

## Moffat County Vision 2025 Transition Plan

### *A Road Map to the Future of Moffat County*

Prepared by Keystone Policy Center in partnership with El Pomar Northwest Regional Council

September 2020

*It is challenging because mining is a way of life...and a complete change. As we plan for the future, we need opportunities for people from the community to provide ideas and be proactive.*

*Kristen Vigil, United Way*

## Executive Summary

In summer of 2020, El Pomar Northwest Regional Council enlisted the assistance of the Keystone Policy Center to help Moffat County and Craig, Colorado proactively prepare for the region's transition from a coal-centered economy. This road map is the product of that partnership and provides actionable recommendations and guidance for the development of a community-driven, coordinated process to direct the region's economic transition and realize their vision for 2025 and beyond.

The recommendations were compiled by gathering information from local leaders in Craig and Moffat County, and in close communication with the Northwest Regional Council. The road map provides an opportunity for the Moffat County community to work together to develop new aspirations by addressing these key focus areas:

- 1) **Tourism:** Bring more visitors to the area who stop and stay. Invest money to market Moffat County as a tourist destination, promote a Paleo Museum, and capitalize on outdoor recreation.
- 2) **New and Existing Industry:** Support existing industry to grow and expand and attract new industry by leveraging existing resources and assets such as Colorado Northwestern Community College, solar power, and to explore alternative uses for coal.
- 3) **Infrastructure and Planning:** Attract new business and development, support and grow existing business, and improve the quality of life for locals and attract more visitors. Develop and improve recreation infrastructure, expand transit and housing opportunities, support urban renewal, expand broadband, and invest in public services.
- 4) **Workforce:** Attract a location-neutral workforce and retain and retrain affected coal workers with a small business innovation center, establish a Vocational Training Center, and market Craig as a relocation hub for people working from home.

The immediate next steps identified for Moffat County and Craig to address the focus areas include:

- **Identify a Leader and Seed Funding** - Identify a local champion to lead this process and find funding to support their position and work of the task force.
- **Develop a Task Force Process and Assemble a Leadership Team** - Convene community leaders and activists willing to monitor the successful implementation of the transition plan.
- **Establish and Convene Working Groups** - Identify work group membership for each of the focus areas to fine tune goals, timelines, and resources needed to implement.
- **Engage the Community** - Promote coverage of the plan's implementation to celebrate milestones and accomplishments and bring the community into the process.

*All the ideas could bring a benefit to our community, but it isn't going to happen without a lot of hard work, time, dedication and finances. The only way this community is going to survive is by coming together to get it done. We cannot fully depend on the state and federal government.*

*Ray Beck, Moffat County Commissioner*

## Background

The prevalence of coal as a source for electricity has been on the decline for over a decade due to environmental concerns and increasing price competition from natural gas and renewable energy sources. Additionally, in 2019 the Colorado General Assembly passed a series of bills focused on reducing carbon emissions that has encouraged the closure of coal-powered stations across the state. Due to these factors, Moffat County and Craig, Colorado – whose main economic drivers are from the coal industry - will face a major economic transition that will require planning and a collaborative community vision.

El Pomar’s Northwest Regional Council saw a need to approach Moffat County and Craig’s economic transition through a strategic, action-oriented process. The Northwest Council partnered with the Keystone Policy Center to fund and build the first step of this process through the creation of a road map for Craig and Moffat County that is driven by local input and ideas. The road map’s intention is to provide the community a straightforward, strategic plan focused on implementing their own vision towards a more economically resilient future.

The first phase of this process focused on information collection and analysis to build a road map that is unique to Craig and Moffat County, charting together ideas for the future along with the various efforts currently underway. Keystone reviewed past meeting summaries, conducted 14 key informant interviews with local community leaders, and collected additional data and ideas through an online survey.<sup>1</sup> This information, along with relevant research, was used to develop the road map presented here. The goal of the road map is to provide actionable recommendations and guidance for a community-driven process focused primarily on Moffat County’s economic transition from coal.

The anticipated second phase of this process will be the implementation of a Task Force process outlined in the strategies and recommendations section of the road map.

