

Executive Summary- Rural Nevada

Entrepreneurial Communities LLC. assessed the rural Nevada ecosystem during the winter of 2022-23. Rural economic and community data were aggregated for four rural counties and benchmarked within the state. Stakeholder interviews and roundtables were hosted in December 2022 and January 2023. A six-person national roundtable of rural entrepreneurship researchers and practitioners was convened in February 2023 to provide insight and recommendations for this report.

Nevada's rural communities are a mosaic of independent economies, stymied from growth and the opportunities of the new economy by a lack of bandwidth, yet primed with talent, ideas, and self-determination. Currently, most rural counties in Nevada rely upon one or two industries for the majority of jobs and local economic activity. During boom times, this reliance is not an issue, but during bust cycles, the negative impact on the local community can be severe. As the economy becomes more global, these boom-and-bust periods have the potential to become steeper and last longer. Weathering downturns may be more difficult in coming decades than it has been in the past. Entrepreneurial ecosystems offer a roadmap for economic diversification, local wealth, and the creation of quality jobs in rural regions.

Distinct differences exist among rural economies in Nevada. Out-out counties in NE Nevada had consistently lower educational levels but often higher median incomes than counties closer to urban centers, in part due to the mining and mineral extraction workforce. Business startup rates in these counties recovered more quickly after the pandemic than those counties closer to urban areas. Close in rural counties were more apt to benefit from urban spillover benefits such as better infrastructure bedroom community populations and stronger tourism.

Diversifying rural economies through entrepreneurship is a key economic development strategy in most rural regions of the country. In Nevada, building the capacity of rural leadership to support the growth of locally owned business is a logical next step to prepare for the future. Integrating entrepreneurial ecosystem principles and practices into rural leadership training and seminars is key.

Community networks were extraordinarily strong in every county where entrepreneurs and entrepreneur support organizations were interviewed. Peer learning, peer lending and community volunteerism were often mentioned as a part of rural life. Connecting rural entrepreneurs with like-minded peers to learn, access capital and make connections will be key to fostering rural ecosystems in the state. This report recommends the launch of incubators/coworks to create community hubs, improve resident access to business resources and put entrepreneurship center stage in rural communities. Rural Nevada business owners appear to rely upon family and friend networks to capitalize their business activity. Leveraging these trends through organized crowdfunding or peer-lending portals like Kiva will take advantage of already strong community networks and offer a solution to a perceived statewide capital shortage.

Most rural counties have limited bandwidth. To compete in a global economy, whether with an online merchant side gig or running a tech-led business, access to high-speed and affordable internet is critical. OSIT has a strong plan for bringing more than 1,000 fiber nodes to government offices, schools and hospitals throughout rural Nevada by 2026. It is unknown when fiber will be readily available rural households. Accelerating access to broadband via free downtown and other public WiFi hubs and hot spots will give thousands of rural Nevadans 'early access' to the tools they need to start new businesses or engage in remote work. Bandwidth will create opportunities too, to attract new entrepreneurs and remote workers to rural Nevada.

Bandwidth alone will not ensure that rural Nevadans will be able to take advantage of online resources to build businesses. Digital literacy will be instrumental to safeguard the survival of existing rural businesses and the creation of new companies over time. Substantially escalating the array of classes, training, and counseling at the NSBDC and Great Basin College in areas associated with online marketing, e-commerce, web site development and other technology-based operations will be critical to getting rural entrepreneurs online and conducting business. Connecting rural innovators to programs like Launch Rural Nevada which support the scaling of traditional business models through technology will result in awareness of business scaling opportunities and connect geographically isolated innovators with peers and resources.



