

Location:
Western Nevada
Development District

Population:
637,254

**Estimated median
household income:**
\$52,397

**Estimated households
below poverty level:**
21.2%



"I was at a training in Illinois and all of the economic development professionals from the Midwest had blinders on and were only thinking about their town or county, but because of the SET, we're thinking regionally in Nevada, and I am already seeing that frame of mind lead to economic development projects that are good for Pershing County—and the region."

~ Heidi Lusby-Angvick, Executive Director, Pershing County Economic Diversification Authority

The effects of the recession are unmistakable, and the Western Nevada Development District (WNDD) was among the rural areas across the nation facing economic hardship. Employment levels were low, and there was also an evident need to enhance workforce education and skill training. To combat these declining education and workforce trends that have been apparent in Nevada for some time, something had to be done. The solution came when the WNDD was selected to be a region for Stronger Economies Together (SET) training in Nevada.

Vision

Through SET, the project team developed a vision statement that recognizes the importance of individual communities while endorsing a regional approach. Western Nevada is an innovative, regional economy, rooted in sustainable development and enriched by the area's abundant natural resources and the collaboration of its independent unique communities. Region-wide these prosperous communities demonstrate a forward-moving commitment to quality of life and to opportunity for all residents.

Progress Highlights

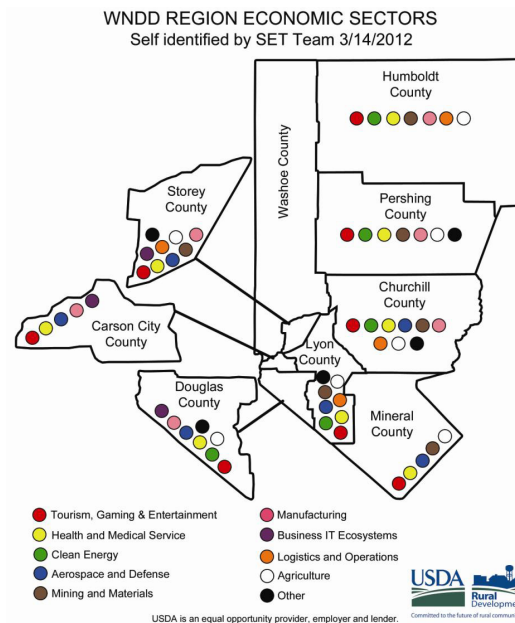
After extensive collaboration, the team finalized which economic sectors to target. Those that presented the greatest opportunity were Agribusiness, Connectivity, Energy and Tourism.

Agribusiness

The region received a grant through SET for their economic blueprint that was distinguished as a High Quality Plan. These funds are being used to develop a regulatory roadmap for local producers and buyers that will determine which regulatory agencies have jurisdiction over the different political entities in the region and what regulations cover the production and sale of food products within and between those entities.

One member of the workgroup is developing a study to Measure Local Food Capacity. This study will provide a baseline for local food production and then measure the increase or decrease of production over time. Though a great deal of work has been accomplished, there is a need for additional funding to complete what has been started.

As drought conditions linger, indoor agriculture will become a more important part of agricultural production in Nevada. Members of



the workgroup have been following Indoor Agriculture activities within the region, and they attended an Indoor Ag Conference in Las Vegas. They will continue to follow these activities and report back regularly.

Several members of the workgroup are interested in viticulture and wine-making. They have been working with a group of like-minded individuals to create a non-profit organization to encourage grape-growing in the region. They are also working on a legislative initiative to allow wineries in the urban counties, including tasting rooms that could increase tourism potential for the region.

Connectivity

The region is in need of additional broadband capacity, especially in rural areas. The group has worked closely with the statewide broadband effort Connect Nevada to help create a state plan, increasing access to broadband.

One project that will have tremendous regional impact is the USA Parkway. The parkway will connect Highway 50 to Interstate 80 while passing through the Reno-Tahoe Industrial Center, a major industrial park. The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) has completed the environmental review for the project and is almost finished with the design for the last step of construction. The workgroup is receiving regular updates on the progress of the parkway. Members

are also helping local communities plan for the impact of this project. Because of the major development in the industrial park, USA Parkway has moved to the top of NDOT's priority list.

Energy

Members of the energy workgroup have been promoting energy efficiency and the production of alternative energy in the region, and they continue to seek opportunities for job creation through these two avenues.

In January of 2014, WNDD was successful in obtaining a grant from the Nevada Governor's Office of Energy to produce YouTube videos promoting the uses of alternative energy. The process will include a contest among high school students to create short videos in their areas that will promote alternative energy use. Workgroup members have been very focused on making this project a success. If it is successful, what will have been learned from this project will be shared with the other workgroups to see if a similar approach might work in other areas.

Tourism

Working with the Nevada Commission on Tourism, a new standardized visitor survey to allow consistency in the gathering of data from attendees at tourism events within the region was created.

The group is working on NVI 50,



the celebration of Nevada's 150th year as a state. They have been seeking joint events and activities that will have a regional impact. One very successful project was the NVI 50 State Fair in Carson City. Many participants at the fair were from other counties in the region.

Members of the group have been very interested in an Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Rally that would take advantage of the many OHV trails in the region. Two of the counties in the region are working together, while two others are interested in participating, to create a rally that will use trails in those counties. In the past, this discussion would not have taken place, and each county would have tried to create an event like this on its own. The SET Tourism workgroup is helping create these regional partnerships.

The regional SET team, through efficient workgroups, has made great progress toward achieving their goals. Great strides have been made to securing the region's economic future and positioning it as a competitive region.