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OVERVIEW

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Blueprint is a statewide strategy to spur Colorado’s economy, help businesses grow and attract new jobs to the state. The Colorado Blueprint is a framework to build a comprehensive economic development plan that aligns existing efforts and identifies opportunities for growth and focused investments. It prioritizes the creation and retention of jobs and the expansion of companies throughout Colorado.

Based on a bottom-up process, the Colorado Blueprint identified six core objectives:
1. Build a business-friendly environment
2. Retain, grow and recruit companies
3. Increase access to capital
4. Create and market a stronger Colorado brand
5. Educate and train the workforce of the future
6. Cultivate innovation and technology

These objectives serve as a framework for discussion across state agencies, regional partnerships and key industry stakeholders.

In 2016, the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) led a bottom-up effort to turn regional feedback on local economic needs, into a statewide set of initiatives to advance the economies of communities around the state. Blueprint 2.0’s goal is to leverage state partnerships and specialized resources in service of the unique economic development goals of rural Colorado. According to the OEDIT website, priority was given to communities that could “demonstrate collaboration, strong local leadership and solid support for the initiative they chose to pursue.” In 2016, 10 of Colorado’s 14 regions undertook 27 initiatives. Each initiative included new services and leveraged state resources and partnerships with organizations outside of state government to provide technical assistance to interested regions. In June 2017, applications were requested for a second round of Blueprint 2.0 initiatives for 2017-18, with revisions to the program based on initial lessons learned during the pilot year.

In Spring 2017, OEDIT engaged Mission Spark, LLC, a third party consultancy, to evaluate the first year of the Blueprint 2.0 initiative. The primary purpose in engaging in this research was to assess the impact of the program’s first year. A secondary goal was to gather feedback on lessons learned during the pilot and to improve the program for future years.
EVALUATION QUESTIONS

In conjunction with OEDIT staff, Mission Spark developed evaluation questions specific to the pilot year of the Blueprint 2.0 initiative. These research questions included:

1. Please describe your Blueprint 2.0 project.
2. How did your project change from application to implementation? What drove those changes?
3. Please describe collaborations/partnerships that supported your project.
4. What outcomes or tangible impacts have you seen as a result of the project?
5. What outcomes or tangible impacts do you anticipate in the future as a result of this work?
6. What was the best part of participating in Blueprint 2.0?
7. What was the most challenging part of participating in Blueprint 2.0?
8. What advice would you offer for others engaging with a Blueprint 2.0 initiative to make the most of their experience?
9. What suggestions would you have for Blueprint 2.0 initiative administrators to strengthen the program?
10. What’s one next step your community or region will take as a result of participating in this program?
11. Is there anything else you’d like to share?
SUMMARY OF DATA SOURCES
The insights and recommendations for this report were garnered from a variety of sources, including primary research through interviews with leads from Blueprint 2.0 selectees. Secondary sources include previous Mission Spark research for OEDIT and specifically Blueprint 2.0, collateral materials that participating projects shared, and insights and supporting documents from OEDIT staff.

REPORT STRUCTURE
Based on the information gathered, this report is structured in the following way:
- Research methods, data sources and limitations of data
- Summary of findings
- Insights from in-depth case studies
- Conclusions and recommendations
RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODS

METHODS

The following process was developed and implemented to gather feedback from Blueprint 2.0 project leads, OEDIT staff, and related partners:

- Conducting one-on-one interviews with Blueprint project leads to gather their insights, current and/or anticipated measurable outcomes, and feedback about participation in the initiative.
- Documenting and analyzing interviews for larger trends.
- Collecting final initiative deliverables and collateral materials from project leads.
- Examining secondary research sources for applicable findings and insights to augment primary data, including collateral materials, Colorado Tourism Office documents and external evaluation insights.

PROCESS

1. The following process was implemented to gather, analyze and report relevant information:
2. Research question development and identification of contacts for interviews (May 2017)
3. Document and secondary research review (May 2017)
4. Research tool development including interview questions and Google Form (May 2017)
5. Interview invitations (June 2017)
6. Data collection via phone interviews and Google Form as needed (June 2017)
7. Collateral materials gathered via email (June 2017)
8. Interview documentation and analysis (June 2017)
9. Report development and submission to OEDIT (June 2017)

LIMITATIONS

Some key limitations to methods employed above include small sample size of interview subjects for community-specific insights, self-reported data that is not verified for accuracy, selection bias (as interview subjects were engaged in other initiatives as well and therefore more likely to seek out and engage in related endeavors.) Other challenges faced included a short timeline in which to prepare and conduct the evaluation. The timeline also fell over the busy summer season and end-of-year wrap up, potentially influencing participation rates. For example, Mission Spark reached out to all of the Blueprint 2.0 selectees for interview requests, but a few were not responsive.
DATA SUMMARY

The recipients of Colorado Blueprint 2.0 initiatives for 2016-17 were as follows:

- Industry Attraction Initiative: Rio Blanco, Trinidad
- Competitive Advantage: Fort Morgan, Limon, Dillon
- Grow Your Outdoor Recreation Industry: Ouray, Montrose
- Strengthen Local Business Brand: San Luis Valley, Buena Vista, Delta
- Tiny Homes Community Master Plan: Morgan, Steamboat, Pagosa Springs
- Adaptive Reuse Workshop: Brush, Delta County, Summit County
- Call Yourself Creative: Buena Vista, Rio Blanco County, Kremmling
- Incubator/Accelerator Best Practices: Morgan County, Steamboat, NWCOG
- Tourism Promotion: La Junta, Delta County, Rio Blanco County
- Community-Led Initiative: Custer County

COLORADO COUNTY MAP

The following image indicates all communities that shared insights regarding their participation in Blueprint 2.0:
**RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODS**

**DATA SUMMARY**

Mission Spark reached out to all selected projects with invitations to complete a brief interview. In total, 13 interviews (12 via phone, 1 via Google Form) were conducted about 19 projects in 12 communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF INTERVIEW SUBJECT</th>
<th>BLUEPRINT 2.0 INITIATIVE(S)</th>
<th>COUNTY/COMMUNITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joel Benson*</td>
<td>Call Yourself Creative; Strengthen Local business brand</td>
<td>Buena Vista, Chaffee</td>
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<td>Charles Bogle</td>
<td>Community-Led Initiative</td>
<td>Westcliffe and Silver cliff, Custer</td>
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<td>Mark Campbell</td>
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<td>Eric Grossman</td>
<td>Strengthen Local business brand</td>
<td>San Luis Valley</td>
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<td>Greg Thomason</td>
<td>Industry/Accelerator best Practices</td>
<td>Fort Morgan, Brush, Wiggins, Log Lane, and Hillrose. Morgan County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Bristol*</td>
<td>Industry/Accelerator best Practices; Tiny Homes Master Plan</td>
<td>Steamboat Springs, Routt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katelin Cook</td>
<td>Call Yourself Creative; Industry Attraction; Tourism</td>
<td>Meeker, Rangely, Rio Blanco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelli Hepler</td>
<td>Tourism Promotion</td>
<td>Delta County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kerstin Anderson</td>
<td>Adaptive Reuse workshop; Competitive Advantage</td>
<td>Dillon, Summit County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Jo Coulehan</td>
<td>Tiny Homes Master Plan</td>
<td>Archuleta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Lunney</td>
<td>Industry/Accelerator best Practices</td>
<td>NWCCOG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Thomason</td>
<td>Tiny Homes Master Plan</td>
<td>Morgan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trish Thibodo</td>
<td>Adaptive Reuse workshop; Strengthen Local business brand</td>
<td>Paonia, Delta County</td>
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* indicates change in project lead
In addition to this high-level summary report, a file of supporting documents has been organized and shared via Dropbox for this project. Files shared there include background information from OEDIT and collateral materials shared from participants to illustrate the impact of Blueprint 2.0 involvement. Finally, all research tools and templates are provided, including the interview questions and detailed documentation of responses.
MISSION SPARK interviewed 13 people about 19 projects in 12 different Colorado communities. The breakdown of projects by Blueprint initiative was as follows:

- Adaptive Reuse workshop – 2
- Call Yourself Creative – 3
- Community-Led Initiative – 1
- Competitive Advantage – 1
- Industry/Accelerator Best Practices – 3
- Industry Attraction – 1
- Strengthen Local Business Brand – 3
- Tiny Homes Master Plan – 3
- Tourism – 2

This subset of projects is largely representative of the total distribution of Blueprint projects by initiative, although the two projects within the Grow Your Outdoor Recreation Industry initiative did not respond.