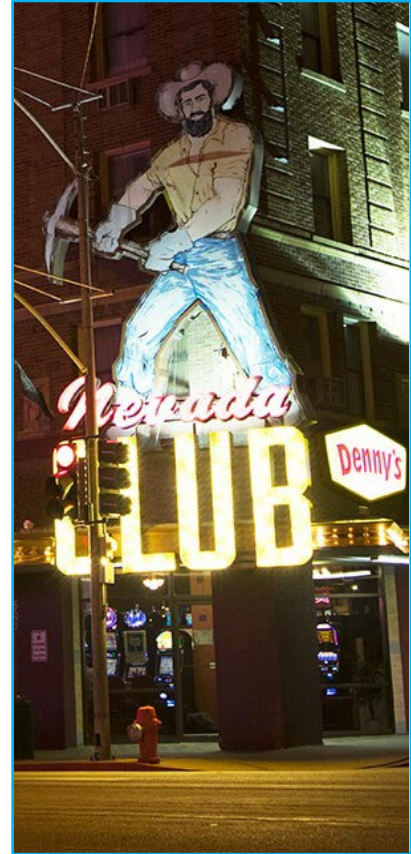
Rural Nevada

Overview

Dozens of different origin stories have given rise to the small, independent communities scattered throughout Nevada. From mining to tourism, crop agriculture to cattle ranching, naval bases to federal parks, many diverse industries built these places resulting in small, independent economies supported by increasingly fragile drivers.

Currently, most rural communities in Nevada rely on one or two industries for the majority of jobs and local economic activity. During boom times, this reliance is not an issue, but during bust cycles, the negative impact on the local community can be severe. As the economy becomes more global, these boom-and-bust periods have the potential to become steeper and last longer. Weathering downturns may be more difficult in coming decades than it has been in the past.

New economic disruptions are on the horizon that will also reduce the number of rural jobs in America in the coming decade. Some of these disruptions will be associated with the implementation of technological advances in mining or changes in agriculture contending with climate change. Online commerce and automation may permanently eliminate many rural service, entertainment, and manufacturing jobs. At the same time, access to high-speed internet will bring new opportunities for remote work and online businesses for rural residents.



Entrepreneurship economic development has emerged as a key strategy to navigate these changes in rural regions nationwide. Entrepreneurship benefits rural communities in multiple ways, including:

- *Insulates the economy.* The more businesses across different industries in a community, the better the community can weather economic flux. A downturn in agriculture, for example, may not harm a local online jewelry wholesaler.
- *Creates diverse jobs.* More small businesses result in a greater variety of jobs and employers. This creates employment opportunities for more residents with different skills and education.
- *Retains youth.* Founding a company gives young people the ability to create their own job and stay in the community rather than leaving in search of employment elsewhere.
- *Generates local wealth.* Having more locally owned businesses translates into greater local wealth. Profits from local companies tend to stay in the community rather than funneling to corporate offices in other places.

Transitioning rural communities throughout the state to embrace entrepreneurship is key to maintaining rural economic vitality while preserving and enhancing Nevada's fiery, independent rural spirit. Local economic development efforts that support remote work and new businesses associated with the internet and make it as easy as possible to start or expand a business are key. Entrepreneurial ecosystems offer a baseline road map for how to do these things.

Rural Benchmark Counties

There is a saying among rural ecosystem builders: “If you have seen one rural community, you have seen one rural community.” This speaks to the variety of economies, people, stages of community growth, and cultures that exist independently in each rural place. The scattered, and often geographically isolated, rural communities in Nevada are no more the same than Reno and Las Vegas; therefore, painting all rural communities with the same brush can, and will, be viewed by some as a disservice to all. While it isn’t possible within the constraints of this project to assess every rural community in Nevada, there are commonalities across Nevada’s rural regions. Rural residents often described their home county as being “rural” or “out-out rural,” signifying perceived differences between some rural counties compared to others. Some of these differences showed up in rural interviews; others were evident from data capture. Two Nevada counties were selected to typify rural—Douglas and Churchill. Elko and White Pine counties were selected to typify out-out rural.

Rural Counties

Douglas and Churchill counties are among four counties (including Storey and Lyon) that are close enough to the two urban centers to benefit from them. While rural in terms of population, these counties benefit from many urban assets, including stronger transportation and bandwidth infrastructure.

