



SIERRA
BUSINESS COUNCIL

Sierra Business Council

Annual Report 2024

A Letter from SBC Leadership

The Sierra Nevada faces significant challenges. Impacts on our environment, driven by climate change and a legacy of resource extraction, affect the treasured landscapes beneath our feet. Economic opportunities for our young people and working families are diminishing, the cost of housing is increasing, and wages relative to the rest of California are falling. Our rural communities and residents sometimes struggle to find their way in a rapidly changing world and economy.

For each of these systemic challenges, we believe there is a corresponding opportunity for learning, acquiring new skills as a region, rekindling our sense of community, improving our resilience, and unlocking innovation.

For 30 years, Sierra Business Council has sought to identify the region's most difficult problems and apply new ideas, methods, and partnerships to solve them. We have seen success in many endeavors and occasional setbacks. Still, our core strategy has never wavered: identify problems that need solving and systems in our region—social, environmental, and economic—that require intervention, and chart a new path.

Over the next 30 years, we are committed to bringing the same approach to our work. We are guided by our core values and engage our partners with integrity, accelerating positive change by valuing diversity and differences of perspective to improve our communities, environment, and economy at a regional scale.

We hope you will join us in our work and make it yours.

Sincerely,

Steve R. Frisch *Allan Pietrasanta*

Steve Frisch
President
Sierra Business Council

Allan Pietrasanta
Board Chair
Sierra Business Council





About Sierra Business Council

Sierra Business Council is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation established in 1994 and has dedicated 30 years to enhancing the Sierra Nevada region through community empowerment, environmental stewardship, and economic development.

Headquartered in Truckee, California with satellite offices in Bishop and staff located throughout the region, the organization promotes sustainable regional growth by supporting businesses, solving rural issues, and addressing climate change. SBC's initiatives include economic empowerment through direct technical assistance and development strategies, climate action programs that enhance energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, and regional advocacy to elevate the Sierra's interests in policy discussions.

Notable achievements include collaboration on establishing the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, launching the Sierra Small Business Development Center, and promoting energy resilience and climate planning via the Sierra Nevada Energy Watch. By integrating social, environmental, and economic impacts, SBC works towards a thriving, resilient Sierra Nevada with diverse economies and restored ecosystems.

Mission & Vision

Mission

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

Vision

In the Sierra Nevada, change and challenge create opportunities. Through innovation, integrity, and respect, SBC is a trusted partner and innovator. We implement projects that model proactive and positive change on the ground, enabling the region to adapt to the needs of its diverse population, a shifting environment, and a sustainable economy. These projects empower the Sierra Nevada to be the best place to raise a family, seek adventure, learn, engage in community, grow a business, and find meaningful work – a place of hope and accomplishment. We act as steward leaders of the region, taking responsibility for the care and responsible management of our place. Our work is focused on finding common ground among the diverse voices of our region to advance positive impact in this place we call home.





Our Foundational Values

Integrity

We lead with honesty, accountability, and commitment to our mission. We adhere to high ethical standards while striving for excellence.

Stewardship

We carefully and responsibly partner to lead the region and manage its resources to advance healthy, equitable, and sustainable natural and human communities.

Innovation

We help create new ways to proactively address complex issues where the collective solution exceeds the sum of the parts.

Prosperity

We strive to build a flourishing Sierra Nevada where the people and the environment can mutually benefit from our efforts and investments.

Positivity

We engage in positive thinking and positive behaviors, like kindness and generosity, striving for the best outcome for all involved. We believe that optimism is a force multiplier.

Systemetic Change

Our most aspirational value is to develop strategies and model new systems that are qualitatively more efficient, just, and equitable.

Strategic Goals





Regional Policy & Advocacy Leadership

1

SBC is a respected and effective regional policy advocate at the state and federal levels. SBC drives positive impact in the Sierra through progressive, game-changing policy and is sought after for our expertise. We focus our efforts on the most impactful legislation and policy with the greatest potential return for the Sierra. Our advocacy advances triple bottom line solutions and intervenes to lift and link policy, planning, and implementation.

The primary strategies to advance this goal are:

1. Focus on mission-aligned, high-impact areas, including a broader range of social and economic policy interventions.
2. Build coalitions and partnerships for change across the urban-rural divide and throughout the state.
3. Expand partnerships with local governments and community organizations.