## Assessment of Current Conditions, Opportunities and Barriers

In early 2020, Tristate Energy announced the closure dates for Craig Station in Moffat County. Unit 1 will close by December 2025, followed by Unit 2 in September 2028, and Unit 3 by December 2029. The Craig Station power plant, and associated Colowyo and Trapper coal mines, currently employ approximately 600 workers in Moffat County, not including indirect jobs. According to data provided by the Colorado Just Transition Office, the power plant and two coal mines employ almost 10 percent of the county workforce and account for 44 percent of total property taxes paid in the county. Additionally, the power plant and coal mines average salary and benefits far exceed other industry wages offered in the area.<sup>2</sup>

These realities have created concern about the economic stability of the community’s future and how the local government will be able to continue to pay for critical services. These services include public schools, fire districts, libraries, infrastructure improvements, and other government services typically paid for through property, sales, or income taxes. There are additional concerns about how local nonprofit organizations, who backfill many important community services to vulnerable populations, will

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<sup>1</sup> List of key stakeholder interviewees, interview questions asked, and electronic survey template can be found in Appendix E

<sup>2</sup> Colorado Just Transition Office [Draft Plan](#), September 2020

be able to continue to provide services because much of their revenue stream is generated through donations from the power plant and their employees. This is exacerbated by the concern that even more residents will require support services as direct coal industry workers and ancillary businesses lose their jobs and livelihood.

Community members also identified other threats they fear will further hinder their economic prospects. Some local leaders see a misalignment with Front Range politics and feel that legislation and directives from the General Assembly and Administration have a disproportionately negative effect on rural communities. There is also concern over a ballot initiative this November that would reintroduce wolves into northwestern Colorado. Many worry the introduction of wolves will have a negative impact on hunting and ranching – some of the region’s main economic drivers in addition to coal. Craig and Moffat County also have a history of failed bonding initiatives to support the school district and other publicly funded services. Some expressed concern that residents will not be willing to vote in new taxing measures to help backfill the loss from the coal plant and do not realize what the actual cost will be to provide important public services.

While the outlook appears dire, the community has begun to take positive steps to prepare for the departure of the region’s main economic driver. Members from the town and county governments along with other organizational leaders and entrepreneurs have begun to devise plans and make investments to diversify the community’s economic portfolio. There have been productive meetings among various community members and regional leaders to identify the most promising pathways forward for Craig and Moffat County.

Some of the opportunities identified for the area include:

- Enhance tourism by marketing the area as a destination for outdoor recreation and unique paleo offerings
- Entice new residents and business with the allure of wide-open spaces and great quality of life
- Leverage Colorado Northwestern Community College
- Expand on the region’s power generation identity through solar farms and finding alternative uses for coal
- Improve transportation infrastructure between the major interstates and
- Expand public transit throughout the region.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created more difficulties for the community due to the initial economic shut down and decreased social interaction, and it has opened the door for new opportunities. Craig and Moffat County provide many assets people look for amid the pandemic including open spaces with endless outdoor opportunities, fewer people, good medical facilities, a nimble school district, and broadband access. According to many people we spoke to, the real estate market has heated up. As more workplaces adopt permanent work-from-home models, it seems there are many people looking to the region to relocate. Craig and Moffat County should take advantage of this opportunity to market and promote the region’s unique assets as a community that offers a great quality of life with a lower cost of living than the Front Range or other metro areas.

Through the information gathered, it is apparent Craig and Moffat County have done a lot of planning for the future. The biggest barriers appear to be the need for capacity building, technical support, supplemental funding, and more intentional community engagement to put their strategies into action. There is also a real need for the community to identify a champion to lead this work. It will require a leader whose main responsibility is to focus on the execution of a transition plan for Craig and Moffat County.

### Moffat County's Vision for 2025 and Beyond

Keystone asked key informants to share how Moffat County and Craig would look in 2025 if the community handled the transition in the right way. The responses overall were positive and portrayed pride in the community. Locals take pride in the quality of life offered in northwest Colorado with open spaces, good schools, familial roots, and neighbors who look out for one another. They hope this spirit is not lost as many coal workers, and other small businesses, will leave the area to find new opportunities. They realize there will likely be major disruptions to how Craig looks and feels in the future but hope the unique identity of Craig is not lost in the transition.

When visioning the area's future, most want to see small businesses thrive and expand, and therefore attract more business to the region. They would like to see more investment on Main Street to beautify the area to draw people who stick around and stay for a while. They would like improved infrastructure that provides a better quality of life for residents and attracts more visitors and business with sidewalks, recreation paths, connected trail systems, and a recreation center.

