

I. Introduction/Purpose of CEDS Plan

I. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE OF PLAN

Region VII Planning and Development Council is one (1) of eleven (11) agencies covering the State of West Virginia authorized by enabling legislation in 1972. The aim of the legislation, as set forth in its statement of purpose, is to provide for the formulation and execution of objectives and policies necessary for orderly growth and development of the Region as a whole; and coordination of objectives, plans, and policies of the separate units of government comprising the area.

Region VII is located in the central portion of West Virginia. It is one of the largest regions in geographic area and is also one of the most rural. Region VII serves a total of 31 jurisdictions which include the seven (7) counties of Barbour, Braxton, Gilmer, Lewis, Randolph, Tucker, and Upshur and the 24 municipalities therein.

The Regional Planning and Development Councils (RPDCs) are statewide networks of cooperating organizations that provide a strategic array of services to support community and economic development, planning, and inter-governmental cooperation. The RPDCs perform as local, multi-jurisdictional agencies focused specifically on establishing regional goals and objectives, regional planning, community, and economic development. Each Council is directed by elected officials from the counties and communities within each jurisdiction, as well as by non-elected appointees from a cross section of the region's social service agencies, education, business and industry management.

The mission of the RPDCs involves the conversion of community and economic development needs into proactive strategies and solutions, often taking the form of regional projects or programs. Much of the RPDCs community and economic development efforts have been directed toward water, sewer, and highway projects. Their roles range from regional planning for identification and prioritization of project endorsements. The RPDCs are authorized to receive and administer state, federal, and private/non-profit grants. Each Council employs a professional staff adept at public funds management, regional/community planning and economic development. The RPDCs possess a significant skill base of grant writing talent, as well as valuable competencies in facilitation, management, information, and referral. The RPDCs provide a valuable linkage between federal, state, and local units of government, having established over time a valuable network of contacts, information, rapport, and trust. Collectively, the West Virginia RPDCs provide service to more than 300 local units of government.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Rural Development Plan (RDP) are designed to meet the aforementioned aim of this legislation. This strategy is the center and plan of action for the Region's overall economic development program. It is the planning and implementation process designed to provide a mechanism for quality and to create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, improve living conditions, think globally, and to coordinate the efforts of persons and organizations concerned with economic development. This process will encourage and demand participation from both the public and private sectors.

The purpose of this Strategy is to briefly describe the regional situation, adhere to the basic goals and objectives of the Regional Council, identify and rank regional projects, and establish a plan of action for economic achievement. The Regional Council addresses the need for advancing economic development, improving the quality of life of its citizens and integrating its human and physical capital planning in the service for economic development.