Some communities, like Mesquite in Southern Nevada, are in an urban county but are very rural. Mesquite has a population of only 21,158, but it is quickly becoming a bedroom community to Las Vegas, even though it is 82 miles from the city, as new residents are drawn there by lower housing costs and recent shifts in remote work.

Out-Out Rural Counties

Elko and White Pine counties in Northeastern Nevada are more isolated counties, hours away from any urban hub. These places were largely founded during the 1800s Westward Trek along the Pony Express and railroad routes and flourished during the mining boom(s) of the last century. The county populations are slowly trending older and more diverse.

Douglas County (pop. 49,870)

Located close to the southern shores of Lake Tahoe, Genoa in Douglas County was the first settlement in the state (including the first bar). Nearby Gardnerville is a Main Street community and has a thriving retail district. Together they support a strong tourism economy. Douglas County supports a growing air tourism (flightseeing) sector with currents that support gliders, sky diving, and “aerial roller coasters.”



Churchill County (pop. 25,723)

With Naval Base Fallon located in the county, Churchill County has a reputation recently boosted by the release of *Top Gun: Maverick* in 2022. Churchill County is also home to an armful of drag racing events, quick-draw contests, and Sand Mountain singing sand dune, a hub for sand racers. The historic downtown district is healthy. Recent economic development work is centered on agritourism.



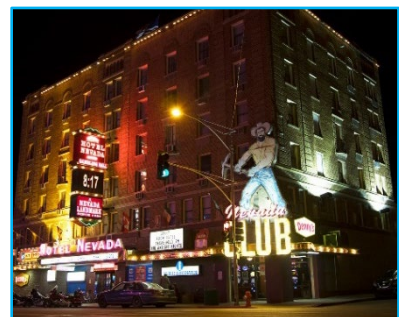
Elko County (pop. 53,915)

Elko County was founded in the 1860s as part of the transcontinental railroad. Mining and agriculture have anchored the economy for more than 150 years. The place-based assets of Elko are substantial, including outdoor recreation in the Ruby Mountains and citywide murals and cultural festivals, such as the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, celebrating its 41st year in 2023.



White Pine County (pop. 9,182)

Heavily dependent on mining, Ely is the largest community in White Pine County. It has iconic gambling halls and serves as a hub for dozens of mountain bike trails that extend into the mountains along old mining routes. The entire region is famous for the best dark skies in the Lower 48 and for Great Basin National Park.



Demographics

Goals: There are baseline demographics common to vibrant ecosystems, including higher educational levels (particularly in STEAM fields), higher median household incomes, diversity, and high household adoption to the internet.

Age, Income, and Education

Distinct demographic differences exist among rural counties in Nevada. Douglas County is more similar to Reno than most other rural counties. (Reno has a median household income of \$76,182, and 34% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher.) In Elko, household incomes skew higher than expected, attributable to the higher wages in the mining sector, which can average more than \$34 per hour for an underground miner. Educational levels are very low in Elko, White Pine, and Churchill counties.

	Median Age	Median Household Income	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Douglas County	53	\$75,688	32%
Elko County	35	\$82,462	16%
White Pine County	41	\$63,590	13%
Churchill County	41	\$61,776	19%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates Data Tables, U.S. Census Bureau. data.census.gov/

While a bachelor's degree may not be relevant for every rural resident, access to training, certifications and digital literacy is. Elko and White Pine counties are served almost exclusively by Great Basin College, which educates 3,800 students across 86,500 square miles in ten of Nevada's largest rural counties. The main campus is in Elko County, and there is a center in White Pine County. The college currently leads the state in the number of online courses offered.



Business starts and exits across the four counties reflect the differences in impact that the pandemic exerted throughout the state. In Douglas County, the tourist economy suffered heavily, with nearly 800 businesses exiting between 2020 and 2021. Starts have been slow to rebound. In remote Elko and White Pine counties, starts dropped off during the pandemic, but after a spike in closures in 2020, they appear to have rebounded more quickly.