It is important to note that both the opportunities and vision identified by community members incorporate many different ideas of how to revitalize the economy and strengthen the community. To work towards a more resilient economic future, we recommend Craig and Moffat County approach this transition with a multi-strategy approach. Colorado's Just Transition Office suggests a similar approach in their [draft plan](#) with recommendations that coal transition community goals include expansion of existing businesses, cultivation of local entrepreneurs, and attraction of a wide variety of new businesses to build more diverse and resilient local economies.

### Mapping Ideas and Moving Forward

Based on the key informant interviews and other information gathered, Keystone mapped the following chart on page 5 of focus areas, goals, and priorities. Each of the focus areas were mentioned by most participants during Keystone's interviews as either an area to directly focus on or one that they provided a priority area that falls under that category. The focus areas include tourism, new and existing industry, infrastructure and planning, and workforce. Leaders from the community previously identified many of the priority areas and their goals, and others were extracted through interviews and the online survey of local leaders.

In Appendices A through D, Keystone collated all the ideas offered under each focus area with their associated priority areas and implementation strategies. Information from the interviews and survey were used to draft the overarching goals for both the focus areas and their priority areas. These goals should be reviewed and refined in the next phase of the process to ensure they are truly reflective of the community and their vision for the future.

## Focus Areas, Key Priorities and Goals

Focus Area	Focus Area Goals	Priority Area	Priority Area Goals (short and long-term)
Tourism	Bring more visitors to the area who stop, stay, and spend money	Destination Marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Further develop and support tourism efforts for increased economic impact</li> <li>2. Event development, marketing, and metrics</li> </ol>
		Paleo Museum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Actively promote paleo as a unique and authentic asset</li> <li>2. Establish a planned approach for an artifact museum and repository</li> </ol>
		Outdoor Rec Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attract more outdoor recreationists to the region</li> </ol>
New & Existing Industry	Support existing industry to grow and expand	Colorado Northwestern Community College (CNCC)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage and promote sustained programs</li> <li>2. Help plan and leverage resources for development of student housing</li> <li>3. Maximize partnership opportunities with universities and colleges</li> </ol>
	Attract new industry by leveraging existing resources and assets	Agriculture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leverage and expand the region's roots in agriculture and ranching</li> </ol>
		Solar Farm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leverage the region's power generation identity and transmission infrastructure with renewable energy sources</li> </ol>
		Coal to Products	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find viable alternative uses for coal that can be produced in the region</li> <li>2. Focus on products with potential to bolster existing or bring in new business</li> </ol>
		Aerospace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore options to connect with the aerospace industry by promoting Northwest Colorado for a spaceport</li> </ol>
Infrastructure and Planning	Improve quality of life for locals while attracting more visitors and residents through improved infrastructure and planning	Outdoor Rec Infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to build out, develop, and connect bike/pedestrian paths</li> <li>2. Further partner for Loudy-Simpson Park improvements</li> <li>3. Improve river access points on the Yampa</li> <li>4. Support efforts of recreation center &amp; district</li> </ol>
		Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expand and plan for the region's transportation systems focusing on infrastructure and public transportation</li> </ol>
		Housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop workforce housing that meets current and future needs</li> <li>2. Develop more senior housing options</li> </ol>
	Attract new business and development with improved infrastructure and planning	Urban Renewal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Beautify main street and the downtown area of Craig</li> </ol>
		Broadband	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete the "last mile" of connectivity</li> </ol>
		Public Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure critical social and human service programs are maintained and funded (mental health, senior services, child welfare, for example.)</li> <li>2. Expand services that attract and retain residents (senior services, childcare, for example)</li> <li>3. Continue building on the partnership between the town and county for shared service and financing opportunities</li> </ol>
Workforce	Attract a location neutral workforce	Small Business Innovation Center	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finalize and promote the small business innovation/co-work facility</li> </ol>
		Vocational Training Center	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide training that keeps people in Craig</li> </ol>
	Retain and retrain affected coal workers	Marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attract remote workers and other new residents with lower cost of living and better quality of life</li> </ol>
		Affected Coal Workers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor state assistance and programs available to affected coal workers</li> <li>2. Create connections and facilitate opportunities for affected coal workers remaining in the community</li> </ol>

As Moffat County and Craig move towards a transition from a coal-based economy, it will require coordinated work and communication across a variety of sectors – especially opportunities for shared planning and coordination between the town and county governments. As the chart highlights, there are many ideas and plans currently underway to address the transition, however the region would benefit from a coordinated effort. The proceeding section lays out specific strategies and recommendations to create a transition process as these various sectors and entities work towards a more economically resilient future. We believe a collaborative, organized, and managed process will allow all the stakeholders within the community to successfully work together towards a shared vision and goals, celebrate accomplishments, and provide opportunities for community engagement.

