2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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Sierra Business Council’s role has always been to serve the economic, environmental, and social needs of our region in times of crisis. While 2020 will forever be defined by the global pandemic, we’ll also remember how SBC supported the immediate needs of Sierra communities while also addressing ongoing issues that impact the Sierra.

In 2020 Sierra Business Council emerged as the leader our communities needed us to be, providing resources to small businesses, advocating for policies to help our communities recover, and implementing climate and energy projects that support our local governments and workforce while reducing the impacts of climate change.

We were the partner that community leaders turned to to distribute $18.5 million in federal economic relief and community-driven loans to business owners, helping the economic backbone of the region survive the worst of the pandemic-induced recession. Our phones were ringing off the hook starting mid-March, and we answered over 2,000 calls while supporting 1,346 businesses and 3,596 jobs in 2020.

We continued our advocacy to bring proactive change to the region, helping lead to the adoption of $536 million in 2021 early action wildfire funding for California (after one of the most destructive wildfire seasons on record). We also supported local affordable housing initiatives, advanced opportunities to bridge the digital divide, and deployed $1.2 million to bring reliable broadband infrastructure to rural neighborhoods.

We redoubled our efforts to protect and improve environmental resilience in the region, embarking on a 22-county climate vulnerability assessment to better prepare the region for climate impacts. Our climate team also worked with 13 towns, counties, jurisdictions, and special districts to begin or complete greenhouse gas inventories, climate action plans, and on mitigation and adaptation projects.

Sierra Business Council has been all hands on deck to ensure that the Sierra will be able to withstand the impacts of the pandemic and come back stronger than ever.

Steve R. Frisch  
President & CEO

Allan Pietrasanta  
Board Chairman
OUR FOCUS AREAS

**MISSION**

Sierra Business Council pioneers and demonstrates innovative approaches and solutions to increase community vitality, economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social fairness in the Sierra Nevada.

**VISION**

In the Sierra Nevada, change and challenge create opportunities. Through innovation, integrity, and respect, Sierra Business Council harnesses these opportunities by implementing projects that model proactive change. Our goal is a diverse, inventive, and sustainable region where the economy is vibrant, the land is thriving, and the communities offer opportunity for all.

We act as steward leaders of the region, taking responsibility for the care and responsible management of our place, guided by the triple bottom line that considers the economy, environment, and community simultaneously.

**Economic Empowerment**

We work with small businesses, local governments, and community nonprofits to build the foundation for a vibrant local economy because dynamic communities are one of the region’s most important resources.

**Climate Action**

We assist communities throughout the Sierra to proactively plan for climate change by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapting to changes already impacting the Sierra.

**Regional Advocacy**

We advocate for the Sierra’s social, environmental, and economic interests. We work to elevate the issues that most impact our communities while ensuring the region’s value is recognized in legislative outcomes.
MEETING THE MOMENT
OUR 2020 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

infused
$18.5 MILLION
in economic capital

helped secure
$536 MILLION
in 2021 California early action wildfire funding

supported
1,346 BUSINESSES
3,596 JOBS

deployed
$1.2 MILLION
to support reliable broadband infrastructure

began a
22-COUNTY climate vulnerability assessment

assisted
13 JURISDICTIONS
with climate resilience projects

“We opened our Cafe during a time when business was booming. Shortly after we were hit with frequent power outages, local fires, and finally COVID. We fought hard to keep our doors open. Receiving a Nevada County Relief Fund grant through Sierra Business Council was a huge relief and felt like someone cared. We were able to pay employees and the rent and keep our doors open thanks to their help!”
-Ariel Wolansky, Choquiero Cacao Cafe, Nevada City
"Thanks to Sierra Business Council's support, You Bet! Bicycle Sales & Service was successful in securing PPP funds, expanding our retail space, and meeting the rising demand of the recreation industry during the pandemic. The SBC’s guidance allowed us to not only make it through this challenging time but thrive despite the challenging economic crisis."
- Jay Barre, You Bet Bicycle, Nevada City

"Through the grant we received from the Nevada County Relief Fund, SBC helped us to buy some much-needed inventory and pay a couple of back bills after things had taken a bad turn during the closure in Spring and Summer last year. They helped to brace us through the COVID crisis and kept us moving in the right direction toward the time when things started to improve for our business."
- Jonny Moser, Clock Tower Records, Grass Valley
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
Sierra Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

Rainbows in downtown Truckee brightened up shuttered storefronts in Spring 2020.