Regional Policy & Advocacy Leadership



1

Impacts:

- Held over 51 meetings with state legislators, committee staff, and agency leaders in Sacramento
- Testified at key committee hearings on housing, climate, and wildfire resilience
- Co-led *Sierra Day at the Capitol*, bringing together over 70 regional representatives in the State Capitol to advocate for policy and budget allocations that benefit the Sierra
- Successfully advocated to place Prop 4 on the November ballot and supported the Yes On 4 campaign, leading to the passage of a \$10 billion climate bond that includes \$1.5 billion for wildfire resilience, \$3.8 billion for safe drinking water and increasing water supply, \$850 million to build clean energy infrastructure, \$700 million to create parks and green spaces, and \$450 million to protect communities from extreme heat. The measure earmarks over \$135 million for climate resilience and wildfire resilience in the Sierra Nevada region.
- Successfully advocated to protect critical funding for Sierra Nevada Conservancy, California Tahoe Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, Department of Conservation, and other agencies amid significant budget cuts
- Helped advance important housing legislation and played a leading role passing SB 440 allowing for the creation of Regional Housing Finance Authorities.
- Led the Sierra Consortium, a group of conservation and community-based organizations and local governments
- Co-convened a coalition dedicated to securing sustained statewide funding for wildfire resilience
- Represented the Sierra Nevada region throughout the state, including at the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, Economic Forecast Conference, California Adaptation Forum, California Economic Summit, and the California Climate and Energy Collaborative.



Energy & Climate Action Expertise

2

SBC is a trusted resource for local governments and businesses to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, maximize energy efficiency, and adapt to climate change across all sectors – including the natural environment, built environment, transportation, housing, and land use fields. We amplify and champion climate action and alternative energy solutions.

The primary strategies to advance this goal are:

1. Offer educational awareness, connections, coalition building, and workforce development activities
2. Provide direct climate mitigation and adaptation planning services to public and private sector partners.
3. Offer energy efficiency implementation services.
4. Develop and implement new projects on a case-by-case basis, focusing on energy codes, sustainability services staffing, energy storage, ZEV expansion, and increasing carbon sequestration.

Energy & Climate Action Expertise



2

Impacts:

- Northern Rural Energy Network
 - Helped secure \$11M to support energy efficiency programming in the Sierra Nevada
 - California Public Utilities Commission approved the NREN in late 2024
 - SBC's NREN programming will include residential energy efficiency technical assistance, residential rebates, commercial rebates, financing, workforce education & training, and codes & standards education
 - Programs will launch in 2025 and serve 14 Sierra Nevada counties within PG&E territory
 - Residential programs will launch in Q2 of 2025 and include rebates, energy efficiency kits, home assessments, and education.
- Sierra Nevada Energy Watch
 - Supported 29 public agencies and 20 small/medium businesses with energy efficiency technical assistance, including:
 - Completed 44 building energy audits
 - Developed 10 benchmarking reports
 - Worked on 3 greenhouse gas inventories
 - Conducted public outreach and community education via 33 newsletters, case studies, blogs, infographics, and presentations
- Climate Transformation Alliance
 - Secured state grant funding to fund CTA operations through June 2026
 - Held 4 quarterly member meetings
 - Initiated a quarterly CTA membership happy hour, "Green Drinks," to encourage network-building
 - Recruited over 20 CTA members to serve on subcommittees
 - Developed a website to provide and encourage resource sharing and updates
-

Energy & Climate Action Expertise



2

Impacts:

- Go Electric Truckee Tahoe
 - Launched the program which is focused on providing workforce education and training to contractors and offers comprehensive support and electrification coaching for home and building owners throughout the region
 - Published 10 on-demand, online webinars focused on installing heat pumps in cold, snowy climates attended by 45 participants
 - Hosted 2 in-person contractor trainings attended by over 20 contractors throughout the Truckee Tahoe region
 - Developed a contractor mentorship program
 - Released a website with contractor and building owner resources
 - Served 24 participants through the electrification coaching service, which provides personalized technical assistance to home and building owners in their electrification journey
 - Secured additional funding for the program, extending it through 2027
- Town of Truckee Dark Sky Outdoor Lighting Rebate Program
 - Designed and developed the program
 - Processed 28 rebates
 - Replaced 128 old fixtures with Dark Sky-compliant and energy-efficient lighting
- Climate Adaptation & Mitigation Partnership
 - Held quarterly CAMP Member Meetings
 - Created over a dozen educational webinars, quarterly newsletters, and monthly grants e-blasts
 - Partnered with CARB and UC Davis to host three regionally located workshops related to the CARB Scoping Plan Update and related emission-reduction goals
 - Served as Lead Author on the CA 5th Climate Change Assessment Sierra Nevada Regional Report
 - Awarded the OPR Regional Resilience Grant Program in partnership with Nevada County and the Nisenan Tribe
 - Developing a Western Nevada County climate coalition, modeled after CTA
 - Served as the Chair of the Alliance of Regional Climate Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA) and oversaw the organization's transition and strategic planning process