## Road Map Strategies and Recommendations Moving Forward

The following strategies and recommendations are suggested steps for how the community could begin creating their own collaborative process to manage the transition. The strategies listed do not necessarily need to occur in sequential order. Some strategies may have overlap and will happen concurrently with others. The order of the strategies may also depend on how the process begins to unfold in Craig and Moffat County. The community may need to first convene a Leadership Task Force where a champion for the process emerges from that group, or a leader could first be identified who helps champion and bring together the Task Force.

### Strategy: Seed Funding

Through the interviews and assessment of past meeting summaries, Craig and Moffat County have identified a need for assistance with capacity building. Part of this capacity building includes funding to support the work of a transition process. Identifying funding opportunities for the process will be a critical initial step to ensure the transition process can effectively meet the expectations laid out before them.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the town and county explore a variety of ways to bring together funding opportunities to support the transition effort. While this is a daunting task, we have reason to believe there are pathways forward.

- The town and county should explore a shared partnership to fund a portion of the transition process work while also actively looking for matching private and public funds.
- There is potential to access matching funds from foundations exploring opportunities to support coal transition communities. Active engagement and outreach to foundations who have expressed interest in coal transition communities and rural economic development should be a first step to identify matching funds. Many foundations have turned their attention towards COVID-19 relief funding, however, there may be opportunity to show how a transition plan will help with planning for the transition from coal, and make the community more nimble in responding to other economic crises like those that COVID-19 has presented.
- There may be a path forward by actively working with the region's state senator and representative in the General Assembly to advocate for a state fund to provide support for capacity building efforts in coal transition communities. This request would align with the findings in the Just Transition Advisory Committee's recommendation number six that advises the state to invest in local leadership, capacity building, and planning to develop, implement,

and oversee the local transition plan.<sup>3</sup> This recommendation may take longer to achieve as it would be tied to the legislative schedule.

- There is reasonable hope the state Office of Economic Development and International Trade may be granted federal funds or find other grant opportunities that could become available for community-driven economic development planning processes. These opportunities are not yet confirmed but should be closely monitored and acted upon should they become available.
- If there is funding available, although not enough to fund the entire process, there may be an opportunity to use limited funds to hire a resource coordinator. A resource coordinator would be responsible to identify new funding opportunities, write grant proposals, and manage grants awarded for the work of the Task Force as well as resources for local government strategies identified in the road map. This position could provide added benefit to the town and county with capacity building by providing a person who is an active grant manager who could manage resources for local government strategies identified in the road map. According to [payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com), the average grant writer salary is \$55,000 without benefits.<sup>4</sup>

### Strategy: Identify a Champion

Another need identified for Craig and Moffat County under capacity building is to identify and cultivate a local champion who can effectively lead a transition process. It is clear Craig and Moffat County have a lot of great ideas and hard-working civil servants; however, the region has yet to identify a leader whose main responsibility is to focus on economic development and the overall needs and coordination of activities related to the transition. Effectively addressing the needs of the transition process will require a full-time commitment and these duties should not be added onto a current position within the town or county. Additionally, there are technical assistance resources and programs available through the state that the region could better leverage if there was a dedicated person focused on economic development and the transition from coal.<sup>5</sup>

Through Keystone’s conversations with community members and review of other champions leading economic transitions in similar areas, we recommend a leader for the process who can encompass the following:

- Preferably, an existing community member, or someone with deep ties to the community to help create legitimacy for the process, sustain local connections, and bolster pride in the community’s vision.
- Someone who can be innovative in their thinking, collaborative with partnerships, and transparent about the overall process.
- Be the face of the transition and Task Force by filling the roles as lead connector, networker, and spokesperson.
- Lead the overall management of the Task Force and serve as chair of the Leadership Team.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://mcusercontent.com/b8edaed9d386fc047dcd5cc35/files/b0332eae-3fa4-4440-b7b5-33aa4be11e49/Draft\\_Colorado\\_Just\\_Transition\\_Plan\\_08.03.2020.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/b8edaed9d386fc047dcd5cc35/files/b0332eae-3fa4-4440-b7b5-33aa4be11e49/Draft_Colorado_Just_Transition_Plan_08.03.2020.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Economic\\_Development\\_Director/Salary](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Economic_Development_Director/Salary)

<sup>5</sup> OEDIT Rural Business Funding <https://choosecolorado.com/doing-business/incentives-financing/rural-businesses/>

OEDIT Rural Technical Assistance Program <https://choosecolorado.com/programs-initiatives/rural-technical-assistance-program/>



- Engage with and maintain relationships with the state Just Transition Office and Advisory Committee, state, federal and regional partners, foundations, and other important connections to the process.