Budget: $744,931
Economic Empowerment includes the Sierra SBDC, the Sierra Economic Development District, and various loan and economic development programs. The Sierra SBDC provides one-on-one consulting and workshops to local entrepreneurs to help their businesses start, grow, and thrive. The Sierra SBDC currently serves El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Placer, and Sierra counties.

- Answered over 2,000 phone calls, providing direct support to 1,346 clients about state, local, and federal resources
- Helped businesses access CARES Act funding, apply for the Paycheck Protection Program, navigate closures and regulations, and scale operations to survive the declared economic disaster
- Administered federal and local grants, including Placer Shares Impact Grants ($8 million), Placer Invests ($5 million), Nevada County Relief Fund ($200,000), Colfax Small Business Grant Program ($41,500)
- Partnered with grassroots community supporters to launch the Resilience Fund and make 24 loans (a total of $395,000)
- Served 1,039 new clients over the course of 4,212 hours
- Supported 3,596 jobs
- Hosted 73 virtual workshops and webinars attended by 460 individuals.
- Helped distribute $18.4 million in capital funding via loans & equity investments to clients
- Distributed $1.5 million in Down Payment Assistance via 33 Martis Fund loans

"The Sierra SBDC was there for me during the early stages of Hibear. They plugged us into the entrepreneurial community helping to set our course toward success."
- Mark Tsigounis, Hibear, Truckee
Gold Country Broadband Consortium was formed to leverage regional, state, and national resources as an investment in improving and expanding broadband access in rural areas. Its goal is to increase internet access and speed in Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Sierra, and eastern Alpine counties.

**Budget: $58,646**

- Helped deploy over $1.2 million to bring reliable broadband to the Sierra.
- Collaborated with CA Emerging Technology Fund and Nevada Co to design parameters for first of its kind Programmatic Environmental Impact Report
- Assisted 4 internet service providers (ISPs) with CASF project applications
- Assisted 5 ISPs with county grant infrastructure applications
- Participated with El Dorado Co. Broadband for All community group for project planning
- Provided project management support for ongoing CPUC mapping updates
- Pursued funding to support broadband projects in the Sierra Economic Development District’s comprehensive economic development strategy
- Aligned priorities with economically disadvantaged communities needing to promote business and job growth
- Scoped the first update of the Nevada County Broadband Grant and managed implementation
- Collaborated with regional transportation districts to explore leveraged funding

"In a rural county like ours, there are significant service gaps. We want to go that ‘last-mile’ and make sure everyone who wants to get online can, so these projects represent important milestones on the road towards that goal. Our partnership with Sierra Business Council's GCBC program helps projects like these happen."

-Steve Monaghan, Nevada County
LAKE TAHOE WATER TRAIL

Budget: $91,610

The Lake Tahoe Water Trail (LTWT) is a designated water route along the 72-mile shoreline that links public beaches with launch and landing sites to help paddlers have a safe recreation experience, practice good stewardship, and protect the watershed.