OVERARCHING INSIGHTS

Participating communities carried out local initiatives in numerous ways. Across the state, projects pursued economic development goals and achieved progress through communication, learning, and relationship building. Interviews pointed to the variety of methods communities employed to pursue their economic development goals, as well as to the range of resulting deliverables and other outcomes.

Blueprint 2.0 communities engaged in an array of activities, connecting with partners, learning, and taking action. This section details findings in the following way:

- Activities, Resources Secured, and Partnerships
- Deliverables and Collateral Developed
- Qualitative Benefits of Blueprint 2.0 Participation
- Ongoing Blueprint 2.0-Related Work
PRIMARY FINDINGS: SELECTEE INTERVIEWS

ACTIVITIES, RESOURCES SECURED, AND PARTNERSHIPS

1. TASKFORCES AND WORKGROUPS ACTIVATED
   ▸ 5 communities developed long-term taskforces or workgroups after initial Blueprint engagement, with approximately 45 active participants addressing needs and implementing plans identified through Blueprint 2.0 participation
   ▸ 1 Invitation to serve on “destination development committee” based on service on 3 Blueprint projects

2. EDUCATION GAINED
   ▸ 8 workshops presented in 6 communities with total estimated attendance of 123 individuals (invitations/attendance intentionally limited for some of these events to ensure participation and involvement from all attendees)
   ▸ A team of 6 people learned about entrepreneurial best practices in mountain towns at the Mountain Venture Summit in Telluride
   ▸ Attended an educational meeting in Northern Colorado by OEDIT invitation in June 2017

3. COMMUNITY MEMBERS GATHERED AND ENGAGED
   ▸ More than 75 people attended 5 sessions
   ▸ Additional 200 people engaged through a community meeting and related one-on-one conversations (Delta County – Local Business Brand)

4. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES SECURED
   ▸ Financial and Technical Assistance: Dillon used the industry information in reports gained through Blueprint to present to DOLA and secure an $800,000 grant toward an amphitheater (Adaptive Reuse Initiative)
   ▸ Mentorship: Several projects commented on the value of the consultant guidance received, including that through the Blueprint Strengthen Local Business Brand initiative for the San Luis Valley

5. PARTNERSHIPS BUILT AND STRENGTHENED
   ▸ New partnerships forged with at least 22 partners
   ▸ 7 communities built relationships with including developers, agricultural industries, banks, architects, recreation groups, non-profits, churches, and research institutes
   ▸ Projects pointed to more than 40 partnerships strengthened through Blueprint 2.0 efforts. These partners included representatives of state and local government, various industries, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, developers, community working groups, and more.
DELIVERABLES AND COLLATERAL DEVELOPED

Many products emerged from these activities, including the following deliverables that were a direct result of Blueprint 2.0 work:

1. **STYLE GUIDES/ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES (2)**

2. **REPORTS, PLANS, AND OTHER DOCUMENTS**
   - Strategic Plans (2)
   - Tourism Action Plan
   - General Action Plan
   - Research report with recommendations and next steps
   - Community assessment study by Community Builders out of Glenwood (Dillon – Adaptive Reuse)
   - Positioning statement about local brand
   - Study commissioned by Ebenezer Lutheran Care Centers to test appeal/feasibility of tiny homes (Fort Morgan)

3. **OTHER PRODUCTS AND RESULTS**
   - RFP for parcels of land
   - Visitors Guide (print and online)
   - Baseline goals establishment for year-round housing
   - Brand development/creation
   - Job description for an administrative support person to implement Blueprint recommendations
   - Creative district offerings featured in a statewide magazine and on television

The majority of Blueprint work in the pilot year was setting a foundation for more concrete work in the future: planning, strategizing, learning, and building relationships. Early indicators of the effects of this long-term work include:

- Increased lodging tax revenue for the year and for the current quarter as a result of marketing efforts (Delta County)
- Increased activity as a result of social media efforts, which were a key recommendation in selected communities’ plans from Blueprint (Delta County, Town of Dillon)
QUALITATIVE BENEFITS OF BLUEPRINT 2.0 PARTICIPATION

Participants also identified these key qualitative benefits to Blueprint 2.0 efforts:

1. CREDIBILITY AND LEGITIMACY – outside experts brought new attention to issues communities had not addressed before and a sense of importance to working on such topics

“What blueprint 2.0 did for us, by providing outside expertise in the way of individuals who have lived and breathed and accomplished goal of building tiny homes and building business incubators, we brought a credibility to those two topics that might not have otherwise surfaced.”

– Greg Thomason, Morgan County – Tiny Homes Master Plan and Industry/Accelerator Best Practices Initiatives

“A key impact of Blueprint was developing conversations about who we are and are not, where we agree and don’t. Really being able to communicate our story of where we’re unique…”

– Trish Tibodo, Delta County – Local Business Brand Initiative

2. COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING - Blueprint 2.0 efforts generated a sense of unification around shared goals, started conversations, and became a source of pride.

“Our communities are much more on board and feeling included in the plans as we move forward. They are communicating more with regards to events and plans that they have.”

– Kelli Hepler, Delta County – Tourism Promotion Initiative

“We have an action plan that’s not the county’s plan, it’s the community’s action plan. We have people stepping up to take the lead - we’re doing legwork - but new people stepping up, with a passion to make our area better…”

– Katelin Cook, Rio Blanco County – Call Yourself Creative, Industry Attraction, and Tourism Initiatives

“The more you can send professional economic developers to a community to lead a conversation and gather the community the better.”

– John Bristol, Steamboat Springs – Tiny Homes Master Plan and Industry/Accelerator Best Practices Initiatives
ONGOING BLUEPRINT 2.0 - RELATED WORK

Many communities easily pointed to next steps in their economic development efforts as a result of Blueprint 2.0. Next steps and deliverables anticipated in the near future include:

1. **FIVE COMMUNITIES ARE SEEKING FUNDING TO CONTINUE THE BLUEPRINT 2.0-IDENTIFIED WORK.**
   - Rio Blanco County is aligning 2018 budget dollars to implement recommendations from their industry attraction initiative report, as well as applying for a Co-working 101 initiative.
   - Delta County is seeking funds to implement the marketing phase of its plan, including developing print materials, website, and social media online presence to build its local business brand. This includes applying for a Blueprint Implementation Grant and exploring other grants, membership programs, pay to play on its website, and a potential LMD effort.
   - Morgan County is looking into grant funding to support the development of the feasibility study by an outside consultant.
   - NWCOGG is writing a grant to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for Regional Innovation Strategies grant to create a hub around the outdoor recreation industry.
   - The San Luis Valley is raising funds to implement its marketing plan.

2. **THREE COMMUNITIES ARE SEEKING OUTSIDE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES TO CONTINUE BLUEPRINT 2.0-IDENTIFIED WORK.**
   - Buena Vista/Chaffee County is seeking design/engineering help for way finding signage now that a style guide is in place.
   - Fort Morgan is contracting with a consultant to complete a feasibility study to look at the recommended agribusiness concepts and determine which are going to be most successful.
   - Rio Blanco County is looking at data center recruitment through a third party.