**Recommendation:** The community needs to identify or cultivate a champion to lead the transition process. We believe identifying a leader could be done through different approaches and do not have a distinct order of events to find the right leader – whether the leader should be chosen first followed by the formulation of a Task Force Leadership Team or vice versa.

- Leaders from the community could do an active search and recruitment for someone who fits the bill to be the leader of the transition. This could be done through a formal job announcement and interview process. If this is the first task, there should be consideration to who convenes the group and is involved in the interview process. A suggested place to start with convening a group of leaders to take on this task could be with the key informant stakeholders interviewed for this road map.
- The Leadership Task Force could be formed first and then see if a champion emerges from that group who the task force gives responsibility to serve as the chair and leader of the process. Or the leadership task force may want to do an active search and interview process to find the right leader for their work.

Both a leadership position and resource coordinator could potentially be paid by braiding funds from local government, state resources, and foundation support. According to [payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com), the average economic development director salary in the U.S. is around \$70,000 and the average grant writer salary is \$55,000, not including benefits.<sup>6</sup>

### **Strategy: Build Transition Task Force Process and Assemble Leadership Team**

To build a transition process that is collaborative and community driven, there needs to be a group of local community members to help guide the transition through a managed Task Force process. The primary objective of building a Task Force is to ensure all the components involved with the transition from coal are coordinated and in alignment with the community's vision for 2025 and beyond.

The Task Force should focus on how to take actionable steps that realize the goals of the road map priority areas. The Task Force will identify the right areas to prioritize and coordinate how to move forward. If a strategy is within the Task Force's ability to act, they will devise the right processes to implement them at the local level. When a strategy is outside their purview, the Task Force should:

- Advocate for their vision to the appropriate decision-making bodies and forge strategic partnerships to support their goals.
- Ensure continuous coordination with outside entities or organizations that work on strategies that align with their vision.
- Take initial steps and due diligence of the strategy to hand it off to the right stakeholders to complete its implementation.

The Task Force should plan to be involved in the transition process for at least the next five years and likely longer. The remaining strategies in the road map outline components of the Task Force including a Leadership Team, Working Groups, and a communications strategy.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Economic\\_Development\\_Director/Salary](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Economic_Development_Director/Salary)

### *Leadership Team*

The first group to assemble for the Task Force is a Leadership Team who serve as a steering committee for the overall work of the Task Force. The leader identified for the transition process should also serve as the chair of the Leadership Team. The chair would be responsible for the management and coordination of all activities related to the Task Force.

The membership of the Leadership Team should be comprised of local community members who have passion, energy, and time to devote to this work. The Leadership Team should strive for diverse membership who represent large cross sections of the community.

It is also recommended the Leadership Team strive for some representation or subject matter expertise in the following areas:

- Local Government: Town and County
- State Representative and/or Senator
- Tourism and Outdoor Recreation
- Business
- K-12 Education
- Higher Education
- Agriculture and Ranching
- Marketing and Communications
- Finance
- Water/Natural Resources
- Public Works/Infrastructure Planning
- Nonprofit

**Recommendation:** Recruit and build a Leadership Team that is large enough to have a cross-section of expertise and representation, and small enough to be nimble and make consensus-based decisions. Approximately eight to ten members would be ideal. The group of key informants interviewed for this road map is a good place to look for volunteers and to source new names and connections for the Leadership Team. While the list provides individuals from a breadth of experiences and backgrounds, it is recommended the Leadership Team also look for untapped local talent and advocates that Keystone may not have come across during our interviews.

The initial tasks for the Leadership Team should include the adoption of governing rules with a decision-making model for the Leadership Team and Work Groups, followed by a thorough review of the road map to ensure it is truly reflective of the community vision. The Leadership Team should develop a vision statement for Moffat County 2025 and ensure the focus areas in the road map are pertinent to that vision and reflective of the identified goals. This step should be followed by identification and active recruitment of Work Group members outlined in the following strategy.