Annual Gross Business Starts and Closures Around Rural Nevada Benchmark Counties

Year	Douglas County			Elko County			White Pine County			Churchill County		
	Starts	Closed	Net	Starts	Closed	Net	Starts	Closed	Net	Starts	Closed	Net
2021	161	116	45	134	88	46	34	8	26	61	40	21
2020	207	671	-464	152	328	-176	27	41	-14	99	209	-110
2019	417	402	15	179	165	14	28	26	2	76	57	19
2018	486	290	196	306	220	86	78	33	45	83	145	-62
2017	422	291	131	130	155	-25	18	31	-13	47	76	-29
2016	418	421	-3	187	329	-142	25	33	-8	83	135	-52

Source: Business Dynamics Research Consortium, University of Wisconsin System.
youreconomy.org

Public Policy

Future-focused public policy should strive to reduce the friction associated with startup activity, including compliance, licensing, and regulation. The public sector should operate to guide and support vs. ban or bar. It is in the hands of public policy makers to ensure that everyone has access to ubiquitous, affordable, high-speed bandwidth.

Public sector leaders and entrepreneurs alike who were interviewed in out-out rural counties were largely disconnected from terms and phrases currently common to ecosystem building. Rural business owners did not self-identify with the word “entrepreneur,” for example, and often corrected interviewers with alternative terms like “business owner.” In most sessions with public sector leadership, interviewers were asked to explain what was meant by an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Sheldon Mudd, Executive Director at Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority (NNRDA) in Elko and a former state economic development employee himself, indicated this language barrier is not something that needs to be changed about rural life, but *is* something the state needs to change in terms of how it supports rural communities. His locally built business startup program titled Ready-Aim reflects this. He noted, “The state would never



call a program Ready-Aim, but here it makes complete sense.”

Cultural differences extend into public policy relationships among local, county, and state governments. Bob Erickson, Chief of Staff in the Fallon Mayor’s Cabinet, indicated his reluctance to collaborate with the state in consolidating business licensing. After discussing the multiple pages of paperwork needed to complete the local business licensing—and the requirement to drop it off in person at City Hall—he happily defended those requirements, stating, “We want to know who the people are who are starting businesses here. They are not a number to us. If they come in, they can meet us and we them.”



Bandwidth

Bandwidth connectivity is poor across most of Nevada’s rural counties. Thirty-nine percent of residents in White Pine County and 30% of households in Elko County have no internet at all or rely only on cell phone connectivity. In Douglas and Churchill counties between 16-20% of households have no internet or rely on cell phones alone. In Phase 1 of the High-Speed Nevada Initiative, OSIT solicited bids to install fiber in over 1,000 state and local government facilities, schools, and libraries in nearly every rural community in the state by 2026.

High-Speed Internet and Connection Types

	Cable, fiber, DSL	Satellite	Cell only	No Internet Service
Douglas County	80%	8%	8%	8%
Elko County	61%	11%	18%	12%
White Pine County	48%	15%	17%	22%
Churchill County	76%	5%	8%	12%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates Data Tables,
U.S. Census Bureau. data.census.gov/

Churchill County's public library offers an example of how public institutions can improve digital literacy and innovation with access to bandwidth. The county has a municipal utility called CC Communications, one of fewer than 500 municipal utilities in the country. The utility dates back to telegraph days, making it one of the oldest in the nation. Most every home and business in Fallon already has access to fiber connectivity. As drones, virtual reality (VR), 3-D printing, and online library resources have become available, librarian Carol Lloyd has integrated these technologies into the library's resources. It now has 10 drones, a 3-D printer, and a VR room with two headsets that are constantly in use, as well as a full-time



IT librarian, who on any given day may be working with a group of children in the VR room then heading over to the retirement facility to help seniors with email issues.

