

WESTERN AGENCY COUNCIL MEETING

WESTERN REGIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (RBDO)

DIVISION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Saturday, June 14, 2025

Tuba City, Arizona



Twin Arrows, Arizona—The 7th Annual Navajo Nation Economic Summit “Investing in the Diné Economy” took place on April 22-24, 2025 at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort and Hotel. The summit was a successful event, bringing together a dynamic group of leaders, entrepreneurs, and community members dedicated to fostering strategic growth and sustainable development within the Navajo Nation. This year’s theme, “Investing in the Diné Economy,” resonated throughout the impactful three days. Attendees engaged in vital discussions and collaborative sessions focused on key areas critical to the Nation’s future, including: Transition Economics (Alternative Energy Sources, Coal, and Beyond), the Economic Outlook of the Navajo Nation, Business Registration with the Navajo Nation, Loan Readiness for Navajo Businesses, Access to Capital Through New Lending (Navajo Small Business Credit Initiative), Artificial Intelligence, United Diné Ventures, Leveraging State, County, and Federal Resources, Maximizing Vendor Relationships, Evaluating Your Business, New Market Tax Credits and Energy Generation Projects, EV Charging Solutions, Indianpreneurship, Building A Food Network, a Tribal Enterprise Roundtable, Rural Addressing, the Entertainment Industry, and Procurement Contracts & Contract Readiness. Beyond the formal sessions, the summit fostered a spirit of community and collaboration. Participants in the Golf Tournament, the early morning Fun Run & Walk, and the rejuvenating Yoga & Meditation sessions all reported having a fantastic time connecting with peers in more informal settings. The Business Matchmaking Event was buzzing with productive conversations, and the innovative ideas presented during the Business Plan Competition highlighted the incredible entrepreneurial talent within the Nation.



The atmosphere was vibrant, with engaging speakers, bustling vendor booths showcasing Diné artistry and enterprise, and countless opportunities for networking and forging new connections. The summit provided a valuable platform for sharing knowledge, forging new partnerships, and identifying action-able strategies to drive economic prosperity and resilience for the Diné people. The energy and commitment displayed underscored a shared vision for a vibrant and thriving economic future.

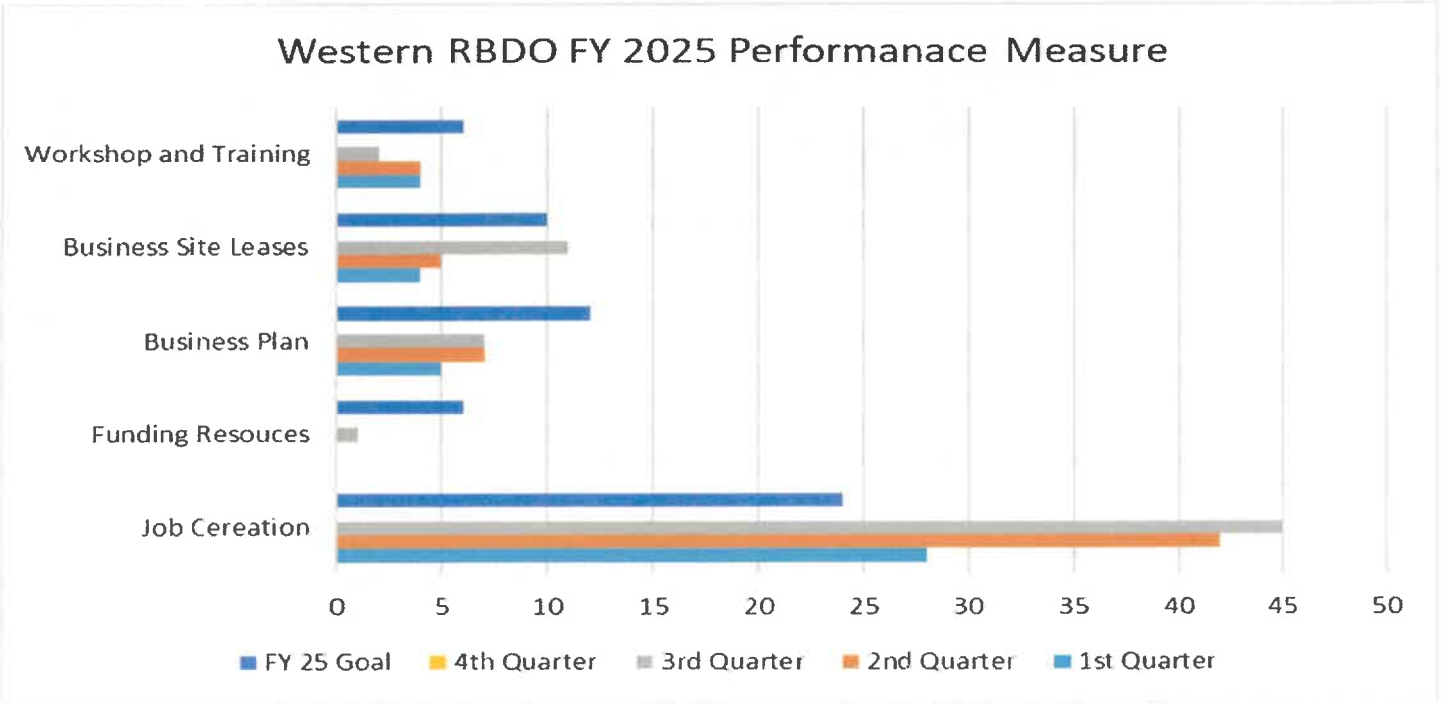
Our office would like to acknowledge and show our appreciation to all the summit organizers, attendees, vendors, speakers, and sponsors. For more information, please visit our website www.navajoeconomy.org.