### **Strategy: Establish and Convene Task Force Working Groups**

Once the Leadership Team is created and has decided on governing rules and a vision, the Leadership Team should create Work Groups organized around the four focus areas identified in the road map:

- Tourism
- New and Existing Industry
- Infrastructure and Planning
- Workforce

The Work Groups would be responsible to take a deeper dive into each focus area. Their primary role will be the identification of strategies that are feasible to implement and in alignment with the community vision. Their work might include identification of subject matter experts, connection to stakeholders, a review of potential sources for funding, and prioritization list of which strategies to act on in the near term, mid-term, and long term. The Work Groups should each be chaired or co-chaired by members from the Leadership Team. The Work Group chairs would be responsible for convening their Work Group and providing continuity between the Leadership Team and Work Group.

**Recommendation:** The initial tasks for the Work Groups include assembling the right members. The membership should consist of community members and may consider including regional partners or other stakeholders with expertise and interest to be involved. The Work Groups should begin work to refine their goals, catalogue strategies that have been completed, and identify new strategies to pursue.

Work charts containing the priority areas, goals, strategies, funding, and timelines have been drafted for each work group in Appendices A through D of the road map. The Work Groups can begin to work from these charts to fine-tune their own organizational systems. As their work progresses, the Work Groups should look for opportunities to engage the community and meet with subject matter experts to identify new strategies that align with their goals.

### **Strategy: Engage the Community**

Through the interviews and community conversations, it was apparent there is a need for a communications strategy on the community's response to the transition from coal. There are many important partners in the region that have engaged in preliminary work to prepare for the transition; however, these proactive steps are not always communicated to the community at large. To successfully implement the transition plan, it will require more community buy-in and trust of the overall process. This will require a thoughtful communication strategy that shares transition plans, celebrates successes with the community, and provides opportunities for community members to engage and incorporate their input.

#### *Communications Strategy*

Keystone compiled the following strategies to build broader community buy-in for the overall process and vision for Moffat County and Craig. These strategies have been identified as best practices or were specifically recommended during the interviews. Many of these strategies could be done concurrently with the previous strategies and should be acted on as soon as appropriate.

- Keep the community, and interested stakeholders, up to date on the Transition Task Force's vision, plan, and successes.
  - Submit regular newspaper articles or op eds in the Craig Daily Press on the Task Force's progress, accomplishments, and milestones completed. Submit semi-regular articles to other neighboring newspapers on progress made, focusing on regional goals and partnership successes.
  - Develop a Task Force website with up-to-date press and meeting information including agendas and meeting notes; provide information on how to contact the Task Force or submit ideas. If cost or website development is an issue, see if the state can support a webpage for the Task Force on their internet portal.

- Establish and monitor a social media presence for the Task Force – provide updates, meeting information, and share relevant articles.
- Provide transparency.
  - Ensure all Task Force meetings are open to the public and allow time for public comment on the agenda.
  - Post meeting agendas and notes or recordings online.
- Create opportunities for the community to engage with the Task Force.
  - Hold semi-annual town halls and focus groups focused on community input that will further align goals and ensure the plan is in coordination with the community’s vision.
  - Conduct community surveys or a needs assessment to better understand the community vision and receive their input. Consider these types of questions: *What keeps people here in Craig?* and *What attracts people to Craig?*
  - Task Force members should attend other community meetings and events to engage residents. Look for opportunities to present to other groups about the Task Force vision, plan, and accomplishments.

**Recommendation:** The Task Force leader should oversee the implementation of an effective communications strategy or identify a Leadership Team member who can assist in the creation of a communications plan. The Task Force can fulfill many of the strategies as part of their responsibilities, while some would require additional funding sources like a community needs assessment. There may be funding available for economic studies such as a community needs assessment - through the state or federal funding.

