



► ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Regional trends in economic development reflect several key areas of focus in relation to policy, and growth. Among those most relevant to the western region are opportunity zones, economic incentives, international trade, outdoor recreation, and broadband connectivity. During the recent CSG West Economic Development Committee meeting, members and attendees engaged with topic experts to gain a deeper understanding of the role of incentives and opportunity zones in state level economic development. Details of the session, as well as speaker presentations, are available on the [CSG West website](#). Information on additional trends is provided below in preparation for future committee conversations.

A critical component of economic vitality, states continue to invest in international trade with specific focus on neighboring countries. Nearly [39 million](#) American jobs depend on trade and 98% of the roughly 300,000 U.S. companies that export are small and medium-sized businesses, and account for one-third of U.S. merchandise exports. In 2018, [California](#) exported \$178.4 billion to 230 foreign markets – the largest of which include Mexico, Canada, and China. [New Mexico](#) exported \$1.4 billion in goods to Mexico, representing 39 percent of the state's total goods exports. And [Arizona's](#) bilateral trade with Mexico and Canada totaled \$20.2 billion, reversing a downward trend of recent years. The United states has the largest economy worldwide and is the largest importer and exporter of goods and services. The integration of national economies into the global economic ecosystem remains as an important key factor in economic prosperity.

Western states feature awe inspiring landscapes drawing visitors from across the nation, as well as the globe. Understandably, [Alaska](#), [Montana](#), [Wyoming](#), [Utah](#), and [Colorado](#) have utilized these natural landscapes to develop an outdoor recreation industry that has become a major part of their state economy. Whether through an Outdoor Recreating Learning Network in Utah, which help states leverage their outdoor resources to promote economic development or partnering with local



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universities to help communities grow their recreation economies, like Wyoming, western states are fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems and outdoor recreation collaboratives to boost their economies.

“High-speed broadband e-connectivity is becoming more and more essential to doing business, delivering health care, and, for schoolchildren, doing homework in rural communities,” said Anne Hazlett, Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development. In June 2019, Pew Charitable Trusts reported that about [21 million Americans](#) lack access to reliable high-speed internet creating challenges in delivering access to modernization trends across the region. Helping to bridge this divide, the federal government is encouraging rural communities to take advantage of new opportunities to expand broadband Internet service. Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new [toolkit](#) featuring twenty-seven USDA programs designed to facilitate the expansion of broadband, including grants, loans and technical assistance from multiple mission areas of the USDA.

Efforts have also been developed at the state level to address this need for broadband access. Washington created a [statewide Broadband Office](#) with an initial investment of \$25 million to enhance broadband accessibility. In Hawaii, a state statute enables the [Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corp.](#) to support broadband deployment while Idaho allows funds from the [Idaho Opportunity Fund](#), a program that makes grants to local governments for infrastructure improvement, to be used for broadband. Meanwhile, cities like San Jose, California are funneling fees wireless companies pay to install equipment on city utility poles into a “[Digital Inclusion Fund](#),” which is expected to total about \$24 million. To learn more about ways that states are expanding access to broadband, visit the Pew Charitable Trusts’ [state broadband policy explorer](#).



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The practice of economic development is comprised of a collaborative effort between government, community stakeholders, and industry. With international borders to both the north and south, expansive rural landscapes along with urban areas home to tech industry giants, the western region continues to invest and integrate its economic outlook both domestically and globally.

Stay tuned...for an introduction the [CSG West Agriculture Committee](#).