3. **OTHER STEPS ARE UNDERWAY TO SUSTAIN COLLABORATIONS AND STRENGTHEN LOCAL BRANDS OVER TIME.**
   - Archuleta County/Pagosa Springs Chamber is changing local comprehensive plans to include regulations about tiny homes.
   - NWCOGG is developing a clearinghouse for entrepreneurial resources for the region.
   - Buena Vista/Chaffee County is constructing an information kiosk.
   - Two communities are creating and issuing RFPs.
   - Delta County is finalizing a countywide logo.
PRIMARY FINDINGS: SELECTEE INTERVIEWS

PROCESS INSIGHTS—CONDITIONS FOR BLUEPRINT 2.0 PROJECT SUCCESS

Across interviews, Mission Spark heard that the project lead was of critical importance, and that this person needed to demonstrate these key traits:

- Persistence and commitment to follow-through
- Leader with authority to implement community decisions
- Identifies concrete next steps from initial engagement (work session, training, etc)
- Has, or is able to build, strong connections with a cross section of industries and organization types

ONE INTERVIEW SUBJECT NOTED THE NEED FOR COMMITTED FOLLOW THROUGH AS THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF BLUEPRINT:

“…if someone in my position who has those grants doesn’t then take the initiative to pursue them, it stops right there. It could have easily been the death knell of both opportunities. So I then had to step back and commit myself to not letting that be the end of conversation. That’s where the challenge came…”

-Greg Thomason, Morgan County – Tiny Homes Master Plan and Industry/Accelerator Best Practices Initiatives

ANOTHER OFFERED THIS ADVICE TO OTHER BLUEPRINT PARTICIPANTS:

“Don’t stop at that work session. Maybe the facilitators might say ‘ok what are your next steps’ and get them to commit to future. Everybody said ‘ok that was great’ and we all walked away. No next steps were really developed from that work session.”

-Mary Jo Coulehan, Archuleta County - Tiny Homes Master Plan
PRIMARY FINDINGS: SELECTEE INTERVIEWS

PROCESS INSIGHTS—CONDITIONS FOR BLUEPRINT 2.0 PROJECT SUCCESS

One community that had participated in several rounds of OEDIT projects particularly valued the strong relationship and resources made available by the state. Another community pointed the benefits of a deepening relationship with state agencies.

“We’ve transitioned since Bottom Up, initially there was an observation that they would come and try to tell us what to do which might or might not work in our own communities...over the years...they’re more inclined to listen. The relationship has certainly improved and the effectiveness of results are showing too.”

– Charles Bogle, Westcliffe and Silvercliff, Custer – Community-Led Initiative

“We’re really positive thing that has come out of this is our relationship with the state. I really do believe it’s because of the Blueprint...we’re seeing more opportunity from the state coming to our county in the last 3-4 months than ever before...one more time your name is flashing across their desk, they see your successes and know you can carry something through...”

– Katelin Cook, Rio Blanco County – Multiple Initiatives

Across initiatives, it appears that there was greater momentum in places with deeper community investment and longer standing relationships with state agencies. In particular, communities with multiple initiatives appeared to gain more traction in their efforts. Three of these multi-initiative communities are examined in greater depth later in this report.
INITIATIVE-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

Interviews with participants pointed to similarities and differences across the ten Blueprint 2.0 initiatives. Each initiative had a specific set of outcomes detailed in the logic model developed for Blueprint 2.0, expected to take place over the short, medium, and long term. The full logic model is available as an appendix to this report.

Mission Spark heard strong evidence of progress toward these outcomes in interviews and in reviewing collateral materials, with the exception of mixed evidence where noted below:

1. **STRENGTHEN YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS BRAND**
   - Increase in knowledge, awareness and skills on community / regional brand (ST)
   - Community / region clearly communicating its local brand through effective methods (MT)

2. **INDUSTRY ATTRACTION INITIATIVE**
   - Community/ region has a clear picture of whether a proposed industry is a good fit and how to attract that industry (ST)
   - Feasibility study in process for community to learn more
   - Community / Region able to reach out to potential businesses with an industry and make the case for their region (MT)

3. **ANALYZE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES**
   - Community/ region has increased ability to distinguish itself from peers regions or communities (ST)
   - Community / region promotes these competitive advantages successfully to target audiences where audiences have increased understanding and value for the community / region (MT)
4. TOURISM PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT

- Community / region builds needed skills, knowledge and support to make an existing attraction stronger (ST)
- Target audiences are more aware of the attraction and its value/ quality (MT)
- Increase in visitors to the attraction (MT/ LT)
- An early indication of progress on this initiative is the increase in lodging tax revenues seen in Delta County in 2017.
- This initiative appeared to have particularly strong progress on outcomes. Interviews pointed to strong consultant leadership and support for the programs as key factors to program success. Funding from the Colorado Tourism Office also appears to have bolstered the early impact achieved in this initiative.

5. INCUBATOR/ACCELERATOR BEST PRACTICES

- Members of community/ region understand the benefits and realities of running an incubator/ accelerator and the potential impacts (ST) – strong evidence
- A subset of those selected for this initiative determine accelerator/ incubator a good fit and successfully launch one (MT) – mixed evidence

6. TINY HOMES COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

- Participating communities/ regions understand what’s possible through tiny homes master planning and determine if a good match for their community (ST)
- Progress on this outcome is still underway but Mission Spark found communities are being deliberate in their research, taking appropriate and needed steps (e.g. connect with financial institutions and community housing groups; conducting an in-depth feasibility study; revising comprehensive plan to add regulations about tiny homes).

7. CREATIVE INDUSTRIES INITIATIVE: CALL YOURSELF CREATIVE

- Community/ region has deeper understanding of how their area can drive economic growth through creative industries (ST)
- Community/ Region promotes and supports growth of creative industries. (MT)

8. ADAPTIVE REUSE WORKSHOP

- Thorough site assessment and understanding of adaptive reuse potential for a community’ region’s proposed site (s) (ST)
- A subset of projects move forward with adaptive reuse strategy for a blighted site (MT)

Evidence from interviews suggests Blueprint selectees made great gains on short-term outcomes and are on track to accomplish medium- and long-term goals. Three communities – Delta County, Morgan County, and the Town of Dillon – have made outstanding progress on their projects in a short time and illustrate the full potential of the Blueprint 2.0 initiative. These communities are detailed more extensively in the following case studies.
ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS: CASE STUDIES

Three communities that participated in Blueprint 2.0 stood out for the effectiveness of their projects: Delta County, Morgan County, and the Town of Dillon. Mission Spark examined the work of these communities in detail to understand the factors that contributed to project success. The case studies below offer insights and lessons learned to inform the future efforts of Blueprint 2.0 and related initiatives. While some lessons are community-specific, some aggregate insights can be identified. In particular, Mission Spark noted more substantial outcomes for communities participating in more than one Blueprint 2.0 initiative. In these multi-initiative communities, projects appeared to complement one another and reinforce an ecosystem of interconnected economic development strategies. In-depth case studies are available in the appendices of this report.

SUCCESSFUL ASPECTS OF BLUEPRINT WORK IN CASE STUDY COMMUNITIES INCLUDED:

▶ A strong mentor who customized guidance to the local community
▶ Report recommendations that were doable and encouraged bite-size progress over time
▶ Autonomy and flexibility in the program to allow for the best local outcomes
▶ A dedicated project lead that followed through
▶ Alloting time to do the work, including relationship building
▶ Diligent community engagement and outreach by the project lead
▶ More than one initiative in a community
▶ Expertise and responsiveness from OEDIT staff and consultants.

MAP OF CASE STUDY COMMUNITIES

The following image shows the locations of the 3 communities featured in case studies for their Blueprint 2.0 work:
ADDITIONAL PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

Interviews with Blueprint 2.0 participants pointed to the positive impact of efforts during the pilot year, as well as to operational feedback for program administrators and participants to make the program even more effective in the future.

Mission Spark heard many positive comments about the support and expertise received from OEDIT and partners. In addition to overall praise, project leads specifically complimented OEDIT staff and partners for creativity and responsiveness and for offering valuable connections to other organizations.