- Began work on a **two-year grant** from the California Tahoe Conservancy to develop and implement the Lake Tahoe Water Trail Bilingual Lake Access Public Education and Outreach Program to increase awareness of the **health and wellness benefits** of human-powered recreation and **improve equitable public access and outdoor recreation** for California’s diverse populations
- **Translated** Stewardship Safety brochures, Day Trip Maps, and website into Spanish
- Distributed **7,500 English and 7,500 Spanish brochures** in the Tahoe Basin, Truckee, Sacramento and San Francisco regions, and Los Angeles
- Expanded **digital marketing assets** (photography and video), social media, and digital advertising campaigns targeted at the largest growing/new user segment of beginner (18-24 years old) and Latinx paddlers

SIERRA NEVADA GEOTOURISM

In partnership with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the National Geographic Society, the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide helps travelers get off the beaten path and experience the Sierra through the eyes of a local. Through an updated 2020 interactive website, those who know the destinations best are able to nominate and showcase the businesses, activities, and destinations they love in the Sierra. The project was without funding in 2020 but exists as a self-sustaining website that remains at the heart of our sustainable tourism and recreation efforts.

"Outdoor recreation is the backbone of the Sierra Nevada economy and way of life, and Sierra Business Council leads region-wide efforts to elevate sustainable outdoor recreation and its economic impact."
-Katie Hawkins, California Program Manager, Outdoor Alliance
The Government Affairs team is an established voice for the Sierra in Sacramento. SBC works with partners to drive funding to the region, bridge the urban-rural divide, and strengthen local communities by engaging in rural equity, natural resource protection, wildfire mitigation, access to broadband, climate resilience, and other issues that impact the Sierra. The government affairs team stands up for the region by testifying in hearings, commenting on legislation, tracking agency grant programs, developing partnerships, weighing in on draft regulations, and campaigning to pass ballot measures.

- Supported the advancement of a climate resilience bond, worked with key legislators ahead of the 2021-22 session to ensure Sierra climate needs would be addressed in a 2022 climate bond
- Worked alongside forestry advocates on comprehensive wildfire funding recommendations, including an early action wildfire budget package that was adopted in early 2021
- Raised the profile of the region's wildfire resilience, forest health, and workforce development needs through a coordinated media campaign with forestry partners
- Supported regional climate adaptation planning legislation to increase climate action capacity and implementation across Sierra communities
- Supported career pathway legislation for formerly incarcerated wildfire crew members.
- Supported the Governor's 30x30 initiative to conserve 30% of California's land and water by 2030; began work to ensure implementation meets the Sierra's biodiversity, resilience, and economic needs
- Developed a list of over 250 shovel-ready projects across the Sierra Nevada to help drive stimulus funds to the region.
- Conducted Census 2020 outreach in hard-to-reach areas of Plumas and Sierra Counties
- Advanced affordable and achievable housing objectives in partnership with the Mountain Housing Council, including an eviction moratorium to protect tenants impacted by COVID-19.
- Supported Governor Newsom's Broadband for All commitment. Recommended CASF funding for underserved communities and supported CASF draft funding guidelines to increase broadband access.
Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (CAMP) is a cross-sector partnership that promotes and facilitates regional climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, serves as a climate action capacity-building hub for Sierra communities, and fosters urban-rural connections to build state-wide investment in our region’s communities and natural resources. Sierra CAMP activates the Sierra Nevada on climate action.

- Began a 22-county Sierra Nevada Regional Climate Vulnerability Assessment in May 2020 to assess the social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities of our region to climate change, and to provide direct technical assistance to city and county governments to undertake local climate planning as required by SB 379.
- Conducted significant research to identify climate indicators and collect and collate data.
- Laid a foundation for community engagement and technical assistance that will begin implementation in 2021.
- Recruited over a dozen experts in natural resources, climate change, energy, public health, energy, and climate adaptation to serve on the Technical Advisory Group for the vulnerability assessment.
- Provided substantial support to Plumas County in its climate planning work, including a comprehensive draft of the Plumas County Climate Vulnerability Assessment, a 66-page document that synthesizes vulnerability in Plumas County across four sectors: human, built, environmental, and economic.
- Represented the Sierra region as part of ARCCA, a network of leading regional climate collaboratives from across California that work together to advance adaptation statewide and increase local capacity to build community resilience.
The Climate & Energy team, through programs such as Sierra Nevada Energy Watch (SNEW), assists communities throughout the Sierra to proactively plan for climate change by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapting to changes already impacting the region. The team works closely with local governments, school districts, public agencies, community members, and hard-to-reach businesses to conduct GHG inventories, develop GHG reduction plans, and execute projects that make their communities more resilient, efficient, and vibrant. Our programs increase the region's capacity to identify projects, identify finance options, and get energy-saving projects off the ground.

