



**NEVADA
COUNTY**
CALIFORNIA

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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: January 29, 2026
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Trisha Tillotson, Director Community Development Agency
SUBJECT: Economic Development Objective

RECOMMENDATION: Information only.

FUNDING: In 2025, the County allocated general fund dollars for the following economic development and prioritized infrastructure projects:

Sierra Business Council's contract	\$ 200,000
Local Freshies contract for gonevadacounty.com	\$ 50,000
Trumba calendar	\$ 6,000
Community Foundation of Nevada County	\$ 83,333
Nevada County Arts Council	\$ 30,000
ED Workplan Implementation	\$ 154,700
Economic Development program expenses	\$ 295,000

BACKGROUND:

At the January 2025 Board workshop, the following objective for economic development was re-adopted:

Promote economic development by emphasizing resiliency and entrepreneurship; retaining and attracting high quality jobs; investing in major infrastructure projects; and working in partnership with our municipalities to support our small business and tourism sectors.

Following are highlights under each goal in the Economic Development Action Plan.

1. Business: *Goal 1: Align around a “grow -from-within” mindset to build a strong foundation.*

The Economic Development office continued its contract with the Sierra Business Council (SBC) for services in four specific areas: Business Technical Assistance, “Warm handoff” Coordination, Inclusive Business Collaboration, and Rural Broadband Expansion in support of the local business community. On average the Economic Development Office engaged monthly with 25 new, expanded or challenged businesses (approximately 300 annually) and connected them with county and regional partners for assistance. Some businesses connect with the office once and have what they need, others come back to the office for continued assistance. FY2024/25 contract work from Sierra Business Council resulted in 360 businesses being counseled 1,258 hours of free technical assistance and 1,125 free workshops/training participants. As of FY25/26 July – November, 164 businesses connected to SBC for counseling resulting in 313.25 hours of free technical assistance. In addition, 75 free workshops/ trainings have been offered.

2. Workforce: *Goal 2: Concentrate business startup, retention, recruitment, and expansion efforts in five sectors. Focus on workforce development and talent attraction is occurring in each of the five highlighted sectors.* 1) Manufacturing and tech included one-on-one visits to manufacturers, a Manufacturer Meet-Up, feature of several manufacturers in the Economic Development e-news. 2. Healthcare included successful coordination with Sierra College, Nevada Joint Union High School District (NJUHSD) Career Tech Program to bring a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) program to the Nevada County campus with students from the NJUHSD Patient Care Program. All passed their certification. 3. Recreation and Sustainable Tourism included hiring Design Workshop to begin working on the Donner Summit Visitor Center, work on the Recreation Fair and engagement with the Recreation and Climate offices. 4. Food and Ag and Cannabis efforts included work with Resource Conservation District on the Sustainable Agriculture Land Conservation grant program and Sierra Harvests Beginning Ranchers and Farmers grant. Cannabis efforts continued with the Department of Cannabis Control Retail Access Grant. 5. Sustainable green construction: While not much has been done in this area, we have been working with businesses such as GapStrap and Geoship that are working on products that will fall in this category.

3. Incentives: *Goal 3: Increase County economic development support and investment.* As part of the Sierra Business Council contract a Finance and Incentives Report was brought to the Board. First priority items recommendations are being moved forward. One area, Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) has been paused by the federal government, but the Economic Development Office will pursue this if and when it opens back up. The Statewide Community Infrastructure Financing Program (SCIP) was adopted by the Board in November 2025. The Economic Development Office is in contact with the Small Business Administration to discuss opportunities for potential microenterprise lending into Nevada County and to better understand what other programs might be offered in the county. Relationships have also been further developed with the State Treasurer’s Office and Go-Biz to keep abreast of programs that can be offered in Nevada County.

4. Tourism and Film: *Goal 4: Boost the visibility of the County and its Assets.*

Gonevadacounty.com

The current site was launched in FY 2022/23 with zero content. The growth in usage demonstrated in the associated presentation includes FY 2021/22 as a comparison as the previous site content was outdated and some copy inaccurate. Even with a partial launch year, the site established a clear baseline and has shown consistent year-over-year performance as it matured. The trendline highlights a measurable shift after we refined our strategy—moving from volume to more intentional engagement, with stronger consistency and efficiency.

From a key performance indicator standpoint, the site is not just a website, it is shared infrastructure. All of our tourism partners have adopted it as the official tourism site for western Nevada County. Visit Tahoe Truckee on the Eastern side also coordinates with the site.