BLUEPRINT 2.0 PARTICIPANTS OFFERED ADVICE TO OTHERS ENGAGING IN THE INITIATIVE TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR EXPERIENCE:

“You do need a strong local champion and leader that will be strong and take it through. Have expectations clear of what you’re getting from the state and what you’re doing.”

– Trish Tibodo, Paonia and Delta County, Adaptive Reuse and Strengthen Local Business Brand initiatives

ONE PROJECT LEAD SHARED THIS BRIGHT IDEA, WHICH COULD BE A LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY FOR OUTSTANDING PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE PARTICULARLY COMMITTED TO SHARE THEIR LOCAL PERSPECTIVE AND EXPERTISE:

“…[it would be nice] if there’s a steering committee to help recommend what initiatives taking place the next year. If there isn’t, maybe that could help guide decisions and some local practitioners could help guide that direction.”

- Katelin Cook, Rangely/Meeker/Rio Blanco – Call Yourself Creative, Industry Attraction, and Tourism Initiatives
ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS: CASE STUDIES

OTHER OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT EMERGED DURING INTERVIEWS INCLUDED:

1. Prepare for changes in personnel by documenting what is done and having a backup person in place. Several interviews noted staff changes as a barrier to project momentum and continuation, whether the point person was a grantee or part of the OEDIT staff or consultant pool.

2. Weigh the project lead heavily in future rounds of applications. This person’s level of authority and commitment to follow through appear to be critical to project success. Autonomy and flexibility in the program to allow for the best local outcomes.

3. Provide project mentors and consultants with a clear set of expectations for the project period, including a minimum amount of follow-up with the local community following the initial convening. For the most part, project leads found their assigned consultants/mentors to be very helpful and responsive, however, a handful of leads did not. Alloting time to do the work, including relationship building:

   ▶ The projects interviewed as part of the business incubator initiative felt that their consultant/mentor under delivered, noting that she was too busy and decreased the learning opportunities (from three site visit possibilities to a single one of less relevance to the project leads) as a matter of her own convenience.

4. Include language about time commitment in the application and provide an engagement agreement guiding selected participants to plan for follow-through. Mission Spark heard many project leads express surprise at the amount of time needed to implement the Blueprint 2.0 initiative fully. Leads found the time invested to be worthwhile, but wished they had known the commitment needed ahead of time to plan accordingly.

5. Provide a kick-off/training day, consistent check-ins, and a final wrap-up session to clarify and strengthen the process for participants.

6. Identify at least one contact willing to serve as a “sounding board” per project, whether a contracted mentor or otherwise. A project lead who felt he lacked this connection wished that he had had one:

   “The thought crossed my mind more than once ‘I wish I had someone that I could just bounce ideas off of’...that resource, an individual one could go back to...”

   - Greg Thomason, Morgan County – Tiny Homes Master Plan and Industry/Accelerator Best Practices Initiatives
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In its first year, Blueprint 2.0 comprised more than two dozen initiatives in 18 communities across the state of Colorado, bringing expertise, technical assistance, and other resources to local communities for customized economic development strategies. The pilot year of Blueprint 2.0 added value to Colorado’s rural communities, bringing quantitative and qualitative benefits to local economies. Project topics ranged from arts districts to business incubators to outdoor recreation to tiny homes, with specific efforts shaped around the unique needs and goals of each participating region.

MEASURABLE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PILOT YEAR OF BLUEPRINT 2.0 INCLUDED:

1. A VARIETY OF ROBUST ACTIVITIES
   ▶ 22 new partnerships and more than 40 strengthened partnerships
   ▶ 5 community workgroups activated
   ▶ More than 120 individuals educated at 8 workshops
   ▶ Nearly 300 people engaged via community meetings

2. VALUABLE TOOLS AND RESOURCES GAINED
   ▶ Dillon used the industry information in reports gained through Blueprint 2.0 to present to DOLA and secure an $800,000 grant

3. AN ARRAY OF DELIVERABLES SUCH AS
   ▶ 2 style guides
   ▶ 8 plans or reports completed to inform local efforts
   ▶ A visitors guide

4. POSITIVE OUTCOMES ON KEY METRICS
   ▶ Increased lodging tax revenues
   ▶ Increased social media activity and site visits from boosted posts

KEY QUALITATIVE BENEFITS INCLUDED

▶ Credibility and legitimacy from outside expertise
▶ Stronger communities from new conversations and unification around shared goals
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IN THEIR OWN WORDS, PROJECT LEADERS HIGHLIGHTED THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF BLUEPRINT 2.0 ON THEIR LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORK:

“Keep doing these projects as they are valuable.”
– John Bristol, Steamboat Springs

“This was a truly rewarding experience. I felt like the State offices were really providing an extremely valuable program. The grants are wonderful and a blessing, but Blueprint gives you a better idea of what to be asking for and doing with grant funds.”
– Kelli Hepler, Delta County

“Ultimately the process is very worthwhile and I’m glad we did it. It’s a conversation that every community should have with itself, who we are and what we’re about.”
– Eric Grossman, San Luis Valley

Most of the participating communities from the pilot year are poised to continue their work in meaningful ways beyond the initiative. Examples of next steps include:

▶ Seeking funding to continue the work (8 communities)
▶ Hiring outside firms for help with design services, feasibility studies, and data center recruitment
▶ Issuing RFPs
▶ Completing a marketing plan and finalizing a countywide logo
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lessons learned during the pilot year can strengthen the impact of these initiatives even further. As Blueprint 2.0 moves into its second round of projects, these key elements are important to consider:

1. The application should define expectations clearly to screen applicants who have the needed time and level of commitment.

2. The application should ask potential selectees to think about next steps and to identify at least one follow-up step beyond the initial engagement. Once selected, OEDIT staff and/or project mentor can assist with identification if needed.

3. The year should begin with clear expectations to improve the experience for project leads. Helpful clarifying tools should include:
   ▶ Brief engagement agreement, outlining project scope and the roles and responsibilities of OEDIT and the selectee
   ▶ Timeline/work plan of activities for the year, including expected time commitment, who will implement in local community.

4. The project lead should be an individual champion who takes initiative and someone with a sufficient level of authority to get things done – this person’s identity, persistence, and willingness to reach out in the community are crucial to project success.

5. The program should continue to allow autonomy and flexibility to allow for the best local outcomes.

6. Mentors should customize guidance to each local community and make recommendations that are doable, encouraging bite-size progress over time.

OEDIT has gathered lessons throughout the pilot year and has already begun implementing changes based on early feedback. Additional insights shared through this year-end research should be incorporated into subsequent years to maximize the impact of the program. With the above process refinements, Blueprint 2.0 can continue to be an effective strategy for expanding and improving upon local and regional economic development efforts.
DELTA COUNTY’S BLUEPRINT 2.0 EXPERIENCE

Delta County, located on Colorado’s western slope, was selected for three projects as part of the Blueprint 2.0 pilot year: Tourism Promotion; Strengthen Local Business Brand; and Adaptive Reuse workshop.

TOURISM PROMOTION INITIATIVE

According to Kelli Hepler, project lead, the goal of this initiative was to unify the county’s five towns “to create an organized and cohesive promotion plan that sends a more welcoming and unified message out to the traveler.” For this initiative, Delta County worked with mentor Dave Santucci to develop a marketing plan. Case studies showed how peer communities used influencers for promotion via social media. Partners included all five local Chambers of Commerce; Delta County; Delta County Economic Development, Inc.; Grand Mesa National Scenic and Historic Byway; the local BLM office in Montrose, and the Colorado Tourism Office. Much of the plan focused on boosted social media posts using branded content, and Delta County saw strong results.