## Appendix A

<b>TOURISM</b>				
<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Priority Area Goals</b> short and long-term	<b>Strategies</b> Local, State and Federal	<b>Budget and Funding Opportunities</b> Grants, Programs and other supports	<b>Estimated Timeline</b> 6 months, 1 year, 2-3 years, 4+ years
<b>Destination Marketing</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Further develop and support tourism efforts for increased economic impact</li> <li>2. Event development, marketing, and metrics</li> </ol>	Actively and effectively market Dinosaur National Monument as a preferred tourist destination	OEDIT Rural Technical Assistance Program; Colorado Tourism Office programs	
<b>Paleo Museum</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Actively promote paleo as a unique and authentic asset</li> <li>2. Establish a planned approach for an artifact museum and repository</li> </ol>			
<b>Outdoor Recreation Opportunities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attract more outdoor recreationists to the region</li> </ol>	Create more opportunities for RVers and campers to stop and stay in the area	OEDIT/CTO/OREC	

## Appendix B

<b>NEW &amp; EXISTING INDUSTRY</b>				
<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Priority Area Goals</b> short and long-term	<b>Strategies</b> Local, State and Federal	<b>Budget and Funding Opportunities</b> Grants, Programs and other supports	<b>Estimated Timeline</b> 6 months, 1 year, 2-3 years, 4+ years
<b>Colorado Northwestern Community College (CNCC)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage and promote sustained programs</li> <li>2. Help plan and leverage resources for development of student housing</li> <li>3. Maximize partnership opportunities with universities and colleges</li> </ol>	<p>Cyber Security program beginning fall 2021 (degree program and certifications)</p> <p>Outdoor ethics class and mountaineering certification programs</p>	<p>CDHE</p> <p>OREC</p>	
<b>Agriculture</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leverage and expand on the region's roots in agriculture and ranching</li> </ol>	<p>Explore warehousing opportunities for meat packing</p> <p>Enhance and promote local food-supply chains</p>		
<b>Solar Farm</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Leverage the region's power generation identity and infrastructure with renewable energy sources</li> </ol>	<p>Champion and lead regional efforts concerning DOLA renewables Project 1 grant award</p> <p>Maximize partnership efforts concerning DOLA renewables Project 2 grant award</p> <p>Explore renewable component recycling industry and economy</p>	<p>DOLA</p> <p>CO Energy Office</p>	
<b>Coal to Products</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find viable alternative uses for coal that can be produced in the region</li> <li>2. Focus on products with potential to bolster existing or bring in new business</li> </ol>	<p>University of Utah federally funded study on alternative uses for coal</p>	<p>EDA</p> <p>OEDIT</p>	
<b>Aerospace</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore options to connect with the aerospace industry by promoting Northwest Colorado for a spaceport</li> </ol>	<p>Update CNCC airline pilot program to be compatible with space port</p> <p>Expand CNCC maintenance programs to include aerospace</p> <p>Explore partnership with Adams Co on the Front Range</p>	<p>OEDIT</p>	

## Appendix C

<b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; PLANNING</b>				
<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Priority Area Goals</b> short and long-term	<b>Strategies</b> Local, State and Federal	<b>Budget and Funding Opportunities</b> Grants, Programs and other supports	<b>Estimated Timeline</b> 6 months, 1 year, 2-3 years, 4+ years
<b>Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to build out, develop &amp; connect bike/pedestrian paths</li> <li>Further partner for Loudy-Simpson Park improvements</li> <li>Improve river access points on the Yampa</li> <li>Support efforts for recreation center &amp; district</li> </ol>	<p>Partner and work with BLM on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sandwash Basin management plan, including visitor services and creating a special recreation area</li> <li>-Wilderness area designations</li> <li>-Completion of travel management plans</li> </ul> <p>Create a Riverfront Commission focused on recreation opportunities including trail miles and boat launches</p> <p>Work with State Land Board to open more public lands to public uses with recreation as a priority</p> <p>Submitted EDA grant to fund a white-water park</p>	DNR/CWCB GOCO	
<b>Transportation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand and plan for the region's transportation systems focusing on infrastructure and public transportation</li> </ol>	<p>Participate in regional RTA planning and development</p> <p>Find or establish a transportation service between I-80 and I-70</p> <p>Planning underway for Bustang service between Denver and Craig</p> <p>Commuter train service between Steamboat and Craig</p>	CDOT CO Energy Office	