While we think of this website as a tourism hub, the intent from the beginning was to use it to support economic development across the County. Chambers, arts organizations, event promoters, and businesses are highlighted on the site, in the newsletter, and as part of the

TRUMBA calendar. Examples include highlighting retail businesses in eastern and western county with stories like favorite bookstores, coffee shops, candy stores and more. In addition, the site hosts a recreation, arts and culture has travel alerts and more. Future ideas for the site include bundled excursions and information on how to bring a small conference or executive leadership meeting to Nevada County.

Visit California

From a state perspective, the most recent data (2024) from Visit California shows tourism continues to be a strong economic driver for Nevada County. Travel related spending hit \$519.1 million resulting in Nevada County State and local tax revenue at \$42.2 million and Nevada County Tourism related employment at 4.4K.

Highlighted activities include adding Nevada County to the Gold Country Visitor Association website at [Nevada County – Gold Country Visitors Association](#), inclusion in Destination Magazine, and a joint marketing effort with our fellow rural counties from March – May 2025 resulting in approximately 600,000 impressions. These efforts have been carefully coordinated with tourism partners including, but not limited to our chambers, downtown associations, arts organizations, tourism organizations and more.

Film is a budding opportunity for economic development. Due to the Governor's \$750 Million Tax Credit option for filmmakers that film in California and the tariffs being imposed by the federal government for any entity filming outside the country, film inquiries have skyrocketed. Current work includes updating the ordinance, providing appropriate information on the website, coordinating current requests and developing a plan for going forward and tracking the economic impact of a project.

5. Tools and Partnerships: *Goal 5: Add additional tools and information to support business growth.* Everything in economic development is the result of partnerships with county departments, local organizations, and state agencies. Projects such as Business Fundamentals through the Economic Resource Council and the Development of a Learning Management System with Sierra Commons enabled us to stretch our economic development capacity. Additional contracts included work with Sierra Business Council, the Nevada County Arts Council, the Community Foundation of Nevada County, Local Freshies, all of which directly support the Action Plan. Funding and contract work is also moving projects forward with the Soda Springs Outdoor Visitor Center and Trailhead, Habitat for Humanity ARPA funded housing project, the North San Juan Fire Suppression Project, the Penn Valley Community Center and more.

In addition, the Economic Development Office continued strong partnerships with the Nevada County Contractors Association on Trades Day, the Economic Resource Council's Tour of Nevada County and Economic Summit, NJUHSD's Career Technical Education and Ranch project, Sierra College on the Certified Nurse Assistant program, the Nevada County Arts Council on their Master Plan, the Airport's Revenue and Sustainability Plan and more. We also hosted the first Young Entrepreneur Pitch Week on the western side of the county.

Grow From Within Strategy

The consultants for the Action Plan conducted engagement with more than 30 organizations and 80 individuals and it was from this feedback that the "Grow from Within" strategy was set. There have been numerous attempts to focus on business attraction over the years by the ERC and other organizations, but these have been largely unsuccessful. While Nevada County has many assets, it also has many barriers that make it challenging to attract outside companies to move here. That being said, your Economic Development Program Manager is always available to connect with a company interested in moving to Nevada County. There are ways to engage in business attraction such as working with site brokers, but that can be costly and lack of infrastructure, incentives, housing for workforce, and insurance can be a barrier.

There are several ways we are evaluating the progress of our "Grow from Within" strategy. One is Fictitious Name Filing trends since the Economic Development Office was formed. Fictitious

name filings have shown a small upward trend, reflecting a stable and gradually expanding level of entrepreneurial activity in the county. In 2023, there were 1,135 filings, followed by a modest increase to 1,147 in 2024. As of December 15, 2025, filings have reached 1203, surpassing the totals from both prior years.

Fictitious name filings often serve as an early indicator of new business ventures, expansions, and sole proprietorship activity. The consistent growth we're seeing aligns with other positive economic signals and reinforces that the county remains an attractive place for business formation.

Despite these very challenging and uncertain economic times, early wins show the "Grow From Within" strategy is producing results. Since the creation of the Economic Development Office, the County has increased direct engagement with local businesses, helping them navigate permitting, access capital, and connect to state and regional programs. These efforts have helped businesses stay, expand, and hire locally—protecting existing jobs while laying the groundwork for new ones. Small and mid-sized businesses, which make up the majority of Nevada County employers, are benefiting most from this hands-on approach.