In 2021, Lloyd subscribed to LinkedIn Learning, an online educational platform that offers more than 5,000 expert-led course videos in business, technology, and creative media skills. In the past eight months, nearly 6,000 courses have been completed by county residents, all online. More than 3,388 residents have watched online StoryTime on the library's YouTube channel, and every Friday there are hands-on, in-person STEAM workshops to engage children in science, technology, engineering, math, and arts activities. What has happened in Churchill County's library can be a model for libraries throughout the state to improve digital literacy across generations once bandwidth is in place.

Some rural communities across the country have proactively worked to connect rural residents to the internet through free Wi-Fi hubs. One of the nation's best practices in this space is from Vermont. The Vermont Digital Equality (VDE) project has installed free Wi-Fi mesh zones and hot spots in 33 Vermont communities in the past decade. Zones have been created in downtown districts, parks, and disadvantaged neighborhoods. VDE offers a toolkit called [Planning and Implementing a Wi-Fi Zone for Your Town](#).

Place

Goals: *Natural, built, and cultural resources collectively create a fertile landscape that attracts entrepreneurs and the talent they hire. Central to this are public-private partnerships (placemaking at scale), designation and branding of entrepreneurial hubs, and a supportive culture that promote lifestyles of innovation, curiosity, community connection, and creativity.*

Isolation of rural business owners has long been a barrier to business innovation. More than one business owner interviewed suggested that they see their business as "operating in a vacuum" or "alone" because of their lack of connection with like-minded individuals. A [statewide survey](#) of entrepreneurs and small business owners in Iowa found that even weak links such as Facebook groups, online communities, and Listserv, for example, can improve the ability of rural business owners to solve common problems and accelerate the movement of solutions throughout a community.

Rural Incubators and Coworks

Incubation and coworking are business support services that connect and serve small businesses in valuable ways. In rural communities, either incubation or coworking (or a combination of both, customized to local needs) can be powerful place-based resources for young businesses.

Business Incubators

Business incubation is a long-term, comprehensive business support program generally coupling services, equipment and subsidized space to promote the growth of early-stage companies.

Business incubation has been a part of the economic development landscape since 1958 but did not take off in economic development circles until the 1980s. Today, there are more than 7,000 incubators worldwide, more than half of which are mixed-use incubators that serve a combination of industries, including retail. A wide array of one-off, niche incubators have emerged in the past decade (such as kitchen incubators, ghost kitchens, food truck incubators and even brewery incubators).

A business incubation program may serve a single tenant for an extended period- often up to two years, sometimes more. The best incubation programs offer post-graduation services as well. Recipients of business incubation services boast high success rates and are substantial contributors to their local economies. According to the International Business Innovation Association (INBIA), member incubators report that 87 percent of their graduates are still in business after five years, in contrast to the 52 percent success rate among the general business population. For every \$1 of estimated public operating subsidy provided, incubators generate approximately \$30 in local tax revenue. In addition, incubator graduates (84%) tend to remain within ten miles of where they received services. All of these benefits make incubation a good fit in many rural communities.

In New Straitsville, Ohio (pop. 654), the Southern Perry Incubation Center (SPICE), has been serving regional entrepreneurs with space, workshops and community since 2005. SPICE is a non-profit organization, started by a group of concerned rural Perry County residents who wanted a location to bring small businesses together to do business and learn. SPICE has served an astounding 2,281 microbusinesses.

The Space On Main Cowork

In 2016, Bradford, Vermont (pop. 3,000), converted a defunct five-and-dime store into a microhub, a community workspace that would build connection in the community while fostering long-term goals around entrepreneurship. Its founder, Monique Priestley, has created a rich array of business resources.



The Space on Main offers a podcasting studio, a digital fabrication lab, conference rooms, and open workspaces. “I can’t believe this is in Bradford!” is the most common reaction to seeing the space.

Through a partnership with Co.Starters, a 10-week program that equips entrepreneurs to start a new business, cohorts of local entrepreneurs were trained. In less than two years, more than 90 people have taken part in Co.Starters programs—almost 3% of the town’s population—and new business activity is taking off.