Meeting With Coalmine Canyon on May 30, 2025 at Van Trading Post Business Site and Dinosaur Tracks.

Van's Trading Post site visit, WRBDO updated Coalmine Chapter on the fuel storage tank removal completed by Navajo Environmental Protection Agency with Region 9 United State Environmental Protection Agency. Dinosaur track site visit; Tourism Department site improvement site, four acres withdrawn to build a water-less restroom for tourist and visitors to the site.





Shonto Community Demonstrates Resilience and Vision for Economic and Community Development

Shonto, AZ — June 10, 2025 — The Shonto Community continues to exemplify dedicated leadership and resilience in fostering a vibrant rural community through ongoing development projects and strategic initiatives. Since establishing the Shonto Marketplace convenience store in 2017, the community has remained committed to economic growth and sustainability despite facing significant challenges.

In 2025, Shonto Community leaders have confronted obstacles related to the Shonto LaQuinta Hotel project and the potential threats to their Business Site Leasing Authority. Nevertheless, steadfast in their efforts, local officials, the chapter manager, and the Navajo Nation Department of Justice are actively collaborating with Canyonland Lodging's Michael Carnal

and attorney Jesse Hiebel to bring the long-awaited Shonto LaQuinta Hotel to fruition. This project aims to provide additional lodging, job opportunities, and economic vitality to the region, further bolstering community growth.

In addition, the community is excited to announce the redevelopment of the former Shonto Trading Post, which has been renamed the Shonto Spring Store. Spearheaded by Shonto Group Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to regional development, this project involves a partnership with Swaback, an acclaimed architectural firm. They have developed a conceptual drawing for a proposed development that includes the revitalization of the Shonto Spring Store and the proposed development of the Shonto Canyon, featuring a river walk, an amphitheater, and various buildings designed to foster entrepreneurship opportunities. This innovative project aims to enhance retail, cultural, and recreational assets for residents and visitors alike.

Further efforts include addressing environmental concerns through the proposed removal of underground storage tanks at the Black Mesa Shopping Center and Shonto Trading Post sites. The community is working closely with Tanya Yazzie, Environmental Program Supervisor at the Navajo Nation EPA-Waste Regulatory Compliance Department, to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. These environmental efforts reflect Shonto's dedication to safeguarding their land and resources for future generations.



Moreover, Shonto is proud to host a Brownfield 101 Workshop scheduled for July 10, 2025, at 10 a.m., aimed at informing and empowering local entrepreneurs and community members. Hosted by Shonto Community Governance, presented by Kansas State University's Center for Hazardous Substance Research (CHSR) and KSU Tribal TAB Manager, Dr. Michaela Shirley, this workshop will provide valuable insights into Brownfields redevelopment opportunities. In-person attendance is limited; interested participants are encouraged to register via the event webpage: <https://www.ksutab.org/event/unlocking-potential-dive-brownfields-101-workshop-host-shonto-chapter-and-tribal-tab-ksu>.