Nevada County is experiencing some very positive results. A lot of this has to do with being able to personally engage with people in our community. The collaborative efforts of our local agencies have enabled us to utilize the strengths of each. By our demonstrating a commitment to business, manufacturers may follow the example of Jada Windows and Geoship in the future and choose to expand in Nevada County. Also, economic partners stayed in contact with two manufacturers that were considering leaving the state but are still here.

Collaboration with local and regional organizations has resulted in new initiatives. ERC recently launched their Bring Them Home program, Sierra Commons has built out its Food Incubator and Forest Entrepreneur program. Current collaboration with Sierra College may result in launching a Medical Assistant Program in the next year or two. Working with NJUHSD Ranch Project, we are helping them explore a possible meat processing facility.

Proposed 2026 Actions

The initiatives outlined below are not implemented solely by the Economic Development Office, but through ongoing engagement and collaboration with local, regional, and state partners. Success in these sectors relies on coordination with organizations such as the Gold Country Visitors Association, Visit California, chambers of commerce, arts and cultural organizations, agricultural producers and nonprofits, workforce and education partners, healthcare providers, regional economic development organizations, and the Cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City and the Town of Truckee. This collaborative approach allows the County to leverage expertise, funding, and capacity beyond County resources, maximize impact, and ensure efforts are aligned with community needs and regional opportunities.

Sector Spotlights:

Agriculture – partners include Resource Conservation District, Sierra Harvest, Ag Commission Office, Farm Bureau, Cannabis Alliance, Ranch Project

Agriculture remains a vital component of Nevada County's economy, landscape, and cultural identity. In 2026, efforts will focus on strengthening farm viability, supporting next-generation producers, and advancing value-added and place-based opportunities.

Key actions will include advancing work on the Sustainable Agricultural Conservation Lands (SALC) grant upon receipt of the consultant report, using the findings to guide long-term farmland protection, land access, and agricultural sustainability strategies. Staff will also work with the Resource Conservation District in a strategy for agrotourism that aligns agricultural producers with tourism promotion efforts, helping farms diversify income while reinforcing Nevada County's rural identity.

The County will continue to support Sierra Harvest's Beginning Rancher and Farmer grant, which builds local capacity, supports new producers, and strengthens the agricultural workforce pipeline. In addition, staff will continue to collaborate with the NJUHSD on its exploration of a potential meat processing facility, which could address regional processing gaps, support local ranchers and create workforce and educational opportunities. These efforts align with the Economic Development Action Plan's focus on "Grow From Within", industry diversification, place-based economic development, and strengthening local supply chains to improve long-term economic resilience.

Tourism – partners tourism organizations, chambers, arts organizations. Tourism continues to be a foundational economic driver for Nevada County, generating outside spending, supporting small businesses, and contributing to Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenues that help fund essential County services.

In 2026, the County will focus on strengthening digital tools, strategic partnerships, and data-informed promotion to increase overnight stays and shoulder-season visitation. Key actions will include expanding GoNevadaCounty.com to feature bundled and bookable experience options—such as lodging, outdoor recreation, arts, and dining packages—making it easier for visitors to plan longer stays and spend more locally. Staff will also explore adding a meetings and small conferences section to better position Nevada County for retreats, small group gatherings, and off-peak business travel.

The County will continue to work closely with the Gold Country Visitors Association on upcoming tourism promotions and regional marketing efforts, ensuring alignment and leverage of partner investments. Tourism planning and decision-making will be guided by Visit California data and local performance indicators, including visitor volume and spending trends, as well as Nevada County TOT revenues, which have consistently demonstrated tourism's role as a key economic contributor. These metrics will help inform where targeted investments can generate the greatest return for local businesses and communities.

Film – partners include regional film offices, jurisdictions, film festivals, CA Film Office, and community partners.

Film production offers Nevada County a high-impact opportunity to attract outside dollars, generate short-term employment, and elevate the County's visibility through its distinctive natural, historic, and rural settings. In 2026, the County will focus on improving readiness, consistency, and data tracking to better compete for film opportunities while minimizing friction for local communities.

Key actions will include updating the County's film ordinance to reflect current industry practices, streamline permitting where appropriate, clarifying roles and expectations. Staff will build out the film section of the film section on the Nevada County website providing clear information on locations, permitting, contacts, and community guidelines to improve responsiveness and professionalism.