Coworking is similar to incubation in many ways. Coworks are shared spaces that fill a gap for important business services. Examples include access to expensive equipment like commercial-grade printers, servers, or video equipment and unique workspaces like green rooms, smart boards, and “phone booths” with video recording tools. Niche resources such as mail or package delivery, lockers, and alternative group telehealth care plans among members are emerging in some sectors as well. Coworks often are positioned as community hubs, providing meetup and workspaces for nonprofits, churches, and community groups, and sometimes serving as pseudo-incubators for new retailers. One big difference between coworking and incubation is that coworkers do not tend to ‘graduate’ from program services. Coworks also serve rising numbers of rural remote workers.

Natural Resources

Throughout rural Nevada, natural resources abound. From dark skies to mountain biking, heli-skiing to caving, the variety of place-based outdoor recreational activities is exceptional. In Bemidji, Minnesota (pop. 14,998), a new recruitment program has been successful in attracting remote workers based on the outdoor recreational assets of the area. The program, called 218 Relocate, offers up to \$2,500 in expenses for moving, free coworking space, and access to a program connecting newcomers to established residents.

In Tennessee, the state created the TN Placemakers Entrepreneurship Fund, which allows rural communities to apply for up to \$100K to support and train small business owners to start and expand their placemaking assets. The website notes: “Talent is everywhere, opportunity is not, and availability does not equate to equitable access. TN Placemakers strives to help communities provide opportunity through true access for the small businesses and entrepreneurs that are and will be a part of their community.”



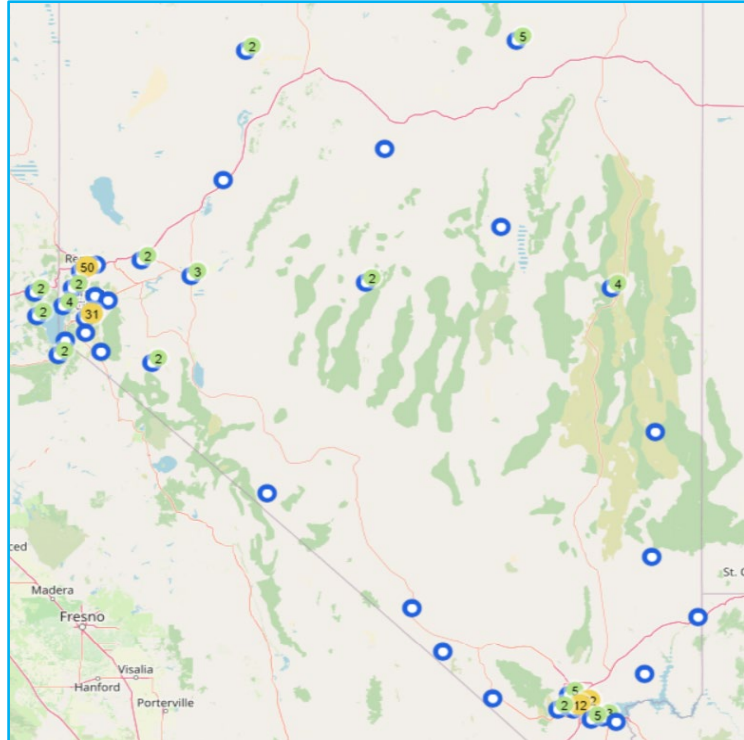
Resource Networks

Goals: *High-performing ecosystems offer a full spectrum of resources, including capital, technical assistance, and dense network resource providers offering onramps, interactions, and collisions to raise and empower all who wish to participate in the economy.*

The resources serving entrepreneurs throughout rural Nevada are sparse, as shown in the adjacent map, but the community networks are strong. Rural Nevada counties have exceptional community stakeholder networks—small, tight-knit groups of local leaders who meet regularly around community issues. These groups include city and county entities, EDOs, Chambers, SBDC advisors, nonprofits, and/or tourism professionals.