Catalyze Sustainable Economies

3

SBC is seen as the sustainable economic development partner in the region. We help leverage capital into the Sierra to expand businesses, support NGOs, and increase capacity in local governments. We provide technical assistance and objective input to determine project feasibility and scalability. We acknowledge that small businesses are the economic engine of the region and support their success.

The primary strategies to advance this goal are:

1. Maintain and expand existing SBDC and Economic Development District Efforts.
2. Open and operate Eastern Sierra Business Resource Center.
3. Increase access to capital in the region by expanding revolving loan funds and community capital models.
4. Create specific workforce education and training programs to meet strategic objectives.
5. Create a program for Economic/Social Benefit Impact Analysis.
6. Implement and leverage Sierra Jobs First program.

Catalyze Sustainable Economies

3

Impacts:

- California Jobs First
 - Published the Sierra Jobs First Strategic Plan to guide project selection throughout the region
 - Collected and cataloged 120 project ideas to promote cross-region collaboration on project applications
 - Received 47 Catalyst project applications to build capacity to create climate-resilient, equitable jobs in the Sierra Jobs First Region
 - Hosted 11 community engagement and 4 Industry workshops in the Sierra Jobs First region
 - Hosted 14 community engagement focus groups with over 200 in person attendees and nearly 500 individual engagements (online) in the California Jobs First Capitol Subregion of Placer and El Dorado Counties.
 - The workshops generated nearly 100 project ideas and cross-sector partnerships.
 - Latino and Tribal populations were engaged through specifically tailored outreach and focus groups.
 - Convened nearly 200 members of the Sierra Jobs First Collaborative in North Lake Tahoe to kickstart the Strategic Planning Process
 - Held 7 Governing Council and 28 Subcommittee meetings that were collectively attended by 35-45 participants at each meeting.
- Economic Empowerment Program
 - Published the Sierra Economic Development District's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
 - Partnered on the Nevada County Recreation and Resilience Master Plan
 - Conducted outreach for the Truckee River Revitalization Program
 - Assisted Plumas County with the Dixie Fire Recovery Plan
 - Launched the Good Jobs Challenge Forest Entrepreneurship program to guide over 30 forest business owners to start their business.
 - Assisted multiple forest stewardship and wood product enterprises in accessing capital

Catalyze Sustainable Economies

3

Impacts:

- Broadband
 - Facilitated two Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) events at Sierra Community College campuses before the depletion of ACP federal funding program dollars.
 - Distributed Chromebooks to 25 families who lack digital devices in the home.
 - Supported ISPs and county agencies in identifying unserved and underserved internet service areas, applying for last-mile state and federal grants through the Federal Funding Account (FFA) program, the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) program, and local county-funded broadband grant programs. Over \$137.5 million in FFA grants were awarded across El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, and Sierra Counties.
 - Supported the California BEAD Challenge process to help correct Federal Communications Commission (FCC) maps used to determine grant eligibility for the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Last Mile Grant program (California applications opening Spring 2025).
 - Collaborated with GIS Consultants to develop web-based, interactive maps that highlight mapping discrepancies and identify accurate gaps in internet services to validate areas are correctly identified as unserved and eligible for future broadband infrastructure grant funding.
 - Participated in outreach and co-facilitated in the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) Digital Equity Best Practices Leadership Learning Workshop for local government agencies. Local Government Agencies that participated received \$1,000 and \$20,000 grants to expand digital equity in their jurisdiction.
- Sierra Small Business Development Center
 - Served 620 unique businesses and entrepreneurs
 - Provided 3,163 hours of counseling at no cost to businesses
 - Created 141 jobs in Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Sierra, Plumas, Modoc, and Lassen counties
 - Helped launch 55 new businesses
 - \$4,137,479 Increase in Sales
 - Deployed \$31,005,869 in loans/equity to businesses
 - Made 24 loans to first-time homebuyers through the Martis Fund

Our Theory of Change





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