To provide for industrial parks, making the most efficient use of land, water facilities, sewage facilities, and minimizing excessive traffic flow patterns.

-To preserve our existing job opportunities throughout the Region I area.

-To encourage the location and expansion of diversified job opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed.

-To encourage future retail, commercial and service enterprises toward existing central business districts.

-To reserve areas of sufficient size which have location and service characteristics unique to industrial and commercial development requirements, thus making the Region I area highly attractive for new industries and resulting opportunities. Characteristics of primary importance to industrial and commercial development land use are proximity to interchanges, variety of modes of transportation and essential public utilities.

-To organize local development groups throughout the region, including but not limited to Area Partnership Councils, Economic Task Forces, and County Development Authorities.

-To preserve, yet develop, our many national attractions to generate additional tourism and travel to the region.

-To develop a Geographic Information System.

-Analysis of COVID impact; implementation of recovery, resiliency, and diversification efforts.

-Analysis of coal loss impact; implementation of recovery, resiliency, and diversification efforts.

-To increase economic resiliency.

-To increase resiliency to natural disasters.

ENVIRONMENT

Flood Prevention

Goal

-To promote flood control projects where needed.
-To utilize new technologies to utilize recovery funds more efficiently.

Objectives

-To assist in short-term flood prevention projects.

-To assist the local governmental entities in developing flood plain management policies.

-To develop a Geographic Information System.

-To increase economic resiliency.

-To increase resiliency to natural disasters.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Vocational Education

-To provide vocational education facilities within each county of the region.

Higher Education

-To provide a variety of easily accessible, quality, higher education opportunities which consider present and future professional needs.

-To provide maximum cooperation and coordination between secondary, private, local and regional sectors.

-To provide maximum productivity and efficiency in program and utilization of resources.

Public Education

The goals of public education for the children and youth of the region may be stated as follows:

-To develop skills in reading, spelling, perceiving, speaking, listening, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing numbers and using reference materials.

-To develop the knowledge of governmental, social and economic systems in order to make informed choices.

-To develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to function successfully in advanced academic and technical training programs and useful occupations.

-To develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to develop self-esteem.

-To develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the creative, visual and performing arts to enrich the quality of their lives and provide an undertaking of their culture and heritage.

-To develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes related to science and technology, rational decision-making and creative problem solving in order to function successfully in a high technology society.

TRANSPORTATION

Goal

-To promote an effective transportation and circulation network that improves the movement of people and goods, protects the environment, facilitates energy conservation, promotes sound development patterns, and is supportive of economic growth.

Objectives

-To enable a well-coordinated system of streets and highways, separating local traffic from industrial traffic, thus improving the accessibility of transportation to public facilities.

-To help develop large commercial airports to handle the present and future needs of developing areas.

-To encourage the expansion of a passenger rail system.

-To promote an adequate public transportation system in terms of jobs and shopping opportunities for elderly, handicapped, and low-income residents.

-To encourage the utilization of existing and potential tourism parkways throughout the region.

-To develop a Geographic Information System.

-To perform the technical and analytical services for the Fayette/Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization.

-To increase economic resiliency.

-To increase resiliency to natural disasters.

GOVERNMENT

Goal

-To promote developments that are indicative of our balanced land use strategy and which are compatible with our efforts to minimize air, water and noise pollution.

-Schedule future development based on the availability of required facilities and services.

-Minimize strip development in areas unsuited for it in terms of soil capabilities, slope conditions, or location of development in flood plains.

-Develop a Geographic Information System.

-To analyze COVID-related impacts and disruptions; implement continuity of operations procedures.

ENERGY

Goal

-To promote economic prosperity and ensure a safe environment for the region through energy conservation and efficiency, the wise management of traditional energy resources, and the development and use of viable competitive and alternative energy systems.

Objectives

-To develop a Comprehensive Regional Energy Development Plan

-To develop an energy impact planning capability within the Regional Staff.