OUTCOMES - TOURISM PROMOTION

- New website
- Engagement up 500% for paid Facebook ads
- Weekly Facebook views grew from 2,500 to 8,000
- Lodging tax up 17% at the end of 2017 and currently shows a 3% increase for the quarter.
- Secured a Blueprint implementation grant from CTO
Delta County's Blueprint 2.0 work has become even more successful through involvement with the CTO social media coop, which matches ad buys dollar for dollar. With one featured post, Delta County had more than 247,000 viewers reached with 11,000+ engagements. Delta County saw a significant increase from 2,500-3,000 people reached weekly to 12,000-13,500 weekly, one month after running the co-op post (cost: $1,000).
STRENGTHENING LOCAL BUSINESS BRAND INITIATIVE

Delta County’s second selected Blueprint 2.0 project was part of the Strengthening Local Business Brand initiative. The county applied for assistance for branding and business recruitment in a unified voice, despite being a fragmented region.

In Fall 2016, Delta County did a daylong workshop with branding partner DCI and Liz Cahill, Chief Marketing Officer for OEDIT. Twenty invited participants from across the community attended – a mix of longtime residents and newcomers, representatives of businesses and government – to learn about the larger process of a branding campaign. The result was a new Branding Taskforce, a workgroup of six members from different sectors and areas of the community. DCI and Cahill gave the group tools to develop a branding position statement and process. Within the community, Trish Tibodo (project lead) and others from the workgroup had numerous conversations and looked at studies and surveys to get feedback and “identify who we are and what we have to offer.”

Once the positioning statement was developed and vetted by the community, the workgroup began working with OEDIT on a community logo. As of summer 2017, a local graphic designer is volunteering to refine and finalize the logo design, shown in draft form here.

CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

Project leads noted that funding is needed to sustain the effort in the future.

“...[this has involved] lots of in-kind time from state, DCI, our side. We don’t have a budget to do marketing. That’s our next phase, how do we start to find money [for] developing print material, website, social media online presence.”

– Project Lead

Delta County developed a detailed follow-up plan with nine concrete steps to keep the foundational work of Blueprint 2.0 moving forward. Highlights of the plan include:

▶ Developing a new website with the Sitemap provided as a guide for navigation, Brand Voice document as a guide for content and advertising advice as a guide for monetizing in the near future.
▶ Devoting funding in 2018 budget to research, tracking, and analysis of key performance indicators for social media
▶ Seeking funding: applying to CTO for additional funding for a key initiative, asking county commissioners for matching funds, and encouraging local 501(c)3 organizations in tourism to apply for Google Grants
▶ Using VisitUSAParks, a social media program with demonstrated results, to create content for its social media campaign. Highlights will include fishing, mountain biking, and agritourism.
WHAT WORKED FOR THE BLUEPRINT 2.0 EXPERIENCE

▶ A strong mentor who customized guidance to the local community
▶ Report recommendations were doable and encouraged bite-size progress over time.
▶ The program has a lot of autonomy and isn’t rigid, allows for best local outcomes.

“Getting the expertise of someone who was focused on us and not delivering a workshop aimed at larger groups. We really felt like our consultant really was passionate about our place and felt pride in working with us to uplift our marketing efforts without a lot of budget.”

– Project Lead

ADVICE FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES

“In rural Colorado we are faced with lack of staff, lack of budget and many times political or generational conflicts that keep progress from happening. If your consultant/team knows what you are up against (and honestly), you will get great advice and plans.”

– Project Lead

WHY BLUEPRINT 2.0 MATTERS

“I feel like it's been a really good process for us...Being an economy that's been really depressed...We are really trying to figure out how to diversify and make our economy more resilient. We've gotta build our infrastructure and make ourselves attractive to businesses coming in.”

– Project Lead

“Our communities are much more on board and feeling included in the plans as we move forward. They are communicating more.”

– Project Lead
Located in northeast Colorado, Morgan County and the towns of Fort Morgan, Brush, Wiggins, Log Lane, and Hillrose, were selected for two projects as part of the Blueprint 2.0 pilot year: Industry/Accelerator Best Practices and Tiny Homes Master Plan. Greg Thomason, executive director of Morgan County Economic Development Corporation, was the lead for both projects.

**TINY HOMES MASTER PLAN INITIATIVE**

OEDIT facilitated a workshop in Fall 2016 and brought subject matter experts to an invited group of community leaders. Eight attendees stepped up to serve on a taskforce and have met three times since January 2017. Most significantly, representatives from the City of Brush and the CEO for Ebenezer Lutheran Care Centers indicated a strong interest in learning more about tiny homes. The Blueprint 2.0 project lead invited Rod Stanbaugh, CEO for Sprout Tiny Homes, the largest builder of tiny home planned communities in the U.S., to meet with city officials and the board of Ebenezer.

Recently, Ebenezer authorized the hiring of consultants to conduct an in-depth study on the appeal of tiny homes in the Brush/Morgan County/Northeast Colorado region. Pending study results, Ebenezer will likely fund and construct a community of 20-30 tiny homes.

“*Our goal, which was to initiate a conversation around tiny homes, was definitely achieved as a result of getting the grant.*”

– Project Lead
MORGAN COUNTY'S BLUEPRINT 2.0 EXPERIENCE

INDUSTRY/ACCELERATOR BEST PRACTICES INITIATIVE
The original goal was to build a sustainable technology incubator in Morgan County. With the help of OEDIT, Morgan County conducted a workshop on the topic. At the workshop, the county was advised to broaden its concept and align more closely with the county’s specific strengths: agriculture and energy. The project lead had numerous individual conversations post-workshop, and wound up hearing great support for an agribusiness incubator. The community is now pursuing that focus, including seeking a grant for an outside consultant to conduct a feasibility study. A local taskforce is engaged as well.

COMBINED OUTCOMES FROM INITIATIVES
Local taskforces engaged around each initiative, representing diverse industries.

“My agency has been seen as a thought leader in both housing and business development.”
– Project Lead

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS:
- Awaiting results of tiny homes feasibility study; local non-profit may fund construction based on results.
- Applying for a USDA grant to support development of an agribusiness incubator.
WHAT WORKED FOR THE BLUEPRINT 2.0 EXPERIENCE

In the words of the project lead, these were the keys to success:

1. A dedicated project lead that follows through.

   “If someone in my position who has those grants doesn’t then take the initiative to pursue them, it stops right there. It could have easily been the death knell of both opportunities. So I then had to step back and commit myself to not letting that be the end of conversation.”

2. Allot time to do the work, including relationship building.

   “Be sure you commit time to this endeavor. It’s not something that’s going to just materialize in and of itself or on its own. It takes time and collaboration from the larger community to succeed. You’ve got to figure out a way to build that.”

3. Community engagement is crucial.

   “I was heartened by the number of people who raised hands... and showed up... The type of engagement needed to make either [initiative] successful – it would have been much more difficult without broad base support.”
MORGAN COUNTY'S BLUEPRINT 2.0 EXPERIENCE

ADVICE FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Connections, someone to bounce ideas off of, and travel money were among the suggestions from Blueprint 2.0 grantees for future program years.

“I think the program would offer a lot more to the communities - because we’re rural and we’re resource poor - if additional resources could be brought to future grant awards. And I say resources because I don’t know that money is the only resource that’s needed here.”

– Project Lead

WHY BLUEPRINT 2.0 MATTERS

“[The best part was] the opportunity to gain credibility around topics that might not otherwise have surfaced or been seen as viable. What Blueprint 2.0 did for us, by providing outside expertise in the way of individuals who have lived and breathed and accomplished goal of building tiny homes and building business incubators, we brought a credibility to those two topics that might not have otherwise surfaced.”

– Project Lead
The Town of Dillon, located in Summit County, was selected for two projects as part of the Blueprint 2.0 pilot year: Competitive Advantage and Adaptive Reuse workshop. Kerstin Anderson, Dillon’s Director of Marketing, Communications, and Economic Development, was the lead for both projects. Key partners included: Seven town council members, Economic Development Advisory Committee (Silverthorne), Town of Silverthorne, Colorado Tourism Office, Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), six developers, committee members from parks and recreation and planning and zoning, and interested community members. In both initiatives, the Town of Dillon received detailed reports from OEDIT with valuable data, case studies, and recommendations. Community members then used this information to continue conversations and implement recommended strategies.