Looking ahead, Shonto's economic development initiatives include a burgeoning rail-to-trail partnership with NavajoYes. The 13-mile stretch of railway in the Shonto area has been transformed into a scenic trail, featuring picnic tables and spaces for runners, hikers, and bikers to enjoy the natural beauty of the region. To maximize the trail's potential, funding is needed for maintenance, repairs, and the maintenance and cleaning of port-a-potties at six key sites along the route, ensuring safety and accessibility for all visitors.

0.6 THE VISION

06.1 FINAL MASTER PLAN

The final masterplan portrayed to the right is the culmination of the analysis, visioning, community input, and conceptual planning iterations. It represents an incredible long-term opportunity for the future of Shonto. While the overall plan may seem ambitious, it is strategically considered to be a phased development that can provide Shonto residents multiple, diverse economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

While this plan is comprehensive and well thought out, we consider it a living document. A Masterplan is our best effort for today, but sets a target for the long term, possibly 5, 10, 20, or 30 years. This plan gives us a view to an unknown future and should evolve with the community and development goals over time.

The following pages outline each master planning component in more detail.

LEGEND

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Sunset Amphitheater | 12 | Keji Rock Venue |
| 2 | Horse Barn, Stables & Pasture | 13 | Pond/Park |
| 3 | Entry Monument & Signage | 14 | Creekside Camping |
| 4 | Gatehouse | 15 | West Camp |
| 5 | The Trading Post | 16 | Parking |
| 6 | East Camp | 17 | The Canyon House |
| 7 | Riparian Habitat Restoration | 18 | Volleyball Courts (School) |
| 8 | Tree Conservation | 19 | Playground |
| 9 | Canyon Studios & Galleries | 20 | Path/Trail |
| 10 | West Wall Retreat Center | 21 | Shuttle Bus Drop Off |
| 11 | Agricultural Fields | | |

Shonto Community's unwavering resolve demonstrates a deep commitment to building a resilient, thriving community that balances economic growth, environmental stewardship, and cultural integrity. As these projects and initiatives continue to unfold, Shonto remains a shining example of rural development and community pride within the Navajo Nation.

About Shonto Community

The Shonto Community is dedicated to fostering sustainable economic development, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. Through strategic projects and collaborative efforts, the community aims to improve quality of life and create opportunities for current and future generations.

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Navajo DED awards use of former NGS railroad tracksto Sunbeam Tours & Railway for high tech tourist attraction

The Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development has awarded an emergency operating agreement and a revocable use permit to a LeChee businesswoman to use the former Black Mesa & Lake Powell Railroad for a high-tech, scenic tourist attraction.

Celesta Littleman, founder and CEO of Sunbeam Tours and Railway, will use a Kia PV5 as a prototype of an all-weather Electric Railway Vehicle, ERV, for a scenic 71-mile round trip through some of the Southwest's most breathtaking landscapes.

"After four years of decommissioning the former Navajo Generating Station lease area, the Navajo Nation received the keys to the site on March 18, 2024," said DED Division Director Tony Skrelunas.

"Celesta first proposed her concept to the last administration. She has continued to improve it since then," he said. "We're pleased to make this announcement and look forward to seeing her ERV put the former BMLP tracks to good use," he said.

The centerpiece of Sunbeam Tours & Railway is the futuristic ERV, an electric, all-weather silent-running vehicle built to accommodate 12 passengers on a three-hour round-trip journey. The trip will include a vendor village stop and a restroom break.

The ERV will be fun to travel in and give tourists 360-degree views of our beautiful mesas and plateaus," Littleman said. "We will have Navajo guides to provide Navajo, geologic and natural history interpretation."



The vehicle is fully accessible, with ADA-compliant features and comfortable seating for all ages. It will provide a safe, comfortable and eco-friendly way to experience cultural tourism, she said.

"Celesta worked hard to develop and improve her business model through the years, and has fulfilled every requirement we've asked of her," said WRBDO Dept. Director Edbert Little. "Her tenacity is impressive, and the jobs and new revenue she'll bring to her community and the Nation are what we strive for."