-To provide proper management for the siting and improvement process for energy production and generation, especially from our coal resources.

-To utilize hydro-electric production at the Bluestone Dam.

-To develop a Geographic Information System.

-To increase economic resiliency.

-To increase resiliency to natural disasters.

HOUSING

Goal

-An adequate amount of decent, safe, and sanitary housing in various price ranges so that every person/family has the opportunity to buy or rent decent housing in a suitable living environment.

Objectives

-To plan neighborhoods which will retain long-term livability and be free from blighting factors such as incompatible land use.

-To pursue a program of renovation of existing units, especially for those on social security and those in low-income brackets.

-To eliminate housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

-To improve and expand the immediate housing opportunities for all residents of the region in order to alleviate housing shortages.

-To provide the distribution of housing resources, including assisted housing to meet the needs of all citizens in order to provide a choice of housing types, price and location.

-To encourage private developers to increase production and to develop a diversity of housing units at various price ranges throughout the region.

-To increase economic resiliency.

-To increase resiliency to natural disasters.

The following Community Facilities and Services Projects have been funded in FY-25 to address our goals and objectives.

I. **Community Facilities and Services Goals:**

Project Name: Amigo & Rhodell Wastewater Collection and Treatment System
Applicant: COMA PSD
County: Raleigh
Source: USDA
$75,000.00

Project: Ballard Sewer Extension
Applicant: Red Sulphur PSD
County: Monroe
Source: CDS-CWSRF
$500,000.00

Project: Big Bend Wastewater Treatment Plant
Applicant: Big Bend PSD
County: Summers
Source: DEP- CWSRF; IJDC
$2,802,000.00

Project: Big Bend Water System Improvements
Applicant: Big Bend PSD
County: Summers
Source: Summers County Commission
$600,000.00

Project Name: Bluewell PSD, Water System Upgrades
Applicant: Bluewell PSD
County: Mercer
Source: Local
$751,400.00

Project: Bradshaw Water
Applicant: McDowell County Commission
County: McDowell
Source: HUD CDBG

$1,967,394.00

Project: Davy Water I
Applicant: Town of Davy
County: McDowell
Source: HUD CDBG
$2,000,000.00

Project: Glen Rogers Sewer Critical Needs
Applicant: Ravencliff-McGraws-Saulsville PSD
County: Wyoming
Source: IJDC
$644,400.00

Project: Glen Morgan Wastewater Treatment Plant
Applicant: Glen Morgan PSD
County: Raleigh
Source: Other
$2,500,000.00

Project: Hinton CSO Abatement II
Applicant: Hinton Sanitary Board
County: Summers
Source: ARC/DEP/HUD CDBG/IJDC/Other
$8,005,000.00

Project: Hinton Sidewalks-Pleasant Street
Applicant: City of Hinton
County: Summers
Source: WVDOT
$710,804.00

Project: Huff Creek Broadband Fiber Deployment Project
Applicant: Wyoming County EDA
County: Wyoming
Source: ARC/Private
$681,331.00

Project: McDowell County-Wide Utility Study
Applicant: McDowell County Commission
County: McDowell
Source: HUD CDBG
$250,000.00

Project: Mullens Sewer System Improvements
Applicant: Mullens Sanitary Board
County: Wyoming
Source: Other
$320,000.00

Project: Northfork-Keystone Wastewater Collection and Treatment System
Applicant: McDowell County PSD
County: McDowell
Source: USDA
$75,000.00
Project: Premier Playground Upgrade
Applicant: McDowell County Commission
County: McDowell
Source: Local, **LWCF**
$104,912.00

Project: Princeton Community Center Phase III, Police Department
Applicant: City of Princeton
County: Mercer
Source: USDA/Governor's Office
$1,314,000.00

Project: Raleigh County PSD Mapping
Applicant: Raleigh County PSD
County: Raleigh
Source: Local Funds (**RCPSD**)
$55,000.00