“One [recommendation] was to advertise all-season day trip activities or things to do in 36 hours. So Silverthorne and Dillon partnered with Colorado Tourism to produce an official visitors guide [that was] published in May. Rather than being heavy on listings it was very lifestyle driven [featuring] top hikes in [the] area, a piece [that] talks about from lakes to rivers, [and] weaves [promotion of] shopping and dining [options] within it.”

– Project Lead
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE INITIATIVE

The primary goal of the Competitive Advantage initiative was to “evaluate the Town’s redevelopment strategies and determine and evaluate options for revitalization of Dillon’s core area residential opportunities, new business development or increased traffic driven by an events strategy.” In Fall 2016, OEDIT presented a workshop to community members featuring a SWOT analysis, case studies, and other relevant data. Recommendations were to use town-owned land as a catalyst for development, to build a sense of pride and improve appearance of the core area, and to diversify the tax base.

ADAPTIVE REUSE INITIATIVE

The goals of the Adaptive Reuse initiative were to “encourage year-round, full-time residents, and pedestrian traffic to drive economic vitality for new and existing businesses and provide enhanced community experiences for residents and guests. Identification of target industries and development of any of the targeted parcels or new areas of opportunity for existing buildings would be a measure of success”. This initiative stressed placemaking and the need for more affordable housing. Through an OEDIT connection, Dillon also gained expert input from Community Builders (a non-profit based in Glenwood Springs).

“Our council retreat looked at the Summit County Housing Authority report, looked at our funding, [the concept of] jobs following people, and set baseline goals for year-round affordable housing which has been really helpful with developers. We’ve definitely used this concept of need for strong placemaking as central to the RFP we put out.”

– Project Lead

COMBINED OUTCOMES FROM INITIATIVES

▶ Used the industry information in Blueprint reports to present to DOLA and win an $800,000 grant towards the community amphitheater.
▶ Developed the Exit 205 visitors guide (available in print and online) in partnership with CTO and the town of Silverthorne. Related posts 205 views on LinkedIn, reached 1,300 people on Facebook and got 39 post clicks (typical activity for Dillon social media efforts). Distributed 3,000 of the brochures at the Bolder Boulder expo.
▶ Hired an architectural firm that created design guidelines to encourage placemaking, “to provide a clear and comprehensive document that articulates the expected quality of development.”
▶ Wrote and issued RFPs to develop town-owned land and create more workforce housing.
ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS

▶ Agreement underway with developers; number of additional workforce housing units will be available later this summer
▶ Continued outreach to businesses once proposals are back from RFP

WHAT WORKED FOR THE BLUEPRINT 2.0 EXPERIENCE

▶ More than one initiative in a community: The two initiatives complemented one another, enhancing the local sense of pride and getting community members to think outside the box.
▶ Expertise and responsiveness from OEDIT staff and consultants:

“We also got an overview of data, industry employment growth by employment, jobs by industry, our Dillon population. They shared different case studies and then came back to us with some recs. The team was awesome to work with...The team was really responsive – I worked with Danielle, Laura, Liz Sloan primarily.”

– Project Lead

▶ Bringing credibility on issues to key decision makers:

“...that level of outside legitimacy that helps the council who aren’t experts in developing have confidence to make some of these decisions and keep initiatives moving forward. That’s a really important piece of it.”

– Project Lead
TOWN OF DILLON’S BLUEPRINT 2.0 EXPERIENCE

ADVICE FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

“On-boarding was a challenge, [with] a lot of phone tag... A clearer timeline would help.”

– Project Lead

WHY BLUEPRINT 2.0 MATTERS

“Based on a lot of this work we did together, we were able to articulate a really clear vision.”

– Project Lead

THE PROJECT LEAD ALSO ECHOED THE THEME OF CREDIBILITY HEARD FROM OTHER BLUEPRINT SELECTEES:

“Thanks to OEDIT, it’s really nice to have that third party sounding board. It was nice that council really saw the value in this as well. A level of third party credibility is really important.”
PARTICIPATION SATISFACTION ANALYSIS

SUMMARY

Colorado has seen tremendous economic success since the Great Recession. The state has bounced back to have the most robust economy in the United States. However, not all Coloradans have shared in the prosperity of the Front-Range Corridor. Blueprint 2.0 was developed not just to award selected communities technical assistance but also to act as a proxy, a conversation starter to help OEDIT understand what it can do better to help rural Colorado share in the same success. Though each Colorado community is unique, by having a cross section of the state communicate their needs to OEDIT, this office was able to identify universal needs and values shared by rural Colorado and develop strategies to engage with those needs and values.

In addition to the Mission Spark evaluation of the specific outcomes of the first round of Blueprint 2.0, the Regional Economic Development division of OEDIT sought to better understand the value of participating in Blueprint 2.0 to the awarded communities. To understand what aspects of Blueprint 2.0 drive value for participants, Regional development completed an analysis using Customer Value Management tools. Regional development interviewed a subset of recipients, and in collaboration with the Strategy and Analytics team developed a survey to collect data on those program attributes that drive value for the selected communities.

This addendum offers an analysis of that value to not only measure the value of program attributes to better inform future rounds of programming, but how to best have a positive impact through relationship building and open lines of communication between the State and it’s rural areas. Blueprint 2.0 is a conduit through which these conversations, and a deeper understanding of the needs of rural areas, can take place. By examining the value participants derive from the program, we can better understand the link between participant satisfaction, and aspects that will engender communities to the program. Not only can OEDIT gather insights into what rural Colorado values from a program, but also how these insights can better the program in future rounds and change the way other rural efforts are deployed.

FRAMEWORK AND DESIGN

This analysis explores the link between attributes of the Blueprint 2.0 program during its pilot year, and the participant satisfaction, or value, that was derived from these attributes. To understand the make-up of this value, participants were asked to brainstorm a simple list of what they considered to “benefits” to participation in the program, and what they considered to be “costs or challenges” of participation. OEDIT interviewed a broad sub-set of participants to obtain these qualities, and grouped them in to like categories to complete the framework detailing the value participants derived from the program. During the synthesis of these results, certain categories of attributes participants identified as “Benefits” were grouped under a broad category named “Relationship Components” due to their similarities as seen in Figure 1.

PARTICIPATION SATISFACTION ANALYSIS CONTRIBUTED BY:

Danielle Lendriet, Regional Coordinator and Analyst
Office Of Economic Development And International Trade
PARTICIPATION SATISFACTION ANALYSIS

THE BENEFITS COMPONENT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

▶ Initiative Scope – clarity on scope of work, project timelines, and outcomes
▶ Local Distinction – community recognition and pride for participation
▶ Community Momentum and Dialogue – the degree to which the initiative was community lead and encouraged a productive community dialogue
▶ Quality of Information – acquired knowledge, usefulness of information, and outside expertise
▶ Exposure to Resources – access to governmental or industry contacts and opportunities for additional assistance
▶ Introduction to Funding Opportunities – introduction to funding, or an increase in the availability of funds

THE RELATIONSHIP COMPONENT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

▶ Stakeholder and Community Engagement – community and regional collaboration, cooperation, and increased buy-in
▶ Partnerships with the State – relationship with OEDIT and the Governors office
▶ Quality of Support – Responsiveness of OEDIT staff and partners, and effective implementation

THE COSTS COMPONENT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

▶ Workload – reasonableness of work performed
▶ Cost of Community Engagement – time and effort of community organization
▶ Financial Costs – the tangible funds spent on the implementation of the initiative

These categories and their attributes formed the framework for the survey distributed to all participants in the first round of Blueprint 2.0 in 2016. This survey asked for satisfaction ratings on all attributes on a scale of 1 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied), as well as “the overall sum of all benefits”, “the overall sum of all relationship components”, and “the overall sum of costs”. The final question asked participants to rate their overall satisfaction with the program “considering all the benefits, relationship components, and costs, how satisfied were you with Blueprint 2.0?”