In Gardnerville, a small group of roundtable attendees indicated there were more than 100 volunteers behind them who are regularly called on to support local initiatives.

GOED’s Rural Community and Economic Development division hosts multiple Main Street communities and delivers programming to facilitate community development across the state. Main Street programs have a long history of economic impact and community development, dating to 1982.



In an interview with Shari Davis at GOED’s Director of Community and Economic Development, she noted that rural entrepreneurs often have a more difficult time accessing information and other resources they need to start or expand a business. “A very Nevada thing to do,” she said, “is to start your own business, but a lack of knowledge about resources and business information makes it difficult. Our expanse is a challenge.”

Many rural business owners interviewed suggested they were unable to navigate the directories of resources providers available to them to know who they should turn to. “I don’t want to make four phone calls to know who the right person is to help me figure out information about my target market,” noted Mary Claire Boucher of MCB Creative during a rural roundtable.

Capital

Among rural entrepreneurs interviewed, capital was regularly cited as a key concern, echoing the findings of the Nevada SBDC's 2022 Small Business Challenges Survey. The Kauffman Foundation has noted that pre-pandemic, the top three sources of capital used by businesses for startup were personal and family savings of the entrepreneur (64.4%), business loans from banks or financial institutions (16.5%), and personal credit cards (9.1%).

Many rural small business owners interviewed indicated they self-funded their business startup. A surprising number of those businesses were additionally supported financially by neighbors and friends. Gifts and small loans from trusted and known sources were described as normal, but institutional funding less so. This kind of relationship-based funding was prevalent throughout the state among those interviewed.

Benefits crowdfunding is an example of effective relationship-based funding. Small business owners register on a crowdfunding platform and post their business financial funding goal, along with some soft benefits for those who contribute, then they leverage social media to attract would-be funders to their campaign to contribute. In Wyoming, the SBA Women's Business Center subscribed to a community crowdfunding portal called The Local Crowd Wyoming. It provides a single community website for many businesses to seek funding on one website, boosting the value of each founder's social media network. Twenty campaigns there have raised over \$150,000 dollars.

Kiva is another online resource based on relationships. Kiva provides microloans of up to \$10,000, paid back over a period of between three and 36 months. In order to qualify to participate in Kiva, a local friend or family member must invest first. In Iowa, a nonprofit called NewBoCo has partnered with Kiva to leverage zero-interest loans from \$1,000-\$15,000, primarily serving rural Iowa.

A rural capital fund launched during the pandemic is doing exceptional work in NE Nevada. The Rural Nevada Development Corporation (RNDC) manages the I80 Fund, launched in July of 2020, supported by mining industry sponsors. It initially served only disaster affected existing business owners in Humboldt (pop. 17,648), Lander (pop. 5,798), Eureka (pop. 1,903) and Elko (pop. 53,515) counties. The program recently pivoted to serve startups and expansion projects in the same region. The loan terms are exceptional: 2% interest in fixed term financing initially, then graduating to 3.75%. According to Michelle Beecher loan officer for the fund, the I80 Fund has supported 58 businesses to date, with \$6,453,380, supporting the creation of 125 jobs and the retention of 207 jobs in a region with a combined population of 78,864.

Launch Rural Nevada is a pitch, education, and networking event founded by a big network of ESOs including GOED, StartUpNV, Audacity Institute, NNRDA, the Ozmen Center for Entrepreneurship, NSBDC, Great Basin College, and UNR. Rural business founders can choose from a youth or adult division to receive training and technical assistance culminating in a statewide pitch event.

Rural Nevada Action Plan

Empower Rural Entrepreneur Support Networks

Empowering GOED to integrate entrepreneurial ecosystem principles and practices into rural leadership trainings and seminars is key to building capacity to support entrepreneurs. Providing equitable funding to rural communities to develop community-led tools to support entrepreneurship will result in locally appropriate resources and services.