STAR is projected to generate \$10.2 million in gross annual revenue in its first year of operation with six vehicles. That is expected to rise to \$11.9 million when sunrise and sunset tours are introduced.

Its operation will contribute an estimated \$1.2 million in Navajo Nation Business Activity Tax. For compari-

son, that will exceed the annual payments made by Salt River Project for water quality monitoring over the next 35 years.

My goal is to offer a different experience and to serve my communities of LeChee and Kaibeto with employment," Littleman said. "It will add to our incredible attractions of Lake Powell, Antelope and Waterhole canyons, and Horseshoe Bend. It will give eager tourists a Navajo experience through beautiful scenery while learning about the Navajo people, how they survived and how they live today."

Littleman said she's loved trains since she was a little girl but was inspired by the words of today's Navajo leaders.


"I heard both President Nygren and Speaker Curley say they wanted to reverse the Navajo brain drain and have young, educated Navajos return home, start businesses, employ other Navajos, help build the Navajo economy and generate revenue for the Navajo Nation. When I heard that, I thought, 'They're talking about me, and I want to come home.'"

- Save the Date -

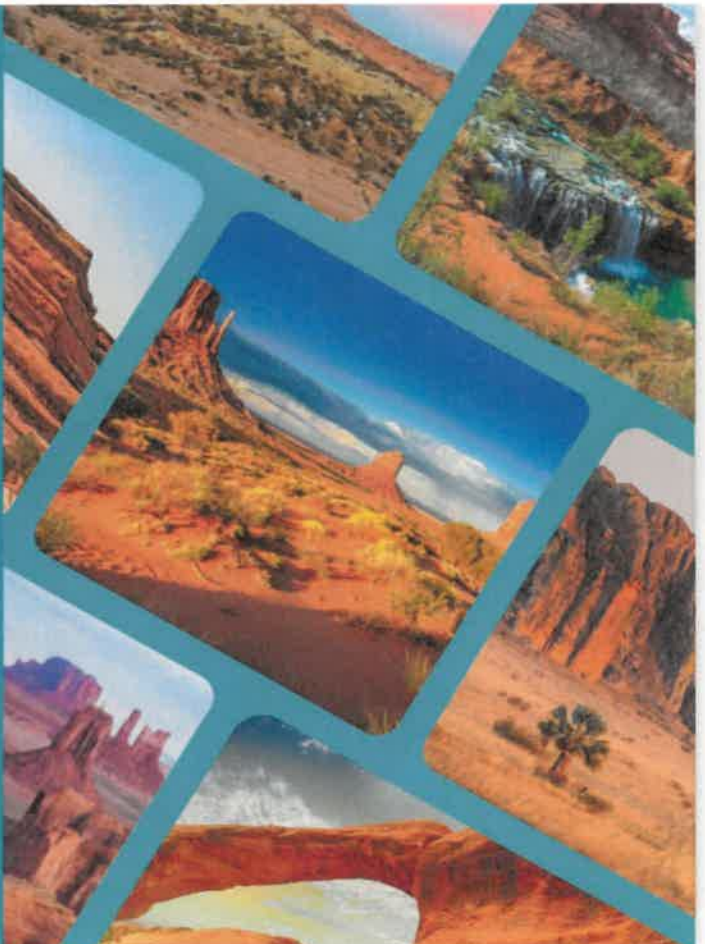
BROWNFIELDS 101 WORKSHOP

at Shonto Community
Governance Meeting Room

July 10th 2025 | 10 AM - 3 PM (MDT)
This is a hybrid event. More details to come!

 Registration opens: June 10th
Deadline to register: June 27th

Contact Michaela Shirley if you have
any questions: mshirl01@ksu.edu



Happy
Retirement



Happy Retirement, Franklin Jishie with Small Business Development Department! Thank you, we appreciate your 28 years of service to the Division of Economic Development. We appreciate the work with the RBDs and being an essential part of the regional communities business development. Farewell and enjoy your retirement.



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The Navajo Nation
Division of Economic Development
Western Regional Business Development

>x< = >x< One Day Training >x< = >x<
at Kayenta Chapter House



"Business Site Leasing Authority"
June 23, 2025 at 9:00 AM

Western Regional Business Development will be sponsoring one day training for those that are interested in acquiring about a Business Site Leasing Authority for Certified Chapters presented by Sally Yabeny.