Responses helped OEDIT identify the relative importance of programmatic aspects to the community and construct a framework for measuring the value participants found in Blueprint 2.0, in order to increase the future consistency of Blueprint 2.0’s delivery.
WHAT IS A GOOD SCORE?

The first round of Blueprint 2.0 awarded 27 initiatives of 10 economic development concentrations to 18 communities or regions. Several communities or areas were awarded more than one initiative. We received 18 responses, one from each initiative, and of those 3 individuals answered survey requests for more than one initiative.

The graph in Figure 2 related participants overall satisfaction score with Blueprint 2.0 to the percentage of participants who would promote the program. Promoters were those initiative recipients who gave a score of 8 or higher when asked the following behavioral questions: 1) if you could do it all over, how likely would you be to participate in the program again and 2) If another community in Colorado reached out to you about your experience, how likely would you be to recommend Blueprint 2.0?

This graph illustrates that participants have high expectations of their experience with the program. While 100% of the participants who gave their initiatives an overall score of 9 or 10 were promoters, rates of promotion drop precipitously from there. A “good” score, where half the participants are promoters, is an 8, and at an overall score of 7, while intuitively considered a decent score on a scale of 1-10, only 17% (in this case 1 in 6) of the participants would promote, and the percentage drops to zero thereafter. On the other hand, this graph also demonstrates the powerful impact that a slight increase in the perception of overall value can have. Boosting the overall satisfaction of participants from an 8 to a 9 doubles the number of participants willing to promote the program.

*Figure 2: Blueprint 2.0 Promoters*
### OBSERVATIONS

Ordinarily, OEDIT would use a statistical technique called ordinary least squared (OLS) regression to calculate “impact weights” that assign importance, or levels of value, to the attributes listed in the framework section. These impact weights however, were not only mostly inconclusive (see section on costs below), but also highly inaccurate due to a statistical phenomenon called multicollinearity. Multicollinearity generally occurs in scenarios where there is a small sample size (i.e. a small number of individuals who took the survey) compared the number of attributes being analyzed. Upon using OLS to test the attributes, OEDIT found that combined they thoroughly explained why the overall scores were given, but not necessarily which attributes were responsible in a measurable manner. In essence Regional Development was unable to disentangle all the attributes from one another to measure their precise effects.

Due to the inaccuracies inherent with the OLS regression in this case, it became necessary to consider the values provided in the preliminary interviews that helped to inform the components and attributes for the survey. As stated in the introduction, these free form interviews helped identify what participants felt was most beneficial and most burdensome about participating in the program. Asking participants to split 10 points first between benefits, and then between costs, derived values from these interviews as seen in Figure 3. While we’ll discuss costs based off the regression results for reasons to be explained below, this method will be employed to better understand the benefits and relationship components.

As for the lack of statistical significance, Regional Development will work to resolve this in future rounds of Blueprint 2.0. Perhaps by reducing the number of overall attributes, especially by combining highly correlated attributes, Regional Development will be able to find individual significance. It’s also possible that due to the number of participants in the program, and therefore the inherently smaller number of responses than one would usually require for OLS regression, that our results will remain inconclusive through several rounds of the program, until OEDIT has a larger number of historical responses to pull from.

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**PARTICIPATION SATISFACTION ANALYSIS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Momentum and Dialogue</td>
<td>Quality of Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Benefit and Relationship Component Attribute Weights*
DATA INTERPRETATIONS

BENEFITS & RELATIONSHIPS

The benefit and relationship components are best discussed in tandem due to their correlation with one another. As is evident from Figure 3, the attributes outlined do not encompass all of those that were measured in the survey. The primary reason for this was because several of the benefit and relationship components were brought up in a negative connotation as challenges to the program during the interviews, but could not necessarily be considered “costs”. Therefore, while constructing the survey with these components in mind, “Initiative Scope”, “Introduction to Funding Opportunities”, and “Quality of Support” were placed into their more applicable component classifications with the thought that if participants viewed these attributes negatively they would naturally score them lower than participants with more positive experiences and outcomes. Lastly, in order to understand more about these attributes, we asked participants to tell us more about “Initiative Scope” and “Quality of Support” when they submitted a particularly high or low score. Results can be viewed in Tables 1 & 2 of the Supplemental and are briefly discussed in the key findings.

As can be viewed in Table 1 of the appendix, the assumption that individuals would ascribe lower scores to the above attributes they were dissatisfied with was confirmed to be the case. The likely explanation for the variance between these scores, based on inference from the interviews, is that it was viewed as a major flaw of the program if these attributes were not delivered as expected and so for participants for whom this was the case, also more frequently mentioned as a hurdle to successful outcomes, whereas among individuals with positive experiences these attributes were seen as structurally inherent to the program, and therefore not as frequently mentioned as benefits by the participants.

As summarized in Figure 3, results from the benefit portion of the interviews suggest that the Quality of Information and Community Momentum and Dialogue were the most important benefit attributes based on how frequently participants indicated they were benefits to participation, and on the values participants assigned to them, while Stakeholder and Community Engagement was overwhelmingly the most important relationship attribute. This suggests that to the participants being their own catalyst for change through engaging a community driven effort coupled with informed conversations about economic diversification, the development of community buy-in around these ideas, and being exposed to quality information to further drive that engagement was paramount.
As discussed in the Observations section, it generally requires a much greater number of observations than there were participant respondents to make any statistical conclusions about the attributes. When the same analysis was applied to the overall values participants provided to determine if there was a relationship between the overall satisfaction score of the initiative and the broad Benefit, Relationship and Cost categories on the whole however, Cost was found to be statistically significant and positive. While it would be untrue to the analysis as a whole to conclude the exact impact that costs had on overall participant satisfaction due to the issues discussed in Observations, this finding nonetheless reinforces the intuitive narrative that a lower cost burden on behalf of the participant communities would increase overall satisfaction with the program.

Of course, this is not to say that no conclusions with regard to cost can be reached. It is likely that if a community is unsatisfied with the initiative and their expectations not met, they may weight costs more heavily as they felt they had to do a lot of work with little return. Conversely, when a community is highly satisfied they may rate the workload more favorably even if they did more work from an absolute calculation. The raw data from the survey lends a degree of confidence to this assertion: Promoters on average gave an 8.8 overall score while rating costs as 8.3 (where the higher the value indicates a lower cost burden) while non-promoters gave average scores of 6.3 and 6.2 respectively.

As could be expected from the pilot year of a program, there was a considerable amount of variance between the satisfactions across initiatives. Tourism Promotion and Development was the only initiative to have both respondents also be promoters, each giving the initiative an overall score of 10, while respondents who participated in the Community Led, Industry Attraction, and Call Yourself Creative Initiatives were all non-promoters of the program. It should be noted that the same participant who would not promote the program based on their experience with both the Industry Attraction and Call Yourself Creative initiative’s indicated they would promote based on their experience with the Tourism Promotion and Development initiative. The rest of the initiatives were spread across both Promoters and Non-promoters.

It should also be noted that OEDIT catalogued all the feedback in addition the satisfaction survey throughout the pilot year and integrated it into the initiatives for 2017. As a result, many initiatives were either reformatted or discarded and replaced, including the three lowest performing mentioned above. Though this report gives us a better quantitative understanding of satisfaction with the program, we were able to identify many of these themes early on and set a corrective course for the second round of the initiatives.
KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The feedback used in this analysis, and the ability to translate this feedback into measurable and traceable attributes, holds widespread potential for improving our offerings and stakeholder relationships throughout the state. Not only can this information be used to inform the development of future rounds of Blueprint 2.0, but also educate on what attributes rural communities value most when interacting with the state on a program. With respect to Blueprint 2.0, even though the concentrations of the various initiatives differ, resulting in a range of outcomes, there are programmatic structures that can be adapted to each initiative to ensure consistent performance program-wide.

Foremost, communities should be the driving force behind the initiative. Requiring strong buy-in at the outset of the initiatives creates a stronger foundation for success, but integrating the community voice into the structure of the program will better ensure continued community backing. Buy-in is also reciprocal; OEDIT needs to be equally as invested in participant success as the community.