- Worked with Nevada County, Grass Valley, Nevada City, and Sonora to implement their respective energy action plans and bring more energy savings and climate resilience projects to their communities
- Facilitated energy efficiency projects for Placer County, City of Jackson, City of Colfax, Donner Summit Public Utilities District, and Quincy Fire District
- Finalized the GHG inventory for Nevada Irrigation District, began development of the Lake Tahoe Basin GHG inventory update, and started the development of the Calaveras County and Angels Camp GHG inventories
- Partnered with private firm SWELL Energy to increase access to Self Generation Incentive Program funds for rural and medically vulnerable households in PG&E territory
- Researched and consolidated a brief document for local governments and residents to better understand planning and feasibility needs for microgrid implementation to offset Public Safety Power Shutoff impacts. Presented report findings at the Ad Hoc Biomass Statewide Working Group
- Researched, wrote, and designed a comprehensive energy efficiency document to better prepare Californians in mountain communities for further grid decarbonization, decentralization, and diversification.

Budget: $366,973
"Sierra Business Council drives meaningful change on a wide variety of issues that impact our region. Their support of small businesses and local economies is the most widely known and recognized. They are also very active in several other community priorities including the deployment of critical broadband infrastructure, advocating for forest resilience and wildfire funding, supporting housing solutions, environmental advocacy, and fostering collaborative partnerships in Truckee and beyond. Truckee is fortunate to have SBC as a partner!"

-Anna Klovstad, Mayor, Town of Truckee
"Small businesses are the backbone of our community, and the impact of COVID-19 was staggering. Sierra Business Council was there for Growing Up Roseville when we needed it the most, helping us secure a grant through Placer Shares and helping our small business through the worst of the pandemic. Thanks to their support, we were able to bounce back stronger and more resilient than ever."

-Marne Larsen, Growing Up Roseville Magazine

**Expenses: $1,944,773**

- Economic Empowerment: 46%
- Climate Action: 19%
- Advocacy: 17%
- General Administrative: 15%
- Fundraising: 3%
Allan Pietrasanta, Chairman  
Former small business owner/Sales Manager

John Singlaub, Vice Chairman  
Ascent Environmental, Inc.

Steve Noll, Treasurer  
Design Workshop

Connie Gallipi, Secretary  
BitGive Foundation

Bill Feyling  
Carpenters 46

Tim Frank  
Sustainability Consultant

Mercedes de la Garza  
Reno/Tahoe Architect

Betony Jones  
Fourth Sector Strategies

Jason Moghaddas  
Spatial Informatics Group

Dennis Meyer  
Andregg Psomas

Richard Morrison  
Former Bank of America

Charles Segerstrom  
Energy Efficiency Consultant

Robert Weygandt  
Placer Co. Board of Supervisors

Teal Brown Zimring  
Galvanize Partners
We envision a future in which strong communities, regenerative economies, and a resilient environment are the foundation of the Sierra Nevada region. Through our work in Economic Empowerment, Regional Advocacy, and Climate Action, we work to make that vision a reality.

In 2021, Sierra Business Council will continue to help the area’s economies recover and small businesses thrive, tackle regional climate vulnerabilities alongside local governments, advocate for increased state investment in the region, and increase broadband equity and affordable housing in the Sierra.
Thank you for your continued support of and investment in Sierra Business Council. We know that this last year has been challenging in so many ways. The Sierra is an amazing place for many reasons, and high up on that list are community members and passionate advocates like you who invest in its future. There’s a small team behind SBC’s substantial impact, and you have our most sincere gratitude.
SIERRA BUSINESS COUNCIL

HOW YOU CAN HELP

DONATE
Make a one time or recurring donation to support resilience in the Sierra at sierrabusiness.org/contribute

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