Project: ROC- Connect Humanity Digital Accelerator Project
Applicant: ROC
County: ROC
Source: ARC
$80,000.00

Project: Summers Co. Trails
Applicant: Summers County Commission
County: Summers
Source: Other
$250,000.00

Project: Welch CSO Removal
Applicant: McDowell County PSD
County: McDowell
Source: Local Funds
$45,000.00

II. Economic Development Goals:

Region I understands that economic development is vital to the success of the region. To that end, Region I assists (either directly or indirectly) with multiple economic development applications and planning continually.

Project: BEDA Site Development
Applicant: Bluefield WV Economic Development Authority
County: Mercer
Source: CDS-HUD
$557,000.00

Project: Bluefield Demolition
Applicant: City of Bluefield
County: Mercer
Source: HUD CDBG
$46,500.00

Project: Community Connections, Renaissance Theater
Applicant: Community Connections
County: Mercer
Source: Governor's Office
$367,671.00

Project*:* Bluefield Exit 1

Applicant: Bluefield Economic Development Authority
County: Mercer
Source: West Virginia EDA
$1,650,000.00

Project: WV Planning Grant
Applicant: Region **I** PDC
County: Region **I**
Source: West Virginia Department of Economic Development
$35,000.00

Project: ARC Planning Grant
Applicant: Region **I** PDC
County: Region **I**
Source: Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
$110,204.00

Project: EDA Planning Grant
Applicant: Region **I** PDC
County: Region **I**
Source: United States Economic Development Administration (US EDA)
$70,000.00

III. Environmental Goals

Region I has experienced multiple federally designated natural hazard events over the past decade and is dedicated to helping the communities facing these events prevent future tragedies.

IV. Human Resources/Education.

Region I realizes the need for continued education and professional development. To that end Region I utilizes local educational resources whenever possible.

V. Transportation Goals

Region I realizes the importance of adequate transportation infrastructure and services. Region I has assisted in acquiring funding for multiple transportation studies throughout its tenure.

VI. Energy Goals

The Region places an ever-important emphasis on energy efficiency and conservation and has assisted with the applications for multiple organizations to bring energy independence to the Mountain State.

VII. Housing Goals

Region I has assisted various county and municipal agencies with meeting local housing needs. Extensions of water and sewer to many previously unserved communities is a major factor in improving housing needs within the Region.

VIII. Government Goals

The Region regularly aids member communities with a myriad of assistance in local and community projects.

Project: Wyoming County Courthouse- Side Stair Replacement
Applicant: Wyoming County Commission
County: Wyoming
Source: Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority (CFIA)
$100,000.00

Project: Wyoming County Courthouse Stair Replacement
Applicant: Wyoming County Commission
County: Wyoming
Source: Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority (CFIA)
$82,416.66

Project: 2021 Monroe County CFIA
Applicant: Monroe County Commission
County: Monroe
Source: Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority (CFIA)
$100,000.00

Total of all funded projects for FY-24= $26,850,032.66

Regional Projects Listing

Region I utilizes an online platform that enables communities to enter their respective projects into a regional project listing. The first component of the survey polls the community for their "Category Priority Ranking," ranking their priorities for the following overall categories:

-Community Facilities and Services
-Economic Development
-Human Resources
-Environment and Natural Resources
-Transportation
-Housing
-Energy
-Government

The second part of the survey polls communities for specifics of their anticipated projects. Accommodations in the survey are made to accept the following information:

-Project Category
-Project Name
-Estimated Cost
-Is Service Currently Provided?
-Number of Persons Benefitting
-Amount of Funding Committed

The survey also allows communities to add additional comments, as well as to upload their respective approved formal resolutions adopting the outlined projects as their desired project list. The Region will continue to utilize this improved methodology as it increases data entry efficiency and expedited generation of the Regional Project Listing.