County staff will work with community partners to develop a local film library, showcasing Nevada County locations that can be accessed by film scouts. In addition, staff will develop a tool to track film-related economic impact, capturing metrics such as production days, local spending estimates, and jobs supported.

To ensure a cohesive and film-friendly environment, staff will engage the Cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City and the Town of Truckee to explore greater alignment and consistency in film policies, processes, and messaging across jurisdictions. Proposed metrics we would encourage support in gathering countywide include: 1. The number of film inquiries and permitted productions annually 2. estimated local spending and production days generated by film activity.

Workforce Development

Train-the-Trainer Program for Soft Skills – Sierra College, Probrilliance, Economic Partners, Nevada County Youth Coordinator

This initiative creates a one-day training class through Sierra College for Human Resource Offices and front-line personnel training them with tools designed to strengthen foundational soft skills and workplace skills. By building internal training capacity, businesses can improve retention, productivity, and career advancement opportunities.

Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) and Medical Assistant (MA) Programs – partnerships include Sierra College, Nevada Joint Union High School District, Nevada County Youth Coordinator, local healthcare organizations, healthcare clinics, and long-term care and assisted living facilities.

The goal is to repeat the CNA training program to address persistent healthcare workforce shortages while creating accessible career pathways for local residents. Talks are underway to pilot a program in the fall of 2026 in cooperation with the Rocklin Sierra College campus for a Medical Assistant Program. These programs support both workforce stability and community health outcomes.

Talent Pipeline Management Engagement (TPM) partners include Youth Coordinator, local economic development partners, local businesses, chambers.

Talent Pipeline Management, a program through the US Chamber of Commerce offers strategies to align employers, education partners, and workforce organizations around shared workforce needs. This employer-led approach improves coordination, reduces hiring friction, and ensures training efforts are closely tied to real job demand. This program identifies current and future workforce needs.

Business Support

Small Business Revolving Loan Program. In today's economic climate, many small businesses, particularly startups, rural enterprises, and locally owned firms, are facing tighter credit conditions, higher interest rates, and increased operating costs. While there is significant pressure on General Fund resources, periods of economic uncertainty are precisely when targeted tools like a revolving loan fund can have the greatest impact. Supporting businesses as they start, grow, and expand helps stabilize jobs, build community wealth, and sustain recurring economic activity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nevada County directed \$250,000 in federal relief funds to help local businesses survive and adapt through a combination of grant and loan programs. As part of the County's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation, the Board set aside funding for a "Resilience Fund" that made low-interest loans available to small businesses, administered in partnership with the Sierra Business Council to support recovery and ongoing operations. Of the 34 grants given, 33 were repaid in full before their deadline and one is on a payment plan.

Funding requests:

The core Economic Development program remains supported through an annual general fund allocation. Should there be additional funding available, the Board could direct resources in these key areas in FY 2026/27:

- \$50,000 for tourism and film represents a modest, strategic investment to strengthen Nevada County's tourism and film efforts. The investment will focus on targeted marketing, film readiness, and partnerships that leverage existing County assets. Outcomes such as visitation activity, film inquiries, and estimated economic impact will be tracked and reported back to the Board.
- \$250,000 - \$500,000 one-time seed allocation toward the development of a small business revolving loan program. Unlike one-time grants, these dollars are repaid and reused, allowing the same funds to support multiple businesses over time while helping stabilize jobs and local services. By contracting with an experienced third-party community

lender to administer the program, the County can ensure professional underwriting, compliance, and reporting—leveraging expertise without adding County staff or creating ongoing General Fund obligations.

Policy Initiatives

Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) - Staff will bring forward C-PACE for Board consideration in the spring of 2026. C-PACE provides a voluntary financing tool that allows commercial property owners to invest in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation improvements, supporting business competitiveness and sustainability without using County funds.

Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) Exploration - A Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) is a way for lodging businesses, such as hotels and short-term rentals, to pool resources to fund tourism promotion and visitor services. A small, self-imposed assessment is collected from overnight guests and reinvested locally to attract visitors and increase overnight stays. TBIDs are industry-led, require business approval, and reduce reliance on general fund dollars while directly benefiting the businesses that participate.

Staff will explore the feasibility of a TBID as a potential long-term, industry-led funding mechanism for tourism promotion. A TBID can provide a sustainable revenue source driven by lodging businesses, reducing reliance on General Fund resources while aligning investment decisions with industry priorities.

Item Initiated by: Kimberly Parker, Program Manager Economic Development

Approved by: Trisha Tillotson, Director Community Development Agency