Potential Owners: GOED, local Main Street programs, RDAs

1. Bring community leaders together around entrepreneurship economic development
 - a. Host rural leadership trainings around ecosystem building throughout Nevada
 - i. Expand participation to include entrepreneurs, libraries, non-profits
 - b. Host an annual Rural Entrepreneurship/ Main Street Conference
 - i. Different communities each year, showcase districts/entrepreneurs
2. Empower rural communities to create their own solutions
 - a. Create a Launch Rural Fund to incentivize the creation of locally developed programs
 - i. Incent the creation of community crowdfunding portals or KIVA

Key Performance Indicators: Rural communities will be empowered through training, technical assistance, networking and funding to develop locally appropriate entrepreneurship ecosystem programs and funding throughout rural Nevada.

Accelerate The Potential of Rural Bandwidth

Free public WiFi hubs coupled with digital literacy support will give thousands of rural Nevadans 'early access' to online tools to start companies or work online. Bandwidth creates opportunities to attract like-minded talent to rural Nevada.

Potential Owners: OSIT, NSBDC, GOED, Great Basin College, Regional Economic Development Alliances

1. Build out free downtown WiFi in rural communities statewide
 - a. Partner with Main Streets, Chambers of Commerce, city government to identify hubs and lead organizations.
 - b. Explore WiFi options including 'do it yourself' models
 - c. Secure cooperative agreements with existing ISP providers
 - d. Identify funding partners from among state, city, local sponsors or businesses

Key Performance Indicators: Multiple rural downtowns will launch free WiFi hubs for their residents

1. Empower and educate rural residents to take advantage of coming broadband connectivity
 - a. Develop and deliver baseline digital literacy training in rural communities
 - i. Partner with OSIT County Broadband Action Teams to identify training opportunities.
 - ii. Utilize rural libraries to engage rural residents of all ages in online learning
 - b. Build and deliver highly customized rural business startup training and technical assistance
 - i. Tap, train and fund local champions at RDAs to deliver NSBDC startup workshops
 - ii. NSBDC develops and deliver specialty e-commerce and online business workshops supporting rural e- business start-up and expansion.
 - iii. Expand the online and in person course offerings at Great Basin College to include business startup, e-media, web design, coding and other tech-based curriculum

Key Performance Indicators: Rural residents have multiple options for digital literacy beginning in 2024.

1. Develop a talent attraction strategy to recruit new rural residents as fiber hubs are installed
 - a. Convene rural community leaders to ideate an attraction strategy
 - i. Inventory regional quality of life and place-based assets
 - ii. Develop a menu of attraction resources and incentives for incoming
 - b. Partner with multiple GOED departments to market a series of rural attraction campaigns

Key Performance Indicators: Rural talent attraction campaigns will increase the number of new rural entrepreneurs and remote workers.

Engage Rural Entrepreneur Networks

Coworking hubs will raise awareness of entrepreneurship, network rural innovators and increase community-wide access to critical business resources. Ramping up rural innovators engagement with tech-led programs like Launch Rural Nevada and RUBA will foster support for rural growth companies.

Potential Owners: GOED, local Main Street programs, RDAs, Travel Nevada

1. Establish community incubation/coworking hubs in rural downtowns
 - a. GOED to host informational meetups statewide to showcase models, best practices
 - b. GOED to develop a rural coworking business plan template for distribution
2. Seed funds from proposed one- time 2023 appropriation for Main Street for incubation/coworks
 - a. Empower rural libraries to participate

Key Performance Indicators: Rural residents will have access to business resources, training and networking and the ability to connect more readily with peers in other rural communities.

1. Enhance and expand programs that support tech-based business startup/scaleup
 - a. Expand marketing of Launch Rural Nevada to reach more rural innovators
 - i. Engage local leadership
 - ii. Host EntreBash networking events to engage would-be innovators

Key Performance Indicators: Rural innovators in Nevada will be empowered to engage in the global economy.