Even as communities indicated the importance of determining their own success they still need a framework to work within. Communities expect the state to be responsive, collaborative, and informative (see Tables 1 & 2 in the supplemental section). Quality of the information presented in each initiative, while clearly important to the respondent participants, is in itself not enough to create a successful initiative. It is the responsibility of the state to do more than present on subject matter alone as these initiatives represent a strategic partnership with the communities. Furthermore participants indicated that being able to engage stakeholders, both locally and regionally, was very valuable, which state involvement helped bolster.

Lastly, the lack of funding and funding opportunities associated with the awardance of these initiatives remains an inhibitor to community success. Though communities were grateful for the strategic planning elements of the technical assistance, many expressed difficulty securing additional resources for implementation. Although some communities, notably Dillon, Delta, and Rio Blanco County, were able to obtain funding, financing was mentioned frequently in both interviews and casual correspondence with awardees and was the lowest rated survey attribute among promoters and non-promoters alike.

The main priority moving into the second round of initiatives is to decrease the gap in satisfaction between promoters and non-promoters. OEDIT was able to identify areas for improvement early on and integrate them into the development or revision of initiatives for 2017 including from those initiatives that tended to receive more positive feedback. The 2017 initiatives are more focused on goals, outcomes, and setting the expectations early on from the release of initiative descriptions through the final deliverable. We look forward to analyzing the results in early 2018 in conjunction with these results to further improve the value of not only Blueprint 2.0, but to determine the best course of action to strengthen OEDIT’s partnerships with rural Colorado.
SUPPLEMENTAL

MORE ABOUT QUALITY OF SUPPORT AND INITIATIVE SCOPE

To learn more about what communities specifically valued about Quality of Support and Initiative Scope, we added a feature to the survey asking respondents who gave very high ratings or very low ratings for either attribute an additional question as follows:

“We noticed you have a strong opinion about (Quality of Support/Initiative Scope). What are the three most important features related to this component?” This question included three blank spaces provided for participants to list in a free-form response what they regarded as the most important components of these attributes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY OF SUPPORT WRITE IN</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration: Personable, communication, understanding of goals, mutual respect, commitment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessibility: Responsiveness, availability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to resources: State resources, expert resources, perspective, data</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process: Organization, big picture thinking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Table 1

Answers to these free-form questions provided a deeper understanding of what participants value about these attributes. On quality of support (Table 1), participants valued the collaborative relationship with the state, access to expertise, and the accessibility and responsiveness of the project lead. On Initiative Scope (Table 2), participants valued the process, engagement and outcomes. As can be seen in the collection of these responses however, there is not just overlap between the two attributes, but with several of the other attributes in the survey. This correlation between attributes is most certainly one of the causes for the inconclusive results. As was previously discussed, in future analysis, attributes will be redefined for clarity, combined, or discarded altogether.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIATIVE SCOPE WRITE IN</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process: Process, comprehensive scope, relevancy to needs, resources &amp; best practices</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement: Engagement process, consensus, consideration of input and stakeholders</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes: Final product/deliverable, outcomes, timing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek funding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability/turnaround</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Table 2
## Participation Satisfaction Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROMOTER VERSUS NON-PROMOTER AVERAGE SCORES</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>NON-PROMOTER</th>
<th>PROMOTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
<td>Average of the Overall Score</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative Scope</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Distinction</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Momentum and Dialogue</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of Information</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure to resources</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Funding Opportunities</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Components</strong></td>
<td>Average of the Overall Score</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder and Community Engagement</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnerships at the State Level</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of Support</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costs</strong></td>
<td>Average of the Overall Score</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of Community Engagement</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Costs</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABOUT MISSION SPARK AND PROJECT CONSULTANTS

Mission Spark partners with philanthropy, nonprofit and social enterprise leaders to achieve transformative social change and to strengthen the social sector. We exist to partner with mission-based organizations on improving effectiveness, increasing impact, and developing innovative approaches to meeting mission. We provide a continuum of services critical to building successful, adaptable, and innovative organizations throughout Colorado.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES CENTER ON THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

- Advancing proven practices, innovation, creative thinking, and adaptability among mission-driven organizations through consulting, training, and other capacity building services.
- Customized strategy and business consulting services for organizations and organizational cohorts primarily in Colorado, in all areas of resource development, organizational development, management, planning and implementation.
- Facilitation of customized workshops and trainings on a wide variety of social sector topics, including emerging trends and promising practices.
- Research, writing and tool development focusing on sector-wide issues and capacity building projects.
- Leadership development and coaching for social sector professionals.

We take a collaborative, inclusive approach to our work, hold ourselves accountable to timelines and results and demonstrate a personal commitment to our clients from the onset of ideas through their implementation. For questions or concerns regarding this report, please contact Kara Penn at 303-579-2219 or kara@missionspark.org.
MISSION SPARK CONSULTANTS

JOANNA MARKS, MPA (MISSION SPARK CONTRACT CONSULTANT)

Joanna Marks, MPA, consults for Mission Spark. Joanna has more than 15 years of experience providing research, analysis, writing, and project management services to non-profits. Her specific areas of expertise are social policy analysis, program evaluation, and fund development, for organizations serving children and families. Early in her career, Joanna planned education and outreach programs for the National Repertory Orchestra in Breckenridge and has since worked with organizations ranging from arts to health and wellness to schools to youth development in Kentucky, Wisconsin, and Massachusetts. She returned to Colorado in 2016.

Across subject areas and clients, Joanna blends data and narratives with the ultimate goals of improving processes for organizations and outcomes for young people. In addition to using her analytical skills to help non-profits strategize and raise funds, Joanna has worked in the public policy arena on issues impacting low-income families. Her highlights in public policy include developing a new measure of poverty for the state of Wisconsin at the Institute for Research on Poverty and measuring the well-being of Kentucky children and families as part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT initiative.

Joanna received her BA in Sociology, Cum Laude, from Rice University. She completed her MPA at the University of Wisconsin LaFollette School of Public Affairs, where she focused on social policy and nonprofit management.

KARA PENN, MBA, MPP (PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT AND OWNER)

Kara is a Principal Consultant with Mission Spark and co-author of the book Fail Better: Design Smart Mistakes and Succeed Sooner (HBR Press, 2014). Kara has 18 years of experience as a manager, facilitator and consultant in Colorado and throughout the United States. She’s served in senior leadership positions in a variety of organizations, including as founder, director, program manager, chair and board member. She’s consulted to more than 75 non-profits, NGOs, government entities and social enterprises on core management and leadership areas, including board development, program management, fund development, evaluation and assessment, business planning and strategic planning. She has also led several organizations through mediation processes and organizational transitions, resolving conflict and enhancing performance.

Kara has facilitated several complex, large-scale community collaborative efforts, including the award-winning Metro East Lead Collaborative in East St. Louis, subject of an US EPA documentary focusing on effective collaborative efforts. As a senior consultant and trainer for the Community Resource Center, Kara authored “Start Up for Success: Planning, Founding and Initiating a New 501(c) 3”, a comprehensive and practical workbook for nonprofit start-up and early implementation. She also developed and delivered trainings in program evaluation, strategic planning, and early implementation for new nonprofit organizations. Kara continues to develop tools and thought leadership pieces on organizational learning and practical management.

Kara graduated from The Colorado College, where she was a Boettcher Scholar. She completed her MPP, with honors, at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, and her MBA at MIT Sloan School of Management. While at MIT Sloan, Kara received the Seley award, the highest honor given to a graduating student. Kara has been the recipient of several national fellowships, including the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship for independent study abroad and to promote world citizenship, the Coro Fellowship in Public Affairs to develop principled public leaders, and the Forte Fellowship to promote women leaders in business. Kara was a member of the Leadership Denver Class of 2015 and has completed over 100 hours of Co-Active Coaches Training.