		Develop more Electric Vehicle charging stations along the scenic byway routes		
<b>Housing</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop workforce housing that meets current and future needs</li> <li>2. Develop more senior housing options</li> <li>3. Consider being a bedroom community and/or retirement mecca</li> </ol>	Partner with Steamboat Springs Housing Authority to understand their workforce housing needs and opportunities	DOLA CHFA	
<b>Urban Renewal</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a more attractive main street and downtown area</li> </ol>	<p>In process of creating an Urban Renewal Authority and undertaking a blight study</p> <p>Explore incentives to offer that support Urban Renewal</p>	DOLA OEDIT	
<b>Broadband</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete the “last mile” of connectivity</li> </ol>	Find grants to accelerate broadband access	DOLA	
<b>Public Services</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure critical social and human service programs are maintained and funded (mental health, senior services, child welfare, for example)</li> <li>2. Expand services that attract and retain residents (senior services, childcare, for example) Continue building on partnership between town and county for shared service and financing opportunities</li> </ol>		CDHS HCPF DOLA CDLE	



## Appendix D

<b>WORKFORCE</b>					
<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Priority Area Goals</b> short and long-term	<b>Estimated Timeline</b> 6 months, 1 year, 2-3 years, 4+ years	<b>Strategies</b> Local, State and Federal	<b>Budget and Funding Opportunities</b> Grants, Programs and other supports	<b>Leadership and Contributors</b>
<b>Small Business Innovation Center</b>	1. Finalize and promote the small business innovation/co-work facility		AGNC proposal from Flex Work for a co-workspace focused on the region  Yampa Building co-workspace	OEDIT	
<b>Vocational Training Center</b>	1. Provide training that keeps people in Craig		Work with CDLE to better understand the workforce and the best trainings to offer		
<b>Marketing</b>	1. Attract remote workers and new residents by promoting lower cost of living and better quality of life		Tout the school district's strong reading comprehension and innovative leaders  Opportunities from COVID – region offers safety, space and outdoors  College tuition at CNCC is paid for residents of Craig	OEDIT	
<b>Affected Coal Workers</b>	1. Monitor state assistance and programs available to affected coal workers 2. Create connections and facilitate opportunities for affected coal workers remaining in the community		Work with CNCC to ensure programming is connected with skill sets coal workers could expand upon and is offered during times workers can attend or is delivered asynchronously	CDLE	

## Appendix E

### Key Informant Interviews

Name	Organization/Affiliation	Title	Sector
Ray Beck	Moffat County Commissioner	Commissioner	Elected
Peter Brixius	City of Craig	City Manager	Local Government
Melanie Kilpatrick	City of Craig	Exec Assistant to City Manager	Local Government
Luke Tucker	Mountain Air Spray / Local Marketing District	Owner	Business
Kandee Dildine	KS Creations	Owner	Business
Bob Rankin	Colorado State Senate	Senator	Elected
Bonnie Peterson	AGNC	Exec Director	Regional
Kristen Vigil	Moffat County United Way	Exec Director	Nonprofit
Josh Veenstra	Good Vibes River Gear	Owner	Business
Rich Thompson	Craig Station	GM	Utility/Mine
Ron Granger	CO Northwestern Community College	President	Higher Education
Jennifer Riley	Memorial Regional Health	COO	Health Care
Tom Kleinschnitz	Moffat Co Tourism Association	Director	Tourism
Melody Villard	Moffat County Commissioner	Commissioner-Elect	Elected

### Key Informant Interview Questions:

1. **Impacts:** What impacts do you anticipate from the closures of Craig Station and coal mining in northwest Colorado?
  - a. What about in Craig specifically?
2. **Preparation:** How do you think community leaders should be preparing for the transition?
  - a. How are you already supporting and preparing for the transition?
  - b. **Resources and Programs:** Are there already resources or programs that currently exist in the community that could address some of the identified needs/impacts?
  - c. **Leaders:** Who are the leaders or champions in the community that you look to regarding the energy transition, job training and creation, economic development or other relevant areas?
3. **Gaps/Weaknesses:** Where do you see gaps (at government level, service provider level, job market, housing needs, other) in preparing for the transition?

- a. What are the most pressing issues to address that you think aren't currently being discussed? What or who do you think might slip through the cracks?
4. **Opportunities/Assets:** Where do you see future opportunities for Moffat County and/or Craig?
  - a. What are the main assets that you think could bring economic value to Craig/Moffat County/Yampa Valley (or entice new revenue, workers, industry, etc.)?
    - i. How could the region capitalize on these?
  - b. What do you think are the best opportunities related to workforce or industry in your community? Why?
5. **The Future:** When you envision Moffat County in 2025 – 2030, what does it look like for you to say, “our community handled this transition in the right way”?
6. Is there anything you wanted to share, related to the pending energy transition, that we didn't get to cover?